

SPENCER MATHIS' 1969 CUSTOM SQUAREBACK

STAND ALONE SQUARE

AFTER LETTING GO OF THE CHOPPED SQUAREBACK HE HAD IN HIGH SCHOOL, ROCHESTER, WASHINGTON'S SPENCER MATHIS NOT ONLY FOUND THE OLD WAGON AGAIN, BUT HE CRAFTED IT INTO A KILLER ONE-OF-A-KIND VOLKSROD!

By Eric Arnold

"I owned the car the first time in high school, and never did anything with it." That was 1988. The Square had already been chopped 4-1/2 inches and paneled, but that was about it. Spencer knew it had potential, but it just wasn't meant to be at the time. He sold the car and moved on.

Fast forward 22 years later to 2010. "I had been away from VWs for a long time and my friend Tom Duttrey was building a Volksrod of his own. I

told him I would be interested in building one as well, but it would have to be a Type 3." They had always been Spencer's favorites, but there was a catch, "I





Detailed 1950s Cadillac "Sombbrero" hubcaps.



Spencer and his wife Hauser proudly pose with their Volksrod.



An Air-Zenith air ride system has this Square dropped to the pavement and adjusts to a smooth, comfortable cruising height. The '49 Plymouth bumpers help complete the throwback look.



Plymouth "Special Deluxe" script is not only an appropriate description for this ride, it's a tie to many of the parts incorporated into the build.



Hauser and Spencer are ready to hit the town in style!



Custom grille in the style of a 1950s era DeSoto.



This amazing paneled Squareback looks right at home in Spencer's workshop: OB's Customs. The shop has been the home for several builds already, with a few more on the drawing board.



Rear fenders integrate these neat vents with aluminum trims.



The cool 1949 Ford hood ornament matches the donor hood.



The rear hatch was turned into a clamshell split gate.



Spencer proudly represents the Kahiko Kula VW Club Ohana.



Late 1960s Dodge side mirrors fit the overall styling well.

specifically wanted my old wagon back.”

Tom actually owned this exact car in between Spencer's high school days and now, but he never did much with it either. Amazingly, with a little effort, he was able to find it just south of the Canadian border. It had changed hands several times over the years and was now in terrible shape, but the current owner was willing to sell it. “I bought it the next week.” The Square was coming back home.

Once it had returned to its roots, Spencer saw everything but the shell was unusable, so he opted to find a donor car. “I was lucky enough to find a super low-mileage Squareback from an estate sale. This would help mine get back on the road.” It was time to get moving! “I started the build at Tom's house, with him and another friend, Steve Pontius. It was a great time just hanging out with the guys, and after a lot of long days, we got it driving again for the first time in years.” Spencer was hooked on VWs again!

A COUPLE OF SHOWS, A COUPLE MORE MODS

“My plan was to make major changes between car shows that first summer. First would be the hood.” He bought a 1949 Ford hood, and crafted it to fit the original Type 3 frame. He also cut up a pair of 1949 Plymouth bumpers to fit the new look.

After attending a couple of shows, it was time to make some more modifications. “When I bought the hood, the seller had this sweet dash hanging in his garage. I thought it would be cool since I've never seen it done. Plus, getting a nice Type 3 dash pad is really difficult and maybe this would be a nice change.” At the same time, Spencer switched out the steering column and steering wheel, both from a 1949 Plymouth he picked up, to give period matching parts to his earlier mods.

A few more events went by and the alteration itch struck him again. “It was time to change the seats. I went from the stock bucket type seats to a front bench seat, upholstered by Scott Boys Hot Rods. This one came from a Chevy S10.” This meant moving the heat controls to what was the stock location for the Ford dashboard he installed earlier. The car is a stock automatic, so the gear selector was relocated from the floor to the column.

The more time that went by, the more changes Spencer made. “The following winter I ‘Frenched’ the head-



Check out the steering wheel, taken from a 1949 Plymouth, with a custom horn button with the OB's Customs logo. The bright white is nicely contrasted with the rich red of the interior.

lights, and shaved the handles and chrome. It became a thing where friends and random people at car shows would come over just to see what was changed since the last show.” This just fueled Spencer's fire for making more updates. “It became a challenge to change things up and keep it fresh.”

'49 PLYMOUTH WINDOW CRANKS

Finally, in the winter of 2016 the final touches started coming together. Spencer had a vision for how the car would be completed, and set out to make it happen. He built a clamshell style rear hatch, which is split horizontally under the window and hinged at the top and bottom. “I finished all the door glass and converted the inner handles and window cranks to those from the '49 Plymouth.”

More custom pieces include a custom grill modeled to look like a '50s DeSoto, '52 Chevy taillights, '49 Plymouth rear fenders, cowl vents, and much, much more, all the way down to the dome light. Spencer did all of the fabrication and body work himself, “I did everything but the front beam!” he says proudly, and rightfully so!

Finally, the time for paint had come. Luckily, Spencer is a representative and former trainer for BASF Glasurit. He had the expertise to handle the job himself. “I wanted something subdued, and with an old



The stock Type 3 seats were replaced by a comfortable Chevy S-10 bench seat.

school feel.” He went with a custom mixed matte white paint, which while unconventional, looks perfect on this one of a kind ride.

Pinstriping the OB Customs (Spencer's shop) logo and powder coating were all handled by Jeff Pinard and staff at Forever Powdercoating in Tumwater, Washington.

Under the engine hatch is the stock 1600 from the donor Squareback, complete with original fuel injection system. It was rebuilt by Oval's Motorsport in Federal Way, WA. Spencer adds, “Most people replace the fuel injection, but I spent a lot of time to learn how to maintain the system.”

The Square is on an air ride system at all four corners with an Air-Zenith compressor and Little Larry's air valves. When it's dropped, it's low! The front beam was built by Matt Watts of Punch Drunk Customs.

The wagon is sitting on 15-inch steel wheels with 1950s era Cadillac



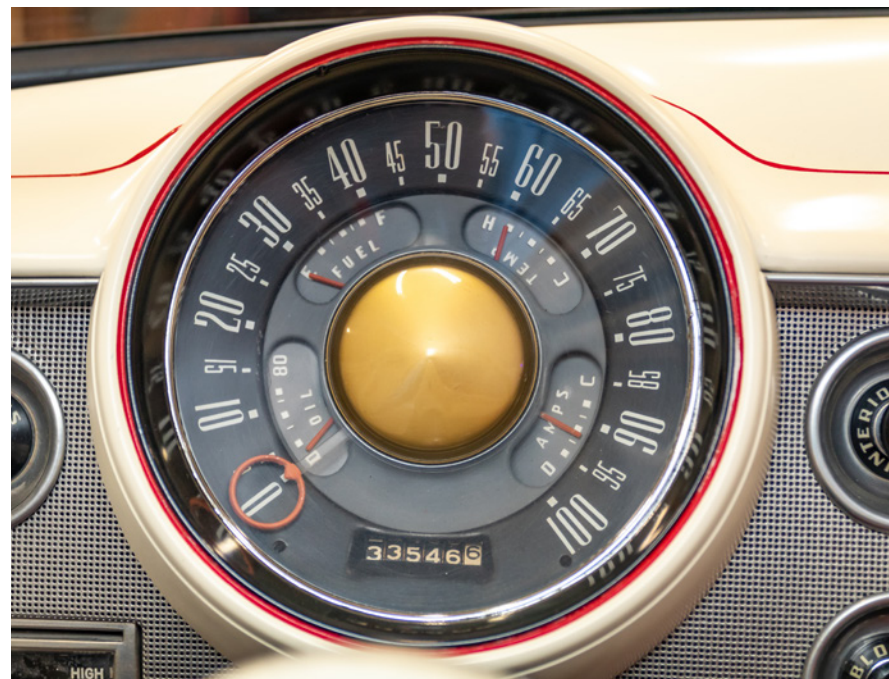
1951 stock Ford radio, which has been converted to digital output.



Allstate turn signal switch from the late '40s and early '50s.



Completely stock 1600cc with original fuel injection remains in place. “I spent a lot of time learning to maintain the system”, says Spencer.



This is not your typical Type 3 speedometer! This classic Ford multi-gauge is fully functional, and has all kinds of flair!

“Sombrero” hubcaps, popular on old school custom rides.

Even though its appearance is far from stock, it takes me back to where this all started in high school, with my friends who introduced me to Volkswagens, and the love of Type 3s.” Spencer continues, “As a newer member of the Kahiko Kula Vintage VW Club, I have found a new group of friends with the same love for VWs that love spending time together both

at shows and non-car related events.” Now that's what the VW community is all about.

When asked why he made so many alterations to the Squareback, he said “I just wanted it to feel like it was something that could have been built in the '50s.” We say: Mission Accomplished!

This radical Type 3 has been picking up show trophies throughout the years and different stages of the build,



Spencer is happy to let Hauser take the wheel!



The front area is clean and simple, of course with matching red carpeting.

we can only guess how many it will take home now that this Square is truly finished. Perhaps Spencer can use his amazing fabrication skills to build a giant trophy case!

For now, Spencer plans on just enjoying this ride with his wife Hauser, who has been very supportive throughout the entire process, while he looks for his next build, a Notchback. We can't wait to see what he has in store for that one!