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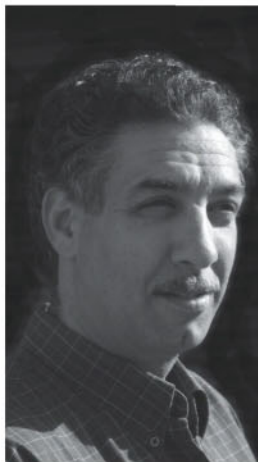
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I remember

seeing all the

new cars...

but nothing

else was as

memorable

as that new

Mustang.

//

New York's World's Fair

Back in 1964-1965, for all New Yorkers and residents throughout the New York City metropolitan area, the usual talk among family, friends and neighbors centered around the World's Fair. People throughout the United States, Canada and the world visited Queens, New York, to take part in this very special event to get a glimpse into the future, but we New Yorkers were the lucky ones, because it was held in our very own backyard. That meant we were fortunate enough to be able to attend more than once. A convenient subway or bus ride, or a quick trip in the family car, got us there in less than an hour. I was lucky enough to go twice.

Early one Saturday morning in the summer of 1965, we hopped in our black-on-red 1965 Oldsmobile and headed to Flushing Meadow Corona Park in nearby Queens. So did thousands of other New Yorkers that day, as the traffic on the northbound side of the Van Wyck Expressway heading towards the site of the World's Fair was nothing but bumper to bumper. It was hot, and like many other cars, our Oldsmobile overheated just outside the parking lot, then the battery died. But thanks to one particular friendly cop, he took the time to give us a jump from his patrol car and got us on our way. That was New York's Finest at its best.

Once inside the Fair, it was sensory overload, especially for this wide-eyed eight-year-old. As a blooming car nut, all I wanted to do was to get a ride in the new Ford Mustang. The Mustang was all that the kids at school talked about, so I had to make sure I experienced it, too. The long lines to get to "drive" the Mustang on its special, self-propelled track meant a long wait was ahead, but my parents stood in line with me, and I finally got my chance. My parents knew I loved cars, so they made sure I was the one who got behind the wheel, not my older brother. We ended up in a red convertible, and throughout the ride I was in heaven. It truly was an experience that I will never forget. Then we rode in Walt Disney's Magic Skyway from the Ford Pavilion to the other end of the park.

I remember seeing all the new cars from General Motors and Chrysler, too, especially the

Cadillacs, which my father lusted after, but nothing else was as memorable as that new Mustang. In fact, so smitten were we boys by Ford's newest sports car that we would bring in our Aurora Mustang slot cars to school to show off during lunch. Then, nearly every day after school, we would walk to

the local toy store on nearby Avenue U to check the model shelf to see if any Mustang kits were available.

The other automobile that took my young breath away, as it did all the other kids at school and on my block, was displayed at the Buick exhibit—it was the Sports Wagon with the three glass panels in the roof. This was heady space-age stuff back then, and was *the* car that we all tried to convince our parents to buy.

Another must-do at the Fair was to "make" yourself a dinosaur from the Sinclair gasoline exhibit. I remember dropping a single dime in the slot of a futuristic machine that would mold a green plastic dinosaur, then drop it down into a bin in front. I still recall how warm it felt. That 10-inch long Sinclair mascot stood collecting dust on the shelf in my room for years; unfortunately he ended up in the nearby garbage dump along with my extensive collection of baseball cards and built-up car, plane and boat models. Thanks, Mom!

Now, with every new product and technological breakthrough available on the internet for all to view in the comfort of their home, there is no longer any need for another World's Fair. It would be interesting to see what such a Fair would be like in this day and age, although I don't think seeing the latest egg-shaped electric car would excite visitors like that Mustang did. Then again, those were different times.

If you didn't get the chance to experience the New York World's Fair first-hand, you will be able to learn more about it in this month's History of Automotive Design on page 56. But if you *were* there, and remember riding in the new Mustang or other automotive-related experiences, we would appreciate hearing about them. 🐉



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The 300 Club

THE ANNUAL CHRYSLER 300 INTERNATIONAL CLUB MEET has set its sights on the Finger Lakes, with Geneva, New York, as its home base this May 3-7. The 47th meet of 300 enthusiasts welcomes all 300 Letter Cars built from 1955-'65 as well as 1970 300 Hursts. Tours will take in the scenery of the picturesque Finger Lakes region and will include museums, wineries and manufacturers, such as the site of Legendary Auto Interiors. A full list of events, hotel and contact information is available at www.chrysler300club.com.

Pinehurst Prizes

THIS YEAR'S FIFTH PINEHURST

Concours d'Elegance will take place May 6 at Pinehurst Resort in North Carolina. Classes headlining this year's event will include American pre- and postwar Classics and sports cars as well as 1953-1972 Chevrolet Corvettes, woven in with race cars, European and Japanese Classics and others.

The 2015 concours saw a 1919 Pierce-Arrow Model 66 A-4 Tourer win



best of show, while a 1931 Cadillac 452A took the prize the year before. Over 100 cars will be showcased on the fairways of the Pinehurst Resort. For more information, visit www.pinehurstconcours.com.

Dodge Brothers to Tour in SoCal



THE INTERNATIONAL DODGE BROTHERS CLUB'S California Dreamin' Tour will take place June 18-22 at and around Fallbrook, California, just north of San Diego, near Temecula Valley Wine Country. The scheduled events include a visit to the Vista Antique Gas and Steam Engine Museum,

MAY

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www.vmcca.org

3-6 • Studebaker Drivers Club Meet
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www.sdcmeet.com

5-7 • Rhinebeck Swap Meet
Rhinebeck, New York • 845-876-3554 (6-9PM)
www.rhinebeckcarshow.com

7 • Greystone Mansion Concours
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www.beverlyhills.org/exploring/greystonemansionconcoursdelegation

7 • Sumter Swap Meet
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28-31 • Annual Show & Swap Meet
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Mission San Antonio de Pala and Western Science Center as well as winery tours. All Dodge cars and trucks from 1914-'38 are welcome, and the base camp will be the Pala Mesa Resort where you can store your modern vehicles and trailers. Registrations are still being accepted, and all information is available at www.dodgebrothersclub.org.



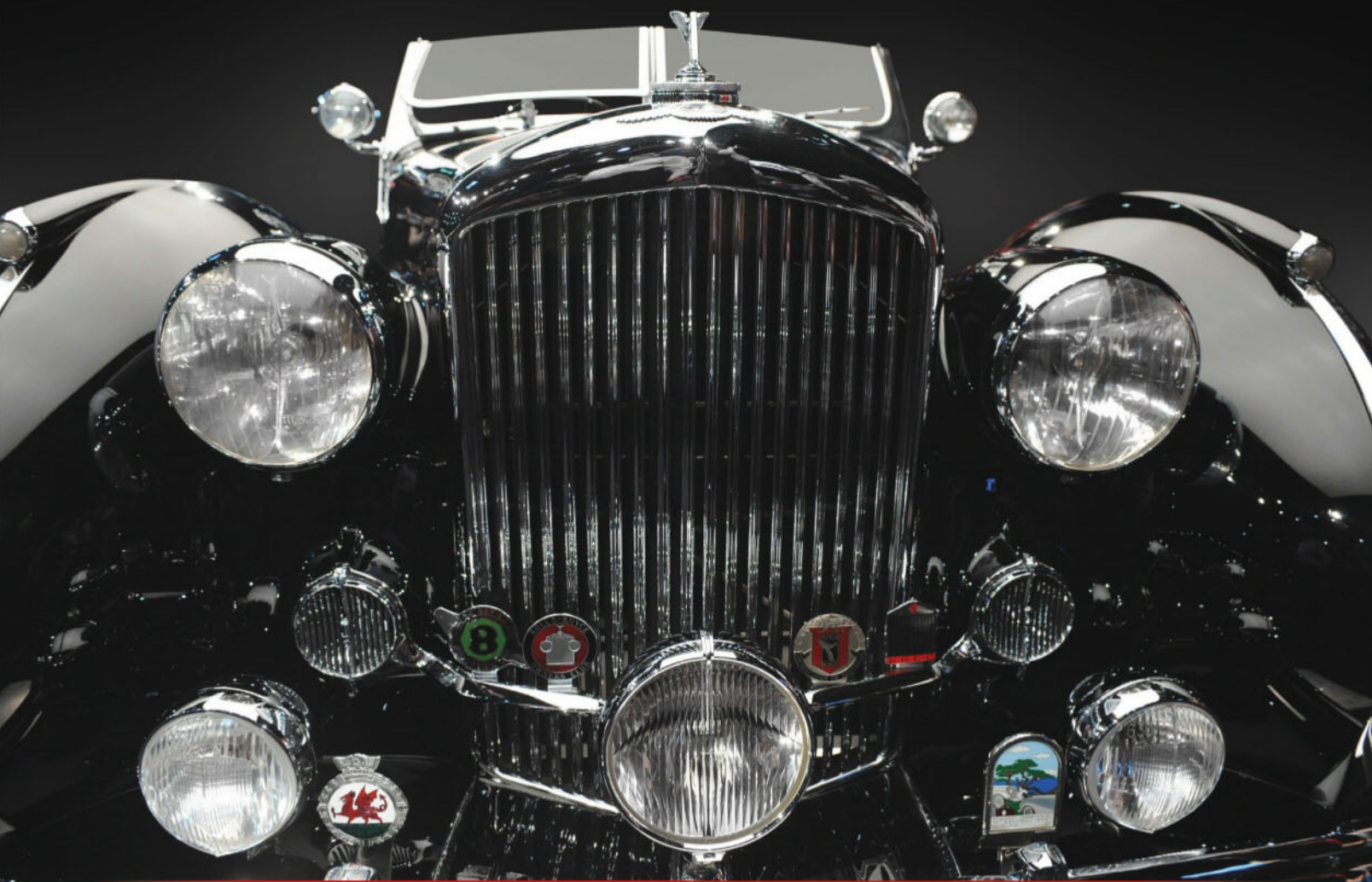
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Stateline Something or Other Redux



THANKS TO THE MANY OF YOU who pointed out the Muntz Jet pictured in this space in the March 2017 issue (and special mention to Doug Smith, who informed us that the yard in question remained there until around the early 2000s).

However, due to a layout mix-up, we neglected to include the photo that we referenced in the text of that piece, so let's fix that mistake and include the correct photo of the odd little homebuilt roadster here. Any ideas about this car?

RE: Wartime Custom



PHOTO FROM 51473, COURTESY BILL HILL

SILLY US, WE THOUGHT THE INSKIP/BREWSTER-bodied Mercury in the photo that Walt Gosden sent us for the March 2017 issue was a car we'd never seen before. As it turns out, the story on the car was in our archives all along, specifically in the February 1983 issue of *Special Interest Autos* (please see HMN.com/Albatross).

Commissioned by *New Yorker* cartoonist Peter Arno, the Mercury was best known as the Albatross 137-K and used cast aluminum throughout its body. Arno owned and raced it for some unknown amount of time before the Albatross made its way to a used car lot near the south side of Chicago in the late 1960s.

From there, collector Bill Hill bought it intending to restore it with his son Mike. Mike told us that its front fenders had gone missing, and the front portion of the frame had started to rot out, so the father-son duo put the car in storage for about 20 years. Mike inherited it after his father's death, but he said the cast-aluminum body scared him away from restoring it, so he sold it to Charles Glick at the Heartland Antique Auto Museum in Illinois, where it apparently remains today.



A-Door-Able

TYPICALLY WE LIKE TO FOCUS ON whole cars rather than on parts in this department, but Stephen Hallas of Orange, Vermont, sent us something rather peculiar, so we thought we'd make an exception.

"I've had this old door for decades, thinking surely I would find out its identity looking through car books," Stephen wrote. "But no, I've concluded it goes to a cabover of some sort?"

We think Stephen's on the right track, given the cutout at (what we presume to be) the trailing edge of the door and the

leaning pillar at (again, what we presume to be) the leading edge of the door. The lack of a window frame suggests an open vehicle, so perhaps the door came off a fire truck? It has a shape similar to those of American LaFrance fire trucks, but many of the details don't match up.

The only alternative we can think of is that it's the rear door from a four-door dual-cowl phaeton, but we can't ever recall seeing a dual-cowl car with fixed pillars on the rear doors.

Ideas?



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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The Goods on Gooding

GOODING & COMPANY CELEBRATED ITS ninth year at Scottsdale with an impressive \$33.4 million in sales and 83 percent sell-through rate over its two-day event. Here is a nice 1934 De Soto Airflow coupe, of which fewer than 1,600 were made. The early Airflow was a breakthrough in the use of aerodynamics in automobile design. This example featured the straight-six, rated at 100hp; Taupe exterior over tan interior and a three-speed manual gearbox. It was said to be complete down to the lug wrench, manual and spare tire. The final bid came in at \$68,200, making a nice sale for both buyer and seller. Visit www.goodingco.com for results and information on future auctions.



Barrett-Jackson Results

ANOTHER SEASON OF AUCTIONS IN SCOTTSDALE HAS COME TO A CLOSE WITH

Barrett-Jackson bringing in over \$100 million in sales. This year, 1,719 vehicles were consigned with over 99 percent of them finding a new home. It's estimated that over 320,000 people were on hand over the week's festivities and that more than \$2.2 million was raised for charity. Among the vehicles to cross the block were this 1930 Cord L29 four-door Brougham. This distinctive-looking beauty was powered by a 299-cu.in. straight-eight 125hp Lycoming engine and is one of very few L29s in existence. The Cord saw some spirited bidding and finally sold for \$300,000. The money was used to benefit the children at Loma Linda University Children's Hospital in California. Barrett-Jackson has posted all its results from Scottsdale at www.barrett-jackson.com.

AUCTION PROFILE

WHEN REMINISCING ABOUT AMERICAN cars from 1957, Pontiac's Star Chief is unlikely to jump to the forefront of anyone's mind. The Star Chief was certainly not as popular as the fuel-injected Bonneville convertibles that shared the same subseries as the two-door Catalina, not to mention many of the iconic cars put out by the other divisions of GM, Chrysler and Ford during that vaunted year. The Star Chief Custom's suspension was improved for 1957, and many other details were also changed throughout. The model saw a respectable production run of 32,862 two-door examples, which makes for a nice alternative if you're in the market for something different from one of the other brands' more popular or expensive models.

This particular car was powered by the 347-cu.in. Tri-Power 290hp engine



CAR	1957 Pontiac Star Chief Custom Catalina	LOT NUMBER	165
AUCTIONEER	RM Sotheby's	RESERVE	None
LOCATION	Phoenix, Arizona	AVERAGE SELLING PRICE	\$43,000
DATE	January 19, 2017	SELLING PRICE	\$35,200

and four-speed Hydra-Matic transmission. It underwent an extensive restoration that included everything from its brilliant Cordova Red-and-Kenya Ivory paint, to its interior, to even the correct factory-

style markings under the hood and on the chassis. It was an AACA Senior Award recipient and has been driven fewer than 27,400 miles, making it an excellent deal for the new owner.

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Scottsdale shows, Mecum held its annual Kissimmee event in Florida, offering nearly 2,700 vehicles and achieving a sell-through of 75 percent during its 10-day extravaganza. Combined vehicle sales exceeded \$86 million, with an additional \$2.5 million devoted to automotive art and rare parts. One of the many older cars available was a 1907 Cadillac Model K Runabout. This supercentenarian Cadillac featured Dietz brass lamps, green paint, red-and-black accent striping, wood steering wheel and a leather seat. This brass-era beauty hammered out at \$70,000. Mecum's schedule will soon be in full swing, so go to www.mecum.com to see the many cars that will be crossing the block this year.



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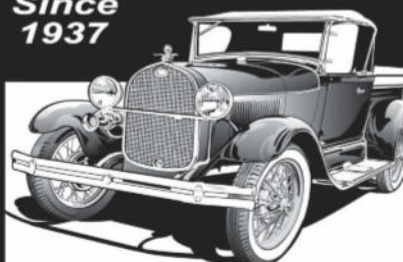
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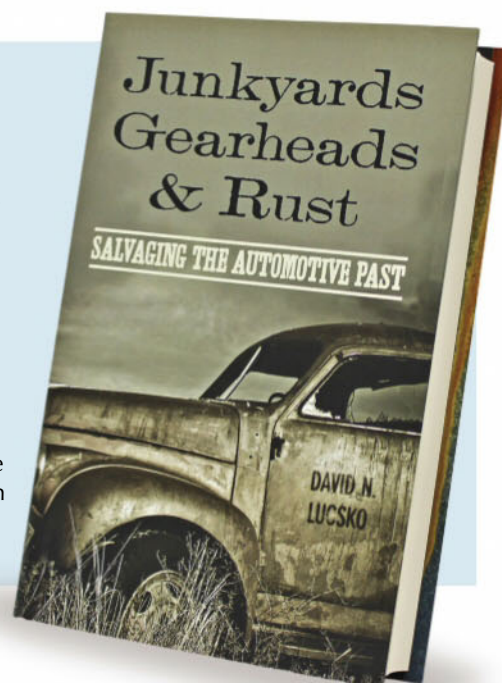
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Back between the wars, you might have found a porcelain sign like this one hanging outside of the Ford dealership in your hometown. This modern reproduction (item TINFORAS) celebrating Genuine Ford Parts offers an appealingly weathered look, measures a substantial 27 inches wide, and features a tough, powdercoated image over sturdy 24-gauge steel. It's pre-drilled and riveted for easy hanging on the wall of your garage or den, where it will look effortlessly cool.

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What car enthusiast with gasoline running through his or her veins hasn't relished the chance to wander through an automotive graveyard, picking still-functional (or decorative) parts and pondering the useful lives of the vehicles contained within, soon to become recycled into their element materials? Junkyards—or as they're more correctly termed, "salvage yards"—predate the automobile, and have played a crucial role in the automotive world for more than a century. David Lucsko, associate professor of history at Auburn University, has written a careful and comprehensive treatise on this little-discussed topic in his 263-page hardcover. He approaches the topic from a gearhead's perspective, pondering how cost and parts availability have changed through the decades, how these businesses have been viewed by the outside world, and what enthusiast-friendly pick-your-own lots have come to represent to the old-car hobby. It's a unique and fascinating insight into an industry we take for granted, and that our hobby couldn't exist without.



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The Dodge Monaco Police Pursuit sedan was a common sight on American roads in the 1970s and 1980s, being a favored choice of law enforcement agents around the country. This was true on television programs like *CHiPs*, which featured these 1975 Monacos prominently in its first three seasons, being driven by officers who backed up "Jon and Ponch" on their motorcycles. This 1:18-scale die-cast example (item AWSS112), built by AutoWorld, is highly detailed, with accurate California Highway Patrol door graphics and a Federal Twinsonic light bar. Under the opening hood is the Magnum V-8 with realistic air cleaner and radiator decals, and inside are a readable instrument cluster, CB radio and flock carpeting. Other delightful details include believable "Fratzog"-emblem hubcaps. You don't have to be a *CHiPs* fan to appreciate what this model offers.

Continued on page 16

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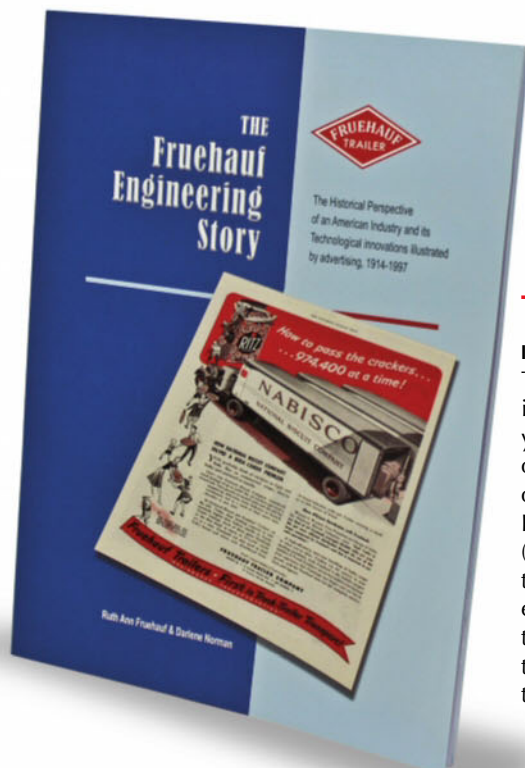
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The Willys Aero of the early 1950s is one of those unusual cars that's little remembered today, which makes the fact that England's The Brooklin Collection has rendered it in 1:43 scale all the more special. This heavy white-metal model represents the late Ace Custom two-door sedan, and its understated Arctic White over Gale Gray scheme is very fetching. The subject car may look plain to modern eyes, but it's interesting to note how advanced its smooth bodywork was in 1954. This example had glossy paint and nice brightwork detailing, speaking to its origin as a hand-built collectible. Fans of independent marques will love this rare treat.

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The Fruehauf Engineering Story

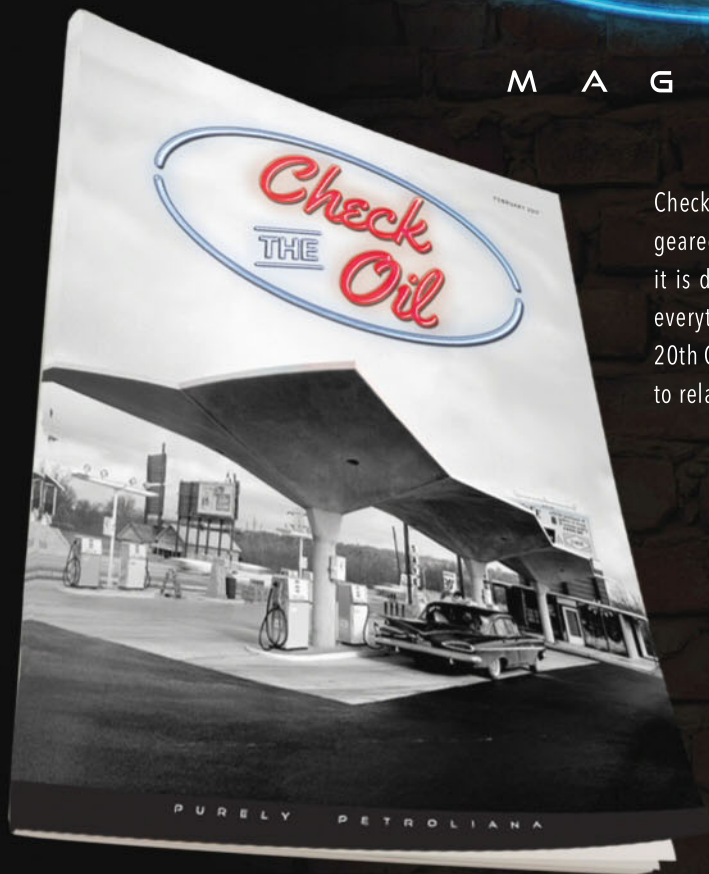
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The Fruehauf Trailer Historical Society has been ambitiously introducing historical books about its signature subject in recent years; this is the latest. It's an 80-page softcover volume that relies on company advertisements dating back to 1917, aimed at trucking operators who needed to know about Fruehauf's superior design work. Part of the earliest effort was convincing buyers that using a trailer (as opposed to a straight-frame truck) could exponentially increase the amount of freight that a given truck could pull. Simple, right? Yes, except that in the 1920s, that was a revelatory concept. The same theme follows throughout the narrative. The website is a direct link to the society. Keep an eye on it, the members are promising that more of these interesting books are in the pipeline.

- JIM DONNELLY



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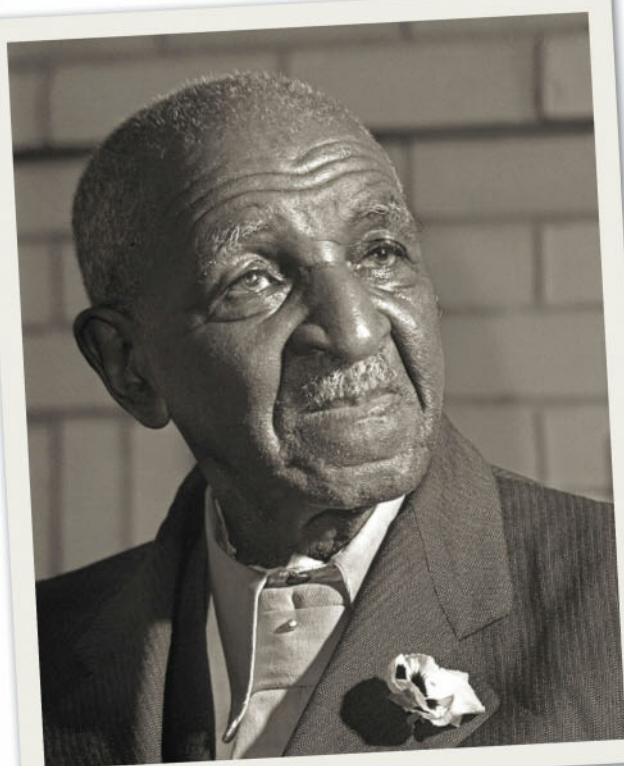
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George Washington Carver



THEY WERE BOTH INVENTORS WHO grew up on farms, and who retained a perpetually high level of interest in scientific research after both had achieved success in their endeavors. Beyond that, they couldn't have been more different: Henry Ford, the man who put American society on wheels, and George Washington Carver, born a slave, who accomplished countless breakthroughs in the world of agricultural experimentation at the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama. What brought them together was their shared commitment to the development of advanced materials for use in building cars, and even refining fuels for them, with all the materials adapted from the world of plants.

Born in a log cabin in Missouri during the Civil War, and just a year younger than Ford, Carver distinguished himself early in life for his inquisitiveness and dedication to science. Unlike the majority of his African-American peers, Carver was fortunate enough to get a high-school education while working as a young farmhand

in Kansas. Denied admission to a Kansas college because of his race, Carver instead became the first black student to enroll at the Iowa State Agricultural College in Ames, Iowa, where he earned bachelor and master's degrees in agricultural chemistry by 1896. He then left Iowa to begin a 20-year career at the Tuskegee Institute, founded by the fabled educator Booker T. Washington.

At Tuskegee, Carver founded and operated the first experimental agricultural station whose research was aimed at the plight of black farmers, who rarely owned the land they tilled and were in constant danger of indebtedness and poverty. In the Deep South, the land had been worn out because of overplanting with cotton for close to a century. The focus of his research was in trying to convince those poor farmers to rely

on available resources to increase yields, rather than on expensive fertilizers. This was where his famed research with peanuts and soybeans as alternative crops first began. Meanwhile, up in Dearborn, Michigan, Ford became aware of Carver's laboratory exploits and began to follow his career with great interest.

Like Carver, Ford had a deep interest in bettering the lot of the American farmer and to bring farm technology and products into his industrial plants. In 1929, he founded his own agricultural research station at Greenfield Village. His only directive to the young trade-school students who staffed it was that they find ways to turn farm products into Ford products.

It was inevitable that Carver and Ford would meet

at some point. Ford, for his part, was obsessed with integrating the soybean into automobile manufacturing, and the station also experimented with hay, hemp, ramie and pine as industrial raw materials. Ford and Carver began a correspondence relationship in 1935, in which Ford laid out his goals to have body materials, paint and even engine fuels derived from farming staples. Carver laid out his agreement in his own letters and suggested the possible use of plants for automotive materials. Ford invited him to Dearborn in 1937 and both men became fast friends based on their shared interests. By 1941, Ford had one of his personal cars equipped with plant-derived plastic body panels, and the Ford Motor Company even had a plastic-bodied compact car built that unfortunately never made it to production before World War II broke out.

Carver died in 1943, a year after Ford had a replica of Carver's childhood cabin built at Greenfield Village. Ford, the man, died four years later. But in a gesture to their friendship, the Ford Foundation was a benefactor of the Tuskegee Institute for many decades after both men were gone. 🐾





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Timber Traveling

The charming beauty of Plymouth's wood-bodied wagons of the 1940s

BY THOMAS A. DeMAURO • PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF CHRYSLER GROUP LLC UNLESS OTHERWISE CREDITED

In the Bing Crosby and Fred Astaire classic film *Holiday Inn*, art imitates life in scenes where a 1942 Plymouth Special De Luxe station wagon transports passengers and luggage from the train station to the inn. In the real world, wood-bodied wagons were predominantly born of that very need—hence the name *station wagon*.

Plymouth, Chrysler's low-priced, high-volume division, offered its first wood-bodied station wagon in 1934—the Westchester Semi-Sedan Suburban—and just 35 were built. The woodie wagon would become more popular in the ensuing years, however, as it evolved, harmonizing the utility of its extra seats and cargo area with its arrive-anywhere-in-high-style body designs. Though it was one of the most

expensive models in the lineup and still a comparatively low-production effort, sales increased steadily, and more than 1,700 were sold for 1939.

For this historical account, we will be concentrating on the wood-sided wagons that Plymouth produced during the 1940s, as these were the most popular and most plentiful models made. We'll profile the 1930s-era wagons in a future issue.



1940



1941

1940

Plymouth's Roadking and De Luxe model lines returned for 1940. Most of the wood-bodied station wagons were De Luxe models, but some Roadking versions were built for export.

The new body was larger—offering more interior space—which was also aided by extending the wheelbase 3 inches to 117 inches. Styling was similar to that of 1939, but the body panels were updated. “Speed lines” were added to the revised fenders and round sealed-beam headlamps were new. Sliding side windows became standard, and the front door hinges were concealed.

As had been the case in the 1930s, the wood bodies for the station wagons were built in Frankfort, Indiana, by U.S. Body & Forging, part of USHCO Mfg. Co. (Noted author Jim Benjaminson of the Plymouth Owners Club adds that Campbell and some other companies had converted Plymouths to woodie wagons on their own during this era as well.)

A Plymouth rolling chassis was shipped to the company for construction and installation of the ash and oak body. For protection, the wood was varnished and the roof slats were covered with an embossed material as a weatherproofing measure. Once assembled, they were shipped back to Plymouth for vehicle completion. Jim also notes, “for 1940 the floor from the back of the front seat to the rear was wood, but for 1941 the floor to the back of the second seat was steel.”

Under the hood was the road-proven 201.3-cu.in. L-head,

straight-six engine. It featured a 6.7:1 compression ratio, solid-lifter camshaft, aluminum alloy pistons with four rings, hardened exhaust-valve seat inserts, full-length water jackets, full-pressure lubrication, calibrated ignition and a one-barrel carburetor. It produced 84hp. An optional 7:1-compression aluminum-cylinder-head engine put out 87hp; two economy packages were offered, and Canadian-built Plymouths through 1942 used a 218.6-cu.in. engine with a larger block.

The pistons, valve-lifter faces and the crankshaft journals were “Superfinished.” According to the company, it was a, “...process developed by Chrysler for finishing metal surfaces to microscopic smoothness...” to reduce friction and increase durability.

To decrease heat and extend longevity, the clutch bellhousing featured ventilation holes. Helical-cut Amola-steel gears and blocker-type synchronizers in the three-speed manual transmission reduced running noise and clash during gear changes. Roller bearings were used in the universal joints to reduce heat and friction, and 4.10 Amola-steel hypoid gears were housed in the Hotchkiss differential. Amola steel was developed by Chrysler and said to be stronger than other types of steel.

The box-section, X-braced frame utilized a coil-sprung independent front suspension with upper and lower control arms, an anti-roll bar (in De Luxe) and “True-Steady” steering with an 18.2:1 gear ratio. Leaf springs with metal covers located the rear end and airplane-type shocks and a lower center of gravity



1942

JIM BENJAMINSON



1946-'48

improved handling. Hydraulic 10-inch drum brakes were used front and rear, and the Superfinished drums and contoured-ground brake facings provided full contact between them. The steel wheels measured 16 x 4 inches and 6.00 x 16 bias-ply tires were mounted.

Inside, there were three bench seats, and the rear two—one wider than the other—were removable to accommodate passenger and cargo needs. The familiar "Safety Signal" speedometer—with a pointer that was green up to 30MPH, then amber up to 50MPH and then red over 50MPH—was set into a revised instrument panel with other ancillary gauges.

An "All-Weather Aircontrol System" (heater/defroster), "Comfortmaster" heater, electric clock and radio were just a few of the available options.

The De Luxe (P10 body code) wood-bodied wagon cost \$970, and 3,126 were built. An additional 80 Roadkings (P9 body code) were assembled.

1941

For 1941, most wood-bodied station wagons were built on the upscale Special De Luxe (P12) line, and the De Luxe (P11) became the base line, upon which just a few woodies were assembled.

The outer grille edges became rounded with bright perimeter trim added, and the grille's center split's revised trim ran from its base up along the hood sides to the doors. The hood now opened at the front, and there was a new ornament. Headlamp bezels were restyled, as were the parking lamps contained in them. The engine vents were removed, but three character lines were added to the fenders behind each wheel-well opening.

White ash framing remained, but white maple or Honduras mahogany could now be selected for the inner panels. Some of the side wood framing saw small design changes, and the hubcaps and instrument panel were revised.

The 201.3-cu.in. engine's output increased to 87hp, an optional aluminum cylinder head resulted in a 7.25:1 compression ratio and 92hp, and the economy packages and Canadian engine continued. The battery was relocated under the hood from under the front seat.

A "Powermatic" option employed vacuum-assistance to ease gear-change effort with the three-speed. Rear gear ratios were 4.10 for De Luxes and 4.30 for Special De Luxes. Safety Rim wheels kept the tire on the rim during a blowout.

The price rose, yet sales also increased to 5,594 units for Special De Luxe (P12) wagons and 217 for De Luxe (P11) ones.

1942

The new P14C-based Special De Luxe wood-bodied wagon appeared lower, longer and wider. Though the V-shape that split the grille remained, it was de-emphasized by new trim. The broad grille bars extended to the wide-set headlamps and even under them. Lower trim wrapped around the front fenders to the wheel-well openings. Beneath the revised front bumper was a valance with a large air intake to improve engine cooling. Parking lamps were moved to the bright trim above the grille.

Front and rear fenders were redesigned, as were the wood body sides that, among other changes, now flared out at the bottom to cover the running boards and had full-length bright trim. The rear doors extended partway over the rear wheel-wells, the side window shapes were restyled and the tailgate and rear bumper were updated. The body was 196 $\frac{1}{8}$ inches long and the track was 57 inches front and 59 $\frac{1}{16}$ inches rear.

A larger 217.8-cu.in. L-head six-cylinder engine featured a 6.8:1 compression ratio, which developed 95 horsepower. The standard three-speed manual and the Powermatic option returned. Rear gears were 4.10s. A new double-channel perimeter frame increased rigidity, but the wheelbase and general suspension layout remained the same.

The price increased to \$1,145, and sales dropped to 1,136 units due to a truncated production run that concluded at the end of January 1942 due to the United States entering World War Two. The reduction in raw materials, such as stainless steel and more, because of the war effort led to running trim changes through the model year.

1946-'48

As was true for other manufacturers, when production ramped up for 1946 following the war, the Plymouths were also warmed-over 1942 models.

Revised horizontal grille bars updated the front end, the lower bar now stopped under each headlamp, and the parking lamps were mounted in it. The front bumper now wrapped around the lower fenders. Emblems, the hood ornament and the body trim were also restyled, and the unique valance panel of 1942 was re-



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tired. The rear fenders covered more of the tops of the tires, and the 1946 Special De Luxe (P-15C series) wood-bodied station wagon was slightly shorter at 195 $\frac{5}{8}$ inches long.

The compression ratio decreased to 6.6:1 in 1946, the economy engine packages and Powermatic options returned and interiors were mildly updated. Wheel and tire sizes decreased from 16 inches with 6.00 x 16 tires to 15 inches with 6.70 x 15 tires very late in 1947. The remaining mechanical aspects appear to be largely unchanged from 1942.

A woodie wagon cost \$1,539 for 1946, and production of the P-15 series of Plymouths continued through February 1949. For 1947, the wagon cost \$1,765 and \$2,068 the next year. Production for wood-bodied wagons from 1946 through 1948 was 12,913 units.

1949

In the spring of 1949, Plymouth's new De Luxe (P-17) and Special De Luxe (P-18) models debuted on 111-inch and 118.5-inch wheelbases. The eight-passenger woodie wagon returned on the Special De Luxe chassis.

Contemporary yet conservative styling was applied via the new grille, front bumper, body lines, hood ornament and emblems. The last vestiges of running boards were gone, and the woodie wagon now had a steel roof and lower tailgate—the latter doubled as spare tire storage. Its doors, roof pillars, side panels and upper tailgate were still wood, and the new rear bumper, taillamps and trim items differed from other Plymouths.

The wagon was shorter (191 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches long) than the

previous year. Front and rear tracks were reduced to 55 inches and 56 inches, and the hubcaps were updated.

The straight-six engine still displaced 217.8 cu.in., but now featured a higher 7:1 compression ratio, an automatic choke and new intake manifold. It produced 97hp. Inside, the three-seat interior layout was retained, but the instrument panel was revised. The new wagon cost \$2,372, and 3,443 examples were built.

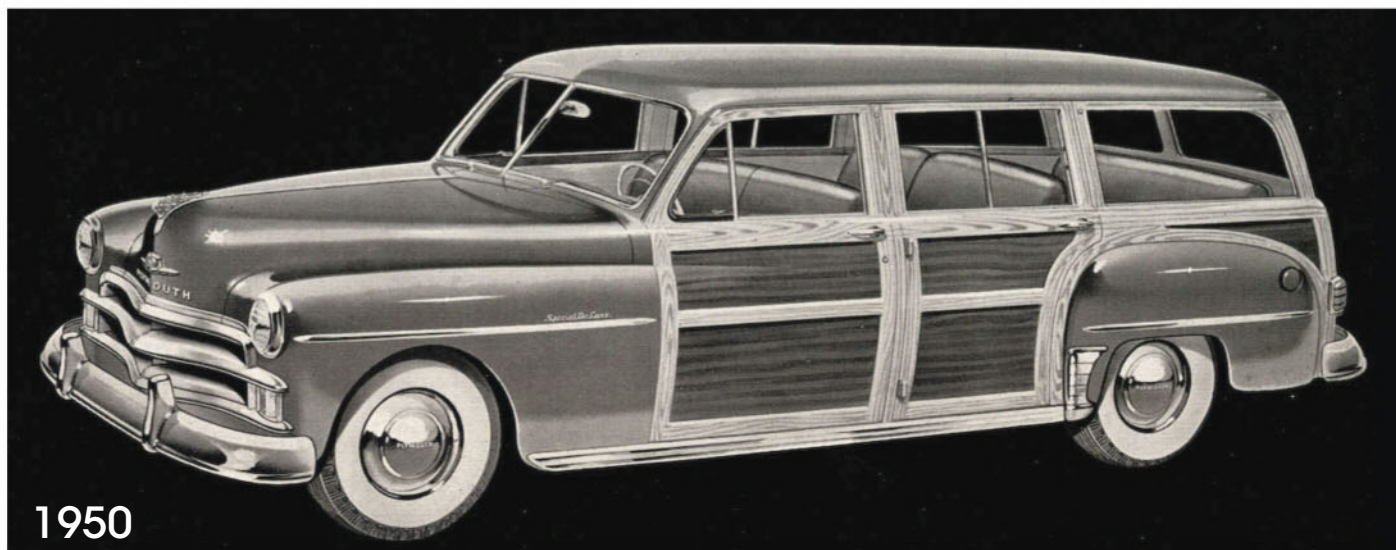
Plymouth's new 111-inch wheelbase, two-door, five-passenger, all-steel De Luxe Suburban station wagon debuted this year and enjoyed instant success with 19,220 sold at a much lower \$1,840.

1950

Exterior revisions for the Special De Luxe station wagon (P-20) were limited to a more aggressive grille with larger but fewer chrome bars—the top one turned down at its ends—a revised hood ornament, emblems and bumpers.

Despite their beauty, the timber transporter's fate was sealed when the higher purchase price, structural rigidity and the complexity and frequency of maintenance it required was compared to those of an all-steel wagon. While Suburban sales continued to soar in 1950, production of the last Plymouth woodie wagons slipped to 2,057 units, thereby ending an era. Today, however, they are adored by their owners and remain highly collectible. 🐾

SPECIAL THANKS to Jim Benjaminson for his contributions to this article.



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SIZE	ITEM
MED	62434/62426
LG	62433/62428
X-LG	62432/62429

NEW

YOUR CHOICE
\$3.99
~~\$5.99~~ comp at \$9.98

Item 62429 shown

SAVE 60%

Customer Rating **★★★★**

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ITEM 60678 shown 68050/62310

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\$139.99
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Customer Rating **★★★★**

SAVE \$130

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ITEM 68525/69677/63087/63088 CALIFORNIA ONLY

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HaulMaster **SUPER COUPON**

4 PIECE 1" x 15 FT. RATCHETING TIE DOWNS
ITEM 63056/63057/60405/63094 63150/61524/62322/90984 shown

SUPER COUPON
\$6.99
~~\$11.99~~ comp at \$34.95

Customer Rating **★★★★**

SAVE 80%

10084977

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PITTSBURGH AUTOMOTIVE **SUPER COUPON**

72", 18 DRAWER INDUSTRIAL QUALITY ROLLER CABINET
ITEM 61656

SUPER COUPON
\$999.99
~~\$1199.99~~ comp at \$1999.99

Customer Rating **★★★★**

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US GENERAL PRO **SUPER COUPON**

2.5 HP, 21 GALLON, 125 PSI VERTICAL AIR COMPRESSOR
ITEM 68091/61454 61693/62803 67847 shown

SUPER COUPON
\$149.99
~~\$179.99~~ comp at \$446.61

Customer Rating **★★★★**

SAVE \$296

10035203

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CENTECH **SUPER COUPON**

AUTOMATIC BATTERY FLOAT CHARGER
ITEM 69594/69955 42292 shown

SUPER COUPON
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Customer Rating **★★★★**

SAVE 85%

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CENTRAL PNEUMATIC **SUPER COUPON**

RETRACTABLE AIR HOSE REEL WITH 3/8" x 50 FT. HOSE
ITEM 93897 shown 69265/62344

SUPER COUPON
\$59.99
~~\$79.99~~ comp at \$198.45

Customer Rating **★★★★**

SAVE \$138

10088716

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PITTSBURGH AUTOMOTIVE **SUPER COUPON**

VEHICLE POSITIONING WHEEL DOLLY
ITEM 62234/67287 61917 shown

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Customer Rating **★★★★**

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CENTRAL PNEUMATIC **SUPER COUPON**

2.5 HP, 21 GALLON, 125 PSI VERTICAL AIR COMPRESSOR
ITEM 68091/61454 61693/62803 67847 shown

SUPER COUPON
\$149.99
~~\$179.99~~ comp at \$446.61

Customer Rating **★★★★**

SAVE \$296

10035203

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HaulMaster **SUPER COUPON**

1000 lb. capacity MOVER'S DOLLY
ITEM 60497/93888 shown 61899/62399/63095/63096 63098/63097

SUPER COUPON
\$7.99
~~\$9.99~~ comp at \$19.97

Customer Rating **★★★★**

SAVE 59%

10018175

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drill master **SUPER COUPON**

1500 WATT DUAL TEMPERATURE HEAT GUN (572"/1112")
ITEM 62340 62546/61014 96289 shown

SUPER COUPON
\$8.99
~~\$12.99~~ comp at \$28.83

Customer Rating **★★★★**

SAVE 68%

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HaulMaster **SUPER COUPON**

72" x 80" MOVING BLANKET
ITEM 69505/62418/66537 shown

SUPER COUPON
\$5.99
~~\$8.99~~ comp at \$17.97

Customer Rating **★★★★**

SAVE 66%

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PITTSBURGH AUTOMOTIVE **SUPER COUPON**

3 TON HEAVY DUTY STEEL JACK STANDS
ITEM 61196 69597 62392 38846 shown

SUPER COUPON
\$7.99
~~\$21.99~~ comp at \$34.99

Customer Rating **★★★★**

SAVE 48%

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The Great New Plymouth

The finely crafted nature of the 1949 Special DeLuxe wood-sided station wagon contradicted its low-price status

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY RICHARD LENTINELLO

There was a lot of truth to the slogan, "The Great New Plymouth," when the new 1949 models were introduced. Their restyled bodies had the most thoroughly redesigned exteriors since the prewar 1940 models. Gone was the fat-fendered look, replaced by front fenders that were less obtrusive and better integrated into



the body. It was a style that helped sales reach 508,000 cars for the model year, and increased calendar-year sales a massive 47.5 percent over 1948. Yes, the new '49 Plymouths were a hit.

Below their reshaped exterior, the 1949 Plymouths were essentially the same car as the previous year's models—same engine block, same brakes, same suspension. However, they looked so much more modern, which is what postwar buyers were craving. And they were better engineered, too, which Plymouth made sure every potential buyer knew. All the brochures stated: "Engineering



magic greets you right from the start. You don't grope for a starter button or pedal. You don't pull on a choke. You simply turn the ignition key—and the engine starts!"

Our feature Plymouth is known as a Series P-18 model because of its 118.5-inch wheelbase. This series had a wheelbase that was longer than that of the Series P-17, which was much shorter at only 111 inches; that's why they are often referred to as the "short wheelbase models." The P-18's Special DeLuxe models were Plymouth's preeminent line,



Steering wheels in the P-18 series measured 17½-inches in diameter, 1/2 inch larger than in the P-17 series. Red handle is parking brake.

preeminent line, priced only slightly higher than the P-18 DeLuxe models. To satisfy the public's demand for a variety of these higher-level automobiles, the Special DeLuxe was available in four different body styles: four-door sedan, two-door club coupe, two-door convertible, and four-door station wagon. Meanwhile, the P-18 DeLuxe line offered just two body styles: four-door sedan and two-door club coupe.

Compared to the top-selling four-door P-18 sedan, of which 252,878 examples were produced, only 3,443 wood-sided Special DeLuxe station wagons were built. However, for those buyers who still wanted to purchase a Plymouth station

wagon but didn't want to shell out \$2,372 for one, there was the more affordable, all-steel, two-door P-17 Suburban, which cost just \$1,840; a total of 19,220 Suburbans were made, which rendered the four-door Special DeLuxe wood-sided wagon a fairly rare car back in the day, and is why so few are seen today.

Up front, the Special DeLuxe's station wagon body features the same front grille and bumper, hood and fenders as all the other Plymouth models, but its main body was handcrafted out of wood by the Indiana-based U.S. Body & Forging Company. The roof is all steel, and the rear fenders are



Metal instrument panel features water temp/amp meter, left; 100 MPH speedometer, center; oil pressure/fuel, right. Radio grille standard.



Fresh air/temperature/fan control sits below radio with clock on right. Interior door panels are made of thin wood paneling.

standard fenders, too, although the rear bumper on the wagon is a special three-piece assembly that allows the tailgate to drop down without any interference. Besides the tailgate, there is also a liftgate up top, offering owners two methods for placing packages in the cargo area. The pillars are reinforced from the roof down to the frame for added structural rigidity, and the doors have double panels for extra strength. As to the attractive wood siding, it was available in either light or dark panels.

Like most automobiles of this era, the engine is an L-type flathead. Being a straight-six design, its bore and stroke measures 3.25 x 4.37 inches, with a total displacement of 217.8 cubic inches. Small in size, this smooth-spinning engine has just four main bearings, a compression ratio of 7.0:1, solid valve lifters and a single-barrel Carter carburetor, all of which allow it to develop 97 horsepower at 3,600 RPM. Performance isn't lively, but its on-the-road manners are adequate to get by. The 4.1:1 rear gear ratio helps the handsome wagon get off the line quicker than had it been equipped with the 3.9 ratio that all the other P-18 models had.

Plymouth was proud of its compact six-cylinder engine, and touted its design and performance in all its brochures. One such piece of factory literature stated: "There's a more powerful 97 horsepower engine, that out-performs all of the other great performing Plymouths! There's a new cylinder head in the engine, a higher 7 to 1 compression ratio, and a new intake manifold. New oil control rings and a new chrome compression ring—another Plymouth first—give you important savings on oil consumption and add thousands of miles to the life of the engine." The pistons used were made of a lightweight aluminum alloy and featured four rings—not the usual three—



“These models had a reputation for being solid and dependable. And because I like wooden boats and well-made wooden objects, I appreciate the Plymouth’s wood quality and the way it’s assembled.”





The second-row seats are split; the passenger-side seat tilts forward to allow access to the third-row seat. The rear doors feature double locks, and a separate metal compartment below the seat. The craftsmanship is first class.



to ensure maximum compression and performance. And unlike many cars from the early postwar era, Plymouths had an oil filter fitted to their engines as well as a filter inside the gas tank. For such a low-price car, Plymouth really did offer plenty of value for the money; no wonder it was number three in the sales race, right behind Chevrolet and Ford.

The transmission is a manual three-speed, with the shifter on the steering column like all the cars had back in the day. It featured synchromesh on second and third gears, so at low speeds you either have to come to a complete stop to shift into first gear or perform a well-synchronized double-clutch

downshift. The clutch itself is a single-plate unit, and its lining material was made of asbestos. By now, most clutches have been replaced, so that shouldn't be an issue today. Overdrive was optional.

The brakes were also the standard of the day. Being a four-wheel hydraulic drum system, Plymouth called them "Safe-Guard" brakes. The drums are 10 inches in diameter, and up front, there are two wheel cylinders per drum for maximum stopping power, while the handbrake is operated via a large hand lever. When new, the tires didn't add much to the wagon's stopping performance, as they were only 6.70 x 15s fitted on 4½-inch steel rims, although their "Super Cushion" name surely made buyers believe that at least this Plymouth had a comfortable ride. The spare tire is located on the tailgate, below a metal cover that has a lock for safekeeping. Although the tire is concealed, it is easily accessible, and effortless to remove.

One of the best examples of Plymouth's Special DeLuxe station wagon we have ever seen resides in South Florida, in the town of Palm Beach Gardens. It belongs to owner George Balaschak, who bought the old Plymouth back in 2008.

He tells us: "I always admired woodie wagons, and my wife, Jacquie, and I finally decided to look into buying one. While I have restored quite a few cars through the years, this one appealed to me because of its ready-to-go condition. We bought it from a friend, and it had been well taken care of, and it's a rather rare vehicle."

As to why he decided to buy a 1949 wagon instead of an earlier model, George says, "The 1949 Chrysler Corporation woodies had steel roofs, which promised to be less of a maintenance problem than the older wagons with wood roofs. These models had a reputation for being solid and dependable. And because I like wooden boats and well-made wooden objects, I appreciate the Plymouth's wood quality and the way it's assembled."

I had the pleasure of riding in this lovely wood-sided wagon on our way to our photo location in nearby Juno



Stone guards were made of stainless steel and only available on the Special DeLuxe, along with brightwork surrounding the windshield.



The straight-six flathead is compact in size, displacing only 217.8 cubic inches; it makes 97 horsepower with its single Carter carburetor. Everything is easily accessible. The orange canister is the oil filter.



Beach, and it rode extremely well. With its independent front suspension sprung by coil springs, it soaked up irregularities in the road with ease, while the 53 5/8-inch long semi-elliptic leaf springs in the rear kept the back end firmly planted, which aided in the Plymouth's solid ride. Though the late-afternoon traffic was light, the old Plymouth handled itself rather nicely, and braked well in a straight line. Like most cars of this era, the noise from the manual transmission is fairly loud at low speeds, but that noise all but disappears once you're cruising past 40 miles per hour. Overall, it was a blast to ride in, and is one of those rare kinds of vehicle that is more than just a

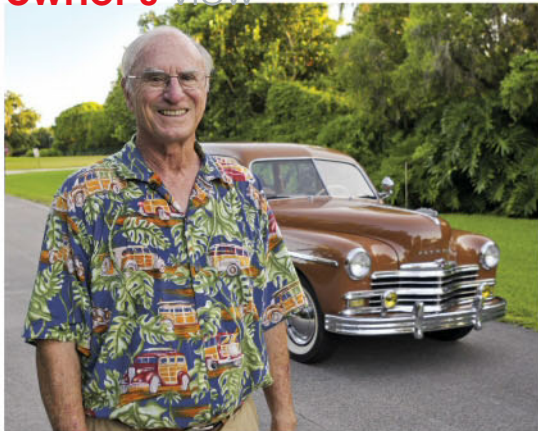
pretty face; it truly is practical for regular use, especially if you have lots of family, friends and dogs.

"This Plymouth wagon is a straightforward old shift car with the bonus of overdrive," George says. "The transmission shifts hard and can be a bit clunky at times, but it's always a smooth shift. To engage overdrive, you just lift your foot off the gas pedal at around 45 miles per hour, and after a few seconds the overdrive engages and you are cruising along with the engine at reduced revs. The overdrive lets us cruise at highway speeds with the engine revs at a comfortable level."

As to the way it drives, George continued his description



The wood-framed liftgate and metal tailgate combine to make access to the cargo area a breeze. Second- and third-row seats are removable.



I do all the maintenance on this woodie wagon, which is basically keeping the fluids checked, tire pressures correct and basic adjustments where needed. I replaced various seals and rebuilt the carburetor when I first got it, but that's about all it needs, apart from a regular wash and clean. My original intention when I bought this Plymouth was to use it, and I do. In fact, I enjoy driving it to the tune of about 1,000 miles per year, but even that's not often enough. I also own a 1930 Lincoln, a '56 Chevrolet Nomad, a '62 Thunderbird, and a Talbo, a tribute to the Figoni et Falaschi-bodied Talbot-Lago T150 SS that I built myself from scratch. Each of these cars has appealed to me for their styling and special character. But the old Plymouth woodie has the extra charm and warmth of its wooden coachwork that is so rarely seen today, as well as being a car that I like to drive.

of the car's on-the-road characteristics by saying, "The old Plymouth corners and handles like any 68-year-old car in good condition. It has radial tires, which help a lot. You would understand if you had experienced the way the old bias-ply tires steered the car when driven over the trolley tracks! The four-wheel drum brakes work well; they don't pull or bind, and driving in flat Florida I don't have the challenges of big

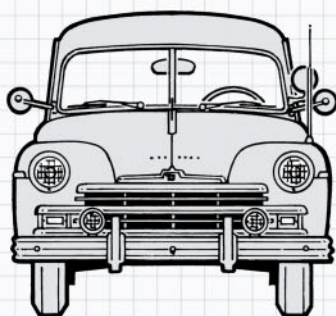
downhills to test fade. But, of course, the answer to that would be to downshift early."

"The best thing I like about this Special Deluxe station wagon is its looks, particularly with this color combination of Malibu Brown and the two different wood tones, which complement its Light Brown interior. Most importantly this car brings a smile to everyone's face when they look at it." 🐾

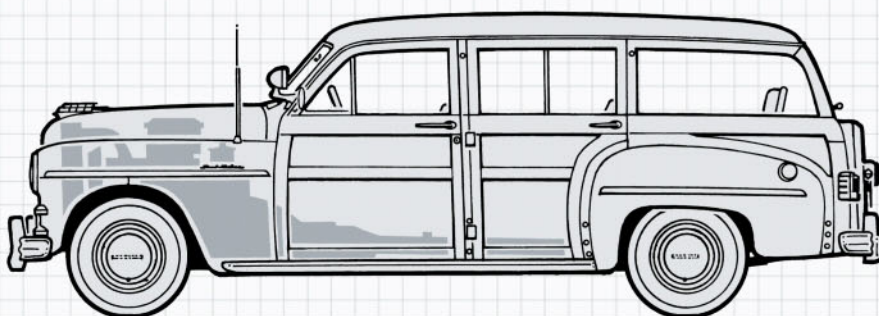


1949 PLYMOUTH SPECIAL DELUXE

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



← 55 inches →



← 118 inches →

SPECIFICATIONS

PRICE

BASE PRICE	\$2,372
PRICE AS PROFILED	N/A
OPTIONS (ON CAR PROFILED)	Spotlamp, fog lamps, overdrive

ENGINE

TYPE	Straight-six, L-type flathead
DISPLACEMENT	217.8 cubic inches
BORE X STROKE	3¼ x 4⅞ inches
COMPRESSION RATIO	7.0:1
HORSEPOWER @ RPM	97 @ 3,600
TORQUE @ RPM	175-lb.ft. @ 1,200
VALVETRAIN	Flathead
MAIN BEARINGS	Four
FUEL SYSTEM	Carter 1½-inch single-barrel downdraft
LUBRICATION SYSTEM	Full pressure
ELECTRICAL SYSTEM	6-volt, 40-amp generator
EXHAUST SYSTEM	Single

TRANSMISSION

TYPE	Three-speed manual, column shift	
RATIOS	1st	2.57:1
	2nd	1.83:1
	3rd	1.00:1
	Reverse	3.48:1

DIFFERENTIAL

TYPE	Hypoid
GEAR RATIO	4.10:1
DRIVE AXLES	Semi-floating

STEERING

TYPE	Worm and roller
TURNS, LOCK TO LOCK	4¼
GEAR RATIO	18.2:1
TURNING CIRCLE	37 feet, 8 inches

BRAKES

TYPE	Four-wheel hydraulic drums
FRONT	10 inches
REAR	10 inches

CHASSIS & BODY

CONSTRUCTION	Steel/wood body on separate steel frame
BODY STYLE	Eight-passenger station wagon
LAYOUT	Front engine, rear-wheel drive

SUSPENSION

FRONT	Independent; coil springs, tubular shocks
REAR	Solid axle, semi-elliptic, tubular shocks

WHEELS & TIRES

WHEELS	4½ x 15 inches
TIRES	6.70 x 15 inches

WEIGHTS & MEASURES

WHEELBASE	118 inches
OVERALL LENGTH	186 inches
OVERALL WIDTH	71.45 inches
OVERALL HEIGHT	65 inches
FRONT TRACK	55 inches
REAR TRACK	56 inches
CURB WEIGHT	3,341 pounds

CAPACITIES

CRANKCASE	5 quarts
COOLING SYSTEM	3¾ gallons
FUEL TANK	17 gallons
TRANSMISSION	2¾ pints

CALCULATED DATA:

BHP PER CU.IN.	0.44
WEIGHT PER BHP	34.44 pounds
WEIGHT PER CU.IN.	15.33 pounds

PRODUCTION

P-18 STATION WAGONS	3,443
---------------------	-------

PROS & CONS

- + Loads of charm
- + Rugged mechanicals
- + Plenty of cargo space
- Lethargic performance
- Parts can be hard to find
- Wood requires upkeep

WHAT TO PAY

LOW
\$35,000 – \$50,000

AVERAGE
\$70,000 – \$80,000

HIGH
\$100,000 – \$120,000

CLUB CORNER

PLYMOUTH OWNERS CLUB

P.O. Box 416
Cavalier, North Dakota 58220
<http://clubs.hemmings.com/plymouthowners>
Dues: \$28
Membership: 2,700

WALTER P. CHRYSLER CLUB

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Kalamazoo, Michigan 49003
www.chryslerclub.org
Dues: \$40 U.S./\$42 Canada
Membership: 3,500

Moto Exotica

The enchanting trim of this 1953 Kaiser Dragon recalls the mysterious islands of the Pacific

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVID CONWILL

Exposure to the exotic vistas of the Pacific stuck with a great number of World War Two veterans when they returned home in the mid-1940s. That affinity led to an explosion of interest in Polynesian culture and aesthetics that would lead to the rise of Tiki bars, Exotica music and the 1949 Broadway hit, *South Pacific*.



One area where faux-Polynesian did not make tremendous inroads was automobile design—with one notable exception. In the immediate postwar period, of course, it was easy to sell anything with wheels to a car-starved public. After that, jet aircraft and space themes predominated with the tech-heavy automakers. But what if you were a newcomer to the auto industry without a huge R&D budget for things like V-8 engines and whiz-bang automatic accessories?

That's exactly the conundrum Kaiser-Frazer faced when the Big Three rolled out their first new postwar offerings in 1949. The automaker's slab-sided designs that had looked so fresh in 1947 when compared with the 1942-style pontoon fenders still being produced by most other manufacturers suddenly seemed very dated. Once a glut of overproduction was cleared out from 1950, with the last few disguised as the final Frazers, it was time for a daring new Kaiser design.

Famed designer Howard "Dutch" Darrin created a longer,

lower and wider body shell with a prominent "sweetheart" dip at the top of the windshield and rear window, reminiscent of the neckline on an elegant woman's dress. The restyle, billed as "Anatomic" design, featured the lowest beltline in U.S. car production for 1951. The result was a success, and Kaiser sales rebounded from a mere 15,228 examples in 1950 to 139,452 cars in 1951—besting the likes of De Soto and Hudson.

With no V-8 on the horizon, Kaiser would continue with the Continental-produced 226-cu.in. L-head straight-six engine that it had used since 1947, albeit revised to produce 115 horsepower. A few months after the new 1951 models debuted, Kaiser doubled down on styling to retain the momentum, introducing an alluringly different trim package for its Deluxe models in the late fall of 1950.

The star of the package was a simulated reptile hide made from vinyl and billed as "Dragonleather." That moniker inspired the name of the Dragon package, which was soon expanded to include a padded vinyl top in yet another faux-lizard skin called "Dinosaur." The package was tweaked twice more in 1951 and





The Bambu-vinyl-and-Laguna-cloth interior is the star player in the Dragon, and it is well supported by lavish chrome trim and accessory lighting inside. That padded dash complements a pop-out windshield to add an extra bit of safety to all 1951-'55 Kaisers.

then dropped when the 1952 models came on the scene with the Dragon's role as a premium Kaiser filled by a new trim level called Manhattan, a nameplate previously used by the top-of-the-line Frazer.

The Dragon returned on Halloween Day 1952, however, as a stand-alone model above the 1953 Manhattan. In addition to the special upholstery and padded top—now in a grass-patterned "Bambu" vinyl and Laguna cloth, a heavy-duty Belgian linen with overlapping patterns. A few cars had vinyl seat inserts instead of cloth.

The Bambu vinyl extended to the interior door panels, interior walls, package shelf, seats, padded dash and even the interior of the glovebox and interior walls of the trunk. To give the Dragon a luxurious feel above and beyond an ordinary Manhattan, the car used almost 200 pounds of insulation to quiet the ride and give it a sense of additional heft.

On the exterior, 14-karat gold was used on the hood orna-

ment, trunk handle and deck and fender scripts. A gold engraved medallion with the owner's name was also installed on the glovebox door. Furthering the luxury, the standard accessory package included everything in Kaiser's "100 options" package such as a GM-sourced Hydra-Matic automatic transmission, E-Z Eye tinted glass, a radio with rear speaker, white sidewall tires, Deluxe wheel covers, a windshield washer, heater, defroster, center armrests in front and rear, trunk courtesy lamps, a glovebox lamp, full carpeting both in the car and in the trunk, backup lamps, power steering and a lighted cigar receiver. So full was the standard equipment that the only real options of note were wire wheels, fog lamps and a spot lamp.

The Dragon, which sold for a price equivalent to a contemporary Buick Roadmaster, was in some respects a comparative bargain, as its sticker price represented essentially the cost of adding all its standard features to a regular Manhattan sedan as options—with the special upholstery and top thrown in for free. Alas,



"Supersonic" name notwithstanding, the flathead six-cylinder was the biggest shortcoming of the Kaiser line. Despite developing only 115hp, the Hydra-Matic-backed engine gives satisfactory performance according to the owner.





all this tropical splendor was not enough to make up the difference between the Dragon's humdrum engine and the Buick's new 188-horsepower, 322-cu.in. V-8. Dragon sales were a lackluster 1,277 units.

The folks who did buy a Dragon, though, got quite a vehicle. It was loaded, of course, exotically stylish and provided an enormously plush driving experience. The Dragons, like all Kaisers and Frazers, are also supported by a strong club network, meaning that expertise and parts are relatively easy to find.

Owner Carl Hering, of Cayuga, New York, is no stranger to the club scene or the appeal of Kaisers in general, as he's the Eastern Division director for the Kaiser Frazer Owners Club International. Further, Carl practically grew up in Kaisers thanks to his father's purchase of a new 1949 Kaiser Traveler Utility Sedan when he was a boy. That 1949 Traveler eventually gave way to a 1951 Traveler and then a 1953 Manhattan, ensuring that Carl's formative years were spent in the back seat of Kaisers.

When Carl turned 18, he purchased a 1949 Kaiser of his own for transportation, though he admits he "proceeded to wreck it—beat it up." Considering the average teenager's hot-rod mentality in 1960, perhaps that's not surprising. But a more mature Carl's next vehicle was a 1951 Deluxe, purchased with assistance from his father. "That was a nice car," he recalls fondly.

After that, Carl was out of Kaisers for a while, but not particularly long. It was only in the 1970s when Carl purchased this Dragon as a solid, complete original in Missouri. He treated it to a quick repaint in the original Jade Tint color and proceeded to enjoy

it—this time as a collector car rather than transportation, though he put many, many miles under its wheels touring with fellow Kaiser Club members.

An oil-burning engine in the 1990s led to a rebuild, but busy with work and other Kaiser projects, he put the Dragon aside and didn't really touch it for the next 18 years. Then, "Six years ago, I started getting serious with it," Carl says. And serious he was, treating the Dragon to an all-but-body-off restoration to showroom-new.

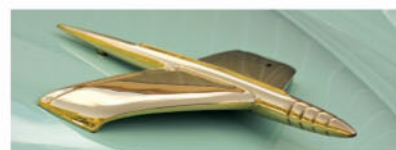
"I'm a nut on originality." That quest for authenticity caused Carl to even track down an NOS bolt of the oh-so-rare original upholstery material that he used to re-cover the front seat and to experience the financial anguish of replating not only chrome, but 14-karat gold exterior trim.

As you might imagine, the Dragon doesn't see quite as much road time today as it did pre-restoration. The car, which has garnered 198 out of 200 points when shown at Kaiser Club events, serves more as a rolling embodiment of a factory-correct, ultra-premium 1953 Kaiser. But Carl says he does drive it locally and he also spreads his time among a 2002 Ford Thunderbird, a 1954 Kaiser Darrin roadster, a 1951 Willys Jeepster and a 1952 Kaiser Manhattan Club Coupe that graced these pages back in *HCC* #30.

Asked for wisdom to impart to would-be Dragon owners, Carl points out that they are the rarest Kaisers except for the Darrin, but acknowledges their affordability in the general scheme of things. He also notes that any Kaiser is a fun and easy car to own—to say nothing of unique. "After all," he says, "Anybody can own a Ford or Chevy." 🐞



“Six years ago, I started getting serious with it...I’m a nut on originality.”





//
I want to talk
about the
automaker I
call 'The Most
Independent.'
That would be,
in my humble
opinion,
the Davis
Motorcar
Company.



The Most Independent

In an earlier column, I mentioned how proud the Nash Motors Company was of being an independent automaker. Nash bragged that it had the most integrated manufacturing facilities in the industry, carried no debt and had ample cash reserves. Taken altogether, the company proudly advertised itself as *"The Great Independent."* James Nance of Packard, on the other hand, hated having his company labeled an independent because he felt it was the kiss of death for any automaker.

Years ago, I dubbed American Motors "The Last Independent" when I wrote my first book, which was a history of American Motors, under that title. But, today, I want to talk about the automaker I call "The Most Independent." That would be, in my humble opinion, the Davis Motorcar Company.

Why Davis? Because it tried to build a three-wheeled automobile, a really unusual-looking car with sleek aerodynamic styling and unusual features. It demonstrated the most independent thinking of all the independents.

The story began around 1941 when race car mechanic Frank Kurtis built a three-wheel sports car for millionaire sportsman Joel Thorne. Dubbed the Californian, it attracted lots of attention when Thorne drove it around his Southern California haunts.

In 1945, fast-talking car salesman Gary Davis acquired the Californian and hatched a plan to produce the car in small numbers and offer them to the Hollywood crowd. Davis began a public-relations push in which he claimed to be the car's developer—not mentioning Kurtis—and planned to sell copies for under \$1,000. In no time flat, inquiries poured in from people anxious to buy dealership rights. Davis used the money he received to begin work on a production prototype after realizing the original car's chassis was too delicate.

Davis found a partner willing to help bankroll the project and get the car into production. He also talked engineers and designers from nearby aircraft companies into volunteering their talents to redesign the car for free in exchange for double their usual pay once production got under way. Davis acquired space in a factory building at the

Van Nuys airport. By November 1947, the new Davis prototype was ready to show.

It had the look of the future, a sleek, slim rocket-like shape with a single front wheel and two rear wheels. Front and rear body panels were protected by elegant curved bumpers, and headlamps were concealed behind small doors. Motive power came from a 46hp Hercules four-

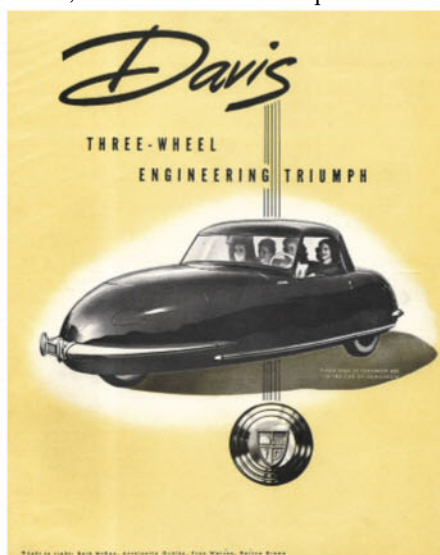
cylinder engine. Coil spring suspension was featured both front and rear. And talk about independent thinking: The hardtop was removable by undoing a few clasps, and there were no door handles; pushbuttons were used instead. Each wheel featured a built-in jacking system. There also was no grille; cooling air came in through a slot below the front bumper. Gary Davis was obviously an independent thinker.

About 10 more cars were hand built, each with the Hercules engine. Then "production" of a sort got

under way, with Davis buying 100 Continental engines, which were installed in cars whose frames were fabricated by an outside supplier. The Davis's 11 aluminum body panels were formed in-house on Kirksite dies—cheap, but only good for about 100 panels before having to be replaced. Apparently Davis, who paid himself a reported \$1,000 a week salary, never raised enough money to fund large-scale production. By November 1948, would-be dealers who'd put down cash for a franchise were complaining to the Los Angeles district attorney. Then, in May 1949, 17 ex-workers filed suit for back wages never paid. By the end of the month, the Davis plant was closed.

Davis had already shipped much of his materials to another site, apparently hoping to continue building his cars. But in May 1950, all the assets of Davis Motorcar Company were sold to satisfy tax claims. That fall, Gary Davis was tried for grand theft of an estimated \$2 million in deposits received for franchises. He ended up serving 15 months at the Sheriff's Honor Farm.

And of his Most Independent car, only perhaps 17 were built, along with three prototypes of a three-wheel Jeep-like vehicle. Like other independents, the Most Independent simply went bust. ☹



I ENJOYED THE ARTICLE ON

flattops in HCC #148. They can be hard to classify as a group as there are variations. For example, the 1959-'60 Chevrolets are pillarless hardtops, as is the featured Pontiac, though it doesn't have the defining overhang on the rear window as do the full-size Chevrolets and the Corvair. The 1961 Chevrolet two- and four-door sedans featured the overhang rear window and are referred to as flattops. I wanted to just add this to the record because, as a model, the 1961 sedan was produced in much larger numbers than all the others featured. I have endeavored to save a 1961 Bel Air four-door sedan; while not as popular as the hardtops, it still gets lots of looks and comments.

Todd Maxwell

Hanover, Pennsylvania

I FIND IT GRATIFYING THAT BOTH

Richard Lentinello and Jim Richardson both speak favorably about not only enjoying the pleasures of driving, but of taking time to enjoy the sights and sounds of the country while doing so.

I appear to have only a couple of years on Jim, so my experiences dovetail with his in so many ways. Driving was a way of exercising freedom, and speed limits were of a type that allowed observation of pleasurable sights along the way. The cars themselves seemed to have almost human characteristics, becoming familiar "friends" especially when conditions were bad and you were safe inside (or at least thought you were.)

The arrival of the interstates cut into that, but, as apparently is also the case with Jim, I avoid them as much as possible, leaving them to the endless stream of trucks and of drivers who pay more attention to their electronic gadgetry than to competently driving down the road in their insulated capsules, which do not allow for any intrusion of sights, smells and sounds.

To appreciate this nation, take an extra 10 or 20 minutes. Enjoy the scenery. Relax. You will feel much more at ease when you arrive, and you will present less danger to others.

Larry Huffman

Piqua, Ohio

IN HCC #148'S "I WAS THERE"

about the 1956 Ford two-door model that was sold with a four-door model front seat, of course it was difficult to get in the

back. At that time, I was a salesman at a Ford dealership, and I saw a car come off the transporter with that very same arrangement—a four-door front seat in a two-door car. I have no idea what happened then, as shortly thereafter I left the dealership.

Vince Neuman

Eugene, Oregon

THE PRATT-ELCAR ARTICLE IN

HCC #148 was thoroughly enjoyed. While it was considered an "assembled" car, it appears to me that has been true with many cars in that era as well as currently. *Elcar and Pratt Automobiles* by William Locke is an excellent book on the history of a company that started with horse-drawn carriages like Studebaker and some other companies had; Elcar obtained 19-inch wheels from Studebaker. My family has roots in the Elkhart area, and my aunt, Versa Chandler Bryant, used to process all the company's incoming and outgoing checks and was authorized to sign them.

The 1930 Elcar 140 had a Continental 322-cu.in. straight-eight engine rated at 140 horsepower. As an American production car, it was ranked third only behind Cadillac's V-12 and the Duesenberg, according to Mr. Locke. Thank you for providing some interesting history on an automobile of which many people are not aware.

Bob Bryant

Niantic, Connecticut

I ENJOYED THE ARTICLE IN

HCC #150 about cars on TV shows. It brought to mind a few more that I remember: There was Ephraim Zimbalist Jr.'s 1958 or '59 Thunderbird in *77 Sunset Strip*, along with Ed "Kookie" Burns's bucket T hot rod. I also remember Frank Cannon's Lincoln Mark IV as being pretty snazzy for a private eye. Then who can forget Jack Lord as Steve McGarrett careening around Oahu in his black Mercury Marquis? And Raymond Burr as Perry Mason drove a succession of nice Cadillacs, including at one time what looked like an Eldorado Biarritz circa 1956 or '57, while his faithful investigator Paul Drake was sometimes seen in a Corvette or a Thunderbird convertible.

Chuck Snyder

Bellingham, Washington

AS A KID GROWING UP IN SAN

Francisco in the 1950s, I remember our

family watching the show *San Francisco Beat* (also known as "The Line Up"). The show ran from 1954 to 1960 on CBS. During the beginning credits you would see a head-on view of a 1951 Ford Sedan police car climbing up the very steep Hyde Street hill while being passed by a cable car heading down the hill. At the intersection at the top of the hill the car would turn left and head down famous, crooked Lombard Street and disappear, off to solve actual crimes from the San Francisco records. I believe that the old Ford was later updated to a 1954 Ford.

Ed Bonuccelli

Cloverdale, California

IN HCC #150, MILTON STERN ASKED

if anyone had ever purchased a Dodge St. Regis. I can confirm that Dodge sold at least one.

February 29, 1984; Niagara Falls, New York. It was my first day on the job at a small newspaper, and the area was hit with a major blizzard that rendered my Chevrolet Monza snowbound. "Well, I guess you'll have to stay at my house tonight," said the boss, who owned a dark blue-green St. Regis. He was born and raised on the great plains of Canada, and knew his way around snow. He barreled the Dodge along the snow-filled Robert Moses Parkway with careless abandon—wife up front, me in the back—and when a ramp was impassible, he simply threw the car into reverse and drove backwards like this was something he did every day. (The boss was also a minister, and I must say I was rather surprised that a man of the cloth could drive a car with such an obvious lack of concern regarding speed limits and occupant safety.)

I drove the St. Regis myself on a number of occasions thereafter, hauling sacks of mail to the post office—interior and trunk filled to the brim, rear end frighteningly close to the pavement. As a car guy, I was aware of the St. Regis's intermediate origins, but it always felt full-size to me—wide and smooth.

Dave Danglis

Lima, New York



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



My father had

been to the

original New

York World's

Fair in 1939

and 1940... So

believe me, I

was primed.



Oh, Those Dancing Dodges!

His job as an engine room officer aboard oil tankers kept my father away from home a lot. He routinely sailed to both the Middle East and the Far East. One time, I remember, he was away from home for more than a year. So when he returned, it was a very big deal. We got a chance to bond. He was back state-side one time in 1965 and said to me, "You want to go to the fair?"

Everybody living within shouting distance of New York City back then knew what that meant. It was the New York World's Fair, being held at Flushing Meadow Park in Queens, not far from Shea Stadium, where the Mets played (badly, in those years, under Casey Stengel, if I remember right). As a day trip, my dad and I took Liberty Avenue from East New York in Brooklyn to Conduit Boulevard and the Belt Parkway, passing not far from the fabled Big Bow Wow on Cross Bay Boulevard where all the muscle car guys and street racers hung out, and then northbound on the Van Wyck Expressway up to Flushing Meadow. You knew you were getting close when you could spot the Unisphere and then that huge observation tower that New York State had put up.

My father had been to the original New York World's Fair in 1939 and 1940, and he told me about the fantastic exhibitions of cars and railroading that were seen at that long-ago extravaganza. So, believe me, I was primed. With the passage of more than 50 years since I attended, my memory is a little foggy sometimes, but I do have specific recall of several automotive attractions that the fair boasted in the mid-1960s. First off, though, I've got to give a shout to the New York City exhibit that occupied a hall left over from the 1939-1940 event. It was a giant scale model of the entire five boroughs, and you went for a make-believe helicopter ride over the "city" to take in the details. I was already into building model cars, so to me, the whole thing was amazing. I distinctly remember trying to spot our apartment building on Atkins Avenue, without success.

Next, it was off to the Ford Motor Company pavilion, which *HCC* editor Richard Lentiniello explains in greater detail in his own column on page six of this issue. I'm pretty certain that we rode in one of the 1965 Thunderbirds as we were pulled through the Magic Skyway, as it was called. We also went to the General Motors Pavilion—my

uncle then worked for the GM Tech Center in Warren, Michigan, where I think at least part of it was planned out—and marveled as you rode in a futuristic transportation module through detailed, animated scenes of cities from tomorrow, with automated highways and mega-speed trains serving the populace. Was this where some kid-turned-engineer got the idea for autonomous driving?

The GM pavilion drew more visitors than any other attraction at the fair during its two-year run.

We also checked out the Sinclair exhibit, which was spectacular, featuring life-sized sculptures of dinosaurs, including the brontosau-

rus that was Sinclair's longtime trademark. Then we wandered down to the lake at Flushing Meadow, where we watched an exhibition of Amphicars, the first time I had ever seen that sports car-turned-boat that's a staple at auctions nowadays. And of course, we made it over to the Chrysler exhibit.

This is where my memory gets a little fuzzy because, well, I was a kid then, and I can't specifically remember what Chrysler was doing with its exhibit, although I do seem to recall that there were a bunch of concept cars inside the building. What I remember much better, and I've written about this before, was how you could somehow apply to get a ride in the Bronze Blowtorch, one of the fabled Chrysler turbine cars. Best as I can recollect, there was a tremendous line of people waiting to take a lap around the pavilion in this landmark car, so my father and I passed on getting a ticket. But we were still able to sidle up to the fence and watch the turbine car whistle and whine through its paces as it took passengers on these magical rides. I'll never forget it. Hey, I never got to see any of the turbine cars run at Indianapolis, except in a parade on the morning of the 2011 race.

Another highlight for me also involved Chrysler products, specifically Dodges. I prevailed upon my father to let me sit through two scheduled demonstrations by Jack Kochman's Hell Drivers, the stunt-driving team, who sent Darts, Coronets and even D-100 pickups balancing on two wheels and sailing ramp to ramp. It was wonderful.

Not everything turned out peachy for the fair. It lost both exhibitors and investors money. But it was a great, innocent expression of world peace and technical advancement, and we're all poorer for the fact that it will likely never happen again. 🐉



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I've forgotten

most of the

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but I can

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missed out

on...
//

A Classic Lesson Learned About Classic Cars

Having spent a lifetime in the collector-car world, several truths have become clear. Many of them have to do with the purported condition or provenance of a car being offered for sale, specifically the overstatement of a car's true condition. Shocking, I know!

One truth, however, resonates louder than the others. In fact, it qualifies as one of Murphy's Laws. That truth is: "The car you've been seeking for years will become available at the least opportune time."

I've forgotten most of the girls I dated before I was married, but I can remember nearly every car that I missed out on because I believed the time wasn't right for me to buy it. I use the word "believed," because for much of my life, I was conservative when it came to financial matters.

I won't give you a list all of the cars I missed. Trust me, it's a substantial one. My epiphany occurred when I bought my 1931 Lincoln Town Sedan 20-plus years ago. I'd spotted the car nearly 30 years earlier at a CCCA Grand Classic in Dearborn, Michigan. I stayed in touch with the owner and, finally, when he was in his 80s, he told me the car was mine. I quickly paid his price.

In the meantime, a longtime friend of mine was going through a similar experience with a Locomobile phaeton. He'd pursued it for years, and, finally, it became available. However, the timing couldn't have been worse—he had two daughters in college. His wife, as understanding a collector-car wife as there is, was, not surprisingly, concerned about their ability to buy the car. Knowing how infrequently such an automobile becomes available, my friend decided he had to go for it—he conducted a "fire sale," selling a Chris Craft boat and two cars while negotiating a short-term loan. He got the car and still owns it.

Ironically, I was also pursuing a Locomobile at the time. It was owned by a fellow who had taken it as trade on a boat and wanted to unload it. I was the first caller, but by the time I arrived to see the car, the owner had a legal

pad containing a "who's who" of Classic car collectors who'd called on the Locomobile. When he showed me the list, I swallowed hard and bought it. Any one of the individuals on that list would have paid his asking price.

A few years ago, I learned of a 1931 Lincoln Dietrich convertible sedan—one of my all-time favorite body styles—that might be available. Only five of this body style are known to exist; none is for sale. I traveled to see the car, told the owners I was interested and asked them to contact me when they

were ready to sell. Ironically, they called me when I was visiting Jack Passey, arguably the greatest Lincoln collector ever. In his lifetime, Jack probably bought more cars for which he didn't have the funds than anyone I know. His bankers knew he was good for the money, and he



always came through.

The owners of the Lincoln told me their asking price, and after some quick negotiating, I owned the car. The only problem was I had no money to pay for it. However, I was attending the Pebble Beach Concours and, thus, was surrounded by fellow collectors. The next evening, I sold one of my Lincolns and was back in the black. A fellow Lincoln owner was impressed; I breathed a sigh of relief.

And what happens when a true one-of-a-kind automobile becomes available? That happened several years ago when another Classic car friend learned a rare car he'd always wanted was coming up for auction. Initially, he set a limit on what he would pay. Then, a fellow collector told him, "You've been talking about this car as long as I've known you. This is probably the last time it will become available in your lifetime. This is your chance to own it."

Fortunately, my friend was able to go for it and has no regrets. In fact, I suspect one or two other Classic cars he later acquired were purchased using the same logic. I wish I'd learned that lesson sooner. Then, all I'd have to worry about would be coming up with enough money. 🐾

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Proletarian Packard

Clothed in a low-line body style, only 88 Packard Super-8 One-Sixty Business Coupes were built for 1940

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEFF KOCH

Ladies and gentlemen, this is a 1940 Packard Super-8 One-Sixty Business Coupe. Yes, a Senior Packard business coupe. Seems oxymoronic, doesn't it? Mighty Packard, home of the V-12 engine up through 1939. Living in the luxury stratosphere with Cadillac, Lincoln, Imperial and others—all offered coupes, of course, but not business





Moving the shifter from the floor to the steering column allows true three-across seating. Wood, carpet and hides impart a rich feel. Column shifter is a snap to use. Art Deco flourishes remain throughout the interior. Radio and heater both optional, and both present here.

coupes. Packard was associated with coachbuilt bodies, with work by LeBaron and Darrin. Opulence. Prestige... Packards were for the unhurried, for people who owned companies rather than worked for them. The humble business coupe, with its single bench seat up front and the trunk, plus space where the rear seat would otherwise live, hauled sample goods (and not a few changes of clothes)... Business coupes were for hustlers—sweaty men in ill-fitting suits hawking widgets from town to town, living out of a suitcase. Potentially rewarding, of course, but... common. Packards were the reward for those who had done well.

The thought of a Packard business coupe was like asking Ruth's Chris to whip you up a Quarter Pounder with Cheese, or dressing a Rockefeller in a T-shirt and jean shorts. It should be no surprise to anyone who understands the Packard model hierarchy that the 1940 Packard Super-8 One-Sixty Business Coupe sold a measly 88 units for the year. Of course it didn't sell well. What sense did its existence make?

Now, the Junior Series Packard lineup, introduced in the throes of the Depression as a Hail-Mary sales move, was competitive with upper-middle-class marques like Oldsmobile. (Indeed, a Series 70 Oldsmobile business coupe and a Packard One-Ten business coupe started within two dollars of each other's base price.) And a business coupe in that class stands to reason: If you're a salesman, on the road for hundreds of miles at a clip in an era before the interstate system, you'll want to be driving something that isn't going to beat you up across the miles, something that would hold its value, and something that (by reputation) was solidly built and wouldn't need to be overhauled every few thousand miles.

With the dawn of a new decade, Packard changed its model nomenclature and shuffled its lineup into four distinct, if similar-looking lines. Junior Packards lived in two series: The old Packard Six became the One-Ten series, carrying its 100hp six on

a 122-inch wheelbase, and the established and popular eight-cylinder One-Twenty series rolled on a 127-inch wheelbase and used Packard's venerable 120hp, 282-cu.in. straight-eight for power. It is the One-Ten that was comparable in price and specification to the Oldsmobile example above.

But this is not a Junior Packard. Following the demise of the Twelves, Senior Packards were split into One-Sixty (the model seen on these pages) and One-Eighty models. Each rode a variety of 127-inch, 138-inch or 148-inch chassis, depending on the body selected. The One-Eighty was primarily a trim upgrade, and was made more available to coachbuilders like Darrin and Rollston. (The One-Sixty Business Coupe had the shortest chassis—a length shared with the One-Twenty line.) We suspect the crux of the reason for this particular car's existence lies here: Beyond giving the Senior line a relatively reasonable base price

to advertise against (\$1,524, the least expensive Senior Packard by \$81, with prices rising steeply from there), the One-Sixty, with its 127-inch wheelbase that it shared with the One-Twenty, meant that a business coupe could potentially be offered, with little extra cost or confusion on the line to make it happen. All the parts fit; why not?

Both the One-Sixty and One-Eighty used Packard's brand new straight-eight engine that launched for the year. Do not underestimate the importance of Packard's new powerplant, in either Packard lore or in the car world in general. "The Engineer's Engine!", cried magazine ads of the era. In One-Sixty and One-Eighty form, "The New Master of America's Highways!" shared an all-new L-head straight-eight displacing 356 cubic inches; a small-ish 3 1/2-inch bore was dwarfed by the long, torque-generating 4 5/8-inch stroke. Mix with 6.45:1 compression and aluminum pistons, a crankshaft that weighed 105 pounds, and factor in that it was a whopping 36 cubic inches larger than its predecessor, and the 356-cu.in. engine developed 160 horsepower—the most pow-





sengers and the more realistic possibility of three-abreast seating. As a bonus, overdrive was available and used a four-pinion planetary gear set rather than a three, as well as a larger one-way clutch. The chassis was up to contemporary standards: independent suspension up front with unequal length A-arms, coil springs mounted considerably inboard of the spindles and an anti-roll bar. In the rear there were leaf springs with a rubber-composite layer between each leaf.

erful eight-cylinder engine in passenger-car production for 1940, and offering as much power as the Packard Twin-Six it replaced. Additionally, the clean-sheet 356 “eats less gasoline than many a feebler motor.” Installed in the lightest body style available—at a shipping weight of 3,760 pounds, it’s 65 pounds lighter than the convertible coupe—it should accelerate quickly when you get on it. Yet, this was no hot rod engine. Hydraulic valve tappets were designed for smooth, maintenance-free operation.

Packard’s newest Senior Series engine hooked up to a three-speed transmission that, at last, got the shifter off the floor and onto the steering column, allowing greater leg mobility for pas-

Styling was, at best, evolutionary for the 1940 models. Body shells had been the same since 1938, but the sidemount spares were now fully enclosed, torpedo-shaped parking lamps now sat atop the front fenders, and new vertically ribbed grilles appeared on either side of the traditional grille shell. Options included a “grille guard”—a pair of horizontal ribs that lived between the front bumper overrides. Packard had occasionally been criticized for failing to update its style, but a new look would be coming for 1941.

Owner Marvin Price of Scottsdale, Arizona, bought this rare Packard circa 2010. He loved the body style and the twin



Packard’s brand new L-head straight-eight displaced 356 cubic inches; 3½-inch bore was dwarfed by the torque-generating 4⅝-inch stroke. Mix with a 6.45 compression and aluminum pistons, and it developed 160 horsepower—the most powerful eight-cylinder engine in passenger-car production for 1940.



sidemounts, and after a five-year restoration spearheaded by his son Shaun, Marvin told us that he loves “the 1930s look, and it drives like a car from the 1960s.” Now, we’ve driven enough old cars at this point to be able to tell a ’30s car from a ’60s car from its drive quality. So we thought we’d take it for a spin.

It is at this point that we must make a confession. This story started out as a comparison with another, market-competitive, high-priced coupe. (No one was more surprised than we were that we were able to scare up a pair of high-end coupes in the same ZIP code.) We set the pair up, got some dynamite long-exposure shots of the pair together. Then we took ‘em for a drive, and ... well ... it wasn’t a fair fight: the Packard was such a superior car in every way that we’re not bothering to name the other subject of the now-scrapped comparison, lest fans of that particular marque get riled up from their armchairs.

The test was really the Packard’s to lose. Considering how much more it cost, both new and now, did it matter? Could we feel the difference? The answer was an unequivocal, “Yes.” Every single aspect of the drive in the Packard was improved over our unnamed competitor. Despite being sized and motivated similarly, the Packard seemed to offer more room inside—more shoulder room, more headroom, and even better visibility out the bifurcated front glass. Idle was smoother—you barely knew the engine was switched on. Shifting was quicker—no hang-ups. The power was stronger. Though not published, torque peak felt like it was barely off

idle. The ride was smoother. Crack repairs and other pavement undulations that sent the other car into clanks and spasms were simply absorbed in the Packard, although the downside was an exaggerated tippiness in the corners that we weren’t expecting. The steering was quicker, lighter, and more direct, and offered enough feel that you could sense what the front tires were up to at all times.

How much of an exaggeration is it, then, to claim that this Series-8 One-Sixty Business Coupe feels like a 1960s car? Not much. Discounting the visual cues, we’d suggest that it feels more first-half-of-the-’50s, which frankly is pretty good for a car made in the dawning hours of the 1940s. This Packard has the torque and drivability of a later Detroit car, and the seating placed your body fairly upright (things got lower and more reclined as the ’50s went on). But the ’50s cars we’re thinking of are six-cylinder examples, before use of the OHV V-8 exploded, and the interior appointments—rich wood, creamy leather on a seat that is mercifully not overstuffed—indicate a higher-end machine than a DeLuxe-grade six-cylinder anything would offer a decade later.

More than three quarters of a century after its initial build, the idea of a high-end business coupe still doesn’t make a whole lot of sense. It didn’t then, either, or else more would have been built. But after driving this Packard, we’re not sure it really matters. A car that drives as well as this one will always find an audience, no matter what body it wears. 🐾

*A car that drives
as well as this one
will always find
an audience, no matter
what body it wears.*



Royal Flash

Dodge's 1955 Custom Royal Lancer is such a wonderful car to drive that one original owner refuses to let it go

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY JIM DONNELLY

Think of a convertible from the midpoint of the 1950s. What comes to mind for you? Certainly a 1955 Chevrolet Bel Air with the new small-block V-8, maybe the Power Pack option. Or perhaps it would be an equally new Ford Fairlane Sunliner, loaded



up with the OHV Thunderbird V-8. How many people, we wonder, would consider the other new performance-oriented offering like the fully restyled, Hemi-powered Dodge Custom Royal Lancer? Hmm.... That's about what we thought. And that's a pity, because this is a stout, contemporary tourer that's very easy on the eyes.

Nineteen-fifty-five marked a terrific year for Chrysler Corporation in general and Dodge in particular. Coming off a dismal sales performance in 1954, K.T. Keller passed Chrysler's presidency onto Tex Colbert, who broke the company down into divisions and gave chief stylist Virgil Exner free rein to remake its products visually. That task fell to his staff stylist Maury Baldwin, who came up with a "Darrin dip" for the Custom Royal model range by running a stainless steel trim spear from hood scoop to taillamps. The 1955 Dodges, especially a Custom Royal Lancer convertible like our feature car, have long

been overlooked by collectors who tend to concentrate on the aforementioned performance convertibles built by Ford and Chevrolet, despite the Dodge's compelling performance and sales statistics. Maybe an objective look at a Dodge like this one can begin to change that.

All new for 1955, this Dodge indeed had some premium Mopar power. It was the hemi-head Super Red Ram V-8 that displaced 270 cubic inches and was rated by the factory at 183 horsepower, linked to the optional PowerFlite automatic transmission via a dashboard-mounted selector lever and fed through a double-downdraft Stromberg carburetor. In February 1955, *Motor Life* tested a Custom Royal Lancer with this powertrain combination, and it comfortably cleared 100 MPH at the top end, with a 0-60 time of 13.8 seconds, all entirely respectable numbers for the era.

Period road testers also praised the Custom Royal Lancer for





Black-and-white interior color scheme was commonplace on premium Dodges in 1955. Note the total absence of dashboard padding. That dash does, nonetheless, boast full instrumentation and extensive use of chromed accents.

its handling capabilities. Chrysler retuned the A-arm front suspension so the front shocks now worked vertically within the coil springs. At the rear, the spring leaves were a half-inch longer and wider than previously, and the shock mounting points were relocated to the rear of the rear-axle housing. The coaxial-type power steering provides 3.5 turns lock-to-lock instead of the usual five. So, soft top or not, the 1955 Custom Royal Lancer was one of Detroit's most roadable and appreciatively potent cars. And that's not even factoring in an option package for the Super Red Ram V-8 that fitted a four-barrel carburetor and real dual exhausts, which boosted the engine's output to 193 horsepower.

This tale starts out decidedly unusually. It first involved a motorboat that the owner of this Dodge, Real Perras, built by hand and had docked along Lake Champlain, which divides

Vermont from adjacent New York. One day back in the Fifties, the boat caught fire; burned up at the dock. The money from the insurance settlement led Real to think about liberating himself from his job at a local rock quarry. He took the cash and he and his wife, Lillian, headed for Randolph, Vermont, where he found this 1955 Dodge Custom Royal Lancer convertible on the dealer's lot, brand new, and paid \$2,700 in cash for it.

That long-gone dealership in Randolph provided Real with a well-optioned car, which included extras like power steering and power drum brakes. Done up in shades of scarlet and black with a white cloth roof, with a stunning black, white and chrome interior, it represents one of Dodge's most premium offerings in 1955, a record year for sales in the domestic auto industry that saw overall Dodge car production skyrocket to



Dodge's top engine in 1955 was this Super Red Ram OHV V-8 with hemispherical combustion chambers. Performance, as a result, is strong.





276,936 units. There were actually two ranges of V-8s offered that year; the new-for-1955 Red Ram used Chrysler's "poly-spheric" cylinder heads with a single rocker arm shaft on each bank of cylinders. The Super Red Ram was a true hemi, with two rocker shafts per cylinder head, with the intake and exhaust valves directly opposite one another. With the Chrysler poly head setup, the valves are located diagonally across from one another. Compression ratio was set at 7.6:1 across the board for all Dodge V-8s.

Long before it left the road to await restoration, Lillian used the Dodge for her daily driver and on two round trips to northern California while Real bought a Chrysler station wagon that was a little better suited to site work than a convertible. "She loved that damn car," Real remembers. "After a while, she didn't want to give it up." The allure of home in Vermont proved too strong to resist in the end. Real and Lillian returned from California to the Perras family compound in Morrisville, having towed the Dodge cross-country with about 18,000 miles showing on its odometer. They didn't want to leave the tri-tone convertible in their barn, where it would attract hay like a magnet. Instead, they stored it in a new hangar that Real built on the property, alongside his airplane. And there it sat, for many years, while Real focused on driving the Chrysler around the farm country of central Vermont.

You might be surprised to learn that, even up north, a convertible top has limited usefulness. "You know, I think we only put the top down about three times the whole time we

"...it drives very nicely, depending on where you're at. If you're on a mountain road here, it's like it's brand new as long as the blacktop is new."

had it until she passed away a few years ago, because with the vinyl interior it was so hot in there, it'd cook you right on the seat. Lillian figured out that the right thing to do was to lower the rear window, so the cool air coming through was like air conditioning up here in the summertime."

Real tells us that when he takes it out for a spin, "...it drives very nicely, depending on where you're at. If you're on a mountain road here, it's like it's brand new as long as the blacktop is new. On the Interstate, it's way off the peg in terms of speed, and it handles fine. The problem is, we don't have that many new roads up here. It handles good even if the body has a tendency to lean over a little bit. I can get it into town here at 60 MPH, and it goes straight. Far as I'm concerned, it drives better than my Nissan." 🐾



Accidental Heirloom

Still wearing its original paint, after 55 years this 1962 Ford Fairlane 500 remains in the care of its original family

BY MARK J. McCOURT • PHOTOGRAPHY BY RICHARD LENTINELLO

Imagine you had fond childhood memories of a particular car, and as years passed and your focus changed, it drifted out of your consciousness. Decades later, you got thinking about it again, discovering that it was not only still around—in the vehicular form of suspended animation—but it was yours for the asking. Too far-fetched to be more than a daydream? Not for one lucky Blue Oval fan.

Skip Shaffer's great-aunt Frances had traded in her 1953 Ford Crestline on a 1962 Fairlane 500 two-door sedan, on December 21, 1961. Frances, who was 64 at that time, had ordered this example of Ford's brand new and popular intermediate line, specifying the upper trim level with the new 221-cu.in. V-8 and Ford-O-Matic two-speed automatic transmission, but precious little else. Her Fairlane was painted Fieldstone Tan over a Scallop Beige cloth

and vinyl interior, and was delivered by her local Hooversville, Pennsylvania, Ford dealer, Kolesko Motor Sales.

This car's 197.6-inch overall length and 115.5-inch wheelbase split the difference between the compact Falcon (which was more than seven inches shorter) and full-sized Galaxie (nearly 12-inches longer), and it shared the Falcon's unit-body construction method. The design was conservative, with vestigial quarter panel fins



and Ford's famous "afterburner" taillamps that worked with a sporty three-dial instrument panel to give the Fairlane a distinct Thunderbird vibe. That aforementioned V-8, which stood in for the base 101hp straight-six engine, featured innovative "thin-wall" casting for lightness; with the help of an 8.7:1 compression ratio and single two-barrel Autolite carburetor, it made 145hp at 4,400 RPM and 216-lb.ft. of torque at 2,200 RPM.

That V-8/automatic combination, which cost \$190, was one of the very few options Frances specified for her new car, along with \$11 reversing lamps and a pushbutton AM radio with antenna for an additional \$59; she passed up power assist for the steering and four-wheel drum brakes, which would have added \$125, to keep her car closer to its \$2,345 base price, although she'd later regret that decision be-

cause of the high-effort controls. Her Fairlane 500 was one of 68,624 examples built in this trim level and body style, a figure that almost exactly doubled that of the base Fairlane two-door with only 34,264 units produced, but was well under the 129,258 figure of the 500 four-door model.

Thanks to her walking-distance commute to work at the family store, Daniel Shaffer Hardware, and her fear of winter weather, Frances didn't drive her Fairlane very often or far. It spent most of its days in the 1920s carriage house-style garage at the home she shared with her sister Blanche. Skip distinctly remembers playing in this Ford as a boy, with his brothers. "We would pretend to drive it. Because the garage was so rustic, the car was infested with field mice! We'd scream when they'd run over our feet. My great-aunt used to keep mousetraps and bowls

of poison on the floor inside the car," he recalls with a grin.

"I always loved that car, and I used to bug her about taking me for a ride. She finally gave in when I was eight years old. She had to sit on a big pillow so she could see over the steering wheel, and I remember her wandering all over the road. We were driving on country roads, and she yelled at me to pull my head inside whenever I'd lean out the window," he laughs.

Frances's Fairlane was last registered in 1978, when she was 80, and the 16-year-old car showed 17,000 miles on the odometer. Frances had broken a hip and could no longer drive. It was a decade later when Skip asked Blanche what became of her sister's last car. "I thought it had been sold. She said, 'Oh no, it's in your cousin Jeff's barn.' I drove over to Jeff's barn, and there it was, sitting way in the back, covered in





The 37,689 miles registered on the odometer during this photo shoot are known to be genuine, as the Fairlane 500 had been driven just 17,000 when the car was brought out of storage in 1988. The original owner splurged on a radio, but did not order power steering.

junk. I asked what he planned to do with the car, and he said he didn't know—Aunt Blanche had just asked him to store it. I asked her if she was willing to sell it to me, and she said I could take it—nobody in the family wanted it!"

When Skip pulled the old Fairlane out of his cousin's barn, he found it almost completely intact. "There was no rust on the body, because it was almost never driven in that awful black salt mixture that Pennsylvania used to put on the roads. But the paint was severely oxidized, like sandpaper—I don't think it had ever been waxed in its whole life," he muses. "There were lots of touched-up paint chips on the passenger door that Aunt Blanche admitted came from the door of her 1966 Pontiac Grand Prix, which had shared their

home garage. Inside, there was a section of driver's floor carpet that I think had been chewed by the mice, but the original upholstery was intact."

Skip had the Fairlane taken to Barron's Service Garage, a facility located in the old Kolesko Motor Sales building, and run by Herbie Barron, the venerable Ford mechanic who'd actually prepared that very car for delivery in 1961. Herbie had the car for a week, and went through it, top to bottom. Although the hard lines were intact, the drum brakes' wheel cylinders had rusted away, and the tires were bald and flat. The radiator and brake hoses needed replacement, and so did the original fanbelt, which still displayed its "C2" part number. The oil filter then fitted to the V-8 was an old-style blue filter with a large nut on the

end, and the oil that drained out upon its removal was as black as tar. Skip notes that this mechanically simple car didn't require much work to be made roadworthy again.

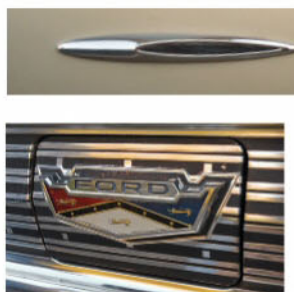
He reminisces about the first time he got to drive his great-aunt's Fairlane—in reality, rather than the imaginary motor-ing he'd done behind the wheel as a boy—with wife Eleanor by his side on the bench seat. "It was cool, and people were staring at us! It took me some time to adjust to how hard it was to maneuver with no power assists; I remember the toughness of steering, combined with that classic old-car smell of mildew and mothballs that Eleanor can't stand, and that it still has now, although she's threatened to get rid of it with Febreze," he laughs.

Those first few miles the Shaffers put



Ford's new thin-wall-cast 221-cu.in. V-8 and two-speed Ford-O-Matic automatic were selected to motivate this equally new intermediate-sized Fairlane in 1962; the car was built with manual drum brakes and few creature comforts, aside from the standard heater.





The factory-installed interior materials, now brittle with age, remain in fine condition, especially the rarely-used back seat and trunk, although the driver's carpeting exhibits mouse damage. Upscale Fairlane 500-specific bright trim still gleams, 55 years on.

on Aunt Frances's Ford would represent the start of its second life, two—and ultimately three—generations down the line. It hasn't required much work to look as it does today, we've learned. "I didn't want to change the original paint, so I used rubbing compound to get a shine on it. That paint is very thin now, so I don't use paste wax anymore, only Eagle One spray wax. The seat fabric is also fragile, which I learned when it began to unravel as I steam-cleaned the driver's seatback. I put a towel down if I'll be driving it a long distance. I change the oil every year with 10W-30, as recommended in the owner's manual, and use a Motorcraft FL-1A filter. Every few years, I'll get the duplicate of the original oil filter, that red one that costs \$40—but the FL-1A works great."

Skip has added more than 20,000 miles to the odometer, and his sons, Kenneth and Daniel, have grown up loving it, as their father did before them. This Fairlane is driven roughly 1,000 miles a year, and has made numerous long trips from their Connecticut home to Carlisle, Pennsylvania, through upstate New York's, wine country, and into Vermont and to Maine. The boys have contributed to its maintenance, and driven it to their proms—it continues to create lasting memories for all of them. "It's fun to cruise around the mountains in a classic car," he says. "It gets a lot of looks and smiles, a lot of horn beeps and thumbs-up, because of the tailfins and the innocent look."

"This was a workhorse, a regular, average family sedan, and they used to be

everywhere, but you rarely see them today. Sometimes it's hard for me to believe that I still have this. It's a rare piece of history, and a time capsule of how cars used to be. I want to keep it in the Shaffer family, and hand it down to my sons. It's more than just a car, it's a member of our family." 🐭



“It's a rare piece of history, and a time capsule of how cars used to be.... It's more than just a car, it's a member of our family.”



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Looking Into The Future

The Cars of the 1964-'65 New York World's Fair

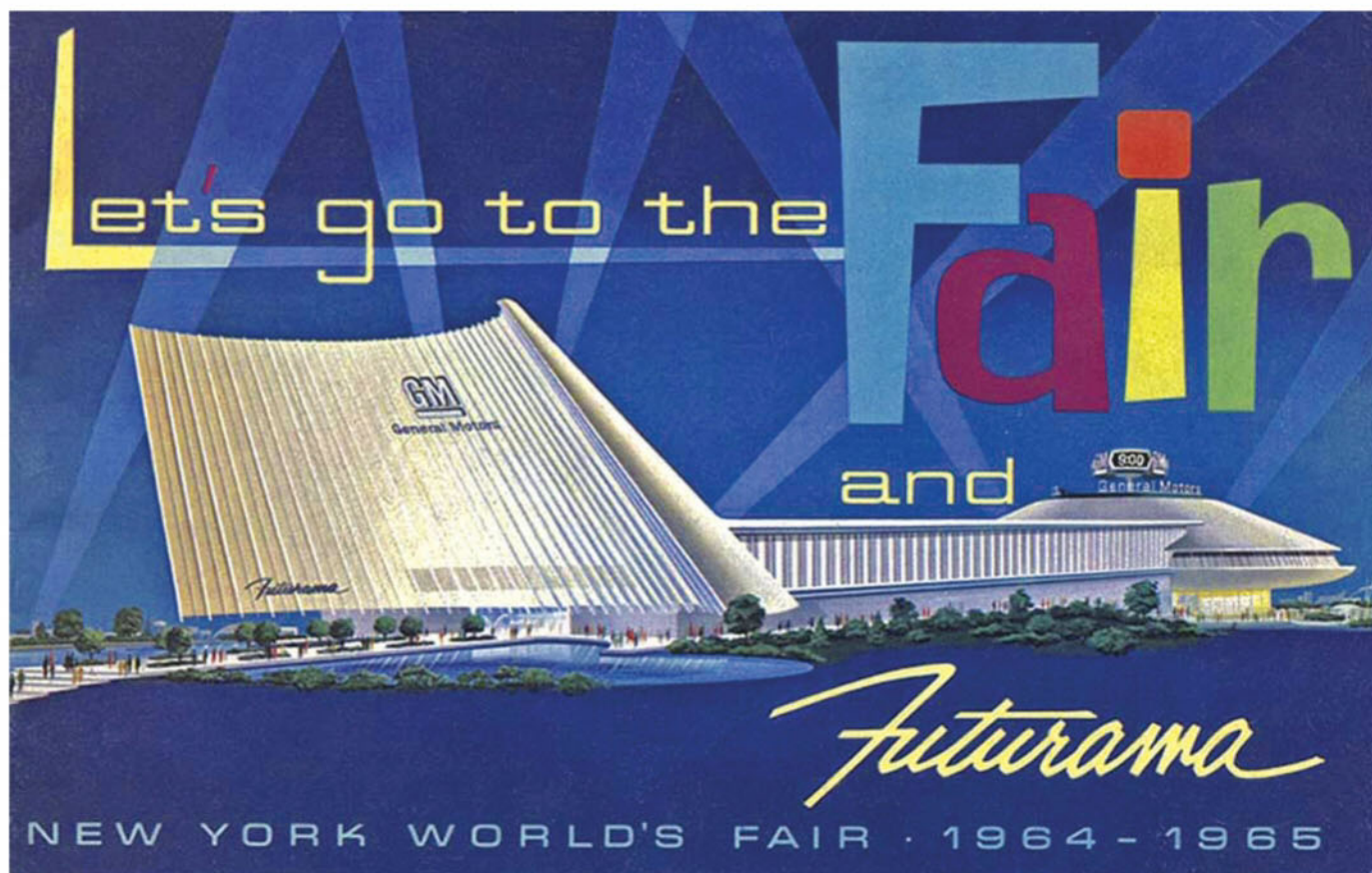
BY TERRY SHEA • PHOTOGRAPHY AS CREDITED

Historians and journalists have written a lot about the 1964-'65 New York World's Fair, and not all of those words speak too kindly of it. Unsanctioned by the Bureau of International Expositions (yes, there is a world body that "approves" such things),

the Queens-based event went on anyway. But with a lack of some international participants (the BIE threatened member nations to stay away), organizers turned to the always reliable American industry to fill in the gaps. And fill them in, they did!

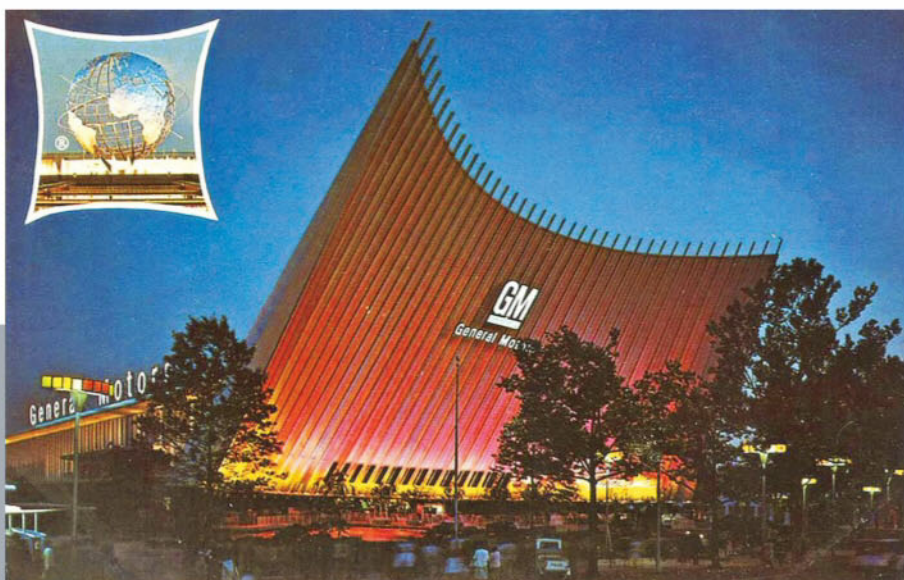
Automotive manufacturers, arguably

as flush as they were ever going to get in the early Sixties, stepped up with massive venues from Ford, GM and Chrysler. They used the World's Fair to not only pitch their products, but also to show off futuristic concept cars and incorporate rides and shows into that product pitch. Local, small-



GENERAL MOTORS

Updating the Futurama ride that first appeared at the 1939 New York World's Fair, the 1964 edition took some 70,000 riders per day on a 15-minute trip through the year 2024 to the moon, the Antarctic, an underwater resort, the desert, the jungle and GM's vision for "the city of the future." GM's massive 230,000-square-foot, bright white Futurama building featured a 10-story tilting canopy above the entrance. The entire eight-and-a-half-acre exhibit was conceived under the auspices of Bill Mitchell and the rest of GM's Styling Staff, with an assist from noted architects Sol King and the Albert Kahn organization. Along with the Futurama ride and examples of current products from all of its divisions, GM also displayed several concept cars never intended for production. Curiously, none of the concepts were presented as being from any particular division.



GENERAL MOTORS

scale assembly lines, cultural and historical displays and lots of new cars were part of the formula. The automakers wanted to entertain people, but they weren't going to miss out on a golden marketing opportunity, either. In these pages, we look back at the displays that they and other related

companies had at the fair.

Though just over 51 million people visited the fair during its two-year run (the BIE was also not keen on any fair lasting more than one season), the break-even point came at 70 million. Though this left organizers and the City of New York well

in the red, plenty of people have fond memories of not only seeing the Ford Mustang for the first time, but also of plenty of concept and real-world cars along with the rides, displays and demonstrations that could keep a kid—or an adult—entertained all day.



GENERAL MOTORS

Stand back, Uber. Take a seat, Tesla. GM visionary designers and engineers conceived a self-driving car more than 50 years ago. As the last of a string of aerospace-inspired concept cars that debuted in 1953 with the jet-powered Firebird I, the Firebird IV looked at least the most realistic, a future version, perhaps, of what the Oldsmobile Toronado might have become. The four-seat coupe had a very long hood, a sloping rear window and a very short rear deck. The non-functioning concept was designed to be turbine-powered with unconventional controls that would be all but unnecessary as the Firebird IV showed off an imaginary computer-controlled guidance system. GM later updated this concept as the Buick Century Cruiser in 1969.



GENERAL MOTORS

The Runabout, a GM concept for a future family car, wedge-shaped, three-wheeled and with a canopy-type greenhouse that had essentially unobstructed views more than 180-degrees wide. With two built-in shopping carts, perhaps GM was attempting to appeal to homemakers who wanted convenience. On the other hand, if such a feature had been adopted, perhaps countless parking-lot door dings could have been avoided over the years. The runabout has a single front wheel that could turn 90 degrees, allowing for maneuvering into and out of some very tight spots.



GENERAL MOTORS

Like the Firebird IV, this GM concept was aircraft-inspired, although it was a static display. Still, its shape and design clearly tell a story of the Jet Age. Designers imagined a car with aircraft-like controls, including a yoke in place of the conventional steering wheel, aircraft-style gauges and similar controls more likely found in the air than on the road.



GM had *Futurama* while Chrysler named its venue "*autofare*" — the manufacturer's use of lower-case spelling, not ours. Housed in several automotive-themed buildings separated by the waters of a man-made lagoon, *autofare* had this, perhaps Virgil Exner-inspired, building shaped to look like a contemporary Chrysler vehicle, and billed as the "world's largest building." Chrysler divided its six-acre venue into various islands. Engineering Island, for example, included a big V-8 engine-shaped building that visitors could walk through, a "one-million horsepower" exhibit, where a 50-foot dragon provided the horsepower and acted as the crankshaft. For the kids, Chrysler even had a puppet show starring the likes of a talking carburetor, an animated oil can and various nuts and bolts.

Not all signs pointed to the future in New York. Among the vehicles exhibited at its pavilion, Chrysler showed off this 1925 sedan, the first earliest example to ever wear the Chrysler badge after namesake Walter P. Chrysler had purchased the assets of the Maxwell Motor Company.



FCA US LLC

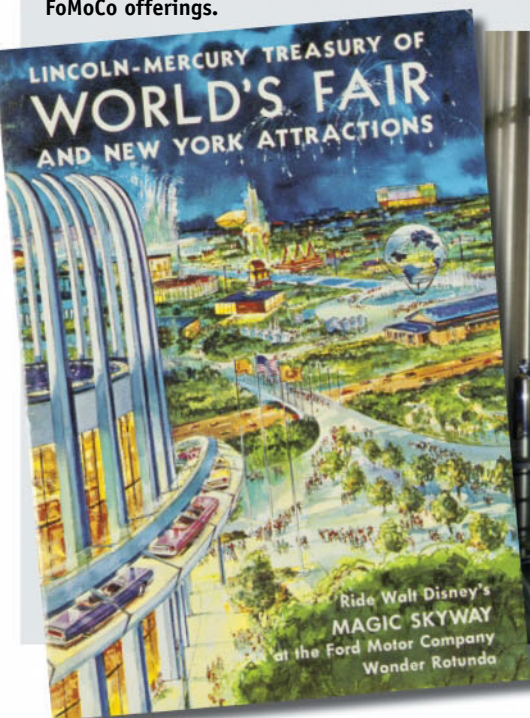
Chrysler's Turbine Car proved to be an audacious, customer-immersive experience that we've written about before. In the mid-1960s, it still seemed to be a viable alternative to a reciprocating, internal-combustion engine, so Chrysler showed off its copper-colored innovation throughout the duration of the fair.



FCA US LLC

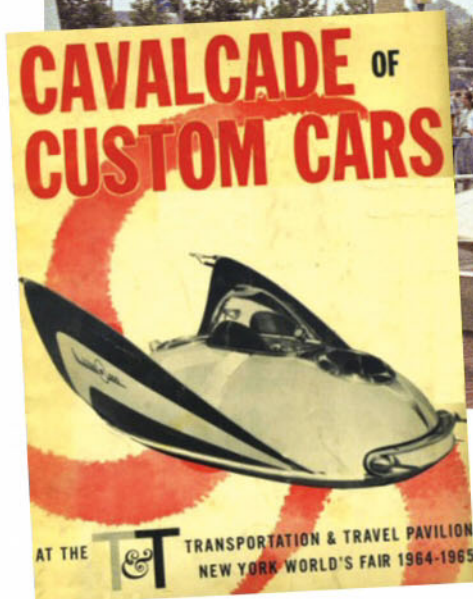
Ford teamed up with the theme-park ride masters, Walt Disney and his Imagineers, to create the Magic Skyway, a ride that used actual Ford convertible bodies to transport guests. (Ford wasn't alone in seeking out Disney for its World's Fair attraction, as General Electric, Pepsi and the official State of Illinois venues boasted Disney's handiwork.) Guests could only enter the Magic Skyway after passing by new Ford models displayed in the pavilion's large rotunda. Once up a moving ramp past the exhibited automobiles, riders hopped aboard a variety of Ford convertibles, including full-size Ford and Mercury models, Falcons, Comets, Lincolns, Thunderbirds and even Mustangs. With the running gear removed, the cars were fixed to a track like any amusement ride. The ride, complete with narration from the car's radio, offered riders a panoramic view of the fair, then a pass through history from prehistoric to future times and, of course, views of the latest FoMoCo offerings.

THE HENRY FORD



THE HENRY FORD

You can't talk about the 1964 World's Fair and not mention the Ford Mustang, the car that nearly defined a generation and a model that's still going strong more than 50 years later. Perhaps the most American of automobile types, the pony car, got its debut on the world stage in New York. Along with the hype and consumer interest generated by the millions who saw the Mustang for the first time in Queens, Ford also used the venue for a packed press conference to introduce the car. Ford even pulled off the extraordinary stunt of disassembling a Mustang, loading it into an elevator at the Empire State Building and then reassembling it on the 86th floor observatory.



Not a part of Detroit's big show, but more of the type of touring custom car shows that continue to this day, the *Cavalcade of Custom Cars* was presented by World Wide Productions. Among the "cars" included was the George Barris *XPAK 400*, an "air car" that rode on a cushion of air via two electrically powered jet aircraft starter motors. The Cavalcade featured Barris' car on its program cover. Other custom cars included Janko Bucik's *Astro*, aka "La Shabbla," aka "The Car of the Future," aka "0011 Pursuer," 14 feet long, 25 inches high and built on a Fiat frame with an Abarth 750cc engine; the *Lil Bandit*, a custom dragster with a Thirties body; *The Selenium-1*, a V-12-powered, jet-fighter-inspired car; the *69'er* street rod; and others, such as the Ford Cougar 406 (see image right).



FORD MOTOR COMPANY

Though at one time a Ford concept car displayed on the auto show circuit in 1962, at the New York World's Fair the Ford Cougar 406 found its place at the *Cavalcade of Custom Cars*. A Euro-style two-door coupe, the Cougar 406 boasted a fuel-injected 406-cu.in. V-8 and a Thunderbird chassis underneath. At the time Ford was building the car, the Cougar name was on the short list for what would ultimately become the Mustang. With a more than obvious nod to the iconic Mercedes-Benz 300 SL Gullwing, with which it shared overall proportions, the Cougar had top-hinged doors. With just two seats, it also showed some love to the original Thunderbird.



FORD MOTOR COMPANY

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One of several concepts that Ford toyed with while designing the Mustang, the Allegro was originally known as the Aventura, then the Avanti, until Studebaker claimed that name, and then the Allegro. It was shown among a handful of Ford concepts at the World's Fair.



FORD MOTOR COMPANY



FORD MOTOR COMPANY

Sporty personal luxury coupes with European flair were certainly the order of the day for many concept cars from the 1960s. Ford designers sketched up some options for a fastback Thunderbird, played around with it until they liked what they had and then pulled a 1963 Thunderbird with a hot, M-code 390-cu. in. V-8 off the production line and sent it to Dearborn Steel Tubing (the guys who built the wild Thunderbolt drag race specials) to create the Italian. It caused a sensation as part of Ford's traveling Custom Car Caravan.



Along with the "Big Three" U.S. auto companies, the United States Rubber Company went all in on the World's Fair, with its tire-shaped Ferris wheel. The maker of U.S. Royal Tires built a replica tire more than 80 feet in diameter, with enough strength and structure to operate it as a park ride with capacity for 96 riders. More than two million people experienced it during the course of the fair. While most of the venues were built as temporary structures, and with the vast majority of them long since disassembled and gone forever, the giant tire still lives on, having been relocated to the suburban Detroit area of a U.S. Rubber sales office immediately after the fair. Renovated multiple times since, the giant tire has become a Michigan landmark itself, greeting visitors on I-94 just before they enter Detroit proper. Considering that it had initially been designed by the same architects who created the Empire State Building, it should come as no surprise that it's still standing.



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Bill France

The visionary who founded NASCAR



BY JIM DONNELLY • IMAGES COURTESY INTERNATIONAL SPEEDWAY CORPORATION ARCHIVES

In these stories, we frequently make the observation that the people who really made a difference in the world of cars could indeed envision the future. Take a visual landscape where very little existed and make it their own. Create an outcome. This is why we choose here to recognize William H.G. France, better known as “Big Bill,” a positively mythic figure who did so much to organize stock car racing by creating NASCAR, and in doing so, founded a sports dynasty that exists to this day. This year, 2017, marks an amazing 70 years since France gathered a group of regional racing promoters at a hotel in Daytona Beach, Florida, headstrong guys all, and convinced them to make him a czar of stock car racing, a burgeoning sport both in and outside the South.

Perhaps nobody other than France

could predict what was coming down the pike afterwards. The focus of this story is on yesteryear’s NASCAR, when the cars were production-based. But we’d be irresponsible if we didn’t look at what NASCAR is today, built on the foundation that the senior France laid. It’s still a family-controlled business and its product is the most closely followed variety of motorsports in the United States. It’s a national series now, but in its infancy, the NASCAR Strictly Stock circuit, as it was called then, gave the South a grounding in professional sport that it had never previously been able to claim. Speaking of which, it’s worth noting that neither the NFL nor Major League Baseball was founded by a single guy. Big Bill France, with his towering, booming presence, founded NASCAR. One man created an automotive, and sporting, monolith that

still endures today. In doing so, he made the Detroit automakers understand fully that by participating in his races and winning them, in largely stock automobiles, they could sell new cars to the general public in great numbers.

The hardest thing to do for anybody trying to write a biography of France is separating the man from the legend, something that arguably becomes more difficult with each passing year. He was born a relatively simple but ambitious kid in Horse Pasture, Virginia, in 1909. He eventually migrated to the nearest big city, Washington, D.C., where two things happened: France met his bride, Anne Bledsoe, who was as instrumental to his success as any race driver, promoter or car owner. And second, he learned fast that he really liked cars. He had the innate mechanical skills of any farm kid back





This was history: The inaugural Daytona 500 in 1959 debuted to packed grandstands, a sellout in terms of its capacity at the time.

then, and found work as a D.C. garage employee. He did some racing on tracks in the D.C. area, usually aboard modified Model Ts, which were the de facto sportsman race cars of their day.

Married to "Annie B.," as she would forever come to be known, France decided to head south to warmer climes in 1934, and picked Florida. Here's where some of the mythology works its way into the story: Longtime stock-car folklore says that Big Bill and Annie B. landed in Daytona Beach after their car broke down and decided to stay. That, in a word, is poppy-

cock. France was a highly skilled mechanic and racer. If their car broke down, he could have easily fixed it. Instead, the Frances decided they liked Daytona Beach and its people, and opted to put down roots. Plus, Daytona was planning to host an annual series of auto races on a unique course that combined its concrete-hard beach sand with a coastal highway. We can only guess that when France learned about the race, he was hooked, and began preparing a Ford for the inaugural event in his Gulf station. Not only that, he was one of the people who helped to lay out the

original Daytona beach course. The initial race was held in 1936, and France placed fifth. Within two years, he was promoting the event himself.

Like other regions of the country, the South was far from flush with cash in the late 1930s. People down there loved cars, however. There were no professional sports to speak of other than the Washington and Baltimore teams, augmented by NCAA Southeastern Conference football and basketball. As World War II passed, the region continued to grow, abetted by a boom in population around its military bases. Florida experienced a recurrence of its 1920s land boom, albeit at a less-fevered pace. Stock car racing swelled to occupy the vacuum of stick-and-ball sports, or their relative absence, represented in the region. That single beach race, with France now firmly at the helm, grew in attendance and participation each year. Plus, since it was wisely scheduled to take place in February, it drew no small number of snowbirds trying to escape the Arctic icebox in addition to native Floridians and others.

Being a race promoter himself, France knew that no small numbers of his



France enjoyed a long personal friendship with General Motors styling boss Harley Earl; the Firebird-shaped Daytona 500 trophy is still named in Earl's honor.

fellow event organizers were far from on the up and up. Yes, it was not unknown for promoters to abscond with the gate receipts while the feature event was still under way. France insisted, to anyone who would listen even desultorily, that a measure of honesty with its competitors would elevate the sport. By this time, France was promoting stock car races as far north as the Carolinas and Virginia, and above there, with races up to Langhorne Speedway in Pennsylvania. That brought him in touch with eastern track promoters such as Ed Otto and Bill Tuthill.

In the great pantheon of fly-on-the-wall moments, you have to think that the 1947 meeting between France and other, more regional promoters must have been to die for. It took place in December at the Streamline Hotel on state Route A1A in Daytona Beach, right across from the sand. Simply put, France convinced these other headstrong promoters that he was the man who could unify their game and professionalize it. And, perhaps even to his surprise, they agreed with him and let him run with the ball. It's important to note that, at this point, the typical racing stock car was a Modified, a chopped-out 1930s coupe with a bootlegger-style flathead Ford V-8 or else an OHV monster like a Cadillac or an Oldsmobile for power. It was wild, unruly racing. France determined to change that, too.

It came in 1949, when France got the idea that a new racing class, featuring new cars that were identical to what ticket-buyers could purchase at their local dealerships, would galvanize stock car racing. The postwar thirst for new cars had permeated fully in the South, and a new Lincoln, Oldsmobile, Cadillac or even a six-cylinder Plymouth sedan (which won the inaugural Southern 500 at Darlington the following year in the hands of the Indy 500 veteran, Californian Johnny Mantz) could communicate more effectively with the spectators than the cut-down, prewar Modifieds that had been the backbone of stock car racing up to that point. The Grand National Division, as the Strictly Stocks came to be known, was under way.

It was anything but a comfortable journey. Herb Branham, the archivist for NASCAR's subsidiary, the International Speedway Corporation, and the author of a respected France biography, told us that an essential element to NASCAR's success was Annie B.'s quiet discipline at keeping the books, and in the process, keeping Big Bill's ambitions in line. There were times in the early years when the Frances would have to scrimp just to meet purses and track fees. Others who believed in his vision came to help. One of them was Ray-



At the head table, France convened a meeting of Eastern race promoters at the Streamline Hotel in 1947. NASCAR was formed as a result of this gathering in Daytona Beach.

mond Parks, the Atlanta business magnate who was one of France's earliest supporters and a pioneering champion car owner with the great Red Byron as his driver. It wasn't easy, but Annie B. pulled it off.

The auto manufacturers did the rest. They wanted to play in the big France sandbox, crowded with stands full of cheering spectators. One of the first great factory-backed efforts came from Hudson, whose Twin-H power urged on early stars such as Herb Thomas and Marshall Teague. Thomas would later move on to the small-block V-8 and Chevrolet, backed by the fabled crew chief Smokey Yunick, and would do battle with the factory-supported Chryslers of the Carl Kiekhaefer team. That was in the middle of the 1950s, and it opened the floodgates for race-bred special packages including Chevrolet's Rochester fuel injection, Ford's factory supercharging, and multi-carburetor setups for Oldsmobile and Pontiac, at least until the Automobile Manufacturers Association prohibited direct factory support of auto racing.

It proved to be a porous ban, as the factories crept back into NASCAR when the 1960s unfolded. By this time, growth along the oceanfront—a lot of it attributable to the racing itself—made the beach events untenable. France had been talking about moving them inland for years before his plan to build a 2.5-mile, high-banked tri-oval was announced in late 1957. His success in promoting Daytona Speedweeks on the beach course won him a raft of local support, and the new superspeedway was completed in only 15 months. It joined Indianapolis as the only American speedways measuring 2.5 miles per lap. The inaugural Daytona 500 of 1959 was a sensation that resulted in a dead heat between Lee Petty and Johnny Beauchamp, a photo finish that took 61 hours to resolve before Petty was declared the victor.



Partners in life and business, Bill and Anne Bledsoe France built NASCAR into a sporting dynasty.

It also proved that big-track racing for stock cars could be viable, which in turn touched off a speedway-building boomlet in the Southeast: Atlanta, Charlotte, Rockingham. Even though professional sports began edging into the South during the 1960s, big-league racing in the form of NASCAR was firmly established as the region's favorite pastime.

France filled a room with both his six-foot, five-inch presence and his intellect. He was a tough bargainer who beat back a unionization effort by drivers and stared down Detroit when it boycotted his races in rules disputes over the Chrysler Hemi. Famously, he also took to the track himself to convince rebellious drivers that his new, sprawling Talladega Superspeedway was safe for competition. France lived to see the explosive growth of NASCAR that accompanied the rise of cable television in the 1980s, but by then, Alzheimer's disease had taken control of his once-powerful mind. He was 82 when he died in June 1992, barely six months after Annie B. had passed on. The legacy that both of them left on American auto racing will never, ever be diminished. 🏆



Motivated by Passion

The home-based body-off rebuild of the only known 1931 Graham Model 46 Roadster

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY MATTHEW LITWIN • RESTORATION PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF TOM TKACZ

Longtime readers might be familiar with Tom Tkacz and his affinity for the cars and trucks from the Graham Brothers. He's been buying and restoring them since purchasing his first Graham—a supercharged 1937 Model 116—in 1963 for the grand sum of \$75. And we've

previously featured his then newly-restored 1927 DC series truck in *HCC* #88. At the time, Tom—now a resident of Killingworth, Connecticut—was in the process of restoring yet another Graham: a 1931 Model 46 Roadster, which we are happy to present here.

Although Tom purchased the Model

46 Roadster in 2008, he had been all too aware of its existence for more than four decades. According to Tom, “I was living in Seymour, Connecticut, and carefully watched it being driven around town for 45 years. The Graham had come from California, but the original engine and transmission had been swapped out for



an Oldsmobile Rocket 88 V-8 and a La Salle three-speed manual. It was a bit of a mild hot rod, if you will, but only mechanically. Visually, it looked like a stock Graham. The only thing they had done to it was a two-tone blue repaint and place sealed-beam headlamps behind the original glass lenses within the bezels. Inside, someone had cut the dash and replaced the original instruments with Stewart-Warner gauges, and the seat looked to have come out of a school bus."

Undaunted by the task of having to locate proper running gear and an

interior, Tom transported the Roadster to his garage after negotiating its purchase and immediately began to disassemble the car to perform a full restoration. As he began to remove trim, fenders, hood and running boards, it quickly became apparent that decades of exposure had a dramatic effect on the main body's support structure.

"Graham was still using a wooden frame to support the body panels," Tom tells us. "There wasn't a trace of wood left in either door—or the small golf bag door—and when you opened the rumble

seat, you could see straight down to the differential. Most of the floor was gone up front, and as I continued to take it apart, I could see that the sill plate rails were nearly nonexistent. The wood—I believe they used oak—had essentially rotted into dust."

Soon after the restoration effort commenced, however, Tom sadly put the project on the back burner for a few years to help care for his wife, Reezee, who eventually succumbed to her illness. Rather than let the Graham linger in restoration limbo, Tom picked up the pieces



The 1931 Graham Model 46 Roadster as it appeared at the time of its 2008 purchase. Clearly tired, it was essentially missing its interior upholstery, the top was heavily weathered and the body wore a blue two-tone paint scheme over its original black color.



The car's disassembly began right away, made easy by the fact that nearly all of the factory wooden framing behind and below the body had rotted to pulp. Non-stock engine and transmission followed, at which point the project was put on hiatus.



Restoration work began again, with the body support rails that would be secured to the steel frame. Since so little was left of the originals, only a vague pattern could be made; it then took time and patience to massage the wood to its final functional form.



Wood fabrication then progressed to the floor and rumble seat frame, a small portion of which still existed. Tom chose ash over oak due to its lighter weight; besides, it's more durable, resists excessive flexing and is also easier to work with.



Once the floor and rear body-support framing was completed, the sub-structure was removed from the frame, the latter then stripped of the remaining running gear and suspension systems. They were subsequently media blasted to bare metal and sealed in primer.



With a considerable amount of the wood framing completed, portions of the body could then be re-secured, enabling Tom to start with metal repairs. Only the lower sections were corroded, which were corrected with fabricated patch panels.

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Once the contours of the steel patch panels were carefully finalized, each was MIG-welded into place. After the joints were ground smooth, only a skim coat of filler was used as necessary and then sanded smooth with 100- and 150-grade paper.



While the roadster's body was addressed, work continued on the 115-inch wheelbase chassis. Following media blasting, no corrosion having been found, the frame was sealed in epoxy paint. Restored suspension, engine and transmission were then installed.



At this stage, the body's restoration effort had progressed from filler sanding to the application of several coats of sandable primer, helping eliminate tiny imperfections. Shown here is the body in a final coat of sanded epoxy primer, ready for paint.



Although the car was originally painted entirely black at the factory, the decision was made to finish the car in an attractive silver/black two-tone following the natural body lines. The silver was applied first; the sides masked off before the black paint was added.



After the paint had been wet sanded with 1500- and 2000-grade paper, and then polished, the relatively lightweight body was carefully carried and repositioned over the finished chassis. Once properly aligned, the two were finally bolted together.



Although much had been accomplished, final assembly still consumed time. Here, the windshield is installed, as are the top bows; however, the entire interior, top, bifold hood and several other smaller mechanical parts have yet to be installed.

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I watched this Graham for 45 years, so when it became available, I had to have it. This car was a passion of mine for that long a time. But once I got into it, I realized everything was a mess. I had to rebuild the seats, have a radiator made, restore the steering wheel and locate a lot of little parts, like taillamps and the dash plate, to make the car right. I've said it before: If it wasn't a Graham, I would not have tackled it. I've since learned that, according to the Graham Owner's Club International, this is the only known Model 46 Roadster extant. That doesn't mean I keep it in a garage. *Reezee*—I named it after my wife—is a fabulous car that I really enjoy driving every chance I get.

and fully committed himself to seeing it through to the finish.

The steel body panels were sent to a friend's shop for media blasting, which exposed damage along the length of each panel's lower section. "The rotting wood was a constant moisture source," explains Tom. To prevent flash rust from affecting the bare steel, the panels were quickly

sealed in self-etching primer.

While the body was being stripped of paint, Tom began to take careful measurements of the few bits or remaining wood to begin reconstructing the sill plate, framing and floors. Of the three, the sill plate was the most critical, which links the body to the frame. Tom admitted that with so little left to work with, creat-

ing the new sill plate rails consisted of a lot of guesswork and finite adjustments. The process was aided by the return of the body, which enabled Tom to verify bolt patterns and alignments. Once he was confident the sill was completed, he finished the floor and moved on to the body panel framing.

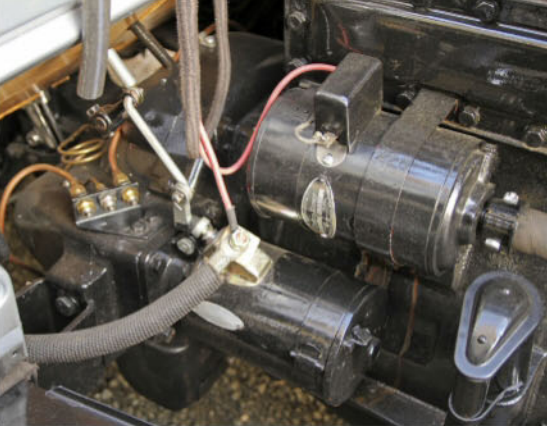
"Rather than use oak, I selected ash for the framing," Tom says. "It's a very durable wood compared to oak, and it doesn't flex as much. Ash is also a lot easier to work with and it's lighter. Aside from all the framing, I had to recreate the support structure in the doors, of course, and the top bows. I had someone bend the wood for me, but I still had to fashion them later."

Once much of the woodwork was completed, Tom was then able to fabricate patch panels to replace the rusted sections on the body, in addition to a hole that was discovered on the right-rear fender. The patch panels were MIG-welded in place, and after grinding the joints smooth, he covered the welds with a skim coat of body filler. Typical of other restorations, it was sanded smooth using the step process, at which point several layers of sandable primer, and eventually a final coat of epoxy primer, completed the body. Then the frame and suspension parts were media blasted, but unlike the body, the process didn't reveal any damage, enabling Tom to quickly repaint them in chassis-black epoxy.

As the restoration progressed, Tom continued to search for much-needed components, including a replacement engine and transmission. Fortunately, he found a proper 207-cu.in. straight-six engine, accompanied by a three-speed manual transmission, in Pennsylvania. Tom was able to rebuild both units to stock specifications; however, while testing the 72hp engine, a crankshaft bearing spun. "I built it a little too tight," said Tom, who immediately began to search for another engine.

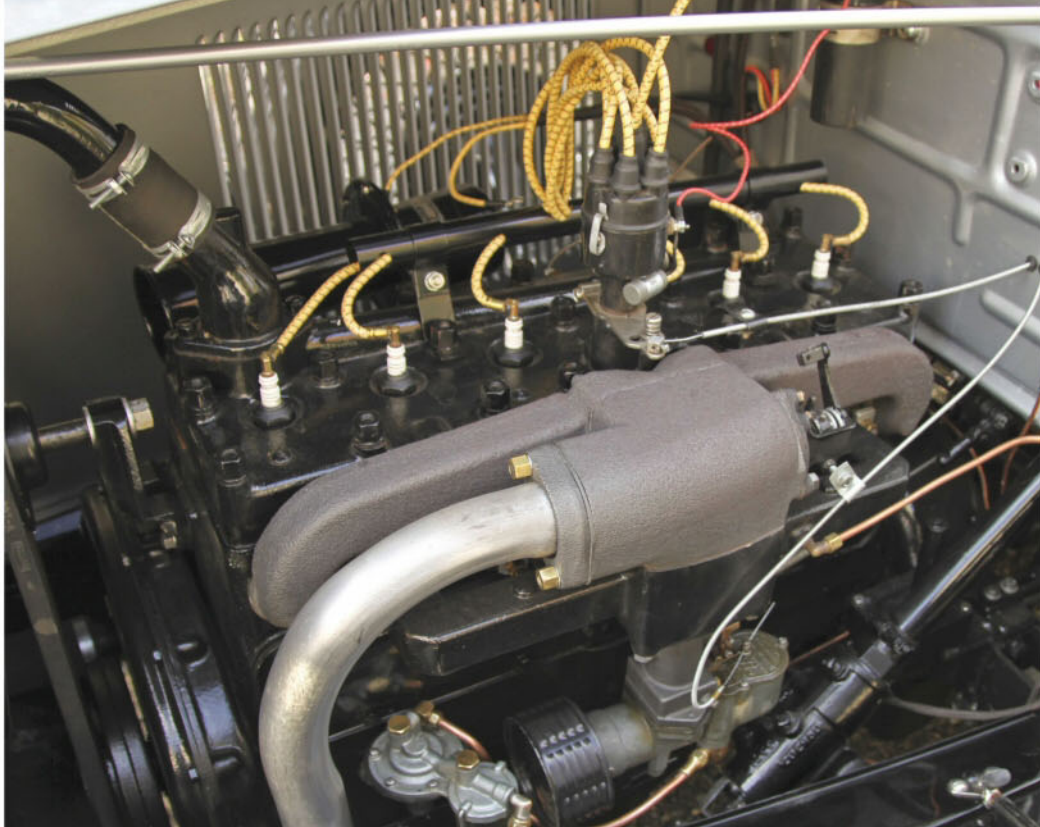
"I found another engine in Alabama," Tom recalls. "The gentleman selling it told me that many years prior,






his brother had rebuilt it and was about to install it when he suddenly died. The engine sat there for years, and he told me he would send it up—don't pay until I have determined whether or not it will run. The guy did a good job because it runs perfectly, but I had to replace the cylinder head."

As the chassis restoration neared completion, including the installation of the second engine and rebuilt transmission, the body was then refinished. Given the sporty nature of the roadster body style, Tom opted against an entirely factory black paint scheme and instead selected a more fitting silver/black two-tone; silver being the first color applied. Again, following traditional restoration practices, after the paint had cured, it was wet-sanded with 1500- and 2000-grade paper and then final polishing brought forth a show-winning finish. A final touch was red pinstriping, added by Tom's cousin, Maxie.



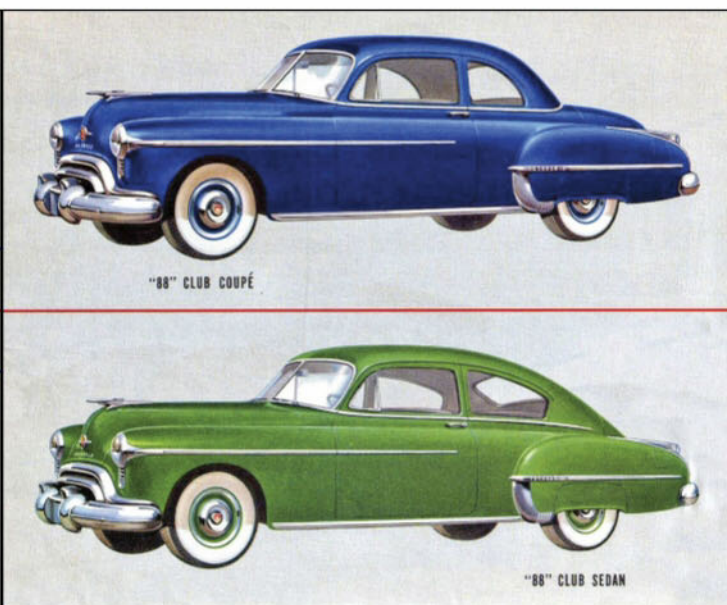
At this stage, the body and chassis were reunited for the first time since 2008, permitting Tom to focus his attention on rebuilding the front, and rumble seats, along with reconnecting the main wiring harness. As to the upholstery, rather than use leather, Tom opted for Naugahyde. Earlier, Tom had been able to purchase both an NOS instrument panel, along with a full complement of stock

Graham gauges. A new top, restored chrome trim and a new set of whitewall tires mounted to powder coated wheels followed, completing the Graham in early 2016.

As a testament to Tom's attention to detail and patience, his Graham has claimed accolades since, including a second-in-class win at the 2016 Hemmings Motor News Concours d'Elegance. 



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Captivating Mercury Capri

ONE OF THE MOST DESIRABLE

Mercurys of all time was the first-generation Cougar. The styling was beautifully executed. One would never have guessed it was a close cousin to the Mustang. And, the Cougar turned the everyday pony car into a small personal luxury car, a market sector that would achieve its zenith in the 1970s.

Eventually, the Cougar moved up to the midsize platform, where it found new fans and the best spokesmodel, Farrah Fawcett. However, the move upmarket left a hole in the Mercury lineup, which they filled with the German-Ford import Capri. These first Capris may not have set showrooms ablaze, but enough of them found happy homes that those of us of a certain age can remember spotting them throughout their run. For many, these affordable sport coupes were their first introduction to European-inspired road manners.

When the Mustang II approached its retirement at the end of the 1978 model year, Mercury wanted an American pony car to replace its exotic, but aging, Capri. Enter the 1979 Capri, based on the Fox platform and sharing a very similar look with the new Mustang hatchback version.

The Mercury Capri featured a wheelbase of 100.5 inches and weighed in at a svelte 2,548 pounds. The Capri's fascia was more upright than the slope-nosed Mustang, utilizing a horizontal-bar grille that was quite Mercuryesque; I have always preferred the more formal look of the Capri's snout. The taillamps were Mustang affairs with horizontal ridges to add distinction, and the wheel arches lacked the "flare" of the Mustang's. In 1983, a debatably stylish "bubble back" or "rear aero" window debuted in the rear hatch. I will reserve judgment on that decision.

When you opened the brochure, you were greeted by a picture of the first-generation Capri with the statement: "The all-new '79 Capri. Created in the tradition of the original sexy European ... and built in America." To the right was a picture of the new Capri in Silver Metallic. Further down, it declared, "Our aim in planning the new Capri was to offer the kind of design thinking that goes into a European sports car at a price unaffected by the uncertainties of foreign exchange rates."

The base and RS Capri came stan-



dard with the tried-and-true Ford 2.3-liter OHC four-cylinder and four-speed manual transmission; the Turbo RS featured a turbocharged version of the same engine. If you chose the 2.8-liter V-6, you had to settle for an automatic transmission. The 5.0-liter V-8 required an automatic in California and power steering and brakes in all 50 states.

One third of the way through its lifespan, the V-6 was replaced with the old 200-cu.in. straight-six, and a 4.2-liter V-8. A five-speed manual overdrive was also added to the option list. By the time the Capri reached middle age, the 3.8-liter V-6 found its way under the hood, and the 5.0-liter V-8 returned (according to the brochures). The 2.3-liter four-cylinder would survive the Capri's entire run.

In keeping with the pony car tradition created by Ford, the Capri could be ordered with the bare necessities or loaded up with all the latest luxury items, while always presenting itself as an attractive package, no matter how much you spent. The era of fashionable upholstery was also in swing, including a herringbone design that still turns heads.

The big news was the suspension, featuring modified MacPherson struts with coil springs located between the upper and lower control arms up front and "four-bar link rear axle locators" with coil springs holding up the back. The rear springs were set ahead of and the "vertical" shock absorbers were set behind the "lightweight cast center section" rear axle. Handling would prove to be one of the Capri's most celebrated attributes. Ford had really taken a leap ahead in its suspension geometry. At the time, a friend of mine bought a 1983 Capri and let me take it for a spin. I was quite impressed by its tight handling; it was a fun car to drive.



Exclusive to the Capri were some interesting packages. For 1981, a Black Magic option featured black paint, gold stripes, gold TRX wheels, and gold cat emblems. Inside were black seats with tan inserts. In 1981-'82, Polar White paint could be ordered with the Black Magic option. Mercury must have sold quite a few of the Black Magic Capris because these are the ones I remember seeing the most back in the day, and they still look cool.

The 1984 Charcoal Turbo RS offered a two-tone paint scheme: charcoal on top of silver and light-gray rub strips. The EFI 2.3-liter turbocharged four-cylinder sat on a beefed-up handling package and specifically designed Michelin radials.

Unfortunately, the Mercury Capri was laid to rest after 1986.

Why should you consider an attractive and fun-to-drive Mercury Capri? Because just about everyone else is looking for a Mustang, which means there are bargains out there. Parts availability for the 1980s Fox-platform Fords is easy enough.

On a field full of Mustangs, wouldn't it be more fun to show up in something no one else has? Especially a Capri? 🐾

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I WAS THERE

Larry Jeff
District Manager
Chrysler Corporation

IN THE SPRING OF 1964, I WAS working part-time in a company-owned Shell station while working on my B.A. at San Francisco State University. I was “in training” preparatory to purchasing a Shell station of my own, which was in escrow at the time. I noticed a great number of brand new Chrysler products gassing up, all of which carried California “Dealer 4” plates. I was envious of their jobs and asked a great number of questions, probably annoying most of them, perhaps because I was 24 years old and just a pump jockey. One of life’s many disappointments occurred at the gas station when I traded for a different night’s work and was told I missed the chance to “kerosene” up a Turbine car that needed fuel on what should have been my watch.

When I sold the station in 1965, I grabbed my diploma and made a beeline to the Chrysler regional office in San Mateo. Four times I made this trip but was unable to get an interview. Nine months later, I received a special delivery letter with the Pentastar logo on the return address—they were interviewing!

The job was titled “District Manager Trainee,” a gig that was to last 12 to 18 months with training in vehicle distribution, ordering and financial report interpretation and analysis. A district manager is the liaison between the factory and the dealers. He sells cars to the dealers, reviews their financial statements and is supposed to be the voice of the manufacturer to both dealers under his jurisdiction and the customers of the dealers in the district.

Starting salary was \$547 per month, which was more money than the Shell station provided after I paid the Blue Chip Stamp bandits their extortion money, plus I only had to work 40 hours a week rather than 70. My first assignment each day was to pick up a large canvas bag at the post office. A secretary separated the complaints and the service and parts mail and dropped an armload of dealer-sent mail on the desk of the Distribution Manager. He gave out the orders that arrived that day; the Plymouths went to me. I had to quickly learn how to check each order for completeness and compatibility between the options and



engine combinations.

After the orders were processed, we sent them to a key-punch operator who transferred all the data onto rectangular cardboard cards known as IBM Cards. The holes in the cards told a reading machine what pencil checks had been made. They were then added to the inventory of other orders previously processed, and these became the Order Bank.

Our next step was to take the call each day from each of the desk-heads at the various assembly plants. We would write down how many bodies of each model of each car line we had been allocated for the next day's build based upon the plant's capacity to build and its inventory of already-manufactured sub-assemblies such as seats, engines, transmissions, etc. And restricted combinations were duly noted.

Once, I was told to have 125 Valiant bodies ready for the plant the next day and to take the code books home and create them, selecting the colors, trim and options using the guidelines provided by the assembly requirements. I remember creating over \$300,000 worth of cars somebody was going to have to sell.

The next week, I answered the Distribution Line and found Bill Harrah calling. In addition to extensive gambling operations, Bill also owned Modern Classic Motors, the Chrysler-Plymouth-Imperial dealer in Reno. Bill wanted to know if he could order a 1966 Belvedere I six-passenger station wagon with a 426 Hemi installed; the order blank said “no,” but he really wanted one to transport money from one casino to another. I was told to discourage such requests, but because it was Bill Harrah I should call engineering in Detroit. Three days later they got back to me with the information that Bill would have to pay for the engineering time and feasibility

study; they didn't know what production piece problems might prevent such an installation. When Bill wanted to know the cost, I told him that the engineering guys thought the wagon might cost as much as \$12,000. His language was salty as he told me to ship him a four-speed GTX and a Belvedere wagon with the base engine; he'd do the job in his own shop.

Arguably, the best part of working for a car manufacturer is the free cars. I began to rethink this when I was handed the keys to a 1966 Barracuda with a 225 straight-six and a color that can best be described as Playboy Pink. A number of Barracudas were painted this awful color by some misguided soul who thought they would make a great special promotion and create some excitement in the showrooms in our Region only. I was so embarrassed by the car that I only took it out socially in the dark. If I preferred my '62 Dodge Polara to the Barracuda, you know the Plymouth was a loser. Thankfully my next car was a Formula S Barracuda, which was reasonably quick, followed by six more Barracudas with lesser engines. The factory was building these good-looking cars much faster than the dealers could sell them, and at one time they delivered to my home five new field cars at once. I gave each of my neighbors a set of keys and told them that Chrysler didn't want all those Barracudas back until the odometers read 2,000 miles. They seemed happy to help. 🚗



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

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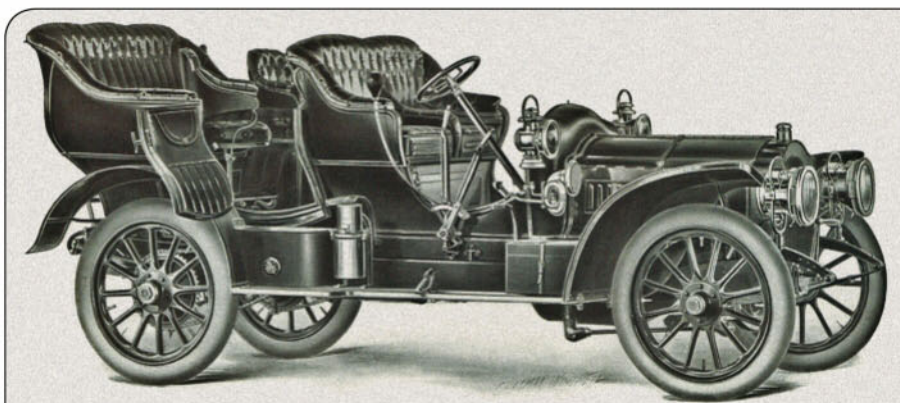
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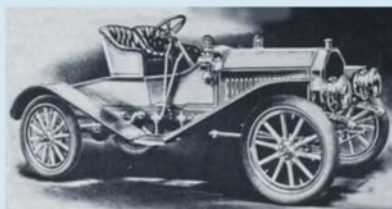
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THOMAS HAS BEEN MAKING ITS NAME IN RACING the past few years and returns for 1907 with the 60hp Thomas Flyer, which is available in six body styles. The Touring and Runabout are the two most popular versions and feature a slightly increased wheelbase at 118-inches. Pricing starts at \$4,000.



BUICK IS BACK WITH SIX DIFFERENT MODELS AND BODY STYLES. The popular two-cylinders are still here, but for the first time, four-cylinder engines are available, equipped on the Model D, S, H and K, linked to a three-speed sliding-gear transmission or two-speed planetary transmission. The two-cylinder model starts at \$1,150, and the new four-cylinder cars at \$1,750.



MOON INTRODUCES THE NEW REDESIGNED MODEL C, available in touring or runabout body styles. The Model C features a four-cylinder 30/35hp engine, drop frame, four-speed transmission and modern suspension with full elliptical rear springs and I-beam front axle. The Model C is available for \$3,500.

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FORD INTRODUCES THE NEW MODEL R Runabout, which joins the Model N and Model S as a part of the Ford four-cylinder lineup. The new "R" is in keeping with Ford's effort to evolve and features the added comfort of foot boards in place of the carriage step and a mechanical lubrication system replacing the Model N's forced-feed oiler. The Model R is available for an affordable \$750.



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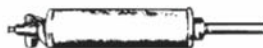
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f t y

Mom and Her Studebaker

IN 1962, MY BROTHER AND I WERE

old enough to look after ourselves and no longer needed a stay-at-home mother. Since we both were in either middle school or high school, our mother, who was college educated with a master's in mathematics, decided to find a job teaching.

Our dad had brought home a car for her in 1951, a Nash Rambler Country Club two-door hardtop with two-tone paint. We grew up in the Rambler, but when she decided to begin teaching she figured she had to have a new car that she could rely on. In 1962, Mom turned 50 and began looking for a new car. Her brother had a very successful motorcycle business in California and drove a 1953 Studebaker Commander hardtop. He had always said it was the best car he ever owned, so she went looking at the local Studebaker dealer.

One afternoon when we got home, there in the driveway was a brand-new 1962 Studebaker Hawk. It was bright red with black bucket seats, four-speed stick shift, full instrumentation, twin traction and dual exhaust. My brother and our father didn't quite know how to take it, but I, being 16 years old, fell in love.

Now, our family was a bit different. My dad's family were bankers and had been for generations. My mother was a very free-spirited farm girl, so the Studebaker was just her style.

After getting a job teaching, she found out what the Studebaker could really do. Her job was to teach sixth graders, so she was instantly popular with all the sixth-grade boys, as they loved having a teacher who drove a car like that.

Every year we would spend the summer in Jackson Hole, Wyoming. We would always take both cars, as my dad and brother would take the station wagon to the interior for weeks at a time on fishing trips, and Mom and I would go horseback riding or on mountain trips.

On one particular trip, we were on Highway 20, which was a narrow, hilly, winding road. We were in the Studebaker, and there was a freight truck that would crowd her on the downhills. She could pull away on the uphill, but then he would



be back. She looked over to me and said, "hold on." She slammed the transmission into third and mashed the pedal. I have no idea how fast we were going, but when the car topped the hill, it kinda floated. She then shifted into fourth gear and kept going. After not too long, the truck was a mere dot on the horizon, to which she said calmly, "I don't think he will bother us anymore."

She would go visit her mother in a small town in Nebraska. My grandmother also loved the Studebaker, for both its color and its speed. One thing Mom had always complained about was that the stick shift would rattle at speeds over 65 MPH. She came home from a visit one time and announced that she found a speed at which the shifter no longer rattled. The speed she discovered was on the Kansas Turnpike where the speed limit was 80 MPH. The speed she discovered was somewhere between 110 and 115 MPH. She was happy to find how well the

Studebaker handled at those speeds and got the tickets to prove it. She enjoyed her Studebaker, and years later, she would always wonder if it was still around.

In 1967, when Studebaker finally called it quits, she panicked about availability and traded it in on a bright red, 390 big-block Ford Galaxie convertible. At that time she was 55, and my brother always asked her why she bought fast cars. Her answer was always the same: "To keep up with the freight trucks on the highway."

I was in the military in 1967, and was upset she got rid of her Studebaker, as I always wanted to buy it from her when she was ready for a new one. I look for them in *Hemmings*, but never can find one quite like hers. The way that Studebaker ran, I am sure now it was supercharged, but can't prove it.

Mom died a few years ago at age 98, and the one thing she missed in her last years was not being able to drive the highways like she used to. 🐾



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End of an Era

The first-series 1955 Chevrolets brought the Advance Design line to a close

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY MIKE McNESSOR

By 1954, the Advance Design was looking less advanced than light haulers from Ford and Dodge, but Chevrolet's showroom success remained unrivaled.

The Ram Brand's C-Series rolled out that year with a redesigned cab, an available automatic transmission and, in late 1954, the 241-cu.in. overhead-valve Power-Dome V-8. Still, the Dodge continued to struggle in last place in sales among the Big Three.

In 1953, Dearborn seriously upped the light-hauler ante with its now-legendary F-100, widely hailed as one of the most attractive truck designs of all time. For 1954, the F-Series further cranked up the heat on Chevrolet by offering buyers its new Y-block, overhead-

valve V-8. Ford grabbed a record-setting market share that year at 29.2 percent, but it wasn't enough to overtake Chevrolet, which commanded almost 32 percent of the market. Independents International and Studebaker slipped even further back in 1954, accounting for 21.8 percent of the light-truck market combined.

Chevrolet's Advance Design trucks would soldier into the 1955 model year against this increasingly stiff competition without any major revisions until the Task Force trucks made their debut in March. That's an impressive run, considering these trucks first hit the job sites, farms and delivery routes of America in 1947. This series is a perennial favorite with collectors and hot rodders alike, and their values have risen

slowly but steadily over the last decade.

The "first-series" 1955 Chevrolet trucks were largely carried over from the 1954 update. The most significant change for 1955 was the switch from a torque tube to the open driveshaft used in the new Task Force trucks. In 1954, there were several revisions to these trucks' exteriors as well as below their hoods. On the outside, the more delicate horizontal-slat grille was replaced with a bold cross-bar assembly. (Though many restored 1954 and first-series-'55 trucks sport chrome grilles today—like this month's highly accessorized feature truck—many left the factory painted.) The 1954 model was also the first of the series to be equipped with a curved one-piece windshield, offered in clear



or with optional tint. Additionally, for 1954, the 216-cu.in. straight-six engine was replaced as the standard powerplant by the more modern 235-cu.in. Six with full-pressure oiling and insert bearings. Advance Design light trucks used a three-speed synchromesh transmission, with a four-speed as an option. (Heavy trucks came standard with a four-speed.) But in 1954, a heavy-duty three-speed became available at extra cost, as did the Hydra-Matic automatic transmission.

The success of the 1947-'54 Advance Design trucks when new, and later as collectibles, had plenty to do with styling. These postwar trucks, though quaint today, were a radical

departure from their predecessors, the 1941-'47 Art Deco series.

For instance, Advance Design trucks incorporated the headlamps into the front fenders. The push-out windshield used to ventilate older truck cabs was replaced in this series with fixed panes of glass and vents built into the cowl. Advance Design trucks faced the world with a wide, subtle grille inspired by Chevrolet's passenger cars and used a front-opening clamshell hood. This was a distinct departure from the high upright grilles, so prevalent in prewar designs, topped by a split hood. The door hinges, too, of the Advance Design rigs were concealed for a streamlined appearance.

The handsome Advance Design cab was also built with functionality as well as driver comfort in mind. The cabin was wider, deeper and taller, which afforded operators and passengers more head and legroom. There were thicker dash and floor mats, as well as more effective insulation than was used on earlier Chevrolet trucks, which helped keep the cab quieter. The dash had provisions for a pushbutton truck radio and speaker, an ashtray was standard, as was a big glove compartment, though a heater/defroster was still optional.

There was room under the wider bench seat to store tools, and that seat could accommodate three adults across





its width. When adjusted, the seat cushion and seat back moved together and the seat rose when moved forward to help shorter drivers see over the dash more easily.

The ability to see out of the cab clearly in all directions was also taken into account when the Advance Design trucks were designed. The windshield area was larger than previous trucks, and corner panel windows, meant to help reduce blind spots or to aid in backing up, were available as an option. These corner windows were part of the DeLuxe Cab package, which shined more brightly than the base unit, thanks to stainless steel window and windshield trim.


The cargo box of Advance Design trucks was increased to 50 inches wide—two inches wider than the box used on

previous-generation trucks. The bed sides used through 1953 were carryovers from prewar Chevrolet trucks and had angled upper bed rails. From 1954 forward, the bedsides were taller and had flat upper rails that were more useful for hauling and loading. Also, until 1949, the gas tank filler was located on the right bed side, forward of the rear wheel. In '49, the gas tank was relocated to the interior of the cab behind the seat and the filler was on the right side of the cab behind the door.

All Advance Design half-tons rode on a 116-inch wheelbase, with solid axles and leaf springs fore and aft. The front axle was an I-beam unit with king pins, and the frame was ladder-type, with four crossmembers and rails measuring $2\frac{1}{4}$ x $5\frac{3}{4}$ inches. Hydraulic four-wheel drum

brakes with 11-inch drums were standard on half-tons throughout the entire run (early trucks used $1\frac{3}{4}$ -inch-width linings, front and rear; later trucks used 2-inch linings in front, $1\frac{3}{4}$ -inch, rear). Boosters were available on heavy trucks, but not on light trucks.

The changes made to the Advance Design series trucks are subtle, and it can be difficult to tell one model year from the next. To help narrow things down at a glance, look for “wing” windows in the doors—these were added in 1951 and carried forward through the first-series 1955 trucks. Earlier trucks without vent windows had a cowl vent door mounted on the left side. In 1952, pushbutton door handles were introduced, and '54 brought the crossbar grille.

This month's sparkling Juniper Green first series 1955 feature truck is owned by Tom Martin of Mechanicville, New York. It's been a regular at Hemmings Motor News events, where it has hauled home multiple awards. Tom found the truck in Georgia in 2005, and performed a body-off restoration. It retains its original 235-cu.in. straight-six engine and column-shifted three-speed manual transmission. Today, he drives the truck 3,000-4,000 miles a year and says he admires the appearance and simplicity of Chevrolet's 1947-first-series 1955 models. “I have always found Advance Design pickups very appealing,” he said. “I’m a former history teacher, so antique vehicles are special to me, and I truly enjoy trucks.” 



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Rolling Down Fifth Avenue

How bus transportation came to New York City

BY JIM DONNELLY • PHOTOS FROM THE ARCHIVES OF PAUL ZENT

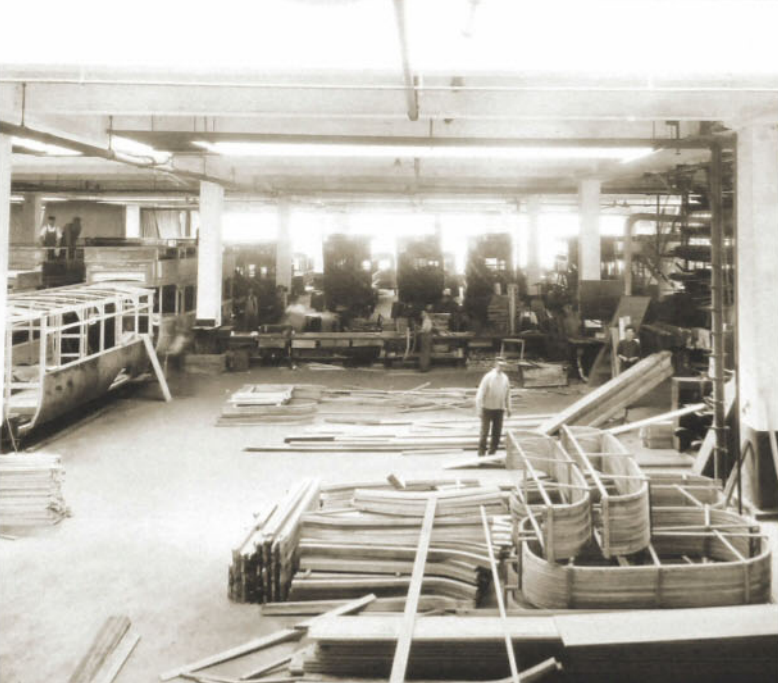
The evolution of public transportation in New York City took the same course as a lot of other transport in the early 20th century, a process that involved getting the horses out of the equation. Horse carcasses and untold tons of manure choked and befouled the city's streets at the dawn of the 1900s, leading to congestion and, well, the potential for disease. In those days, New York's transit system was largely a hodgepodge of quasi-independent agencies, one of which was the Fifth Avenue Coach Company. As the 19th century began to fade away,

it was indeed what its name implied, using horse-drawn double-deckers to ferry passengers down Fifth Avenue, already one of the city's most prestigious streets, from the reaches of upper Manhattan.

What happened next comes to us courtesy of Paul Zent, who lives on Long Island in Floral Park, New York, and is a retired maintenance supervisor for the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, the sprawling agency that handles bus, subway and commuter rail operations for the New York City metro area. During his career, he periodically had a unique tasking, which was to care for the buses

of the past that make up the heritage fleet of the New York Transit Museum. One such bus is a General Motors "Old Look" transit coach that resembles the one that Brooklyn native Jackie Gleason drove in the classic 1950s sitcom, *The Honeymooners*.

Another exhibit in the fleet is Bus 303, a sister to the vehicles you see in the photographs. We were delighted when Paul reached out to us with some of his archival photos; the lead one dates to about 1915, when motorized coaches were determinedly going about replacing the horse in the city's transit systems. It's



an exercise in customization that followed the original Fifth Avenue theme of multi-decked coaches with an open observation area on top. Fifth Avenue, the operator, used to buy the bus chassis, have them shipped to its shops in New York and once there, hand them over to skilled craftsmen who would then fabricate and attach the bus bodies to the frames.


At their heart, these were European buses—face it, the Continent had a good head start over the United States when it came to urban development—adapted to American streets. The chassis came from De Dion; note that they featured Hotchkiss-type drivelines rather than the more common American chain-drive setup. The engine came from Daimler,

using licensed Knight sleeve-valve architecture. There's right-hand drive only. And no front fenders, at least not at first. Also, check out the cast-spoke wheels and solid rubber tires.

"The reason I have those photos was because for years, I was part of a group that took care of the museum's fleet of vintage buses, which at the time was 17 or 18 buses," Paul explains. "The city has a transit museum, but back then, the buses were never kept there. Instead, they were spread out throughout the system, which I believe was 18 bus garages around the city; three here, four or five there. We kept them running because once a year, they used to have a bus festival at the Transit Museum in Brooklyn. I was asked to take

over the museum fleet and get them all running. There's actually a Bus 303 in the system that was just on the verge of being running when I retired from the MTA, a 1917 De Dion-Daimler that was like the ones in these photos. It was assembled, all rewired. As of five years ago, it was running."

Some of the photos you see were taken at the Fifth Avenue maintenance shop on 131st Street in upper Manhattan, which was later replaced by a larger, more modern shop on 132nd Street that also served as the transit line's headquarters, at the intersection of Broadway, just a couple of blocks away from Grant's tomb. Fifth Avenue also operated a satellite garage at 129th Street and Amsterdam Avenue that was originally a barn for the horse-drawn rigs before being taken over for bus maintenance, including the museum fleet for a time.

In the detail photos, you can see the bus bodies being assembled from hand-made ash framing. In one picture, a team of mechanics works the engine bay of one double-decker while other units in the fleet line up alongside it. In another, a pair of workers performs a necessary part of daily maintenance on one bus, swapping out the lead-acid batteries for a fresh pair. Also, remember that this was during World War I: The bus line exhorts riders to do their part by purchasing war bonds. 



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

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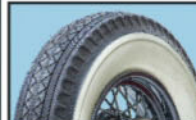
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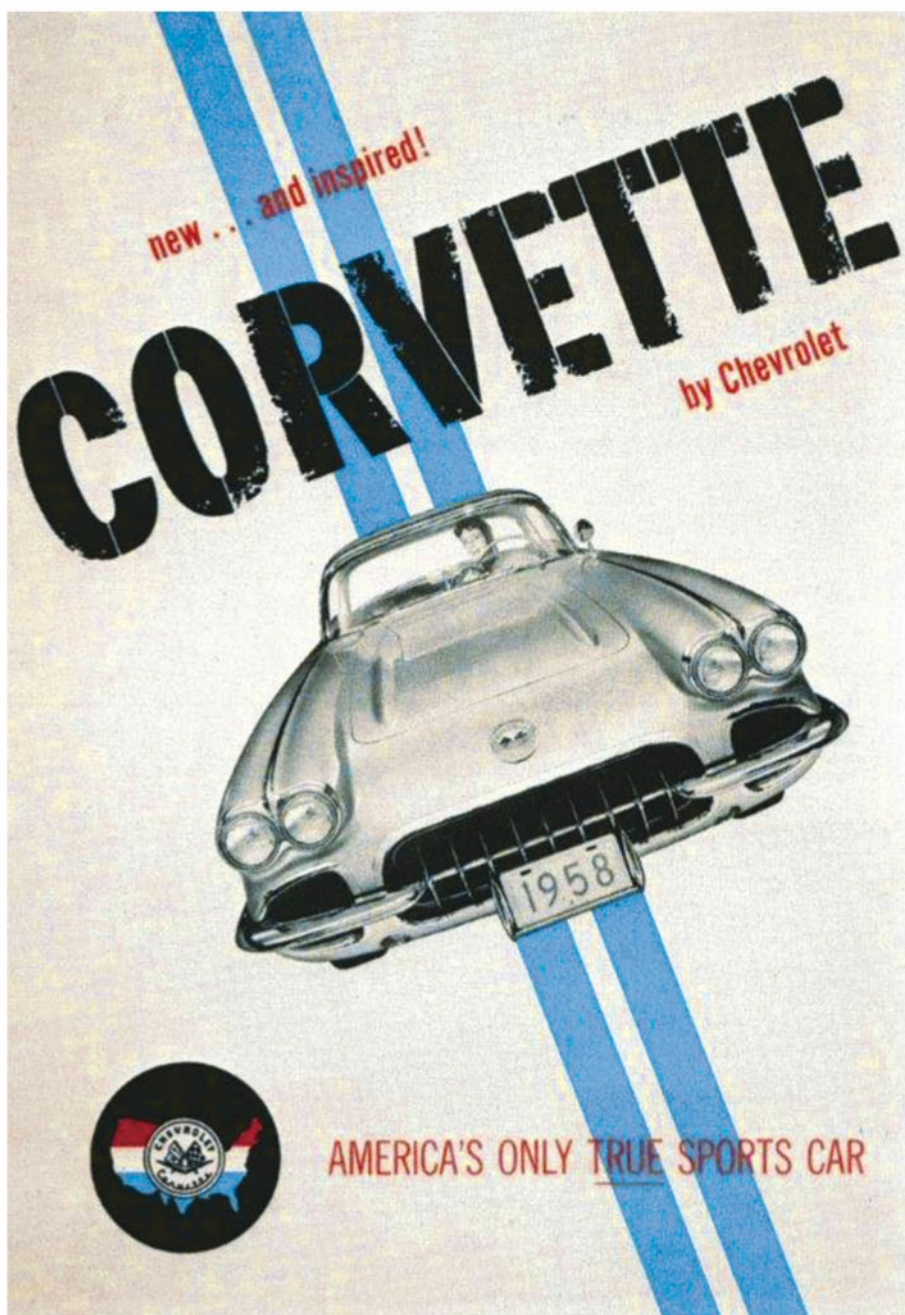
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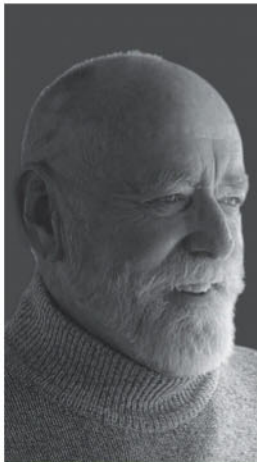
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//

Yes, I live

in the past,

but I am

not lonely

because there

are plenty of

others who do

the same.

//

The Past as Present

Some say we shouldn't live in the past, but I happen to *like* living in the past, or at least parts of it. I prefer it because the present depends too much on ignoring the unpleasant, even when it hits you in the face. And the future is worse, because it is impossible to predict one way or another with any certainty.

However, the past is known, and we can choose which parts of it we want to relive. How can one do that, you ask?

Well, you can do it by living in houses that were built many years ago, by furnishing them with old things, and especially by driving and maintaining classic cars. Living in the past is great, because you can edit out what you don't like, such as the diseases that were yet to be cured, the wars that had to be fought, and the crazy and dangerous people that were around. It's important to know about such things, but we don't need to relive them.

It all started when I was going to art school. I worked on cars to get through art school, and then they became a hobby while I worked as an illustrator, and then an art director/designer on magazines. I later became an editor, started a car magazine, and did a little TV on *My Classic Car*, but that is neither here nor there.

My wife and I had no money in my college days. We lived in an apartment that was part of a big Craftsman-era house, and we furnished it with cast-offs we found at garage sales. We didn't know that those things would go up in value and later be regarded as antiques, unlike modern furniture that rapidly goes out of style and becomes worthless.

This was back in the '60s. Back then, I drove a 1957 Chevy truck that had been owned by a roofing company. I nursed and restored that old truck for many years, but as my kids approached adolescence, they were embarrassed to be seen in it, so I sold it at a tidy profit and eventually stepped up to a 1938 La Salle.

I also love to watch old movies, and am especially fond of black-and-white film noir classics like *Lady in the Lake* and *The Third Man*. For music, when out cruising these days in my 1939 Packard 120 convertible coupe, I have

equipped the car with a hidden CD player and detachable speakers mounted in Tupperware salad bowls placed loosely on the floor behind the seat. I motor along to a bunch of cherished CDs of a radio program done by my late friend Rich Conaty, called *The Big Broadcast* on which he played pop and jazz from the 1920s and '30s.

Rich not only played this era of music on WFUV at Fordham University in New York, but

he drove an immaculate two-tone 1950 Nash Ambassador, and was quite a dweller in the past himself. I enjoyed Rich's show so much that I even listened to it faithfully down in New Zealand by podcast. Rich not only played great music, but he also told us who the musicians were, and when the recordings were made. His knowledge and his record collection were vast, and I miss him greatly, though I can still relive his show and the wonderful music of the past through his CDs.

By contrast, in my 1955 Bel Air I have some Fats Domino, The

Coasters and some great doo-wop recordings I put together from another friend's collection. I should work in a few CONELRAD Civil Defense warnings just to make them more authentic, though.

In New Zealand, I have a couple of Rolling Stones discs, along with some Joan Baez to play in my wee 1966 Morris Minor convertible, too. In fact, New Zealand itself is a lot like living in the past for a Yank like me. People still take family drives and go on camping vacations, and there isn't a fast-food drive-through on every corner plying the public with edible mediocrity, either.

Yes, I live in the past, but I am not lonely because there are plenty of others who do the same. I see them at car shows and vintage races driving marvelous machines that aren't made any more.

All I can say is: Wherever you are Rich, I hope you have a big Nash Ambassador to cruise around in, and Bing Crosby's "Million Dollar Baby" and Bix Beiderbecke's "Singin' the Blues" coming in on the AM radio as you ply those streets of gold. 🍷



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LUNCH: Maple Street, Downtown French Lick, IN - Noon
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WEDNESDAY, JUNE 28

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

THURSDAY, JUNE 29

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

FRIDAY, JUNE 30

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

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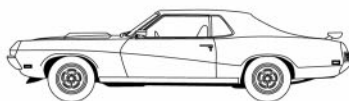
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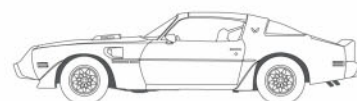
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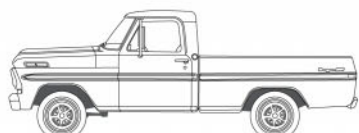
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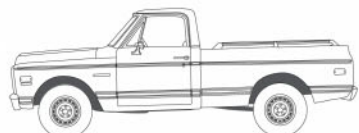
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