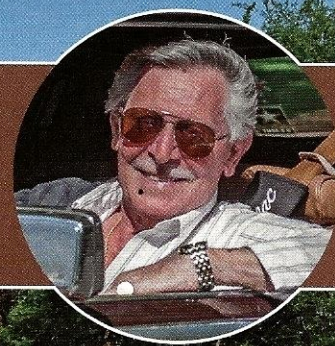


SONNY SCHWABER 1978 ELDORADO



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— Sonny Schwaber



Sonny Schwaber proudly served the City of New York for 27 years as a New York City police officer with over 5000 arrests. It was a passion for him, but there was one passion that not even the badge got in the way of — building, restoring and driving cars, especially Cadillacs.

"I loved Cadillacs my entire life," Sonny said. "I've had over 30 Cadillacs."

Sonny remembers being in love with cars since he was a child. The exterior of a well-made car was always beautiful to him, but he found the engine even more interesting. "I just liked mechanics," Sonny said. He grew up on 23rd St. between 1st and 2nd Ave. in Manhattan surrounded by the landmark skyscrapers the city is known for, along with the steady flow of hustle and bustle traffic that exposed him to a variety of automobiles, leaving him in awe with each passing year. A nearby Chevrolet dealership was one of his favorite spots to take a peek in every once in a while.

"I'd see the years going by," Sonny said. "and I'd be like, 'Wow, these cars are getting better and better,' but that (fascination) was already in me."

Sonny started building race cars when he got older and joined the Army when he was 18 years old. He was stationed in the United States, which gave him the opportunity to keep looking for car parts. Anything he found useful was sent back home to his father for his '58 Oldsmobile engine. Sonny earned an honorable discharge from the military in 1963 and became a New York City police officer a year later. It was the beginning of a successful career, but it also marked the beginning of a new aspect he got involved in, which was customizing Cadillac show cars.

"The first one I bought was a 1955 convertible," Sonny said. "It was gorgeous."

The crown of his achievements is his 1978 Eldorado that he's owned for 45 years and named "Baby." He came across it at his friend's body shop on Tremont Avenue. It stood at 19 feet long without the wheels, Sonny said. It also didn't have any interior, but that didn't stop Sonny from falling in love with it.

"The first time I saw it, I said, 'Jimmy, I have to have the car,'" Sonny said. "He said, 'It's a lot of money,' and I said, 'I don't care about the money. I want that car.'"

The Eldorado was Sonny's two months later

when he brought it to his home in Bayside, Queens. "My wife flipped," Sonny said. He sold the additional four Cadillacs he had and extended his garage to make room for it. It was one quarter-inch short of 20 feet, but Sonny made it a foot and a half longer. A cushioned interior was also added that makes any passenger feel the warm embrace of what it truly means to drive in luxury. The car also shows off a well-balanced color combination of western saddle fire mist and brown fire mist.

"I picture it ahead of time," Sonny said. "When I make up a car or do something to it, I know exactly what it's going to do."

The car also runs on a 425 cubic-inch engine carrying 185 horsepower and 340 pounds of torque. Onlookers would be wise to have their sunglasses on when looking underneath the hood on a sunny day. "I love chrome," Sonny said. The car features a chrome alternator, A/C compressor, air cleaner, valve covers, a high-pressure steel-braded A/C brake and water-power-steering lines. The ignition wires and wire harness are also covered with stainless steel. Sonny also added several additional features to the car, such as an Edelbrock carburetor, American classic tires made by Coker, front CV axles, stainless fuel line, as well as an aluminum radiator and finned transmission oil pan. There are also a few additional options featured on Sonny's Eldorado including a lighted key entry and electric rear-tire gas cover. The car won several first-place show-car awards over the past 45 years, including the People's Choice Award at the 2015, 2017 and '18 Spring Cruise Ins. Onlooker can also see a picture of a rose on the rear passenger-side window if they look close enough. It's for his wife Rosemarie who has enjoyed every minute of being in The Villages with Sonny since they moved down 16 years ago. She teaches jazzercise, while Sonny still actively partakes in his love for cars. He's a member of The Villages Classic Automobile Club, Vintage Car Club and the Cadillac and LaSalle Club, an international car club for Cadillac enthusiasts, of which Sonny has been a member for 50 years.

"I just love cars with a passion," Sonny said. "I still work on my cars. I do everything I possibly can."

