

SPORTS & EXOTIC WORKSHOP

RESTORATION PROFILE



A LONG TIME WITH A LLOYD

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY DANIEL STROHL

The thunderstorm came unexpectedly while Harold Rice and his new wife, Lucille, were in Gettysburg.

Unaccustomed to the local weather, and sweltering in the August afternoon, they left the windows of their car—their new car, bought just a few months before this trip—open when they entered some long-forgotten museum, and emerged from that museum to find the car flooded.

“There were a good two inches of water in it,” Harold and Lucille recalled of that day in 1959. “We bailed it out the best we could.”

Fortunately, their new car had a rubber floormat rather than carpet. And, to be

honest, a 1958 Lloyd Alexander doesn’t have much in the way of floor space. Still, one heck of a thing to happen on your honeymoon. To make matters worse, a few days later, they found rice plants growing up around the floormat—a few stray grains must’ve flown into the car after the wedding and taken advantage of the soaking they got.

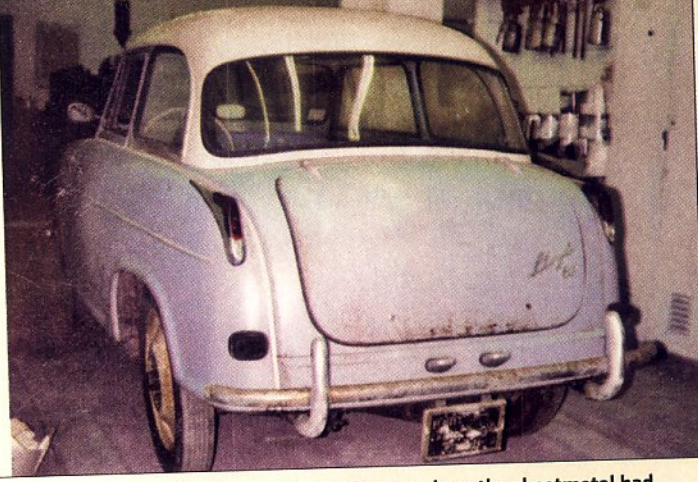
Harold and Lucille, lifelong residents of Wilmington, Vermont, have plenty of stories from that trip, which took them to Washington, D.C., Virginia, and then up to Niagara Falls before heading home, all in their little two-cylinder, air-cooled Lloyd. (Harold recalls the trip lasting two weeks;

Lucille said it was just a week. “But she’s got a better memory than me,” Harold said.)

Unlike many married couples, Harold and Lucille still have the car they honeymooned in, more than 50 years later, and by Harold’s reckoning, it’s actually better now than it was then.

The two-tone Lloyd—an Alexander with the column-shifted four-speed transmission, front bucket seats and extra chrome trim—entered their lives a few months before they married, when Harold sold his big Ford dump truck and went into Brattleboro to buy the Lloyd from Raymond S. Roberts, Inc., a dealership that at the time also sold Chevrolets, Oldsmobiles and

1958 LLOYD Alexander



As it arrived in Steve Rice's body shop, the Lloyd was suffering from the kind of surface rust you might expect from 28 years of storage in a dirt-floor garage. Here's the best news: Not one piece was missing.

More good news: There was not a single spot where the sheetmetal had rusted through, and the only accident damage was one small dent in a front fender. Even the factory blue and white paintwork had survived.



With the car supported on jackstands, disassembly was straightforward. Removing the windows without damaging the gaskets or cracking the glass required the use of dish soap as a lubricant, and gentle pressure.

With the hood and grille out of the way, the two-cylinder engine and its attached gearbox could be dropped out. The whole assembly attaches to the tubular backbone of the car with four large bolts.

HAROLD I. RICE
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Cadillacs (though built in 1958, the Rices' Lloyd remained on the Roberts lot into 1959). Harold actually bought the Lloyd for his bride-to-be to drive to work as a school-teacher, he recalls.

"Oh, I was working for the state of Vermont then," Harold said. "They drove right by my house in the mornings and picked me up, so I didn't really need a car."

Lucille didn't drive the Lloyd long, however. One day in January or February 1960, with a light dusting of snow on the ground, she spun the Lloyd 360 degrees on a hairpin turn on a road just outside of Wilmington. She didn't hit anything, but the incident

shook her up enough to convince Harold to put the Lloyd away.

The Lloyd sat for longer than just the remainder of that winter, however. Aside from one brief period when Harold's brother John drove it for temporary transportation, the Lloyd remained put away in Harold's parents' dirt-floor garage for the next 28 years.

By then, "it desperately needed a paint job," Harold said. He knew exactly who to trust with painting the Lloyd, too: his other brother, Steve, who operates SR Autobody in Portland, Maine.

Steve admits upfront that he's not much of a restorer; it's collision work and rust

repair to meet Maine inspection that pays Steve's bills.

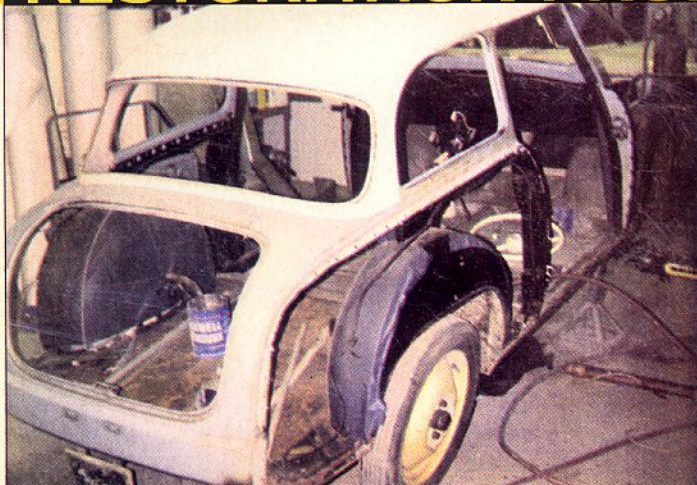
"Harold had asked me repeatedly to paint it," Steve said. "But I knew it would need more than just a repaint."

Nevertheless, he agreed, and picked the Lloyd up from their parents' garage. As he described it, the Lloyd remained entirely original, but disheveled.

"It wasn't beat up, and the elements hadn't gotten to it, but the mice sure had," he said. "And you sure wouldn't trust the brakes or the tires to be good after so long."

On the other hand, the Lloyd had somewhere just north of 20,000 miles on it, so what rust it had was just surface rust,

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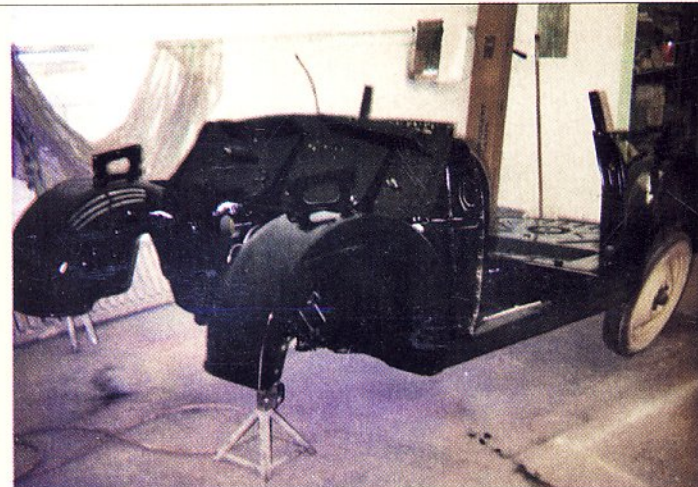
No cutting required: Every single bit of the Alexander's sheetmetal could be removed with nothing more complicated than a wrench. How many cars that have spent 52 years in Vermont are this rust-free?



It looks nasty, but this is merely surface rust. After fully disassembling the body shell, Steve stripped everything back to bare metal, either by sandblasting or the use of an abrasive disc on an air sander.



The chassis was sprayed with Sikkens single-stage urethane primer. Note that the B-pillars, which carry the weight of the rear-hinged doors, and their horizontal supports remain welded in place.



At least three coats of Sikkens single-stage urethane black followed the primer. Steve picked Sikkens because he considered it the best quality paint available, and applied it with a DeVilbiss spray gun.



not body rot.

Steve tucked in for a long-term restoration, one that would take place in between his primary collision work and ultimately last more than two years. He started by dismantling everything except the front-wheel-drive drivetrain assembly.

"This was back in the days before the Internet, which meant that if I were going to rebuild that engine, I'd have to spend a lot of time on the phone," Steve said. "So I didn't dare take those apart." Instead, he simply cleaned them, adapted Volkswagen/Porsche drive axle boots to replace the originals, and set the drivetrain aside.

One pleasant surprise: Because the Lloyd saw little daily use, Steve had none of the

trouble removing rusty bolts and fasteners that he encounters with his typical Down East-based automotive patients.

After tearing down the rest of the car, Steve said he sandblasted the entire body, inside and out, with either silica sand or Black Beauty blasting media. "This was also before walnut shells or plastic media," he said. "And if I used any chemical stripper, it was minimal, compared to the blasting."

Steve found that he needed to use very little filler on the Lloyd, recalling just one dent in the fender that needed to be straightened. With that taken care of, he then sanded the bare metal to rough it up for the several coats of primer he sprayed, then sanded smooth. On top of that, he sprayed three

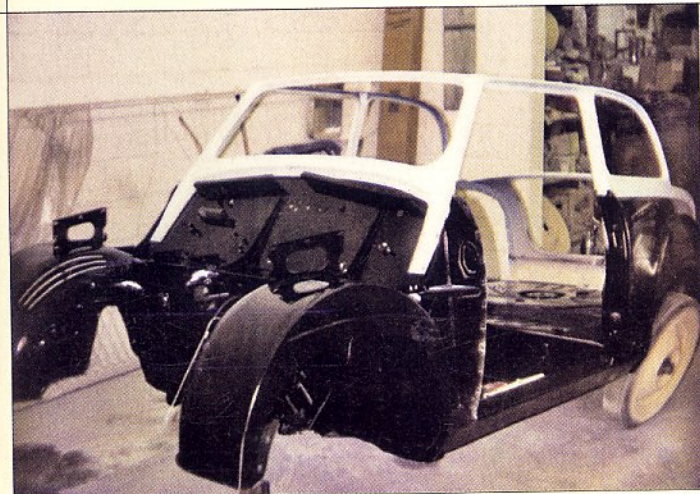
1958 LLOYD Alexander



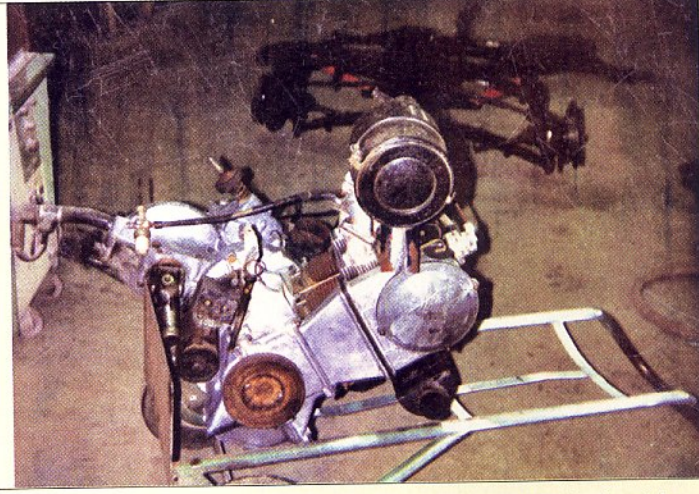
All body panels were stripped, primed and painted off the car, again using Sikkens products. Although the shop has a spray booth, Steve painted some of the parts in his workspace, after wetting down the floor.



About a teaspoon's worth of filler, to fill in a dent in a front fender, was all that the car needed. A paint supplier matched the original colors, using areas of the car that had been protected from fading.



Reassembly was the reverse of disassembly, with plenty of care taken not to harm any of the fresh paintwork. After lining up a pair of bolt holes with an awl, Steve would insert the rest of the many fasteners.



Warned that gaskets might be hard to find, Steve cleaned and painted the engine and gearbox, but left them intact. The engine had just 20,000 miles, and had been in good condition when the car was parked.

to four coats of both colors using Sikkens paints.

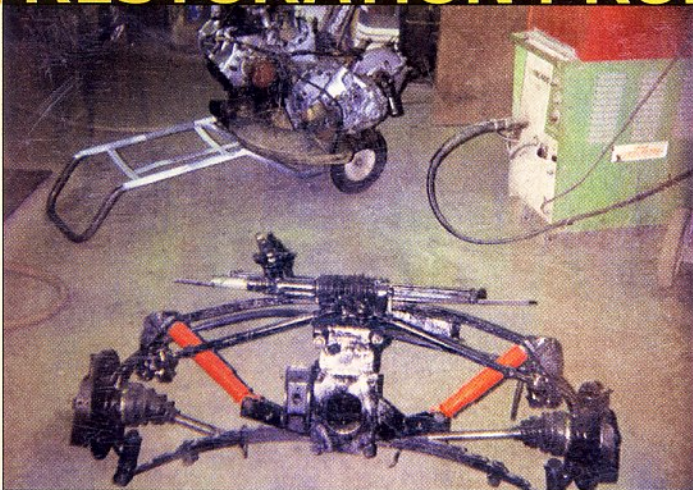
"I used Sikkens at that time because they were high-solid urethane paints," Steve said. "And I sprayed them through a DeVilbiss siphon-feed gun—I hadn't even heard of HVLP at that time."

With the passage of time, Steve can no longer recollect who rechromed the bumpers, door handles, mirrors and hubcaps. Same goes for the upholstery shop that Steve hired to reupholster the seats after he stripped them of their rodent-nibbled covers, then sandblasted and painted the frames. "I do recall that we felt there was no way to recover the seats in NOS or reproduction seat fabric," Steve said. "So



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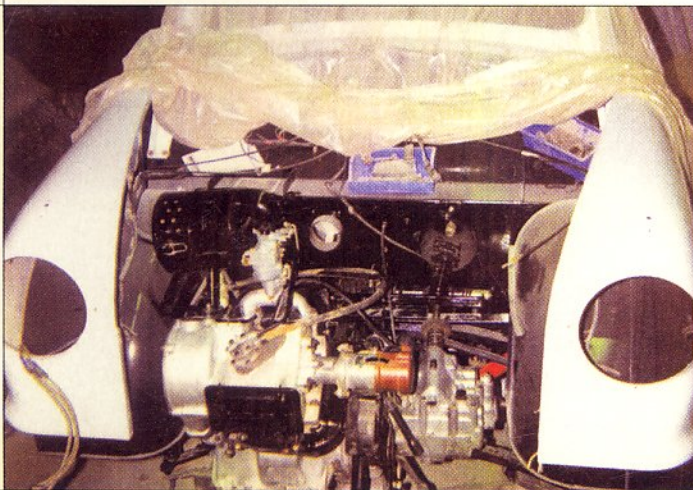
RESTORATION PROFILE



The suspension assemblies were judged to be in good shape, and so received just a thorough cleaning and fresh paint. Visits to local Porsche and Volkswagen parts suppliers tuned up boots for the drive axles.



With the old upholstery and eau-de-rodent padding removed, the frames were cleaned and painted, and brought to a local shop for new coverings. The checked cloth was the closest match for the original pattern.



Piece by piece, the Lloyd came back together. The brake master cylinder and all four wheel cylinders were sleeved in stainless steel, while Coker Tire provided a set of radial tires similar to the originals.



Its fresh chrome and polished stainless trim sparkling, the Lloyd made the trip back to Harold's house in Vermont on Steve's trailer.

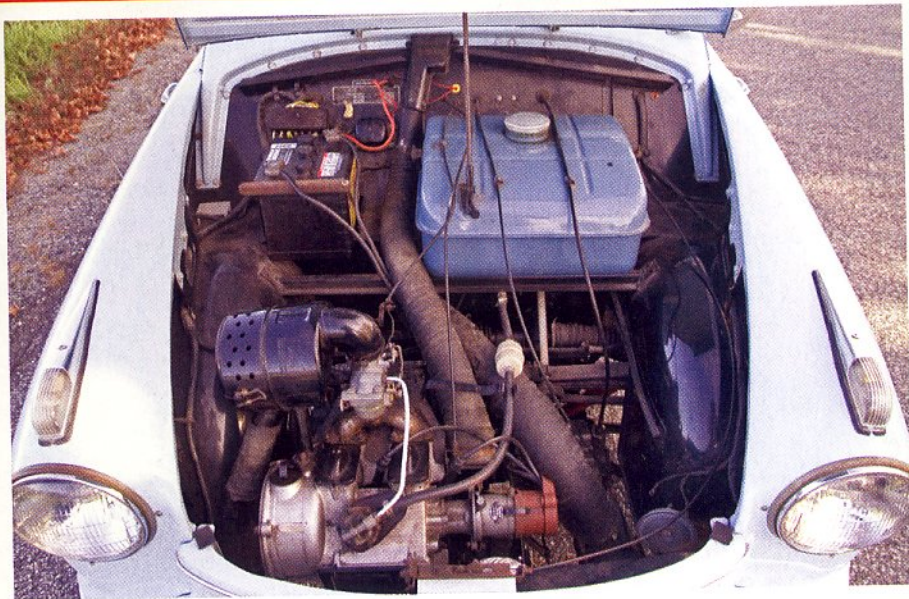
we went with material that was as close as we could find to the original."

The rubber floor mat still remained in usable shape, so Steve simply cleaned that up and reused it. "And the lenses are the same exact ones that Lloyd screwed into place in the factory," he said.

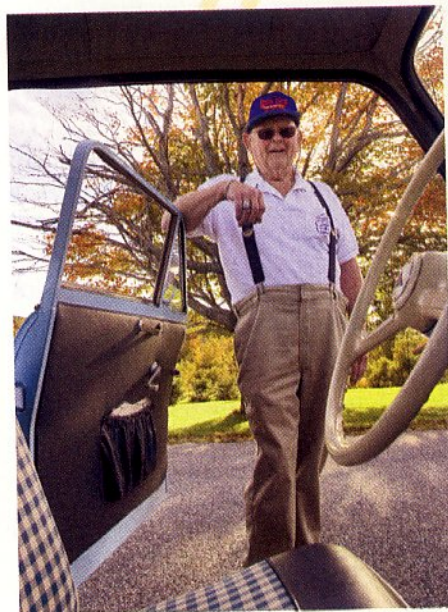
Steve did disassemble the entire brake system and have all four wheel cylinders, along with the master cylinder, resleeved. With the body painted and reassembled, he then reunited it and its drivetrain, mounted new 125R15 radial tires to all five wheels, installed a fresh battery, and brought it back to Harold in Vermont.

Though Harold and Lucille had no plans to return the Lloyd to daily service, they did

1958 LLOYD Alexander



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put it back on the road for the occasional putt-putt around town and to local classic car shows for the next few years—that is, until the original engine lost a bearing in May 2008.

"I think it had a bad bearing from the beginning," Harold said. "Whenever we changed the oil, we would see little tiny bits of metal in the oil from time to time. Then they got bigger and bigger until one day a whole bearing came out."

An air-cooled, four-stroke inline two-cylinder, the Lloyd's engine measures just 36.3 cubic inches, or 595.5 cubic centimeters, the latter measurement providing the "600" model designation. Its 24 horsepower doesn't sound like much, but it only needs

to move around 1,200 pounds of car and returns somewhere in the neighborhood of 50 miles per gallon.

But, of course, not every neighborhood mechanic is willing to work on a Lloyd two-cylinder engine. Harold's friend, Larry Nutting, removed the engine for him and found a mechanic willing to rebuild the engine three hours away in Burlington, Vermont. Though the mechanic took more than a year to rebuild the Lloyd's engine, he did get it back to Larry, who reinstalled it in the Lloyd in July 2009, just a month before Harold and Lucille celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary.

This time, thankfully, nobody threw rice in the Rices' car. 🌐

