

URSULA

1958 MB 220S

This car has spent its life entirely within the Central Coast region of California. Originally from Santa Barbara, the car moved with its second owner to San Luis Obispo in the 1970s, and with its third owner to Cambria in 1986. The second owner did a relatively thorough restoration in 1968, including paint, major engine work, transmission overhaul, etc. A second restoration was done in 1977, which included body work, paint (Dark Brown), interior (wood, MB-Tex, carpet, headliner, rubber). This 2nd restoration even included overhaul of the clock, seat recliner hardware, and other “minor” hardware. At the time of this 2nd restoration, the car had covered 312,000 miles. Four years earlier, in 1973 at 272,000 miles, the engine had been overhauled, replacing pistons, rings, etc. and reboring cylinders.

When I bought the car from the third owner in 1994, it had then covered 361,000 miles. After a year of reliable performance (with a major tune and some minor repairs), I felt the car was ready for another restoration project. As the picture at left shows, the car was a

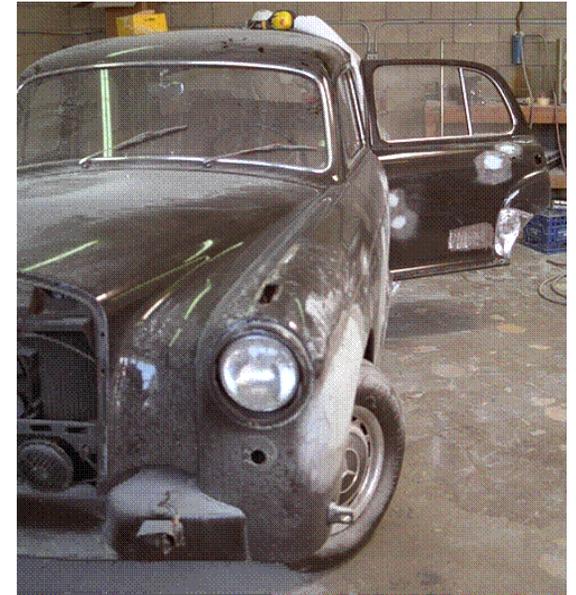


solid “20 footer” – most of the minor body dings, paint checking, bumper rust, etc. don’t show at 20 feet or so. We live in Cambria, California, very near the ocean, so I was concerned about possibility of rust problems. However, even with the car’s extensive history along the coast, there was little rust, either on body panels, frame, or other parts. The chrome parts had some surface pitting, but not serious enough to warrant repair and replating. Our goal was a good looking “driver”, definitely not a show car. Additionally, since the 58 220S sedan will probably never be a high dollar value car, it didn’t seem sensible to put large amounts of money in it. This was definitely a project where wanted to have fun and spend sensibly. This ponton sedan is a great choice for a vintage car (In my opinion) -- it’s extremely comfortable (generally shocking people who are expecting a noisy, rattle-prone, jarring ride), handles fairly well, and fits four or five people. That makes it great for taking visitors on scenic drives along the coast, through the Paso Robles wine country, or simply going to dinner.



Based on the condition of the car, our objectives, and our budget, we planned the following restoration projects:

- Exterior
 - Body Repair (Dings, some trim replacement)
 - Paint – Modern Urethane with clearcoat
 - Bumpers, other chrome – polish, no replating
- Mechanical
 - Driveline balancing, U-Joint Replacement
 - Complete exhaust system (Stainless Steel copy of original)
- Interior
 - Wood – Down to bare veneer on all wood. Finish with 10 coats of hand applied Tung Oil (To approximate appearance of original “melted Hershey Bar” covered with 40 coats of lacquer, but with enhanced durability especially to sunlight)
 - Clock, Instrument Cluster – Repair, refinish – Used Original instruments (e.g. no quartz clock replacement, etc.) – All Instruments Operational
 - Very little work needed on MB-Tex, carpet, door panels



These pictures were taken during the exterior restoration. The work included body repairs, grill refinishing, painting and clearcoat. The color is dark green, as close to the original DB259, (non-metallic) Forest Green as we could get, using the chips available. Paint was done in Ditzler Durethane, by Rainbow Painting in San Luis Obispo, CA.

The decision to change colors from the previous Dark Brown was a fairly easy one – The dark brown from that era had none of the richness of the sable brown cars from the 1930s, while the dark green is downright lively, especially in bright sunlight. As indicated above, the interior wood has been fully restored, while the upholstery (Saddle MB-Tex), headliner, carpeting and door panels are still in excellent condition from the restoration of 20 years ago.



Since the paint and body work, I've gradually replaced rubber trim (windows, trunk, doors), insulation, and wiring. In the past years I've replaced various seals (rear end, fuel) and done a fuel pump and carburetor overhaul. The car is driven regularly, and takes trips of 100 to 300 miles occasionally.

The picture above was taken during an MBCA Central Coast Section trip to the Point Sur Lighthouse, located just south of Big Sur. Even though we had decided this was never to be considered a show car, I was still concerned about the 40-knot winds blowing the sand against our then-new paint job.

Other than the paint and body work and other relatively minor repairs and upgrades, from 1996 until 2009, no major work was done on the car. Engine compression remained good, but I was noticing significant oiling of the #6 spark plug.



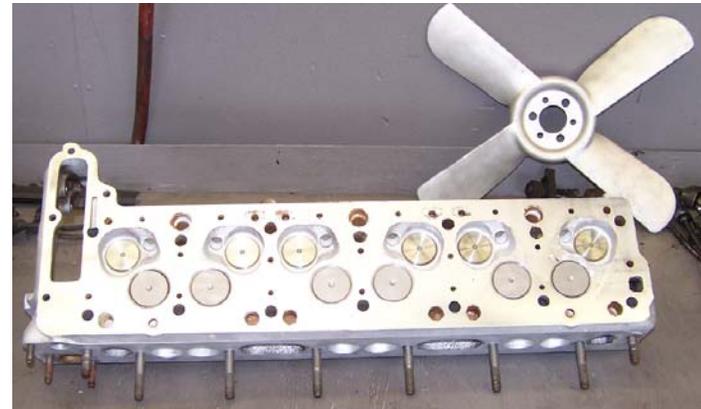


So, hoping that something as simple as valve guide replacement would solve the problem, I asked our mechanic at Rizzolis in San Luis Obispo to look into it. As it turned out, there was a head gasket leak in that area and a somewhat scored cylinder. So, at 387,000 miles we decided to undertake a pretty complete top and bottom end overhaul

- Rebuilt block and head, bore engine and replace rings
- Replace exhaust valves, pistons, rings and bearings
- New timing chain
- Fuel Pump overhaul
- Clutch overhaul (pressure plate, disc, bearings)
- Recore radiator.
- Clean and paint engine & compartment

While this car has been a daily driver for most of its life, through the 3 previous owners, we now drive it about 2,000 miles a year, including a trip each year to the Monterey Area for the “Car Week” events. While not a daily driver, it’s definitely the car we use for weekend activities, and especially for touring visitors around to see the

California Central Coast -- Hearst Castle, Elephant Seal preserve, Paso Robles Wine region, beaches, etc. It’s far and away the most comfortable of the cars we have – the seats are like high quality living room furniture, not the hard, sports-car influenced seats from later years. As you can see from the graph below, I have pretty complete records for most of the car’s life. Two of the three previous owners kept very detailed records and receipts – that certainly adds to the fun of digging into the car’s history.



Ursula's History 1958 Mercedes-Benz 220S

