

Restoration of the 1948 Chevrolet Stylemaster Utility

by Phil Luke

This story began in January, 2000, when the (then) President of our Vintage Sports Club, Kevin Field, told me that he knew of a 1948 Chev ute that was up for sale. It had 'some damage', but had been purchased new by the present owner, and was a pretty good price.



Photos: Phil Luke

Approximately five litres of body filler was removed from the left hand rear corner



This was the 'damage'

After we thought about the storage space needed while the work was being undertaken, and convincing my wife that "\$200 is an absolute steal", I thought I'd view it, at least. When there, I decided to buy it, and arranged a car trailer to bring it home.

The damage consisted of hefty dents in the radiator, grille, mudguards and bonnet, caused when the elderly owner drove into

it while shifting another vehicle, but I was able to start it and drive it onto the trailer.

The ute had been used as a builder's work vehicle for some years, so the original light green paintwork was concealed under the obvious grime from many building sites. Basically, though, it was a sound vehicle.

The first job comprised hours of scratching, scraping and chiselling away the countless layers of grease, dirt and concrete from the front suspension, which was completely unrecognisable.

So began the months of dismantling, stripping, knocking out the dents, sanding, mechanical checks of all parts, and then

the paint job. Every detail had to be thought through, discussed and dreamt about before being tackled. We consulted experts on some of the tasks, and anyone who sat still long enough was asked, or told, about the current problem or success. I'm sure other restorers will agree, that sometimes to save money, or when a tool is unavailable for a specific job, you just have to use your inventiveness and make one that will do the job.

Then came the task of replacing the hood lining and upholstery. My wife, Marij, helped me out with this job. We borrowed an industrial machine, set it up in the garage and, with the original items used as a pattern, we were able to complete the job, and also make up a tonneau cover for the tray.

Despite the near 40C° heat towards the



The scaffolding brackets and other 'accessories' were removed first



The inner suspension nuts were welded on solidly



The front suspension first had to be chiselled free of the layers of caked concrete



The straightening process is under way

The beautifully restored 1948 Chevrolet, ready for her first outing



Repairs were made to the body around the wheel arch before the mudguard was attached

end of this project, 'The Ute' was on the road by the end of January, 2001; what started as a 'long term' project turned out to be up and running in less than twelve months. The main reason was that the Mt Barker 'Power of the Past Rally' (3rd and 4th March) was planning to feature, among other things, Chevrolet vehicles.

Since then, we have used the ute fairly regularly, sometimes to transport stationary engines to various shows, and to tow our

small (10ft 6") 1974 Viscount caravan on a few outings with the car club. We even took the Chev on a trip to Birdsville several years ago; the tray packed to the brim with camping equipment, and she is very comfortable to ride in.

It has been a very satisfying project to have undertaken, even more so as we completed 98% of the restoration ourselves, including the painting and upholstery. *Phil Luke, Morphett Vale, SA

