

DANDY



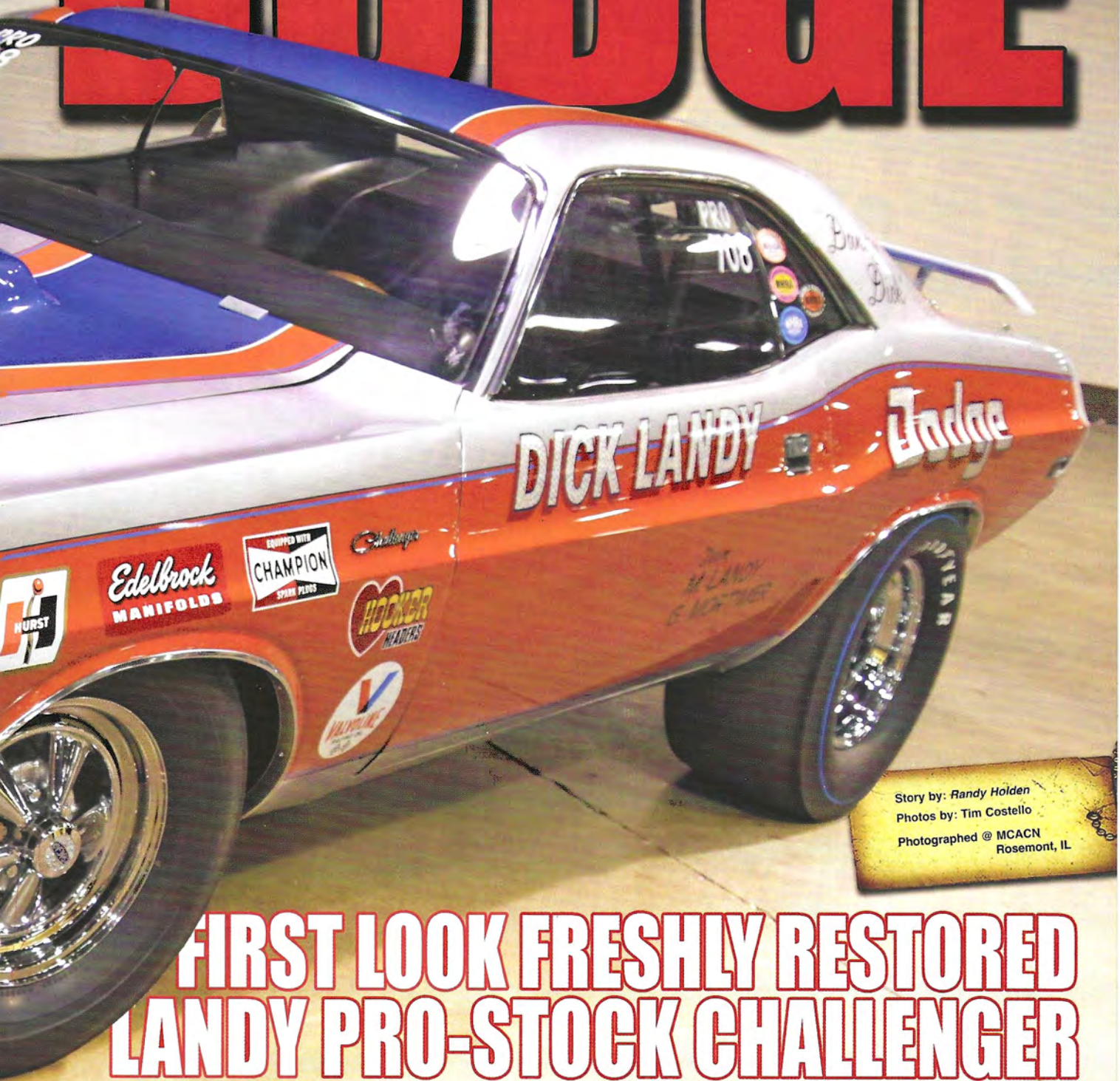
W

e're praying every body reading this already knows who Dick Landy was; if you don't, go do some research and come back in a little while. Once again, we were blessed to have known Dick pretty well before he passed away before his time from kidney failure back in 2007. Through the years, we talked with him many times about his former race cars and his misadventures on and off the track, but Dick was still busy running a speed shop, and he was often "to the point" with his conversations. Thankfully, we enjoyed a good many, and we ended up seeing

him at more events over the years. Talking with Landy, while he had a great many race cars throughout the years, there were obvious favorites scattered in the mix. He was certainly

proud of the '65 A/FX Coronet that made him an international celebrity, but others he mentioned frequently included his '68 to '70 Chargers and his Pro Stock Challengers. Another

DODGE



Story by: Randy Holden
Photos by: Tim Costello
Photographed @ MCACN
Rosemont, IL

FIRST LOOK FRESHLY RESTORED LANDY PRO-STOCK CHALLENGER

guy who came to know Dick Landy extremely well is legendary race car restoration specialist Erik Lindberg, who lives up in Minnesota. Erik had always been infatuated with Landy's

cars and his career, but it wasn't until he got the chance to restore Dick Landy's red, white, and blue 1971-72 Challenger Pro Stocker several decades back that he actually got to

know Landy. The first step in the process was to authenticate the car, which was something Dick was adamant about, and once it had been



positively identified, there was a steady stream of information about the car between the two, countless photos were shared, and Landy granted permission to use his name and all the lettering to make it look just as it had at the close of the 1971 season. That was the beginning of a fantastic relationship that lasted until Dick Landy's passing, and it continues today with Dick's son, Richard.

With that out of the way, Erik Lindberg is a vintage race car restoration guru with quite a few historic drag cars that have ended up at his shop to be brought back to "as raced" condition. After reviving that initial '71-72 Landy Challenger, Erik went on to restore the Dick Landy 1973 Dart Sport Pro car, he bought and restored Dick's famed 1967 Coronet R/T Super Stocker, and he set his sights

on finding the car he was most fond of, and a car he'd talked to Dick Landy about numerous times; his first Pro Stocker, the silver/orange/blue 1970 Hemi Challenger R/T. It was Landy himself who told Erik ages ago that the 1970 car had been sold to another racer, Dave Gildart of Memphis Tennessee. That gave Erik a name to start searching, but as always, he feared if the car still existed, it would likely have been modified and updated beyond belief and may have even been set out to pasture, literally, and possibly rotted to death.

The '70 Challenger had been shipped to Dick Landy as a true "body-in-white," acid-dipped shell by Dodge, plus a brand new Challenger R/T 426 Hemi, a four-speed car, used as a donor to build the Pro car. Landy built the car from the ground up and

had it on the track asap, with a mild altered wheelbase, rear quarter opening and wheel houses were stretched 4" forward, front fenders stretched 3" forward, the ultra light weight stainless steel k-frame kept from his 65 AF/X Dodge, Dart 6 cylinder spindles and hubs, Hurst Airheart disc brakes front and rear, front and rear spoilers, a modified Six Pack fiberglass hood, and of course, the color scheme that his team cars had been using since 1968. The Challenger was raced hard through 1970 and 1971 seasons then was sold in January 1972. There was a period of about seven months in late 1971 where both of Dick's Pro Stock Challengers could be seen together in the pits and at the Christmas tree. Upon selling the car to Dave Gildart in Memphis



Tennessee, Dave raced it from 1972 to 1973, updating it and making a number of changes to keep it competitive. The Landy paint scheme was painted over, and the Chally ended up at Atlanta Race Cars, where they did a bit of chassis work out back and opened up the wheelhouses so the R/T could mount much bigger wheels and slicks, and the rear suspension was tweaked to make biting into the track easier.

Continuing the chain of events, while all Erik's research and hunting was going on, he happened to converse with a friend at a swap meet who had scored some mopar parts from a guy in Arkansas in the mid eighties and claimed to have a Dick Landy Challenger. Could it be a possible connection considering Memphis is right next to Arkansas? The owner of the potential Landy Challenger was described as a "Black Oak Arkansas looking Hippy Dude."

Then, some years after that, the tale has a major breakthrough. Erik was on the phone with his friend Reed Koeppe discussing the Challenger, describing the hippy looking guy to Reed and he said he may know someone to call in that area to see if that description fits anybody. It wasn't more than a day later they had their guy; it was Terry Sevens. The next step was to try and get Terry on the phone to see if he still had the car, which luckily, he did. A few months later Reed was in the area picking up

another car but was able to meet with Terry and view the alleged Landy Challenger for the first time. It was the moment supreme and Reed confirmed the details that Erik was looking for. Another hurdle cleared, almost there.

Having found the car, Erik wasn't going to just leave well enough alone. Twice, through the years, Terry said he'd sell the Dodge for an agreed-upon price, and Erik would start getting his trailer ready to go get it, and before he could leave home, Terry would go off the screen and was back to refusing to sell the car! All you can do at that point is not blow up and get angry, or the fish will slip completely off the hook, so despite his frustration, Erik remained outwardly cool about it and knew this dance would continue until all the stars aligned and he'd actually land the Chally. The biggest thing he was afraid of was that some super-collector with unlimited funds would find out about the car and throw an offer at Terry that he wouldn't be able to refuse. Thankfully, that never happened. We'd love to tell you that, at this point, Erik's patience won out, but it very nearly didn't, and all his years of conversations almost amounted to nothing at all. Terry Sevens passed away in late 2016 with the car still tucked away in his garage, and instantly, all communications, emails, and phone numbers stopped working. Erik nearly went into a blind panic,

and for months, he was on pins and needles, worried about what would become of the car. Then, just a couple of months later, Richard Landy rang Erik up with a panicked voice and told him he was looking at the Challenger, of all places, on the local Facebook Marketplace webpage! Turns out Terry's sister got charged with liquidating his estate, and she got rid of the whole ton of rare vintage racing parts, engines, and cars, to a guy in Missouri. Erik couldn't believe it – after years of patiently stalking the hidden car, it was now public. Erik was not a Facebooker at that time so he called Reed to get on Facebook and find the the Challenger which Reed was able to do and he lined up a deal to purchase the car. Not wasting any time, he snagged his trailer, and the next day, Erik was in Missouri, finally looking at the car and completely satisfied it was Landy's original '70 car. The money changed hands, he loaded the car as fast as possible, and got the heck out of there before anybody else could call up and start interfering with the deal! In a state of disbelief, he called Richard Landy out in California and told him, "It's on the trailer, I got it!" and they celebrated like school kids via long distance; Richard had been following Erik's holy quest to find the car, and he knew that one had meant a great deal to his dad.

The Challenger arrived in Erik's shop in the spring of 2017, and after spending several days just looking at it, he got down to work taking the R/T apart and seeing what needed to be corrected and replaced to bring it back to exactly "as raced" summer of 1970 condition. Stripping the car down, the original Landy paint was buried under half a dozen later paint schemes, all of which Erik documented with photos, and then the car went down to the bare metal, which was a very cautious undertaking as the metal is extremely thin thanks to Dick Landy acid dipping the entire car when it arrived at his shop back in 1970. Everything was about making the cars as light as possible back then and shoving as much horsepower into them as you could. Since it was an entirely new class of racing, the

NHRA hadn't had time to muddle up the rulebook about it, so from 1970 to 1972, Pro Stock was the Wild West of professional drag racing, with every team out there doing different things to get an edge on the next guy. And, thanks to the Hemi, those first years were owned by Dodges and Plymouths.

Landy's colorful Challenger, being a whole new type of Dodge racing in an entirely new class of drag racing, naturally garnered a lot of national media attention. The car appeared with Dick Landy on the cover of the May 1970 issue of Hot Rod Magazine with an extensive feature on the car. Here's a really fun fact: Erik Lindberg had the feature in that magazine tacked to his bedroom wall over his bed! So, from his middle school years, Erik went to bed every night looking at that car, and that's a major reason it had imprinted itself so deeply into his psyche – he'd been lusting after the car long before he could drive. The car appeared in countless magazine ads, it toured the country with Landy's Performance Clinics at Dodge dealerships, and they even sold thousands upon thousands of postcards of the Challenger with Dick posed next to it. More than any other car Landy ever had, the silver Challenger became an overnight marketing sensation.

With all that being said, it was also one of his most successful and innovative race cars. Secretly testing the all new sixteen plug Race Hemi in December of 1969 and showing up at both the NHRA and AHRA Winternationals in January with the visually mind blowing set up. Dick racked up a pile of wins, including the Bakersfield March meet, the Northern Nationals at Sears Point, the Seattle National Open, OCIR in April, Detroit Dragway in May, the Colorado Pro-stock Championship in May, the NHRA Summer Nationals in York, where he debuted the very first pair of Cragar Super Trick front wheels to the public, Bonneville Raceway, the Division 6 WCS, the OCIR Division 7 meet in October, and others through 1971.

Having researched the car to the nines, Erik knew what needed to be done everywhere once he had it all apart, and that set into motion a nationwide parts-finding effort to round up every vintage 1970 Hemi Pro Stock piece of equipment

MOPAR TUMBLERS

3 IN 1 MOPAR DRINK COOLERS

SPILL PROOF DRINK CONTAINER • CAN COOLER • BOTTLE COOLERS!

OVER 12
DESIGNS TO
CHOOSE FROM
25.95 +\$5/H



225-274-0609 • MOPARCOLLECTORSGUIDE.COM



CHAMPIONSHIP PERFORMANCE

ARP congratulates Mark Pawuk on winning the 2024 Flexjet NHRA Factory Stock Championship with his potent Dodge Challenger. Mark has relied on ARP fasteners throughout his storied career. Bolster your Mopar's engine, driveline and chassis with ARP fasteners.



ARP
automotive Racing products



Scan on the QR Code to visit the ARP Website

800-826-3045

www.arp-bolts.com

Download our new catalog and Hemi product guide, or request a free printed 2025 catalog



he could find. He redid the A.R.C. rear end changes to put the wheel tubs and rear suspension back to how it had been in 1970 and continued rounding up parts and studying the car as he worked on customers' cars to keep the lights on and afford his fixation with making his beloved Landy Challenger absolutely perfect. Since he was working on the car as a side job and putting customer cars first, this turned into an uncharacteristically long restoration, taking a full eight years to finish. Being an engine wizard, Erik built the Pro Stock Hemi himself, which was done exactly as they were then, using some extremely rare parts. The monster boasts legit 1965 "K" style dual plug aluminum Hemi heads, a modified Hilborn drive for dual distributors, dual coils, a hand fabricated Edelbrock independent runner tunnel ram holding a pair of massive date-coded 1150 Holley 6214 Dominator carbs. Altogether, with its 13.5 to 1 compression ratio, the Hemi produces between 650 and 700 horsepower on race gas. Everywhere you look, every little detail is spot-on, right down to the bizarre little Speedwell Industries aluminum steering wheel atop the column that's feather-lightweight. With

the body almost perfect, Erik sent the car over to his allies at Hite Auto Body, where the legendary Heath Hite got it smoothed to perfection and then laid on the painstakingly accurate coat of many colors the R/T is now wearing. After that came the lettering and pin striping from another legend, Brian Truesdell, and watching the clock for MCACN 2024, with wet paint and two months to show time, Erik went into full-bore thrash mode to get the car completely back together and ready to make its big public debut at the show. You've heard this many times before, but literally, he didn't finish the car until the night before, finishing at midnight and then pushing the car into his trailer! He showered, packed quickly, and left that same night, headed to Illinois!

Here's where the leap of faith comes into play. While he'd fired the big Hemi up the day before, Erik hadn't driven the car an inch under its own power! Exhausted, he climbed into the trailer, backed out the extremely loud monster, and drove it through the arena to the prime spot that Bob Ashton had picked out for him – that was the first time the Challenger had moved under Hemi power in probably fifty years! Of




course, the premier of the car was a major success. Erik got some much-needed rest, and with a host of accolades, he loaded back up and returned to Minnesota to keep on doing what he does. The Challenger, however, now serves as Erik's magic happy getaway place.

Driving it is certainly a thrill, but most of the time, Erik just pulls up a chair, looks at it, and contemplates the meaning of life and countless other things. You have to really be a history junky to understand it, but certain cars just exude a mojo that cannot be explained, and this is one of them. To sit behind the wheel, look over that hood, and look around the cockpit puts you in another state of being. Imagine all the things that happened right there, all the historic moments the car was a part of, all the biggest names in racing who examined the car inside and out when it was new and also parked their butts in that seat to have a look around, the countless thousands of speed junkies who posed with it at Landy's clinics – this Challenger had been an absolute



rock star in the realm of racing cars in 1970, and all that history is still clinging to the car. If you're a history wonk, you can't help but get caught up in it, and that's the biggest reward of all for Erik – he grew up as a child looking at this very same car tacked to his bedroom wall, and now he owns it. Not many of us can say dreams come true in this big a fashion.

What's next? Erik and Richard dream to be able to orchestrate a MCACN Dick Landy show display of every surviving Landy car and T-top hauler all in the same place at the same time. There are approximately nine Landy race cars known to survive, and amazingly, Erik has restored four of them! If anybody can do it, Erik can. As for the legendary Challenger, this one will likely be Erik's calling card forevermore. We hope to see it again soon at a Mopar event that has a track because we'd love to see him stage it and at least do a moderate launch for the cameras. He's already told us he has no intention of making hard passes with it because he couldn't stand the thought of something going wrong and putting the car into a guardrail. Probably a pretty wise decision! Considering it took eight years for the foremost professional on the planet with these things to get it looking and acting the way it does now, nobody wants to mess that up! Once again, history is alive and well, thanks to Erik Lindberg; all we can say is well done, and having that much patience (and a bit of luck) does pay nice benefits. ✖

PHOENIX GRAPHIX ^{R/T}
 "Any Decal, Any Car, Any Year!"

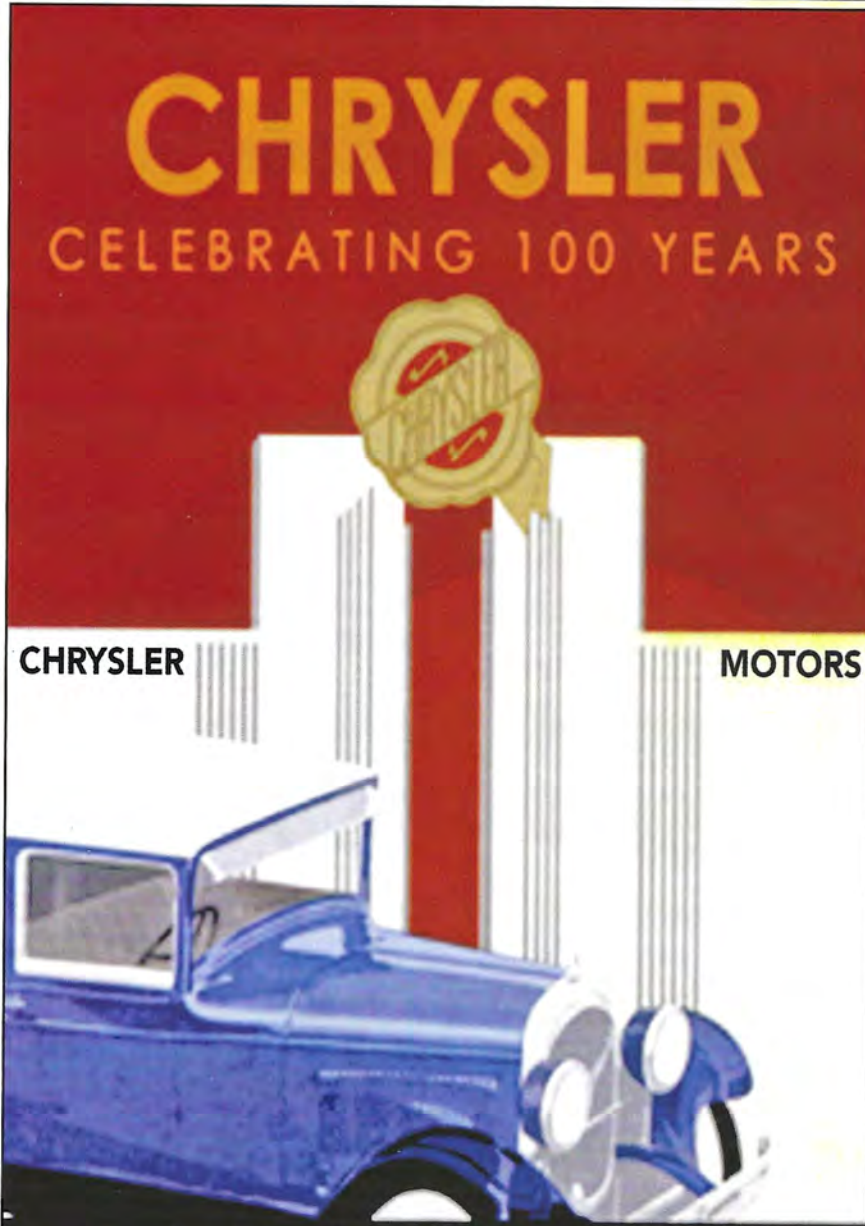
World's largest Manufacturer of
 Licensed Plymouth/Dodge Restoration Decals.

STRIPE KIT DECALS

800.941.4550

www.PhoenixGraphix.com ESTABLISHED 1985

SATISFACTION GUARANTEED DEM LICENSED MANUFACTURER UNBEATABLE PRICES



CHRYSLER **MOTORS**

1925 A CENTURY OF PROGRESS 2025
CARLISLE CHRYSLER NATIONALS July 11-13, 2025

FACEBOOK: W.P.CHRYSLER.CLUB CHRYSLER100.COM