

72 Olds Cutlass



In 1977 as a freshman at Texas Tech I did not own a car. My friend Terry Read and I use to discuss our favorite cars. We both liked the 1970 -72 Cutlass Supreme. It was from this date that I developed and interest in this vehicle. Here is the finished product after months and months of work.



I saw the car in the paper one Sunday afternoon. The thing that caught my eye was the fact that the car had a four speed transmission. I bought the car for \$1,600.00. My brother Dave went with me to pick it up. The first thing I did after pulling away was to put the top down. The feeling I got as I drove down LBJ Freeway that spring afternoon was awesome. I liked to keep the windows up in the early spring while running the heater. It worked great. I wished for power windows, one option that is a must for convertibles.



I bought the Cutlass Convertible in April of 1984. My friend Mark got a chance to drive the car around the block. He was hooked and had to have one. Here he is pictured sitting on his 72 Cutlass. Some of our friends though we shared one car. They couldn't believe we both had orange convertibles. My car came equipped with bald tires, Keystone mag wheels and chrome exhaust extensions. These items would soon be history. The air conditioner compressor had been removed and placed in the trunk. My goal was to put the car back in original condition. But when it came time to re-paint the car, I decided that the orange color had to go.



My Cutlass had two rare factory options for the convertible. The car had a Muncie 4 speed transmission with a floor mounted shifter. The seating is a 60/40 bench seat with a fold down arm rest. These two combinations are very rare. The original transmission had a Hurst shift lever and round knob. In ignorance I replaced it with the Hurst "T" handled shift knob. The shifter can be seen just below the air conditioning controls. The original shift lever had a round black knob. When the restoration was begun the original shift knob was reinstalled. The car also had a four spoke sport steering wheel.



This photo shows the restoration in process. All the chrome has been removed.. There were many dings that had to be filled. I spent every weekend working over at my parents sanding and filling dents. Note the poor condition of the convertible top.



The first coats of primer have been applied. I had to hunt the junk yards for the correct SS III wheels. This particular model wheel had a bolt on center hub that was an excellent design for keeping the caps on the wheels. Chrome inserts and wheel rings finished off the wheels. I shelled out the bucks for a set of BF Goodrich 60 series T/A radials.



There was a great deal of extra work involved in changing the color. The inside of the fenders, hood bottom, trunk lid bottom, doors, and door jambs had to be sanded and primed. I'm sure my parents must have had second thoughts when I wheeled this wreck out of the garage.

I bought all new weather-stripping for the doors and windows. One of the items that I was excited to find was replacement rubber for the rear windows. These windows had a weather strip that sealed it to the main windows. Convertibles are noisy and fresh weather stripping was a must. These items were bought through a company called "Year One" that specialized in Oldsmobile parts



This photo shows the color change process. The doors have been removed. The hood and trunk also. Note too that the back seat has been removed to allow for the repainting of the well area. Each primer coat was wet sanded by hand with 400 grit wet sand paper. Small imperfections in the panels was filled with a special compound.



While we let this coat of red cure , we removed the wheels. The factory wheels were painted to match the car. The original top was worn out and needed to be replaced. A new top was planned. One of the good things about the Cutlass Convertible was that the top was designed for a glass rear window. The plastic windows are a pain and always crack or yellow. The rear glass made it easy to see out the back. I installed a trailer hitch and an air adjustable shock system for towing.



After putting 2 coats of primer, 5 coats of red and 4 coats of clear, we pushed her out of the garage and began wet sanded for the last time. Here my friend Scott uses a buffer to reveal the final product. After the work was completed I drove to the corner gas station to fill up. Both attendants came out to admire my car. It was a great compliment for months of work.

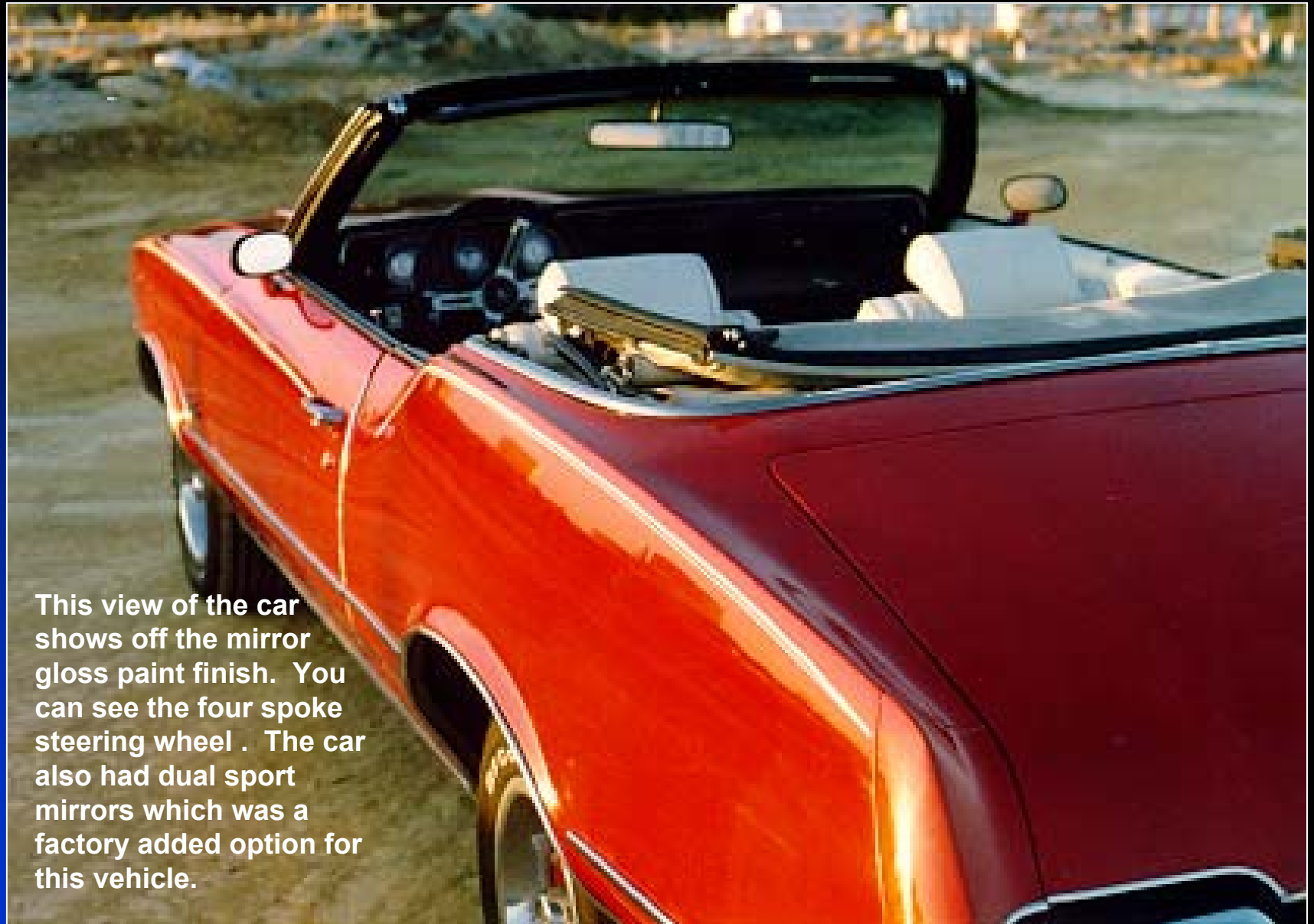
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This is side view of the finished product. The 1972 Cutlass model had a distinctive six panel tail light.. The side of the car was finished off at the factory with a thin line body side molding. The dealer installed moldings were larger and took away from the lines of the car. The dual exhaust system has been rebuilt and was purposely left understated. The 350 CID engine and 4 barrel carburetor produced a low rumble that said, “ I’m a muscle car”



The 72 Cutlass came with lots of options. The options that stood out on this car were the sport four spoke steering wheel, the 350 CID engine, 4 Barrel Carburetor, dual sport remote mirrors, power top, SSIII wheels, muncie 4 speed with hurst shifter and tilt away steering Other options available on other 72's were power seats, power windows, power door locks, 8tract tape, bucket seats and center console. I have seen one other 4speed 72 convertible and it had buckets and a console. Of the 72's this one was one of the best.



This view of the car shows off the mirror gloss paint finish. You can see the four spoke steering wheel . The car also had dual sport mirrors which was a factory added option for this vehicle.



The paint job cost me approximately \$600.00 for labor and materials. The new top was about \$750.00 and included a glass window, five year vinyl, replacement pads, top well and landau cover. I had a special parking place at my apartment complex. I always tried to park close to the curb to avoid getting dinged. After all that hard work I kept the car covered. My Honda Accord at the right protected the other side of the car.

2/15/2006



One Sunday afternoon while I was living in Dallas, my friends and I hooked up my 81 Ski Nautique and drove out to Lake Ray Hubbard. It was October of 1986 and we must of looked pretty cool driving out to the lake on that sunny afternoon. You can see the addition of the new vinyl landau cover that is used to protect the top. This photo was one of the few I took showing the ultimate lake rig. It never failed to turn heads at the boat ramp.

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This photo shows my 1972 cutlass in front of a private ski lake called Frame Switch in Huto Texas. In this picture the boat seems to dwarf the car but in reality the angle of the trailer seems to distort the size of the boat. Looking back on it today, I can't believe I used this classic car to pull that boat.



My friend Allen backs the Ski Nautique down the ramp at Lake Austin. Launching the boat was always easy with the top down. Unfortunately I learned the hard way that boat ramps and clutches are a bad mix for those who are unfamiliar. Once, after returning to the boat ramp the car wouldn't start. We had to push start the car with the trailer attached.