

A Tale of Love or Lust....

How we came to own our 1937 Packard 115

Lust or Love, or Love or Lust, or Lust then Love, or Love then Lust, or Love and Lust, or Lust and Love, or just Lust or just Love?

These questions have been asked by mankind most likely since the start of time when the topic is affairs and the question about the affair is why, or why not?

Back in Jan 98 Lou and I took a short R & R break in Melbourne. After a very big night out we caught an early morning train and battled stinking heat and stinking hangovers and eventually arrived at the Ballarat Swap Meet. It was there we met Jim and Helen Killkenny, straight away (and in my hung over state) I thought they were very decent people as they have a great surname, live in the enchantingly named suburb of Ivanhoe, but even better they have a sister car to our 1926 Hupmobile tourer and had a love for it akin to us for ours! Instant friendship resulted and an arrangement made for them to come to Auckland and travel with us to the Art Deco weekend in Napier in Feb 99. As with most well made plans there is often a glitch, in this instance their recently engaged daughter chose a wedding day which clashed, as always a quandary was followed by a decision and for them a wedding it was and for us it was Napier! Not long after our return from Napier, Jim and Helen rang for a report, during the conversation I stated our intention to look for and acquire a mid to late 30's roadster which would allow us far more flexibility for long distance travel. A month or more passed and Jim rang late one night (he forgot about time zones) to tell us he had found just what we were looking for, a beautifully restored Packard roadster!

So now to the affair! No, it was not lust as we did nothing, we did not even ring the number he had given us, we didn't even have a picture in our minds of what this car would look like. A few weeks passed and Jim rang again, to enquire what we had done, he informed us that the car was in an undercover classic car sales in Brighton Vic and the owner needed to sell as he had purchased a Cord out of the U.S. and the price had reduced. As a result and having 'nothing to loose' (yeah right!), I rang the owner of the business Bob Parsons, Bob naturally told me how beautiful this car was and casually mentioned that he would send me some photo's (this was back in the days before we all had e-mail) and would include details of the owner to whom I could talk directly if I was interested as he (Bob) would still collect his finders fee.

The photo's duly arrived a few days later, this is when the affair heated up as it was love at first sight for both Lou and I. Jim inspected the car and furnished us with a full written report (by fax), as he is a qualified motor mechanic and motor engineer his assessment was taken most seriously by us (and it has proved over the ensuing years to be 'spot on'). After due consideration I called the owner, noted Australian restorer Chris McClelland, haggled a little or a lot and negotiated a price which suited us. From this point things moved very quickly and a great service was provided by Phil Gubb and his Melbourne counterpart Brad both of Jas Jenner's International. After a few minor hiccups the car was containerized, customs sealed and loaded onto a Russian freighter named, The Capitaine Berioski. This did cause me much nervousness as having spent some time working in Moscow at the N.Z. Embassy I had just cause for concern! Notwithstanding, in just a few days we were able to take a few shots of this ship (or rust bucket) from Takapuna beach as it went by on its way to the Auckland container port. A couple of days later Lou and I were summoned to the Jas Jenner's yard in Mangere, Bob Ballantyne accompanied us for the unveiling, our hearts raced when we saw the beat up state of the container, and we endured the irritating bad taste jokes about the container falling and rolling around on the deck very well! Eventually the customs seal was cut and doors opened, we were very excited and very nervous as this was our first sighting of 'the new love in our life'. We rolled the Packard out of the container allowing Customs and M.A.F. to do their thing. Lou and I were overjoyed, this beautiful car far exceeded our expectations. There were no signs of damage (in fact the car had been beautifully packed inside the container) and no travel problems, the battery was connected and it started on the first push of the button, what made an immediate impression was just how easy this car is to drive and how easily it handled modern traffic with its excellent brakes and how comfortable it is to ride in.

Our love affair is now definitely a long term relationship, it is hard to imagine now that this all happened 10 years ago. Since then Lou and I have many happy memories of people and places in our Packard. We have improved the car (as you do) and will continue to do so, it really is a very drivable and reliable car and we really do love it.

Looking back at the records the letter which came with the photos is dated 13th July 1999, and the N.Z. Customs release form is dated 7th September 1999, things sure did happen quickly (as they do with any affair)! We purchased this car sight unseen with only photos and the words of a good friend to judge it on, yes we were very lucky in love!

This Packard is a 1937 model 115 C convertible coupe. A very low mileage/owner and original example, when imported into Australia from Colorado in the mid 90's it had done only 43,000 miles, prior to restoration it was drivable and in very good order, in fact was registered and was roadworthy. Chris McClelland purchased the car ex the U.S in the mid 90's from the family of the 2nd owner, Chris is a professional restorer and builder of hot rods and set about giving this Packard a full body off and nuts and bolts restoration, during its restoration it was converted to RHD, but I have all the original LHD parts in the event they are ever required.

In closing it is rumored (but not substantiated) that Carol Lombard was gifted this car by her 'true love' Clarke Gable but as is a rule in any affair, a girl must keep her secrets!

Brent and Lou Mathieson



Brent & Lou's 1937 Packard 115C

The pic on the left is the first photo Brent & Lou saw of the Packard and instantly fell in love.



The two photos below showing the car in roadworthy condition before restoration.



These two photos above showing the restoration of the body and the quality of workmanship.

The two photos below showing the chassis stripped, then sandblasted, painted and assembled.



