

BIZ BUZZ

by Buzz B. Berkeley



WAY back in 2007, we covered the story of the THRIF-T. A multi-purpose, American made delivery vehicle that, at the time, appeared to be the only remaining example. The history of the vehicle was researched, the car was restored and at some point the owner decided to get it appraised to determine its value.

He apparently hired an appraiser because I got a call from someone claiming to be an appraiser looking for ideas of the value of a "rare" vehicle, "the only remaining example" of an American made package delivery vehicle.

"Is it a Thrif-T?" I asked.

there was a pause and then the appraiser said "why, yes, it is a Thrif-T, do you know the car? What do you think the market value is?"

I thought for a moment and then told him my opinion. After hearing it, he scoffed.

"Oh, I think it is worth considerably more than that," he replied. "It is a very rare vehicle and the only one known to exist."

I agreed that it was rare, but I countered that "rare" does not necessarily translate into "valuable".

We went back and forth a bit, each of us coming up with examples to support our opinions.

I then ask him a question: "Are you charging your client for this service?"

"Well... yes," he replied "I am a professional appraiser."

I then asked him if he thought that I should charge him something for providing him with my own "expert" opinion on the subject at hand. He did not think I should charge him anything.

"So basically I am doing your job for free," I said, "and then you charge your clients for that?"

The appraiser did not see it that way. He mentioned something about how he thought money should not change hands on this type of friendly encounter and that he was hoping to establish a relationship with me and obviously since I was not interested in any sort of friendly discussion he was done here and "good day to you SIR!" He hung up before I could try to explain how, if he subscribed to MICROCAR NEWS magazine, it might benefit his appraisal business because he could easily see the current market values of a wide variety of vehicles in all sorts of conditions via the eBay Watch page and the Live Auctions results. oh well.

Soon after this, the THRIF-T appeared on the market for sale (privately at first), with an initial asking price of \$50,000 (later lowered to \$45,000). It appeared on eBay a few times with no sale and has



been recently been shopped around again. Since the first offering, a **second** THRIF-T showed up on eBay in December 2012. Despite the second example being mentioned in a previous issue of MICROCAR NEWS, the first yellow THRIF-T was again shopped around the message boards and on eBay twice as:

"very rare, one 1 known to exist"

The owner was notified of the other THRIF-T but continued to advertise his vehicle as the only known example.

As far as I know, it remains unsold today. Prices on eBay failed to meet the reserve, but the prices bid were actually rather close to what my original estimate was of the actual "value" of the vehicle.

So what is going on here? On one hand I think the owner is a little out of touch with reality in that he continues to deny that another example exists, but I also think he was misled by the appraiser that he hired to come up with a "value" for the vehicle. If you hire a professional and they tell you that you have something worth \$50,000, why would you sell it for \$10,000?

I've always told people that when trying to find a value for their car, it should be judged like the Olympics:

Get some estimates, throw out the high value,

throw out the low value,

the truth is somewhere in between.

Harry Kraemer is a Club member and also an appraiser. He mostly appraises aircraft, but I asked him his opinion of this situation:

I do agree with you that this appraiser did their client an injustice. Rare does not equate to \$\$\$\$. In such cases where you have a rare or one-of-a-kind I try to find an equal vehicle (equal in size, engine size, performance, etc) and also rare or limited production and look for comparable sales for the vehicle and use them as a reference (reference only). For vehicles that are not included in the various reference guides I often will refer to the same make and model listed for sale (when I can find listings). I will contact the owner/seller and ask what offers have been turned down. I can then take the asking price and compare it with offers turned down and come up with a fairly accurate fair market value.

An appraisal request can be for different reasons such as estate settlements, insurance claims, insurance values, divorce settlement, loans, etc. Therefore it is important to use a format that is accepted by the end user. An appraisal can also be used to determine the purchase or sale price of a vehicle. If the appraiser does not use an accepted format and/or cannot backup his/her work then the appraisal may be worthless.

The bottom line is that a vehicle is worth what someone is willing to pay for it on a given day – no more or no less.

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