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Car of the Month: Gary Branson's 1969 Boss 429

Well, it's done, at last, My Boss 429.

The car was in restoration for almost three years, including time on a rotisserie. I invested countless hours, not to mention a trip to the emergency room, more on that later. Last October 2001 my car was featured as the DVMA Car of the Month. It was still in restoration at that time. It seems like only yesterday. But here I am, one year later, and the car is winning shows and being featured again in the Feed



Bag as a completed car. In this article, I won't get into the specifics and history of the car like I did last time. I thought you may be interested in the trials and tribulations that I went through during the restoration of the car.

Looking back over the last three years I can say I experienced excitement, frustration, and pride as I built the car. I was right the first time I saw the car as I was considering buying it on that day in May 1999. I knew it would be a lot of work but I didn't quite realize the amount of difficulty I would have locating correct parts and in dealing with unscrupulous enthusiasts. My sources were really limited because there is just not that many people who know a lot about the Boss 429. They only made 1357 units between 1969 and 70. The expense was also more than I anticipated. However, it was worth every minute and every dollar restoring this rare old muscle car.

I learned some lessons restoring the car. One of the lessons was in purchasing parts. I guess I was initially a bit gullible in dealing with some people who were dishonest. My objective was to use new old stock (NOS) parts whenever I could. I soon found out that NOS parts for a Boss 429 are both rare and expensive. I found that most of those individuals who had NOS parts were pirates. **Everyone thinks you have a deep pocket.** Well, that certainly isn't the case with me but I had to pay the inflated prices anyway.



Case in point, I needed a new fuel pump since the car sat in storage for 19 years. I wanted a correct Boss 429 fuel pump but I found out it was impossible to buy a new one at any price. I then had two choices, purchase a new fuel pump that was dissimilar in appearance but functional from Monument Auto Parts, or rebuild my original. I chose the rebuild option. I just couldn't swap out my original specifically marked fuel pump core; I needed to locate a rebuild kit.

I managed to find a Boss 429 registry and parts resource in Spokane, Washington. During a conversation on the phone, one of the owners convinced me he had a "rare rebuild kit" and would sell it to me for \$85.00. Well, I purchased the kit from him and when I received it in the mail I saw that it was a kit from "AMK Products." AMK Products is a large OEM/NOS retailer of correct nuts and bolts of which I previously made purchases. I looked in their catalog and found the same item selling for \$25.00.

Another story was when I took my pristine original radiator that came out of my 26,000 mile Mustang to be inspected before I put it back in my car. I just wanted to make sure it was OK. The cooling fins were straight and it seemed to flow unrestricted water when I put a hose to it. Nevertheless, I wanted an expert to look at it. I happened to have an acquaintance who owns a Boss 429 who runs a radiator shop. I remembered he previously told me he had engine-overheating problems with his Boss so I wanted to make sure mine would be good to go. I left my core with him for inspection. He called me back in a few days and told me my radiator was so clogged he couldn't repair it. He suggested a recently rebuilt unit that came out of wrecked big block Mustang for \$300. I said OK since he was "the expert" and I trusted him. When I went to pick up the radiator I found it's condition to be cosmetically poor, nothing close to the radiator I brought to him. I asked for my old radiator back and he nervously explained that he junked it and he no longer had it. I had no choice but to accept the radiator he wanted to sell me. Well, his Boss 429 showed up at the next show with a newer radiator. I know this because I photographed his car extensively a year earlier when I was anticipating my restoration. The previous radiator was cosmetically poor, similar to the one he sold me. I could never prove it but I feel he swapped my pristine radiator for his old one.

These are just two of my stories but there are many examples of greed such as the inflated prices I had to pay for NOS parts. Some of the examples are; the correct engine fan cost \$975. The air

cleaner snorkel was \$900. The power steering pulley was \$255. The smog thermactor tubes and ferrules \$500, shocks \$236, front spoiler \$279, etc, etc, just to name a few. Word of caution, if you're rebuilding an old car, be cautious, take your time, don't trust people you really don't know,

I finally completed the assembly and body and paint, in February 2002. I trailered the car to my mechanic in Hayward. I left the car with him and sat around the telephone like a little kid for the next few days while I waited for the car. He finally called me back, but rather than tell me he had the car running, he told me the worst news I could hear. There was a leak of coolant into one of the cylinders. This meant there had to be a crack in one of the water jackets requiring the head to be removed and repaired. However, it wasn't that simple since the heads do not come off while the engine is inside the car. I had to remove the motor. Those of you who have rebuilt a car know how I felt. The seats, center console, shifter linkage, drive shaft, transmission, engine wires, and most all accessories on the engine had to come off. This also meant that many of my new nuts and bolts, freshly purchased from AMK Products, were gonna get scratched and end up with rounded corners. In any event, I didn't waist any time. I trailered the car back to my house, rented a cherry picker and removed the monster engine. The head was repaired and I had the engine and transmission back in within 4 weeks, with the help of fellow DVMA member and Boss 351 owner, Steve Akacsos.

I trailered the car back to the mechanic and dropped the car off again. The car was started and I actually drove it home. Unfortunately, I only got to drive it for a short time because the engine developed a ticking noise that got louder and louder. What might that be you ask? You guessed it. One of the cam lobes went flat within the first 50 miles. This time the mechanic let me work in one of his bays. Fortunately, the engine didn't have to come out, I just had to remove the entire front of the engine, water pump, timing cover, radiator and grill. The engine builder did not have an explanation for the problem cam. He hinted that the manufacturer might not have properly heated the cam when it was molded. He also thought that since the engine rebuild, it sat for about 2 years before being started. He thought the pressure of the stiff valve springs might have been a contributing factor. In any event, he paid for the new camshaft and he put it in at no cost. I reassembled the accessories, etc, and we got the car started once again. This time it ran like a Swiss clock.

I have driven the car to only three shows since April and have put about 900 miles on the 26,000 mile car. I won awards in all three shows including our DVMA car show in May. I would have tried to

be in more shows this summer but my shift at work was changed to weekends through September.



About the trip to the emergency room, I sliced my thumb with a box cutter razor when I was cutting off a heater hose. I ended up with 5 stitches and a lecture from my wife.

All in all, the car provides more fun than you can get outside of a bedroom. There are gobs of torque and it handles really nice. Many people have never even seen a Boss 429 so it gets lots of attention.

-Gary Branson