

**The best way  
to describe a convertible  
Barracuda Formula S is...**

*text and photography by Thomas Glatch*

As I write this, summer is in its last throes. The trees hugging the twisty roads along Lake Michigan's eastern shore are just starting to turn, and the scent of autumn is in the air. But in Norm Ver Hage's 1969 Plymouth Barracuda Formula S convertible, the sun warms our backs, the wind combs our hair in its own random pattern, and the powerful 340 and tight suspension make quick work of the hills and bends around the sand dunes famous in these parts.

Those fortunate enough to own a drop-top muscle machine might understand the feeling, but few have experienced the unusual thrill of a Barracuda Formula S convertible—just 83 were built in '69. Power, handling, comfort and beauty is the balance that makes Norm's "S" so unique.

Power comes from Chrysler's torquey, free-winding 340-horsepower A-block factory rated at 275 horsepower. Interestingly, NHRA rated the

motor at 301. Norm's car is equipped with the famed TorqueFlite automatic and 3.23 Sure-Grip differential, though a four-speed was also offered. Plenty of other small-blocks have been surprised by this potent package, and we can attest to some big-blocks that have been equally humbled. And for those that got away, a 383 version of the Formula S was available.

Handling is delivered by the Formula S suspension, a race-bred group of heavy-duty torsion bars, six-leaf springs, large diameter anti-roll bar, and disc brakes. Plymouth advertising claimed, "You'll never want to go straight again."

Comfort was a hallmark of the Formula S, and Norm's is loaded with practically every option under the sun, including the Interior Decor option, Light Group, Sport Steering Wheel, tachometer, power brakes and



steering, and much more wrapped up in a stunning Sun Gold and black package.

Then there's the unquestionable beauty shimmering in Sunfire Yellow paint, contrasted by the Firestone Redlines, then set off by an extremely rare set of factory Kelsey-Hayes cast aluminum wheels—available only in the first three weeks of 1969 and then discontinued due to cracking problems.

Norm is general manager of his father's Chrysler-Plymouth dealership in Holland, Michigan, and he is surrounded by plenty of Mopar muscle, old and new. He personally specializes in A-body Barracudas from 1967-69 and owns six of them. The prize of the collection being this Formula S. After three years of cosmetic and body restoration, it debuted with a class win at the 1990 WPC Club National Meet.

But the real joy is joining Norm on one of his frequent summer runs up the Lake Michigan shoreline. It's a rare treat!

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**'69 Barracuda Formula S  
By The Numbers**

340-Equipped	
Fastback .....	1431
Hardtop .....	325
Convertible .....	83
383-Equipped	
Fastback .....	603
Hardtop .....	98
Convertible .....	17



**Sunsational!**

