

THE '34 MERCEDES-BENZ 500K SPECIAL ROADSTER STORY

By Chuck Maddux

Al Bohr purchased one of the first kits offered by Heritage Motors. They built 'turn-key' cars for Budget Rentals in LA & Miami. In June 1989 he began the arduous task of building it. Al purchased a 1975 Camero as the donor car, salvaged the front & rear-end, engine, transmission and other assorted parts as required by the "Manual".

During the year he spent over 800 hours in his Salem, Oregon one car garage assembling, cussing, acquiring needed additional parts, cussing some more, trying to cope with the "Manual", finally finishing the car in June 1990. There were many calls to Heritage Motors, trying to come to terms with the "Manual". Another 100 hours of his time was spent on refinements. As you know, kit cars are never 'done'. Al's first trip was to drive the car to California in September 1990 for the



NCKCC San Leandro Show. Since the car had been designed for rental car use, the frame was exceptionally heavy duty, with a steel cage all around the passenger compartment, including the windshield. Because of this the finished car weighs almost the same as the Camero and handles really well. By his own admission, Al is electrical wiring challenged, so the wiring harness under the dash remains a mystery to be solved or forgotten. Time will tell.

After I purchased the car from Al, a major obstacle was to get it smogged and registered in California. Fate was on my side, because the Oregon title described it as a 1934 Mercedes replica. When I received the California title I was delighted it showed 1934 Mercedes Benz.



The first change I made was to put Coker radial wide white walls all around, which really added to the overall look and driving comfort. The really big project came when, due to age, many of the engine gaskets began to leak various fluids. After much soul searching I decide to install a new 350 Chevy engine, 4-speed R700 automatic transmission, Eddlebrock computerized fuel injection and an after market, Vintage Air, air conditioner. The original was really bad, as it only cooled when the car wasn't moving. The aluminum gas tank had only a 12-gallon

capacity, so during the engine swap I found a welder able to work on aluminum. He added a 2-inch insert, which made the capacity about 19 gallons. The installation of the larger transmission required the shortening of the drive shaft, which unfortunately eliminated the cruise control. The mileage is 17 to 18 mpg and the new engine runs like dream. The transmission had to be replaced during a club outing in 2007. Other than a few leaks the replacement has worked very nicely; cruising 65 at 1400 RPM is great. Suzanne & I have enjoyed our various trips including a break-in drive to visit Al & Rhoda in Oregon City. That trip included a drive down the Oregon coast with visits to most of the Light Houses along the way. We have also enjoyed other long road trips. This car is such a joy that I don't expect to be looking for another toy.

I'm most happy that Al decided to both build and sell his first kit car and he is already active on other exciting automotive projects.

About the owner, Chuck Maddux and NCKCC

Some history about me and the club; I joined NCKCC shortly after Paul and his group founded the club in 1983. There was a story of it's beginning in the Contra Costa Times. I didn't have a kit, but did purchase one thru Paul. It was a Liberty Motors '29 Mercedes SSK replica for a VW chassis. The kit languished in my garage for ten years when I was able to convince Bill Landers to build the car. Since I had acquired all the components and begged, pleaded and promised to pay all bills promptly. He did a great job, but unfortunately it was not a well designed kit for a tall person. I kept it for some years and eventually found a small person here in Benicia who loved the car, whereupon a deal was struck. During this time I had become acquainted with Al Bohr and had admired his '34 500K Mercedes. I jokingly had told him that when I sold my 1st toy I would buy his car. Then, when I sold my car I reminded him of my offer. Fortunately he had decided to build a Fino kit, so I made him an offer he couldn't refuse and the car became mine in 1998.