

Pontiac Trans Am Restores Villager's Memories of Youth



Ed Ingalls drove a Trans Am when he was a kid, and he jokes that he is trying to find that feeling again.

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Building things comes naturally to Ed Ingalls, including building cars. Ingalls finished restoring his 1974 Pontiac Trans Am on July 9, and the next day he drove from Florida to Syracuse, New York, for the Syracuse Nationals.

The event is one of the largest car shows in the northeast and he wanted to participate.

"I drove this car more than 2,500 miles, going to Nationals and then to Ohio to the Trans Am Nationals before heading back to Florida," said Ingalls, of the Village of Largo. "I only had one problem that was minor. There's an oil pressure gauge on the dash with a direct line to the engine and I didn't quite tighten it enough, leading it to drip on my shoe."

Ingalls said the Trans Am is his eighth car restoration. He went to school to be a mechanic and got into the field at a young age, but realized there was not much money to be made.

He went into business for himself instead, and at one point ran five businesses at once. He also owns several patents, including one for a product he designed called Safe Step Stair.

"I've always liked using my hands and creating different things, whether it's cars or products to make people's lives easier," Ingalls said. "But my cars, those are for me."



Ingalls bought his 1974 Trans Am in November 2024. He was looking online and found it listed for sale in California.

He said Trans Ams are hard to come by in good condition, and the one he found had almost no rust and only about 97,000 miles on the odometer. He checked out the car around 2 p.m. and was driving home from California by 11 p.m.

Ingalls drove a Trans Am when he was a kid, and he jokes that he is trying to find that feeling of being 18 years old again.

"It's the nostalgia for me," he said. "I love everything about this car, but it really brings back that feeling and those memories of driving as a kid."

Ingalls spent the next eight months restoring the Trans Am. It was in good condition, but there were elements about the car he didn't love.

The dash was in bad shape, he said, and the paint had been redone but it was a bad job. He said there were waves and overspray.

In order to make the paint job look good, he completely took it apart and did each thing himself. Ingalls had 38 separate pieces of the car he needed to paint individually, and then he moved on to the body.

"All the flares on it are handbuilt by me," Ingalls said. "It's the only car in the world that looks like that, because it's custom."

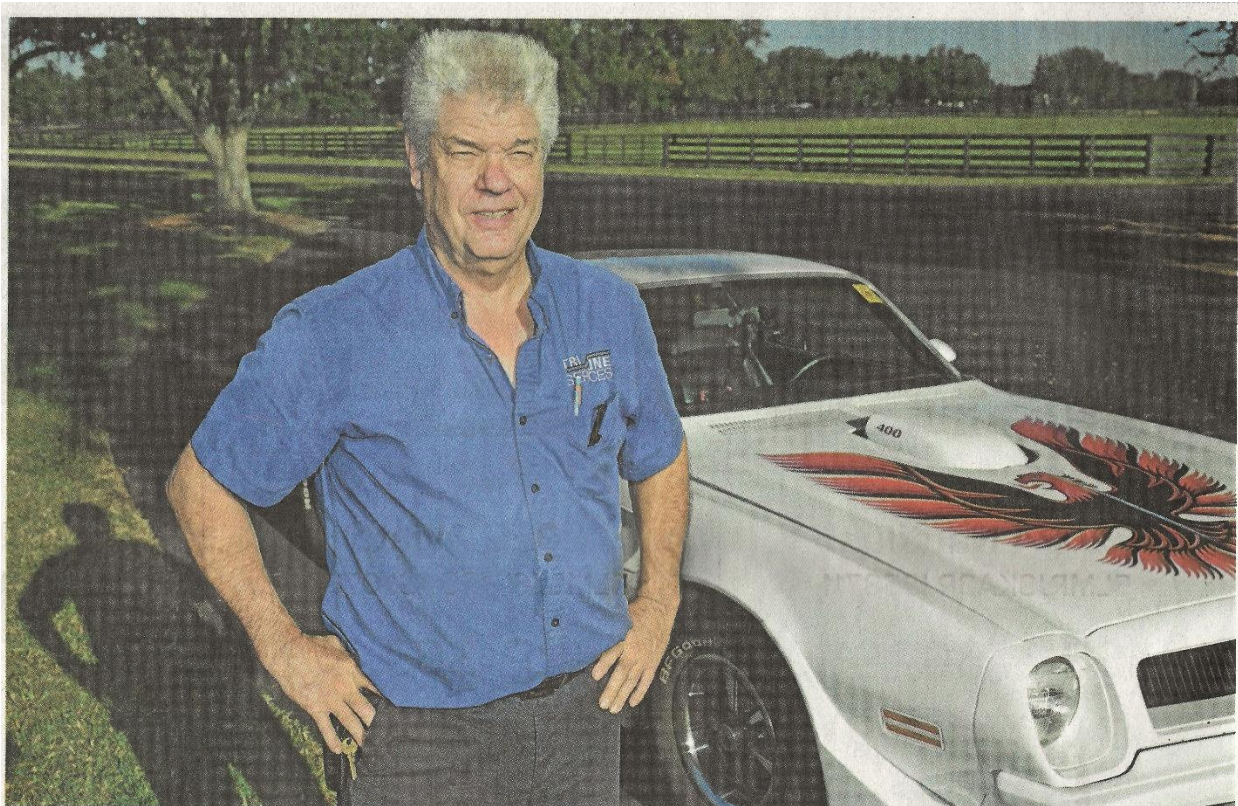
Ingalls put molds on the car made out of plywood and cardboard. He then filled the molds with a two-part expanding foam that hardens when it dries, and he scraped and shaped the foam to get the look he wanted.

He then had to take the molds off and cover them with fiberglass before finishing the final paint job.

"The only thing I didn't do myself was the dash, which I shipped to Texas and had them put in the original GM molds," Ingalls said. "Restoring this car took me about 1,400 hours, with 1,000 hours just in the body."

Ingalls already has his eye on his next potential restoration project. He likes to joke that because he still works part time, his cars keep him out of his wife's hair and give him something to do.

Ingalls is a member of The Villages Classic Automobile Club and takes the Trans Am to different club events and car shows. He likes showing off the custom detailing and talking to others about the nostalgia of driving the car when they were young.



Ed Ingalls, of the Village of Largo, with his 1974 Pontiac Trans Am on Wednesday at The Villages Polo Club. Ingalls restored the car to look exactly how he wanted, including customized parts on the body of the car. He already has his eye on his next potential restoration project.

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