



## AutoInfocus

# Broker's '27 Chrysler bears resemblance to Le Mans car

BY NATHAN BOMEY  
nbomey@mbizreview.com

You won't see Bill Milliken riding around in his 1927 Chrysler Model 72 with the leather helmet and goggles that came with it.

Although fashionable in their day, the helmet and goggles – which were used to protect the driver from rocks and mud flying over the windshield from non-paved roads – aren't necessary on today's streets.

Over the last several years, Milliken, owner of Ann Arbor's Milliken Realty Company, has slowly renovated the Model 72 into working condition. His goal was to make the car resemble the original rumble-seated roadster that finished third at the 1928 Le Mans 24-hour road race in France.

When he bought the car for \$7,500 about six years ago, it needed a massive overhaul, including a new engine. "This was a project on wheels," Milliken said.

Fascinated by the Le Mans road races of yesteryear, Milliken turned the Model 72 into a near replica of the original car that raced in 1928.

That vehicle took third behind a \$6,300 Bentley and a \$5,750 Stutz. The Model 72 was priced at \$1,595 when it was released.

"They were racing against cars that were three times as expensive as they were," Milliken said.

Milliken has replaced the engine, restored the leather interior and wood grain instrument panel, and acquired new wheels. He also converted the brakes to contemporary internal



Milliken's restored 1927 Chrysler. | ROBERT RAMEY

expansion brakes and upgraded a windshield that "killed the car aesthetically."

The wheels that originally came with the car had wooden spokes, but for safety concerns, Milliken said they needed to be replaced with wired wheels like those used in the Le Mans race. He fabricated new wheels using British rims and spokes. The car has a three-speed gearbox and six-cylinder engine with four-liter displacement. It has a BHP horsepower rating of 85.

Milliken wouldn't say how much he's invested in the car. He said it's nearly impossible to determine how much it's worth now, because there isn't a standard market price for vehicles that are, literally, one of a kind.

"A car is only worth what someone will pay for it," he said.

The car sports its original wooden steering wheel, "which I wouldn't part with," Milliken said. "It's the patina of the car from an era gone by." Milliken won't be racing his Chrysler any time soon, especially not at its supposed top speed, 72 mph.

He drove the car for the first time two months ago on a local street – a task that requires the ability to know how to double-clutch.

"This is a fun car to drive," he said.

Even without the helmet and goggles.

### Executive Wheels

#### 1927 Chrysler Model 72

**Owner:** Bill Milliken  
**Car description:** Rumble-seated roadster.

**Original price:** \$1,595.

**Cost:** Milliken bought the car for \$7,500 about seven years ago.

**Estimated value today:** Unknown.

**Upgrades:** New engine, leather interior, wired wheels, upgraded windshield.

**Engine:** Six-cylinder, four-liter displacement.

**Top speed:** Theoretically 72 mph.

**Amenities:** Came with a "ratty" convertible top now permanently in storage; has a "jump seat" in the back that fits two.

**Insurance and license:** Policy with Hagerty Insurance, based in Traverse City, with an authentic historic license plate.

**Milliken's other vehicles:** 1963 Porsche Convertible, 1950 Chevrolet pick-up truck, 1967 BSA motorcycle.