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THE DEFINITIVE ALL-AMERICAN COLLECTOR-CAR MAGAZINE

SEPTEMBER 2014 #120



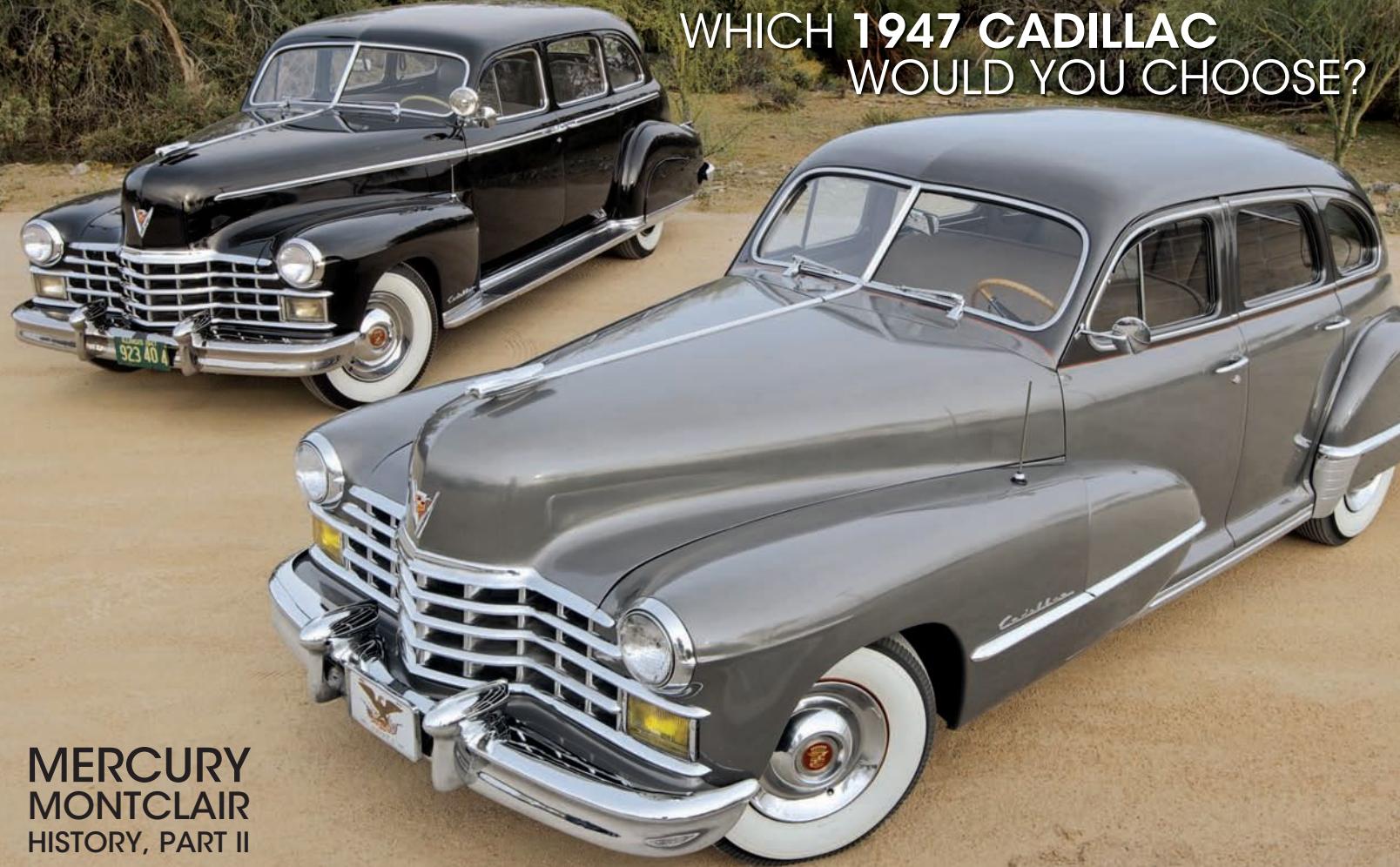
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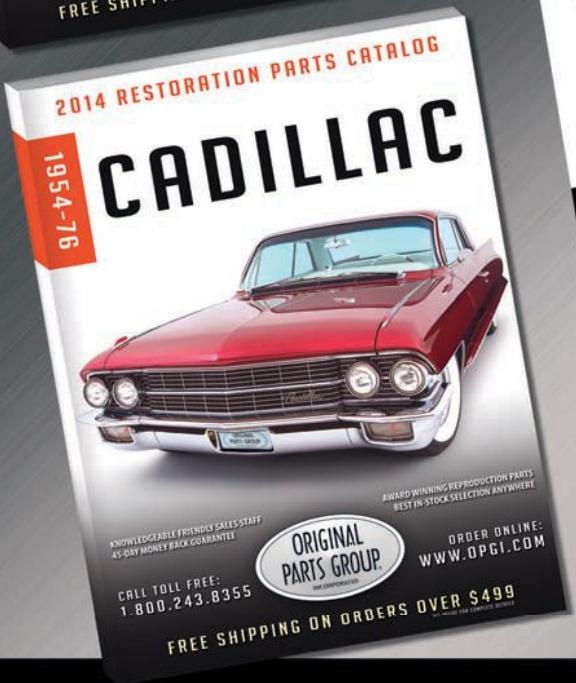
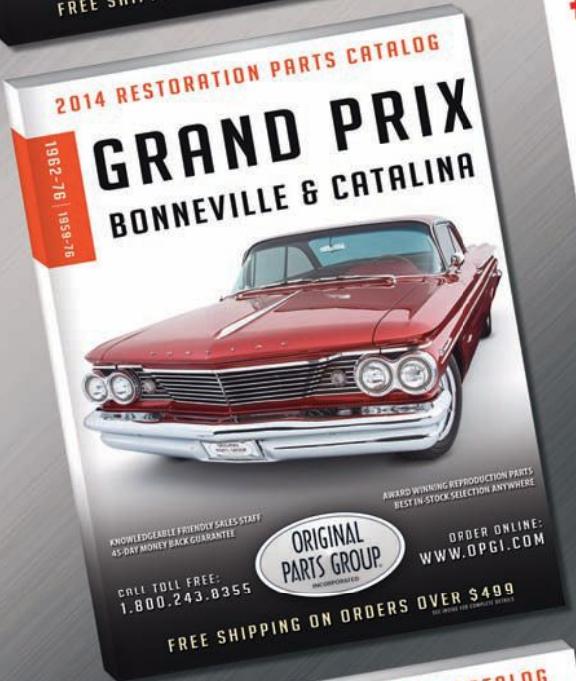
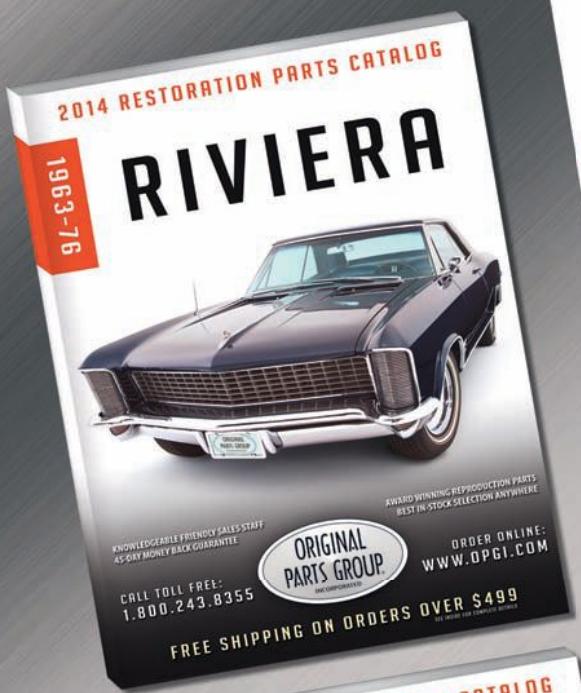


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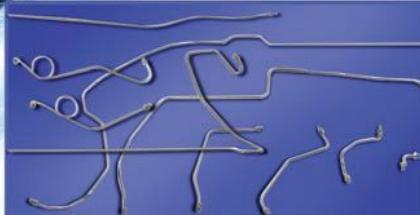
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car or to make

a point that is

simply wrong.



# richardlentinello

## Confused Definitions

The best friends you can ever hope to make are our fellow old car owners. They share our same interest and enthusiasm for old cars and trucks, but sometimes this enthusiasm for our beloved automobiles clouds our vision. We sometimes see things better than they really are; such is our love of our cars. This honorable misconception of reality colors the classified ads we write when the time comes to part with one of our cars.

For years, certain descriptors have been used to either sell a car or to make a point that is simply wrong. As with fables, new folks to the old car hobby quickly adopt these falsehoods because they just don't know any better. So let's set some things straight.

### It's an antique if it's 25 years old...

This is perhaps the biggest falsehood of all time. Just because many car clubs, such as the AACA, state that a car has to be 25 years old to qualify for admission, that doesn't mean that it's an authentic antique, or a "classic" for that matter. Many different classifications exist out there, and they are often organized around year, make and model. The general consensus is that cars of the early postwar era can be called classics, but usually anything built from the mid-'70s onward are simply "collector cars." So, all desirable old cars are collector cars, but not all collector cars are classics, or antiques.

### Mint condition...

The only thing that can be labeled "mint" is an uncirculated coin that has never been touched. Even cars that had just rolled off the assembly line were not mint as they had handprints all over them. So let's toss this overused, inaccurate term aside and replace it with something more appropriate and more truthful. How does "excellent showroom condition" sound?

### One-owner...

Whether your name is on the title or not, if you're the person selling the car and you did not buy the car when it was brand new, then it's not a one-owner car. Not that this really matters to many people, because it doesn't, but we need to state the facts as they are; it's not good to mislead a potential buyer into thinking otherwise.



### 100% Original. New paint and Interior...

Any major item that has been replaced or refinished renders a car a non-original. The car may be restored or rebuilt to original specifications, but it's not original. Authentic original cars still wear the same paint the factory applied when they were first built, and upholstery, drivetrain and everything else, too. As soon as a car is repainted, or its interior or engine replaced, it's no longer original.

### Convertibles are worth more...

In most cases this may be true, because as the saying goes: "When the top goes down the price goes up." However, not everyone in the market for a collector car wants a convertible. Many enthusiasts prefer the security and comfort of a fixed roof. For those who enjoy spirited driving on curvy roads, fixed-roof cars handle far better because their chassis don't flex as much as convertible bodies do.

### New paint makes a car more saleable...

Sometimes cars are painted before they're put up for sale to hide rust or recent accident damage, which causes more knowledgeable buyers to be suspicious of new paint. It's better and easier to sell a car with its old paint because the buyer will better be able to see just how honest the car really is, and if its body had any prior damage. In many cases, cars with their original paint—however faded and scratched that paint may appear—will command a far higher price because unrestored original cars are fast becoming the most desirable type of collector cars to own.

### Bigger engines are more desirable...

Not everyone who owns a muscle car or full-size car wants a big-block V-8. Small-block V-8s are lighter, so cars powered by them tend to handle better. And sometimes a larger engine can be overstressed, which can make it less durable and overheat quicker. Also keep in mind that in today's world, an engine that is more fuel-efficient is often more desirable, especially for those owners who plan to drive their old cars regularly. ☀

Write to our executive editor at [r lentinello@hemmings.com](mailto:r lentinello@hemmings.com).

Driving a classic  
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\*Figure based upon 2013 consumer data collected by Hagerty on single car quotes, with premiums \$5000 and under, from several standard (or "everyday") auto insurance carriers.



## HCC Honored with National Award

**HEMMINGS CLASSIC CAR** has been presented with a national first place in magazine feature writing by the American Auto Racing Writers and Broadcasters Association. The winning article was entitled "The Black Beast," (HCC #100) and was a history of the Alco racer that is one of only two known surviving cars from among the starters of the inaugural Indianapolis 500 in 1911.

The recognition was announced at AARWBA's annual awards breakfast at the Brickyard Crossing golf club, held on the weekend of this year's Indianapolis 500. The article was written by Senior Editor Jim Donnelly, and illustrated by photography from Executive Editor Richard Lentinello.

## SEPTEMBER Calendar

- 5-7 • Swap Meet & Car Show  
Springfield, Ohio • 937-376-0111  
[ohioswapmeet.com](http://ohioswapmeet.com)
- 7 • Sumter Swap Meet and Car Show  
Bushnell, Florida • 800-438-8559  
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- 12-14 • Bennington Car Show  
Bennington, Vermont • 802-447-3311  
[www.benningtoncarshow.com](http://www.benningtoncarshow.com)
- 18-20 • AACA Western Fall Meet  
Big Sky, Montana • 717-534-1910  
[www.aaca.org](http://www.aaca.org)
- 18-21 • Charlotte AutoFair Fall Meet  
Charlotte, North Carolina • 704-841-1990  
[www.charlotte-autofair.com](http://www.charlotte-autofair.com)
- 20-21 • Michigan Antique Festival Show & Swap • Midland, Michigan  
989-687-9001 • [miantiquefestival.com](http://miantiquefestival.com)
- 24-27 • Petit Jean Fall Swap Meet and Show • Morriston, Arkansas  
501-727-5427 • [www.museumofautos.com](http://www.museumofautos.com)
- 26-28 • Englishtown Fall Swap Meet  
Old Bridge, New Jersey • 732-446-7800  
[www.etownraceway.com](http://www.etownraceway.com)
- 26-28 • Fall Jefferson Car Show & Swap • Jefferson, Wisconsin  
608-244-8416 • [www.madisonclassics.com](http://www.madisonclassics.com)
- 26-28 • Hemmings Concours d'Elegance • Saratoga Springs, New York • 800-227-4373  
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## Iowa Invitational

**THE DES MOINES CONCOURS D'ELEGANCE** celebrates the fine art, design evolution and amazing innovations of motor vehicles through the years, as well as the designers and engineers that created them. The Concours will take place in downtown Des Moines, and classes will include: Chrysler/Mopar 1924-'64, Mustang 50th Anniversary 1st Generation, Prewar Classics 1917-'42, Postwar Classics 1946-'64, Preservation Class,



Antiques thru 1916 and more. The event will take place September 6-7, and applications are still being accepted.

Visit [www.desmoinesconcours.com](http://www.desmoinesconcours.com) for all the details.

## Stupendous Studebakers

**IF YOU ARE IN THE SAN DIEGO AREA**, you will want to check out the annual Cool Classic Car Show that's put on by the San Diego County Studebaker Chapter. The show will take place September 27 at Spanish Landing West on San Diego Bay and will be open to all Studebakers and related vehicles (EMF, Erskine, Rockne, Pierce-Arrow and Packard). This year's show will include a commemorative mug as well as a people's choice award judging class with custom glass trophies. For more information and registration details, call 619-251-5638.



## Stan Hywet Hall Concours

**THE SPIRIT OF THE 1920S AND 1930S** will arrive at Stan Hywet Hall & Gardens as it hosts its annual Concours d'Elegance, September 19-21 in Akron, Ohio. The show will feature Pierce-Arrow, Duesenberg, Packard Darrin, pre-1929 motorcycles, Cord, classic American woodies and a class entitled "Vehicles that Defy Description." Among the vehicles on display will be a 1932 Duesenberg SJ Derham Tourster, the only surviving prototype Lincoln Continental built in 1939, a Brass Era class that includes a 1912 Simplex 38 Torpedo Phaeton by Holbrook, a 1907 Garford-Studebaker limousine and the very last Tucker built—number 1052. In addition, there will be a fully operational replica of the 1771 Cugnot fardier steam carriage, the world's first self-propelled vehicle. If you are planning on being in the Ohio area this September and would like more information on the event, please visit [concours.stanhhywet.org](http://concours.stanhhywet.org).

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## Uncle Frank's Cadillac

**WHEN HE WAS A BOY, RICK COUGHLIN** got a chance to ride in his Uncle Frank's Cadillac. Normally, that's not too noteworthy, except his Uncle Frank's Cadillac wasn't much like your Uncle Frank's Cadillac.

Aside from the giant horns, Frenched headlamps, nose job, and "La Mexicana" script across the grille evident in the photo Rick found of the car, he recalls it being silver with gold-plated lettering and horns.

"The car belonged to my father's uncle who lived in the Warwick or Providence, Rhode Island, area," Rick writes. "His name was Frank DeSanto or possibly DiSanto. When visiting him and his wife in the late 1950s, I rode in the car several times, and it was so very nice."

So how long did Uncle Frank own his Cadillac, and where is it today?



## 40 over Eight

**FINALLY, FROM THE EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY** Digital Collections comes another photo of a trackless train similar to the *Palmer Overland* from a few issues back (see HCC #93, 96 and 99). According to the university's description, the photo was taken in October 1960 during the Nash County Harvest Festival parade. No indication was made as to what sort of truck chassis it rode on or who built it.

## Corvette for More

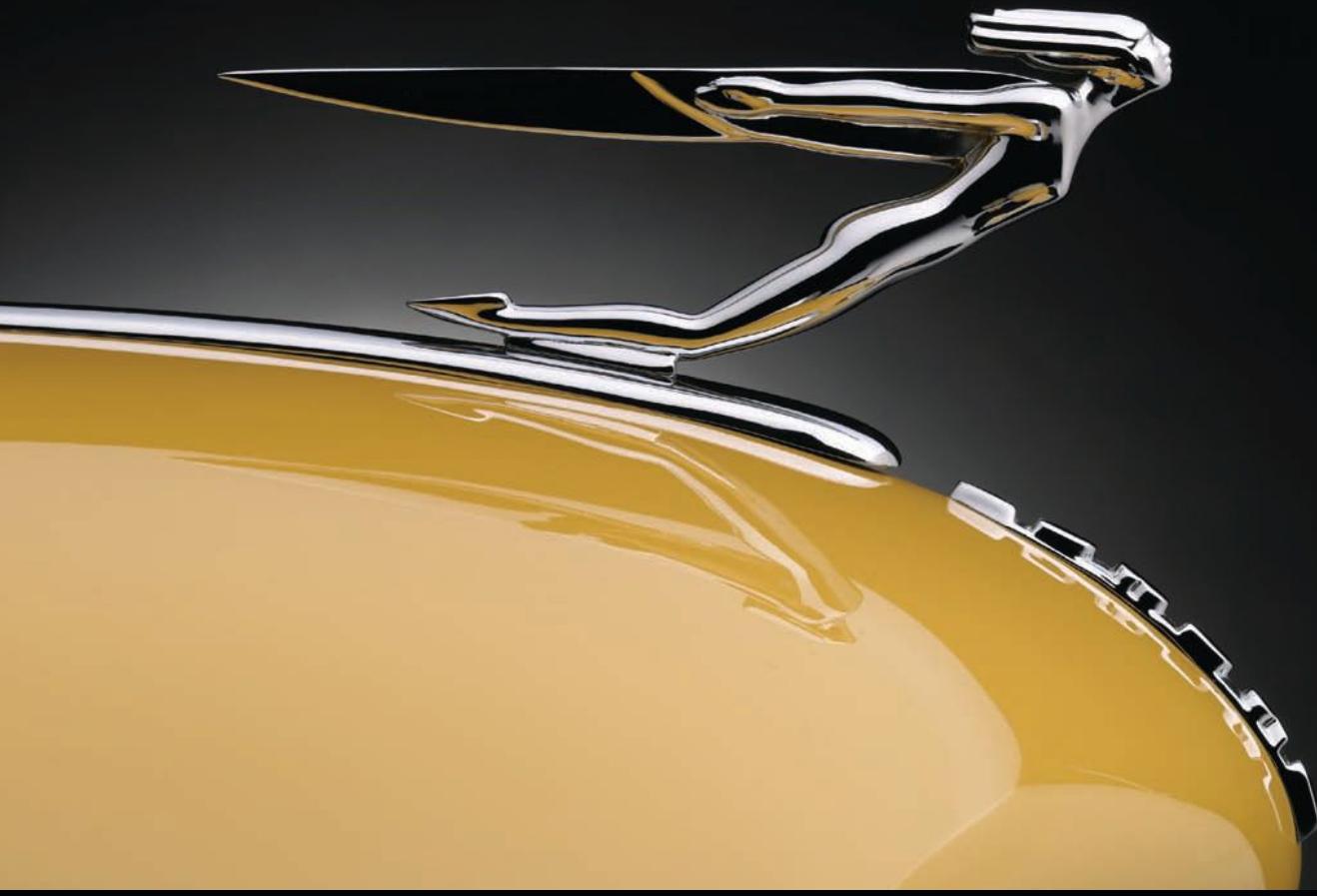
**YOU KNOW HOW IT IS.** You get a Corvette and want to take all your friends and family for rides, but there's only one other seat, so everybody queues up, and before you know it, you're lapping the block until midnight. Unless, that is, you get a Corvette like the one reader Marty Richelsoph spotted in the late 1980s in Flagstaff, Arizona.

Marty recently dug these two photos out of an old album to share with us and at the same time to ask who was responsible for the four-door conversion. "The work seems very professional, and this is the only four-door 'Vette I've ever seen," he writes.

Some quick Googling shows that California Custom Coach built six such four-door Corvettes in about 1980, with two believed to still exist, neither one of which looks like this one. Is this a third one from that run, or did another coachbuilding firm stretch this one out?



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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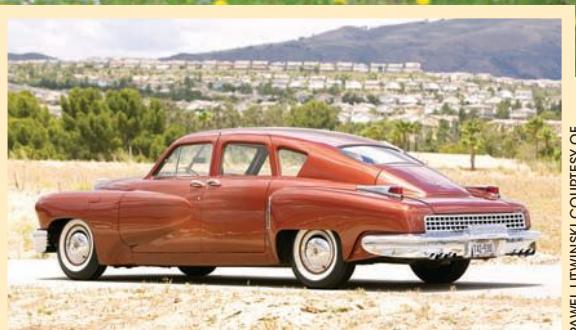
1935 Auburn Speedster

CARIN SCHNABEL COURTESY OF RM AUCTIONS



## Austin Clark's Mercer

**RM AUCTIONS MONTEREY** lots are lining up, including this 1911 Mercer Type 35R Raceabout that spent 65 years in a collector's stewardship; it was once owned by noted historian Henry Austin Clark. Also available is this restored 1948 Tucker 48, previously of the Bob Pond Collection. The RM Monterey event will be held August 15-16. For more information and a complete look into all the Monterey and future sale lots, visit [www.rmauctions.com](http://www.rmauctions.com).

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## Greenwich Success

**THE BONHAMS GREENWICH AUCTION** boasted a 93-percent sell-through resulting in sales over \$8 million. The standing room only crowd erupted into applause when the 1966 Fitch Phoenix sold to a local buyer for \$253,000, including premium, validating hope that the car would stay in the home state of the late Connecticut automotive icon John Fitch. The single prototype is only one of what were to be many built atop Fitch-worked Chevrolet Corvair underpinnings. Contact: [www.bonhams.com](http://www.bonhams.com)

## AUCTION PROFILE

**SURE IT HAD A DENT**, and it certainly wasn't pristine, but that's what made this wagon quite perfect. The wood-work still looked very much like wood, the paint looked factory applied, yet taken in as a whole the wagon looked ready to power away from the train station to a relaxing mountain resort with authority. The wagon was reported to be mechanically sorted, with prewar Ford technological refinements such as the 85-horsepower 11A V-8 engine and hydraulic brakes.



**CAR** 1941 Ford Model A Super Deluxe  
**AUCTIONEER** Bonhams  
**LOCATION** Greenwich, Connecticut  
**DATE** Sunday, June 1, 2014  
**LOT NUMBER** 386

**CONDITION** 3/Original  
**RESERVE** Yes  
**AVERAGE SELLING PRICE** \$80,500  
**SELLING PRICE** \$71,500 including premium

# SEPTEMBER

## Calendar

**3-6 • Mecum**

Dallas, Texas • 262-275-5050

[www.mecum.com](http://www.mecum.com)

**6 • VanDerBrink Auctions**

Grant, Nebraska • 605-201-7005

[www.vanderbrinkauctions.com](http://www.vanderbrinkauctions.com)

**7 • Girard**

Wakonda, South Dakota • 605-267-2421

[www.girardauction.com](http://www.girardauction.com)

**18-20 • Dealer Auctions**

Charlotte, North Carolina

800-352-4898 • [www.dlrauctions.com](http://www.dlrauctions.com)

**18-20 • Wildwood Motor Events**

Wildwood, New Jersey • 609-729-7646

[www.wildwoodmotorevents.com](http://www.wildwoodmotorevents.com)

**20 • Silver Auctions**

Portland, Oregon • 800-255-4485

[www.silverauctions.com](http://www.silverauctions.com)

**26-27 • Dan Kruse Classics**

Austin, Texas • 866-495-8111

[www.kruseclassics.com](http://www.kruseclassics.com)

**27 • Express**

Frederick, Maryland • 410-243-9999

[www.auctionclassicars.com](http://www.auctionclassicars.com)

**25-27 • Barrett-Jackson**

Las Vegas, Nevada • 480-421-6694

[www.barrett-jackson.com](http://www.barrett-jackson.com)

**25-27 • Russo and Steele**

Las Vegas, Nevada • 602-252-2697

[www.russoandsteele.com](http://www.russoandsteele.com)



## Neoclassics at Monterey

**IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN** if the neoclassic revival cars will take hold with the same bullish exuberance as other sectors of the collector car market. Those who might just want something unmistakably over the top to drive around should look no further than this 1979 Stutz IV Porte, offered at Mecum's Daytime Auction in Monterey, August 14-16. Contact: [www.mecum.com](http://www.mecum.com)

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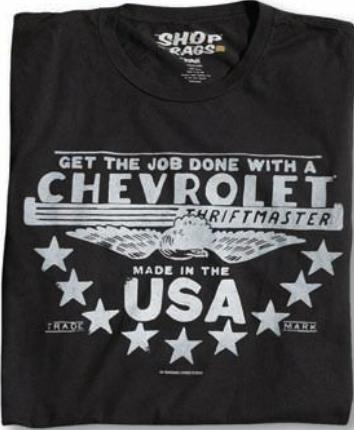


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## Ford Y-Block Engines

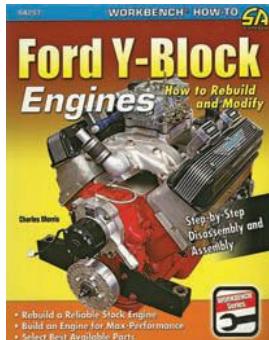
**EVERYTHING YOU ALWAYS WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT** rebuilding Ford's Y-block engine can be found in this insightful softcover book that focuses on not only rebuilding them, but also how to modify one of these vintage small-block V-8s for maximum performance and durability.

This step-by-step guide details how to properly disassemble one, then reassemble it to perform at its very best, all of which is illustrated with well-composed color photographs and individual captions.

Reference is made to all the different size Y-blocks, which includes the 239-, 256-, 272-, 292-, and 312-cu.in. engines. You will learn how to identify Y-block components and discover the proper machining methods needed as well as how to effectively remedy the Y-block's notorious oiling problems. Cost: \$24.95.

800-551-4754

[www.cartechbooks.com](http://www.cartechbooks.com)



—By Richard Lentinello

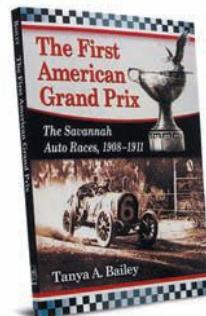


## 1954 De Soto Firedome

**WE DEFY YOU NOT TO APPRECIATE** the toothy grin of an early-1950s De Soto, as it represented such a friendly face out of a sea of massively imposing sheetmetal. The re-styled 1954 Firedome V-8 convertible was the most exclusive model in the lineup, and it's been rendered winningly in Fairway Green Poly over a green interior by England's The Brooklin Collection. Modeled in 1:43 scale in heavy cast white metal, this flagship convertible has lots of accurate bright metal trim, as well as accessory wire wheels and a clear view of the new dashboard. Mopar fans will love this pretty, well-crafted model. Cost: \$129.50.

800-718-1866

[www.diecastdirect.com](http://www.diecastdirect.com)



## The First American Grand Prix

**MANY OF US WOULD GUESS** that the first great American road race was the Vanderbilt Cup on Long Island. But how many know the history of the other Vanderbilt race, held in Savannah, Georgia? This informative, 230-page history, published in paperback, will bring the story to you. Author Tanya Bailey is curator of a local museum dedicated to Savannah's century-old racing history, and she clearly knows her subject matter. Here at HCC, we've been gratified by the gradually accelerating pace of books on American racing's first decade that have been coming to the fore. This is in the top rank of those valuable efforts. Cost: \$39.95.

800-253-2187

[www.mcfarlandpub.com](http://www.mcfarlandpub.com)

—By Jim Donnelly



## 1969 Dodge Charger R/T

**IT COULD BE ARGUED THAT THE SECOND-GENERATION** Dodge Charger was the best looking entry ever offered in the American muscle car genre. It's fitting that Auto World chose to model the epic 1969 Charger R/T in its Dodge centennial line. This 1:18-scale die-cast is incredibly realistic, with opening panels, a highly detailed interior and engine bay, swiveling headlamps and even factory-style overspray on

the undercarriage. Yes, you can read the instruments, and the drive-shaft turns with the rear wheels. Like the genuine article, this model represents a lot of Hemi Orange style for surprisingly little green. Cost: \$69.95.

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## Watercolor Wonderment

**ANYONE WHO HAS OWNED AT LEAST ONE** Ford Model A virtually every year since he was in high school in the 1960s has earned the right to be called a devoted old-car hobbyist, and that is the case for graphic illustrator and fine-artist John Pratt. It's been some time since we checked in with this talented Urbana, Illinois, resident, and he's been very busy rendering beautiful vintage car- and truck-themed pieces using that hardest-to-master painting medium, watercolors. While John creates primarily for fun, the results of his work are worthy of the gallery walls they often hang on. "Though I sell works periodically," he notes, "I consider myself an old retired guy who just likes to paint when the notion strikes." We're glad that it does!

Many of John's latest originals are still available for purchase, and prints of any size can be made to individual order. Prices of unframed originals range from \$140 to \$300, and they are sized from 12 x 14- to 18 x 24-inches.

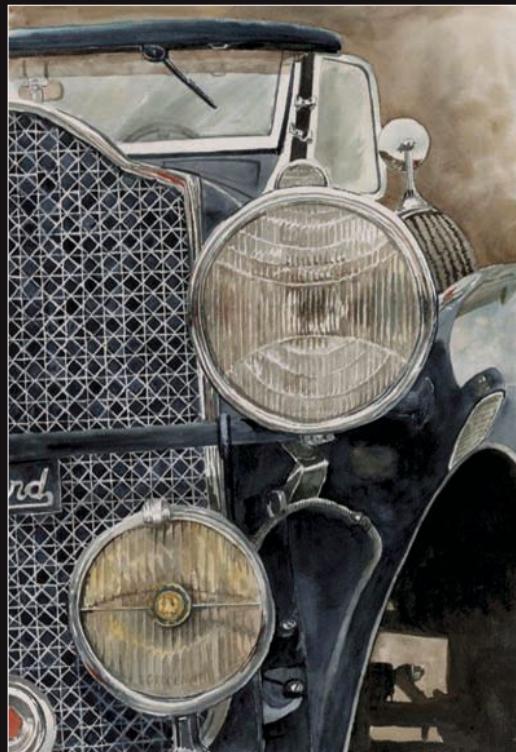
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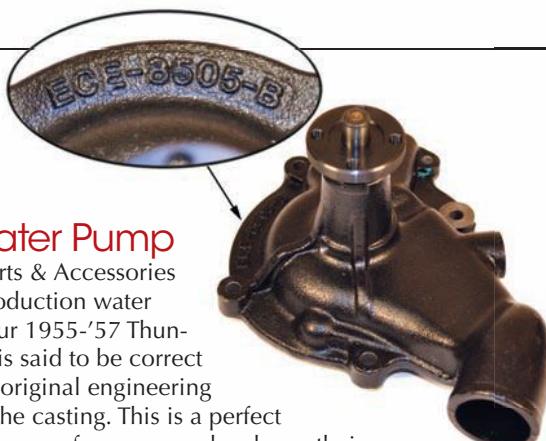
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### T-Bird Water Pump

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## End of an Era

*A pair of 1947 models from the extreme ends of Cadillac's immediate postwar lineup*

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEFF KOCH

**C**adillac's 1947 lineup was the end of a chapter - one that began in the prewar era. Starting in the 1940s, Cadillac focused its energies.

Gone after 1940 were the successful junior-division LaSalles nibbling away at the bottom end of Cadillac's market share; so, too, the mighty range-topping, if slow-selling, V-16-powered models that were banished to the used-car lots of history.

For the 1941 model year, the extreme ends of Cadillac's lineup were not quite as extreme as they were just a couple of years earlier: The new B-body-based Series 61 Cadillacs replaced the LaSalle marque entirely, and the Series 75 Fleetwood became the top of Cadillac's model lineup. From five series and 39 models in 1940 to six series and 26 models for 1941, this lineup was eventually whittled down to just four

series and 12 models for 1947.

That re-focusing appeared wise in the long run. Cadillac had a rough year in 1946. As the division got back on line, material shortages plagued all manufacturers that yearned to build cars for a hungry postwar public. As a premium car line, fewer than 30,000 1946 Cadillacs were built. And there likely wasn't much hope for the 1947 models internally. They only

needed to keep up their end of the bargain while style changes for 1948 and mechanical changes for 1949 were being prepared.

With the 1946 models looking like warmed-over 1942 cars, and with the major body and mechanical updates not due until 1948 and '49, respectively, the 1947 models saw only the gentlest of facelifts. The grille featured five horizontal bars instead of the previous model's six bars,



while the parking and fog lamp housings were combined. Script superseded the block lettering seen on the front fenders previously, and the black rubber stone shields ahead of the rear wheel openings were replaced by bright pieces. The Cadillac crest (only recently ensconced in a chromed "V" on the hood) now rested in a field of horizontal stripes inside the V, and a winged trunk ornament lived on

all models, save for the Series 60 Fleetwood sedan. There was a new wheel cover design too, which was quickly nicknamed the Sombrero. New colors replaced old colors. The trim shuffling was mild, even for what was, ultimately, the end of an era. The biggest technological breakthrough, made standard on Series 62 convertibles and Series 75s, were Hydro-Lectric power windows that raised and lowered at the





A 100-MPH speedometer was front-and-center, and given enough room, a Series 62 could well reach the century mark. Radio and Hydra-Matic were optional extras. Cloth seating, plain but durable. The back seat is commodious, but watch your head on the reclining roofline getting in.

touch of a button. They were problematic enough, especially when the cars began to age, that plenty of owners retrofitted crank windows instead.

Even in 1947, there were more than 100,000 unfilled orders waiting for the division. GIs had back pay to burn, and despite the ever-consolidating series and model lineups, a total of 61,926 Cadillacs were built—more than twice the number built for 1946. (Just as importantly, the 1947 Cadillac line beat Packard by nearly 10,000 units.) And this, despite the prices jumping. A Series 62 four-door sedan, like our feature car, started at \$2,359 in 1946, and increased to \$2,553 for 1947—a nine-percent increase year-to-year. On the other hand, a series 75 Fleetwood five-passenger sedan started at \$4,340—nearly double a

Series 62, but only \$42 more than a comparable 1946 model.

There are, certainly, similarities across the range beyond the badge; if anything, Cadillac's lineup felt far more streamlined than it did in the freewheeling 1930s. Despite the completely different bodies, the dashboards are identical down to the 100-MPH speedometers. The track is the same on both, though the inch-wider, inch-larger-in-diameter wheels on the Fleetwood play havoc with the published numbers. But engines, transmissions, brakes, axles (and their attendant gear ratios), suspension and steering all were rationalized and shared between series for 1947.

Both automobiles used the same "Monobloc" flathead V-8. With its 3.5-inch bore and 4.5-inch stroke, it displaced 346

cubic inches. It featured a 7.25:1 compression ratio and three main bearings that helped it put out 150 hp with 260 lb.ft. of torque at just 1,700 RPM. Carburetors were either the two-barrel Carter WCD or the two-barrel Stromberg AAV-26.

It was a monster of an engine—nearly 900 pounds fully dressed—despite its cylinders and crankcase being cast as a single unit. Hydraulic valve lifters with hardened ball seats were used for both durability and the silent operation that Cadillac owners craved. Keep in mind that these engines were powerful enough that, beginning in World War II, a pair, along with matching Turbo Hydra-Matic transmissions, were installed in each M24 "Chaffee" Light Tank. Each engine/transmission powered one set of tank tracks, with the two powerplants



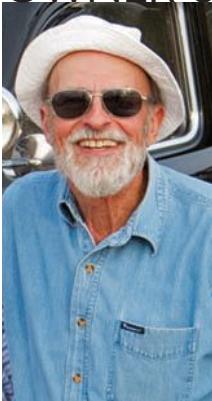
connected by a spider gear. Cadillac's advertising during the war helped ensure goodwill once the production lines shifted from tanks back to making cars again.

Both of these Cadillac models are feted today: the Classic Car Club of America considers the Series 75 through 1948 a Full Classic, while the Milestone Car Society recognizes the Series 62 of the era as a Milestone Car.

Of course, both models feature a perimeter frame with central X-bracing, although wheelbases differ between series. The C-body Series 62 has a 129-inch wheelbase, while the Series 75 Fleetwood has a long 136-inch wheelbase. Although the 7-inch difference doesn't sound like a lot, it makes the back of the Fleetwood seem like a proper limousine; doubly so in five-passenger mode, where there's more floor instead of another seat. And beyond the extra 7 inches between the wheel centers, differences abound.

The Fleetwood's frame itself, at 7  $\frac{7}{8}$  inches deep, is a full 1  $\frac{1}{4}$  inches deeper

## OWNER'S VIEW



I t was really the condition that sold me on this car. It's funny, but I never really liked this car's looks. My brother bought a Cadillac of that era as a tow vehicle, because his Nash didn't have the power. His car wasn't dressed-single-color paint, blackwall tires, no Sombrero hubcaps—and it looked out of proportion to me. I didn't pay much attention to them after that, but when I went to Leo Gephart's place in 1995 and saw this one sitting there, I thought, now that's an attractive car. It was so original and obviously well cared for, I bought it in spite of what I thought about the styling.

*—Raoul Jacques*

**Hand-typed original owner's information is placed on the radiator support; somehow it never got lost or dirty. Note exhaust coming forward out of the cylinder heads.**



than the Series 62's 6  $\frac{5}{8}$ -inch-deep frame. The rear leaf springs in the Fleetwood are 2 inches longer, at 56  $\frac{1}{2}$  inches per side, and have 10 leaves instead of eight, and the Fleetwood's gas tank grew from 20 to 24 gallons. The Fleetwood's bigger steel wheels meant that it rolled on six-ply 7.50x16 tires rather than the Series 62's four-ply 7.00x15 tires, and its steering ratio

is slightly lower—a gear ratio of 24.58:1 versus the Series 62's 23.53:1. The Fleetwood also had a lower final drive gear ratio.

You'd think that it would be the same basic chassis under both models, but despite shared components, the two frames were different altogether. The beefier suspension and frame are both contributing factors to, and the result of, the Fleetwood's heftier presence. Shipping weight for the Fleetwood was 4,875 pounds, 600 pounds more than the Series 62's comparatively flyweight 4,235 pounds.

Then there's the body. The Fleetwood-built Series 75 bodyshell, essentially the same as the 1941 model, exuded a patrician elegance that was up-to-the-minute by prewar standards. It's only an extra 7 inches between the wheels, but add in an extra 5 inches in overall height compared to a Series 62, and at 71  $\frac{13}{16}$  inches the Fleetwood's body feels far more upright and imposing. The Fleetwood's front fenders were less exuberant than on the lower-line models, stopping short of intruding



**Instrument panel is identical to the Series 62, though the button-tuck seats give a richer feel front and rear. Reupholstered front seat is hydraulically positioned. Rear compartment is positively cavernous with the single seat; this was a chauffeur-driven car when new.**

on the front door skins, but leading to the traditional running boards that the Series 62 does without. A single chrome strip runs the length of the body from the side of the hood to just below the greenhouse on the Fleetwood, while chrome trim appears only on the protruding fenders of the Series 62.

Despite approaching 70 years old, there seems to be no shortage of 1947 Cadillacs around. We weren't even looking, and we tripped over three fine examples of the marque and year within a 20 mile radius (the third of these, a Series 62 convertible, is the subject of this month's Restoration Profile on page 58).

But these two particular models struck us. Both are relatively low-mileage examples that are as close as you'll find to

factory original. Both cars seen here are in remarkable original condition—in both cases, only seat cushions required reupholstering (the Series 62 got a new headliner as well), while the rest of the interior, not to mention the paint and mechanicals, all remain as delivered from the factory. Both are equipped with Hydra-Matic transmissions, a \$186 option in 1947. Both cars had ladies as their first owners. And both exemplify the essence of Cadillac: style, class and surprising affordability. One is as high up the ladder as you can get, with low production numbers to accompany its rarity, while the B-body base-model Series 62 sedan is hardly a bottom-of-the-barrel car. It was by far the most popular Cadillac of the year.

The Series 62 seen here is owned

by Raoul Jacques of Phoenix. He bought this car more or less as you see it in 1995 from Scottsdale-area classic-car dealer Leo Gephart with a trunkful of trophies from local and marque-specific car shows. It's a late-production model, delivered October 7, 1947, to Mrs. Sandra M. Bottan of Toronto, Ontario, Canada. It arrived with the original owner's card intact on the radiator support. The two-tone paint scheme (Vista Gray on top, French Gray on the bottom, with colors divided by a red pinstripe) is original and unrestored. Its options included radio, fog lamps, back-up lamps, Hydra-Matic, the "Sombrero" hubcaps, and rear skirts. This was Cadillac's production leader: 25,834 Series 62 four-door sedans were built for the 1947 model year—nearly 42 percent of all Cadil-



lac production for the year.

It's got roughly 47,000 miles on the odometer, and even though Raoul drives it just 500-600 miles a year, it still requires maintenance. "I use modern 10W30 detergent oil," he tells us. "I drive it so little that I end up changing the oil every couple of years. I do add some GM cam oil to the motor oil, since it has a high zinc content, and occasionally I'll put in some Marvel Mystery oil. I haven't had any problems with the lifters with the modern oil, but I've heard some talk about an oil pump component that won't get lubricated properly with modern oil. Adding the cam oil takes care of that." What do you use for maintaining the body? "I don't. My wife had some guy come and polish it about 15 years ago, but I don't want to take too much paint off it. I guess it could be shinier, but it looks plenty shiny to me as it is. I just keep it clean and in the garage, and dust it with a California Car Duster."

The five-passenger Fleetwood 75 is

**The same 346-cubic-inch Cadillac "Monobloc" V-8 powers the Fleetwood as well as the Series 62, though the Fleetwood's extra 600 pounds of weight blunts acceleration somewhat.**



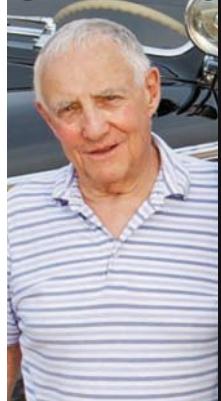
owned by Lee Gurvey of Scottsdale. The original owner was Mrs. Cora Sparrow of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, who took delivery two days after Christmas in 1947. Lee bought this Cadillac out of the pages of *Hemmings Motor News* from Mrs. Sparrow's grandson, Walter Mead, of Mead Paper fame, in 1979; it had 24,000 miles on it at the time. Today, after 35 years of

ownership and countless old-car tours and rallies, Lee has managed to nearly double the mileage, while keeping it nearly all-original. A late-production model, it sports chromed 1948-model headlamp trim rather than the painted 1947-spec trim that most others received. A paltry 300 five-passenger Series 75 Fleetwood sedans were built for 1947—less than half of a percent of total Cadillac production for the year.

As for maintenance, it needs relatively little. "I was smart and went to NAPA when they had the good oil, with the additives to keep the lifters quiet. I just stocked up on it in the '80s, and I've been using it ever since."

Today, these cars' original condition make them well worthy of study and interest. Their charm surpasses the situation of their creation. But in their day, the successful 1947 Cadillacs were more than just cars. They were placeholders as engineers scrambled furiously to accommodate the future. That they sold well was perhaps an unexpected bonus. ☀

## OWNER'S VIEW



I purchased this Series 75 in 1979 from a member of the original owner's family; I consider myself the second owner. It had a classic look, and I loved that it was all-original. It shows well, it drives like new and it's never failed me. Only the seat cushion ever gave out on me. It was a chauffeur-driven car, and both the front and rear seats were worn, so I had the original fabric stretched and re-stitched. Well, we were driving with some friends in the back seat, and the cotton thread just let go. At that point I had both seats completely reupholstered. But it was just the seat cushions; everything else inside that car is original.

—Lee Gurvey

✓Yes

✗No

✓Yes

✓Yes

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# Command Presence

*One of Studebaker's iconic designs,  
the 1941 Commander Sedan Coupe  
is a pleasure to own and drive*

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY JIM DONNELLY



**J**ust ask anyone. They'll tell you it's a Seventies thing. You know, the emergence of the personal coupe with space for four, a lot of style; although some will point to the original Pontiac Grand Prix or Oldsmobile Toronado and insist that the four-place luxury coupe is really a child of the Sixties. And still others go further back a couple of decades more. After all, what was the first Mercury of 1939, with its thin B-pillars, other than a personal luxury car?



To that query, we'd suggest taking a look toward South Bend and examining the 1941 Commander coupe as another early interpretation of the concept – not the biggest or most luxurious car that Studebaker produced, but perhaps visually the most rakish.

Click off the aesthetic cues: Coupe body, from which the hardtop would be

derived. Tastefully applied but nonetheless striking combinations of trim and body colors. Intimate but not cramped accommodations for four occupants. A dignified driving experience, even for onlookers. For a starved public emerging from the Depression, and with war closer than it probably realized, a 1941 Studebaker Commander sedan coupe represented an

interlude between unspeakable hardships for those able to possess one.

To really understand what a 1941 Commander is all about, you've really first got to go back into the previous decade. Wind things back a full decade, to be exact. That was when Studebaker was being run by Albert Erskine, who was determined to make the manufacturer a competitor to



The Commander's interior is 100-percent original. Art Deco touches, inspired by the masterful Raymond Loewy, abound inside, including the instrument faces and dramatic steering-hub spear. Module below factory radio contains the climate controls.

Chrysler, Ford and General Motors in the emerging low-price market. Remember, we should note, that some Studebakers from this era are luxury titans that now enjoy CCCA Full Classic status. Erskine had recently rolled out an eponymous low-priced car that was less than a hit. With his company now shedding cash, Studebaker went into receivership.

The Erskine-brokered deal that brought the even more troubled icon, Pierce-Arrow, into the Studebaker fold was canned. Working independently of Studebaker, two auto engineers named Ralph Vail and Roy Cole had crafted a lightweight L-head straight-six engine that they tried unsuccessfully to get Willys to buy. Vail lived not far from South Bend in Michigan City, Indiana, and figured it couldn't hurt to make a similar sales pitch to Studebaker. The engine, and an accompanying light car, were shown to Erskine and became the new entry-level Studebaker model, the Rockne. Trouble was, the car's namesake, Notre Dame football hero Knute Rockne, was killed almost immediately thereafter in a plane crash. The Rockne automobile lasted until 1933, but the Vail-Cole engine remained a Stude-

baker property, a step below its premium straight-eights that powered a mid-range car called – for the moment – the Dictator.

That was before currency collapses, among other difficulties, turned Europe into a petri dish that bred goose-stepping fascists. In 1938, the Dictator line received a model name with less of a negative connotation: Commander. By this time, the Light Six had grown from its initial displacement of 189.8 cubic inches to a total of 226.2, with both its bore and stroke increased. Studebaker was out of receivership by then, and wanted to give the low-priced field another, better-aimed shot. The result, which arrived in 1939, was the Champion.

By this time, Studebaker had retained Raymond Loewy Associates to manage its styling efforts. The entire lineup, including the Commander, received a restyling to mark the Champion's arrival. This is the direct lineage from which our feature car, a 1941 Commander Sedan Coupe owned by Rex Miltenberger of Niles, Michigan, so proudly springs.

At the midpoint of the company's model range, slotted below the President, the Commander received minor restyling

changes in 1940 and 1941. The Sedan Coupe was a midyear addition to the 1941 Commander line, incorporating the model year's two big styling changes, a one-piece curved windshield and the elimination of running boards, plus a longer 119-inch wheelbase for the Commander, a 2.5-inch increase over 1940.

In the multiple tiers of Studebaker trim and models, Rex's car is a Custom-level Sedan Coupe, Model 11-A, differentiating it from the Custom Deluxe, DeLuxe-Tone and Skyway trim designations. The exact Commander Sedan Coupe production total remains elusive, but according to its body-tag serial number, this is the 609<sup>th</sup> car produced in 1941, during which Studebaker turned out just under 134,000 automobiles, its best year since 1928. According to factory records, the total Sedan Coupe production, including a very short run of 1942 models, stands at around 2,350 units, which makes it highly unusual to spot one today.

"I asked Richard Quinn at the Studebaker National Museum how many were made, and he went through the production orders for the last couple of weeks," Rex tells us. "I know it's very low production.

All I know about its early history is that it was sold new out of South Bend. Through the museum, I saw a photo in the *Studebaker News*, the company magazine, from 1941. It showed two brothers standing next to two 1941 Commanders and one of them is a Sedan Coupe that looks identical to this one. It may be the same car."

It's definitely the same car that has passed, twice, through Rex's custody. That's a three-decade-plus association that had its start when Rex was living in South Bend, and had already owned a couple of Studebakers, including an early Land Cruiser sedan. We'll let Rex tell the story of its two-stage acquisition:

"The first time, it was in 1979. I was working for the Illinois Toll Roads as a service engineer. I had just finished restoring a 1941 Commander Land Cruiser, so I was out there looking for more 1941 stuff. I call home from the road and talk to my wife, and she tells me that *Hemmings Motor News* had just arrived in the mail. I tell her to check the Studebaker section and see what's in there. And she tells me there's a 1941 coupe for sale. She tells me it's in Elkhart, Indiana, which is just down the road. I couldn't believe it."

When Rex rapidly dialed the seller's number, he learned the Commander had already been sold, or so the seller insisted. Rex persuaded the guy to hold off on the sale until he could make it back to Indiana that coming weekend. He returned early on a Friday, looked it over and discovered it was a completely unrestored Command-

er Sedan Coupe, including 100-percent original paint, with only 13,000 miles racked up in just under 40 years of existence. "Again," he intones, "I couldn't believe it, and I also couldn't believe that it was so close to my house and I was never aware of it."

*Even though everything was nice and original, I still took the body off the frame and did a full restoration on it. But it didn't take me long to restore it because it was so nice. Today, of course, we wouldn't do something like that. We'd save it to preserve an original car.*

mined what would come next. As he recalls, "Even though everything was nice and original, I still took the body off the frame and did a full restoration on it. But it didn't take me long to restore it because it was so nice. Today, of course, we wouldn't do something like that. We'd save it to preserve an original car."

Separated in two, the Commander went to South Bend and into O'Chap's Body Shop (known for metalwork including customizing, and by some accounts, for creating the roofline that Studebaker later incorporated into the Gran Turismo Hawk), where the frame was resprayed and gobs of caked-on undercoating were scraped from underneath the bodywork. O'Chap's also takes credit for the Commander's other departure from originality, a refinishing in Custom-level contrasting colors, Cloud Gray and Alpine Blue.

The Commander still had its original glass and tires when Rex took it in 1980 to a Studebaker meet in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. As time passed, however, Rex found himself in the market for a house, and several of his Studebakers got sold in order to fund the down payment. One of them was the Commander coupe. It didn't go far – Rex sold it back to its previous short-term owner in Elkhart who'd spotted it for sale in *Hemmings*. That guy was a homebuilder, and would end up buying and reselling the Commander several times over the ensuing years to generate quick cash for various projects.

Falling into ill health, the builder of

**STUDEBAKER WINS AGAIN!**



*in the Annual  
GILMORE  
ECONOMY  
RUN*

**NOT JUST ONCE-BUT  
YEAR AFTER YEAR**

**Here  
are the  
Records**

1938 Studebaker Commander – First in division Studebaker President – Third in division	1939 Studebaker Commander – First in division Studebaker President – First in division
1940 Studebaker Commander – First in division Studebaker President – First in division Studebaker Champion – First in division	1941 Studebaker Commander – First in division Studebaker President – First in division Studebaker Champion – Second in division

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**BUY A 1941 STUDEBAKER**

With gasoline rationing in the immediate future, winning a fuel-economy run was very big news for any manufacturer. The 1941 Commander repeatedly topped Gilmore Oil's annual gas-sipping competition.



Originally marketed to Willys-Overland, the Vail and Cole-designed flathead, using light L-head architecture, served Studebaker nearly for the rest of the marque's lifetime.



**S**everal years ago I took it down to the Studebaker National Meet downtown in South Bend, which was the last time I'd driven it in quite a while. Then it wouldn't start, so I had to remove the gas tank, clean it, and rebuild the carburetor to get the sedimentation out.

So this Commander, being so original and having such low mileage, doesn't get driven a whole lot. Now it starts up and runs fine. When we take it over to the Glidden Tour, we figure it's going to be about 600 miles, more or less. That will be the farthest this Studebaker has been driven in a long, long time.

ferred the Studebaker back to Rex; the car had been through several additional owners by that point. Rex hauled it home, started the engine and had his ears assaulted at once by a troubling knock. He raised the car, dropped the oil pan, and peered at the main and rod bearings. Seeing nothing obvious amiss, he turned the engine over several more times, and was astonished by what he spotted: One of the pistons had broken completely in two horizontally, right near the oil ring, the upper half remaining lodged in the combustion chamber while the bottom half of the piston, still connected to the rod by wrist pins banged against it on the compression stroke. "I never bothered starting it when I bought it back," Rex explained. "It only had 15,000 miles on it by that point. I figured it wasn't necessary."

During a subsequent rebuild, Rex replaced all the pistons with stock-compression new-old-stock pistons. The Climatizer heater core beneath the front seat was leaking water, so that was replaced with a NOS heater. As finished, the car boasts options including an AM radio and a very unusual dealer-installed accessory, a shortwave receiver. Rex got his from a Studebaker collector who was actually using it as the basis for a home receiver. He figures Studebaker probably offered it to boost export sales, especially as war was approaching.

This is one of the most cautiously driven collectible cars we've encountered in some time. Rex was only putting about 25 miles on the Commander annually, so we were especially gratified that he allowed us some seat time. Generally speaking, the



speed limits during our test drive were around 35 MPH, right in keeping with the Commander's demeanor. The beautifully sculpted, Art Deco steering wheel accepts your inputs graciously. It's surprisingly slop-free and accurate, and the independent "Planar" front end is flat in cornering, abetted by the leisurely top speed.

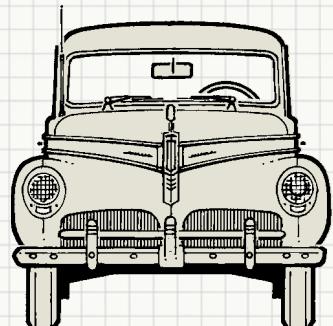
Studebaker designed the Commander for reasonable cruising, however. In top gear, a mechanically actuated overdrive kicks in on the Warner Gear transmission with a clunk, as you lift off the throttle with the speedometer still in the upper 20s. You ease up to a stop, and you're in third gear until you push in the mechanical clutch, with a little bit of calf work. But it's a very friendly car to drive, and this summer, Rex is returning it to the road with a vengeance. The Commander will be en route to the revived Glidden Tour in northwestern Ohio, vanquishing the two-lanes, just as the ghosts of South Bend intended. ☀



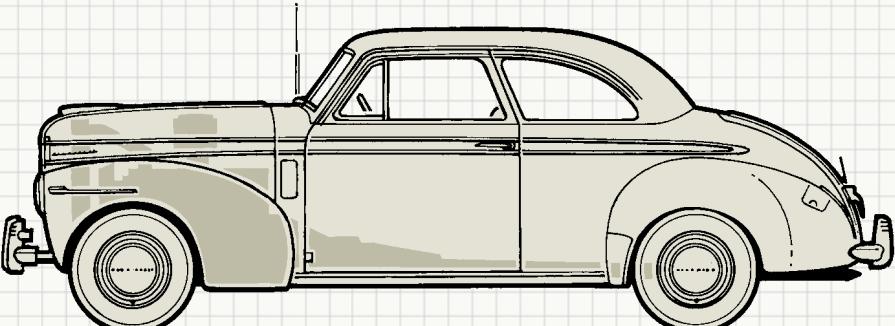
1941

# STUDEBAKER COMMANDER

ILLUSTRATIONS BY RUSSELL VON SAUERS, THE GRAPHIC AUTOMOBILE STUDIO  
©2014 HEMMINGS CLASSIC CAR



58.25 inches



119 inches

## SPECIFICATIONS

### PRICE

Base price \$990

### ENGINE

Type	Studebaker L-head straight-six, cast-iron block and cylinder head
Displacement	226.2 cubic inches
Bore x stroke	3.3125 x 4.375 cubic inches
Compression ratio	6.5:1 (optional, 7.0:1)
Horsepower	94 @ 3,600 RPM
Torque	175-lb.ft. @ 1,200 RPM
Valvetrain	Solid valve lifters
Main bearings	4
Fuel system	Single Stromberg Model BXOV26 one-barrel downdraft carburetor
Electrical system	6-volt battery/coil
Exhaust system	Cast-iron manifold, single exhaust pipe

### TRANSMISSION

Type	Warner Gear three-speed manual, single dry-disc mechanical clutch, mechanical overdrive
Ratios	1st 2.57:1
	2nd 1.55:1
	3rd 1.00:1
Overdrive	0.70:1
Reverse	3.48:1

### DIFFERENTIAL

Type	Hypoid, semi-floating axles
Ratio	4.55:1

### STEERING

Type	Ross symmetrical cam-and-lever, manual
Turns, lock-to-lock	5.25
Ratio	Variable, 25.5:1 to 33.0:1
Turning circle	41 feet 3 inches

### BRAKES

Type	Four-wheel hydraulic
Front/rear	11.0-inch expanding drum

### CHASSIS & BODY

Construction	Steel body on full steel double-drop frame with X-member
Body style	Four-passenger two-door coupe
Layout	Front-engine, rear-wheel drive

### SUSPENSION

Front	Independent with transverse semi-elliptical leaf spring, tubular shock absorbers
Rear	Live axle, semi-elliptical leaf springs, tubular shock absorbers

### WHEELS & TIRES

Wheels	Stamped-steel disc
Front/rear	16 x 4.5 inches
Front/rear tires	6.25 x 16

### WEIGHTS & MEASURES

Wheelbase	119 inches
Overall length	205.75 inches
Overall width	73 inches
Overall height	67.5 inches
Front track	58.25 inches
Rear track	60.31 inches
Shipping weight	3,160 pounds

### CAPACITIES

Crankcase	6 quarts
Cooling system	14.5 quarts
Fuel tank	18 gallons
Transmission	2 pints, plus ¾ pint for overdrive
Rear axle	3 pints

### CALCULATED DATA

Bhp per cu.in.	0.415
Weight per bhp	33.61 pounds
Weight per cu.in.	13.96 pounds

### PRODUCTION

Total production for the 1941 model year was 133,900 units. Factory records indicate that about 2,350 Model 11A Commander Club Coupes were produced from the model's introduction in mid-1941 until civilian production ended in early 1942.

### PROS & CONS

- + Lots of Art Deco details
- + Drives well and smooth
- + Awesome Loewy-crafted style
- Trim parts difficult to find
- Overdrive clunks hard
- Very leisurely road manners

### WHAT TO PAY

#### Low

\$6,000 - \$8,000

#### Average

\$10,000 - \$12,000

#### High

\$16,000 - \$18,000

### CLUB CORNER

**Studebaker Drivers Club**  
c/o Cornerstone Registration  
P.O. Box 1715  
Maple Grove, Minnesota 55311  
763-420-7829  
[www.studebakerdriversclub.com](http://www.studebakerdriversclub.com)  
Dues: \$24/year  
Membership: 12,500

**The Antique Studebaker Club**  
c/o Cornerstone Registration  
P.O. Box 1743  
Maple Grove, Minnesota 55311  
763-420-7829  
[www.theantiquestudebakerclub.com](http://www.theantiquestudebakerclub.com)  
Dues: \$30/year  
Membership: 1,350

**JUST WANTED TO LET YOU KNOW** that I really enjoyed the article on the Buick Wildcat in *HCC* #117. This car has lived somewhat in the shadow of the Riviera, and it is true that the Riviera most likely stole some of the sales from the Wildcat just as the Oldsmobile Toronado stole sales from the Starfire. However, full-size sporty luxury didn't come much nicer than the Wildcat. Buick provided enough of its own styling elements to separate it from the other full-size offerings in the Buick stable.

I would like to point out a couple of items as well. The Buick chrome five-spoke road wheel was an exclusive option for the Wildcat in 1964, although it is not uncommon to see them now on other Buicks of the era as they have been retrofitted by owners over time. Also, it is true that by 1964 Buick adopted the corporate GM Turbo Hydra-Matic transmission; however, Buick marketed this transmission as the Super Turbine 400 through the 1966 model year and didn't use the Turbo Hydra-Matic name in advertising until the 1967 models were introduced.

One other item I would like to point out is that the wheel cover on the 1963 Wildcat was also shared with the Riviera, the only difference being that the Wildcat used its own medallion in the center, and the Riviera used the Buick Tri-Shield.

Please keep the articles coming on full-size sporty luxury cars. A little muscle with a little class makes for a great driving experience!

Patrick Curran  
Monroe, North Carolina

**Congratulations Richard!** Over the years I've read several driveReports on Buick Dynaflow-equipped cars, and every one of them remarked how smoothly they shifted. You are the first writer I can remember who advised your readers that it's because they "don't shift," and are strictly a torque converter transmission with a manually selected "low range." It's great to have someone tell it like it really is.

I must also add how gratifying it was to read your interview with George Dammann. I was very enthused with the entire Crestline series as soon as I bought the first one and subsequently bought nearly every other one in the series.

Vinton Tarrant  
Copenhagen, New York

**I MUST TELL YOU** how much I enjoyed your profile of George Dammann in *HCC* #117. From the time I received my first Crestline book, *The Illustrated History of Ford*, as a Christmas gift in 1973, I was hooked. When I'd catch wind of a new Crestline release, I would head to the local bookstore hoping to find it there. In the 1980s and '90s I bought some of the titles at the Pomona Swap Meet from Jim Moloney, who authored some of the books. In those days Jim was a familiar site at auto swap meets around California, always driving his red Volkswagen pickup. Among the last of the Crestline books I bought was Jim's *Studebaker Cars* at the Pasadena Literature Sale in 1994. Jim was nice enough to sign and date my copy for me. Over the years, I would acquire 34 of the Crestline titles, and I still enjoy taking one of the books off the shelf and spending time with it.

Dave Harkey  
Highland, California

**AN INTERESTING NOTE** on the Detroit Underdogs column in *HCC* #117 about "The Other Monza." At the time, I worked as a die maker at the Fisher Body plant in Mansfield-Ontario, Ohio, and we ran the rear quarter panels for the notchback coupe version. Internally, we knew it as the "H-special" body, the "H" body being the Vega. Both the opera window and full window panels came off the same dies, with the window area differences accomplished via die inserts in what we call a "style change" operation. When the other style was required, we'd pull out one style of steel inserts and install the other style.

Mark Corbin  
Galion, Ohio

**READING PAT FOSTER'S MUSINGS** in *HCC* #117 on the 1960's Beetle, I recalled my parent's decision in 1963 to trade our ailing 1960 Ford Falcon for two new VWs—a Beetle and a Microbus. Having six young kids, price and reliability headed their list of features for any new car. Style, visibility and a strong heater—for our harsh Michigan winters—never made it onto any list I saw. Both VWs proved to be far more reliable than the Falcon. My folks proclaimed both cars "good enough"—lack of crea-

ture comforts and warranties aside.

What were buyers thinking by 1968? With the Rambler, I'll bet nothing at all. Current or potential VW owners never considered it. By then, the Beetle owned a growing market segment of eager new consumers that VW itself had forged from those ignored by upscale U.S. marques. Too little, too late, the Rambler American was shut out of this new market at any price. The Beetle had followed the same path to success as Ford's brilliant Model T. It was a "good enough" car at a bargain price. Yes, the Rambler American may have offered buyers what they wanted in 1968, but the VW Beetle gave owners what they needed—at a price they could afford.

Paul Tyra  
Newton, Massachusetts

**WORD OF MOUTH SOLD VWS.** Your neighbor would buy one and compliment the car on the great mileage and good dealer service. You didn't know anyone who bought a lemon; even rich people bought VWs. It was considered a well-made car and there was no social stigma about buying a Beetle. Only grannies bought Ramblers; it might not be true, but you would be embarrassed if you got dropped off at school in a Rambler. Lastly, VWs were fun to drive and easy to work on. Young people drove VWs and old people drove Ramblers.

Skip Corey  
Wallingford, Pennsylvania

**THE BEETLE OFFERED** its owner a kind of style and identity that Rambler with all its creature comfort and engineering advantages could not.

Tom Ryder  
Los Olivos, California

**ALL OF PAT'S CRITIQUES** are well founded—the Rambler had more room, nearly equal gas mileage, large trunk, better heater, etc. What he fails to consider, and what is important to a lot of us, is the fun factor. The VW was flat-out fun to drive—even going to the grocery store.

I purchased new, a 1964 Rambler American 440 convertible, three-speed with overdrive. I loved the car. In 1967

*Continued on page 34*

## An Unusual Advantage

**R**ecently, while looking through old advertisements for cars of the 1910s-1920s, I came across a car boasting a curious advantage. The ad was for the 1923 Courier Touring Car, which was built in Sandusky, Ohio, and at first glance the claim seemed to be of minor significance. The factory proclaimed that its car was "The Most Completely and Conveniently Lubricated Car in America."

So? I said.  
So what?

Giving it a bit of thought, I realized that in the earliest days of the automobile, lubrication was essential to getting any sort of reliability out of a car, so any machine bragging that it was not only the most *completely* lubricated automobile on the market, but also the most *conveniently* lubricated was clearly talking up some important advantages. Whether or not the Courier really was all it claimed to be, I have no idea, but I recognize the importance of its declaration. It was meant to attract mechanically-minded buyers, but apparently it didn't; according to sources, the Courier faded away by the end of the year. As you can see by the illustration, it looks like a nice-enough car for anyone.

Nowadays, we're drawn to advertisements that assure us we are buying "The Ultimate Driving Machine" or "Luxury Uncovered," and other such nonsense. (I still haven't figured out what Mazda's "Zoom Zoom" campaign was supposed to be about). But in the earliest days of the automobile, people's needs were different, so companies geared advertising to things that would appeal to those buyers. Most ads were pretty conventional boasts like Cadillac's "Sureness of Service," and Stearns' "Runs like a Deer." But others highlighting unique advantages were sure to appeal, such as the 1903 Stevens-Duryea brag that its automobile was superior in "Speed, Reliability, Hill-Climbing." Hill-climbing? Sure; although today we never worry about cars being able to climb hills, in an era when cars often had less than 15 horsepower, the ability to surmount high places was not always a given.

Stevens-Duryea wasn't alone. The Kansas City Motorcar Company advertised its product as "The Car That Climbs the Hills." By the way, Stevens-Duryea also touted the fact that its car

"Starts from the Seat," a feature I'm sure many people appreciated.

For those tired of adjusting or replacing valves, the 1907 Elmore advertised that it was "The Car That Has No Valves." The engine, you see, was a three-cylinder two-stroke – shades of future Saabs! The air-cooled 1905 Knox was

boasted as being "Waterless" so, obviously, an owner would never have to worry about boiling over.

"The Fastest Car in the World" was the exceptional claim of one

well-known automaker in 1906. Care to guess who it was? Packard, maybe? Stoddard-Dayton perhaps? Nope, it was Stanley Steamer, which celebrated a rate of 127.66 MPH set by one of its cars at Ormond Beach during the week of January 21-28, 1906. I remember my dad telling me that the fastest car he'd ever driven back in the old days was a Stanley.

Several manufacturers used various words and phrases to claim their cars were the best in the world – one or two came right out and said it. But, for my money, the most audacious brag has to go to Ransom Olds, who claimed in a 1912 ad headlined "My Farewell Car" that his latest Reo was "my topmost achievement," adding "I consider this car about as close to perfection as engineers will ever get." In other words, the 1912 Reo was the be-all-and-end-all car of all time. Gosh, I wish I had his confidence.

Will this prominently noted product feature make you want to buy the car: "The Rambler Spare Wheel." That's the headline in a 1909 Rambler advertisement. The text goes on to explain that every 1909 Rambler came fitted with a spare wheel with an inflated tire, so that when you had the inevitable tire trouble, you needn't get out and fix it. Just jack up the car and swap in the good wheel and tire and you're on your way. You could now wait until you got back to the comfort of your home to repair the flat. That was a very real and exclusive advantage for Rambler. It was the first company to offer a spare tire, and lots of people saw the wisdom in that. It's only now, over a hundred years later, that automakers are beginning to phase out spare tires. So, I guess Rambler had a pretty good idea. ☺



Nowadays we're attracted to advertisements that assure us we are buying "The Ultimate Driving Machine" or "Luxury Uncovered," and other such nonsense.



Uncle Sam sent me to Germany, so I sold the AMC and bought a VW Squareback when I got there. The drive home from the dealership is freeze-framed in my mind. I thought, "Wow, this thing is really fun to drive." As a person who had always driven American cars, this was a revelation. I slung that thing around German roads for four years, brought it home, and drove it another six years.

If you figure in the fun factor, there was no comparison. Most buyers were young, and the fun factor was important.

Mike Harrel  
Denison, Texas

**THANK YOU, PAT FOSTER,** for highlighting the Battleship and some history about the Four Wheel Drive Auto Co. of Clintonville, Wisconsin, in *HCC* #116. The FWD Museum, which is the original Zachow-Besserdich machine shop, still treats visitors to a close look at the Battleship and various early FWD trucks.

There is, however, one more car made by FWD. In the early 1930s, the company prepared a racing car that competed at the Indianapolis 500. Some years ago, the car was sold to private interests after having a home at the FWD Museum for many years.

FWD purchased a light truck company called Menominee Truck in 1920 and made those vehicles next to the FWD plant into the 1930s. Clintonville also was the home to the Topp-Stewart/Atlas Tractor Co. as well as the Patterson Brothers Shop, which made speedometers for Ford of Canada's export operation.

Clintonville also gave birth to one more automotive idea. William Besser-dich wanted to produce a new car line in about 1915. He was going to call it the Wisconsin Duplex but decided to move the operation to another community. He, too, decided to make trucks instead of cars. Today we know them for the city the new company adopted, Oshkosh Trucks, made in Oshkosh, Wisconsin.

Tom Collins  
Kaukauna, Wisconsin

**I READ BOB PALMA'S** column in *HCC* #117 with interest; I'm one of those "younger" entries into the car hobby. I was born in 1958, and find that I read the articles about cars of the '70s and '80s with every bit as much interest and enjoyment as those about older vehicles—more, perhaps, as they are the cars that

I learned to drive on and bought as a young man.

I recently purchased a 1988 Buick Reatta, a four-year, low-volume car, one of GM's brave forays into different thinking. Certainly, tinkering with it is not the same as tinkering used to be with my first car, a 1966 VW Beetle, but the Reatta is, like many of its '80s brethren, a reasonably well-built and eminently driveable car. It's fun and unusual, and it gives me pleasure, and I think that's what the car hobby is all about. I agree with Bob: let's welcome the '80s people; we're not all bad!

Dan Hearty  
*Surrey, British Columbia*

**WITH ONE EXCEPTION,** Ray Bohacz did a nice job in his article, "Making it Better in the Pursuit of Perfection" (*HCC* #118), in which he discussed the hard-to-define and elusive concept "Quality."

Ray states that, "Quality starts with the design of a component." Elsewhere, he says "...all Detroit car companies have produced quality products, but in many instances, consumers did not recognize the quality of those products." The missing notion in both of these statements is that "Quality" begins with a clear understanding of the needs and wants of the customer.

The reason American car manufacturers lost their way in the '70s and ran hard aground in the '80s is largely attributable to the fact that they also lost sight of that fact. Since that time, most car manufacturers have, similarly, become oblivious to the fact that many customers are weary of the bean-shaped design, limited color choices, and option packaging that has sucked the individuality out of automobile choices today. They want something else!

Between the manufacturers' limited appreciation for this basic tenant of "Quality" and the incessant meddling in automobile content through government regulation, we are left to find enjoyment in automobiles today, primarily, through our passion with collector cars.

Michael Berkin  
*Oxford, Maryland*

**THE STYLISH 1960 EDSSEL RANGER** convertible, as profiled in *HCC* #118, was my favorite body style of that final year of production. It's really unfortunate

that the Edsel name was so underappreciated and reviled. The car's namesake, Edsel Ford, was a great and forward-looking man. Had the Edsel been manufactured a decade earlier, or even a decade later, it may have survived longer. The 1960 models were "The Best of the Last."

Chester Bates  
*Sullivan, Maine*

**REGARDING PAT FOSTER'S** article in *HCC* #116 about Studebaker fleet/commercial cars, my father worked for Southern Counties Gas Co. in Southern California during the 1950s, and they had a large fleet of bullet-nose Studebakers, all early '50s models. He drove one as a meter reader; it had no back seat, just a canvas flap that led to the trunk. As a five-year old, I thought it was a blast to ride back there. I guess it was considered a business coupe back then, and it was stripped—no options at all. When he was promoted to service work, he drove Dodge and Ford trucks. No Studebakers there.

When we moved back to southwestern Lower Michigan, there were Studebakers everywhere as we were only 25 miles from South Bend. A lot of the small towns had Studebaker police cars and, as a hot-rodding teenager, you never knew if you could outrun them if you had to because you didn't know if they were running V-8s or not. But Michigan City, Indiana, had six-cylinder automatic Larks, which could be outrun by a bicycle.

Bruce Thomas  
*Rapid City, South Dakota*

**I AM A YOUNG 51-YEAR OLD boomer** and was not lucky enough to have ever driven a column-shift car. My question is: Why did manufacturers stop using this format? Seems a dash or column shifter (manual or automatic) would offer more passenger space and comfort. My question probably dovetails with the bench seat (for less sporty performance autos).

Your personal opinion, or the opinion of others via your "letters" section, would be great.

Stephen Lombardo  
*Dallas, Texas*

## The Good Earth

If you've never seen the spectacle, one of the most worthy experiences you can enjoy is heading to Kokomo Speedway on a warm Sunday night and watching Indiana's version of Sprint cars, with no wings, locked in combat on the dirt quarter-mile. My exhaustion from something like 40 straight hours of wakefulness, which included the Indianapolis 500, evaporated as Dave Darland, knife-fighting his way to a merciless win, rocketed past, deep in the cushion, firing clods of Hoosier soil into the packed crowd, including a chunk of clay that went right into my slack-jawed mouth.

I didn't spit it out. It was a literal taste of history. Today, except for certain places, you've almost got to buy a ticket and go into a rocking little speedway like Kokomo to experience the communion between rubber, steel and soil that was once a standard part of the automotive experience, whether you liked it or not. Here at Hemmings, just for instance, we avoid photographing cars on grass, unless they're on a concours lawn someplace. How come? Because, folks, cars don't run on grass, especially if it isn't mowed. Instead, sometimes a car is a perfect fit for dirt. A 1934 Ford, especially if it's all-original, begs to be captured digitally on an out-of-the-way dirt road someplace. That's the way those cars were intended to exist.

Even today, you can catch some examples of what I'm talking about if you know where to look. Our home state of Vermont is crossed with well-maintained dirt roads, which form part of the Green Mountain State's rural character. But Kokomo really is a car town, with a prominent automotive history, once the home of Haynes-Apperson and today the location of a big Chrysler plant that produces transmissions, mainly for rear-drive applications. It's located about an hour north of Indianapolis along U.S. 31. Every so often, a graded gravel road will intersect the modern highway, running out of sight across the flat, rich farmland. In the early years of driving, these roads still existed as



rutted dirt trails. During the Depression, they were favored getaway routes for outlaws like John Dillinger. The bandits called them "cat roads," since they allowed a stealthy getaway.

Last year, I was driving across Iowa on Interstate 80 when I passed an exit for the little town of Dexter. The name leaped out at me for reasons I couldn't immediately remember. I Googled it on my smartphone, and it turned out to be the place where Bonnie and Clyde narrowly escaped after a shootout with the law. I did some checking, and both

the camp where it happened and the dirt road leading to it still exist.

Our automobiles have always been shaped technologically by the roads they could reasonably be expected to encounter. When rural transport was as likely to be over dirt as macadam, cars were implements with style—heavy channel frames, thick stamped fenders, axles bigger in dimension than the average femur. Long before I showed up, old-timers were carping that they don't build cars like they used to. That implies that the industry somehow got cheap or fixated on the cost of producing cars. That's only true up to a point. In the years before America became sclerotic with blacktopped arteries, cars simply had to be built as robustly as civil-engineering projects. The landscape demanded it. Anything less, and the car would have been rattled to pieces before more than a couple of installment payments had been laid down.

It's very unusual to see a well-restored collectible automobile of any sort back in its natural environment and off pavement. The unimproved roads that still exist are having their histories extended while plied by farm trucks, pickups and the odd SUV. The closest that premium cars of the past get to dirt today is the manicured, putting-green grass that's growing out of it. To find out how it used to be, you've got to head off into the countryside on an expedition of learning. That, or watch the soil swirling in the bottom of your cup at some hallowed place like Kokomo. ☠

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projects. //



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## Brand Loyalty

In the movie *A Christmas Story*, young Ralphie told us his father was “an Oldsmobile man.” Ralphie thus cited an important factor in the United States automobile industry’s growth: brand loyalty. Brand loyalty supplied momentum to keep a company going when its products were less than competitive in a given model year, or even a given era.

Is there a better example than Ford Motor Company? Henry Ford’s respect for farmers and the working man resulted in the “universal car,” his famous Model T. It created an enormous bloc of loyal Ford customers that was not seriously challenged until well into the 1920s. Whatever Ford built, year after year all during the ‘teens, was so good, so practical and so cheap, that a new car was possible for almost every employed American.

Did the Model T stay in production too long, allowing competitors to find weaknesses in Ford’s marketing strategy? Probably. Did Ford retain mechanical brakes too long in the 1930s, and I-beam front suspension in the 1940s, giving competitors an opportunity to frame Ford engineering as obsolete? Probably.

So, what carried Ford through to the do-or-die 1949 model? The Model T’s momentum. True: Good, more up-to-date Model As had been brought to market, followed by stylish, fast, low-cost V-8s, but didn’t both of them ride the Model T’s coattails to some extent? Even when the 1949 Ford was hatched with contemporary styling perched on a modern chassis, it was so underdeveloped that it still needed brand loyalists to tolerate its teething problems until, as Ford advertised, it was “50 Ways Better For ’50”...which wasn’t hard to do.

Ford’s competitors also needed brand loyalty’s momentum from time to time. All by itself, the attractive 1956 Chevrolet accounted for over 25 percent of all the new cars sold in the United States that year. But can you imagine being a Chevrolet dealer in October 1956 and seeing a shorter, narrower, higher-waisted 1957 Bel Air Sport Coupe parked next to the Ford dealer’s longer, lower, wider 1957 Fairlane 500 Victoria...with real ’50s fins?



Today, 1957 Chevrolets are 1950s icons. But back in the day, Chevrolet needed brand loyalists to carry it through 1957, when rivals Ford and Plymouth out-styled Chevrolet by a country mile. Indeed, Chevrolet lost almost two percent of its market share in 1957, falling below 25 percent, while Ford and Plymouth each gained almost two percent. Plymouth advertising proclaimed, “Suddenly, it’s 1960!” Buyers agreed, increasing Plymouth’s overall market share to almost 10 percent.

But four years later, how would you like to have been a Plymouth dealer, watching your first 1961 Plymouth being backed off the transport? Its torsion-bar front suspension gave it an engineering edge, so would you have considered displaying it on a lift in the service area,

rather than in the showroom? That way, people could see the torsion bars and not the car’s exterior design. Market share tumbled to barely five percent, so brand loyalists were needed to buy enough 1961 (and smallish 1962) Plymouths to see the marque through the bizarre styling of those two years until the more conventionally styled, and better-received, 1963 models arrived.

Brand loyalty has decreased dramatically in recent years. Automobiles have become more of an appliance and less the topic of loyalist conversation, having been replaced by personal electronic devices as the day-to-day darlings of the public’s fancy. For example, Cadillac formerly enjoyed one of the highest percentages of repeat customers in the industry, but its sales fell almost 70 percent (from 351,000 to 109,000) between 1978 and 2009. Manufacturers further erode brand loyalty by offering conquest rebates to encourage customers to trade out of competing makes.

Ralphie’s dad might have overlooked a bad 1978 Ninety-Eight Diesel and went back for a new, gas 1981 Ninety-Eight Regency as his last new car; after all, he was “an Oldsmobile man.” But his favorite marque is gone...and, more than likely, so is Ralphie’s dad and his mindset. That kind of brand loyalty is rarely seen anymore today. ☺

has decreased  
dramatically in  
recent years.  
Automobiles  
have become  
more of an  
appliance...



# Montclair!

*After a three-year hiatus, Mercury reintroduces the model for another run in the mid-market position – Part II*



1964 BREEZEWAY COUPE

BY MATTHEW LITWIN • PHOTOGRAPHY FROM THE HEMMINGS MOTOR NEWS ARCHIVE

**M**ercury was hardly an exemplary pillar of stability in the 1950s. The division, once lauded for its grand entry into the mid-priced car market in 1939 with elegant styling, ample power and plush features, had been driven into a realm of ceaseless turmoil. Series hierarchy and divisional alignment were in constant flux.

So, too, was the general perception of Mercury's wares by critics and customers alike who often viewed them as gussied up Fords one year and baby Lincolns the next.

Caught up in the whirlwind of endless unrest was Montclair: a name that transitioned from convertible model to its own series in 1955, while supplanting the Monterey as Mercury's top-of-the-line series. Offering attractive body lines and trim, plush interiors, and hot V-8 engines in four body styles, it was easy to understand why the Montclair found 104,667 buyers in its first year, and another 91,434 in 1956; the latter numbers hampered by a recession. Yet as popular as it was, even the Montclair could not escape the instability. By 1957 it had been demoted to a mid-priced series behind Turnpike Cruiser and eventually the Park Lane in 1958, the year in which the Edsel was launched into the low end of the same market.

As Dearborn struggled to keep the Edsel solvent, full-size Mercury sales suffered. Montclair production, now offered in three body styles, ceased at 23,602 units. By 1960, its output dipped to a scant 19,814 units. It was a paltry number in light of the 102,539 Montereys sent to eager buyers and the fact that Edsel had mercifully been cancelled. A real surprise was the newly minted Comet; the compact shot past all expectations after the Edsel fiasco, culminating in 116,331 units at year's end.

At the 1961 model unveiling, gone were the Montclair and Park Lane. The Monterey was retained, now built on shortened

120-inch wheelbase chassis, and deemed the division's full-size luxury car. Joining it were the economy-priced Meteor 600 and the slightly upscale 800 series on the same chassis. Choice of engines ranged from the 223-cu.in. Super Economy "6" to the 300-hp 390-cu.in. V-8. The Meteor name had already been in use in Canada as an upscale Ford, so confusion abounded further in Mercury's customer base in the northern border states.

Further jostling ensued over the next two years. The Meteor was moved to a mid-sized 116.5-inch platform, ahead of Comet's 114-inch wheelbase. Model names within each series were altered, and in mid-1962 a performance Monterey, the S-55, was added to the lineup. For 1963 each series was further expanded, while a new fastback-designed Monterey hardtop called the Marauder appeared mid-year, homologating the body for circle track competition. Showing up on the option chart were 427-cu.in. Marauder and Super Marauder engines, making 415 and 425 hp, respectively.

In spite of these and other advances in Mercury design and engineering, the automotive market was becoming more segmented each season, and the Meteor was suffering the same fate as the Edsel. In each of its three years of production, it had stumbled just past a mere 50,000 units annually, as Monterey output rebounded from just over 50,000 to more than 106,000 in the same three-year period.

Perhaps in an effort to recapture some of its past, Mercury

announced the reintroduction of both the Montclair and Park Lane for 1964. As the latter of the two resumed its role as the division's luxury series, the Montclair was once again positioned as the mid-range model ahead of the Monterey. Offered in four-door sedan, two- or four-door fastback hardtop, and two-door hardtop body styles, ranging in price from \$3,116 to \$3,181, Montclairs were constructed upon the now four-year-old 120-inch wheelbase perimeter frame, complete with an independent ball joint, coil-sprung front and multi-leaf-sprung rear suspension systems.

Since 1961, full-size Mercurys shared much of the body and its substructure with Ford. The 1964 models, including Montclairs, were—at their core—restyled 1963 editions; however, visually there was enough change to make them stand out from the previous model year. Grilles were now sharply convex, rather than concave, complemented by a matching convex point on each front fender. A wide strip of side molding, running from the midpoint of the front wheel opening to the rear bumper—skirting the top of the rear wheel opening—helped differentiate the series from others. Fastback hardtops retained the Marauder moniker, while the four-door sedan and two-door hardtop featured reverse-canted rear glass and were dubbed Breezeway sedans à la Turnpike Cruisers of yore; the middle section of the rear glass could be lowered electronically.

Plush interiors were still a Mercury hallmark, and the Montclairs came with pleated cloth and vinyl upholstery, or all-vinyl over bench seats. Much like its Ford counterparts, the instrument panel featured a horizontal speedometer with auxiliary gauges set into round rocket-inspired pods below.

Depending upon transmission selection, each Montclair was powered by a standard 250-hp (three-speed) or 266-hp (automatic) version of Ford's 390-cu.in. V-8; a four-speed manual was also offered. The 390 engine, developed for its 1961 introduction, was a member of Ford's FE-Series of engines

that included both the 352 and 406. Options below Montclair's hood included 300- and 330-hp versions of the 390, as well as 410- and 425-hp editions of the FE-Series 427-cu.in V-8, the latter featuring dual four-barrel carburetors.

In its first season back on the market, Montclair production concluded at 32,963 units, the most popular being the four-door Breezeway sedan at 15,520 units. It was hardly an auspicious relaunch; however, sweeping changes for 1965 offered new hope for improved sales.

Montclairs were now based on a totally new 123-inch wheelbase perimeter frame with integrated torque boxes. One was positioned at each end of each frame side rail, serving to limit flexibility in the center section while virtually eliminating noise and vibration transfer from the suspension, which itself had also been redesigned. Although a modified version of the coil-sprung independent front suspension was retained, the rear suspension was upgraded from leaf to coil springs. Measuring 62-inches wide, the front and rear track was an adaptation of Pontiac's "Wide Track" stance.

The longer chassis called for a longer, wider body, and to that point, Mercury shamelessly advertised the revamped models as being designed "in the Lincoln Continental tradition," fully departing from its Ford-based underpinnings yet again. With an overall width of 79.4 inches and a 218.4-inch length, there was an ample amount of three-dimensional space for front and rear passengers. Wide, rectangular grilles seemed as though they were lifted directly from Lincoln, including its center section relief that added dimension to the wide expanse. Faux vents were positioned just behind the leading edge of the front fenders, while a band of brightwork ran the length of the beltline, further differentiating the Montclair from the Monterey. Side glass was now curved as well.

Interiors were still offered in cloth and vinyl, or all vinyl, but the instrument panel took on a more elegant and contem-



1965 MARAUDER COUPE

PHOTO BY MATTHEW LITWIN



1966 TWO-DOOR HARDTOP

porary look. Five round gauges were set into a single aluminum panel, which also stretched to envelop the climate controls and choice of radio. Auxiliary controls were set into a strip of wood applique below. Mechanically, the series retained the same array of 390-cu.in. engines, as well as the 425-hp 427; the transmission lineup remained unchanged.

Montclair was offered in just three body styles for 1965—four-door Breezeway (with Flo-thru ventilation), and two- and four-door fastback Marauder trim—at a cost of \$3,072 to \$3,145 without options. Demand pushed production to a more welcoming 45,546 units for division executives.

As was typical of a redesigned car, only year-to-year refinements were made to the Montclair. For 1966, the body was lengthened slightly to 220.4 inches; the grille was noticeably revised to include a vertical center ridge emblazoned with the Mercury coat of arms; and the faux fender vents were now an egg crate design. Slender brightwork added a touch of elegant flair. Although three body styles remained, hardtops dropped the Marauder moniker, and the Breezeway roof treatment was eliminated from the four-door sedan in favor of a more traditional greenhouse. Interiors, plush as they were, received only slight updating.

Likewise, there were few changes mechanically, the lone exception being in the V-8 engine lineup. Standard offering was now a 265-hp 390 with three-speed manual transmission, or the 275-hp 390 in conjunction with the Multi-Drive Merc-O-Matic automatic. Optional equipment was the new 410-cu.in. V-8, rated for 330 hp (available against both aforementioned transmissions, as well as a four-speed manual), or the 345-hp 428-cu.in. V-8 (the three-speed was not available against the 428). Unfortunately, total Montclair production slid to just 38,913 cars in 1966.

Although the Montclair's chassis varied little from its 1965 redesign, the 1967 model year did welcome the return of the Breezeway model to the series. Like all Montclairs, it sported a shortened 218.5-inch long body with faux egg crate fender vents and a grille design eerily similar to the 1965 model. The greenhouse was of a contemporary design, unlike its predecessors. Breezeways, dissimilar from the regular four-door sedan, had a deeply recessed rear window. The two-door hardtop, the sportiest of the four body styles offered, now had a flowing aerodynamic backlite, rather than the angular fastback design of the previous model year.

Interior upholstery had been continuously updated and was still offered in cloth/vinyl or all-vinyl upholstery. The instrument

panel was its least appealing feature: color-keyed with a massive round speedometer directly over the steering column and a wide expanse of faux grillwork consuming the lower half. Engine selection was reduced to three. The base V-8 was the 270-hp 390, available in conjunction with the still-standard three-speed manual, or optional four-speed manual and Merc-O-Matic. On the option chart was the 330-hp 410 V-8—now in its second and final season—and the 345-hp 428 V-8, both of which were only available with either the four-speed or automatic.

Each passing year, the Montclair—as it did in the Fifties—



1967 TWO-DOOR HARDTOP



began to resemble the full-size entry-level Monterey more and more. By 1967, only discrete chrome model names and additional exterior brightwork on the Montclair separated the two visually at first blush, helping, in part, total 1967 output to fall to 19,922 units. Coupled with a price difference of \$252 - \$279 between comparable 1968 models, this slide would continue further, to just 14,760 units in a year that witnessed the elimination of the faux fender vents, relocation of the side trim, and slight alterations to the front and rear fascias. With the discontinuation of the short-lived 410 engine, a 315-hp 390 V-8 slid

into the open position on the option chart.

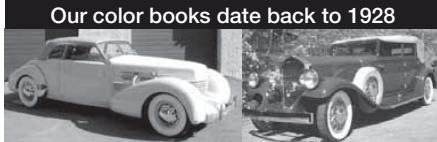
So few were the noteworthy changes between 1967 and '68 that not a single contemporary automotive magazine bothered testing a Montclair. All eyes were instead on the growing performance car market segment, including Mercury's high-powered Cyclones and Cougars. As the sun set on the model year, the Montclair was forever phased out of the division, replaced instead by the new Monterey Custom trim level for 1969. And even this upscale model would not survive past the 1974 model year. ☀

1968 BREEZEWAY SEDAN



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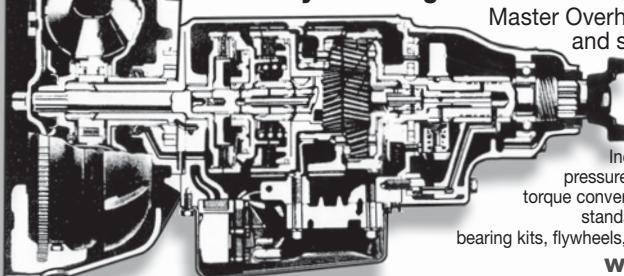
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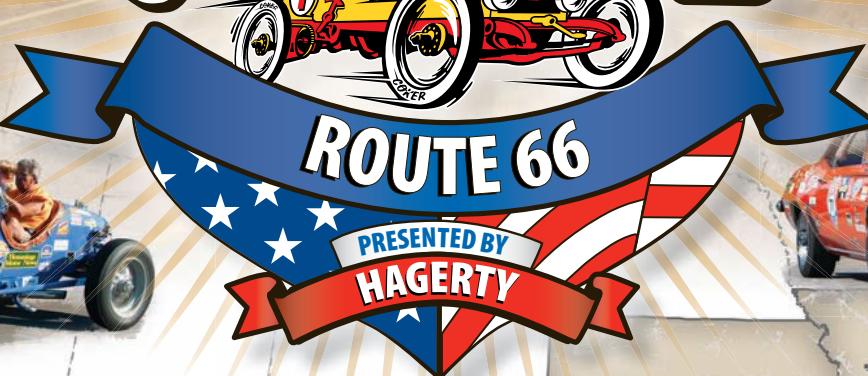
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## Retractable Rarity

*A lifelong retractable fan finds a 1948 Playboy Convertible Coupe in his own backyard*

BY MARK J. McCOURT • PHOTOGRAPHY BY RICHARD LENTINELLO

It's not unusual today to find a convertible car with a folding solid metal roof, rather than the traditional cloth or vinyl; Chrysler and Pontiac have sold popular-priced hardtop convertibles in recent years, as have overseas automakers ranging from BMW to Volvo.

Those cars all trace their proof of concept back to Ford, which was the first automaker to mass-produce its Skyliner retractable in the late 1950s. But Ford's complex hardtop mechanism was very nearly beaten to the market a decade earlier by a brilliantly simple version attached to a little car from a bold startup from Buffalo, New York: the Playboy Convertible Coupe.

You may find yourself asking, 'What's a Playboy?' You don't have to turn in your car-enthusiast card; most people have never heard of a Playboy, and even fewer have seen one in the sheetmetal. It was that innocent question that would forever alter the perception of Plantation, Florida, resident Michael Cohen.

"I'm now semi-retired. Last summer, my wife said I was being kind of a grump, so why don't I go find a car I want to play with," Mike tells us. "I've always loved cars, and I got hooked on old MGs by reading the book, *The Red Car*, in eighth grade. So I was thinking about a 1953 MG TD or a '55 TF.





While early models used a 91-cu.in., 40-hp Continental engine, the majority of Playboy Convertible Coupes were powered by a 133-cu.in. Hercules flathead four-cylinder making 48 hp; this one received new gaskets, rebuilt water and oil pumps and a rebuilt Carter carburetor.

A couple of friends suggested I go see a Brit named Mike in Pompano Beach, 26 miles from where I live; he restores MGs, and he'd help me.

"I set up an appointment to visit his shop. We were walking between adjoining warehouses where people store cars, and out of the blue, he asked if I'd ever heard of a Playboy. I said, 'As a matter of fact, I have!' 'Nobody's ever answered that in the affirmative before,' he replied. I told him how I've owned two 1959 Ford retractables, and that I know the history of retractables: Peugeot was first [with the Éclipse décapotable] in 1936, Chrysler made three experimental Thunderbolts in 1942, and then a company called Playboy made 90-some-odd examples before going out of business, before Ford hit it big. Why did you ask me that?" he asked his host, incredulously. "'Is there one here?'"

Michael explained that, not only had his interest in MGs come from that much-loved Don Standford book: The protagonist Hap also drove his father's "'57 flip-top box," a Ford retractable hardtop convertible, and this created another lifelong automotive fascination that led to his own purchases. "I'm a retractable guy, and I'd never seen a Playboy in my life. My dream would be to see and touch one. I never thought I'd do so; they basically don't exist," he recalls. "Mike said, 'There's one in that building over there.' I said, 'Let's go—I need to see that car!'"

Today, the Playboy is just a footnote in American automotive history, but it was a genuinely exciting prospect in the car-hungry marketplace immediately following World War II. Conceived as a small, frugal, stylish second family car built from



The Playboy's party trick was its brilliant and simple folding hardtop, which was counterbalanced and manually activated; you unscrewed two clasps that held the top to the header, and pushed it back, where it folded into the well behind the single bench seat, the front portion forming a neat tonneau. This example's interior is original, and that welcoming bench allowed the company to advertise the car offering seating for three. There was also a very tiny seat in the well; actually, it was more like a padded ledge.



The painted steel panel offered the driver a comprehensive bank of dials indicating amperage, fuel, speed, oil pressure and water temperature; a Volkswagen-style Bendix Sapphire I AM radio was later installed under the dash, next to the chromed overdrive pull knob.

proven proprietary components and advertised to retail for only \$985, the Playboy Motor Corporation's Convertible Coupe was the vision of former Packard dealer Louis Horwitz, former Pontiac engineer Charles Thomas and service station owner Norman Richardson. Their first prototype, unveiled in Buffalo in February 1947, was a small, three-passenger soft-top convertible with a rear-mounted Continental four-cylinder engine, an innovative independent front suspension and a vacuum-controlled planetary transmission.

Subsequent pre-production models—97 were hand-built, in total—maintained the prototype's ahead-of-its-time smooth styling but switched to a conventional, front-mounted engine and three-speed manual transmission. Most intriguing was the two-piece, counterbalanced folding hardtop, which—after two screws released it from the windshield header—manually pivoted down and locked into place, the leading section forming a tonneau in the manner that modern convertibles like the Mustang didn't adopt until recently.

"I don't have the keys to that building," Mike told me, "But I'll see what I can do." I called him every three or four days for four weeks straight!" Michael says with a laugh. "We finally met the owner, and got to see the car, serial number 75. It was parked with three other vehicles that had all belonged to the owner's father, who had taken ill; they were driven in and covered with blankets. He passed away in 1987, and they sat there for 26 years.

"I was ecstatic to know I'd finally see and touch one. While we were removing the blankets, Mike leaned over and said, barely above a whisper, 'I think he might sell it.' From that point forward, I was in shock. I'm not sure I even comprehended looking at the car."

Michael established a good rapport with the seller, who—after a subsequent meeting—said he felt his father would want someone like Michael to have the Playboy, because of his knowledge and enthusiasm. "With every classic car I've bought, my rule has always been that it has to be complete and running, or I'm not interested, because I'm not a mechanic," he explains.



*“With every classic car I've bought, my rule has always been that it has to be complete and running, or I'm not interested, because I'm not a mechanic...”*



"I went back with my mechanic friend Russ Gagliano. We put a bit of oil into the cylinders, dropped a new battery in and turned the key—she cranked so strong, she wanted to start! We wouldn't let it, for obvious reasons. We wanted to be sure it wasn't seized, because if it was, I really didn't want any part of it. But the engine cranked strongly, and the car was 98-percent complete, with very little missing. We made a deal and flat-bedded it home."

Michael and Russ worked together to bring the Convertible Coupe back to mechanical health, while preserving its amazingly original features. "We dropped the fuel tank and lines, took off the air filter, sprayed starter fluid into the carburetor, and she fired right up! It ran rough, we only let it run for a second, but it was good to know it would be a running car again." So, having purchased the Playboy in August, he and Russ worked through the fall and early winter months to restore it for the road. "We rebuilt the gas tank and replaced the lines, installed new brakes and wheel cylinders and a new master cylinder. In order to replace the engine gaskets, we had to remove a lateral steel beam that held the radiator, so we pulled that as well, and had it dipped. Having gotten that far, we also sent the fuel and water pumps out to be rebuilt."

Like many short-lived automakers did in the 'Teens and Twenties, the Playboy Motor Corporation was building "assembled" cars, those made with components produced and sourced from numerous suppliers, rather than made by the company itself. "The car is a potpourri of a lot of different things," Michael notes; "The taillamp bezels were from a 1930s Chevy DeLuxe, the dash bezels were from a 1940s Studebaker truck, the door handles were from a Model A Coupe. The carburetor was Carter, the steering box was Ross, the clutch is a Borg & Beck. They had bits and pieces of what they could get their hands on. They used Continental engines, Hercules engines, and at the end of the run, Willys engines. Mine has a Hercules, and that company primarily made engines for heavy equipment and tractors."



Number 75's Hercules inline-four is an L-head design with three main bearings, and its 3.25 x 4.00-inch bore and stroke offers 133-cubic inches. With the aforementioned single-barrel Carter downdraft carburetor, it makes 48 hp at 3,200 RPM and 80-lb.ft. of torque at 2,000 RPM. The column-shifted three-speed manual came from Warner and the four-wheel drums were Wagner components; new and unusual was the independent front suspension, which combined tubular shock absorbers with single control arms and horizontally mounted coil springs. Also unusual was the fitment of tiny 12 x 4-inch wheels.

Our feature Playboy's enthusiastic new caretaker had an end goal in mind: showing the car in the new preservation class of the 2014 Boca Raton Concours d'Elegance, held in late February, and he achieved that goal and more than he ever imagined. "While I was working on the car, I started reaching out to other Playboy owners. Of the total number of cars built, 39 are known to exist. Two are in Europe. Only 12 are running—the others, unfortunately, are in poor shape, whole or in pieces, parked in garages, barns or in a field. We've reignited the camaraderie—there are 10 to 12 people who are really enthusiastic

and who keep in touch with each other, try to help each other."

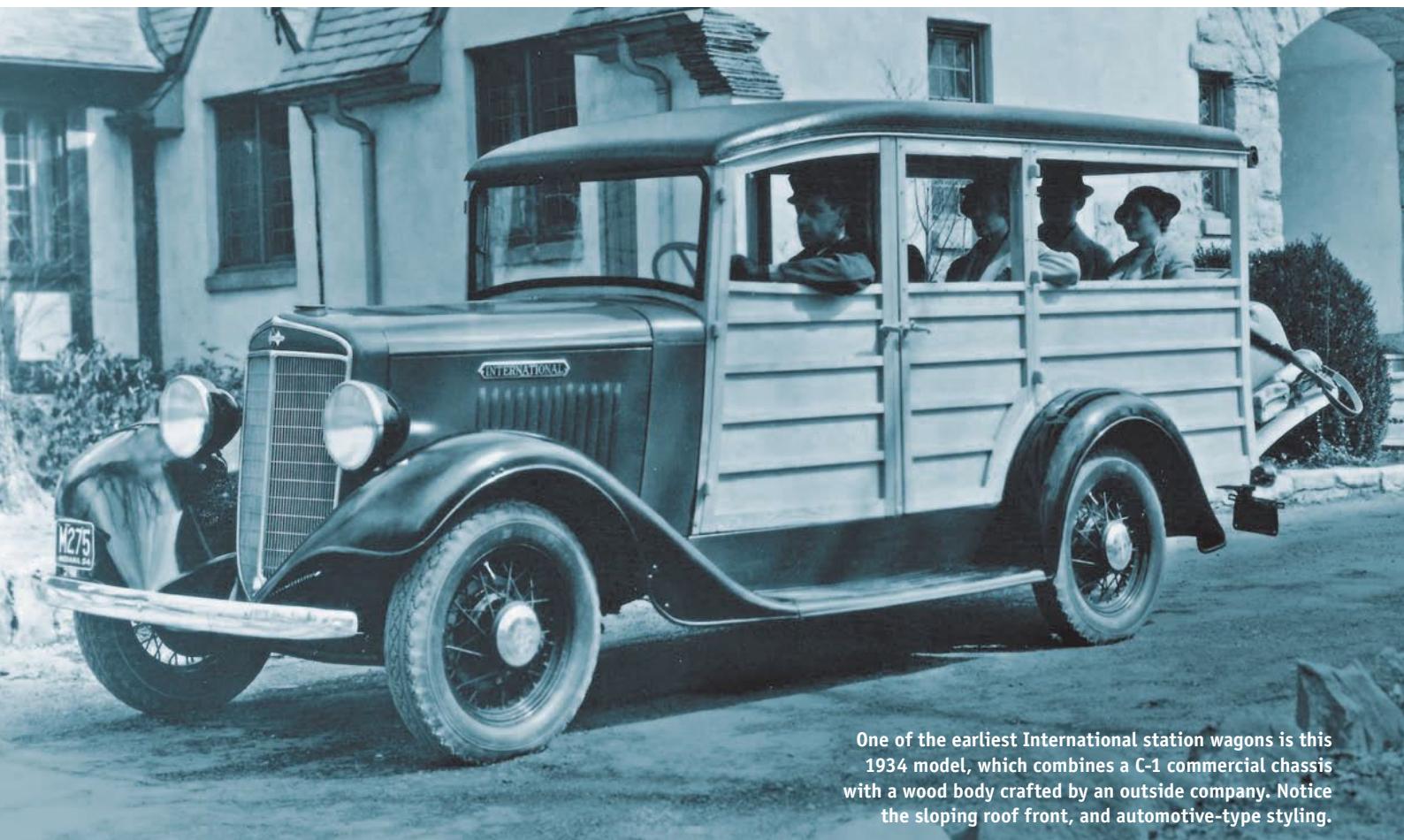
Michael had the Playboy roadworthy in time to attend the Concours. He even showed it the day before it was due in Boca Raton, at the AACA National Winter Meet in Port St. Lucie, where it was awarded for Historical Preservation Original Features. The Playboy was also a hit in Boca, where it attracted big crowds and subsequently, an invitation to be displayed at the Elliot Museum in Stuart, Florida, where it spent the months of April and May.

"All these great things have happened," he says with pride. "I still can't believe that not only did one of these cars exist, but it was right here, all along. It's been a wonderful ride—the car has changed my life. It now has a social life much better than mine. It's been invited here, there and yonder, and we're having a great time."

The Playboy Motor Corporation had folded by 1950, before production could begin in earnest—an underfunded victim of skittish investors—but not before it captured the hearts and imaginations of thousands of enthusiasts. Those remaining examples, like Michael's number 75, continue to do so nearly 70 years later. ☀

**Adding to top-down comfort was the REO under-dash heater, built by the Chicago Manufacturing Company, while the decorative door handles were thought to be Ford pieces. The stylishly trimmed taillamps accented the slab sides that would make such a stir on the 1949 Ford.**





One of the earliest International station wagons is this 1934 model, which combines a C-1 commercial chassis with a wood body crafted by an outside company. Notice the sloping roof front, and automotive-type styling.

## The Travelall *International Harvester's Rugged and Roomy Station Wagon*

BY PATRICK FOSTER • PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF THE PAT FOSTER COLLECTION

**F**rom the time it entered the automotive field in 1907 right up to the present day, International has generally offered both cargo and people haulers. Today, the products are IC-brand school and passenger buses along with International-brand heavy trucks. In the earliest years, it was pickup trucks and passenger cars. And in between those eras was a series of handsome station wagons that could do double duty.

International produced its first automobile, the Auto Buggy, in 1907 and built mainly cars until 1909 when the Auto Wagon light truck—essentially an Auto Buggy with the rear seat removed—debuted. Company executives soon realized that trucks were much more popular than cars with its traditional customers; i.e. farmers who bought its farm implements. And trucks were very profitable. International eventually stopped producing passenger cars, and decided instead to concentrate on building trucks.

International's sturdy light-truck chassis was used occasionally by coachbuilders to produce wood-bodied station wagons.

These wagons were built mainly for the hotel and depot trade, though some were also built for personal use. A good example of an early International station wagon is the handsome woodie on the new-for-1934 International C-1 chassis shown here. Powered by a 70-hp four-cylinder engine, it used International's metal cowl, hood and front fenders mated to a wood body with plastic side curtains rather than roll-up windows, and a fabric-covered roof. Because of its relatively high cost, sales were never very high.

During the 1930s and 1940s, International continued to offer bare chassis with station wagon bodies produced by a range of body builders including the Burkett Company of Dayton, Ohio and Baker-Raulang of Cleveland. They were lovely to look at but, like all woodies, required a lot of maintenance; sanding and varnishing the wood was an annual chore. In 1937, the C-1 was replaced by the improved six-cylinder D-2 chassis on a 113-inch wheelbase. With the new chassis came bold, all-new styling that still looks good today.



This 1935 C-1 woodie wagon is similar to the 1934 model, but differences can be seen in the body construction, most likely because it was built by a different body company. This particular wagon belonged to the Hotel Marblehead.

More automotive styling can be seen in this 1937 D-2 International. Note that the windshield header is now made of steel.



The D-2 chassis was used until 1941; while the new K-series chassis was introduced in late 1940. The K-series discarded the stylish sweptback radiator grille of the earlier vehicles in favor of a more upright look and placed the headlamps in the front fenders, modern-style. But wagon sales remained low because of high cost and maintenance of the wood body.

World War II didn't interrupt International's production to the extent it did other American vehicle manufacturers. The company built military versions of its civilian trucks and vans, as well as dedicated military vehicles including halftracks, ambulances and personnel carriers. After the war, International got back into civilian production with warmed-over versions of its K-series. In 1949, the company even built a fleet of steel-bodied panel vans converted to passenger wagons for United Airlines.

Those airline passenger vans may have proved an inspiration for International because in 1952 the company decided to get into the station wagon market in a big way, introducing an attractive new model it called the Travelall. This was the first

production-model steel-bodied International station wagon and was a handsome looking vehicle.

Based on the L-110 panel truck introduced in November 1949, the new Travelall rode a 115-inch wheelbase and was powered by a 220-cu.in. overhead valve straight-six engine that developed 101 hp and was connected to a sturdy three-speed transmission with floor shift. Styling was similar to the L-series panel truck it was based on, with bulging fenders and a "mustache" grille consisting of small vertical slots and two large horizontal bars at the bottom.

The new wagon offered only two doors plus a tailgate/transom set-up at the rear, the right front seat folding forward for easier rear-seat access. Interior trim was rather truck-like, with leatherette-covered removable seats that could accommodate up to eight passengers. Travelalls were often purchased by contractors to transport work crews and their equipment from site to site. And many farm families also found the Travelall to be

Station wagons from the 1930s are among the loveliest cars ever made, and this 1939 International D-2 is a prime example. The look is stylish, yet very sturdy.



a good investment, since it could be both a work and pleasure vehicle. The all-steel body greatly reduced maintenance.

The L-series was replaced by the new R-series for 1953 so, although the new Travelall was only one-year old, it already received updated styling. The new look was simple but pleasing, making these early models among the most handsome of all early Travelalls. The front end now featured a rectangular opening which was bisected by a tapered bar with the "IH" logo in the middle, and the domed hood now had an open air slot at the front edge.

The Travelall was gradually transformed by market demand into a more car-like vehicle. In September 1955, the new S-series was introduced featuring improved body mounting for a quieter ride, a stronger frame and a complete facelift. Headlamps were now located at the forward edge of the fenders, the hood was broader and flatter with a larger air slot at the front end, and a new white-painted grille with a trapezoidal opening debuted. Recognizing its growing use as a family vehicle, Travelall now offered an optional Hydra-Matic automatic transmission. Other improvements included optional power brakes, whitewall tires and 12-volt electrical system. Stylish two-tone paint schemes were also offered, and to further gussy it up, a radio and chrome bumpers were available. The S-series Travelall remained in production through March 1957 when it was replaced by an all-new and much larger vehicle.

International's 50th year as a truck manufacturer took place in 1957, so management felt the anniversary called for something really big. The company introduced the all-new "A" series—for "Anniversary." They were real beauties, and a big step forward for International. The Travelall became both an upscale family transporter and a rugged work vehicle.

Designed by International's styling chief Ted Ornas, the new Travelall was much larger, with fenders faired-in to the body to eliminate both running boards and the old-fashion "separate-fender" look. The new trapezoidal grill was either painted a contrasting color or could be ordered in chrome. Headlamps with turn signals atop were set into the square-cut front fenders. The body was much wider, with a wraparound windshield, larger door glass and huge rear side windows. There was also a unique third side door, on the rear passenger side, for easier access to the rear seat. Travelalls ordered in two-tone paint got attractive "lightning bolt" side moldings to separate the colors. In sum, Travelall's look was modern, substantial, bright and airy.

Inside the Travelall's spacious cabin were improved shoulder, head and legroom, along with attractive new colors and trims. Mechanical improvements included suspended brake and clutch pedals, along with a glovebox centered in the instrument panel; a 12-volt electrical system was now standard equipment. The standard engine was International's Black Diamond 240, which was a 240-cu.in. overhead valve straight-six that developed 140.8 hp. The more powerful option was a 264-cu.in. straight-six that made 153.5 hp. Despite the added size, the Travelall's weight stayed about the same, at 4,000 pounds, and its wheelbase was actually one-inch shorter, at 114-inches. Three trim levels were available—Utility, Standard and Custom—and as before, Travelalls could be ordered in two- or four-wheel drive versions.

Another facelift occurred when the mildly improved B-series was introduced in February 1959 featuring stacked quad headlamps and a new grille with a metal grid insert. For the first time, a V-8 engine was available, a modern 266-cu.in. V-8 that developed 154.8 hp and 227 lb.ft. of torque. The next update to the Travelall took place for the 1961 model year when a restyled body appeared, giving it a lower bodyline and improved looks. Quad headlamps were now side by side rather than stacked,



When International debuted its K-5 series of light trucks for 1941, styling was considerably different. Gone was the sweptback grille, replaced by an upright, more truck-like appearance.



This 1948 KB-2 series wagon has been embellished with twin windshield wipers, wide whitewall tires and a fancy bumper overrider. The license plate appears to be for Jacksonville, Florida.



The very first production-model International all-steel station wagon was this 1952 L100, which was also the first vehicle to wear the Travelall name. Utilizing the basic body of the IH panel truck, it featured an eight-window greenhouse but only two side doors.



After only one year on the market, the Travelall received an updated chassis and new styling and became the R110 Travelall. Note the handle for the side-opening hood.



Travelall styling was again updated for 1955 with a lower hood line, headlamps now set in the fenders, and optional two-tone paint.



Travelall's first complete redesign came in 1957 as International was celebrating its 50th year as a vehicle manufacturer. The new Travelall was larger, roomier and much more car-like than before. A third side door made its appearance on the passenger side.

and a fourth side door was added, making an already useful vehicle even more capable.

International continued to offer the same basic Travelall through 1968. Grille and trim changes, along with mechanical improvements, kept the Travelall competitive. However, although International was doing well overall in the truck market, sales of its light-duty models were stagnant even as the market was growing by leaps and bounds. For the 1969 model year, the



A modernization to the Travelall's design included lower lines and headlamps now flanking a new grille. At this time a fourth side door, seen here, was finally added.

company decided to completely redesign its light truck line, and that meant a new Travelall as well.

The new Travelall was a honey. Debuting in November 1968, it featured all-new styling and three models: half-ton 1000D, half-ton Custom 1100D and the three-quarters-ton Custom 1200D. The 1000D came only in two-wheel drive, but the Customs could be built with either two- or four-wheel drive.

It was quite handsome, with a few styling details first seen on the very popular Scout. As before, Travelalls were still fairly large vehicles with the capability of carrying up to nine passengers, featured as much as 124 cubic feet of cargo space, or a mix of both. Though stretching 204.7 inches bumper to bumper, they were easy to handle and smooth riding in character. Rolling on a 119-inch wheelbase, the Travelall had the space to get the job done.

Like most truck-type station wagons of that era, base Travelalls were stark, stripped workhorses, but the Custom series boasted good-looking nylon upholstery, with vinyl bolsters, padded door panels, brushed-aluminum instrument panel trim, underhood padding, dual horns and more. Bucket seats and nylon carpeting were also available. The optional air conditioning was now built into the dashboard for a cleaner look.

Three exterior trim versions were offered: Base, with white-painted grille, hubcaps and bumpers; Exterior Trim Package 1, which added an aluminum grille, bright trim around the windshield, vent wings, drip moldings and headlamp and taillamp bezels; and Exterior Trim Package 2, which added woodgrain



Like most truck-type station wagons, Travelall kept its basic body in production for several years, with updates and refinements to keep it looking new. This 1965 model wears an attractive grille, handsome two-tone paint and an optional auxiliary fuel tank, as shown by the extra gas cap in the front fender.



Travelalls were still used a great deal by construction companies as seen with this 1968 all-wheel-drive Travelall. This is a work truck, as noted by the painted front bumper and lack of hubcaps.



From 1969 to 1975 the Travelall's styling changed very little, and mostly involved minor revisions such as grille and trim updates. This 1971 is a good example of how a family would use their Travelall.

side panels outlined in bright trim. Chrome bumpers, full wheel discs and bright hubcaps were all optionally available.

Standard power on half-ton models was a 145-hp American Motors 232-cu.in. straight-six engine—International switched to AMC engines for cost reasons. The 1200D got a standard 266-cu.in., 154-hp IH V-8. Optional engines included IH V-8s of 304-cu.in., 345-cu.in. and 392-cu.in. with up to 235 hp. The standard gearbox was a three-speed manual, and buyers could opt for a heavy-duty three-speed, a four-speed, HD four-speed, two five-speeds (one with direct-drive top gear, one with an overdrive top gear), or a three-speed automatic.

Because of all these changes and engine/transmission options, the new Travelall was well received by the buying public. One owner wrote that his new Travelall "rides like a dream," another said it was "built like a truck, handles like a car." *Popular Mechanics* magazine polled owners and found that



A completely redesigned Travelall debuted in the fall of 1968 as a 1969 model. It featured crisp, square cut lines with slab sides, and a front-end design that had a family resemblance with the Scout. Notice the amount of chrome and brightwork on the new wagon; Travelall was becoming more and more a family car.

92.4 percent loved their Travelalls enough to consider buying another, a greater rate of loyalty than for any other American vehicle.

In the ensuing years, International Harvester introduced the AMC 258-cu.in. straight-six and 401-cu.in. V-8 engines to its line, and continued a steady stream of refinements and improvements. For the 1973 model year anti-skid brakes—what we call anti-lock brakes today—debuted as an option. But this was the last good year for International light trucks. During the year, the Arab oil embargo went into effect and buyers stopped buying big cars and trucks. International light-duty truck sales, which included pickups, Scouts and Travelalls, totaled just 103,353 vehicles; by 1975, International's production dropped to a lowly 44,005 units. Rather than pile up losses, the company decided to get out of the light-truck business, save for the Scout, which would continue on to 1980 before that too got the axe.

It's too bad they don't make Travelalls anymore. They were tough as anvils, soft as a feather bed and built to last. They just don't make them like that anymore. ☺



The final styling changes for the Travelall included a very handsome full-width grille with integrated headlamps, plus new woodgrain side treatment. But the market for big vehicles was drying up due to the gas shortage, and International sales plummeted.

# LeMay – America's Car Museum

*Through its events and educational programs, the museum is helping to preserve the future of the collector car hobby*



BY MIKE BUMBECK • PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF LE MAY – AMERICA'S CAR MUSEUM

The greater Seattle area is famous for strong coffee, Boeing aircraft, the Space Needle, drive-on ferry boats and Harold LeMay. His was the largest privately owned car collection in the world, according to the *Guinness Book of World Records* in 1997. While Harold passed away in 2000, his legacy and collection carries on at LeMay Family Collection Foundation in Marymount and at LeMay – America's Car Museum in nearby Tacoma, now entering its third year as not only a destination for over 400,000 visitors, but also as a driving force behind the preservation and future of the collector car hobby through its event and educational programs.

The entire contents of the museum are based on the extensive car collection assembled by lifelong car enthusiast, Harold LeMay. Born in Yakima, Washington, in 1919, Harold was the founder and owner of the Spanaway Garbage Collection Company, and in his travels picking up garbage, Harold would find old cars and trucks, and usually ended up buying them. He

bought so many, in fact, that at its peak, Harold's collection of cars and trucks was in excess of 3,000 vehicles. Harold died in 2000, shortly after celebrating his 81st birthday.

The LeMay opened its doors to the public in June 2012. Perched on a hill between Seattle and Mount Rainier in Tacoma, Washington, the museum facility itself is astounding, with four stories and 165,000 square feet of exhibition space, which includes galleries, a banquet hall, meeting space, car storage, a café and restaurant, museum store, an on-site maintenance facility and even a massive slot car track. The mission of the museum moves beyond convention. Mention the word "museum" and most people will think of a static, almost stoic place of sedentary introspection. Not so with this museum, according to President and CEO David Madeira.

"We wanted to change what a car museum is. Not only presenting and preserving our collection, and changing exhibits, but let's have a museum that is actually committed to serving



“ We wanted to change what a car museum is. Not only presenting and preserving our collection, and changing exhibits, but let’s have a museum that actually is committed to serving the enthusiast community. ”



the enthusiast community," David tells us. "I often say at events that it's not about us. It really needs to be about *all* of us—about America's experience with the automobile. What we try to do is have lots of events as well as rotating exhibitions, so that anyone who comes in here, from the general public to their enthusiast dad, can find something that they relate to so that they can remember their experiences and their stories."

Those tales and memories of your first car... that long summer road trip... the day that you finally got your license and took the family hand-me-down out on your own... these are all part of our national American narrative, and an integral part of the core of the museum. "Everyone remembers their first car, family driving vacations, a sports car they fell in love with as a teenager," says David. "Personal experiences with cars are at the heart of the American experience and at the soul of the museum. We're featuring more than a century of automotive lifestyle and history, as well as the future of transportation. America's Car Museum has truly become a travel destination, attracting visitors from every U.S. state and from around the world."

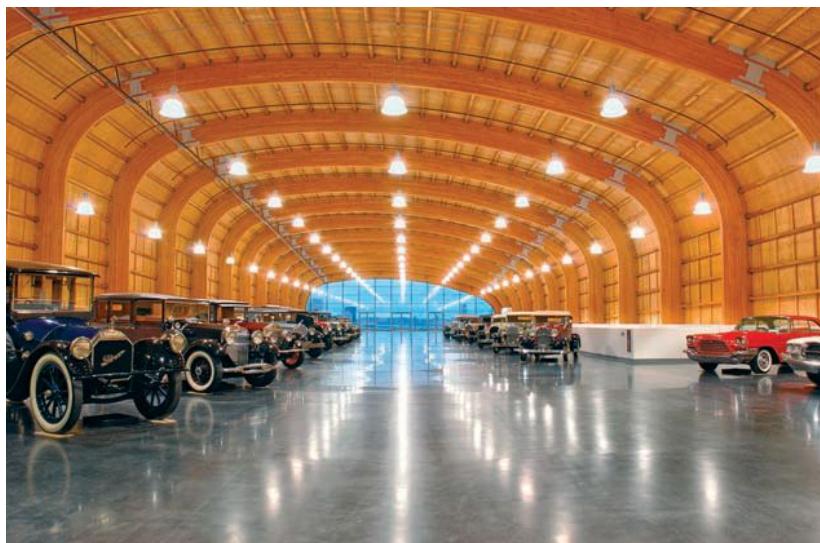
After a banner first year and a smooth shift into a second, the museum is moving

into the future with rotating exhibits like the *Masters of Mustang*, opening in June, and an ongoing series of events—with the Vintage Motorcycle Festival on August 22-24, and the Pacific Northwest Concours d'Elegance slated for September 7th as just a few 2014 highlights. David is excited about moving into the third year and looking forward to the fourth when he explains museums typically stabilize. Events from concours to cruise-ins are an important facet of moving into the future.

"The events are another way to serve the enthusiasts and collectors who were asking to come here and support us. Let's make sure we provide them with opportunities to put their cars on the road and do something with us, where the automobile is not just sitting in a museum, but it's actually out there, and they're enjoying it," David says. "We're going to continue

our drive-in movie series this summer with three events, which usually attract about 300 cars per night, and we'll likely have a music concert within the next few months. In 2015, we'll add a winter event that won't be a big-ticket item or fundraiser, but will simply be affordable fun. It's tentatively called 'Drive Away the Blues,' and will be a beach party... in February!"

Though the museum does have an in-house maintenance facility, it leaves extensive restorations to the professionals, especially those who specialize in particular makes or machines. The true working garage keeps all the cars in the collection in operable condition and serves a place of learning. Along with K-12 programs and the Family Zone that see 30,000 young people visit every year, the museum is committed to making sure that the collective knowledge of our



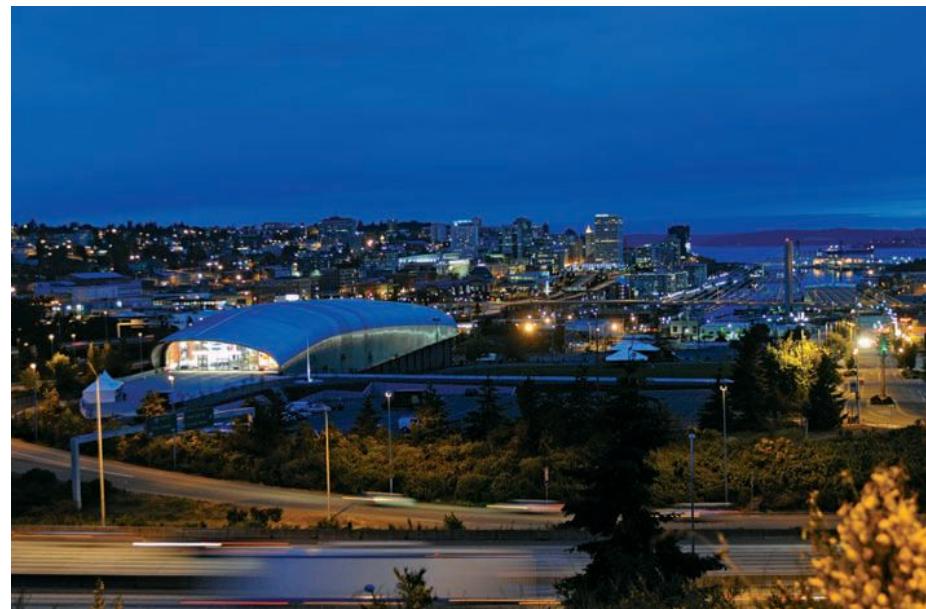
An inside view out through the front of the 165,000-square-foot building shows just part of the constantly rotating collection of classic cars.



The drive-in movie series runs select summer Saturdays on the Haub Family Showfield.



The museum hosts a huge slot car track, which is a favorite of kids and adults alike.



The museum is located adjacent to the Tacoma Dome off Interstate 5 near Commencement Bay on the majestic Puget Sound.



David Madeira behind the wheel at the museum, and Harold and Nancy LeMay on a rally, circa 1995.

automotive heritage is not lost for future generations of enthusiasts.

The museum provides two internships every summer in the shop for students from the McPherson College Automotive Restoration program. "One of the best things we hear from the young people that have been here is that they really get to work on a far wider variety of automobiles here than they can typically. This collection spans a century of mostly American, and some foreign, vehicles. They really get exposure to all eras and makes," says David.

"Moving beyond internships, the museum is proud to be involved with the Hagerty Education Program. The Hagerty Education Program is a great initiative, central to our vision and differentiates us from most car museums that focus on presenting the founder's collection to the public. This program exemplifies how we're taking a broader approach. While honoring our founder, our vision is to promote America's automotive heritage and thereby present stories and experiences to which the larger community, not just enthusiasts, can relate.

"Through the Hagerty Education Program, we are ensuring that the skills necessary to preserve and restore vintage automobiles (and wooden boats) are transmitted to the next generation. The program provides grants to organizations that train young people in these skills and, importantly, gives

scholarships for students to enroll in these programs and prepare for careers in the field. Significantly, we're also providing apprenticeships for young people to train under the tutelage of master craftsmen in order to obtain the hands-on training critical to their future work.

"Public schools are not providing adequate training of this nature, so we've decided to support institutions like McPherson College and the International Yacht Restoration School of Technology and Trades, which are equipping young people with the skills that can be applied to vehicle preservation. Today's professionals in the field need young people to join their shops and continue their work. Frankly, it's this educational mission that sets our museum apart and should compel everyone who cares about vocational training or our automotive heritage to 'join the movement' and support the Museum and the Hagerty Education Program."

With the museum's gala opening already in the past, David knows that active and ongoing participation is the key to the future. Passing historical automotive



Interns from the McPherson College Automotive Restoration program in action in 2013.



This 1911 Simplex, owned by Ray Scherr, took 2011 Best of Show at the Concours.

knowledge from one generation to the next hinges on participation from both, and the museum hopes to be a conduit of American automobile heritage. Harold LeMay envisioned this new museum before his death. His widow, Nancy LeMay, and her son Doug are not only delighted with the new museum, but also serve on the board of directors.

"Let's be active. Let's promote America's automotive heritage, let's preserve the treasures, let's educate the young people so there is a future for the hobby, so that the knowledge isn't lost. And let's make sure that we're doing things that make it an active place that people want to be involved in." ☀

**CONTACT:**  
LeMay - America's Car Museum  
253-779-8490  
[www.lemaymuseum.org](http://www.lemaymuseum.org)



A Flying Merkel motorcycle on the grounds at the 2012 Motorcycle Show.



## CARavanning Cadillac

*Resurrecting a 1947 Series 62 Convertible  
to show-quality standards*

BY THOMAS A. DeMAURO • PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEFF KOCH





Used, rust-free hood and front fenders were bolted on to test proper fitment before the car was disassembled. By ensuring proper panel fit, alignment and gaps first, the possibility of needing costly adjustments after the paint application is reduced.



The rear fenders were also replaced due to rust. Stripping to bare metal revealed these used examples to be very clean. They were pre-fitted to the body to ensure that they were straight. Even the taillamps and bumper were reinstalled to check their fit.



After TIG welding and metal work, coats of Squeeg's epoxy primer filler were applied, as was a skim-coat of Crest filler where needed. Block-sanding began with 40-grade paper on the Crest and progressed to 80-, 150-, 320- and 500-grade over the whole body.



Though originally painted in lacquer, a two-stage urethane system was now used. Following a coat of PPG sealer, six coats of Dark Navy Blue PPG DBC Deltron 2000 Basecoat acrylic urethane were applied. Next came five coats of PPG DCU2021 urethane clear.

When I was 15, our small-town doctor bought a new 1947 Cadillac convertible," Bill Ingler reminisces. "Upon seeing it, I decided I'd own one... someday." A scant 42 years later "someday" arrived when he answered an ad in *Hemmings Motor News*. Nostalgia for its classic lines and luxurious appointments was heavy in the air when he bought this New Jersey-based, one-of-6,755, Series 62 convertible. (If this article entices you to seek more Cadillac knowledge, read the comparison story featuring two other 1947s in this issue.)

Fitted with the optional Hydra-Matic transmission, fog lamps, radio, and backup lamps, the Cadillac was previously restored. Anxious to drive it, Bill did brake and

suspension work on the car and made the pilgrimage from his Columbus, Ohio, home to Gloucester, Massachusetts, to participate in the Classic Car Club of America's 1990 September Morn CARavan. Though it looked great and drove well, "The engine smoked so badly I was asked to follow on the end of the line for the tour," he laments.

Bill had the 346-cu.in. 150-hp flathead V-8 rebuilt shortly thereafter, but was disappointed in the result. Nevertheless, he drove the Cadillac until 1997 and participated in six more CARavans before a crack in the block necessitated rebuilding a replacement engine, which this time was entrusted to Steve Wright in Columbus. Details are vague, but Bill recalls that the pistons, lifters and valves were replaced with products from Terrill Machine in De Leon, Texas.

The engine features an AC fuel pump; a Carter WCD two-barrel carburetor; a cast-iron intake; L-type cylinder heads; a hydraulic lifter cam, 1.88/1.63-inch valves; .015-over pistons; a 7.25:1 compression





The Cadillac's bolt-on body parts were painted, wet-sanded and polished while off of the car to ensure a consistent finish. A progression of 800-1200-2000-2500-grade papers was used as was a four-stage polishing process with 3M Finesse-it products.



Once the drivetrain and all of the bolt-on suspension parts were stripped from the beefy 9/64-inch-thick steel X-member-reinforced perimeter frame, it was sent to the powder coater, along with the front anti-roll bar and myriad other chassis parts.



Though the 346-cu.in. V-8 engine and four-speed Hydra-Matic transmission did not require rebuilds, they were cleaned and repainted Cadillac green. The radiator was recored, refinished and reinstalled along with the drivetrain on the newly detailed chassis.



The exhaust manifolds feature a black porcelain finish, and the exhaust pipe was wrapped with asbestos at the factory to reduce heat transfer to the nearby water pump. A non-asbestos thermal wrap, which is applied wet to form-fit as it dries, was now used.



ratio and a Delco breaker-point ignition. The exhaust manifolds feed into a single head pipe and a Walker muffler subdues the cacophony of internal combustion to a more Cadillac-like dulcet tone.

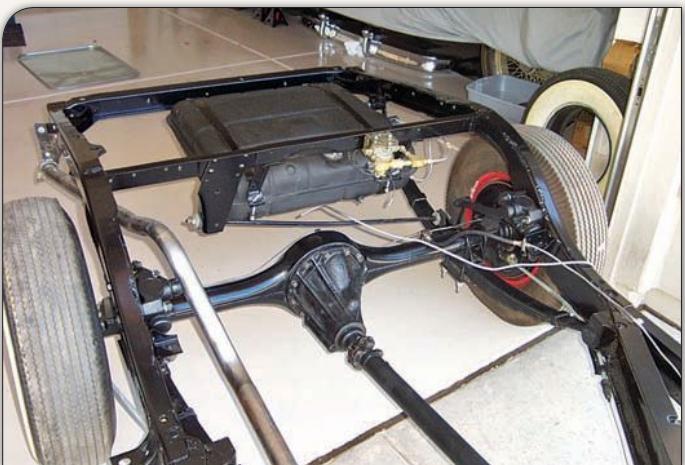
Interestingly, this engine has yet to require an overhaul—a testament to the quality of Steve's late-1990s work. During the restoration, Bill replaced the generator, starter, coil, regulator and wiring for the 6-volt electrical system with new items found at Hershey. The original Hydra-Matic was rebuilt in 1990, and the 3.36:1 ratio rear end received new axle bearings and seals.

With the Cadillac still in excellent mechanical condition, in 2000 Bill decided to have Shaun Price Restorations in Gilbert, Arizona, repaint it. Subsequent media

blasting, however, revealed significant body rust, especially in the floors. It was so prevalent that Shaun commented, "What do I weld and what do I weld it to?" The simple repaint had graduated to a complex body-off restoration.

"To secure much-needed interior and trunk floor pans, I purchased a 1946 Series 62 Cadillac coupe from a nearby salvage yard," Bill remembers. The 1946 and 1947 Series 62 cars are almost identical, so the 1946 was a great parts donor." He also sourced a rust-free hood and front and rear fenders.

Following a test-fitting session, the car was torn down. Since the 1947 car needed the 1946 car's floors, the latter's body was cut until all that remained were the floors, firewall, and windshield cowl, still on the



The Hotchkiss-style rear, cross link and knee-action shocks were powder coated in a "chassis black" sheen. Fuel delivery from the restored 20-gallon fuel tank is aided by an electric fuel pump to ward off vapor lock during the steamy Arizona summers.



The finished rolling chassis was brought back to Shaun's shop, where the freshly-painted body was waiting on a lift for reinstallation. It was then mated to the chassis using new body bushings and hardware employed at the attaching points.



With great care taken to avoid scratching the painted, wet-sanded and polished panels, working from the rear forward, the deck lid, rear fenders, taillamps, backup lamps, fender trim, top trim and rear quarter windows were installed.



Mechanical and electrical work has moved forward. The firewall pad and transmission tunnel insulation have been installed, as has the painted-brown heating unit on the passenger side. The new wiring harnesses and other small parts can also be seen.

1946 frame to maintain structural integrity. Bill says, "After media blasting the 1946 car's floor pan and firewall, the windshield cowl on the 1946 coupe firewall was removed, and the convertible-specific 1947 windshield cowl was welded on. Door posts and parts of quarter panels were transferred and welded to the 1946 floor, using parts from the 1947 and the 1946 donor car."

Once the bodywork and sanding were completed, paintwork began. Though originally French Gray, the Cadillac was painted black when Bill bought it in 1989. For the repaint, he chose Dark Navy Blue two-stage urethane.

While the body was being restored, Bill worked on the chassis. New front coil springs and rear leaf springs were sourced

from Eaton Detroit Spring, and the kingpins and all the bushings were replaced. The Delco knee-action shocks and the Bendix 12-inch four-wheel-drum brake system were rebuilt. The Kelsey-Hayes 15 x 5.5-inch wheels originally had 7.00 x 15 bias-ply tires, but Bill says for a better ride and handling, he prefers the Diamondback radials he installed.

Once the chassis and body were reunited, restored exterior bright trim and missing or damaged pieces replaced with ones bought at Hershey were fitted. The bumpers were restored by Paul's Chrome Plating in Evans City, Pennsylvania.

"A full Bedford Cord interior or half Bedford Cord and half leather upholstery were offered for the 1947 model year," Bill says, but he decided to deviate from stock





The instrument panel had been removed, stripped, primed and then painted in the same beige hue used for the seat upholstery. The gauges were restored and set in the panel along with the chrome heater control radio-speaker grille prior to mounting it.



With the fenders, headlamps, hood, windshield and its trim fitted, the front end takes shape. The grille and bumpers would follow, and then the Cadillac would be sent to the upholstery shop for a handmade leather interior and the convertible-top install.



Before installing the new springs, padding and leather upholstery, the seats were stripped bare and repaired where needed. Hydraulic lines, which are visible on the floor pan, run to the rear of the cabin to actuate the convertible top apparatus.



Interior work progresses in the rear. Note, the door panel and rear side panel are in place, the front seat is finished, and the fabrication of the upholstered sections that surround the convertible top's hydraulically actuated mechanism is in process.



and have an all-leather interior made by Danny Reece Upholstery in Scottsdale, Arizona, in 2006. "Having driven this car with a Bedford Cord interior for several years prior, I know how hard it is to keep it clean, so I chose full leather interior," he explains.

Though hydraulic windows were introduced on the 1946 Cadillac convertible, those on this car are windup. Bill elaborates, "The original hydraulic windows of 1946-'47 tended to jam, the switches would fail, and/or the hydraulic system would leak and stain the door panels. Cadillac dealers went so far as to convert back to windup windows to appease customers." The hydraulic power seat was also converted to manual actuation, and seatbelts were added during the restoration.

Upon completion of the project, Shaun

reflected, "This wasn't a restoration, it was a resurrection." In May of 2007 when Bill was serving as the Director of the Arizona Region of the CCCA and the coordinator of The Spirit of the Southwest CARavan, he drove his 1947 Cadillac Series 62 convertible on the nine-day, 1,000-mile tour through Northern Arizona, thereby completing a circle of progress that began with the New England CARavan in 1990.

This time, however, participants gasped in recognition of the incredible restoration rather than at how much the engine smoked! "It performed wonderfully" Bill says, "except for one bout of vapor lock that occurred when I forgot to turn on the electric fuel pump."

Now 67 years since he first laid eyes on a 1947 Cadillac convertible, Bill, at 81, still drives his. The good doctor's car must have made quite an impression. ☀



Full leather interior became available a few years later, so Bill figures it's close enough time-wise that his 1947 model won't look obviously incorrect with full leather upholstery. Once completed, the appearance is lavish and exudes class.



The tan top looks mostly stock, sans the factory-installed chrome bow trim strips for the front, middle and rear. They didn't come with the car when Bill purchased it, and they are very difficult to reuse or find new, hence the welting to cover the top tacking.



owner's view



**S**tarting a restoration on a 1942-'47 Cadillac convertible without all the parts in hand, especially the chrome trim, is not advisable, as some items are not out there. Even if you are lucky and find the parts, the prices make the restoration very costly.

I mentioned Hershey as a source for a lot of the parts. For 15 years in the 1980s and 1990s, I had a spot at the fall Hershey meet. Walking the rows in those years allowed me to buy NOS Cadillac, as well as good used parts for the car. I gave up my spot at Hershey in 2003 after moving to Scottsdale, and by the time I did, there were few NOS or good used parts left for my 1947, or really any Cadillac from the 1930s or 1940s.

## 1960 De Soto



Adventurer 2-door hardtop

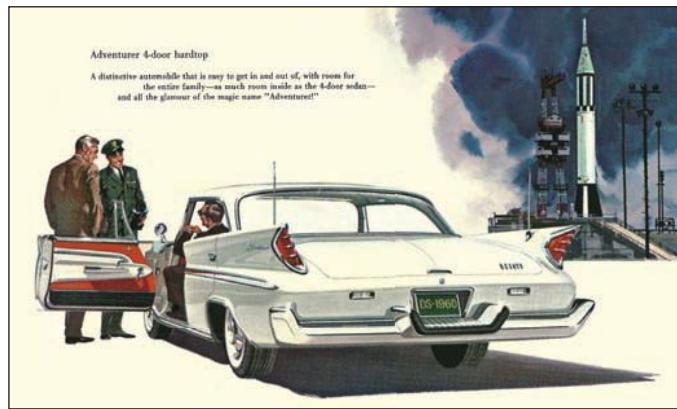
If you're going places, this is the car to get you there! Its styling is rich with the flair of youth . . . the verve of the sportsman. Every line of its design serves a purpose and does it beautifully!

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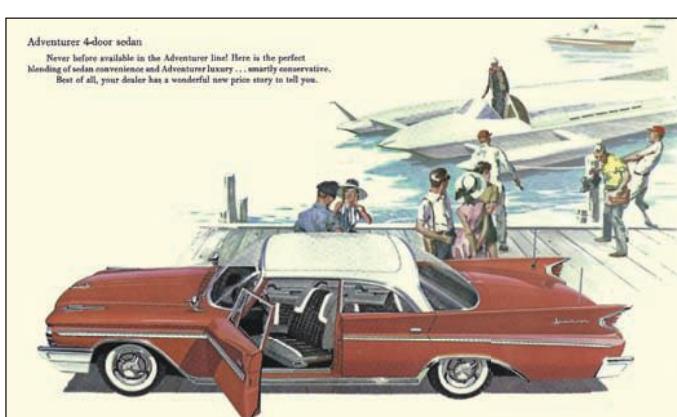
For instance, Fleetwing styling—a daring and distinctive look that stamps you immediately as a person of discernment and good taste. The new Unibody which, in effect, *combines* the frame and body into one single solid piece of steel. Torsion-Aire Ride

has been refined to cushion the car better. Insulation has been thickened and extended. Even at super-highway speeds, you ride in hushed quiet, protected from road shock and noise by the finest combination of body, suspension and insulation ever engineered. There are six new De Soto models for '60 in the three most wanted body styles.



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Fleetline 1949–1954  
Impala 1958–1976  
Nova 1962–1979  
Malibu 1964–1986  
Nomad 1955–1960  
Parkwood 1959–1960  
Styleline 1949–1954  
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Yeoman 1958



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**52**  
YEARS OF  
EXPERIENCE

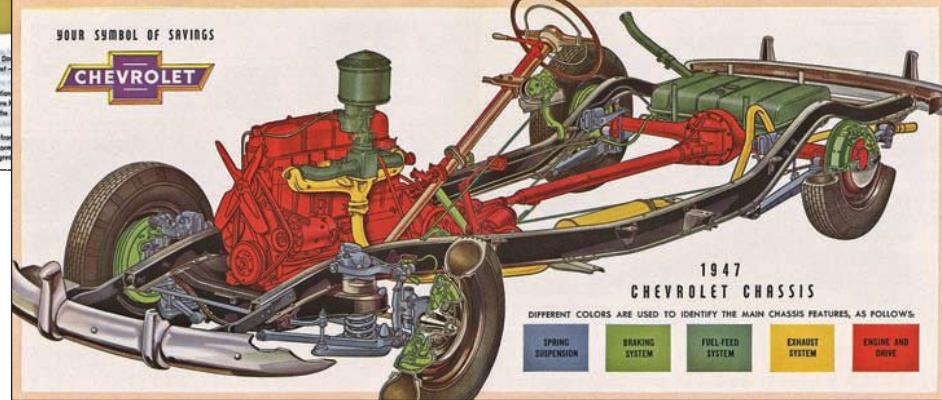
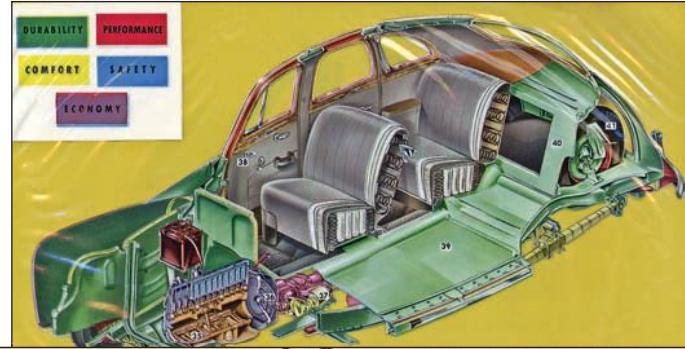


# VINTAGE LITERATURE

BY CHRIS RITTER

ILLUSTRATIONS COURTESY OF THE AACA LIBRARY

## The 1947 Chevrolets



### AMERICAN CITIZENS WERE EAGER

to buy new cars when the United States emerged from World War II. Auto manufacturers were just as eager to sell, but due to the previous war effort, they could offer little more than 1942 models with some minor improvements in trim and styling features. Mechanically, the 1946-'48 Chevrolets were identical to 1942 models, relying on the same 90-hp, 216-cu.in. engine and 116-inch wheelbase chassis that served the automaker before the war.

Fast forward to today and note that if you are doing an authentic restoration on a 1947 Chevrolet, you won't want to use period sales literature as your source for learning about original colors on chassis components. Why? Well that's because Chevrolet used a color-coding system in its literature for suspension, engine, braking, fuel and exhaust systems.

The color-coding graphically illustrates the components of each system. Users, then, just needed to read some highlights and specifications, and they would be fully informed about how each system functioned and the value, comfort and convenience it provided the driver and passengers. The literature essentially resold 1942 models, but it found a unique way to make old features come to life and seem exciting to a population ready to buy new cars.

For example, a 9 1/8 x 8 1/4-inch sales folder points out that "the quiet, easy-shifting Synchro-mesh transmission has helical gears in all speeds," and "rear springs are

enclosed in metal covers, which retain the lubricant and keep out dust and grit." It goes on to tell buyers to "note the simplicity and sturdiness of Chevrolet's unitized Knee-Action." These weren't new features, but they sure sounded appealing to eager consumers! Meanwhile, the color-coding makes it quite obvious which system each part belongs to.

The most unique piece of 1947 Chevrolet sales literature comes in the form of a 9 x 12-inch spiral-bound catalog that has illustrations on clear plastic pages. When readers first open the cover, they see the '47 Chevy exterior. As the pages are turned, layers of the car are revealed, and that catalog's color-coded system takes over. For example, as the exterior door skins are removed we see the inside of the body. It is colored green (fitting into the "Durability" color code), and a corresponding caption emphasizes the use of heavy-gauge inner and outer steel panels and how they protect the inside upholstery from the elements. Another page exposes the Chevrolet's torque tube drive and hypoid axle design. These features fall under the "Performance" cat-

egory. In total, there are 54 features and components highlighted in the catalog.

Interestingly, the color-coded categories are not the same between the two pieces of literature. While the traditional catalog focuses on specific categories like braking, fuel and exhaust systems, the spiral-bound catalog categories are more qualitative and discuss durability, comfort, safety, economy and performance. Perhaps the spiral-bound catalog was used more heavily by salesmen in the showroom where visitors are more likely to be emotional and impulsive; whereas at home (where the traditional catalog was probably more common), prospective buyers were comparing hard facts between various manufacturers.

It is possible that automakers could have produced no sales literature in the first few years after World War II and still sold plenty of cars. Nevertheless, since they couldn't offer a restyled car in 1947, marketers found a unique way to make old features appealing again. Chevrolet production hit 695,986 in 1947, and by 1949, it would exceed one-million units for only the second time in company history and the first time since 1927. ☀

The logo for Bob's Speedometer Service, Inc. features the company name in large, bold, serif capital letters at the top. Below it, "Speedometers, Clocks, Tachometers" is listed. A central section contains the services offered: "All gauge instrumentation repaired & restored". At the bottom, "Cables, Gas Sending Units" is listed. To the right of the central text is a black starburst graphic containing the words "GM Cluster Rebuild". The address, phone numbers, fax number, website, and email address are listed below the central text.

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# X-Body Omega

## WAIT A MINUTE. DIDN'T WE ALREADY

try to sell you an Omega? Yes, a Novoldsmobile Omega. Soon after, I discovered the Nova-based Oldsmobile Omega has many fans. Recently, I spotted a very nice 1973 Omega with just 46,000 miles on it for sale on the side of the road. Ironically, that is where most people think you would find this month's Detroit Underdog. They would be wrong.

In 1981, a good friend of mine was looking to trade in her 1973 Ford Maverick, which was her first new car. She considered the Chevrolet Citation, but for just a few hundred dollars more, she found a medium blue, two-door Oldsmobile Omega. Her father convinced her to go with the "Merry Little Olds," reasoning, "Why buy a Chevy, when you can drive an Oldsmobile?"

As a nice Jewish boy from the South, I can tell you that Oldsmobiles were always very popular with members of my synagogue. When Oldsmobile was discontinued, I wondered what many of my fellow tribe members would end up driving.

She drove that 1981 Omega for eight years with no issues. It was a nice car with a comfortable interior, a smooth ride, and though styled with lots of rectangular edges, very attractive. When it came time to buy another car, she sold the Omega to a maintenance man in her apartment complex, and he enjoyed driving that car for several more years. Well into the 1990s, I remember seeing him behind its wheel.

That particular Omega may have provided dependable transportation for two different owners, but if you believe what you read or hear, few if any of the others of its kind actually did. This is why I don't believe everything I hear.

Oldsmobile ended the 1970s with the last of the rear-wheel drive compact Omegas. In 1980, the Novoldsbuitacs were replaced with the front-wheel drive, X-platform, Buick Skylark, Chevrolet Citation, Oldsmobile Omega and Pontiac Phoenix. Some considered the Phoenix and Skylark the most attractive of the quadruplets, but I still prefer the Omega.

The Omega was introduced with two body styles, two- and four-door notchback sedans, both featuring Oldsmobile's split grille with the inset headlamps.



PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF OLDSMOBILE

Although the body had a bit more front-end overhang than most front-wheel drive cars of the day, the long-hood-short deck proportions worked very well.

The standard and Brougham were offered throughout its production run. An SX coupe option became the ES in 1982. And, there was the SportOmega with plastic fenders and stripes in red and orange, white and gray two-tone paint and a downward-angled grille that was also attached to the SX and later the ES.

Initially, the Omega came with two engine choices, the tried and true, 2.5 liter "Iron Duke" four-cylinder powerplant from Pontiac or the new GM 2.8-liter LE2 V-6 that was designed and built specifically for the X-cars. In 1982, the Chevrolet high-output 2.8-liter V-6, generating 130 horsepower, was made available on the ES models.

The brochure proclaimed:

"When all the designing, testing and innovating was over, Oldsmobile had just upgraded the small car idea! Result: the kind of room, seating comfort and luxury you might expect in a bigger car – in a car that's trim outside."

"We took important steps ... to help make [it] seem like a little limousine."

"You've gotta drive it. You're gonna love it. Take a test drive soon."

From the moment they left the factory, the X-cars displayed several flaws requiring a number of recalls, especially braking problems caused by a last-minute change from a center-mounted handbrake to a foot-operated brake pedal to allow for front bench seats. Most everything was fixed after the first year,

but once you gain a reputation for poor quality, it is very difficult to shake it off.

The Omega was the only X-car to find more buyers in 1981 than in 1980 (147,918 versus 134,323, respectively), but in 1982, the numbers would start to fall until little more than 50,000 were sold in 1984, the final model year. Funny, 50,000 of any model today would be considered a success.

In 1985, the Oldsmobile Calais replaced the Omega.

While on a recent car club road trip, I mentioned that I was going to focus on the Olds Omega in a future column, and Jeff Masoner of Arlington, Virginia, told me he recently purchased a 1981 Omega Brougham. The group had stopped for breakfast at Horne's in Port Royal, Virginia, and he wanted me to keep it quiet, but I have a voice that carries; so much for secrets.

His Omega is equipped with the V-6, automatic, power steering, brakes, windows and door locks, AM/FM radio, air conditioning, tilt wheel, cruise control, vinyl top, dual sport rearview mirrors, and wire wheel covers.

Jeff likes compact sedans that were the everyday drivers when they were new but are rarely seen at car shows today. "These cars bring back more memories for me; these are the cars so many families had," he says.

"It's really quite comfortable, and I do think of it as my little limo!" Jeff emphasizes. He is enjoying the unique blend of luxury and economy.

Why buy a Chevy when you can drive an Oldsmobile? ☺



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BY JIM DONNELLY

IMAGES FROM THE COLLECTION OF PAT O'NEILL,  
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## Emory Sweeney



**ALL OF US, IT WOULD SEEM,** took driver's ed in high school, with the gym teacher or assistant football coach functioning as the instructor, foot poised anxiously over the second brake pedal. Some of us went to voc-tech schools to study welding or auto mechanics, or to one of the private technical schools for more advanced training. We take all of this for granted as part of our country's educational foundation today.

And yet, try to imagine where we were nearly 90 years ago, when cars were very much in vogue, but practical knowledge about what to do with them was decidedly absent. It was a gaping void, so big that few individuals noticed that it even existed. One man who did was named Emory Sweeney, and almost on a whim, he forged himself into the father of automotive technical education in the United States.

He was born in 1883 in Chicago, the grandchild of emigrants from the Ould Sod. His parents had been raised in Canada, where his father would come to breed and raise cattle. To be closer to the action, Sweeney's parents moved to Chicago and its monstrous stockyards. They relocated again, following Sweeney's birth, to Kansas City, then as now a booming railhead for beef on the hoof rolling in from the prairies of the West. The family lived in the city's predominately Irish area in its northeast quadrant.

In the vernacular of that society, many of the residents were what were

then called lace-curtain Irish. People owned carefully turned-out carriages drawn by horses, but cars were steadily making inroads. In turn, that meant it was a common sight when a draft horse came clopping down a bricked street, its harnesses lashed to a dead car. The owner invariably had that deer-in-the-headlamps look, revealing he had had no idea how to get it going again.

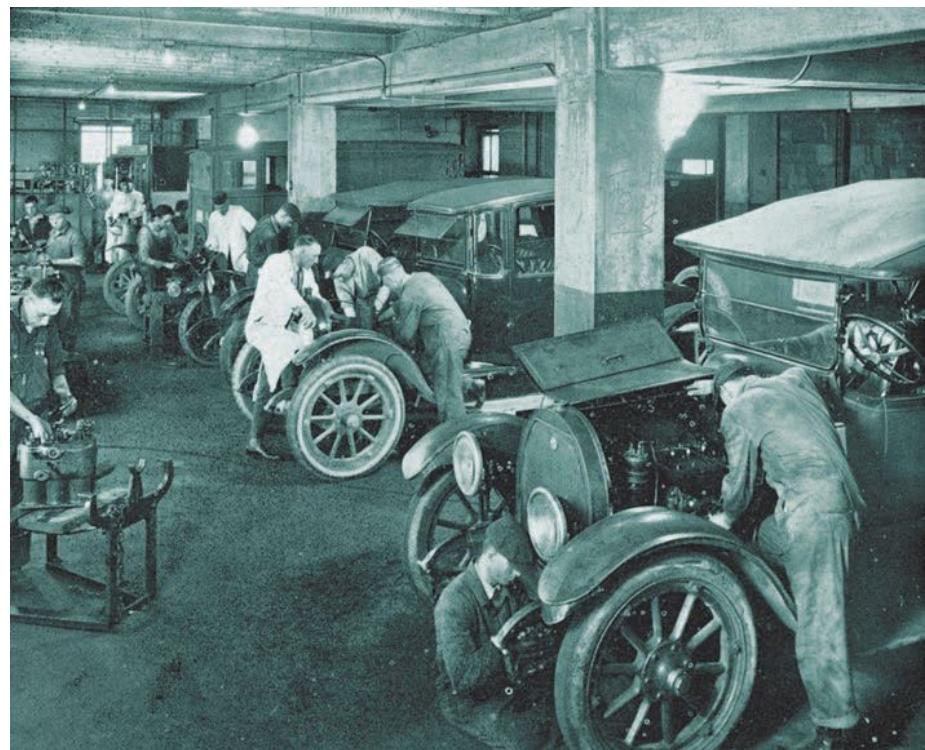
By this time, Sweeney had dropped out of high school and already had an entrepreneurial failure as a cattle broker under his belt. No matter. He apprenticed himself to a downtown Kansas City garage in 1908 and after a year, pooled \$1.65 with a buddy, enough to buy a classified ad in the back pages of the *Kansas City Star*: "WANTED. Young men, mechanically inclined, to learn the automobile business."

Once they rented classroom space, Sweeney and his pal realized they had no cash left to pay for classroom equipment or tools. But the power of newspapers netted five would-be students, all of whom forked over the \$25 tuition. With some cash flow, Sweeney was able to fur-

nish the school, however marginally. But the idea was unquestionably a winner. By 1917, the new Sweeney Automobile School had more than 1,200 students enrolled. When World I War ended, Sweeney expanded the curriculum to include aviation mechanics. Enrollment more than doubled. Sweeney then had a 10-story building erected to house the school. It contained a dormitory, cafeteria and even a post office.

Sweeney's foray into technical education made him a millionaire in the Roaring Twenties. But the global flu epidemic decimated his enrollment, and as the Wall Street crash loomed, Sweeney was forced to sell the school, a radio station and even his family home. He recovered to operate smaller mechanics schools around Kansas City. At his death in 1953, Sweeney was said to have trained more than 85,000 new mechanics. ☈

**[EDITOR'S NOTE:** We are grateful to Kansas City historian Pat O'Neill, who is working on a book about Sweeney's vast exploits, for contributing the images and background information for this story.]





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# Five-Gallon Oil Cans

## BEFORE THE LARGE 55-GALLON DRUM

came into popular use, car dealers, garage owners and auto parts stores had engine oil and other petroleum products delivered to them in 5-gallon cans. Although many 5-gallon cans actually contained 5.2 gallons of oil, the compact metal cans were far more convenient to store, and way easier for the mechanics to lift.

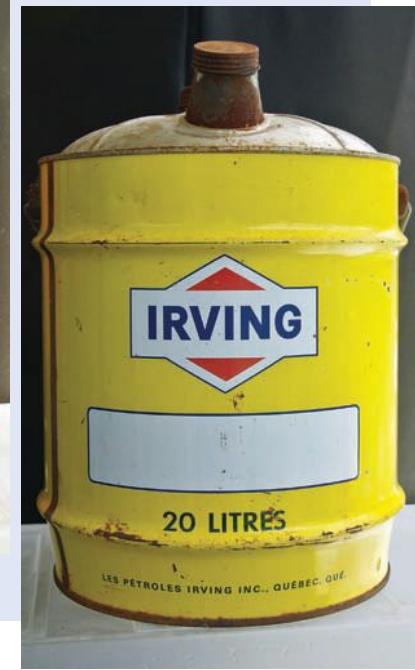
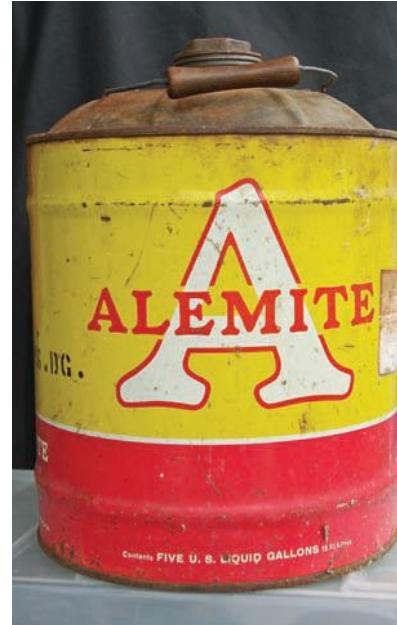
The early versions had spouts that were integrated into the can's top, which made pouring the oil much easier. The length of the spouts varied from 2 inches to nearly 5 inches. Later versions—like everything else in life that is changed to reduce production costs—didn't have spouts; instead they were made with just a simple twist-on metal cap. Early versions also had a small wire metal handle whose hinge was brazed to the top of the can, while later model cans featured a much larger wire handle that was fitted to the can's outer edges and included a small rounded wooden grip that made carrying them much less strenuous.

Most of these 5-gallon cans were manufactured by just two companies, either the American Can Company or the National Can Company. All were made of sheetmetal and were painted in enamel with the oil company's trademark logo and colors lithographed on its side.

Today, like practically every other type of petroliana, these 5-gallon cans are highly collectible. Back when they were new, they were just oil cans, thus they were subjected to daily use and abuse. Rarely did they escape the indignity of being covered in oil and grime, then being scraped and dented as they were carelessly stashed away alongside other cans. That's why it's so hard to find them in truly outstanding condition, and if you do, these are the cans that are prized by serious petroliana collectors.

Besides condition, the cans that are worth the most are those featuring the names of small regional oil companies that are relatively unknown or those that are long out of business, as their rarity makes them quite desirable among collectors and enthusiasts.

Prices for these 5-gallon oil cans are all over the map, with some cans selling for as little as \$10-15. However, when prices are this low, the cans are usually not in ideal condition and show considerable amounts of rust and scratched paint. Cans that are in excellent original condition have been seen for sale for \$100 or more, with the more rare oil brands easily exceeding \$200. I found three such cans about four years ago in a Vermont antique store and quickly snapped them up for just \$60 total, which shows that you can find them anywhere, and not just at collector car swap meets. ☜



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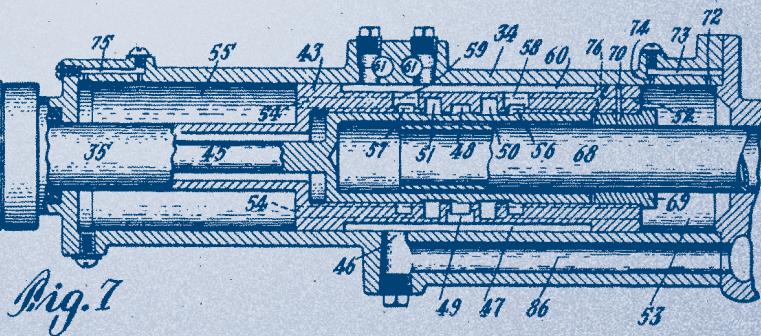
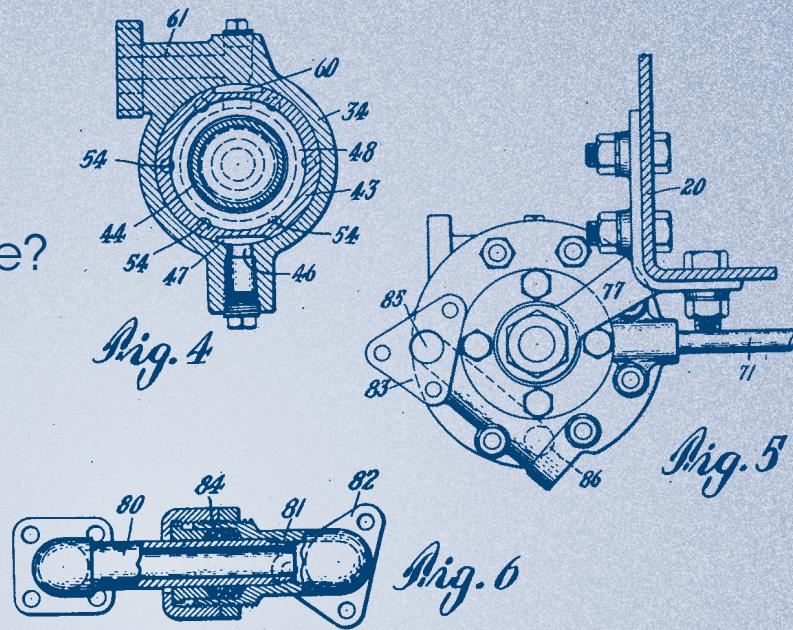
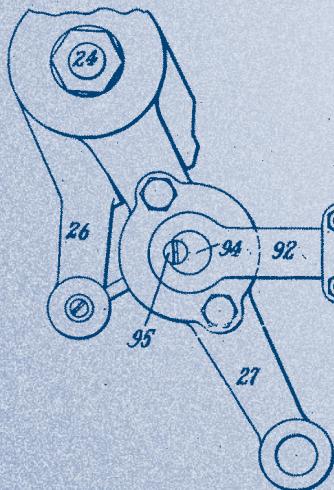
# Power Steering

May I be of assistance?

*Inventor:*

*Francis W. Davis.*

*Hugh & Brown Lining May  
Atty's.*



## JOB: Power-Assisted Steering

ILLUSTRATION COURTESY OF THE U.S. PATENT OFFICE

BY RAY T. BOHACZ

**IF THERE IS ONE THING THAT STAYS** constant in the automobile industry, it's change. The dynamics of this business demand that an evolutionary process occurs. The impetus for that evolution may be to make the product better or simply to make it different to attract new customers. Making the automobile easier to drive quickly became a main focus of automakers around the world and especially those rooted in America.

Highly effective, easier-to-operate manual steering systems emerged in America, and this technology naturally

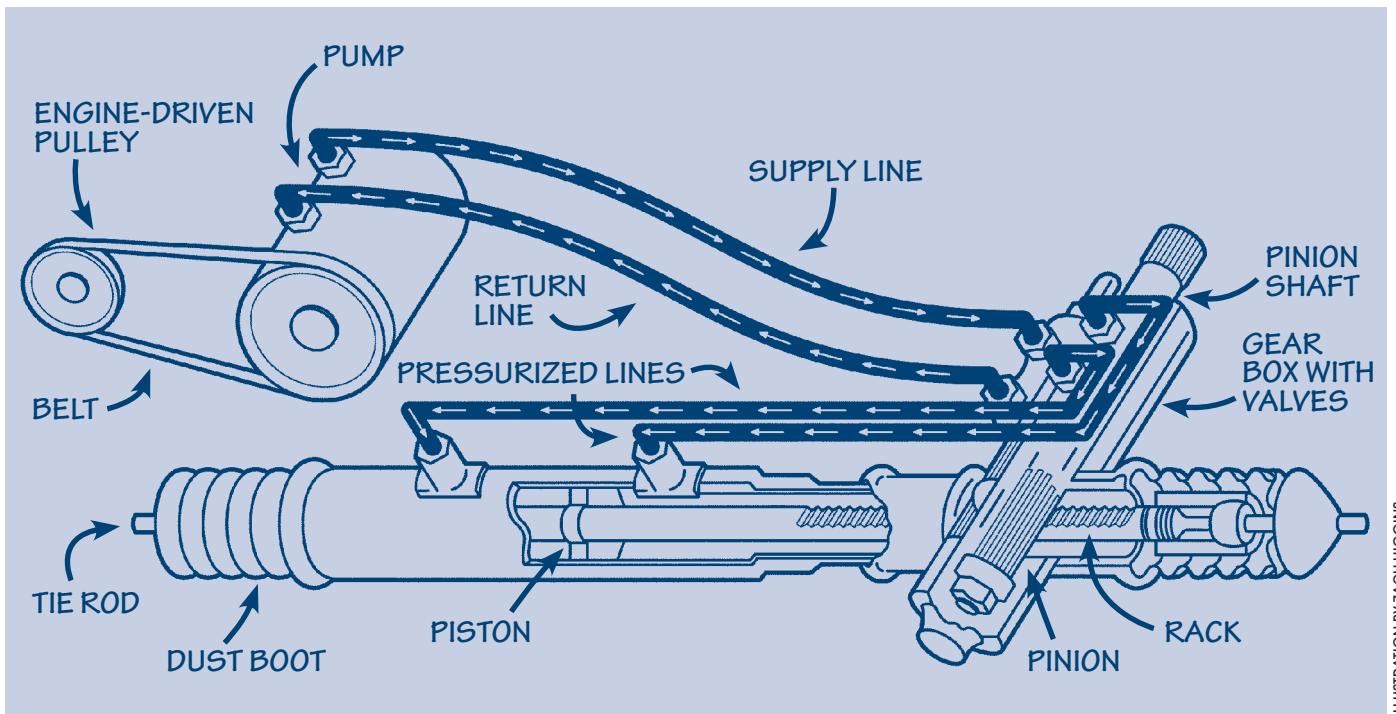
developed into an assisted system. In 1926, the Pierce-Arrow automobile was the first to be fitted with a power-assisted steering system. This system was designed by Francis Davis, whom many consider to be the father of power steering. Pierce-Arrow's hope had been that this new system would make its prestigious cars easier to drive. However, numerous problems afflicted this first effort, and it would be another 25 years before an acceptable assisted steering system was introduced. By that time the Pierce-Arrow company was no longer in business, and the manufac-

turer of what would now be considered modern power-assisted steering (PAS) was Chrysler.

The American marketplace embraced this technology—which made turning the steering wheels of large and heavy American automobiles easier—with such zeal that by 1952, PAS was found on no fewer than five American models.

### AN UNLIKELY BEGINNING

Pierce-Arrow was the first auto manufacturer to employ PAS on vehicles in the private realm, but the need for assisted



Eventually, a rack-and-pinion unit replaced the steering box for more precise action since it eliminated all of the intermediate components. The theory of hydraulic assist remained basically the same, though.

steering had been realized in other contexts before that. Heavy-duty trucks, buses and military and off-road vehicles were the real catalysts for the development of this technology. Early systems took many forms based on a variety of theories and approaches. The 1930s would see vehicles other than cars utilizing, variously, vacuum, compressed air and pressurized fluid as the method of assistance. During WWII, the hydraulic PAS received widespread use in the American military on Chevrolet-made armored cars, and it was this design that would be later adapted for passenger car use. The first British use of PAS employed a system designed by Lockheed, the American aircraft company, and it was installed on a Daimler double-decker bus in 1948.

As with any new technology, variations in concept often become blurred when similar but different systems are called by the same name. To the historian and engineer alike, there are two main design families of reduced-effort steering. To many, the term "power-assisted steering" identifies a manual-steering box with a hydraulic cylinder attached to the linkage, usually from the Pitman arm to the center-link or similar device. In this application, hydraulic pressure from an engine-driven pump does not directly interface with the manual steering box, but merely assists in the left-to-right turning of the wheels of the automobile. It is simply a conventional manual-steering box as-

sisted by hydraulic force at a geometric point.

In contrast with power-assisted steering, the design of "power-steering" systems relieves more of the effort required in turning the wheels by having the hydraulic fluid interface and work with the internal components of the steering box.

Within the engineering community, these categories would be divided even further, according to the following descriptions:

#### INTEGRAL GEAR

An integral gear system is one that has the power cylinder, servo and control valve all in the steering box. The entire system is self-contained. It's close to the same design found on Chevrolet-built military vehicles in the 1940s, and since 1965 it has been the industry standard. Back in the early days of marketing, this technology was often referred to as "full" or "complete" power steering. It is what we know today as power steering, regardless of whether a steering box or a steering rack and pinion is employed.

#### SEMI-INTEGRAL GEAR

In this system, the components are split into two locations. The power cylinder and servo piston are connected directly to the steering linkage, while the control valve is located in the steering box. When it was first implemented, this type of power steering offered a good compromise

between control and the isolation of the steering system from transmitted forces. In contrast to one that provides only power assistance, this is still considered a "complete" system. In 1957 Rolls-Royce used this design for its first power-steering system.

#### LINKAGE UNIT

Power cylinder, servo piston and control valve are all located in the steering linkage in this design. First introduced in America during the early 1930s for low-volume production heavy-duty vehicles, this design's main benefit was that it was easy to package in a myriad of chassis and vehicle types. It could almost be considered an "add-on" and not an integral part of the vehicle design. A Bendix-supplied linkage unit was used by Ford in 1954, while in Europe a Girling system of almost the exact same design was employed on the Armstrong-Siddeley Sapphire in 1956.

When compared to the modern integral-gear system, the linkage-type unit has the disadvantage of being less sensitive and requiring very long hydraulic lines running from the pump to the assist cylinder.

Some European heavy-duty trucks are still manufactured outfitted with a modernized version of a linkage unit, which is made under license in England from the Ross Tool and Gear Company of America. After around the middle of the 1960s, few

passenger automobiles have been made that employ this style of power steering.

## A BLESSING AND A CURSE

It's interesting to note that in its early days, PAS had probably just as many detractors as it had fans. The ease of turning the steering wheel, especially when the vehicle was parked or moving slowly, was a welcome change for those who struggled with overcoming friction and the laws of physics so keenly felt when using manual-steering systems. PAS also provided the car with a more luxurious feel, insulating the driver from a good deal of road irregularities and ruts that were common on the mainly unpaved byways of America once outside the metropolitan areas.

But drivers who considered themselves purists complained—as they had with the advent of the automatic transmission—that PAS isolated and removed them from the feel of controlling the car, numbing their interaction with the road surface. These criticisms focused attention on “road feel” or “feedback” from the road, factors that are still of concern in the industry today. During the 1960s, road tests of PAS-equipped cars were often full of complaints about their steering feel. Descriptive terms such as “numb,” “separated,” “removed,” “isolated” and the like, all made enthusiasts want to shun PAS-equipped vehicles before they ever drove one.

During the 1960s and up until recently, General Motors products were particularly maligned for having “over-assisted” steering, while Ford, Chrysler and AMC seemed to put less assistance in their mainstream PAS systems, saving the minimal-effort feel for their more luxurious models.

Thus, a new engineering discipline in Detroit was the calibration, or “tuning,” of PAS systems. Through the manipulation of steering box gear ratios, hydraulic flow rates, hydraulic pump pressures and valves, PAS systems could be made to take on different personalities. This meant that, for example, a PAS in a Pontiac Le Mans could be easily made to offer more assistance and isolation from the road, while the same basic vehicle marketed as a GTO could be more connected to the road and less assisted.

The understanding of how the feel of PAS systems could be adjusted eventually spawned the speed-sensitive power-steering systems that became commonplace in the 1980s. This design allowed for less assist and more feedback as the road speed of a vehicle increased. So, a vehicle that was parking or driving at low

speeds would have its steering benefit from greater assistance, while a vehicle driving at higher speeds would feel as if its steering were closer to a manual steering box or rack and pinion system.

## CORE COMPONENTS

For a steering system to offer assistance to the driver, a hydraulic pump is required. In most, if not every application, and especially in those from the 1950s forward, the pump is engine-crankshaft driven and mounted to the engine block. A rubber belt drives the pump via the crankshaft pulley. Common to hydraulic circuit functions, there are rotor and vane-type pumps, and each automotive manufacturer had reasons for favoring its chosen design. The pump has a hydraulic reservoir that can be integral or mounted remotely. If it is a remote fitment, then a line allows the hydraulic fluid to be sent to the pump. It was not uncommon for a hydraulic pump to create a pressure of more than 600 PSI in order to provide a proper amount of assist to the driver.

The pump has two lines going to it—a high-pressure line that carries the fluid used in providing the assistance or work, and a return line that runs back to the pump. The return line is often nothing more than a rubber hose that is impervious to oil, clamped to the outlet of the steering box and onto the pump. Both ends of the return line connect to the system through metal tubes that are flared to help secure the hose in place. In contrast, the high-pressure line is a typical hydraulic hose similar to that found on any hydraulic system, such as those used on farm tractors or backhoes. They are factory-made with a high-pressure crimp and usually employ an O-ring fitting on at least one, if not both, ends.

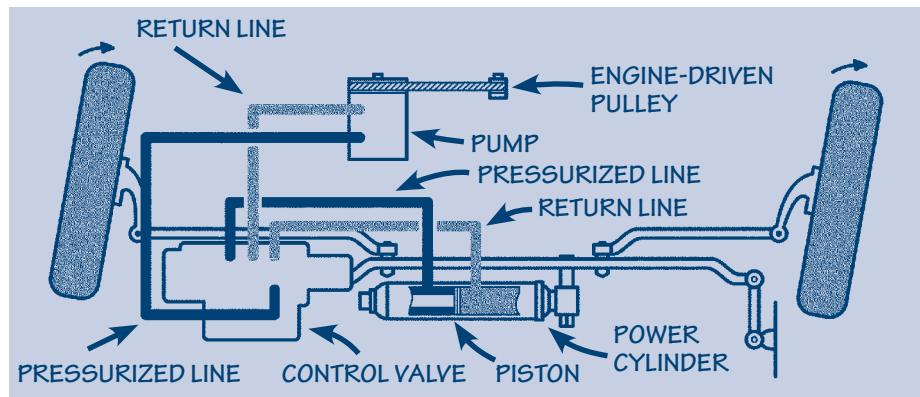
As was common with the development of automatic transmissions, each car company had its own specific fluid chemistry for its power steering system. In

some cases, the PAS utilized automatic transmission fluid, but in most instances it did not, even though many mechanics and car owners refused to believe this. Many an early power-steering system became problematic due to the introduction of the wrong fluid.

The other components of the PAS system are the control valve and the servo or “power cylinder.” A convincing argument could be made that both the pump and the power cylinder are simply the workers of the system, while it’s the control valve that provides the personality.

The control valve performs three duties. When there is no demand for assistance, as when the vehicle is going straight, it remains in the neutral position—allowing all the fluid sent by the pump to be freely recirculated back to the reservoir. Once the steering wheel is turned, the control valve directs fluid to the appropriate circuit, providing assistance in the turning of the wheels either left or the right. The control valve must also allow the fluid that is being displaced by the direction of travel to be sent back to the reservoir. The last function of the control valve is to create a level of assistance proportional to the increase in steering effort encountered by the driver. It needs to be a dutiful soldier—remaining neutral when going straight and then correctly measuring out the amount and direction of the assist when the wheels are being turned.

The PAS system, with its humble beginnings in 1926, has made driving automobiles and trucks of every type and size much more enjoyable. It also created the opportunity for those with less arm strength to be able to operate anything from a car to a huge construction machine. The purists may still malign the PAS system, but just let that belt fall off the pump for a day and we will see how they change their tune! ☺



The linkage-unit PAS design employed a conventional steering linkage in place of the rack and pinion and an external power cylinder.

ILLUSTRATION BY ZACH HIGGINS

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## Greg Smith

### Body Assembler at Fisher Plant #2

Chevrolet Motor Division

#### IT WAS THE BEGINNING OF THE

summer of 1969. I had just finished my second year of college at Michigan State University in East Lansing, Michigan, and I was poorer than poor. My good friend was working at Fisher Plant #2 in Flint, and he had a fairly cushy job working in what was called the upholstery shop, basically putting together interiors of cars. I was thinking that I would end up there too as his mom was in the personnel office, and I was sure that she would put us together.

After a very basic orientation, I was assigned to the body shop; basically where all the steel body panels are put together, sealed and welded. What a shock that was. I was able to work first shift, from about 6:15 a.m. until 2:45 p.m. in the afternoon.

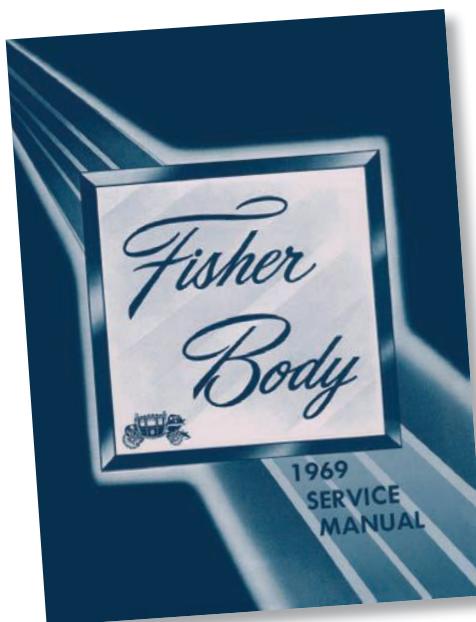
I reported the next morning at 6:00 a.m. and was put on a job called "the gates," where the assembled sides of the body come together with the body pan, and several pieces are put into place and held in position with big steel bars until the body can be welded together further down the line.

My job was to put on the header piece that went across the top of the windshield area. My partner and I each put one of the big steel bars across the body to hold everything in place, then we took turns jumping up into the trunk and putting in the piece that had the trunk hinges already installed; this was the panel between the back window and the trunk opening. It seemed like a lot of work, and that first day the outside temperature was in the low 90s, which meant it was well over 100 degrees inside the factory. I think I lost 15 pounds just by sweating it off. It was brutal!

By the second or third day, I had the job down pretty well, and my partner and I seemed to be working quite well together. We could get our job done on each vehicle (they were coming down the assembly line at the rate of about 60 cars per hour). Every two minutes, one of us would have to put that cross piece in the trunk, jump down onto the body carrier, jump over to the front of the next body and install the piece over the top of the windshield. We then put in the steel

bars that held everything together. From so much stepping up and down from the cars, the roughness of the floors and the fact that they were oil soaked, I would go through a pair of work boots every five to six weeks. We wore cotton gloves that did pretty well protecting our hands, but because we handled so much metal, we would go through two pairs of gloves each shift. By the end of the morning shift and again in the afternoon when it was time to go home, our gloves would be starting to develop holes in them, and we would just throw them out.

In the morning, I usually got to work



two or three minutes before the line started, but on one particular morning everyone was standing around shooting the breeze. Nobody was really ready for everything to start up. I was informed that we were "on strike." To this day I'm not really sure what the problems were. My union representative came by to inform me of my shift on the picket line. I told him that I really wasn't interested in doing that and instead went up into northern Michigan for a few days with my family and enjoyed a short summer vacation away from the shop and the city. We were back and "settled" with the company about five work days later. Nothing

seemed to change; I presume that there had been some work problems someplace in the factory, but I really never knew. It was nice to get a short break but also nice to get back as I wanted to make as much money as I could in a short time to prevent having to come back.

I was planning on just doing this factory job for three months, until fall semester started around the middle of September. At \$3.60 per hour, the money was so good that I just couldn't give up the job right away. All of my fellow workers, most of them had been working there since high school and were in their 40s and 50s, told me to get out of there and go back to school. I had every intention of doing that, but I just needed a few more months of the "big money" so I could comfortably go to school and feel that I could work part-time in some other job and not have to work full-time and go to school full-time.

Once in awhile, I would even work double shifts to maximize the amount that I was earning. That was a pretty long day, as I wouldn't get out until about 11:30 in the evening and then have to be back at 6:15 the next morning. Many times I would work a double on Friday so I wouldn't have to worry about working the next morning. It was a really different life and one that I couldn't have done for very long. It was physically very hard, and working the gates was a job for young legs. I ended up working there for nine months, and by the time I left, I was ready to go back to school and be much more serious about classes and grades.

I have always remembered my time there and how I never really wanted to go back. It was a great life lesson, and it sure got me focused on doing well and not having to work on an assembly line in any kind of factory. ☺



**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](mailto: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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## THE CORK CURE?

**Q:** The Holley one-barrel carburetor on my six-cylinder Edsel tends to leak where the glass bowl meets the gasket (on the bottom of the bowl). This engine also used a Carter carburetor, which a mechanic said is superior. Should I switch to a Carter?

Abbot Fay  
Wareham, Massachusetts

**A:** This is a common problem with Holley 1904 carburetors, and it's typically blamed on people overtightening or unevenly tightening the screws that hold the glass bowl to the body, warping the mating surfaces. Before ditching the carburetor, you might try picking up a roll of cork gasket material from an auto parts store and making your own bowl gasket. Sometimes cork gaskets squish and swell enough to stop fuel leaks—far more so than fiber or paper gaskets. An Internet search also turned up a YouTube video that shows a gentleman reportedly correcting a warped 1904 body by completely disassembling the carburetor, putting it in a vise with the bowl mating surface pressed against a flat piece of metal and then carefully heating the area around the mount. To check it out search: "Holley 1904 1 Barrel Leaky Float Bowl" on YouTube. I cannot vouch for this method, but it's certainly interesting. The Carter AS carburetor is designed differently, so it won't be as apt to leak, but I couldn't say whether or not it would swap directly and use your existing fuel line, throttle linkage, etc.

## SLOW GO WOES

**Q:** My 1968 Ford Galaxie has a small-block V-8 with an automatic transmission, power steering and power-assist front disc brakes. Recently, the brakes began a slow release when applied at speed. I changed the master cylinder, but it still does it. The car doesn't pull to either side when this happens, and the brakes release completely within one or two seconds after taking your foot off the pedal. What can I do to correct this?

Bob Snow  
Palm Beach Gardens, Florida

**A:** First, check to make sure that the pedal and linkage are moving freely and not binding somehow. If these check out

okay, more than likely you have a brake hose or line that is restricting the flow of fluid back out of the calipers. It could also be that the caliper pistons are hanging up slightly and retracting slowly. Look over all of the lines and hoses, as well as their mounting brackets. (Sometimes a rusty mounting bracket can puff up enough to slightly pinch a hose.) If you don't remember the last time you changed the hoses, they're probably overdue for replacement anyway.

## DRIVE BELT DIRECTION

**Q:** I have had a 1955 Thunderbird for 20 years. It was fitted with a vintage McCulloch supercharger that has added to my fun with this car. The drive belt has just broken, and I can't locate a replacement. I contacted someone who advertises in *Hemmings* as a repair service for Paxton/McCulloch, but he hasn't come up with anything yet. Any suggestions?

Bob Hurley  
Belleville, Michigan

**A:** There's a great website for vintage McCulloch superchargers at [www.vs57.y-block.info](http://www.vs57.y-block.info), and it includes a list of parts vendors, accessible from the site menu on the left side of the home page. (The direct url is [www.vs57.y-block.info/vendors.htm](http://www.vs57.y-block.info/vendors.htm)). Perhaps one of the specialists there can help.

## MORE POWER TO THE PLUGS

**Q:** I recently installed a Pertronix ignition in my 1957 Mercury—it has a 368-cu.in. V-8. Everything is working fine, but I'm curious, should I change the gap on the spark plugs? Will I notice any performance or fuel economy gains?

Burt Warner  
*Via email*

**A:** Pertronix says you can open the gap up .005 from the recommended stock setting, which will help maximize the ignition's ability to burn the air/fuel mix. Will you notice an improvement in your car's performance? Probably not, but it's not going to hurt, either. Don't open the gap any wider than the recommended amount, seeking noticeable gains as you'll probably find yourself burning through caps and rotors.

## CREATIVE COOLING

Regarding the question about installing air conditioning on a 1954 Bel Air with power steering, I put a Vintage Air system on my 1956 Chevrolet's 235-cu.in. straight-six. I simply moved the alternator to the passenger side of the engine by making a pipe plug in the side of the engine into an external threaded stud/pipe plug and fabricating a longer adjusting arm from a bolt on the water pump. I also had the harmonic balancer made into a two-groove unit by The Damper Doctor in Redding, California. I mounted the compressor and the power steering pump on the driver's side of the engine.

I used one belt to drive the power steering pump from the dual pulley on the compressor, a second belt from the balancer to the compressor and a third belt from the balancer to the alternator. This system has run well for over 25,000 miles. The Vintage Air unit was more than adequate for my four-door sedan in a desert area. I hope this is helpful.

Jim Woodworth  
Temecula, California

## FAILING DAMPERS

Your recommendation in *HCC* #118 to replace a failing damper is correct as far as it goes, not knowing make, model, year, etc. However, someone working on a 50-plus-year-old vehicle might not be able to find a replacement. When I started rebuilding GM 215-cu.in. aluminum V-8s, I found Damper Dudes (Anderson, California). They rebuilt and indexed my dampers to whatever my application—Buick or Olds front covers, or 300 cu.in. V-8 Buick crankshafts to 215 cu.in. engines.

Curtis Fankboner  
Caldwell, Idaho

**A:** You're absolutely right. Ordering a replacement isn't an option for every automobile engine.



Send questions to: Tech Talk, c/o  
*Hemmings Classic Car*, P.O. Box 196,  
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question to: [mmcnessor@hemmings.com](mailto:mmcnessor@hemmings.com).



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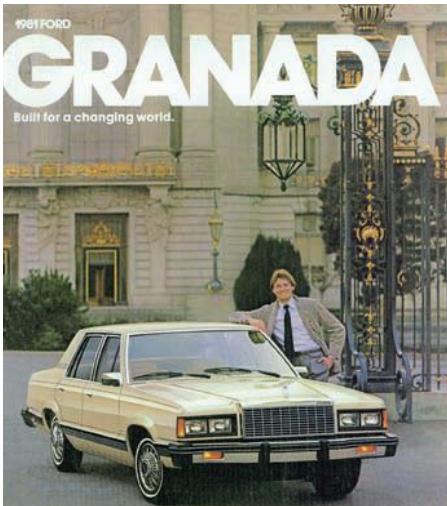


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**SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION** Andrew Lindsay "Drew" Lewis announces that the Japanese government has agreed to a voluntary three-year reduction of about 6 or 7 percent in automotive exports to give American manufacturers a decent interval to retool their small car production capability.



**FORD DECLares THE GRANADA** "the most changed American-built sedan for 1981." Based on the Fox-body platform, the fully unitized body weighs 400 pounds less than last year's model. Built lower to the ground, the Granada's fuel economy is increased with the improved design. Three different series are available: the L, GL and GLX, and body-styles include the two- and four-door sedans. The new generation Granadas are available at a starting price of \$6,474.

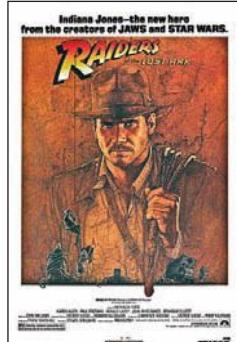
**THE NEW DE LOREAN** is a sleek, sophisticated car, with stainless steel body panels and Kammback tail with rear louvers and gullwing doors. The softly brushed exterior will not fade or chip, and the 2.85-liter V-6 is engineered for performance and driver satisfaction. The De Lorean is guaranteed to draw attention wherever it goes, and it is available now for \$26,000.



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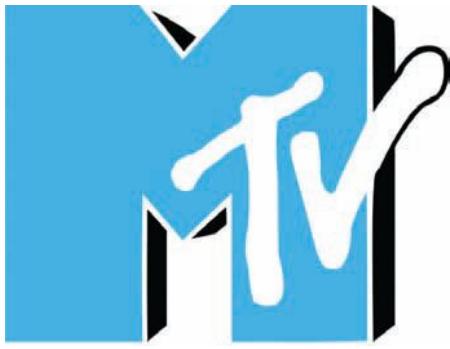
PHOTOGRAPH BY JEFF KOCH



**RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK** claims the domestic box-office crown, bringing in over 212 million dollars.

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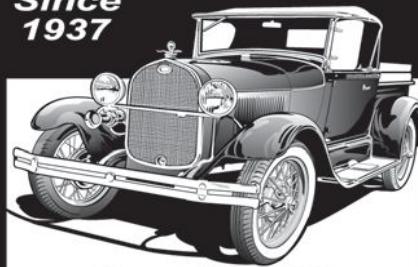
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# Full Circle

## ALONG A RIBBON OF NEARLY EMPTY

two-lane highway, two cars race past stunned drivers. The sleek black '57 Chevrolet sport coupe in front looks like it belongs there. But wait, what's this car behind, the one staying right on the tail of the Chevy? It's a dowdy old sedan, gray, dumpy-looking, staid. What's this old 1953 Oldsmobile Super 88 doing here?

Male drivers in Robbinsville High School knew this Rocket 88 well. Driven by the madman they'd christened "Fireball Robinson," it had humbled every other car that challenged it, staying close behind, toying with them, as Highway 129 wound its way along the Tallulah River Valley in the mountains of western North Carolina, until reaching the notorious mile-long straight section. Then, with effortless ease, it would swing into the passing lane, leaving them in its wake, telling the whole world their ride didn't have what it takes. Billy Ray Ledford vowed to get even after the old four-door humbled his '55 Chevy, and he was certain that his Bel Air Power Pak was the car to do it. Had the Olds finally met its match?

That question was not answered that day, or ever. The last of the cars the two racers zoomed past was the county sheriff in an unmarked vehicle, no doubt hoping to put an end to the dangerous driving along this stretch of road so tempting to would-be racers. Billy Ray got away, but not me, the driver of the Olds.

Unlike the Oldsmobile in the famous ad campaign, the car I drove that fateful day was my father's, literally. I'd gone with him in 1955 on the four-hour trip to Atlanta to trade in our slow old 1951 Dodge, hoping to influence his choice, and the conservative Olds sedan was not it. Why not that snappy '54 Ninety-Eight two-door hardtop we tried out? Now that was a car. But the price was too much for my dad's pocketbook. Well, okay, how about the almost-new '55 Ford hardtop? It wasn't a Ninety-Eight, but we'd look a lot better in it than that old gray four-door. No, my dad

didn't like the way the Ford sounded; "tinny," he said. He'd never been a Ford man. We climbed back in the wheezing old Dodge for a second look at the 1953 Super 88. After an hour of haggling, the deal was struck, and we started the trip back to the mountains in our new car. It was dusk on the long summer day when we finally pulled up to the house, but my mom and two younger sisters ran

knew the old '53 Olds would never have been able to pass that '57 Chevy. It had met its match. I began to lose interest in it, and within a year, I retired it with grace, still undefeated in a Tallulah race, trading it for something else.

I was car crazy long before the Olds, so it's no surprise that I've owned a lot of different collector cars through the years. Newer Oldsmobiles, Buicks, including a '53 Skylark convertible that I bought for \$200, a '41 Cadillac convertible and other Cadillacs, Lincolns, Imperials, a Pontiac, a Corvette and several different XK Jaguars.

My latest collector car was a 1957 Thunderbird, white over red; a glamorous car and a great design. It drove well, but rattled too much, and the doors never seemed to shut just right. With the T-Bird sold, the search started anew. I had a list with a lot of different cars on it, but no Oldsmobiles. Then finally I bought one – a 1953 Super 88 convertible.

The Olds had had a body-off rotisserie restoration. I'd had some pretty decent cars, but never one restored to such an extent as that. The seller turned out to be a member of the National Antique Oldsmobile Club, Ed Glover of Bloomfield, New Mexico, and as nice a man to buy a car from as you could ever want. Ed did a marvelous job on this car. Starting work in 2000 with a car that needed just about everything, he didn't finish restoring it until 2010. He kept the original colors, Lotus Cream with an Agate Red interior, and took great pains to keep everything original, even the padded dash top. In addition, Ed installed seat belts and added a hidden electric fuel pump, controlled by a switch under the dash, making starting easier if the car sits for a long time.

A half century had passed since I last sat behind the dash dominated by two large circles and oversized steering wheel of the old sedan, but it all flooded back. I knew instantly the location of each knob and switch as if it had been yesterday. The old saying is that what goes around comes around. For cars, this has proven true. Once again, Fireball Robinson is behind the wheel of his 1953 Super 88. ☀



out to see the new car, clamoring for a ride. It held us all with room to spare. Maybe this wouldn't be such a bad car after all.

Later, my dad taught me to drive in that car. I took my driving test in it, and still later, for the princely sum of \$100, he passed it on to me. Like so many teenage boys of the Fifties, I set to work "improving" it. After a couple of spray cans of red paint, I had a red dash and red wheels. Proud of my work, I called my mom out to take a look. She was horrified, but I knew the sedan had some class now. My dad didn't seem to care one way or the other.

I never raced again after facing the judge. Although I never told anyone, I

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# CLASSIC TRUCKS



## Split Decision

*Introduced on the 1965 F-100 and F-250, Ford's Twin-I-Beam independent suspension hauled the F-series into the modern age*

BY MIKE McNESSOR • PHOTOGRAPHY BY TERRY SHEA

**D**earborn management must've been feeling risk averse in the early 1960s, with red ink from the Edsel debacle still fresh on FoMoCo's balance sheet. It's no wonder then, when buyers began rejecting Ford's new bed-and-cab-integrated "uni-body" 1961 F series two-wheel-drive trucks, that the streamlined pickups were hastily pulled off the market. Replacement models were quickly fitted with mismatched fleetside beds leftover from the previous F series until new fleetside beds could be manufactured. Edsel-type-situation averted.



Ford's 170-hp 300 six-cylinder was first offered in 1965 F-series trucks. This versatile, reliable inline engine enjoyed a three-decade-long production run and was finally phased out in 1996.

Meanwhile GM was stretching out its sales lead, and Ford was relying on a restyled truck that, while handsome, was riding on leaf springs at all four corners. A Chevrolet truck of the same vintage would've cruised down the road like a Lincoln by comparison, thanks to its torsion bar front end from 1960-'62, or coil springs from 1963 forward.

For 1965, Ford pulled the leaf springs out from under the front of its F-100s and F-250s and replaced them with its Twin-I-Beam setup, which soldiered on in F-series pickups until 1997. At the heart of the Twin-I-Beam was a pair of solid-beam axles that acted sort of like long lower A-arms on each side of the front suspension. The end of the beam where the spindle attaches looked like a conventional solid axle, while the other end was mounted to a pivot point positioned below the front crossmember. Radius rods kept the beams located; while a set of beefy coil springs provided the cushion. Voila! Independent front suspension.

Twin-I-Beam had many advantages and a few disadvantages. On one hand, the system was rugged as it relied on sturdy forged steel axle beams and had very few moving parts. Twin-I-Beam also offered generous suspension travel for soaking up bumps

on a job site or on unpaved roads. But Twin-I-Beam was also very heavy and there wasn't any provision for easy front-end alignment as there was with a control-arm/ball-joint setup. Camber adjustments were made to Twin-I-Beam trucks by bending the axle beam, and caster adjustments were made by changing the bushings on the radius arms. Furthermore, wheel camber constantly changed as the suspension moved up and down, which could cause uneven tire wear and strange handling as the bushings, springs and pins wore out.

While the front suspension of Ford's two-wheel-drive light trucks was transformed for the 1965 model year, the solid rear axle hung from conventional leaf springs. But under the hood, a host of new and improved engines was on tap. At the top, the 292-cu.in. Y-block V-8 was out, and the 208-hp 352-cu.in. FE V-8 was in. Buyers preferring a six-cylinder engine also had their choice of larger, more powerful offerings. In place of the previous year's 223- and 262-cu.in. straight-sixes, the 140-hp 240 six and the 170-hp 300 six were offered for 1965.



Despite its work truck exterior, this F-250 is fairly plush on the inside, with carpeting and accessory gauges. This truck has the Custom Cab, which added full-foam seat and vinyl-covered door panels.





**Twin-I-Beam front suspension was new for 1965. The rugged setup soldiered on under Ford trucks until 1997.**

On the outside, Ford's handsome 1965 F-series trucks wore a revised grille with squared-off openings, and the marker lamps were moved to a more conspicuous location above the headlamps, where they served as bookends for the Ford logo.

The well-known Ranger package also appeared for the first time on Ford light trucks in 1965, offering car-like amenities such as carpeting, bucket seats and an extra-cost console. Not surprisingly, the option list for Ford trucks had grown longer in the decades since the end of WWII and for 1965 included a four-door crew cab, Western mirrors, Cruise-O-Matic transmission, bolstered seats with vinyl upholstery, four-wheel-drive and more.

This month's good-looking F-250 feature truck belongs to Kevin Clark, an electrician hailing from Pendleton, New York. Kevin has owned the truck for about a decade, first using it around job sites and as a general-purpose carryall. He then decided to have the truck painted, which more or less made it too nice to use as a workaday hauler.

"I found it in a barn where I'd gone to look at a 1966 Plymouth Satellite convertible," Kevin said. "But I saw this — its bed filled with tires and the outside covered with chicken crap — and I had it home about an hour later."

What was most appealing to Kevin was the condition of the F-250's body. It had apparently been used only to pull a camping trailer and was never subjected to heavy doses of road salt. "I put a battery in it and it ran, so I drove it home — I didn't even put a plate on it," Kevin said. "The body was pristine. It still had its original paint, but the hood and roof were sun beaten. I probably used it like that for two or three years, occasionally taking it to jobs to haul home scrap wood. I was even reluctant to paint it since it was such a nice, original truck. The body shop just scuffed it, primed it and painted it with single-stage enamel."

The engine remains as Kevin purchased the truck, ditto for the chassis and brakes, though he did have the lower half of the bench seat reupholstered. The exhaust is an aftermarket unit with dual tailpipes that also was on the Ford when Kevin bought it. "I've tried to keep everything original, even the wheels and hubcaps," he said. "The exhaust isn't original, but it sounds kind of cool. The 300-cu.in. straight-six runs great — you just touch the key and it's running."

Kevin's last collectible pickup was a 1951 Ford that he once wished he hadn't sold. But this 1965 F-250 has spoiled him for older trucks. "I've always liked the 1961-'72 Fords, and I particularly like this one, especially the way it drives compared to my old 1951 pickup. It will cruise along at highway speeds and handles like a dream, no wobbles or shakes — it's as nice as a new truck." ☀

**Outside, this F-250 sports one repaint, an aftermarket dual exhaust and 225/75R16 radials. The current owner worked it for the first couple of years, but it now lives a life of leisure.**



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## Mural of America

*Cross-country trucking during the Eisenhower years*



BY JIM DONNELLY • PHOTOGRAPHY FROM THE COLLECTION OF BILL WELTON

Very so often, we'll have a piece of mail fly into the Editorial cubbies that defies description. This is one of those rare and joyful instances. Unsolicited, a small packet arrived from Bill Welton of Elizabeth City, North Carolina, containing several period photos he took himself and a hand-typed accounting of his days as an over-the-road trucker during the middle of the 1950s.

Bill told us that in 1953, he unexpectedly found himself out of work in New York City, when a friend who was employed as a freight dispatcher in Queens suggested he try trucking. The firm where his pal worked was Mural Trucking Service, based in the Long Island City section; its name was a combination of those of its two founders, Murray and Al Shapiro. They encouraged new drivers to buy their own trucks and hit the highways.

And that's what Bill did. He visited Island Chevrolet on Staten Island and selected a new Chevrolet 3600, then the biggest truck you could buy with a Bowtie badge. "I was pretty green," Bill writes. "I didn't even know what a fifth wheel was until the salesman enlightened me." Regardless, Bill plunked down about \$3,500 and got ready to roll. The tractor had no radio or sleeper. The fuel supply came from an 18-gallon tank located perilously just behind the bench seat. To that, Bill added a 100-gallon saddle tank on the frame. The tanks fed the same engine installed in Chevrolet passenger cars with Powerglide transmissions, the 235-cu.in. OHV Stovebolt straight-six with 108 hp. In the truck, it turned a four-speed manual transmission and a vacuum-shifted two-speed rear axle. By long-hauling standards, even in the 1950s, that wasn't a lot of ammunition.

But in November 1953, Bill rolled out of the Big Apple for the

first time as a trucker, for the princely rate of 22 cents per loaded mile (or 18 cents empty). Before leaving, Bill had mounted the biggest tires that would fit on the 3600's 20-inch wheels, but while pulling a loaded 40-foot cargo trailer – Mural's market was direct uncrated freight – climbing hills could be a struggle. Before the West Virginia Turnpike was built, Bill hauled diner dishes from a ceramics plant in Wellsville, Ohio, to a supplier on the Bowery in Manhattan. That involved crawling across the precarious New River Gorge, in winter, via a two-lane ridge route with no shoulders and "guardrails" of cables stretched between posts.

On other early winter hauls, Bill got bogged down in snow along U.S. 67 in Arkansas one night, only to learn that his chains wouldn't fit the larger tires he'd installed. In Chicago, frigid temperatures forced the rear axle to lock up between its high and low ranges. Bill had to use highway flares to heat the differential housing and unfreeze them. Bill was responsible for all repairs and travel expenses on the open road. Mural paid for the truck's insurance, reciprocal tags and all tolls. Still, Bill calculated that he was clearing \$22 every 100 loaded miles, not bad for the era.

The adventures rolled on aboard the Chevy, in between Bill catching naps by jackknifing himself across the seat. He crossed the Mississippi aboard an ancient ferry float at Dyersburg, Ten-



nessee, making landfall on the gravel riverbank, and got his trailer ripped open by a low-hanging piece of angle iron on the Staten Island ferry. One time, he got a job to start out from Burbank, California, and head east, picking up ancient, all-brass cash registers along the way to be melted down by National Cash Register in Dayton, Ohio. Bill learned fast that if you slammed one of the discarded registers down hard on a bench, the cash drawer would pop open and usually give up some coins. Bill figures he banked 35 cents for every register he loaded on that run.

The fun came to a temporary halt in 1955 when Bill was traversing the old Tamiami Trail through the Everglades in south Florida, where the Stovebolt sheared its crankshaft in two at about 80,000 miles. An Army surplus 6x6 wrecker dragged the rig to town, where a local garage replaced the short block. After another 80,000 miles, Bill upgraded the 3600 with a new 261-cu.in. Stovebolt six, installed by a New Jersey dealership for \$444.44, he recalls precisely. Thus repowered, the 1953 tractor pulled his hauler to the new Fontainebleau Hotel in Miami Beach, where Bill delivered the luxury lodge's grand piano, catching some nods in his sleeping bag on the ballroom floor. Later, he earned \$5.00 for each piece of statuary he picked up in Manhattan and delivered at the Fontainebleau.

Later, Bill traded in this truck for a new 1955 Chevrolet model, with the then-new truck version of the 283-cu.in. small-block V-8. This time, he and his brother added a homebuilt sleeper. "It was the coldest place in the world, but it did save me a motel bill or two. The 283 proved to be rather unreliable. After another 40,000 miles or so, and after witnessing some grisly highway deaths, I gave it up to pursue other employment. But as far as I was concerned, that old Chevrolet six-cylinder was the champ." ☺

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](mailto:jdonnelly@hemmings.com).

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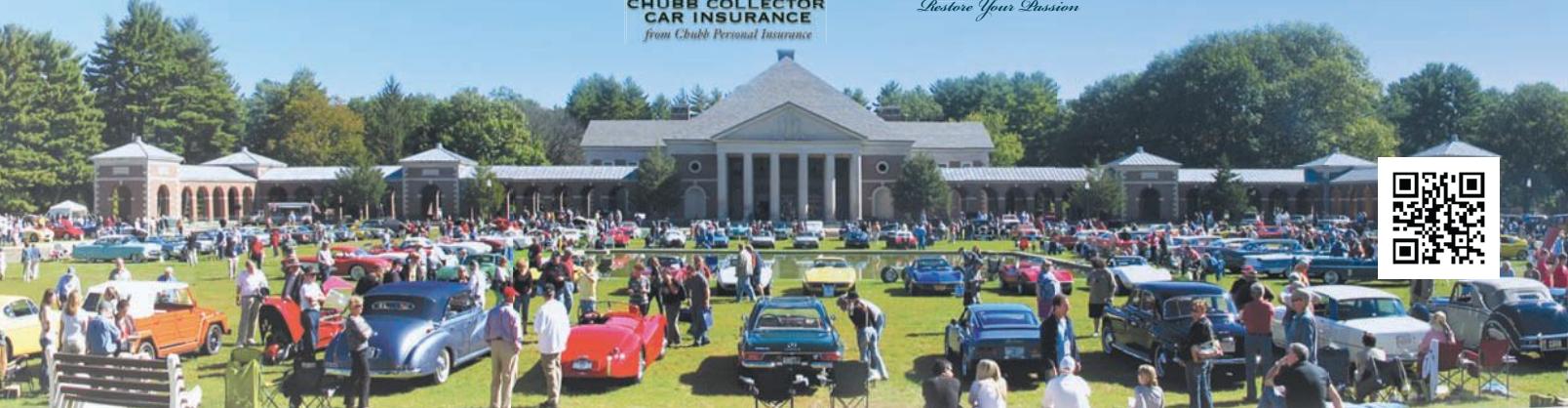
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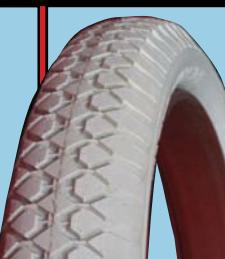


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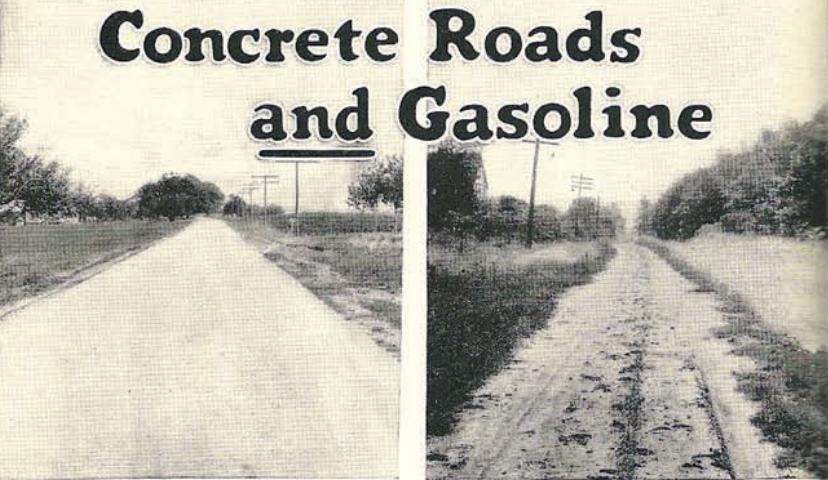
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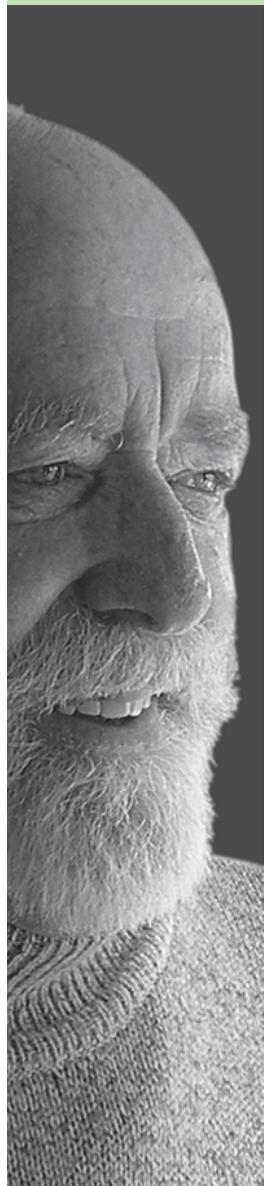
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I'm concerned

that one whole  
glorious decade  
of automotive  
history is so  
terribly under-  
represented at  
car shows...



# jimrichardson

## Can You Spare a Nickel?

**O**ne of my favorite adolescent memories is sitting cross-legged on the floor of the showroom at the local Ford dealership back in the Fifties and sketching an antique Model T center-door sedan they had on display. It was my intention at that time to become an auto designer and go to Detroit.

I marveled at how tall and how spartan the T was. Its spidery suspension and wheels were something I had never explored. In fact "spidery" fit the whole vehicle because it was all black and very spindly. I wasn't aware at the time that

the car I was drawing was a fossil from a mass extinction of the auto industry in the 1930s. You see, before the Great Depression there were over 100 automakers in the U.S. But by the late 1920s, there were fewer first-time buyers because the industry had begun reaching a saturation point, so something would have to give soon anyway.

And then came the stock market crash of 1929. The small independents that operated on a thin margin, and companies that concentrated exclusively on luxury brands almost all went under within a couple of years. Before the great die-off, there was the likes of Peerless, Pierce, Marmon, Stutz, Duesenberg, Cord, Kissel, Doble, Packard and others. Of course, Packard soldiered on until 1958, but that was because it went to less-expensive mass-produced models.

The cars that disappeared in the Depression were primarily the "nickel era" offerings. Except for the great classics, they are virtually unknown today. I think of Elgin, DuPont, Locomobile, Maxwell, Durant, Star, Reo, Elcar, Owen Magnetic (one of the first hybrid cars), Wills Sainte Claire, Baker Electric, Cunningham, Oakland and on and on.

The reason we don't see these cars at shows today is twofold. For one, they aren't as exciting to look at as the great classics, and secondly, most of them were melted down to feed the war effort in World War II. We see a few brass era horseless carriages today because they are so charming and quaint, but we don't see the more dour straight up Twenties-era cars. They were rather somber and subdued because they were painted dark colors, and much of the trim on them, such as radiator shells, was painted to match the body. However,

the nickel plating that was there was certainly beautiful with its slight golden cast.

The Twenties cars do not feature prominently at shows today, but so many great innovations occurred during that time. Four-wheel hydraulic brakes, synchromesh transmissions and electric self-starters come to mind. Also, four- and six-cylinder engines were common during the teens, but the 1920s saw the advent of the V-8 with Cadillac, the V-12 with Packard, and the straight-eight with Isotta Fraschini. Superchargers and oil filters, stamped disk wheels, balloon

tires, all-steel construction and open Hotchkiss drivelines made their entrances as well.

I'm concerned that one whole glorious decade of automotive history is so terribly underrepresented at car shows, so I would like to propose an extra-points bonus for Twenties-era cars at such events. The reason they're not there is partly because they are rare, and replacement components are less available, but also partly because those cars were made before the time of all but the most senior of us.

In fact, I didn't know years ago when I was sketching that Model T that one day Detroit would be in ruins, and not only would there be few Twenties-era cars to marvel at, but there would be no De Soto, Studebaker, Oldsmobile, Pontiac, Mercury, Willys, Nash or Plymouth. These marques were part of the postwar extinction in the auto industry, and I would give extra points for them at shows too, because they may one day be as obscure as Paige, Jordan and the '20s cars are today.

Maybe we need a nickel-era car club to preserve these ancient Twenties classics if for no other reason than to let our younger generation know just how rich and varied this country's automotive history is. And also the technological innovation of that decade is worth remembering, too. How many car buffs today know that the hybrid is not a new idea?

And how will future designers be able to understand and build on what has gone before them if they don't have examples to draw from, explore and marvel at? So, do the world a favor and restore a nickel-era car. It won't be easy, but it will be worth the effort. ☀



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