



Here Comes The Volkswagen: A Wedding Restoration

VW enthusiast and friend of Mid America Motorworks, Darby Milnor – known as Dr. Darby for his work repairing Volkswagens – has seen his share of project cars at his Cary, Ill. restoration business, Midwest Autosavers. He shared a recent restoration story with us that had a very firm deadline: get the bride to the church on time!

The Project

Every business owner worth his salt is grateful for each and every one of his customers and takes the time to get to know them and understand their wants and needs. Nothing delights Dr. Darby more than to running into one of them at an automotive event (read VW show), where they are spectating or showing their car. He takes the opportunity to visit with them and catch up with their lives.

Darby met Tyler perhaps 12 years ago at a local cruise night where he was looking over one of Darby's VWs. He was probably 18 at the time and before long, he located and bought a 1966 Beetle that he cherished. It was a little weathered, but he enjoyed it just as it was and kept it in good running order these many years. Tyler occasionally enlisted Darby to help with something or another on the car, but for the most part he did a great job all on his own.

As time passed Tyler's eyes were captivated by something else: a great girl named Julia. They eventually became engaged, with the VW playing a part, and it was decided that Tyler's 1966 would participate in the wedding as well.

Then the unthinkable happened. Tyler was making a right hand turn and was rear ended by a much larger vehicle, severely damaging his beloved VW. Dr. Darby attempted to work with the insurance company, but to no avail. They declared it a total loss. The body was crushed, both quarter panels buckled, and the crankshaft and frame were both bent.





Darby took the sad looking remains and together they addressed the situation and began to hatch a plan. Working with Julia and Tyler's parents, some great VW owners, the talented crew at Midwest Autosavers, and parts from Mid America Motorworks, they were able to repair Tyler's car.

They took it a step beyond repair, deciding that Tyler's old 1966 was in need of an overall facelift. It received a full exterior restoration, complete with new rally numbers, new bumpers, chrome wheels, new tires, a 12 volt conversion, new seals, a carpet kit, period correct radio and a whole lot of love and support. Willie, resident "awesome machinest" at Midwest Autosavers, assembled a 1641cc short block using a proper 1966 engine case and Tyler finished the engine himself.

As the wedding approached, Tyler was getting a little nervous that the Beetle wouldn't be ready in time. He didn't know the full extent of the work being done.

The Monday before the wedding, Darby and crew laid on a beautiful layer of VW's Ruby red paint and began reassembly. Working late into the night all week and adding new and donated parts, they finished the car on Friday during a tremendous thunderstorm.

Not wanting the fresh car to get wet, they backed the hauler into the shop, loaded the Bug and headed for Tyler's parents' house. A few miles from their destination, the rain stopped and a beautiful Autumn moon began to show through the clouds.

Tyler and his Grandfather were there to greet tuck the car safely into the garage. The following day, Darby was honored to be among Tyler and Julia's family and friends as they began a new journey together.

VWs were parked all along the street, the married couple made their exit in Tyler's 1966 and at the reception that followed, the cake topper almost stole the show. It featured Tyler, Julia and a perfect scale model of the 1966.

We wish Tyler and Julia many miles of smiles in their wonderful little car and, when the time comes, perhaps Midwest Autosavers can build them a matching pedal car for the kids!

Dr. Darby has been restoring vintage VWs, cars and trucks, as well as saving them from the hands of unscrupulous repair shops, untrained mechanics and the scrap yard, for almost 40 years. His passion for Vintage VWs is far-reaching with customers sending him vehicles from almost every state, Mexico, Puerto Rico and Europe.



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