

Musclecar Milestones

The 1970 'cuda 440 convertible was recently restored to its original splendor by Andrew White of Apex Autosports.

TEXT BY GEOFF STUNKARD / PHOTOS BY JOHN STUNKARD
ARTICLE FROM WELLBORNMUSCLECARMUSEUM.COM



“MY DAD HAD FORDS, AND MY FIRST CAR WAS A MUSTANG, SO I WAS NOT A MOPAR GIRL WHEN WE FIRST MET; IN FACT, I HAD NEVER SEEN A HURST PISTOL GRIP UNTIL OUR FIRST DATE WHEN I CLIMBED INTO TIM’S CHARGER. I SAW IT AND SAID ‘WHAT IS THAT THING;’ MY FIRST THOUGHT WAS THAT IT WAS SOME AFTERMARKET REDNECK PART.”

Pam Wellborn was laughingly recalling her first encounter with Chrysler’s legendary musclecar options. Tim Wellborn and Pam Twilley had known each other in high school, and Tim had arrived in a 1970 Charger for their first date that occasion. While the two enjoyed those carefree days, career and life choices would cause them to go their separate ways into other relationships and responsibilities after graduation. Pam moved to Birmingham to get her nursing degree, while Tim ended up beginning his serious work responsibilities at the family business, Wellborn Forest Products.



The 'cuda seen here had originally come from the Phoenix, Arizona, being sold new through the well-known Town & Country franchise out there. It was the mid-1980s, and Tim had purchased it as part of a growing group of classic Mopars he owned. Partial to Chargers and NASCAR-oriented B-Bodies, it was the only E-body he owned at the time he and Pam’s relationship reignited in 1986.

“THERE IS SOMETHING ABOUT THAT CAR,” HE SAYS. “BLUE, WHITE TOP, BIG BLOCK...” “YES, DO YOU REMEMBER WE DROVE THAT CAR TO THE MOPAR NATIONALS IN 1988 IN COLUMBUS?,” PAM REPLIES. “WE GOT MARRIED IN 1987, AND WE HAD FOUR OR FIVE CARS AT THAT TIME, INCLUDING THE JAMAICA-BLUE 1970 CHARGER WE HAD DATED IN A FEW YEARS EARLIER. NOW, I LOVE CONVERTIBLES; TIM LOVES THE 1971 CHARGERS.”

As things worked out, the financial requirements of Tim’s family-owned cabinet business in Alexander City, which he took over when his father passed away unexpectedly in the early 1990s, eventually resulted in the painful separation of virtually their entire collection, saving just one wing car (a yellow Superbird) and the Tawny Gold Hemi Charger that Tim’s late father had owned. However, those lean years were time and money spent wisely, and, once back on solid footing, Tim and Pam were able to reacquire the droptop E-body from its then-current owner in Canada.

This car is unique, as most people forget that the only year you could get a 440 four-barrel in the Plymouth ‘cuda convertible was 1970. No 440 convertibles were ever built on the A-body platform, and in 1971, the final year of production, the 440 high-performance motor was offered only in Six Pack trim. The standard 440 option allowed A/C to be installed on this car; only 34 1970 440-4 ‘cuda converts were constructed. Moreover, it is fairly high-optioned: EB5 Blue Fire Metallic paint, color-coded Elastomeric bumper, racing mirrors, hood pins, AM/8-track, and side-sill-deck moldings. Pam, for one, is very glad to have it back.



“Yes, I have had an impact on our collection with the cars I’ve picked,” says Pam with a big laugh. “If it were up to Tim, we’d have mostly 1971 Chargers!”

Tim laughs and nods in agreement. Though Pam might have not been overly impressed with that Pistol Grip and the brawny Mopars at first sight, she was a quick and thorough study. Tim’s previous serious relationship had not been very happy; having admitted that his car interest was a pretty important part of his life, he wanted to make sure that any other woman he became serious about having a relationship with ‘got it.’ So, within a short time of their reacquaintance, Pam was learning.

“TIM GAVE ME ALL THESE REFERENCE BOOKS WHEN WE FIRST STARTED DATING, AND I REALLY LIKED HIM, SO I STUDIED THEM,” PAM SAYS. “BACK THEN, A LOT OF THEM WERE LITTLE GUIDES LISTING OPTIONS AND PARTS. PRETTY SOON, I HAD MEMORIZED A LOT OF DETAILS, AND EVENTUALLY I WAS ACTUALLY DOING JUDGING AT SOME OF THE EVENTS WE WENT TO. OF COURSE, I HAD A GREAT TEACHER.”

As mentioned, this car was sold in 1994 to help keep the business moving, and went through a number of owners before returning to Alabama. When it came back, though pretty unmolested and still garage kept, the unrestored numbers-matching machine was showing its age. To this end, the Wellborns turned



it over to restorer Andrew White of Apex Autosports, who did a spectacular job of bringing the rare metal back to award-winning status.

Meanwhile, Pam's interest in convertibles resulted in some other cars that have come into the collection, including their W30 4-4-2 '70 Olds and their Ram Air IV GTO Judge, both outstanding droptops even if they are not Mopars. The couple also has a 383-cid Challenger R/T convertible in the museum's holdings. These rarities have become part of the museum's best-known holdings, and remain an important part of the heritage of the musclecar era.

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Why not a Hemi? Well, beyond the additional cost and maintenance associated with it, you could not get air conditioning with the 426. Indeed, this would also go away in 1971 on this model, as it was not available with the Six Pack design, either...



One unique aspect of this car was the single 4bbl carb, a Carter AVS model that was superseded in 1971 with the 3-2 Holley Six Pack layout on Chrysler's performance 440 engines, making the 440-4 'cuda a one-year only offering.

The blue interior in the E-body was augmented with the dictaphone recorder, plus bucket seats with a console-mounted automatic shifter.

The rocker along the bottom edge were an extra-cost option that only a few 'cuda owners chose to purchase. These and other styling cues were typical for American performance cars that year.

