

# With this '33 coupe, owner gave himself the 'the Willys'

By Mike Polderman

My favorite car is a 1933 Willys coupe that I sold a few months ago.

The buyer wanted a car like mine his entire life and he wanted it so badly, he made me an offer I couldn't refuse.

At an annual car show, he saw it, wanted it and made me the offer. I finally let him have it and he took it home.

The Willys is a rare car and very difficult to find. It was produced in limited number from 1933 to 1942-43 and, as a result, it is difficult to find parts for.

I bought the Willys as a car kit that was just a plastic body, so then you have to build the interior for the car.

I had to scout all over the country to find headlights for the Willys car, as they were particular only to it.

I bought the body in Pennsylvania, the frame in New York and I bought the engine out of an old pickup truck I found locally, which I rebuilt and put in the car.

I found parts all over the country and put them together. It was more difficult to do that, but I wanted to build the car a certain way. Rather than just buying what fit, I wanted a lot of things that were unique to the Willys car.

The engine was a 454 bored 60-thousandths over. It also had a tunnel-fork manifold, four-barrel carburetor and really wide tires. It was a pro-street car.

The radiator had to have an extra-large capacity, which took a long time to find, and I finally had it custom-made.

My wife, Wendy, and I made the interior. I made up my own carpeting, she made the head liner, we made the door panels and built everything from the ground up. I took the seats out of a 1965 Mustang for the car.

Although the Willys was probably green in 1933, I've always been partial to black, which is the color I painted it.

My car had a power trunk lid, power windows and power door locks.

It also had dual dome lights and a radio, but I never installed a heater or air conditioner. You don't need heat because you don't drive it in the winter, and in the summer, you're not in the car long enough to need air conditioning.

I drove it to a lot of events, like the Gilmore Car Museum, the Vicksburg Car Show and Martin Dragway, and I won first place at all three events. I won four or five trophies with the car.

I used to race at Martin Dragway and I thought I was pretty good at it, so I wanted to race the Willys, but I never did; my wife isn't too keen on drag racing.

Building cars has always been a hobby of mine and I've been playing around with cars since I was old enough to crawl up into them.

I've had 20 or 30 cars over the past 15 years, but the Willys was the third car that I built. It was worth somewhere around \$22,000.

I'm not 100 percent sure of what I'll build next and I'm just now getting my money together from the sale of the Willys. I'll travel to national events and look around.

I've had an interest in the Willys since I was a child. I watched them at the drag races all the time.

I worked on my car for about three years, but I've had a lifelong love of the Willys.

**—As told to Tara Marion**

**Mike Polderman lives in Schoolcraft and owns Polderman Excavating. He drives a 1996 Dodge truck.**