

## *Feature Vehicle*

Norm and Sandi Biggar, Oakville, Ontario

### **1972 GMC Sprint SP**

Vehicle-1972 GMC Sprint Custom SP, VIN #5D80W2B501342



This “truck” was built in Baltimore MD on April 17, 1972, for export to Canada.

It was shipped to Kerr Pontiac Buick GMC Ltd., which is still operating today at a different location in Oakville selling the same makes of vehicles, including Cadillac.

The original owner of this car was Thru-way Cartage and Leasing of Mississauga, Ontario.

In January 1974 I was driving through the used car lot of Kerr Pontiac, checking out the inventory as most guys at the age of 22 often did. I’m not sure if it was the color, the bodylines, or the 454 emblem on the black grill that got my attention first, but this Sprint sure caught my eye. I talked to a salesman about the price, and, yes, it was available. After convincing my Dad and myself that I really needed this vehicle, I signed the deal on January 7, 1974 and traded in my 350, 300 hp and 4 speed 1970 Chevy Nova SS. Needless to say, I wish I still had that Nova today too, but at least I kept the Sprint.

The Sprint was my daily driver in those early days and I even had a set of G60 x 15 snow tires on the rear in the winter. My buddies and I were into snowmobiling in the winter and this car even came with a rear hitch that did a mean job of hauling around my double snowmobile trailer. The Sprint had a dealer-installed new rustproofing product on the underside of the body that was supposed to keep the effects of the road salt used in our climate from rusting the vehicle. Boy were they wrong! I was already starting to see rust perforating the right rear quarter by 1976. I made the decision not to drive the Sprint in the winter months any more, and that’s what happened in 1977 and 1978. I used a pickup from the family farm for transportation when the Sprint was not on the road.

Meanwhile, there had been a few issues other than the rust, which tended to chew the lobes right off the GM camshafts. After the second GM camshaft failed, I installed a Crane hydraulic cam that seemed to hold up well. In 1975 I had joined the family farming business in a partnership with my Dad, but at this point in my life I wasn’t taking much money out of the farm in order to buy larger and additional equipment for the expanding grain and oilseed business, so any

major repairs on my Sprint were financially out of the question. With the rust finally slowed down due to no further winter driving, I made the decision to store my Sprint in an equipment shed on our farm after the summer of 1978.

What follows is just another variation on a common story we've all heard before. In 1982 Sandi and I got married, and one year later we were three, after the addition of our first child, Stacey. In the fall of 1985 we moved into a new house that we built on a lot at the home farm, following the arrival of Lianne in our family in April of that year. Meanwhile, the Sprint sat neglected in our shed



surrounded by farm machinery and 2500-pound sacks of bulk soybean seed at certain times of the year. Every so often I would run into old friends at parties or reunions and the topic would come up. Everyone would ask me whether I was ever going to fix that old Sprint, and my answer was always "Yes, hopefully someday." Our third child Natalie was born in February 1988, and she was the last of our family additions.

In 1990, one of the organizations that I was involved with on the county level was the Ontario Wheat Producer's Marketing Board. Our county was one of five that comprised district six. The district director at that time passed away due to illness, and via a conference call, all the county delegates tried to "persuade" one of us to just fill the spot for three months until the annual March conference. Well, yes, I foolishly agreed to their requests; this ended up being a 13-year long second job. It wasn't until I retired from the board in 2004 that I was finally getting to a point in my life where I felt the Sprint ought to be restored, or at least sold to someone who would take care of it.

Ray Pineau, a friend who is also interested in cars, kept urging me to fix the Sprint. I knew that to complete a restoration such as this would require a lot of time I don't have, as I'm still operating a 1500-acre farm with the help of Sandi and our employee, Steven Kelly, so Sandi and I decided to have the work done by professionals in order to spend more time driving and enjoying the car. We settled on Muscle Cars Plus in Stoney Creek, which is on the outskirts of Hamilton Ontario, about 20 to 30 minutes from our home, to handle the restoration. The Sprint was put on their waiting list in March 2005 and we got the call that they had an opening in August 2005.

The first two weeks in the shop at Muscle Cars Plus were devoted to dismantling and tagging all the pieces that were removed. The body was sent out for acid dipping and the frame got blasted and then powder coated. We knew from the start that some panels, such as the right quarter, would need replacing or repairing, and after dipping there were areas of the floor that had pinholes, so the decision was made to replace both rear quarters and put a new floor in the cab.



At this time I also hooked up with Will Nash of Nash Total Performance in Binbrook, who was to be the builder of the LS-5 engine. I wanted to keep the Sprint looking stock under the hood so that we could preserve the originality of this rare unit, so we decided to retain the stock intake manifold and carburetor as well as the stock exhaust manifolds. Due to my concerns about the camshaft failures in the car's early life I decided to go with a Comp Cam hydraulic roller cam with roller rockers. The block was line bored and decked, and then we added an Eagle steel crank and stroker kit, which was then balanced. Stainless steel valves in the heads, fluid harmonic balancer, gear drive on the cam, and a 2500-rpm stall converter completed the rebuild. The engine was finished in November and was sitting in the frame by mid



December. The original TH 400 transmission was rebuilt and a shift kit added before mating it to the engine.

Reassembly of the chassis was done in late January and the paint on the body was also finished. The body was reunited with the chassis in February and the task of putting together all the pieces and reinstalling them continued. All the original glass was reused with the



exception of the windshield. New carpeting, reupholstered seating, and new headliner, door panels and sun visors finished the interior. We retained the original dash pad and instruments. I had purchased a fiberglass tonneau cover from Gaylord in California, so that we would have a large "trunk" to carry items to cruise nights and car shows. The tonneau arrived in time to be painted at the same time as the body. Muscle Cars Plus custom

fabricated a stainless steel exhaust system. New bumpers, door handles, grill, light assemblies, and vinyl roof completed the exterior restoration. By mid-June, 2006, the car was ready for firing up and test-driving.

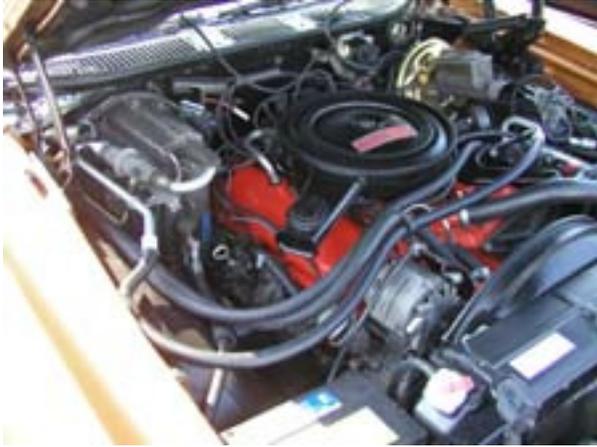


We had the Sprint home long enough to attend several local cruises prior to the Northern Chevelle Gathering. Sandi and I headed out on Friday, July 7 for the Holiday Inn on Grand Island, our first major trip with the Sprint and our first trip to this area.

There was a forty-minute line-up to cross the border from Ontario to New York; it was a hot day, and, yes, the engine began to overheat! We made it without any mishaps, though, and, wow. What an impressive array of cars were attending the show. Things were going well until Saturday afternoon when I tried to start the car again and heard that "lump in the throat" grating sound that usually goes along with a worn-out ring gear.



A small group of helping hands gathered and we began the process of sorting out the problem. There was lots of power at the battery, the connections were all right, and Glenn Lever didn't even hesitate to crawl under the Sprint to use his own tools to rotate the crankshaft to a fresh spot, and, failing success, to loosen the starter. Nothing seemed to work, however, so we booked an extra night at the



hotel and Jamie from Muscle Cars Plus came to our rescue Monday morning with a new starter. The nose of the starter, which had been brand new, had broken right off! With the new starter working fine, we headed for home with a short stop in Stoney Creek to diagnose a faulty clutch fan and arrange for a replacement, which to this point in time has solved the overheating problem. Thanks again to all those CanAm club members who didn't hesitate to lend a hand;

unfortunately I don't know all your names. We hope to see you at next year's gathering, if not at a cruise in the local area before then!

I applied to GM of Canada in October 2004 for the documentation on this vehicle. This information is available for a fee for any vehicle that was built and destined for a Canadian dealer. It is listed as follows:

Vehicle: 1972 GMC Sprint Custom SP  
 Vin: 5D80W2B501342  
 Trim: 704- Black Vinyl Bench  
 Paint: 933  
 Production Plant: Baltimore, MD  
 Production Date: April 17, 1972  
 Shipping Date: April 17, 1972  
 Model Number: 53680-pickup delivery  
 Engine: 454 CID 270HP 4bbl Invader V8  
 Dealer: Kerr Pontiac Buick GMC Ltd.  
 Oakville, ON

Number Imported for Sale in Canada: (Same Model NO. Only) 309 (V8 Sprints)

<u>OPTION</u>	<u>DESCRIPTION</u>
AV3	THREE POINT SEAT & SHOULDER HARNESS
A01	GLASS-TINTED-ALL WINDOWS
A52	BENCH FRT SEAT
B84	BODY SIDE MOULDING
B93	DOOR EDGE GUARDS
C08	EXTERIOR SOFT TRIM ROOF COVER
C60	AIR CONDITIONING MANUAL CONTROL
D33	OUTSIDE REAR VIEW MIRROR-LH-REMOTE CONT.
F40	H.D. FRT & RR SUSPENSION
GY2	REAR AXLE-3.31 RATIO
G80	REAR AXLE-POSITRACTION
JL2	DISC BRAKES-FRONT SINGLE PISTON

J50	VACUUM POWER BRAKES
K19	AIR INJECTION REACTOR
K30	SPEED & CRUISE CONTROL
LS5	ENGINE: 454 CID-4 BBL CARB HI-PERF-V8
L08	ENGINE EMISSION CERTIFICATION
M40	3-SPEED AUTOMATIC TRANSMISSION (THM 400)
N33	STEERING WHEEL – TILT-TYPE
N40	HYDRAULIC STEERING
PM7	F60-15-B (2+2) TIRE-HWY-BB-WHITE LETTERS
T60	HEAVY DUTY BATTERY
U14	INSTRUMENT PANEL GUAGES-TACH & CLOCK
U69	RADIO-AM/FM PUSHBUTTON
U76	WINDSHIELD ANTENNA
V30	BUMPER GUARDS, FRONT
YE7	SP EQUIPMENT PACKAGE
ZK8	TIRE PRESSURE STICKER
Z14	AIR CONDITIONING (ALL WEATHER)
Z49	MANDATORY CANADIAN BASE EQUIP MODIFICATIONS

I have heard the exterior color described as Saddle Bronze, Burnt Orange or Burnished Copper. We repainted the vehicle in a base/clear of the original color. As far as production numbers, I have referenced Dan Carr's web site and his production numbers show 114 LS5 Sprints produced in 1972, 70 equipped with the THM 400 transmission.



We also own another muscle car, a 1968 Oldsmobile 442 convertible we purchased from a gentleman in Owen Sound, Ontario in February 2005. It was a great Valentine's gift for us (That excuse worked well)! It has had several owners in Ontario and started its life on the west coast of Canada in British Columbia. It is not a #'s correct car as the 400 engine was blown up and replaced with a 455 from a Toronado. I spent

some time last winter replacing a few items such as door handles, cleaning and repairing the door latches and other small areas that needed attention. It is fun to drive and is a bit of a hot rod with an Edelbrock intake, Holly carb and headers with a THD 400 and shift kit. It is a driver and hopefully we will be able to refurbish the body, paint, interior and get a new convertible top in the future.

See this link for additional pictures

[http://www.leverfamilysite.com/Norm Sandi Biggar Index.htm](http://www.leverfamilysite.com/Norm_Sandi_Biggar_Index.htm)