

TONY D'AGOSTINO IS JUST THE CARETAKER OF THIS
"WRONG" 1970 CHALLENGER CONVERTIBLE

ROCKSOLID RELIC

STORY GEOFF STUNKARD



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FOR TONY D'AGOSTINO, HIS WIFE CINDY AND THEIR SON ROBERT, CHRYSLER HISTORY IS A WAY OF LIFE. BASED ON THE DELMARVA PENINSULA IN THE TOWN OF HARRINGTON, DELAWARE, TONY'S PARTS IS NOW ONE OF THE BIGGEST NOS/PRE-OWNED MOPAR-ONLY PARTS BUSINESSES, AND TONY IS ALSO A FOREMOST EXPERT IN THESE ITEMS.

Tony's passion is for cars that are original, not perfect. One of his most special buys is this somewhat non-descript 1970 Challenger R/T.

Tony would be the first to admit that green (even EF8 Dark Green Metallic) would not have been his first choice had he been filling out the order form. This car's sheetmetal and paint is all original, except for a vintage touch-up on one door. It was the car's remarkable condition that pushed Tony to buy the car from his friend Jim Penta, who had mentioned it was for sale during a conversation back in 1998. An unmolested big-block, four-speed convertible, Tony called Jim back the same day and said he would buy it himself.

Tony began by digging into some truly rare parts in his stash for the right stuff for this car with 65,000 miles. Stuff like the correct 1970 service battery, fresh NOS Goodyear Polyglas tires, date-coded plug wires, and other small things that would make



the car appear exactly what it was when it was new. One of just 149 examples built that first year of the E-body, there were a few other things that were left incorrect, though.

Quality control was not a strong suit for the company in this time period. Tony noticed that the weatherstripping on the driver's side rear window was no longer attached. It turns out the sheetmetal had never been drilled for the screw! The spare and jack were loose in the trunk because the trunk floor had never had the spare and jack supports welded to it. The grilles were normally painted black on R/T models, but this



grille is argent.

The interior was originally light brown. In 1972, the owner had ordered black NOS pieces from Chrysler –

seat material and door panels – plus OEM paint to color the metal and plastic parts and the convertible boot, possibly to match the top. Of everything Tony has done to make the car original, that proved to be the most challenging. The later paint was carefully stripped from the boot and other pieces. NOS brown door panels and rare NOS brown material were located to redo the seats.

The car is still equipped with the numbers-matching standard base 383/335 hp engine, which sports a single-point distributor, four-barrel Holley 625 cfm carburetor, and the factory manifold exhaust. Tony had the engine taken apart to renew the bearings, rings and gaskets, then detailed it perfectly. The rest of the driveline includes the Pistol Grip-stirred A833 four-speed and 3.23 SureGrip differential. The R/T was fairly well-optioned (AM/FM radio, four-speed, console and full wheel

covers), and our educated guess is that a dealership in its past may well have done some of the later changes we noted, possibly to sell the car despite its production line inefficiencies.

A majority of the car is correct and exactly as built, so Tony considers it an original that has never been over-molested. It is also a one-year-only model; in 1971, the performance versions of the Challenger convertible would fall by the wayside. Only standard non-R/T models could be had with the top down, though a sunroof was one of the options on the Dodge E-body.

Tony and Cindy have several cars they are able to drive around, so the Challenger is reserved for nice evening rides like those shown here. While a perfectionist (and Tony is a fitting representation of that based on some of his other rides) would be very tempted to "correct the mistakes," this car has personality. **A/E**

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