

Dormant No More

A 1969 AMC AMX returns to the road course

Forty years ago, a new

1969 AMC AMX was driven off a dealer's lot, destined for a life in the fast lane. It wasn't the first to do so, nor was it the last, but as is often the case, its on-track prowess was lost to time. Once it had served its purpose (or the funds ran dry), the car was left in an impound yard somewhere in California's San Fernando Valley, waiting to be discovered once again.



the NHRA C/Gas class. According to its current owner, Robert Byng, the car ran consistent 10.50 elapsed times, competing directly against factory AMC S/S AMX cars (see *HMM#66*, March 2009).

Sadly, "The cost of fielding a race car on a parts counterman's salary were soon realized, and the AMC was eventually parked and covered on his father's driveway in 1979," Robert told us.

Stunningly, the car remained untouched for the next 26 years. By chance, the father was talking to a friend at church when the car became the center of discussion, and a series of events led Robert to the site where the car lay dormant. According to him, "The California sun had taken its toll on the paint to the point where I knew it would have to be stripped. But I was also told that it had originally been raced on the street and in

complement the Traco manifold. Backing the engine is a custom-built Jerico four-speed, followed by a stout AMC Model 20 rearend containing a 4.56:1 Detroit Locker rear gear. Robert then installed 12.19-inch diameter disc brakes at all four corners with four-piston calipers, and dual master cylinders "with a balance bar on the original pedal assembly."

Inside, safety improvements were made by updating the original eight-point roll bar with current DOM tubing and installing a pair of racing bucket seats and a bottle of fire suppressant. An aluminum-encased Fuel Safe fuel cell was a mandatory installation, one that would enable Robert to enter the car in road racing and track day events. The AMX was completed in April of 2008, with Robert performing all the work except paint.

"Early road race documentation of AMXs is scarce. Its short 97-inch wheelbase really limited class choice in 1969; it was further limited by the Traco dual four-barrel intake. The Traco piece has been extensively researched; it was likely designed for the Javelins in the Trans-Am Series, and no other copies of this manifold are known to exist. A vintage photo from 1972 shows an AMC engine built by Traco Engineering for the LaMont/Heiser Pro Stock with a similar intake, though," said Robert.

"For the moment, I am a novice at road racing. Attending track day events at Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca has been a real experience; learning control is very confidence-inspiring. Late last year, I took the car to Buttonwillow Raceway. It performed beautifully, even in the 103-degree heat. Several of the certified instructors that were present put the AMX through its paces, and followed with a lot of input. I'm hoping to eventually vintage race the AMX in an arena where it started its racing life." 🏁



Fortunately, in the early 1970s, it was, by a determined young racer. One year and \$400 later, the AMC was finally released to him.

As it turns out, the second owner had already established a relationship with high-performance outfits such as Traco Engineering, Hank the Crank, Aviaid Oil Pans and both Tom and Jerry Sneva. In time, the AMX was transformed into a drag racer. The Snevas were kind enough to fabricate several chassis components, while a new layer of Candy Apple Red was laid over the body, fender flares and all. Traco Engineering, fresh from its AMC Trans-Am contract, supplied a new dual four-barrel intake for the engine.

Transformation complete, it was off to the track, where the AMX competed in

road racing—there was great potential, and I became the third owner."

Robert immediately got to work on the car with the intent of restoring it back to road-racing configuration. He stripped the body of its dilapidated paint and carefully removed the drag racing chassis modifications. The exterior would be refinished in its factory-applied color of Black Mink Metallic, and the interior would once again be dressed in its rare Platinum trim, as had been the case when it left the factory in 1969.

The engine was still equipped with the Traco intake, but Robert opted to remove and save the original modified Crane SS/AMX heads and other vintage parts. He replaced the heads with aluminum assemblies from Indy Cylinder Head, which

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some form of competitive motorsports on a regular or semi-regular basis? No matter if it's drag racing, rally racing or anything in between, we'd love to hear from you. Print-quality photographs (or digital images), comments and contact information should be submitted to *Weekend Warrior*, c/o *Hemmings Muscle Machines*, P.O. Box 2000, Bennington, Vermont 05201 or e-mail Matt Litwin at mlitwin@hemmings.com.