HAPPY 40TH BIRTHDAY TO THE CHALLENGER!

NASCAR SEASON OPENS WITH MIXED RESULTS FOR DODGE

HEMI HEAVEN
PRODUCTION OF 2010 CHALLENGER DRAG PAK WILL BEGIN THIS SUMMER

"Big Daddy" Don Garlits was behind the wheel of a 2009 Drag Pak car last year. (Jeff Burk photo)

Following a first-year sell out of 100 factory-built program vehicles in 2009, Mopar announced its 2010 Dodge Challenger Drag Pak program. For 2010, the non-street legal V-8 powered, rear-wheel drive Dodge Challenger is available with the 6.1 liter HEMI® that may be set up with a 5-speed automatic or 6-speed manual transmission.

“We’re proud of our drag racing heritage at Mopar and we will continue to support our drag-race customers where they compete,” said Pietro Gorlier, President and Chief Executive Officer - Mopar Service, Parts and Customer Care, Chrysler Group LLC. “The Dodge Challenger Drag Pak program was a success last year, and we’ll be carrying that momentum into our 2010 build.”

Based on the 2010 Dodge Challenger SRT8® and finished in a Stock Eliminator configuration, Mopar engineers eliminated select production components and systems to reduce vehicle weight by approximately 1,000 pounds. To accentuate weight savings, the Dodge Challenger Drag Pak features unique drag-race components including: composite lift-off hood with functional scoop, Dodge Viper-style front seats, polycarbonate door windows, a light-weight cooling module with electric fan, manual rack-and-pinion steering, a special cable-operated deck-lid release, special light-weight front-brake assemblies and special cable-operated throttle linkage and pedal assembly.

The Dodge Challenger Drag Pak features a retro Stone White paint scheme and is sanctioned for NHRA Stock, Super Stock and Comp Eliminator drag racing. The Manufacturer’s Suggested Retail Price is $39,999 and production begins this summer.

The 2009 Dodge Challenger Drag Pak program commemorated the 40th anniversary of the legendary 1968 Dodge Hemi Dart and Plymouth Hemi Barracuda package cars. The ‘68 Package Cars were sold as actual running cars with VIN identification. The 2009 and 2010 Package Cars are not running cars and do not come with VIN identification.

Orders for the 2010 Challenger Drag Pak must be submitted using the Dodge Challenger Drag Pak Application, which is available now at www.mopar.com or from the Mopar Direct Connection Tech Line at 888-528-HEMI (4363). Customers should work with their local Dodge dealer to submit their application. [03/03/10]
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HOW SWEET IT IS!

Mopar-powered Kasey Kahne Racing (KKR) driver Brad Sweet claimed his second straight win in the 2010 USAC Mopar Midget National Championship Series on Thursday night, Feb. 25, in the Las Vegas Super Sprint Classic event at Las Vegas Motor Speedway.

Sweet, winner of the season-opening “Copper on Dirt” event in Tucson, Ariz., on Feb. 21, led the first six laps of the 30-lap Vegas feature in his KKR Ollie’s Bargain Outlet/Auto Value Spike/Mopar, and then trailed Chad Boat until the white-flag lap when he regained the top spot.

The Grass Valley, Calif. native also notched a runner-up finish in Sunday night’s “Sokola Shootout” at Perris ( Calif.) Auto Speedway. He continues to lead in the points standings heading into a two-night stand at Hickory Motor Speedway in Hickory, NC, on March 24–25.  (photo courtesy Mopar)  [03/03/10]

SOMETHING TO CHUY ON

On Thursday, March 4, Chuy’s Mesquite Broiler will host their annual March Meet Pre-race Party welcoming racers and fans to the legendary March Meet at Auto Club Famoso. The party kicks off around 5 p.m. Racecars will be on display including the “Nitro Kitty” Dodge Charger nitro funny car driven by Mendy Fry.

A live radio show remote will broadcast from the restaurant and Chuy’s will offer food and drink specials. Chuy’s is located in Bakersfield, Calif., five miles west of Highway 99 on Rosedale Hwy.  (Tim Marshall photo)  [03/03/10]

CHRYSLER TO REPLACE MINIVAN AIRBAG SENSORS

Calling it a "safety improvement campaign" rather than a recall, Chrysler has announced it will replace a front airbag sensor in more than 355,500 minivans starting in June. It covers the 2005-2006 Chrysler Town & Country and Dodge Grand Caravan minivans.

Chrysler made the decision to fix the airbag sensor after the company said it found one of the front airbag crash sensors could crack under some conditions. This could allow water to get into the sensor, which could cause the sensor to malfunction.

Chrysler said it’s avoiding calling it a recall because if a problem occurs, the vans still meet federal crash test standards. But, Chrysler added that the van would not provide the enhanced protection in a crash if the sensor malfunctions.

Chrysler is asking owners to wait until June to contact dealers because it needs time to distribute repair parts.  [03/03/10]
BUSCH TAKES THE POLE WITH TRACK RECORD SPEED, BUT DODGE DRIVERS DON'T HAVE A GOOD DAY AT VEGAS

Las Vegas native Kurt Busch turned a track-record lap of 188.719 mph to claim the top starting spot for Sunday's NASCAR Sprint Cup race at Las Vegas Motor Speedway. Jeff Gordon was second with a lap at 188.646.

Kurt's little brother, Kyle Busch, held the previous track record of 185.995 mph. Kurt, who is winless in nine previous starts at Las Vegas, credited new crew chief Steve Addington for his strong qualifying run. Addington was Kyle's crew chief for the win at LVMS last year. He was fired in October from Joe Gibbs Racing, and Kurt Busch hired him in December for his team.

On Sunday, Kurt finished in the number 35 spot in his No. 2 Miller Lite Dodge.

Sam Hornish Jr., driver of the Penske Racing No. 77 Mobil 1 Dodge in the NASCAR Sprint Cup Series, finished 28th in the Shelby American. After days of cold weather and rain showers in Las Vegas, the temperature was much warmer under sunny skies as the field approached the green flag. Aware that the Mobil 1 Dodge might not handle well in such drastic temperature changes, Hornish began updating his team on the car’s condition shortly after the start the 267-lap race. By lap 20, he reported that the Dodge Charger was very loose-handling overall.

"We were way off early," said Hornish. "We had a set of tires yesterday in practice that were pretty tight and we kept adjusting the car thinking the track was getting tighter and tighter. When the race started and we realized we had made adjustments on a bad set of tires, the car was too free. Once we got a decent handle on it, we were two laps down and then I was speeding on pit road. We stayed out trying to catch a yellow (flag) and lost another lap. It was one of those days we started digging a hole and it kept getting deeper and we didn’t figure out how to put dirt back in it."

Penske Racing teammate Brad Keselowski finished in the 26th spot in the Spring Cup race.

DELAWARE CHRYSLER EQUIPMENT AUCTION NETS $550,000

An auction of equipment and tools on Thursday, Feb. 25, netted approximately $550,000 for the University of Delaware. The University had been hoping to get at least $100,000.

Attendees bid on nearly 1,000 lots of items, including tools, carts, lifts, warehouse equipment and heavy machinery. All items came from the former Chrysler Assembly Plant on South College Avenue, which UD acquired in November. Proceeds from the auction will be used by the University to reinvest and redevelop the 272-acre property into an advanced scientific research and technology campus for the future.

“The turnout and results of this auction far exceeded our expectations. We projected netting $100,000 from this event,” said Vic Costa, executive director, 1743 Holdings, LLC, the wholly owned subsidiary of the University of Delaware that oversees the site.

Private contractor Great American Group conducted the auction on behalf of the University.
KESELOWSKI TAKES 4TH IN NATIONWIDE SERIES

The best finish for the Dodge brand was Brad Keselowski’s fourth place finish in the Sam’s Town 300 NASCAR Nationwide Series race at Las Vegas Motor Speedway. Rookie Justin Allgaier finished three cars behind in the Verizon Wireless No. 12.

Keselowski had the pole position going into the race and set a new track record with a speed of 185.427 mph and a time of 29.122 seconds.

“What an accomplishment for this team,” Keselowski said. “We just got out there, pulled the belts tight and ran it as hard as I could. I didn’t breathe for about 60-seconds. Awesome lap.”

Keselowski’s crew chief Paul Wolfe echoed his driver’s excitement about his qualifying run. “A great effort by everyone on this Discount Tire Dodge team,” Wolfe said. “We just worked really hard to get the car to drive well and we’ve got a little speed here in qualifying too.”

Keselowski pulled double duty at Las Vegas, driving the No. 22 Discount Tire Dodge in the Nationwide Series race on Saturday and the No. 12 Penske Dodge Charger in the Cup race on Sunday. For the Nationwide race, Keselowski used the chassis PRS-030, a brand new chassis to the team.

CHARGES DROPPED WITH PREJUDICE AGAINST LAYSON’S RESTORATIONS

Layson’s Restorations in Lakewood, Wash., has announced the end of a patent and trademark investigation in the state of Pennsylvania. This follows the FBI’s move to drop its case last fall. Having the charges dropped “with prejudice” means that the charged cannot be re-filed.

It is the end of a lengthy legal battle that began at the Chryslers at Carlisle event in July of 2008 when David Layson, owner of the business, was arrested on charges of theft by deception and trademark counterfeiting of Chrysler emblems.

Layson’s issued a statement, which reads in part: “We would like to express our deepest appreciation to our customers, vendors, business partners and even competitors who encouraged us and provided the moral support to see us through this difficult time.

“We want to extend a special thanks to Robert Wolff of Mopar Collectors Guide and Phil Painter – both of whom made the effort to see through the issues and into the truth of the matter. We will always be grateful.

“Going forward, we hope these developments when combined with a turnaround in the economy will allow us to recall some of the loyal employees we were forced to lay off and continue our quest to make more parts and improve our processes to better serve our customers who, along with our love of classic cars, motivate us to be the best we can be every day.”

The statement concludes, “In the end, we hope that the legal issues surrounding the manufacture and sale of legal reproduction parts have been resolved once and for all – for the good of the hobby, and those of us investing and working to restore valuable pieces of American automotive history.” [03/03/10]
STOCK UP ON INK AND PRINT YOUR OWN ADRL EVENT TICKETS

The American Drag Racing League is now providing race fans the ability to print free tickets to its national events from the comfort and convenience of their own computer.

“This new online service will ensure that anyone with a computer and printer will be able to obtain tickets to our events. We have thousands of fans who travel to see each of our events and they don’t want to wait until they get near the track to pick up their tickets. It will also be easier for teams and sponsors to get tickets without having to track them down in-market,” Executive Vice President Jeff Fortune explained. “Basically, this program is being offered as a convenience for our fans and track partners and we’re confident it will make things easier for everyone involved.”

To print tickets, ADRL fans can visit the official ADRL Web site where they will be able to order and print up to 10 personalized, bar-coded tickets. All printed tickets will also have the option of upgrading to reserved seating status and pre-purchasing premium parking at a discounted rate. [03/03/10]

SUMMIT PARTNERS WITH ‘BEAT THE HEAT’

Summit Racing Equipment has signed a partnership agreement with Beat the Heat, Inc., a non-profit association of police officers and fire safety officials dedicated to educating young people on the dangers of street racing, drunk driving, and drug use.

The Beat the Heat program includes teams of police and fire safety officers who build marked police and fire department drag race cars to gain the attention of children and teenagers. Beat the Heat officers bring their race cars to schools, community events, and races to open a dialogue about the dangers of street racing and alcohol/drug-impaired driving, and talk about the importance of racing only at dedicated drag strips. Members also display and compete on the track at NHRA, IHRA and ADRL races, as well as various exhibition events across the country.

“We’re proud to team up with Beat the Heat,” Jeff Winters, Summit Racing Equipment Chief Marketing Officer, said. “Summit Racing has been serving the hot rodding community for over 40 years, and we understand the importance of enjoying our vehicles safely and responsibly. We firmly believe in the mission of the Beat the Heat program, particularly the goal of educating young drivers about the dangers of illegal street racing and impaired driving.” [03/03/10]

HURRY TO SAVE ON MOPARS AT THE STRIP ENTRY FEE

The annual Mopars at The Strip extravaganza will be held March 26-28 at Las Vegas Motor Speedway. If you pre-enter by March 10 you can save some dollars. Check out www.moparsatthestrip.com. [03/03/10]
Pist ‘N Broke

Of all the parts in an internal combustion engine, the toughest duty is undoubtedly assumed by the piston. Tasked with the job of transferring peak cylinder pressure into the connecting rods over and over again, you know pistons work hard and never get a rest.

I’ve owned many pistons in my time but never saw most of them in the flesh. That’s how it’s supposed to be. But in a couple of instances I got to see them real good and up close -- not a good thing. Here’s my story.

The first ugly piston story occurred way back in 1989. I was living in Massachusetts (at home under Dad’s roof) and was a few years out of college. The car was a super clean white 1964 Dodge Polara 500 two door hardtop that I’d built up with a retro Super Stock vibe. You know the drill, body-colored 15x7 steel wheels out back with matching 15x5.5 steelies up front. Coker 7.10-15 bias ply tires under the nose and M&H Racemaster P265-15 D.O.T. street slicks out back gave it a break from the too-modern radial tire thing while providing excellent traction during late night street race action against the local Chevy and 5.0 guys.

It rode on Mopar Performance catalog-sourced S/S leaf springs with an adjustable pinion snubber while the nose rested on stock V8 torsion bars I’d cranked up a few inches for an aggressive stance – and much needed road clearance for the deep sump oil pan.

Otherwise the car was pretty much stock looking on the outside. Ditto for the gut, a basic black vinyl affair with a fresh carpet and buckets pirated from a ’66 Coronet. I was particularly proud of the push-button Torqueflite transmission – all set up with a full-manual, reverse-pattern valve body.

Which takes us under the hood. Since these early B-bodies lacked the more complete VIN system adopted in 1966, I only knew it was born with a V8, probably a 318 poly mill judging from the 10-inch manual drum brakes and manual steering (things I was happy to see). Fortunately, when I bought it during a trip to San Diego, CA, (I was still living in Massachusetts at the time but was working for an automotive toy store called Munchkin Motors – we traveled to car shows all over the country selling model cars) a dual-quad 383 was under the hood.
Funny thing, the purchase took place at a swap meet in the Jack Murphy Stadium (since re-named Qualcomm Stadium) parking lot. The guys selling the car turned out to be Marty Ahlgrim and George Massuchi, two guys I’d later get to know very well once I’d moved from Massachusetts to Los Angeles a few years later in 1991 and got a job at *Chrysler Power* magazine. Marty and George were regular fixtures in Roland Osborn’s *Chrysler Power* magazine and car show scene.

Getting back to the piston story, we towed that Polara cross-country from San Diego to Massachusetts behind a late model Ford van. Once home, the car was put into service immediately. The dual quads on the 383 were a pair of Carter 500s mounted on a factory single-plane cast iron manifold from a 1958-ish low-deck B engine, perhaps a DeSoto Adventurer.

That mill ran okay and I turned a 14.3 during my very first drag strip outing at New England Dragway. But I needed more. So I scored a 1969 440 out of a New Yorker and had it rebuilt with Six Pack rods and matching TRW LF2355 forged Six Pack pistons. A MP .528 lift solid cam tickled the valves and a Holley 750 double-pumper sat atop the Edelbrock Torker 440 intake manifold. I really wanted a cross-rammed Max Wedge, but funds were too thin to allow it (until a couple of years later – but that’s another story).

On the night of August 11, 1989, with 200 miles on the freshly built engine, I picked up a fellow Mopar buddy by the name of Killer Kowalski (so named for his formidable fastball during high school sports). As we cruised around we felt pretty smug and figured the car should be good for some high-twelvies – not too bad for 1989. Though the engine was still in the break-in period to seat the rings and such, we couldn’t resist the urge to take a little ride out to the solitude of the Ware town dump. A light rain was falling so we couldn’t get too crazy, but I figured why not open her up a little bit? With minimal tire adhesion on the damp pavement, engine loading wouldn’t be high so what could it harm?

With the Torqueflite in Drive I rolled into the throttle and felt the mighty 440 spin the tires while urging the car forward in a gentle drift. Yes, I stayed in it – until there was a loud “klang” and the engine developed a real bad shake. Since we were a couple miles away from the safety of his garage, Kowalski shouted “Don’t shut it off!” And so we limped the wounded Polara through town and into his driveway.

The post mortem revealed trouble in cylinder number 7: a broken connecting rod and a cracked cylinder bore. I still marvel that we drove it home. The thinking was, “it’s raining, the damage is done, let’s not get soaked walking home.”

Before you jump to the conclusion that rod failure was the root cause of the catastrophe, remember, although I bought them used out of *Hemmings Motor News*, I had the rods magna-glow inspected, re-sized and fitted with SPS rod bolts (in those days before the dominance of ARP fasteners). So I was following the Golden Rule of engine building. And to those who cry, “you put used rods in an engine, what do you expect?” let’s not forget that aftermarket rods were incredibly expensive back in the Eighties, not like today. It was actually a fairly common (and safe) practice to recycle swap meet connecting rods back then. Again, as long as they passed inspection.

No, the root cause of the failure was a too-tight piston pin. I won’t name any machine shops here but, needless to say, the relationship between that one piston, pin and rod wasn’t happy. When the one failed piston came out of the engine during the autopsy, a 3-inch section of connecting rod was still attached. The rod, pin and piston were fused as one. No amount of reasonable effort could make the rod swing on the pin. It was seized. Meanwhile all the other pistons flopped freely on the rods as I removed them.

When a bound wrist pin destroyed the 440 in my ’64 Polara, I was out of action for 2 weeks. The second rebuild held together great and the car ran 12.9s in street trim. I later swapped the top end for 1964 Max Wedge stuff... and the car slowed down to 13.1s. Argh.

The twisted Six Pack rod offers mute testimony to the forces unleashed during engine failure. Though I sold the Polara in 1991 to finance my move to California, I still have the wasted piston as a memento.
You'd think the force of the piston running up and down in the cylinder with the crank spinning at 6500 rpm would be less than what it took to bend, twist then snap a beefy Six Pack connecting rod, but no. The mangled rod beam demonstrated what can happen when a piston pin seizes solid. The force has to go somewhere. Study the photos for more proof.

The upshot is that I had the block sleeved to repair the wounded cylinder, bought a single TRW 2355LF replacement piston from a very sympathetic Mancini Racing and was back on the street within two weeks after a credit card-busting thrash. Yeesh.

My second tale of piston abuse happened in 2001. I had moved from Massachusetts to California to begin a magazine writing career. Ironically, this piston event took place at the drag strip in Carlsbad, CA – a mere shout away from the stadium parking lot where I bought the Polara from George and Marty in ’89.

I was working at Hot Rod magazine and was having great fun working under Ro McGonegal’s editorship. Ro wanted desperately to increase Hot Rod’s readership and so did as much as he could to break away from the old days where Hot Rod was mostly about Chevys. He encouraged articles featuring Pontiacs, Buicks, AMC products and yes, Mopars. I threw him a bunch of Mopar-oriented story ideas and he bit on just about every one of them.

On this day in Carlsbad I was at the wheel of a Hyper-Pak-equipped Slant Six. Yep, Hot Rod actually embraced a Slant Six for one of the few times since Tex Smith built his aluminum-block Slant Six-powered XR-6 roadster way back in 1962. And I was in charge of making it go as fast as possible so we’d have an exciting story to print.

The focal point of the story – frankly – wasn’t the legendary reliability of the Slant Six. Rather, I got all excited when Doug Dutra conspired with Clifford Performance (where they say 6=8) to reproduce the mythical Hyper-Pak long-ram intake manifold that ruled the compact car classes at Daytona in 1960. If you’ve ever seen a Hyper-Pak Slant Six, you know it’s an awesome sight. So I built one as a story in Hot Rod.

The engine was budget oriented to keep it “real” and that meant using cast aluminum pistons from an outfit called Enginetech. Just fine for stock rebuilds and just about anything a hopped up Slant Six can throw at them, the best part of these pistons (PN P1515 for those who care) was that they cost $59.92 for a set of six! The cylinder head was milled 0.100 to boost compression to 9.2:1 and given some mild porting by Doug Dutra. A Clifford 276M mechanical cam was installed (specs are 0.464 / 0.464 lift, 276 degrees adv. duration) along with 340 valve springs. A 600-cfm Demon carburetor topped the Hyper-Pak manifold and the darned thing ran pretty good.

In a 3,100-lb ’70 Duster with a 4-speed manual O/D transmission (with the super wide-spaced 3.09 / 1.67 / 1:1 / 0.67 fuel economy gear ratios) and 4.30 gears, it ran 14.92 at 78 mph. The lousy trap speed wasn’t due to any weakness on the part of the engine, but rather the 0.76 top gear of the Chrysler A-833 O/D transmission. The third gear ratio was 1:1 but with the 4.30 gears, the engine hit its 5500-rpm redline well before the quarter-mile mark so I was forced to make the speed-killing upshift into O/D to cross the line. Not too bad. But I wanted more - a recurring theme, no?

Sooo, I turned to that magical solution of horsepower in a bottle. It is common knowledge that you can safely run nitrous on a dead stock engine with cast pistons as long as you don’t get greedy. Guys do it all the time, right?
So I had a custom “clover leaf” nitrous plate made up by Richard O’Malley with the nitrous oxide and supplemental gasoline spray bars set up in a cross form. This created four distinct – and approximately equal – “spray zones” beneath each of the carburetor's four throttle blades. As you know, a standard V8 style nitrous plate is designed to deliver its spray to each cylinder bank. But with any inline engine, this is a recipe for uneven nitrous distribution and possible combustion complications. With the cross-form spray bars, the nitrous/gasoline injection would be pulled into the down flow created by each of the carburetor’s four barrels then into the cylinders and evenly distributed. The idea was to minimize the excess lean / rich conditions from cylinder to cylinder that can spell disaster in a nitrous application. Remember, you must tune the entire engine for the leanest cylinder – or risk melting that piston. In the case of a Hyper-Pak-equipped Slant Six, the number three cylinder seems to run the leanest. Remember this point for later in the story.

O’Malley’s special nitrous plate was backed by a standard kit from Nitrous Works. Jetted for a modest 50-hp shot, the car ran 14.3 at 93.1, a massive jump all around. But most important is how the extra cylinder pressure created by the nitrous injection allowed the little Slant Six to regain power after the upshift into O/D. The thing picked up fifteen mph! Okay, so that was good. Why not step it up? For the next pass 75-hp jetting was installed and the ignition timing reduced by 1-degree.

The resulting 13.873 at 96.44 left jaws on the floor. Could there be even more in this thing? A swap to the biggest setting of 100-hp jets was made and another degree of ignition timing was backed out at the distributor to be safe. The clock read 13.57 at an amazing 99.23 mph. Through it all, the engine seemed happy, reliable and in no way degraded by the nitrous usage. You can read all about it in a story titled Big Thrill Six Chill that was published in the December 2000 issue of Hot Rod magazine.

Over time the Hyper-Pak engine saw dozens of additional street and strip nitrous deployments and stood up well. Then a 360 engine went into the Duster and the Hyper-Pak was stuffed into a ’62 Plymouth Valiant 4-door sedan. A full-manual pushbutton 904 Torqueflite replaced the O/D 4-speed and milder 3.55 gears went into the A-body 8 ¾ rear axle I put under the back seat. In this mode the car was good for a 14.695 at 90.98 mph naturally aspirated. And, yes, I also swapped the Duster’s nitrous kit into the Valiant. As they say, every good thing must eventually come to an end. And so it was with the Hyper-Pak Valiant on a subsequent trip to the Carlsbad strip in 2001. I did my usual pre-nitrous ignition timing reduction and even installed colder spark plugs and a few gallons of 100-octane in the tank. With the nitrous jetted to deliver a 75-hp jump, it should have been super safe. But as I left the starting line I noted that the engine seemed to sputter a bit for a second. Then a mist of oil appeared on the windshield. The engine was still running but there was something wrong. I aborted the run and limped back to Carlsbad’s nasty dirt pit area.

Sure enough, the number three spark plug was “nipped” (electrode and ground strap melted). Luckily I had trailered the car to the track since I was about 120 miles from my home in El Monte, CA. Upon disassembly, I was shocked to find the number three piston had lost part of its crown and the rings were torched clean through. The oil spray on the windshield was the result of the combustion gasses blowing past the breached piston and pressurizing the crankcase. At 5,000 rpm, an open crankcase will spray oil from any convenient opening. In my case, the valve cover breather was blown clear off and a half-quart was dispensed in a matter of seconds before I shut it down.

Thanks to a shot of nitrous, my Hyper-Pak Slant Six ran like a V8. In the background is the lead page from the story I wrote for the December 2000 issue of Hot Rod magazine. The pencil points out where a jet of hot combustion gas melted away part of the piston crown then sliced cleanly through the two top rings like a plasma cutter. Whoosh!

The lesson learned is that cast aluminum pistons can be but aren't always safe with modest nitrous levels. I’m not certain that any tuning error on my part caused the failure but rather tend to believe that a bit of debris may have clogged one of the tiny drilled orifices in a spray bar. Who knows, but in the end I removed the nitrous system and replaced the damaged short block with a fresh assembly based on a 1962 aluminum block. The Valiant’s nitrous huffing days were over, traded for a life of showcasing factory production (and prototype) aluminum Slant Six goodies – another story for another time.

Steve Mags Speaks - Pist 'N Broke - Page 4 of 5 - MoparMax.com
My final tale of piston destruction is one that I know the least about. I worked as a machinist at Stage V Engineering – makers of Hemi heads and rocker arms - and one day Eric Hansen and the guys were gathering a bunch of scrap aluminum for recycling. Amid the pile was the saddest looking Hemi piston I had ever seen. Scope out the photos and you’ll agree. It seems a customer sent it in to show what happened when his freshly assembled cross-rammed Race Hemi lost an intake manifold bolt. Not all bolts, just ONE, and it rattled around inside the engine for a few seconds before smashing a hole through the crown of this piston.

The funny thing is how that lone bolt head made its way into several combustion chambers before making its forcible exit past the piston and down into the crankcase. The other pistons in the engine, though not punctured, showed signs of a visit as the lone bolt head rattled from cylinder to cylinder via the open plenum of the cross ram intake manifold. Weird! They gave me that piston as a keepsake and good luck charm. At least it didn’t happen in one of my cars!

Somebody else’s nightmare, this unfortunate Hemi slug got ventilated by a loose bolt head. Use the best fasteners available!

Viewed from beneath, the holed piston shows where the bolt head finally pushed through and into the crankcase. Needless to say, a complete rebuild was required but the engine lived to run again.
JET HELICOPTER MAINTENANCE:

THE 2010 SEASON IS FAST APPROACHING!

It's hard to believe it but we're looking at our fifth year of racing our big Plymouth wagon in NHRA Stock Eliminator competition. Since 2005 we've witnessed the good, the bad, the ugly, and everything in between. It's been an expensive and occasionally heart breaking ride but we're coming back for more!

If you've been reading this column then you probably know that we are actually going to be running a two-car team this year, our second car being our nearly completed '66 Belvedere II. I told you about that last month.

A couple of weeks ago we dared to peek in our enclosed trailer to see how our flagship was doing. To our relief, everything was perfect except the front tires were flat. A little air and she fired right up. The battery was still hot! I drove it into the shop for a deep maintenance cycle. After I pulled in I had to let it idle until it got warm for the first time in months. I could barely walk after I shut it off and climbed out over the roll bar. The raw power of a well-prepped 426 Max Wedge through open exhaust is simply indescribable.

The old front tires weren't exactly old—they were actually pretty new. When we sprayed them down with soapy water we found that they were leaking out of the side walls. I called Goodyear and they gave us a new set. Yay, Goodyear! This is the kind of stuff that we're looking for when we do maintenance. If you fix these types of problems in the shop you won't have to run around like a rookie at the track.

We try and make it look easy on race day. Sometimes we even succeed. I still can't believe how sexy these new Weld front wheels are. If you have to ask how much they cost then you can't afford them. On the scale they're a mere four pounds lighter than a pair of Torque Thrust D front runners, making them no bargain by any measure, but they are so damn sexy! Also, the first time I ran them on the car I scored a perfect light in qualifying, then won a heads up final for the big trophy! Maybe they were worth as much as a good running car!
I am relieved to say that we have nothing major to do to the motor this off season so we made a couple of minor changes. We switched water pump housings, going to a 440Source unit with the outlet on the passenger side. This necessitates changing the lower radiator hose outlet but when it's done the hose no longer runs right over the oil filter. Anyone who's ever changed the oil on a big block Mopar can imagine what a great upgrade this is.

Of course we'll rebuild the carburetors; they have to be rebuilt all the time. I'm pretty sure it has something to do with the fuel system putting out enough volume and pressure to supply a WWII fighter plane engine--you've got to get close to the edge to go fast!

We're also going to install a set of Performance Welding merge collectors on our headers and see if they improve anything. We've heard good things and all the heavy hitters seem to be running them. I'll let you know.

Here I am detailing under the hood. Off white gets dirty looking fast but you can touch it up with a brush and it looks fine. I probably wouldn't even bother with this except we did such an over the top job on the black Belvedere that we ended up setting our bar higher. They do give out trophies for the "Best Engineered" race car. Maybe we'll get one someday.

I also removed all the contingency decals and logos of sponsors who haven't paid in a while. I'm sure the car will end up covered again. Those contingency decals really pay! It was Christmas every week for months after my Medford win.

I just love this car and I wanted to give it a good polishing and waxing treatment before the next campaign. You can see in this picture that I took apart the grill and headlights and polished them. The tech inspectors love a tidy engine compartment no matter what class you run. Taking time to clean up under the hood before you go to the track will almost always save time and hassles getting through tech.

Here's my driver of the future. Her brother loves race cars as well. I've said it before: drag racing is a family sport. While I am proud that our team is first generation and we build our own cars I am glad to be passing the legacy along by racing with my family. We'll be starting the season off at the end of April in Boise, Idaho. I hope to see you there!
I am not really sure what it all means now that Fiat owns Chrysler. When I take a few steps back from this entirely strange idea, I start to wonder if I even care anymore—does it really matter if the company is owned by Germans, Italians, Americans or Martians? The only thing that truly matters in my mind is whether or not the new management can come up with something to attract buyers and, in turn, preserve some jobs here in the United States. However, that is as far as it goes for me and yet I hope for more.

I just looked at the website and there is nothing new or outstanding. The competition still has more models to choose from, better economy and in some cases more performance. If I was a new car buyer I would look elsewhere and I hate to have to say that. Even the naming of the Dodge line-up reads like teenage boy machismo fantasy material. Not everybody wants to “Avenge” with a “Caliber” loaded up on “Nitro”. What up? How about something a little ambiguous or at least sweet sounding? Remember, “neon”? The “hi!” ad campaign was great and it worked.

I looked and looked for something to love and about the only things I really liked were things that just weren’t so practical for me—like the “DragPack” Challenger. For a measly 40k you can run the quarter mile in the 10 second range. How cool is that? It is so fantastical as to be almost unbelievable, yet there it is. If I had any sort of race dream left in me I’d be figuring out a way to buy one of these incredibly cool machines. I’d also like to see how fast one of these babies would tear up the salt flats. How about something a little ambiguous or at least sweet sounding? Remember, “neon”? The “hi!” ad campaign was great and it worked.

How about the Gem electrics? (An American built electric car owned by Chrysler) Frankly, they are awesome but falling just ever so short of being truly useful for the average consumer. The idea is there but the execution is sharply off. Golf cart, open-air styling is “eye-catching” only because you look silly in the rain. The 25 mph top speed is practically dangerous, even within the confines of most American urban centers. A bike messenger on a fixed gear goes faster than that. Still, with refinement I could see many people buying one. An enclosed passenger compartment, 10 more mph and we have a winner!

According to the website affordability calculator, I would save nearly $500 a year running this around town as opposed to my ’64 Dart… pretty convincing but it doesn’t go far enough – no pun intended – to make me run out and buy one.

Upon further inspection of my thoughts, I realize that the glory days of Chrysler are all I really care that much about. That sublime era of 1955 to 1970, when the corporation was in third place… but a strong third place. Being in third gave the organization a certain scrappiness. Somehow that scrappiness led to innovation and risk taking that paid off. There was a pride there as well and no small amount of talent. Something you could call magic coalesced for Chrysler back then; despite setbacks like the failure of the ’62 cars and the subsequent loss of a talent like Virgil Exner.

Even when the Corporation was putting out wild, unsaleable, yet legend-making cars with wings on them or unstreeatable drag cars with VIN numbers and seatbelts they never lost sight of their core consumer. They kept pushing out Darts, Valiants and Coronets and they made sure every variation of those models was covered. If a Valiant was just too insurance salesman for you then a Dart convertible might just swing the way you did. Ad campaigns ran the gamut from law enforcement to free love psychedelic freakouts.

Brand identity was strong and even though everybody knew the Super Bee and the Road Runner were the same under the skin, there was still strong adherence to one or the other brand. Even on the racetracks those identities were reinforced… Dodge had Cotton Owens and Bobby Isaacs while Plymouth had the Petty Dynasty. A reputation for toughness and reliability worked across the board from the most staunchly independent farmer to the little league mom out in the ‘burbs.

Where did it all go? Who knows, and who knows where it will go. I’d like to see the brand stick around. Maybe in three separate entities, with Mopar being the performance name, Chrysler the luxury segment and Dodge the rock solid family and work vehicle marque. (Whose insane idea was it to rebrand the trucks “Ram”? Sorry, you don’t go and trash one of the last remaining good brand identities your company has.) Whatever happens, I can only hope that the current situation calls forth the same scrappy, successfully innovative vib of the glory days. 🗯️
Challenger: Forty Years of a Dodge Muscle Car Legend

Alright, so strictly speaking there haven’t been 40 years of Challengers. With the lapse in production from 1974-1978 and again 1984-2005 (plus the inglorious Mitsubishi period from 1978-1984), we’re really celebrating the 40th anniversary of the introduction of one of our favorite muscle cars. We wish there had been more model years, but at least the Challenger is back. And for that, we are eternally grateful.

When the Dodge Challenger first entered in the muscle car ranks of Detroit’s Big Three, it arrived with something its competitors didn’t have: the greatest range of powertrain choices in the industry, from the small but durable 225-cubic-inch “Slant Six” to the fearsome “Elephant Motor” — the 426 HEMI®. With the best muscle-car powertrains in the business, Dodge Challenger has added, and continues to add, to its rich legacy, creating one of the most storied nameplates in automotive history.
1970

The Dodge Challenger made its debut in the fall of 1969 as a 1970 model. While it shared Chrysler’s “E-body” short-deck, long-hood platform with the third-generation Plymouth Barracuda, Dodge Challenger's wheelbase was 2 inches longer, creating more interior space.

The Dodge Challenger was originally offered as a two-door hardtop or convertible, in base, SE (Special Edition), R/T (Road/Track) and T/A (Trans-Am) trim.

But it was the range of powertrain choices that was truly remarkable:
1. 225-cubic-inch I-6; 145 horsepower
2. 318-cubic-inch V-8; 230 horsepower
3. 340-cubic-inch V-8; 275 horsepower (290 horsepower in the T/A)
4. 383-cubic-inch V-8; 290 horsepower
5. 383-cubic-inch V-8; 330 horsepower
6. 383-cubic-inch V-8; 335 horsepower
7. 426-cubic-inch HEMI V-8; 425 horsepower
8. 440-cubic-inch V-8; 375 horsepower
9. 440-cubic-inch V-8; 390 horsepower

Driveline choices for various engines included Chrysler's TorqueFlite automatic transmission and a three- or four-speed manual transmission, which could be equipped with a Hurst "pistol-grip" shifter. Big-block Challengers could be ordered with a heavy-duty Dana 60 differential equipped with a limited-slip differential.

Even the paint schemes said "performance," with colors, including Plum Crazy and HEMI Orange, accented with "bumblebee" stripes. Customers could further customize their cars with twin-scooped hoods, "shaker" hoods and deck-lid wings.
Befitting the brand’s performance heritage, Dodge raced the Challenger in its first year on the market. For the street, it was offered in the limited-edition T/A model to meet homologation requirements for Sports Car Club of America (SCCA) Trans-Am racing. The T/A was one of the first production vehicles to offer staggered size tires in the front and back: E60 x 15-inch front and G60 x 15-inch rear.

In 1970, Sam Posey drove the lone Trans-Am racing Challenger, prepared and run by Ray Caldwell’s Autodynamics Race Shop. While he didn’t win a race in the No. 77 car, Posey finished fourth overall in points.

Drag racers, including Dick Landy and Ted Spehar also campaigned Challengers in the National Hot Rod Association’s new Pro Stock class. In 1970 and 1971 the HEMI-powered Challengers (and Plymouth ‘Cudas) virtually ruled the class.

On the big screen, a 1970 Challenger R/T starred in the film Vanishing Point, a high-speed pursuit movie that has become a cult favorite with muscle-car fans. The movie was remade for television in 1997. Other 1970 Dodge Challengers have been seen in films, including Used Cars, Natural Born Killers and Phantasm I and II; and in television shows, including Mod Squad.

For the 1970 model year, more than 83,000 Dodge Challengers were sold.
1971

In 1971, designers made subtle styling changes to the Dodge Challenger, providing new treatments to the tail lamps and grille. The single-tail lamp design from 1970 became two distinct lights for 1971, and a new-for-1971 twin-inlet Challenger grille was painted silver on standard models and black on R/Ts.

Challenger R/T models also received a set of fiberglass quarter-panel louvers. An additional coupe model with fixed quarter windows was added to the lineup.

As in 1970, a wide range of trim levels, exterior colors and striping options made the Dodge Challenger easy for customers to create a special car. However, for 1971, Dodge dropped the T/A (it was no longer racing in Trans-Am), SE models and R/T convertible.

New EPA emission standards led to some powertrain changes; the optional 375 horsepower 440-cubic-inch was eliminated, as was the Six Pack-equipped 340-cubic-inch powerplant. The 383-cubic-inch Magnum engine was detuned to 300 horsepower by lowering the compression ratio for improved emissions. However, a 390 horsepower six-pack 440 V-8 was available, and the 425 horsepower 426-cubic-inch HEMI still topped the vast engine offerings.

A Dodge Challenger paced the Indianapolis 500 race in 1971. Dodge produced 50 Challenger convertible pace car replicas — all painted HEMI Orange with white tops and interiors.
1972

With escalating insurance rates and new EPA emissions mandates, more changes came to the Dodge Challenger in 1972. Also, the Society of Automotive Engineers (SAE) revised the torque and horsepower rating test from a “gross” to a “net” as installed in the cars. This reduced all ratings 20 to 30 percent, making them non-comparable to previous ratings.

Only three engines were available in the 1972 Dodge Challenger: the 225-cubic-inch Slant Six with 110 horsepower, the 318-cubic-inch V-8 with 150 horsepower and the 340-cubic-inch V-8 with 240 horsepower. All were equipped to use the new unleaded fuel.

With convertible sales in steady decline over several years, the 1972 Dodge Challenger was offered in hardtop form only. The sun roof had become a more popular alternative and was offered as an option for more than $400.

New front-end styling in 1972 featured a larger “egg-crate” grille. It was painted argent for standard Challengers and black on the Challenger Rallye performance model, which replaced the R/T. The Challenger’s tail lamp design included twin lights on each side, with the center panel painted the same color as the grille. The Rallye model was equipped with four small scoops on the front fenders.

1973

Beginning in 1973, the federal government mandated new bumper-impact standards that resulted in the only changes to the Dodge Challenger exterior — five-miles-per-hour bumpers equipped with large rubber guards that extended out from the bodywork.

Inside, grained vinyl was the only available seating material, but a new instrument-cluster design was part of the Rallye option package. The Rallye was eliminated as a separate model, although customers could create one with options.

Under the hood, the six-cylinder engine was no longer available; the 150 horsepower 318-cubic-inch V-8 was standard, with the 240 horsepower 340-cubic-inch V-8 as the only option.
1974

With performance car insurance rates skyrocketing, more safety equipment led the short list of changes for the 1974 model-year Dodge Challengers. Inside, lap and shoulder belts were equipped with an inertia reel. In addition, there was a federally mandated seat belt-ignition interlock, which prevented the car from being started if the driver or passenger didn’t buckle up.

The Dodge Challenger offered a different engine option for 1974. With the 318-cubic-inch V-8 still standard, a 360-cubic-inch V-8 producing 245 horsepower replaced the 340-cubic-inch V-8 as the only engine option.

In April 1974, Challenger production ceased. During a five-year span, approximately 188,600 Dodge Challengers were sold.

1978-1984

Beginning in 1978 — the year the U.S. Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) standard took effect — Dodge offered a new Challenger two-door coupe imported from Mitsubishi. It was offered with a standard 1.6-liter, 77 horsepower I-4 engine, with a 2.6-liter, 105 horsepower four-cylinder as an option.

Slightly restyled in 1981, the Dodge Challenger soldiered on until 1984, replaced by the growing stable of Chrysler Corporation’s K-platform compacts and a new import from Mitsubishi: the Dodge/Plymouth Conquest.

During its six-year run, sales of the imported Dodge Challenger averaged between 12,000 and 14,000 units per year.
At the North American International Auto Show in Detroit in January 2006, Dodge unveiled the Challenger concept to immediate acclaim. Based on the Dodge Charger’s advanced rear-wheel-drive platform and legendary HEMI V-8 engine, the Dodge Challenger concept featured the long hood, short deck, wide stance and two-door coupe body-style that resembled the iconic Challengers of the 1970s.

Over the next several months, the company received repeated pleas from consumers and the media to build the car.
The Dodge Challenger returned with the all-new 2008 Dodge Challenger SRT8 at the Chicago Auto Show. The 2008 Dodge Challenger SRT8 offered all that pony-car fanatics crave: ground shaking performance, unmistakable design cues reminiscent of the original Challenger, world-class ride and handling characteristics and benchmark braking.

The Dodge Challenger SRT8’s 425 horsepower (317 kW) and 420 lb.-ft. of torque (569 N•m) were the result of SRT’s exclusive, proven 6.1-liter HEMI V-8 engine. Its 69.8 horsepower-per-liter rating exceeds even that of the legendary 1966 “Street HEMI.”

Dodge Challenger SRT8 sports a five-link independent rear suspension allowing for independent tuning of ride-and-handling characteristics. The Challenger SRT8 featured SRT-exclusive 20-inch fully forged Alcoa aluminum wheels with four-season Goodyear Eagle RS-A or optional three-season Goodyear F1 Supercar tires. All four wheels were equipped with red painted Brembo calipers that feature four opposing pistons on a fixed caliper for even clamping performance.

The 6,400 Dodge Challenger SRT8 models built for the 2008 model year were available in HEMI Orange, Bright Silver Metallic (shown) and Brilliant Black Crystal Pearl exterior paint colors. Interior highlights included race-inspired leather seats with added bolstersing and an exclusive red accent stripe, exclusive stitched accents on the seats and steering wheel, four-bomb gauges with tachometer and 180-mpch speedometer in the center. An SRT-exclusive Reconfigurable Display (RCD) with Performance Pages provided drivers instant feedback on zero to 60 mph time, 60 to zero mph braking, g-forces and 1/4-mile time, and limited-edition numbered dash plaque.

The first production 2008 Dodge Challenger SRT8 was sold at the 37th annual Barrett-Jackson Collector Car Auction with a winning bid placed by Craig Jackson, Chairman/CEO of the Barrett-Jackson Auction Company of $400,000. All of the proceeds went to charity.

Mopar even sponsored a Challenger drift car.

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2009

The introduction of the all-new 2009 Dodge Challenger SE and R/T models at the New York International Auto Show delivered the full lineup of Dodge Challengers to the marketplace. From the maximum Dodge Challenger SRT8, to the performance of the Challenger R/T with its 5.7-liter HEMI V-8, to the cutting-edge technology of Challenger SE with the efficient 3.5-liter V-6 engine, the 2009 Dodge Challenger offered a full menu of options for every customer.

Adding even more capability than the 2008 model, the 2009 Dodge Challenger SRT8 with its powerful 6.1-liter HEMI V-8 offered a six-speed manual transmission, in addition to the proven five-speed automatic with Auto Stick. The six-speed—the Tremec TR-6060—was matched with a race-inspired dual-disc clutch that was first offered on the 2008 Dodge Viper SRT10.

The new 2009 Dodge Challenger R/T tucked its legendary 5.7-liter HEMI V-8 engine under a long, raised performance hood with functional hood scoops to increase engine cooling. The newest-generation 5.7-liter HEMI® V-8 engine featured dual Variable-cam Timing (VCT) and dual ignition (two spark plugs per cylinder) to increase power and torque, while improving refinement and efficiency.

When paired with the automatic transmission, the new-generation 5.7-liter HEMI® V-8 included the fuel-saving Multi-displacement System (MDS) allowing Dodge Challenger R/T Classic to operate economically on four cylinders, or produce 372 horsepower (277 kW) and 401 lb.-ft. of torque (544 N•m) when all eight cylinders are needed.

With its “pistol grip” shifter, the six-speed manual transmission Dodge Challenger R/T featured a performance-tuned dual exhaust with optimized engine back pressure and two lowrestriction bottle resonators for maximum “throatiness.” The result, even more power at tap with 376 horsepower (280 kW) and 410 lb.-ft. of torque (556 N•m) ready to accelerate the Dodge Challenger R/T from zero to 60 mph in less than 6 seconds.
The new 2009 Dodge Challenger SE powered by the 3.5-liter High Output V-6 with a four-speed automatic transmission produced 250 horsepower (186 kW) and 250 lb.-ft. of torque (339 N•m).

Halfway through the 2009 model year, the Dodge Challenger R/T Classic offered menacing looks and, combined with the 5.7-liter V-8 engine, an unforgettable punch. Based on the Challenger R/T, the Challenger R/T Classic featured dual throwback A-line body-side R/T stripes in matte black, ‘Challenger’ fender badging in classic script, large 20-inch polished-chrome heritage wheels, classic egg-crate grille with heritage ‘R/T’ badge, body-color rear spoiler and bright racing style fuel filler door.

The 2009 Dodge Challenger SE Rallye added even more pony-car excitement with a more responsive five-speed automatic transmission (implemented as standard equipment on all mid-year Challenger SEs), throw-back hood and deck-lid dual stripes with accent color outer stripes, bright racing style fuel filler door, 18-inch rallye wheels with all-season performance tires, body-color deck-lid spoiler and Micro Carbon interior accents.

Original B5 Blue returned from the Dodge paint code archive for a limited-edition run of Challenger R/T Classic and Challenger SRT8 models.
“Big Daddy” Don Garlits returned to racing occasionally in the seat of the Drag Pak Challenger. The 35th race car to carry the “Swamp Rat” name is a factory-built 2009 Dodge Challenger powered by a fuel-injected, gasoline-burning engine built using Mopar’s 6.1 liter (370 ci) engine with Mopar Hemi parts including a pair of the “new” Mopar Hemi heads. (Jeff Burk photos)
Based on the production Dodge Challenger SRT8, Mopar® offered a modern factory-prepped Challenger Drag Race Package Car (as a special body-in-white). To reduce vehicle weight, major production component and systems were eliminated, including windshield wiper assembly, complete HVAC system, all airbag components, rear seats, power steering system, exhaust system and underbody heat shields, cross-car and side-impact door beams, rear-bumper beam and rear deck-lid spoiler. The drag racer offered three engine options — 6.1-liter or 5.7-liter HEMI or 5.9-liter Magnum® Wedge — as well as manual or automatic transmission options.

2010

The 2010 Dodge Challenger R/T and Challenger R/T Classic add even more performance and excitement with the Super Track Pack for the 2010 model years. This handling package includes 20-inch Goodyear Eagle F1 Super Car tires, front and rear Nivomat self-leveling shock-absorbers, a larger rear stabilizer bar, a 3.06 rear-axle ratio, performance brake linings and enthusiast-desired “ESC-off” stability calibration.

Even more exclusive, and true to Challenger’s high-performance history are the 2010 Dodge Challenger R/T Classic and SRT8 Detonator Yellow and Plum Crazy editions.

The Dodge Challenger R/T Classic in Plum Crazy Pearl Coat is the first limited-edition to offer dual throwback A-line body-side R/T stripes in matte black or new bright white, while the SRT8 editions feature unique SRT-designed appointments and unique SRT performance seats with accented stripe.

Two of the wildest and rarest 2010 Dodge Challenger special editions will soon be available to Dodge fans and collectors to celebrate 40 years of Dodge Challenger performance: the 2010 Dodge Challenger R/T Classic and Challenger SRT8 Furious Fuchsia editions.
With Furious Fuchsia Pearl Coat exterior paint and all-new Pearl White leather performance seats, these limited-edition Dodge Challengers deliver the best of modern American muscle-car characteristics.

With a rejuvenated economy, the Challenger just may have a rosy future for the next forty years.
Hemi Heaven

FOR TIM AND PAM WELLBORN, THIS MUSEUM IS A SPECTACULAR LOOK AT MOPAR (AND MUSCLE CAR) HISTORY

Story and photos by Geoff Stunkard

For long-time Mopar collectors Pam and Tim Wellborn, it ended up being a former Chevrolet franchise that answered their questions. Having amassed the largest collection of 1971 Hemi Chargers (it is possible the Wellborns now own more ’71 Hemi Chargers than Dodge itself at any one time did during the season the cars were available) plus many other high-quality musclecars, the desire to find a way to display them had grown. Moreover, the Wellborns also wanted them to be someplace that would allow others to appreciate them. The answer turned out to be the large but decrepit Darwin Dobbs dealership on Broad St. in their hometown of Alexander City, Alabama.

Tim purchased the building back in 2004, and began directing an extensive level of renovation to turn it into a world-class facility. The dealership had a small showroom, but had been very successful in the service side of the business, with a cavernous floorpan for complete servicing. All of that was long past when the Wellborns purchased it; the roof was leaking, there were mechanical upgrades required, and frankly it was likely more of an eyesore than a reflection of its Art Moderne heritage from the streamlined era of the late 1940s. However the effort was worth it, as the building was perfectly suited for the display of Detroit’s finest performance iron, plus the artifacts the couple has gathered over the years.

Once the restoration was finished, this collection of cars formerly housed at their estate home was transferred to the new location, which opened to the public on January 18, 2010. Gracious to a fault, the Wellborn are now sharing perhaps the largest Hemi collection in the world with the public. In late 2009, we were treated to a very special preview of the collection, with Tim as our guide. Here’s is a sneak peak at the real reason why ‘the stars fall on Alabama.’

This is just half of the row of 1971 Hemi Chargers that Tim and Pam accumulated. There may not be a more impressive gathering anywhere, let alone in a place where you can actual see them.
Up on the lift is a 1969 Dodge Daytona; this code 999 Omaha Orange example was the only one painted this color. Beneath are a 1970 T/A and AAR – both are survivor cars.

This is the outside of the former dealership, complete with special Wellborn signage.
Check out this 'service bay,' located in the rearmost area of the museum. The 1971 Challenger is an unrestored 'barn find' 1971 Challenger R/T with a 440-Six Pack for power. The Daytona, a 440-powered example, is getting that delicate nose repaired.

Here is the Super Bee used by Motor Trend for a December 1970 road test that featured four different Chargers; this example was built specifically for the road test according to the broadcast sheet.
This is a NASCAR engine that made one of Richard Petty's Chargers fly back in 1974; the engine (which has not been apart) apparently used a Hemi block and specially-massaged wedge heads for the race at Talladega.
Tim bought out a long-time Mopar collector to obtain the parts that are seen in the attic and parts department (which is open on occasion for escorted tours). Here is a 1971 Hemi K-frame, still wrapped in the tattered shipping paper, and two sets of NOS 1971 Hemi AFB carbs. This stash is frankly beyond explaining; you would have to see it to believe it.

On display in the main lobby are several cabinets full of factory literature, promotional items, racing memorabilia, and more.
This 1971 Charger started it all; Tim's dad bought it back in the mid-1970s and it has been in the family ever since. Based on its options, rarity, and sentimental value, it is probably the favorite.

Here is a Lemon Twist Yellow Superbird, one of two in the collection. All that windshield sales signage is also original factory stuff. Note that some of the cars in the rear are up on second-tier display, which allows even more muscle to be included. Yes, there a few non-Mopars here as well.
Another look showing some of the signs and display items that the Wellborns have collected. That Panther Pink Charger on the right is Pam’s ‘driver,’ though its condition would make it worthy of any show.

This one’s a 440. How do you know? Hemi cars automatically got that Ramcharger hood with the trap door; the Six Pack Ramcharger was optional, with these ‘slats’ as the regular equipment.
Another look showing some of the signs and display items that the Wellborns have collected. That Panther Pink Charger on the right is Pam’s ‘driver,’ though its condition would make it worthy of any show.

This one’s a 440. How do you know? Hemi cars automatically got that Ramcharger hood with the trap door; the Six Pack Ramcharger was optional, with these ‘slats’ as the regular equipment.
Another Hemi car gets dyno-tuned. Tim has put several vintage Sun ‘Engine Performance Analyzers’ on display, wired up to look like guys are getting ready for Saturday night.
This is the original K&K Dodge Daytona that was used by Bobby Isaac to set 28 land-speed record numbers back in 1970 at Bonneville; Isaac and owner Harry Hyde won NASCARs Grand National title that year as well. It is on display in the dealership's original showroom.

Look at this cream puff; must be on a trade! It's a 1969 Charger 500, and, yeah, its got a Hemi! 🛒🔥
HIGH VOLTAGE!

Many people relocate their ignition coil to the passenger compartment to isolate it from the heat and vibration of the engine compartment. However, if it is not done properly it will defeat the purpose and possibly lead to bigger problems. JEGS Firewall Feed-Thru is designed to isolate the spark and prevent voltage leaks at the firewall insuring the full spark reaches the distributor cap. It is constructed from highly durable DuPont Zytel thermoplastic polymer and has brass male post terminals for maximum conductivity and tracking resistance. Requires a 3/4” panel hole. Includes mounting hardware. Made in USA.

For more information, go to www.jegs.com.

NEW, RADICALLY DIFFERENT MECHANIC’S STOOL DESIGN!

The TailBone mechanic’s stool features the same big 5” diameter wheels as are used on the Bone line of creepers, for exactly the same reason… big wheels roll effortlessly over air hoses, drop cords, shop clutter, rough surfaces and much more. The base is a uniquely designed tripod, a naturally stable work platform on uneven floors and surfaces. Rather than a swiveling seat, the base turns easily and naturally with the user so its legs always stay your of the way, and let you tuck your feet under you for comfort or convenience. The bucket seat works just like the ones in a high performance car, making it easy to use your natural body movements and trunk strength to position yourself and the stool to do the job.

Because the new TailBone’s big wheels don’t get hung up on obstacles that trip and tip the ordinary little wheels found on most shop stools, they resolve a safety issue that really hampers user comfort. And the bucket seat is shaped and sized for real-world people, so in the manufacturer’s words, “it’s not like trying to perch on a padded poke in the butt!” The 13.5” seat height is similar to most workshop rolling stools, and is appropriate for many workshop chores. Future plans are to offer the TailBone in other heights, as well to extend its applications for use at normal height work benches and other common shop situations.

The wheels are designed and built expressly for use in auto shops, and provide advantages not found on any other creeper wheels anywhere. The seat and base are molded of the same tough engineering grade polymer that’s been used for the famously durable Bone creepers. They’re smooth, impact resistant, impervious to oil, cleaners and common solvents, and easy to clean.

TailBones are designed and intended to perform and last in the professional auto shop environment, where they’ll be used and abused on a daily basis. A copy of the warranty and information about the TailBone and the company’s other products can be found at the company’s website, www.bonecreeper.com.

JEGS NON-SPILL QUICK COUPLINGS FOR AN LINES

Allows quick removal & replacement of AN lines without spilling any fluid or allowing air into the system. Ideal for use on the dyno or racecar for brake fluid, fuels, nitrous, mechanical gauges, oil, coolant, and most other frequently serviced fluid applications.

These couplings are available with two types of o-rings seals. Use couplings with EDPM seals for brake & clutch systems. Use couplings with Viton® (fluorocarbon) seals for oils, minerals, gasoline, coolant, nitrous, and most other fluids. JEGS couplings are color coded for easy identification (couplings w/ EDPM seals are anodized Red and couplings w/ Viton® seals are anodized Black).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-Spill Couplings w/ EDPM O-Ring Seals (Red Anodized)</th>
<th>Non-Spill Couplings w/ Viton O-ring Seals (Black Anodized)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Part Number</td>
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<td>555-103003</td>
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</table>

For more information, go to www.jegs.com.
STILL A MYSTERY CAR

Where are there details about the way cool Mopar red custom at the Mooneyes show? Mopar Collector's Guide put it on their cover but did not identify it either...

Thanks.

Bob Severin
San Jose, California

Our photographer didn't have any info on the car. Guess he wasn't alone in that failure. Sorry.

RESTO VERSUS CLONE

(RE: http://www.moparmax.com/features/featurecar/iii_4-firstbase-3.html)

Like everything else he does, has to be the center of attention! How can a car be 'restored' to have options it never had?

It is a CLONE!

Sorry, Tony, you have been caught again...

Ed Johnson
New York

NEEDS A LITTLE SHIFTER HELP

I have a Hurst Comp. Plus on my 64 Dodge Polara w/ 426W. I had it rebuilt by Hurst over five years ago. It's been driven less than 500 miles since 2007. It shifts good normally, but when I want to lay the wood from a stop and have a hard 2-3 shift it locks in the neutral gate when there is a large amount of torque applied.

I've been searching for a good rebuilder. Is there a beast and worst case scenario price?

Thanks for your time.

George Smith
Omaha, Nebraska

A POPULAR CHOICE

Hello, my name's Haitham, but I go by Steve. I'm a 27-year-old engineer living in southern California. I'm currently building what will be a unique 1968 resto-mod blown big block Charger. It's about a month from completion, and 6 months into the build. It is going to be a beautiful car and I thought it would be magazine worthy so I decided to write to the more popular magazines.

Haitham Sghayer
Southern California

Steve, send some photos and we'll be in touch.
IMMORTAL NAMEPLATE

I love the mag. I hope the name Dodge will never die.

Carl Flinn
Vist, California

MOPAR MAX GOES CLUBBING

First time I'd seen the e-mag. Nice job. Good writing, great pics. I'm forwarding it on to the rest of our Club members (Central NY Mopar Assn). I'm the VP and have been into Mopars since my teen years. My two sons are also into the hobby & we have a half dozen Plymouths between us, from a '53 Savoy wagon to a '71 Duster 340.

I look forward to your next issue.

Pete Ciciarelli
Caughdenoy, New York

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Love your magazine, keep up the great work. Have you & your editors given any thought to including a section in your magazine for persons such as myself that are keen on street performance but are including new GREEN ideas such as installing hydrogen generators, cold fuel vapour intakes, green supplements? I am sure there are a lot of other people out there that are doing or considering these activities. We are already seeing cars at the Edmunds auctions with them. Just thought I would ask.

Eugene Stevens
Saskatchewan, Canada

Thanks for the idea, Eugene. We'll see what we can put together in a future issue. Keep reading! And, readers, send information on what you are doing to help the planet while still keeping those Mopars running to editor@moparmax.com.

TAKING A BREAK WITH MOPAR MAX

AWESOME MAGAZINE! How do I get a copy sent to me?

SSgt Eric Hayes
Ali AB, Iraq

Thanks for taking the time to read. Just goes to show how dedicated real Mopar fans are. Here's the good news, Eric: we're only on the Internet and we're FREE. You can even read all of our back issues in our Archives. Keep safe!