



FROM SWAP MEETS TO THE ROAD

Protecting Your Classic Car

Restoring any classic motor vehicle requires careful planning and research. Unfortunately, often, the last consideration is how you'll protect yourself and your investment if something goes wrong during the process.



For any classic car enthusiast, a restoration project is a journey of passion, patience, and persistence. It's a process that demands careful planning, countless hours of research, and a deep appreciation for automotive history. But amidst the excitement of sourcing parts and bringing a vintage vehicle back to life, one crucial element is often overlooked: protecting the investment while it's still being restored.

This is a story about one such journey - a 1939 Chevrolet Master sedan resurrected from swap meet finds and transformed into a beloved road-tripping companion. It's also the story of the man behind the wheel, Alan Walker, whose lifelong dedication to the hot-rodding community has given him a unique perspective, not just as a restorer, but as a classic car insurance specialist at

Assurant. His experience underscores a vital lesson for every enthusiast: the right protection is as fundamental as the right parts.

THE SPARK OF A PROJECT: FINDING A '39 CHEVROLET

Like many great classic car stories, Alan's began with a vision. In 1987, he came across an old body and chassis of a 1939 Chevrolet Master XH sedan. It was exactly what he was looking for, but it was clear from the start that it would be a long-term commitment. The car needed a tremendous amount of work, and Alan had to make it not only beautiful but safe and enjoyable to drive.

The initial phase of work wasn't spent in the garage with tools in hand, but at swap meets, sifting through piles of

parts and possibilities. "Most of the parts came from swap meets," Alan recalls. "I bought several trailer-loads of stuff at a meet back in about 1987. I took it all home and worked out what I was going to do with it. I basically knew what I wanted, and I knew that a lot of the stuff was in pretty poor condition."

Finding all the parts was a slow and deliberate process, consisting of years of trading up and refining his collection. "I slowly traded my way into a much better set of parts as I came to appreciate how much it cost to repair things," he explains. This methodical approach allowed him to acquire the best possible foundation for his build.

A PASSION BALANCED WITH LIFE

During these years of collecting, Alan shifted his focus to spend more time with his family. He had been deeply involved in New Zealand's hot-rodding scene, serving as president of the New Zealand Hot Rod Association (NZHRA) from 1978 to 1981, and was an active member of clubs like Southside Streeters and Mid West Street Rods. He now chose to devote more time to his family.

"I'd taken a break from being heavily involved in the administrative side of clubs and rodding," Alan says. "While I was collecting, I focused more on taking my kids to their sports and all those things."

This hiatus from the auto scene also gave Alan more time to focus on his hunt for parts. By 1994, with his children older and his collection of parts brimming with potential, Alan was ready to dive back into the project that had been waiting patiently in the wings.

REIGNITING THE BUILD

From chassis to certification

With parts in hand, Alan began the serious work on the Chevrolet. Drawing



Alan is still a keen hot-rodder

on years of experience helping others with their projects, he started from the ground up, redoing the chassis in his home garage. To improve the car's handling and safety, he made a significant upgrade, fitting a front suspension subframe from a 1979 HZ Holden.

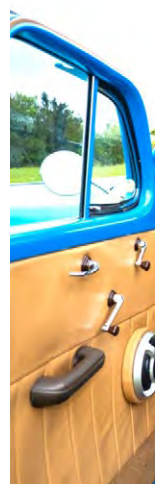
Powering the classic Chevy was a 327 cubic inch V8 engine, originally from a late-1960s Camaro, which was fully rebuilt with new parts. This was paired with a matching Chevrolet Turbo 350 transmission and a Ford Fairlane 9-inch differential

- a practical choice based on what was readily available at the time.

"I wanted a standard original factory diff that hadn't been modified," Alan notes, emphasising his focus on reliability.

Navigating the certification process for a modified vehicle can be one of the most challenging stages. Alan was fortunate to have guidance from knowledgeable friends from the start. This support network ensured that even as he built the car himself, he was adhering to the necessary standards, which would prove crucial for getting his car legally on the road.

The rolling chassis was completed with a classic touch: a set of retro Cragar





Distinctive in ANZ blue and polished Cragars

alloy wheels, with 14 x 6-inch rims on the front and wider 15 x 8-inch rims on the back, giving the sedan the perfect stance.

BRINGING THE BODY BACK TO LIFE

With the chassis complete, attention turned to the bodywork. While Alan handled much of the initial disassembly and preparation himself, he entrusted the finer panel work to a close friend, a highly skilled panel beater named Dave Loose. "I did all the simple stuff myself, but when it came down to the finer stuff, I handed that over," he admits.

The parts he had gathered from swap meets over the years were finally put to

the test. After sending four sets of doors to be stripped, each came back revealing too much rust to be salvageable. Undeterred, Dave re-skinned all the doors and the boot lid, meticulously crafting new metal to restore the Chevrolet's original lines.

The upholstery was another job for a trusted expert who was tasked with creating the interior, which was finished in high-quality leather. The final piece of the puzzle was the paint. With the help of another friend, Alan painted the car in his garage. The result is a testament to their skill and care; even after 25 years on the road, the paint remains in remarkable condition.

"The panel beating and the upholstery

were the only two jobs that I shopped out," Alan says, highlighting the hands-on nature of his project.

A SECOND CAREER BORN FROM A LIFELONG PASSION

Alan's journey as a restorer was deeply intertwined with his involvement in the car community, but his professional life was on a different track. He had a 42-year career with Telecom, starting as a telephone technician and eventually moving into service management. When he faced redundancy at age 60, his deep roots in the hot-rodding world unexpectedly opened a new door.

"I still needed a job, but no matter



Big leather seats offer great comfort on long journeys



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what I did, I couldn't get one," he recounts. "I was either overqualified or underqualified." Then, an email circulated through the hot rod clubs. Protecta Insurance, now Assurant, was looking for someone from the classic car scene with vehicle knowledge, people skills, and computer competency. Alan applied and got the job.

Now, with over a decade of experience as a customer service representative specialising in classic vehicle insurance, he has found the perfect role. His ability to connect with fellow enthusiasts on their level has been invaluable.

"I find that I know many of the customers from being actively involved in the sport," he says. "I'm able to speak to them on the same level when they ring up. People with these cars, in general, are a lot fussier, with different expectations, and I understand where they're coming from."

This empathy is the cornerstone of Assurant's approach. The company recognised early, that the classic and modified vehicle market required a different kind of understanding, one

that didn't see modifications as a liability but as part of the game. Alan's ability to assess a vehicle based on his knowledge of certification requirements allows him to provide informed, fair coverage for vehicles that other insurers might shy away from. "If you don't have the right people on board, you can't keep those customers," Alan asserts. "Your average classic car enthusiast wants to talk to a person who they know understands their perspective and where they are coming from."

THE FINAL TOUCHES: HISTORY, COINCIDENCES AND THE OPEN ROAD

In 2000, after years of dedicated work, Alan's 1939 Chevrolet was finally complete and ready for the road. The car, it turned out, had a rich history of its own. Research by a Chevrolet club member revealed it was originally manufactured in Canada, assembled in Petone in 1939, and first sold to a farmer in Hawke's Bay. It later served as a taxi in Christchurch from 1946 to 1963 before making its way to Auckland. In

a remarkable twist of fate, one of its former addresses in Auckland was just 500 meters from where Alan lives now. "It's priceless, stuff like that," he says.

Since its completion, the Chevrolet has been anything but a garage queen. It has clocked up over 150,000 km on trips across New Zealand. "We've done five major trips to the South Island, to Hot Rod Nationals and pre-1949 runs. We've been to Invercargill, Wanaka, all those sorts of places," Alan says, "We were in Motueka the night of the Kaikoura earthquake, and it got shaken up a bit!"

For Alan and his wife, the car is a source of adventure. "We've had a lot of fun in the car, and my wife and I love going on trips," he shares. While it may not be a trophy winner at car shows, its value is measured in memories and miles. "It's a well-known car, and we just appreciate it because we've had a lot of fun in it. It drives like a car from the late 70s and early 80s."

PROTECTING YOUR PASSION FROM DAY ONE

Alan Walker's story is a powerful reminder of what the classic car community is all about: passion, perseverance, and the joy of the cruise. But it also carries an important lesson learned through his dual role as both an enthusiast and an insurance expert.

Protecting a restoration project shouldn't be an afterthought. Whether it's a collection of parts sourced from swap meets or a fully restored vehicle ready for the road, your investment is vulnerable to risks like accidental fire, theft, and damage. An appropriate insurance policy provides peace of mind, ensuring that a setback doesn't mean the end of the road for your dream.

Just as Alan received good advice at the start of his project, today's restorers can benefit from working with specialists who understand their unique needs. At Assurant, our team is built on that understanding. We know the value of your classic vehicle isn't just in its parts, it's in the time, effort, and passion you pour into it.

If you're embarking on a restoration journey or have a cherished classic in your garage, don't wait to think about insurance. Protect your passion with cover that appreciates its true worth.

Contact Assurant today and discover tailored insurance solutions for your classic car.



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