

'48 Fleetmaster has new life as a street rod

By Keith Kurtz

I purchased my favorite car eight years ago and I've been working on it ever since.

It's a 1948 Chevy Fleetmaster, which is a deluxe version of the '48 Chevy.

I like it because it's a four-door and roomy, so I can take my wife and kids and go for the weekend to a car show.

It has a normal 350 transmission with a 327 VB motor, which makes it a street rod.

A classic car is restored right back to the original condition, where this isn't.

It's not really a race car, but it goes pretty fast.

I upgraded the engine because when I went out with the guys, they all left me in the dust and that was no fun.

I also like the chopped top, which is where, on this particular car, four inches were taken of the top and lowered down.

It sort of gives you tunnel vision when you're in the car, but it gives the outside that real sleek, streamlined look.

When I bought the Chevy at a car show here in town, the body work was already done.

I'm not really a body man, but I can do all of the mechanical work myself.

Since I've bought it, I've changed the motor and done a lot of interior work; it has an all-cloth interior.

It also has power seats and I'm working on power windows.

I've done a lot of drive-train work, which is what makes the car go.

I've updated some parts to a late-model car. For example, this one has a '72 Nova subframe and rear end.

There's always something new coming out.

You can buy fiberglass bodies and just rebuild the whole thing—right from the ground up if you want, depending on how much money you want to spend.

I also want to put air conditioning in the car; it's a money pit.

I met a guy who wanted to trade me once.

He had a brand new Pontiac Trans Am and said he would trade me even up.

He paid \$22-\$23,000 for his car, but mine stays valued and the car he's driving goes down in value.

It's for sale right now, but I'm not that anxious to sell it.

Now that I've built a street rod, I don't know if I'd buy another one or go with something different, like a late-model car, and pro-street it.

I've always been interested in cars and have played with them since I was in high school.

It's something I really like to do, going out to the garage and putting around — every man should try it.

I put anywhere from 2,000–3,000 miles on the car a year. I drive it to golf and car shows as often as I can.

I've gotten a few ribbons and things, but no big trophies.

The odds of getting any type of award are slim unless there's something really outstanding about your car, which is usually a bright-colored paint job that people would notice.

At the fairgrounds, for instance, there are 2,400 cars, and that's a lot of cars for them to say that yours is the nicest.

At first, my car was a difficult model to find, but when you go to more shows, you see a lot more of them.

The unique thing about mine is that you don't see a lot of four-doors in the street-rod version; you see a lot of two-doors.

If I sell it, I'll miss it and the kids will miss it because they really enjoy it.

I'm not sure if they like going to the car show or if they just like going to the motel and swimming in the pool, but they do like the car.

—As told to Tara Marion

Keith Kurtz and his family live in Portage. He drives a 1996 Jeep Grand Cherokee and works as the service manager for Allied Mechanical Services Inc.