

1985 Chrysler Laser



Five hundred bucks bought me one of my favorite cars – the '85 Chrysler Laser Turbo. Leather interior, 5 speed manual gearbox, and characteristic flaking of Chrysler gray paint made this car possibly the 'sportiest' car I have ever had. The turbocharger, as best as I can recall, only produced something like 9 to 11 inches of mercury manifold overpressure but gave the little 2.2L 4-cylinder 146 horsepower at 168 foot-pound of torque! This was roughly the same as my 1968 Buick Skylark Custom with a 350 cubic inch 8-cylinder, but at about 1000 pounds less weight. While the original specs say it does 0-60 MPH in an unremarkable 8 seconds, it was the 0-30 speed that it did in about 1 second that could beat anything off the line – until I had to shift. It pretty much dogged out there, and had no top end. Luckily, the preponderance of races that occurred in Plymouth in those days happened for about five seconds after the light turned green at the four-corners.

Tanya will remember learning to drive a manual in this car, and Sue will remember getting it stuck on the railroad track doing the same. Tanya and I used to drive the kids around in this and noticed they always slept soundly in the back seat. This was likely related to the fuel leak I found, dripping from an injector seal directly onto the hot turbocharger, generally filling the cabin with vaporized gasoline. If any of our kids had trouble in school in later years, I apologize.

Another Plymouth incident was taking it to a certain car dealership for some minor work. I will not name it here, but it was in the Country and it was a Chrysler Jeep Dodge place. I returned to pick it up and found the hood was crushed into accordion and shoved back through the windshield. They tried every story in the world to make it somehow seem like it accidentally flew open and, in fact, my fault somehow. However, after I explained that unlatched hoods generally don't send themselves through the

windshield backwards by springing the hinges, and that there was a gray, hood-shaped dent in their overhead door that wasn't there before, they agreed to fix it.

The car's untimely demise was also due to the work they did. Their failure to properly tighten a tie rod end caused my driver's tire to buckle under the car and up through the floorboard at highway speeds one lonely night on an Indiana road. Trish will remember the incident, but it ended with me holding a truck driver at sword-point in a corn field. (That is another story completely.) Anyway, what a great car.