

1940 Packard 180 Remembered

By John N. Packard

My only experience with a 1940 180 dates back to the 1960s. My uncle knew of my interest in Packards and wrote me about one that was up for sale in a town adjacent to his place on Clary Lake in Maine. I mentioned this to a fellow AACA member and he became quite interested. I wrote to my uncle and asked for pictures of the car. What he sent was an undeveloped roll of film; so eager to see the car I jury rigged a dark room in my basement and we developed and printed the film. The car was a formal sedan and looked quite good. The price was reasonable so my friend decided to buy it. I sent his down payment to my uncle who acted as our agent with the owner.

Then the issue became: how do we get the car from Maine to Maryland? Since Maine is my native state I convinced him that we should drive up to Maine, service the Packard and drive it home. I invited my mother to go along and visit with her sister while we dealt with the Packard. So on New Years weekend we set off in my brand new 1964 Dodge 880 sedan to engage in this car adventure. The trip north was uneventful.

When we arrived in Maine my friend was anxious to see the car and close the deal; so off we went with my uncle to check out his new Packard. As we approached the car it became apparent that the photographs did not give a true picture of the car. It had been painted by hand with a brush! Needless to say my friend was quite distressed; but I tried to encourage him by noting that the paint, however awful it looked, had protected the car from rust. Well we took the car to a Sunoco Service Station and had it checked over...oil change, fluid check, brake adjustment, etc. to make it roadworthy for the trip home.

Late that evening my friend got cold feet and said that he wanted to return to Maryland without the car, particularly because there was snow in the weather forecast. I urged him to reconsider and assured him that everything would work out well. So the next morning we set off down the Maine Turnpike heading for Maryland, mother and I in the Dodge 880 and my friend in the Packard. When we got to the Massachusetts Turnpike the snow began and the wind picked up. Suddenly my friend pulled over on the shoulder and announced that he would not go any further. So I put him in the Dodge with my mother and I took over driving the Packard.



Things went well as we reached the Connecticut parkways. The Packard warmed up and seemed to run more smoothly, although it was consuming a good bit of oil. I pulled over on the Merritt Parkway to check the oil and to gas up and we agreed to meet on the New Jersey side of the George Washington Bridge at an ESSO station, if we got separated. Indeed we got separated and I waited at that station for several hours before they finally caught up. It seems that my mother was navigating and got them onto the West Side Drive and down into New York City before they realized their mistake. I insisted at that point that my friend take over driving the Packard and I would drive with my mother in the Dodge.

As we drove down the New Jersey Turnpike, now quite late in the evening, my friend pulled into every rest area to relieve himself. My mother and I began to joke about it. Only later did I learn that my friend had not told his parents, with whom he lived at the time, that he was going

to Maine to bring home a Packard. They thought that he was simply accompanying me on the trip. So, as he got closer to Maryland he got more nervous about the trip because he knew that his father would not approve of his buying the Packard much less his driving it from Maine to Maryland. When we reached the outskirts of Baltimore he told me that we would park the Packard at an ESSO station rather than drive it to his parent's home.

The car needed a lot of body work and I encouraged him to begin working on it. Eventually he rented a garage and moved the Packard there. Not being mechanically inclined he never did work on the car. Eventually he decided to put it up for sale. Several people expressed an interest and came to see the car. The garage was located in a residential area of Baltimore and he allowed the prospective buyers to drive it around the neighborhood. While motoring with one interested person the brakes on the Packard failed. The prospective owner rolled through several stop signs and brought this massive vehicle to a halt by running the tires along the curb. He then put the car in reverse and drove it backwards to the garage. My friend was ready to give the car away at that point!

Subsequently the car sold; but that was not the end of the story. My friend and I were in the old Blue Field flea market at the Fall Hershey Meet, when I sensed the presence of something or someone close by. Turning around there was that 1940 Packard Formal sedan, in an even sadder state of disrepair than when he owned it, with a 'For Sale' sign on it. No, we didn't buy it!

Pictured above is how the Packard would look today if my friend had kept the car and had it restored.