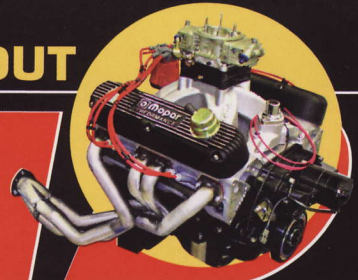


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# BOTTOM LINE

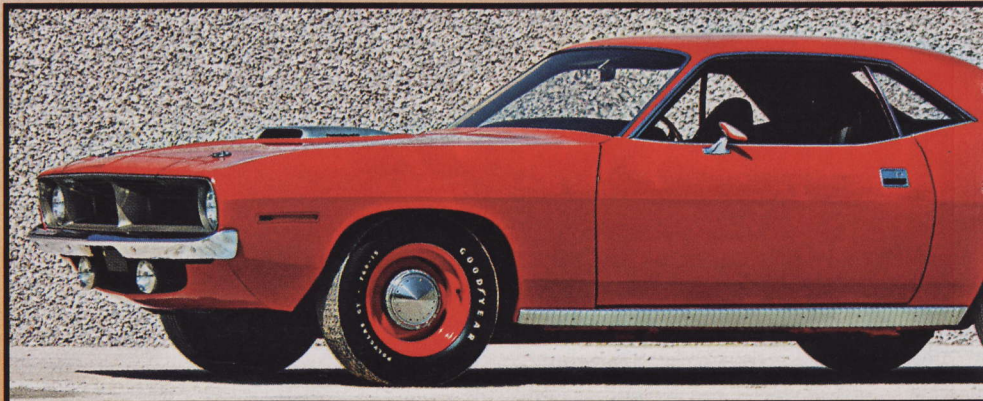
By Bill Woods

Photos by TheBruntBros

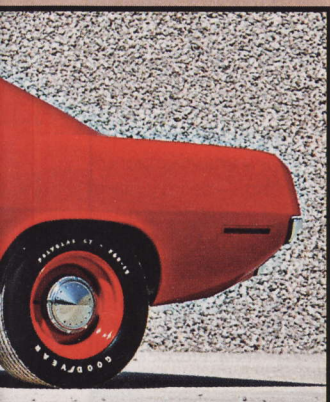
**A** 74-original mile 1970 HemiCuda. The dream of an untouched hermetically sealed and stored time-capsule showroom condition 'Cuda is enough to stand the Mopar hobby on its ear and tempt the zillionaire collectors to mortgage their châteaux in the south of France for a gazillion dollar bidding war for this rarity. And while this HemiCuda does hit the mark for its incredible low mileage, the dream dissolves in the spotlight of reality. Even if this car does not score an "eleven" on a chart from one-to-ten, it still rates as an exceptional example of a mostly original—if not unmolested—HemiCuda.

Bill Reardon was 62 years old when he drove down to Shreve Chrysler-Plymouth, in Clarksburg, West Virginia, to order a new 1970 HemiCuda coupe. Bill, a drag racer from Bridgeport, West Virginia, had one thing in mind when he optioned out his ride—strictly a strip machine—eighth, and quarter-mile tracks. No radio, no disc brakes, no Dana rear, no power steering.

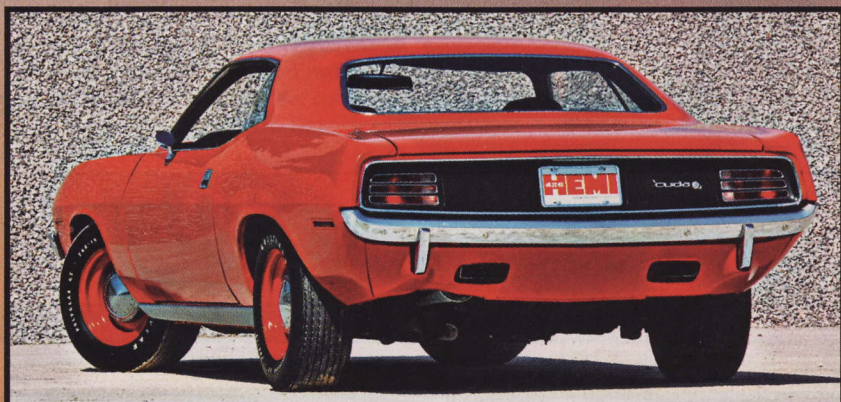
Bill's car, VIN BS23ROB349214, was built late in the game, May 25, 1970, to be exact. It was the 10th from the last HemiCuda assembled for 1970. When Bill picked up the car from the dealer, the odometer showed 0.8 mile. The same mileage was indicated on the state inspection sticker. Bill drove the 'Cuda the 28 miles to his house—probably its longest cruise on the street, and began to prepare the Plymouth for battle. Off came the shaker and the factory intake. On went a tunnelram with a single 1100 cfm Holley. Out came the 3.23 Sure-Grip gear. In went a set of 5.88s. Out came the stock torque converter and valve body. In went a 4-grand converter and manual valve body. Out came the stock exhaust. In went nothing. The stock springs were



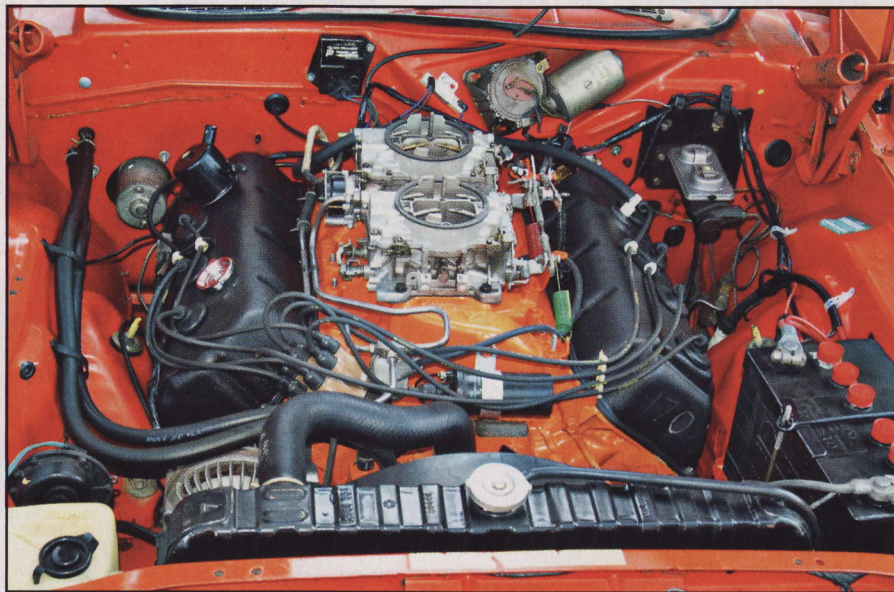
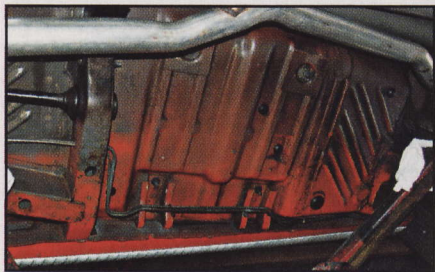
*The lowest-mileage  
'70 HemiCuda on  
the planet. Period.*



*1970 HemiCuda wears mostly original paint. Miraculously, although bought and modified for racecar duty, the body was never cut. The 'Cuda was put back to mostly stock with the original parts that the first owner had removed and stored.*



## BOTTOM LINE



**Items such as the coolant overflow bottle are excellent preserved originals, and show the difference from current repops. While the exhaust is not original, the untouched floorpan is a reference example. The Hemi is nicely detailed but not 100% correct at this point.**

replaced by a set of Super Stock units. The Space-Saver spare was tossed, and in its place, a full-size 8.25-15 spare, probably from a station wagon, was filled with sand and bolted in the center of the trunk.

Bill mounted an auxiliary instrument clus-

ter on the floor. He drilled through the trans tunnel to mount the gauges, and the drill bit caught a thread in the carpet and pulled it. Bill had the carpet replaced under warranty. Here he is destroying the originality of the 'Cuda, and he wants an original carpet—talk

about brass sphericals! Thankfully, Bill did not hack up the car or make other hard-to-reverse mods, such as adding a rollbar.

Bill made 30 passes in the 'Cuda. Then he died in the fall of 1970. He left a legacy of five timeslips in the console, the quickest time

shown was an 11.80. Bill's widow parked the 'Cuda in the garage and vowed never to sell it. She never did. When she died in 1977, Bill's son had a different view. The 'Cuda was a memory of his father's passion for racing. It grieved him just to look at it because it stirred up such deep emotions. He put the car up for sale through an ad in the local paper. The ad, listing the car with 41 miles, and an asking price of \$3500, hit on a Wednesday.

Marvin Dillon saw the ad on Wednesday, and waited until Thursday before calling. He told Bill's son that he'd like to come by and see the car on Saturday. Imagine, a 41-mile HemiCuda advertised anywhere, at any price, and no one even wants to check it out for four days! This is what it was like in the late '70s, with the Arab oil embargos, and the resultant gas lines, taking center stage. Now, Marv knew what a HemiCuda was. Between him and his brother, the Dillons had owned five Hemicars.

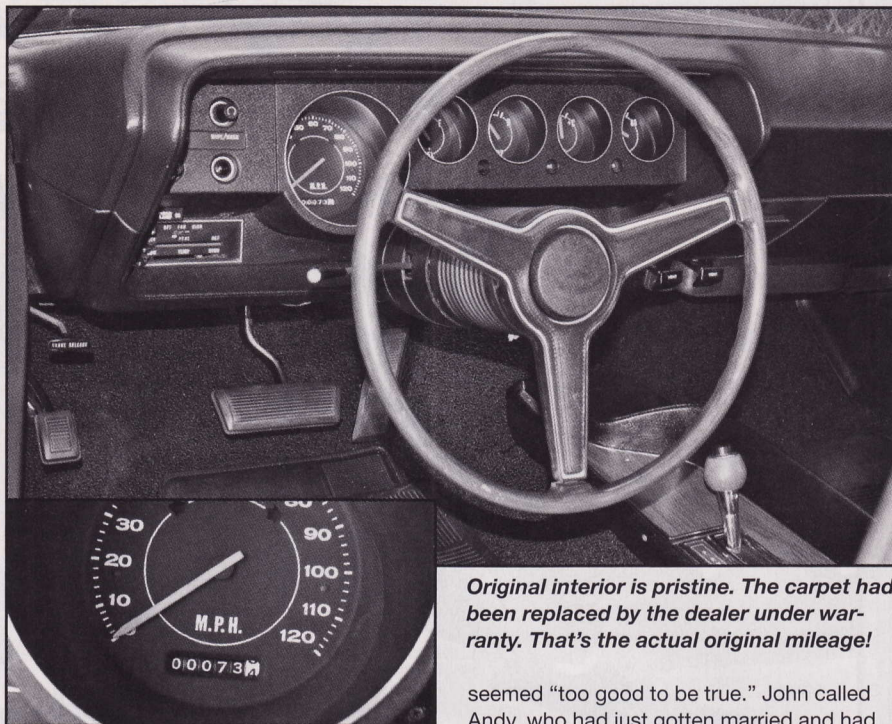
Saturday rolled around, and Marvin was the only person who looked at the 'Cuda. The racing stickers and the tunnelram didn't faze him. Deep down, in his heart of hearts, Marvin knew that one day this car was going to be worth big bucks. So, naturally, Marv tried to beat up Bill's son on the price. The son wouldn't budge, so Marv wrote a check for the full amount.

To come up with the dough, Marv had to pull the cash out of a down payment on a house that he and his wife were planning to buy. 'Course, this pushed back the house sale, which made Mrs. Dillon none too pleased. But hey, you gotta keep your priorities straight.

Bill had saved the original parts he had removed from the 'Cuda when he modified it for racing. The parts were in boxes, stacked along with other boxes, next to the car. The boxes weren't too friendly to the car's paint, and it was scuffed in places. Marv picked up the 'Cuda and the boxes, but had no place to put them. The first snow was in the forecast, so Marv parked everything in the carport of his mother's house. Four days later, he was able to rent a garage. The 'Cuda, by the way, had never been wet.

Over the next six months or so, Marv converted the 'Cuda back as close to stock condition as he could. The original rear wheels were missing, so Marv bought new ones. He reinstalled the original springs and the rear end pumpkin, but the front drag shocks remain on the car to this day.

Marvin planned to keep the 'Cuda "forever." Forever came sooner than he expected—1993, to be exact. It came with a knock on his door, and it wasn't Avon calling, although Marv had wished it were. It was Uncle Sam, in the form of an IRS agent. Did Dillon realize that he owed the government a zillion in back taxes? Marv hit the panic button, and sold the 'Cuda. The buyer was Donny Chapman. The selling price was 40 grand. Marv at least had made a ten-fold profit on his investment,



**Original interior is pristine. The carpet had been replaced by the dealer under warranty. That's the actual original mileage!**

and had advanced the odometer from 41 to 42 miles.

Shortly thereafter, Marv received a phone call from his good friends at the IRS. "Sorry to inform you, heh, heh, but we made a little mistake. You didn't owe us anything. Sorry." Click! A quick phone call to Donny: "Can I please, please buy the car back?"

"Sorry." Click!

Donny, one of the "inner circle" of Mo'collectors held onto the car until 1999. Fred Englehart, a noted buyer and seller of high-end and rare Mopars had gone down to Donny to buy one of his cars. He ended up buying nine—one of which was the 'Cuda. Fred says that the 'Cuda was pretty well-known in the hobby, and that he paid Donny 42 grand for the car. Fred found a buyer for the 'Cuda—Kevin Moore—within 30 days. At some point, the 'Cuda went to Legendary Motorcars, in Canada. Legendary removed all the race stickers (and, sadly, the original inspection sticker), touched up the scuffed paint, and, for some unknown reason, painted (incorrectly) most of the front suspension components.

Bill Aukerland was the next owner, and then, Fred Englehart bought the car *again*. This time, the price had ballooned to 340 grand. Fred flipped it to Andy Distad for 365. Andy really went on a tear, piling on the miles until the odo turned 61.1. The next owner was noted Hemi engine builder John Arruzza, of Arruzza High Performance in Thomasville, NC.

John actually had been looking for a SuperBird, doing a Google search on the Internet for "SuperBird for Sale." He was clicking around one site, when the HemiCuda popped up. The ad had just come out, and

seemed "too good to be true." John called Andy, who had just gotten married and had too many cars. Andy had bought the 'Cuda strictly for speculation.

John did some research and found out that the car was indeed well known. He called his buddy, Fred Englehart, and found out that Fred had owned the car—twice. Fred's summation of the 'Cuda: "It's a hell of a car." John bought the 'Cuda sight unseen. He tuned up the Hemi, and took it for a 10-mile spin. He said it was a great running car, the engine was very responsive. It killed him not being able to take the 'Cuda on I-85 and blow it out on a 50-mile blast.

John never wanted to crack the 100-mile mark, believing it would significantly compromise the car's value. He had to sell it before the miles rolled up. John drives the heck out of all of his cars, including two SuperBirds and a Daytona. Besides, he had four times the amount of money in the 'Cuda that he had in his house.

John sold the 'Cuda to its current owner, Scott Vardeman, of Classic Antique Restoration Service, in Magnolia, TX. Scott essentially wiped down the engine compartment, and that's about it. He intends to put the 'Cuda in a museum, where it will be on display and serve as his retirement nest egg.

In spite of some deviations from showroom stock, the 'Cuda, with the odo now showing almost 74 miles is, in many respects, a fantastic example of how the cars came off the showroom floor. High-dollar restorations are more like pilot cars, hand built, and adjusted to the max. This 'Cuda's doors rattle when you close them, just like they did when they were new. The floorpans are pristine, and are a reference as to factory overspray. Add all this to the incredible low mileage, and you end up with truly a one-of-a-kind car. ★