

The Forty Year Dream

When Russ Barger turned sixteen, his parents fostered an agreement with him. If he saved up half of his money for a car, they would give him the other half he lacked. Having some initial cash, Russ went to task thinking of ways to get more. Since he was doing 4H in high school, he had a couple of cows and decided to sell them. With that Jack and the Beanstalk inspired maneuver, he had the rest of the money he needed, and he purchased the 1964 Chevrolet Impala for \$700 from a young college student at Colorado State University.

The day he purchased the Impala is also one of the most endearing memories that he has with the car. It was a warm Colorado afternoon, but a rainstorm had come in; the Impala was still wet and beautiful. He remembered thinking to himself, "Wow, this is my very first car. This is so much freedom." Moreover, as a child, he was fortunate enough to grow up on a big ranch, and this allowed him to enjoy driving the car to and from school every day.

He drove the Impala for two years, but when he was ready to graduate high school, he purchased a 1977 Camaro. And, since he was driving the Camaro more than the Impala, it made sense to park the Impala in the proverbial family barn. Which as it turns out, was indeed his family's barn in Colorado. There it rested from 1978 till the Summer of 2018 until he and his son brought it to our shop. "Luckily, my mother didn't charge me storage fees," Russ stated jokingly. The Impala had a tarp placed over it, but the tarp itself did little to protect it from the harshness of time and it still accumulated dents and dings from rocks, antlers and even a riding lawnmower.

Even though the Impala remained unused in the barn, its restoration was always in the back of Russ's mind. Over the years he had multiple offers from people to purchase it, but Russ remained steadfast in his dream. This beat-up, half-forgotten Impala, was his very first car. Although while he didn't know the value of the Impala at the time, the sentimental aspect was more precious to him.

Finally, after Forty years, the timing felt right. Having enough of both time and money, Russ was ready to begin the restoration process. Russ's initial plan was to restore the Impala with his sons, in the hopes of creating a lasting bond and memories. There was only one problem; his sons were grown and living out their own lives. He didn't know what his next step was until he met a gentleman in Lakeway, TX, who told him "If you really want to know what you have as a car, take it to Mike at Crossroads." So he did, and that's when he finally met Mike and the crew that would be working on his car. "I found him to be very personable and professional." He commented.

"I had no idea about the car, I had no background in revamping a car, let alone how to estimate the costs, and can you get it done within your budget?" he stated. Also, "There are so many people who are more interested in their image, and being on television, but this shop was more interested in quality." This aspect laid the foundation for the work that would take over a year to complete.

Russ was very impressed at how Mike wanted to get the entire family involved in the project. To that end, "The shop became my family." Russ commented. Mike and the crew at Crossroads took on the project. They continuously offered several options and directions on where to go for each step in the process. Having these options were beneficial for Russ because, as he stated, "The research and monetary constraints that I would have had, they laid out evenly for me" he continued.

After the restoration, Russ even took the Impala to a car show where it won first place, and he often gets compliments on the paint and shape of the Impala. "That car is uniquely linear," he told me with a pretty hefty smile on his face. Russ enjoys the way people see and love the car as much as he does. "Everything works. I never could believe that it's better than when I purchased it as a sixteen-year-old kid." Getting the Impala restored with his family involved was a fantastic experience. "Having my sons see the difference between what the Impala looked like when it removed from the barn to how it looked after the restoration was just amazing" he stated finally.