

The Little Eagle That Could

by Brad Busque

Pictures by Joe and Peggy Howard



We had recently moved to Simsbury, CT, from West Hartford, CT. We now had enough room to keep the Ambassador and Eagle at home. Over the winter I had stripped the chrome off the Ambassador so it could be repainted back to the original Antique Red. The chrome came off in a half day with Sandy and I working on the project, carefully labeling each item, and attaching Baggies of clips, screws and fasteners to the item. Now here it was April, the car had sat the two weeks specified by the paint shop, and it was time to start putting the chrome back

on the old girl. I backed the Ambassador into the driveway and started working on reattaching the items I had removed. I figured I would start from the front end and work my way back after I got both the bumpers back on. As I was working on the car a blue GTO pulled into the driveway. A guy I had never seen before climbed out of the car and introduced himself. His name was Steve Reed and he was Secretary for the Valley Classic Cruisers, a local car club. He had noticed the Rambler from the street and pulled in to get a closer look. He left a card and an entry form for a show that the club was hosting in town in the middle of July.

As June approached I stopped by at Steve's to get more info about the show. He was happy for the interest and said he would push to get the AMCs moved out of independents and into their own class if I spread the word about the show to the 4 Seasons (the local AMCRC chapter). They never actually had Ramblers attend the show before, and wanted to get some in. I sent Brian the info, and thus it was published in the Ramblings. Of course my wife wanted to enter her Eagle in the show, and asked if it would be allowed since it was not yet 25 years old. The answer was yes, please bring it!

The day of the show was hot, but not humid with the temperature around 88 degrees. When we arrived there were lots of cars on the show field. We found Steve had more than kept his word and added two AMC classes to the show instead of the one promised, AMC 58-79 and AMC Muscle. It was easy, my car was in the AMC class. The Eagle however was not covered by the AMC years, and definitely not muscle. Turns out the Eagle qualified for the "Special Interest" class.

Special Interest consisted of any car not yet considered an antique. The class consisted of Dodge Vipers, late model Corvettes, Indy Pace Car replica Cameros, Saleen Mustangs, Cobra Mustangs and very many modified Honda's, Toyota's, and Mazda's, aka Ricers. The cars



in this class in many cases where worth more than 20 times the Eagle. Looked like, for the first time in its car show career, the Eagle would be leaving without a trophy. When we latter learned that only 1 trophy per category would be awarded, it seemed the Eagle's fate was sealed.

4 Season members Joe and Peggy Howard brought their pristine Marlin from NH, and Jay Flynn brought his beautiful 65 American Wagon from Torrington CT. In addition there were two AMX's present, a blue one and gold one. It was a peer judge show and we had a good time going out, looking at, and voting for our favorite cars. The Howard's Marlin had a crowd around it all day. I'm not sure if it's the color, the pristine condition, or the fact it's a Marlin, but that car can really attract a crowd. Who knows, maybe it's a combination of all 3. When award time arrived we sat back and listened to the classes and winners. We were positioned well, as winning cars

had to drive by us after getting their trophies. The Howard's Marlin took the AMC class, The AMC muscle class was taken by the blue AMX.

From talking to the owner we learned the car had not been washed in over 17 years. The previous owner had started the tradition, and the new owner was following in his footsteps, always keeping the car dry so nothing more than a dusting was required. This wasn't a trailer queen, but a car that had been driven to the meet. When it came to the "Special Interest" class we were shocked to here the winners were Sandy and Kassie Busque and their 1987 AMC Eagle!



Well to say there were a few upset Viper, Corvette and Saleen owners would

be an understatement. How would you feel if your 60,000 some odd dollar car had just been beat by a car that had sold two years ago for less than \$2500? It was a peer judge meet, with over 350 cars entered, and believe me, AMC was in the minority among the makes represented. I was amazed, as were the other 4 Season members that the majority of the group present had voted for the Eagle. Maybe AMCs are finally getting the recognition they deserve, maybe the car people who voted realized that an 1987 Eagle with 100,000 miles in great



condition is a bit more special than a Viper or Cobra in show room condition with less then 5K showing. I guess we will never know for sure, but it was an amazing AMC moment. So AMC owners, get your cars out, get them to cruise nights, get them to shows, and get them to the AMCRC National, who knows what your little AMC has in store for you?