

# LARRY RUPPEL

OUR PRESIDENT FOR 20 YEARS!

So what's the story on that 1935 pick 'em up Chevy truck in the front yard of the Compound? That's the truck Larry played in as a kid back in Nebraska in the 1950s. He brought it out to Colorado in 1975 and there it sits – a monument to a different (some would say better) time and a great Christmas ornament.

Larry started life on a small ranch in Taylor, Nebraska. He went to school in a one-room schoolhouse near the ranch through the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. His family then moved to Dos Palos, California where they stayed for about a year, then moved back to Nebraska (Norfolk). When he was a high school Junior, the family moved to Arvada where Larry became part of the first graduating class of Arvada West High School in 1964.

Larry attended CU Boulder and Hillsborough College in Festus, Missouri after which he returned to Denver and worked as a machine operator/precision grinder for Sundstrand Aviation in Denver for 13 years. In 1978-79, while still at Sundstrand, he started his own business (manufacturing animal tattoo equipment) which he operated for 35 years along with all his other interesting pursuits. Larry still works (part-time) at Ram Grinding in Arvada.

Larry met his wife, Kathy, in late 1967 while cruising Denver's 16<sup>th</sup> street, then a popular place like the main strip in *American Graffiti*. Kathy was driving a new ('67) Mercury Cougar; Larry had a '66 Corvette, 427/4-speed, which was his first car (in his name). They fell in love, got married and have been together for 52 years. They adopted two children, Christina and Nick. Nick has been part of the RMOC scene for many years. His wife, Jaime, is the editor of the RMOC newsletter.

In 1968, Larry bought another car – a brand new Mustang fastback, 390/4-speed. It was Presidential Blue with that characteristic white design on the sides, pictured below.

Larry's father had two cars which Larry later owned - a black 1963 Ford 500 XL 2-door hardtop and a 1966 Oldsmobile 442 two-door sedan (post), bench seats, painted Autumn Bronze with a white top. Through a trade arrangement with his dad, Larry got the 442 in 1974; he still owns this car. He has since painted the 442 Fusion Orange, a Corvette color suggested by Kathy, and made lots of custom changes, including replacing the stock engine with a 455 CID. Larry's favorite car was the '63 Ford 500; his favorite Oldsmobile is the 442.

Larry's other cars included a 1969 Mustang, which he had for a year, and the 1966 Oldsmobile Cutlass convertible which he bought in 1990 – the one most of us remember as the one painted a striking "canary" yellow with the white top. In 2012, Larry sold the convertible to an Oldsmobile aficionado from Australia who crated it up and shipped it 8,000 miles across the ocean to a new home.

Larry's current cars are: (1) a Magenta colored 1963 Hearse (not Hurst) Olds, which includes a matching steel coffin on a custom trailer that Larry built; (2) his Olds 442; and (3) a 1996 Oldsmobile Bravada.

Larry used the Hearse for a mobile auto repair business he created called Autopsy. He once drag raced the 455 CID Hearse at Bandimere Speedway, filled with his business tools and equipment, and clocked a respectable 18-second run (equivalent to 17 seconds at normal/lower elevations). At a Christmas parade in Longmont back in 1994, the Hearse and coffin trailer received "interesting" publicity in the local paper. Today, the car stands tall (literally) at the Compound thanks to a lift job he performed some time ago, with "Not for Higher" painted on the side. (Clever pun).

Larry's cars have received awards at car shows fairly consistently, although he said awards are only meaningful if there is a story behind them or the award is unexpected. For example, he entered the '66 Cutlass convertible in the 1999 Dallas Nationals, but it broke down. Not to be discouraged, he rented a car (not an Oldsmobile), set up a display of parts and spirit items for judging, and received a Third Place and the "Hard Luck" award for his effort.

Larry joined RMOC in 1987. He had attended a car show and was impressed with Bob Petri's 1965 Oldsmobile 442 convertible. Bob told Larry about the club and he decided to become a member. Larry became very active in the club, starting out as Activities Chair, later becoming Secretary and then President. He has served as President of the club intermittently, and sometimes consecutively, for a total of 20 – yes, *twenty*, years.

Larry has been a member of other car clubs but that didn't last long. He has remained a member of RMOC for 33 years, mainly because of the special people in the club. Members value their cars but are generally non-judgmental about them and are not critical of each other as they are in some other clubs. There is a sense that "cars are not everything," he says. Larry feels that RMOC is a social club first and a car club second. Spouses and friends are welcome and you don't have to own an Oldsmobile to be a member or forfeit your membership if you get rid of your Oldsmobiles. There is a lot of variation in years, models, styles and colors of Oldsmobiles which makes it interesting. And club activities offer something for everyone.

Larry has been a "uniter rather than a divider," to borrow a phrase, which begins to explain why he has served as President so many times. He has opened the Compound for club gatherings (summer picnic, Men's Potluck, car clinics, etc.) which have always included friends and families of the members and has done so for 20 consecutive years. This year, he opened the Compound to celebrate RMOC's 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary and for a couple drive-in music gatherings, featuring the renown Moses Walker and the Clam Daddys (sic), at a time when such gatherings were more important than ever to members.

We appreciate Larry and Kathy Ruppel and thank them for helping make the club what it is today and what it will be tomorrow.



