

The "new" W300M

For years I have known folks whose Power Wagons bore the model designations WDX, letter-number-PW (C-1-PW, *etc.*), and WM300. I have two WDX's, one B-1-PW, and one C-3-PW. I recently sold my C-1-PW. There was another model designation out there but it got so little mention that it seemed to be a typographic error instead of a deliberate act by the Dodge Company.

This was the W300M. For years I have been following Power Wagons on the *Power Wagon Forum*, in the *Power Wagon Advertiser*, at the various Power Wagon rallies, and other places where folks gather to drive, display, and discuss these magnificent machines. No one talked about or even mentioned the W300M. Did it exist only in the "Twilight Zone?"

The dealer who sold me my tractor several years ago called me last June to tell me that another customer of his was retiring at age 84 and selling off all his ranch equipment. Among this equipment was a Power Wagon and he remembered I had some of them. I called the old rancher and went out to look at it. It was sitting in a field where the Spring rains helped the various weeds and grasses to nearly hide the truck. The unmistakable radiator, hood, and cab of a Power Wagon stood clear of the vegetation. I was wearing my usual summer attire - shorts and a "tee" shirt with a Power Wagon printed on it. I certainly was not dressed for climbing through waist high vegetation, so my examination of the truck was basically a fast inventory followed by a hasty retreat to shorter grass. The truck seemed to be complete. It started and ran smoothly. Although there was a lot of surface rust, I found no visible rust-through. The instrument panel indicated that it was at least a 1951 model. The old rancher was not sure about the year but assured me he had a good title.

A few years ago, these old ranchers and farmers didn't think these derelicts sitting out in their fields or behind their barns were worth much. Some of us actually bought some reasonably presentable trucks at a pretty good price. Those deals are rare these days. Almost all the old codgers I have run into in the last few years are very up to date on old car and truck prices. This fellow was no exception. His price was not bad compared with prices being asked by some, but it was more than I paid for any other Power Wagon or military Dodge that had not been restored. I don't know if he knew about Power Wagon fever, or knew I had it. He didn't let on. There was only a friendly smile when I agreed and we shook hands on it. There was one condition to the sale. The truck had an

"A" frame hoist on the front that he needed to load the rest of the equipment he was selling so the Power Wagon had to be the last to go.

The months passed. The spring rains were forgotten in a seriously dry summer. The old rancher's decision to retire put him ahead of some farmers and ranchers in Texas who were forced to give up their livelihoods. They watched crops that were planted late because of the Spring rains wither half grown in the Summer heat - long after their usual harvest dates. The Spring rains also prompted the growth of weeds in pastures, crowding out beneficial grasses and forcing sales of cattle at reduced prices.

Finally, the old rancher called and told me he was done with the Power Wagon. At the same time, the rains everyone had been praying for these many months came - and they came - and they came. Farm and ranch equipment couldn't be used or even moved. Every low area experienced flooding. Many fall festivals were canceled or washed out. These rains delayed my going to get the Power Wagon.

FINALLY! The rains stopped. Fields began to dry out. Dirt roads were passable and could be used without tearing them up. It was a perfect time to go get the Power Wagon - and I got the perfect cold. After a week of postponements, I headed to Golinda, Texas, to bring the Power Wagon home. The deal included four additional wheels and tires, a spare transmission, a spare transfer case, and a parted out front axle. This extra weight and the "A" frame meant I would have to take my "long" trailer, the one that can carry a Power Wagon and my WC-52 with its Ben Hur trailer. Loading was easy. The four wheels and tires were lashed down on the front of the trailer with a trucker's cargo ratchet strap. The extra transmission, transfer, and axle were in the Power Wagon bed. The Power Wagon started right up. I drove it onto the trailer and placed it right over the three axles. I was amazed at the ease with which I was able to lower the "A" frame. It was held up with a small channel iron that ran to the top of the boom from a reinforced "headache" rack over the front of the bed. The bolt that held the channel iron was a fine thread and the nut came off easily. I tied a load strap to the channel iron, took a couple wraps around the headache bar, tugged back on the strap to take the load off the bolt, removed it and eased the "A" frame down. It stopped when it was horizontal. I secured the Power Wagon with axle straps and ratchet straps, and snubbed the "A" frame with another cargo strap to keep it from bouncing. Here's how it looked ready to bring home.



When the old gentleman handed over the title and his old registration receipts, I got some very pleasant surprises. The Power Wagon was a 1958 L6W3M, and was much newer than I thought. It turned out that I am the third owner. The US Government owned it until June 1965 when the old rancher bought it. When I got home, I went to my *Standard Catalog of 4x4's* and learned that I had a W300M. Yes, Virginia, there is a W300M. I just bought one. That designation was used only in 1958 and 1959. I read the specifications and learned that it came with 12 volt, key starting, a synchronized transmission, and it was the first year for the 10,000 pound winch.

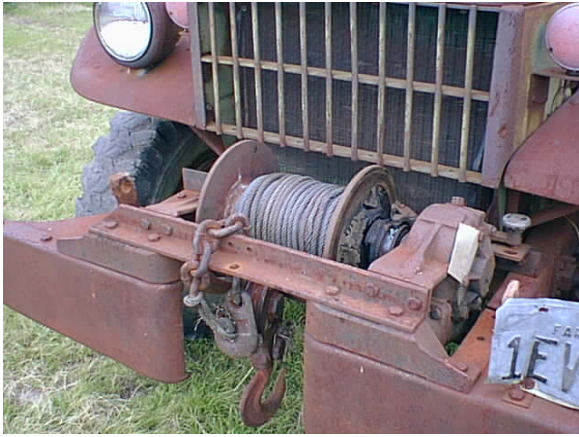
I waited until the next day to unload. It wouldn't start - just fire and quit. I'd try without any luck, leave it for a while and then come back and try again. Finally, I realized I was having a Senior Moment. I grabbed the emergency gas can and poured about four gallons into the W300M. Of course it started right away. I drove it up by my shop and removed the "A" frame. The pulley at the apex of the "A" frame was a high quality snatch block rated for 20,000 pounds. The bolt that holds it together needs some more coaxing so the block is still on the cable. The winch spools in and out under power, but I wouldn't try respooling the cable by myself using power. I pulled the cable all the way out and respooled it by hand.

Then, I took a slow walk around the Power Wagon. I wanted to see if I should hide the truck under some old camouflage nets I have, or shout and brag about my good deal. This page is the answer. I'm bragging. The truck has a good bit of surface rust, but there's virtually no rust through anywhere. I'll remove the support assembly for the "A" frame since my WDX also has an "A" frame set-up. I'll have to fill in the two holes where the support goes through the lower bed

to the frame. Fortunately, the entire support assembly is bolted, not welded on. In fact, other than the "A" frame mounts on the front frame extensions (partially visible in the winch view), this truck has no bogus welding anywhere.

Walk around the truck with me and see if you think I got a decent truck.





All the fenders & running boards are straight. The spare tire carrier is complete and the piece that clamps the rim was in the cab. Rear bumperettes were typical on government owned Power Wagons. The winch was complete and in regular use. The cable was shorter than standard but is recent. The heater is the original MOPAR 75 complete with defroster ducts. The control knobs and ignition switch appear to be original.

Well, here it is - my W300M.

WHOOPEE! While I was moving it around the other day, I noticed something I have never seen on any of my other Power Wagons - THE FUEL GAUGE WORKS!