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VISIT



Some Dreams Never Die

I was a teenager back in the mid-1970s. Many of the guys in my neighborhood were about five years older than me. While I rode my Sears single-speed bike with the banana seat, they raced up and down Tiller Lane in their musclecars. It was back then that I was bit by the musclecar bug. It would be years and years (for financial reasons), though, before my dream to own one came true.

In 1997 I was finally ready to purchase that musclecar. It didn't take long for me to decide what I was going to track down. I always loved the first generation ponycar body style. I wanted a GM but not a Camaro because there are so many around here in Minnesota. A buddy of mine owns a beautiful 1970 GTO with a 4-speed and he told me that his 400 engine is loaded with power and is "bulletproof" in terms of reliability. So, I ran an ad in *Hemmings Motor News* that read:

WANTED: 1967 or 1968 Firebird 400 convertible, serious buyer, must be a 4-speed, clean, rust-free body, excellent condition.

I found my 1967 Firebird 400 convertible with a red body and original rare red interior in Nebraska and drove it back to Minnesota. The red on red was so nice-looking that Pennzoil Corporation chose my Firebird to be in a promotional film it produced in Minneapolis. Mechanically though, it was



tough. I spent the next three years getting it to run as good as it looked. I had the engine, M-20 Tranny and Safe-T-Track rear end rebuilt and had a new fuel and brake system installed, plus a bunch of other stuff.

The last thing was the exhaust—it got true duals with turbo mufflers and sounded

great! I had the entire mechanical restoration completed and the car looked and ran outstanding. But I got to drive it for less than a week. Everything came to a screeching halt one Saturday evening in April 2000 when I was coming back from Porkey's (an old original burger joint in the Twin Cities) with my 19-year-old nephew and two of his buddies. Someone in a '99 SUV failed to yield the right of way and pulled out right in front of us. Fortunately, no one was hurt. However, my dream (car) was shattered.

It should have been totaled but I kept it anyway. I received a very generous settlement from the SUV driver's insurance company. So the Firebird now has new quarter panels (the old ones had some braze work done on them at one time), all new chrome around the wheelwells, new weather stripping, many NOS parts and four coats of basecoat clear. Cruisin' this summer has never been better. Some dreams never die. ☛

