



Curt and Grace

Curt Lambdin has been a gearhead as long as he can remember. His father tinkered with cars, and he followed in his footsteps. Even before he was licensed to drive, Curt owned a car and kept himself busy taking it apart and putting it back together again.

Curt was pulled over by the police in front of school for hot-dogging on his very last day of school, while his girlfriend Jo Ann – now, his wife – sobbed from her 10th grade class window as she saw it all unfold. Fortunately, despite being late for his court appearance (because he struggled under his friend’s ‘64 Corvette to repair a balky clutch) the ticket was thrown out.

Tragedy struck Curt at eighteen when, as a result of a diving accident, he was paralyzed from his chest down. But Curt’s spirit is indomitable. He and Jo Ann went on to marry and he has had a long and successful career with the Social Security Administration.

Curt couldn’t get cars out of his blood, though. In 1989 he bought and restored a 1964 Impala SS convertible that he eventually sold five years later. Then, in 1991, a co-worker decided he wanted to sell a 1959 Savoy that he had tinkered with for over six years, although it mostly just slept in his garage. His co-worker backed it out of the garage and snapped some pictures and Curt was sold. The very next day, he sent a rollback to East Northport, Long Island, for the Savoy. It had a mere 48,000 miles on the two-speed, flathead six. Curt had thoughts of flipping it, but when Jo Ann saw the rollback pull up, she exclaimed: “Let’s keep it! It doesn’t need any work!” Many thousands of dollars later, Curt begs to differ.

Starting in 1991, first with the Impala and later with the Savoy, Curt and Jo Ann became very active in The Street Cars of Desire, a Maryland-based antique and custom car club. At

that time, the club was unique in that it was organized as a 501c3 charitable club for the purpose of giving back to the community. Over the years, Curt and Jo Ann served in the capacities of treasurer, secretary, and newsletter staff. Curt served as president from 1994 to 1997. At a luncheon held at the State House, the club has been feted by the governor as one of the most charitable organizations in the state. By the time they left the club in 2000, it had given away \$750,000 in charitable contributions.

In 1991 there was a posting in the local newspaper for a movie to be filmed in Maryland. It was to be set in the early sixties, and the producers were looking for vintage cars. Despite sporting a split manifold and dual exhaust, Curt’s car appeared as would so many cars from that era. His car was picked along with six or seven others from a crowd of a 100 or so. *That Night*, starring Juliette Lewis, was filmed in late 1992, and Curt’s car figured prominently in it.



59plymouth.net/ephemera/video/Movies/ThatNight.

Following this experience, the couple decided to go with a ‘50’s custom look. They had the car painted metallic green and the interior done in roll and pleat. At this point, Jo Ann did most of the driving, putting 20,000 miles on the car. Then in 1996, they took it a step further. They extracted the

sub frame from a 1976 Volare Premiere station, along with the LA



318 engine, 904 transmission, 323 limited slip rear end and a Road Runner driveshaft, all of which were dropped into the Savoy. The interior was done again, this time with a custom tweed interior and power bucket seats from a ‘76 Eldorado. The car was lowered (the lakes pipes make it appear even lower) and the car was equipped with handicap controls, enabling Curt to drive. For many years in the late ‘90s, Curt did just that: driving his car to car shows throughout the Mid-Atlantic States. On one



such occasion in 1998, he was even interviewed by Don Garlits for ESPN at the Englishtown car show.

Lately, Curt’s health has made it difficult to for him to get around much; but, in 2008, he, Jo Ann and daughter Grace made it to the Carlisle All-Chrysler Nationals, where many like-minded ‘59 Plymouth enthusiasts dropped their jaws to see such a stunning customization.

Curt wishes he knew more people with disabilities driving custom cars. But then, it seems that Curt is every bit as unique as his car is.

-- Dan Morton