



The Plymouth Bulletin

28-time Old Cars Weekly Golden Quill Award winner

March-April 2019

355

Volume 60 Number 3

Voyager minivan



Tom Gagner's 1985 Plymouth Voyager LE



End of an era: 'Fifty-nine

Cruisin' Bruce Palmer

"Cruisin' Bruce," as Bruce Palmer is known to his myriad listeners on Worcester, Massachusetts, classic hits radio station "The Pike" at 100 FM on the dial <pikefm.com>, is no stranger to either classic hits or classic car cruising.



Bruce has worked in radio for thirty-six years, starting as an undergrad at Penn State's University Park where he worked at the campus radio station. Spinning oldies and classic rock from the start, and throughout his career, he advanced to working at a local commercial station while still a sophomore. After graduation he did several stints throughout the Northeast, including Boston where he worked for a time, and Providence, Rhode Island, where he spent fifteen years. Now at "The Pike" for almost twelve years, Bruce lives in Rhode Island close to the Connecticut border, about an hour's drive from the station. His four acres of land provides him with ample opportunity to store and work on his many classic vehicles, notably station wagons.

Bruce's wagons from a half-dozen years ago

Bruce can't account for why cars have been such a passion in his life. It's not an avocation his father particularly shared or nurtured. But he will tell you that rear-ending a '75 Torino wagon in his first car—a '74



Mustang II V6 he bought with his brother—brought an end to cruising in the Mustang, but started his love affair with Torinos and station wagons. He has owned seven or eight Torinos over his lifetime and even now has two in his stable.

But this is a magazine about Ply-

mouths, so let's get to the part about station wagons! While not in the studio, Bruce also DJs for local events, many of which are classic car shows. Depending on how much gear he needs to haul to a particular venue—speakers, amplifiers and the like—he may need more carrying capacity than a regular car affords. While

hanging out at the local A&W with some buds back in 1996, he started flipping through an *Auto Swapper* in the rack, and spotted a 1959 Plymouth Sport Suburban in factory Daffodil Yellow. Originally a California car, it was brought east by its Boston owners to haul flowers for their shop.



Center of Bruce's wagon fleet, his '59 Plymouth is also the oldest.

The business eventually folded and the wagon was put up for sale for \$2,800. When Bruce arrived to look at the car, he was informed that the price had been dropped to \$2,500. Shrewdly picking apart some obvious issues with the car, he managed to finagle the price down to \$1,200. Driving a 90,000-mile car with a shot steering box and on bias ply tires, Bruce weaved his way home with his buddy driving guard behind him as a protective measure.

Four years after he brought the car home

Bruce spent about a year making the car roadworthy. Along the way, he had it repainted in a bold early nineties MoPar yellow and a white roof. In addition to an electric remote-controlled tailgate window that is standard on the '59 nine-passenger Suburban, the car also boasts of a deluxe interior and factory AM radio. The 318 wide-block was tired; so when Bruce's friends called from a car show in Englishtown, New Jersey, four years later, telling him of an original crate short-block for sale at \$250, he jumped at the chance to buy it. Installing a pair of rebuilt heads for good measure, Bruce had infused the old Suburban with new life. It has been a reliable source of transportation, with one notable exception.

A holiday parade in North Attleboro, Mass.

On the way to a cruise night in 2009, Bruce heard a slight noise and thought he might be smelling smoke. After the event, he had almost limped the car home when he heard a screeching noise as the wagon skidded to a halt. The postmortem revealed that a collapsed

brake hose had resulted in the rear brakes locking. As Bruce jumped from the car, the overheated drum caused the tire to explode, and he saw flames coming from the wheel well. Hearing his hollering for help in the middle of nowhere, people in a passing vehicle slowed enough to roll down a window and toss a gallon jug of water at Bruce's feet before taking off! By judiciously sprinkling the water over the flames, he managed to put the fire out, but not before the tire on the other side



Four days after Bruce brought his '59 Sport Suburban home

not damaged, and the wagon was back in service within a month's time.

Twenty-three years

Bruce has now owned the car for twenty-three years, and the odometer reads 130,000. He routinely brings it to events where he DJs, rotating the Sport Suburban with three other cars from his stable. He continues to work on the car to keep it up, striving to do something every year—a piece of trim here, a gasket there. But mostly, he just cruises in it as he has for these twenty-three years. If you're in the northeastern states at a car event or a cruise night, look him up. You can find Bruce's venues on his website. His name is his address: <cruisinbruce.com>

—Dan Morton
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On a holiday parade

blew in a sympathetic reaction.

Belatedly, a truck from the fire department a mile down the road arrived, too late to help. When asked who called them, they reported they had heard the explosion and decided to come running. As Bruce eyed the runoff from his own extinguishing efforts, he noticed a sheen in the puddle. Fragments from the exploding tire had punctured the gas tank. Fortunately for the car—and for him—Bruce's intervention had saved the day.

By 2:30 AM, the car had been trail-

ered home where it remained sidelined until replacement drums could be found; the heat had cracked them in half a dozen places. Remarkably, the paint was



*"For '59... If It's New,
Plymouth's Got It!"*