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FEBRUARY 2017 #149



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1934 FORD ROADSTER

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CONTENTS

HEMMINGS CLASSIC CAR • FEBRUARY 2017 • VOLUME 13, ISSUE 5



FEATURES

36

- 24 **History of the De Soto Adventurer**
- 28 **Exner's Adventurer Concepts**
- 30 **1956 De Soto Adventurer**
- 36 **driveReport:**
1934 Packard 1104 Super Eight Club Sedan
- 48 **1980 Shay Super Deluxe Roadster**
- 52 **Studebaker Goes Racing**
- 54 **Driveable Dream:**
1915 Marmon 41
- 58 **History of Automotive Design:** AMC Prototypes
- 64 **Personality Profile:**
Ken Eberts
- 68 **Restoration Profile:**
1923 Detroit Electric—Part II



DEPARTMENTS

- 10 NEWS REPORTS
- 12 LOST & FOUND
- 14 AUCTION NEWS
- 16 ART & AUTOMOBILIA
- 20 PRODUCTS & PARTS
- 22 AUTOMOTIVE PIONEERS
- 43 RECAPS LETTERS
- 76 DISPATCHES FROM DETROIT
- 78 DETROIT UNDERDOGS
- 80 I WAS THERE
- 82 REARVIEW MIRROR
- 84 REMINISCING
- 95 ODDIES BUT GOODIES

COLUMNISTS

- 08 RICHARD LENTINELLO
- 42 PAT FOSTER
- 44 JIM DONNELLY
- 46 DAVID SCHULTZ
- 96 JIM RICHARDSON

CLASSIC TRUCKS

- 86 CLASSIC TRUCK PROFILE:
1957 IH CIVIL DEFENSE
- 90 COMMERCIAL CHRONICLE

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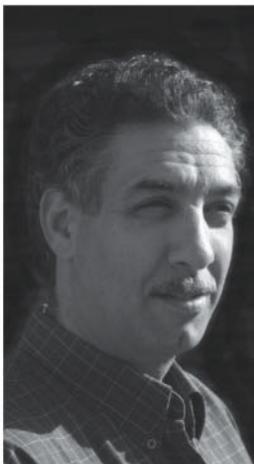


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Motoring in a Marmon

On a late afternoon last November, I traveled to Keene, New Hampshire, to photograph the 1915 Marmon that's presented as this month's Driveable Dream. On the way to our photo location, I had the immense pleasure of riding with its long-standing owner, Warren Witherell. Actually, I was riding in the single seat in the rear so I would be better able to take a few action shots of Warren at the wheel. It was a thrilling experience that I'm not likely to ever forget.

Experiencing firsthand how different cars ride, perform and feel on the road is always a treat. This is especially so when it involves prewar automobiles. Warren suggested we ride with the windshield removed as it would further enhance the driving experience, and with the 47-degree November air blasting our unprotected faces, he was right. Having just moved up from Florida less than four months prior, I forgot how cold 47 degrees feels.

As you'll read in the profile on this matchless Marmon that senior editor Jim Donnelly penned, what makes this particular example so special, and so unique, is that it's been in the same family since it was new. Warren has owned this incredible and very rare piece of American automotive history practically his entire life, so he knows the car intimately inside and out. "It's exceptionally reliable," Warren proudly told me, as he slowly pushed the long shifter into the next gear. During our photo shoot, which took place at three different locations, every time Warren went to start the Marmon in order to move it, its big engine always fired up on the first twist of the key, bursting into life with a boisterous mechanical symphony that only prewar cars can make.

With the straight-cut gears in the manual, non-synchromesh gearbox loudly whirring away, Warren really had to work to get the car up to speed, yet he did so with reassuring ease. Driving along on the winding back roads surrounding this southern New Hampshire town, I was amazed as to how well the big Marmon handled them. Of course we weren't traveling fast, but having driven many cars from the '50s and '60s, the 102-year-old Marmon would have out-cornered most of them, and with far less body roll. Yet I was even more

surprised at just how effectively its mechanical brakes slowed the car down. There was no pulling to the left or right, nor did I ever get the sense that we weren't going to stop in time. It was truly a remarkable experience, made all the more special because it was in a long-lost American automotive brand that was once so prominent among the

wealthy and elite oh, so long ago.

One of the most stimulating aspects of driving around in cars built prior to The Great Depression is just how connected you feel to the road and to the car itself. You're an integral part of the machine and, unlike modern cars, you drive it, it doesn't

drive you. That alone makes owning automobiles from this era a distinctive pleasure unlike anything else riding on four wheels. But, for me, the single-most enjoyable aspect of driving prewar cars is how you're better able to appreciate your surroundings. The lower speed that these old machines travel at allows you to see things that you never would have seen if driving faster. You observe houses, barns, trees and distant views in greater detail, and people, too, and, most important, what's lying about in yards and driveways; prewar cars make it so much easier to find old cars because they give you a few extra seconds to look as you are passing by.

The hands-on driving experience that the Marmon provided can easily be duplicated in automobiles that are not as rare, are way more plentiful and much more affordable. Consider, instead, the ever-popular Model A Ford, or even a Model T, both of which you will have a far easier time finding replacement parts for. Other affordable prewar cars to consider include Whippets, Dodges and Plymouths, and all the different brands from General Motors. And don't forget about those well-built prewar Studebakers, Hudsons and Willys; there are several less-popular brands as well, such as Durant, Moon, REO and others. You don't need to spend big bucks on a prewar car to enjoy the prewar motoring experience, but if you can afford a Marmon, go for it. 🚗



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COURTESY FIAT CHRYSLER AUTOMOBILES

Chrysler Museum Closes

FIAT CHRYSLER AUTOMOBILES HAS ANNOUNCED that the Walter P. Chrysler Museum located in Auburn Hills, Michigan, will be closed and converted into office space. The museum will close December 18 to the public, and the vehicles located inside will be redistributed to other company facilities as well as being showcased at internal and external FCA events. The 55,000 square-foot museum broke ground in 1996 and opened in 1999. An average of 90,000 visitors visited annually, but the museum eventually began to lose money and, as a result, was only opened to the public on special events and occasions. The museum enjoyed limited openings this year with volunteer staff from FCA, but with waning attendance, the decision was made to repurpose the facility.

Stupendous Studebakers

THE KEYSTONE CHAPTER of the Studebaker Drivers Club will be hosting its 44th annual swap meet at the Expo Center in York, Pennsylvania. The event will take place March 9-11 and will feature an outdoor car corral, as well as heated buildings for the swap meet. There will also be a raffle for a 1957 supercharged Golden Hawk featuring an automatic transmission. The drawing will take place on the 11th at the AACA Museum, and the winner need not be present to win. Admission is free to the event. Be sure to visit the Keystone Region's website for more information at sdckeystoneregion.com.



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CLEAR YOUR SCHEDULES FOR APRIL 7-9, as the La Jolla Concours d'Elegance will take place on the bluffs of the Pacific Ocean in San Diego. Registrations are still being accepted, and this year's featured marque will be Packard. The weekend culminates with the concours on the 9th green at the Ellen Scripps Browning Park and will feature 12 classes and over 20 sub-classes from the earliest horseless carriages to American muscle and European exotics. General admission tickets are available online and are less expensive the earlier you order. Visit www.lajollaconcours.com for tickets and registration information.

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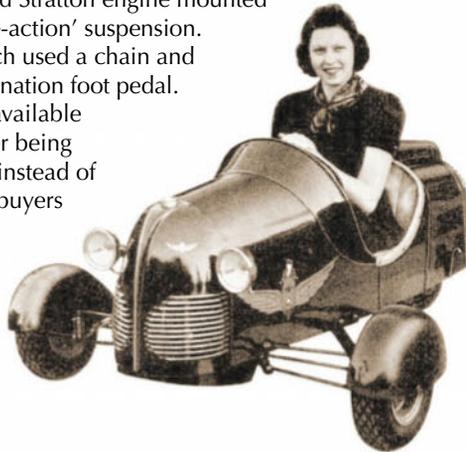


RE: Pants-Less Racer

HERE WE THOUGHT THAT THE THREE-WHEELED KIDDIE CAR that Mark Carr inquired about in the November issue (*HCC* #146) was some sort of homebuilt job. Nope. Author Robert Cunningham set us straight:

"It's actually a Moto-Kar, manufactured in 1939 by Moto-Scout Manufacturing Company, 8440 South Chicago Avenue, Chicago, Illinois, in three models: \$199 Single Seater (like Mark's), \$214 Two Seater, and Track Model for use in amusement parks. They were powered by a one-cylinder, four-cycle L-head air-cooled Briggs and Stratton engine mounted on a frame with three-point 'knee-action' suspension. The brake and Moto-Clutch, which used a chain and V-belt, were operated by a combination foot pedal.

"Stylish little Moto-Kars were available in street and water form, the latter being mounted on two large pontoons instead of tires. All were marketed to retail buyers for sales promotions, premiums, rentals, estates, window display and advertising. Mark's Moto-Kar is missing the front fenders, headlamps and cockpit upholstery."



RE: Done By Local Man

FINALLY, NO LESS THAN A half dozen of you wrote in to tell us that the two-faced Model A that Fred Wilcox sent us photos of (also in *HCC* #147) nowadays rests in the LaPorte County Historical Museum in LaPorte, Indiana, which features a portion of the collection of Dr. Peter Kesling.

As for who built the car, Jim Chudzynski of LaPorte, who worked for Kesling for more than



40 years, said he recalls picking up the car from a man in Jefferson City,

Missouri, in the 1990s. At the time it was lettered just as it is today.

RE: Steel 'Vette?



THOSE OF YOU WHO MIGHT HAVE SCOFFED at the story of the steel-hooded 1953 Corvette that Edmond Ray related to us in the December issue (*HCC* #147), scoff no more. Jim Egleston wrote in to tell us that not only was he at the same event, but he also met the owner of the car with the infamous hood—which he identified as No. 57—and got to inspect the car and hood, both also at the event.

"Memory tells me he located the car in a junkyard (and) the mounting hinges were different," Jim wrote.

Perhaps the owner of the car would care to write in to us with more details?



 Recently discovered a unique or noteworthy classic car? Let us know. Photographs, commentary, questions and answers should be submitted to *Lost & Found*, c/o *Hemmings Classic Car*, P.O. Box 196, Bennington, Vermont 05201 or emailed to dstrohl@hemmings.com. For more *Lost & Found*, visit <http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/category/lost-and-found/>.

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Hershey Highlights

RM SOTHEBY'S 10TH ANNIVERSARY SALE IN HERSHEY WAS A SUCCESS, with \$11.58 million in sales and 90 percent of all lots sold. Four of the top five sales were American Classics, with a 1930 Duesenberg Model J Dual-Cowl Phaeton, one of just three, leading the way and selling for \$2.09 million. A 1935 Auburn Eight Speedster, 1932 Lincoln Model KB Boattail Speedster and

1931 Pierce-Arrow Model 41 Convertible Victoria were also among the top five, all selling in the deep six-figures. There were some other more affordable and nice cars available as well, with over 30 selling for under \$30,000. This handsome 1948 Lincoln Continental Club Coupe sold for \$28,600. Full results are available at www.rmsothebys.com.



AUCTION PROFILE

By 1922, Buick was a well-established marque in the automobile industry and the powerful six-cylinder line offered a 242-cu.in. straight-six engine that put out 60 horsepower. Styling was pretty much the same as previous iterations, but modern design was creeping in with improved electric headlamps with dimmer switch and a Willard storage battery. The four-door touring version was the most popular model, with 34,433 produced, of which 499 were built for export.

This particular six-cylinder Buick uses a three-speed manual transmission, semi-elliptical leaf-spring suspension, full floating rear axle and rear-wheel mechanical drum brakes. It was all—including coachwork, beige paint and the same brown fenders that were used nearly a century ago—recently restored. The interior is vinyl, with a canvas top piped in brown, both in solid



CAR	1922 Buick Model 22-45 Five-Passenger Touring	LOT NUMBER	112
AUCTIONEER	RM Sotheby's	CONDITION	#1
LOCATION	Hershey, Pennsylvania	RESERVE	None
DATE	October 6, 2016	AVERAGE SELLING PRICE	N/A
		SELLING PRICE	\$24,500

condition and usable for regional car shows, touring and events. The interior also features a varnished wooden steering wheel and dash, which are in

good condition. Accessories included were "wind wings" and a rear-mounted spare tire. The car had only seen 13 miles since its restoration.

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The Finest at Boca

THE BOCA RATON CONCOURS D'ELEGANCE has named an official auction house for their 11th annual event in Boca Raton, Florida. The Finest Automobile Auctions sale will take place February 11th during the concours weekend at the Boca Raton Resort & Club. This will be their third auction; they were at The Elegance at Hershey for their inaugural auction and Aspen, Colorado, last September, which saw a sell-through of 68 percent and over \$2.8 million in sales. Consignments are being accepted, and several world-class cars are expected to cross the block; live online bidding will also be available via Proxibid. Visit www.theFinest.com for more information.



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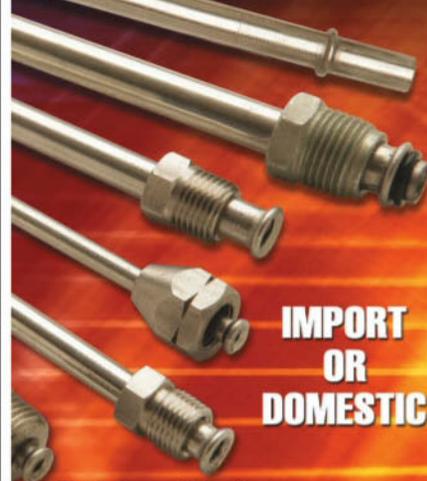
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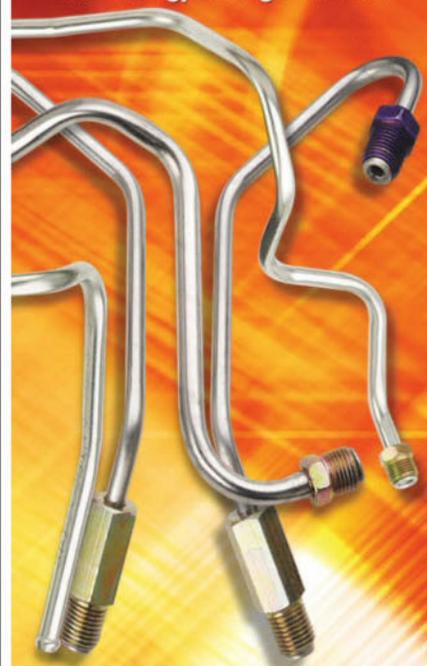
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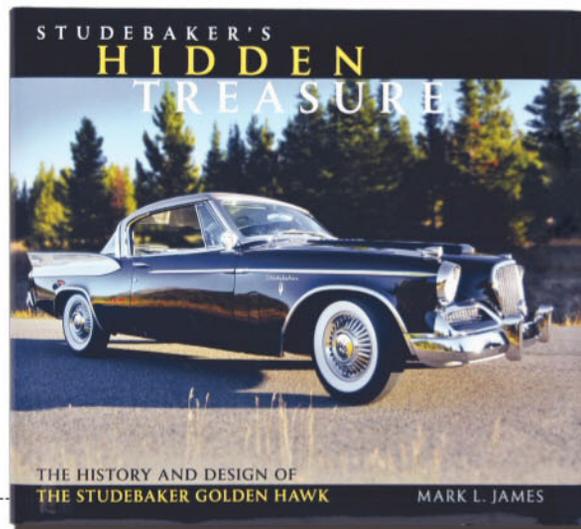
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You don't have to be a Blue Oval devotee to appreciate this useful and stylish, vintage-looking Ford Rolling Cooler. Sized 34 inches tall, 36 inches wide and 17.5 inches deep, this 44-pound ice chest is constructed from durable powder-coated steel, and it's made even better with large handles, a bottle opener and detachable cap catcher. The lid is split for easy interior access, and the insulated, molded 80-quart watertight tub has a built-in drain. Adding to this simple-to-assemble cooler's practicality are a lower storage shelf embossed with the Ford logo, and locking swivel casters offering mobility with security. It's great for the garage, patio or anywhere you want to show your allegiance while entertaining friends and family.

Studebaker's Hidden Treasure

814-883-8067 • WWW.BARRONPUBLISHING.COM • \$29.95

When it comes to postwar American automobiles, few get the blood boiling from an aesthetic standpoint as quickly as the delectable Studebaker Golden Hawks of 1956 through 1958. They were the end products of a design evolution that could trace its way back to the Starliner coupe of 1953, itself a landmark car. Now, Studebaker collector Mark James of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, who owns several concours-quality examples of these classics, has authored and published a large-format hardcover that tells the Golden Hawk's development story in 74 richly illustrated pages. There's almost enough detail-type photography herein to allow the book to function as an authenticity and restoration guide. Appendices cover tech and specs, color codes, production numbers and more. We'll say this flat out: Any fan of Studebakers will want to read this book. - JIM DONNELLY



1933 Graham Blue Streak

800-718-1866 • WWW.DIECASTDIRECT.COM • \$129.95

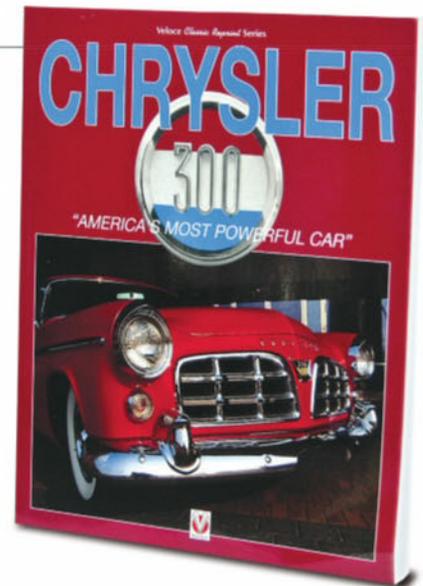
One of the most underrated automakers of the early 20th century was Graham, and this company produced some truly stunning and influential cars in the 1930s. The Blue Streak, introduced at the start of that decade and styled by the talented Amos Northup, was the first to combine skirted fenders, a lower ride height and a rakishly angled radiator grille and windshield, and immediately rendered contemporary cars old-fashioned. England's Brooklin Limited has modeled the 1933 four-door sedan in 1:43-scale after the 1:1 original belonging to jeweler Nicola Bulgari. This white metal collectible does a great job of showing the significant car's handsome lines and careful detailing. It's not an obvious choice to be commemorated in scale form, which makes this Graham all the more desirable.



Chrysler 300 Reissue

800-458-0454 • WWW.QUARTOKNOWS.COM • \$39.95

Chrysler's 1955 C-300 was a game-changing automobile that truly cemented its parent company's reputation for advanced technology and high performance. Then the most powerful car in America, this first "Letter Car" would launch a new flagship line of limited-production coupes and convertibles that would turn heads up to the present day. Veloce Publishing has just released a reprint of its classic Robert Ackerson title, *Chrysler 300: "America's Most Powerful Car,"* which encompasses 160 black-and-white softcover pages, plus a small color section. It brings readers through the entire Letter series lineup, from the aforementioned C-300 to 1965's 300L, and offers perspective on the Hemi V-8 engine's development, the car's racing history and what set it apart from the competition. Numerous sidebars chart specifications, performance figures, options and more. This is an excellent and valuable resource to Mopar fans and automotive historians, alike.



Ask the Man

201-868-2190 • WWW.PACKARD-REPRINTS.COM • \$15-\$145

Packard showroom literature of the Classic era was typically as lavish and beautiful to behold as the cars it was promoting. Because they were not as widely distributed as were brochures from more commonplace marques, these Packard pieces are rare, expensive, and highly sought today. Thanks to an enthusiastic Packard historian in Germany, a number of original pieces dating from 1924 through 1939 have been reproduced, and are now available for purchase.

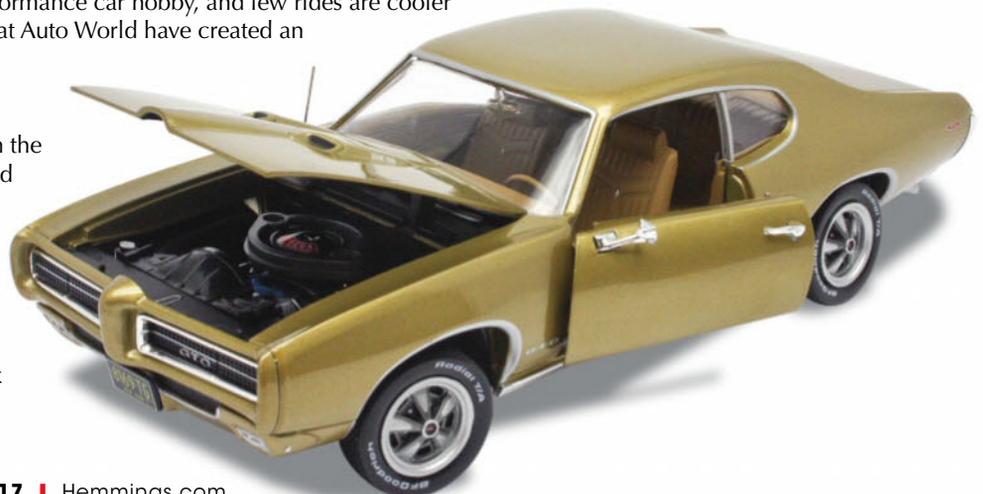
Dr. Andreas Straube is the proud owner of a 1934 seven-passenger Super Eight sedan and a 1934 Twelve limousine, and he is sharing his passion for these Packards by replicating brochures and other advertising ephemera for fans of the venerable automaker. These reasonably priced pieces are printed on high-quality paper in full color, and softcovers are spiral-bound or saddle-stitched, while some pieces are hardcover.

Classic Packard owners and fans will thrill to these premium collectibles. U.S. and Canadian orders will be handled by Dr. Straube's New Jersey-based representative, Ole Böök (olekbook@aol.com).

1969 Pontiac GTO

800-227-4373 X 79550 • WWW.HEMMINGS.COM/STORE/DIE-CAST • \$89.95

Our sister publication *Hemmings Muscle Machines* has always had its finger on the pulse of what's cool in the American performance car hobby, and few rides are cooler than the 1969 Pontiac GTO. The experts at Auto World have created an exciting collectible in the form of this 1:18-scale hardtop, rendered in Antique Gold and representing the gorgeous four-speed, one-owner example celebrated on the cover of issue #37, October 2006. Limited to just 1,002 pieces, this die-cast GTO (item AMM1081) features an opening hood and doors that expose the engine and interior; deluxe features like flock carpeting and an accurately detailed chassis give the model a true-to-life appearance. Pontiac fans will flock to this awesome muscle machine.



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Braking Bowtie

Reproduction emergency brake warning lamp kits for the 1955-'57 Chevrolets are now available. Like the original, this kit features a red light that flashes when you engage the emergency brake, letting you know the brake has been applied before you drive off. The popular accessory was useful in saving wear and tear on the rear brake shoes. When you release the brake, the light stops flashing, letting you know that it's safe to go. These are simple bolt-in kits. Cost: \$95.95.

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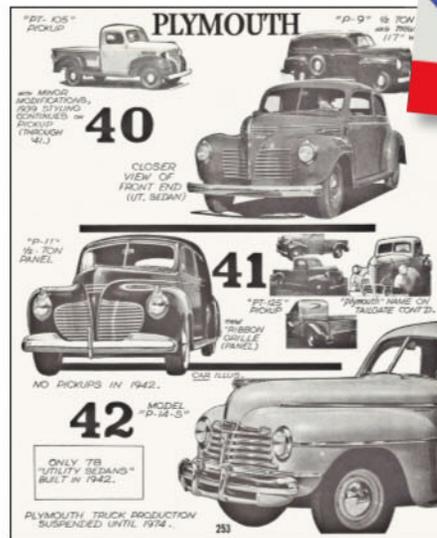
Tad Burness



YOU, AND A LOT OF US, MAY WELL have gotten your start in our world by sketching cars and trucks instead of paying attention in class. Maybe the ruler came down across your knuckles, too, in an attempt to dissuade you. Now, imagine not only avoiding punishment for your dawdling, but making it a career. That's the life story of Tad Burness. He was a prolific illustrator of motor vehicles, of every variety, and grew it into a series of newspaper packages, books and more. Best of all, we can only imagine how many ordinary car people's doodlings he vindicated through his own success.

He was born Wallace Burness in Berkeley, California, in 1933. Like many of us, Burness derived particular enjoyment from scratching away on paper, leaving images of cars in his wake. He met his wife through a computerized dating program—definitely something off the wall in 1967—but they still eloped and made a lifelong marriage. All the while, Burness kept on drawing. He developed a style that evidenced a particular accuracy, with effective use of details and shadowing that brought his subjects to three-dimensional life.

In 1966, Burness joined King Features Syndicate, which supplied materials to thousands of American newspapers, drawing the regular two-page spreads



called *Auto Albums*. They graced many of the automotive or classified sections of daily and weekly journals. What set Burness's work apart was that he was more than "just" an artist, but also did research into his subjects and their histories. As an example, he created a detailed drawing of a Crosley sedan, breaking out its wheelbase, price and other necessary data to illuminate his piece of artwork. The same thing happened when he drew trucks or other heavy equipment. Burness was also known to dabble in railroad-themed illustrations.

FORD SPOTTER'S GUIDE 1920-1980



AMERICAN CAR SPOTTER'S GUIDE 1940-1965



TAD BURNESS

The *Auto Albums* proved to be wildly popular, and countless car enthusiasts gladly collected the full-page spreads for their own archives. The first of Burness's 25-odd books came when a selection of the *Auto Albums* was bound into a single volume. That, in turn, led to other books, spotter's guides on American cars from the 1920s, 1930s and on American trucks. In an introduction to the later volume, first published in 1978, he explained to readers that, "Because good factory photographs of some of the rarest [truck] makes are difficult—if not impossible—to find, certain illustrations must rely on reprints from original advertisements, some of which were in poor or faded condition. But other photos, such as those provided for the book through the courtesy of manufacturers, are excellently clear. Also, my own collection of truck literature was used for the book."

Burness later moved to Pacific Grove, California, where he was active in both religious and historical doings on the Monterey Peninsula. He was living there when he passed away from heart failure in 2012. 🐾

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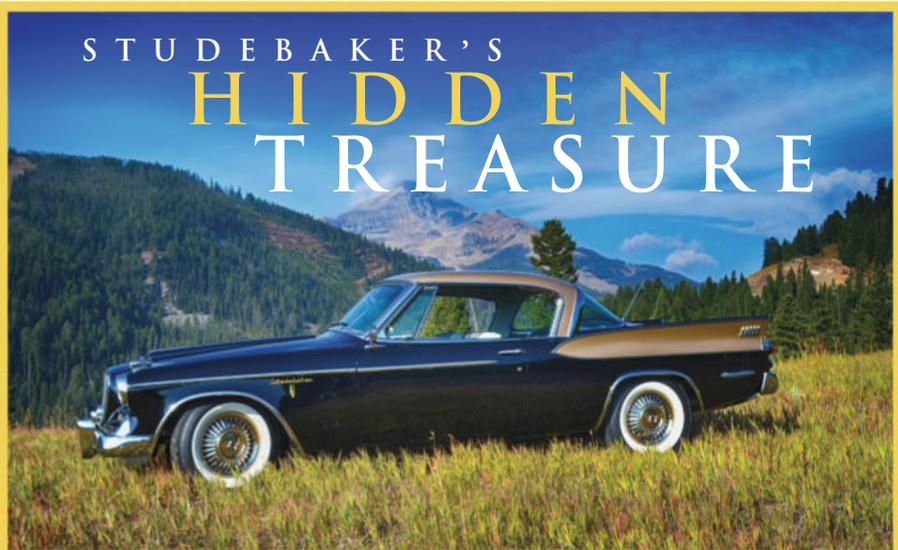
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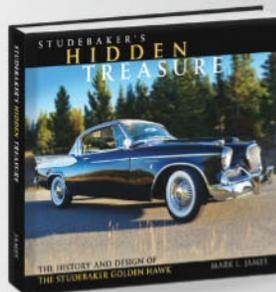
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Barron Publishing Co. introduces *Studebaker's Hidden Treasure*.

This new book not only concentrates on the Golden Hawks of 1956 through 1958, it also includes much of the history surrounding these cars' manufacture. *Studebaker's Hidden Treasure* is a must read for all automotive enthusiasts.



"Mark James has penned a definitive study of Studebaker Golden Hawks, and his passion clearly shines through this new book, *Studebaker's Hidden Treasure*. Mark's extensive research will be a tremendous resource for enthusiasts of today and tomorrow. We look forward to adding it to our AACA Library & Research Center archives."

— Steve Moskowitz, Executive Director, Antique Automobile Club of America (AACA)

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1956

Refined Muscle

De Soto's illustrious high-performance car—the Adventurer

BY RICHARD LENTINELLO • IMAGES COURTESY OF BARRETT-JACKSON, CHRYSLER ARCHIVES AND HEMMINGS STAFF

Style and performance. Those were the primary hallmark characteristics of De Soto's new Adventurer model for the 1956 model year. Introduced in February, although it was only in production for five years, the Adventurer quickly became a highly sought-after automobile for those buyers looking for luxury and performance

in a single package, but with a dose of exclusivity thrown in. With only 15,662 Adventurers built during its entire production run, they were fairly rare when they were new, so now, after some six decades, it's a real treat to view one today. They truly are special automobiles.

The name Adventurer was borrowed from the two Chrysler concept cars that were introduced back in 1954, both of which were crafted in Italy by Carrozzeria Ghia. Virgil Exner designed Adventurer I, which was the most conservatively styled of the two cars, while Adventurer II had that "supersonic" fast-back shape that Ghia-styled sports cars were then given. While the production-based Adventurers look nothing like either of those two concept cars, the name signaled something new, exciting and exceptional.

Marketed as a sub-series of the Fireflite line, the Adventurer model was so superior to all its other De Soto stablemates mainly because of one singular component—its engine. Each Adventurer was equipped with the most powerful engine that De Soto ever fitted to its cars, all of which featured a dual-quad carburetor setup. The first-year Adventurer had a Fireflite V-8 that had been modified with a larger bore, although the stroke remained the same. Now with a 3.78 x 3.80 bore and stroke, the increased displacement totaled 341.4 cubic inches, and had a compression ratio of 9.25:1. Yet its hallmark feature was its dual four-barrel Carter WCFB carburetors, which were complemented by a high-lift camshaft and a revised intake manifold with enlarged ports that allowed it to develop a very healthy 320 horsepower at 5,200 RPM. Other features in-



1957

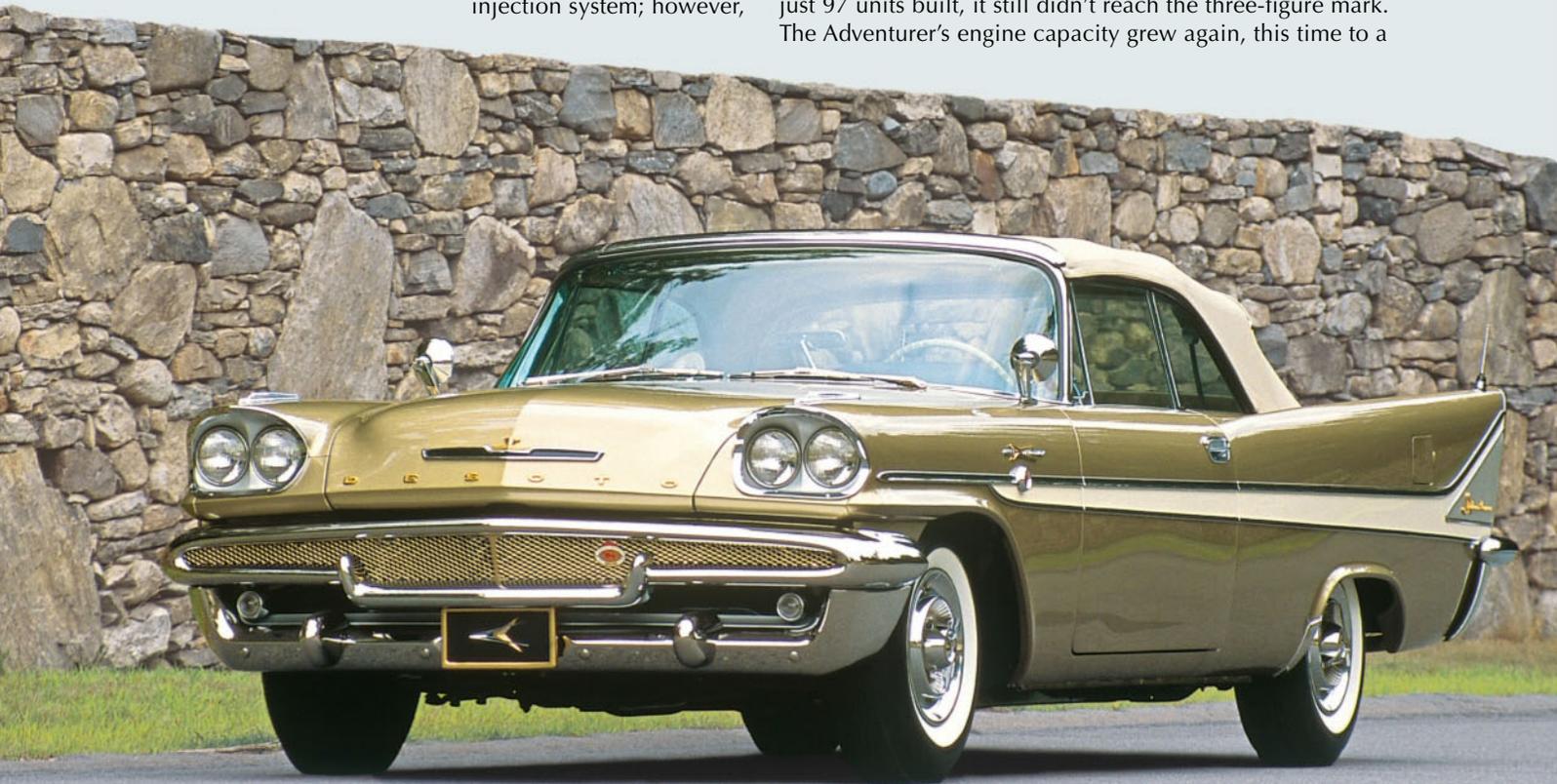
cluded a shot-peened crankshaft, heavy-duty connecting rods, stiffer valve springs and dual exhausts.

A two-door hardtop body style was the only way an Adventurer could be had during the 1956 model run, but that changed when the 1957 models were introduced with the availability of a two-door hardtop and a convertible; production figures show that 1,650 hardtops were built versus just 300 convertibles. The 1957-spec dual-quad V-8's displacement had been increased to 345 cubic inches, and sporting the same 9.25 compression it now developed a very healthy 345 horsepower at 5,200 RPM. The options list was now quite extensive, and included a non-slip differential for an extra \$50; dual exhausts remained a standard Adventurer feature, as did power brakes, TorqueFlite automatic transmission, dual rear antennas and dual exterior mirrors among others. Factory list price for the hardtop was \$3,997 with the convertible's price set at a then-mighty \$4,272, which was nearly \$1,000 more than the similarly styled Firedome convertible.

For the 1958 model year, the big news which took Detroit by storm was the introduction of the optional Bendix fuel injection system; however,

few Adventurers were ordered with it as it was a costly unit at \$637.20. Those cars that were fitted with this then-complex system were soon retrofitted with the standard dual-quad Carter carburetor setup. The engine's displacement was increased again, this time to 361 cubic inches, and had a sizable bump in compression to a full 10.0:1 ratio. Although the horsepower rating remained the same at 345, it hit its peak 200 RPM lower at the 5,000 RPM mark. The Adventurer hardtop's base price was increased to \$4,071, and just 350 examples were sold. The convertible's price tag was now \$4,369, which may explain why only 82 cars were built, thus making the 1958 convertible the rarest of all Adventurers made.

Production of De Soto's high-performance luxury car increased slightly for the 1959 model year. The hardtop version saw a production run of 590 units at a cost of \$4,427; it was the second-most expensive De Soto that year, and about \$70 more than the top-of-the-line nine-passenger Fireflite station wagon. The big price increase was with the convertible Adventurer, as its base surged to a hefty \$4,749. Although its production was more than the previous year's model, with just 97 units built, it still didn't reach the three-figure mark. The Adventurer's engine capacity grew again, this time to a



1958



1959

then-mighty 383 cubic inches. With the 1959-spec engine's compression ratio increased ever so slightly to 10.1:1, and still being fed by a pair of four-barrel Carter carburetors, its horsepower rating had a small increase to 350 at 5,000 RPM.

With De Soto's demise looming on the horizon, the 1960 model year would be the last for the Adventurer. With the Firesweep and Firedome lines no longer in production, the Adventurer series became a shadow of its former self. It was now less expensive than the previous year's Fireflite, but it was still De Soto's top model.

As odd as it may seem during its last year of production, the Adventurer was now available in three different body styles: the two-door hardtop (3,092 built), four-door sedan (5,746 built) and a four-door hardtop (2,759 built); a convertible version was no longer offered. And with the Firesweep and Firedome no longer available in De Soto showrooms, Adventurer production numbers rose to their highest level ever.

There were now two engines being offered to 1960 Adventurer buyers: The base powertrain was the previous year's 383-cubic-inch V-8, which was now called the Adventurer Mark I, but instead of the usual dual-quad carburetor setup, it now had a single Carter four-barrel, thus it developed only 305 horsepower at 4,600 RPM. The big muscle engine, and it was truly loaded with muscle,

PRODUCTION

TOTAL

1956 996

1957 1,950

1958 432

1959 687

1960 11,597

TOTAL 15,662

was the new Mopar Ramcharger. This mighty V-8 featured two four-barrel carburetors on Chrysler's new long-runner intake manifold, which allowed it to develop 325 horsepower at 4,600 RPM and a whole lot of torque; the Ramcharger V-8 was available only on the Adventurer.

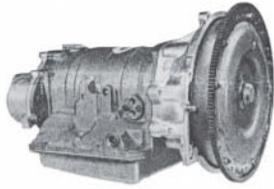
With its trademark simulated gold accents, luxurious options and powerful, high-horsepower V-8 engines, the Adventurer was a car built for those buyers who enjoyed and appreciated distinctive, fast motoring with a proud American nameplate on its hood. Too bad it was only available for five short years. But as stated in the De Soto sales literature, "Pure gold...in ride, pride and pleasure." And it was. 🏆



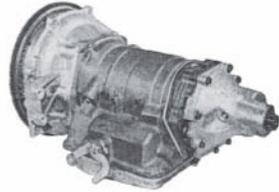
1960

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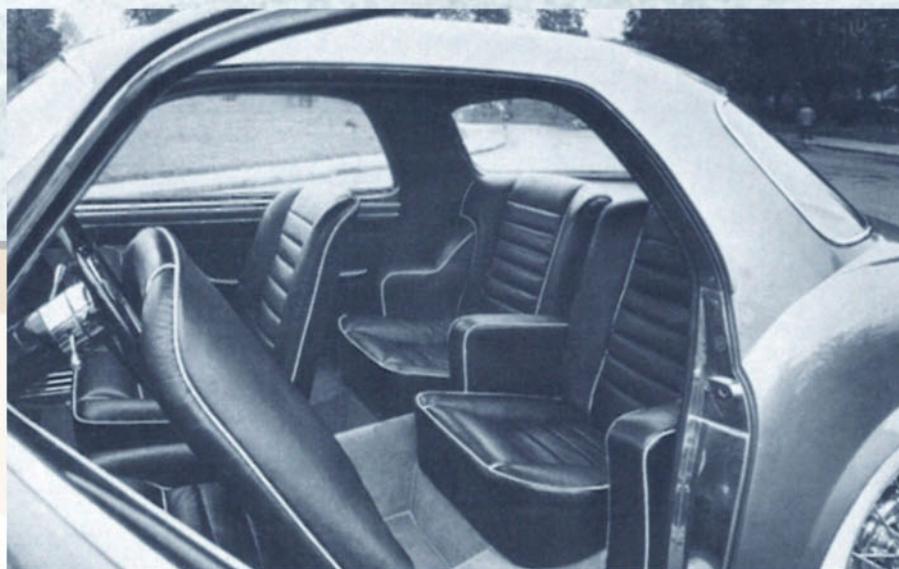
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Thinking Ahead

Virgil Exner's Adventurer Concept Cars



Adventurer I



BY DICK LANGWORTH • PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF CHRYSLER HISTORICAL COLLECTION • ILLUSTRATIONS BY RUSSELL VON SAUERS

Editor's note: This story is an abridged version of Thinking Ahead, which first appeared in SIA #30, September/October 1975.

One of Virgil Exner's proudest show cars was the 1954 De Soto Adventurer I. This was the most compact experiment yet, its shortened wheelbase measuring only 111 inches and its overall length only 190 inches. Since most of the Adventurer's length was between its wheels, it could accommodate a full four passengers.

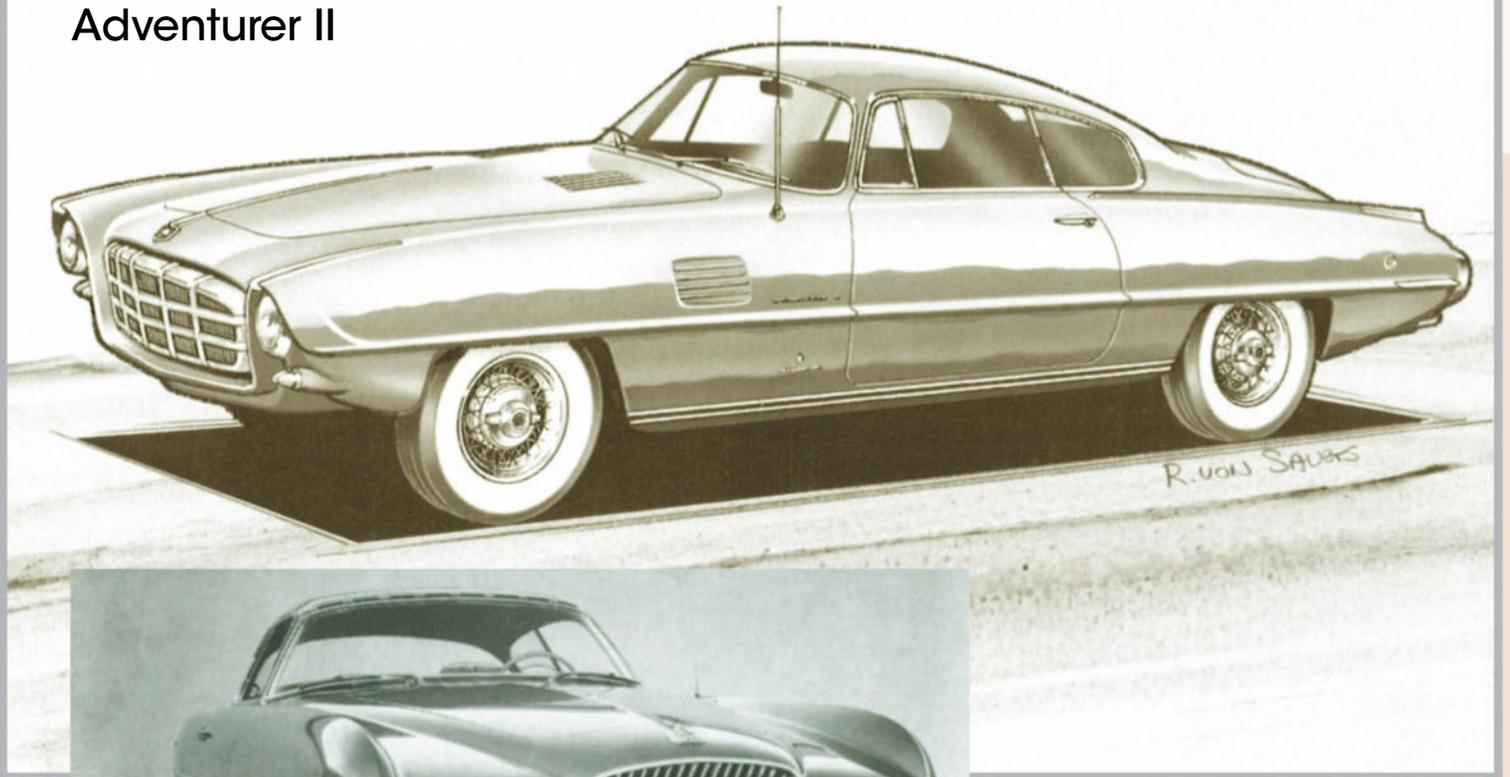
Its off-white coupe body was equipped with outside exhaust pipes, a racing-type fuel filler and wire wheels. The interior was done in black leather, with a full set of circular instruments on a satin-finish aluminum dash.

The Adventurer I came closer to being produced than any Exner show car up to that time. "If it had," Exner said, "it would

have been the first four-passenger sports car made in this country. It was better than a 2+2, and of course, it had a De Soto Hemi. It was my favorite car always, and I owned it for three years and kept it at home. I don't know what became of it—I think it eventually went to a wealthy collector in South America."

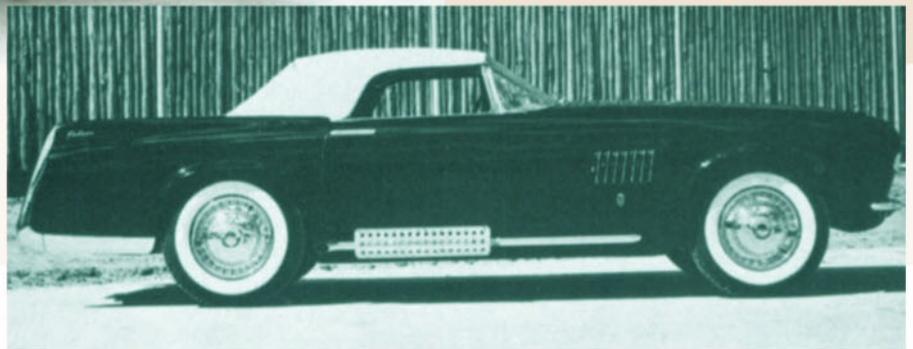
The Adventurer I was part of the same

Adventurer II



Firearrow Coupe

Falcon



series as the K-310 and C-200 (show-cars), a relatively coherent group showing similar styling ideas. It was also the last of that early series. The next group of Exner-Ghias was again homogenous, and again influenced a non-Chrysler production car—the Dual-Ghia.

The first of this new series was the Firearrow roadster, presented first as a full-size mock-up on a Dodge chassis, which subsequently evolved into a second, running roadster. Both were clean,

neat cars, free of Fifties excess, though the windscreens—of unframed glass with no header—indicated their purely show-car nature. Later came a Firearrow sport coupe and convertible, the latter being the Dual-Ghia's direct inspiration. The Firearrow coupe was anything but a mock-up, achieving 143.44 MPH on the banked oval at the Chrysler Proving Grounds.

After the Firearrow series, each Exner show car enjoyed its own unique individuality. The Adventurer II and the Falcon

came next, two of the prettiest of the lot, though with a bit of an Andy Gump appearance in the case of the Adventurer II, which lacked any kind of bumper. This De Soto's most novel feature was a retracting rear window that slid away into the trunk. Its styling handled the long wheelbase with ease, and it was not unlike the later Alfa Romeo Sprint Speciale in its graceful, rounded appearance. Exner had little to do with this one, though, it being more or less Ghia's product. 

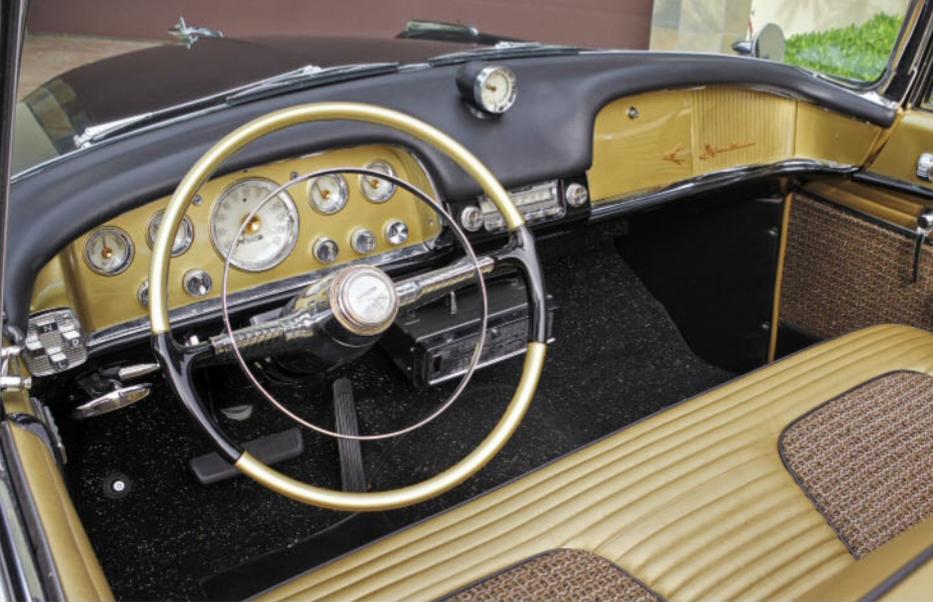
One-of-None

The 1956 De Soto Fireflite that was transformed into a one-off Adventurer convertible

BY THOMAS A. DeMAURO • PHOTOGRAPHY BY RICHARD LENTINELLO



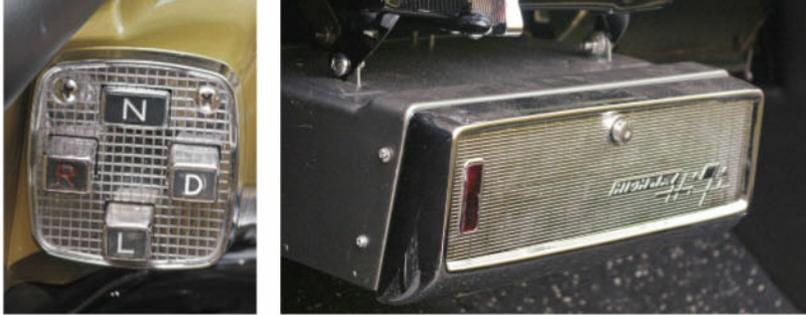




Except for the removal of the “Flite Control” lever (shifter) from the dash and the addition of the new-for-1956 push-button transmission controls, the “Dual-Cockpit” instrument panel arrangement was mostly carried over from 1955.

Like all the other products of the Chrysler Corporation, the middle-priced De Sotos benefited from the ground-breaking 1955 Forward Look, and they would appear even more dramatic when new Flight-Sweep styling was added for the 1956 model year. Proving that too much of a good thing can still be a good thing, on February 18, 1956, De Soto introduced the Adventurer—a two-door coupe with much of the panache, performance and posh trimmings that embodied Chrysler’s 300 letter cars, but at a more wallet-friendly price.





Since this Adventurer convertible was built from two cars, it ended up with both the Benrus watch in the center of the steering column and the dash-mounted electric clock. The Highway Hi-Fi under-dash record player is ultra-rare and a highly prized option today.

De Sotos were advertised as having been “Designed and powered for the super-highway age,” and the Adventurer perhaps made the best case for that assertion. A sub-series of the top-line Fireflite based on the Fireflite Sportsman coupe, the Adventurer (aka Golden Adventurer) offered more spirited performance than its sister models. While the Firedome line featured a 230hp, 330-cu.in. two-barrel De Soto Hemi V-8, and the Fireflite a 255hp four-barrel version of the 330 Hemi, the Adventurer was equipped with De Soto’s most powerful engine for 1956—a 320hp, 341.4-cu.in. Hemi with two Carter four-barrel carburetors, a 9.25:1 compression ratio, internal engine upgrades and dual exhaust. The PowerFlite two-speed automatic with push-button shifting via buttons on the left of the instrument panel

was also standard. A De Soto “Important Service Information” document listed a 3.73:1 gear-set for the 8¾-inch differential in the Adventurer.

Like the other De Soto Fireflite and Firedome models, the Adventurer rode on a 126-inch wheelbase, was 220.9 inches long and 78.9 inches wide. It had 12-inch four-wheel drum brakes and was equipped with coil-sprung independent front suspension with an anti-roll bar and a leaf-sprung rear, but heavy-duty springs front and rear (a leaf added) and heavy-duty Oriflow shocks were standard, as were whitewall tires and aluminum anodized gold wheel covers.

The Adventurer wasn’t about to be overlooked on the road either, as it featured exterior paint schemes that were variations of gold with black and/or white. Also included were dual outside rearview mirrors and dual rear-mounted radio antennas.

Inside, the instrument panel and steering wheel grips were gold, and the seats featured upholstery comprised of light-gold vinyl and cloth inserts. A padded instrument panel, power brakes, power front seat, power windows, windshield washers and electric clock were also standard. Power steering was listed as optional on an early press release, but some experts say it was standard, especially given how many other power-assists were already standard.

The instrument panel layout, which was shared with the Fireflite and other models, was commendably complete with regard to gauges and somewhat sporty in appearance. A large, round 120 MPH speedometer was flanked by smaller round dials featuring fuel and amp gauges to its left and oil pressure and temperature gauges to its right. The switchgear was neatly lined up horizontally under the gauges, the optional radio was in the center of the panel with the ashtray and lighter under it and the cowl ventilator lever and summer ventilation door controls extended from beneath the dashboard. On the passenger side was the radio speaker adorned with “Adventurer” script in gold and the glovebox.

Performance was impressive for its day. An Adventurer ran 137 MPH at Daytona and reached 144 MPH at the Chelsea, Michigan, Chrysler Proving Grounds. It also served as the pace car for the Pikes Peak Hill Climb in the same year that the Fireflite convertible with Adventurer trim paced the Indianapolis 500 and spawned the sought-after 255hp Pacesetter replicas for the public.

Of course, all this image, performance and luxury had



A 341-cu.in. Hemi V-8 engine featuring two Carter four-barrel carburetors, internal performance upgrades and a 9.25:1 compression ratio was exclusive to the Adventurer.



its price. In De Soto's case, it was approximately \$3,680, still considerably less than the over-\$4,000 price tag of the 340hp, 354-cu.in. Chrysler Hemi-equipped Chrysler 300B.

Of the 100,000-plus De Sotos built for 1956, just 996 of them were Adventurers and none of those was a convertible. In fact, the Adventurer convertible didn't debut until the 1957 model year.

So why was the Fireflite convertible you see featured here transformed into an Adventurer? Bob Schmidt, owner of Smittys Classic Cars in Branson, Missouri, explained that he's restored more than 50 1955 to '59 De Sotos over the past 30 years.

Beginning around 2011, he used the parts from an original 1956 Adventurer hardtop to transform an original 1956 Fireflite convertible into this one-of-none 1956 Adventurer convertible for a Midwest car collector. Bob said that for the other aspects of the body-off restoration and the conversion, he enlisted Curry's Hot Rods in Nixa, Missouri, to perform the metal repair, bodywork and paint.

This De Soto was then auctioned at Barrett-Jackson in Scottsdale, Arizona, in 2012. In December of that same year, it crossed the block once again at RM Auctions as part of the John Staluppi Collection in North Palm Beach, Florida.

When Len Foxman of Lighthouse Point, Florida, saw this "what-if" 1956 De Soto Adventurer convertible, he knew that he had to have it. "I've always admired the Chrysler Corpora-

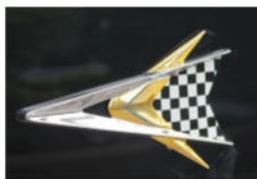


tion's inventive engineering," he explains. "I had a Hemi Coronet that I loved, and my father bought a De Soto sedan when I was younger." That explains why Len made room for this rather-large-by-comparison De Soto among his collection of later-model Ferraris and his Alfa Romeo Spider Veloce.

Rest assured that this De Soto sports a few features his Italian sports cars don't have. Its interior has both the steering column-mounted Benrus watch and a dash-mounted clock. The Highway Hi-Fi under-dash record player is a considerably rare and desirable option today. Developed by CBS-Columbia for Chrysler, the Highway Hi-Fi only accepted proprietary seven-inch, 16 2/3 RPM records, but could provide up to 45 minutes of music per side. It played through the radio speaker and used the



Flight Sweep styling was added to the Forward Look and ushered in distinct rear fins for 1956. Though there were subtle revisions in appearance up front, mainly in the grille area, the rear quarter-panels and their moldings, taillamps and rear bumper received the most dramatic of the body alterations from the previous year. Chromed wire wheels were installed on this De Soto instead of the painted steel wheels with gold wheel covers that came standard with the Adventurer.



“The Adventurer provides a purely 1950s ride and driving experience. It’s a large, heavy, lumbering highway cruiser, but possesses strong power. It’s a real eye-catcher that draws smiles from everyone who sees it.”



radio's volume and tone controls.

Though the combination of standard features from the Adventurer hardtop and the options on this Fireflite are compelling, Len gets the most enjoyment from his finned Fifties-era convertible out on the road. Top-down cruising with the additional performance provided by the transplanted 341-cu.in. Hemi V-8 and drivetrain offer him a unique perspective.

Len tells us, “The Adventurer provides a purely 1950s ride and driving experience. It’s a large, heavy, lumbering highway cruiser, but possesses strong power. Its two-speed PowerFlite is clunky yet dependable—I’d still rather have a TorqueFlite. It’s a real eye-catcher that draws smiles from everyone who sees it. I just enjoy sharing it with family and friends, and I want to be an

effective custodian for it.”

To that end, Len drives the De Soto twice per month and puts about 1,000 miles per year on it. He keeps it in an air-conditioned garage and has a skilled mechanic change the fluids and filters and perform any other needed maintenance and tuning twice per year.

Len, a National De Soto Club member, describes his convertible as “a brilliant example of 1950s American engineering and enthusiasm.” The display board that came with it when he acquired it states, it’s “the car that De Soto didn’t build but should have.” After having owned and regularly driven this 1956 De Soto Fireflite-turned Adventurer convertible, Len agrees with that sentiment exactly. 🏎️



Super Eight Superiority

On the road in a 1934 Packard 1104 Super Eight Club Sedan

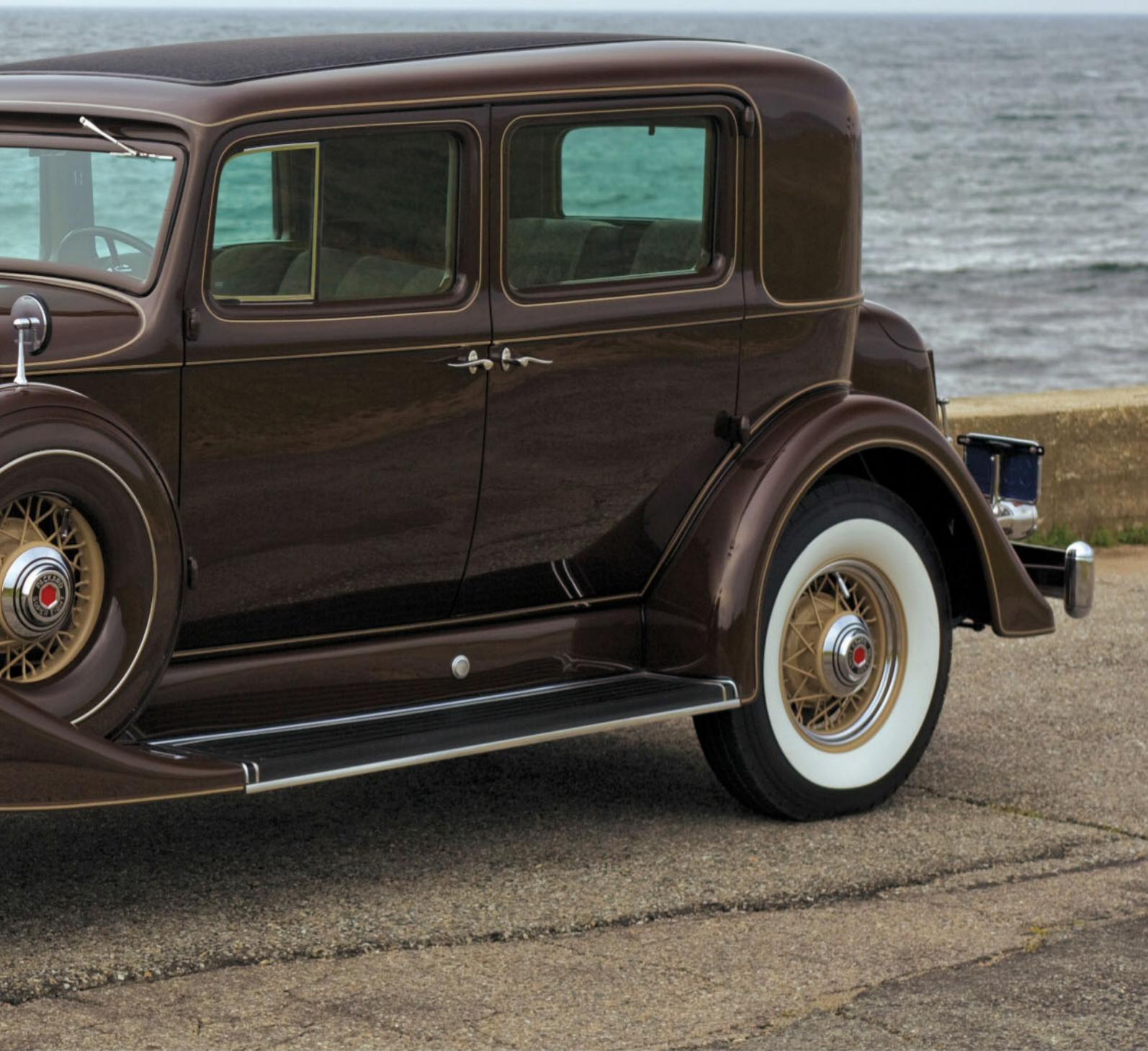


WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY TERRY SHEA

Early cars weren't reliable. Well, not as reliable as a horse or, say, a good pair of boots. Fewer moving parts and no unproven ones, you see. Getting potential customers to overcome their fears required plenty of long-distance driving adventures for those pioneering automakers to show off their work.

Packard engineer and foreman Tom Fetch partook in such a journey, spending two months driving a single-cylinder, two-horsepower Packard Model F entirely across the country in

1903. His 63-day journey in *Old Pacific* from San Francisco to New York took him across large swaths of territory where roads were only a suggestion and where locals could only vaguely



point him in the right direction. The railroads became his navigational aid. But he arrived successfully, exhausted, as he entered New York City. Packard, of course, was able to use that mission to trumpet the quality, durability and reliability of its early cars.

Given Packard's penchant for such events, it should come as no surprise that plenty of Packard owners still put lots of miles on their cars. Doug Fernandez, a retired body-shop owner from Wethersfield, Connecticut, took this 1934 Packard Super Eight Club Sedan—a three-time, Classic Car Club of America 100-point Full Classic—on its own incredible journey in 2013.

Starting in Times Square, New York, and following the Lincoln Highway all the way to San Francisco, the tour began with 58 cars, but just 19 made it to the Golden Gate Bridge without needing any time on the trailer. Doug's car was one of those 19.

When all of the other entrants' cars made their way home via trailer of some kind, Doug and his wife, Judy, carried on the second half of their trip. First heading down the California coast to Santa Monica, they returned east via Route 66. For the record, they did need a head gasket replaced and had to fight some pretty significant rod knocking for a portion of the return trip (the crankshaft was out of round, a problem missed during



Power assisted by your forearms only, the steering is made somewhat easier on this 4,985-pound car with the large diameter wheel. All Eight and Super Eight models received a brown steering wheel for 1934.

the initial rebuild, which only included the top end). But, as Doug reports, after more than 8,000 miles driven, 1,000 gallons of gas consumed and too many states to count, “The car survived and my marriage survived.”

Considering that Doug had purchased the car with some fairly extensive corrosion in the body just a few years before and made it a full-time job to restore the car with his own hands as much as possible, the results are quite stunning. The old Packard was finished in a Sherwin-Williams shade known as Hot Fudge. But the work was extensive. “My wife sewed all of the upholstery,” he says. “It was a body-off restoration, of course. Every nut and bolt was taken off. The Bijur central lubrication system was torn down. I did the engine over and changed the differential to a high-speed rear end; it was a complete restoration.” Doug even restored the wooden frame of the body, along with all the body panels that covered it. Other than using the paint booth at his old body shop, Turnpike Motors in Newington, Connecticut, to spray the components, Doug completed the job at his home, but sent out the chrome plating to a specialist.



The instrument panel is jewel-like in presentation and construction, but not too easy to see from the driver's seat.



Along with AACA and CCCA shows, Doug is a frequent participant in the latter's tours, though he admits that he often finds himself as “one of the only ones who actually built a car from the ground up.” So, what's under the skin of the understated elegance of this car that makes it so reliable that more than 80 years on, it's still going strong?

Packard, always playing by its own model-year rules, debuted the 11th Series models in August of 1933, after just six months of producing the 10th Series. With the Depression still hammering the auto industry, Packard was the leading purveyor of luxury cars, though that market had all but evaporated. Though the intent of the updates from the 10th Series to the 11th seemed a bit superficial, it was not enough, and Packard sales sank to their lowest in decades, the company selling just 6,071 cars in 1934, compared to 48,318 automobiles just five years previous. Fortunately, despite those sales numbers, enough cars have survived or been brought back from the brink, like Doug's Super Eight Club Sedan, to allow us to experience them to this day.

Packard's designers made only subtle changes to the Super Eight body for 1934, extending the front fenders farther past and down in front of the front wheels and also more consistently matching the shape of the rear fenders with the rear wheels. The traditional, upright ox-yoke grille remained, taking its prominent place at the front. While some manufacturers had already taken to streamlining their designs, the Packard Super Eight models kept with tradition, maintaining the straight-up grille and windshield and its supporting A-pillars.

The official designation for the 1934 Club Sedan was model type 756, which shared the 142-inch wheelbase of the model 1104 chassis with no less than nine other Super Eight body styles. A shorter, 135-inch wheelbase model 1103 chassis formed the backbone of the most basic Super Eight Sedan, and a 147-inch wheelbase model 1105 chassis supported a variety of coachbuilt designs by Dietrich and LeBaron included in the Packard catalog for 1934. In the most recent previous years, the coachbuilt custom models had been reserved for the top-of-the-line Twelve models. Given that 11th series Super Eight buyers got the looks—and length—of the Twelves, but at a bit of a dis-



The understated elegance of a Classic Packard is on display here, with the spacious cloth interior almost living-room like for the rear passengers, but a bit more workmanlike up front.

count, it's not a surprise that the custom bodies were available on both model ranges.

The five-passenger Super Eight Club Sedan featured here shares its wheelbase with the long Super Eight Formal Sedan, but yields some rear-seat passenger leg room and privacy for a small trunk, attached externally at the rear of the car. Still, with the big eight under the long hood and sitting on that rugged chassis, the listed weight of the club sedan was just shy of two-and-a-half tons at 4,985 pounds.

Fortunately, along with a very stout frame built strong enough for a truck, Packard in the early 1930s also engineered some very robust engines. While the standard Eight models used a 120-horsepower straight-eight engine with nine main bearings and a $3\frac{3}{16}$ -inch bore against a long 5-inch stroke, Super Eights produced an even more impressive 145 horsepower at the same 3,200 RPM peak from a similar engine with a $3\frac{1}{2}$ -inch bore and the same 5-inch stroke—good for 384.8 cubic inches

of displacement. The standard compression ratio for the Super Eight was 6.0:1, while a 6.38:1 high-performance option was available, along with a 5.0:1 alternative for customers in areas with low-grade fuel.

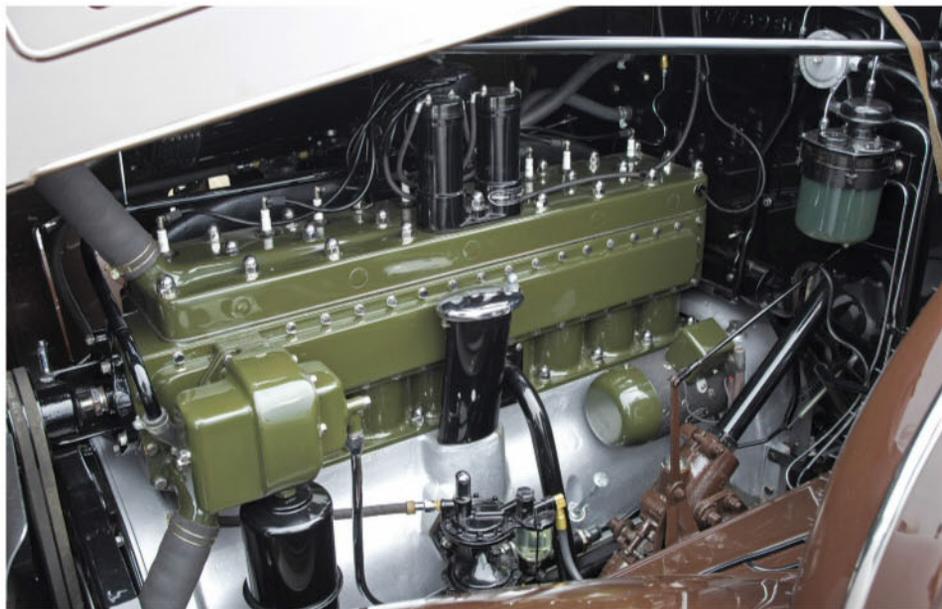
Packard engineers upgraded the engines for the 11th series with an oil temperature regulator that allowed for the use of a single-viscosity oil all year round. They also fitted an oil pressure regulator to the engines as well, along with a full-flow oil filtration system.

Though Packard continued to earn a rather large chunk of what we would call the luxury car market today, its overall sales tanked in 1934, despite a rebounding of the overall market. It's hard to fault the premium Packard automobile itself, when the market was simply looking to lower-end cars to keep people on the road. Doug's offer to let me drive his award-winning Super Eight required no repeating.

Stepping into the model 1104 Club Sedan, its overall length rather impressive, I need to remind myself that this wasn't even Packard's biggest car, nor built on its longest chassis. But imme-



Packard's 145hp, 384.8-cu.in. straight-eight is everything you have heard: a paragon of smoothness with an abundance of torque; Bijur Automatic Lubricator was rebuilt by the owner and automatically lubes the chassis.





I showed my 1930 Packard 745 Phaeton at Hershey in 1994. I parked it on the show field next to a 1934 Packard Super Eight Club Sedan, and I couldn't stop looking at that Club Sedan. I just fell in love with the body style and the lines. The Club Sedan is not worth anywhere near as much as my Phaeton was, but I just loved the body style.

My 1934 Super Eight runs very smoothly. You have to be rolling to make it steer, but once on the road, the car is very quiet and very smooth. But you hit a bump and it kind of wants to jump around. It may not be the most valuable car, but it's my favorite one.

diately, I understand why Doug finds the car so endearing, as its proportions seem about perfect between the hood, the passenger compartment and the small trunk.

The cloth seat is high and flat and somewhat narrow for the driver and sole front passenger, though not as narrow as some other similar cars of the era. The steering wheel, of course, is large, because the power steering comes only in the leverage your forearms can power it through turns. The instrument panel is a jewel-like beauty that unfortunately is not too easy to sneak any quick glances at from behind the wheel. The oil pressure dial is the only one that can be seen without effort, but since we have no plans to set any speed records, and the car runs cool, we can pretty much skip using the gauges for our short drive.

The Packard fires to life and is nearly silent. Doug warned me that I need only the most minimal of throttle to get moving, and he's right, as the big eight-cylinder pulls almost from idle. From a stoplight, second gear is chosen almost immediately and third gear comes about the time we pass through the intersection. So much torque seems available that other than coming to a complete stop or to climb a steep hill, I can see almost no need to downshift.

The throttle requires very little pressure, and the throttle pedal itself has a little tab on the edge that allows you to roll your foot onto it, rather than to press straight down with the whole foot. Clutch effort is fairly light, though the take-up point is rather high in the pedal's overall range.

At parking-lot speeds, the radial tires made the steering quite resistant, but it lightens up considerably at speed, as

would be expected. Likewise, the on-center feel is almost non-existent and the steering is vague when traveling in a straight line. However, it sharpens up in turns and tracks true to your intent once the initial steering input is made. Doug admits that the car, with its solid axles, moves around a bit, though he did implement a bit of a fix. "With the regular bias-ply tires," he says, "you hit a crack in the road and it wants to jump one way or the other. I put radials on it, and it tracks a lot better now, but it steers a lot harder. You sort of solve one problem, but you kind of create another problem." We have no qualms about radial tires on a car tasked with traveling 8,000 miles over the course of a few short weeks.

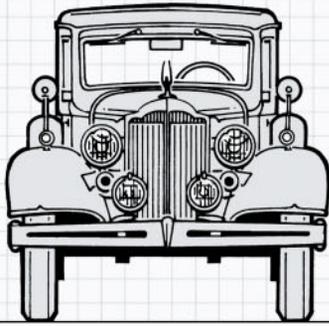
The mechanical brakes work as advertised, with a quick stab scrubbing off speed from the nearly 5,000-pound car with relative ease. The car stopped assuredly, and the brakes acted progressively. Our last stab at those brakes is in Doug's driveway, literally a minute or two before rain began falling.

Though cars like this Club Sedan get little of the attention that open cars of the same line do, we can absolutely see the appeal Doug finds here. "We had a 1936 Packard and we had a farm. We would drive that car around on the back lots. When I saw the solid disc wheels on the Packard and some of the show cars, I just kind of liked that look. That got me into the Packards, but then, once I saw the Club Sedan, I just loved the profile of it: the long hood, the little humpback trunk. It just looked so elegant to me." Elegance, performance and reliability to take an unforgettable cross-country journey. What more could you ask for in a Classic Packard? 🐾

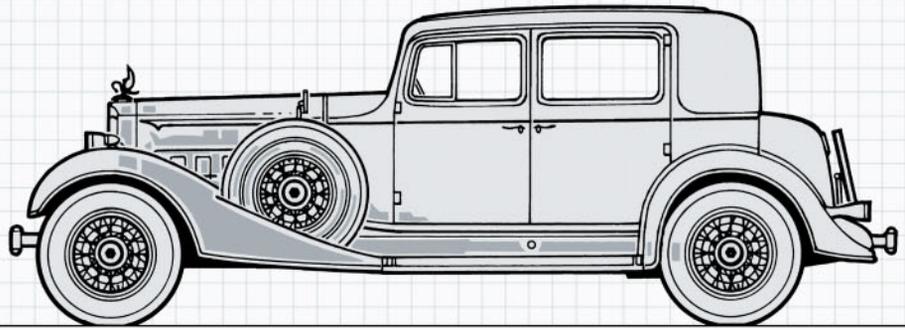


1934 PACKARD SUPER EIGHT CLUB SEDAN

ILLUSTRATIONS BY RUSSELL VON SAUERS,
THE GRAPHIC AUTOMOBILE STUDIO ©2017 HEMMINGS CLASSIC CAR



58 inches



142 inches

SPECIFICATIONS

PRICE

BASE PRICE \$3,255

ENGINE

TYPE L-head straight-eight with cast-iron block and cylinder head
DISPLACEMENT 384.8 cubic inches
BORE X STROKE 3.5 x 5 inches
COMPRESSION RATIO 6.0:1
HORSEPOWER @ RPM 145 @ 3,200
TORQUE @ RPM 290-lb.ft @ 1,600 (est.)
VALVETRAIN L-head side-valve
MAIN BEARINGS Nine
FUEL SYSTEM Stromberg downdraft carburetor
LUBRICATION SYSTEM Full-pressure, gear-type pump; auxiliary Bijur Automatic Lubricator for chassis
ELECTRICAL SYSTEM 6-volt
EXHAUST SYSTEM Cast-iron manifold, single exhaust

TRANSMISSION

TYPE Three-speed manual
RATIOS
1st 2.46:1
2nd 1.53:1
3rd 1.00:1
Reverse 2.88:1

DIFFERENTIAL

TYPE Semi-floating rear axle with hypoid gears
RATIO 4.41:1

STEERING

TYPE Worm and roller
TURNS LOCK TO LOCK Five
RATIO 18.6:1
TURNING CIRCLE 48 feet

BRAKES

TYPE Mechanical drum brakes with vacuum assist

CHASSIS & BODY

CONSTRUCTION Steel over wood body on tapered, double-drop steel ladder frame with six crossmembers and X center brace
BODY STYLE Two-door, five-passenger sedan

LAYOUT

Front engine, rear-wheel drive

SUSPENSION

FRONT Solid axle with semi-elliptical leaf springs with lever-type adjustable shock absorbers
REAR Solid axle with semi-elliptical leaf springs with lever-type adjustable shock absorbers

WHEELS & TIRES

WHEELS Welded steel spoke
TIRES: FRONT/REAR 17 x 7.00 inch

WEIGHTS & MEASURES

WHEELBASE 142 inches
OVERALL LENGTH 213 inches
OVERALL WIDTH 71 inches
FRONT TRACK 58 inches
REAR TRACK 59 inches
SHIPPING WEIGHT 4,985 pounds

CAPACITIES

CRANKCASE 10 quarts
COOLING SYSTEM 20 quarts
FUEL TANK 25 gallons
TRANSMISSION 4.5 pints
REAR AXLE 6 pints

CALCULATED DATA

BHP PER CU.IN. 0.38
WEIGHT PER BHP 34.38 pounds
WEIGHT PER CU.IN. 12.95 pounds

PRODUCTION

MODEL 1104 SUPER EIGHT CLUB SEDANS 325

PROS & CONS

- + Fantastic proportions
- + Smooth, torquey engine
- + Reliable and durable tourer
- Poor gas mileage
- No air conditioning
- Limited luggage space

WHAT TO PAY

LOW
\$25,000 – \$35,000

AVERAGE
\$50,000 – \$75,000

HIGH
\$90,000 – \$115,000

CLUB CORNER

THE CLASSIC CAR CLUB OF AMERICA

5100 River Road, Suite 175
Schiller Park, Illinois 60176
847-390-0443
www.classiccarclub.org
Dues: \$70/year



Was Failure Inevitable?

Was the failure of the American independent automakers inevitable? Was their demise almost preordained? Sometimes I wonder.

Back in the period 1900-1920 there were literally hundreds of small and medium-sized independent automakers that introduced new cars to American motorists, but most of them enjoyed just a brief time in the sun before going bust. As the automobile business goes, or any type of business for that matter, it's not unusual; in fact, failure is a lot more common than success. Whenever a unique product is introduced and a new market opens up, scores of newcomers rush in to become a part of it. Witness the dot-com boom and bust of not so long ago.

With automobiles I think there was even more excitement because the new cars were so obviously revolutionary and useful, the technology was fairly accessible, the cost of entry much lower and the barriers to entry much fewer than, say, in later years. After all, there was no OSHA or EPA to contend with, no real safety regulations, and no truth-in-advertising laws to deal with. Cars were relatively simple to produce, components were readily available and the market seemed to have no limit. As a matter of fact, many companies eschewed expensive engineering teams entirely and built what were known as 'assembled cars,' (i.e. cars built from existing components on the market). That was possible because the automobile merged two existing technologies—carriage-making and engine-making. It wasn't as big a leap as computers, or as expensive as something like SpaceX. All you needed was money and a large enough building in which to assemble cars. And even that wasn't necessary—for a time, John Willys assembled his cars in a rented circus tent!

So, why did so many companies go out of business? Why did Pope Toledo, Knox, Franklin, Mercer, Apperson and all the many others fail? It happened for a variety of reasons, but the three most common were probably:

A. The companies were under-capitalized and couldn't expand as quickly as they needed to.

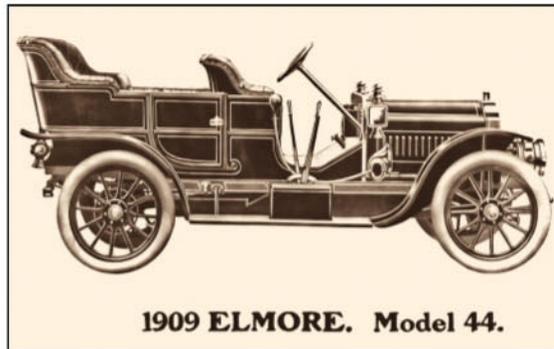
B. The cars they made were simply not good enough, and the public realized it.

C. The companies bet on the wrong technology.

In this last category, Doble, White and Stanley steamers, Northern, Baker and Waverly electrics, the friction-drive Cartercar, the two-stroke Elmore and a host of others must be included because they bet on the wrong technology and were unable to survive.

A few of the more familiar brands, like

American Austin (and Bantam), Crosley and virtually all of the cyclecar makers were guilty of building cars that too few buyers really wanted. They misread the market, believing that Americans would take to midget cars if only they were given the chance. But more than



1909 ELMORE. Model 44.

100 years of industry history has shown that thus far Americans prefer their automobiles to be on the large size. Bantam and Crosley were decent little cars, but they struggled to lure buyers. The message from consumers is clear: No peanuts, please! It's still that way. Just ask Smart.

As far as being undercapitalized, that category would encompass scores, if not hundreds, of makes. One brand I'm very familiar with, Willys-Overland, was nearly always short of cash and only managed to survive by getting into a market segment that had practically no competition. REO made an excellent car but lacked the capital to compete with the mainstream makes. REO eventually exited the passenger car market to concentrate on trucks, as did Autocar and International Harvester for similar reasons. Studebaker, once so well-funded, drained its capital reserves during the Great Depression, then went through a reorganization, but never truly recovered from its brush with bankruptcy. At least, until it finally gave up on cars to focus on its other businesses.

The ongoing shakeout of smaller companies continued essentially from the birth of the industry to about 1930 when the Great Depression took hold. From that point, the sharp reduction in sales served to unveil which businesses had strong balance sheets and which didn't, along with which firms had strong dealer networks and which didn't. Along the way, some very fine automobile companies were driven out of business. 🚗



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I WAS VERY DISAPPOINTED WITH

Dennis Koons' reaction to the Crosley Hotshot article (Recaps, HCC #147). I did not read it as an attack article on Corvettes. Facts are facts—history and dates of that history are recorded. The 1949 Crosley was the first production car with all-wheel disc brakes. Crosley had a high-revving, shaft-driven overhead cam engine—way back then. Crosleys competed, and won, their class at Sebring, Florida, in 1950—car #62, and car #19 also won its class.

Jorn Jensen

Worthington, Pennsylvania

FIRST, LET ME SAY THAT I AM THE

owner of several Crosleys and have been a member of the National Crosley Automobile Club for about 30 years. Included in these Crosleys is a 1952 Super Sport, which is the upgraded version of the 1949 Hotshot without disc brakes but has doors starting in 1951. After reading Dennis Koons' letter where he totally bashes the Crosley Hotshot because it has been called the first postwar sports car, my first reaction was disgust that someone would trash talk cars that I know well and love very much. He may have been among the disgruntled people that were in the two-seater class at an AACA show that I entered my 1952 Super Sport in many years ago. The Thunderbird, Corvette and other car owners were unhappy with my first-place win.

The interest that any Crosley draws at a cruise-in or show is really something to see. These are fascinating cars from our past that attract people of all ages. They are not fast nor are they extremely expensive, but they are part of our automotive history that is being kept alive and available for people to view by the current owners. The next time you see a Crosley at an event, it will probably have a lot of people around it with the owner answering many questions. We Crosley owners are a friendly bunch of people, and we like to share our small-car knowledge with everyone. No, the Crosley roadsters are not Corvettes. Thank goodness.

C. Joe Miller

Ford City, Pennsylvania

IT'S ABOUT TIME THE CROSLEY HOT-

shot got the recognition it deserved, and thanks to HCC for rebutting the false claim from Chevrolet that the Corvette was America's first sports car. The Hotshot was

a two-seater, four-cylinder, stick-shift car, which was the standard format of sports cars at the time. And a Hotshot won the first Sebring race in 1950 racing against Ferraris and Allards, with other class wins chalked up at Le Mans and Bonneville. Not bad for a "street legal golf cart," as Dennis Koons claims.

When the Corvette first came out, it was nothing more than a boulevard cruiser, only available with an automatic! Give me a break. It was successful mainly because it was manufactured by a major automotive company. And let's not forget that GM almost pulled the plug on the project in 1955 when Ford's new Thunderbird was outselling it five to one.

I owned a 1960 Corvette powered by a later 340hp 327. It was fast, but with that antiquated circa-1949 kingpin suspension, it certainly couldn't handle. And, after all, that's what sports cars are supposed to do.

Bob Testa

Lebanon, Connecticut

I SUPPOSE ACCORDING TO DENNIS

Koons, none of the British Leyland cars would be considered sports cars because they were cheap and relatively slow. And since when does the restored value of a car determine its place in the collector world? Nowhere in the article did I see it as a slam against Corvettes. The Crosley Hotshot is what it is, and the Corvette is what it is. But I will tell you this: At a car show the crowd will gather around a Crosley while the Corvette next to it gets very lonely. I know a Corvette snob when I see one.

Tim Hamblen

Seymour, Indiana

TO THE GUY WHO DENIGRATED

Crosley, builder of the first postwar American sports car, I think winning the first Sebring endurance race in 1950 pretty well proves its claim. Corvette is a sports car that didn't get four-wheel disc brakes until 1965 and overhead camshafts until 1990, technology that was used by Crosley in 1950.

As to the Plymouth that was featured in Detroit Underdogs in HCC #147, in 1957 I worked in a print shop and would make deliveries using the owner's 1948 Plymouth. One day, he gave me a couple of dollars to fill the tank and, after doing that, I checked the oil. Nothing appeared on the dipstick, so I put in a quart, then

two more quarts. When I got back to the shop I asked him when he last changed the oil. "Not ever," he said, since he had bought the car six years before. And it ran fine!

Art Naebig

La Valle, Wisconsin

MR. STERN'S DETROIT UNDERDOG

series is refreshing and a needed outlook on collector cars. I enjoyed his article in HCC #147 on the mid-Forties Plymouths. Over the years I have owned a number of mid-Forties Plymouths, including the 1948 club coupe residing in my garage at present, which sits next to another underdog—a 1989 Chrysler TC by Maserati. I agree with everything Mr. Stern mentions about these cars except it is quite obvious he has never adjusted the valves on one of these side-valve engines. The process requires starting the engine, removing the right front wheel, inner fender and valve side plates, and attempting to adjust the valves without scorching your knuckles on a hot exhaust manifold, a few extra knots on your head, and a new vocabulary.

The quality of these Plymouths is excellent and could be enjoyed by just closing a door. There was a solid sound, unlike the hollow tinny sound of a Ford. Chevrolets of those years had rod bearing problems, which hurt their reliability. The Plymouth's art deco dashboards are a thing of beauty, and their performance was comparable to Fords yet greater than Chevrolets. In my youth, I did a bit of street racing with several of my Plymouths and did quite well against all comers. My souped-up 1947 four-door Plymouth blew off a number of the early V-8 Chevys on the strip and street, and Richard Petty's father won a number of NASCAR races with a 1950 Plymouth sedan.

Bob Westphal

Chairman of the Board

Cascade Pacific Plymouth Club

I HAVE BEEN THE OWNER OF A

1947 Plymouth Special Deluxe Club Coupe since 1994, and I can attest to it being an inexpensive and reliable old car. Mine has served me well. I was serving in the U.S. Navy and purchased the Plymouth on a duty change from

Continued on page 45



Guilty Cinematic Pleasures

Every so often, you'll see one of our editorial prognosticators in these columnist spaces discuss their favorite movies, TV cars, road music and more. I've been there, too, talking about my favorite roadfood trips for things such as deep-fried hot dogs and the like. My significant other and a succession of physicians have prevailed upon me of late to change my diet permanently. I don't eat a lot of the food that I shoveled into myself for so many years that my late father took to calling me a "human garbage disposal." I eat a lot of Asian food now; mega-cheeseburgers, not so much. So I've got to pick a new list of favorite things to do with cars. Let's try movies with automotive themes. My choices may be a little different from yours, but let's get to it, and reader feedback is certainly welcomed here in any case.

Sure, I love the staples such as *Mad Max*, and watching the original *Gone in 60 Seconds* of 1974 ought to be a rite of passage not just for a car enthusiast, but also for anyone who ever fantasized about living in Southern California. There are other films that have caught my attention through the years. I loved Steve McQueen in *Le Mans*, but how many of us out there have also seen him in *The Reivers*, based on the great William Faulkner's final novel, made in 1969, in which the King of Cool plays a raffish knockabout tooling around the South in a 1905 Winton?

Then there's *The Lively Set* of 1964, starring Philadelphia's own James Darren and a pre-*Virginian* Doug McClure as youthful hot rodders and draggers who take on the world with a homebuilt turbine race car (actually, the Ghia-bodied Chrysler Turbine car with a new coat of white paint). This movie was actually nominated for an Academy Award, which is more than you can say for *Hot Rods to Hell*, released in 1967, a potboiler in which an angry Dana Andrews and his family are harassed by a posse of greasers as they make their way across the California desert. And speaking of the desert, who can ever forget 1971's release of *Vanishing Point*, which brought Barry

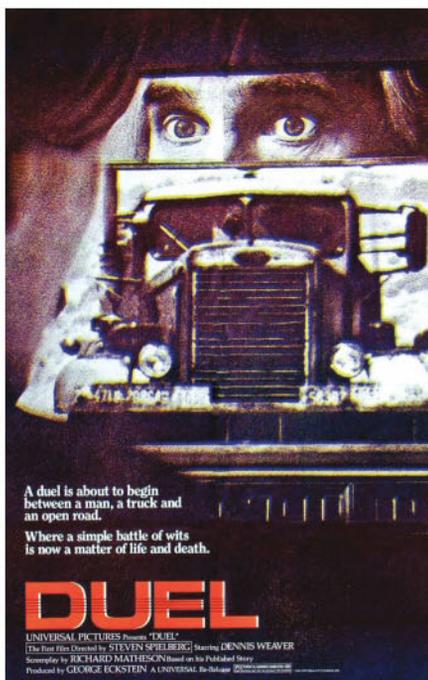
Newman to stardom as he eluded police across three states in a 440-powered Dodge Challenger R/T? The movie has a fabulous rock soundtrack, led by Delaney and Bonnie Bramlett, the perfect complement to the endless arid vistas of the film.

If you're getting the notion that I really like movies set in the desert scrublands of Southern California, you're right on target. That brings us to my personal favorite among automotive-themed films: *Duel*, the 1971 ABC-TV Movie of the Week that launched the directing career of Steven Spielberg. I always considered the movie a semi-allegory for the crush of traffic that the Los Angeles region suffered in those years, even though the action takes place in the Soledad Canyon area northeast of the L.A. basin.

It's a movie about road rage raised to the level of high art, almost campiness. One of my favorite character actors, Dennis Weaver, is a traveling salesman who heads out from suburbia on a business trip at the wheel of his four-door,

Slant-Six Plymouth Valiant. He stops for gas up in the brushy mountains and an attendant tells him that a radiator hose needs to be replaced. Fatefully, Weaver ignores the advice. He then has an encounter with a grimy oil tanker pulled by a mysteriously piloted Peterbilt tractor, whose unseen driver initially refuses to let him by in a passing zone. Weaver finally does manage to get around the rig on an upgrade but unknowingly has triggered the trucker's fury, and the faceless driver attempts to kill him by running him off the road.

The extended game of chicken that follows is harrowing. Weaver was a much better actor than some of his TV work would lead you to believe, and the fear he exudes while being chased by the tank truck is palpable. Of course, the overloaded radiator hose finally blows on him. There are parallels between its climax and that of *Hot Rods to Hell*, which anyone who's seen both films will spot immediately, even though Weaver weeps joyfully when his own ordeal is finally finished. I never get tired of watching it. Better for the soul, surely, than loaded chili dogs, to say nothing of the stomach. 🍌



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Florida to California. I bought it in New Mexico; it had been sitting outside for three years on four flats, but it had a newly rebuilt engine—\$3,000 and it was ours. After my dad and I had gone through the brakes and the fuel system and replaced the water pump, we drove the car 1,300 miles to our new duty station.

While I was in California, I took out a “Vehicle Improvement Loan.” It was painted, the bumpers were replated, the interior was touched up and an overdrive transmission from a 1953 Plymouth was installed. Three years later, I received orders to be transferred to Norfolk, Virginia; we loaded up the Plymouth and drove across the country. In the almost 22 years of ownership the Plymouth has never let us down. Through the years, I have replaced four sets of tires, a starter, two generators, a clutch, master cylinder and several batteries. My family was raised in it, and we’ve met so many wonderful people because of it. The Plymouth is a family member and will continue to be.

Tim Buris
Brownwood, Texas

THREE CHEERS FOR DAVE LANNING

and his 1941 Hudson Coupe and for *HCC* #147 for featuring it. As a restorer as well as a hot rodder of long standing, I heartily approve of the modifications Dave made to his vintage car. Improving driveability as well as the reliability is a must if you are to safely enjoy your old car on today’s thoroughfares, and in doing it, retain the basic charm and originality that was intended by the original designer and manufacturer.

You’ll probably have a torrent of outraged readers writing to complain about the destruction of a perfectly good, prime candidate for an original restoration despoiled by another unappreciative miscreant—maybe even a few subscription cancellations. But I hope cooler heads will prevail.

I have been guilty of the same deeds as Dave for well over 50 years. My first transgression was multiple carbs and aftermarket cylinder heads on my otherwise “stock as a rock” 1936 Ford flatback two-door sedan. It was no rocket, but it kept up with traffic pretty well in the late 1950s. Next was a very plain, dull-green 1956 Chevrolet business coupe. When the old six-cylinder gave out, for \$45 I purchased a good-running 283-cu.in. V-8 that bolted right in. Again, no exterior changes for this sleeper.

My current “hot rod” is a 1968 Buick Wildcat convertible purchased with a seized 430-cu.in. V-8. After fruitlessly trying for months to locate a rebuildable 430, I found a 455 in a wrecked 1971 Riviera. This was a bolt-in swap that netted me many more horses and additional torque to move 4,200 pounds of iron that might have otherwise become a parts car, at best. Again, the car appears factory stock down to the original upholstery and hubcaps. You’d need to be somewhat of a Buick expert to detect any modifications, even after looking under the hood.

I hope to see more similarly updated classic cars in your fine publication in the future. The only concern I might have is the questionable effectiveness of 1941 stock brakes if called upon at 100 MPH. My old ’36 Ford met its demise due to the original mechanical brakes that failed to halt us safely.

Dave Reedley
Sacramento, California

REGARDING THE MERCURY BOBCAT

in *HCC* #147, I suppose that by the editor’s logic, the Pontiac Aztek will also be “collectible” by around 2025 or so since, according to Mr. Lentinello, the passage of time is apparently all that is required to cause a putrid turd of an automobile to magically morph into a classic. Here’s a hint: “collectibility” goes hand in hand with “desirability,” and disposable, forgettable transportation like the Bobcat has no place in this publication.

Jason Treadaway
Marietta, Georgia

I’M IN MY EARLY 60s AND CARS

like the Mercury Bobcat were the type of cars that were the first cars that many in my generation owned. My first car was a 1975 Pontiac Astre SJ that I ordered when I was 20—it looked like a mini Corvette to me. I never thought that an Astre would be mentioned in *HCC*, but it brought back a lot of good memories. So I, and I’m sure many of your readers, would enjoy reading about these cars from time to time.

Jim Scott
Ft. Wright, Kentucky

I REALLY ENJOYED THE ARTICLE ON

the Mercury Bobcat. Your publication has a great variety of articles that should be of interest to any motorhead. The cars

from the 1970s, ’80s and early ’90s are all prospects to be preserved and collected. Most of these cars can still be purchased at reasonable prices. It is also important for beginning or even long-term collectors to know that cars from this era operate well on today’s fuel, and most have disc brakes along with the split master cylinder for added safety. They make good “daily drivers” as well as collectibles. A good bet for a beginning collector in my opinion is a 1986-’91 Buick LeSabre, or a 1985-’90 Electra/Park Avenue. These cars have a unique forward-opening hood and under that hood is GM’s legendary 3800 V-6. I would love to see an article on these cars someday. Thanks for a wonderful publication.

Parkis Waterbury
Dalton, Wisconsin

I SAY BRING ON THE BOBCATS,

Chevettes or anything that makes the traditionalist squirm. Growing up in the 1970s, I enjoy the early evolution of small cars as well as long hoods, heavily padded vinyl tops and large bench seats. My collection of cars and memorabilia is based on things that make other people scratch their heads. “Why do you have a Vega?” or “Why don’t you put a V-8 in that Malibu?” or “A four-door Nova?” are some of the more frequently asked questions I get. I’ll take the four-cylinder Chevy II or Mustang II any day over the endless rows of GTOs, Camaros, Mustangs and Chargers. The odd cars are why I get this magazine.

I could go on for hours about my collection and the stories behind each car or why I like the cars of the ’70s best, but from reading your articles I think we are already on the same page for a lot of things.

Keep up the good work!
Dave Wilbur
Bellmawr, New Jersey

I REALLY LIKED YOUR TAKE ON THE

Pinto and the other basic cars of that era. I consider my 1966 Dodge Dart, three-speed, Slant Six, to be one of the best cars I ever owned. When I was born, the Model A Ford was still 13 years away from qualifying as a classic; they were still common as dirt even into the late 1960s. For every so-called

Continued on page 47

CARavanning



The famous Cunard Line used a wonderful phrase in its advertising: “Getting there is half the fun.” I couldn’t agree more, whether it’s used in conjunction with ocean travel or driving a Classic motorcar.

On more than one occasion in this column I’ve written about the enjoyment that I and many other Classic car enthusiasts receive from *driving* our Classic cars. For us, a long drive through colorful fall foliage surpasses any award we might receive.

That belief was reinforced this summer when I participated in a CARavan sponsored by the New England Region of the Classic Car Club of America (CCCA). The tour took us through beautiful areas of New Hampshire and Maine over a nine-day period. In all, we drove more than 1,200 miles.

Where else but on a CARavan can you admire a 1936 Cadillac V-12 Fleetwood sedan just ahead of you, then gaze into your rearview mirror at a 1932 Lincoln V-12 Judkins Berline—not to mention get passed by a 1931 Duesenberg LeBaron phaeton? Pretty neat, eh?

Of particular significance was the fact that the tour’s director had not only never organized a tour, he’d never been on one. He convinced his region to sponsor it and stepped up to serve as director. I’ve never been on a more enjoyable or better organized tour.

Since the CCCA recognizes specific cars built between 1915 and 1948, there was quite a cross section of cars on this CARavan. More than 100 Classic cars participated from throughout the United States. And, they ranged from 1921 through 1948.

I should note that in recent years Classic cars built between 1940 and 1948 have been increasingly prevalent on CARavans. Why? They’re easier to drive and have a bit more horsepower than their earlier counterparts. But for those of us who enjoy the automobiles of the 1920s and ’30s, it’s much more enjoyable traveling with cars of “our era.” The newer Classics sometimes tend to be on their own tour.

More important, a tour is supposed to be

just that—a tour. Remember the Cunard phrase—“Getting there is half the fun.” A tour shouldn’t be a competition to see how quickly one can arrive at the next stop. I remember being on a CARavan out West; we spotted in the distance a group of cowboys bringing in a herd of cattle. When we arrived at a coffee stop and told our fellow travelers about it they were puzzled; they hadn’t seen it. No doubt, they were focused on getting to that coffee stop ahead of us.

Something else that set this CARavan apart from others in which I’d participated was the quality of the cars:

two Duesenbergs, two Cadillac Sixteens, two Cords and 17 Packard Twelves—plus a fine gathering of other marques, including Lincoln, Stutz, Rolls-Royce, Pierce-Arrow, AC and Bugatti.

I was especially impressed by a 1931 Cadillac V-16 Fleetwood limousine, or I should say its owner. The car had received Best in Show at the 2016 CCCA Annual Meeting and had appeared at the Pebble Beach Concours

d’Elegance only a month earlier. Now, here it was, being driven on the back roads of New Hampshire. The owner said it was time to drive it and enjoy it. I know he received a number of “thumbs ups” from fellow tour participants.

It was years ago when I figured it out. After receiving several awards for my 1936 Cord 810 I started driving it in earnest, including several trips from Ohio to Auburn. One summer I drove it to an area car show. A fellow seated in another Cord came over to me and asked what it was like to drive it. “You own that Cord, right?” I said, “How did you get it here?” He replied that he’d trailered it—a distance of 30 miles—because he thought it might break down.

A friend was listening in. “Mister, get in that car tonight and drive the s--- out of it,” he said. “If man made it, man can fix it. And you’ll have fun.” Not terribly profound, but pretty good advice.

Here’s what I hope you’ll take away from this article: People who find it as much fun as we oldtimers are still entering the car hobby and are willing to step up and be involved. And, it’s more fun to tour with your Classic car than drive it on and off a trailer. 🚗



“
For us, a long
drive through
colorful
fall foliage
surpasses any
award we
might receive.”

Classic automobile there are 10,000 ordinary Fords, Chevrolets and Plymouths that took people to work, on vacation, to school, to life itself. Yes, it's hard to imagine that the Vega and Chevette, the Neon and even my Sonic will someday be revered, but if the Ramblers I sold back in 1974 can do it now, so can any of those cars. Great article and great view without rose colored glasses.

Gary Bricken
Elmendorf, Texas

AS A LONG-TIME SUBSCRIBER SINCE

SIA back in 1974, I thought I would comment on your intro regarding the Mercury Bobcat. Should you do a story on this car? Of course, you should! It's hard to believe these cars that I recall seeing everywhere are now fodder for collector-car magazines. But there it is. Besides, I love to see great examples of these cars that were so ubiquitous so long ago. It does bring back some fond memories.

To those who think a car like the Mercury Bobcat is not acceptable, I say, relax. Read it for what it's worth, or if you just can't stand it, skip the darn article. Life is too short. Every old car represents a slice of the past that is worth remembering.

Brian Schultz
Cincinnati, Ohio

I ENJOYED RICHARD'S COLUMN ON

the Bobcat. Yes, I believe these cars are collectible and warrant the exposure *HCC* has provided. All of the cars from this era provide a snapshot of the times. Most of us remember the OPEC oil embargo and Detroit's reaction to it. While I collect cars from the muscle car era I do appreciate all cars, especially those that are no longer made. Ford Elite, Chrysler Cordoba, Chevrolet Laguna are all cars from a bygone era that I hope collectors recognize their importance in automotive history. Any and all vintage vehicles should be welcomed into our hobby. Our goal should always be to preserve automotive history in all forms.

Marty Burke

I'M IN 100 PERCENT AGREEMENT

with Richard. I realize that the terms "classic" and "collectible" mean different things to different people. But those who insist on applying arbitrary rules to those definitions (makes, models, production years, number of doors, etc.) limit the opportunities for those who own, show

or simply appreciate seeing and reading about all types of automobiles. As far as I'm concerned, celebrating all facets of our transportation history is our hobby.

Paul Davis
Grants Pass, Oregon

I REALLY ENJOYED BOB PALMA'S

column in *HCC* #147. I own a 1965 Impala, and I agree with Bob that 1965 Chevrolets weren't "all new." The closest you could get to an "all new" Chevrolet that year would be if you bought a Caprice Custom sedan with a 396-cu.in. V-8 and Turbo Hydra-Matic transmission. These items were mid-year introductions that were unavailable in 1964.

Other Chevrolets that might qualify as "all new" were the 1960 Corvair, '62 Chevy II, '71 Vega and '80 Citation. Each of these cars was very different from prior Chevrolet offerings and had drivetrains and chassis not previously used by Chevrolet. Ironically, except for the Chevy II, they were all *Motor Trend* Car of the Year.

Russell Heim
Levittown, New York

THE CAR I THINK ABOUT WHEN I

think of an "all new" car is the Chevrolet Corvair. It was a new unibody design with a rear, air-cooled, flat-six engine. The styling was smooth and timeless; they still look good today. The trunk was up front, and the back seat could be folded down for additional luggage space. And, best of all, it had four-wheel independent suspension; a very advanced feature for an American car at that time. I wish the Corvair had lasted longer.

Tim Heydon
Seattle, Washington

"ALL NEW, ALL OVER AGAIN"—1951

Really? Palma should have said it was the 1960 Corvair! That car started with a clean sheet of paper. How could he have missed that? My second choice would have been the 1929 Chevrolet that changed from a four- to a six-cylinder engine, all but assuring a new drivetrain. However, I'm not positive that "all" of the body panels were new except for the front end to make room for two more cylinders. Even the Corvette was not as "all new" as my two choices, as it had the old "Stove-bolt" engine in the beginning.

Stan Howey
Mt. Pleasant, Michigan

THE TRULY ALL-NEW CAR WAS THE

1997 Corvette; new LS engine, drivetrain layout and frame and body. I'm the proud owner of a 2003 Z06, and compared to my neighbor's 1995 Corvette there is no similarity between the two except maybe the 12-volt battery.

Bob Tamas
Stratford, Connecticut

JIM RICHARDSON WAS RIGHT

about images certain cars project about their owners (*HCC* #147). I have a Harley-Davidson, and a few years ago this came to the attention of a coworker. Wade is my age, probably 55 at the time, and just happens to own a mid-Eighties Corvette. In his hypocritical way, he responded, "Yeah, I've seen those old Harley guys trying to act like they're Hell's Angels."

I was ready. I replied, "I don't want to hear it, Wade. I just went to the Corvette Expo, and I've never seen so many 60- and 70-year-old men running around with unnatural tans, pony tails, open shirts and gold necklaces."

When I drive my 1957 Fairlane, I fantasize about being Luke Doolan, running illegal alcohol over to Memphis. I guess we all like to slip into our alter egos occasionally, huh?

Bill Crisp
Knoxville, Tennessee

MY FRIENDS AND I HAVE JUST

returned from Hershey, and it seems to us that Hershey is maybe on a decline. We think there were fewer cars in the corral, and fewer vendors in the swap meet. Do you agree? The average age of visitors seems to be growing higher each year. In 10 to 15 years, where do you think the collector-car hobby will be? Is there any estimate as to how much money is spent at Hershey? But our greatest pet peeve were the huge amount of electric carts touring the car corral.

Alan Roth
Cleveland, Ohio

To have your letter considered for Recaps you must include the name of the town, city and state you live in. Thank you.

Easy A

The 1980 Shay Super Deluxe Roadster provided classic Model A fun with modern safety and accessibility

BY DAVID CONWILL

PHOTOGRAPHY BY RICHARD LENTINELLO



The rolling 25-year window continues to provide an air of collectibility to many cars that perhaps would not have earned a second look in their prime. It also affords an opportunity to re-evaluate cars that have slipped off the collector-car scene's radar. Take, for example, Harry Shay's effort to provide the nostalgic looks of the Model A Ford roadster with the ease of a late-model car. Underpinned by thoroughly modern Ford mechanicals, the Shay was embraced by some and derided by others because it was inevitably compared to the simple and affordable 1928-'29 Ford it replicated.



Now, however, even commonplace cars of the Shay's 1978-'82 era (and its successor, by Camelot Motors) are open to consideration as something more than just transportation. As such, one can consider the Shay as a contemporary to the Pinto and Fairmont on which it was based, rather than in the context of its 1920s inspiration. Take into account its approximately 5,000-unit production run and it's even something of a rarity.

In that sense, as a late-'70s, early-'80s automobile, the Shay is unmatched. There was no two-seat roadster version of the Pinto—no open version at all, in fact. It was not a time for fun cars. Even the Corvette had dropped its roadster body after 1975. The only comparable cars were the small, sporty roadsters still being imported from Italy and the U.K.

But the Shay was all Ford underneath. Thanks to a savvy arrangement by Shay's company, The Model A and Model T Motor Car Reproduction Corporation (changed to the less-cumbersome Shay Motors Corporation in late 1980), Shays were actually offered through Ford dealers when new. When maintenance was needed, that same dealership could provide service, as could scores of local garages used to working on domestic cars.

Although today bringing a Pinto or a Shay to your local Ford dealer might garner a blank look, neither car is in any way a mechanical orphan. The Pinto's overhead-cam four-cylinder engine was retained by Ford up to the early 21st century and is well understood by enthusiasts and workaday mechanics



Though 60 cubic inches smaller than a 1929-spec Model A flathead, the OHC engine produces more than twice the horsepower. The Pinto IFS is the basis for most modern street rod suspensions.



everywhere, as are its three-speed automatic transmission, optional four-speed manual transmission and 7.5-inch rear axle.

Likewise, the Shay's fiberglass roadster body (unlikely to have suffered much, if any, decay) is underpinned by chassis components familiar to anyone who has recently flipped through a street rodding catalog: The Pinto independent front suspension, rack-and-pinion steering, and disc/drum brake setup are very similar to the Mustang II components still favored by many street rod builders.

An area the Shay does differ significantly from both its mechanical cousins, the Pinto and the Model A, is the wheels and tires. Shay manufactured a wheel in the Pinto's four-lug pattern but styled after the tall-and-skinny wire-spokes used on the 1928-'29 Model A. Instead of a 21-inch rim, however, the Shay used an 18-inch wheel and tire—the same dimensions as a 1932 Ford. Many sources warn that these fabricated wheels are vulnerable to rust and damage, so it is worth double checking those items when contemplating the purchase of a Shay.

The combination of '70s engine, chassis and braking technology with a 1920s ride height and 1930s tires makes the Shay a uniquely handling automobile. According to the owner of this Shay, Kevin Knoop of Hobe Sound, Florida, the experience is very similar to a Model A "until you turn the corner or step on the brakes," at which point the more-modern technology makes its presence known in a positive way. On uneven surfaces, however, he tells us that the shimmy and wander of the skinny bias-ply tires bring back the old days.

The big selling point for the Shay, now that the warranty is up, is the automatic transmission. As Kevin notes, the only options for finding a car of the 1920s era that you don't have to shift for yourself are either a street rod or a replica like the Shay. With a street rod, however, you are at the mercy of the builder as to which parts were combined and how. The Shay, built from the Ford parts bins, is a standardized design like a production car because it was a production car.

Those Shays not equipped with the FOG four-speed manual use a C3 automatic, a light-duty three-speed transmission shared with the Pinto, which remained in use behind four-cylinder Ford engines up to 1989. Kevin had to have the C3 in this car rebuilt by his local transmission shop, but says they handled it easily.

Kevin and his wife, Cindy, selected the Shay primarily on the basis of the automatic. They wanted a pre-WWII car that Cindy was comfortable with behind the wheel. Kevin, who had worked on both vintage and late-model cars during his career as an auto mechanic, was equally comfortable with both the 1920s Fords and the 1970s Fords on which the Shay was based. The couple found the Shay in New Jersey through *Hemmings Motor News*.

This yellow roadster had been sitting for quite a while, as is common with collector cars and even replicas—especially in colder climates where year-round driving is virtually impossible. Kevin had the car shipped to their Florida home and set to work evaluating what was needed to bring it back up to snuff.

The 88hp, 140-cu.in. engine, although it had long-ago



The steering column, shifter, pedals and other controls were taken from the Pinto (later Fairmont) parts bin. The rest of the interior would not look out of place in a 1920s car.



been stripped of its federally mandated emissions equipment, ran well and he simply tidied up the engine compartment—most notably by giving the trimmed air-cleaner snorkel a more finished appearance. The sluggishly shifting transmission, as noted earlier, was sent to a local shop for rebuilding. With safety utmost in his mind, Kevin tackled the brake rebuild himself.

Since then, the little car has barely had the chance to cool down. Kevin and Cindy drive it very regularly, up to twice a week, year round. They have no complaints about the Florida heat, especially now that Kevin has fabricated a simple rubber-wrapped wood wedge to hold the windshield tilted out while driving.

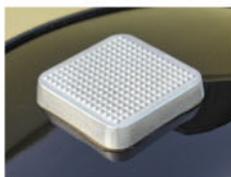
The retired couple is particularly fond of taking young relatives for rides in the rumble seat, another feature you won't find on any other 1980 model-year car. As hoped, Cindy has little trepidation about taking the Shay out on her own, having recently treated a visiting cousin to a picnic excursion in the roadster. She laughingly notes that the car is a real "guy magnet," with many men falling over themselves when they see the not-as-old-as-it-appears car go by with two women inside.



The combination of '70s engine, chassis and braking technology with a 1920s ride height and 1930s tires makes the Shay a uniquely handling automobile.

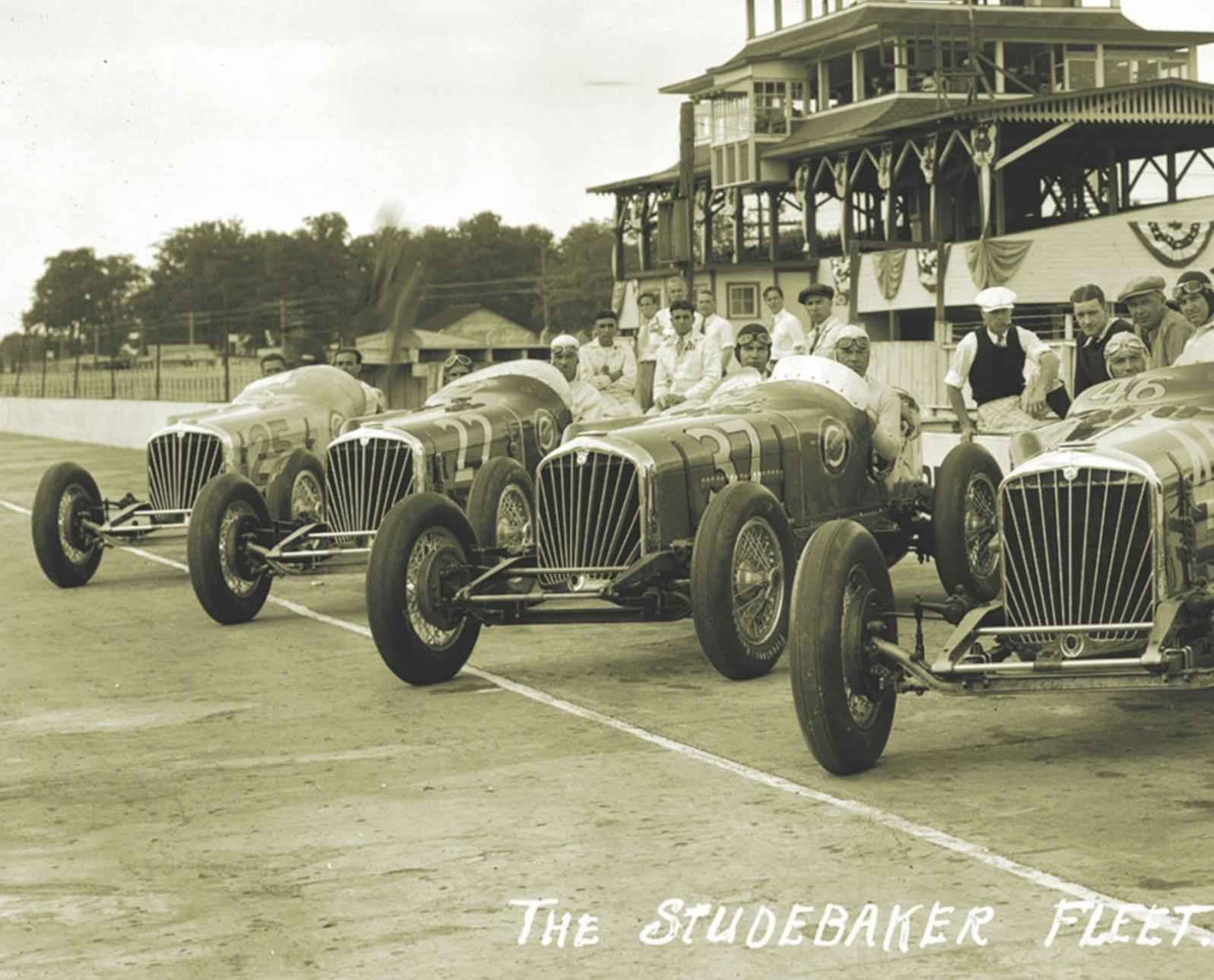
Possibly the greatest appeal after the Shay's sheer driveability is how easy it is to work on. Kevin tells us that he got all of his service parts through his local NAPA store. He even has a plaque on the dashboard dedicated to the counter guys who made his work so easy by having parts either on hand or available soon after the asking.

Harry Shay wanted to offer the public the fun of a Ford Model A without the dedication required to own a car of that vintage. That is really still the appeal of the Shay. Anyone who could drive or service a Pinto can drive or service a Shay. With prices still very low, a Shay may well be the easiest way to replicate the carefree, open-air motoring of the late 1920s for the modern enthusiast. 🍷



Harry Shay worked hard to give the exterior an authentic Model A appearance, complete with cowl lamps, wind wings, runningboard steps, rumble-seat hardware and those custom-built 18-inch wire wheels. Use of 1932 Ford-spec tires gives a little more width at the slight expense of diameter.





THE STUDEBAKER FLEET

Builder of Champions

Studebaker's entries in the Indianapolis 500

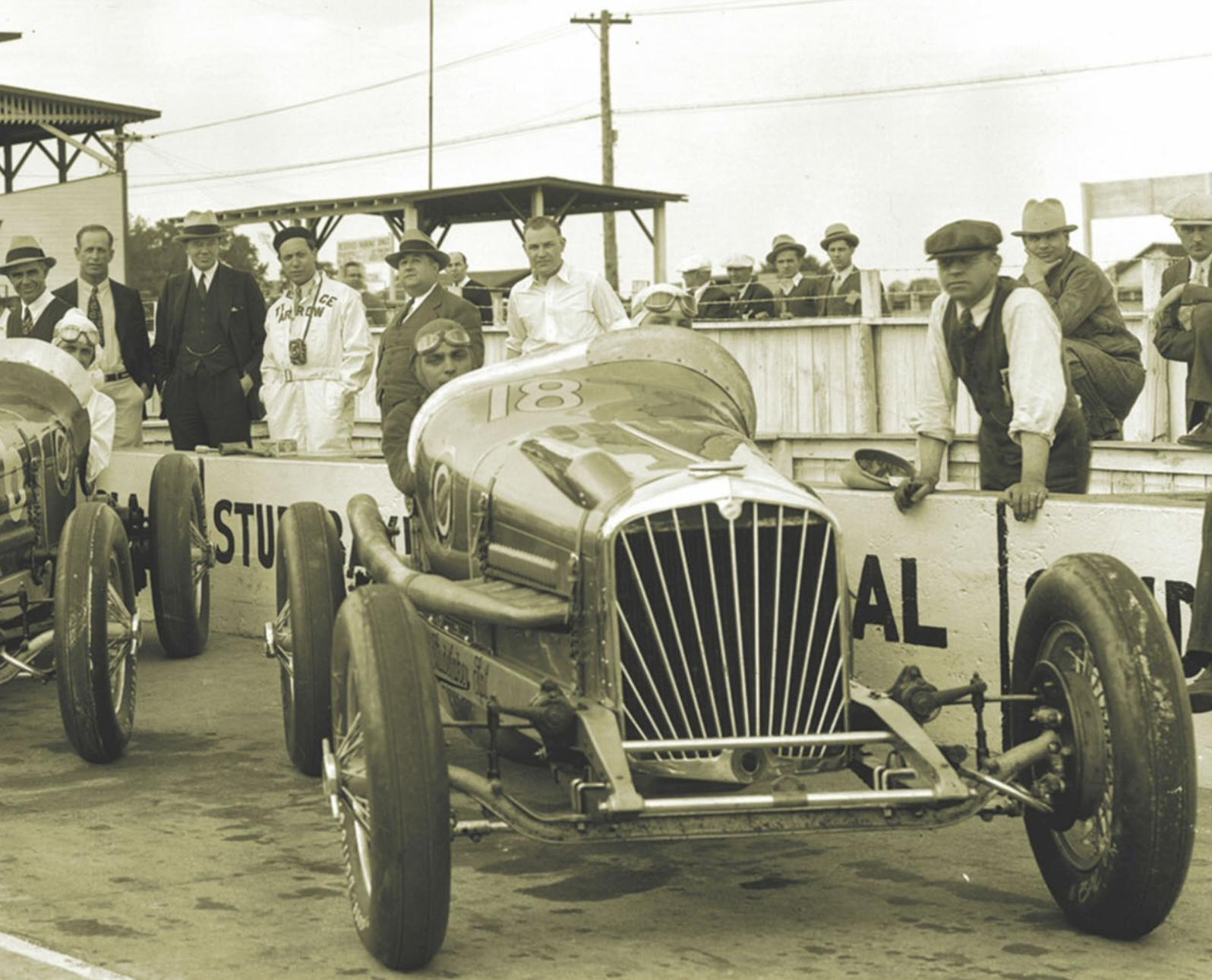
BY TERRY SHEA • PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF INDIANAPOLIS MOTOR SPEEDWAY AND JOHN SNOWBERGER

By the late 1920s, when Studebaker had already embarked on a successful campaign to set speed and endurance records, its slogan was “Builder of Champions,” and the company’s ad copy included references to the notion that they had “more official stock-car records for speed and endurance than all other makes of motor cars combined.”

These records included the likes of Studebaker’s testing crew, including renowned professional driver Ab Jenkins, driving four essentially stock President Eights 30,000 miles in 26,326 minutes over 19 days and 18 nights at Atlantic City’s board track for an

average speed of over 68 MPH. At one point, Studebaker held 114 records, 31 of which it kept for 35 years.

But it was at Indianapolis in the 1930s where Studebaker really made its mark. With the expensive Miller specials dominating the



field by the late 1920s (fully 27 of 33 cars entered in 1929 were Miller powered), the AAA Contest Board modified the rules to allow stock-block engines up to 366 cubic inches, so long as they had just one intake and one exhaust valve per cylinder. Although Miller-engined cars continued to dominate, the change did attract plenty of entrants running stock engines: Buick, Chrysler, Hudson, du Pont, Duesenberg, Oakland, Stutz, REO and Ford were all present at the Brickyard in the 1930s. But none of them was as successful as Studebaker.

Two privately entered, Studebaker Eight-powered specials finished a very respectable eighth and 18th at the Indianapolis 500. In 1931, Jenkins, Studebaker's most well-known endurance and test driver, personally bankrolled an Indy entry, this time with significant help from the Studebaker Proving Grounds' engineering crew, which boosted compression to 7.5:1 with a modified cylinder head, fitted hotter spark plugs, installed four downdraft Winfield carburetors and used steel tube exhaust headers. The result was 174 horsepower in a car weighing just 2,550 pounds. While it didn't have the outright performance of the Millers, it was more than enough to be competitive. Starting from 19th on the grid, driver Tony Gulotta took the lead, but with just 33 laps to go, hit an oil slick and eventually finished eighth. The pole winner in

1931 was Russ Snowberger, a privateer whose car was built around a President Eight engine that he found in a junkyard and assembled for \$1,500 total!

People were definitely taking notice, including the folks in South Bend, where chief engineer Barney Roos managed to convince Studebaker boss A.R. Erskine that a full-fledged factory effort at Indianapolis would be a great showcase for the President Eight. In 1932, Studebaker fielded five cars in the premier American race, finishing as high as third, and no worse than 16th. In 1933, the factory engineers tweaked and tuned the engines some more. The factory claimed 205 horsepower, enough to help the fastest Studebaker post a 115.6 MPH qualifying time, good for ninth on the grid. They performed nearly flawlessly as the five factory cars and two privateers completed all 200 laps while claiming all positions between sixth and 12th in the final results, all on a combined budget that was a mere fraction of what the Miller specials cost the top competitors. Two other Studebaker cars finished 18th and 28th.

But it was the last hurrah for Studebaker's efforts at Indianapolis as the company was soon bankrupt, and Erskine killed himself just weeks after the May race. By 1934, although privateer efforts continued, racing was not a priority for the cash-strapped enterprise. 🏁



One Century, One Family

After 102 years, this incredible 1915 Marmon 41 is still being driven and enjoyed by the same family who bought it new

BY JIM DONNELLY • PHOTOGRAPHY BY RICHARD LENTINELLO

Any number of superlatives, gasps, and oh-my-goshes apply when you're talking about this hall-mark Marmon. The automobile herein is an even 102 years old. It's still in the same family that bought it new. It's still in New England. It's unrestored. Regardless of its value, it's not for sale. It's driven regularly, or at least as regularly as racking up 49,000 miles in more than a century will allow. And as far as anybody can tell, it's the very last such Marmon 41 built with its oddball three-seater Club Roadster bodywork that's known to exist.

This presentable 1915 Marmon is a hardware winner, picked for Editor's Choice at the 2016 Hemmings Concours d'Elegance in Saratoga Springs, New York, competing in the Preservation category. It's also a rolling touchstone to a family's heritage going back to the dawn of the automobile. The Witherell family hailed from Boston at the time, were very successful, and their patriarch decided to buy a car that was worthy of the brood's station in life. That's where this story begins. Its end will likely never be written, at least by us here.

"Amazing, isn't it? In another five or

10 years, you'll have all these Model Ts that have been in the same families for 100 years coming into the mix, but right now, it's still rare to see," says Warren Witherell of Keene, New Hampshire, who is the custodian of his family's magnificent Marmon. The saga of this vehicle begins with a guy who didn't even own it: Warren Witherell, Warren's great-grandfather, who was a highly successful grocer in Boston just after the turn of the 20th century. He imported liquor, cigars, olives and other products from Europe to retail to monied Bostonians. His son, Percy, went to Massa-



chusetts Institute of Technology and became an astronomer, of all things. “He was a nerd, and he liked being a nerd, and all of a sudden, he had to go work in his father’s store as a finance guy. And he didn’t like it. He wasn’t what you’d call a people person. Then Prohibition came along and they couldn’t sell liquor anymore, so that sort of finished off the store. As a kid, I remember we had cases of whiskey, rye and bourbon, already in bottles, only they had no alcohol in them. You had to brew your own alcohol and mix it in.”

Regardless of all this, Percy was

The Marmon’s original owner, Percy Witherell, poses in front of the dealership in Boston where he bought the Model 41 in 1915.



enough of a techie that he really liked cars. And among people of that ilk in the 20th century’s second decade, Marmon was the way to go. The Indianapolis-based premium automaker had just made history by win-

ning the inaugural running of the Indianapolis 500 with test driver Ray Harroun in the hot seat. Percy wasn’t necessarily a car freak, Warren said, but respected the marque because of Nordyke & Marmon’s



This version of the Model 41 was unique for its unconventional three-passenger seating arrangement. Absolutely nothing in this interior has been restored or otherwise touched in 100 years. The upholstery is original to the car. Warner gauges fill instrument binnacle.

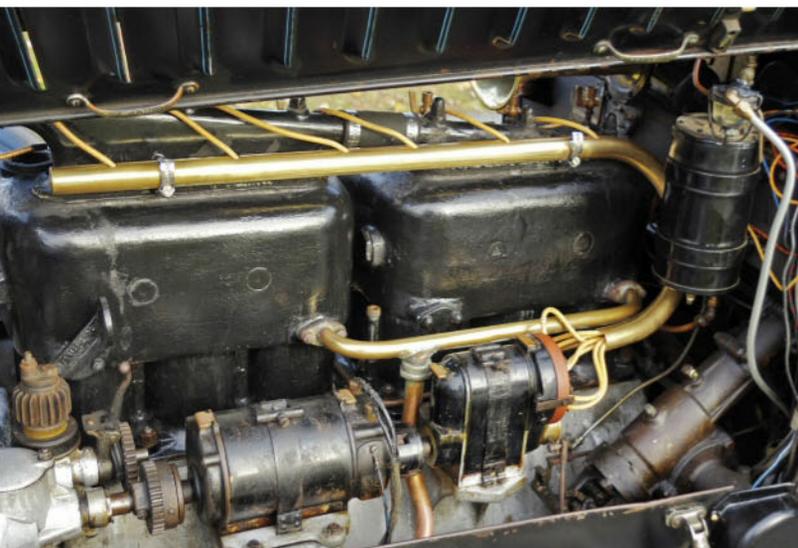
reputation for engineering excellence and its notoriety for having won the Indianapolis race. The bill of sale from Boston dealer Frank Wing came to \$3,049, nearly 10 times what a Ford Model T would have cost then. Marmon enthusiasts tend to divide up its early cars by eras, and the Model 41 was the firm's final creation of Era Two. It retained the stout dual-frame engineering practice of the first era—really, with the roads that existed at the time, Marmon had little other choice—and nonetheless moved away from previous Marmon practice of offering a single model that was intended to appeal to all sorts of buyers. It was this decade that saw Marmon evolve into a truly premium automobile.

Marmon announced the Model 41 in December 1913. It was the beneficiary of modernistic styling, with completely new body panels throughout. Three body styles

were initially offered by the factory on the basic wheelbase: A Club Roadster, five-passenger touring car and seven-passenger touring. The Model 41, being a new design, benefitted from Marmon's engineering of an equally new engine. It was a straight-six that made use of the firm's traditional barrel crankcase construction and full-pressure lubrication. Bore and stroke were 4.25 and 5.50 inches, respectively, giving the L-head engine a displacement of 447 cubic inches. The cylinders were cast in blocks of three. The model nomenclature refers to the Marmon engine's taxable horsepower, although its true output is guesstimated at close to 70hp. The 1915 version of the Model 41 featured a full Bosch ignition system incorporating a magneto, starter and generator. There's a hand crank out front, but Warren told us that it's completely superfluous—to hear him tell it, nobody has the muscle

power to turn the huge Marmon engine against its own compression.

Percy used the Marmon every day, even after the grocery store closed around 1926. Warren's father recalled bouncing around Boston jammed into the Marmon's diminutive rear seat. Percy was a pack rat, the kind of guy who never threw anything out, as the mountain of Marmon correspondence and mechanic's bills that accompanied the car can attest. He eventually had the Marmon stored in a garage and kept it there, even though he moved to another house. The paperwork trove also includes letters from interested parties who spotted the car and wanted to buy it. Finally, with the garage nearly collapsing around the car, Warren's aunt persuaded Percy to get rid of the Marmon. That was in 1959, by which time a huge tree had sprouted up in front of the garage.



Cylinders are cast in threes on the 447-cu.in. straight-six. Owner guesstimates it will churn out 70 horsepower. Fuel mixture is fired courtesy of Bosch ignition. The functional air compressor is extremely rare. Carburetion is by updraft Stromberg.

Percy had to rent a chain saw to cut it down so the Marmon could be rolled out. Warren's father ultimately took ownership of it, dragging it to his own house in 1962, just before he was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease.

What on this Marmon is non-original? Practically nothing except for the paint. In 1919, Warren's uncle, who was about six years old at the time, decided to surprise his father by washing the car. Only thing was, he first rooted around in the cleaning supplies and decided to attack the dirt using steel wool. The battleship gray finish was decimated. "That's why in my family, we didn't wash cars ourselves for a long time. You could get in real trouble for doing it," Warren quips. The car's repaint likewise dates to 1919, deep blue coachwork with black fenders, now heavily patinated with the passage of nearly 100 years.

In case you were wondering, Warren doesn't own a trailer, so when the Model 41 gets out and about, it's generally under its own power. "It runs reliably, it can go long distances, but because I don't have a trailer it doesn't really get dragged around to shows and such. It's not any good in the rain because the canvas top is all rotted, but it basically runs fine."

One of the great traits that Marmon marketed was its cars' ability to be driven

“It's great to drive. Just great...with the big wooden steering wheel, it's tough to park but when you're cruising along, it's effortless.”



up hills using the forward low gears—as opposed to reverse—due to its vacuum-pressurized fueling system. This was considered a huge selling point for a premium car like the Model 41, given that most lesser conveyances had to attack steep grades in reverse to ensure that the fuel would keep flowing to the carburetor. The flip side is getting down the other side of the hill. The Model 41 only has brakes on its two rear wheels, and while the drums are more than 16 inches in diameter, they don't offer an abundance of stopping power. So Warren, at the firm urging of his wife, tends to stay away from the mountains of New Hampshire and neighboring Vermont.

"It's great to drive. Just great," Warren beamed. "With the big wooden steering wheel, it's tough to park, but when you're cruising along, it's effortless. The wheels

are big enough so that you can go on road or off road, no problem. Remember that in 1915, roads were either cobblestoned or dirt; there was nothing that was improved, so that's no problem, either. The only thing you really need to watch is stopping. With brakes on only two wheels, you've got to plan your stopping way in advance, and if somebody pulls out and cuts in front of you, they're going to get squished. It's also a 12-volt electrical system with a coil from the factory as new, and it starts right up. And it's got a Kellogg tire pump with an air compressor that wasn't rare then, but it really is now. My car was never traded in, so it's one of the few cars that still has it. A lot of people would take the compressors off the cars, bolt them to their workbenches, then die, and their widows would throw the compressor out. I don't have that issue." 🏠





AMC Pacer

The Mysterious “Lil” Chief, and other proposed Pacer replacements

BY PATRICK FOSTER • PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF THE PAT FOSTER COLLECTION

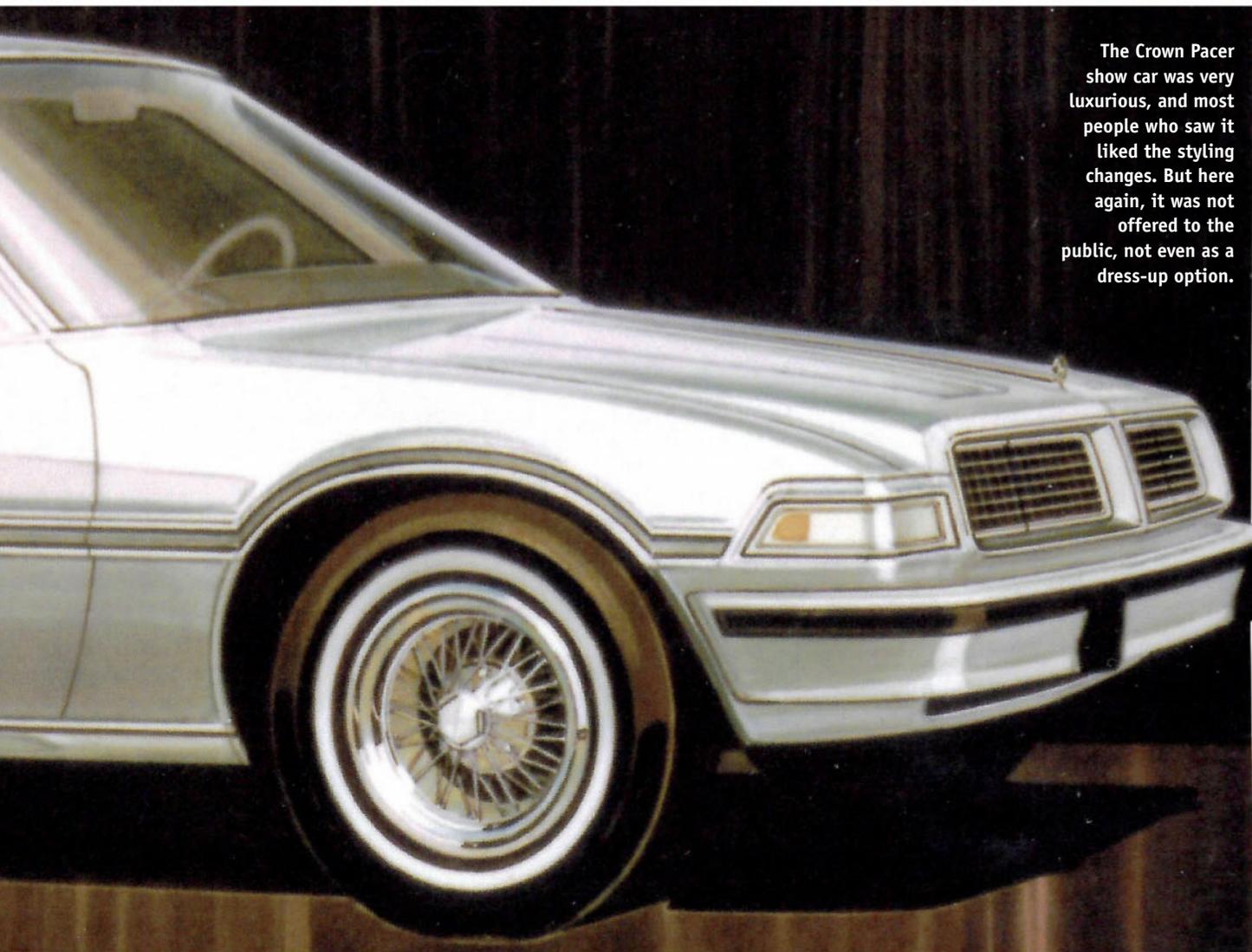
What to do with the Pacer? That was the question being asked around the headquarters of American Motors during late 1977. Why? Because Pacer's sales were dwindling to the point where it would soon hardly be worth building them. This was the fabulous car that two years earlier had set the automotive world on fire. Now, it was dead in the water.

At one time, the Pacer was

considered quite an innovative car. It was unique, stylish and very futuristic; perfect for crowded cities. Some saw it as a completely new dynamic that would reshape the industry. Essentially it was a large small car, a wide, roomy vehicle on a short, 100-inch wheelbase. Dimensions were like nothing that's ever come before or since. The Pacer measured a mere 171.5 inches in length, which was about two inches longer than a Gremlin, but boasted class-leading interior room,

comparable to a midsize car.

As originally designed, the Pacer was supposed to be a fleet, athletic-looking car. But it came to market considerably bulked up after company lawyers insisted that, because future crash and safety standards were unknown at that point, the Pacer had to have additional structural steel to enable it to pass any imaginable standard that might come. That made the Pacer one of the safest cars on the road, but, when combined



The Crown Pacer show car was very luxurious, and most people who saw it liked the styling changes. But here again, it was not offered to the public, not even as a dress-up option.

The Pacer Stinger was the first attempt to try to jazz up Pacer sales by modifying the product. Although it looks cool in a '70s sort of way, management didn't think it could sell in sufficient volume.



with the excessive width, also made it probably the heaviest small car as well.

There was also the engine debacle. Originally, Pacer was to be powered by a General Motors-supplied Wankel rotary engine. AMC president Gerry Meyers had a deal with GM president Ed Cole for GM to supply Wankel engines for the Pacer. The car would have been much lighter with the rotary engine, not the bloated beast it became. But GM decided at virtually the last moment to

not go through with its rotary engine program, citing fuel economy concerns. A stunned Meyers did the only thing he could at that point—tell his engineers to shoehorn the AMC straight-six engine

under the Pacer's low hood. The new engine weighed quite a bit more than the rotary, which meant springs, shocks, axles and other components had to be made stronger, adding more weight. Air



Notice the painted spoke wheels and wild side-exhaust pipes. Despite its sporty looks, the Stinger offered no better acceleration than the Pacer.

conditioning, automatic transmission and other options added still more. As a result, the Pacer came in more than 500 pounds over its target weight. Meant to be an economy car, it ended up being not much more fuel efficient than a mid-size.

Regardless, when the Pacer was introduced in 1975, it hit the market like a whirlwind. Tens of thousands of people flocked to showrooms to see it, thus the Pacer sold like nickel cigars. It seemed like everyone in America wanted one. AMC soon raised its sales estimate from 65,000 to 95,000. Before long, production was boosted to 184,000 Pacers per year.

By the end of 1975, however, sales began to slow. By then, there were lots of Pacers on the road, and many

buyers were complaining about sluggish performance and poor fuel economy. Prospective buyers were turned off by articles that focused on these two weaknesses. By December 1975, AMC knew it was in trouble. Since September, it had been building 4,000 Pacers per week, but selling only 2,000. Dealers' lots were filled with unsold cars. After that, sales collapsed; in 1977, less than 45,000 were sold, this from a vehicle tooled up for 184,000 units.

In a desperate attempt to recoup some of their \$60 million investment in tooling, AMC officials began to look for other models that could be built on the Pacer body; anything to get Pacer sales moving again.

The first thing they tried was a custom show car called the Pacer

Stinger. Created by AMC Styling in 1977 to test public opinion, it traveled the U.S. as part of that year's International Show Car Association's 20-city tour. With yellow pearl body paint accented by matte black stripes, the Stinger looked like a giant bumblebee. To give it extra style, the fenders were flared out and a chin spoiler attached. Adding even more cool, AMC stylists also specified side-mounted exhaust, CIBIE road lamps, fender-mounted air scoops and five-spoke "jackman star" road wheels with oversize radial tires. Inside were black-and-yellow striped vinyl bucket seats, black carpeting, black leather-wrapped sports steering wheel, a rallye instrumentation package, and a center console. Door panels were black, with a contrasting yellow door pull area. The



The 1977 Pacer wagon represents a typical Pacer of that era. Compare this sedate-looking family wagon to the gutsy-looking "Lil" Chief.



As if it's not exciting enough the Pacer pickup concept model was even given some flames to dress it up.

Stinger was a popular show car, and there have been rumors that six or eight more were produced by a specialty company, though we couldn't find anyone who could confirm that.

As nice as it looked, AMC management realized the Stinger couldn't pull up Pacer sales by very much, so they had the styling department investigate other possible uses for the Pacer body.

One such proposal considered was a small Ranchero-style pickup on the Pacer platform. Styling Department employees loved the idea, and soon a running prototype was mocked up. Good-looking, it suffered from a too-small cargo bed, along with the same poor fuel economy/performance issues of the regular Pacer.

The following year, 1978, brought the next attempt to refine the Pacer

for greater appeal. During March, the company unveiled a special show car called the Crown Pacer. It was an attempt to gauge reaction to several styling features that were meant to make the Pacer look more conventional, ideas such as colored bumpers, an upright grille and hidden headlamps. The biggest change made was to use a vinyl covering to reduce the size of the rear side windows, perhaps the single



The Pacer pickup concept had distinctive lines, but a cargo bed that was too small. The pinstripe doesn't really add anything to the look.



The very Jeep-ish "Lil" Chief. Based on a Pacer station wagon, the body was mildly modified to give an entirely different look. Note that built-in rooftop carrier is, painted body color. Note, too, the single off-road driving lamp set within the carrier. The young lady worked in

feature that people most objected to. But the reaction to the Crown Pacer wasn't strong enough to convince management to take a try with it, so it was back to the drawing boards.

When asked directly about other plans for the future of Pacer, Styling VP Dick Teague told a reporter that he had mocked up a full-size model of a four-door Pacer. However, no photos or drawings of it have ever appeared. Teague also spoke of a taxi model he was developing based on the Pacer hatchback, but here again, no photos of it have surfaced.

There was one other attempt at coming up with some way to salvage the Pacer investment. Recently, a batch of Styling Department photos have come to light that depict one of the more radical—and mysterious—AMC styling projects ever. It's a Pacer-based four-wheel-drive sport utility vehicle called the "Lil" Chief—and it looks like quite a nice car.

The "Lil" Chief was an attempt to recycle the Pacer station wagon

into a completely different vehicle, by modifying and disguising the basic body. This was accomplished by introducing new front fenders that raised the profile considerably, along with an aggressive new grille that gave the look of a tough sport utility. To help disguise the side view both the front and rear wheel wells were opened up (again for that "off-road" look), and matte-black wheel flares were added. Oversize Goodyear Tracker A-T tires—the same used on the Jeep Cherokee—were fitted on chrome spoke wheels. The last step in transforming the pedestrian Pacer into the exciting "Lil" Chief was to change the roofline by adding a rooftop cargo carrier. In addition, four versions of the mock-up have their rear side windows altered by add-on plastic covers with smaller windows inset.

The "Lil" Chief name had been kicking around AMC Styling for a while, and once graced a Jeep CJ-7 concept vehicle that was never shown to the public. It was meant to designate a

vehicle that was a junior off-roader compared to the big Cherokee Chief.

AMC's "Lil" Chief was never shown to the public, although it certainly had the potential to become a great seller. The four-wheel-drive market was red hot at the time, and AMC's Toledo Jeep factory was having a hard time keeping up with demand for its vehicles. Adding a Kenosha-built "Lil" Chief would have helped both AMC and Jeep, by utilizing passenger car production capacity to fulfill demand for four-wheel-drive vehicles. Whether or not the "Lil" Chief would have been badged a Jeep or an AMC is not known, though the name suggests it might have been a Jeep.

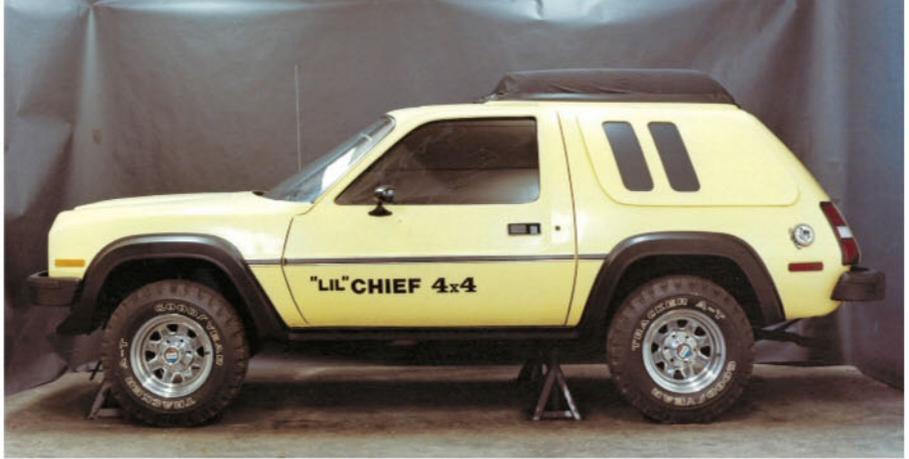
The "Lil" Chief appears to have been built on a production Pacer body, but we don't know if it had an interior or not—all that can be discerned from photographs is that it has an interior rear-view mirror. The rest of the interior might simply be a "ghost" made of plywood covered in black felt, often done to give the impression of having seats.



the rear side windows are not altered, but a the AMC Styling department.

There's a bit of mystery surrounding the "Lil" Chief. Although we have many contacts in AMC Styling and called more than a dozen former employees to find out what we could about the "Lil" Chief, we came up empty, because no one in AMC Styling remembers the vehicle; that's never happened before. The only identification on the back of the photos is a single word and date: "Staff 9/20/79." We know the photos are authentic. When we showed these photos to our designer friends, they recognized the attractive young lady seen in one photo; she was a secretary in AMC Styling. Apparently "Lil" Chief was a highly secret project.

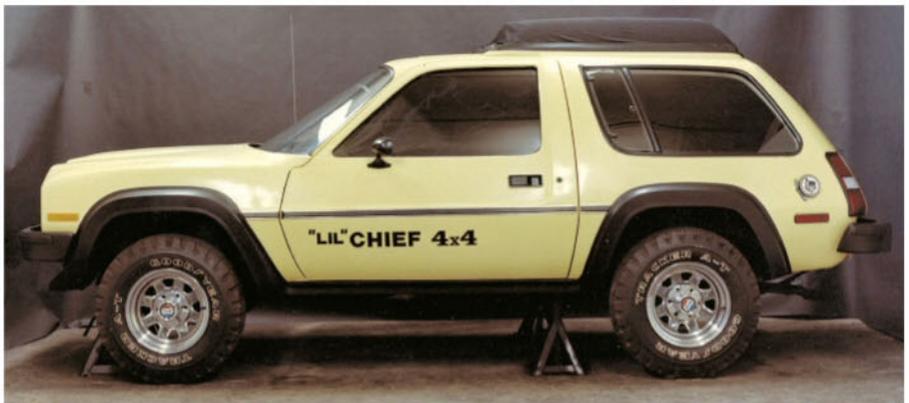
Which leaves us with a few unanswered questions. So why wasn't the "Lil" Chief put into production? No one can say. It might have sold well overseas, if not here in the U.S. Also, whatever happened to the prototype? And lastly, why does no one remember it? For now, we're stymied. Does anyone out there have the answers? ☹



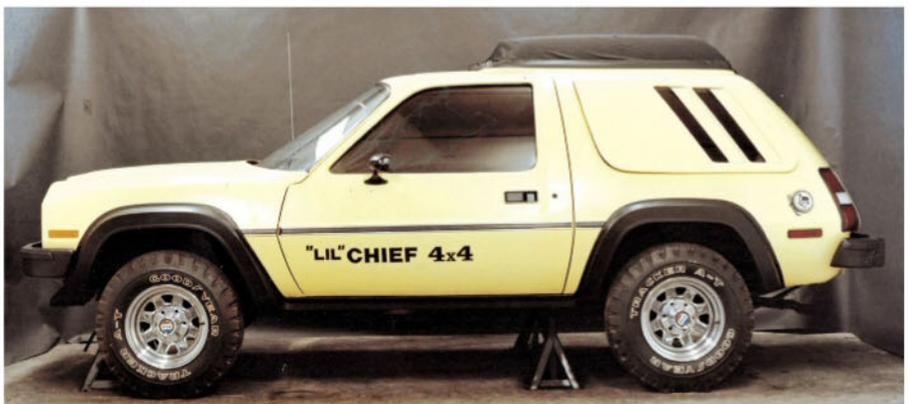
This "Lil" Chief version had rear windows mostly covered over to alter its appearance, with two louvre-type side windows and a black cloth roof carrier.



Along the same lines as the previous photograph, different side windows are featured, along with the body-color carrier.



A minimalist approach, with unaltered side windows and a simple cloth-covered rooftop carrier.



This "Lil" Chief featured side windows with two vents and a black cloth carrier. AMC built only one "Lil" Chief, and used removable window treatments and carriers.

Ken Eberts

One of the most prolific, award-winning automotive fine artists who has devoted his life to celebrating cars in art



2007 AACA Hershey Fall Meet poster image: *Suddenly it's 1957*

BY MARK J. McCOURT • IMAGES COURTESY OF KEN EBERTS

Nearly every car-loving kid with an artistic bent has put pencil to paper to express his or her passion in visual form, but few are so lucky as to be able to focus and nurture a childhood dream into a highly successful and influential career that spans more than a half century. Then again, few have the talent and tenacity of automotive fine artist Ken Eberts. He has tirelessly worked to promote cars as a subject worthy of artistic celebration and recognition in the rarefied world of fine art, and has created more than a thousand of his own pieces, and indulged his personal enjoyment in the form of his own automotive collection.

New York City's Bronx borough was a pretty bleak scene in the 1950s, when a young Ken was growing up in an apartment building near the junction of Tremont and Grand avenues. "I would look outside, and there were brick buildings, asphalt streets and concrete sidewalks. There was nothing

to grab my visually focused personality, except the cars... there were two-tone and three-tone exteriors, lots of chrome, really sleek-looking designs, fast-looking cars. They captured my attention," he recalls. "I was a car nut from day one."

And those brightly colored, expressively styled automobiles provided all the inspiration a young boy with a fertile imagination and natural talent needed. Ken began designing his own cars for an automaker he called "Future Motors." "It was almost like a girl playing house. I dreamed up this car company, and my apartment house was where Future Motors was headquartered. I drew cars to compete with Chevrolet, Ford and Plymouth. I would do cutaway drawings and manuals, where I'd break down and number all the parts. I created advertisements that I'd paste up in the apartment and in the hallways. I was a really weird kid," he says with a smile. "I

made little 2 x 4-based models that I sold to my neighbors for \$1.50. That led me to enter the Fisher Body Craftsman's Guild Model Car Competition, where I got an honorable mention—a great experience."

As a teenager, Ken honed his skills at New York's High School of Music & Art in Harlem; this helped secure his acceptance into Pasadena, California's, prestigious Art Center College of Design. At Art Center, Ken roomed with David McIntosh, who would go on to design Buick's sporty two-seat Reatta, among other vehicles, in his career at General Motors. "We both wanted to own a sports car, but we couldn't afford to buy them. We could, though, afford to design and build them ourselves.

"European chassis were too expensive, so we needed frames from American cars," Ken remembers. "We paid \$75 for a Henry J without an engine. We stripped the body off and put a Chevy 265-cu.in. V-8 in it. We made a 1:8-scale clay model, and from





Above: Ken, age 23, home from Ford Styling in the drive of his Detroit house, posed with his home-built fiberglass sports car. Left: This 1929 Auburn boattail Speedster painting was the poster art for California's 2015 Benedict Castle Concours.

there, we went to a full-size plaster model. We pulled molds off that, and built two fiberglass bodies on Henry J chassis."

David graduated a year earlier than Ken, and brought his sports car to Detroit, where he began work at GM. Ken would also move to Detroit after completing his degree in 1965, and likewise, his sports car came along. "I rented a shop, and continued working on it," he tells us. "The Henry J frame was too flexible, so I ended up switching to a 1956 Corvette frame from a car with an engine fire. I left the fiberglass in black primer, because I didn't have the money to paint the body the way I wanted to."

It was the Ford Motor Company that brought Ken to Michigan after school, as he was hired into the styling department. "The day I walked into Ford was probably the highlight of my life as a designer, because I'd always been on the outside, looking in. When I walked down the corridor at Ford, seeing those doors that led to the separate studios, I suddenly realized, 'Hey, I'm on the inside, now, looking out!'" he muses.

At that time, Ford executives rotated newly hired stylists through each studio in a trial period, offering the newcomers a full range of assignments. "Every six months, you'd switch studios, and at the end, they did a final assessment, and put you in the studio where they thought you'd do best,"

Ken recalls. He would work on the interiors of the second-generation Ford Econoline and the late-1960s Australian Falcon, and contribute to the exteriors of the 1968-'69 Mercury Cougar and Lincoln Continental.

"I really liked working at Ford, but I left in 1966 to move back to California, where I still live," Ken tells us. "I got a job at Lockheed, working on the L-1011; I was part of a group of five designers who did the cockpit and interior of that plane, which was a competitor to the DC-10. I brought the sports car back to California with me, but I was an irresponsible kid who didn't think of the future. I let it sit behind a gas station while I was busy making my new life, and somebody stole it—that was the last I saw of it."

As much as this artist enjoyed working with airplanes, his favorite mode of transport was earth-bound. In 1968, Ken expressed those feelings again by picking up brushes, illustration board, gouache and transparent watercolor paints, and rendering cars at home, in the evenings after work. Little did he know that this personal creative outlet would alter the course of his life. "The mother of my girlfriend at that time was an art agent, and she saw my little paintings, and asked if I would let her try to sell them for me," he remembers. "That's how I started my art career."

Ken found there really was a market for

his art, but continued to work at Lockheed until early 1969, when he summoned the courage to make a bold change. "I gave myself five years to see if I could make a living as an artist. And after those five years passed, I gave myself another five years," he laughs. "It's getting close to 50 years now!"

"I think I've done 1,250 paintings since 1968. I have a book that lists all my paintings, and I'll look at that and say, 'My God, how many hours are in all those paintings!' But even better is that I was able to sell virtually all of them—I may still have 10, if that," Ken tells us. "Of course, this isn't an easy way to make a living—it's been up and down. I'd start thinking about getting another nine-to-five job, and the phone would ring, with a gallery telling me they'd just sold a painting. I liked the freedom that creating art full-time brought, but I might have gotten to the point of taking Pepsi bottles to the liquor store for the refund," he laughs.

Thankfully, Ken has always been able to connect with automotive-art collectors at just the right times. He credits his personal inclination towards the 1950s and 1960s, and the cars of those decades, as being his favorite subject matter, and notes how his patrons were drawn to reminisce about those eras at a point in their lives when they could afford to indulge themselves in this art.

"Those decades were a revolutionary time in automobile design, the 1950s through the early 1970s. While the way that cars were manufactured didn't radically change, the way they looked sure did. There were many cars from that time that aesthetically turned me on, including the 1949 Fords, the 1963 split-window Corvette and the 1966 Riviera, Toronado and Eldorado. I like the 1965 Corvair a lot, especially the two-door hardtop... and the original Corvair too, especially the 1963 Spyder convertible," he explains.

"I admire guys who have an overwhelming interest in one car and know ev-

everything about it, but I like all kinds of cars, from different eras. I currently own a 1938 Buick Special, a '54 Studebaker Starliner, a '56 Continental Mark II, '57 Plymouth Savoy, '59 Chevrolet Impala, 1966 Dodge Monaco and a 1978 Ferrari 308 GTB. And I don't automatically assume that because you're talking about a Hispano-Suiza, that it's a better design than a Chevrolet! The designers were all about equal. One car was manufactured in high numbers and the other may have been a one-off, but that doesn't make it a better design."

Ken has been able to incorporate some of his favorite cars—indeed, at times those in his own fleet—into some of the commissioned pieces he's known for. Longtime AACA Hershey Fall Meet attendees no doubt recognize the event poster art he's been creating for an incredible 20 years! We asked how he chooses the scene and cars that star in each Hershey painting, and he explained that these pieces are typically private commissions. "I find someone who wants to use their car in the poster, and in return, they'll buy the original painting from me, which helps to finance the poster. I'm already working on the 2017 poster art, which includes Cadillacs and La Salles of the late 1930s-early 1940s that belong to collector Bill Davis."

He continues: "Bill will send me pictures of his cars, so I can see their colors and accessories, and I can get further reference material on my own. In this case, the background is pretty much open to my choice; I presented ideas to Bill, saying, 'This is what I'm thinking of doing,' and he said, 'That sounds great.' Other collectors I've worked with have been much more specific in what they wanted the cars and scene to be, and I've included owners and other important people in the paintings."

Ken was also honored to create the poster artwork for the 2016 Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance, a commitment that took a full year from start to finish. This

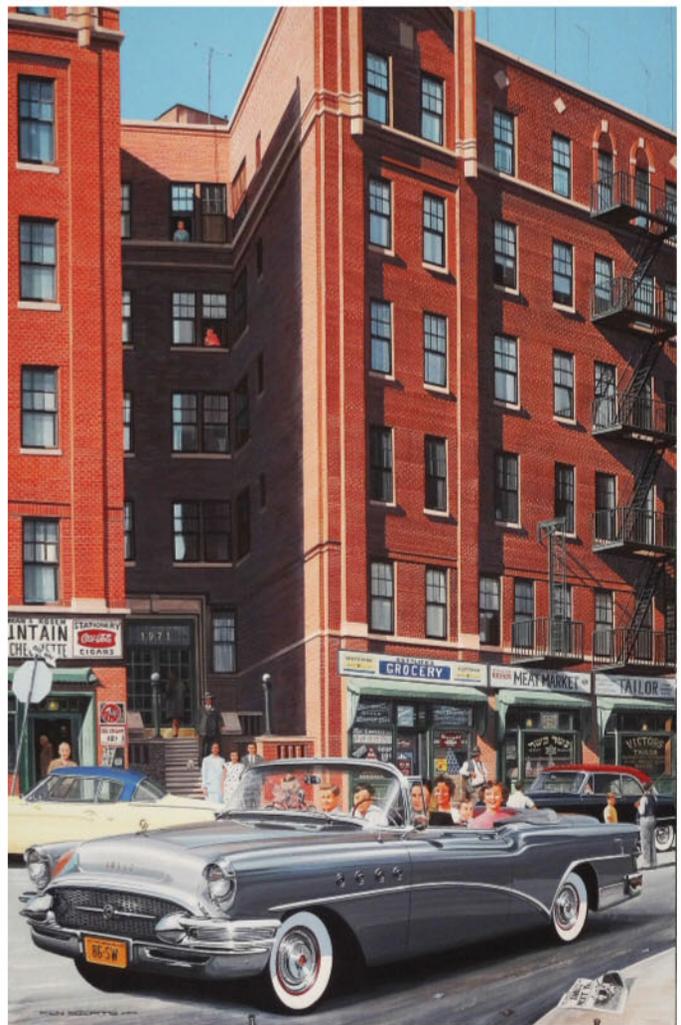
Pebble Beach painting was commissioned by Edsel Ford II, a regular patron of our subject, and it shows the three Ford GT racers that swept the 24 Hours of Le Mans in 1966, parked on the lawn of The Lodge at Pebble Beach. "Edsel requested the GT, and that was okayed by the concours committee. They wanted the Lodge in the background, and initially wanted one car. I asked about including all three, and they said they had to make sure they could get all those cars there, for display. Once I got the okay, I sent Edsel and the Concours committee concept sketches, which they returned with feedback. I did a series of between 15 and 20 sketches, some variations of the same idea, until everyone agreed, and I proceeded."

The Pebble Beach Concours is a major event in Ken's calendar for another reason: For 32 years, it has been the setting for the annual exhibit of the Automotive Fine Arts Society. Ken was one of six founding members of this organization, and remains its president today. The mission of the AFAS—which currently has about 30 active, associate and honorary members—is to have automobiles considered a valid

subject for fine art. The AFAS is currently enjoying increased exposure on the international stage, with a recent show in Japan and ongoing negotiations for an exhibition at the National Automobile Museum in Beijing, China. "It's like night and day from the beginning," he tells us, "but we've come to a plateau. Automotive art is increasingly shown in art museums, but I'd like to see it go still further, for there to be a greater focus on 'serious,' nostalgic automotive art, rather than the pop-culture pieces that museums tend to gravitate towards today."

So, with a lifetime of creative car art to look back on, is Ken contemplating throttling back? Never! "I'll keep doing what I'm doing, because I enjoy painting, and guiding the AFAS. It's always interesting for me when I'm commissioned to do a painting, and if I'm light on commissions, I'll paint something I've always wanted to, like a 1966 Toronado, or even my fiberglass sports car, which I'll make nice and shiny, and set at a concours, or driving across the country," he says with a smile. "My drawing board is always occupied with something. And if for some reason I can't paint, I can always go to the garage and work on the real cars." 🏎️

L.A. Scenic, below, includes Ken's 1966 Dodge Monaco, which he turned into a police Polara by changing the taillamps and adding the roof-top gumball. Tremont and Grand is a very personal painting that depicts Ken's childhood neighborhood, and everyone shown is a relative or friend. His Studebaker is in the background.



Electric Rescue

The restoration of a 1923 Detroit Electric Model 90 Coupe progresses from primer to reassembly—Part II

BY MATTHEW LITWIN • PHOTOGRAPHY BY MATTHEW LITWIN AND DAVID CONWILL
RESTORATION PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF RYAN MAHONEY



Purchasing a collector car from a museum is not unusual; several opportunities to do so arise each year. In nearly every case, the short list—usually offered via public auction—is determined by the needs of the institution,

its fiscal agendas, space constraints or a small number of other reasons. However, cold calling museums to seek and obtain a specific make is completely out of the norm, yet that's exactly what Richard Amuso did.

A resident of Staten Island, New York, Richard spent his 2012 summer looking for a Detroit Electric to purchase from any museum willing to part with its example. "They're unique, and that's what attracted me to them," he tells us, adding that, "you



hardly ever see them come up for sale,” as the catalyst for his unconventional purchasing approach, which we outlined in last month’s issue. Late in the year, his tack led him to his destination when he negotiated the purchase of a 1923 Model

90 Coupe from the Antique Auto Museum of Iowa in Coralville, Iowa.

To recap Part One, the electric-powered coupe had received an amateur restoration by today’s standards, perhaps in the late Sixties. Just how much use it saw

after was unclear; however, the Detroit Electric was left to age in a near-constant state of slumber for the last 30-plus years. Though a functioning car at the time of delivery, it was just barely so; deterioration had led to a lengthy list of needs



After being media blasted, the metal portions of the two-piece wheels are treated to a coat of epoxy sealer primer. After sanding, both surfaces will be given a layer of sealing primer. Filler was not used on the wooden spokes, preserving their natural grain.



Once the final layer of primer was permitted to cure, new 4.75/5.00 x 19 whitewall tires were mounted on the rims, which were then secured to the corresponding wheels with the original hardware; tires and hub centers have been masked in advance of paint.



When it came time to select colors for his Detroit Electric, Richard turned to a combination that had been applied to a Ford he previously owned. A hint of the attractive finish was apparent when the wheels were sprayed in Tacoma Cream, a Model A hue.



Prior to this image being captured, the main aluminum body had received skim coats of Rage Gold filler and Piranha glazing putty, each smoothed using the step process of sanding. Here, the body has been sealed with high-build primer, which is curing.



The upper body during wet-sanding using 400- and then 600-grade paper. Note the feather coat of black paint highlighting any surface inconsistencies. Wet sanding creates the illusion of a messy surface, but it provides a superior, smooth surface for paint.



The elegant body lines of the Detroit Electric provided the owner and restorer the opportunity to explore the possibility of a two-tone finish. With the upper half ready, the restorer applied Copra Drab, another Model A hue. Note the finished wheels.



With the top portion of the aluminum body masked to protect the new finish, focus shifted to the lower portions. This consisted of a final round of wet sanding and a finish layer of primer, the latter being allowed to cure to prevent shrinking later.



The second part of the desired two-tone finish has been accomplished with the application of Chicle Drab, completing the Ford Model A trifecta. At first blush, one might suspect that paint work was complete; however, there was a lot more ahead.



This is an aspect of a restoration that increases the cost and will likely be underappreciated until later. To achieve a proper two-tone flow, the body was completely masked once again, leaving only the elevated trim exposed for a finish layer of Copra Drab.



Now that the car is almost completely unwrapped, the harmony between color, body lines and trim is in full view in spite of the artificial lighting. Note that the frame and suspension and differential are still sporting a matte black primer applied earlier.



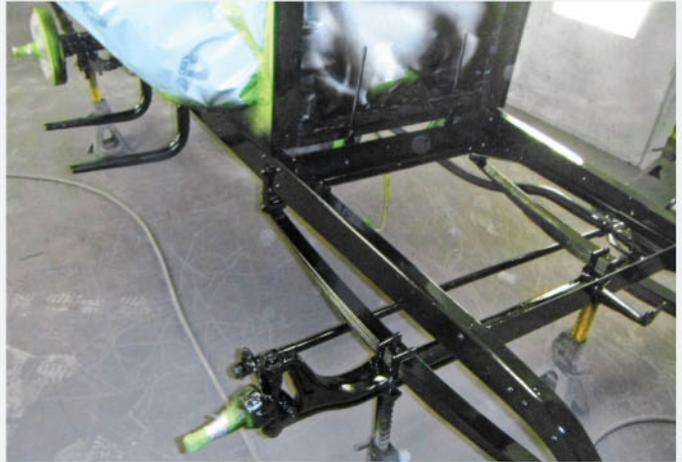
Not to be forgotten were the other body panels: both steel-over-wood doors and associated exposed hinges, and the front and rear aluminum battery covers. Each was subjected to the same primer/sanding steps as the main body shell.



Briefly discussed last month was the need to replace two missing panes of glass, including the right-front curved corner unit. Finding a replacement was improbable, so templates were made, first of paper (as seen here) that would later be transferred to aluminum.



After months of painstaking corrective effort, each of the removable front and rear fenders was finally ready for paint. They were given a final coat of primer before several layers of gloss black paint completed the compound curved panels.



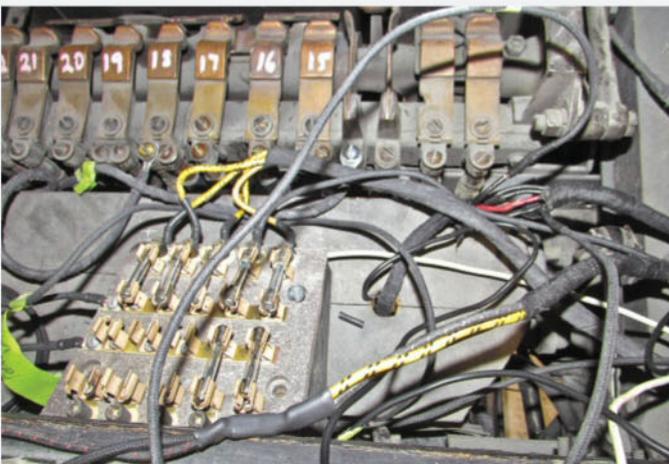
Due to its exposed design, typical of the era, the frame and suspension components were isolated from the refinished body before receiving gloss black enamel. Note that the front spindles and rear brake systems were protected against receiving paint.



One final touch before the paint aspect of the restoration could be considered complete was the application of pinstripes. To tie the wheels into the rest of the color scheme, the team opted to use Tacoma Cream to highlight the body's elegant lines.



Locating period-correct wiring and connectors is not difficult; however, finding a wiring harness for a Detroit Electric is. With the body/paint completed, attention could turn to replacing the brittle wiring, using it as a template for the new cables.



This is a detail of the Detroit Electric's master controller, essentially an oversized fuse box located within the rear seat framing. According to the restorer, not only was the wiring within in need of replacing, so too were the copper components.



Although the relative complication of massaging a motor back to life was not part of the equation, manipulating 84 volts of electricity came with its own set of hazards, such as properly linking the seven front batteries, thus the schematic.



Rather than attempt to link preassembled battery cables, as a previous restorer did, each cable was custom made for its intended location. It's not a complicated process, although it is important to maintain the cables' integrity against moisture.



To help expedite reassembly, the upper and lower bench seat—here, being test-fit—had already been restored with new springs, foam cushion and upholstery, the pattern of which duplicated what was found in period literature. Note the headliner is installed.



Many restorers will insist that installing a new interior is best accomplished using the top-down method. Here the team began with the headliner, followed by the upper, and then lower, side panels. Done properly, transitions hide many seams.



Concurrent to the interior installation, the staff went to work replacing the second piece of missing glass: the swing-out, top-hinged front windshield. Both the glass and, as seen here, frame, had to be fabricated, the latter using reference photos.



With nearly all the interior restoration completed, the team is in the process of installing the custom-made floor carpet. At this stage, two critical pieces have yet to be fitted into the cabin: the instrument panel and the flip-up front jump seat.



Though some key trim, including bumpers, fenders and running boards, needs to be installed, the project neared completion when vinyl graphics were carefully positioned on the battery covers. Note that painter's tape is protecting the pinstripes.



It's listed as a four-passenger car, but folding the jump seat provides more room for three on the full-width bench. Tiller steering and electric controller fold up against the side panel for easy ingress/egress to the opulent mohair-upholstered cabin.

when Ryan Mahoney and his young staff at Coastal Classics in Jackson, New Jersey, were hired to restore the car.

In the early weeks of 2013, the Coastal Classics team began the project with a comprehensive evaluation of the car's interior and exterior condition and problem areas. Missing glass, faulty and brittle wiring, and a lost instrument panel were among the top needs beyond a new interior. That list grew after disassembly began and the body—a combination of steel and aluminum panels over wood framing—had been media blasted. While most of the wood had been spared from the ravages of time, the softer aluminum had been dimpled and, in several spots, torn. Meanwhile, the steel fenders would need extensive patchwork, as would the lower portions of the steel doors that exhibited lackluster repairs from the previous effort.

Beyond the need for several fabricated fender patch panels, smoothing each of the body panels, regardless of metallurgy, was a multi-step process that began with the application of epoxy primer. A skim coat of Rage Gold body filler was applied and sanded, followed by a skim coat of 3M Piranha Advanced Finishing Putty and more sanding.

According to Ryan, "For the main body—and later when the fender repairs were completed—we used this system of

smoothing the body in large part because of its composite structure. We didn't want to expose the panels to heat because of the undamaged wood framing behind it, nor did we really want to remove them, just from a time aspect."

As to the few minute areas of damaged wood, rather than employ the cut-and-replace method, the team merely

cleaned the affected areas and effected repairs using Durham's Rock Hard Water Putty which is easy to mold but does not shrink while curing. All this was done while fabrication work began on new front and rear wooden battery trays and corresponding brackets made from oak.

In this, the second and final chapter of the tale, we explore the last year of ef-



Oversized amp and combination speedometer/odometer gauges are the sole instruments found within the cabin. All 14 six-volt batteries, the same used to power today's golf carts, are linked to the master controller (below).





As I look back on the project, it really could not have turned out any better than I had hoped. Right from the start, everything fell into place: being able to buy it from the museum, hiring the right people to restore it, to finding an amazing upholstery supplier. While the overall result took time—all good things do—and admittedly exceeded my expectations as far as finish and driveability, it's the friendships I have made along the way that I appreciate. It's such a wonderful hobby: to be able to have it all come together like this, to be able to share it with others and to enjoy it with everyone.

fort required to complete the Detroit Electric, a car that, in its heyday, was exceedingly popular among women drivers—the most notable owners were Clara Ford and Mina Edison—due in part to the car's lack of a crank starter and its comfortable, near-silent cabin.

On these pages we outline the details pertaining to the exterior finish and provide a taste of the electrical reconstruction. One fortunate part of the restoration was the remarkable condition of the car's suspension system. As explained by Ryan, "Once we media blasted the undercarriage, and then primed and painted it, all we needed to do was lubricate everything and make adjustments. The biggest offenders were the steering linkage—it was a little sloppy—and the electrical ac-

celeration components; the brakes merely needed tweaking."

A more compelling aspect was the unconventional source for upholstery. As explained by Richard, "While Ryan and his crew worked on the car, I looked at upholstery suppliers. I already had the paint selected, so it was a matter of looking for the right color palette in correct mohair. A lot of conventional suppliers didn't have what I was looking for, so I searched the internet and found Star Carpeting—an interior buildings design supply company—in Manhattan. At their facility, I explained what I was doing to one of their representatives, showed them the exterior colors, and they put together samples of everything I needed: floor carpet, headliner, seat upholstery, piping, curtains, all arranged

on the table so I could see how it matched up with my vision. I placed the order and it was delivered to me within a week."

Once the interior was completed, the team could finish the project by reuniting fenders, running boards, exterior lamps, bumpers and miscellaneous trim to the body and chassis. By September 2014, the Detroit Electric was completed and back in Richard's eager hands.

"I've taken it to several events and really enjoy showing it to collector car enthusiasts. Again, you just don't see them. It's also a unique car to drive because of the tiller steering and electric control system. It averages about 50 miles on a full charge and has a top speed of about 25 MPH, but with a car like this, that's all you need. It's just a lot of fun," says Richard. 🐾



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Apollo/Skylark Sightings

'74 Buick Apollo



BACK IN HCC #107, WE FEATURED as a Detroit Underdog the 1970s Oldsmobile Omega. Soon after, I learned there were many fans of the Omega, including a devoted club. I also figured that one Nova-based compact would be enough of a story. However, for the past few months, Buick Apollos and Skylarks started coming up for sale at the rate of one or two a week. Where had these cars been hiding? Hibernating in the garages of original owners? Then, I was waiting at a stoplight, and what pulled up beside me? A red 1974 Apollo in very decent shape. Yes, an Apollo.

Like the Omega, the Buick Apollo was introduced in mid-1973 to give broader market coverage and respond to consumers' piqued interest in economy cars. Buick said of its newest car: "APOLLO. A small car that offers the kind of performance, refinements and comfort you'd expect of a larger car. Offered by Buick to give small car owners a small car to move up to."

The timing couldn't have been better, but of the two late comers to the X-body game, the Apollo was the least popular. Those who bought an Apollo were most probably existing Buick customers, who were still living in an era when Americans were not only brand-loyal, but also dealer-loyal. Their time came to either trade in the old Buick or buy a car for a son or daughter or maybe just a second car. In the showroom was an attractive compact that looked like a Nova but played on Buick themes with three "VentiPorts" carved into the leading edge of the sweep spear, a grille and rear-end treatment that mimicked the new Colonnade Centurys (HCC

#116), and, of course, had the prestige of being a Buick, three rungs above Chevrolet and just one below Cadillac.

The Apollo's introduction was as understated as the car, with the brochure published as one-page foldout. The base engine was the (Chevrolet) 250-cu.in. straight-six mated to a three-speed manual transmission. Manual steering and brakes were also standard. Of note, this was also the base powertrain combination for the Omega. In 2013, I was informed that no Omega left the factory equipped as such, but tell that to the man who three years ago sent me a photo of his 1974 Omega with a straight-six, three-speed on the column, painted wheels and button hubcaps. Base models rule.

Buick advised potential customers: "HOW TO ORDER YOUR APOLLO: We suggest you start with the available 350 cubic-inch V-8 engine, either the 2 or 4 barrel version. Then you can add Turbo Hydra-Matic transmission and power steering."

We don't have exact figures on how many Apollos left the factory with a straight-six or even a manual transmission, but the brochures list both through 1975, the year the Apollo name only applied to the four-door sedans. Beginning that same year, the two-door coupe and hatchback models became Skylarks, whose base power was the Buick 3.8 liter V-6, although a manual transmission was still standard (pardon the pun). The resurrection of the Skylark name for the coupes also marked new styling that had a European flair, 95 percent of which was shared with its GM cousins. The big news was the front suspension, which was bor-

rowed from the Camaro/Firebird, offering improved handling and a wider track. All 1976 models were Skylarks.

There were several optional V-8s over the course of its run through 1979, including 4.3-liter, 5.0-liter and 5.7-liter powerplants with two- and four-barrel carburetors, depending on where and when you bought your car. A European-inspired S/R ("Sports/Rallye") package was available on the Skylark models.

In 1978, Skylark Custom replaced the S/R designation in the final year of the Skylark Custom hatchback. The 1979 model year ended early when the first GM front-wheel-drive compacts were introduced as 1980 models. In the end, Buick stated Skylark is "compact on the outside, but being a Buick, it's also open, airy, and roomy on the inside ... With all its qualities, it's obvious that Skylark is very much a good old American Buick. You'll know that when you examine the list of comfort and convenience items available."

Why consider an Apollo/Skylark? Back in the day, the thinking was why buy a Chevrolet Nova when for a few hundred dollars more, you could buy a Buick Apollo/Skylark. That's now flipped on its head. Today, for a few hundred or even a thousand dollars less, depending on condition, you can buy a Buick Apollo/Skylark. Also, I've rarely seen a Nova that is powered by its original engine. There seems to be a rule that all Novas must have a V-8. With an Apollo/Skylark, most of those I found were still powered by a V-6 and a few by their original V-8s. In addition, the Apollo/Skylark buyers tended to load up their cars with more options. Wouldn't you really rather have a Buick? 🐶



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BUT FOR THE FACT THAT I HAD EARLY IN MY LIFE

acquired the habit of eating, I would, like many car guys, have worked in this automobile industry job for free.

I believe the word today, in the current vernacular, is “logistics,” which I guess made me a logistician; however, back then, I was simply called a dispatcher. I worked for a large commercial transporter who had the contract to haul, other than by rail, the automobiles produced by the St. Louis Chrysler plant in Fenton, Missouri. Sadly, the plant has since ceased operations and the buildings have been razed, which brought a tear to my eyes when I drove by the now-vacant field not too long ago, as I remembered the beehive of activity that had surrounded this economic icon. Now it is just a windswept plain like a scene in an old cowboy movie, with piles of rubble to be carted off in preparation for another misadventure fueled by corporate greed and overseen by bean counters rather than engineering and marketing departments.

I remember well those times when I couldn't wait to get to work each morning. My ritual involved stopping at the Shell gas station along the way to work to get a buck's worth of regular and a 25-cent pack of Luckies. Awaiting me each morning were the truck drivers, who were always lined up in the proper pecking order, and a pile of paperwork representing recent product for assembly and posting. The “good mornings” from coworkers were in a tone commensurate with how the Cardinals had fared the day before. The beginning of each day would be like no other, before or after. The bosses, the support help, the line workers, the supervisors—everyone—from three-piece suits to jumpsuits, were all working in the industry that affected every American life. After all, who didn't own, or want to own a car? We were a community. We earned a paycheck. We contributed to our country and its economy. We had a sense of worth. A sense of value. Pride. Commitment. And we saw the fruits of our labor on the streets and highways every day. Now, it's gone. Gone to other countries with lower wages and associated lower standards of living. Politics aside, Michael Moore's movie, *Roger and Me*, was a reminder of what I'd witnessed firsthand. I was there.

Yet, how cool it was to be not only a part of the then Big Three and to personally witness the evolution of the Chrysler Corporation from a staid-grandpa family-sedan image to the ground-pounding, snarling-mighty Mopars of the mid-to-late 1960s, but to also be the person in charge who decided which cars went where and when, all the while making sure the cars got there. Naturally, I became popular with the car-hauler drivers who loved one-stop day trips.

My main task was to assemble newly minted Mopars into loads for the drivers to take to awaiting dealerships that ordered, or were told they'd receive, a green two-door sedan along with the red Hemi convertible they really wanted. Drivers, based on union seniority, chose the plum runs, therefore the main challenge for me, other than keeping the flow of cars constant and smooth, was keeping the mood of the drivers constant and smooth. Heaven help me if I'd given a preferred run to someone lower on the union totem pole—fortunately, that never happened.

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Dodge POLARA **Dodge Fever**

SEE YOUR DODGE BOYS. TELL THEM THE FEVER GIRL SENT YOU.

Once I received a phone call from a driver I had dispatched only a few hours earlier, who had loaded a Dodge Polara two-door hardtop too far forward on the top tier of his truck. When he drove under a bridge, it peeled the Polara's roof back to the trunk, thereby creating a one-off version of Chrysler's answer to Ford's retractable hardtop convertible of 1957-'59.

I went to the bullpen, retrieved a similarly equipped Polara coupe, and drove it about 25 miles to the location on the side of the road where the driver had pulled over. After exchanging the necessary bills of lading (and sweeping the broken glass off the seat), I drove the “convertible” back to the plant, enjoying all the head-turning attention along the way.

Asking what was to become of this Chrysler curiosity, I was told they'd simply cut the pillars at the factory welds and put on a new roof, which sounded reasonable to me. I have often wondered if someone at some future date ever found a pebble of glass in a crevice somewhere in the car and wondered how it got there. I know. 🐞

 I Was There relates your stories from working for the carmakers, whether it was at the drawing board, on the assembly line or anywhere in between. To submit your stories, email us at editorial@hemmings.com or write to us at I Was There, c/o Hemmings Classic Car, 222 Main Street, Bennington, Vermont 05201.



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RATIONING HAS BECOME a necessary sacrifice to help with the war effort. Automobile owners take note that national speed limits of 35 MPH have been implemented with no more than five tires allowed per car. Any additional tires will be confiscated by the government. All automotive racing and touring has been banned as well, and drivers are encouraged to share rides with family and friends. Fuel rationing will take effect, with local War Price and Rationing Boards issuing gasoline stamps.

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- Life magazine – \$4.50/year
- Bicycle – \$29
- First-class stamp – \$0.03
- Ticket to the movies – \$0.30

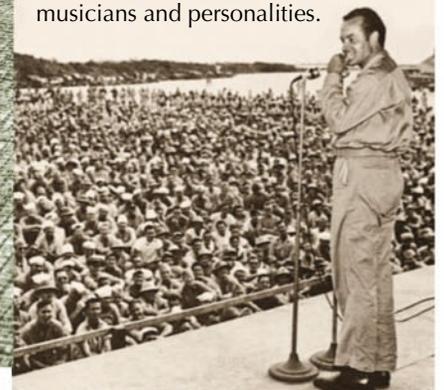


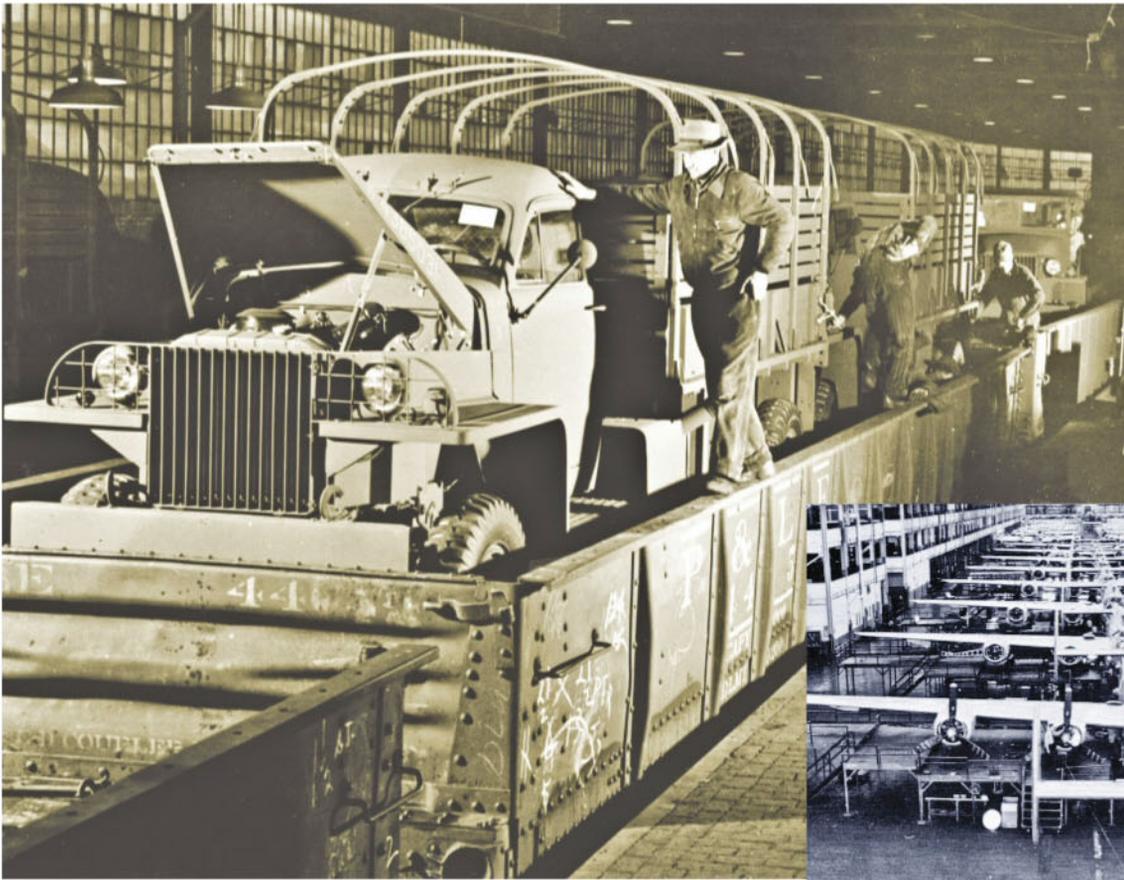
BOSTON RED SOX SLUGGER TED WILLIAMS joins the war effort and is sworn into the Navy Reserve on May 22, 1942, a day after he hit his 100th career home run. The 23-year-old two-time all-star and defending A.L. batting champ hit an amazing .406 last year. Williams will finish out the season, but looks forward to serving his country to the best of his abilities.



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The Acquisition of Betsy



IN 1954, WHEN I WAS 17, WE MOVED to Porterville, California. My parents decided to rent a home about one mile out of town. It turns out that it was a godsend. Moving to a ranch with two old horses, chickens and a big old barn with all the necessary tools to farm 60 acres of cotton gave me plenty of opportunities to stay busy. The farm was owned by Mr. Beaver, and had a nice two-car garage near the Beavers' home.

After a few months, I became better acquainted with Mr. Beaver. One day, while walking with him, he opened the garage doors. To my surprise, there sat a 1947 Chevrolet Fleetmaster. Wow! I was impressed. Then my eyes focused on the most beautiful car I had ever seen. There "she" sat—a 1949 Packard Eight Deluxe four-door sedan with woodgrain dash, push-button radio, ivory steering wheel, wide whitewall tires, cormorant hood ornament leading the way, painted jet black with chrome strategically placed. My heart almost stopped! Right then, I decided that one day she would belong to me.

I began to tell Mr. Beaver, at every opportunity, that when he decided to sell the Packard, I wanted to purchase her. Each time he assured me that he would see that I got her. Time passed. Dad got transferred to another town. I got married and moved to Southern California. On every return to Porterville, I would check to see if she was still sitting in the garage. She was.

One day while sitting in my office, out of the blue, a small voice whispered in my ear, "call Mr. Beaver." I hadn't seen him in two years. I put it out of my mind.

About two hours later, here came the whisper again, only a little more forceful. After the third time, I began to wonder if Mr. Beaver was okay. I decided to call him. Mrs. Beaver answered the phone. They were both in their 90s.

"Who is this," she asked. I finally got through to her as to who I was. I asked if I could speak to Mr. Beaver, and she said that he wasn't there. I asked her when he would be back and she replied, "I'm not sure. He's gone to Fresno with the old Packard. He's going

to sell it." My heart sank. I related my long story to her about all the promises he had made me. She said, "Oh, he's so forgetful lately. You know, we're no spring chickens anymore." I asked her how I could get ahold of him. She replied, "Well, he's stopping at our daughter's house before he goes to the car lot." I asked her for their daughter's phone number. She said, "Sure, let me find it.... Here it is." That was the longest 1½ minutes of my life.

After thanking Mrs. Beaver and telling her goodbye, I called her daughter. She said her dad was still there and she put him on the phone. I said, "Hi, Mr. Beaver. This is Ed." After what seemed like an eternity, it all clicked. He said, "Sure, I remember you. It haunted me all the way over here. Someone wanted to buy her, but I just couldn't remember who! You still want to buy old Betsy," he inquired. I assured him I did. "Well, you know she's not as pretty as she used to be," he informed me. I told him, "I don't care. I want her. Yes, I want her." He said, "Okay, I'll take her back home." I told him I would see him that weekend. It was probably the longest four days I have ever spent in anticipation of something I wanted that badly.

Saturday finally came and I arrived in Porterville about 10 a.m. Mr. Beaver was still feeding the chickens and cattle. I noticed his slightly bent back was even lower than I remembered. He had me go over to where he was. My heart started to flutter. What if he sold the car? There was no sight of Betsy. I made small talk as long as I could. Then, suddenly I asked, "Where's Betsy?" "Oh, the car is in the garage," he

answered. I let out a big breath and a big grin spread across my face. I asked him if we could go see her. He told me, "Sure. Let me finish feeding the cattle." I was thinking, "This is the day and the time that old Betsy is going home with me."

We opened the door, and there she sat in all her splendor. I made a quick circle around the car. The right front fender was smashed. Mr. Beaver explained: "I wasn't looking a while back, and I plowed into the tractor." "Not a problem," I said. "No problem at all." The interior looked okay, but the plastic seat covers were dingy and soiled. We opened the engine compartment and there it was—eight wonderful, powerful cylinders all lined up in a row for my inspection. "Looks good to me," I said. "I'll take her." "Wait, you don't know how much I want for her," he reminded me. I told him, "I don't care how much you want, I'll take her." "Well, since you told me that, I'll take \$500 for her, if you still want her." "I do. I do. Yes sir, I want her," I assured him. So, I bought Betsy and drove her to Southern California, some 200 miles away. The old Packard ran okay, but needed a tune-up, which she received when I got home.

The next day, I decided to remove the plastic seat covers. I took the back seat out, laid it on saw horses and removed the cover. To my surprise there was the most beautiful original seat, pinstriped and perfect! The front seat was in the same condition. Later, I found out, in the 1950s, if you bought a luxury car they would install plastic seat covers as a bonus, if you wanted, at no charge.

Over the next three years, I had body work done to the front fender, had her sanded and stripped, then painted with three coats of black lacquer. I polished the shiny parts, bought new whitewall tires and had her tuned-up—that's all. I drove Betsy with pride for 27 years. I go by the old home place every few years and pause and look in the garage. Mr. and Mrs. Beaver are gone, old Betsy is gone, but I can still remember what Mr. Beaver said as I drove off with her. "If she doesn't start, just say, 'Come on Betsy,' and she'll start. She never let me down." And Betsy never let me down, either. 🐾

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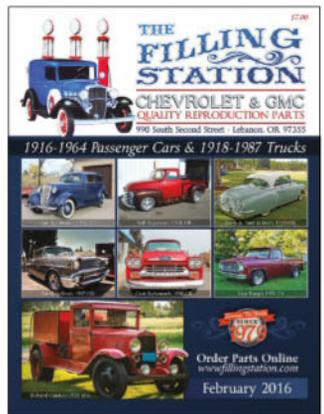
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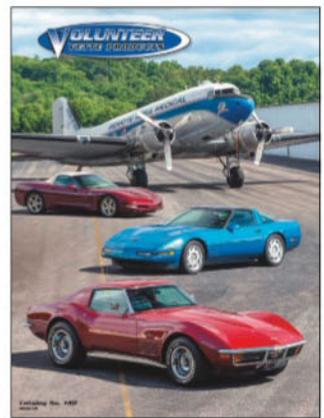
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Duck and Cover

A 1957 International Civil Defense Rescue Vehicle recalls the what-if horror of the Cold War

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY MIKE McNESSOR

Bert the Turtle had a built-in shell and Civil Defense helmet to protect him from the horrific effects of a nuclear attack: the city-levelling blast, the vaporizing heat and the deadly radiation. It helped, too, that Bert was a cartoon turtle facing a cartoon nuclear explosion, which probably helped him remain calm and follow instructions in the face of cartoon global annihilation.

But to the rest of us watching the well-known 1951 Civil Defense film, *Duck and Cover* (starring Bert), where school children sought shelter under desks, in doorways, at the base of walls, or, in one scene, under a picnic blanket, postwar America looked like an ideal place to panic. After all, it was the first

time in history when two newly emerged superpowers with vast ideological differences and growing nuclear arsenals at their disposal were poised to wipe the other—likely each other—off the globe.

Fortunately, humanity survived the Cold War to witness a great number of amazing and also terrifying events. But, for those schoolchildren who were drilled to duck and cover, it was something they never forgot.

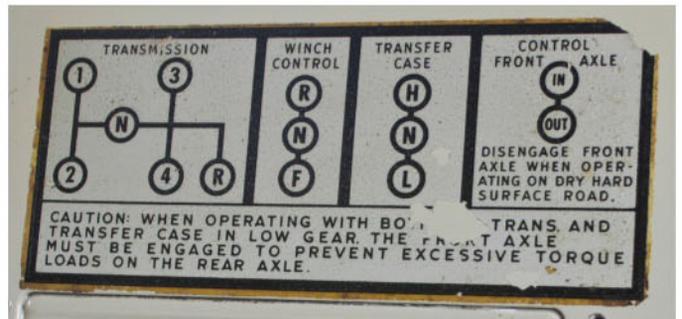
"The Cold War is kind of a mysterious part of my life," said Tim Havens Sr., 54, of Hudson Falls, New York. Tim is the owner of this month's feature truck—a 1957 International S-120 four-wheel-drive Civil Defense Rescue Service Vehicle. "The Air Raid Warnings and *Duck and Cover*

are very interesting to me because I lived through them. It was a very scary time—when one of those Emergency Broadcasting things came on the television, I would be scared to death."

Had the worst occurred, Civil Defense teams would've rolled into action in rigs like this, based on procedures set forth by the Federal Civil Defense Administration. After the Soviets tested their first nuclear weapon in August 1949, local and state officials around the U.S. called on the Federal government to outline a course of action in the event of a nuclear attack. As a result, the Federal Civil Defense Administration was formed in December of 1950 through an executive order issued by President Harry S. Truman.



The International's instrument cluster and dash are 1950s commercial-truck minimalist with a complement of basic gauges and controls for the lights and wipers as well as a hand throttle and choke. A cigar lighter sits below the ashtray. The winch is PTO-driven, and the transfer case has high and low range.



The Civil Defense force's boots on the ground were volunteers who were locally organized following policies established by the feds, forming a sort of "self-help" emergency force. There was little Federal money allotted to the program through the presidencies of Truman and Dwight D. Eisenhower, so, often, state and local funds were used to purchase all of the necessary equipment. In addition to training and an array of supplies, three types of trucks were offered to local CD teams: light-duty with a gross vehicle weight of up to 10,000 pounds; medium-duty with a 10,000-20,000-pound GVW and heavy-duty with a GVW over 20,000-pounds.

This International panel is an example of the light-duty CD truck, perched on a ¾-ton chassis. (Other makes were offered as well, Dodge, Chevrolet, GMC and Ford.) Its original complement of life-saving gear might've included equipment like self-contained breathing apparatus, axes, crowbars, asbestos blankets, rubber boots, chains, sledgehammers, first-aid kits, stretchers, a 1,500-watt generator, radios, resuscitators and more. Much, much more actually—anything and everything that organizers could imagine might be needed

to help people survive in a catastrophe.

Under the hood of this S-120 is International's optional 264-cu.in. Black Diamond straight-six engine, good for 153 horsepower at 3,800 RPM and 248-lb. ft. of torque at 2,400 RPM. A four-speed crash box with a floor shift kept things simple and rugged, as did the truck's unassisted steering and brakes. Speed is definitely not this truck's forte, but reliability would be.

The International S series was spawned by the R series, which made its



debut in 1953 as a subtle evolution of the 1950-'52 L series. The R sported a simpler grille than its predecessor with Raymond Loewy's IH man-on-a-tractor logo in the center replacing the earlier three-diamond logo. It was the R series that brought factory installed four-wheel drive into International's light truck lineup. Automatic transmissions (GM Hydra-Matics) were first offered on R series trucks as well, starting in 1954.

For 1956, all of International's light trucks received a facelift that positioned the headlamps high up on the fenders—rather than on opposite sides of the grille—and they were renamed the S series. The S series lasted midway through 1957 when the redesigned A series, or "Anniversary" series was introduced.

Our feature truck served in Civil Defense until it was repurposed by the Southbridge, Massachusetts, Fire Department before its previous owners, Donna and Ed Baldyga, bought it. Over the years, the International had accumulated fewer than 10,000 miles, but needed a complete restoration, which the Baldygas meticulously performed.

When Tim, its current owner, first



spotted it in 2012, the International was standing tall at the American Truck Historical Society National Show in West Springfield, Massachusetts. “We were at the show with a bunch of my trucks and a group of people,” Tim said. “One of my friends said, ‘Havens you’ve got to come with me—you’ve got to see this truck. It’s everything you love. It’s an International four-wheel-drive with a winch, and it’s a Civil Defense rig with all of the gear.’”

Tim was immediately smitten and tried to buy it on the spot, but the Baldy-gas weren’t ready to part with the truck. “I asked Ed Baldyga if he’d ever consider selling it, but he said it was a labor of love

and they’d worked very hard on it,” Tim said. “I told him I understood, gave him my business card and let him know that if he ever wanted to let it go, to call.”

In June 2015, Tim became the truck’s new caretaker. It now resides in his extensive collection of old commercial vehicles and makes occasional show outings, including a trip to a Hemmings Cruise-In last summer. “It’s an absolute privilege to own,” Tim said. “It’s been painstakingly restored and fully outfitted with everything it would’ve had as a response vehicle for an unspeakable emergency,” he said. “It represents, for me, a really fascinating part of American History.”



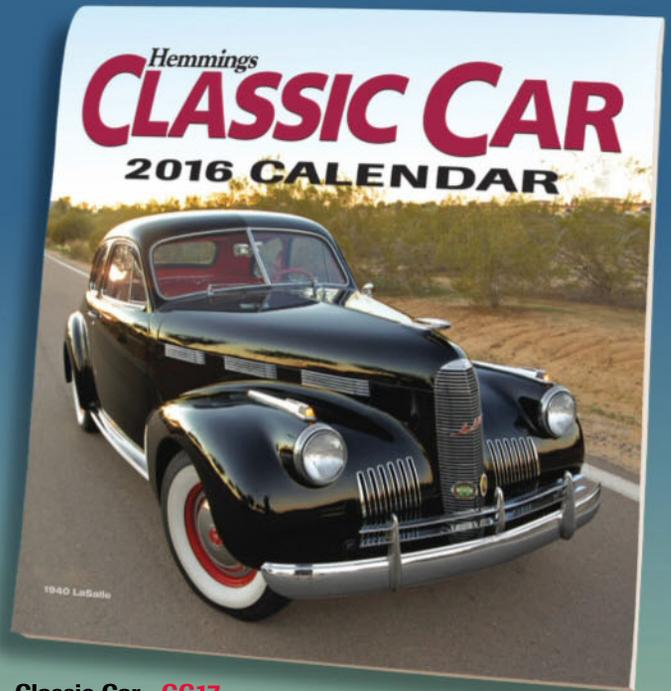
Under the hood is International’s 264-cu.in. Black Diamond straight-six, while out back is an array of 1950s era CD goods, including a generator, gas masks, all-purpose survival crackers, helmets and more.



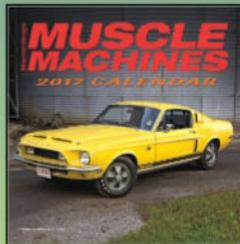
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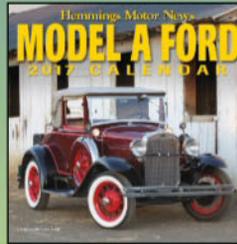
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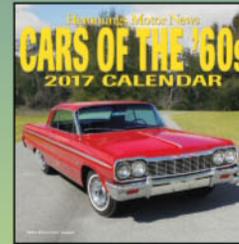
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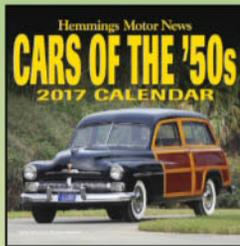
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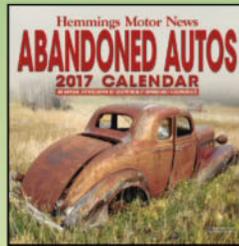
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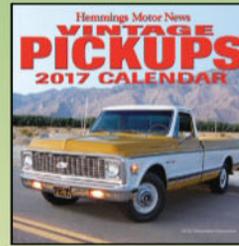
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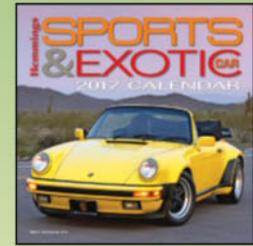
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Score One For the Heifers

A too-fast rig dumps a load of swinging beef in Ohio

BY JIM DONNELLY • IMAGES INTERPRETED BY FRED GRUIN JR., FROM HIS ARCHIVES

Going to school in the country, circa the late 1950s, wasn't just about a bunch of panty raids. Fred Gruin Jr. was studying transportation management in north-central Indiana at a college where, as he recalled, there were about 1,800 male undergraduates and maybe eight females. So the opportunities for socializing weren't exactly there. Fred, happily, was a truck enthusiast, and would make trucking and transportation safety his life's work. So he and a pal would use their leisure time driving an hour or more in any given direction, looking for trucks to see and photograph.

That's what they were doing in April 1959 in the area of Bryan, Ohio, along U.S. 20, about 10 miles east of the Indiana border. It was, and still is, a busy east-west truck route, not far from the shore of Lake Erie. There's an Ohio Turnpike interchange nearby, which may help to explain why the state highway department realigned U.S. 20 with a sweeping S-bend, specifi-

cally placed on the otherwise flat road to slow down the traffic near the exit. Fred was tooling along with his buddy one grayish, chilly day when they approached the curves and happened upon what you see before you.

First, the rig. It was a beautiful tractor, an International Harvester R-Model conventional with a lovely integrated sleeper compartment that most closely resembled the roofline of a prewar business coupe, like a 1937 Studebaker. These were gorgeous trucks, most often with International gasoline engines for powerplants, even at the end of the 1950s. The rig was leased to Daniels Motor Freight of Warren, Ohio, which typically hauled general cargo, but did have a few temperature-controlled trailers in its fleet. The R-Model was pulling one of them, loaded with swinging beef. If you're unfamiliar with the phraseology, it refers to a half a cow or steer suspended from a hook in the trailer's ceiling. You know, the kind of meat that Sylvester Stallone used as a punching bag

in the original *Rocky*.

On the road, the slabs of beef were allowed to swing freely, back and forth, in response to the rhythms of the truck. Which is fine, as long as you're on a relatively straight piece of highway, the sort that dominated northern Ohio. Only this Daniels driver was hauling hard, probably on the way to a packing house east of Cleveland, when he approached the S-bend at Bryan.

You can figure out what happened next. The International swung first one way, then the other, the multi-ton metronome in the refrigerated box following suit, tacking side to side inside the 40-something-foot trailer. The driver cranked the steering wheel hard and then the swinging beef, a couple of hundred pounds per slab, swung wildly, likely slamming against the insides of the trailer as the whole rig jerked side to side. Moments later, the trailer wheels started to elevate as the whole rig rocked. Maybe halfway through the corners on U.S. 20,



the laws of physics took full command of the situation and tipped the trailer, and its load, over on its side, dragging the International and its hapless jockey along for the ride. Clanging like a botched piano chord, the rig ended up rolled inverted on the grassy side of the highway.

Fred figures he pulled up a short time later. There was no apparent indication that anyone had been hurt, and Daniels (presumably) had sent out a second tractor-trailer combination and a crew of swamper to transfer the meat from the overturned trailer to the other rig so that it could continue its perishable-cargo journey. Fred recalls being impressed by the efficiency of the loading crew as they hefted the animal halves and carried them over to the second truck. He and his buddy snapped some photos and headed on their way.

"Driver was going too fast," he told us from his home in East Aurora, New York. "It was that simple." 📷

 We enjoy publishing period photos of authentic, old-time working trucks, especially from the people who drove them or owned them. If you have a story and photos to share, email the author at jdonnelly@hemmings.com.



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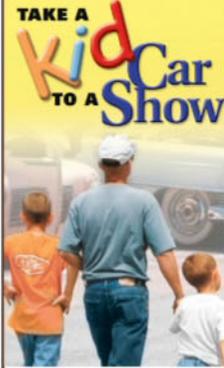
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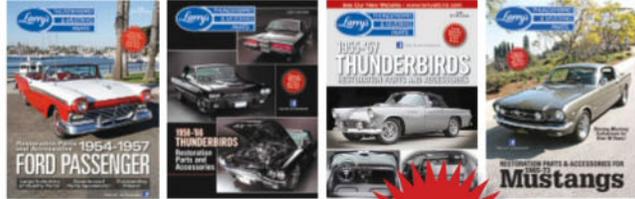


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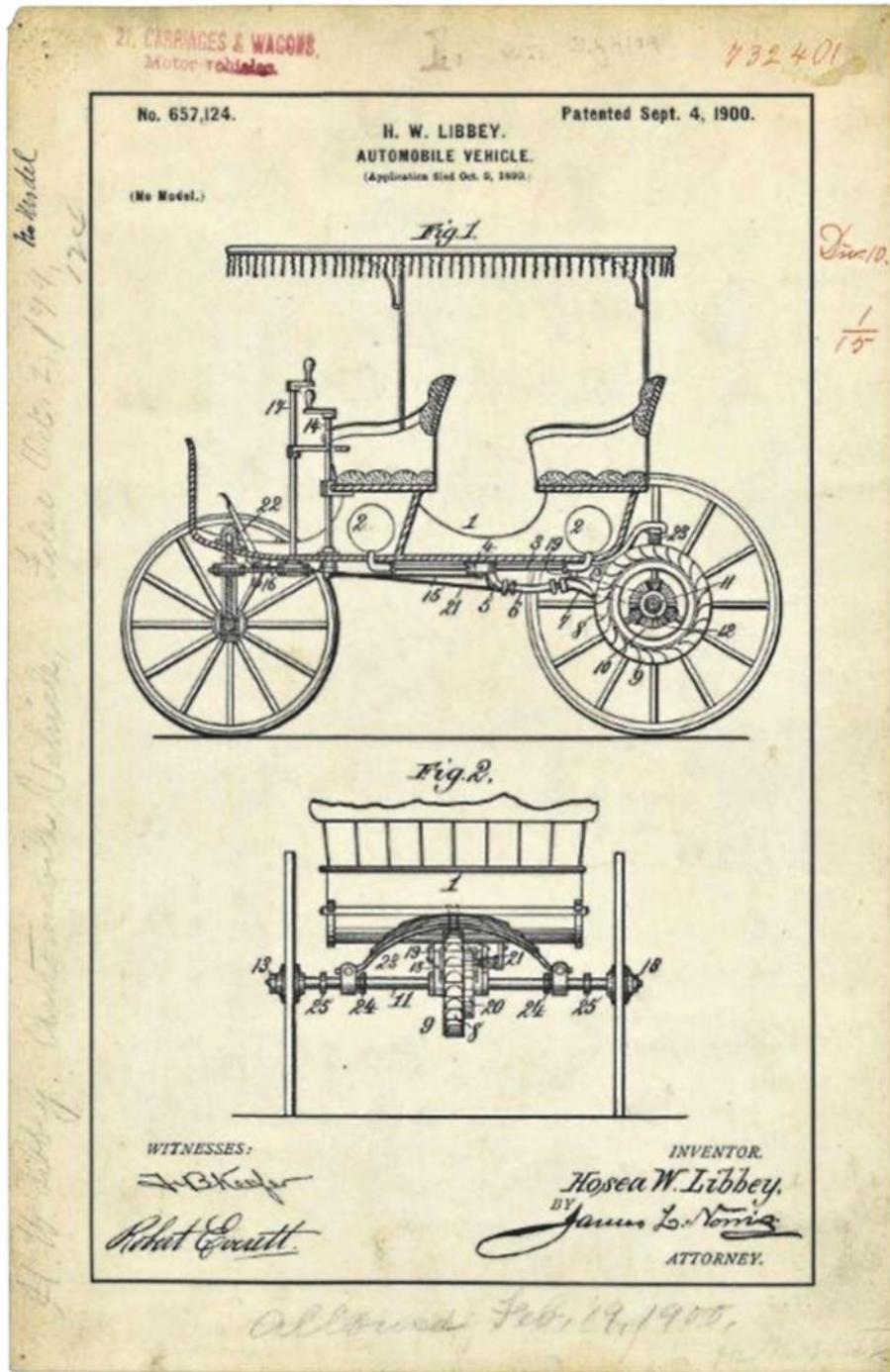
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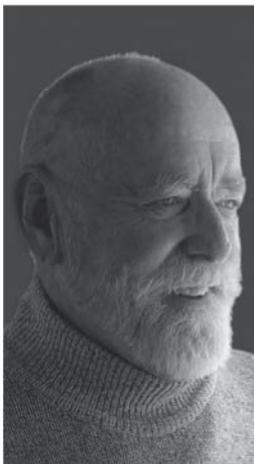
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Driving in the Golden Age



The cops—

or my sons—

may have to

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and snatch

my keys from

my gnarled,

greasy hand.



I don't know about you, but I am getting... uh... old. In fact, I never thought I would live this long, and I wouldn't have if some wonderful individual hadn't literally given me his heart when he was done with it a few years ago. In fact, I must say, at 75, I feel blessed just to be here. But now I wonder how long the state of California will let me drive my classics on public thoroughfares.

I passed the driver's license test again this year and my eyes are good, but things could change. I know this because I have a couple of friends whom the state has declared unfit to drive. My pals have accepted this gracefully, but I don't intend to. The cops—or my sons—may have to overpower me and snatch my keys from my gnarled, greasy hand. You see, driving, and wrenching on old cars are great pleasures in my life. Always have been.

As a lad, I remember going over to shopping center parking lots on rainy Sundays and slaloming around the lamp posts in a 1949 Chevrolet with fluffy dice, teardrop knobs, a split manifold and a couple of Rochesters, and I recall seeing how fast I could go down a local road called Snake Hill; but that was half a century ago. Nowadays I just savor the process of driving, and I want to keep doing it as long as I can.

Pursuant to that goal, I sought the advice of AARP—an organization of which I am a member—which lobbies for and sells insurance to old people like me, and wants to keep us driving. They have come up with some recommendations that I now share in the knowledge that some of you are also in the same situation in which I find myself. Someone said time wounds all heels, or something to that effect, but I am still hoping to minimize the damage.

To begin with, AARP recommends that we exercise and stay in good shape. Does that include operating a floor jack? They also say to have your eyes and hearing tested every year. And they recommend that you not drive in inclement weather, and avoid distractions like texting and listening to loud music. Getting into a little slap and tickle with your front seat passenger is out too. I haven't done any of that for years of course, but you never know.

Also, if you have imbibed at a New Year's party, don't be tempted to say to your spouse, "#%\$! Give me the keys, I can drive." And plan your route, avoid driving at night, stay off the freeways if they intimidate you, and leave plenty of room in front of you so you can stop easily.

That is especially true if you decide to go for

a spin in your 1958 Buick. It did not stop on a dime even when it was new. Such cars make quite a fashion statement when you show up in them, but you want to make sure you actually show up and that you don't run into your host's newly painted 1965 GTO when you arrive.

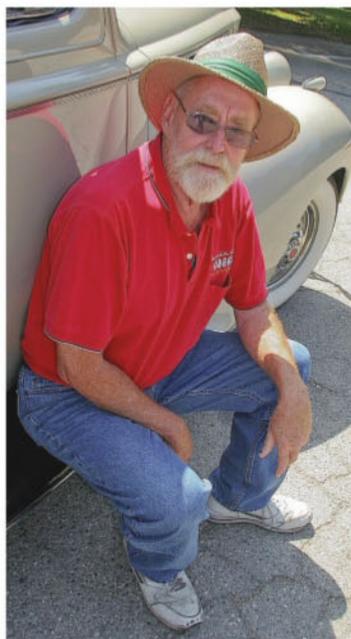
As an automotive journalist, I am required to test-drive restored race cars that are not suitable for public roads on occasion. For that, we trailer them to a track or a large parking lot that is not being used. I also take horseless-carriage-era vehicles to such locations to make sure I am not a menace to traffic.

Thankfully, there is also a nearby event every year called Cruisin' For A Cure,

which is held to raise money to find a cure for prostate cancer. I especially enjoy this show because it is held on a vast fairground, and there is a continuous parade of classics—some of which cannot be driven on public streets—rolling by to entertain.

It makes me think we should hold more events like this where old guys in old cars can drive and enjoy their cars, and not be a threat to local architecture, or cause alarm to the gendarmerie. Large industrial parking lots would be fine, and spectators could be charged a small fee. There could even be hay bale races for those so inclined. Ticket takers, a taco truck and Porta-Potties would be all we would need.

Driving is fun, and should not be restricted just to people going to work. In big cities, there needs to be places where we can enjoy driving just for the sake of it, no matter how old and dangerous we and our cars may seem to the kids. And though we, and our classics, may be unsuitable for normal use, we could still putter around a parking lot and slalom through the lamp posts. And, no, I have not outgrown that. Just yesterday, I did it in a super-tuned 1961 Austin-Healey Bugeye Sprite, and the thrill was definitely not gone. 🏁



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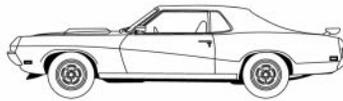
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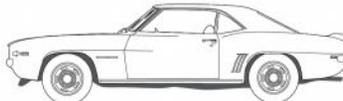
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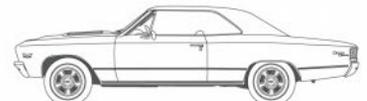
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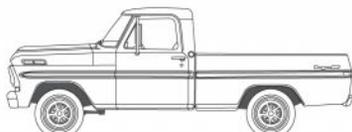
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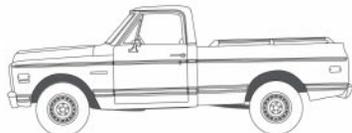
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