

Taking a Chance on a 1917

International

by George Kirkham



International

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In the summer of 1997, a good friend and fellow truck collector, Ron Carey, of Calgary, Alberta, called to see if I would be interested in one or more 1917 International model H trucks he had collected over the years. Ron said he had no interest in restoring them himself.

The next time I was in Calgary, I stopped to see Ron and the trucks, which were in various stages of bad to worse. None were complete, and after the inspection, I told Ron that I did not have the ability to restore such an old truck in such rough condition. He said he would advertise them and let someone else restore them.



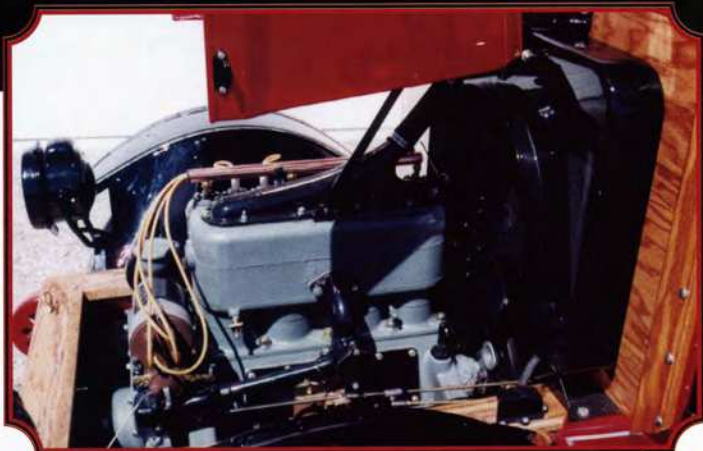


A year later, Ron called to say that he was going to restore three of his five trucks, one for himself, one for me, and one for someone else. He wanted to know what color I wanted mine to be. I had more or less forgotten about these trucks, as I had my own projects on the go.

I thought it was kind of presumptuous of Ron to assume that I would want one. As we talked, though, I began to think that Ron's truck restorations were world class, much better than I would ever be able to do, and that I might not have many chances in my life to own a fully restored 1917 International model H. Without knowing costs, or how long, or much else, I told him, "Red, please."

My father spent 40 years as an International-truck zone manager, and I have been selling International trucks for 23 years, 16 of those as an International-truck dealer. I have a true





passion for Internationals and have 18 restored trucks and more than 60 parts or “maybe-do” trucks. The 1917 Model H is the oldest in my collection. The next oldest is a 1923 S, followed by trucks all the way up to 1975.

I was able to watch the restoration of the H at Ron’s shop on my many trips to and from Calgary. It still amazes me what Ron and his staff can do with an old hunk of junk. They have a machine shop in house, so very little gets sent out.

I have a high level of respect for the quality of work done on my 1917 Model H, especially because I have done a few restorations myself. It has all-new wood, new fenders, and every nut, bolt, screw, and part has been redone.

My family and I stopped at Ron’s shop in August 2000, when the truck was done. We had decided to take it home after showing it at an ATHS



club meet. When we drove it in the parade at the show, we were very proud of our latest International, especially since many fellow club members were seeing the truck for the first time. It was like showing off the newest member of the family.

Getting the truck home was not so pleasant. At the end of the show, a storm came through with heavy wind and rain and a little hail. We loaded up the truck and headed south to Lethbridge, Alberta, in the same direction as the storm. We ran into some hail, so we stopped to let the storm blow over and made it home without any damage.

It is a lot of fun to display the truck at shows. Many people stop and share a story about their younger days, and it seems the older the person, the longer the story. 🚚



George and Stinky Kirkham's 1917 International DL

