

# Gremlin Story, by Marc Goldblatt

## Classic-Technologies.com

On February 1, 2016, I had an hour for lunch and I needed to ship out a Classic Technologies fuse box that day. However, I was out of paper preventing me from printing out the manuals I include with each sale. The plan was to buy paper, run home, print out the documents, close-up the package, and bring it to the post office. The first place I stopped surprisingly didn't have paper so I ended up cutting through my neighborhood to go to another store. I happened to drive by a house that was having a detached garage being torn down and saw an old filthy car parked on the side of the road. It was a 1974 AMC Gremlin with a 232 inline six motor. I continued my errand and rushed back to look at the car. I saw that it had 48k miles, no rust, and was all original. I asked if it was for sale and was told yes, and they would take anything for it. They wanted it gone as soon as possible; clearly not knowing the value of a classic car in this condition.

It had been parked since 1985 and the motor was frozen, one of the wheels was frozen and there were no keys or title to the car. First I offered \$500 and they reiterated, we will take anything for it. I went to the ATM and returned asking if they would take \$250; and they said \$300 and its yours. The deal was done and the whole time I was thinking what am I going to tell my wife because I have two other classic cars and one that is still not finished after a few years of working on it. But if I felt if I waited another second I would miss out on this deal. Later that day they were offered \$1000 for the car but they signed a bill of sale over to me and honored our deal. I had the car flat bedded down the street to my house and started to clean up the car before my wife saw it. She didn't give me too much grief knowing how much I paid for it and I have a pretty good track record for finishing whatever I start. I thought it could be a great high school car for my son who was 12 at the time, or just do a quick flip after getting it running and going.



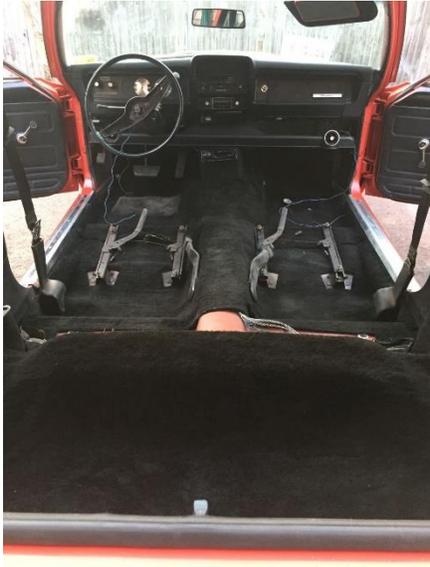
Since the car was like a time piece with low miles and not a super desirable car, I decided to do a stock restoration. I tried every trick in the book to free the engine with it still in the car, to no avail. I pulled the engine and once it was apart, it became obvious that was the right and necessary thing to do. I got all new rings, bearings, seals, fuel pump, water pump and rebuilt the carburetor and head. I put the engine back together with the help of the two master engine builders below, and added a fresh coat of paint.



There was a small rust hole under the battery which I fixed while the engine was out. Since the engine looked so nice, I figured I might as well paint the engine compartment. After the engine was in, I poured a few gallons of gas into the tank, but it wouldn't start. Gas was not getting to the carburetor. I looked at the new fuel filter and it was black inside when it was supposed to be clear. I happened to tap on the gas tank and my finger went through it. I called all the AMC parts suppliers for a Gremlin gas tank, but I was told I would not find one and had to repair the one I had. I cut out the rotten section of the tank and had nice access to sandblast the tank clean. I welded in the patch panel and then lined the inside of the tank and it was like new or better.



After finally getting the car running through the fuel system, it turned out that the radiator was leaking and had to be replaced. The kids and I love to crank the tunes in the Triumph so I put together a sound system using an old school amp off ebay, some inexpensive speakers, and a smart phone ready head unit. I built the speaker enclosure to the specs of the speakers and it ended up sounding amazing. I also installed it in a way that the car could be returned to stock if desired.



At this point the car was basically brand new and to not have a nice paint job would have been a waste of all my effort on this project. I painted the car outside, and was very happy with how it came out. But I ended up with a big, but manageable, setback. I thought the safe thing to do was to not move the car while the paint was soft, and left it outside overnight. Unfortunately, that was a bad move and ended up having to scuff and add extra coat or two again. But this time I did it in my garage. It wasn't as big of a deal because I didn't unmask the car and I had plenty of extra paint. The original decals were available and after putting them on, it really surpassed my expectations of how the car would come out and the end of the marathon was near.



After everything in the car was working properly, I went to the DMV to get the car registered. After getting the plates and putting them on the car, I was quickly going nowhere with a dead battery in the DMV parking lot. I called a friend for a jump and later found that the voltage regulator was bad and problem was solved.

After being done with the car, I didn't put too much effort into trying to sell it. I also have a TR6 which is a two seater and I can only take one family member at a time. The Gremlin is automatic and a 4 seater, so the whole family can go out together, and my wife can even drive it. It gets lots of attention (good and bad), but I enjoy it because it's different. A few months back, it caught the eye of a film producer he persuaded me to let him use it in their film. The scenes were filmed the other night along with my TR6, and was an awesome experience being on a movie set for both my 13yr old son and I.

The whole time working on the car, I was concerned about putting too much time and a few dollars into a Gremlin. However, the enjoyment that it has brought the family has made it so worthwhile and then some. Plus, in going to some car shows, there are lots of Porsches, Ferrari's, Camaros, LBC's ... but there is always only one Gremlin. The day I found it, my lunch ended up being well over an hour, but I do think I got the Classic Technologies fuse box out that day. But if it wasn't for all those unique circumstances, I doubt I would have had this opportunity and experience.

