

# My Little Red Rocket

## My 1929 Fire Truck

It was at a Model A Club meeting in February 2009 that a flyer was passed among us - 1929 Model A Fire Truck for sale along with hoses, nozzles, extinguishers, and original bell. As fate would have it, I was looking for a new project, preferably a commercial vehicle. So the following weekend I headed off to the town of St George, about five hours drive from where I live.

My first impression upon arrival was, "another wild goose chase," but then I began to notice just how much of this sad and sorry car was there and how little wear and tear she had suffered in her eighty years of service to the community. I could find very little wrong with the running gear. The brake clevis pins, cross shafts, pedal bushings and steering linkages were almost perfect. There was no rust in the entire body and wheels were excellent. The only real damage was the gas tank where someone had replaced the cap with a piece of rag, which resulted in the tank being full to the brim with rain water for who knows how long. The following weekend saw me driving five hours again, towing my trailer to pick up my new project. Sadly the owner had a change of heart and refused to part with the original bell.



Some interesting facts came to light over the next three years as I reduced the old girl down to the bare frame and then began the total rebuild.

This little fire truck was called a pumper engine. It had a Hale Conshohocken pump mounted behind the original three speed Model A box, connected by a short seven inch drive shaft. The torque tube and rear A Frame arms therefore had to be shortened which resulted in the differential poking up at such an angle that when filling it with oil, the rear of the car had to be raised eighteen inches to fill with the correct amount.

Wanting to find out as much as I could about the car, I contacted the Fire and Rescue Museum of Australia and was told that no right-hand drive Model A's were ever used as fire trucks. Model T's were first used, then the Fire Dept. went straight on to the 1932 Fords. They were therefore quite interested when I told them I had a right hand drive Model A Pumper Truck.

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Some months later I received an e mail from the guys at the museum with a photo of a 1929 Fire Engine that was found in the Australian National Library Collection, taken in a town thirty miles from where I had found my car. How chuffed I was to realize I had that very same car. Trouble was, the only photo in existence did not show the rear part of the vehicle. I searched for many months looking for just the right type of body to do justice to my little red rocket but found nothing. With the rest of the car now completed, I decided to design a body myself, with plenty of brass and an overhead ladder rack.

While in Boise Idaho in 2010, I saw a fire truck at the Yonkie Museum with a rear under slung hose reel and a body style that gave me something to go on. I finished the project in time for our 2012 Australian National Meet in Ipswich and won people's choice award.

The little red Fire Truck is now a regular at show and shine and charity events, and the kids love her. I had a ton of fun restoring her and am now looking for another commercial project.

I recently attended the Regional Meet in Bend Oregon and was pleasantly surprised to see a 1929 fire truck similar to mine on display in the foyer of the convention centre. The Bend meet was great and I was able to catch up with many friends from the High Desert A's, the Treasure Valley A's and the Galloping Gerties.

Thank you, my many American friends, for making me feel part of your Model A families.



**Lindsay Harris. Model A Ford Club of Queensland Australia.**

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