

Hemi Powered 1955 DeSoto

By Thomas Kenney

For several years Anne and I have been searching for a DeSoto that's collectable and, at the same time, can become a usable car in which to attend events and participate on tours. I've belonged to the national DeSoto club for five years and have gone to many old car shows looking for the "right car".

My interest in DeSotos started when I was growing up because my father owned several. I've ridden many miles

1955 DeSoto in driveway

in a DeSoto. I first saw the 1955 DeSoto special coupe pictured below on the DeSoto club website. At the time I was looking for a 4 door sedan like the one my father drove. This 2 door hardtop sedan has such a nice appearance that I reconsidered my concentration on 4 door sedans.

Well, I made arrangements in late October to get a first hand look at this car, taking the Amtrak train from Baltimore to Fairfield, CT. The DeSoto had everything I was looking for in a classic car.

This hardtop coupe was partially restored 14 years ago and has been garaged ever since. The exterior is nice; light blue body and white top, and it has a medium blue interior that needs to have the seats redone. I decided to buy this gem and become only the third owner.

I asked the owner, "what kind of wax do you use"? He replied, "none". The car shines but hasn't been waxed. He also mentioned that the car hasn't been rained on since it was repainted.



One week later, on Election Day, I returned to Fairfield with a rollback carrier to bring my 1955 DeSoto special coupe home to Hampstead. The trip

was 273 miles each way, but the traffic was fairly light due to the semi-holiday.

With only 94,000 original miles, the 291 CI – 185 HP hemi V-8 and automatic transmission run well. The two speed automatic is smooth and the hemi engine provides more than enough power. It doesn't have a

lot of options, only a clock and radio, and it doesn't have power steering, so three point turns are equivalent to a work out at the gym!

An unusual feature is the dash mounted shift lever. I think they were only used on the '55 Mopars and in '56 DeSoto switched to push buttons.

While the car runs fine, it will need some minor work to make sure it's road worthy. And the seat upholstery will need to be redone. The steering wheel is bright green, unusual in a blue car. It turns out the blue

steering wheels faded to green on '55s. I think I'll keep the green steering wheel as it's a real conversation starter.

Loading on Rollback

The DeSoto just barely fits into my rented garage. There's only room to open one door if I hug the other wall

when I put the car away. There's no passenger side mirror, so backing into the garage is very tricky.

I went to car shows forever looking for my dream car. Now I'll be going to the shows to show it off. This DeSoto is a real head turner and it's so much fun to drive down the road and have people wave and smile as we drive by.