

## Henry Country

At the end of March 2021, after a long month of haranguing and negotiation, we had finally convinced insurance to pay for the vehicle I had lost in an accident: my 1984 Jeep CJ7. I loved it and, maybe a little obsessively, cared for it with a fine-tooth comb while I had owned it, and although I heavily missed it at the time (and still do today) I figured I was ready to move on. I already knew I wouldn't be buying another CJ, as I felt the experience wouldn't be the same, and I would not have wanted to feel as though I was simply replacing what I had lost.

It was bittersweet for sure, but it had to be done. At this point, I knew I wanted another '80s icon, and the thought of owning a Jeep Cherokee XJ or an old Chevy pickup instantly inspired daydreams of long cruises and simple free-spirited fun. I hopped on my phone and started looking for a worthy vehicle. The next couple of weeks were spent keying over vehicles in various states of disrepair, until at last I found something that clicked: an 85 Chevy C10. The two-tone red and white paint screamed class, squared-off headlights and a grille like a toothy grin boldly flaunted the coolness of whoever sat in the driver's seat. It was a beautiful truck, and I knew I had to see it in person.



The only problem was that it was 3 hours away from me, but I was determined.

The next morning my dad and I hopped in the car and drove down to Henry's house (the man selling it). The small town was out in the middle of nowhere, in Henry County, Georgia. Trees and tall grasses surrounded us on either side of the road. The only noise you could hear was the wind whispering through the trees, the chirping of songbirds, and the occasional pickup truck passing by. We arrived at the house a little early (my dad is a fast driver, so they say) and took some time looking over the truck, and I have to say I was quite impressed. Sure, some of the paint was peeling off, but underneath the frame was solid, and everything looked to be in order. At least, everything looked to be in order with the truck. A few minutes after we finished inspecting the frame, we were joined by a man who lived across the road from the seller, he explained to us that he was a good friend of him, and about how he was an honest guy. My dad and I talked to him for a while about several subjects, ranging from cars, to Covid, to his experiences as a soldier and coming back home. Over the course of this conversation, we were somewhat wary of the situation. For instance, there were multiple pit bulls chained to trees in the backyard. The man we were talking to reeked of smoke, and at one point took a swig of whiskey from a bottle in a bag from his car and explained "nosy neighbors" (keep in mind that this was during the middle of the day). A shed that seemed to be intentionally separated from the side of the yard with the pit bulls had what appeared to be a makeshift chicken coop attached to it, with no living chickens, but what was definitely a dead chicken hanging its head out of one of the roosting boxes.

After around 30 minutes of small talk, as well as thinking of a few questions that we wouldn't dare ask, Henry drove up the gravel road in a tree hauler, his friend cheering him on with glee. It was surely a sight to see, hopping out of his truck, gold teeth glinting in the sunlight. He immediately struck me as a "happy go lucky" type of guy, and although at this point my dad was suspicious, I was more curious than anything. He strutted over to us wearing a golden smile, albeit one maybe only a mother

could love. We soon got to work chatting over some of the details about our possible purchase. Lots of technical truck-talk was thrown around, particularly about the rebuilt 383 Cubic Inch powerhouse under the hood. He opened the door, jumped in, and started her up. I must say, it was impressively loud, an exhilarating shrill roar accompanied by a rumbling tone, my ears were numb after just a few moments of entertaining the monstrous roar from that V8. It was perfect, at least in my eyes. I couldn't wait to jump inside, and that's exactly what we did next. My dad and I climbed onto the bench seat with me in the middle and Henry drove us down the gravel road. When we reached the main highway, he said "well, this might be the last time I drive her, might as well have some fun!" I barely had time to react, or even process what this might imply, before I was thrown back into my seat (and into my dad) as the truck surged left onto the road, tires screeching, dust and gravel flying out the back. We held onto each other for dear life as we saw the front of the truck lurching towards the ditch at the edge of the road.

After we'd straightened out (and calmed down a bit) he took us on a much steadier drive to the gas station up the road, and then to his friend's "house", which was in fact not a house but some sort of large mobile home that I don't know what to call. "let's wake him up" he said with glee as he stomped the gas pedal, being as loud as he could. It wasn't long before a rather large man in sunglasses walked out. I don't know if cheerfulness is a disease that runs in Henry County, but we were once again met by a mellow, yet still cheerful man who was more than eager to show off his many man toys. He swept the cover from a Harley Davidson motorcycle that I can only describe as bright enough to light up the sun. Every square centimeter of that bike (besides the baby blue paint) was clearly polished chrome, in fact it was almost too bright to even look at, I could feel myself getting drunk off of the wavy reflections and had to turn away. What drew our attention from that (and trust me when I say it would take a lot for that not to be the center of attention) was his own C10, also baby blue, but not as shiny as the abomination we had just witnessed. He cranked it up and popped the hood, underneath sat a beautifully done big

block engine, and I wondered where his taste had gone when he did the bike. They chatted about some of the mechanics of their two trucks, how they helped each other out with the things they didn't like doing ("I'm the mechanic, he's the electrician" Henry chimed between giggles), and about future plans for other vehicles.

By this time, it was quite late in the afternoon, I knew we had a three-hour drive back to Atlanta and we were not on a mission to get home at midnight. Henry drove us back to his house where we proceeded to say our farewells. As could only be expected at this point, another conversation ensued, but not about the truck. He and my dad talked about life out in the country vs life in Atlanta, a wealthy man who owned much of the property in the area, the story behind the pit bulls (that he allegedly loved very much), and about life in general, including some unsolicited (but well spirited) dating advice. During the conversations, we probably paced the whole property three times or so. Three hours later (we still hadn't left) Henry was rolling out rims he thought would look good with the body lines. "Naw man now don't you go makin this no redneck truck" he quipped in response to my idea of "putting a little lift on it, but not too much". After a little more show and tell, we finally got down to some more business; the title, more specifically the lack of one.

Before I go any further, at this point my heart was beating out of my chest, I wanted that C10, but the lack of a title is a nearly insurmountable problem. Without a title, you can't register a vehicle. Without registration, you can't drive it. We spent some time discussing how we could deal with this, but Henry's comments of "don't worry man, it's all about who you know" in reference to having it titled by the local courthouse did not inspire confidence. The little voice in my head was screaming at me, the sun was now setting, and we would be getting back well after 10pm if we stayed any longer. I reminded my dad of the time, and he gave me an expression that is best described as shock; not at the fact that I had told him, but that it was so late! We hastily said our farewells (again) and told Henry that we'd let him

know the next morning if we would be coming back. “Stay young son, stay young” he said as I was getting in the car to leave. We couldn’t help but laugh as we drove into the night.

After the long drive home, my dad and I had a serious discussion about the truck. The next morning, we had our verdict in the form of a deep sigh. We decided that the titling process was simply too much to go through. Although in the end we didn’t buy it, I was still thankful to have gone and spent a day with the more eccentric side of the truck culture that I love.

Writer’s questions

How can I make the essay shorter?

Can I be more concise in reporting detail?

How can I make my essay flow?