



PHOTO: STEPHEN BACH PHOTOGRAPHY

Joe Hanley's restored 1974 Land Rover Series 3.

A Father and Son Rust-oration

PARENTS OFTEN PASS ALONG personal passions to their children; for some its music, others sports. For me its cars, in particular Land Rovers. All of my children at one time or another had a Land Rover daily driver, my eldest son still drives his every day.

This story is about my younger son Joe's 1974 Land Rover Series 3. According to Joe it is a keeper. You can see it in our advertisements and if you come to our repair shop it resides in our front office. It is the first vehicle that customers look at in our showroom before the restored vehicles. It is well-used and has gone through a sort of restoration.

When I purchased my first Land Rover (a 1987 Range Rover) we took it on off-road trips and on a Land Rover club weekend trip. Joe went with and caught the Rover bug. He decided to go old school and found his 1974 Series in Indianapolis. Joe was only 15 at the time—no driver's license yet—with the thought of fixing it up for his first car.


The Rover did not run and came with a spare frame which should have been an indication that this was a bad idea. It was priced very reasonably and had

a title that later was decided was its only strong point. I convinced a friend with an enclosed trailer to join me in picking up the truck and we drove with a trailer to carry the spare frame.

We arrived in Indianapolis and met with the owner who assured us the motor turned and it had been running just yesterday. Joe thought it was great and I wondered how bad could it be since we had a spare frame. We went ahead and purchased the truck more on gut feeling than smarts. The drive back was uneventful and we backed the trailer up to the shop I was working at to unload. Upon opening the trailer, we found the frame had fallen off and was now part of the trailer floor easily swept up. We got what was left off the trailer and inside. The engine was rusted solid; the wiring was a mass of corrosion. Every rule I follow for the purchase of a car had been broken, but Joe still had the gleam of ownership in his eyes.

We moved the truck to my garage so that we could work on it in the evenings and weekends at our leisure. Initially, my wife thought it was exciting that it was here and a father-son project. That did not last long. It eventually turned our entire garage into a

Land Rover restoration lasting three years. Joe and I worked on the truck in spurts of inspiration. We found the spare frame to be the wrong year and had to weld body brackets to mount the body. Anything that could stop us from finishing the truck happened in a rolling sequence. Joe never once thought we would fail, and we kept going.

We finished mechanically restoring the truck and never got around to the body. Joe drove it as a daily driver for three years before having to get a newer vehicle for work. It has gone to Nicolet National Forest in Northern Wisconsin for off-road trips and still goes off-roading regularly. For all the time and money and cursing at the pile of junk we started with, I would do it over again with no regrets because every time Joe starts it up and drives it I still see that gleam in his eye. 

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George Hanley is the owner of Highgate Motors in Barrington. Stop by to see Joe's 1974 restored Land Rover at the shop, located at 1203 Northwest Highway. To contact Highgate Motors, call 847-496-0818 or visit www.highgatemotors.com.