

In the summer of 1969, a young United Airlines worker at the Oakland, California, airport decided to serve his country in Vietnam and become a Navy pilot. Shortly before heading to flight training in late June, he stopped by Hayward Dodge to purchase a new Dodge Dart like his cousin owned. His kin opted for the venerable 340 Swinger, but having a bit more need for speed, he wanted the 383 powered GTS. The green on green GTS before you was originally a "sold car" ordered on Valentine's Day and shipped to Hangtown Motors in Placerville, but the deal must have fallen through and it was transferred to Hayward Dodge.



*The cousin's 340 Swinger and the '59 Ford Skyliner*

A deal was struck for the console 4-speed shifted big block GTS that included a stack of cash and a 1959 Ford Skyliner as trade-in. One caveat in the deal was the installation of power steering. Having driven the deft Swinger, he knew power steering was a must with the extra weight on the front end. The dealership installed a new steering box, pump, brackets, and new crank pulley for \$111.13! Not sure what the flat rate is for this installation, but those service technicians earned their keep swapping that steering gear on a big block A-Body!

The new GTS and owner wasted no time in heading east, reporting to Naval Air Station Pensacola for flight school. Not long after arriving in Florida the GTS was involved in a minor



*GTS with USS Wasp in background in Pensacola, FL*

altercation that required the left rear quarter to undergo a little body work and a repaint. The green hue that was applied never matched the rest of the car from day one, but it would have to do. After training was complete, the green Dart once again headed across the country to Naval Air Station Whidbey Island, in Oak Harbor, Washington. The GTS would have to wait through two tours in Vietnam as the owner became an A-6 Intruder bombardier/navigator with Atkron

196 attack squadron. After completing his service to his country in 1973, the GTS was piloted back home to the California Bay area. Several stops were made along the route, including one in Southern Oregon. He liked the area so much both he and his A-6 pilot both purchased land with the thought of moving to the area at some point. The request for transfer with United Airlines from Oakland to the Medford airport finally paid off in 1979, and the Dart moved his



*GTS warming on a cold Washington morning. Note black CA plates.*

family to the wooded property purchased outside of Rogue River, Oregon. The GTS performed the daily duties of transportation while raising a family, racking up 78,000 miles until it was parked in 1999. The engine was removed to be used in an unrealized project, and the car was covered with a

tarp for safe keeping. Though not normally a good idea, these must have been military grade tarps that did an amazingly job of keeping the GTS from rot and decay.

In the summer of 2005 the adult son of a neighbor spotted the resting Dart and queried about its disposition. He was looking for a father/step-son project car to rebuild, and a deal was struck. Gathering the engine and a few removed parts, the GTS was trailered to a new home with the dreams of a complete restoration. The disassembly process quickly ensued, leaving the Dart body not much more than a rolling shell. Everything was bagged, tagged, and neatly boxed. Inside the glove box and console was a treasure trove of service receipts, old registrations from California and Washington, the original window sticker, the purchase order from Hayward Dodge (documenting the added power steering), the dealer prep card, and even the business card from the sales manager who sold the car. A pristine broadcast sheet found taped to the glove box liner completes the amazing provenance of this GTS.



The interior was in sad shape, so a new headliner, black carpet set, and Legendary seat covers in the original Frost Green were ordered. Knowing the Dart needed to be done correctly, they contacted local MoPar aficionado Todd Hoffman, owner of Hoffman's Winners Circle, Inc., for some technical support and direction. Eager to check out this emerald in the rough, an appointment was set to meet the owners and assess the needs of the GTS. Surveying the condition of the doors and hood, it was quickly apparent that the original paint had survived incredibly well, and a recommendation was made to not pursue painting the Dart. The upper door frame paint had worn to the primer, and the dash frame had relented the textured lacquer many years ago, but the external paint was still shiny. Todd provided paint codes and sources for the materials needed, but suggested putting the car back together with a minimal amount of restoration. The project stalled, and in 2013 an unfortunate divorce forced the sale

of the disassembled GTS. Fortunately, Todd had kept close contact with the father/step-son team and he was contacted to purchase the Dart.

After several hours of looking through boxes, checking part condition, and cataloging all of the critical components, Todd concluded that this was a project worth owning. Besides, why not own a *third green GTS*! Not a favorite or even preferred color, just fate folks! The boxes of parts, engine, bumpers, grille, seats, transmission, doors, fenders, and hood were loaded into an enclosed utility trailer that would serve as a storage unit for the next few years. The rolling body with four original wheels and one original tire was transported to the Hoffman stable.

The condition of the original paint and lack of any body rot or even blisters caused Todd to forgo the normal restoration, even though the gutted body was a prime candidate for the paint shop. The exterior was thoroughly washed and cleaned with a clay bar, then buffed with a foam pad to renew the luster of the original F5 Limelight Metallic paint. A paintless dent removal technician spent 5 hours finessing the dings and minor creases from the original sheet metal. The results confirmed Todd's suspicion that the GTS was too nice to succumb to a



repaint. A painted car is a painted car, is a painted car. Original happens only once, and cannot be reproduced. Once the body panels were installed and aligned, a new vinyl top was glued in place and secured by the original windshield and tinted back glass. The external bright work was cleaned and installed with the original hardware, leaving minor imperfections with the patina of an original condition car. The driver side mirror and tail light bezels were so pitted they would be distracting, so they were replaced. The grille and trunk finish panel were stripped and new paint applied in the GTS pattern, leaving the aluminum in aged condition. A set of new window felts was installed, but all other window and door gaskets and seals are original.

Many interior components needed to be restored or replaced, so the decision was made to make the GTS look new on the inside. The upper and lower door frame areas were masked to the factory line and sprayed in PPG F3 Frost Green. New seat covers were installed over restored frames and seat tracks, and the headrest bands received new chrome strips and a good cleaning. The original door panels and arm rest pads were cleaned and retained with new window cranks and arm rest bezels. The 4-speed console and GT Sport emblems were in very good condition, requiring only a thorough cleaning. The dash frame was stripped



and painted in the textured flat hue of olive drab, and a new dash pad was installed. All of the dash bezel plastic was rechromed and detailed to look as original, encompassing the Dart thumbwheel AM radio and fully functional gauges. A new green headliner, package tray, and black carpet finish the cabin.

The original, matching numbers engine had received a previous rebuild, but it was torn down for inspection and treated to new parts throughout. New 10:1 compression pistons fill the fresh .030" oversize bores, the crank was turned .010" under and balanced, and the heads were treated to bronze valve guides, stainless exhaust valves, and hardened seats to run on unleaded fuel. A dual roller timing set spins the Mopar Performance restoration bumpstick ground to stock HP specifications. Todd's dad provided an NOS, GTS specific dual point



distributor to pass the spark through date coded plug wires to the Champion J-11Y plugs. New KV rubber fuel lines replaced the brittle originals, and fuel flows through a date coded filter to the impeccably restored Carter

4615S AVS carburetor. The engine retains its original alternator, power steering pump assembly, exhaust manifolds, cooling fan, air cleaner, and chrome valve covers. Glen-ray

Radiator provided a fresh "065" radiator to keep the big block cool, and a reproduction battery is held in place by the original retaining strap.

Gleaming like a jewel in a pig's snout, the fully detailed engine assembly was installed into an engine bay showing its age, with the goal to retain the original appearance of as much of the car as possible. Areas of light surface rust, missing paint, dents, and extra holes would be part of the story of this Dart's survival.

A new clutch and pressure plate assembly transmit the 383's torque through the original transmission to the 3.23:1 Sure-Grip 8 3/4" rear axle. All four corners received new organic brake lining, the drums were turned, bearings packed, and original wheel cylinders were rebuilt. The original master cylinder was also rebuilt with all new internal components. Todd had a set of Firestone redlines waiting in the shop for another GTS, so they were stretched on the original GTS wheels and the stainless dog dish red line caps finish the look.



*Original owner and the Dart GTS re-unite!*

After a brief period of engine break-in and mechanical shake down, Todd proceeded to hunt down the original owner of the GTS using the address from the title. Fortunately, he had not moved far and Todd was able to get the complete history of the GTS and its travels across and around the US. The original owner was thrilled to know the Dart was back on the road again, and even presented Todd with the original California black plates worn when new. An appointment was arranged to bring the two back together again, and he was able to drive the GTS he bought new 47 years ago. Someday this Dart may receive new paint and restored suspension components, but for now it can be driven and enjoyed with a documented history and the paint it was born with.