

Keeping It in the Family



Hal Lynch fulfills his uncle's dream of turning his 1970 AMC AMX into a road-racing beast

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By Mark Anderson

Back in the early '80s in New England, Village of Virginia Trace resident Hal Lynch was a classic car guy.

Along with his uncle, Lynch would spend his free time working on his car, a Volkswagen, and his uncle purchased a muscle car classic – a 1970 AMC AMX.

"He was the second owner of it, and it had 92,000 miles on it," Lynch said. "He was on the road a lot, and he used to love getting in the AMX and going down the turnpike to various appointments and that kind of thing."

Lynch would visit his uncle on the weekends, and they would spend time in his uncle's garage talking about what they wanted to do with the AMX.

"He was always upset because back in the '80s, these cars were about 15 years old and getting near the bottom of the depreciation schedule – people were tearing them apart and turning them into drag racing cars," Lynch said.

"That frustrated him to no end because he always thought if you just did it right, you could build one of these old muscle cars to be a high-speed road car that would be able to be respected and compete with any of the best European supercars at the time."

Unfortunately, his uncle passed away in 1984 before he got to see his dream become reality, and he left the AMX to Lynch.

"My aunt said his words to me were that I would know what to do," Lynch recalled.

So, now Lynch has a classic AMX that he wants to build out to be a road racer in memory of his uncle – a noble idea, but one that is easier said than done.

Produced between 1968 and 1970, the AMX is a two-seater muscle car built by the now-defunct American Motors Co.

Developed by AMC in an attempt to reach a new muscle car market, the AMX was meant to be a competitor of the Chevrolet Corvette, which cost substantially more at the time.

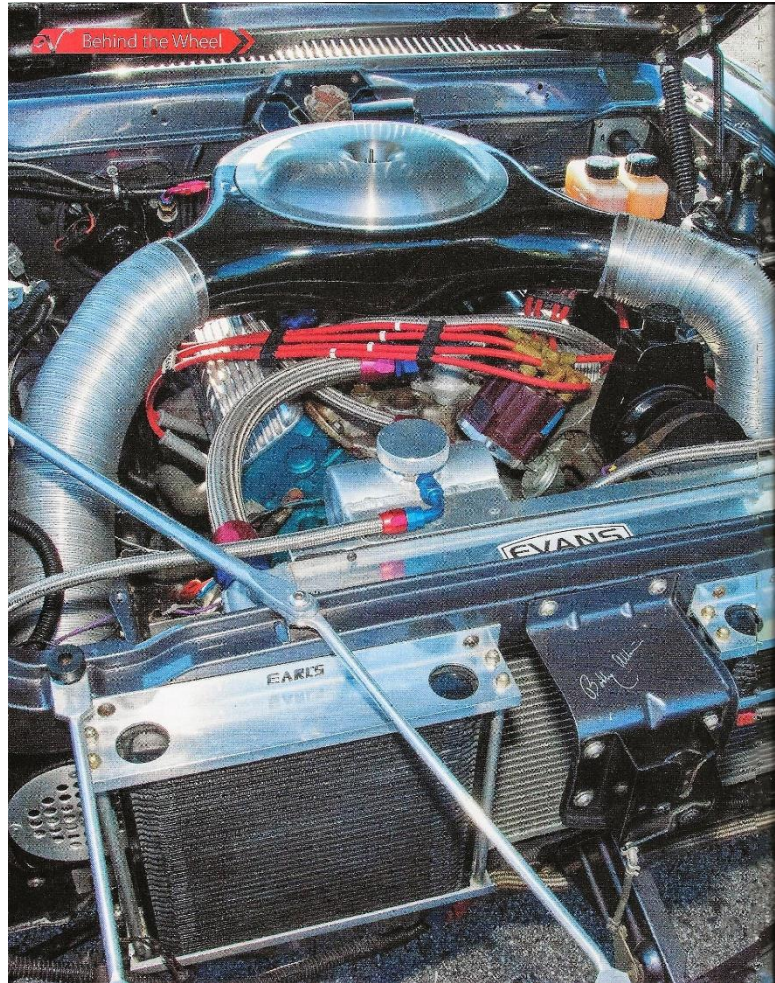
Lynch began working on the car, and at the time, he worked for AT&T – which meant he could make long-distance phone calls trying to track down parts without getting charged long-distance fees.

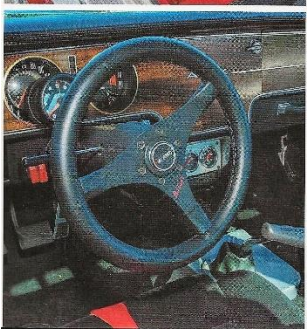
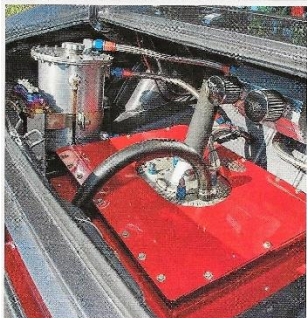
He kept a copy of the Hemmings catalog at his desk that he would check during his downtime.

"I'd be working and I'd look, 'Oh, there's a guy in Montana who has a racing wheel from the Trans Am race car!' he said, laughing. "And I'd call him up on my business phone and talk to him because they didn't monitor your phone calls back then. I probably spent thousands of dollars on long-distance calls just tracking down any piece I could find from the old cars. I couldn't have done that had I not worked for AT&T, because I would've gone broke."

Lynch cobbled together the pieces he needed from around the country – including an engine that once belonged to former NASCAR driver Bobby Allison.

He also says that because the type of auto body work he was looking to do would have been incredibly expensive for his just-out-of-college budget.





He instead recruited the help of a local biker gang to make the flared fenders he needed to complete the car. He met with the bikers frequently to work on the car and he paid them in beer and smokes, he says – much more affordable than the \$40,000 quote he was given by one shop.

Lynch finished modifying the car in 1991 – seven years after he inherited the AMX from his uncle.

Even though he continues adding parts and tweaking things on the car, he says he thinks it's a car his uncle would be proud of, evident in the fact that his garage is full of trophies he and the car have won in the time since.

He also gives special thanks to Speedline Performance, Total Recon and the Body Shop for their recent assistance with the AMX.

Now that he has the money to afford fixing anything that may break, Lynch says he plans on taking the car to more track days at speedways around the state, where he can really dial in the car's settings and tune it exactly the way he and his uncle always wanted. He even has a backup race car that he is working on to be his track tester while he learns the ins and outs of a particular speedway.

"I could afford to build the car, not break the car," he said. "Now I can probably afford to break and fix it a couple times if I had to."

In the meantime, you can find Lynch and his AMX at Villages Cruise Ins and other car shows here in Central Florida, where he is ready to spend time talking about the car's rich history and everything it means to him.