

# **DUDE... WANNA HEAR A STORY?**

This van, "Cloud Dancer," was in numerous magazines and won lots of awards years ago (before my time). After the van was retired from the spotlight, it was sold and occasionally driven. I found it for sale at a show when I was in high school (25+ years ago). Amazingly, nobody bought it because, as my dad (my hero) said at the time, "Who the hell would drive it!?" Well, I fell in love with it and somehow bought it. It was my very first vehicle and I drove it every day to high school - regardless of the snow/etc. I eventually added hundreds of lights, multiple musical horns, additional batteries, etc. I didn't have a clue what the hell I was doing but I was having fun and figuring it out. (To me, wiring this van was easier than trying to understand women – and still is).

After high school, I went to college and law school. During those 8+ years of schooling, I foolishly had the van sit outside wherein it rusted terribly. After passing the bar exam, I drove it to job interviews (Evidently, this isn't the most appropriate vehicle for lawyer interviews). Reluctantly, I sold the van since I needed a 'professional' vehicle and I didn't have the skill or money to restore it.

Over the next 17+ years, I always wondered what happened to "Cloud Dancer." Whenever I would bump into somebody, they never asked about me. Instead, they appropriately asked, "How is Cloud Dancer!?" Unfortunately, I never knew the answer. As a total goof, I decided to try and find "Cloud Dancer" 17+ years later to see what happened to it. Most friends and aficionados said it could never be found. Impossible they said. And to everyone's surprise, after a loooooong search in multiple states, I found the van in a barn with no plates collecting dust (and vermin). Indeed, the van had several dead critters which had taken up residence inside. The van was evidently re-painted the glittery black color (only glitters in sunlight) you see now via severe rust/aging.

Although I know absolutely nothing about auto mechanics (i.e. I don't even change the oil or replace a light bulb), I unexpectedly decided to buy the van back and had it towed home to NJ. I couldn't see having the van rot away in the barn. 50% of the people said I was nuts to buy it back and the other 50% said I was nuts if I didn't. Either way I'm nuts, but at least I won't look back with regret. Now I can look back and say, "Doh! That was stupid but I tried," which I prefer.

Somehow, the van is improving via my limited skill (and very limited bank account). For example:

- The front carpet was missing and the floor had small holes enabling you to see the road. I patched the holes using pennies and commercial glue (Total cost: 8 cents plus glue).
- The center dashboard was missing. I couldn't find the red material so I bought a kids dress for \$1.00 at a flea market, cut it up, and created the dashboard. I figured if I had to build the dash, why not modernize it. Hence, there is a 7" tablet, mp3 player, camera and GPS now. (I fried 2 tablets, a GPS and hundreds of fuses learning how to wire it. Long story).
- The rhinestones are a new touch. I don't have the skill/money to airbrush, but even I can glue crap together. Hence, I thought the rhinestones livened up the interior (from the \$1 store).
- The red fuzzy carpet I purchased 25 years ago when I previously owned the van. I never got around to using it for the van and I never got around to throwing it out either. Hence, 25 years later, I ended up using the very carpet that had been sitting in my basement all along.
- The red interior was horribly faded. I lack the skills to reupholster the material (which I couldn't find) so I spent \$5 a can (with coupons) for fabric paint and gradually restored it.
- The overhead console was ripped apart. I was at a flea market and bought the CB for \$5, switches for \$1, new wire, etc. Now everything is wired and the *hundreds* of lights work.
- I patched the gas tank 25 years ago. 25 years later, the van wouldn't start. After extensive trouble shooting, I eventually realized I had to re-patch the identical gas tank so I spent \$5.

☺ Admittedly, I totally lack the skill and money to restore this van... I'm just a lot dumber and more stubborn to realize it. Hence, "Cloud Dancer" lives on! ☺

PS: The van ain't perfect but is beyond my skill (and budget). If you can help at an obnoxiously low price (i.e. broken wheel flare, knockoffs, air brushing, mechanical), please say hi [www.PUZZELE.com](http://www.PUZZELE.com)