

was hand-drilled once the molding was installed. There was no pilot hole, and the Creative Industries workers drilled it wherever it landed. Knowing that Dave had his original set, Gene offered the NOS parts as a trade for the car's original moldings. Dave couldn't refuse an offer like that, and the Daytona, once again, had its original parts.

After a long haul, the car was back together and in roadworthy condition for the first time in July of 2011. Gene was invited to display it in Building T at Carlisle, where it made its official debut. After obtaining feedback on the car at Carlisle, and over the next several months, he sent it back to Vance's shop this past winter for a few updates. Gene's one of those guys who really believes in "perfect," so, after a ton of consideration, the proverbial "date correct" block was removed and the original warranty block was reinstalled in the car. Gene explained why, "I spent the winter tracking down Jerry Meade for a second time, and finally drove across the state to meet him in person. Being able to meet and discuss the history of this car was the deciding factor which made the use of the warranty block appropriate, despite its incongruous casting date. Otherwise, using a '73 block would've been a piece of the puzzle that simply didn't make sense to the casual observer."

The car was completed once again "just in time" for this year's Mopar Nationals and the list of those who played an invaluable role in the car's restoration is rather lengthy. At last count, more than 250 separate companies or individuals supplied parts or services! Gene said, "That's what happens when you scrounge parts non-stop on the telephone, internet, and every major swap meet for ten straight years (I started searching for parts to restore this car almost a year before actually picking it up)." Some folks who were particularly helpful with advice and details include, in alphabetical order; Bill Allphin, John Antonelli, Frank Badalson, Dave Benasutti, Dirk Blundell, Jim Bodanis, John Borzych, Dave Henke, Paul Jacobs, Danny Liebrandt, Jim McCauley, Dick Padovini, David Patik, Ken Presley, John Rizek, Doug Schellinger, Ken Stonebrook, Mark Tiffany, Allen Vasut, Pete Veight, Dave Walden, and of course, Vance Cummins. Some other folks or firms who provided restoration or other custom services include, in no particular order, Rob Brombacker, Stockton Wheel, Legendary Interiors, Instrument Specialties, Glen-Ray Radiators, Westech Automotive, Mike Flaherty, Jules D'Addio, and Bill Edwards just to name a few. Gene summed it up with, "I'd list the vendors from whom parts were purchased, but in all honesty, it's probably easier to name off the ones who didn't provide any parts - and I seriously can't think of too many! The end result of this restoration has been possible with the collective assistance of nearly the entire Mopar community, and I'm particularly grateful." ❖

MOPAR NATS DAYTONAS: IN CONCLUSION



After many hours and countless dollars, three Daytonas sat side-by-side in the judging tent at the Mopar Nats. I have to say, it was incredible to see three Daytonas that were state-of-the-art restorations, among the best the Mopar world has to offer. Each one of these owners and builders put their hearts, skills, and love of Mopars trying to create perfection. No matter how each car did, those folks really deserve to be commended for the results they achieved. It was a huge honor for me to not only hang out with each owner and builder, but to see what it takes to compete in the Mopar Nats OE Gold class. If you're not familiar with the OE Gold class, let's do a quick review. Judging is based on a 2,200 point scale. Cars receiving 85% earn a bronze, 90% earns a silver, and for 95% or higher, the car receives the coveted "gold certification." So, how did the Daytonas do? Tony D'Agostino's Daytona took home gold! John Antonelli's Daytona also took home gold! Gene Lewis's Daytona, once again, took gold! For the first time in Mopar National's history, there were three Daytonas which all received OE Gold Certification.

Afterward, I spoke with head judge Keith Rohm. I asked, "With the high level of restoration, how do you take points away?" He told me points are deducted in as little 1/4 point increments, and every area of the car is gone over thoroughly. One of the most common point deductions is due to components made after the date coding of the car. Sometimes an owner is forced to compromise on a part which is close to the original part, but not as correct as it should be - you do the best you can with the parts available. Another common deduction is due to paint finish; it shouldn't be too shiny or perfect. If you've ever looked at the finish on an original Daytona, the area where the rear window plug was installed has a different spray pattern versus the assembly line process. The paint should appear just as the dealer would've received it - not too shiny and with slight imperfections.

On the other side of the coin is the window of acceptability. Could this car have a modification done at the dealership or factory? An example of this would be red power steering fluid. At the time when these cars were built, power steering fluid would've been checked at the new car prep department at the dealership. If the fluid was low, they would've installed the cheaper ATF instead of factory power steering fluid. Things like this are considered when going through a car.

Keith told me, "I have to say, Mopars are one of the hardest brands to judge. Each and every one is slightly different." The thing that stuck with me from our conversation was, "Don't ever say, 'That's the way they came,' because someone will prove you wrong! I've seen some documented combinations that you would think were crazy and could've never happened."

So how close were these three cars? Wrap your minds around this; the three cars finished within 0.65% of each other! They finished in the order of the red Daytona, followed by the white Daytona, then the yellow Daytona. The quality of the restorations was simply mind blowing. Never in Mopar National's history has this happened, and it will most likely never occur again. I would like to say congrats to Gene Lewis, Tony D'Agostino, and John Antonelli for all three having spectacular Daytonas. If you missed the stories on any of the other Daytonas, check them out in the December 2012 and the January 2013 issues of MCG.❖