

The Plymouth That Runs on Flower Power

A car-lover tracked down the dream car of her 1960s youth—a Barracuda Mod Top



The 1969 Barracuda Mod Top basking in the afternoon sun at the Pylesville, Md., farm of Kim Barnes. *Matt Roth for The Wall Street Journal*

By: A.J. Baime, Aug. 15, 2017 9:19 a.m. ET

Kim Barnes, from Pylesville, Md., the event director for the Art in Motion Concours d'Elegance at New York's Monticello Motor Club, on her 1969 Plymouth Barracuda Mod Top, as told to A.J. Baime.

Growing up, I loved cars, and in 1969, I used to ride my bike 2 miles to a Chrysler dealership in Des Moines, Iowa, to see this new vehicle in the window. It was a yellow Plymouth Barracuda Mod Top, and it had this gorgeous floral design on the roof and seats. [Plymouth was a division of Chrysler.]



The story was, Chrysler executives in the 1960s realized that women were buying their own cars rather than their husbands buying cars for them. More and more women were getting jobs and making choices for themselves, and Chrysler wanted a car that would appeal to them.

Company executives came up with this idea of floral roofs and seats, and partnered with another company that specialized in shower curtains and tablecloths to make patterned vinyl that did not fade in the sun. Chrysler called the car Mod Top, and advertised it as "The Car You Wear."

The Mod Top was not originally a success, so only 937 1969 Mod Top Barracudas were made. It took me about 40 years to find mine. I passed on two six-cylinder Mod Tops, but then, just before Christmas in 2015, I saw one with the more powerful V-8, for sale on [eBay](#). My husband already thought I had too many cars—I have a small collection—so I was reluctant to bring it up. In the end, I could not help myself.

The car was in Texas. I bought it sight-unseen and had it transported to my house. My daily driver is a 2017 Jeep Wrangler Unlimited Sahara, and this Mod Top cost roughly the same as that car.

Six months later, I took it to the [Carlisle Chrysler Nationals](#), in Carlisle, Pa.—a huge gathering for Chrysler fans. There was one other 1969 Barracuda Mod Top at the show, and the owner had the original paperwork. When I looked at it, I could not believe my eyes.

His car had been purchased in 1969 from the same Iowa dealership that I used to go to as a kid, where I first saw a Mod Top. Chrysler made so few of these, and this one had the same yellow paint, so it had to be the exact car. It was a wonderful moment, for me and my Mod Top.

Kim Barnes with her 1969 Plymouth Barracuda Mod Top, on her farm in Pylesville, Md. Ms. Barnes has been a fan of wheels since she was old enough to ride a bike. She bought the Mod Top in 2015.

