

DIABLO A's MODEL OF THE MONTH OCTOBER 2021

Bob Grady and Marty Larsen Restore Tim Lindstrom's 1930 Two Door Deluxe Phaeton



Tim and Sue Lindstrom have been long-standing members of the Diablo A's Model A Club in Concord, California with Sue being a past president.

Thirty-six years ago Tim purchased at auction a 1930 Two Door Deluxe Phaeton. This is a fairly rare automobile as only around 7,000 were produced between 1930 and 1931. Only 6,000 in the United States.

Tim's plan was to restore the car once he retired and had time to work on it. As sometimes happens, fate had other ideas and Tim passed away before he could start restoration. Sue and I were in contact since they moved to Texas and she confided in me that she had no idea what to do with the car as it needed considerable work to even be made road worthy.

I had determined that I was through restoring Model A's after finishing my 1931 truck but decided between my wife and I that it would be a tribute to Tim if I could do this car. So I bought it and had it shipped back to California where it was picked up early one morning by Bob Grady in the parking lot of a large local mall. It had to be winched off the carrier as the grease had solidified in the wheels and glued the spindles to the drums.

A little about my good friend Bob Grady: Bob is one of the most generous people I know. He gives his time freely to members of the Diablo A's to help keep, in his words, "our club members' Model A's on the road". He and his wife Lynn (Past President) are one of the reasons that our club is so robust and active. You may have seen Bob or his hands, as he is prominent in several if not all "How-to" videos made by the Diablo A's and available through several Model A retailers as well as on-line. Bob has built several Model A's for himself and assisted various club members in repairing and restoring their cars. He is currently working on the Phaeton at his house. With this Coronavirus lockdown, Bob has been generously picking up and delivering various parts as we work to restore each one to its previous glory.

Tim's Car

The engine had apparently never been out of the frame. It had been bored probably twice as it was 20 over, the crank shaft had never been turned, and the babbitt looked really good. The engine and frame numbers matched, and the block was in very good shape. As far as we can figure the engine had about 45 thousand miles on it.

The Beginnings

I had the motor rebuilt by Stan Vermeil, a name that might be familiar to some sport fans as his brother Dick Vermeil was a football coach of some renown. His father invented sprint car racing and there is a race run each year in his honor. Stan tells me he has been building engines since he was 14. He's built two for me so far and they are strong runners for sure. He keeps saying he's never going to build another but keeps making exceptions because he loves it. Stan has a small shop in Nevada City, California, a very scenic place with a lot of history.

I had no idea just how different the Deluxe Phaeton was from other Fords of that era. For one thing the inside door handles are different than any others. And don't you just know that we broke one trying to get it off to be chrome plated. But have no fear, there is a 180-A body style club with some very dedicated members, one of whom had the same problem many years ago and sand cast some of those very hard to find (read impossible) door handles in brass. He polishes them, has them chrome plated, and is offering them for sale to other 180-A owners. He really doesn't make any money doing this but takes pride in helping to keep these cars on the road. He also confessed he is a bit obsessive compulsive when it comes to Model A's. And that's good for us!



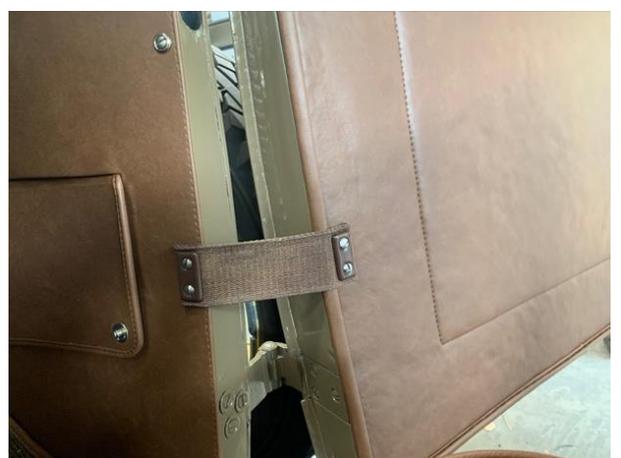
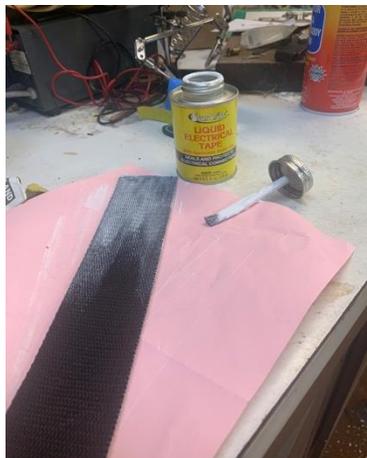
Other hard to find items are the B pillar metal moldings that the door closes against. After 90 years of the door being slammed against these moldings, they are usually in poor repair. You may exchange the word poor with several other adjectives like shot, destroyed, mangled, or beyond repair. Sometimes not even enough remains behind to surmise what they looked like.

Good news again! An individual back East had a stamping machine, a lot of time on his hands, and a 180-A. So he duplicated these parts, for I'm sure little to no profit, and to keep these cars on the road. I now have two brand new B pillar stampings.



Check Straps

After perusing past 180-A newsletters I came across an article on the check straps, which were rubber impregnated cotton, and a procedure to stress leather ones to make them look like the originals. By accident I ran across some woven nylon strapping that I had hanging around and happened to have a can of a liquid rubber used for the electrical industry to further insulate wiring. It's fast drying and easily applied with a brush included in the lid. I coated both sides of the strap material with this liquid rubber, waited 20 minutes, and painted it with a can of leather brown spray paint. I used the same paint on the chrome end pieces after burnishing them with a wire brush. And viola! It looks to me like the originals. Works well also. Of course the judges will be the final arbiters.



Luggage Rack

The luggage rack was another challenge. Fortunately we had a new one to model it after. Our friend and former club member, Charlie McKwean, has a restoration business in the California foothills and as Bob and I were visiting to compare information on the 180-A that he is restoring, he produced a brand new, in the box, luggage rack. I don't know where he got it, but he had it. I managed to take lots of pictures and as a result when it came back from the plater I got in touch with Snyder's and got their remaining stock of acorn nuts and carriage bolts. They no longer carry these parts. Bob was able to wood grain the metal bars across the rack.



Chassis and Paint

The chassis, with exception of the engine and overdrive, was finished thanks to Wayne and Peggy English of the Diablo A's. They donated all four backing plates, drums, and brakes which not only saved us a ton of money but helped to speed the assembly. That money saved has been used to pay for chrome, or upholstery or top material or.....

Bob has painted the whole car in his garage in a makeshift spray booth and it came out looking perfect.



The Upholstery

With the advent of LeBaron Bonney's demise I had to scramble to find an upholsterer familiar with the 180-A. Fortunately I found Classtique auto upholstery in Lindstrom, Minnesota and Mike has been very accommodating, even halting production to make sure the correct wire-mold, which had to be custom ordered, accompanied the order. I shipped my rebuilt seats to him and he reupholstered them and sent them back. The carpets fit wonderfully as well.



The Top

The top was one of the biggest challenges. The top material crumpled when we put it down and just fell apart, as fabrics will do after many years in the same position. The top bows had to be replaced and luckily Snyder's has a guy who supplied some very nice, steam bent wood bows.

The top irons were severely bent out of shape over the years and several days were spent bending and matching with the Ford blueprint for the irons. I can't stress enough how critical it is that this gets done correctly. I had the dubious honor of getting the lower top irons, that are chrome plated, done twice because I failed to bend them prior to the first plating.

Installing the top was an exercise in frustration at first until we were able to figure out how to go about it. First bend and align the top irons, fit the bows, remove the bows, cover the bows with bow drill, and reattach the bows. We drilled pilot holes in the bows and used Phillips head screws the same size as the correct screws to pre thread the holes and make the installation smoother. We fitted the top padding and ground out a little of the wood bows where the pads sit so they won't have an unsightly bulge when the top is on. We also sanded and applied spar varnish to the bows before covering them to make them more weather resistant. We installed some sticks cut to 13 1/2" between the rearmost bow and the body, secured the top irons to the front, tied the top irons together in the middle with zip ties to insure that the bows were fully extended, and put the straps on. Then the top and side padding was attached. The top pads were hand sewn closed and the rear curtain with window installed. After all that, the application of the top was anticlimactic. Here's a tip. After installing the window in the rear curtain, cut the fabric out to make sure you haven't cracked the glass. It is a b___h to reinstall a rear window glass once the rear curtain has been installed. (Here's a tip, use a glass suction cup carrier to hold the glass in place while you reinstall it.) We laid the top on and attached it across the rear and then stretched the daylight out of it as we tacked it across the front. I still can't believe how well it turned out.



Gas tank and Alternator

The carburetor didn't work so well. I wouldn't either if I had ingested as much rust as it did. Turns out that thirty years sitting in a garage has a tendency to cause rust to happen in the gas tank. After cleaning the carburetor two or three times and then replacing it and cleaning the new one, we finally concluded that the tank was the problem, not the carb.

I made this discovery on the initial drive from Bob's to my house. I wanted to show off the Phaeton to friends that were visiting from out of town (yes, we social distanced) so began the drive. I made it about 10 blocks before the gas line became clogged and so I pulled off the main drag onto a side street. Bob had an appointment elsewhere, so I had some time to bond with the car and about ten passersby. Two of them remarked that this was the most beautiful car they had ever seen. That was more than gratifying.

After a while Bob arrived, just as I had managed to get the car started again, so I asked him to follow me. This time I made it nearly home, missing it by only 8 blocks or so. Bob towed me the rest of the way. Over the next couple of days my neighbor and I ran several gallons of fuel through the tank and then out through a coffee filter into the gas can, attempting to flush the rust from the tank. By putting the top down and looking directly into the tank I could see the rust and determined what needed to be done to fix it. I had a screen filter that attaches to the top of the gas on/off valve and sticks up into the tank. I pulled the gas valve out, installed said filter, and put it back together. Being very proud of myself, I invited my son-in-law to drive it around the neighborhood. What could go wrong?

We made it to the stop sign a block away when all stopped because the battery was dead. The ammeter had not been displaying any activity and I mistakenly thought that was because the system worked so well it was just balanced. Wrong again. The alternator was not alternating, and after making that determination the alternator is now winging its way to Ohio where it was born, with the suggestion that it be born again.

The saga continues. No restoration would be complete without the inevitable breakdowns while road testing. I have had my share with other vehicles in the past and this one was no exception. It's a good thing our club don't still have the Nozzle (our club hard luck award), as it would be a permanent fixture at my house.

Next

So now it's just a waiting game. The upholsterer told me I can expect the side curtains sometime in May. He is apparently buried in work, having gleaned some of LeBaron Bonney's customer base. And the overdrive rebuild is in COVID lockdown.

Much Thanks

I think it turned out extremely well for a home restoration. It could not have been accomplished without the help of many people: Snyder's and Brattons; the President of the 180-A club, Ross Milne, who supplied information and drawings; Ron Ehrenhofer for help getting my wiper motor chrome plated and for the beautifully restored spotlight; Don Swafford for help with the paint formulas for the top irons and inside rear window; Mike Francis at Classtique Upholstery , a learning experience for both of us. And of course all my friends in the Diablo A's who offered advice and knowledge. Thank you all and to the ones who I can't remember because of CRS. (Can't remember stuff).







Marty Larsen