

THE SAGA CONTINUES...

The 'Three DeSoto Guys' Are Now *Four* Desoto Guys

By Bill Wurzell

I know you're probably thinking, 'not another DeSoto story'. No, it isn't ...well, yes it is. It's an update of a story we brought you back in February. The story about the forelorn 1949 DeSoto Custom Sedan that has languished in a garage in Northern Virginia for FORTY YEARS!

In that story, a call went out to individuals or car clubs that might be interested in stepping up to 'rescue' the old DeSoto from her solitary confinement and possibly breathing life back into the old girl. Well, my friends, I'm glad to report that call has been answered by a very knowledgeable, capable and industrious member of Chesapeake Region AACA; Mr. Willis Terrett of Millersville, Maryland. When Willis read about the DeSoto in the Bulletin, he made it a point to attend the weekly, Thursday morning breakfast meeting of 'old car guys' just across the Pennsylvania border in Hanover. Willis knew his good friends, Gary Wilmer and Gary Ruby would most likely be there. Mr. Terrett made his intentions known to President Wilmer that he indeed was interested in acquiring the lucky old DeSoto. Gary Wilmer, in turn called me to report the good news; we now had an individual that was willing to take on the DeSoto project.

Chesapeake Region, Secretary, Jim Turner is also President of the DeSoto Owners Club of Maryland. Jim, along with Activities Chair, Bob Baer, first visited with the then owner of the DeSoto on January 20, to get a better 'feel' for the car and see if we could get the motor to turn, which we were unable to accomplish. In the ensuing weeks, the article appeared in the Bulletin and Willis 'stepped up', Jim Turner and I accompanied him to visit 'Miss Barbara' and try and move the situation forward.

Willis and Barbara came to an agreement on the DeSoto. Willis promised he would remove the car during the following week. He booked a towing company for a rollback to retrieve the car. I accompanied Willis and the rollback once more to Northern Virginia on a nice sunny Thursday morning.

The process of pulling the old DeSoto from the garage could not have gone more smoothly. I must say, standing there watching that old beauty emerge from that dusty garage was simply thrilling. Willis deftly steered the car backward onto the rollback while being pulled by the truck's powerful winch. It only took about a minute. However, getting all four wheels on the ear to turn on a previous visit was a big help and might have prevented damage to the car.

Willis has everyman's dream garage on his property but it's filled with a totally restored and gorgeous 1955 DeSoto Fireflite Sport Coupe; an obvious number one; a 1951 Ford Victoria two door hardtop and a beautiful 1964 Studebaker 'Champ' pickup truck, so, no room for the newcomer. But, Willis has a very good friend; 'a Packard guy' that also has a dream garage that even has air-conditioning! This garage is only about a mile from Willis' residence and that's where the '49 was deposited.

Willis wasted no time getting busy and in short order had the radiator and a massive set of horns out of the car so he had access to the crank nut to turn the motor.

(Editor's Note: The following narrative is from Willis Terrett reprinted here from the 'DeSoto Diary' newsletter of the of the Maryland DeSoto Owners Club of Maryland) The motor on the '49 DeSoto was locked up, we had to remove the radiator to gain access to the crank nut. Once that was done we were able to try to turn the motor. More Marvel Mystery Oil was poured into the cylinders. With a little persuasion the motor started to turn. We heard two POPS which made our hearts skip a beat but the motor turned free! As the motor turned, we could detect no compression on any cylinder. A decision was made to pull the head and found four exhaust valves stuck open. The noise we heard were stuck



Into the sunlight after forty years!

intake valves that released after the lifters receded, the cylinders seemed okay. Around the valve seats a slight ridge is present which is to be expected. The coolant in the system tested to +10 degrees. None of the freeze plugs are leaking or swelled from freezing. I haven't pulled the wheels yet but did back off the brake adjustment and the wheels turned freely. I will need to check the wheel cylinders, master cylinder and brake shoes before the car is ever driven. The main objective is to get the motor running before anything else is attempted. My Packard friend has fallen in love with this car as his father had a 1949 Plymouth the same color and looked very similar to the DeSoto. I am committed to both Barbara and my Packard buddy to get this DeSoto running safely and on the road. Along with the original keys, Barbara found the dealer invoice; Hendri Motors, Inc., Philadelphia, PA. The car was purchased January 27, 1950, for \$2,496.70. Barbara's in-laws traded in a 1947 Pontiac club coupe. I have the original owner's manual and the owner's service policy, registration cards and a Pennsylvania temporary registration certificate. Barbara put together a history from the time it was purchased new to the day it left Virginia on the rollback. I've never had this kind of information on any of my other antique cars. With this information the DeSoto deserves to be on the road again. As I progress, I will keep all informed.--Willis Terrett

(Willis remains a loyal member of CRAACA and has recently joined The DeSoto Owners Club of Maryland)