



In Rust We Trust

"IN RUST WE TRUST!" That's the signature of John Fowlie, proprietor of Big M Automotive, on the '59 Plymouth Forum—and John should know, as you will see.



John grew up loving classic automobiles, and cut his teeth on a '56 Chevy. He came to own a 1957 Mercury convertible in 1985, and in his search for parts, he acquired a small fleet of Mercs he was able to part out, while helping folks restore their own. With a friend, he formed Big M Automotive, north of Sacramento, California, in 1997. Eventually, he bought his friend's share of the business. (Big M was a slogan Ford Motor Company used in the mid-fifties to differentiate the Mercury line from the smaller Fords.) In time, John grew to favor Forward Look automobiles; now, most of his business is MoPar-based.

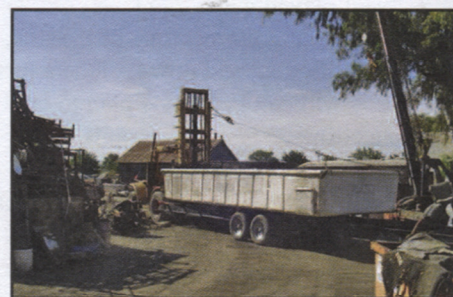
John's reputation precedes him. He is a reliable parts source who prices parts fairly, and has helped hundreds of enthusiasts restore their vehicles. He has been a member of the '59 Plymouth Forum for over twelve years, and has freely con-

tributed advice and help to this novice as well as those more knowledgeable.

Perhaps one of John's more remarkable endeavors has been the ground/up restoration of a 1959 Sport Fury convertible. Actually, restoration is an insufficient term. More than one vehicle contributed to his recreation together with an astonishing collection of fabricated parts, some from no more than tissue paper-thin remnants of rust-encrusted sheet metal serving as patterns. Here is one such example from the convertible top well drains:



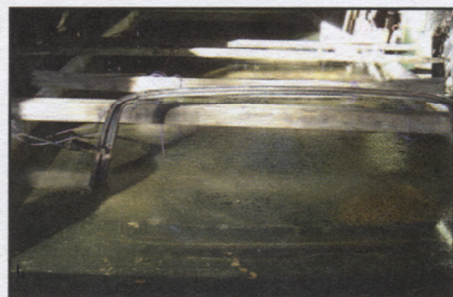
Fabricating parts from scratch—as if one were cutting paper with scissors—is no small feat. But one of the more prodigious aspects of this restoration is the "Big Dip," a full-body reverse-electrolysis treatment to remove heavy rust. How do you give a 17-foot "road locomotive" a bath?



"I found this tomato bin during a property cleanup, never knowing I would find a use for it," John writes. "A motor home chassis works well to wheel it around."



"About eight inches of water was added, and additional leaks found were sealed with wet patch. Then the body was lowered into the bin, while the hose ran constantly... Baking soda (lots of it) was mixed in, and power to the anode (junk exhaust pipes) and ground to the cathode (body) was introduced. After an hour the water had changed from clear to a pale green..."



"The water got murkier and murkier each day. For the final 48 hours, a series of grids were hung just above the floorboards and trunk floor. Here, the electrolyte was allowing 40 amps to pass through it."

The end result was truly remarkable. "After wire-brushing the floorboards, I could see exactly what sections would need to be replaced. There were several weak areas that did not look bad before the rust was lifted away. It will be nice



working with clean metal, however.

THERE'S NOT ENOUGH ROOM in this column to do John's restoration justice. If you are interested in the full details, you can read all about it here:

[<http://bit.ly/59vertresto>](http://bit.ly/59vertresto)

John and M'lisa Fowlie drove the finished Sport Fury to Carlisle in 2015, where I had the privilege of seeing it. If you would like to see John's Fury in motion, you will find it here:

[<http://bit.ly/fowlie2015carlisle>](http://bit.ly/fowlie2015carlisle)

And if you are in need of that elusive Plymouth part, give John a ring! You'll find his website is here:

[<http://www.bigmauto.com>](http://www.bigmauto.com)

—Dan Morton

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The finished product: John Fowlie's 1959 Sport Fury convertible



The sole '59 Plymouth registered for the 2017 National Spring Meet was 'Mike Schaefer's Belvedere sedan which arrived too late for the official picture taking,

BOB KERICO PHOTOS

