

The Star

November-December 2012

Mercedes-Benz Club of America



Ready to Rally
1938 230S All-Terrain Sports Car



A New Project

The answering machine was steadily chirping away when I stopped by my office on a Saturday in early March of this year. "No sense just letting it chirp until Monday," I thought. "I'll see what's on there." A voice I didn't recognize said, "I've got a Mercedes-Benz that I would like to give to you." Now, I don't know about you, but that is not the kind of message I receive every day. Or ever before this, for that matter.

Needless to say, I wasted no time calling the gentleman back. He indeed had a Mercedes, a 1986 560SEL to be exact, and he did want to give it to me for free. I asked him why and he said, "Because I enjoy reading your articles in The Star and I know that you like to fool around with these old Benzes." And because I wasn't born yesterday, I asked him if he had any pictures. He would be happy to email them, he said, and before long, two sets of pictures came rolling into my inbox. In fact, some of those emailed photos are featured in this article.

What I saw was a very nice car that appeared to be in good condition. I immediately called him back and said, "Tell me more."

He related that he had purchased the car years ago intending to fix it up. Now he had a new job that required quite a bit of travel, he was parking outside in the driveway while this car stayed inside, and he was tired of paying other people to work on it. In short, his life had changed but the car hadn't – it simply didn't fit his lifestyle anymore. He tried to sell it but didn't have



any luck, so he decided the best thing to do was just give it to me.

"Can you come and get it today?" he asked. "No," I said. "It's pretty late and it gets dark pretty early this time of the year. I'd like to have daylight on my side in case I encounter trouble on my way home. How about if I try to find someone at church tomorrow morning and we come and get it tomorrow afternoon?" He agreed to that plan.

At church the next morning I asked my favorite wingman, Don Karsten, if he'd be up for a little road trip. Naturally he said yes, but only if we could leave after 2 p.m. That was no problem for me, and shortly after 2, we were on our way. The car was located in Parchment, a suburb of Kalamazoo, Michigan, about an hour from my home. The miles seemed to fly by and soon we were in Kalamazoo.

Don and I arrived at the rendezvous location a little before our designated time. Soon enough I heard the rumbling exhaust

of a big V-8 Mercedes engine approaching – the exhaust system apparently had some rather large leaks and I actually heard the car before I saw it. In its defense, the car did look exactly like the pictures that were emailed the day before.

The current owner and I exchanged pleasantries and he told me a little about the car. While the car did have some shortcomings, there was nothing particularly alarming to me at that moment. Service receipts for work done on the car were on the passenger's seat, and on top of those was one of the two-volume M-B service manuals that are now sold in CD-ROM format. I figured I could always leave the car by the side the road if it broke down and at least be ahead having the Service Manuals. The owner also mentioned that new parts that he had ordered were in the trunk, still in the sealed shipping cartons. This was getting better by the minute. Without further ado, he signed the title over to me and was on his way with his wife, who had just arrived to give him a ride home.

Once in the driver's seat, I ran the window down to tell Don what route we'd be taking home. The driver's window immediately fell down into the door. So this is what it's going to be like, I thought. I grabbed the window and, amazingly, it came back up. To make a long story short, we then traveled home without further complications.

In future issues, I'll be describing some of the things that have happened and some of the discoveries we've made since arriving home. In a nutshell, the car ain't free anymore. By the way, I haven't been able to come up with a catchy name for this project yet. If you have a suggestion, I welcome your input.

Jim Luikens is director at large of the MBCA and a member of the Western Michigan Section. He has been writing columns on his project cars for The Star for almost six year. Questions and comments can be sent to him at jlukey@risales.com.

The new car is a pleasing shade of grey, with a matching MB-Tex interior in relatively good condition. At the price I couldn't go wrong.

