

A VENT WINDOW VIEW – Buggy Buggy

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Restoring an old car is not a job for people who dislike dirt. From tear-down to finish, there is no good way to avoid soiling ones clothes, hands and hair when taking a car down to bare metal. And, it is nearly as bad when one begins reassembling the vehicle for that's when one ends up with smears of Bondo and various sealers embedded on skin and clothing. Oh, and let me mention a couple other little inconveniences such as paint fumes and having callouses instead of fingerprints (which might be a plus if you're on the FBI's Most Wanted List) from all the hand-sanding required as the work progresses.

Still, there are some guys who sail through these restoration jobs without bearing a single mark of dirt, paint, Bondo, or grease where it does not belong at the end of their workday. To be honest, these guys always remind me of those second or third-grade girls in school who could wear their little starched frocks through a pig sty without picking up a speck of mud!

Some years back I had the good—or was it bad—fortune to be in cahoots with a fellow (Stacy) whose “pickiness” equaled that of a third-grade prima donna, but his skills in auto repair far exceeded mine. When we discovered that with a bit of judicious care one could pick up an occasional vehicle for a price well below its value because of its need for repairs, we began frequenting auctions and perusing want ads for bargains. Our searches sometimes included small town junkyards and that's how we happened across a '38 Ford sedan. It was priced right, but of course, there was a reason. Its front clip was missing. Nothing remained forward of the firewall except for the frame rails. To move it, we had to rent a two-wheeled tow-dolly. As soon as we had the rig hitched to my '67 Mustang, we headed for Stacy's house. Let me say right up front that a Mustang is much, much too light to handle a dead weight such as the rear half of an ancient Ford riding on soggy tires. Although it was the coldest November day we had suffered up to that point, I sweated off six pounds before we reached the warmth of Stacy's garage.

With our “find” safely stowed and business hours about to end, I towed the dolly back to the rental shop while my partner began to study the upcoming project. Our plan was to begin work on the Ford over the upcoming weekend. Sadly, our planning failed to take into account that there were beetles, spiders, and other miscellaneous bugs residing in the old car. During the night, as the temperature in Stacy's basement garage suggested that springtime had arrived early, the insects migrated up the stairs toward the even warmer climates of Stacy's living room, kitchen, and bedrooms.

It was well after sunrise when Stacy put on a pot of coffee and began to rake footprints from the previous day out of the shag carpeting in his living room (I told you he was picky). That's when he discovered the invasion from below. Stacy forgot our plans to make a fast buck off the sale of our junkyard treasure and, instead, used his El Camino to drag the old car from his garage out to the street. After that, he vacuumed his house six times. Then he phoned me. My suggestions that we could spray the old Ford and the garage did not satisfy him. He wanted the buggy buggy removed from his property, not just his garage. I had no choice but to agree but, luckily, excluding gas used and time wasted, we actually made a couple dollars when we sold the old car to a nearby body shop. However, I still feel we wasted a grand opportunity to rebuild a piece of history. I'm reminded of that every time I see the dash clock I kept from that old Ford!