

The Lady's Choice
by Rick Feibusch



What do you do when the wife is the motorhead in the family? When faced with this situation, Gary Conklin, a Ventura, California banker with more interest in weekend trips to Los Vegas, just lets wife Sue indulge in her passion for Morris Minors. Her first, a 1954 Series II tourer that she had restored has served as regular transportation around town since it was completed in March 2004.

This "stakeside" hauler has just been completed after six years of a slow and deliberate restoration. This blue beauty was first sold in 1964 in New Zealand as a pickup (ute). It ended up in a big batch of British iron dragged out from down under by Dr. Bob Wiedemeyer of South Carolina and sold on eBay. Sue Comklin bought it and had it shipped to California in in 2002, where she started driving it daily. While it was swabbed with three layers of hardware store enamel, it ran OK and was dependable,



In 2006, Sue felt that it was time to make it look as good as it ran, so it was brought to Jay Neiderst, a Santa Paula, CA European car restorer who specializes in Alfa Romeo, for a complete going over. After the body was stripped and sandblasted, it was found that there was more body filler than metal in parts of the truck, so the rotten bed and tailgate

were ashcanned, while the floors and cab back were welded up with new metal and the cab and cab back were deftly welded into one solid piece.

The original 1098 was rebuilt and detailed, as well as hotted up a bit with a set of Sprite SUs. It also retains the original gearbox, 4:55 rear end gears, and factory drum brakes.

Once the body was primed and ready to paint, Jay designed and built the stakeside body with a 1" square tubing framewoth the wood attached to the solid body colored framework. Neiderst felt that real removable stakesides would rattle so it was built not to move as well as adding some strength to the frame. The wood is varnished California redwood. The fenders are new trailer fenders (called guards down under). The whole thing was swathed in medium blue paint and put back together, painting and detailing each piece before installation.

The silver and black leather seats and carpeting came all the way from Newton Commercial in the UK, while many of the other bits and bobs came from ESM in the UK and Moss Motors in nearby Goleta, CA. The wheels are an unusual size in the US, 14X5.5, but Sue wanted 14" wheels that would take tyres bigger than 145 rubber bands and found these Minator alloys that are in perfect proportion with the rest of the little ute.

There actually was a point of contention amongst the Conklins concerning the name of the truck. Sue originally dubbed the ute "Elmo," but Gary didn't think that was "manly" enough for the scrappy little hauler, so it was changed to "Ed." When Sue took one look at her shiny new stakeside, he became "Elmo" again. Elmo's first big outing was the Channel Island Marina British Car Meet on July 27, where it attracted a crowd all day.

