

# RESTORATION OF A 1936 FORD CABRIOLET

Submitted by Harry Goebel



The car was purchased in November 1988 from Saul Gonzales who owned the car for 23 years. The original owner, a man by the name of Rainwater, lived in Miami Springs.

The car was painted black and had some modern conversions, such as a hand brake under the dash from a 1939 Ford and a 1941 motor with sleeved cylinders. It also had hydraulic brakes which I rebuilt with new shoes, wheel cylinders, master cylinder and hoses. The car came with a spare, supposedly original engine. I drove the car for about six months in its more or less original condition.

My first thought was to rebuild the 1941 motor, do a spot paint job and install a new convertible top, drive it and have fun. After pulling the motor, and giving it to the machinist, we found it had serious problems. While all this was going on, I was getting a lot of advice from Dick Metts and Al Powell, who were Ford men from many moons ago.

Dick kept talking about rebuilding the original engine. I kept thinking it wouldn't have the kind of go power that I enjoy. With the 1941 in bad shape I turned to the 1936 original engine.

One Saturday, Maurice Hawa, Dick Metts, and I loaded the 1936 motor into Maurice's newly acquired 1939 Plymouth pickup and headed for Harold Wilcox's garage. If anyone knows Ford motors, he does. We found



Harold in a white shirt and white pants assembling a motor. Harold, a local engine builder, was now in his eighties and had a problem seeing. We asked Harold to come out and take a look at the 1936 engine. Harold came out and couldn't see the motor but felt it and

determined in less than a minute that it wasn't a 1936 but a 1937 with block off plates for the water pumps.

It so happens that Dick Metts had a 1937 Ford pick-up and was looking for a 1937 motor. I gave Dick the motor and he rebuilt it and installed it in his pick-up.

At this stage I had to go back to square one. Then I remembered the ad in a hot rod magazine that John Boyce gave me for a 1936 Ford engine in Melbourne, Florida. The engine was a L.B. (late 36) with insert bearings in place of babbit.

In the meantime, Lowell Cooper went to Mt. Dora and came back with a picture of a 1936 Ford, painted Bambolina Blue. I decided to follow his advice and paint the car that color. While all this was happening, I was taking the car apart piece by piece, sand blasting and priming. I went through 1800 pounds of sand blasting material. The very last piece that I sand blasted was the bracket that held the spare tire which isn't seen and gets very little attention. While sandblasting, I went through black, then red, and finally the original color which was Bambolina Blue. This was a promotional color that was produced in April of 1936. My wheels are dated May and June of 1936. It also has a lockable glove box which was a late feature.

My neighbor was kind enough to let me store all these painted parts in her garage and everything was going fine until I had a call from her at about 3:00 AM one morning when she said, "Harry, I hate to tell you this, but your fenders are floating around my garage." A pipe plug had rust out and there was about four inches of water in her garage. I got to sleep about 5:00 AM after making an emergency repair.



The last piece to be painted was the cowl and rear body which was still on the rolling frame. After getting the car back from the painter, I realized I could not leave the car with the original firewall. One other item of modernization was a shelf in the fire wall for the battery. I made a phone call to Missoula, Montana and talked a fellow into cutting a fire wall out of a parts car for \$75.00. After having the fire wall installed I finished it by painting and detailing with a patent plate and body ID plate. The battery is now where it

belongs in its unhandy place under the floor board.

In the 2½ years I had the car apart I went to Hershey twice and one trip to Pate, Texas where I found the steering column and 1936 radio. I found more motor parts, door locks, and a late distributor with flat top coil all reasonable priced. The car has a Le Baron Bonney interior and top which Dick Metts installed.

What advice can I give you?

First, find a car that you are willing to spend a lot of time and money on. Next, have a place to work on that car about the size of a three car garage so you can pick up where you left off the next day or night. Most of

the work I did on the car was done at night after work and on Saturdays. Some people can't figure out how I got away with working on a car in the Gables.

If you are not going to paint the car yourself find some professional that has restored a car for himself and has the type of quality you are expecting. Next, take the car all the way. Believe me, you will probably spend more time under the car trying to clean and paint the frame when you could have taken the body off and had the frame dipped or sand blasted.



Would I do it again? Maybe, if I found a 1953 Hudson Hornet convertible. The truth is, you can probably find a car restored a lot cheaper than having one restored or even doing most of the work yourself.

The thing I enjoyed was the search for that special part, like the front shocks that I found in Ohio and sent to Oregon to have them rebuilt. I happened to be at the right place at the right time at the Ft. Lauderdale show and came away with my first Junior.

There are some people I want to thank. Maurice Hawa was always there from the very first day of deciding that I wanted the car, that extra hand to help bolt on a fender or a running board. Dick Metts for talking me into bringing the car back to its original state and his advice and physical help. George Klammer for his help and advice. Al Powell for all his encouragement and technical advice. How could I lose after working with those masters?