

Spring CAR CARE

This year's featured vehicle is Glenn Mercer's 1941 Dodge Truck



March 25, 2020
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COUNTY
Republican

'41 authentic obsessions

BY ROXIE MURPHY
REPUBLICAN STAFF WRITER
 rmurphy@wardpub.com

When Glenn Mercer purchased his 1941 Dodge Custom truck in 2009 from a man in Sullivan, he realized quickly that he would need a place to store it. The collector of antique convenience store items came up with a perfect solution — he'd build a gas station authentic to the year of his truck.

"It's Papa's Past Gas," Mercer said while showing off the shop and one car garage that houses his '41 pickup. "Back in the mid '70s, we had a little antique store downtown and I've bought and sold pretty much my whole life."

Once he realized older advertising items were getting harder to come by, he began keeping choice pieces.

"It kinda got out of hand," Mercer laughed. "I've probably got about 100 signs, advertising, clocks, what have ya."

When Mercer moved to town in 1999,



See **Mercer '41**, Page 3B

GLENN MERCER built this garage to hold his 1941 Dodge truck and his collectibles. He is pictured on the front page with his grandsons, Jackson (6-years-old) and Jet (3-years-old) Weyrauch.

PHOTOS BY ROXIE MURPHY



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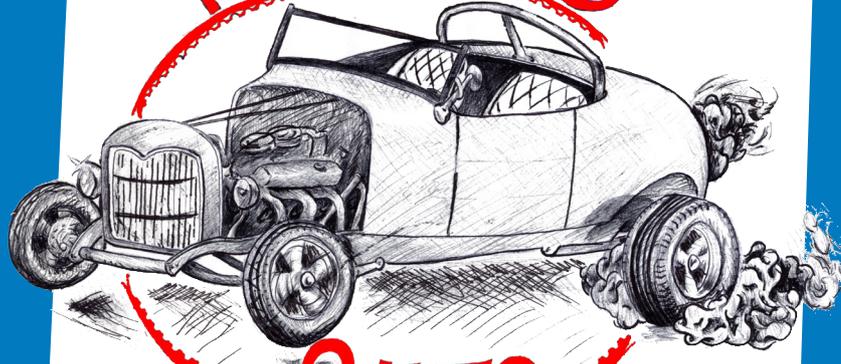


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Mercer '41 • from page 2B

he realized he needed a place to store those items. At that point he stored them under the bed, behind kitchen cabinets, and in closets. With the purchase of the '41, he had a solution.

"I decided I was going to build me a place to display it," Mercer said. "That's what I did. I built me a gas station — what it would have looked like back in the old days."

That is what he ended up with. They started building the garage in 2010 and when it was finished, his daughters gave him a sign for Christmas, dubbing the gas station and garage "Mercer's Garage."

Mercer said he continues to add to the "old store."

"You'd be surprised the people who just stop and say 'hey, I've got this sign, do you want it?' It's not usually high dollar expensive, but usually interesting."

Mercer points to an old whiskey decanter with a propeller that says "Spirit of St. Louis 1969" that someone gave to him. He also pointed to old oil bottles.

"One of my favorites is this Wholesome Bread push," Mercer said. "Those are very rare because they was on the outside of buildings and they just disappeared, rust, decay."

He pointed to an old Marlboro advertising sign and said a lady gave it to him.

"She was a cigarette salesman and she said she had a sign in front of an old store building on her route and next time she went she would take a hammer and pull it off," he said. "That was 20 years ago and you know I wouldn't get rid of it for nothing."

He pointed to an unopened glass bottle of Grape Crush that housed Pepsi-Cola, a misprint from the factory. A lady in Sullivan brought it to him.

The old time convenience store and gas station is packed to the brim with old candy boxes, glass bottles of sodas, advertisements, cigarette cartons, complete with an old cash register.

"That was give to me by my old store boss when I retired," he said. "It came out



MERCER'S COLLECTION of 1941 memorabilia is housed in his garage. It includes this case full of tobacco products.

of Dr. Scott's doctor's office in Sullivan." While he was building the shop and garage, his brother-in-law in Cuba was storing his '41 truck.

"I always like old vehicles and I always wanted an old truck," Mercer said about the purchase of the old Dodge. "A guy out in Sullivan had that one."

The Sullivan man had two trucks, and had purchased Mercer's for a parts truck to fix up his.

"He went to Columbia to pick it up, and when he got there, he said 'this truck is in better shape than the one I'm fixing up' so he kept it. I ended up buying it from him

See **Mercer '41**, Page 4B

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Mercer '41 • from page 3B

and had it restored.”

When it was first purchased, the 1941 Dodge served as a state truck in Kansas. Mercer isn't sure which owner brought it to Missouri. When he picked it up, the fenders and bed sides were mostly immaculate after some sanding. The bed had a sheet of metal in the bottom, and he replaced it with wood, just like it would have had off the Dodge line.

He was able to keep the restoration on the cheaper side. “A friend of mine over at Cuba, Jack Groover, restored it for me,” Mercer said. “He was retired when he did mine. It's no high dollar restoration, but it's good.”

Local mechanics helped with some of the work too. “Mike Riefer made the whole new gas line for me,” Mercer said. “The old gas line was pretty well rusted up. I took the old one down to him and he formed it and shaped it to where it needed to be. He came up and evaluated the truck so I could get insurance on it.”

Riefer was the one who set him up with the parts company he used and Mercer did a lot of the work himself.

He had Scego's do the powder coating. Turnbo's came to him and replaced the brakes. Larry Myeburger in Owensville reworked the upholstery.

“He did a wonderful job on them,” Mercer said. “I took the old ones out, he took 'em with him and a month later he came back and they snapped right in.”

The truck runs on an old L-Head motor, widely known as a “flathead” six. A flat piece of cast iron that is bolted down on top of the block gives the engine its name. The valve and entire valve train is located within the block. To

allow for valve clearance and to relieve compression, the head is mostly hollow. The flathead six was common in Dodges and many other early cars before World War II. The motor first came out around 1929 and was in production until 1972 with few changes.

“That's the motor I picked it up with,” Mercer said. “It ran then.”

While the motor may not be what the '41 came off the line with, it is the same style. The pickup also had a crank

**“If I had to do it again,
I think I'd buy one
already done.”**

option to bypass the battery if it was dead.

“I don't have the crank,” Mercer said. “But I bet if I looked I could find one easy.”

He upgraded the old battery from a six volt to a 12 volt so it could have the automatic start.

“It was the last pickup series made before World War II,” Mercer said. “Then in 1946 when they started making trucks again, it was the exact same everything because they already had their assembly lines set up. '41 and '46 are exactly the same except for the titles.”

The parts company in Massachusetts that sells new “old stock” had everything he needed. That is also where he ordered the interior kit from and installed it.

“The pieces came already cut out and I just put it in,”

Mercer said.

The old Dodge was road-ready in 2014, and Mercer didn't hesitate to take to some fun places.

“The first time I started driving it, I put it in the Gasconade County Fair Parade and got all the way down to the end of Main Street and run it out of gas,” Mercer said laughing. “The gas gage wasn't working. I thought I had plenty. We pushed it off to the side and Mike Reifer said the same thing happened to him 20 years ago.”

“We added the signal lights,” Mercer said.

Another golden find is the Missouri 1941 truck license plate Mercer purchased at a swap meet a few years back.

“It was incredible,” he said. “I took it up to the DMV in Jeff City and they looked up if it was being used — which of course it wasn't because it is all numbers.”

Now the license plate can stay with the truck as long as it is issued in Missouri.

Today the old girl sits in the shed of Papa's Past Gas with pride. Even after seeing the credible old gas station, the excitement of discovering the classic 1941 crimson and black truck gleaming under some winter dust can't be described. Literally a jewel within a jewel.

A scuff mark on the passenger side wheel well from when Mercer was helping the painter put the bed back on and a crack in the windshield that showed up a day after the windshield was replaced adds even more authenticity.

The original chrome is shining on the front bumper, and the running lights, and taillights gleam with the word “Dodge” etched in.

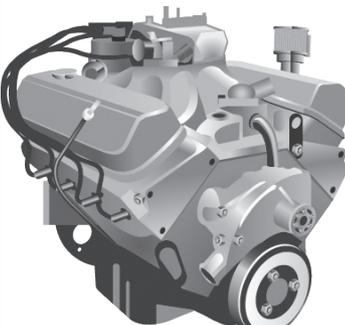
Mercer said he takes the truck to some shows, including

See **Mercer '41**, Page 6B

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MERCER PURCHASED this 1941 Dodge truck from a gentlemen in Sullivan. He found a 1941 truck license plate by accident at a swap meet. The rear brake lights (seen in photo above) have the word Dodge on them. Driving in the Gasconade County Fair parade he discovered the gas gauge did not work when he ran out of gas at the end of main street.



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THE TRUCK Mercer purchased came with an L-Head motors, commonly called a “flathead” six, common in Dodges and many other early cars before World War II. The engine was first produced around 1929 and was in production until 1972 with few changes.

Mercer '41 • from page 4B

Cuba last year where he sat all day at Dottie’s Truck Stop. “That was a fun one,” he said. “Of course I have had it here in Owensville and at the Threshers. It’s pretty well won everywhere its went.”

He had the truck for sale briefly last year, but isn’t committed to the idea.

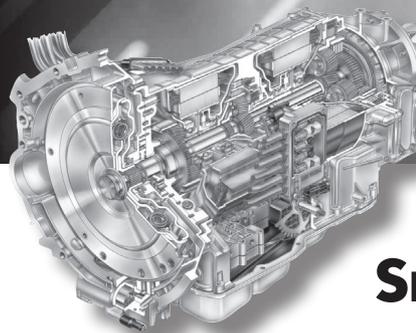
While fixing the truck was fun, it was also time consuming. Mercer completed the truck in 2014.

“If I had to do it again, I think I’d buy one already done,” he said.



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MERCER IS happy to show off some of his favorite items in his collection. They include this Grape Crush soda bottle (photo above) that was accidentally filled with Pepsi-Cola, and a Wholesome Bread push (photo below) which is rare because they were often used on outside doors and became rusted and decayed over time. His collection of advertising signs includes one for Royal Crown Cola (bottom photo).



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A tale of buying and selling cars

BY LAURA SCHIERMEIER
ADVOCATE STAFF WRITER
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Henry Ellis Crum, Jr. of Vienna, says the first car he ever owned was given to him by his brother, Cellis Crum. It was worn out and nobody wanted to buy it for maybe even \$35 to \$40, but JR Crum wanted it.

It was 1958 and he was 16 years old. What young man that age doesn't want a set of wheels of his own. The car was a 1949 Studebaker and the first year he owned it, he drove it 8,000 miles and burned 36 gallons of oil that he bought in two gallon cans.

"You could see me going down the road," he said about all the oil the Studebaker burned. "It was worn out," he said. "I

couldn't afford a battery so I parked it on a hill to roll down to get it started."

He still has that car.

His second vehicle was a used 1955 Ford that "liked fuel pumps better than a cat likes cream." A local man, Willie Breeden, had it and it was already worn out. Crum bought it from Leonard Weidinger for \$500. Crum had saved and saved to get the money to buy the Ford. Then a nephew got sick and was in the hospital and his parents had a hospital bill to pay and no money.

It was Crum's \$500 that was used to pay the hospital bill. The nephew got better. Crum went to Leonard Weidinger and told him the sad story about why he could not

See **Crum**, Page 9B

CRUM BOUGHT this 1927 Hupmobile (above right) at a Lorts Brothers auction. He still has the receipt. It looked like a gangster car and the speedometer went up to 75 mph. Crum still owns this 1969 Mercury Marquis with a 429 engine. The young men, the motor heads he knew, didn't like it, preferring instead the sporty Chevy Chevelle.



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Crum • from page 8B

longer buy the Ford. Weidinger took the Ford to Crum's parents place and left it, saying Crum could pay for it on payments, which he did.

He traded that car for a 1963 Dodge Dart, the first new car he ever owned. It was pea green and Bill Beck sold it to him for \$1,800.

Crum took really good care of the car. He always had the seats covered and he was extremely particular in caring for it. Two years later, he took the car back to Bill Beck who gave him \$2,500 for it, and he actually made money on that deal. "I had it like brand new," Crum said.

He took the \$2,500 and bought a 1966 Fury III. Mr. Beck always gave his customers

The VIP didn't have the big engine though. Crum calls it "an old man car" because it was an automatic and had air conditioning. They rode in it on their 40th anniversary when there was a party in honor of that occasion. He still has this car.

Crum, who with Shirley owns Shirley's Furniture and JR's Hardware store in Vienna, is well known for being able to fix about anything. He didn't inherit this from his dad, Ellis Crum, Sr. who couldn't fix anything with an engine but could certainly use a crosscut saw very well.

"I liked anything with a motor on it," he said. People would give him stuff and he'd tear it apart. Most of the time he could

put it back together but not always. He liked anything with an engine—cars, trucks, chain saws, lawn

mowers, and especially tractors. He had a lot of tractors.

One day while they were working on a tractor, a man stopped and talked to them and told Crum "My dad would like to meet you. He is selling cars." His son Jason wanted him to go and in the end, on a cold day with ice on the ground, Crum, and his sons Jason, Travis and Craig all went to the Cuba area to see Rod Freese and his cars.

Crum sat at their kitchen table while the man's wife tried to get him to eat cake. They talked tractor and the old man said, "I like him. Show him the cars." Crum thinks it was because of the tractor talk that he liked him and was willing to sell him the cars.

In his basement, Freese had a burgundy 1927 Model T Touring Car and a 1929 Ford Model A, brown with black trim. These cars had been used at the Ozark Extravaganza at

See **Crum**, Page 10B

**"Shirley hated it.
It was a speed demon."**

who bought a car a full tank of gas and Crum accidentally had the Fury in the wrong gear and in the middle of Freeburg, the car made it up to 60 mph before he got it shut down.

It was this car he owned when on June 6, 1970, he and Shirley were married. They took a honeymoon trip to the Arcadia Valley in Iron County, seeing the sites of Elephant Rock and the Johnson Shut-Ins. They stayed at Mimosa Village in Ironton and there's a photo of the motel with a powder blue Fury III.

"Shirley hated it. It was a speed demon," Crum says, admitting he drove it too fast. He would tell his passengers as he put a \$5 bill on the dashboard that they could have the \$5 if they could pick it up. No one ever did because once the car was moving, they were too busy hanging on for dear life to worry about picking up a \$5 bill.

He sold that car but later bought a 1966 Plymouth VIP, which was the closest he could get to that powder blue car he'd once had.



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Vichy to entertain the crowd with a Bonnie and Clyde moving car chase drama.

At the same guy's place, there was a 1918 Ford Model T delivery style vehicle. The delivery part of it had been rebuilt by a guy in Cuba as the original one had rotted off.

Crum didn't have the money to buy the cars even though he and his boys all wanted to buy them. Jason told him they knew enough people who wanted to buy the tractors so he made some phone calls to different people. He sold two trailer truck loads of tractors to get the money to buy the three cars. They needed the space in the shed as well.

Freese wanted Crum to have the old cars because he knew he wouldn't chop them up. He wanted them kept original. He's sold all of them with the 1918 bought by Ryan Davis. It's in Argyle now.

Crum bought a 1969 Mercury Marquis that had 45,000 miles on it and a 429 engine, a muscle car engine. The young men such as Paul Daniels and Darel James didn't like it. Those young motor heads preferred the Chevrolet Chevelle, which was more sporty looking.

He got the Mercury from Freese also, but from his wife after Freese died. He was contacted by the wife who said she wanted him to have it. He told her he could not afford it. She said, "I will sign the title and you pay me when you can." The day he drove the Merc to Vienna he nearly got sick because it had mothballs in it and with the heat on the mothball smell was very strong. He still owns this car. He didn't sell it, but he would.

A unique vehicle he once owned was a 1927 Chevrolet dump truck which he never licensed. It was brought new when it was brought to Maries County. It's in Osage County now as Ryan Davis has it.

Crum also owned a 1927 Hupmobile that had six cylinders, which in 1927 was unheard of because all the cars had four cylinders. It looked like a Model A, a gangster car. The speedometer showed up to 75 mph, also unheard of.

Crum bought it for \$9,250 (he still has the receipt) at a Lorts brothers auction between Vienna and St. James. When he bought it, the auctioneer said, "It will stay in Maries County."

The Hupmobile was built by the Hupp Motor Company, in business from 1909-1939, according to wikipedia.

The Hupmobile has a "prayer bench," similar looking to the kneelers in a Catholic church, only in the car it was flipped down and was a foot rest.

He also had a 1953 Chevy from the Belle area a nephew bought and sold to Crum. He had trouble getting a title. He got hard up for money and sold it to Howard Carter. "It was an old car and nobody had one like it," he said, calling it an old car in modern time. He went a lot of places in it. It had a few rust spots. It had six cylinders and would get 25 miles per gallon.

Crum got his first speeding ticket on Highway 63, south of Vienna, from a local young man he had written a reference for to help him get into the Highway Patrol Academy.

It was not long after this that he and Shirley bought the store and he went south to fix a leaky propane line and was in a hurry to get back to the store. He was driving a 1976 pickup truck and not paying attention to the speed when he was pulled over by the highway patrol. When the young man gave him the ticket, he told him, "You've deserved this for years."

One time he didn't get a ticket. He was driving the powder blue Fury III and outran a highway patrolman. He was a Mr. Paisley from Rolla who chewed tobacco. Crum was somewhere years later and Paisley came up to him and asked him if he still had that car, saying, "I'm the one who chased you and you outran me."

The only new truck he ever bought he still has. It was in 2000 when he and Shirley bought a new Chevrolet three-quarter ton truck with an old style body from Weidinger Chevrolet. He only drives it when its nice.



ELLIS CRUM Jr. is pictured driving his 1927 dump truck that with a fuel tank in the back connected to the engine with a hose. Pictured riding shotgun is Eddie Bauer as they drive on Highway 63.

It has 19,940 miles on it and it means a lot to him.

He says Shirley never complained about all the car trading he's done over the years

and only said she didn't like him staying so late working on cars in the garage. In fact, Crum said the worst argument the two of them ever had was over a computer.

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THIS 1918 Model T delivery style Ford (above left) was purchased from a man in the Cuba area on a cold winter's day. Pictured with it at Maries County's 150th anniversary celebration in Vienna in 2005 are Robert Elam of Freeburg (left) and a man named Vernon.

THIS RED Ford (above) is one of the three cars Crum bought from a collector in the Cuba area. It's a 1927 Model T. It won Best in Class once at the Owensville Threshers car show.

THIS 1929 Model A Ford was another of the cars purchased in the Cuba area. It was one of the cars used to reenact a Bonnie and Clyde car chase for the enjoyment of the spectators at the Ozark Extravaganza.

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