

By RUSTIN WATT

- Daily Leader

The Batmobile seen in the newest installment of the “Batman” saga, “Batman Begins” and “The Dark Night” – some refer to as the “Tumbler” – made a pit stop at the Days Inn in Liberal Tuesday night. On its way to an autoshow in Omaha, Neb., from Burbank, Calif., the Batmobile sat on the back of Warner Brothers Pictures flat-bed trailer in the parking lot of the Days Inn Motel.

“I’ve stopped here before about half a dozen times,” Dave Ragan, a member of Warner Brothers Transportation Department in Burbank, said. “With the hours I’m able to drive, it always ends up as the end of my day.”



Ragan’s previous visits were on his journey from Burbank to Chicago during the filming of the movies.

“I stay at this hotel every time, as well. It works out perfect, and it’s a great town. My daughters

were able to come on one of my trips and one of them happens to love the Wizard of Oz. She went bonkers when she found out about the Oz Museum and really enjoyed seeing it.”

Ragan went on to say if he was able to reach town early on a future trip, he plans to visit the air museum.

The Batmobile will be displayed at the autoshow in Omaha today through Sunday. The Tumbler is not the only vehicle on the big screen Ragan has driven, delivered or worked on in his day.

The “General Lee” seen in the “Dukes of Hazard” movie in 2005, and Michael Keaton’s Batmobile as seen in 1989’s “Batman Returns” to various shows all around the country are just a couple.

Along with meeting the entire “Dukes of Hazard” cast, which included Willie Nelson, Johnny Knoxville, Sean William Scott and Jessica Simpson. Ragan recently met Cher working on the set for “Burlesque,” in which Cher will be starring with Christina Aguilera.

“I’ve worked on many sets with all sorts of vehicles,” Ragan said. “I’ve worked on set for picture cars from Batmobiles to cop cars. I usually assist in the transportation of most vehicles.”

While Warner Brothers is synonymous for the movie-Batman vehicles, Ragan made sure to clarify the misconception that the Batmobile seen in the television series was not a Warner Brothers production.

“The TV Batmobile has no Warner Brothers affiliation,” Ragan said. “George Barris of George Barris Customs has made many custom television vehicles such as the ‘Munster’ mobiles and has a shop in north Hollywood.”

Ragan referred to his job as the collaboration of a diplomat-mechanic-driver-scheduler-detailer-financial analyst.

“It’s a well-rounded job,” Ragan said. “You need to be able to put out any fires if anything comes up.”

It all stems back to autoshop at Burbank High School, which led to a major in the field for Ragan.

“It seemed nothing non-vehicle related followed high school,” Ragan said. “I had my own cars, had built my own hot-rods and such. I just always found myself comfortable around cars. A lot of the vehicles are very specialized, and my mechanical background led to my comfort in handling the vehicles. I was also able to keep them running which led to my job with the Batmobile.”

As far as specialized goes, the Tumbler, as seen on the big screen, is actually a combination of four vehicles. Ragan described that each with the same appearance was used for a specific intent. One was able to eclipse the high speed the 480 horsepower, 4,200 pound vehicles were all fashioned with. Another was a stationary version, another for jumps and stunts and such.

Though a blue tarp that nearly shrink wrapped the vehicle for protection may have kept it from formal view, the Batmobile transported by Warner Brothers Transportation Department worker, Dave Ragan, enjoyed its stay at the Days Inn and the friendly community of Liberal.