

Body-off-restored by the crew at Northside Automotive in Madison, Virginia, this '63 sunroof sedan, owned by Gladys Ridgeway, went.....

From Rag To RICHES

BY ROBERT K. SMITH

Employed as a receptionist/secretary at Northside Automotive & Customs in Madison, Virginia, VW enthusiast Gladys Ridgeway is also married to Billy Ridgeway (he works there too, alongside NA&C's owner, Grant Fincham). As Gladys watched Billy and Grant turn-out top quality restorations of cars and trucks over the years, she waited patiently for them to tackle her '63 VW sunroof sedan. In-between customer's projects, Billy, Gladys, and Grant spent four months (after hours and during week-ends) taking the car down to bare bones, then completely redid her Beetle to an A+

showpiece of a vintage driver.

With the body off its pan, Billy took care of the bodywork, with help from his wife Gladys, who spent many hours sanding to make sure all body surfaces were straight. Once the car's shell and removable parts were prepped for paint, Grant broke out his spray gun and covered everything with PPG Concept single-stage, in the original '63 sedan color, L390 Gulf Blue. While the paint was curing, Billy and Grant dismantled the pan of its trans, suspension and brakes, painted the pan semi-gloss black, refurbished all components to factory stock specs, with the exception of adding KYB shocks at all fours, then put everything back



Northside Automotive's main men, Billy Ridgeway (left), Grant Fincham.





Northside Automotive & Customs crew (Billy & Gladys Ridgeway, Grant Fincham) redid this '63 in four months, after hours and during weekends. Gulf Blue paint is PPG Concept single-stage, done by Grant, while interior work was done by the Ridgeways. Engine is a 1600 dual-port, and trans is stock '63, both rebuilt at Northside. This car is super clean in, out, & underneath, thanks to attention to detail by Billy, Gladys, Grant.



together. For a rolling chassis, the NA&C team painted the factory wheels Gulf Blue and Ivory, mounted 165-15 Coker white wall tires, bolted them on, and popped-on a set of chrome VW logo hub caps.

For a little more power than the '63's factory-installed 1192cc engine, Billy and Grant elected to rebuild a Type 1 1600 mill, sporting stock tin, offset "doghouse" oil cooler, Bosch vacuum advance distributor, single Solex 34 PICT carburetor, and stock exhaust system. The 6-volt electrical system was converted to 12-volt, so the engine now has the later model flywheel and corresponding starter.

As soon as all the wiring and plumbing were done, Billy and Gladys, plus Grant and his wife Katie, all teamed-up to carefully place the anewed body shell onto its freshly renovated chassis. Once the body was secured, the body parts and trim were installed, aligned, and tightened in place. For the interior, it was the Billy and Gladys show, as they began with a white crush headliner, moved to the floor with oatmeal loop carpeting, and installed the stock style

panels (kick, door, quarter). Factory seats were rebuilt (painted frames, new padding) then covered with tan vinyl and silver beige inserts, and accented with standard lap belts. The dash is simple and clean stock, with refurbished steering wheel, speedometer, fuel gauge, and radio, not to mention redone factory shifter, pedal assembly, and the addition of an accessory Bambus under-dash parcel tray.

Not only is Gladys super happy with her "new" old '63 ragtop sedan, she's amazed at people's responses wherever she drives it locally, or when it's displayed on a turntable (thanks to Billy and Grant) at car shows. So far over a five-month span (February to July '08), the Ridgeways have netted seven first-in-class awards, six Best of Shows, two Best Displays, three Best Interiors, and three Best Paints. The best part — Gladys loves to drive this Bug whenever she can, always ready to hand out Northside Automotive & Customs business cards to present and future air-cooled VW owners, along with her story about the car's build.

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