



To correct the effects of storage – and some questionable “help” from various hungry and furry critters – Cooks replaced all four window liners and serviced all power-window motors. With a few very skillful patches of the headliner and a thorough cleaning, the interior looked as if it were meant to be on display at a dealership.

A talented female technician at Cooks, Amie Groce, meticulously wet-sanded and polished the original paint, bringing the car’s exterior back to life and restoring it to its original luster. Groce also made the flawless chrome sparkle.

“I was amazed at how Cooks really preserved the originality of the car and very competently restored everything to its original finish,” Staskus said. “It came back in stunning fashion.”

Life with the 280SEL

This beautiful car is a perfect example of the flagship Mercedes-Benz S-Class sedan of 1969. Finished off with Uniroyal tires, “... the car is in as close to original showroom condition as is humanly possible,” Staskus said. “Sometimes I feel like it should belong to the San Francisco Symphony or the de Young Museum – on permanent display. ... However, I think the Wattis family appreciates that I have put the time and effort into bringing the car back to such a wonderful condition, and also that someone owns it who really enjoys it.

“I drive it once or twice a week,” Staskus continued. “I live close to my office in Willow Glen just south of central San Jose. Sometimes I go home at lunch and get it and drive it to a local restaurant I like, and then drive it back to the office. It runs so smooth, [it’s] like [captaining] the Queen Mary. The 6-cylinder 2.8-liter engine is just beautiful. It’s the perfect engine to propel such a large sedan gracefully and still keep up with the brisk pace of today’s traffic, which is nice.”

Staskus said the car’s leather seats help his whole body relax as he drives around town, which makes the car a pleasure to drive on a near-daily basis. And he appreciates other perks.

“I keep looking at the odometer while I am driving because it’s hard to believe I am in a 1969 Mercedes-Benz with fewer than 35,000 miles on it,” he said. “So many years left to enjoy the very same car that was enjoyed by the ‘Sophisticated Lady’ of San Francisco. Her memory definitely lives on.”

OPPOSITE PAGE: The well-engineered 2.8-liter fuel-injected engine nicely fills the pristine engine bay, looking as if it has just rolled off the final Mercedes-Benz assembly line in Sindelfingen. **THIS PAGE FROM THE TOP:** The warm and welcoming interior of the 280SEL, complete with the sparkling original instrument cluster and lustrous wood-veneer trim. The odometer proudly tells the tale: This very special automobile has covered just 34,594 original miles since 1969. The rich golden-brown cognac leather seats and matching plush carpeting add to the 280SEL’s palpable sense of understated elegance. Clean and capacious trunk, ready for a wealth of luggage or shopping.