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APRIL 2017 #151



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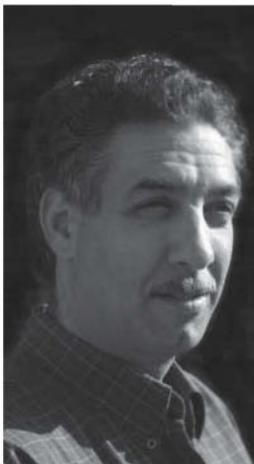
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Late-Model Desirability

In light of all the comments of late regarding whether or not cars like the Mercury Bobcat that was profiled in issue #147 should be featured in a magazine about classic cars, I'm proud to let it be known that I would welcome that compact Mercury in my garage any day. And why not? It's loaded with personality and charm, it's easy to maintain, affordable to buy and will attract so much attention wherever it's driven and shown that you will have a perpetual smile on your face talking to people about it.

Is that Bobcat on my list of must-have automobiles alongside the 1965 Riviera, 1956-'57 Continental MKII, '57 Cadillac, 1963/'64 Grand Prix, 1967/'68 Barracuda or all the different Corvairs that I want to own? No, it isn't. But that doesn't mean I wouldn't want to own it just the same. I would treat it with the same respect and admiration as all those other distinctively styled automobiles; it deserves it.

All too often, some people think that age, pedigree and value determine a car's desirability and whether or not it should be considered a "classic" and be featured in this magazine—they don't. Simply put, as long as a car is at least 25 years old, we'll consider publishing a story on it. We on the Hemmings staff don't care much about how valuable a car is, its rarity or how much power it has. We simply like and appreciate all types of automobiles, regardless of what make, model or year they are.

Now, more than ever, as the values of all the great automobiles have escalated out of reach for the majority of us old-car enthusiasts, we would like to help everyone make their old-car dreams come true by pointing out "alternative classics" for them to consider; that orange Bobcat was one of them. Reading about these once-forgotten daily drivers alongside Cords, Packards, Hudsons, Studebakers, Lincolns and Imperials makes for some truly interesting and diversified reading. More important, by featuring cars from the late '70s, '80s and even the early '90s, we will not only help those car guys and gals with limited budgets enjoy the collector-car experience, but by doing so we'll attract younger car enthusiasts, thus ensuring that the old-car hobby will continue to flourish.

My personal short list of "alternative classics" that you should consider include the Ford Maverick, Plymouth Duster/Dodge Demon, Chevrolet Vega and AMC Pacer/Gremlin/Hornet. If you prefer something a bit older, consider an early '60s Valiant, Lancer or Rambler, or one of the 1961-'63 "compact" B-O-P models. Dodge's Diplomat from the early '80s was a handsome-looking car, but if you want lots of power, then take a close look at the early

fourth-generation LT1-powered Camaro/Firebirds of the 1993-'97 era. A car with 275/285hp that can be bought for less than \$3,000 doesn't come along too often.

Someone recently asked me what my ideal old car would be if I had to drive one every day. Without hesitation, I

replied, a 1983-'88 Chevrolet Monte Carlo SS. My second choice would be a 1984-'87 turbocharged Buick Grand National. While they may not be considered "old" in some people's eyes, the oldest version of each is already fast approaching 35 years of age. Both cars are blessed with impressive shapes, are handsomely styled, extremely reliable and efficient, very comfortable and, most important, very safe to drive on today's crowded roads. That's the beauty of owning cars from the 1980s.

When the warmer spring and summer weather arrives, we plan on going out and finding more cars from the late '70s to early '90s to photograph for future features. No, we have no plans to feature an '80s car in every issue, but you will be seeing more of them being given the spotlight. There are many distinctive models that rarely, if ever, have been written about. For instance, when was the last time you read an in-depth article on an Oldsmobile Toronado Trofeo? Or how about a Buick Reatta? A Ford Taurus SHO? One of my favorite cars from this era was Cadillac's Northstar-powered Eldorado Touring Coupe—a truly sensational automobile.

So, now it's your turn to tell us which American car from the late 1970s to early '90s you would consider buying, and why. And while you're at it, your thoughts on this topic would be most appreciated. 📧



//
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Studebaker Sit-Down

THE STUDEBAKER DRIVERS CLUB has announced the date for its International Meet. South Bend, Indiana, will host this year's event, which will occur May 3-6. A swap meet and car corral will take place each day starting at 8 a.m. at the St. Joseph County Fairgrounds. There will also be a concours occurring during the four-day event and Saturday, the final day, will feature an open judged car show with an awards ceremony. The full itinerary also includes a parade, tours, luncheons and chapter meetings to discuss future Studebaker gatherings and events. For a full list of events, fees, registration and hotel information, visit www.sdcmeet.com/Home/Agenda.

Pierce-Arrow Gathering

THE PIERCE-ARROW SOCIETY is celebrating its 60th year and announced The Great River Meet to take place near the Illinois, Mississippi and Missouri Rivers in Maryland Heights, Missouri. The host hotel will be in St. Louis, and the dates for the event will be June 6-10. Touring destinations include the St. Louis Museum of Transportation, with its vast collection of trains and automobiles, the Creve Coeur Airport, which houses the Historic Aircraft Restoration Museum and the Camp River Dubois

where Lewis and Clark departed on their famous expedition. The Pierce-Arrow car show will take place on Saturday at the Transportation Museum, with over 1,500 expected visitors and an awards banquet to follow at the hotel. The club will also help you coordinate drop-off and pick-up of your Pierce-Arrow, if you wish to have it shipped to the meet. For more information and all touring destinations, please visit www.pierce-arrow.org/activities.

Texas Early Ford V-8s

THE SOUTHERN TEXAS REGIONAL GROUP is proud to host the 44th Annual Texas Tour that will be based around Kerrville, Texas, in the Y.O. Ranch Hotel and



Conference Center. The events will take place April 6-8, with a busy slate of sight-seeing, swap meets, raffles, seminars and an award banquet to end the weekend. Thursday and Friday tours will take place on your own, with recommended routes with mileage accounted for in tour packets. See all the attractions and scenic roadways around the Southern Texas Hill Country, located northwest of San Antonio. Saturday will include the Grand Tour with lunch, concours and awards banquet. Visit www.earlyfordv8.org/Upcoming_Events.cfm.

APRIL

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6-8 • National Bakersfield Swap Meet

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6-9 • AACA Southeastern Spring Meet

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7-9 • Antique Portland Automotive Swap Meet

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7-9 • La Jolla Concours d'Elegance

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19-23 • Spring Carlisle

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21 • AACA Old Dominion Meet

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24-29 • VCCA Spring Tour

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27-29 • All Truck Nationals

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28-30 • Englishtown Swap Meet

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Fast Little Back

BOB ENG OF SIOUX FALLS, SOUTH DAKOTA, was only able to get three rear photos of this fastbacked sports car back in the days of film cameras and only so many photos per roll (that is, about 20 years ago), but even with a photo of the front of the car, we'd still be as puzzled about it.

At first glance, it appears to be based on a Cobra or Cobra replica, with a circa 1949-'51 Chevrolet Fleetline four-door fastback body chopped to bits and reassembled around the back half of the Cobra. How the driver saw out the back window—which almost became a moonroof—we're not sure, but it must have been a somewhat comfortable ride, judging from the hitch being put into use.

We can't see how this wouldn't have survived the last couple of decades, so tell us if you've seen it anytime recently.

Cuban Cadillac

AS MORE AMERICANS TRAVEL TO CUBA now, we're sure we'll be receiving plenty more photos of odd mashed-up Cuban cars like the one that Thomas Carlquist's friend Tony caught on camera.

"Tony isn't too much of a car guy, but nevertheless he came home with some nice shots, among others, this," Thomas wrote. "As far as I can see, it is a 1949 Cadillac, even if it is missing some bright parts in the area of the turn indicators. That can happen to anyone, but what puzzles me is the roof. At first, I thought it might be

a ZIL or ZIM, but I'm pretty sure it is a '49 Cadillac. Rear fenders seem OK, but what have they done above the belt line? The Series 75 used the older body style, and it is too short for a limo of any kind."

We think Thomas is onto something with his hypothesis—perhaps that's a Series 75 limousine roofline shortened to fit atop a Series 61/62 four-door sedan? Consider the rear quarter windows and the awkward way the roof flows into the trunk.

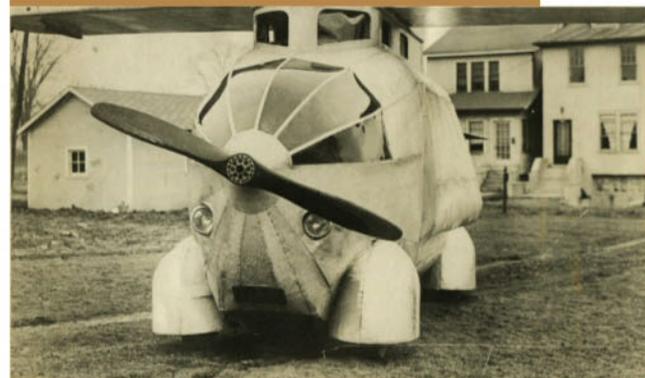
Whatever happened, perhaps the real question to ask is why?



Before April Fools'

ALL WE KNOW ABOUT THE DIRIGIBLISH VEHICLE in the photo is what we can see: a blimp-like four-wheeler with full spats, a propeller on the nose, isinglass windshield, and wings that look less aerodynamic than a paper airplane. Despite our best efforts, we couldn't discern the origin of the license plate.

Plus, there's this: In about 1930, a Dutch magazine clipped the image of this vehicle and photocomposited it over a picture of Schiphol airport, then claimed a Polish inventor had invented it. The date of that magazine's publication? April 1.



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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in Dallas, and its spring sale will take place April 21-23 at the Dallas Market Hall. Expect to see around 500 cars, with American Classics well represented.

Last year, 59 percent of the 490 lots sold for a total of \$4.1 million. This 1948 Lincoln Continental Cabriolet featured power windows, Continental kit, power-operated top, and, of course, the V-12 and sold for a reasonable \$31,000. Preliminary listings for the 2017 auction are being compiled, and consignments are still being accepted, so check with Leake at www.leakecar.com for an up-to-date listing.



Kansas City Mecum

MECUM FINISHED ITS 2016 CALENDAR with a big auction in Kansas City, which saw over 650 vehicles up for sale. When the smoke cleared, over 54 percent of the cars found a new home, totaling over \$8 million in sales, which also included a 95 percent sell-through of automobilia and road art. Among the American collector cars was this 1950 Buick woodie wagon finished in dark green. A limited number of wagons were made, with only 2,480 leaving the factory, making this a somewhat rare find. This fine example needed some work, but sold for a reasonable \$19,500. Full results are now available on Mecum's site at www.mecum.com.

AUCTION PROFILE

NEARLY ONE PERCENT OF Ford's vehicle production was devoted to station wagons in 1936, and Ford was on the cusp of making its own wooden bodies at Iron Mountain, which would allow the company to increase its wagon output. By 1941, Ford was making over 15,000 wagons per year, which accounted for 2.6 percent of its passenger car production.

The 1936 model saw some styling changes, with reshaped rear fenders, a new, more-rounded grille treatment, individual grilles over the horns and artillery-style wheels.

The wagon pictured here was in the same family until 2014 and featured an older restoration. The 221-cu.in. V-8 engine was complemented with a three-speed manual transmission without overdrive.



CAR 1936 Ford Station Wagon
AUCTIONEER Auctions America
LOCATION Hilton Head, South Carolina
DATE November 5, 2016

LOT NUMBER 122
CONDITION #3+
RESERVE None
SELLING PRICE \$40,700

The bodywork was standard tan, and the interior was brown. The optional roll-up front glass windows with canvas side curtains and fitted plastic transparent windows provided additional barriers to

the elements. It's unknown how many of the original 7,044 wagons survived, which can lead to high prices. The final bid was lower than expected for a mechanically sound older restoration.

APRIL

March 31-April 2 • Auctions America
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Palm Beach, Florida • 480-421-6694
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Goshen, Indiana • 800-860-8118
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20-21 • Carlisle Auctions
Carlisle, Pennsylvania • 717-243-7855
www.carlisleauctions.com

21-22 • The Branson Auction
Branson, Missouri • 800-335-3063
www.bransonauktion.com

21-23 • Leake
Dallas, Texas • 918-254-7077
www.leakecar.com

22 • Silver
Portland, Oregon • 800-255-4485
www.silverauctions.com

Springtime in Branson

THE BRANSON AUCTION is scheduled to take place April 21-22 at the Branson Convention Center in Branson, Missouri. This will be the 39th Spring auction, and hundreds of cars will be available for sale at this year's event.

Last year's auction saw over 140 cars offered for sale, including a 1951 De Soto Custom Deluxe that was just 1 of 55 made for export that year. The car had found its way back to the States and won many awards at national De Soto Club Convention Shows. When the final hammer fell, it sold for \$30,250.

This year's consignments are filling up fast, so be sure to visit Branson's website at www.bransonauktion.com if you plan on being in the Missouri area this spring.



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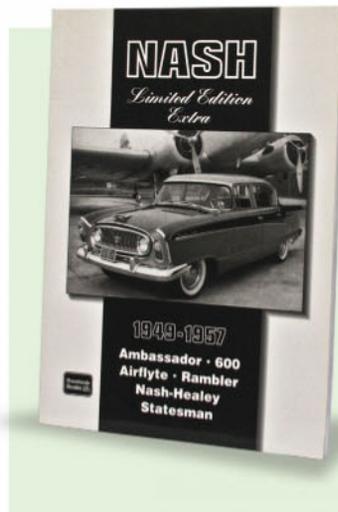
If you coveted a “mid-year” Corvette when you were younger—or perhaps still do today—you know what powerful excitement the beautiful 1963-1967 Sting Ray can inspire. You can spark the imaginations of your children or grandchildren with their very own 1963 Corvette 12V Ride-On, from Summit Racing. Recommended for children ages 3-6 and weighing up to 66 pounds, this realistic-looking toy (item KAL-KL-7015-12V) sports iconic details like those stylish chrome bumpers, hood vents, quad taillamps and, of course, the coupe’s split-window rear treatment. The 12V battery-powered motor offers a 3.8 MPH top speed, 2.5 MPH in reverse, and a battery charger is included. Think of the fun they’ll have when they hear its realistic horn, ignition and V-8 engine sounds—it will make you feel like a kid again, too.

Check the Oil

WWW.CALCARCOVER.COM

800-423-5525 • \$16.99

If your garage or den wall is crying out for a piece of petroliana decor, the California Car Cover Co. has a great solution in the form of its new Texaco Oil Can sign (item 90156257), which is crafted from embossed metal and sized a reasonable 8.75 x 16 inches. It is a stylized interpretation of the classic flexible-spout oil container that used to be found in every corner garage, and proudly bears Texaco’s iconic red star and green “T.”



Nash 1949-1957

800-458-0454 • WWW.QUARTOKNOWS.COM • \$24.95

Nash Motors was an innovative automaker through its 41-year existence, and the cars it built in its last decade of operation were true game changers. Fans of Nash and Rambler cars will thrill to see this 128-page “Limited Edition Extra” softcover, *Nash 1949-1957*. It’s a product of England’s Brooklands Books, compiled by R.M. Clarke, and is filled with period road tests by motoring periodicals in Great Britain and the U.S. Curious as to what people thought of the sleek Airflyte when it was new, or how the Nash-Healey fared against the sports car competition? The black-and-white reprinted stories in this book, taken in their entirety, are wonderfully enlightening. We can’t recommend this book, or any Brooklands Road Test Series title, highly enough.

1966 Ford Galaxie 500 7-Litre

877-343-2276 • WWW.DIECASM.COM

\$299.95 (STANDARD EDITION);

\$366.95 (TRIBUTE EDITION); \$449.95 (HOMAGE EDITION); \$465.95 (ENTHUSIASTS EDITION)

Ford’s biggest, sleekest and most powerfully luxurious car to come out of the “Total Performance” era of the 1960s was arguably the 1966 Galaxie 500 7-Litre two-door Hardtop. This coupe offered exquisite detailing and a fleet appearance that belied its size and aptitude for laying down smoky burnouts, courtesy of that 428-cu.in. V-8 under the hood. Automodello has created a gorgeous rendition of this Galaxie 500 in 1/24-scale form, officially licensed by the Ford Motor Company. This non-opening resin model features incredible detailing in paint, lenses and exterior brightwork, plus a truly lifelike interior. Its windows are “rolled up” on the passenger side, “rolled down” on the driver’s, for choice of display.

The standard model, made in a run of 299 examples, is painted Nightmist Blue over blue. The Tribute Edition, of which 66 are being made, comes in Candy Apple Red over black, while the Homage Edition (24 available) is Raven Black over Tan, and the Enthusiasts Edition (19 made) is available in Wimbledon White or Antique Gold, both over black interiors.



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1.5 total carats of genuine Ethiopian opal for under \$100! PLUS, FREE matching earrings!

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Long ago, we made a vow: We would not produce a five-opal anniversary ring until two very specific conditions were met. First, the opals had to be of superior quality, with the joyous iridescence to delight all who saw the precious stone's colors dance in the light. Second, the price had to be right, so that we could provide the value Stauer clients expect from us. So when The New York Times style section called Ethiopian opal the "undisputed winner" of the 2014 Gem Show, we decided to pounce. The result is the astoundingly beautiful *Five-Star Opal Anniversary Ring*.

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Five Star Opal Ring



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"Opal's spectacular play-of-color can display all the colors of the rainbow."

— Gemological Institute of America

"The play of color in opals is so gorgeous they sometimes don't even seem real and yet they are." — from 2015 Couture Show

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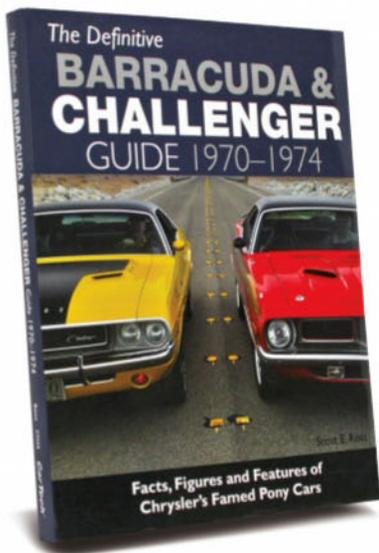
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While the original Valiant-based A-body Plymouth Barracuda beat Ford's Mustang to market in 1964, that sporty compact didn't make much of a sales impact in comparison to the cross-town competition. It wasn't until the E-body Barracuda, and its Dodge Challenger sibling, debuted for the 1970 model year, that Mother Mopar had a serious player in the pony car wars. Author Scott Ross tells the story of these hot cars in *The Definitive Barracuda & Challenger Guide 1970-1974*, paying special attention to the variations that make them unique and valuable. This 192-page hardcover is liberally and colorfully detailed with styling illustrations, photographs and interesting charts and sidebars. You can follow these E-body cars from development through production, see their year-to-year changes, and revel in detailed appendices containing specs, colors, option codes and more. It's a great resource.

Motoring Newsprint

303-898-9478 • WWW.ADAMAMBRO.COM • \$30-250,
WITH FRAMING AVAILABLE ON U.S.-SHIPPED ORDERS

For most of the last century, newspaper classified advertising was one of the most prevalent methods for selling and buying automobiles, and even for those not in the market to buy, for daydreaming about cars and the adventures they could enable. While the Internet has largely made this time-honored sales venue irrelevant, classified newsprint still evokes nostalgia, and for one creative thinker, becomes a backdrop for automotive art.

Michigan native Adam Ambro is an architect by trade, living and working in Golden, Colorado. The primary industry in his home state—and having grown up in a three-bedroom, five-car-garage house—has given this auto enthusiast plenty of inspiration. “With true classified ads becoming scarce, I put as much thought into composing the newsprint canvas as the artwork itself,” he explains. “Each canvas is uniquely curated towards adventure-based subjects, leaving much to be discovered beyond the details of the drawing.”

Adam turns newsprint pages—or, in certain cases, magazine newsprint—into art by hand-layering pen, marker and other media on the paper, creating texturally rich images that pay tribute to the vintage 4x4s, cars, motorcycles and campers that inspire thoughts of escape and fun. His original pieces are available as reproductions in numerous forms: digital press prints use 111-pound velvet cover stock and are sized 13 x 19 inches with a 1/2-inch border, while chromogenic photographic prints are sized 20 x 30 inches and feature archival Kodak Professional Endura Premier Matte paper in full bleed, and each can be professionally framed.



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Tire Thoughts

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Titanium Scratch Remover is a unique, simple-to-use formula that quickly removes scratches and scrapes from your car's exterior. The formula is effective, containing titanium-enriched cream with microbeads and microscopic lamellar crystals. Not only will it remove the scratch, but it will also strengthen the treated areas while providing a mirror-like finish. Application is simple, requiring only the use of a microfiber cloth. Cost: \$9.99.

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GM pickup owners now have an easy fix for replacing some of the seals on the 1967-'72 GM trucks. These reproduction seals are molded to fit the corner for the top of the A-pillar, and don't require the use of weatherstrip adhesive. The seals press on to the pinchweld of the body and install quicker and cleaner than the original style glue-on seal, and will protect your interior from unwanted noise and drafts. The kit is a three-piece set and fits both front doors and the passenger-side third door. Cost: \$126.

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Truespoke reproduction wire wheels bring back the look of the 50-spoke Cadillac wire wheels that used to be available at your old Cadillac dealer. These new wire wheels are exact reproductions, right down to the authentic Cadillac emblems. The wheels will fit 1957-'96 Cadillac models and have a copper/nickel/chrome-type, show-quality finish. Sizes are available at 15-, 16- and 17-inch diameters and are offered alone or as part of a wheel-and-tire package. Cost: Starting at \$1,995 (set of four).

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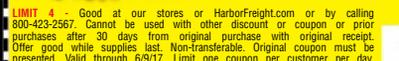
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PITTSBURGH AUTOMOTIVE

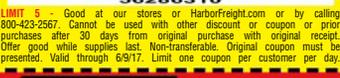
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68497/61360
68498/61359

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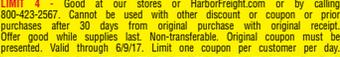
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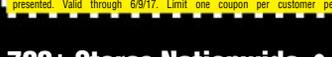
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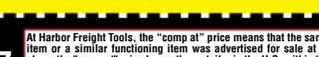
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Semon E. Knudsen



SONS CAN FOLLOW FATHERS TO

greatness in the world of automotive management, too. One of the prime examples of this axiom exists in the case study of Semon E. Knudsen, better known as Bunkie, to distinguish him from his father Big Bill Knudsen, who just happened to run General Motors, like Bunkie would come to run Ford. It's fair to say that the elder Knudsen gave his son a kick-start in the business when Bunkie was only 14. That's when Dad gave him a new 1927 Chevrolet as a present, only with a catch: The car was in pieces, and the younger Knudsen had to assemble it himself.

Not only did Knudsen successfully bolt the Chevrolet into one piece, but he also finished high school and did a year at Dartmouth College before transferring to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, from which he graduated in 1936 with an engineering degree. To be clear, that was not an entrée to the executive suite at GM. Instead, Knudsen's first job was at a Detroit machine shop; it wasn't until 1939 that he first arrived at a GM operation, handling tools at a Pontiac plant. Knudsen would work at no fewer than 106 GM facilities before he was named chief of Pontiac in 1956.

Up to that point, Pontiac had a long-standing reputation for building

cars that were uniformly reliable but unyieldingly stodgy, aimed squarely at older buyers who were comfortable with that rung on the GM brand hierarchy. Sales were equally slow, with Pontiac perennially mired outside the top five in annual national new registrations. It got to the point where, by 1959, GM actually considered combining Pontiac with Oldsmobile, and ordered up an example of that year's Olds with Pontiac nameplates attached to it. By then, GM president Harlow Curtice had already turned the keys to Pontiac over to Knudsen, and given him a five-year window in which to execute Pontiac's turnaround. It's part of GM folklore that Knudsen's first official act was to barge into the divisional offices and rip the Silver Streaks, a signature Pontiac design feature for decades, off the 1957 models just two months before they were supposed to hit the showrooms.

Next, he pulled Elliott "Pete" Estes away from Oldsmobile as his chief engineer and John Z. DeLorean from Packard as his director of advanced engineering. Pontiac was never the same again. Beginning in 1957 and accelerating forward came the era of

the Wide Track, the Tri-Power, Super Duty specials, OHC engines and more. Knudsen pushed Pontiac to primacy on the track in both drag and stock car racing. Just that quickly, the make jumped to third in sales nationally. GM rewarded Knudsen by making him general manager of Chevrolet, where he continued his performance revolution.

Knudsen undoubtedly saw himself following his esteemed father to the presidency at GM. Yet in 1967, the board chose Ed Cole to take the reins of the corporation. Within months, Knudsen accepted an offer from Henry Ford II to lead the Ford Motor Company. Magic seemed poised to repeat itself as Knudsen green-lighted both the Boss 302 and Cougar Eliminator, but his tenure at Ford ended abruptly after just 19 months, allegedly due to Lee Iacocca's influence with Ford II.

An icon of the American muscle car, Knudsen took on a different kind of performance entity, when he moved to White in Cleveland and introduced a completely new line of heavy trucks. He remained as White's chairman and CEO until he retired in 1980. Knudsen then returned to the Detroit area, where he died in 1998. 🏎️





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An American Original

A lifelong quest yields a 1959 Rambler Cross Country Super station wagon

BY JIM DONNELLY • PHOTOGRAPHY BY RICHARD LENTINELLO

American Motors had a history-making year of sales in 1959. There were four basic model ranges: American, Rambler Six, Rebel and Ambassador. In the Rambler Six line, AMC bequeathed a simple new eggcrate grille with a gap between the grille and the hood where "RAMBLER" was spelled out in stand-up block



letters. The Six line was further divided into Deluxe, Super and Custom levels in ascending order of trim. Supers, like our feature car's Cross Country, were distinguished by a script callout in the rear door near the tip of the missile-shaped side trim spear. The Super Cross Country turned out to be the second-most-popular model in the Rambler Six range, with 66,739 examples produced, topped only by the Super four-door sedan,

which rang up 72,577 sales units in 1959.

Power came from American Motors' base engine, a cast-iron straight-six with OHV architecture. It displaced 195.6 cubic inches and boasted a robust compression ratio of 8.7:1. That translated into 127 horsepower at 4,200 RPM, the solid-lifter engine being fed by a single-barrel Carter Type YF-2014S carburetor. The transmission is a three-speed manual, backed



Cross Country cabin dwellers benefit from excellent visibility all around and a commanding driver's position. The pull knob that activates the optional overdrive is out of view. Note the tight positioning of the instrument cluster, right in the driver's view.



The instrument cluster tells you the minimum of what a driver's got to know. Weather Eye, headlamp and wiper controls are grouped in a surprisingly small area to the left of the steering column, next to a plate that covers the absent automatic-transmission pushbuttons. Swing-out tissue dispenser is a rare AMC option. Theme of angled door-panel trim continues throughout the multi-toned interior.



up with overdrive.

Back in the late 1950s, station wagons such as this distinctive-looking Rambler were immensely popular with growing families of the postwar baby boom. North Merrick, on New York's Long Island, isn't far from the original Levittown. You know, neat tract homes that date from just after the end of World War II. The houses are commonly small, sitting on little lots, mostly ranches and capes. It was the ideal time and place to own a station wagon, the kind of car into which you could bundle the brood and head for the mountains or the seacoast. In 1959, Kevin Costanzo's family was one of thousands on Long Island that had a wagon proudly sitting in the driveway of their little piece of America.

What's unusual was, it was a Rambler. Not as unusual as you might first think, though. After all, 1959 was the year that American Motors Corporation built and sold 386,414 new automobiles, a record performance year for an independent manufacturer, and the highest annual sales total ever achieved by any independent in industry history. That same year, AMC president George Romney got his face on the cover of *Time* magazine, which lauded him for his commitment to smaller, less-dramatic cars that were more economical to buy and operate.

Kevin grew up, moved to Florida and today operates a limousine service in and around West Palm Beach. We discovered his Cross Country wagon at a regional car show there, certainly a rare sight today. Preserved and restored station wagons of any ilk are uncommon to find because, by and large, they were beaten into oblivion by their loving owners. Most headed straight to the salvage yard. There are exceptions, of course, and this is one of them, made all the more unusual because it comes from outside the Big Three. Kevin is big into cars—he owns a hot-rod Ford T-bucket—but he was insistent that one day, his collection would include a restored 1959 Rambler wagon.

"First of all, when I was a child, about three years old, my mom and dad owned this exact kind of car, and I always wanted one once I got into collecting. I decided I wanted to get a Rambler wagon. Everybody said I was crazy, said they didn't make many of them and so forth and so on. But I still wanted one, and I started looking. What I originally wanted to do was to find a car in Arizona because I knew there'd really be no rust, so I started looking there. Then I got a call from a



Split front bench seat features backs that recline; smooth textured upholstery incorporates white vinyl insert for some added pizzazz.

friend of mine who told me, 'Hey, I found a car for you. It's in Orlando.' That's about 2½ hours from here. So I called the guy, and it turns out that he had bought the car in Arizona and then brought it back here to Florida. He brought it back to restore it for his kid, but the job just became too overwhelming for him, and he decided to sell it. So I'm getting ready to go up there and see the car and the guy tells me his name is Constantino. Well, my dad was named Constantino, too. I'm getting goose bumps here. I drove up to Orlando, looked the Rambler over and bought it on the spot."

Back in West Palm Beach, the restoration process took about a year. For a goodly portion of that time, Kevin sat at his computer, searching hard for NOS parts to complete the job, although having been an Arizona car for most of its existence,

rust wasn't a major problem on the Cross Country. "Even though I had everything for the car, like the headlamp bezels and lenses, I was still on the computer three or four times a day, and you wouldn't believe the stuff I found. I had parts coming in from Norway, new emergency-brake cables. So everything's new on the car. And everything I bought was NOS; I didn't want to buy anything used."

For instance, Kevin managed to find some fabric bolts of original 1959 American Motors seat upholstery from a supplier of vintage upholstery in Ohio, going only from his memory of the patterns on the caramel-colored seats in his parents' station wagon. Networking was crucial to locate the necessary components. "I found a guy whose parents had owned five AMC dealerships, and when they died, he was looking to sell everything online. I got some unbelievable stuff from him. It's all from working the phones and the emails. The guy you contact at first may not have what you're looking for, but especially with the AMC people, he'll put you in touch with somebody who has whatever you want plus a lot more than that. It's really amazing."

We're fond of saying that this world of ours is all about happy childhood memories. Kevin took that notion a step further by doing the color scheme and interior work totally from memory—by that, we mean that he wanted to replicate the Autumn Yellow paint finish and the candy-colored interior to get the correct tonal appearance of the car's hues to resemble his parents' Cross Country back in North Merrick. When he first bought the car, it was crudely finished in pink and white, but when he received the title in the mail, he read it over and noticed that it had been originally finished in ... wait for it ... Autumn Yellow. "Between the guy being named Constantino and the car having been yellow, there were just all kinds of spooky things about this," he recalls.

Rust, to be sure, was largely off the problem list. The most significant that Kevin can recall is the lower outside edge of the tailgate, where the corrosion was sliced away and replaced with welded-in patch panels, with no body filler used. The interior and all its padding, however, were destroyed by solar



The diminutive OHV straight-six did yeoman work for AMC for decades; note the top-mounted oil filter. The washer bag and carburetor are original to the car. American Motors was an early practitioner of crafting unitized steel bodies for mass-market automobiles.



What looks like metalized Swiss cheese is actually an air deflector used in conjunction with the front vent windows. Dual jet-like vanes make for an interesting hood-ornament treatment. The Cross Country Super led all other Rambler wagons in 1959's sales totals.

radiation. We ought to point out here that this was Kevin's first restoration project. "I won't do it again. This was my last restoration, too," he laughs. "I think it was the most enjoyable thing I've ever done, not just me but the people who worked with me, like the guy who helped out with the interior work or my buddy who owns the body shop, he kept saying, 'You're crazy, you're crazy,' but all of them got right into it when we got started, and they all worked from the heart, once they knew the story behind this car."

The Rambler's unitized bodywork was handled by Hector Santana at Tropical Auto Body in West Palm Beach. Once the bodywork was done, Kevin had the bumpers and other trim pieces rechromed at Sunshine Polishing in Miami. The moldings on the Cross Country are made from stainless steel; Kevin hand-buffed them to a chrome-like gleam. The engine came off the frame for probably the first time ever, and was rebuilt to full stock specifications and displacement by Engine Rebuilders of West Palm Beach, even to the point of being repainted in the original Battleship Gray. Kevin recalls that the process of reattaching the myriad pieces of trim to the body required

weeks of effort, if not months.

Since the restoration was completed, Kevin began searching for a second late-Fifties Rambler station wagon—not for himself, but for Sergio Morales, who handled all the interior work on Kevin's Cross Country at his shop, S&S Auto Tops in West Palm Beach. Kevin went back online and began the hunt because Sergio was so smitten with the Cross Country that he wanted one for himself. The virtual journey led Kevin to Brooklyn, New York, and the station wagon he found there, in his own words, was "a real rustbucket." Kevin and Sergio had to make their own rotisserie so the perforated wagon could be inverted and body repairs begun.

Any project of this magnitude is going to involve easy steps that are like fielding ground balls, and maddening quests for parts that threaten to hold up the entire show. In the case of the Cross Country, we asked Kevin what was the hardest component to find. In 1959, Ramblers could be optioned with the Flash-O-Matic, pushbutton-operated automatic transmission. If you had a manual or manual-overdrive car like Kevin's, the factory installed a small blocking plate on the dashboard



“I've never seen so much attention paid

to a car as this one gets from the public.

It happens wherever I go. It's so rare,

you'll never see one at a car show.”



Four-slot stamped-steel wheels were painted to match the exterior body color; hubcaps were made of stainless steel with the "R" painted in enamel.



One-piece oval horizontal taillamps break up the tailfin's tall appearance and give the Rambler station wagon a bit of that 1950s-era rocket style.



The window glass cranks down into the one-piece tailgate. Luggage space is copious.

to cover the opening where the transmission pushbuttons would ordinarily go. "It was just a little aluminum plate that went over the hole in the dash. This one had a pushbutton in the middle of it for the horn, and I had a friend make me a replacement plate. That was one thing. The other was that when you look down the tailfin, right above the running lights, there's a little round red reflector on each side. I went online and managed to find two brand-new ones. I haven't seen any since then."

Another rarity was the swiveling, under-dash tissue dispenser. You reach down, turn it sideways, retrieve a tissue and daub at your sniffles. They're very hard to find today. "I'll tell you, that component alone cost me \$300," he says.

As to that overdrive transmission, Kevin explains: "There's a little knob underneath the dashboard that you pull out to activate it. I basically leave it pulled out all the time. Then once you're in third gear, you lift off the gas a little bit, then press down again and the overdrive kicks in."

Kevin reckons that he drives his Cross Country wagon every couple of weeks, not sticking to a particular level of annual

mileage. There's probably no real need to run up the odometer, because without fail, every time Kevin shows it, he's swamped with inquiries or just plain memories delivered with a smile. This is a long way from an everyday cruise-in regular. It's a late-Fifties Rambler and a rarely seen station wagon model, to boot. People tend to drift around it as if levitated by some unknown gravitational force. They may have not grown up on Long Island, but if they're out of suburbia from anywhere during the Levittown years, they've got a Rambler story. Maybe it's not about a Cross Country, but somebody they knew and remember owned a Rebel, or an Ambassador, or perhaps a wee Rambler American.

"It's not a few people, it's everybody," Kevin explains. "It's always, 'I learned to drive on a car like this,' or 'My grandmother had a car like this,' or 'My uncle had one of these station wagons and we used to go on vacations in it during the summertime.' Everybody has a story. I've never seen so much attention paid to a car as this one gets from the public. It happens wherever I go. It's so rare, you'll never see one at a car show." 🐾





Chieftain's Catalina Coupe

Pontiac's overlooked 1958 Chieftain Catalina offered ample style and plenty of performance

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY THOMAS A. DeMAURO

Since taking over as General Manager of Pontiac in the summer of 1956, Semon E. "Bunkie" Knudsen had been fortifying the then-sixth-place-in-sales GM division with the right people in key positions to develop the new products required to turn its fortunes around.

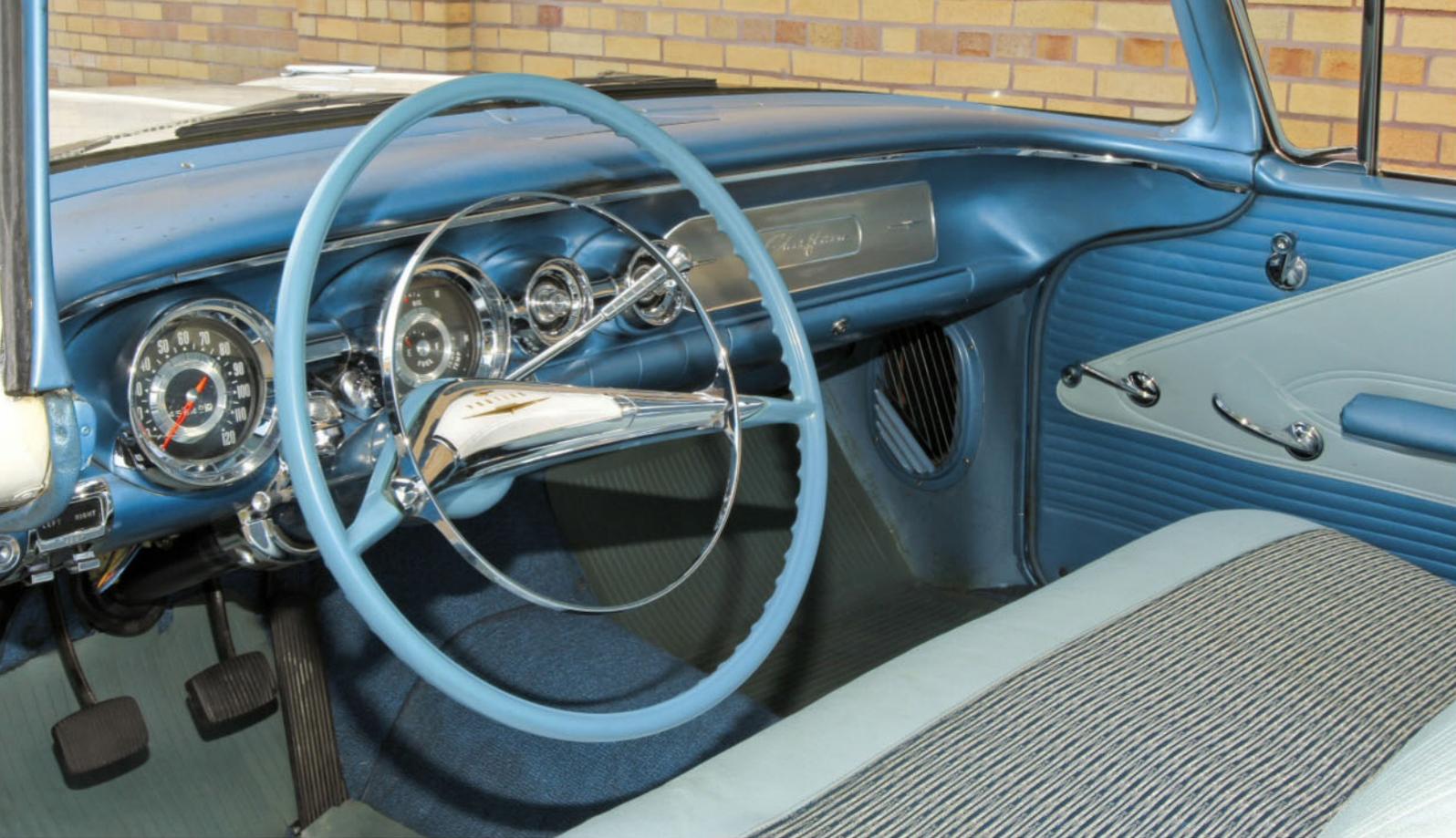


Hiring Chief Engineer Elliott M. “Pete” Estes and Director of Advanced Engineering John Z. DeLorean were two decisions that reveal Knudsen’s eye for talent. Each of them later ascended to the General Manager’s chair at Pontiac and then Chevrolet, and Estes ultimately became president of General Motors.

Under Knudsen’s direction, removing the “suspenders” on the 1957 Pontiac hood was a quick fix, as it was ready for

production when he arrived. The 1958 models were nearly complete as well, but by that model year, his racing program was showing positive results, and more regular-production go-fast options were emerging, as Pontiac focused on building a performance-oriented image.

The redesigned 1958 Pontiacs were lower and larger than their predecessors, and updates included quad headlamps, a



The instrument panel is logically laid out in the two-tone interior. Interestingly, the optional radio was neither ordered then nor added later.



A comprehensive set of gauges except for a tach were provided. The odometer reveals this Pontiac's low mileage. Series I.D. script is on the passenger dash, and automaker I.D. adorns the Deluxe steering wheel.



new grille and bumper for the more massive-appearing front end, broad side covers outlined by rocket-shaped trim, tamed tailfins, hooded quad taillamps and a revised decklid and rear bumper. The A-pillars now angled forward, offered a more dramatic wraparound windshield, and the rear roof pillars angled forward to afford a similar treatment for the backlite.

A new backbone-style X-shaped Aero-frame was reported by Pontiac to permit a lower floor and roofline, while maintaining ample interior space. "Quadra-Poise" suspension introduced revised upper and lower control-arm geometry to improve anti-dive during braking, and ball-joints supplanted kingpins up front. Control arms and coil springs replaced the previous year's rear leaf springs.

The 347-cu.in. V-8 of 1957 grew to 370 cubic inches and was named "Tempest 395," citing the torque rating when equipped with a four-barrel carburetor and backed by an automatic transmission, though the base engine for Chieftains and Super Chiefs was a two-barrel 370 (240hp manual transmission, 270hp automatic) with lower torque ratings. Performance options such as Tri-Power, which was introduced in 1957 and would become highly popular through 1966, returned, and engines equipped with it were rated at 300 horsepower. Rochester mechanical fuel injection was also offered at 310hp. Higher-performance "NASCAR" Tempest 395 A engines with a four-barrel (315hp) or Tri-Power (330hp) were released partway through the model year.

Transmission choices included a synchromesh three-speed manual and the extra-cost Super Hydra-Matic automatic, which was refined for smoother operation and to match engine output. The Safe-T-Track limited-slip differential debuted at extra-cost to aid in efficiently transferring the power to the ground in all weather conditions and on varying surfaces via both rear tires, and the ill-fated and short lived "Ever-Level" air suspension was offered.

There were four 1958 Pontiac series. In ascending order



The expansive front bench seat features a split back and three-tone upholstery; note lack of B-pillar. Door panel design mirrors C-pillar.

of price and content, they were Chieftain, Super Chief, Star Chief and Bonneville. The mix of sedans, coupes, convertibles and station wagons varied between each, and not all were available in all series. For instance, the entry-level Chieftain offered seven models, including two- and four-door sedans (framed side windows), Catalina coupe (two-door hardtop, no side-window frames) and Catalina sedan (four-door, actually a hardtop despite the sedan name), a convertible and six- and nine-passenger Safari station wagons.

The remaining series offered more luxury appointments, and the Star Chief and Bonneville, a standard four-barrel 370 engine (255hp manual transmission, 285hp automatic), but fewer models. For example, the top-of-the-line Bonneville was only available as a two-door sport coupe and convertible. The Super Chief and Star Chief series didn't offer a two-door sedan or a convertible (and the latter had a Safari), but their Catalina coupes and sedans, and their four-door sedans had longer bodies and a two-inch longer wheelbase at 124 inches, versus the 122 inches of the Chieftain, Bonneville and Safaris.

Chuck Brown of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, has been an admirer of 1950s cars dating back to when his stepfather bought a 1958 Pontiac Star Chief Catalina sedan new. When he heard from a friend in September of 2000 that a low-mileage, 1958 Chieftain Catalina coupe was for sale locally in Bethel Park, naturally, Chuck had to investigate.

Before he was even able to go see the '58 Chieftain, a '57 model also came up for sale nearby, so Chuck and his friend checked out both of them. He recalls that the '58 model was the better of the two. "The '57 Pontiac was a two-door sedan and just wasn't what I was looking for," he says. Conversely, the '58 Chieftain was a hardtop, it was complete with just 33,700 miles on its odometer, and its Graystone White/Squadron Blue two-tone paint combination was the inverse of the same colors on his stepfather's Star Chief. The potential

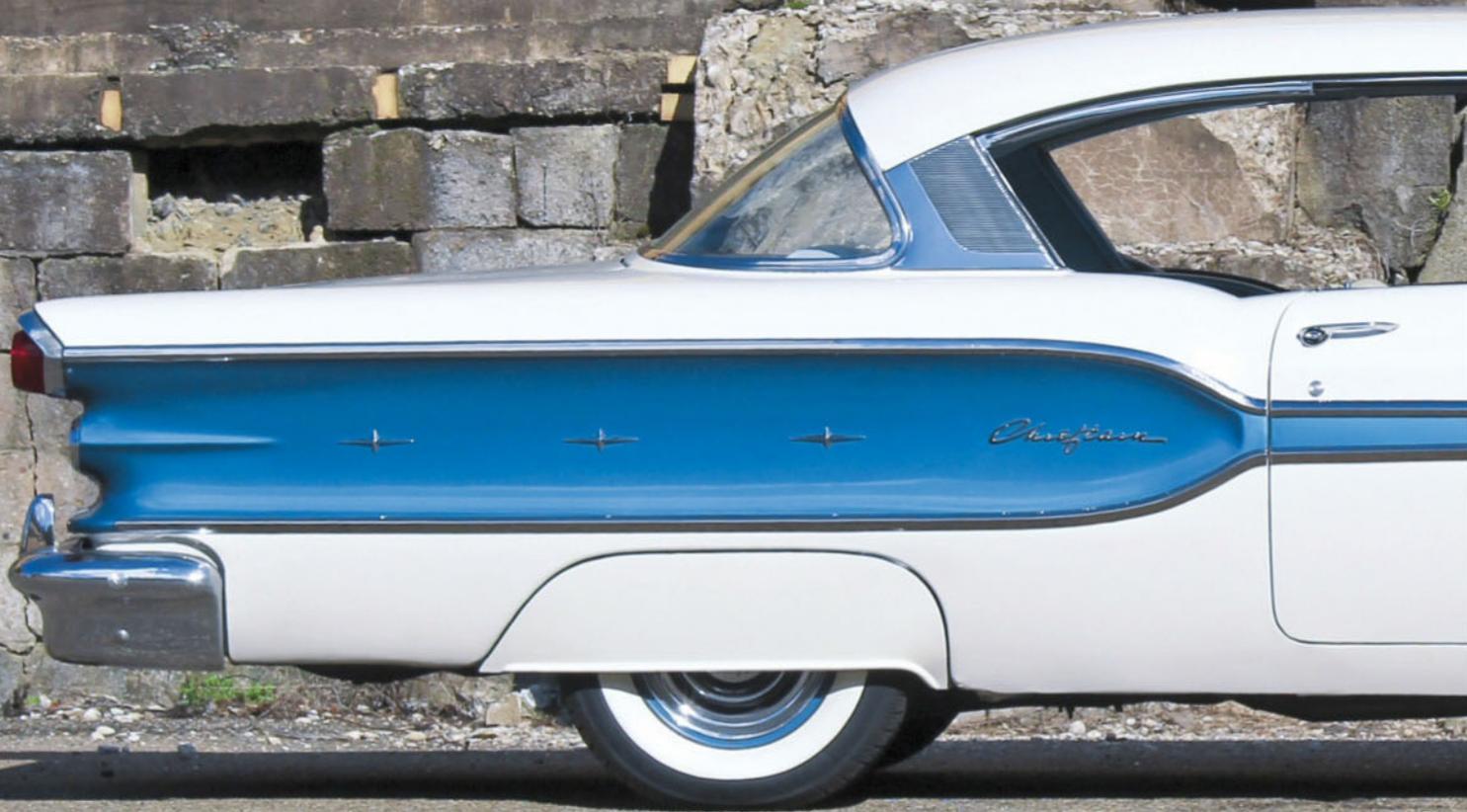


With the rear side window wound down, the Catalina Coupe's pillarless design makes entry into the rear seat area an easy task.

purchase wasn't without its issues, however.

The Chieftain wasn't roadworthy at the time because it was missing its battery, and the rebuilt Tri-Power induction system was sitting in the trunk. Undaunted by its non-running state, Chuck still surmised he could make the Pontiac into an enjoyable driver. Before he purchased it, however, he returned with another friend—an autobody technician—just to confirm that the Chieftain was actually as solid as he had first thought.

Chuck also notes, "I believe this car came from the factory



with an automatic transmission because the VIN has an 'H' in it, which stood for Hydra-Matic. Standard transmission cars had an 'S' for synchromesh. I haven't been able to confirm when or why it was changed."

Once he had his Chieftain home, the work began. Chuck sent the Tri-Power assembly to a professional to properly set up the three two-barrel carburetors and their linkage. Upon their return, he installed them, and a new battery, wheel cylinders, brakes and lines. He examined the rest of the drivetrain and suspension for potential safety and drivability issues before, and again after, road testing.

What he learned while out on the street was that the 370-cu.in. engine was responsive, the column-shifted three-speed manual transmission still shifted well, the rear didn't make any noise, and the suspension still felt tight.

According to Chuck, the body retains some of its original paint, but most of the top surfaces and those down low on the sides were repainted, and the roof was originally blue to match the side coves. The bumpers appear to be the factory-installed ones as well. Aftermarket fender skirts were already on the Chieftain when he bought it, so he decided to retain them.

Over the years, some additional cosmetic and mechanical work kept the Pontiac road-ready. The passenger fender and door required repairs, and the bright trim was replaced on the same side, as was the grille. The clutch, shocks and brake shoes were replaced, and a dual-circuit brake master cylinder was installed to increase safety should part of the system fail. Modern radial tires that retain a vintage appearance were mounted to improve the ride and handling.

Not one to shy away from a challenge, Chuck even drove his Chieftain to the Pontiac Nationals in Norwalk, Ohio, one year. Roughly a 365-mile round trip, he told us that the Chieftain performed flawlessly. "My Pontiac accelerates very

well. It drives smoothly, especially on the highway, but handling is what you might expect from a 1950s car."

I had a chance to drive this Pontiac and felt the same way about its characteristics. Sliding behind the large, thin-rimmed and ornate Deluxe steering wheel and settling into the softly padded Morrokide-and-Lustrex-covered bench seat, I instantly noticed a light and airy feeling in the spacious and bright two-tone blue cabin.

A high seating position and the wraparound front and rear windows with thin pillars and the lack of side window frames offer generous visibility in all directions. With one foot depressing the clutch pedal and the other on the brake pedal, a twist of the ignition key brought the 370 instantly to life, and it soon settled into a steady idle.

Moving the column-mounted three-speed shifter from neutral toward me and down engaged first gear. After releasing the parking brake, I gave it some gas while easing out the clutch pedal, and we were off. Once the car gained some road speed, working the clutch and sliding the shifter up-forward-up engaged second gear and soon after, the same clutch actions and pulling straight down on the shifter grabbed third.

The engine pulled smoothly through the gears, and though our test loop's traffic conditions didn't allow for a serious evaluation of acceleration, during our drive, we were able to dip into the outer carbs a

few times and were rewarded with an intake roar, a louder exhaust note and a satisfying rush forward.

Power steering is a welcomed option in a car of this size and weight, and it required a very light touch, but it did negate any road feel. The ride was quite soft and somewhat floaty, and cornering was met with considerable body lean, but these characteristics are no different than most cars of the era. Braking performance via the iron drums was also commensurate with this vehicle's build period.

Viewing the well-designed two-pod instrument cluster was





This 370's Tri-Power induction system was modified with aftermarket air cleaners, mechanical carb linkage to replace the vacuum style and a manual choke.





I really enjoy taking my Pontiac to car cruises because there's never another one there like it. Out on the road, I always get a honk and thumbs-up from other motorists. My Chieftain also participated in the production of two movies that were shot in Pittsburgh, though you may miss it if you blink at the wrong time. In *A New York Heartbeat* (2013), you can see my car only in a flash. It was also filmed for *American Pastoral* (2016), but may have ended up on the cutting room floor, since I never saw my car when I watched it. There was also a feature on my Chieftain in the February 2005 issue of *POCI's Smoke Signals*.

easy, thanks to the large-diameter steering wheel, but I did have to look around the horn ring at times. The heater and other controls and switches were within reasonable reach, and there was no need to concern ourselves with the radio, since this Pontiac wasn't optioned with one.

The seat offered good back and thigh support, but of course, no lateral support in the turns since it's a bench design... and there are no seatbelts. The somewhat upscale interior accoutrements belie the fact that the Chieftain is the entry-level Pontiac. It has carpeting instead of a rubber floor mat; a two-tone upholstery scheme and the door panel design and the off-the-shoulder seat patterns contribute to a rich appearance.

All-in-all, this Chieftain Catalina was a comfortable cruiser once you get used to the action of the column shift linkage and the lack of a synchronized first gear. And of course, it drew plenty of positive attention on the street.

With less than 46,000 miles accrued to date, Chuck's 1958 Pontiac still serves as a weekly pleasure car for warm, sunny days in and around Pittsburgh.

Though he readily admits that he doesn't often show his Chieftain Catalina coupe, as he'd rather enjoy it on the street, he did decide to participate in the World of Wheels Show at

the Pittsburgh Convention Center, where his Pontiac garnered Second place in its class in 2013 and returned in 2014 to capture first place. Quite an achievement for a driver that sees as much road time as this one does.

This particular coupe has led a charmed life, thanks to caring owners, but as history has shown, all was certainly not roses for the Pontiac Motor Division that year, as sales slipped sharply, due in large part to a recession. Most other automakers suffered to varying degrees as well, and Pontiac lost some market share, which some have argued was exacerbated by price increases for the 1958 models.

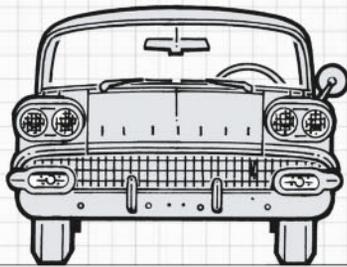
Times were tight in many American households that year, but Chuck's recollection is reinforced by the optimism of a nine-year-old—his age at the time—and the nostalgia that has grown over the nearly six decades that followed. He simply remembers how much he enjoyed riding in his stepdad's new Pontiac, and that has helped fuel his admiration for his Chieftain.

Consequently, Chuck has no extravagant plans for his Chieftain. He'll continue to maintain it and drive it whenever the thought strikes him, as he's done for more than 16 years. In so doing, he'll rekindle childhood memories and forge new experiences. 🏁

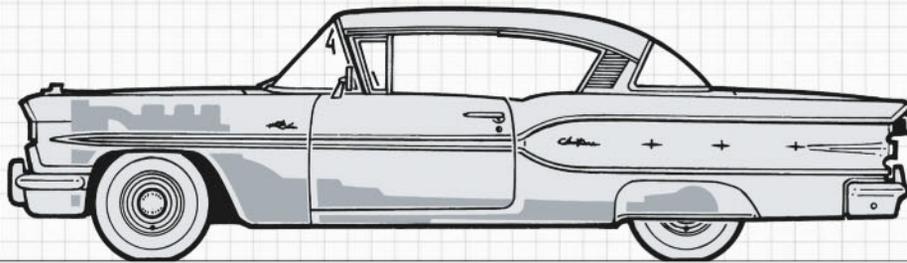


1958 PONTIAC CHIEFTAIN CATALINA

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



← 58.7 inches →



← 122 inches →

SPECIFICATIONS

PRICE

BASE PRICE	\$2,707
PRICE AS OPTIONED	Approximately \$3,337
OPTIONS (ON CAR PROFILED)	Tri-Power, \$100.50; power steering, \$107.50; Deluxe steering wheel, \$15.78; Deluxe wheel discs, \$17.60; Circulaire heater and defroster, \$96.30; dual exhaust, \$31.18; mirror group (outside rear view mirror, inside non-glare tilt mirror, visor vanity mirror), \$13.10; backup lamps, \$17.20; (Super Hydra-Matic, \$231.34 was likely factory installed, given the presence of its code in the VIN)

ENGINE

TYPE	OHV V-8, cast-iron block and cylinder heads
DISPLACEMENT	370 cubic inches
BORE X STROKE	4.0625 x 3.5625 inches
COMPRESSION RATIO	10.5:1
HORSEPOWER @ RPM	300 @ 4,600
TORQUE @ RPM	400-lb.ft. @ 3,000
VALVETRAIN	Hydraulic valve lifters
MAIN BEARINGS	Five
FUEL SYSTEM	Three Rochester two-barrel carburetors on a cast-iron intake manifold, mechanical pump
LUBRICATION SYSTEM	Pressure, gear-type pump
ELECTRICAL SYSTEM	12-volt
EXHAUST SYSTEM	Dual pipes, mufflers and tailpipes

TRANSMISSION

TYPE	Super Hydra-Matic automatic
CURRENTLY	Column-shift, standard-duty, three-speed manual
RATIOS	Manual
	1st 2.21:1
	2nd 1.32:1
	3rd 1.00:1

DIFFERENTIAL

TYPE	9.3-inch ring gear, Hypoid-drive gears, Hotchkiss design; open
GEAR RATIO	3.08:1

STEERING

TYPE	Recirculating ball-bearing gear, power assisted
GEAR RATIO	22:1
TURNS TO LOCK	4.25

BRAKES

TYPE	Four-wheel hydraulic, power assisted
FRONT	12-inch drum
REAR	11-inch drum

CHASSIS & BODY

CONSTRUCTION	Steel body with steel reinforcements surrounding passenger compartment, separate tubular-center X-frame, box section, four cross-members
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BODY STYLE	Two-door hardtop
LAYOUT	Front engine, rear-wheel drive

SUSPENSION

FRONT	Independent; unequal-length upper and lower control arms; coil springs; telescoping double-acting hydraulic shocks, anti-roll bar
REAR	Solid axle; control arms; coil springs; double-acting hydraulic shocks

WHEELS & TIRES

WHEELS	Steel, drop-center, wheel covers; 14 x 6
TIRES	Bias-ply, 8.00-14 (currently Diamondback wide whitewall radials; 215/75R14)

WEIGHTS & MEASURES

WHEELBASE	122 inches
OVERALL LENGTH	210.53 inches
OVERALL WIDTH	77.4 inches
OVERALL HEIGHT	57.0 inches
FRONT TRACK	58.7 inches
REAR TRACK	59.4 inches
SHIPPING WEIGHT	3,765 pounds

CAPACITIES

CRANKCASE	6 quarts
COOLING SYSTEM	21.2 quarts
FUEL TANK	20 gallons

CALCULATED DATA

BHP PER CU.IN.	.810
WEIGHT PER BHP	12.55 pounds
WEIGHT PER CU.IN.	10.17 pounds

PERFORMANCE*

0-60 MPH	7.6 seconds
¼ MILE E.T.	16.0 seconds
¼ MILE SPEED	88 MPH
FUEL MILEAGE	N/A

*February 1958 *Hot Rod* road test of a 1958 Bonneville sport coupe with the 300hp Tri-Power engine, Hydra-Matic and 3.23 rear gears and no Safe-T-Track.

PRODUCTION

CHIEFTAIN	
CATALINA COUPES	26,003

PROS & CONS

- + Very reliable
- + Sporty hardtop styling
- + Substantial power for its day

- Few parts reproduced
- First gear isn't synchronized
- An overlooked model year

WHAT TO PAY

LOW
\$8,000 – \$12,000

AVERAGE
\$19,000 – \$23,000

HIGH
High-\$33,000 – \$37,000

Add 20% for Tri-Power
Add 5% Hydra-Matic transmission

CLUB CORNER

PONTIAC OAKLAND CLUB INTERNATIONAL

P.O. Box 68
Maple Plain, Minnesota 55359
www.poci.org
Phone: 877-368-3454
Dues: \$39 per year
Membership: 9,000

ANTIQUE AUTOMOBILE CLUB OF AMERICA

501 W. Governor Road
P.O. Box 417
Hershey, Pennsylvania 17033
Website: www.aaca.org
Phone: 717-534-1910
Dues: \$35
Membership: 60,000

Full-Sized Ferocity

With the 1966 Galaxie 500 7-Litre, Ford created a muscle car designed for the whole family

BY DAVID CONWILL

PHOTOGRAPHY BY RICHARD LENTINELLO







The steering wheel with “walnut-like trim” was a 7-Litre exclusive, other features like the bucket seats and console were shared with the 500 XL. The optional clock, converted to quartz, works, as does the AM radio. Accessory gauges and tach were added later.

There is more to life than drag racing. You wouldn't necessarily know it, going to many car shows today, where you will see rows upon rows of pony cars, compacts and midsize cars stuffed with hot V-8 engines. It's perfectly forgivable to think that maybe everyone who bought a car from 1964 to 1972 was bent on pairing the smallest body possible with the biggest engine.

That's not the case, of course. Full-size cars didn't disappear with the advent of the power-to-weight obsession that gripped performance-car culture back then. There was an increased emphasis on luxury trappings in formerly pedestrian brands like Ford and Chevrolet—witness the LTD and Caprice—but power

didn't go anywhere, either. With a little bit of hunting, an enthusiast can really stand out by finding one of the later offerings pairing big bodies with big engines.

Around 1965, full-size muscle began to take on a degree of civility largely absent earlier in the decade. The raucous, temperamental big-block V-8s of the early 1960s were tamed by the replacement of solid-lifter camshafts and multiple carburetors with bigger bores and longer strokes. Along with these powerful, yet under-stressed, engines came sporty features reminiscent of European Grand Touring cars—another contrast with the bare-bones, all-business demeanor of early full-size performers.

Nowhere is this evolution of the full-size performance car





An Ivy Gold interior, which complements the Ivy Green exterior, is largely the same as found in a contemporary 500 XL's. A glass window completes the white convertible top. Front and rear seatbelts were factory features that year, though rears were not required until 1968.

more evident than in the 1966 Ford Galaxie 500 7-Litre, available as a two-door hardtop or convertible and priced above even the LTD series. The 7-Litre name derives from its "Thunderbird Special" engine: A 428-cu.in. FE-series V-8. The 428, which capitalized on its similar displacement to the vaunted 427-cu.in. V-8s with which Ford had seen much success in NASCAR and drag racing, was a more sedate creature than its predecessor.

For ease of production and more civilized street manners, the 428 achieved its displacement with a longer stroke and smaller bore than the 427—making it ideally suited to the full-size Ford intended for the street. An emphasis on torque and real-world driving manners meant the 428 produced "only"

345 horsepower, thanks to a 10.5:1 compression ratio, a Holley four-barrel carburetor and "special dual, low-restriction exhaust."

Of course, the 428 wasn't solely available in the 7-Litre, but Ford sweetened the deal with a long list of standard equipment. First and foremost was the Cruise-O-Matic three-speed automatic transmission. Ford's vaunted "Toploader" four-speed manual was available as a no-charge option.

Also standard in the 7-Litre was everything that came on the equivalent 500 XL models: console, floor-shift, bucket seats covered in "leather-smooth vinyl" and front and rear seatbelts. Unique to the 7-Litre series were standard power front disc





The chrome rocker covers are part of a dealer-installed engine dress-up kit original to the car. The 7-Litre badges describe not only the engine displacement but the series itself. The wheel covers, shown below, are another 7-Litre hallmark.

brakes, styled wheel covers, body striping and 7-Litre badging.

Almost all of the luxury and performance features available to purchasers of lesser full-size Fords were available to 7-Litre buyers, with the exception of light-duty items like the three-speed manual transmission or the 289-cu.in. V-8. Speed demons could actually specify the 425-horsepower "Cobra 427" V-8 in place of the more sedate 428 (a move that precluded installation of the automatic transmission), along with items like a limited-slip differential and heavy-duty suspension.

With only a little over 11,000 7-Litre cars produced (compare that with more than 32,000 500 XL's), it's hard to say that there is a "typical" 7-Litre, but the Ivy Green example on these pages is probably a fair representative of the breed. Owners Ron and Kathy Hanisko, of Wallingford, Connecticut, are determined to keep it that way.

Ron and Kathy purchased their 7-Litre in January 2015 from a consignment dealer in Florida, where it had unfortunately been sent very soon after a decade-long restoration effort by the previous owner who had fallen ill. As a testament to the quality of that restoration, Ron says that he's done virtually nothing to the car since taking ownership, save for required maintenance and some subtle upgrades like hidden electronic ignition and a tachometer held in by Velcro for easy removal.

The Haniskos are no strangers to full-size Fords, having previously owned a 1964 Galaxie convertible. They discovered the 7-Litre while searching for another convertible. "I was thinking a Mustang or a Camaro, something along those lines," Ron says, "Because I once owned a '64 Galaxie, the last thing that was on my mind was another Galaxie."

But Ron knew the 7-Litre was not just another Galaxie. He says that while most people at shows acknowledge it as a nice old Ford, he truly relishes the conversations with those who understand what the 7-Litre fender badges really mean. Thanks to those aforementioned low-production numbers, and still

lower survival rates, the group of 7-Litre owners is an exclusive club. "I like the fact that so few were produced. According to the International 7-Litre Registry, 147 automatic convertibles are known to exist today. Most people at car shows think it's a



regular Galaxie 500, but every once in a while someone comes along who knows what it is. That's when I can really have a fun conversation about the car."

To that end, Ron, who is not typically a purist, has endeavored to respect the previous owner's dedication to originality, right down to retaining the whitewall tires (upgraded to radials) and stock wheel covers. He also tries to limit the number of casual miles the car gets on it. "Occasionally," Ron notes, "my wife will say 'It's a nice day, let's take the convertible for a ride,' but I don't like getting in the car and just wandering aimlessly."

On the other hand, Ron says he and Kathy won't hesitate to drive it to the right destination—they've put 4,500 miles on it over two seasons of ownership. "We really mix it up. We probably go to two or three cruise nights a week during the summer. I'm selective on the shows I go to—the ones where we travel for a distance and spend the weekend, my wife enjoys more than just going to a local car show."

The car is not a fire breather, it wasn't intended to be, but the combination of power and luxury makes it perfect for exactly the kind of use to which Ron and Kathy put it. "It's pretty heavy—it's just about two tons," Ron says. "It rides like a dream, but because of all that weight, the 428 isn't as responsive as you might imagine. For a car its size, yeah, it corners pretty nicely. The car will not dip. It's great with the top down. It's extremely comfortable."

The "family size muscle car," as Ron describes the 7-Litre, was unfortunately to prove an evolutionary dead end for Ford. The name returned as a package, rather than a separate series, in 1967 and was extinct by 1968. That means that finding a 7-Litre car is a special thing. Perhaps more remarkable, their relatively unknown status compared to something like the Fairlane GTA or the famous Mustang, means you can still enjoy an interesting, exclusive piece of performance-car history for only a small premium over regular Galaxie prices. 🏆



“It rides like a dream... For a car its size,

yeah, it corners pretty nicely.

It's great with the top down.

It's extremely comfortable.”





Lark Versus Rambler

Something that's always fascinated me is how vintage cars were thought about back when they were new. If you read contemporary car-magazine articles about the 1951-'55 Kaisers, for example, you learn how greatly they were admired, especially their styling. Read about the 1953-'54 Hudson Jet, and you see high praise for its power and quality. Willys Jeeps, on the other hand, often received criticism about their low power and harsh ride.

But the topic that interests me most is what people thought of the Studebaker Lark and Rambler Six when they were new—how they felt they compared. I located some vintage magazines that evaluated the two together, as well as a few that tested them separately. Titles included *Motor Trend*, *Car Life*, *Sports Car Illustrated*, *Motor Life* and *Popular Science*. What they thought of these two cars is interesting.

Devon Francis, writing for *Popular Science*, said the 1959 Lark "...is truly small ... more than three inches shorter than the Rambler American, [previously] the littlest ... domestic car. Yet the Lark seats six persons.... The most prominent feature ... is the grille [which] makes the Lark look like a vest-pocket edition of the Chrysler 300." *Motor Trend* described Lark as a "...well-appointed, lively performer ... a fresh American-designed vehicle with a European flair."

Francis compared the two-door Lark's \$1,925 price against the Rambler four-door's \$2,098 tag instead of using the Lark four-door's \$1,995 sticker (Rambler didn't offer a 108-inch two-door). Either way, the Lark beat the big Rambler in pricing, though AMC also had its \$1,789 American to offer bargain hunters.

Francis said the Lark, being 16 inches shorter than the senior Rambler, didn't have Rambler's "big car appearance." "It looks like something from Europe," he stated, but noted that interior roominess of the Lark and the big Rambler were "...so alike they could have been copied from the same blueprint." Lark's wheelbase was 108.5 inches versus Rambler's 108 inches. Oddly enough, the full-frame Lark actually weighed hundreds of pounds less than the unibody Rambler. *Popular Science* raved about the entry room for both cars, calling it "...nothing short of

superb [and] far better than Chevrolet, Ford or Plymouth...."

Engine-wise, the Lark's base flathead six-cylinder produced just 90hp, while the Rambler's OHV six-cylinder was good for 127hp. Fuel mileage was close, with the base three-speed stick, but when overdrive was used, the Lark's



Photo, using Studebaker American from an reference to the most famous magazine. See: Studebaker American and over grille design on back panel and complete.

smaller engine delivered better mileage. Perhaps not surprisingly, the Rambler Six was much quicker, accelerating 0-60 in 16.3 seconds versus the Lark's leisurely 20.4 seconds. But when both were

equipped with their optional V-8s, the Lark proved significantly quicker than the Rambler. Both cars were judged to have good riding qualities.

Opinions about the Lark tended to vary among magazines according to which engine was tested. *Sports Car Illustrated's* view of the Lark's six-cylinder performance was unflattering: "... its 90hp leaves it definitely in the poopy category when trying to overtake at 50+ mph." But *Motor Trend's* Lark with a 259-cu.in. V-8 under the hood accelerated like a scalded cat: They clocked it doing 0-60 MPH at 10 seconds even. That was good moving back then. The Rambler V-8 took a reported 12 seconds.

As far as handling and cornering performance, *Motor Trend* said the Lark "...felt like it was running on tracks." Steering effort was so easy on their non-power-steering test car that they became convinced it actually did have power assist. It didn't. *Car Life* said, "Driving the Rambler Six is pure pleasure. The car's weight is evenly distributed... The suspension is soft enough to give a comfortable ride yet firm enough to prevent swaying or wallowing."

The takeaway I got from all this research was this: Every car magazine that tested the Rambler and the Lark liked them. Evaluators were universally surprised at how nicely the cars performed and how well they were built. Individual preference dictated whether the test driver preferred the more traditional Rambler or the European-style Lark, but even in such cases, there were no knocks against the competition.

And no one said the independents didn't make as good a car as the big boys. Instead, they praised their innovation. That's good. 🐾



The takeaway

I got from all

this research

was this: Every

car magazine

that tested the

Rambler and

the Lark liked

them.



I'M WRITING AS A CAR GUY, NOT A car snob. I can enjoy damn near anything with an engine, and I don't care if it's a Renault Dauphine or an SSJ Duesenberg. If you can drive it, you can have fun with it. I don't care if it's a Delahaye with Fignon et Falaschi coachwork exquisitely hand formed by skilled panel beaters or a rusted rat rod. And this is why I'm writing. Quite often there will be a letter published in Recaps wherein a reader has written in high dudgeon to decry a car that has been featured. In a world increasingly divided over so many issues, we car guys and gals really should meet on common ground. Who cares if a Crosley or Corvette was America's first sports car? They're both cars, they both have four wheels and an engine—they're both great! Is a creamsicle-colored Mercury Bobcat a classic? It doesn't matter—it's part of our collective automotive history and is emblematic of its time and place. That alone makes it worthy of appreciation and inclusion in your magazine. Is a Pontiac Aztek destined to become a coveted collector car? Only time will tell, but I would remind everyone that the Edsel was once looked at in much the same way. And love or loathe the Aztek, it did in many ways foreshadow the now ubiquitous crossover. Perhaps such a car is not your taste, so don't buy one. There's no need to sling epithets at a car or its owner. I'm not alone in my sentiments; I started a Facebook group, Malaise Motors, as a lark earlier this year. The group is dedicated to any and all cars built between 1972-1995, a time frame that encompasses a lot of vehicles which are, shall we say, underappreciated. In my group "malaise" is a term of endearment, members laughingly refer to themselves as "Malasians." Our first members were just my own Facebook friends, but we've grown to nearly 2,300 members as of this writing. The reason for this success, I feel, is in no small part because I and my fellow Admins and members work very hard to maintain an environment that is fun, lighthearted and irreverent, but never ever insulting of members or their cars.

To me, *Hemmings Classic Car* has a very similar tone and is to be commended for it. Where else can I read about a Packard Eight sedan, a single-family-owned Marmon with a century on the road and AMC Pacer might-have-beens in the same issue? Milton Stern's "Detroit Underdogs" column never fails to delight! Reminiscences from readers of their days in the industry or driving classic cars is the cherry

on top of one of my favorite automotive periodicals. You have a subscriber for life in me. Keep up the good work!

Bryan Davis
Fresno, California

I WHOLEHEARTEDLY DISAGREE WITH

the letter from Jason Treadaway in *HCC* #149, both in content and in the letter's unnecessarily rude, condescending tone. Collectibility and desirability are in the eye of the beholder. There are plenty of people who find any old, low-mileage, original car to be collectible, no matter how mundane.

Additionally, his example is flawed. There are already people collecting Pontiac Azteks, thanks to Walter White driving one in the successful *Breaking Bad* television series.

Personally, I love seeing a well-preserved oddball at a car show, and I love seeing them in your magazine. Keep it up!
Christopher Fisher
Delmont, Pennsylvania

I WAS APPALLED TO READ THE LETTER

from the reader who called the Bobcat a "Putrid turd of an automobile," as well as it not having a place in your publication.

Any old car that has been well taken care of or even restored to the level of that Bobcat deserves to be seen in your magazine. Imagine how the owners felt when they read this tasteless letter. The owners comment that "it was such an amazing time capsule, we had to buy it. It deserved to be preserved and appreciated! It makes people happy," pretty well sums it up.

Car collectors of all ilk appreciate a well-kept or restored car. Not everyone can afford to spend lots of money on restorations, but perhaps they would like to go to car shows and rather than just look, they can take their Bobcat, Pinto, Vega or Gremlin and be a part of the experience.

I thought the Bobcat was a lovely car and enjoyed reading about it.

Printing that reader's letter was in bad taste. Shame on you!

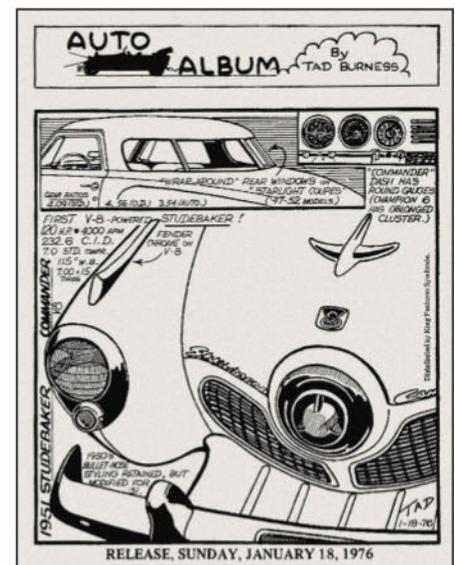
Tom Jakeway
Lewis, Colorado

MY FATHER, AARON SPAINHOUR,

passed away this July at the age of 87. His favorite car stories revolved around the 1957 De Soto "Golden" Adventurer hardtop that he owned as a young man. He talked about the swivel seats and the pushbutton transmission that always confused valets and garages. His only complaint was the

cruise control would not set on any speed higher than 100 MPH! My dad rebelled from his Chevrolet mechanic father to be a MOPAR man through and through, even going as far as becoming a Chrysler dealer during the difficult late 1970s. He sold the dealership right before the introduction of the minivan. I always look forward to the new issue of *Hemmings Classic Car*, but your February 2017 issue featuring an Adventurer on the cover and an excellent article on the inside brought back fond memories for me. It was a fitting tribute for a true "adventurer."

G. Cole Spainhour
Austin, Texas



REGARDING YOUR FINE PIONEERS

column on Tad Burness in *HCC* #149, you didn't include an example of his syndicated "Auto Album," which appeared weekly in many newspapers. These pen-and-ink drawings were done in the style of either artist or cartoonist, depending how you saw them, but had much information on each car featured.

As a teenager, I began corresponding with Tad, and he was always eager to talk about cars, old movies, music or just about anything cool! During this time (early 1970s), he drove a 1959 Edsel as his daily driver, so he was a car guy through and through. Enclosed is a copy of "Auto Album" Tad sent me that featured a Studebaker like I drove in high school.

Bruce Newell
Yakima, Washington

Continued on page 45



The Heat of the Matter

If you live up in our part of the United States, you better get used to it being cold. One of the staples of life here by Hemmings World Headquarters is listening to the wind scream down into the valley of the Waloomsac River as the temperature begins to drop. And I'll tell you, those things you might have heard on The Weather Channel are the stone truth. It really does sound like a runaway freight train.

You get up in the morning and it's scrape, scrape, scrape. Then you crank the engine and pull away from the house—sometimes, the fluid inside the torque converter is chilled so thick that the car doesn't want to move. If you're lucky, the heater might have started cranking by the time you get to pull into the company lot. Do this day after day, and maybe you, too, will start wondering about how people kept from freezing to death in their cars while driving in winters past. Come on, all you Hemmings Nation folks in Wisconsin, Maine and Montana, you know you've had these thoughts. As I type these lines, our friends in North Carolina are digging out (or melting out) from under eight fresh inches of the white stuff, so they likely get the point, now, too.

One of the realities of our world is that really old and cool cars—no pun intended—typically hibernate during the winter. Nobody wants them exposed to salt and aggregate chipping off their luscious paintwork. So, to some degree, you've got to use your imagination when you're out on a photo shoot in the summertime. You can look at the seatback railings from which people used to hang blankets in the winter. Or maybe you're a literature collector. That means that you can page through the advertisements for heavy dusters and car coats—I remember my mother using that term to describe a longish outer garment that she had—that were marketed to the earliest drivers, looking like the kind of protection the Donner Party could have used.

Then we move on to the heating systems that were developed for the automobiles themselves. I will admit right up front that I'm not an expert, but I do recall the stove-type arrangement that used to go on top of the engine of the Ford Model A, which often lacked any other provision for occupant warmth, and blew engine-warmed air into the

passenger cabin. I spoke to two of our resident Model A experts, Mark McCourt and Dave Conwill, and both noted that any heating system you were likely to find on most mass-market cars in those years was relegated to the aftermarket, and that such systems as you found with the Model A tended to become more broadly available as

the nation went deeper into the 1930s, when gasoline-fired interior heaters became more commonplace.

Really, though, you had to get onto the other side of World War II before the days of car robes and such began to give way to the integrated heating system that was factory-developed and

installed. This was when GIs back from the war were familiar with the joys of making holes in the floorboards of a Jeep or a big GMC 6x6 to admit some engine heat while they were running the Red Ball Express in Europe. It was also around the same time when the auto manufacturers started to come up with magical names to describe some very basic heating systems: A defrost-or-heat knob, a fan knob and a temperature slider that often functioned more like an on-off switch. Look at the feature on the 1959 Rambler station wagon elsewhere in this issue. You can see how elementary the Weather Eye heater setup was, and how little space it took up on the dashboard. But the Rambler was built in Kenosha, Wisconsin, which meant it came off the line well-equipped to blunt the effects of the brutal Great Lakes winters for those who were ensconced in its interior. No digital temperature controls or heated seats in sight, at least not yet, but it kept you from thinking you were about to be turned into a stalagmite.

Got a question here, raised in part by the Editor in Chief: Remember how the rap against Volkswagens was always that their air-cooled engines could not pump out enough heat to keep a Beetle's tiny interior warm? I've had a lot of experience with those cars in the winter and can tell you that the criticism was largely justified. Let me take the question one step further and ask that if that was true for Volkswagen, what about the Chevrolet Corvair? Did its two additional cylinders generate enough heat under the rear engine cover to warm the interior acceptably well? Let me know. And stay warm any way you can. 🍷



//
...maybe you,
too, will start
wondering
about how
people kept
from freezing
to death in
their cars
while driving
in winters
past.



I AM ONE OF THE GUILTY PARTIES TO

Alan Roth's concern about Hershey's decline, as noted in Recaps in *HCC* #149. I have been a Hershey vendor for 36 years and last year, 2016, my three spaces sat empty—first time in those 36 years. I “pay” for my Hershey “vacation” with the income from my vendor space sales. But 2015 was dismal. Then, our hotel was sold between 2015/2016, and the year-to-year reservations were not forwarded to the new hotel owners—so we lost our hotel room. That was the straw that broke the camel's back.

I have complained to the AACA, and no response. Everything is rosy. The biggest problem that I see is the hospitality industry—they gouge the people during Hershey week. Hershey, Pennsylvania, is an \$80/night market. During Hershey week, they double it to \$160 or more, plus all of the taxes (not just sales tax). Selling \$5 and \$10 items, it takes massive sales to pay off an \$800 hotel bill. The AACA needs to get active with the hospitality industry and explain that the gouging is killing the goose that lays the golden egg.

Second problem is that there are more rules for vendors than buyers—the AACA should value their vendors—we're the ones that bring in the buyers. Yes, the golf carts are a problem, and there are rules to limit that, but the rules are not enforced. I have ideas that can turn Hershey around, but if there's nothing wrong, then nothing needs fixing.

I'll buy my 2017 spaces, and we'll see what October 2017 looks like and make a decision near travel time—if we can get a reasonably-priced hotel room, we will probably go.

Jorn Jensen

Worthington, Pennsylvania

I AM WRITING ABOUT AN ISSUE THAT

no one seems to want to address: that being the collector-car price bubble that has yet to burst. At some point, it definitely will, and I for one will welcome it. Prices for cars and parts are continually getting outrageous. I, myself, have been repairing and restoring Corvettes for nearly 40 years, but when you see items like a T-10 four-speed selling for \$10,000 or a complete big-brake package selling for \$30,000, that just proves it has to stop.

Car prices continue to rise, but most of the inventory is not moving. I see the same cars for sale for one to two years, but these overpriced dealers refuse to drop their prices. Add on the fact that many of the

older guys are dying off, I see the interest shifting to later-model cars with the younger guys. If you take notice, there is no shortage of early Corvettes for sale.

Vinny Catalano
Dade City, Florida

JIM DONNELLY'S "AUTOMOTIVE

Pioneers" column about Strother MacMinn in *HCC* #148 reminded me of a fascinating day I spent in 1989 with MacMinn, David Holls and Franklin Hershey at the Blackhawk Automotive Museum in Danville, California. I had the pleasure of knowing them all through my being editor for the Cadillac-LaSalle Club's *Self Starter Annual* magazine and V.P. of publications for the Packard Club.

Strother (who was quite proud of his Oldsmobile instrument panel design used from 1941 to 1948) was retired at the time; Dave (who was heavily involved in the design of the iconic 1959 Cadillac tailfins) was director of design at G.M. Design; and Frank (who designed the famous Pontiac Silver Streak) and had worked at GM Design under Harley Earl, was retired and living in Palm Springs. Dave was out for a visit, to include the Pebble Beach Concours, and our plan was to visit the Blackhawk Museum open-house the next day. Once there, we ran into Frank and Strother and decided to walk through the collection together. To have the opportunity to discuss each car we viewed, with these friends, and to hear their well-founded comments and critiques was priceless. They are gone now, but I'll never forget that day.

Bud Juneau

Brentwood, California

MILTON STERN'S ARTICLE ABOUT THE

Buick Apollo-Skylark in Detroit Underdogs in *HCC* #149 brings back some very painful memories of being a Buick service manager back in 1973. This Chevrolet Nova with a Buick emblem on it was far from being what repeat-Buick customers expected and most found out after the fact. Most were powered by the Buick 350-cu.in. V-8; in fact, we only sold one Apollo in 1974 with the Chevrolet 250-cu.in. straight-six engine. What the Buick buyer wanted was small, but not cheap, and they didn't get that. This unibody mono leaf spring car had a rough ride compared to other models, along with other problems.

In 1975, things got really bad with the name change on the two-door models to Skylark. The repeat buyer that owned the

older Skylark, up to 1972, would buy by model name. What he really wanted was the Regal, but wound up with a Skylark. For fear of losing the deal, the salesman would not explain the difference between the X-body car versus the A-body car. A couple of weeks later, the customer would come in looking for the salesman, and when they couldn't find them, guess who got the haircut? Yep, the service manager. That was the year that Buick also introduced the Chevy Vega-Monza under the name Skyhawk; that's another horror story for another day.

Phil Aubrey

Merlin, Oregon

JIM RICHARDSON'S COLUMN ON

flat tires, "Fubba Dubba Dubba," in *HCC* #148, brought back memories of my youth. In about 1956 or '57, we were traveling from Pittsburgh to Geneva-On-The-Lake, Ohio, for summer vacation in our 1950 four-door Dodge sedan, when we experienced a right front flat tire. Dad dutifully pulled over and labored to get that heavy piece of iron off the ground using the bumper jack. As he went to get the tire from behind the car, for some unknown reason, Mom thought she'd help and pull the tire off. Well, the bumper jack slipped and pinned Mom's hand between the partially extracted top of the tire and the bottom of the wheel lip. I was just a lad of 6, but together with my Mom, we made a loud cry for help.

There was a group of young men hanging out at the Dairy Queen nearby that came running over; they lifted some of the weight off her hand while Dad feverishly pumped up the jack until she was freed. We expected the worst, a broken hand or finger—perhaps even severed. What, in fact, happened was nothing short of miraculous! The fender landed on her wedding ring, which bore the brunt of the weight; her hand wasn't hurt and her ring finger was only slightly swollen. No one could believe it. The guys changed the tire, and we continued on our vacation.

I learned very early on not to trust a jack, and they don't make cars or wedding rings like they used to.

Ken Stubert

Georgetown, Texas



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



//
The suppliers
of hinges,
seat springs,
interior
hardware,
glass,
upholstery
cloth,
carpet and
leather, etc.
were really
confined to
a group of a
select few...



Custom Coachwork Suppliers

For those of us who enjoy custom-built motorcars created prior to World War II, we have seen some excellent and well-deserved recognition of the coachwork firms that designed and built the amazing bodies for those luxury automobiles. What have not been so well recognized are the manufacturers of components that were purchased by the custom body builders to construct their coachwork. The suppliers of hinges, seat springs, interior hardware, glass, upholstery cloth, carpet and leather, etc. were really confined to a group of a select few that all the body builders patronized.

Two companies that most of the custom body builders used were located in New York state. One was The Harry A. McFarland Company, located at 17 West 60th Street in New York City. It supplied interior hardware such as dome lamps, footman loops, door handles, robe rail fixtures, window winders, etc. to all the major body builders in the USA. McFarland's location was strategic to its business. The Packard Motor Car Company of New York, which was a factory branch with an immense dealer/distributor network, was less than a five-minute walk from McFarland, as were the LeBaron and Rollston coachbuilders. Brewster bodies were all equipped with hardware supplied by McFarland, and, considering all the cars built by Rolls-Royce of America that featured Brewster coachwork, I believe the firm was its best customer.

The Derham Body Company of Rosemont, Pennsylvania, was also a very good purchaser of McFarland's offerings. The base metal of the hardware castings could vary from white (pot) metal, to German silver and bronze. Knobs at the end of window winders would be metal, if supplied for the chauffeur compartment, and either metal or bone if fitted to the rear compartment. Plating for the rear compartment hardware would be nickel, silver or gold, depending upon the accompanying

cloth and woodwork and was chosen to complement the whole design. The hardware in the front compartment where the chauffeur sat was usually painted black (even if the base metal was cast bronze) to match the leather there and to contribute to the sober appearance of that area.

The other New York firm was the F.R.

Atkinson Spring Company, located at 33 Scott Street in Hamburg, a town just south of Buffalo. It had developed in 1923 from the Burdick-Atkinson Spring Co., and most of its factory buildings, built in 1880, still exist. It was located right next to a main rail line, so delivery of completed orders could be easily shipped. F.R. Atkinson noted in its advertising that it was a manufacturer of custom springs, specializing in genuine "lace web" construction for use in automobile upholstery.

In 1930, custom body builders like the Walter M. Murphy Company in Pasadena, California, and the John B. Judkins Company in Merrimac,

Massachusetts, as well as independent car manufacturers like Stearns-Knight and Cunningham, all used Atkinson to supply their custom-designed and manufactured seat springs. "After all—passengers ride on the cushions," was its motto at the custom body salons. The spiral springs were shaped like hourglasses and held together by a "lace web." Atkinson noted that its engineers offered wide experience in scientifically coordinating cushion design with chassis suspension and body layout. A small tag was attached to the bottom of the springs that the company constructed, noting the size and body builder that ordered the cushion. The Mayhew family was heavily involved in the management at Atkinson, as well as in the filing of patents for its product. Despite the demise of most of the custom body builders by 1939, the F.R. Atkinson Spring Company was still in business until at least the spring of 1952. ☞

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Golden Anniversary

Lincoln celebrated its 50th anniversary with the rare and opulent 1971 Continental Town Car Golden Anniversary Edition

BY MARK J. McCOURT • PHOTOGRAPHY BY TERRY McGEAN

Henry Leland's Lincoln Motor Co. may not have been established with the intent to build some of America's finest prestige cars—history buffs know Leland tried to build Liberty aviation engines for this country's effort in the Great War, but peace came before production ramped up—yet that is what the company did, both

under his watch and that of Henry and Edsel Ford. Lincoln's fortunes rose and fell in its first half century, but the outlook was bright in 1971, when it celebrated 50 years of automotive production by creating a distinctive, limited-production variant of its most venerable nameplate: the Continental Town Car Golden Anniversary Edition.

The Continental was Lincoln's "halo" car from its debut in 1939, and would similarly create a stir in the industry in the form

of the ultra-luxury 1956 Mark II and influential 1961 sedan and convertible. It was fitting that the one-millionth Lincoln automobile built wore that badge, being a Continental sedan that left Ford's Wixom, Michigan, plant on March 25, 1968. That blue four-door model represented the end of the unit-body Continental, though, as the 1969 model year would be its last before this car was thoroughly redesigned, creating a new paradigm for American luxury cars in the 1970s.



The 1970 Continental may have been evolutionary in its styling, retaining the crisply formal air of its predecessor, but it was very different under the skin. Ford's engineers used body-on-frame construction, devising a full-length, box-rail frame that could share mechanical components with the full-sized Mercury Marquis and Ford LTD. And yet, counterintuitively, this new design was more space-efficient and lighter than the unit-body it replaced. The 1970 model was very close in dimensions to the 1969 model—127- versus 126-inch wheelbase, 225 versus 224.2 inches in overall length, 79.6 versus 79.7 inches wide—but this new car had a wider track, was notably roomier inside and weighed 4,719 pounds, 292 pounds less than before.

Like the previous generation, the new Continental could have two doors or four, but only the two-door was a true hard-top; the new sedan had slender B-pillars that were disguised between frameless door glass. And the older Lincoln's trademark "clap" doors were gone, replaced by front-hinged rear doors that were believed to hold more appeal for conservative buyers cross-shopping Cadillacs.

When the 1971 Continental was unveiled, it exhibited minor, effective visual refinements. The runaway success of the bold, polarizing 1969 Mark III had given the stylists working under Ford design chief Eugene Bordinat, the confidence to reimagine the 1970 Continental with a tall, self-assured grille treatment that incorporated Mark III-inspired, vacuum-operated headlamp covers, along with horizontal taillamps that emphasized the car's substantial width. This model year refined what came before,

retaining the horizontal-bar grille in a simpler form; a Cord 810 influence is clear, with the body-color header panel, six tightly-spaced bars and body-color headlamp doors. And the bumper-mounted taillamps traded their six red horizontal segments per side for nine vertical ones.

The Continentals built for Lincoln's 50th year were also carry-over in mechanical terms, with their four-barrel-carbureted, 460-cu.in. OHV V-8 engines featuring 10.5 compression and making a gross-rated 365hp at 4,600 RPM and 500-lb.ft. of torque at 2,800 RPM, despite the addition of emissions controls. That torque was routed to the rear wheels through a three-speed Select-Shift automatic, while power assist for the steering and front disc/rear drum brakes was standard equipment. An appropriately supple ride was provided by the coil spring suspension,





Special black leather upholstery and deep-pile carpets were mandatory with the Gold Moondust Anniversary trim; note the special gold-plated plaque above the glovebox. The rim-blow steering wheel and AM radio were standard equipment, while the dealer installed the original owner's personalized plate.



which incorporated ball joints and an anti-roll bar up front, and a transverse stabilizer worked with the live-axle rear. Illustrating Lincoln's engineering sophistication was the specification of Michelin 225R-15 radials, rather than bias-belted tires.

It was in late August 1970, that Ford's Lincoln-Mercury Division announced the 1971 Continental Golden Anniversary Edition. This special model would be based on the Town Car option, which first appeared in 1969, and featured special badging and upgraded interior materials, including color-keyed extra-soft leather upholstery and door panels, deep-pile carpets, a napped nylon headliner, glovebox vanity mirror and more. This new Golden Anniversary Edition would include a commemorative gold-tone dash plaque indicating it was one of a limited quantity

of Town Cars built to commemorate the 50th year of the Lincoln motor car, a pair of 22-carat gold-plated keys in a display box, and personalized owner monogram plaques for the driver's door and dashboard. It would include those Town Car interior material upgrades, and buyers could select from the full paint, vinyl roof and interior color palette.

Lincoln did offer a unique and appropriate treatment for the Golden Anniversary Edition that was not available on the Continental coupe or Mark III, that being the "J9" Gold Moondust metallic enamel paint combined with a black Cavalry Twill-grain vinyl roof and black soft leather interior. Out of 28,622 Continental sedans built in 1971, just 1,575 were Town Cars: 535 used standard Lincoln paint choices, and 1,040 were specified in



This 460-cu.in. V-8 has not been apart in its 85,500 miles, although the four-barrel carburetor was rebuilt and an exhaust manifold gasket was replaced. The automatic climate control system uses GM-sourced A/C components. The black canister on the driver's side holds vacuum for the headlamp covers and door locks. The mouse-damaged original hood insulation pads were replaced.



Gold Moondust Anniversary trim.

Our feature car is one of the few Golden Anniversary Continentals still extant. This Town Car was ordered in the spring of 1971 by ABC, the American Broadcasting Company, as a company car for its long-serving vice president, Simon Siegel. Simon specified its options, including an electric rear window defroster, signal-seeking AM radio and the Sure-Track Braking System, a computer controlled rear-wheel ABS developed by Kelsey-Hayes. The loaded Continental cost \$7,016.50—the rough equivalent of \$41,815 today—a substantial discount off MSRP that this prominent company received through Ford's "X Plan" for VIPs.

This flagship Lincoln is now in the care of Simon's grandson, Steve Siegel, who explains, "This car was my grandfather's 'gold

watch,' given to him when he retired in 1972. He'd had the car registered with the specially-issued New York plate, 'TV-77,' which indicated ABC's television production company status and its '770' AM radio station number. I remember being a kid in the 1970s, when five of us would be in the back seat, sliding left to right, as he'd take a turn. Back then, I loved watching the speedometer, which is a horizontal tube filled with a weird fluorescent yellow liquid that moved with the speed," Steve recalls.

"Simon drove the car into the 1980s. He passed away in 1991, and the car went to my father. At that point, the odometer showed about 85,000 miles, and there were scrapes and dents in the body sides, which were repaired when I had it repainted for him in 1992. My father would start it once in a while, and take it to the local Lincoln-Mercury dealer for servicing. They disconnected the Sure-Track system when they could no longer get parts. He stopped taking it there when the service manager told him they didn't want to work on it anymore, and they'd help him junk it, for a tax credit! The car sat in his garage until 2013, when he told his five children to take it, or he'd give it away." Steve was the only one with a garage big enough to house it.

He found that mildew had grown on many surfaces of the Continental's plush interior, but the body and paint remained in good condition. After Steve and his son cleaned the interior, he renewed the fluids, swapped old Champion spark plugs for new Autolites, and changed a blown-out exhaust manifold gasket. The Autolite carburetor was rebuilt to accept today's ethanol-laced gasolines, and the front brake calipers and brake hoses were replaced. Upcoming projects will include re-coring the radiator and rebuilding the original master cylinder. And the car runs much better on premium fuel than the regular fuel his father had been using, he notes.

"It's longer than my 1995 Suburban, and is like a battleship to drive. If you have a corner coming up, you have to turn the wheel in advance, and it's like radioing the engine room, 'Full turn starboard!'" Steve says with a laugh. "It's a lot of fun to see the reactions this car gets when it's on the road. It represents a moment in time—this was what successful executives drove in those days, not Mercedes or BMWs. It's really special that four generations of our family have sat in those same original leather seats. Simon's great-grandchildren have worked on and ridden in this car. It will eventually be used as a limousine in their weddings." 🐾





General MacArthur's 1942 Packard

Stashed for years in a Texas garage, this Packard survived by a series of miracles

BY JAMES A. HOLLINGSWORTH • S/A #34 REPRINT

For one particular Packard Clipper built in the fall of 1941, fate was to dictate an unusual destiny. It would have General Douglas MacArthur as its first owner. It would survive World War II. It would escape by three days an appointment to be demilitarized and lost to history. It would, by moments, miss

becoming a parts car. And finally, by less than four weeks, destiny would once again dictate an escape from the crusher at some undetermined salvage yard.

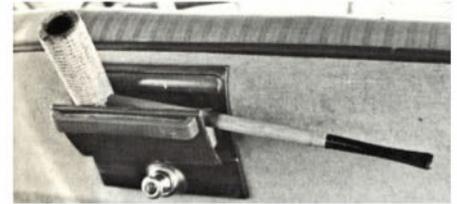
This historic car, a 1942 Packard 120 8 Clipper Custom, engine #E-318750-D, serial #1512-5747, was built specifically for General MacArthur. MacArthur had ordered

a car for himself from the Packard factory, paying for it by personal check. That \$2,600 check was returned to him compliments of Packard, along with assurances that the car would be shipped with the next military order headed for Australia.

General MacArthur's Clipper had every conceivable accessory: factory air



Completely original interior still sports gun mount. Odometer shows 74,000 miles.



MacArthur paid \$2,600 for his Packard, but the factory sent back the check with thanks.

conditioning, overdrive, Electromatic clutch, radio, heater, defroster, fender skirts and strangely, a Packard cormorant mounted atop the standard 1942 Clipper hood ornament.

Painted olive drab with the usual white star and other military markings, external wartime equipment included adjustable louvered headlamp shutters; driving, blackout and convoy lamps; siren; snap fasteners for the windshield canvas; and flag mounts. Never was the trim chromed—it was all sprayed olive drab, including the cormorant. Inside, there was a gun mount, fire extinguisher and first-aid kit, all within easy reach of the driver. Interior garnish had been painted over with a gilt color.

The military lights were controlled by the toggles left of the instruments. One of the three switches changed the horn to a siren.

Packard's 1942 model run ended in February of that year. The MacArthur engine bears the casting date 11/13/ 41. The Clipper identification chart shows engine numbers from E-300001 to E319329, so this engine was apparently followed by only 579 more 120 Packard 8s.

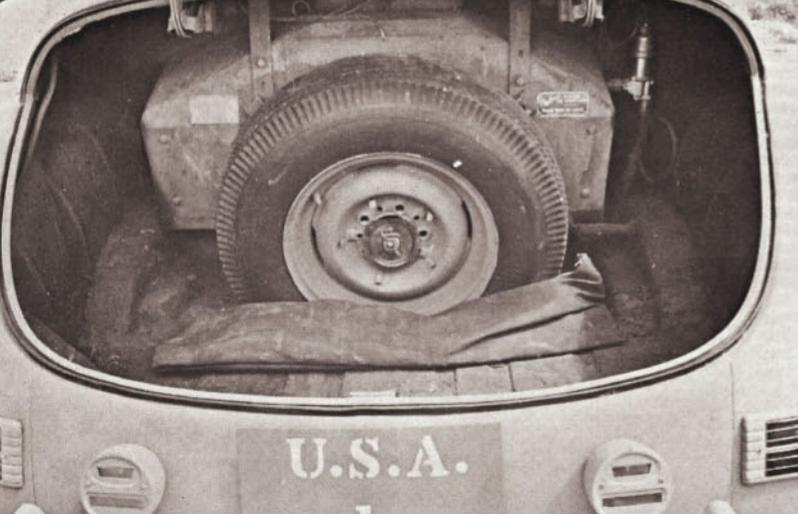
MacArthur's Packard followed him throughout the war, from Australia to the Philippines and to the occupation of Japan. In September 1948, following the formal Japanese occupation, the Clipper was retired. General MacArthur soon released the car to himself from military service and made it a gift to his loyal and favorite driver. At his family's request, the driver must remain anonymous in this article, and for that reason I'll refer to him simply as Smitty.

General MacArthur arranged through a Navy friend, a skipper of the aircraft carrier *U.S.S. Princeton*, for transportation of the car to San Diego. There it was loaded onto a military flatbed truck and carried to Ft. Sam Houston in San Antonio, Texas, where it was released to Smitty. Smitty drove the

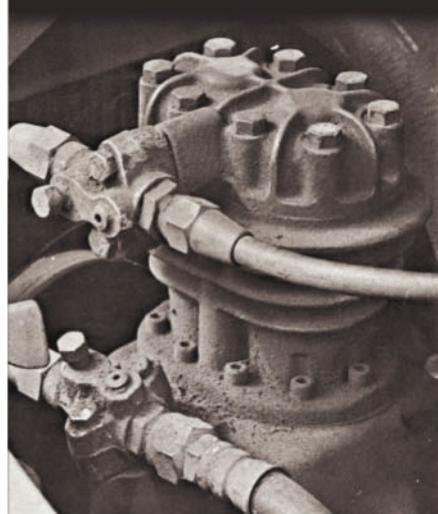
car to his home in Dallas and planned to convert it for civilian use. In Dallas, he made arrangements to have the military hardware removed and the body painted a bright postwar color. But the bodyshop was busy at the time, and Smitty agreed to bring the car back the following week. That night, after parking the Packard in his small, dirt-floored garage, Smitty died in his sleep.

In 1968, Packard enthusiast Don MacLellan of Dallas was restoring a 1948 limousine. He'd heard about a Packard for sale from a parts manager, and he finally went to Smitty's widow's home to take a look.





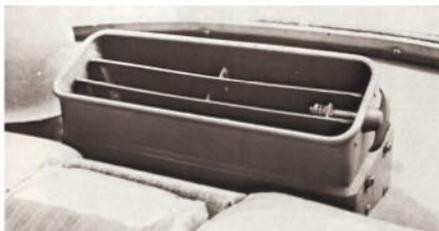
MacArthur's Packard contains every major option, including factory air conditioning. Cool air moves from a massive evaporator in the trunk into the car through a duct in the package shelf. Compressor stands to the left of engine. Packard began offering air as early as 1939.



The garage, with no windows and a single door, had become almost inaccessible in the 20 years since Smitty died. A tree had grown up so close in front of the door that even after chopping it down, the stump kept the door tightly shut. Finally a notch cut in the door let Don slip inside the garage.

Since Don had no inkling of the Clipper's background, he bought it for parts, figuring that at least the air conditioner could be used in his limousine. Several months passed, and the widow called Don to ask for a letter relieving her of responsibility for the car. Don promised to send her a note, but he forgot, and a few weeks later she called him again. She asked him to please get the car off her property, and she also asked whether he was interested in some old papers that belonged with the car. He offhandedly said yes.

The following Saturday, Don tossed his acetylene torch in the back of his pickup, intending to take out the Packard's air conditioner. As he was climbing into his pickup, Don's postman waved and walked over with the day's mail. Thumbing quickly through the expected business letters, Don came to a big envelope from Smitty's widow. When he opened the envelope, out



tumbled the military releases, letters from Packard Motor Car Co., and all the documents that identified this car as something special.

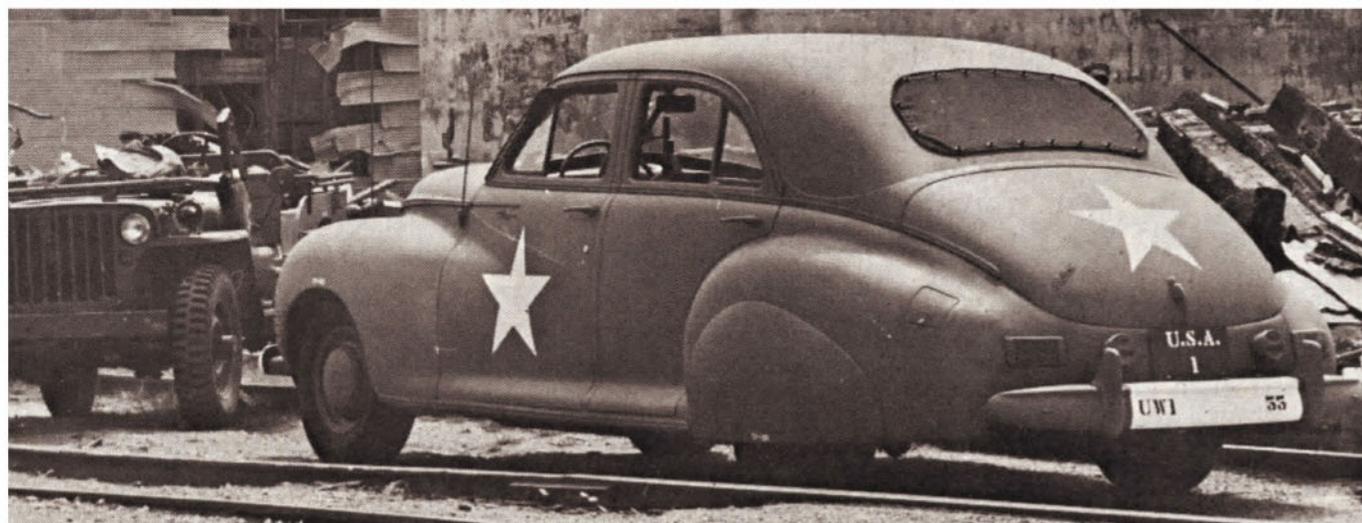
After removing the car, Don asked about its history, and the widow showed him a family album with photos of MacArthur, the Packard, and Smitty in various places throughout the Pacific. Although she refused to part with the pictures then, Don felt that she might come around eventually and let him photocopy them.

After a lengthy overseas business trip, Don tried to call the widow, but found that her phone had been disconnected. Dropping by her house, he discovered from neighbors that she'd died just after Don pulled the car out of the garage. The widow had only one distant relative, and this relative wasn't interested in her funeral

or meager estate, so the county took her belongings from the rented house and arranged for the widow's burial.

Had Don waited any longer, the Packard would have gone the way of the rest of the widow's property—probably to the scrapyard. As it was, General MacArthur's Clipper escaped destruction in three close calls in this country and no telling how many more overseas.

This now-famous Packard has remained untouched and unrestored. The dirt and grime of the past 33 years still cover the engine. Only the interior and olive drab paint have been cleaned—plus the addition of new tires, battery, etc. After 74,000 miles, Gen. MacArthur's 1942 Clipper still drives nicely, and all systems work, even the air conditioner. This is one military vehicle that was fated to survive. 🐞



Beyond cleaning up the car, owner MacLellan has done only minimal restoration. Canvas shipping covers hide the back glass.

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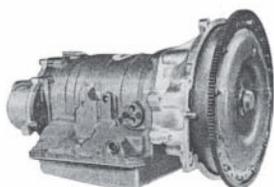
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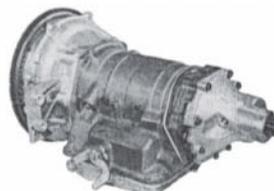
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Family Affair

Inspired by his parents' car, one man has kept this 1933 Auburn 8-101A Brougham for 47 years



WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY TERRY SHEA



American automakers were definitely enjoying some very robust sales in the Fifties, but not every family had a new Buick, Plymouth or Oldsmobile in the driveway. Tom Becker, one of five boys in his house, recalls how the Becker family ended up

with a classic Auburn in the early Fifties in Philadelphia. "My four brothers and I," says Tom, "convinced my dad that they needed a family car for them to drive, and they went out looking for a car. We were thinking of a Ford, but ended up buying a 1932 four-door sedan Auburn.

"It had a seized engine because the car had been sitting on blocks for seven years," continues Tom, "but it suited our family needs better than a Ford would because it was a much larger car. My older brother, John, was the mechanic of the family, and he proceeded right away to working on the engine. I was his helper,

his 'gofer,' so to speak, handing him the tools and watching him tear the engine apart, rebuild it and get the engine in the car running again. That was where I picked up my knowledge on car repairs. We used that for a number of years as our family car."

Tom still has many clear, fond memories of growing up with that 1932 Auburn 8-100 four-door sedan, some of them doing activities which are probably un-Constitutional these days. "Back then, every now and then—I know you weren't supposed to—we'd stand on the running boards and drive through the streets of



Philadelphia a little bit." The car remains in Tom's family to this day, his brother John having taken custody of it some years ago.

Serving as a communications specialist in Vietnam (doing the same work he had before and after his service with the telephone company), Tom got a letter from his brother in early 1970 about a 1933 Auburn 8-101A Brougham for sale in Philadelphia. Despite the one week each way turnaround for the mail, the car was still available, and Tom's brother bought it on his behalf—information that took another week or so to get back to Tom.

John set to work on getting the Brougham back up and running. Because Auburn had carried over its 1932 designs to 1933, both Auburns in the Becker family had essentially identical mechanicals, making John already intimately familiar with the '33 Brougham. Also, they had an additional parts car to keep both vehicles on the road.

By the time Tom had fulfilled his commitment to Uncle Sam and returned stateside, John had already removed the cylinder head and the oil pan. "I got there in early April," says Tom, "and we proceeded to check out the piston rings and

the bearings. We re-lapped the valves and got the car back together, got it running."

At that point, the Brougham was in need of a repaint, but Tom never had any intention of fully restoring the car. It's safe to say that Tom was perhaps a few decades ahead of the curve in this hobby, what with today's near obsession with originality versus over-restoration. "One of the stipulations I had when I bought the '33 Auburn," recalls Tom, "was that this was not going to be a car that was going to be taken apart. It was going to be kept in running condition. It's as original as I can keep it."



Aircraft-inspired instrumentation is clear and legible with white-on-black gauges. Weathered and stained interior speaks to its originality and use.



Before refinishing the car, Tom needed to attend to some issues with the body's structure. Like many cars of the era, the 1933 Auburns featured steel body panels nailed over wooden framework. Time and exposure are kind to neither wood nor steel, and while the Brougham was pretty solid all around, its long, rear-hinged doors were sagging on the wooden posts that supported them. Tom discovered a marine-grade epoxy used by boat builders that allowed him to shore up some of the "soft and squishy" wood.

Tom figures he is the "fourth, possibly fifth" owner of the car, so, even though it was a mix of midnight blue and primer, he had to play a bit of the automotive archaeologist to get to the Auburn's true colors. "We found the original color underneath the front cowl air vent and had that matched up," says Tom. "John and I made a deal that if I were to take the time and sand down the body, he would use his painting equipment. Over a weekend,

we painted the car in the backyard."

The seats, too, had been dyed by a previous owner and left "streaky." Tom turned to J.C. Whitney, of all places, which actually offered seat covers for a 1933 Auburn in 1970. The stained top, canvas over wooden ribs, proved a more formidable challenge. Today, it looks as it did when Tom first got the car, the water stains clearly telling a story of many years of outside storage.

After Tom and John got the car back on the road, they joined the Auburn-Cord-Duesenberg Club and made their first trek to the club's annual Labor Day weekend event in Auburn, Indiana. They also learned another lesson about keeping such a vintage car on the road: "One of the first jobs we had to do when we got out there was to get a needle and thread to re-sew some of the seams on each side of the roofline. Because of the wind and the weak thread, it had to be re-sewn so that I would not lose the wood. The rain

loosened up and rotted the threads, and each year, I had to go out there and re-sew them. So, I finally wised up and learned that fishing line held up much better."

Keeping the Auburn weather-protected was important for Tom because, amazingly, it was not only the first car he ever bought but also the sole four-wheeled conveyance that he owned at the time. Since it had antique Pennsylvania tags then, limiting his use of it, he otherwise got around via a Lambretta 150 scooter—even in light snow.

For the first five or six years he owned the Auburn, Tom put a bunch of miles on it, but it soon was not the only car he owned. A couple of Volkswagens, including a Thing, a Bugeye Sprite and even a two-stroke Saab all got him around. In 1977, when Tom got married, he and his new bride took the Auburn. "The wedding was in June," says Tom. "She and I were in the Auburn, and the rest of the wedding party were in air-conditioned Lincolns and



Lycoming L-head straight-eight engine, with a 3-inch bore and 4¾-inch stroke made 100hp at 3,200 RPM from its 269 cubic inches.





Fords. They had the comfort, but we had the style."

Like many of us, the car hobby got put on hold for Tom while he made a career and raised a family. Upon his move to upstate New York, he sent the Auburn to Oklahoma, where his brother had moved. Fast forward to 2008, and John had finally convinced Tom that he needed the Auburn in his life again. John trailered it to Tom's home in Fonda, New York. "The car needed some work again to get it back on the road," says Tom. "I had to go through and replace some bearing seals. Going over the car, changing all of the fluids in it, checking to make sure that the engine

was still working good. We did not pull the engine apart."

By this time, the backyard-painted body was more than beginning to show its age, but Tom was still not interested in restoring the car. And we can't blame him since he puts plenty of miles on it. "Most people with a car that old have restored it or they feel it's not roadworthy," explains Tom, "so they trailer it wherever they go. They just don't bring them out quite as much. People will see the Auburn and ask, 'How long have you had it?' I say 40 or 45 years, and they look at the car and they think, 'He's had it that long and this is the best he can do with it'"

"These cars are only original once. Once you start working on them and changing them, they look nice, but the charm and the originality of the car is taken away a little bit. With a car in this condition, it's driveable and you can just get in there and you can have fun. I am not afraid if a little kid is interested and wants to stand on the running board and look in, if they touch it, if the paint gets scratched or scuffed a little bit. That doesn't bother me.

"It has eased my mind and conscience when I have talked about the car not being in pristine shape. The paint looks old. The running boards have the rubber worn off where the driver would step on them to get in or out. But being able to drive a Thirties car that I had as a kid makes it all the while worth having it." 🐾

“It has eased my mind and conscience when I have talked about the car not being in pristine shape ... But being able to drive a Thirties car that I had as a kid makes it all the while worth having it.” ”



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Martin Motor Company, 3994 Forbes Avenue, Pittsburg.
W. N. Booth, 646 Willson Avenue, Cleveland.

STANDARD WHEEL COMPANY, 671 Ohio Street, Terre Haute, Indiana.

Willys-Overland

The successful legacy of entrepreneur John North Willys

BY PAT FOSTER • PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF THE PAT FOSTER ARCHIVES

In 1902, Charles Minshall, president of the Standard Wheel Company of Terre Haute, Indiana, supplier of wheels to many early automakers, decided to get into the car business himself. He hired a young engineer named Claude Cox to design his new car, dubbed the Overland, after the famous Overland stagecoach. The first Overland, the Model 13 runabout, was fairly advanced for the time, having a single-cylinder, water-cooled 5-hp engine mounted vertically up front rather than horizontally under the seat, and a two-speed planetary transmission. The frame was solid oak, a tiller was used for

steering, and styling was simple but quite attractive. The first car was tested February 12, 1903.

There are conflicting reports regarding exactly how many were built that first year, but it was probably about 12 cars, each priced at \$595. In 1904 a 6½-hp two-cylinder Model 15 runabout was added to the line, priced at \$600. Production rose to 25 cars that year, but building so few cars was unprofitable. Hindered by a cramped factory, operations finally moved to a larger building in Indianapolis in January 1905.

By then, the Model 13 was dropped, and the line consisted of the Model 15

runabout with tiller steering, Model 16 with a slightly more powerful 7- to 8-horsepower engine and steering wheel, and the Model 17 with 8 to 9 horsepower and a stylishly long hood. Late in the year, a four-cylinder Model 18 side-entrance tonneau was added.

Moving into the new plant took time, so not many automobiles were produced that year, and again the company lost money. When a disgusted Minshall decided to drop the business, Cox convinced buggy maker David Parry to form a new Overland Auto Company, incorporated on March 31, 1906, to continue production.

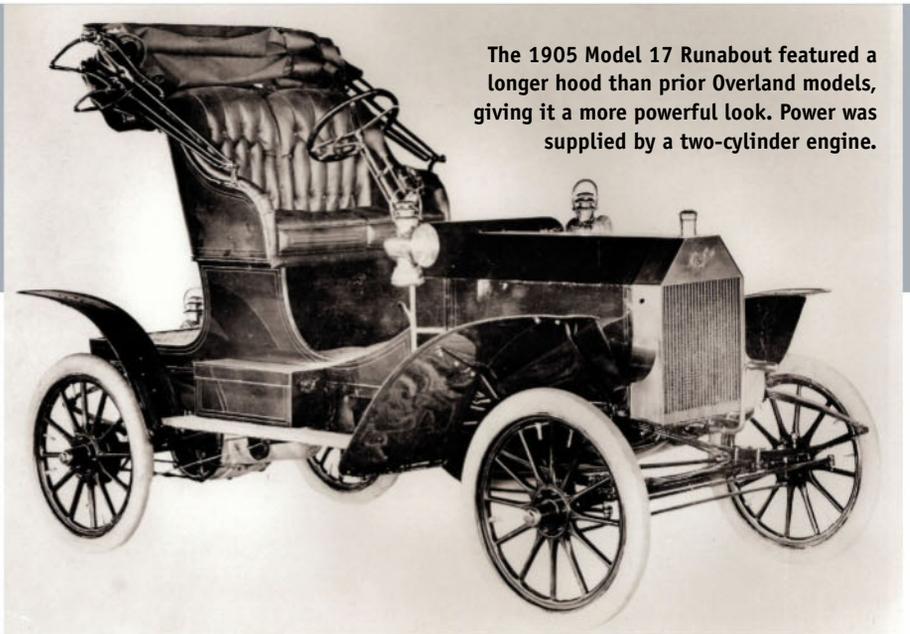


The shape of the hood on this 1904 Overland is stylishly curved, and fenders have been added. This particular model also has a surrey top. This year, the company continued to struggle to increase production.

In this ad (above, left), the name of the company is listed as Standard Wheel Company rather than Overland. Note the Terre Haute address.

That year Cox produced 47 cars, all sold to an aggressive young automobile dealer in Elmira, New York, named John North Willys. Willys (pronounced "Willis") held franchises for Rambler and American Underslung, but was selling more cars than he could get. He contracted to buy Overland's entire 1907 output—a projected 500 cars, sealing the deal with a \$10,000 deposit.

But then came the "Panic of 1907." The New York Stock Exchange fell almost 50 percent, as panic spread throughout the financial world, and credit became impossible to obtain. Overland, unable to



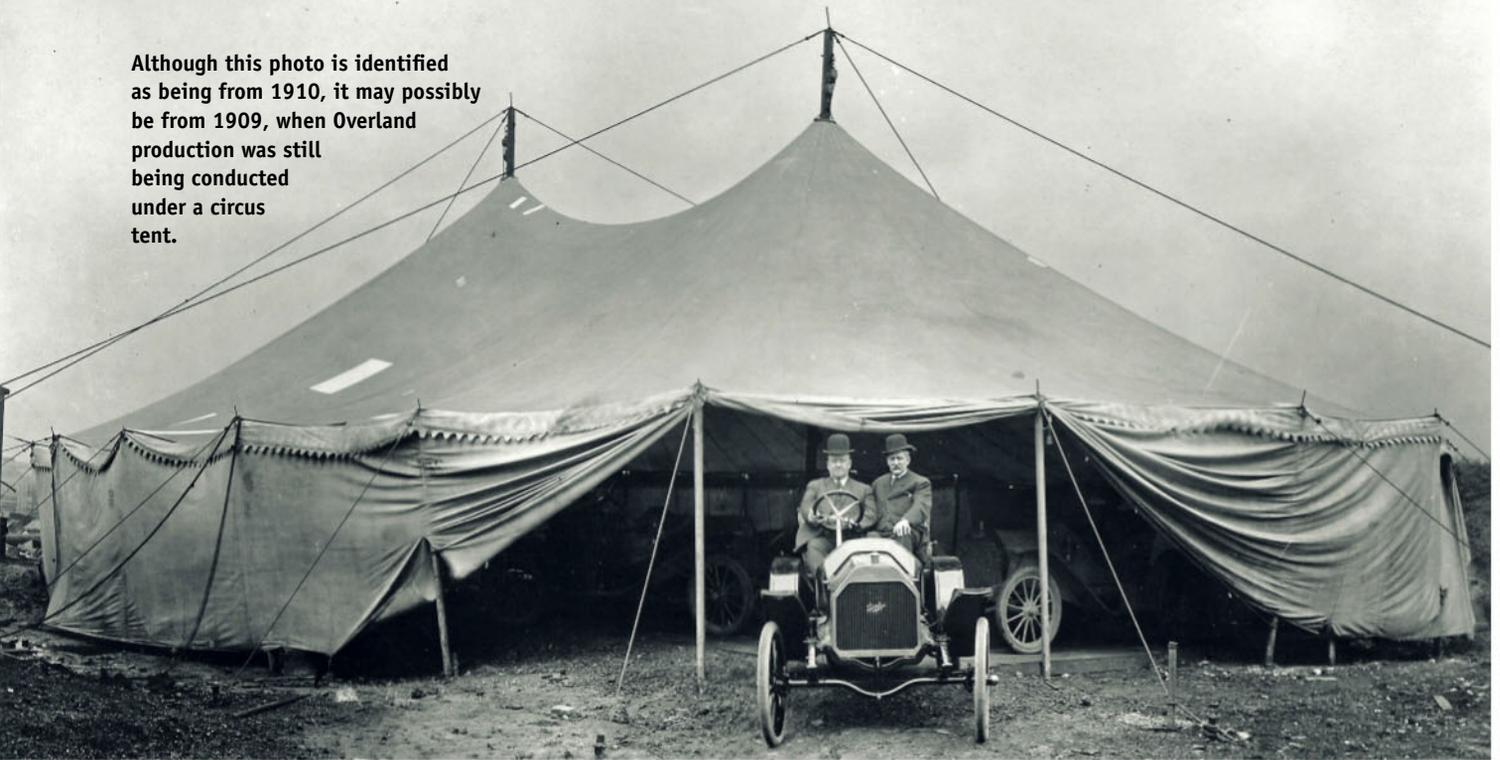
The 1905 Model 17 Runabout featured a longer hood than prior Overland models, giving it a more powerful look. Power was supplied by a two-cylinder engine.

procure sufficient parts to produce cars, halted assembly.

Willys began to wonder where the

cars he'd ordered were, and decided to find out. When he detoured in Indianapolis, he was shocked to find that Overland's factory

Although this photo is identified as being from 1910, it may possibly be from 1909, when Overland production was still being conducted under a circus tent.



“complex” consisted of a row of tents, a small sheetmetal building, and nobody working. “When am I going to get my cars?” Willys asked Cox. “You’re not going to get any more.” Cox replied, “On Monday we go into the hands of the receivers.”

Believing the Overland was too good to let die, Willys took over the business, borrowing \$7,500 to resume production. He had a circus tent erected, set up assembly inside, and in 12 months produced 465 Overlands. By the end of the first year, the once-bankrupt company had net assets of \$58,000.

From there, it was straight up. In 1909, Willys purchased the huge Pope Toledo plant, among the largest and best-equipped automotive factories in America, and produced an extraordinary 4,907 cars. In 1910, sales more than tripled and the company became the third largest auto producer in America, behind Ford and Buick. Then for 1912, sales more than doubled, to 31,977.

The following year, Willys shot into second place, behind Ford.

The first automobile to carry the Willys name, the new Willys-Knight, came in 1914. It was a substantial-looking four-cylinder, 45hp automobile available in roadster and touring car models, with prices beginning at a lofty \$2,475. By comparison, an Overland roadster was \$795.

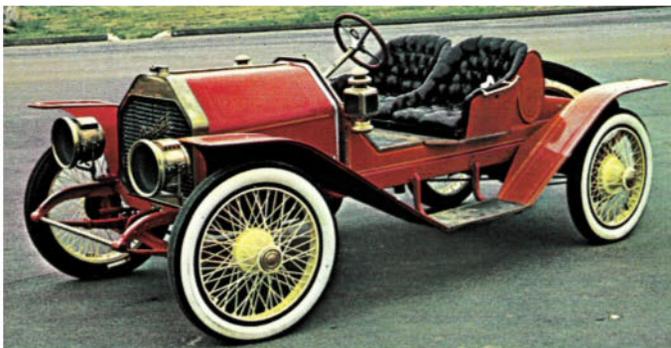
Willys-Overland continued to grow. For 1916, a whopping 139,888 Overland and Willys-Knight cars were sold, and a \$9.5 million profit reported.

Then troubles began. The Great War was raging in Europe, and Willys decided to get into production of military products. He ordered machinery and a mountain of parts and components to build a broad range of war equipment. On November 1, 1918, he ended car output, committing the company to all-out war production. Ten days later the Armistice was signed, and Willys was stuck with millions of dollars of parts and

materials that were no longer needed. Not until January 2, 1919, was limited production of automobiles resumed, and even by March, the plant was producing just 425 cars daily, far short of its 750 unit goal. Then the company suffered a lengthy and bitter strike mid-year that halted production until Christmas. Profits plummeted.

Willys introduced a stylish little Overland Four for 1920, riding a 100-inch wheelbase and powered by a 27hp four-cylinder. Although it was designed in 1917 as a Model T fighter, the war delayed it until late 1919. Inflation during the intervening years raised its price to \$945, much higher than the Model T. Despite its good looks, sales were lackluster.

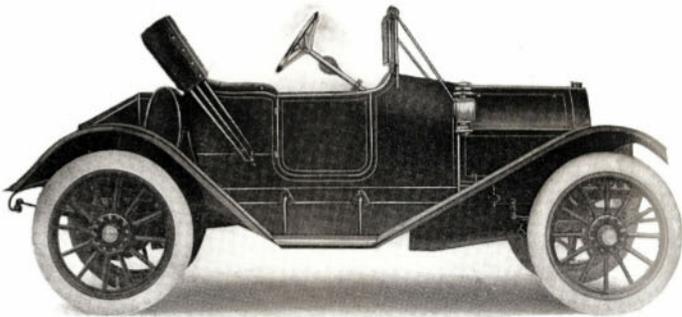
A sharp recession from January 1920 to July 1921 triggered a further decline in business. And because Willys had just ended a year where it earned very little, it was overextended. Sales dropped and the company lost \$16 million. With his



This 1909 Overland speedster has sharp lines and a rugged, aggressive appearance. Note the large brass “drum” headlamps and side lanterns.



In 1910, Overland became the third best-selling car in America. One reason for Overland’s immense popularity can be seen in the great styling of this 1910 Overland tourer.



The Overland Model 59 roadster for 1912 was priced at just \$900. Sales this year were about double compared with the year before.



By 1916, the six-cylinder Overland coupe boasted a flat windshield as well as more stylish running boards.

company teetering on bankruptcy, John Willys couldn't convince bankers to let him remain in charge. They brought in Walter Chrysler, who'd recently left GM, to run the company, paying him a million dollars a year, with a two-year contract.

In 1922, only 52,072 cars were sold, and Willys-Overland lost an astronomical \$43.2 million. With the company short of capital, the 1923 cars were modestly upgraded and renamed the Model 91 (100-inch wheelbase and 27hp) and Model 92 Redbird (106-inch wheelbase and 30hp), which was duded up with a striking red paint job to attract attention.

Then John Willys hit the road, traveling the country, bucking up his retail network. Dealers loved him, and before long, orders starting pouring in. In fiscal year 1923, 146,632 Overlands were sold, along with 49,406 Willys-Knights. The company began to climb back.

During 1924, the Model 92 boasted two sharp new models—the Blackbird and the Bluebird, both, like the Redbird, named for their snazzy paint schemes.

Driven by stylish new models, success continued into the next year when a six-cylinder Model 93 on a 113-inch wheelbase was added to the Overland line. By the end of 1925, Willys reported that, in some ways, it was the best year the company ever had to that point. The net profit was \$11.4 million, the firm had \$7.7 million on hand and



Very stylish, in the European vein, was the 1917 Overland Light Four Country Club Roadster for four passengers. Priced at a mere \$750, it attracted many buyers. Willys-Overland sold more than 132,000 cars during the year. That's John Willys at the wheel.

wholesaled 214,460 cars to its dealers.

Willys entered the 1926 selling season still peddling the Models 91, 92 and 93. However, the following year, the company announced a new nameplate, Whippet, dropping the well-known Overland brand. Also offered were a pair of revised Willys-Knights.

The Whippet was a nicely-styled light car with a 134-cu.in., 31hp, four-cylinder engine, and a 100¼-inch wheelbase. America's smallest car, it had the smallest



The 1919 Overland Model 90 touring car seen here is fitted with a winter hard top for extra protection from the elements.



Two young ladies out for a spin in a 1920 Overland Model 4 coupe.



The 1925 Overland Model 91 offered decent styling, along with a low price tag and good fuel economy.



John Willys had a lavish new administration building erected in 1915 to house the headquarters staff of his growing automobile company; this is that same building in 1927. This handsome structure was torn down some decades later.



John Willys abruptly ended the Overland models and introduced a new brand—the Whippet. Here we see Willys with the 100,000th Whippet produced, a sharp 1927 Collegiate Roadster.

engine as well, but, due to its light weight, it was a good performer. Priced at \$625, it combined terrific fuel economy with acceleration others in its price range couldn't match. Initially offered in touring, two-door coach sedan and coupe styles, by the end of 1927 additional models were added, including a Whippet Six.

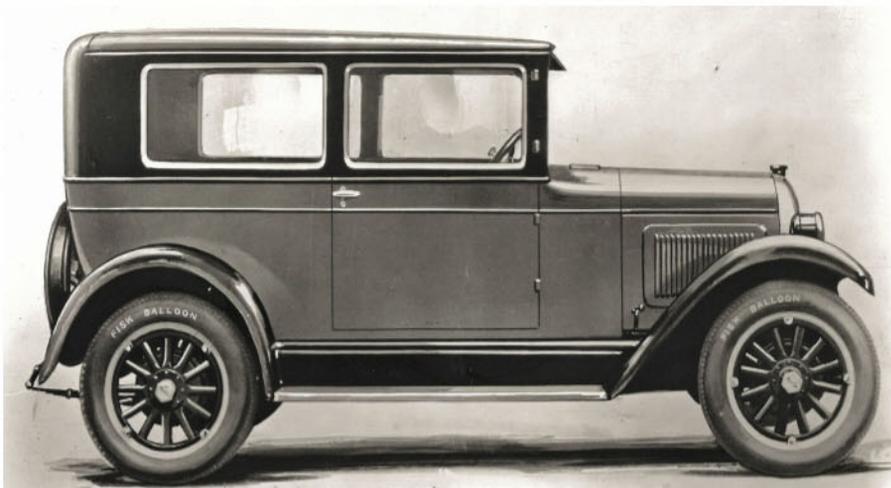
During 1927, Willys produced 184,127 vehicles, with strong demand continuing into 1928. Success reigned supreme. Willys once again occupied third place behind Ford and Chevrolet, ahead of such stalwarts as Essex, Buick, Pontiac, Dodge and Chrysler. In 1929, John Willys

accepted the post of U.S. ambassador to Poland, selling his Willys-Overland stock for \$21 million, and relinquishing the presidency to Willys vice-president Linwood Miller. Willys retained the chairmanship.

Styling and engineering of the Whippet line was substantially improved for 1929, prices were reduced and the cars were advertised as "The Superior Whippet." The popular four-cylinder Whippet Coach, a two-door sedan, was just \$550, while a six-cylinder Whippet Coach cost \$695. Both featured longer, more stylish bodies with a higher radiator and hood, as well as full-crown fenders. Also featured was

"Finger-Tip Control," a single button in the center of the steering wheel that controlled the starter, lights and horn.

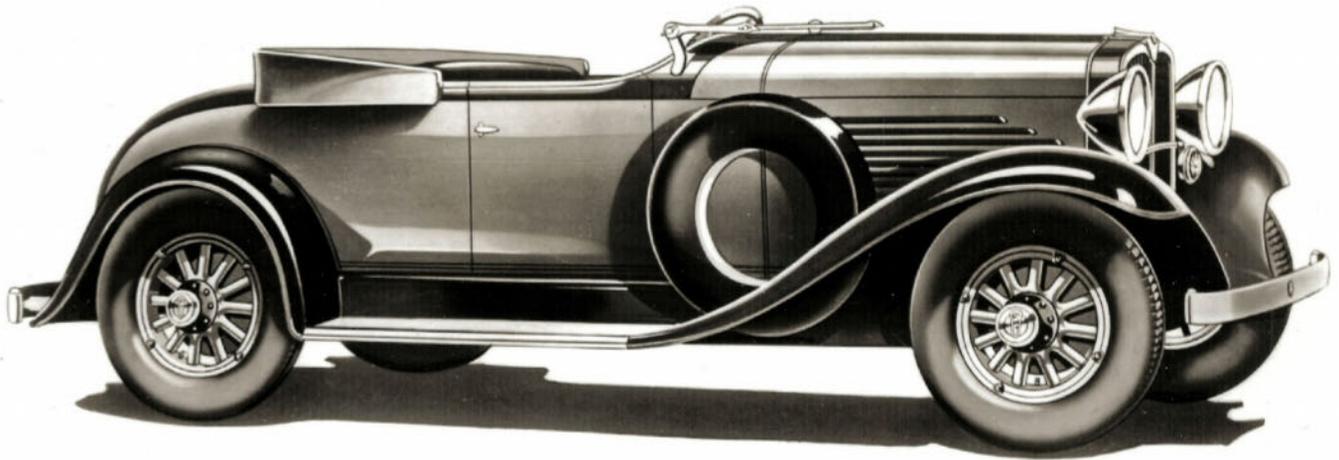
But 1929 saw sales drop 18 percent. The problem was increased competition from the handsome Ford Model A, as well as the good-looking Chevrolet. Willys lost nearly \$5 million due to write-offs, amortization of tools, price reductions and more.



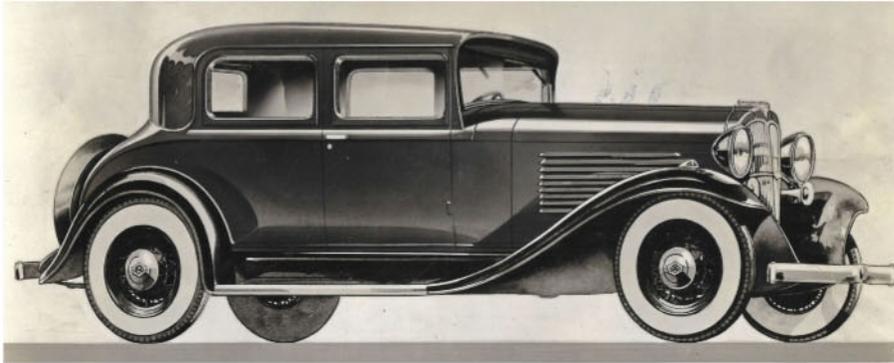
Top-selling Willys-Overland for 1928 was the Whippet Coach, a stylish two-door sedan. This year, Willys-Overland was again in third place in sales behind Ford and Chevrolet.



This ad for the 1929 Whippet refers to the many improvements and calls them the "Superior Whippet." But sales were slowing down due to increased competition.



John Willys began marketing some of his cars as Willys in 1931. Shown is a handsome 1931 Willys Six Model 97 roadster.



The all-new Willys models eventually supplanted the Whippet. This 1932 Model 8-88 Victoria Coupe offered nice lines, an 80hp eight-cylinder engine and a generous 121-inch wheelbase.

Then the Great Depression began. By the end of the year, business everywhere began to fall off rapidly. With Whippet sales slipping, Willys-Overland introduced new cars bearing the "Willys" brand. The 1930 Willys Six was a fairly substantial car with a 110-inch wheelbase and a more traditional design than the European-style Whippets. But that year, the company managed to sell only 80,555 cars and lost \$7.5 million.

For 1931, the ailing Whippet was dropped—the public now rejecting the whole Euro-style movement—and the company introduced a six-cylinder Willys Model 97, with prices starting as low as \$495 for a roadster. There were also classy new eight-cylinder Willys Model 8-80 cars, priced from \$995 for a Victoria coupe to \$1,295 for a Custom sedan. Slotted in between was the Willys-Knight, now just four models in two body styles. Sadly, the company sold just 61,782 cars to its dealers during 1931, and lost over \$14 million.

The 1932 Willys cars were basically revisions of the prior-year models, consisting of the six-cylinder Willys 6-90 "Silver Streak" on a 113-inch wheelbase, the eight-cylinder Willys 8-88 "Silver Streak" on a 121-inch wheelbase, Willys-Knight 95 Deluxe on a 113-inch wheelbase and the Willys-Knight Model 66D on a 121-inch wheelbase.

In early 1932, John Willys resigned his

ambassadorship to rejoin his auto company, which was on the verge of bankruptcy. Once again, he hit the road to bolster dealers and solicit orders. Willys traveled town to town, relentlessly driving himself week after week. Meanwhile, his engineers worked on a new car called the Willys "77" that could sell for as little as \$395 and deliver 25-30 MPG. Built on a 100.5-inch wheelbase with a narrow 51-inch tread, it was introduced for 1933 and was well

received. The public had never seen anything like it. The audacious styling included a severely sloping hood line, "starfish" wheels and faired-in headlamps protruding from the fenders. The "77" anchored the bottom of a lineup that included Willys 6-90A and 8-88 Silver Streak models and a single Willys-Knight Model 66E Custom Sedan.

But Willys-Overland continued to sink. John Willys pumped \$2 million of his personal fortune into the business, then searched for more capital. He traveled until he seemed on the verge of a breakdown. "I think we swung a million-dollar loan in Detroit," a visibly worn-out Willys told an associate late on the afternoon of February 13, 1933. But the next day, the bank closed its doors. The day after that, Willys-Overland went into receivership.

There the company stayed until 1936, when a most unusual plan was created to gain control of the company and take it out of bankruptcy. With its return to full scale production would come a bold new car, unlike anything Willys had ever built before. We'll save that story for a future article. 🐼



During the Great Depression, Willys decided to focus all efforts on a small, economical car with a low, low price. The 1933 Willys Model "77" line of coupes and sedans were all priced at less than \$400. The "77" two-passenger coupe was tagged at \$335 for a base model, \$355 in Custom trim. A four-passenger coupe was \$375 base, \$395 for a Custom.



Earl "Madman" Muntz

He changed the face of advertising and in-car entertainment forever

BY JEFF KOCH

Anyone is lucky to make a fortune. Madman Muntz made (and lost) three in his lifetime: \$72 million worth of cars one year, \$55 million worth of TV receivers half a decade later and \$30 million worth of car stereos and tapes in 1967. He also changed the face of advertising and in-car entertainment. All without a high school degree.

Born Earl William Muntz on January

3, 1914, and living his early years in Elgin, Illinois, the inveterate tinkerer built his first radio at the age of eight. By the time he was 14, he had built one for his parents' car. This intersection of automobiles and technology would be a recurring theme in his professional life, but it would have to wait: During the Depression, Muntz dropped out of high school at age 15 to work in his parents' hardware store.

In 1934, Muntz opened a used car lot. Entrepreneurial? You bet. It was an early indication that Muntz was ahead of his time. Muntz was just 20, and his mom had to sign all of the documentation every time he made a sale. When he was 26, Muntz vacationed in California, and discovered that used cars sold for better prices there than they did in Elgin, so he opened up a used car lot in Glendale, California. He also lucked into a quantity of brand-new high-end cars—13 of them—crated up and meant for Asian customers, but undeliverable, thanks to growing conflicts on that continent. Within two weeks, thanks to some favorable stories in the local press, Muntz sold all 13 cars, still in their crates. Not long after, he opened a second used-car lot in Los Angeles, closed the lot in Elgin, and moved to California full-time.

With no new cars built during the war, Muntz briefly had a car shortage. His plan: Buy cars cheaply in the Midwest and pay soldiers, plenty of whom had to do basic training in Southern California, \$50 to drive them out. Muntz himself would occasionally drive a car from Chicago to L.A., taking Route 66; he boasted that he could make the trip in 33 hours, faster than the storied Santa Fe *Chief* passenger train.

In those days, used-car salesmen were seen as either boring number crunchers or shifty shysters looking to bilk you out of your dough for a clunker. It was in Los Angeles that Muntz met Mike Shore, an ad man given carte blanche to come up with sales gimmicks. And boy, did he. Billboards and newspaper ads showed Muntz in long red underwear, wearing a Napoleon-style hat, screaming slogans like, "I buy 'em retail, sell 'em wholesale—IT'S MORE FUN THAT WAY!" and "I wanna give 'em away, but Mrs. Muntz won't let me—SHE'S CRAZY!" Later, he'd threaten to smash a featured car with a sledgehammer if it wasn't sold by the end of the day.

The long history of the wacky TV and radio pitchman can be laid directly at Earl Muntz's feet. His billboards and newspaper ads were part of the SoCal landscape during the war and for years after. With up to 170 ads a day on radio, you couldn't escape him. His name was a cultural touchstone, a generational in-joke; Bob Hope would use Muntz as a punch line for big laughs. By the end of the

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She's smiling because she manages to get some pretty groovy people into her car wherever she goes.

Well, there's herself, of course. And some other swingin' people, too. Folks like Herman's Hermits, The Lovin' Spoonful, The Young Rascals, Eric Burdon and the Animals, Nancy Sinatra.

Now, that's a lot of people to haul around in a car, but she has them nestled comfortably in her glovebox-small Muntz M-30 car stereo system which cost less than \$40.00.

And there's still enough room in the car for her boy-friend.

Sometimes, she even takes some other passengers on her drives. People whose first names are Frank, Dean, Trini and Petula.

You'd smile, too.

39⁹⁵

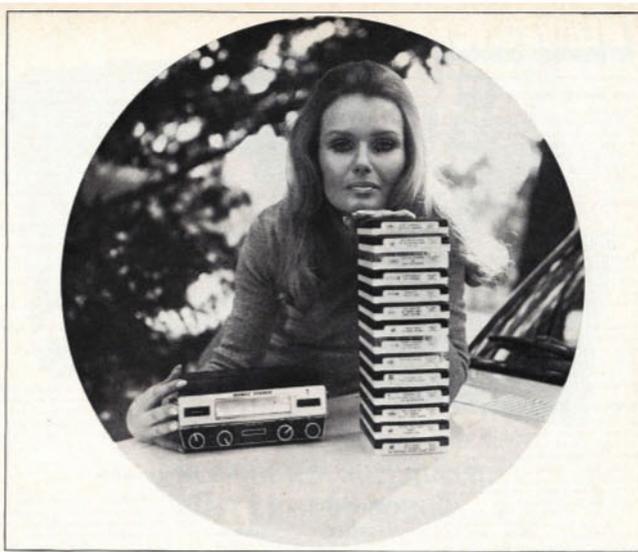
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war, Muntz was the world's biggest used-car dealer. In the immediate postwar period, one tour guide reported that Muntz's car lots were ranked seventh among all of the tourist attractions in Southern California. Right up there with the La Brea Tar Pits.

From used cars, Muntz moved into the TV-manufacturing business—not a stretch, considering his early interest in radio. His reputation, built through his used-car empire, was one of low pricing and value. Televisions were complicated and expensive, with vacuum tubes, transformers, rheostats, capacitors, resistors and more. The cheapest model with a 12-inch screen cost nearly \$450 in late 1940s dollars—about a third of the cost of a new Ford. De-contenting seemed the simplest solution. But how?

Muntzing, as it became known, was a postwar term for the age-old K.I.S.S. (Keep It Simple, Stupid) principle. Legend has it that Muntz carried wire clippers in his pocket, and if he suspected an employee of over-engineering a component, he'd start snipping wires until the picture died—then suggested that the engineer should fix that last part. Instead of 30 tubes, Muntz's TV used just 17; this not only saved costs, but eliminated some of the heat that all of those components generated. Most of the removed components were meant to boost signal in rural areas; as a result, Muntz

marketed primarily in cities with strong TV signals from nearby towers. His sets also had a built-in antenna, which got around the growing problem of urban apartment buildings banning external TV aerials. The first Muntz TVs sold for \$99.95 in 1949, and by 1953, Muntz TV Inc. grossed more than \$50 million. Muntzing came back to bite him when people discovered that they needed to call a TV repairman for even the smallest adjustments, when more expensive TVs had built-in provisions for those same adjustments. With sales declining, Muntz TV went out of business in 1959.

While knee-deep in used cars and TVs in the early 1950s, Muntz also had an opportunity to distribute VWs in America, but turned down the opportunity after test-driving a Beetle. This was early in the company's Stateside career (the first two Beetles arrived in the U.S. in 1949) but Muntz was unimpressed. He did, however, own Kaiser-Frazer franchises in both New York City and Los Angeles.

And then there's the Muntz Jet. You'll read about the car's history elsewhere this issue, but for all of its rarity, it's easy to forget the Jet was a car that was completely out of character for Muntz's reputation in the early '50s. For a man whose name became synonymous with frugality, the Jet was a sybaritic automobile, with Cadillac

or Lincoln engines and a drinks cabinet in the rear armrest. For a man whose companies hyped the bottom line, the cost of his car was beyond all but the most well-heeled of the era; at \$5,500, it was double the price of a Series 61 Cadillac two-door hardtop.

While Muntz made at least three different fortunes in his lifetime, the Jet cost him at least one of them. He built about 400 Muntz Jets, give or take, and is said to have lost \$1,000 on each car; that's \$400,000 (in 1953 dollars) down the tubes. Production ceased only because Muntz couldn't sell Jets for his cost. The cognitive dissonance—the cheap-TV guy wants to sell me a \$5,500 car?—surely didn't help. The Muntz Jet is an outlier in the man's business history, if only because it wasn't a raging success—and it's all the more interesting for it.

By the late 1950s, most cars had a radio; only the most bare-bones models saw fit to plug the hole in the dash with a decorative radio-delete plate. A personal soundtrack in cars was unknown before Highway hi-fi; the system, which played records at 16½ and 45 RPM, would skip whenever the car hit a bump in the road. It was a fad, little more.

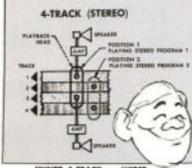
But Earl Muntz kept an eye on technical developments in radio, and in 1959, he read about the new Fidelipac audio tape, designed to play commercials and jingles. It was the first commercially available recorded

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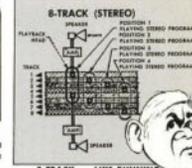
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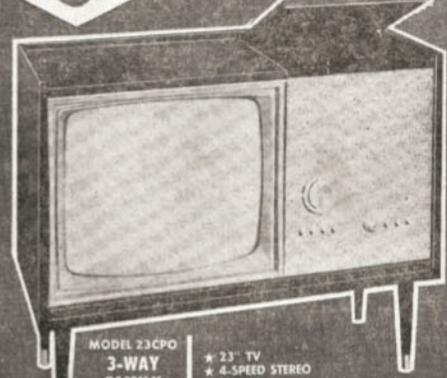
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audio tape cartridge. Tape would roll off the outside of the spool, a pinch roller in the player would place the tape against the capstan, then get fed back into the center of the spool. The Fidelipac, or *cart* as it is known in the radio industry for decades, used an endless quarter-inch tape loop with three tracks—one of which was used to automatically re-cue the tape. (There was also an Illinois connection for the Elgin native: Conley Electronics, which licensed cart technology, was based in Skokie.) Muntz could have enough tape on a single cart for both sides of a full-length 33½ RPM record. By adding a fourth track so it would play in stereo, you could play entire albums in your car as you drove—no skipping as you went—in an endless loop.

Using this technology, as well as players made in Japan, Muntz started the Muntz Stereo factory, in Van Nuys, California, in 1962. He sold pre-recorded cartridges (under license from a variety of record companies) and players for both home and automobile. It's not unfair to call it a revolution: For the first time, durable portable media could make the trip in the car, playing what you wanted to hear rather than endless commercials and corny public service announcements. The driver controlled the listening experience; your sound choices became active, not passive. The number of

stereo controls was minimized to allow the driver to concentrate on the road. While AM/FM stereo could be ordered in only high-end cars like Cadillacs and Lincolns, anyone could install a Muntz Stereo and a couple of speakers, and get similar sound quality. Licenses were granted at bargain prices, because at the time, record companies thought of consumer audio tape as a fad, and that nothing would replace vinyl. The Hollywood elite loved them: Bill Cosby, Frank Sinatra, Robert Culp, Lawrence Welk and many other stars had Stereo-Paks in their cars. And Muntz's Stereo-Pak was a hit among the general public, too. At a retail price of \$129.95, customers couldn't get enough of 'em. For a while.

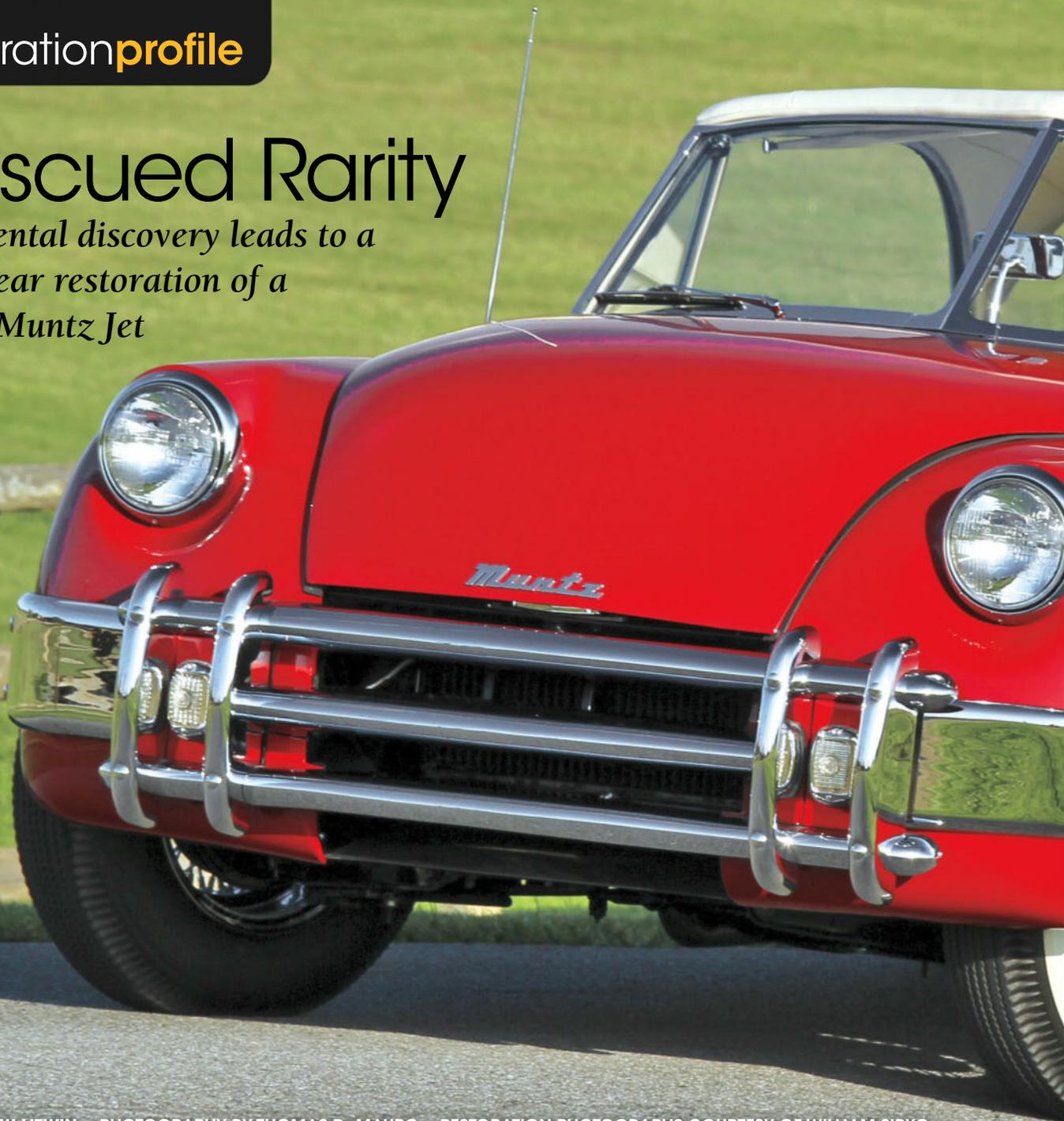
There were problems. Early Muntz tapes had a short play life, thanks to the layer of graphite improperly bonding with the tape ribbon itself. But the tape supplier had lenient credit terms with Muntz, so he stuck with them. Also, technology marched on. Bill Lear, of Learjet fame, was a Stereo-Pak distributor, as he sought to install them on his eponymous airplanes. But Lear, like Muntz, was a tinkerer. As he learned that Sony and Philips were making narrower tape, Lear found that he could put twice as much music on the same amount of tape, with acceptable audio quality. This, and other technical simplifications, begat the

8-track cartridge, and it was on the market in Ford products starting as early as 1965. It quickly became the new tape standard, and Muntz was drowning in returns of unused pre-recorded tapes for his soon-to-be-obsolete system. The return of unsold merchandise eventually buried Muntz Stereo, in 1970. After a warehouse fire, the company did not reopen.

But Muntz's spirit of innovation was irrepensible. In his retail electronics store, he combined a Sony television receiver with a special lens and reflecting mirror, and projected the image on a larger screen—making the first successful widescreen projection TV. Muntz also embraced recordable video technology, offering both VHS and Betamax players and recordable tapes. Much like he did with the four-track tape, he invested in the Technicolor Compact Video Cassette, which was designed to compete with both VHS and Beta. The format didn't take off, and again Muntz's fortunes flagged. By early 1985 he was back in business, though, and was the first retailer to offer a Hitachi cell phone for under \$1,000. He operated an electronics store that specialized in satellite dishes, cell phones and a motorhome rental company. Muntz died of lung cancer in 1987, but you just know that he was working on integrating all of that new technology into a car. 🚗

Rescued Rarity

Accidental discovery leads to a two-year restoration of a 1952 Muntz Jet



BY MATTHEW LITWIN • PHOTOGRAPHY BY THOMAS DeMAURO • RESTORATION PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF WILLIAM SIPKO

In September 2009, William Sipko was in New Castle, Pennsylvania, ready to examine a Lincoln Zephyr for sale on behalf of his friend. It should have been a straight-forward trip: Collect details, images and, ultimately, provide an opinion about the car in question. As the day unfolded, however, William discovered that the seller had several other cars for sale.

"The gentleman casually mentioned that he had a car I had probably never seen before," William recalls. "At that point, I was intrigued, and that's when he led me into a barn. In the back was an unusual red convertible. I wasn't sure what it

was until he mentioned that it was a 1952 Muntz Jet. I wasn't looking for anything in particular; however, I have a soft spot for cars that didn't quite make it. I have a 1938 Bantam and a 1925 Willys-Overland, for example, so I found it appealing, despite its condition, and bought it."

William goes on to describe the state of the Muntz—a convertible equipped with a removable factory hardtop—after it was further assessed in his shop. "It was very rough, about as close to a parts car as you could get. On a scale of one to 10—one being the worst—this was a two. Someone had begun to take it apart

years ago, but fortunately, 85 percent of the important parts were there."

Both the hood and trunk lid were bent, William recalls, while new floorboards would have to be fabricated. Several emblems were missing, as were the fender skirts, some side moldings, and a section of the front bumper. Part of the engine had been disassembled, and those parts had been stowed in the trunk. As to the passenger compartment, while the seats and instrument panel were still adorned with albeit deteriorating vinyl, a few chrome accent trim pieces and the rear-view mirror had vanished, while the



ice chests had rotted away.

“When Earl Muntz purchased Kurtis, he made several changes to the sports car, primarily lengthening the chassis three inches to add a rear seat. His initial batch of cars used Cadillac V-8s; however, a switch was made to Lincoln powerplants. And among his sales gimmicks was that each car was furnished with ice chests for beverages, hidden under the lift-off tops of the side armrests.”

Armed with a detailed list of requirements to resurrect the Muntz, William began disassembly. He and his shop fabricator, Roger Hirko, removed

and documented each piece of remaining trim and every exterior body panel, exposing the car’s unit-body structure and driveline. With the panels removed, they were able to extract the V-8 engine with greater ease. Once the 154hp, two-barrel-carbureted 337-cu.in. Lincoln flathead had been removed, the GM-manufactured Hydra-Matic automatic transmission was separated from the bellhousing, which had been custom-made by the Muntz factory to permit the merger of the two units.

“One of the things we discovered early on,” William explains, “was that Muntz rarely, if ever, documented any-

thing while building these cars, so we made sure to take careful notes during disassembly. One of the stories about the Muntz is that, depending upon what day of the week it was, your car could have been built using sheetmetal screws or an assortment of nuts and bolts; basically, whatever they had available at the time. Some cars came with hubcaps, some with wire wheels. There was no dealership network—you called the factory and ordered a car that, at \$5,000, cost more than a new Cadillac. So when we found a chip of the original red paint hidden under a door hinge, we stopped what we



In September 2009, the 1952 Muntz Jet slowly emerges from its long slumber. Some disassembly work had been started long ago but abandoned. Here you can see that the hood is bent and not sitting flush; also note the missing right-side bumper section.



Once relocated to a well-lit workshop it became apparent that there was a fair amount of corrosion afflicting damage to the steel body panels. Like the hood, the deck lid was twisted, and the thin side trim had gone missing; rear bumper and taillamps were present.



A portion of the interior has already been removed, including the front seats and the driveline tunnel, most of which was originally covered by a partial console. Note the extensive rust that forced the separation of the floorboards from the rocker panels.



The Muntz, like the Kurtis, didn't use a traditional frame. With the original body panels removed, one can see the extensive unit-body-style support structure that lay hidden below. Made from a heavy-gauge steel, it was able to better withstand corrosion.



Though the support structure did not exhibit corrosion, the front upper crossmember—which also supported the hood latch mechanism—had been damaged beyond repair. Using the original as a template, a new piece was fabricated and MIG welded into place.



Earlier, the body had been shipped to be acid-dipped to cleanse the metal of paint, primer and other material. Now in bare metal, rust was cut from the panels, and patch panels are in the process of being MIG welded. Note the lower front fenders.



Here, the body has been carefully realigned and sprayed in several layers of protective primer. Chassis black enamel has been applied to interior sections. Trim is being test fitted; adjustments are easier to accomplish now, before paint has been applied.



Found in a partially disassembled state, the Muntz's original 337-cu.in. Lincoln flathead V-8 has been rebuilt and refinished. Mounted to a temporary stand, it is being tested to ensure it is in smooth, running order before installation onto the chassis.



After masking off the areas destined to remain in chassis black, the body was given a final layer of epoxy primer, which was then sanded smooth. Look closely, and you'll see that a portion of the inner wheelwells and the rocker panels have been painted red.



Using a PPG basecoat/clearcoat system, the Muntz received its Colorado Red paint. Permitted to cure, it was then wet sanded and polished. Already, several pieces of restored trim have been installed, as have the suspension and Tru-Spoke wire wheels.



Like the exterior, the interior received careful restoration. This is a portion of a seat assembly; its springs tested for firmness and painted black to protect against future corrosion. NOS vinyl upholstery was obtained to finish the interior.



With a new, yet simple, wiring harness installed, connections can be made to the rebuilt Stewart Warner gauges. Aside from a speedometer and tachometer, both the left and right bank of cylinders had their own temperature gauge.



Sporty Lincoln steering wheel adorned with unique Muntz center hub does not obscure the engine-turned instrument panel. Radio is located in the front edge of the squat center console; ventilation system is under the dash; an ice chest resides under each rear armrest.

were doing and took the time to match it to Colorado Red. It was our best guess since there were no Muntz paint codes."

After disassembly, the car's main structure and body panels were sent to Redi-Strip in Indianapolis where they were acid-dipped. The process easily dissolved paint, primer and plastic filler, exposing bare metal and, previously hidden maladies that would require corrective measures. "When it came back to us, the acid dip confirmed that Roger was going to have to do a lot of fabrication work. The good news was that the main chassis structure, which Muntz built with a far heavier gauge steel than the body panels, was essentially solid."

During the next 12 months, Roger fabricated lower sections for both fenders and doors, then focused his attention on reproducing a new floorboard and rear quarter panels, frequently checking dimensions and contours based on what remained of the original panels. "Nobody knows how many Muntz Jets were really built, again, due to poor records. Because of that, finding another that is correctly restored is a challenge. When we did find a Muntz, we took a lot of measurements and reference photos.

"Workmanship at the factory was crude. Having done concours-level restorations prior, I had to decide between making the car better, or restoring it to the original factory standards, such as they were. As we moved forward with the rebuild of the body and support, we decided to MIG and TIG weld the new sections,

copying the crude Muntz methods to bring it back to its day-one appearance."

Last on the list of body repairs was a comparatively simple straightening of the hood and deck lid, at which point, the fully reassembled body received several coats of PPG primer. After the paint cured and was sanded, three layers of epoxy primer were applied, the last of which was block-sanded using 150-grade paper. Interior sections, such as the trunk cavity, engine bay and unpopulated passenger space, received several coats of chassis black paint.

With color already selected, William chose a basecoat/clearcoat PPG system.

Another one of the shop's employees, Jay Penrod, sprayed four coats of paint onto the body, sanding each application with 500-grade paper after allowing for proper cure time. Next came three applications of clearcoat. The last layer was wet-sanded, progressing from 1,500- to 2,000-grade paper. Farecla polishing compound was then used to bring forth a show-winning shine.

While the body was being addressed, William worked on other aspects of the car's restoration. He tells us: "I had Edge Racing Engines, also in Windber [where William lives], manage the engine rebuild. Since someone had pulled the



The Lincoln V-8 was restored to factory specifications, meaning the two-barrel carbureted flathead produces 154hp and 275-lb.ft. of torque.



I read my first copy of *Hemmings Motor News* when I was 15 and started working on cars a year later. It led me to a career in metal fabricating, so the Muntz Jet was an easy project for me, as bad as it was. It looked so helpless sitting in the barn, like a disabled puppy. I thought, "Well, I better rescue this guy. It looked pretty rough, and no one is going to help him." During the restoration, I felt like I was Indiana Jones trying to uncover history and parts. It was a fun project the whole way through, and I learned a lot from the Muntz. When I take it to shows, I talk to spectators about it all day long, and my voice gets sore because of the interest; it's such a unique car and that's what attracted me to it. My recommendation is to do a lot of research first. Fortunately, a Muntz is not like a Tucker, or any other hand-built car with unique hand-built parts. Other than the body, it's all common parts from other manufacturers, so it boils down to time and patience to see the project through.

cylinder heads off long ago, we feared that the Lincoln block—stamped with the same 'M146' designation that we found on the chassis—might have been damaged. Although rodent nests were in the piston bores, it was determined that the block wasn't cracked. Even better, because it was a Lincoln engine, we could buy all the internals to match its factory specifications. While the engine was being worked on we rebuilt the Hydra-Matic transmission."

As to the front and rear suspension, Muntz used parts from Ford, including the drum brake system, in order to complete the ensemble. It was a step in the restoration made easy for William based on the prevalence of bolt-on parts.

"We lucked out when it came to the interior," William says. "Muntz used Stewart Warner gauges—including separate water temperature gauges for the left and right cylinder banks—so I could send them out for a simple rebuild. Roger fabricated new ice chests from stainless steel, and Black's Upholstery in Altoona, Pennsylvania, got

to work on the interior. We were fortunate enough to find original Snow White vinyl to re-cover the seats, door panels and the cast-aluminum dash. They also re-covered the interior of the removable top.

"As that process was ongoing, I constructed a new wiring harness. It was rather easy, since Muntz didn't add a lot of gizmos. The first step was to stretch out and nail the original harness onto a sheet of plywood. Then, using reproduction fabric-insulated wiring, I simply retraced the layout and connections."

Earlier, chrome trim had been sent to M&P Refinishing in Jeannette, Pennsylvania, and it had been returned as reassembly was underway. In addition, new glass had been ordered, each piece custom-etched with the original's April 1952 date codes at William's request. There were a few pieces, though, that required additional effort and patience to obtain.

"Muntz didn't make any extra parts. They were like a hot rod, really. A Lincoln engine, GM transmission, Ford suspension; they even used a Lincoln steering

wheel, so there are no spare NOS parts in the traditional sense. For instance, the quarter glass window cranks are the same parts Ford used on their 1951 convertibles, and finding them is tough. Long story short, I talked to a guy in Colorado who was friends with a nearby junkyard owner who had a couple convertibles sitting in the yard. He would make the arrangements for me, but I would have to wait a couple months for his buddy to finish a gold panning expedition in the mountains. That's how it was with the restoration of this Muntz. We either had to hunt a part down, or make one from scratch, like the fender skirts. It's all part of the hobby—that's why I like it," says William.

By the summer of 2011, the restoration of the rare Muntz Jet—by more recent accounts, one of fewer than perhaps 200 made—had been completely finished. Since then, William has enjoyed sharing it with other enthusiasts at regional and national events, as well as the occasional short excursion to keep its mechanical systems fluid. 🐾



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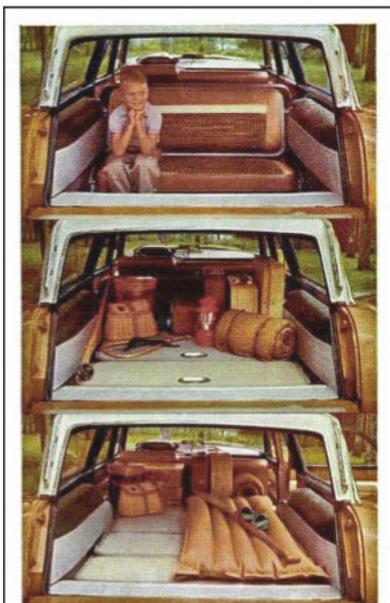
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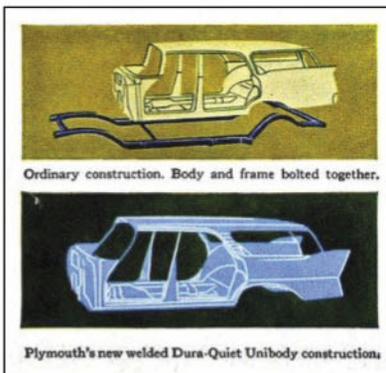
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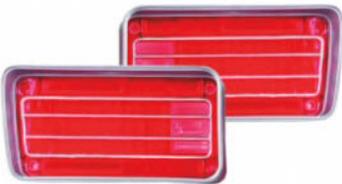
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An LTD II, Nothing New

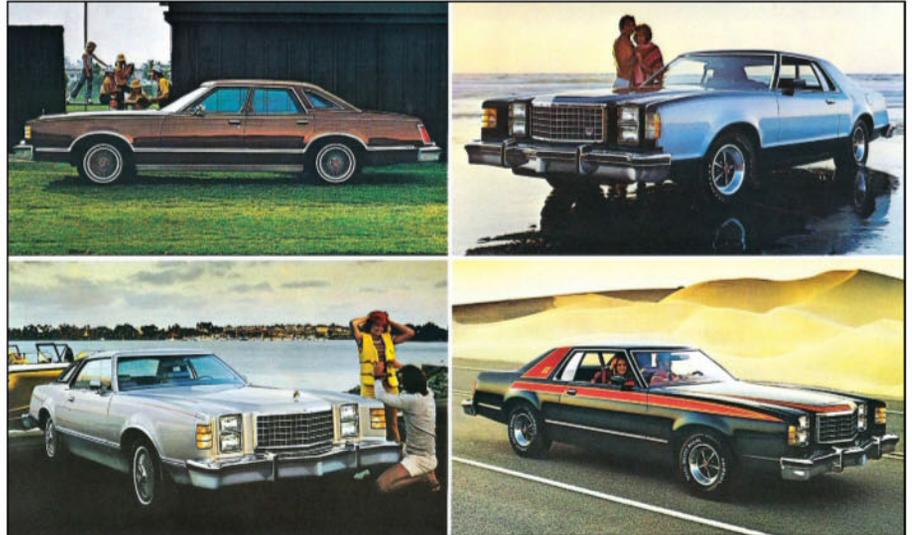
AS WITH ANY UNDERDOG I TRY TO shove into your garage, LTD IIs have started popping up for sale lately. I have a personal relationship with the short-lived, Torino-based LTD II, because in 1990, I had a friend who was down on his luck. His Chevrolet Citation had died after racking up more than 150,000 miles. I was working at a restaurant in Williamsburg, Virginia, and one of the cooks was selling a 1979 Ford LTD II S for \$300. The sedan was beige inside and out, with no vinyl roof nor the rear quarter/opera windows. The only option was air conditioning. I decided to buy it for my friend, which meant I had the pleasure of driving it to my mechanic to have it checked out.

The first thing I noticed was that for such a large car, the interior was no roomier than my Dodge Aspen. In addition, the car's road manners were less than stellar. Of course, I could attribute that to its age and high mileage at the time. However, in the literature from that era, many writers noted the slightly sloppy handling characteristics of midsize Fords when they were equipped with base suspension components.

Fortunately, my new purchase only needed an oil change, a tune-up and rear tires. It's one thing to buy someone a car; it's another to hand him a clunker that ends up being a money pit—the gift that keeps on taking. My friend was happy to have transportation, and he drove it until the engine seized up a year later, at which time he was able to buy a new car.

In 1977, General Motors introduced its highly successful, downsized, full-size fleet. For a year, all American midsize cars, including those from GM, rode wheelbases of anywhere from 114 to 118 inches. GM would rectify that in 1978, when even AMC would continue to market the Matador as a midsize during its final year, while some Mopar full-size nameplates were also applied to midsize cars. Over at Ford, they were in a state of denial and expounding on the virtues of road-hugging weight.

With the moderate success of the Ford Elite (*HCC* #129, June 2015), Ford squared up the styling on the Torino/Elite body and created the still highly desirable 1977 Thunderbird. On the same platform,



it gave us the 1977 LTD II, which replaced the Torino (a new Mercury Cougar featured most of the same body styles as the LTD II). However, the station wagon (Cougar included) continued to use the 1976 Montego body from the cowl back during its single-year existence.

Still body-on-frame and riding a 114-inch two-door and 118-inch four-door and wagon wheelbase, the LTD II attempted to look like a smaller version of the full-size Fords. As a T-Bird and Cougar XR-7, they were magnificent. The basketball-court-sized hood and short deck lent themselves well to the extremely popular personal luxury car market.

The Ford LTD II was one of the largest midsize cars ever, and even the 1978 brochure notes that it's wider and longer than the best-selling full-size car from GM. How confusing was it to buy a car in the late 1970s?

"Ford's quiet riding LTD II combines LTD's traditional high level of workmanship with a unique sporty spirit all its own. The result: a comfortable new car that's trimmer in size and price than LTD." Our friends in Dearborn continued: "And like the Mustang II, it's a fresh, young idea that's just right for its time. For a family car, it's a lot of fun to drive."

Standard power came from the 302-cu.in. V-8 all three years, and optional engines included the 351-cu.in. and 400-cu.in. V-8s through 1978, and

only the 351 for final year, 1979.

Three trim levels were available, base "S," standard (no letter designation), and Brougham. The standards and Broughams could be ordered with all that 1970s padded vinyl we all loved, including side trim and half roofs with opera windows on two-door models and full roofs with rear quarter/opera windows on four-doors. The base models had solid C-pillars. I was always surprised when I saw a two-door LTD II Brougham when one could buy a Thunderbird for not a whole lot more cash.

Sales were good for a few minutes then the public realized that they could get a full-size GM model with more interior room and better handling and efficiency. With the introduction of the Fairmont for the 1978 model year, the LTD II had lost its way. Why Ford continued to sell it in 1979, the year it introduced the 114-inch Panther platform LTD, is still a mystery. A more timely and popular midsize LTD would debut on the Fox platform in 1983.

While the LTD II was not the most desirable car back in the Disco Era, if you share an ad for one with fans of 1970s cars, the response is overwhelming. The good news for you is that values for these hefty midsize cars are still low enough to pick one up for pennies (maybe dimes) on the dollar and enjoy cruising around town in a car that will bring a smile to your friends' faces. The four-door Broughams are the most popular among collectors. Who knew? 🐶

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Raymond Boelke Service Manager Chevrolet

IN THE SPRING OF 1959, I ACCEPTED

a job as assistant service manager at a Chevrolet dealership in Chicago. Up to this date in my life, I had ambitions of working at General Motors. I was at that time a service writer ("service advisor," in today's terms) for a Chevrolet dealer in Evanston, Illinois. My background to this point was attending engineering school at Northwestern University for one year before deciding to go to General Motors Institute of Technology in Flint, Michigan (now called Kettering University). My dealer agreed to sponsor me in the Dealer Co-op two-year course, which meant I rotated every two months between schooling and dealer on-the-job training.

After I completed my schooling, an assistant service manager's job opened up at the above-mentioned Chevrolet dealer in Chicago. I got the job, and six months later, I was asked if I was interested in the manager's position. My answer was a conditional "yes." The condition was based on me appointing my own staff. My terms were met, and a new, very important phase of my automotive career began.

Over the next 15 months, I instituted several operational changes, many as a result of my schooling. The changes were all for the good, and got the dealer out of the "old time" service department syndrome. The changes proved so successful and significant that Chevrolet Motor Division offered me a position as Chicago zone claims adjuster, but that's a whole different story.

My first significant service department change as manager was to smooth out and speed up the job flow to the mechanics (now called technicians). Up to this point, the written repair orders were stacked at the foreman's desk awaiting a technician who was looking for a job to do. My new system (remember, this was before computers) had a 10-slot work rack for each mechanic, which was located at the write-up area. The jobs were assigned immediately after being written. As the slots filled up, the mechanic could see his work load from his work stall and handle his time accordingly. It also gave much-needed flexibility to each mechanic to manage his workload, for



The mechanics' work slots were located on the office outside wall.

instance, in the event that a job got tied up awaiting parts or customer approval.

As a new service manager, I also experienced many frustrations. For example, the mechanics were never happy because they weren't getting the "good jobs," or the dealer wasn't happy because he wanted a better bottom line, or the factory was on my case to reduce its warranty expenditure. One specific issue I had to contend with was getting rid of the union steward because the dealer didn't like him. The steward and I got along great, which made the dealer's order extremely tough, but I successfully reduced his workload to the point where he had to leave our dealership and go to one that could feed him more work.

Probably the most significant chapter in my career involved the introduction of the Corvair. It was a disaster for General Motors, the dealers, the customers and the mechanics. The warranty cost to GM was astronomical, the dealers' service workload (including parts and warranty handling) must have tripled, and the customers were experiencing a myriad of product failures, from gas heaters backfiring to engine seals leaking oil into the combustion chamber. As a result, many mechanics refused to work

on Corvairs because it was so different from anything General Motors had on the road. As a result, I offered all Corvair service work to just one young, ambitious mechanic. He saw the opportunities, went to every Corvair school and seminar and was perhaps the best paid mechanic in our shop.

After approximately 15 months on the job, the Chevrolet Motor Division zone service manager came to my dealership requesting an interview with me for a position with Chevrolet. My dealer reluctantly gave approval, and even though I would have to take a considerable pay cut, I felt the health and retirement benefits far offset the reduced pay. Actually, I did recover the pay loss within the next year. Thus began my 31 years with the Corporation, always on the automotive service technology side of the business. 🍷

 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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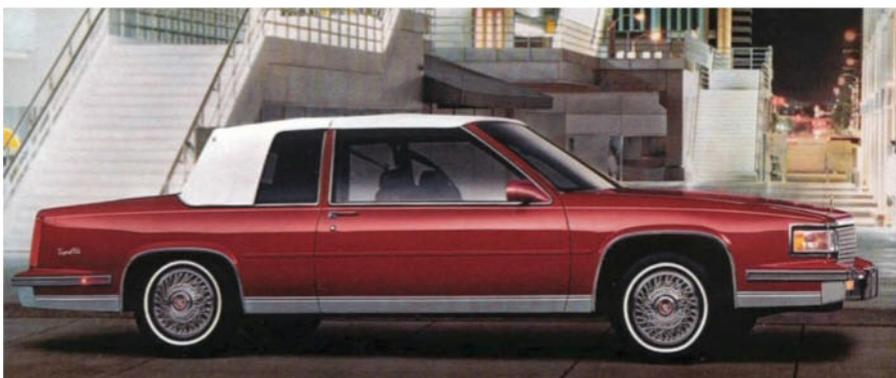
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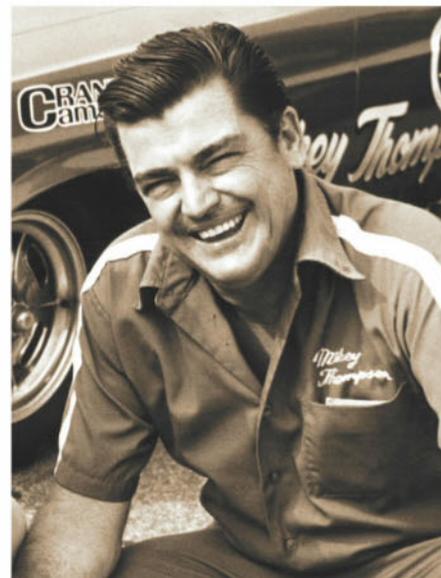
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- Car radio (Alpine; removable) – \$199
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- First-class stamp – \$0.25
- Ticket to the movies – \$4.00



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MICKY THOMPSON, THE FIRST AMERICAN to break the 400-MPH barrier at the Bonneville Salt Flats in his four-engine Challenger I, is murdered with his wife by two hooded gunmen outside their home in Bradbury, California. Thompson is credited with building the first slingshot dragster in 1954 and set many speed and endurance records over the course of his career.

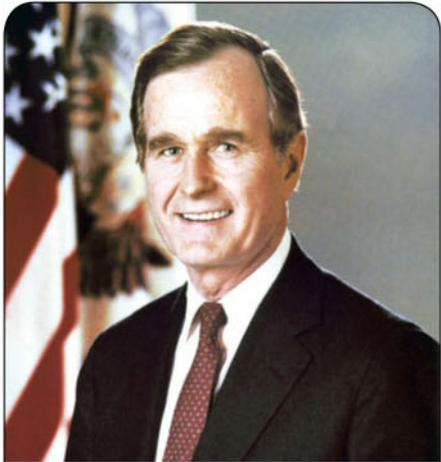


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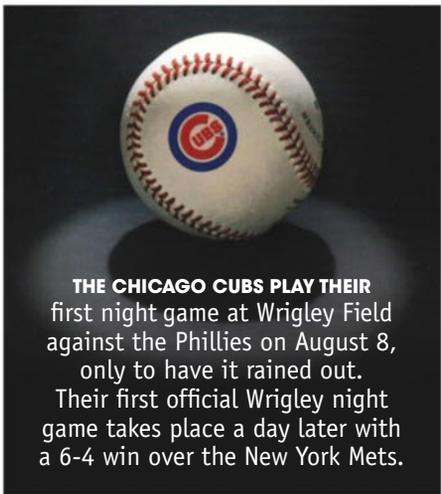


RAIN MAN, starring Dustin Hoffman, Tom Cruise and a 1949 Buick Roadmaster, wins the Oscar for best picture, actor (Hoffman) and director.

RICK MEARS WINS HIS THIRD INDY 500 over second-place finisher Emerson Fittipaldi, with the race finishing under caution.



GEORGE H.W. BUSH DEFEATS Michael Dukakis and becomes the 41st president of the United States.



THE CHICAGO CUBS PLAY THEIR first night game at Wrigley Field against the Phillies on August 8, only to have it rained out. Their first official Wrigley night game takes place a day later with a 6-4 win over the New York Mets.

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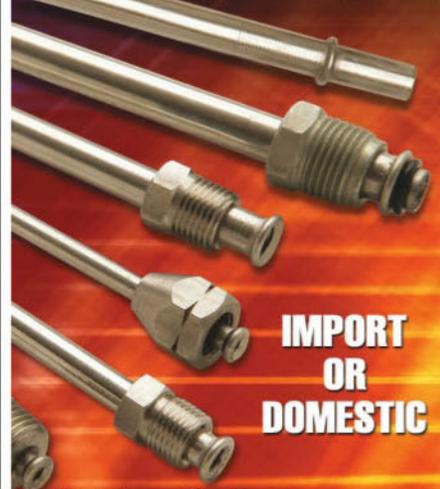
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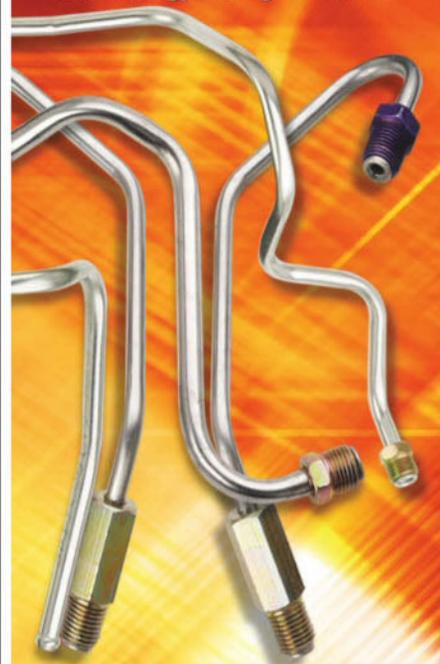
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SHORTLY AFTER RETURNING FROM

World War II service, my older brother, Bob, began building and racing a hot rod on western Wisconsin's small-town dirt tracks. It was built in a garage well back from my parents' house. My job as an early grade schooler was to wash car parts. However, my most important job involved protecting Ma's refrigerator from the mechanic's greasy hands. Bob's six pack of beer was deposited at the start of each day, then I was the only one my mother allowed to fetch the beer. I was ordered by my brother to not shake the cans, which I didn't, but what seven-year old can carry a beer 30 yards without running? The compromise was that the cans were opened very carefully.

The late 1940s hot rods were mostly made from early '30s stock Fords cut down to hot rod dimensions. However, Bob built his from scratch. It was powered by a Chevrolet straight-six with a high-compression cylinder head. His car could corner as well as the Fords and had more torque coming out of the corners, but lost out down the straightaway to the high-revving Fords. It wasn't bad on the quarter-mile, but his car was a dog on the half-mile tracks. By 1949, he junked the Chevy hot rod. He and my dad put the high-compression cylinder head on Dad's 1938 Chevy, but Dad quickly pulled it off, as he feared it would blow up his engine.

In 1950, Bob, and my other older brother, Denny, got into racing dirt track stock cars. Late 1930s Ford coupes with flathead V-8s were their favorite, as they handled so well. The cars had good "stock" engines, thanks to a brother-in-law's engine rebuild shop, and they at least broke even financially with their racing. The summer schedule was Friday night, Saturday night and Sunday afternoon, all at different locations. Winter time involved building new cars for the following summer. Lots of welding went on in the garage, and even some forged metal work using an old hand-pump farm-horse shoeing forge. The late 1930s Ford parts cars stored nearby in a shallow ravine became my playground.

In 1950, a test race track was formed in a large field east of our house and yard. My mother would not allow it to be used when the wind was blowing from the east. By



1951, the test track was returned to growing soy beans as the Korean War raised their price.

By the mid 1950s, family obligations and jobs were getting too much for my brother to continue with racing. By 1955, some of the owner/drivers started to drop Chrysler and Pontiac overhead V-8s into their race cars. Denny was a top-notch driver and could still sometimes hold them off with the flathead Ford V-8.

My first motor vehicle was not a Chevrolet, but a used Cushman motor scooter. It served well for summer work, and in spring and fall it was transport into town for high school; much better than riding the school bus for two hours each day. In winter, the scooter was a no-go.

It was May of 1959, graduation, a summer job in highway maintenance was approaching and it was time to get a car. I had been along with my dad to car lots before when he traded cars, but this was different. It was my \$200 savings on the line. A nice-looking 1953 Mercury caught my eye, but Dad wisely steered us to a very plain 1952 Chevrolet four-door that cost exactly \$200.

The car was the plainest of Janes, and had only 55,000 miles on it. The trunk floor revealed a smattering of oat seeds, so it was obviously a farmer's car from the west-central Wisconsin area. It had a 216-cu. in. straight-six, 90hp engine and manual column shift. It did have a heater, but no other accessories had been added, not even an oil filter.

For a radio, someone had cobbled on an aftermarket car radio from the 1930s. The speaker and radio tubes were in a box mounted under the dash. Two cables ran

from the box to two little knobs and a station dial the size of a half-dollar mounted under the dash in the center. Reception was pitiful, and the two local stations didn't play rock 'n' roll.

Without an oil filter, it required frequent changes, plus adding a quart every 300 miles. I found removing the thermostat in the summer increased oil mileage, but the oil darkened fast. In the four years I drove the car, it only needed a master brake cylinder rebuild, and replacement of a king pin and the muffler and tailpipe. As expected, the car never busted my budget.

After four winters and five summers of using the car, I was off to graduate school and had no place for it. For the next three years, my dad drove it to work so my younger sister could use his 1959 Mercury for college transportation. When she graduated and got her own car (a 1966 Mustang fastback), the 1952 Chevy was passed to Bob as a drive-to-work car. After a couple more years of use, the body was badly rusted, but the engine ran well; same as always. Bob, it happens, had an International Farmall F-12 tractor rigged with a snow plow that had a bad engine. Having been a stock car builder, he rigged up the replacement by cutting the F-12's frame below the engine, lengthening it with a welded-in metal section and installing the Chevy's straight-six. Boy, could that plow Wisconsin snow!

I could never afford to restore a 1952 Chevrolet; however, my utility vehicle is a 2000 Jeep Cherokee Classic. With its straight-six engine, it has that same booming sound and that same low-speed torque as my old 1952 Chevy Six. 🏁

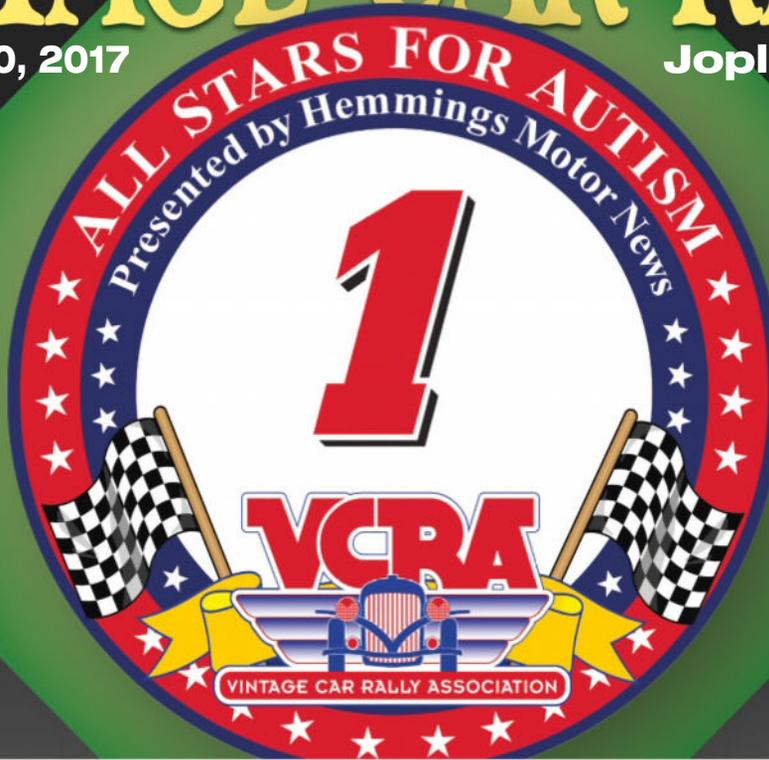
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Some Assembly Required

Ford's TT was always a DIYer's dream, and this 1923 model lived up to that legacy

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY MIKE McNESSOR

Do-it-yourselfers love trucks. Without these beasts of burden, it'd be impossible to haul home building materials, pull a small equipment trailer, plow snow, etc. Fortunately, we live in an age of peak truck when upwards of a half-dozen manufacturers have been building versatile, powerful, comfortable

and reliable haulers for decades. But there was a time when just acquiring a truck was a serious do-it-yourself project. Dealer lots weren't overflowing with new pickups, and there wasn't an endless supply of used haulers for sale everywhere. At the dawn of the 20th century, trucks were often deconstructed passenger cars with the people-carrying

furniture removed and the back three-quarters of the body hacked off then replaced with a homemade box or a flat bed.

The widespread availability and low price of Ford's Model T made it a prime target for these transformations from family car to general-purpose hauler, and soon an aftermarket sprang up offering

kits to make these conversions easier. The market for a Model T-based truck didn't go unnoticed by Henry Ford, and in 1917, he unveiled the Model TT: a one-ton truck platform that used the model T's powertrain but a stronger worm-drive axle and beefed up suspension, sold without a cab or body. It wasn't until 1924 that Ford began offering crude cabs, beds and canopy bodies for the TT. For 1925, a closed cab was added to the lineup, as was a stake body.

These weren't particularly powerful trucks, as Ford's 177-cu.in. four-cylinder engine made just 20 horsepower, so TT's were equipped with deep gear ratios to allow them to move heavy loads. This meant that they weren't particularly fast, either, with a top speed of around 20 MPH. But with prices ranging from \$400-\$500 for a TT chassis (throughout the TT's decade-long run, its price actually decreased from \$600 in 1917 to \$325 in 1927) Ford sold thousands of TT's.

This month's immaculate feature truck is one of 261,661 TT chassis that Ford produced for the 1923 model year—prior to the company offering its own bodies. Its current owner and restorer, DIYer Dan Shields of Upper Sandusky, Ohio, rescued it from a one-way trip to the scrapyard in late 2012. The purchase price was an attractive \$100, less than one third of what it would've cost new. But Dan's TT was far from factory fresh when he took it in.

"The truck had sat quietly in the corner of a barn in northwest Ohio for approximately 60 years until a portion of the barn collapsed," Dan told us. "As a result, the old truck was badly damaged and the owner was getting ready to haul it away. A local scrapyard was going to pay the owner \$100 to junk it out. I offered to pay the same amount for the vehicle and told the owner I would come over to pick it up. He offered to deliver it to my shop since it was already loaded up to go to the scrapyard."

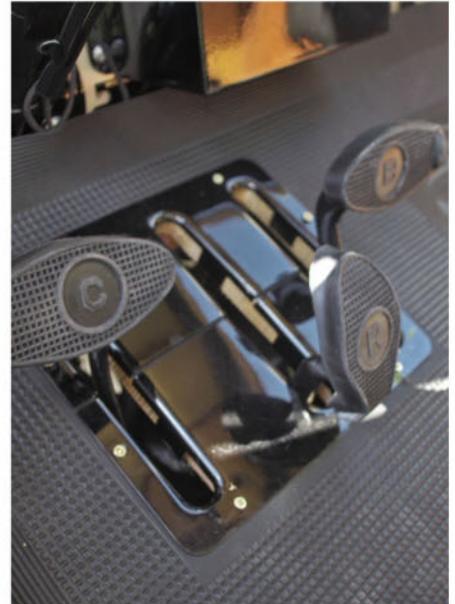
Dan bought the truck sight unseen and it turned out to be even more dilapidated than he'd imagined. Though a veteran of several restorations, he was initially uncertain about how to approach this project. "The truck was in a little rougher shape than I envisioned, and I realized this would require a lot of time and effort to bring it back to its original condition," Dan said. "Even

though I had restored several cars, I did not know where to start on this. I first needed to find and read anything I could about Model T's to educate myself."

One of the first things Dan discovered is that the TT's support base isn't as expansive as the Model T's. "After reading several books, magazines and online articles, it became evident that restoring a Model TT truck would present many more challenges than restoring a Model T," he said. "Model T parts are readily available, but parts for a Model TT are much more difficult to acquire. Some basic parts are interchangeable between the two, but there are several specialty parts designed for use only on

the trucks."

Also, while the truck wasn't badly rusted—probably due to its having been used very little—one of the frame rails had been bent when the barn collapsed on it. "I started by completely disassembling every part of the truck down to the last nut and bolt. There was virtually no rust on any of the parts," Dan recalled. "One of the first major problems I encountered was the right frame member, which was bent out of shape due to the barn collapse. The piece was taken to a local metal fabrication shop, where it was placed in a press. After three days, the frame member was removed, but unfortunately,





the bend was still there, making the piece unusable.”

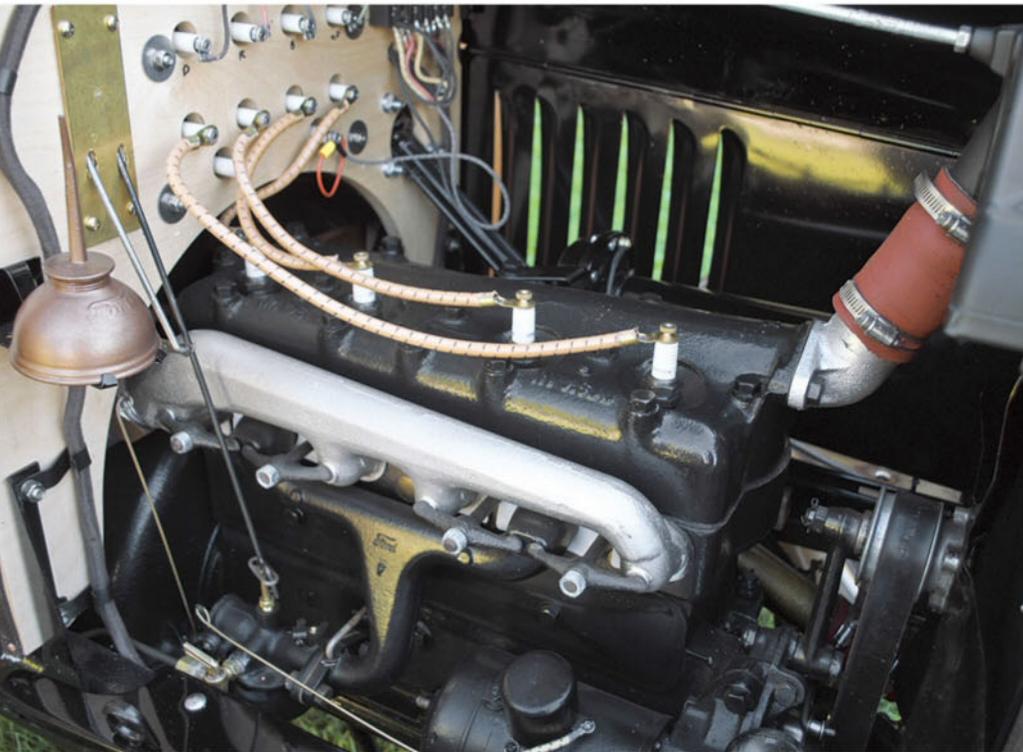
Dan located a new frame in Indiana, advertised in *Hemmings Motor News*, for \$200, which he stripped of rust and pressed into service. “Much of the early work was done by hand and consisted of cleaning everything with a wire brush, sandblasting, and acid baths to remove the rust and paint. During this, I became

intimately acquainted with every part of the truck, down to the smallest springs and bolts,” Dan said. “Once all the parts were cleaned, they were primed and painted by hand to prepare them for reassembly.”

The TT’s original engine was rebuilt by a friend who had experience with Model T’s. He discovered that the truck’s engine was standard bore with its original internals in place. The

transmission meanwhile was shipped to Cincinnati for an overhaul, while the hickory wheels went to a refinishing shop in Mount Victory, Ohio. Dan handled the chassis restoration and reassembly.

When it came time to build the truck’s body, Dan selected rough-sawn oak for the bed and walnut for the cab. The joinery work was performed by



Amish cabinetmakers in southern Hardin County, Ohio, and Dan had the cab's custom glass cut locally.

While researching the truck's history, Dan learned that it had been manufactured on December 27, 1922, and was purchased new by a painting contractor in the village of Carey, Ohio. The TT remained with one family until the 1950s, when it was sold to a local mechanic. It went into storage then, until Dan acquired it and brought it back to better-than-new condition.

"It took a little over two years to restore the truck," Dan said. "I did most of the work by myself and photo documented the entire experience. I met with a local Model T collector and routinely picked his brain for ideas and assistance during the project. Beginning with very little knowledge of Model T's it has become a labor of love, even inspiring me to restore a 1920s Model T Roadster. In all my time going to car shows, I have probably only seen about 10 TT trucks. Pre-1924 trucks without cabs are rare and hard to find. Most are unrestored and in very rough shape."

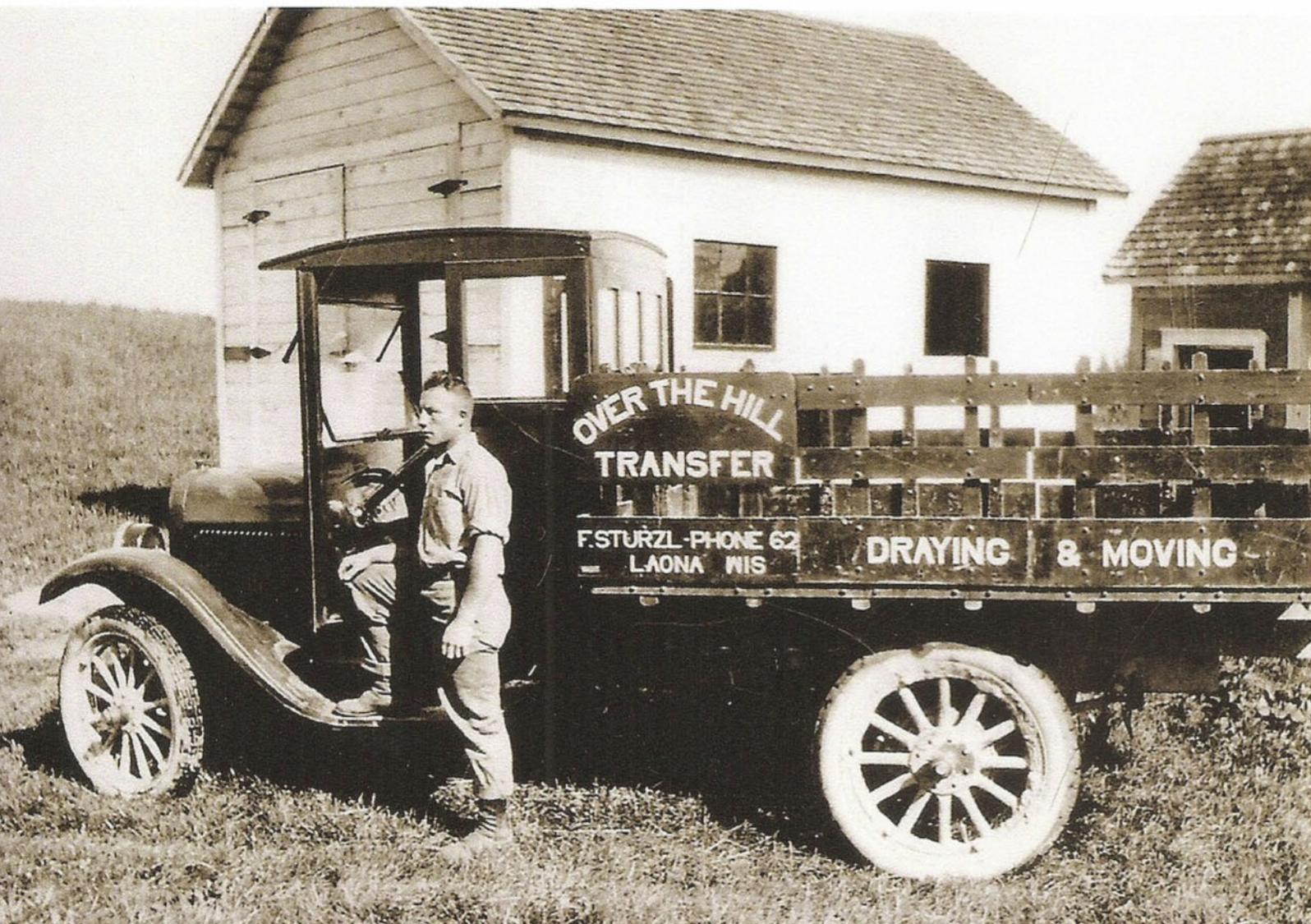
In the end, that initial \$100 investment in a derelict truck turned out to be a tuition down payment for an advanced class in American commercial

truck history that most enthusiasts will never enroll in—or fully understand.

"I have often heard the comment, 'Anybody can work on a Model T,' but the vehicles are foreign to most modern mechanics," Dan said. "There are few manuals, no electronics, and no way to easily determine what has gone wrong. Mechanical problems are usually troubleshoot by trial and error. Early owners would carry a set of tools, as they would need to act as their own mechanics in the case of breakdowns while on the road." 🐞

SPECIAL THANKS to Ronald Marvin Jr. for contributing to this article.





Into the Great North Woods

Hauling everything in the hinterlands of Wisconsin

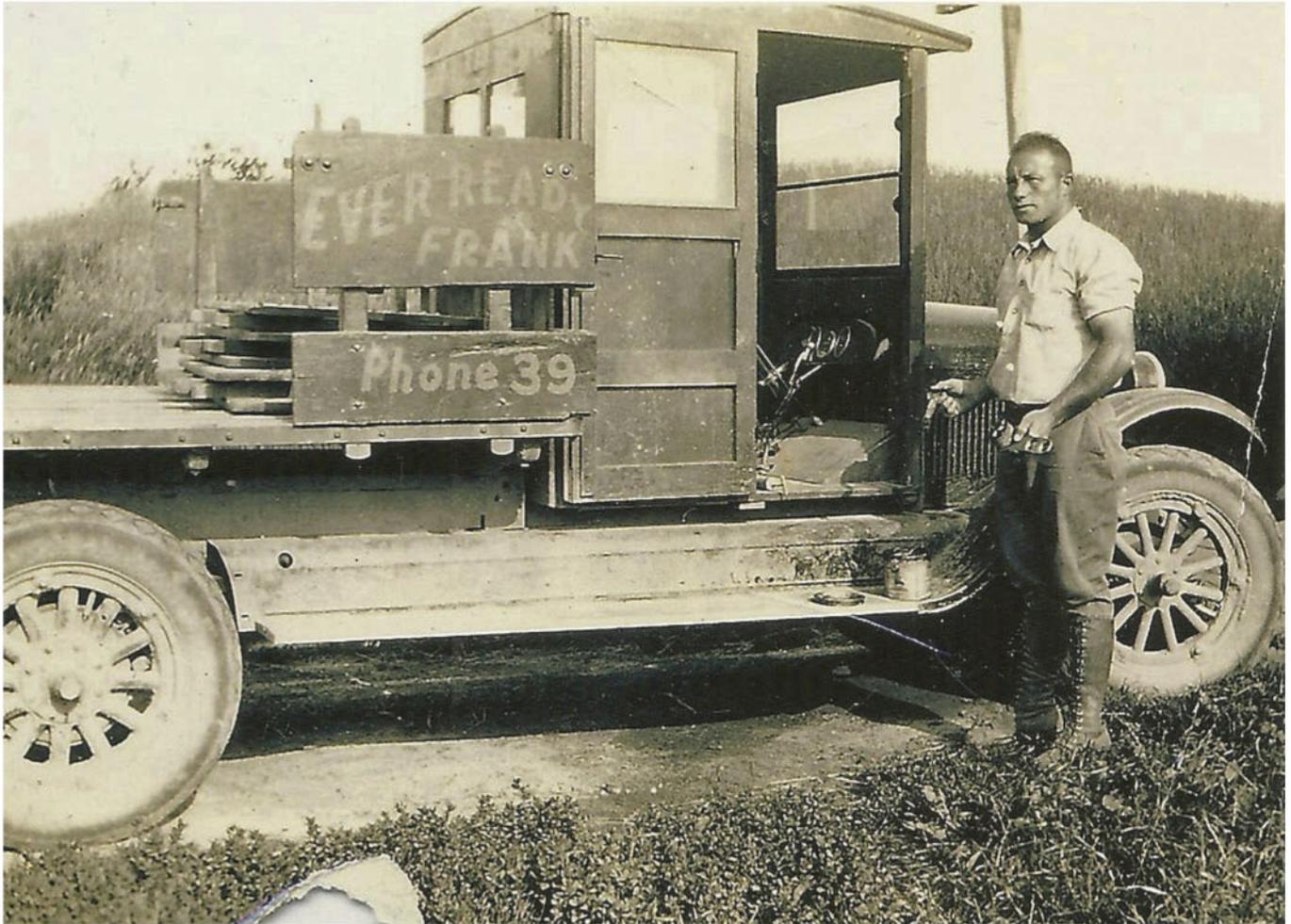
BY JIM DONNELLY • IMAGES COURTESY AL STRANZ

If you want to get an idea how old these photos really are, and the action they depict, take a look at the image on the opposite page. The truck is lettered with a two-digit telephone number advertising the hauling business that operated it. Not too unusual, given that the gentleman in both photographs was working with the truck into the early 1930s, at the latest, and that the location is rural Forest

County, Wisconsin, about 20 miles from where the Upper Peninsula of Michigan juts up against the northern reaches of the Badger State. This is the part of Wisconsin where hardwood forests stretch almost to the horizon, the kind of place that the Nobel laureate Bob Dylan might have been singing about in "Tangled Up in Blue."

The truck operator is a guy named Frank Sturzl, although he went by the

name of Hank. He was the maternal grandfather of Al Stranz of Abrams, Wisconsin, who sent us these photos to judge our interest in telling Hank's story. When we heard it from Al, we were enthralled. Hank's business was hauling freight, the kind that came right off the freight trains that were the primary mode of commercial transportation in northeastern Wisconsin. Living in the tiny municipality of Laona, he hauled



freight off the trains from the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad at its Laona depot, and also out of the Wabeno on the C&NW, Laona junction on the C&NW and the Soo Line, and Cavour on the Soo.

Literally everything that went into and out of these lumbering towns ended up at some point in the back of Hank's truck, which per Al's relatives who could remember back that far, was a 1928 Chevrolet. The cargoes included sugar that he delivered to moonshiners who operated stills east of Cavour, and big tins of their finished product on the way out to the railhead. It was relatively steady work, if not very secure from an income standpoint. In the top photo, you can see a can of paint on the truck's running board and a brush in Hank's hand, as he was evidently snapped in the midst of lettering the Chevrolet. Al tells us that, over the years he remained in the business, Hank also operated an International and an REO in his draying operation.

As its name implies, Forest County is

all about trees and tourism. Today, a lot of people from southeastern Wisconsin maintain vacation homes in its lake-dotted landscape. Hank came from a family of blacksmiths that had sailed from Germany in the 1880s, with his father following the railroads as far as Portland, Oregon, where he was killed in an accident. The grandfather's widow relocated the family to Laona, which at the time had the nation's largest hardwood sawmill, mainly cutting hard maple. At the western end of Forest County was a community of residents who had migrated en masse from Kentucky—as Al explained, the locals still call them “Kentucks”—who handled the bulk of the moonshining. He told us you can still go to western Forest County and hear people speaking with marked Appalachian accents.

The irony that surrounds all of this is that, in 1934, Hank decided he needed a steadier income, so he ran for Forest County undersheriff and won. Next, he was elected county sheriff. Al

told us about local folklore that recalls the encounters between lawmen and bootleggers, one of them being a chase along the Soo Line using railroad handcars that ended in a crash when two of the handcars collided. Hank and his deputies became involved in a foot chase, along with some federal agents, and when Hank tackled one of the miscreants, it turned out to be his older brother.

Hank went on to later serve 24 years as Forest County treasurer. After he retired, he went back to trucking, you could say: He and his wife bought a 1965 Chevrolet pickup, with a big slide-in camper, and spent the rest of their days touring the United States. 🚚

 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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205VR14	Dog Bone	\$429
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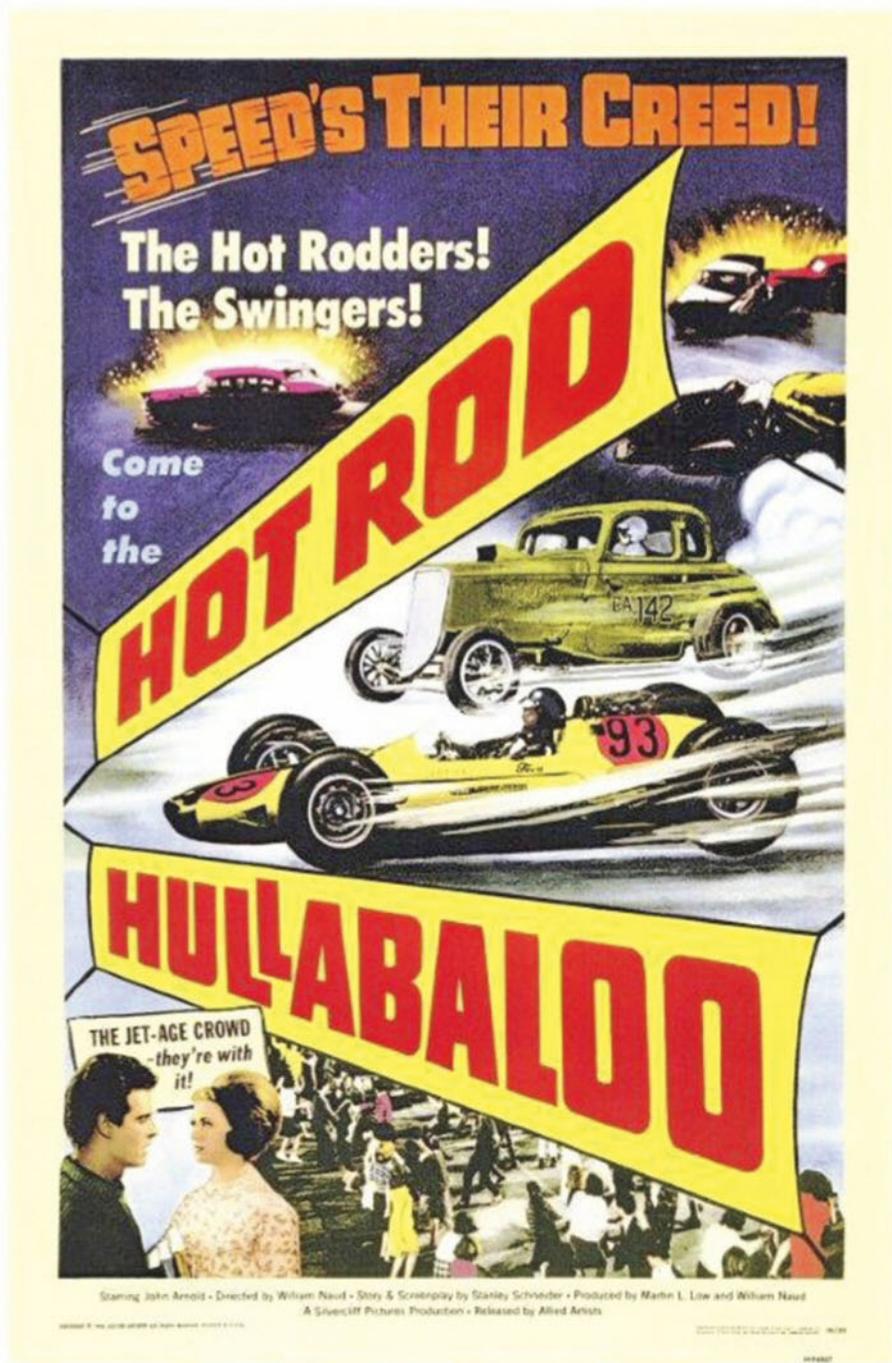
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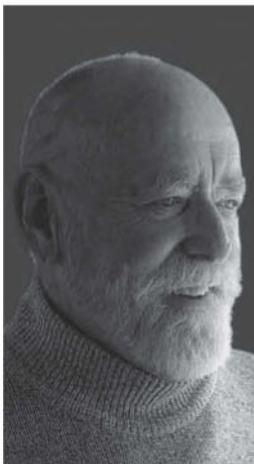
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Movie poster
1966



What's in a Name?

I have spent a lifetime studying cars: how they look, how they work and who built them and why, but the one thing I have not been able to figure out is the process by which carmakers come up with the names for their products. It makes little to no sense to me. Take Plymouth, for instance.

You probably assumed that Chrysler's low-priced offering was named after the rock on which the pilgrims first set foot, but that's not the case. Plymouth was named after a brand of sturdy binding twine. For those of you too young to remember binding twine—before plastic bags, people used to wrap packages in paper and then tie them with twine.

Some cars were named after where they were made, such as Auburn, which was made in Auburn, Indiana. And certain models were named after their engines, such as Hudson's Great Eight. But then the Oldsmobile 4-4-2 was named after its performance components, which included a four-barrel carburetor, four-speed transmission and dual exhaust. In the mid-1930s, Packard came out with its first mass-produced model, dubbed the 120, touting the length of its wheelbase.

Naming a car after its wheelbase is novel, but not as bizarre as Studebaker naming one of its models the Dictator during the heyday of Hitler and Mussolini. And then, later, came the Edsel, which was named after Henry Ford's only son, who died in 1943. Unfortunately, the name sounds a bit like a Yiddish insult.

Some manufacturers named their cars after suburbs of Los Angeles, such as Chevrolet's Bel Air and Malibu, though in both places, Cadillacs were more common. And then Cord's 1936 Beverly and Westchester models were named after parts of Los Angeles that E.L. Cord owned at the time. His car company went broke, but he made millions subdividing Beverly Hills. And then there was the Corvair Lakewood station wagon, named after the working-class suburb where I grew up. That fit.

Birds of prey were popular as car names, too. There was Studebaker's Hawk and Ford's Falcon, for example. The name Hawk sort of fit, with its flaring fins, but the Falcon appellation was somewhat of an exaggeration when you consider that, that particular predator is such a fast, nimble and sleek creature. The early Falcons were more like ducks. They were stubby, sturdy and slow. But dropping the 289 small-block

in them later made them more Falcon-like in performance, if not appearance.

Some car names were ill considered when it came to stereotypical cultural associations. For example, Pontiac's Aztek? It was the name of a people that practiced human sacrifice on a daily basis to make the sun come up. And then there was Studebaker's Scotsman. It played on the stereotype of Scottish thriftiness. I have not checked with the Scottish-American community to see how that went over with them, but the car was plain, frumpy and chintzy. It even had plaid upholstery, and painted hubcaps and bumpers like the trucks of the times.

Today's car companies likely resorted to their new nonsense names after Isuzu debuted the Ascender, which sounded too much like "ass ender." Today, they are going with monikers such as Hyundai's Elantra, which sounds like a cooking herb, and Cadillac's Escalade, which sounds like an escape that ended in an avalanche.

After much study, and in view of some of the lame names car companies have foisted on us over the years, I have decided to offer a few of my own: How about a sub-compact called the Incentive? It would be small, economical and funny-looking. The reason it would be called the Incentive is because owning one would make you want to buy something better.

Ford may be looking for a new model to succeed its Futura, Fiesta and Focus lines. It could build a hybrid and call it the Fiasco. And then Buick—a marque that appeals to older guys like me—could call its new sporty model the Viagra, because it makes you feel young again. And Lincoln could call its new SUV the Continent because it is as big as one.

Come on, car companies: You have succeeded at developing many magnificent cars over the years; why can't you do a little better at naming them? If you have any ideas for car names, please send them to me at jameshr106@aol.com. If we all pitch in, I am sure we can help. 🐦

//
And then
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older guys like
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SUNDAY, JUNE 25

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PIT STOP: 6204 Martha Berry Hwy, Armuchee, GA - 3:15 p.m.
OVERNIGHT: Riverfront Pkwy, Chattanooga, TN - 5:15 p.m.

MONDAY, JUNE 26

LUNCH: Cannonsburgh Village, Murfreesboro, TN -- Noon
OVERNIGHT: Fountain Square Park, Bowling Green, KY - 5 p.m.

TUESDAY, JUNE 27

LUNCH: Maple Street, Downtown French Lick, IN - Noon
OVERNIGHT: Courthouse, Downtown Franklin, IN - 4:30 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 28

LUNCH: Auglaize St., Downtown Wapakoneta, OH - 12:30 p.m.
OVERNIGHT: ACD Automobile Museum, Auburn, IN - 4:30 p.m.

THURSDAY, JUNE 29

PIT STOP: Hudson Auto Museum, Shipshewana, IN - 9:45 a.m.
LUNCH: Gilmore Car Museum, Hickory Corners, MI - 12:15 p.m.
OVERNIGHT: Depot Town, Downtown Ypsilanti, MI - 4:45 p.m.

FRIDAY, JUNE 30

LUNCH: Stahls Automotive Museum, Chesterfield, MI - Noon
OVERNIGHT: Main Street, Frankenmuth, MI - 4:45 p.m.

SATURDAY, JULY 1

LUNCH: Bay View Park, Downtown Alpena, MI - 12:15 p.m.
OVERNIGHT: Valley Camp, Sault Ste. Marie, MI - 5:15 p.m.

SUNDAY, JULY 2

FINISH: Union & Seventh, Downtown Traverse City, MI - 3 p.m.

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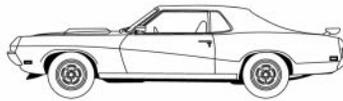
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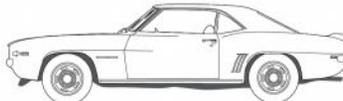
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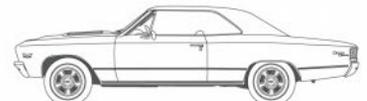
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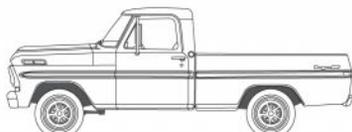
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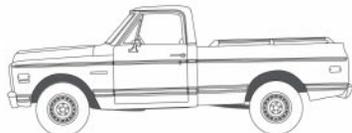
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