

WOMEN OF AMC

"Javlynn" Sue Leair

Quite a few people ask me how my love of AMC cars, particularly Gremlins started. It was November of 1982, and I was 13 years old. My mom and I were going Christmas shopping at a craft store and we parked across from a maroon Gremlin with large 12 inch gold gremlin guys on the upper quarter panels. At first I thought the car was ugly, but by the time I was 14 years old I wanted a Gremlin, was keeping journals of how many I saw per day, and was even interested in other AMC cars. Since I couldn't afford a car, I collected parts and displayed them in my bedroom.



I first joined OAMC and AMO in the summer of 1987 after attending the Richard Teague Meet in Springfield, OH. Thinking I died and went to the big AMC parking lot in the sky, I appreciated being in the company of 100 plus AMCs on the field and being able to meet Mr. Teague in person at the banquet following the show.

It took me 12 years to finally find and afford the perfect Gremlin. Talk about patience. To this day, I still display parts in my bedroom (2 fenders, 9 grilles, 1 steering wheel)... and I even have a few in the spare room (2 grilles and a hubcap).

I started searching for a Gremlin in 1994 and finally found the perfect one (for me) in summer of 1996, a period of 2 years. The day before I left to go to the AMO international in Cedar Rapids, IA, I got a call from a man in the Wisconsin Dells area saying that he has a Gremlin in original, pristine condition for sale.

At first, I was doubtful since the few others that I had talked to said pretty much the same thing only to find that the cars had rust and modifications. After the show in Iowa, I headed north to the Dells area to check the car out. The second the owner removed the car cover, I was in awe and had a strong feeling that would be the car. Before I was 100 percent sure, I checked the car out in more detail. A couple weeks later on Aug. 10, 1996 a truck and trailer with the Gremlin showed up in front of the house. Once I got the car in the garage, I remember standing in front of it and gazing at it for at least five minutes not believing that I was finally an AMC owner. My



mom once caught me in the act of standing in the garage and staring at the car and said that she could tell that I really love it. The only work I had to have done to the car before driving it on the road was to have the all four drum brakes completely re-done. A fresh battery was a must as well.

In May of 1998 I purchased a '69 Rambler, so I could have an AMC that I could drive to Kenosha, since I wanted to keep the Gremlin a low miles car. The Rambler was a reliable car and ran well, until June 2003 when the tranny fell out and the 199 cid six cylinder engine was getting tired with 146,000 miles. Plans for a 232 cid transplant, a new paint job, a new sound system, a new interior, etc., etc. fell through. I sold the Rambler last February (a year ago) to Tom Bunsey.

Kenosha 2002 was a blast. I was going to take the Rambler, but I was having tranny problems with that car. So Gremster went instead. That was Gremster's first "National" and the car won a silver award. On the way to Kenosha, the Gremlin turned 20,000 miles somewhere in Indiana. In Gary, IN, however, traffic slowed down to a crawl. Weather was HOT...98 degrees

and 98% humidity. Our bottled water was hot enough to make tea with, the air conditioner didn't work, and those black vinyl seats didn't help, either. By the time Ken and I reached the Illinois border, I was wondering whether or not I should call 911 to help pry us off the black vinyl seats. Other than that, the trip to and from Kenosha was uneventful, and Gremster ran flawlessly.

Gremster's specs:

Name: "Gremster" - Named after the Gremlin in the Kodak commercial shown on TV during the mid to late 90s.

Mileage in Aug. '96: just under 17,000 miles

Mileage on my way to Kenosha in July 2002: turned over 20,000 miles

Mileage Feb. 2003: just under 21,000 miles

Engine: 258 cid 6 banger

Tranny: Auto. on the tree

Built: April of 1973

Equipment/Options: A/C, power steering, non-power brakes, AM radio, rubber floor matting, bench seats, black vinyl interior

Stored during the winter: in one of those plastic, inflatable car bubbles

On April 4, 2003, I purchased a '74 Javelin in Bloomington, Indiana. That day was a beautiful, mild day in the mid 60s, and I had the window rolled down enjoying the breeze as I cruised the Indiana highway in my new ride. My folks and I stopped in Indianapolis to have dinner with some friends of Ken and to spend the night. When we left the next morning, it was cold, and the mild temperatures of the previous day were a memory. In fact, it was so cold that there were a few snow flakes falling from the sky. Since the Javelin was a California car, one of the previous owners had bypassed the heater core, so the heater didn't work. Good thing that I brought my winter coat with the gloves still in the pockets. I could even see my breath inside the car. Meanwhile, Ken and mom in the nicely heated Dodge Intrepid got a message on the two way radio, so we stopped at the closest Target to get a blanket. As I was driving, I noticed that the car was surging and running a bit rich and a bit rough. Our next stop was at McDonald's to get some hot cocoa and to get some feeling in my fingers again. Despite being quite a bit of a freeze baby, I toughed it and drove the heaterless Javelin for the entire six hour trip.

The trip to get the Javelin titled is a whole different story. On the way over to the title and license bureau in Parma, the Javelin surged and ran real rough but it made the trip. At the title and license bureau Ken and I got the usual BS associated with getting a car from out of state titled. We had to rush three times between the title place and the license place and wait a while, as well. The car had to get an "out of state" inspection which consisted of making sure the VIN number on the car matched the VIN number on the title. Ken pulled the Javelin up to the curb next to the license bureau for this inspection, and the group of guys hanging out next to the building were commenting that it was a nice car. After running back to the title bureau and getting the title in my name, Ken and I went back to the license bureau for the second time to get plates. I was able to get vanity historical plates with my first choice, JAVLYNN. On the way back from the bureaus, the car was running even worse. In fact, I let Ken drive, and he had to put the car in neutral and give it gas in order to keep it running. About four blocks from Ken's place, he asks me how it felt having the car in my name. When I answered that it felt great, the Javelin died. Ken and a few onlookers got the vehicle pushed into the corner deli where we sat for three and a half hours until AAA showed with a flatbed. Ken pried the distributor cap off, was greeted by a layer of black, soot-like material on the inside of the cap and noticed that nothing was left of the points.



A few weeks later when I needed to get pictures of the car for the insurance company, I noticed that the car was in a different position in the garage. I turned to Ken and asked him if that meant that it was running again. He smiled. Ken had replaced the points, distributor cap, and spark plugs the previous night. I was able to start the car, pull it out of the garage, let it warm up, and snap a few pictures of it.

Work done on the Javelin since I got it:

new Edelbrock 4 barrel carb. (the badly worn original carb was responsible for the bad surging), new rechromed back bumper, marker lights replaced, tune up - new points, new neon green plug wires, replaced rear main seal, replaced radiator, replaced water control valve.

Last summer, it seemed like the Javelin was at my mechanics more than it was at Ken's place, where I normally store it. The main problem I had with it was the surging and stalling. I would be driving it and it would be surging. When I would stop at a light, the car would occasionally stall. This certainly made the vehicle less enjoyable to drive. At a cruise-in at the city hall in Eastlake, a priest rode around in a golf cart and blessed the cars. Ken looked down and asked if holy water was green. Apparently the blessing didn't help the Javelin as the radiator weeped antifreeze. Needless to say, I followed Don my mechanic to his house and left the car there. The radiator that is presently in the Javelin came out of Don's AMX since he was already planning to upgrade the AMX. The second time I took the Javelin to Don's was to replace the badly worn original 2 barrel carb that was responsible for the surging. Since there was a 4 barrel carb manifold in the car's trunk when I bought it, the logical thing was to replace the 2 barrel with a 4 barrel. I was able to drive the car to the Immke meet and Teague meet, but it still surged. A week later, Ken started the Javelin which was running real rough and missing. Despite fighting with and adjusting the carb, Ken couldn't get it to run properly, and the Javelin sat in the driveway while we went to the AMO Nationals in Michigan. That first Carter that was put on the car had a bad casting. So the car went back to Don's a third time. The second Carter carb also had the same problem, but this time Don could see the bad casting just by looking at it. Ken and I finally decide on an Edelbrock carb, which ended up working wonders on the car. It ran like a whole different car when I got it back.



Javelin's specs:

Name: Still in the process of coming up with a nick name.

Mileage Feb. 2004: 139,000 miles

Engine: 304 cid V-8

Tranny: Auto. - Torque-command floor and console

Built: possibly July of 1974 - one of the last Javelin's built

Equipment/Options: A/C, power steering, dual exhaust, black vinyl interior, black vinyl top, rally pac instruments, twin grip, tinted glass

I also create calendars. The 2004 calendar is still available, while the 2005 will be available in July. I have on-line stores: Javlynn Sue's AMC Store www.cafeshops.com/Javlynnnsue & The Grease Gremlins' Garage www.cafeshops.com/GreaseGremlins
You can see my Gremlin and visit my web page at <http://www.bge.net/kwalk/gremster/>