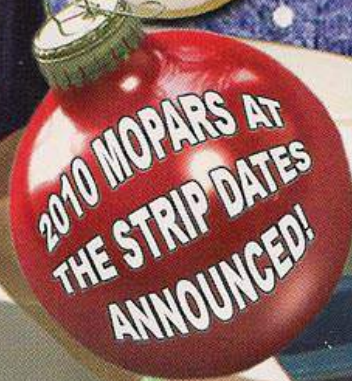


# MOPAR ENTHUSIAST OF THE YEAR ANNOUNCED

# W O O R

## MOPAR COLLECTOR'S GUIDE

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### HOT NEW MUSCLECAR OIL HITS THE MARKET

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January 2010



# PUTTING THE PIECES

**U**nless you're a relative newcomer to the hobby, you'll likely recall a restoration shop named Aloha Automotive that was located in Wisconsin. Aloha gained widespread notoriety back in the latter part of the 1990's, then, as their reputation spread, so did their customer and waiting lists. Tommy White and his family and friends ran the business with great skill, and they moved from their original smaller shop into something of a mega-complex (40,000 square feet) capable of handling ten or twenty cars at a time. Through the years, we've featured a large number of cars that were restored by Aloha, and have seen their work take home major awards coast-to-coast at just about every major Mopar event in the land. Then, on February 1, 2008, what seemed to be a Mopar restoration dynasty came crashing down like a dump truck dropped out of a C-130

without a parachute.

The guy working frantically behind the scenes at Aloha was Tommy's son, Andrew, who managed the crew of twenty workers and oversaw all the work in the shop. Andrew handled pretty much everything except estimating restoration costs and the billing department; aside from those two areas, the boy was up to his armpits in every other aspect of making Aloha the icon it had become. In 2006, Tommy and his dad entered into a five-year-plan that called for Andrew to start working into a percentage ownership arrangement, so his parents could retire and Andrew could take over the business entirely in 2011. Then, within the year, things started to go awry. Without going into too many grisly tabloid details, Tommy met a lady who began to occupy a lot of his interest. She also began to occupy a lot of his money. Needless to say, his family wasn't too happy about all this and worked feverishly to set things on

an even keel. Try as they might, however, the relationship continued and the debt it caused spiraled out of control. Finally, Andrew was smacked in the face with the cold hard reality that the company's money was gone, and he was left alone to deal with the shop's customers and employees.

With several Mopar-related parts scandals having taken place not long prior to this, understandably, most clients who had cars in the shop were in a blind panic. Since Aloha specialized in high-end, high quality Mopar restorations, when everything hit the fan there were a number of noteworthy Mopars in the shop in various stages of completion or disassembly. Most of the owners had forwarded money to Aloha for the restoration work, and overnight, all of them were clamoring for their money and their cars back. And this isn't mentioning the twenty guys who suddenly found themselves without a job. Right smack dab in the middle of this horrific nightmare,

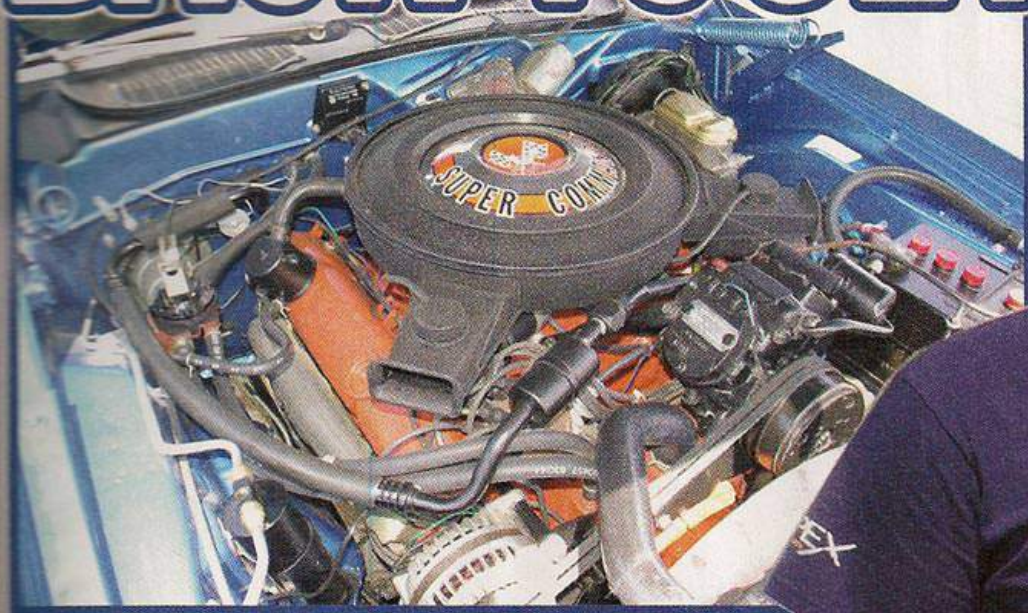


**STORY:** Randy Holden

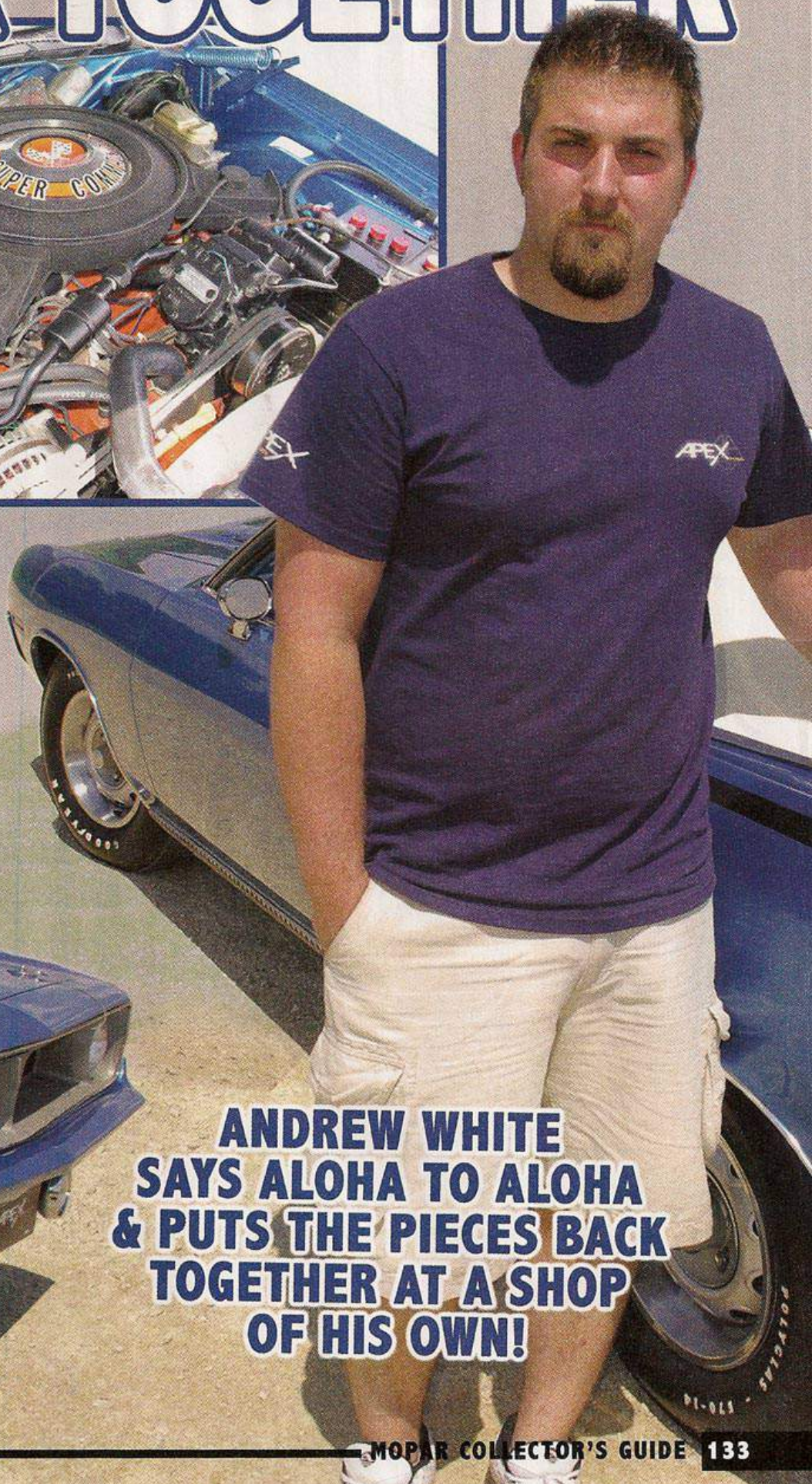
**PHOTOS:** Rob Wolf

Photographed @ Mopars in the Park  
Farmington, MN

# BACK TOGETHER



Andrew White did a lot of growing up in a very short amount of time. Andrew had dedicated his adult life to building Aloha's legacy, and he was rightly proud of the work he'd overseen. Now, everything he had worked for had been tossed aside and there wasn't a whole lot he could do about it. Instead of just throwing up his arms and bailing out of this seemingly impossible situation, Andrew buckled down and vowed to set things as right as was humanly



**ANDREW WHITE  
SAYS ALOHA TO ALOHA  
& PUTS THE PIECES BACK  
TOGETHER AT A SHOP  
OF HIS OWN!**



possible, given the circumstances.

At the center of our article, this month is a B5 blue '70 'Cuda convertible that's in the stable of well-known collector Tim Wellborn of Alabama. Tim's generally more associated with '71 Chargers, but scattered among Tim's long-nosed Chargers, you'll find a number of E-bodies, and '69 B-bodies as well. One of the Mopars that helped shape Tim's lifelong addiction to old Mopars happens to be this particular blue 'Cuda. At the time of Aloha's downfall, Tim's blue 'Cuda ragtop was sitting in the Wisconsin shop with freshly applied paint and the motor sitting between the frame rails, but there was

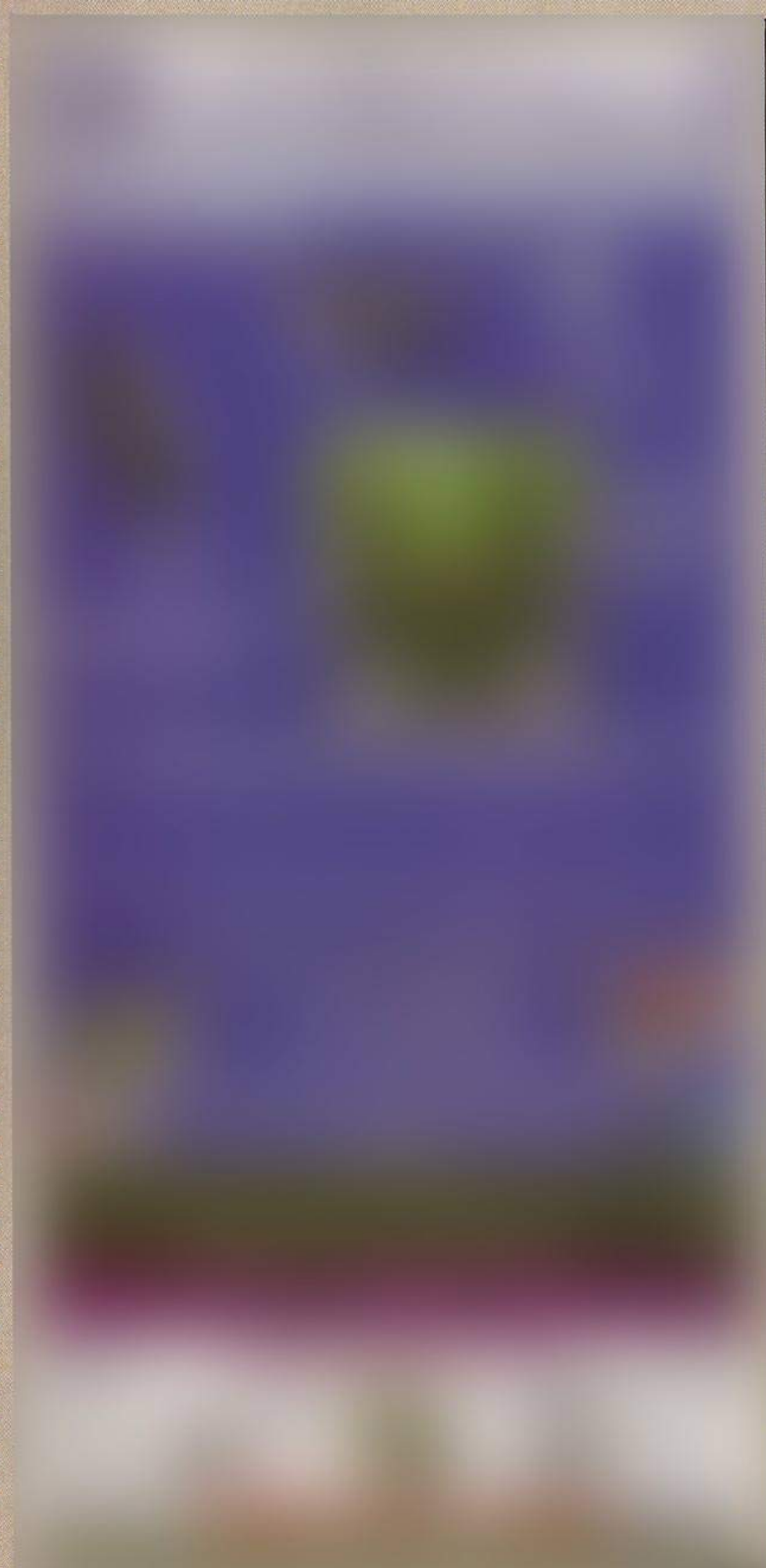
still much work to be done. According to Andrew, it was nothing more than a painted shell, with the motor just sitting in place still waiting for everything else to be completed. When Wellborn received word of Aloha's bankruptcy and the rapid liquidation of the company, he got on the phone with Andrew right away to make certain his beloved E-body was still there. Andrew assured him the car was okay, and furthermore, he pledged to Tim that he very much wanted to complete the job he'd started. Andrew and his wife, Megan, were already looking into opening their own resto shop and he assured Tim the 'Cuda would be among their highest

priorities. Wanting to err on the side of caution, Tim graciously declined the offer, and using his best manners, simply stated he wanted the car back at his place in Alabama. Truthfully, he was scared that parts had been sold off the car, or that the work hadn't been performed as described, because in those frantic days rumors were flying all over the place. Andrew complied, and in short order, the 'Cuda arrived back at Tim's place.

Tim went out to inspect the convertible expecting to see the worst. What he found was exactly the opposite. Instead of shoddy workmanship, he found the work that had been completed was absolutely top-drawer and just as nice as he could've ever expected. Better yet, every little part of the convertible, down to the smallest trim pieces, had been carefully packed inside the car, or in boxes that accompanied the car back to Alabama. Andrew had gone around the shop with a fine toothcomb and made certain that each of the cars went back to their owners with every little piece with which they'd entered the shop. It was bad enough that some of the customers had lost money, but he was going to see to it they wouldn't be missing any parts, or be inconvenienced in any other way. This serious attention to detail, in the wake of what amounted to a full-scale family and business disaster, impressed Wellborn greatly. He was soon on the phone with Andrew again discussing what to do with the convertible, and within three months, the whole package was on its way back to Wisconsin to have Andrew finish the task.

Literally picking up the pieces, Andrew, and wife Megan White, opened the doors of Apex Autosport in Grafton, Wisconsin back in February 2008. Andrew hired back a few of his hard workers from the Aloha days, and within weeks, the shop was turning out muscle car restorations that rivaled anything the guys had done previously. Apex is hardly a small operation, being a 10,000 square foot shop with its own engine shop and dyno facility built-in. In fact, the only thing that Andrew and his crew don't do in-house is the drive train machine work, which he subs out to a nearby shop. Other than that, they do everything under one roof, from paint to mechanics to interiors to suspensions; and that's the way Andrew likes it because he gets to oversee every step of a car's build.

Wellborn's blue '70 'Cuda entered



the doors of Apex in the latter part of summer 2008, and they immediately laid into the car, picking up where the work had left off. Since the paint job hadn't been wet-sanded or buffed, that was the first order of business, which required them to do a bit of disassembly and back track a little bit to get the job done right. The B5 was slicked to a mirror-like sheen, a bit of clear went atop that to preserve the gleam, and from that point forward, it was off to the races with the project.

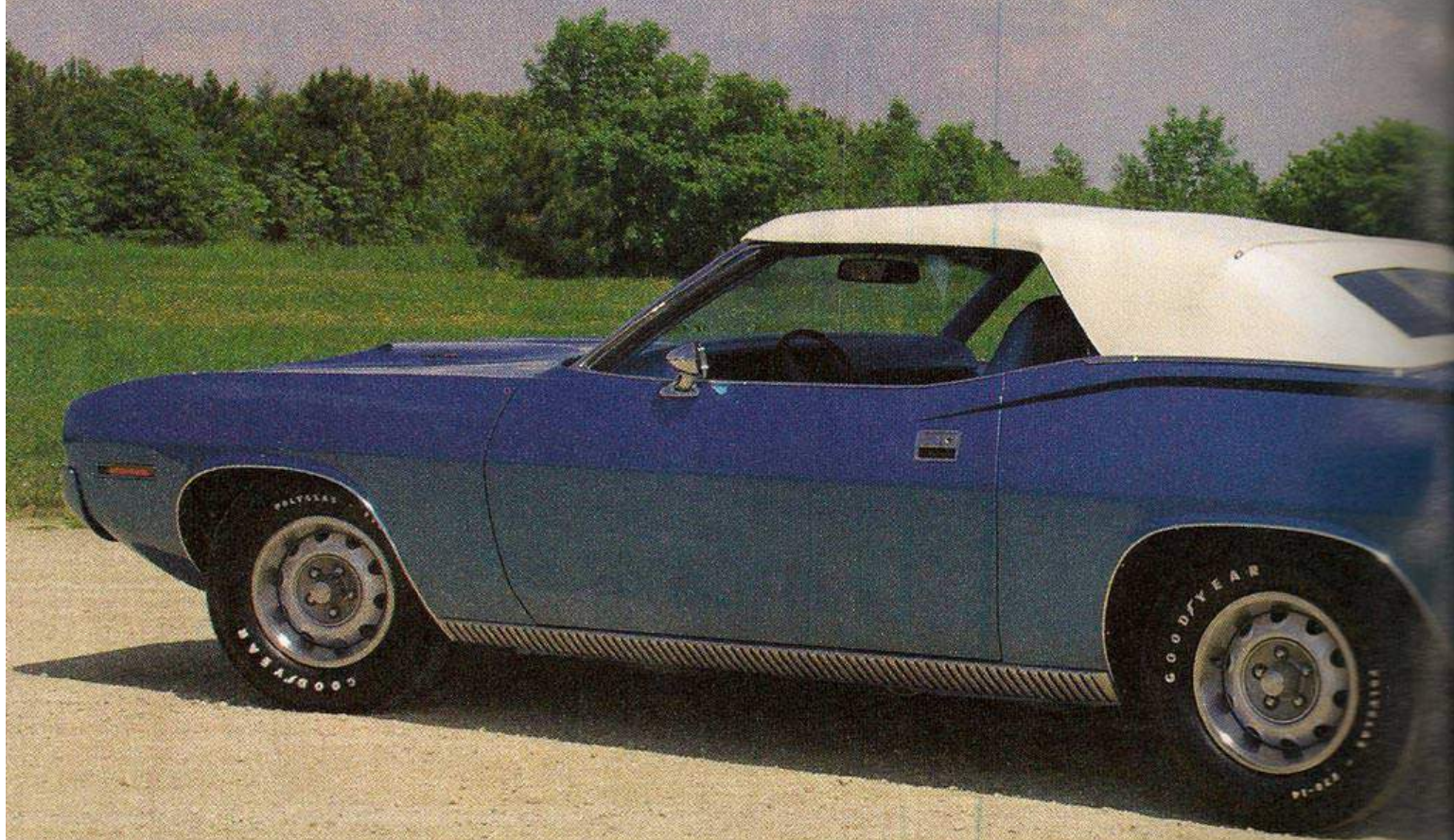
The original interior was still intact, but crispy from age, so it was deemed prudent to change out just about everything in favor of repro components from Legendary, with a smattering of NOS parts thrown in here and there where repro pieces weren't available. Obviously, a B5 blue car with a B5 blue interior is an attention-getting combination, but the combo really raises eyebrows when it's done with a convertible because there's not much hiding the double-stuff blue treatment. Accenting the blue/blue scheme is a brilliant white power top, which sets the car off nicely and keeps the frequent Alabama rain showers at bay. The car's original 440 and TorqueFlite were restored to stone stock specs with

the exception of electronic ignition replacing the original points. The suspension was rebuilt to like-new specs and appearance, and aside from the console-mounted cassette deck, everything else on this ragtop is just as it was when it left the factory back in 1970. Interestingly, the cassette player appears to have been added long ago, perhaps as far back as the early seventies, as the trail of owners attest that it's seemingly always been there! Since Tim stressed that this one would be a driver not a show poodle, Andrew took extra care to make certain everything worked better than new, and after putting 170 miles on the odometer to make sure there were no bugs, squeaks, or rattles, the convert went back to Tim Wellborn in the early part of 2009. Since then, Tim and his wife have been having a lot of fun reliving memories with the blue Plymouth and making up for lost time. We told you this was a pivotal car for the well-known collector, so it's about time we told you why.

Before Tim Wellborn was a big time Mopar collector, he was pretty much like the rest of us - just a young guy who liked fast muscle cars. Back in 1981, a friend-of-a-

friend (and also a notable Mopar guy) named Dave Jones up in Indiana listed a well-optioned low-mileage '70 'Cuda convertible for sale. Dave had just found the largely original car sitting in Arizona, where it had spent its whole life. Aside from one older repaint, apparently done because the car had been tapped lightly in the nose at some point, everything was still original, and everything worked - even the air conditioning! Tim jumped at the chance to buy the convert, and since it was such a comfortable cruiser and reliable old car, he used it as his primary driver and cruising vehicle for years. This is a factory rubber bumper car, and unusually, it was ordered with dual chrome mirrors instead of painted jobs. Color-keyed bumper cars almost always have painted mirrors, but not so this time around. The original owner also ordered power steering, power brakes, air conditioning, a power top, the 375 horse 440, and Rallye wheels. There's a console-shifted automatic backed by a 3.23 Sure Grip rear, so all the way around, this one was made for driving, not all-out racing.

The convertible served as something of the nucleus for Tim's



car collection, which rapidly expanded. But, as real life settled in, and Tim decided to get married, he sold off a number of his cars, and the 'Cuda convert was among those sacrificed to finance the necessities of family life. The 'Cuda went to Mark Headrick, of Year One, Goodmark Industries, and Auto Metal Direct fame, then Mark sold it to a collector in Canada, where it remained until Tim bought it back just over seven years ago. So, from 1981 forward, this particular 'Cuda lived with some very caring owners. In fact, when the convert was first sent to Aloha, the initial plan was simply to refresh the paint and leave everything else alone. As so often happens, once they got to studying on doing that, Tim and everyone else realized that, if the paint was put into like-new condition, everything else was going to look shoddy. And so, a simple repaint turned into a ground-up rotisserie restoration that took some very unexpected twists and turns. As you can see, however, thanks to Andrew White and his dedicated crew at Apex Autosports, despite the drama that caused Tim a bit of stress, this Plymouth's long, strange, trip turned into a serious, happily-ever-after tale. ❖

