



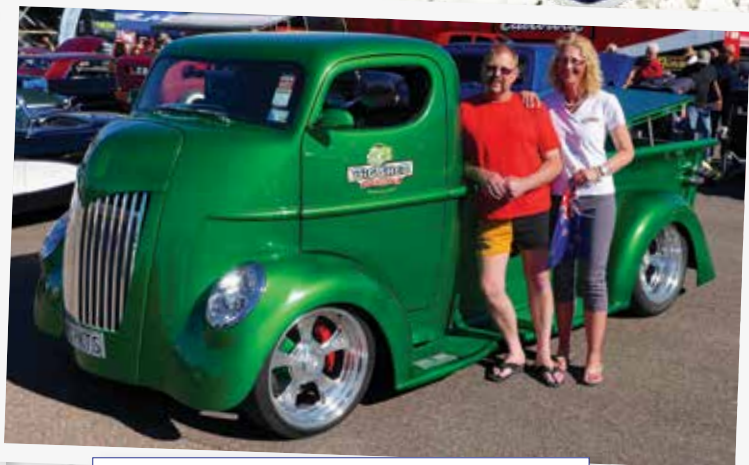
The Ultimate Roadie

Diary of Big Shed Customs trip to the USA



From Craig Stare

Mark Stead is a man who not only has big dreams but has the talent and desire to carry them out to fruition. Over a period of a few years Mark created this wild truck out of nothing more than a few sheets of panel steel. Each year he'd bring it to Muscle Car Madness to display its progress. The finished product was featured in New Zealand Hot Rod magazine in April 2013. This rod is by no means the only NZ hot rod to have been taken to the States to compete. John Reid built a top car for Steve Payne and was right up there with the best in America. Mike Roberts probably got the least recognition for his creative talents with his amazing A pickup, although not the reason for the trip. Mark's truck has probably done better than any other exported Kiwi hot rod. This article has been compiled to demonstrate that if you want to do something bad enough and you have the will to give up everything you own, and have an amazing supportive wife (Tania) you can make it happen. Follow along and enjoy in the events that unfolded during this epic journey.....



The happy couple realising that all their dreams had come true. Photo credit Roy Garibalbi.

Tuesday 27th October 2015

Flew Dallas - LA

Truck arrived but not checked by US Customs.

Wednesday 28th October 2015

Went to Topping Events in Costa Mesa and introduced ourselves to Marshall Topping, Jason De Lao and Ron Keilwitz.

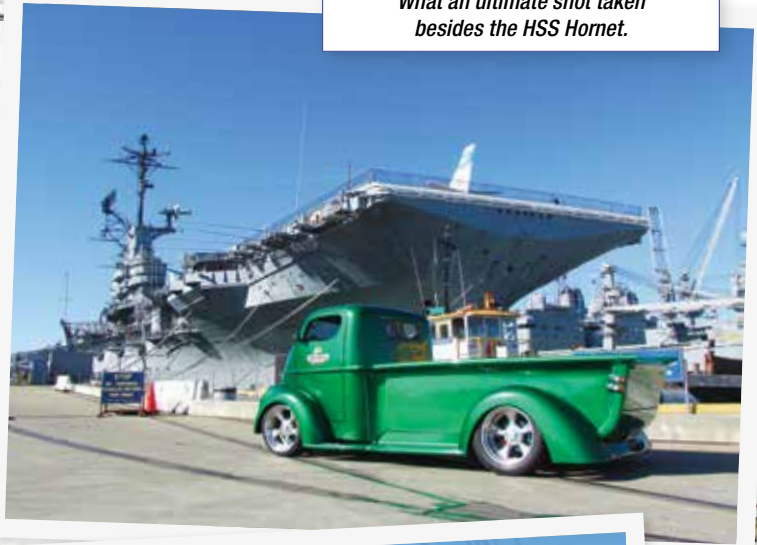
Thursday 29th October 2015

Truck has been released from Customs and is at Kiwi Shipping in Compton. Owens Transport in Christchurch had flooded the engine trying to start it while loading it into the container. Two sets of spark plugs later and we were on the road.

Friday 30th October 2015

California has had an extended summer so the temperature was not as cool as we had planned. The radiators in the truck are under the deck and are air cooled from underneath. The air temperature this day was 30 degrees, combined with the heat from the vehicles on the freeway and the congested nature of LA freeways, the radiators weren't coping. As this was a driving holiday, a modification was needed. We purchased a radiator for a '57 Thunderbird as it was the closest fit to the room we have and would work on a plan to install it tomorrow.

What an ultimate shot taken besides the HSS Hornet.



Just cruising the Las Vegas strip. Steve Curle almost got a ticket for using his cell phone while driving 'til they figured out it was right hand drive!



A radiator replacement was required to cure overheating. It's a very hot country, especially if you are parked on the freeway.

Saturday 31st October 2015

Left Pomona at 4:15am and headed to Huntington Beach for the Donut Derelicts casual hot rod gathering. (as they call it on their website). This was held in the car park of a shopping centre. We'd been told to be there at 5am, which we were. There were already 40 cars parked up when we arrived. Everyone has to be gone by 9am when the shops open and by that time there were 250 cars parked up.

Ron from Topping Events was at Donut Derelicts and he offered the use of their workshop to fit the new radiator. Our plan A had been the carpark of the motel so this was a much better plan. Ron stayed and we are grateful for his help. The radiator fitted like a glove and we were back on the road. Jason from Topping Events invited us to his home for Halloween. The best outfit was his sons, he was dressed as a strip of bacon. The news late week had been how bad bacon was for you.

Sunday 1st November 2015

We had been told the Balboa Car Show was well worth a visit so we headed there. A great group of people and cars. We were honoured to win the Best in Show trophy. They had a great free raffle with interesting prizes which were presented by Mike Brewer, who according to his website is a well known presenter of television motoring programmes.

We went for a drive to Huntington Beach and met up with Mel Craig from The Detailing Pros. He offered to work his magic on the holograms on the truck's paint. A very clever tradesman.



Part of the 'Hot Haulers' display at Good Guys, Pleasanton.



Great recognition at prizegiving time at Pleasanton.



Discussing the plan of attack to fix the radiator, Ron Keilwitz to left, Mark in the middle and Marshall Topping to right.



At Good Guys Scottsdale Arizona, more awards



Judging a portion of the show.

Monday 2nd – Friday 6th November 2015

Headed to Las Vegas to attend the SEMA show. Steve Curle from Kiwi Shipping helped us with registration, shuttle passes and a general how-to guide for the first timers. A massive event covering more than 9290 square metres. We spent 8 hours each day, walking around the show. SEMA is not open to the public, just trades people. Met up with Gene and Lo Chomowycz from Graphic Express, Marc Mitchell from Marcs Cars, Dunedin, Tony O'Donnell, South Island Hub Manager for Repco and numerous other Kiwis. Did the touristy visits to Counts Kustoms and Ricks Restorations. We were issued with a traffic infringement. This is our posting from Facebook. There are a couple of photos of stop lights included with the photos. Not the lights in the story though.

The Clark County Sheriff Department Incident.

Steve Curle, Kiwi Shipping and Mark went for a cruise down the Las Vegas strip last night in the truck. Eventually, Mark realised the blue and red flashing lights behind him were meant for him. Mr Plod approached the LEFT side of the truck and said to Steve "You were talking on your phone". "Yes but I don't have the steering wheel". "I saw you on the phone". "Yes but I don't have the steering wheel, he does". And pointed to Mark on the RIGHT hand side of the truck. We have been in similar situations with our lefthand drive Chev Impala at home and know Mr Plods don't find this anywhere near as funny as we do. A discussion was then had as to why there is no visible VIN number and how the registration system works in NZ. Mark's answer to where are your insurance papers was "you'll have to ask Tanya", who stayed back to do the washing. Mr Plod issued Mark with running a red light, which he didn't but we guess he had to save face. It's just funny. At one part on the way to Las Vegas, we were travelling at 148 km/hr and despite the NZ police advertising, we didn't die. In fact our usual travelling speed was 120km/hr and not once did we die, nor did anyone who passed us.

Saturday 7th November 2015

Headed back to LA, in convey with Steve Curle from Kiwi Shipping, via the 'scenic' route rather than the freeway. Saw lots of cool stuff.

Sunday 8th November 2015

Attended the Topping Events-run Long Beach Swapmeet. Ran in to Andy Smith from Smith Automotive in Levin who do some of our certifying and ex Blenheim girl Donna Smith who now lives in Australia. Began the drive to Pleasanton, San Francisco, staying in Santa Barbara for the night.

Monday 9th November 2015

Spent some time with Paul Bragg at his home in Paso Robles. In 2011 Paul was inducted in to the Grand National Hot Rod Show Hall of Fame. Mark met Paul in 2009 at a workshop run by Lazze Janssen and they have kept in touch.

Tuesday 10th November 2015

Arrived in Pleasanton, San Francisco for the GoodGuys 26th Autumn Get Together.

Wednesday 11th November 2015

Spent some time with Lazze Janssen from Lazze Metal Shaping.

Thursday 12th November 2015

Did a bit of sightseeing and visited some museums, including the HSS Hornet.

Friday 13th November 2015

Registered for the GoodGuys show. We are entered in the Truck section, which is inside so it was a 4.72km walk back to our accommodation.

Saturday 14th – Sunday 15th November 2015

Met John Pelzers, brother of Willie with the 1948 Chev COE Transporter. Awarded the GoodGuys Hot Hauler prize. As we were inside we were unable to be part of the prizegiving. For the first time in ages, it rained on Sunday. We have included a photo of a rubbish bin outside an Auto Zone store. It was full of wiper blade packages.

Monday 16th November 2015

Left Pleasanton at 3:30am for the long drive back to Huntington Beach. Called in and saw Lawrence Bryant, a Blenheim lad who works for AutoCraft Pros in Camarillo. Did the shop tour at Chip Foose's. We forgot to take of photo of our parking there. We were late so we parked in the first available spot, the main entrance, hopped out and locked the doors. True power parking.

Tuesday 17th November 2015

Left Huntington Beach at 4am for another long drive to Scottsdale, Arizona for the GoodGuys 18th Southwest Nationals.

Wednesday 18th November 2015

Had a look about the area

Thursday 19th November 2015

Registered for the show and joined in the show tour cruise. Started at 10am and finished at 4:30pm, 115 miles for the day. (I have included a copy of the itinerary) We met Gary Meadors who founded GoodGuys.

Friday 20th November – Sunday 22nd November 2015

Over 3500 are registered for the show and looks like every one of them turned up. A local TV show, PositiveSide TV interviewed Mark. Met up with Gene and Lo Chomowycz from Graphic Express and helped them to pack up their stall on Sunday. Every Saturday there is a McDonald's Rock 'n' Roll car show, another informal gathering of about 400 vehicles and motorbikes, again in a shopping centre car park. This one runs from 4pm - 8pm. The truck was awarded The Gazette Pick and Way Cool awards, one of only two vehicles to win two awards at the show. Photos were taken by the GoodGuys editor for a GoodGuys magazine feature. We didn't win the Long Distance away, that went to a gentleman from Canada. We met Mr March from the 2015 SnapOn Tools Tech Toys Calendar which Mark and the truck also feature in.

Monday 23rd November 2015

Much needed quiet day.

Tuesday 24th November 2015

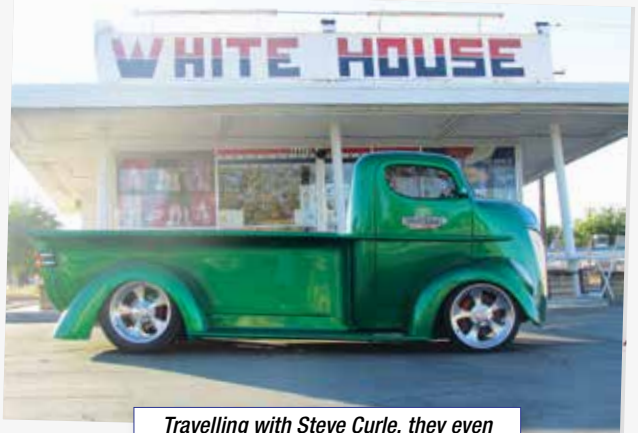
Left Scottsdale and headed to Pomona via San Diego.

Wednesday 25th November 2015

We loaded the truck and waved it goodbye on its trip to Texas for the winter. The truck will stay with Mark's brother until the middle of the year when we will head back and take it back to Kiwi Shipping for its journey home. The truck has an EPA permit to stay in the US for 365 days from date of landing. We drove nearly 6000km in five weeks. This doesn't include the 1000km we did in Texas in a rental car in the first week.

Would we do it again? Hell yes, once the new roadster is finished. We met some good, honest and all-round nice people. A couple of wankers who were full of their own piss and importance but we didn't have to spend long with them.

We would like to specifically thank:
Steve Mitchell – Big Shed Customs
Marshall Topping – Topping Events
Jason De Lao – Topping Events
Ron Keilwitz – Topping Events
Steve Curle and his team – Kiwi Shipping
Peter McGuire – driver extraordinaire, Amarillo, Texas



Travelling with Steve Curle, they even called into the "White House".



Subsequent Show Awards at the World of Wheels Custom Auto Show in Birmingham, Alabama. 1st place - ISCA Total Custom (International Show Car Association) and 1st place - Best Truck



A rare pic now with Gary Meadors before his untimely passing, Mark Stead and Gary enjoying the moment.