

This is the story of my GT Hawk, which left my ownership in late March of this year... It was part of this household from Feb 2000 - Mar 2021.

In the late 1990's, a few members of the Potomac Chapter had garnered an interest in doing a Tour of Route 66, which extends from Chicago to Los Angeles. Donna and I were all for going on this trip of a lifetime, with the one proviso, that we do it in a genuine Studebaker. At that time, all we had was our 1970 Avanti II, which was being renovated at the time.

Early in the year 2000, the search was on for a viable car and although much energy and cost had been put into the Avanti, it wasn't ready for prime time. Further, I was definitely not enthusiastic about putting a lot of time and effort into preparing another car. I went onto Ebay and before long, found a "Prize Winning" 64 GT Hawk, in the Carolinas. The SDC Forum was always a good source of advise and help, but when I asked about the car, no one knew the owner. When I asked if anyone could look at it for me, no one volunteered. Those were the early days of Ebay and you soon learned that veracity in selling was a bit of a crap shoot. So the owner and I had some exchanges over email and I decided to go for it. On the Friday before the York Swap meet in February 2000, the seller delivered the car to my driveway, in a continuous light rain that had been falling for a few days. The seller and I had both, planned on attending the York Meet, so we took care of business and he left. Donna and I looked the car over in the driveway and left it there while we, also went to York, PA. for the weekend.

On the following Sunday afternoon we arrived back home and thought it was a good time to pull the Hawk into the garage and check it over. It did look good sitting there bathed in the "shiny" coat afforded by the rain, and I was anxious to see what we had. It started right up and I was pleased to see it had great oil pressure. Into gear, up the driveway and into the left bay of the garage. Still being wet, it was left to dry out for a while before getting back to it. I was amazed at the interior, as all the door and side panels were new, as was the windshield and headliner. All the stainless trim and brightwork was like new. The carpets needed a bit of help, but don't they all. The seats were not original and was one of the facets that made this car attractive. They came out of a mid 90's Chrysler, with an electric drivers seat, very cushy and reeked of making a great cruising car. It even had cup holders in the fold down arm rests.

Monday went drearily by, but on Tuesday the sun came out and it warmed up a bit, so the garage door was left open and the inspection ensued. I got a bit curious when the sunlight reflected oddly on the rear of the front fender. It seemed there were more fender contours than I've seen on other Hawks. This was in the form of a slightly irregular surface, usually produced when "Bondo" was poorly finished. Yes, there I was, looking at the old, 'backyard' fender repair and on both sides I noticed now, as areas were compared. Well not to be unexpected, I thought and it could have been worse, but we'll see. This was supposed to be a "prize Winning" car, but 'hmmmm...' there were no trophies included with the sale.

I had noticed the door had an odd feel to it as it was closing. There would be a resistance that increased as it swung toward the jamb and had to actually be forced to complete the arc and engage the latch. This did not bode well, as I have never encountered anything like it before. That in itself encouraged a more thorough inspection. Looking closer, I see another field of irregular Bondo on the lower eight inches of the door itself. 'Puzzling' I noted, so I went around to the passenger side and there was a mirror image of the Bondo there also. So the doors and fenders have this issue. Anything else?

Well, to proverbially make the long story short, every panel on the outside of the car had an issue. the fenders, the doors, the quarter panels, the trunk lid, the hood.... and the roof. The car was newly painted with a shade that closely matched like the Astra White that Studebaker used that year. If you didn't know, the color white can be used to hide many a blemish, if you don't look closely. Years later, I joked that if I painted all the bad spots Black, the car would have looked like a Holstein cow.

So what to do now except look for all of the misrepresented features of the car. The door swing was intriguing, which encouraged me to lift the carpets on the drivers side. That revealed a very poor job of riveted sheet tin over a gaping hole that extended from the firewall to half way under the drivers seat and 3-4 inches up the transmission tunnel. There was nothing but rust below the a-pillar and when it was all finally cleaned off, there was only air below the lower hinge on the door pillar. The body brace did not exist, nor did the first 12" of the sub floor box and that was only the drivers side. So the A-pillar had no support, causing the door to sag. The passenger side had a similar situation, but not nearly as serious. The rear body braces were compromised, The rocker panels were Swiss cheese, the inner floor supports were pretty bad and the rear quarter panels had large holes at the door lock pillar, hidden of course by patch panels. In total, both front fenders, lower edge of both doors, both quarter panels and the trunk all had patch panels riveted *////over///* the rust perforations. The sad thing was that after seeing how all this was done, it would have been less work to repair the rust than to install those patches over it and slather Bondo all over everything. The roof had filled in dents as well as the trunk. What a mess, but it looked ok from 20 feet.

You could imagine the frame of mind, this put me in. I couldn't look at the car for a few weeks after finding all this. In reality, I couldn't have sold the car the following day, for half of what was paid for it.

Since it was likely that very few of the claims about this car were true I had a nagging suspicion about the "rebuilt engine", with the R1 cam. Although this aspect was not advertised on the Ebay ad, I found an old flyer in the glovebox that touted all the virtues of this car by the fellow who owned it, before the guy I bought it from. He lived in Wisconsin and I emailed him for information on the car.

The engine would start fine and had a slight lope, which I attributed to the R1 cam, etc. The oil pressure was fantastic at 70psi cold and no lower than 50 warmed up. At one point, I was running the engine and checking things out, leaning over the fender, when a splash of water hit my cheek. The small stream was coming from the water pump flange, so that made me remove the radiator cap to relieve the pressure at that point. When the cap was removed, the water was very dirty, which while being further disappointing, was not totally unexpected.

I drained the radiator and found a lot of critter crap and acorns inside. The only thing I could do was shake my head in amazement. After briefly cleaning out the radiator and refilling with plain water, started it again and went on with the inspection. The engine Lope was just a tad irregular and that led to a compression test, which told me that # 4 cylinder had an issue. It was decided to pull the heads to see what the issue was and after a couple hours found out that the lumpy cam lope was really caused by a bad exhaust valve in #4. You could actually move the valve sideways almost a quarter inch. Looking at the other valves, it was evident that the rebuild on the engine, did not include the heads. However, I was totally floored when getting back and leaning over the fender to see that the cylinders walls still had the break-in cross hatch lines from the hone and .010 oversize pistons installed. So there was finally some good news here. I sent the heads out to a shop for rebuild and pulled off the oil pan and water manifold to see what was there.

The inside of the block was as pristine as could be possible. Nothing out of sorts, all very detailed and professional which gave me some encouragement.

As you may guess, there were a lot of surprises on this car. Not to mention that to re-gasket the front of the engine and oil pan correctly, everything had to come apart, including the timing gear cover. I used the proper tool to pull the crank gear off and put my hand under the hub as it cleared the end of the crank, so as to catch the woodruff key... nothing dropped into my hand. I looked around on the floor to see if it escaped somehow and nothing. There was NO woodruff key holding the crank gear in place, only the interference fit on the crank nose. This was totally unacceptable. It was obvious that the person who put the car together did not have a clue as to what they were doing. Perhaps that was the reason that the entire chassis, which included from the engine block and below and from front bumper bracket to rear was sprayed in black POR-15..... even the brake rotors, hoses and anything in the way. This was done while the body was off in a shop getting "restored" with patch panels.

When the 2nd previous owner replied to my email, he sent pictures of the car when he sold it to my Ebay seller. It showed the chassis separated from the body, and of course the pictures are too fuzzy to see any detail. So the previous owner in Carolina had the car for a couple years and then unloaded it on me.

On the front disk brakes, the passenger side disk brake had a deep groove dug into the outside of right rotor. The damage was caused by the brake pad guide plate which was installed incorrectly. Pressing on the brake pedal forced this plate into the rotor along with the brake pad. There was also some damage on the underside of the valance on the passenger side, which to me indicated that the car had gone into the weeds at some point and likely because that right brake lost its effectiveness due to the incorrect assembly. Fortunately, I had another disk brake system on the shelf from my Avanti which was upgraded (?) to Turner brakes. Now we add the valance to the repair list.

I could go on, but it would be easier to say the car needed everything done over.

So, as the story goes, the car went into the garage for inspection and stayed there 8 years getting renovated. Almost every aspect of this car had to be looked at.

Along around late 2001, I realized the GT Hawk was not going to make it for the Route 66 trip, so we purchased, yet another car for that adventure.

After returning from the tour in May of 2003, my attention was mostly aimed at building a kitchen extension on our house. This could be viewed as 'payback' for my obsession with the cars, so the GT Hawk stayed in repose for a year and a half, while that project was completed. There's another back story to this that can be told later.

In 2005, work again picked up on the Hawk. Every body panel that had a patch was repaired with new metal, The drivers side sub floor box and all the body braces were replaced, the passenger side box was repaired. While replacing the rear leaf spring bushings, found a spot on the frame bottom plate that had to have a section installed. The garage was tented in late 2006 and all the removable body parts were sprayed off the car, then the body shell was done. New front suspension bushings, tires, bumpers and carpets and the car went to the International in Lancaster in 2008.

Over the following years, it went on local tours with the Chapter and things were taken care of and upgraded little by little. Electronic ignition, larger Radiator, A/C work, etc. I modified the fan shroud so it could be opened like a clam and things worked on, easily from the top. This came in handy when the A/C pulley system was changed to a Vintage air setup, as the factory crank

pulley for A/C was no longer available. Also installing a 6 bladed fan with viscous drive was necessary.

The rear leaf springs were given an added leaf to raise the rear a bit. New front end bushings again in 2015. So now we're reaching the end of the story in 2016 when I could no longer get under the car easily, but still worked to keep it maintained. In October of 2018, we decided to move on downsizing and started thinning out the house. The garage was mainly my responsibility and along with listing all the parts I had, it was decided to put the GT Hawk up for sale.

The car was advertised on its own webpage and was an adjunct to selling all the parts that were accumulated over the years. The parts steadily went out the door but there was no immediate action on the Hawk.

It was in February of 2021, when I received an email from a gentleman in France about the car. We discussed my history with the car and what took place when I bought it. I created a web page for him to view with all the repair pictures and with that transparency, he decided to purchase the car. It left our house for the Port of New York on March 29 and was containerized for the trip to France. On May 19 it left New York and is on the water as I write this, destined for Le Havre France on Jun 9. The purchaser is an avid Studebaker fan and a car restoration enthusiast in his own right. It wasn't long after he purchased my car that he also purchased an Avanti on the west coast. It is also in transit right now.

With the sale of the GT Hawk, I was divorcing myself from any possibility of ever working under another Studebaker. So, in the spirit of "Give more than you promise", the trunk was filled to the brim with extra parts I had, including a set of heads, water pumps, distributors, a complete Dunlop disk brake assembly, special tools, electric fuel pumps, many boxes of miscellaneous parts for him and a side order of parts for his friends. 19 boxes in total. A car cover, shop manuals.. a brand new space saver spare , etc. So he has a good start.

One of the unexpected requirements in the logistics of transporting the car to France, was that I had to create a manual of operations. Every old car has its idiosyncrasies and ways to do things, so all these items had to be documented in a Manual, in both English and French, with quick reference cards alike hung around the cabin. What do do , what not to do, etc. " turn the battery off during long periods of storage", etc.

In the link below, the day of departure is documented for the Buyer. There are pictures and movies of the last days in the USA.

<https://studebaker-info.org/2488/Lastday/2488depart.html>