

## 1964 PLYMOUTH Valiant Barracuda pushbutton 273- Kee

Written by Double Dragon

Wednesday, 11 June 2014 20:28 - Last Updated Friday, 04 March 2016 22:14

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The 1964 Plymouth Valiant Barracuda was introduced to the world April 1, 1964 according to most Chrysler authorities. The April Fool's Day introduction date is not fully supported with documentation the way April 17, 1964 is for the Ford Mustang. We know the precise date for the Mustang because it had a gigantic budget behind its introduction advertising. The 'public date' had been built up to over a few lead in months.



If the Barracuda introduction date is indeed 'April Fool's Day' it makes some poetic sense when you consider its parallel course with the Mustang which trampled the fish before it could 'make waves'. If the Mustang had not been built, would the sporty economy class be called 'fish cars' instead of 'ponycars'? AMC obviously believed this when they released the Marlin which was a larger version of the Barracuda.

Both Mustang and Barracuda had the same mission: provide a sporty inexpensive car using a new body with existing mechanical economy car parts. The Mustang was essentially a rebodied Falcon and the Barracuda was a rebodied Valiant. Mustang crushed the Barracuda with a sales juggernaut best compared to Beatlemania. The secret was the long hood/ short deck proportions on a totally new body.

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Chrysler saved some money by reusing the front of the Valiant. By preserving the basic proportions of the economy car and retaining the Valiant name Plymouth reminded potential buyers that this was still a Valiant. No one thought a Mustang was a Falcon.

Plymouth got it right in 1970 when they played the same fastback grafting trick to create the fantastic Valiant Duster, but the first generation Barracuda didn't catch on with the same sales power. The Barracuda provided revolutionary space usage for such a small car with its fold down seats which created massive rear room, but in the sales race Mustang styling trumped Barracuda utility. The Plymouth fold down seat trick would be revived in the 'Space Duster' package (Dodge also tried the same thing with the first generation fastback Charger).

Both the the new Mustang and Barracuda had fairly short runs before the summer assembly plant changeover arrived to retool for the subsequent model year. In the case of Mustang they were all 1965s from the first one off the line. Despite experts calling the first run of Mustangs '1964 1/2' model year cars, for titling purposes Ford designated them as 1965 model year cars. The Barracuda mid 1964 run were titled as 1964 cars until production changeover to the 1965 model year on the First Friday in August of 1964 (August 7). The 1965 model year lasted until the Second Friday of July 1965 (July 9). That means the 1964 model year Barracuda had a 4 month run and the 1965 model year had an 11 month run. The Mustang sold like crazy but the numbers are slightly misleading because the Mustang 1965 model year ran 15 months.

The base Valiant Barracuda engine was a 101 HP 170 slant six. Next up was a 225 slant six which was adequate for the lightweight Barracuda. For guys who wanted some performance to accompany the image of the car the small Barracuda got it on when the lightweight small block 273 2 barrel 180 HP 'Commando' V8 was ordered.



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The 1964 model year was the last one for the Chrysler pushbutton automatic transmission. It was never a popular option with the public because they were accustomed to moving a lever to choose gears.

I have good memories driving a 1964 Barracuda with pushbutton automatic except for the times I was trying to put the car in park when it was late at night in some unlit spot. If the interior light worked it probably wouldn't have been such a hassle but in this particular instance you can't just ram the column shift lever all the way home to put it in park. You can't just slip it up a notch to find neutral. You have to press the right button which was tricky in the dark.



The ALLEY FINDS Barracuda has an automatic transmission and therefore it has the pushbuttons. You can spot them on the left side of the dash. The gold interior is in pretty decent shape except for the foot pad under the pedals and the top of the driver's bucket seat.

This Barracuda is part of the Charles Kee collection which was auctioned off in May, 2014 following Kee's death in 2013. Most of the Kee cars were collected in the 1980s on a 50 acre property in Brothers, Oregon for storage outside in the desert.

Kee amassed several hundred cars stored on his property but would only sell to people he liked. Money was not the issue when he sold a car. See the full story in the 20 YEARS PLUS story on one of Kee's personal drivers; a 1967 Chrysler New Yorker.

The Barracuda VIN V442729093 decodes:

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V- Valiant/ Barracuda

4= V8 engine

4= 1964 Model year

2= Hamtramck, Michigan (aka 'Dodge Main') final assembly plant

729093= Sequential number



The fender tag decodes starting with the bottom line first:

0703= July 3, 1964 build date/ the plant production number 3325 is not related to the VIN/ Body  
V49= Barracuda (the V means V8)/ P5Y= Gold vinyl interior/ WWA= White paint. Usually it is  
followed by a 1 but this one has an 'A' after which may indicate a stripe.