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JULY 2017 #154



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**SEPTEMBER 15, 16, 17, 2017**  
**Hemmings Motor News**

11th Annual

# CONCOURS

**▶ FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 15th**

**REGISTRATION & RALLY**

- 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. Registration at the Festival Commons, Lake George, New York.
- 12:00 noon – Join in a rally through the beautiful Adirondack region to Prospect Mountain.
- 2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. Luncheon buffet at Dunham's Bay Resort, Lake George, New York.

**▶ SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 16th**

**CRUISE-IN SPECTACULAR**

- Gates open at 8:00 a.m. An all-makes car show that's open to cars, trucks and motorcycles. Including: muscle cars, street rods, sports cars, exotics and classics.
- Awards at 2:00 p.m.
- Cocktail reception with cash bar at 6:00 p.m. and dinner available at 7:00 p.m. at the Fort William Henry Hotel.
- Keynote Speaker/Honorary Chairman: Wayne Carini.

**▶ SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 17th**

**CONCOURS d'ELEGANCE**

9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. Open to concours-quality, pre-1974 cars, by invitation only.

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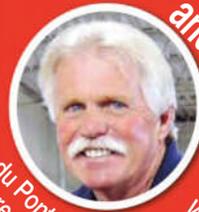


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ISSN# 1550-8730 • [www.hemmings.com](http://www.hemmings.com)

Published monthly by Hemmings Motor News

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Periodicals Postage Paid at Bennington, Vermont

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## The Punk Rock Effect

I was standing at the bar at Max's Kansas City in lower Manhattan back in the summer of 1976 when the bartender leaned over, tapped the bar top, and said to the two leather-clad guys standing next to me, "All right boys, you're on." They were Joey and Dee Dee Ramone. We sat down barely 20 feet in front of the small stage, the lights went out, and then we heard "1-2-3-4," followed by the loudest three-cord explosion of the most primitive rock-n-roll sound I had ever encountered. This was my kind of music, and I was hooked for life.

So, a few weeks ago, the day after Winter Storm Stella swept through the Northeast, I drove down to Brooklyn to see my favorite band, Green Day. With my daughter Gina by my side, who, by the way, has already attended way more rock concerts than people twice her age. We both agreed that it was the greatest concert we had ever attended. It was spectacular! Having seen most of the great bands, including the Rolling Stones, Deep Purple, Cheap Trick, the Kinks, Frank Zappa, Bad Company, Aerosmith, Savoy Brown, the Beach Boys, Springsteen, Jefferson Starship, Steve Miller, Peter Dinklage, Spirit, Van Halen, Chuck Berry, Edgar Winter, Jerry Lee Lewis, and The Who (three times), my preferred musical genre has always been punk rock.

Punk rock is the only music that truly speaks to me; folk music makes me want to tear my hair out. So it was only natural that my favorite hangout growing up was the infamous underground rock club CBGB's, where I also saw the Ramones, among many others. Living in New York City afforded us endless musical opportunities, so back in the '70s and throughout the '80s, I got to see many of the celebrated punk/new wave bands: Buzzcocks, Johnny Thunders, the Undertones, Elvis Costello, The Specials, Nick Lowe, The Pretenders, Sylvain, Graham Parker, the Police, Joe Jackson, Mink DeVille, and even Wayne County. But Green Day is on a whole other level.

Besides their addictive, ultra-high energy, catchy melodies, and insightful, meaningful lyrics, the message that Green Day sends its listeners is that you should be yourself. Don't allow others

to wrongly influence you, and, most importantly, don't believe the lies of politicians. Be true to yourself, and do what you want to do, not what society dictates you do.

This same individualistic view of life has not only been a huge part of the way I live my life, but I have always viewed automobiles in the same vein, too. When friends and others ask me what collector car they should buy, I constantly express my position that you should own what you always wanted to own. Never buy a car based on what its future value may be, what its status in the collector car world is, or whether or not



that particular car is one that everyone loves. Who cares if others like or don't like the car you own—I surely don't. It's good to be different. More importantly, it's good to be you.

If you always wanted to own a Gremlin, then buy a Gremlin. If you prefer a Studebaker Lark over a Golden Hawk, then buy the Lark. If an overhead-cam Firebird tops your list, forget what the 455 guys say, and go for the six-cylinder version. Want a Cadillac Catera, Dodge Omni GLH, or even a '70s-era Oldsmobile Starfire? Then buy one and drive it like you stole it. That's living.

And if you always dreamed of cruising around in a rat rod, but have been afraid to do so because your friends in your local AACA chapter will despise you, then I say build that rat rod, dump your "friends," and go have fun! It's your life, your car, so do as you wish. There's nothing more rewarding than to make *your* automotive dreams come true.

So before I head to that big salvage yard in the sky, I hope to one day own a 1963-'67 Corvette, drop in a Pontiac 421 with mechanically activated Tri-Power, and a Tremec five-speed, and watch the Bloomington Gold crowd gag. Now wouldn't that be a blast!

Oh, and if you want to experience one of the most incredible rock shows on earth, go see Green Day. I know I certainly will again, and again, and again... 🎸

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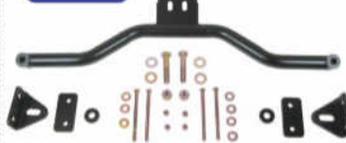
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## JULY



### Wilbraham Hill Climb

**VINTAGE HILL CLIMBING COMES BACK TO WESTERN MASSACHUSETTS WITH THE THIRD** biennial Wilbraham Hill Climb. The 2013 and 2015 events were great successes, and this year's event will take place July 8 in the town of Wilbraham, just east of Springfield. The day's events include a show and parade of cars along Main Street, featuring Brass Era and vintage sports cars of all types as well as a car corral. The hill-climb runs are a reenactment of the 1908 run up Monson Mountain Road, and will take place all day. All VSCCA members and their cars are eligible to run, and the parade is open to everyone. Past cars have featured vintage racers ranging from Ford and Plymouth sprinters to Stutz Blackhawks, as well as imported marques. For more information, visit [www.wilbrahamhillclimb.com](http://www.wilbrahamhillclimb.com) or [www.vsc.ca.org/events/biennial-wilbraham-hill-climb](http://www.vsc.ca.org/events/biennial-wilbraham-hill-climb).

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### Oldsmobiles in Albuquerque

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### Lincoln's 100th

**THIS YEAR'S LINCOLN HOMECOMING WILL CELEBRATE** a special Anniversary, as the marque celebrates the end of its first centennial. Lincoln began building V-12 engines for the Allies in WWI before it was reincorporated in 1920 to build automobiles. All Lincoln clubs are invited to this special event, which will be held at the Lincoln Car Heritage Museum at the Gilmore Car Museum in Hickory Corners, Michigan—both judged and display cars are welcome. The gathering will take place August 9-13. Side trips include tours of the Meijer Gardens in Grand Rapids, Off Brothers Automobile Collection, the Kellogg Bird Sanctuary, and a tour of the Bill Parfet Auto Collection. Saturday's show will feature a special showcase of 1920s and 1930s Lincolns and judging of Lincoln cars from over 50 different classes and eras. Visit [www.lcoc.org](http://www.lcoc.org) for accommodations and registration information.



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## RE: A-Door-Able

**MANY THANKS TO THE ENTIRE MEMBERSHIPS** of the American Austin Bantam Club and Austin Bantam Society because it seems like every one of them wrote in to tell us that the mystery door Stephen Hallas sent us photos of for HCC #152 did not come off a fire truck, as we first thought, but off a Bantam, as illustrated by Ralph Davy's photo, above.

Exactly which Bantam? Fortunately, we also heard from Robert Cunningham, whom we trust with knowledge of all things Bantam, and who told us that it comes from a 1940 Bantam convertible coupe. "If the upholstery is red vinyl, it's from a standard model; if it's red leather, it's from the more costly Riviera model," he wrote. "By contrast, the Bantam coupe, pickup and panel truck doors featured full window frames, and Bantam Hollywood convertible coupes had doors just like the mystery door, but the upper rear corner of the chrome glass frame was radiused instead of squared."

## CuBuick

**IN RESPONSE TO THE CUBAN CADILLAC** in HCC #151, Stan Polinsky of Trenton, South Carolina, wrote in to note that "unusually modified cars... are not uncommon" in Cuba. "No surprise that parts are hard to come by, but Cubans are very creative in keeping them on the road."

As an example, he sent along a photo of a similarly modified Buick he spotted while visiting

Cuba. Apparently based on a 1957 Buick Special four-door sedan (Model 41), it features some creative body work, adding several inches to the roof and sail panels and subtracting the same amount from the trunk.

So, we're to assume from the Cadillac and this Buick that trunk space isn't nearly as important as passenger space? Maybe only in the taxis.



## Don't Drive to Jericho?



**DANNY PLOTKIN**, who frequents the comments section on the *Hemmings Daily*, knows quite a bit about '50s and '60s Mopars, but admits that this one stumped him.

"Back in 2007 at Chryslers at Carlisle was a 1961 Fury four-door sedan with a Golden Commando 383," he wrote. "Under its hood were two bizarre trumpet-like devices screwed into the exhaust manifolds as depicted in the attached two photos. I couldn't find anyone to tell me what these are."

Nor did the seller of the Fury know. And he said they didn't seem set up to play "La Cucaracha" either, so that leaves us guessing, too. 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](mailto:dstrohl@hemmings.com). For more Lost & Found, visit <http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/category/lost-and-found/>.

*A Duesenberg Model J coupe owned by eccentric playboy George Whittell Jr. commanded \$10.34 million.*



Not actual size.

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Very few American automakers present the deftness and quality of pre-World War II construction than Duesenberg. Anchored by the ever-popular Model J chassis, Duesenberg offered fine coach-builders of the early 20th century a platform to produce truly beautiful pieces of mechanical art.

**The Duesenberg was then the finest vehicle of its kind that money could buy.** This car is so beautiful it appeared in the 2013 movie *The Great Gatsby*— a most fitting ride for the rags-to-riches, Jay Gatsby.

The Model J quickly became one of the most popular luxury cars, as well as a status symbol in the United States and Europe, driven by the rich and famous, including Howard Hughes, Tyrone Power and Clark Gable.

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McCORMICK'S PALM SPRINGS COLLECTOR CAR AUCTIONS



## Palm Springs Payout

**KEITH McCORMICK'S PALM SPRINGS COLLECTOR CAR AUCTION** finished its first auction of the year with record attendance figures and over \$5.8 million in sales. At the end of February's three-day event, 459 vehicles crossed the block, with a 66 percent sell-through rate. This 1961 Lincoln Continental had less than 35,000 miles and was featured in many invitation-only events. The body was in excellent condition, with a frequently serviced and well-maintained 430-cu.in. V-8. When the smoke cleared, it had hammered home for \$54,600. A full list of results is available at [www.classic-car-auction.com](http://www.classic-car-auction.com). Mark your calendars for November, as McCormick will return to the Palm Springs Convention Center for its fall sale.

## Amelia Island Results

**GOODING & COMPANY** had a successful sale at Amelia Island this past March as it generated over \$30.5 million in overall sales with a 77 percent sell-through rate. Among the many high-profile sales, there was a nice 1941 Ford Deluxe Station Wagon. Owned by one family for 45 years, the flathead Ford received a restoration about a decade ago, before the current consignor received it in 2012. This prewar beauty featured a slatted wood headliner, tan interior and a wood exterior composed of mostly original maple frames with birch panels. When the bidding ended, this wagon found a new home at \$66,000. Full results and listings at [www.goodingco.com](http://www.goodingco.com).



GOODING & COMPANY

## AUCTION PROFILE

**CADILLAC'S FLEETWOOD-BODIED CARS** were all built on 146-inch wheelbases and were designated Series 30 (Series 10 and 20 had Fisher bodies). This particular Series 30 was body style 6033-S and featured an L-head 335-cu.in. V-8 engine, capable of producing 130 horsepower. Other features included a three-speed transmission, coil-spring independent front suspension and four-wheel, power-assisted mechanical brakes.

This 1935 Cadillac has an interesting history. It was first invoiced to Boston's Cadillac Automobile Company, which was owned by Alvan Fuller. Fuller was a former congressman and governor of Massachusetts, and the car was used as a show car at the 1935 Boston Auto Show. It is believed to have been returned to Cadillac, where it stayed for decades and was finally sold to a California collector in the 1970s. The Cadillac found its way back East during succeeding decades,



OWEN FITTER/RM SOTHEBY'S

<b>CAR</b>	1935 Cadillac 355-D Five-Passenger Town Sedan	<b>LOT NUMBER</b>	235
<b>AUCTIONEER</b>	RM Sotheby's	<b>RESERVE</b>	None
<b>LOCATION</b>	Amelia Island, Florida	<b>AVERAGE SELLING PRICE</b>	\$35,000
<b>DATE</b>	March 11, 2017	<b>SELLING PRICE</b>	\$27,500

and the current owner has had the car since 2013. The upholstery was believed to be original, but the paint was changed from the original Cathedral Grey. A lot of work went into it, though, with

new tires, clutch, brakes, and exhaust, plus an engine overhaul, including rebuilt cylinder heads with new valves. While not a show car, it was in very good overall condition.

# JULY

## 1-2 • Silver Auctions

Jackson Hole, Wyoming  
800-255-4485  
www.silverauctions.com

## 7-8 • Smith Auctions

Cape Girardeau, Missouri  
800-861-7648  
www.smithauctionsllc.com

## 8 • Silver Auctions

Spokane, Washington • 800-255-4485  
www.silverauctions.com

## 8 • Vicari Auction

New Orleans, Louisiana  
504-264-2277 • vicariauction.com

## 14-15 • Central PA Auto Auction

Lock Haven, Pennsylvania  
800-248-8026  
www.cpaautoauction.com

## 15-16 • VanDerBrink Auctions

Norwalk, Ohio • 605-201-7005  
www.vanderbrinkauctions.com

## 20-22 • Mecum Auctions

Denver, Colorado • 262-275-5050  
www.mecum.com

## 27-29 • GAA Classic Cars

Greensboro, North Carolina  
855-862-2257  
www.gaaclassiccars.com

## Northwest Passage

### THE EARLY FORD V-8 CLUB AND SILVER

Auctions will be working together during the Spokane Swap Meet in Washington state. The meet is held July 7-9 and the Silver Auction will take place on July 8. You are sure to see some great prewar Ford cars and memorabilia during the three-day event. The show takes place at the Spokane County Fair and Expo Center; for more information visit Silver at [www.silverauctions.com](http://www.silverauctions.com).



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## 1956 Chevrolet Bel Air

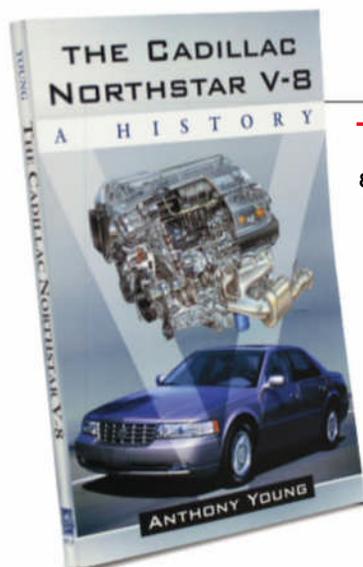
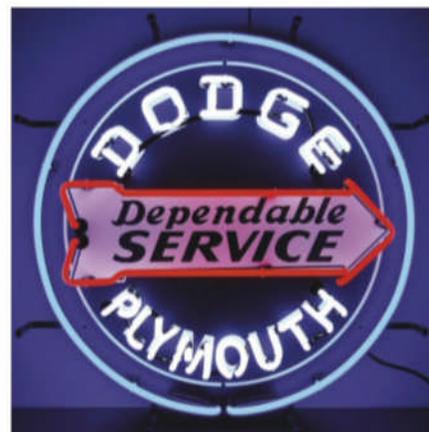
800-423-5525 • WWW.CALCARCOVER.COM • \$49.99

While the Tri-Five Chevys, on the whole, are unmistakably seared into American culture, it's the 1955 and 1957 models that are most famous and most typically replicated. It's therefore neat to come across a 1:18-scale model of a 1956 Bel Air convertible, this one rendered in pearlescent yellow and black. Made by Road Signature and officially licensed by GM, it features a believable upholstery treatment, and the ample interior and exterior brightwork is attractively handled. Under the opening hood is a facsimile "batwing"-topped dual-quad V-8, rendered in blue rather than that year's red, and our sample is equipped with a floor shifter. Regardless of those small details, it's a solidly attractive effort at a reasonable price, and '56 Bel Air fans will enjoy it.

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## The Cadillac Northstar V-8

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The Cadillac Motor Division was an early pioneer of precision-assembly and eight-cylinder-engine technology, having introduced its first V-8 in 1914, and leading GM's change to overhead-valve V-8s in 1949. The most technically sophisticated V-8 Cadillac that engineers would create, before the marque switched over to use GM Powertrain engines, was the dual-overhead cam, four-valve-per-cylinder "Northstar" engine of the 1990s-2000s.

In this 196-page softcover, author Anthony Young offers a fascinating look at the inspiration behind Cadillac's Northstar, including its development, evolution, and use in competition and other production cars. Readers will enjoy his technical, thorough, and yet approachable writing style, as they follow this important American engine through its life, and come to understand its enduring legacy for all multi-valve GM engines.

*Continued on page 18*

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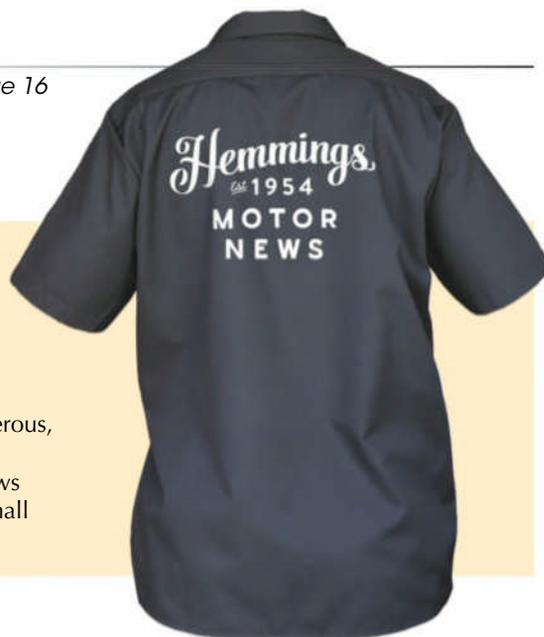
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## Creative Industries of Detroit

800-551-4754 • [WWW.CARTECHBOOKS.COM](http://WWW.CARTECHBOOKS.COM) • \$39.95

Within the 191 softcover pages of this very interesting book, whose subtitle is *The Untold Story of Detroit's Secret Concept Car Builder*, the author takes us inside the "secret" company that fabricated concept cars for Chevrolet, Ford, Chrysler, and Packard.

That secret firm was the Progressive Welder Company, an aviation specialist based in Detroit that was started back in the 1930s. With a name change to Creative Industries, this engineering company started getting automotive-related work after the war, and soon began building full-size concept cars.

Be it developing complete cars or simply adding transparent roofs, Creative Industries spearheaded the building of President Eisenhower's 1950 Lincoln Cosmopolitan "bubbletop" limo, while the list of concept cars that the firm clandestinely built includes the 1954 Mercury XM-800, the 1953 Dodge Granada, 1955 Packard Panther, Ford's FX-Atmos, and many early Corvette prototypes.

The creation, design and construction of each concept car is discussed in depth and lavishly illustrated with many never-before-seen photographs and drawings. If you love American concept cars, this book is an absolute must.

— RICHARD LENTINELLO

## 1970 Buick Gran Sport

800-718-1866 • [WWW.DIECASTDIRECT.COM](http://WWW.DIECASTDIRECT.COM) • \$144.95

Brooklin Models of England has long had a soft spot for General Motors' Buick division, as evidenced by its impressive "The Buick Collection: B.C. 1934 to 1939" line of handcrafted white-metal replicas. This 1:43-scale specialist has moved solidly into the postwar era with its new 1970 Gran Sport 455 Stage 1 convertible. Beautifully rendered in Emerald Mist Poly over a saddle bucket-seat interior, it's a real charmer that will appeal to enthusiasts of classic and performance Buicks, alike. *HMN's* resident Buick guru, Matt Litwin, noted its high level of correct and accurately colored detail, inside and out, and gave it two thumbs up—a better endorsement you won't find.



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## Alfred Stromberg



**THE NAME "STROMBERG"** has gotten a lot of traction as hot rodding's most famous carburetor, the 1930s-era EE series—better known as the "97"—has once again become a hot commodity. In fact, it's even back in production.

Stromberg the man, however, is less well known. Like Harry Tillotson, William Carter and the Holley Brothers, Stromberg's eponymous mixer of fuel and air has long outlived the man himself. He is actually far better remembered by enthusiasts of vintage telephones and radios, thanks to his lifelong involvement with those products as well.

Alfred Stromberg was born near Stockholm, Sweden, on March 9, 1861—slightly over two years before Henry Ford. He would grow into a "little, unassuming man with sharp features and intelligent eyes ... with great will power, with nerves and muscles of steel," according to the *Svenska Tribunen*, a Swedish-American newspaper of his heyday. Like Ford, he would get his start working in one of the great establishments of a famous 19th century inventor, though not Thomas Edison but Alexander Graham Bell.

As a teenager, Stromberg started his career as an electrician, and by the age of 18 he had risen to the position of foreman at Öller & Co, Stockholm-based maker

of telegraph instruments, telephones, and sewing machines. It was while working for Öller & Co that he installed the first battery transmitter to be used in Scandinavia.

When the U.S.-based Bell Telephone Company established itself in Stockholm, Stromberg joined that organization, where he performed much of the work installing the Stockholm telephone exchange as well as several of the telephone exchanges in Northern Sweden. Around 1884, Stromberg took the opportunity to join Bell's Chicago office. In 1886, he married a fellow Swede, Ellen (or Ella) Johnson, with whom he had four children.

One story from this time, likely apocryphal but too good not to share, is that upon his arrival in the United States, the ambitious young immigrant found himself short of funds and attempted to obtain a loan of 25 cents. Denied such an investment, Stromberg was said to have vowed never again to attempt to operate on credit.

Over the next five years, Stromberg worked for Bell, inventing refinements to telephone equipment on the company's behalf. In 1890, he set out on his own, carrying his electronic expertise to the Thomson-Houston Co. and the Chicago Electric Protective Co. for the improvement of burglar alarms.

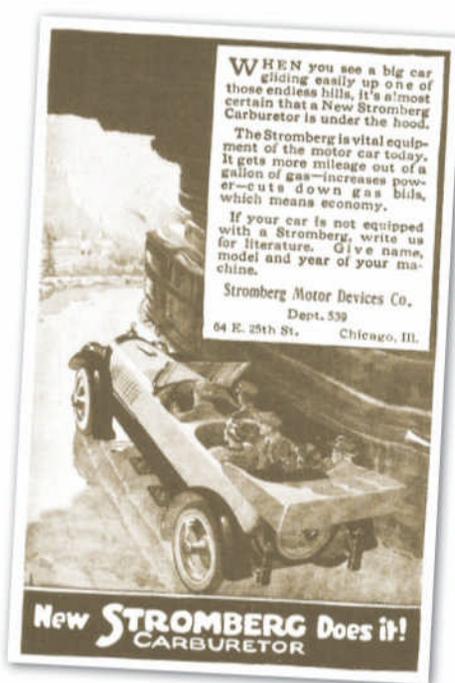
When the Bell telephone patents expired in 1893-'94, Stromberg and another Swedish ex-Bell employee named Androv (some sources say Anders) Carlson joined together to form the firm of Stromberg-Carlson, producing telephone equipment for companies outside the Bell System. One of the biggest customers of Stromberg-Carlson was the Rochester, New York, telephone company, and in 1905 a group of Rochester investors purchased the concern, leaving both Stromberg and Carlson wealthy men. Stromberg-Carlson would later expand into radio and phonograph production, including car radios. It still exists today as a subsidiary of Genband U.S. LLC, still producing, in essence, telephone equipment.

The energetic Stromberg was not content to retire in his 40s, however. After assisting in Stromberg-Carlson's re-establishment in Rochester, he returned

to Chicago and was soon involved in the Perry Time Stamp Company and the Goldberg Motor Car Devices Manufacturing Company. At Perry, which soon bore the name Stromberg Electric Chronograph Company, he oversaw the creation of an automated time-stamp system, which became familiar to hourly workers everywhere. That company is now known as Stromberg Office Products.

At Goldberg, renamed Stromberg Motor Devices circa 1909, Stromberg (and his old friend Carlson) brought much-needed capital to the designs of John Goldberg. A large factory was erected in Chicago, and the company's one-a-day production of carburetors for automobiles, motor boats and aircraft, was soon increased to one per minute.

Stromberg's carburetor operation would prove just as successful as his telephone and time-clock efforts. The carburetor company was purchased by Bendix Aviation in 1929, shortly after the death of Carlson. Stromberg himself died in 1913, one day short of his 52nd birthday. The original Stromberg carburetor company would produce its last units for U.S. consumption in 1974, but the name and the famous 97 design live on with the revived Stromberg Carburetor company of Suffolk, England. 



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# Coupe de Villes of the 1970s

*Cadillac's two-door Coupe de Ville defied all economic indicators while still staying with the times*

BY JEFF KOCH • PHOTOGRAPHY BY GENERAL MOTORS

The 1970s were a complicated time for Cadillac. The decade was a rough patch for Detroit in general, but when you're atop the luxury-car group and the ground starts shifting underneath you, things can go sideways before there's a chance to react. Consider: In a time of economic uncertainty, Cadillacs were expensive; in an era of rapid downsizing, Cadillac needed to follow suit to remain competitive.

During the gas crisis, Cadillac installed an even larger engine. The marque refused to bow to the whims of the economy, setting sales records six times over the course of the decade as big cars were supposedly falling out of favor with the American public. And one of the brand's most popular models, responsible for between a third and one half of all divisional sales, was the Coupe de Ville.

We would surmise that a number of factors conflated to make the Coupe de Ville such a strong-selling staple of the 1970s. For one, baby boomers were beginning to come into their own, hitting their stride as an economic force. Then there was the fact that more married couples were becoming two-income families, meaning there was more money to spend on luxury goods, like a Cadillac. And the rise of the personal luxury car was not going unnoticed in Detroit. Opera windows and earth-tone hues were replacing hood tachs and poppin'

paint colors in America's showrooms. Why would someone pay for a luxury car with a Chevrolet, Ford, or Chrysler badge on it when that increased economic power put a real luxury car within reach? In the 1960s, the Coupe de Ville was a high-fashion staple; in the '70s, its new popularity catapulted it into the status of legend.

There were three distinct generations of Coupe de Villes sold in the 1970s: the 1970 model, the 1971-'76 models, and the downsized-for-1977 models, whose chassis lived clear into the mid-1990s.

The world doesn't suddenly change with the start of a new decade; and so it was at Cadillac. Its Coupe de Ville for 1970 debuted in September 1969, and was but a gently facelifted '69 model on a 129.5-inch-wheelbase chassis that dated back to 1965. After a comprehensive restyling for the 1969 model year, which extended the hood and rear quarters, squared up



1970



the roofline, and eliminated vent windows, the '70 Coupe de Ville received the gentlest of facelifts. A new grille featured 13 vertical ribs against cross-hatched openings; the brightwork around the headlamps was bordered with body color; narrow, vertical taillamps returned, with reverse lights set into the lower bumper. Power remained the tried-and-trusty 10:1-compression 472-cubic-inch V-8 rated at 375 horsepower and, more crucially, 525 pound-feet of smooth torque at just 3,000 rpm—plenty for the 4,650-pound shipping-weight coupe. A total of 238,745 Cadillacs sold, setting a divisional record, although a strike saw calendar year sales at 152,859. Coupe de Ville sales weighed in at 76,043, an increase of 10,288 units from 1969. Not bad for a car whose base price was \$5,884.

General Motors' B- and C-body line of full-size cars was completely redesigned for the 1971 model year, and the Coupe de Ville was no exception. With its wheelbase growing half

an inch, to a stately 130 inches, overall length grew to 225.8 inches. This is the shortest that the 1971-'76-era Coupe de Ville would be. Upcoming bumper laws and redesigns would see it grow another five inches over time. The nose featured a more prominent peak, with each headlamp given its own separate chrome surround, vertical bumper guards flanked the front license plate, and sculpted body sides converged on the rear quarters. Beneath that new tapered hood, GM dropped compression ratios across the board for 1971, so that engines could run on the upcoming unleaded fuels. Cadillac saw compression drop to 8.5, with power rated at 345 gross horsepower and 500-pound-feet of torque at 2,800 rpm. The base price also jumped to \$6,264, to start. In 1971, for the first time ever, Cadillacs were built outside of Detroit; some Coupe de Villes were manufactured at GM's Linden, New Jersey, facility. Cadillac model year production grew to 188,537 units. New-





1973

model excitement didn't grab the potential Coupe de Ville buyer, however, and just 66,081 Coupe de Villes were sold—a loss of 9,962 units over the previous year.

After the launch of the all-new Cadillacs for 1971, and facing the massive regulatory and engineering challenges concerning bumper laws, emissions issues and other regulatory mandates, there wasn't a lot of time or money (or, frankly, reason) for Cadillac to change its look. As such, a new grille pattern, with emphasis on the horizontal ribs in the grille, were part of a gentle facelift that also saw parking lamps move from the bumper to between the headlamps. A new front bumper system, designed to meet federal 5-mph bumper laws, saw overall length grow nearly two inches. Power ratings were revised, although the big 472-cu.in. V-8 was unchanged; the old "gross" system was revised to a new "net" system that saw horsepower rated at 220 at 4,000 rpm and 365 lb-ft of torque at a low 2,400 rpm. Starting this year, the Cadillac brochure stopped publishing power and torque ratings, altogether. Pricing

retreated slightly in 1972, to \$6,168, to start. Cadillac celebrated its 70th anniversary with record sales numbers: 267,787 cars for the model year, including 95,280 Coupe de Villes—an increase of 29,199 cars, or a whopping 30 percent over 1971.

Another year, another revised front end: federal laws saw a new energy-absorbing 5-mph bumper on the front of the Coupe de Ville and all 1973 Cadillacs; rubber-tipped vertical bumper guards were placed outboard of the grille. The new bumper increased overall length fractionally, to 227.8 inches. A new, wider grille featured an intricate egg-crate pattern. This would be the final model year for a pillarless hardtop Coupe de Ville—a car that had innovated the pillarless hardtop body style when the nameplate was launched back in 1949. Engine output remained at 220 hp and 365 lb-ft of torque, while the base price jumped a modest \$100 for 1973, to \$6,268. The five millionth Cadillac was built in June of 1973. Cadillac was moving from strength to strength, with overall marque production hitting another new record of 304,839 cars—a full 112,849 of them Coupe de Villes



1974



(an increase of 16 percent over the year before). That's the fourth time in four years that Cadillac hit a sales record. Clearly, the automaker was doing something right.

Big changes were made for the midlife rejuvenation of Cadillac's perennial big seller. The separated headlamps of preceding years were again joined together, and a strong new crosshatch grille treatment appeared. With a pillarless Coupe de Ville gone, the two-door now sported a "coach" window treatment that required a wide B-pillar—a styling spiff meant to accommodate a federal rollover regulation that never came. New rear quarters with strong horizontal lines eliminated the former elliptical look, and the federally mandated 5-mph rear bumper blended nicely with the elongated rear taillamp/fin blades. New options included a Space Saver spare tire, equipping any de Ville that was ordered with optional steel-belted whitewall tires, and the Air Cushion Restraint System, a forerunner of today's airbags. Base price jumped to \$7,867, partly to offset the cost of the revisions and partly thanks to post-

OPEC inflation kicking in. Unsurprisingly, for the first year in several, Cadillac did not hit record sales numbers. Just 242,330 Cadillacs sold for the 1974 model year, although 112,201 Coupe de Villes left dealer lots (a model year decrease of just 648 cars, or less than one percent), meaning a whopping 46 percent of all 1974 Cadillacs were Coupe de Villes. At the end of 1973, the first fuel crisis kicked in—too late to affect Cadillac's strong sales for the model year. But as we will see in the years to come, this would have a tremendous effect on the division and the models it engineered and sold.

Another restyled front end, this time sporting dual rectangular headlamps and a revised grille, graced the new 1975 Cadillac Coupe de Ville. Steel-belted radial tires, power door locks and GM's new HEI—High Energy Ignition—became standard features. A sunroof and the electrically operated Astrorooftop, which featured a sliding sunshade, were optional. Faced with ever-reduced horsepower in the emissions-crunched and fuel-sensitive times, Cadillac made the unusual move of installing a larger engine—the 500-cubic-inch V-8 that had previously resided in the Eldorado—as standard; the 8.5-compression engine was rated at 190 horsepower. Standard axle ratios dropped from 2.91:1 to 2.73:1. Starting in March of 1975, electronic fuel injection became optional. A speed-density-type unit, a single four-barrel throttle body, and eight injectors nourished the engine, while sensors fed ambient air temp, coolant temp, manifold air pressure, engine speed, and throttle position data to the ECU. Emissions-choked V-8s of the '70s frequently had starting, idle, and stalling issues, none of which were a factor with fuel injection metering out the power. The added cost could be absorbed into the Cadillac's increasingly spendy sticker price. Also, EFI let Cadillac run clean. More than power or economy, EFI's ability to pass the emissions-sniffer test helped popularize this system as time went on. Pricing started at \$8,600 in 1975, but two subsequent pricing adjustments saw base prices rise to \$8,616 and \$9,029 as the year went on. A total of 264,731 Cadillacs were built for the 1975 model year. In a year when Detroit sold two million fewer cars than the year before, a year-to-year increase was a rare bright spot in GM's ledger. Even so, Coupe de Ville production decreased by 1,983 units, to 110,218 cars.





1976

The 1976 model year was a rare carryover year for the Coupe de Ville, with most options and powertrains staying put. A more intricate crosshatch pattern in the grille, newly trimmed front cornering lamps, and a Delco Freedom battery underscored the bulk of the substantive changes. A record 309,139 Cadillacs were sold for the Bicentennial model year, and Coupe de Ville sales grew by 4,264 cars in the big C-body's swan-song year, to 114,482 built. Sales were strong, but the first fuel crisis, whose hangover was still being felt, served notice that things needed to change. Cadillac would be on the vanguard of the downsizing movement—first with the profitable, image-leading, Nova-based Seville in mid-1975, and then with something long-rumored but still surprising for 1977.

Cadillac celebrated its 75 years of existence with an all-

new, smaller Coupe de Ville. With 8.5 inches taken out of the wheelbase, 9.5 inches of overall length removed, and weighing a whopping 950 pounds less, the new de Ville could fool you into believing that it had become a small car. Not so. Thanks in part to a three-inch-taller greenhouse, the new Cadillac offered more headroom and legroom—not to mention more trunk space. The new 7.0-liter/425-cu. in. V-8 was related to the outgoing 500-cu.in. beast, and with 8.2 compression, it was rated at 180 horsepower at 4,000 rpm—with 320 lb-ft of torque at 2,000 rpm. That's just 10 fewer horsepower needed to haul a 20-percent-lighter package. What's more, it still looked like a Cadillac: upright grille, stand-up hood ornament, ample use of chrome trim, and a certain stylistic formality that the Cadillac customer demanded. Fuel

injection remained optional, and boosted power to 195 hp; a super-low 2.28:1 rear gear ratio also became available. Sunroof and Astrorof versions were still offered, but the Air Cushion Restraint System didn't survive the transition. (Neither did rear wheel skirts, long a de Ville styling staple.) But new luxuries were added, including match-mounted wheels and tires to further improve the ride, and a comprehensive anti-corrosion treatment. Pricing started at \$9,810, possibly prompting some potential customers to wonder why they would want to pay more for less. Yet, once again, Cadillac was right for the zeitgeist. Model year production of 358,487 total cars set another divisional record, and Coupe de Ville production soared to 138,750, an increase of 24,268 cars.

With such a comprehensive makeover for 1977, Cadillac



1977

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took a breath for 1978. A revised grille, new rear bumper ends, a recalibrated transmission, new electronic leveling control with suspension-mounted sensors and rear air shocks, and retuned body mounts, comprised the bulk of the changes. Base price for the Coupe de Ville was \$10,584—the first time the Coupe de Ville started above \$10,000. Cadillac built 349,684 cars for 1978—the division's second-highest-ever total. Coupe de Ville production slipped, however, to 117,750 units—a loss of 21,000 cars over its smash 1977 debut season.

With a more-substantial-than-usual facelift coming for the 1980 model year, Cadillac let the 1979 Coupe de Ville float along on its own momentum, offering only minor cabin upgrades. A new interior dome lamp sported dual map lights. Chimes replaced buzzers in the cabin, to remind you to put on

your seatbelt. Dual electric remote mirrors became an option, as did a convex passenger's-side mirror and a variety of radios with added 40-channel Citizen's Band capability. And a new crosshatch grille pattern, of course. The Oldsmobile Diesel V-8 had late availability in 1979—just in time for the second OPEC fuel crisis. Cadillac had another record model year, with 381,113 cars built for 1979. Coupe de Villes started at \$11,728, a 10-percent jump over the year before, but sales shot up to 121,890—more than 4,000 cars more than the year before.

The Cadillac division ended the decade of the '70s as it had started it: atop the luxury car group, tackling the shifting automotive landscape with apparent ease and not a small amount of style. As the '80s dawned, Cadillac found itself far better prepared for the decade ahead than it did the decade just past. 

1979



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# Quintessential Cadillac

*Nearing the end of the full-size era—the 1978 Coupe de Ville*

BY DAVID CONWILL • PHOTOGRAPHY BY RICHARD LENTINELLO

“A car for every purse and purpose,” was Alfred Sloan’s vision for General Motors during his tenure with the company. Before it broke down thanks to too much badge engineering, the rigid divisional structure he created in the 1920s guided GM to be not only the world’s largest automaker, but the world’s largest corporation.



The shining jewel atop that hierarchy, of course, was Cadillac, the self-proclaimed “Standard of the World” to which all other automobiles were compared.

The crisis of American confidence that took hold in the 1970s would eventually lay waste to the Cadillac division, though many would argue it has risen to new heights today. Before that, however, the nameplate could be counted on to build models that conformed to styling and marketing trends with deep roots. Perhaps no car better symbolizes those old Cadillac philosophies than the final generation rear-wheel-drive de Ville.

The de Ville name comes from carriage manufacture and implies a handsome, luxurious conveyance for use in town. As a Cadillac appellation, it goes back to the 1949 Coupe de Ville, Cadillac’s pillarless hardtop body style in the Series 62 model, itself named after a Motorama dream car based on the high-luxury Series 60 Special. The de Ville remained an upmarket variation

on the pedestrian (for Cadillac) Series 62 until 1959 when the Coupe and Sedan de Ville obtained separate-model status.

From then until the 1980s, when Cadillac began to change its image in response to the inroads of European and Japanese luxury brands, the de Ville was something of a bellwether for the company. In 1978, Cadillac brochures identified Coupe de Ville as “America’s favorite luxury car.” When it shifted to front-wheel drive in 1985, leaving only the Fleetwood constructed in the old style, the old days were clearly gone at Cadillac.

Michael Signorile, of Staten Island, New York, got his taste for Cadillacs young, back when Cadillac was unabashedly a large, powerful, cushy American car—upstart Seville notwithstanding. At the tender age of eight, he took a ferry ride with his grandfather to Brooklyn. Disembarking in the Bensonhurst neighborhood, young Michael was struck by the concentration of GM’s crown jewel.

“When we got off the train, Cadillacs were all around,” he





**The original 180-hp, 425-cu.in. V-8 still resides underhood, a direct descendant of the 472- and 500-cu.in. V-8s of earlier years, but with smaller bores for fuel economy. A 190-hp, fuel-injected version was also available. Power brakes and air conditioning are natural equipment for a late-1970s Cadillac.**



reminisces, "And that's how the love affair got started. From that point on, I always wanted a Coupe de Ville."

In particular, Michael notes, he wanted one built in the late 1970s. "The design and shape, to me, are perfectly proportioned. Not as big as the 1976 Cadillacs, the '77 to '79 models were downsized."

The new Cadillacs at that time were the fifth generation of the de Ville model, sharing the C-body platform with the Buick Electra and the Cadillac Fleetwood. The reduced size helped General Motors meet the upcoming Corporate Average Fuel Economy standards, 18 mpg for 1978, as did the 425-cu.in. V-8, a reduced-bore version of the monstrous 472-cu.in. V-8 used in 1968-'74 de Villes.

The 425 V-8 was short-lived, replaced for 1980 by a further-necked-down 368-cu.in. V-8, which would find itself saddled with underdeveloped cylinder shutdown technology the next year. While the fifth-generation de Ville would continue in production through the 1984 model year, it was never really the same after the 1979 model year.

The 425 V-8, in carbureted form, was rated at 180 horsepower, only 10 fewer than the 500-cu.in. V-8 it replaced. The

slight loss of power compared with the approximately half-ton reduction in weight made for little reduction in performance, but the consumer of Cadillac products in the late 1970s was not so much concerned with power as luxury.

The de Ville continued to deliver its traditional opulence in spades. Standard features for 1978 included the robust Turbo Hydra-Matic 400 automatic transmission, automatic climate control, power windows, an AM/FM signal-seeking stereo ("with Scanner and Disappearing Antenna!"), six-way power seat and the classic Cadillac crest, standing proud out front.

All of that was what Michael was looking for when he decided, as a 40th birthday present to himself, to seek out his own Coupe de Ville. At first, none of his leads panned out, but on a Sunday morning in October 2015, this one practically found him. "My friend Joey said 'Hey Mike, did you see that Cadillac?'" The car, located only five miles from Michael's house, had just appeared "down the beach from where all the car guys meet in Staten Island," with a for-sale sign in the window. Its original, 83-year-old owner had finally decided to part with his Canyon Copper Firemist 1978 Coupe de Ville. The seller told Michael "he was happy it went to a true Cadillac enthusiast."





**The original Antique Mulberry leather interior has survived impressively sound and well preserved—right down to the optional Delco AM/FM stereo eight track. The color combination with Canyon Copper is both striking and unusual.**



Michael's appreciation for the marque runs deep. Originally hoping to find a white de Ville, he's quickly come to appreciate the Canyon Copper color, thanks to its rarity. He also enthuses about the car's all-original condition.

"What I really love about this Cadillac is its originality. It was never really touched except for maintenance. Nobody ever cut the radio out as so many of these models were. It still has the original Delco eight-track tape deck and it still works."

The ride is also a time warp, both physically and psychologically. "When I get behind the wheel of this Coupe de Ville, it takes me back to a simpler time, and being surrounded by all that body makes me feel safe," Michael said. "It's so nice to get compliments from other people on the road—it reminds them of years ago."

"The car handles and steers like a typical Cadillac. You can turn the wheel with one finger, and the transmission shifts very smoothly. The front disc/rear drum brakes stop well, but I don't take any chances."

That cautious approach—to preserve and maintain the car's originality—also applies to how Michael cares for the Cadillac, treating it to a biannual oil change and protecting the original paint, Elk Grain vinyl roof and Antique Mulberry leather upholstery with Meguiar's and Mothers products. He is also planning to replace the rear body filler panels ahead of the bumper, along with the rear shocks and springs, soon.

This Cadillac is driven about 500 miles per year, on Sundays between April and October. It's a rolling piece of Cadillac history and Michael is striking a balance between experiencing—and enjoying—that history and preserving it for future generations. However, on the street may be the only place you'll get to see Michael's Coupe de Ville, as he says he hasn't entered it into any car shows.

"To me," he says, "the award is the car." 🏆

*The car handles and steers like a typical Cadillac.*

*You can turn the wheel with one finger, and the transmission shifts very smoothly.*



# Superlative 88

*Oldsmobile's upscale Super 88 "Rocket-powered" sedan for 1955*

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY THOMAS A. DeMAURO

In the 1955 model year, new sales records were achieved for the U.S. auto industry and Oldsmobile that would endure for a decade. Wide public acceptance of the division's well-appointed "Go Ahead" styled models, which were fortified with an even more powerful 324-cu.in. overhead-valve Rocket V-8, propelled production to 583,179 cars being built.



Oldsmobile offered the 88 and Super 88 series on a 122-inch wheelbase and the Ninety-Eight on a 126-inch wheelbase. The entry-level 88 line featured a four-door sedan, two-door sedan or two-door Holiday coupe (hardtop). A 324-cu.in. two-barrel engine and three-speed manual transmission were standard with the four-barrel engine optional.

Super 88s provided the 324 four-barrel V-8 as standard in the body styles just mentioned or in a convertible. The top-of-the-line Ninety-Eight also included the four-barrel engine in a four-door sedan, two-door Deluxe Holiday coupe or Starfire convertible. Four-door Holiday sedans (hardtops) debuted partway through the 1955 model year for all series. A Hydra-Matic transmission was optional in all models and was highly popular.

Though the major body redesign had arrived for the 1954 model year, and the panoramic windshield, roofline,

and overall body shape were carried over for 1955, it also benefitted from further visual refinements.

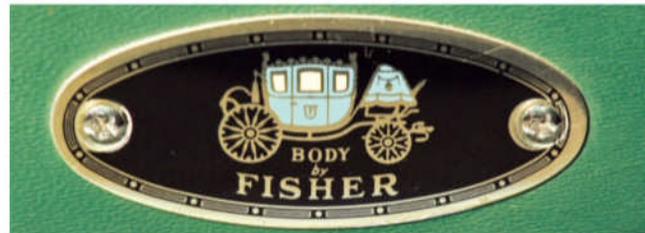
New forward-jutting headlamp hoods added an aggressive appearance to the front end, as did revisions to the wide-mouth grille area, which was emphasized by a new front bumper that mirrored the grille opening's upper shape and was further integrated into the body design. Freestanding "OLDSMOBILE" letters were proudly perched atop the crossbar in the grille opening, and a revised "world" crest and the rocket hood ornament graced a new hood highlighted by two centrally located raised ribs instead of one.

Front wheel wells and rear fender skirts that were squared-off for the 1954 88s and Super 88s became a graceful, rounded and swept-back design for 1955. The shapes followed those of the 1954 Ninety-Eight Starfire convertible and Ninety-Eight Deluxe Holiday coupe's wheel wells.





This interior is original, and its color complements the cream body and green roof. Its instrument panel design is ornate, yet practical, with a brace of gauges and clearly marked controls. This Super 88 was liberally optioned and even included the Autronic Eye automatic headlamp dimmer.



New side trim featured a long sweep that curved downward as it crossed the front fenders and doors, ending over the rear wheel wells on 88s, Super 88s, and the 98 four-door sedan. The rearward-angled trim section from the beltline pinch dramatically curled back and turned down to meet the long sweep. Short straight trim sections were on the lower rear quarters.

Upper body side trim on the 88, Super 88, and the Ninety-Eight four-door Holiday sedans (hardtops) originated near the A-pillar like that of the Ninety-Eight two-door models instead of at the beltline pinch like the others. It, and the side-sweep trim, ended just ahead of the rear wheel wells. Rear fender skirts weren't standard on the Holiday sedans or two-door Ninety-Eights. Body trim also served as paint breakpoints for some of the available two-tone schemes. The rear updates were limited to a new bumper and taillamps.

With go-fast looks and "rocket"-based marketing, providing power under the hood to back up the boasts was essential. Of course, Oldsmobile excelled in this area as well. Its 303-cu.in. V-8 that wowed the public with its overhead-valves and 135 horsepower when introduced for the 1949 models, grew to 324 cubic inches for 1954 and received top-end breathing enhancements to increase horsepower to 185 with the "Quadri-Jet" four-barrel and 170 hp with the two-barrel. For 1955, a higher 8.5:1 compression ratio,



higher lift hydraulic-lifter cam, and improved combustion chambers increased the power rating of the four-barrel, 324-cu.in. engine to 202 hp and the two-barrel version to 185 hp.

Though hardtops became all the rage at the time, our driveReport Super 88 was built on the lower-cost two-door sedan. It's an 18,983-mile original with a Grove Green roof over a Caspian Cream body. Amazingly well preserved, it was purchased in the late 1980s by Harry and Lois Peles of Carrolltown, Pennsylvania.

Harry recalls, "Coworkers at the steel mill told me about a fellow worker nicknamed 'Big Mike' who had an old car." When Harry learned that it was a Super 88, he had to pursue it. "In high school I worked at an Oldsmobile garage, and I've always loved the looks and performance of them. I was also in the process of collecting good original cars, and this one fit my collection very well."

Big Mike wasn't ready to sell, however. He had inherited the low-mileage Oldsmobile from his father-in-law, and he wanted to keep it. Harry periodically asked about the Super 88, and was getting accustomed to being told that it still wasn't for sale.

Finally, fate intervened. A family member of Big Mike's had ruined his own vehicle and then set his sights on the Oldsmobile as his next car. Now even more concerned for its wellbeing, Big Mike had a change of heart. One day, he replied to Harry's perennial inquiry about the Super 88



A used-car promotion folder, shop manual, invitation to view the new models, dealer postcards, owner's manual, and a couple of original accessory belts are displayed.



The 202-hp, 324-cu.in. four-barrel engine hasn't required significant work, just maintenance, since the day it was installed on the Lansing assembly line.



by asking how much he thought it was worth. Harry instantly recognized that negotiations had opened. He told him that he thought the sedan was worth about \$2,500, and that if it were a hardtop it would likely be a bit more. His valuation was solely based on descriptions of the car he'd received from his coworkers. Harry had never actually set eyes on the Olds in person. That figure concurred with what Big Mike had been told elsewhere, so a deal was struck on the spot.

Harry jokes, "It took me nearly three years of asking before he finally decided to sell it and once he did, it took just three minutes to close the deal."

With 13,901 miles on the odometer, 30-plus years after it was built, Harry took possession of a time capsule that was barely broken in, and at the time, still wore its original tires. "The car was in excellent condition and 100 percent original, except for the battery," he explains. "It only needed the driver's-side taillamp replaced and some paint work. The original owner touched it up with non-matching yellow paint applied with a brush."

Having done bodywork and paint since he was a teenager, Harry was certainly qualified to ensure the areas that required repainting were expertly blended into the original finish. He installed an NOS taillamp and serviced the car.

Now, still part of his collection nearly three decades later, the Super 88 has been maintained well and driven sparingly. Though pending brake work precluded a test drive by the HCC staff during the photo shoot, Harry shared his vivid recollections of his time behind the wheel of his Oldsmobile.

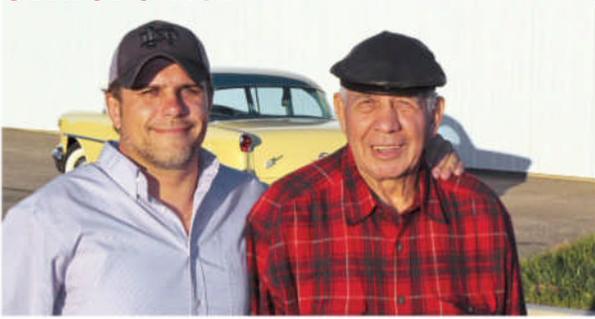
"Its 324 engine is powerful and accelerates very well, considering the era. You can see why this was the engine of

choice for hot rodders in the '60s. In fact, the worst speeding ticket I've ever received was in this car. It idles quietly and pulls through the gears smoothly. You barely feel the upshifts. Steering is almost effortless, thanks to the optional power assist, but there's almost no feedback through the system."

Harry describes the body lean in the turns as moderate, but the Oldsmobile negotiates road imperfections, "Like



Interesting details representative of a pampered low-mileage original include a service sticker on the windshield post and a cardboard tag under the hood of the Super 88 that date back to 1955. Both are still readable.



**J**ust in case you are somehow still wondering how Oldsmobile achieved record sales for 1955, the man who owns one offers his insight. Harry says: "It's a perfect mixture of performance and luxury in a sedan. Anyone who has ever ridden in my Super 88 appreciates the quality, and the experience makes them smile. It feels brand new and transports you back to the 1950s. I love the colors and the interior. I'm very proud of the car, and I have no regrets buying it."

you're riding on a cloud," he tells us. "You could hit railroad tracks at 35 mph and barely feel them. It does tend to wander a bit with the bias-ply tires, however. During higher-speed braking, there's slight nose dive, but the car stays pretty level and doesn't pull. Of course, cars today handle better, but they don't have the character of this Oldsmobile. It rides great and is very quiet."

A bench seat, padded dash, nearly full instrumentation with the speedometer and amps, temp, fuel, and oil pressure gauges set into a large chrome bezel, adorn the interior. Only a tachometer was absent, but it wasn't an Oldsmobile option in that era. The extra-cost AM radio is in the center of the dash, as is the glove box for easy access by all front-seat occupants, and the clock is in front of the passenger.

"The interior looks and feels brand new," Harry reports. "The seats are like sitting on your living room couch. Back support is very good, but the seatback is straight up with no recline. You sit high in the car, and everything is very accessible. Visibility is very good, with large expanses of glass all around you. Looking out the front, you see the rocket hood ornament. The only drawback is the small outside rearview mirror. Gauges are right in front of you and easily viewed through the color-keyed green steering wheel. Oldsmobile must have been quite proud of its power-steering



option, as it's announced on the steering wheel."

The Super 88 has been a pleasure for Harry to drive and maintain. Given his decades of collecting experience and the condition of this Oldsmobile, you may believe that he follows a rigorous preservation regimen, but he says it's really pretty simple.

The Oldsmobile is stored in his large garage. It's parked on plastic sheeting with cardboard under the tires. It's always under a high-quality car cover. Inside, dryer sheets are placed under the dash, the seats, around the interior, and under the hood to keep mice away. He says mothballs smell too bad. The dryer sheets work well, but have to be periodically changed, as their effectiveness fades over time. He also keeps up with regular maintenance, like changing the fluids and more. Every few months, he applies WD-40 to all the chrome and anything that could rust. He warns that it's

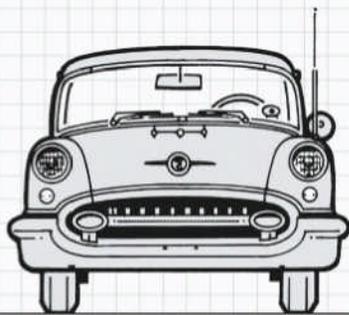
very important to keep moisture out of the car.

Now 81 years old, Harry still has an active car collection that includes a 1966 Corvette L79 roadster, 1950 Mercury (unrestored), 1962 Thunderbird (unrestored), 1950 Ford F-1 truck, 1935 Plymouth coupe, 1933 Plymouth sedan, 1967 Ford XL 390, 1971 Jaguar XKE V12, 1996 Buick Roadmaster, and a 2010 Mustang GT. He explains, "I had a larger collection, but have sold 10 cars or so over the past couple of years." 🚗

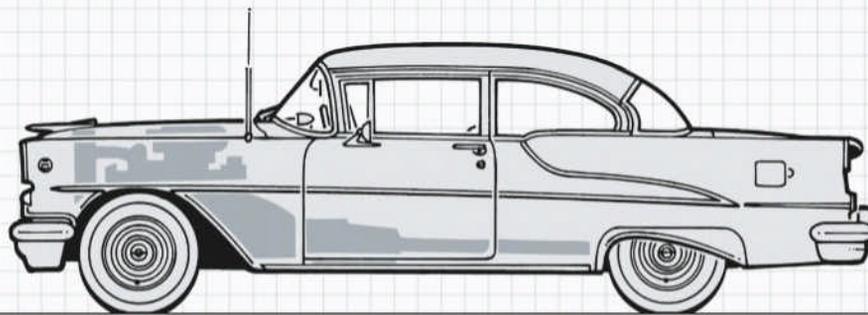


# 1955 OLDSMOBILE SUPER 88

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



59 inches



122 inches

## SPECIFICATIONS

### PRICE

**BASE PRICE** \$2,436  
**OPTIONS (AS PROFILED)** Hydra-Matic transmission, power steering, power brakes, Deluxe AM radio, rear seat speaker, power antenna, back-up lights, Autronic Eye, dash pad, electric clock, Deluxe steering wheel with horn ring, seat belts, door edge guards, vanity mirror, two-tone paint, auxiliary lighting group, tinted glass, wheel covers, whitewall tires

### ENGINE

**TYPE** Oldsmobile OHV V-8, cast-iron block and cylinder heads  
**DISPLACEMENT** 324 cubic inches  
**BORE X STROKE** 3.875 x 3.4375 inches  
**COMPRESSION RATIO** 8.5:1  
**HORSEPOWER @ RPM** 202 @ 4,000  
**TORQUE @ RPM** 332 lb-ft @ 2,400  
**VALVETRAIN** Hydraulic valve lifters  
**MAIN BEARINGS** Five  
**FUEL SYSTEM** Four-barrel carburetor, mechanical pump  
**LUBRICATION SYSTEM** Full pressure  
**ELECTRICAL SYSTEM** 12-volt  
**EXHAUST SYSTEM** Single

### TRANSMISSION

**TYPE** Hydra-Matic Super Drive four-speed automatic  
**RATIOS**  
 1st 3.82:1  
 2nd 2.63:1  
 3rd 1.45:1  
 4th 1.00:1  
 Reverse 4.30:1

### DIFFERENTIAL

**TYPE** Hotchkiss-type; hypoid drive gears, open  
**GEAR RATIO** 3.42:1  
**DRIVE AXLES** Semi-floating

### STEERING

**TYPE** Dual Center-Control, recirculating ball nut, power assist  
**RATIO** 25.7:1 overall  
**TURNING CIRCLE** 42 feet

### BRAKES

**TYPE** Super-Hydraulic, four-wheel drum, power assisted  
**FRONT** 11 x 2.5-inch drum  
**REAR** 11 x 2-inch drum

### CHASSIS & BODY

**CONSTRUCTION** Steel body on I-beam chassis with X-member and crossmembers  
**BODY STYLE** Two-door hardtop  
**LAYOUT** Front engine, rear-wheel drive

### SUSPENSION

**FRONT** Independent; coil springs, direct-acting hydraulic shocks, anti-roll bar  
**REAR** Solid axle, semi-elliptical leaf springs, hydraulic shocks

### WHEELS & TIRES

**WHEELS** 15-inch stamped steel with wheel covers  
**TIRES** 7.60 x 15-inch Firestone

### WEIGHTS & MEASURES

**WHEELBASE** 122 inches  
**OVERALL LENGTH** 203.36 inches  
**OVERALL WIDTH** 78.26 inches  
**OVERALL HEIGHT** 60.5 inches  
**FRONT TRACK** 59 inches  
**REAR TRACK** 58 inches  
**SHIPPING WEIGHT** 3,755 pounds

### CAPACITIES

**CRANKCASE** 6 quarts with filter  
**COOLING SYSTEM** 21.5 quarts  
**FUEL TANK** 20 gallons  
**TRANSMISSION** 11.25 quarts  
**DIFFERENTIAL** 4.75 pints

### CALCULATED DATA

**BHP PER CU.IN.** .623  
**WEIGHT PER BHP** 18.58 pounds  
**WEIGHT PER CU.IN.** 11.58 pounds

### PRODUCTION

1955 SUPER 88 SEDANS 11,950

## PROS & CONS

- + Plenty of power
- + Upscale Super 88 model
- + Well-preserved originality
- Single exhaust system
- Hardtops got more attention
- Too original to drive without concern

## WHAT TO PAY

**LOW**  
\$7,000 – 10,000

**AVERAGE**  
\$14,000 – \$22,000

**HIGH**  
\$30,000 – \$40,000

## CLUB CORNER

**OLDSMOBILE CLUB OF AMERICA**  
 P.O. Box 80318  
 Lansing, Michigan 48908  
 517-663-1811  
[www.oldsmobileclub.org](http://www.oldsmobileclub.org)  
 Dues: \$40/year  
 Membership: 6,400

**NATIONAL ANTIQUE OLDSMOBILE CLUB**  
 121 North Railroad St.  
 Myerstown, Pennsylvania 17067  
[www.antiqueolds.org](http://www.antiqueolds.org)  
 Dues: \$38/year  
 Membership: 1,300



## A Question of Muscle

**A**sk most automobile enthusiasts to name the first muscle car, and the usual answer is the 1964 Pontiac GTO.

I generally don't like getting into discussions about which automobile company built the first muscle car, because discussions can turn into arguments pretty easily. For me, the whole question used to be an open-and-shut case, because in my humble opinion the first true muscle car was the limited-edition 1957 Rambler Rebel. In fact, I went on record with that viewpoint in this column some years ago. At the time, I based my opinion on a definition I was taught years ago when I was still a young, impressionable lad. "A muscle car," an old-timer told me, "is a midsize car equipped with the engine from a full-size car." By that standard, the Rebel certainly fits the bill, because it was the only midsize Rambler powered by the big Nash Ambassador 255-hp, 327-cu.in. V-8. In addition, in the one year it was produced, the Rebel was the fastest American sedan you could buy (a fuelie Corvette was less than an eye blink faster). Like I said, it seemed an open-and-shut case.

But recent conversations with some Studebaker buds have got me thinking that maybe I was too hasty in my judgement. Some of their arguments are ones I've heard before, but some new points they presented have given me pause. Plus, there's a *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* thing that's starting to bug me.

What many Studebaker enthusiasts are saying is that the 1956 Golden Hawk should wear the crown of First Muscle Car in America. Their argument is that the Golden Hawk was a midsize car powered by a full-size engine, in this case, the ground-thumping 352-cu.in. V-8 ordinarily used in Packards.

Noted Golden Hawk collector Mark James emailed me that, in his opinion, the 1956 Golden Hawk "... is clearly the very first muscle car. The monstrous new Packard 352-cu.in. V-8 created 275 hp at 4,600 rpm. The torque was 380 lb-ft. Known as the 'Skypower 352,' the engine was coupled with a four-barrel carburetor and dual exhausts. The Packard V-8 gave the Golden Hawk the second highest

horsepower-to-weight ratio of any 1956 American car, second only to the Chrysler 300B. Its top speed is over 125 mph, and in 1956, a '56 Golden Hawk raced in the grueling Mille Miglia race in Italy."

The Packard engine enabled the Golden Hawks to accelerate 0-60 mph in a hair over nine seconds, and in 1956 that was nosebleed territory.

With such a big engine stuffed under the hood of such a svelte car, it would appear to be a prime example of the classic muscle car formula, only one year earlier than the Rebel, right?

Except, as I noted some years ago in this space, the Hawks ride a 120.5-inch wheelbase, same as the full-size Studebaker President, and that's clearly outside the formula. To my younger self, that seemed an automatic disqualification. But friends point out that the Studebaker line included two and four-

door sedan body styles (plus station wagons) in the Champion, Commander, and President series, and each was a six-passenger car. In contrast, the Golden Hawk hardtop coupe was completely different from those family cars, and was a five-passenger car, a distinct difference that could conceivably qualify it as a midsize automobile.

But do we have to stick to the midsize car/full-size engine formula? I confess I'm no longer sure. When I think about it objectively, I say yes, but when I stand next to a 1956 Golden Hawk and look over its size, and listen to its potent engine, I'm not sure what to think. Besides, how can I be sure that old-timer knew what he was talking about?

The *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines muscle cars as "any of a group of American-made two-door sports coupes with powerful engines designed for high-performance driving." Under that definition, anytime a large V-8 engine is fitted in a two-door, rear-wheel-drive, compact, midsize or full-size car designed for four or more passengers, it's a muscle car. That definition, you probably noticed, would actually exclude the Rebel, since it was a four-door hardtop. (Rambler didn't offer a two-door model in 1957.) But did I mention the Rebel could do the 0-60 run in 7.5 seconds? That puts it well ahead of the Golden Hawk.

Anyhow, at this point I'm anxious to hear other opinions. You got any? 🐼



//  
I generally  
don't like  
getting into  
discussions  
about which  
automobile  
company  
built the first  
muscle car...



## AS MY WIFE WAS FLIPPING THROUGH

*HCC #151*, she came across the article on the 1959 Rambler Cross Country wagon. "When I was in school I knew kids whose families owned some of those Ramblers," she said. "Those were the kids who always begged to be dropped off a block away from school."

Great article. Both of us thoroughly enjoyed it. Thanks for a great magazine. Ryck and Marianne Lydecker  
*Germantown, Maryland*

## GOOD GRAVY, BUT THE PACKARD

Business Coupe in *HCC #152* is a gorgeous car! Great color combo and detail. The article questions its *raison d'être*, with its seemingly paradoxical high-luxury style and fittings on a low-level body, but to me it makes perfect sense. If I were a successful businessman, one who enjoyed owning and operating fine cars, it would have been the perfect commuting vehicle with which to travel to the office in, in comfort, style, stature, and exclusivity while remaining fun to drive. And the ultimate date car, just for the two of you; kids have to stay home with the nanny! I see it as the personal luxury car of the 1940s, the complement to the sedan that the successful businessman no doubt also kept for the more formal occasions.

Steve Sieker  
*North Bend, Washington*

## I AM SURE THERE ARE LOTS OF CAR

guys who would rather have their car on your cover than on the grass at Pebble Beach. But that story about the Packard Business Coupe has me wanting to meet the 88 guys who bought that model in 1940: guys working for their pay, and not afraid to show the world their success.

Mark Clinard  
*Florence, Colorado*

## I OPENED MY *HCC #152* TO PAGE 80

to the "I Was There" article, and there it was: "The Pink Barracuda."

I was a couple of years out of high school in San Francisco, working as an apprentice shipwright at the then-named Hunter's Point Naval Shipyard. One day I got to work, and parked out front of the woodworking shop was a brand new, pink "bake your kids in the back seat under the big back window" Barracuda. I couldn't help but wonder as to who would buy a Pepto-Bismol pink Barracuda? As I recall, I later found out it belonged to the shop's

carpenters union rep.

Since the author of the article, Larry Jett, was working in the San Francisco Peninsula area at the time, I'm thinking the Barracuda must have been one of the special promotion cars he talks about in the article. Yes, a mighty ugly color.

I would have never known about the car's origin if not for your very informative magazine. Keep up the good work. Ed Bonuccelli  
*Cloverdale, California*

## I REALLY ENJOYED JIM DONNELLY'S

article in *HCC #152*, "Bill France, the visionary who founded NASCAR." Like the rest of your entire magazine, it was very well written. It made me long for the days of "Win on Sunday, sell on Monday," the days when car companies were in the race, too, developing monster engines like the 425-hp 409 and 427 Chevys, the 421 Pontiacs, Chrysler's Hemis, or the 425-hp SOHC 427 Fords. When wind-tunnel testing brought about the high-wing Charger Daytona and Plymouth Superbird, Ford developed the Torino Talladega and Mercury Cyclone. Who could forget when "Awesome Bill from Dawsonville" dominated with his Thunderbird, causing GM to develop the Monte Carlo SS Aero and the Pontiac Grand Prix 2+2 in order to be competitive.

Things started to change when the boys from Ford ran the Taurus with a two-door configuration. I'm not 100 percent sure, but I don't remember ever seeing a two-door Taurus on the street. Now, all NASCAR Cup cars seem to have a cookie cutter car body with different decals to distinguish them from being an Impala, Fusion or Camry, which are all in two-door body styles and look nothing like what the cars on the street do. I know that everything is different now, with cars all being front-wheel drive, but the fact that they don't even resemble what is on the street, I believe, has taken NASCAR away from the vision that Bill France had, and returned it to its roots of running modifies. Personally, I agree with the vision that France had for NASCAR, and as a result, I am less a fan of the series now than I used to be.

Forrest Teeters  
*Park Falls, Wisconsin*

## JOHN PIERSON'S REMINISCENCE IN

*HCC #152* reminded me of a family story about my grandmother, another matriarch whose driving style was a

bit on the fast-paced side. Grandma was widowed at 50, and went to work as a traveling saleslady specializing in ladies' "foundations." Although the six-cylinder, three-on-the-tree 1960 Rambler Ambassador she purchased to traverse the wide-open spaces between Nebraska's small towns was nobody's idea of a fast car, Grandma could push it to meet her need for speed. Once, while we were visiting her, my dad borrowed the Rambler to run an errand. Upon returning the car to her, he remarked that the transmission seemed a little sticky shifting in and out of second, to which she replied, "Second gear? I don't use second gear!" Second gear, indeed! To a hard-charging working gal like my grandma, second gear was superfluous, and only slowed her down. Matthew Gage

*Portland, Oregon*

## FOR US IN THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST,

the big World's Fair event was the 1962 Seattle Fair. I remember most the architecture of the buildings, as the boy in me hoped to grow up to become an architect, and at the Seattle Fair, the major buildings were done as permanent structures. But the car-crazy kid remembers as well the auto salon in the Coliseum building, where GM displayed the rocket-like Firebird III. At the time I didn't know it wasn't the latest thing, just that it was a dream car, and I was up close.

Wayne Janzen  
*New Westminster, B.C., Canada*

## I STOOD IN THE LINE WITH MY PAR-

ents for a ride in the bronze torch, and I got my ride. In the Ford exhibit, we rode in a 1964 Galaxie convertible. People were giving up their place in line to "hit it" when a Mustang came along. Today, we have a 1962 Thunderbird and a number of '64 Galaxies, including a street legal '64 Galaxie #28 Fred Lorenzen NASCAR clone. So, I guess those times had an effect on me.

I agree with Richard's comment that there will be no more world's fairs like the New York World's Fair. That was an amazing time in U.S. history.

Jorn Jensen  
*Worthington, Pennsylvania*



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



## The Road to Weldville

When people ask me who maintains what I sometimes refer to as my “collector cars,” I usually deadpan that my budget is just sufficient to cover one unpaid, unqualified, untrained mechanic—referring, of course, to myself. Though I play it for laughs, it is the truth, and I suspect that it’s the truth for a lot of you out there, too—though you’re probably more qualified than I am.

I put myself to work in other ways for the same budget of zero dollars. I’m my own unpaid upholsterer, though I’d never be mistaken for the real thing, and I learned this winter how to become my own unpaid woodworker, applying a new layer of walnut veneer to the dashboard of my little, British-made sports car.

It’s satisfying to be able to do this work, secure in the knowledge that, however big a mess I make of things, I’ll never be at risk of being taken off the job. I love to tinker with anything mechanical, and have ever since my dad taught me how to replace the ignition points in the family car all those years ago. It’s often said that whatever has been made by a human can be remade by a human, if necessary, and so I plunge ahead, shop manual in one hand, wrench in the other, and hope in my heart.

Being paid *bupkis* per hour means that I can take as long as I like to get the job done, and so I try to do things the right way. This is especially true when I’m confronted with some “handiwork” done by a Dreaded Previous Owner, or DPO. There’s a kind of bliss in making everything right again, just as the engineers intended.

Where this approach falls apart is when we enter that *terra incognita* known as bodywork. When I was in high school, my first car was a 1968 Pontiac Catalina, which, at the tender age of seven, had already surrendered huge expanses of its rear quarters to New England’s salty winter roads. To make the Pontiac more presentable, I went to the auto parts store and returned with a tub of Bondo, a length of fiberglass cloth, and some resin and hardener. The job made the car look even worse, if anything, and ruined my mom’s good dressmaking shears in the bargain.

Alas, my bodywork skills have not progressed since that day. How many times have I turned down a project car because it “just needs floors,” as the ad says? I’ll sadly shake my head, knowing in my heart that the one avenue open to me, membership in the Brotherhood of the Pop Rivet, just isn’t in the cards.

But anyone who thinks they can steer a course clear around rust is only fooling themselves.

Last summer, I went to look at a rolling shell that was advertised as “rust free,” which meant, in car-ad speak, that it had only a little visible rust. I looked it over, and found two things: tiny blisters had started to form behind the rear wheels, and someone from the Brotherhood had taken care of the driver’s floor.

Driven by cockeyed optimism and the irresistibility of a low price, I bought the car. The rust wasn’t so daunting—new rear lower quarters were available, as was a new floor. But I’d painted myself into a corner, with only one way out: learning how to become my own unpaid welder.

There must be a lot of people like me, because there are countless videos and books that promise to turn anyone into a crackerjack welder in the comfort of their own garage. What I wanted, however, was someone who could watch what I was doing, and offer advice and support. In other words, I wanted a hands-on course.

I would have been better off if I had been looking for a class in violin repair, or search-engine optimization. The local colleges didn’t teach welding, and the vocational school had no useful suggestions. I might have given up, and gone with the DVD approach, when a pal reasonably suggested that I ask my friend and mechanic Kevin Leonard if he’d take me under his wing.

Little did I know, but welding is one of Kevin’s great passions. He’s an A-1 proselytizer, too, delighted for the opportunity to spread the Gospel of the MIG. I’ve been dropping by his Williamstown, Massachusetts, shop, Flamingo Motors, after work, and he’s shown me that even a complete greenhorn like myself can lay down a blobby, zig-zag line of what looks like seagull excrement on a piece of sheet steel.

Actually, I’m making good progress, which is entirely the result of Kevin’s considerable skill as a teacher. I’m over my fear that I’ll become blinded, or electrocute myself, and I’m even starting to catch on to some of welding’s sensory delights, like the delicious sizzle the wire makes in its puddle of molten metal when everything is just *so*. I’ve learned how to see where I’m going, and, although my early efforts had a Ouija-board-like aspect, I’ve discovered that it’s possible to direct the bead with some precision.

I’m never going to approach Kevin’s level of skill, and that’s okay. I’ll be entirely satisfied if I can weld in my rear quarter patch panels and driver’s floor without botching things too badly.

And then we’re on to paint. Lucky for me, I know of one unpaid painter willing to take on the job. He’ll just need a little bit of training. 🐼

Although my early efforts had a Ouija-board-like aspect, I’ve discovered that it’s possible to direct the bead with some precision.

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## Factory Periodicals

The need of automobile manufacturers to stay in touch with their customers has been around since at least the first decade of the 20th century. They realized early on that a happy customer could be a repeat buyer. Showing car owners how pleased other owners of the same brand were would reinforce the notion that it was wise to possess a particular make, and to not seek or consider anything else.

Factory magazines that were sent on a periodic basis to car owners were the answer to staying in regular communication. The magazines often had articles on wonderful destinations that you could drive to or dream about, profiles of famous and not-so-famous owners of the brand, and announcements of new accessory equipment, plus other essential information. The magazines that were mailed went directly from the factory to the car owner and were a first-person means of communication.

Many manufacturers had factory magazines, and all of these publications had lots of photographs and illustrations. The magazines were meant to entertain and inspire use of the car the recipients owned. Two of the most lavish magazines were published by luxury car manufacturers. Both Lincoln and Packard issued periodicals on a somewhat erratic but regular basis—the best issues being published in the 1920s and early 1930s. There were full-color covers, and for Lincoln in special salon editions, color found its way to some interior pages, as well.

Chrysler started its *Motoring* magazine soon after the company was founded. The issue for August 1929 was basically a sales catalog in magazine format. The illustrations are first rate and reflect the Art Deco style of that era. The *Dodge News* was started in 1935, and although not an extravagant publication and printed in mostly black and white, it did keep the Dodge owner aware of what Dodge was doing. In 1937, there was even an independent magazine that started to be published titled

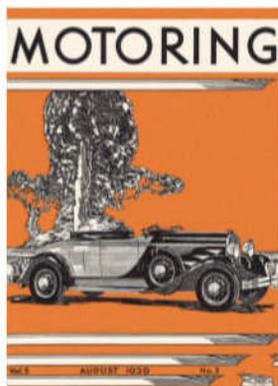
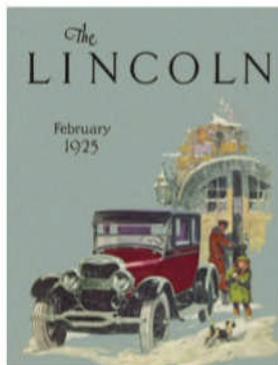
*The Chrysler Dealers News*. It was “not connected with the Chrysler, Dodge, De Soto or Plymouth organizations.” It went strictly to dealers and salesmen of Chrysler products and was published on East 42nd Street in New York City. Just as the factory magazine went to car buyers to keep them informed, this magazine kept employees of the dealerships aware of the latest equipment and news.

Auburn/Cord had their own magazine, and the *Ford Times* started in the Model T era and would be published for decades. Ford also published *Truk-Age*—aimed at its commercial buyers and sellers—in the 1930s, and the *Ford Dealer* was full of new sales material, ideas for promotion, etc., and was distributed to salesmen. There was also a Lincoln-Mercury magazine post war, and as mentioned in my January 2016 column, Cadillac had *The Crest* magazine going out to customers from 1928. While not exactly a magazine, *The Cadillac Accelerator* was a service-oriented publication. The *Studebaker Wheel* was another magnificent publication that can be considered outstanding just for the images it contained. Issues from the early 1930s are especially interesting. *The Reo Review*, published in the 1920s, was REO’s magazine. Oldsmobile’s magazine from the same era was called *The Pacemaker*, and the *Oldsmobile Weekly Wallop* was the periodical that the automaker sent to its salesmen.

The *Buick Bulletin* was produced by the sales department of the Buick Motor Co. This magazine had its start in 1936, and pre-World War II, each autumn’s issue contained a nice feature story. There was also a special issue devoted to the next year’s models, and at the center was stapled a full-color sales folder that was also given away in showrooms.

It was usually four pages long and showed all of the body styles and series that were introduced at that time of the year.

These factory magazines are really interesting to view, especially for their images, but as a source of information, are often overlooked today. 📷



These factory magazines are really interesting to view, especially for their images, but as a source of information, are often overlooked today.

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# Ohio Two-Stroker

*One of the last remaining 1910 Elmores still runs strong, thanks to the man who has owned it for almost 50 years*

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY TERRY SHEA

**D**uring the earliest days of General Motors, Billy Durant took the young and seemingly well-funded corporation on a buying spree, voraciously adding other carmakers to his company. While the big names like Buick, Cadillac, Oldsmobile



and Oakland survived, the majority never made it past the financial crunch that first took the over-leveraged Durant from his spot at the top.

One of those companies was Elmore, founded in Elmore, Ohio, in 1892 by a sawmill operator and his two sons as the Elmore Bicycle Company. After moving to nearby Clyde, Ohio, in 1897, the company soon began experimenting with two-stroke engines, with automobile production following in 1900. The company's debut of a trap and a runabout, each with a two-stroke, two-cylinder engine under the seat, prompted a name change to the Elmore Manufacturing Company.

From the very beginning, Elmore acted as an ardent believer in the simplicity of two-stroke architecture, with advertising reading, "We have no gears, cams, clutches, sprockets, chains, valves or other kindred trouble makers." In later years, "The Car that has no Valves" became the company's tag line. Advertising materi-

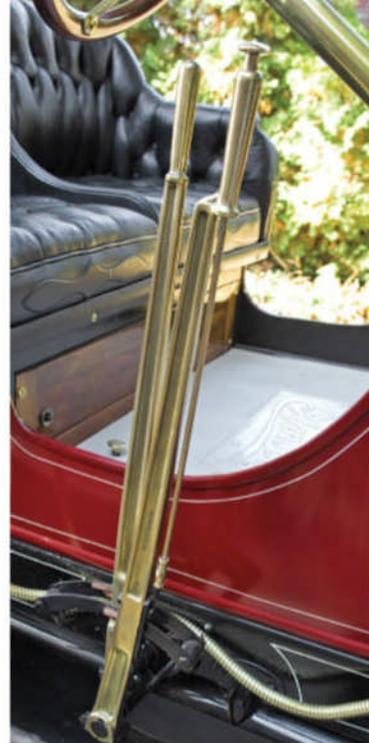
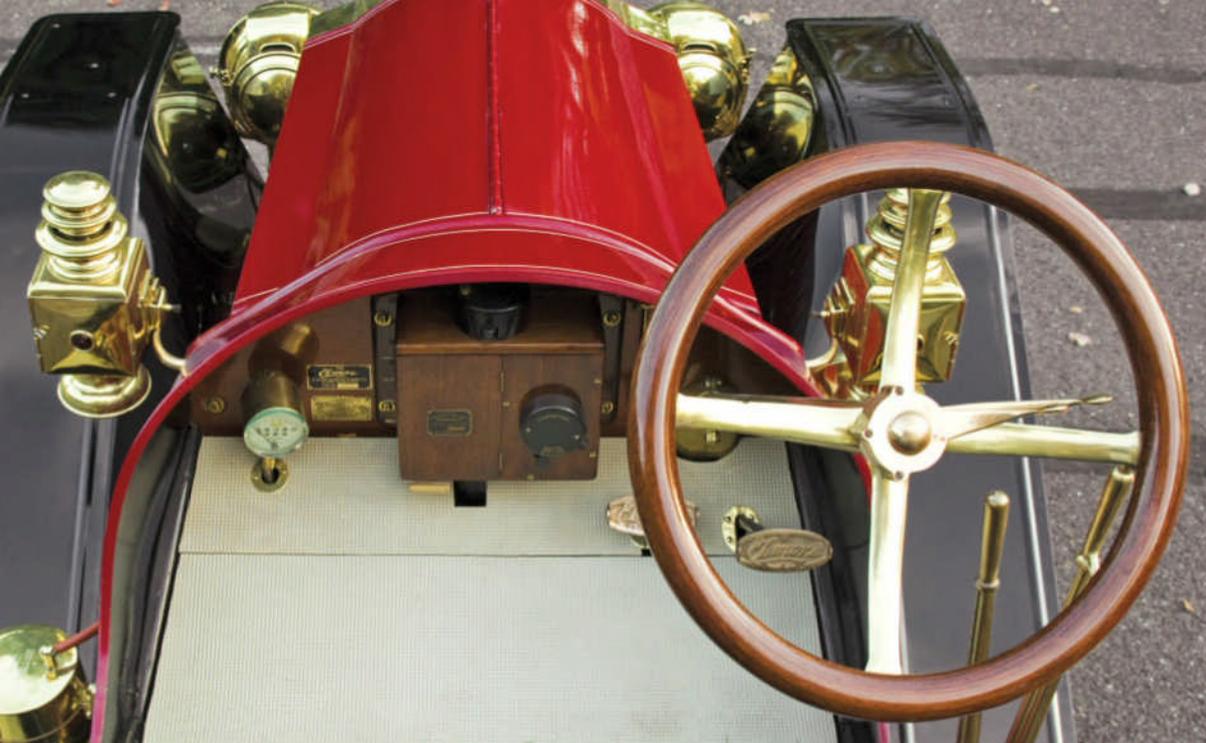
als reveal an almost evangelical zeal to the virtues of two-stroke engines regarding their power, reliability and durability as compared to a four-stroke, to the point where Elmore concluded that its position is "beyond the possibility of cavil or argument." Its ad copy for 1911 dared the car-buying public to consider its wares:

"Old methods of automobile selling have passed away. The present day buyer is seldom a complete novice...

"Today, therefore, the owner, actual or prospective, classes automobile motors in two divisions: one which has no valves and one with valves. In the valveless class, he finds the Elmore occupying a commanding position, and all other valveless motors in a more or less defensive attitude.

"'Wait a moment,' some reader seems to say. 'You speak of motors that have and motors that have not valves. Now if you may have motors without valves, what earthly sense is there in using valves?'"





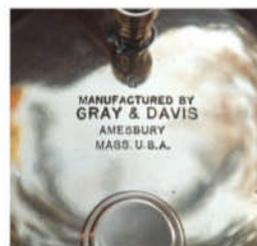
“None, my dear Sir; none at all, as every Elmore owner knows.”

Like the rest of the then-fledgling automobile industry, Elmore’s automobiles grew more sophisticated, sporting steering wheels in place of tillers by 1904 and a somewhat more conventional drivetrain in 1906, with the debut of its four-cylinder engine, an upright, inline powerplant mounted in front of the driver with a driveshaft carrying power to a differential at the rear. Though the layout was conventional, the two-stroke engine remained an outlier in a world with plenty of four-stroke options.

Sales reached 209 cars in 1906, more than doubled to 467 cars in 1907, and grew nearly another 50 percent in 1908, to 648 units. All of this activity attracted Durant, and GM purchased Elmore in November of 1909, for somewhere between \$500,000 to \$600,000. What little has been written about Elmore’s history suggests that GM bought Elmore for its

two-stroke patents, but all signs point to the most significant patents having expired by then. Whatever Durant’s motivation, GM’s financial backers soon soured on Elmore after Durant’s forced departure in 1910. At first, they moved production from Ohio to Detroit in 1911, but all Elmore production ceased in 1912. What was left of the once-pioneering automaker was sold off in 1916 for \$50,000.

Fortunately, there are people like Al Shaw in this world, who have gone to tremendous effort keeping what little remains of Elmore alive. The 87-year-old retired civil engineer spent a career working on railroads throughout the northeastern United States. Today, he resides in Wayne, Pennsylvania, but in the 1960s, while working for the Pennsylvania Railroad halfway across the state in Altoona, coworkers alerted him to a retired colleague who had an unidentified old car in the garage. Al did what any of us would do and went down to check it out.



Details abound on this early Demi-tonneau, with brass seemingly everywhere, from the acetylene lamps to the horn, steering wheel, shifter, and more. The Atwater Kent ignition box (top right, opposite page) earned the imposing nickname of “cabbage cutter” for obvious reasons.



"A.B. McIntyre was his name," recalls Al. "I went to his house, and he acknowledged the fact that he had a car, but he didn't want to talk about it. I realized now that he probably had dementia of some sort. Anyhow, he never would let me see it. But one time, I knew he was not around, and I went and looked through the windows of his garage and saw the car. I did not, at the time, even know what the car was.

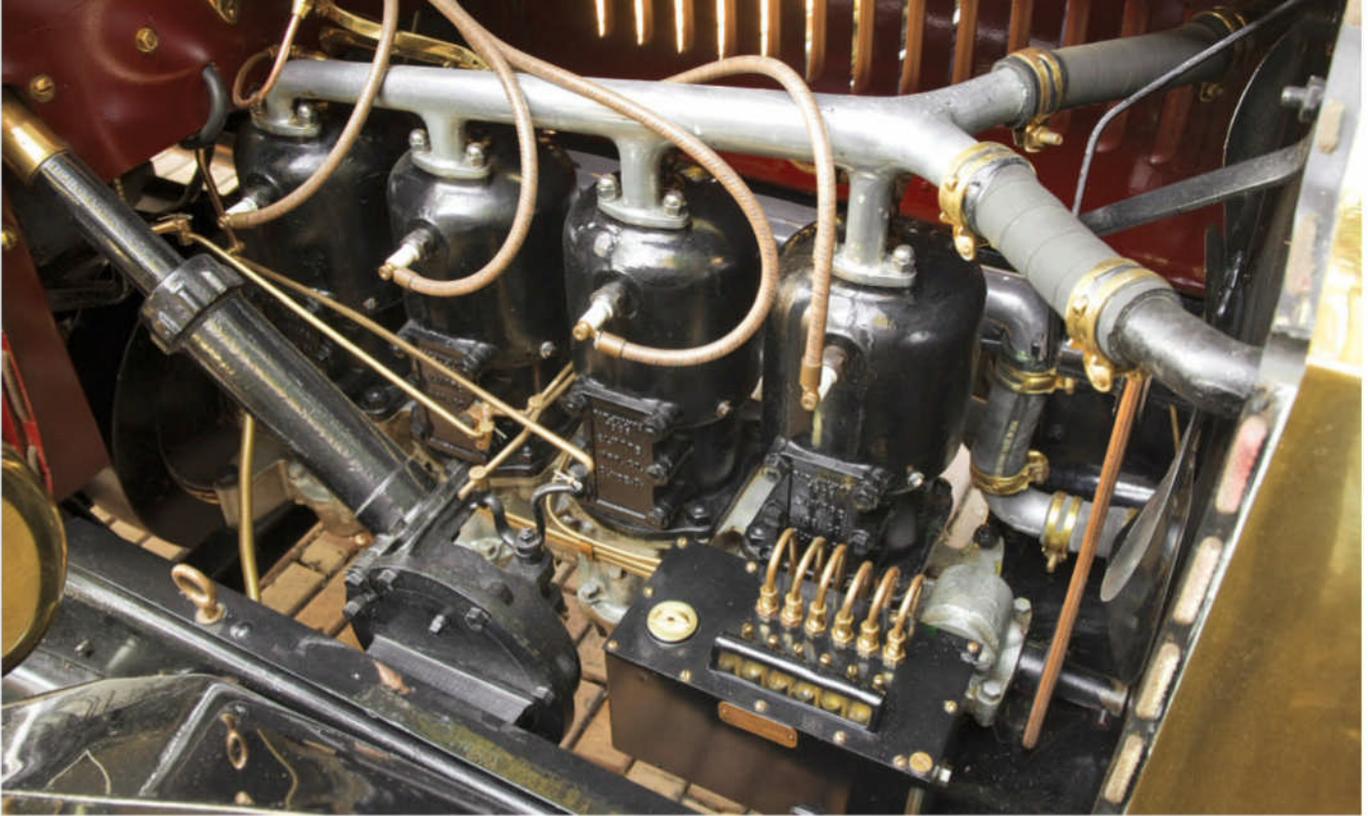
"Living behind the garage was his nephew, and I talked to him and told him if the car ever came up for sale that I'd be interested in buying it. This was back in 1965 or 1966. In 1971, I got a telephone call. I had been moved to Philadelphia and was then working in New York. His nephew indicated that A.B. had died, and the car was for sale. I offered him a price, and he accepted it. I went down the next week and got it. Then I knew it was an Elmore, but I hadn't the faintest idea of what it was."

What Al had on his hands, and what's pictured on these pages today, is a 1910 Elmore Model 36 Demi-tonneau.

At \$1,750, it was the base model Elmore for that year. The Demi-tonneau shared its 110-inch wheelbase with a five-passenger Touring Car, also priced at \$1,750, and a partially closed Landauet at \$2,500. Those three models also shared a 36-horsepower, four-cylinder engine. Elmore additionally sold a 120-inch-wheelbase Model 46, rated at 46 horsepower, in both seven-passenger Touring and Limousine models. Though almost any Brass Era auto these days can be considered rare, Al's Elmore survives as one of the very few remaining running and operating Elmore extant.

Under the hood of the Model 36 sits what Elmore called "the simplest motor in the world." Having offered three- and four-cylinder engines the previous year, in 1910 Elmore manufactured solely four-cylinder powerplants. With a four-and-a-half-





**Making power on every downward piston stroke with far fewer parts, two-cycle engines are inherently more efficient. But they require some unique engineering. In the case of Elmore's 254.4-cu.in. inline-four, the crankcase (below) requires a separate, sealed chamber for each cylinder.**



inch bore across a four-inch stroke, the 254.4-cubic-inch engine in the model 36 was rated at 36 horsepower, hence the name, though Elmore's own information calls that number "arbitrary" and likely based on performance. The company advertised the Model 36 to be good for 50 mph, and the higher-spec Model 46, with its more advanced two-stroke design, to be good for 60 mph. Al corroborates those numbers for his Model 36, saying, "It goes like the dickens! It'll run up to 60 very easily. That's the fastest I've ever driven it. I never tried going any faster."

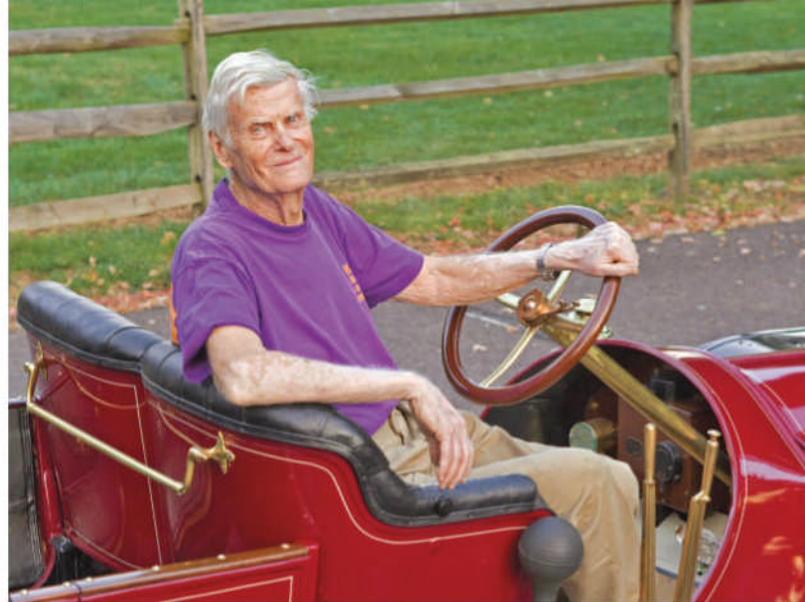
The two-stroke Elmore's engine features some unique attributes not seen on the typical four-stroke engine. The crankcase is divided into four individual sections, one for each cylinder and each section sealed off from the other. The Model 36 two-stroke power cycle relied on a crankcase-scavenging technique that drew the air/fuel mixture into the crankcase during the upward stroke of the piston and allowed it to pass to the combustion chamber via an intake port at the top of the stroke. This process necessitated what could almost be described as individual crankcase sections for each connecting rod and crankpin to keep the entirety of each cylinder separate. In a conventional four-stroke engine, of course, there is no need to keep those areas segregated in the sump, as compression all takes place in the individual cylinders above the piston tops.

Speaking of pistons, each one in the Model 36 features what Al describes as "an inch-and-a-half-high fin on top. That "fin" directs the fuel mixture from the intake port above the piston for proper combustion to occur, while the process simultaneously expels spent exhaust gases. Though his car was complete, Al had new aluminum pistons cast, a smart choice given advances in metallurgy in the past 100 years.

The rest of the Model 36's driveline is rather conventional, with a three-speed sliding-shift transmission connected to a driveshaft and, ultimately, a Buick-based differential, the latter of which was a surprise for Al. Elmore may have used a Buick rear, but the manufacturer employed its own brakes to go along with it.

Though the Demi-tonneau was complete, it needed a full restoration. Al did the body and upholstery in the first 10 years

*“It goes like the dickens! It’ll run up to 60 very easily. That’s the fastest I’ve ever driven it. I never tried going any faster.”*



of ownership, but then came his kids' college and those other things in life that need taking care of. With his retirement in 1995, he could get back at it, eventually finishing the car in 2006. Surprisingly, he did not have to chase down too many parts to complete it, and none specifically on the two-stroke engine. For a time, only the correct brass headlamps eluded him until he found them at a flea market.

With the crankshaft journals ten-thousandths or so out of round, they had to be machined. But given the rarity of the crankshaft, Al took no chances, not letting it out of his sight. "I took it to a machine shop that specialized in hot rods and they ground the crankshaft," says Al. "I didn't want to ship the crankshaft to anybody, because I was afraid if they lost it, I'd be in big trouble. So, I took it to an outfit up in Morrisville, Pennsylvania, and stood there while they redid it."

After figuring out some of the quirks of having a two-stroke, Al discretely installed an electric starter so that it now starts very easily, though not like a modern car. "Well, it has a priming

cup system," Al explains, "which is terrible, and I don't use it. I made a Rube Goldberg choke on it; I open the hood, slide it in place, crank it, and the minute it starts, jump out and slide the little piece of leather down. And once it's hot, it starts immediately anyhow."

Riding along with Al, sitting high above any other car, with no windshield in our faces, listening to the relatively quiet two-stroke putter along, helped by its large flywheel, we get a sense of that superiority Elmore was selling a century ago. Of course, stopping requires some very long lead time, even on the short journey back to his home on suburban streets from our photo location.

Though Elmore is long gone—the site of its Ohio factory now a bustling Whirlpool plant stamping out a new washing machine every four seconds—there are holdouts like Al Shaw and his 1910 Elmore Model 36 Demi-tonneau keeping the flame alive for a pioneering automaker that did not quite pass muster with General Motors and the bankers who ran it 105 years ago. 🚗



# Different By Design

*Long forgotten, the 1978 Buick Skyhawk was a styling tour de force of its time*

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY RICHARD LENTINELLO

Forget what the pundits and car snobs say about them, the 1975 to 1980 Skyhawks are extremely stylish and sporty-looking automobiles. They had a distinctive shape, the likes of which had never been seen before, at least not from a Detroit manufacturer. Too bad the majority of them ended up in the hands of high school kids who then proceeded to thrash the life out of them, because today they would make ideal collector cars to restore and enjoy.

For the 1971 model year, Ferrari's replacement for the 365 GTB/4 "Daytona" was the 365 GTC/4, and it is this exotic sports car that clearly influenced the styling of the Skyhawk and its

siblings the Chevrolet Monza and the Oldsmobile Starfire. We've always said that if the first-generation Skyhawks and Monzas had worn an Alfa Romeo badge instead, they would be prized by



collectors today for being a poor man's Ferrari, but because they are often considered to be nothing more than mass-produced Buicks and Chevrolets, they fail to receive the recognition and appreciation they so rightfully deserve.

When the Monza and Skyhawk first burst onto America's automotive landscape back in September of 1974, General Motors' new H-body sub-compacts caused quite a stir. They had that ultimate boy-racer look, so the younger generation found them quite appealing, as did those buyers seeking something different. Here was a sleek looking automobile, powered by a small-block V-8 and affordably priced. *Motor Trend* magazine clearly recognized these distinctive compact cars and presented the Monza 2+2 coupe with their Car of the Year award for 1975. Back in the day, this was a significant honor.

The first-generation Skyhawks were all hatchbacks, yet they were extremely practical, thanks to their 28 cubic feet of cargo space once the rear seat had been folded down. And their smooth, flowing lines weren't just for styling purposes; they had a 0.43 drag coefficient, which, for a design from the early 1970s, was extremely effective. As stated in the Buick brochure for 1975, "There's never been a Buick like this one before. The Skyhawk's sub-compact size, its blend of operational economy and agile performance and its sleek lines represent a whole new spirit of driving for Buick customers." The brochure continued by stating: "With its rectangular headlights and low aerodynamic styling, the Skyhawk is for people who don't mind being conspicuous, as well as for those who love the feeling of driving a responsive, fine handling comfortable car."

The 1978 model Skyhawk was introduced in October 1977, and continued in production until September the following year. Considered a first-generation model, it remained in production essentially unchanged through the 1980 model year. Its base price was \$4,367, yet the somewhat stripped down "S" model cost only \$4,103. Total 1978 production reached 24,589 units, which helped bring the total production of first-gen Skyhawks to 95,863. This is about half the production of the more popular Chevrolet Monza.

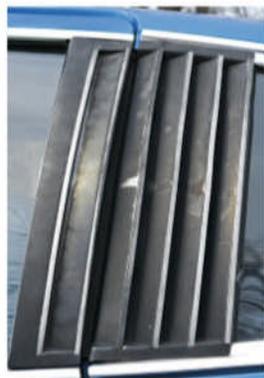
The Skyhawk's compact V-6 engine displaces 231.4 cubic inches, or 3.8 liters, the latter it would be referred to as in subsequent years. With a 3.8-inch bore and a stroke of 3.4 inches, its cast-iron cylinder heads yield a compression ratio of 8.0:1; the crankshaft rides in four main bearings inside a cast-iron block. Fuel is provided by a single two-barrel Rochester 2GE carburetor, and with its High-Energy ignition, which eliminated the points and condenser, it has an even-fire sequence, for smooth operation. With the mandated catalytic converter strangling its power output, it was only able to produce 105 hp at 3,400 rpm, along with 185 lb-ft of torque at 2,000 rpm. According to Buick, the engine had an "oil pressure switch connected to fuel pump, shuts off fuel supply if, for any reason, the oil pressure falls below normal operating limit."

Buick also said that "The new Early Fuel Evaporation system should aid economy and certainly provides quicker, surer starts on cold or wet mornings. These features should work together to make for longer maintenance intervals and good overall operating economy."





Aside from some minor touchups on the exterior, everything on this Skyhawk is original. Complementing the handsome, sporty alloy steering wheel is plastic woodgrain that covers the instrument panel, console and around the Delco AM/FM radio—the speedometer tops out at 80 miles per hour. Rear seat folds down to an expansive cargo area. Exterior louvers are merely decorative.



With a standard hypoid solid-axle differential in the rear, there were two different gear ratios available: 2.56:1 and 2.93:1. Buick also offered buyers the choice of three different transmissions: a Saginaw four-speed, a Borg-Warner five-speed overdrive, and a three-speed BOP-pattern automatic, which could have been either a TH250 or TH350.

Riding on a relatively short 97-inch wheelbase, the suspension incorporated coil springs, shocks and anti-roll bars front and rear, although the “S” model only had the anti-roll bar up front. Power-assisted disc brakes were fitted up front and had ventilated rotors, along with standard-issue drum brakes in the rear. The base model Skyhawk came in weighing 2,707 pounds, while the “S” models were slightly lighter in weight at 2,678 pounds.

The Skyhawk’s sporty shape really didn’t reflect its performance, which simply was not exhilarating. It took 11.8 seconds to reach 60 mph from a standstill, and 18.4 seconds to run the quarter mile. With its top speed at around 93-95 mph, had its V-6 engine not been suppressed by the government-mandated catalytic converter, and had it been equipped with a four-barrel Quadrajets carburetor instead of a measly two-barrel, its horsepower rating would have been far greater, and its driving character oh, so much more exciting and fun. Then again, the Skyhawk was no different than any other car built during this tumultuous era of increasing DOT and EPA regulations.

With America thinking that it would soon follow the rest of the world and go metric, the markings on the speedometer reflected this philosophy and were shown in both miles and kilometers per hour. There were also volt, fuel, temperature, and battery-indicator gauges. In their 1978 brochure, Buick stated: “And in keeping with Skyhawk’s zeal for the road, its cockpit has been arranged with two-plus-two bucket seating and with every dial, switch and control within easy reach and eyeshot of the driver.”

The Rallye steering wheel also mirrored the Skyhawk’s sporty intentions, being a three-spoke aluminum wheel with a rim that matched the color of the interior. And to give the cabin an air of sophistication, woodgrain vinyl covered the gearshift surround and the small, open console surrounding the handbrake, which incorporated a small tray to hold spare change. The cut-pile carpeting was a soft nylon blend, and the reclining, high-back front bucket seats could be upholstered in either cloth or vinyl. Other features included a space-saver spare tire and an 18.4-gallon fuel tank.

Now, more than 40 years after they were first introduced, a



Fitting a chrome air cleaner was a popular period “upgrade” to the V-6, as owners hunted for every ounce of extra horsepower. With its two-barrel Holley carb, it made just 105 horsepower.

Skyhawk on the road, in a car show or at a cruise night is a rare occurrence—they simply aren’t around anymore. About 10 years ago, if it wasn’t for Lori Richards of Cumberland, Rhode Island, spotting our feature car on the front lawn of a house in nearby Richmond with a “for sale” sign in its window, she and her husband Marty would never have owned it. Both Lori and Marty are of the age when owning cars like Skyhawks were commonplace. Lori had a Sunbird as her first car, and Marty’s sister owned a Starfire, while his best friend had several Monzas and Skyhawks. “I have some history with these H-body models,” Marty tells us. “So that makes owning one today a nice experience.”

One of the main reasons few H-body cars survive is that they were plagued with corrosion issues. Even Marty says “they all rotted away!” When he first bought his Skyhawk, the bottoms of both doors were badly rusted, as were the lower front fenders. They had the body repaired and repainted in the original shade of Marine Blue, and then replaced some of the light-blue interior as well; this included the arm rest, carpeting and the back of the driver’s seat—the center console was brought back to life with a vinyl paint respray. The engine was removed so all the gaskets and seals could be replaced, along with the timing belt and carburetor.

*This Skyhawk is  
part of our family. We are just  
really proud to own it.*



**Marty and Lori both owned H-body cars in the '90s. Marty is an accomplished drummer, having played with the J. Geils Band, Joe Perry, Pat Metheny, Dizzy Gillespie, and the Boston Pops.**

Marty is quite pleased with his Buick Skyhawk, and goes on to say: “Our Skyhawk is now in very good shape, and it has that classic Buick 3.8 V-6. I love the rarity and uniqueness of it now, and its sporty 1970s styling with those wheels. It’s fun to drive but has proven to be practical as well; I can fit an entire drum kit in it. Also, when people see it, they have a very joyful reaction to it.

“On the road, the Skyhawk handles relatively well for a ’70s car; there’s not much body roll, and the steering has a little play. The transmission shifts smoothly, and the transition between gears is gradual. It also has the typical power limitations for this era engine, but that’s okay. This is a nice cruising car, and using mid-grade fuel, it gets about 17 mpg in the city and 26 mpg when driven on the highway. My current goal now is to drive it and enjoy it while maintaining its originality.

“This Skyhawk is part of our family. It’s a survivor—there just aren’t that many out there. And it’s a constant reminder of the 1970s—of going to concerts, hanging out with friends, band rehearsals—all of that. We are just really proud to own it.” 🐼





# Salvaged and Saved

*Hurricane Sandy couldn't sink this unrestored 1968 Ford Fairlane Torino sedan*

BY MARK J. McCOURT • PHOTOGRAPHY BY RICHARD LENTINELLO

If you lived on America's East Coast in the fall of 2012, you were almost certainly impacted by that year's most powerful storm, and well aware of the incredible destruction that reportedly

made Sandy the second-costliest hurricane in American history. More than a quarter-million vehicles were affected, and that vast figure sadly included many cherished collector cars. The unrestored

Ford Torino on these pages was one car so impacted, but rather than breaking it down for its valuable parts, the sedan's new owner preserved it and transformed it into an even better driver.



A replacement Ford big-block radiator, clutch fan, and fan shroud were installed behind this upmarket Torino sedan's original grille to ensure the factory-installed 302-cu.in. V-8 can keep its cool in today's traffic.





Plainview, New York, resident Paul Rosina was scanning the Copart listings for salvaged cars in the months immediately following Sandy, as a coworker pointed out that many of those total-loss cars were being sold through that used-car auction firm. “There was lots of great stuff,” he recalls. “I’m a Ford guy, and this Torino caught my eye—it didn’t look half bad, and was appealing with its 302-cu.in. V-8 engine, power steering and air conditioning.

“After the storm, they were putting flood cars any place they could find a lot. This car ended up at the Englishtown

race track in New Jersey. I was told there were about 14,000 cars there, parked everywhere but on the track itself. I went there to look at it, and also saw a 1966 Corvette and a 1957 Thunderbird—both had taken water over the roof. There was a 1953 Cadillac two-door with factory A/C that took it up to the tops of the fenders—you could still see the water line,” Paul says.

“The cars that had been filled with salt water, and then sat in the sun, had a smell that knocked you out when you opened a door. When I opened the Torino, it didn’t smell bad—it smelled

like an old lady inside,” he laughs. “The seats and carpets felt damp, but they weren’t damaged. I got in the car, and since the key was in the ignition, I turned it. The oil and alternator lights came on; turned the key again, and it cranked. I hit the gas a few times, and it started right up, and ran pretty well. I tried the air conditioning, and it worked! I moved the shifter into Drive and Reverse, both of which functioned. I opened the hood to look at the engine, and saw the fuel pump was leaking gas, so I quickly shut it off. The body had no rust on it, although the exterior needed to be washed and waxed. I could tell it still had original paint on the hood, roof, and trunk, but the sides had definitely been repainted. It was like the lady had parked by Braille: she’d dent something, and have it fixed and resprayed.”

Paul had found a 103,000-mile



**The engine breathes more efficiently now through a four-barrel carburetor, headers and dual exhausts; power front disc brakes will replace the original unassisted drums.**



This Torino's garage-stored legacy is evident in its never-cracked dashboard and pit-free brightwork, which shined up with chrome polish. An AM radio was swapped for a correct AM/FM stereo.



example of Ford's new-for-1968 Fairlane Torino sedan powered by the equally new "F-code" 302-cu.in. V-8 engine, one of 17,962 so built. This handsome mid-sized four-door cost \$2,776 before options like the SelectAire Conditioner A/C (\$356), SelectShift Cruise-O-Matic three-speed automatic transmission (\$188), power steering (\$84), AM radio (\$57), white sidewall tires (\$34), and other niceties were added. All told, its original owner probably paid about \$3,700 for this brightly colored Torino,

which was roughly equivalent to \$25,900 today. It was built in Ford's Atlanta plant on November 28, 1967, and sold the following month through a dealer in Jackson Heights, New York City.

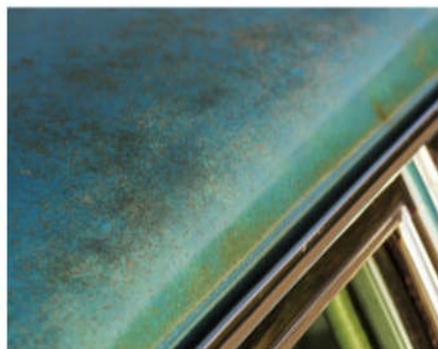
That V-8—which would become one of Ford's most famous engines—featured a 4 x 3-inch bore and stroke, 9.01:1 compression ratio, and two-barrel Autolite 2300-A carburetor, and made 210 horsepower at 4,400 rpm and 310 lb-ft of torque at 2,800 rpm. Rounding out this Torino's mechanical package were

coil-spring ball joint/leaf-spring front and rear suspensions, recirculating ball steering, and 10-inch drum brakes behind 14-inch wheels. And despite its generous 116-inch wheelbase and 201.1-inch overall length, the 3,108-pound four-door sedan was actually 36 pounds lighter than the Torino two-door hardtop.

Impressed by what he saw, Paul decided to try to buy it. He explains, "I put a number in my head: I wouldn't bid more than \$1,300, because I knew Copart auctions have lots of fees. That price was where the bidding stopped, and I won it. I ended up paying \$1,912, which was pretty much what I'd expected." He collected the car from Englishtown in January 2013, bringing it back to Long Island, where it had always resided. "I'm guessing it was a one-family car. It was obviously garage-kept its whole life, and had a completely original cloth-seat interior."

Paul quietly admits his initial plan was to use it as a parts car to restore his unrusty, but accident-damaged, 1968½ Torino 428 Cobra Jet Fastback, but he quickly reconsidered. "I thought, 'No way, I can't do that. The Torino Cobra Jet is gonna have to wait.'

"I cleaned up the interior, installed a factory AM/FM stereo I had from a parted-



The Aqua cloth and vinyl upholstery remains fully intact, and the factory build sheet was found under the rear bench. Years of polishing have left the original paint on the car's horizontal surfaces thin.



Opening the Torino's trunk reveals a bias-ply spare and a decades-old minor accident repair, in which body filler seeped through holes drilled in a quarter panel.

out Torino, and polished the paint. I got all the shine I could get out of that original finish, using a buffing wheel and Mothers and Meguiar's products," Paul says. And while this Ford didn't need much cosmetic work, he did make numerous mechanical alterations to improve efficiency and roadworthiness. Starting with the V-8, he installed an Edelbrock Performer intake manifold, 600-cfm Holley four-barrel carburetor, MSD electronic ignition, exhaust headers, and a quiet dual-exhaust system. Paul rebuilt the C-4 automatic transmission to cure a second-third gear slip, and while he was at it installed a mild shift kit before treating the chassis to shortened front coil springs (cutting three quarters of each coil, to lower the nose), a one-inch-diameter front anti-roll bar, KYB shocks, and 225/70-14 radial tires mounted on a \$50 set of OEM 1968 chromed styled steel wheels, complete with hubcaps and trim rings.

"I was on a quest for fuel economy. The car has enough power with four-barrel and headers, so I swapped the original 3.0:1-ratio rear gear for a 2.79

gear. It now gets about 19 mpg, which is great. You don't need an overdrive in this car; at 70 mph, it's probably tachng around 2,600-2,700 rpm. I can cruise at 80-85 mph, with no distress, it just goes. In fact, I got pulled over on the New York State Thruway last summer for doing 82 mph!" he says with a grin.

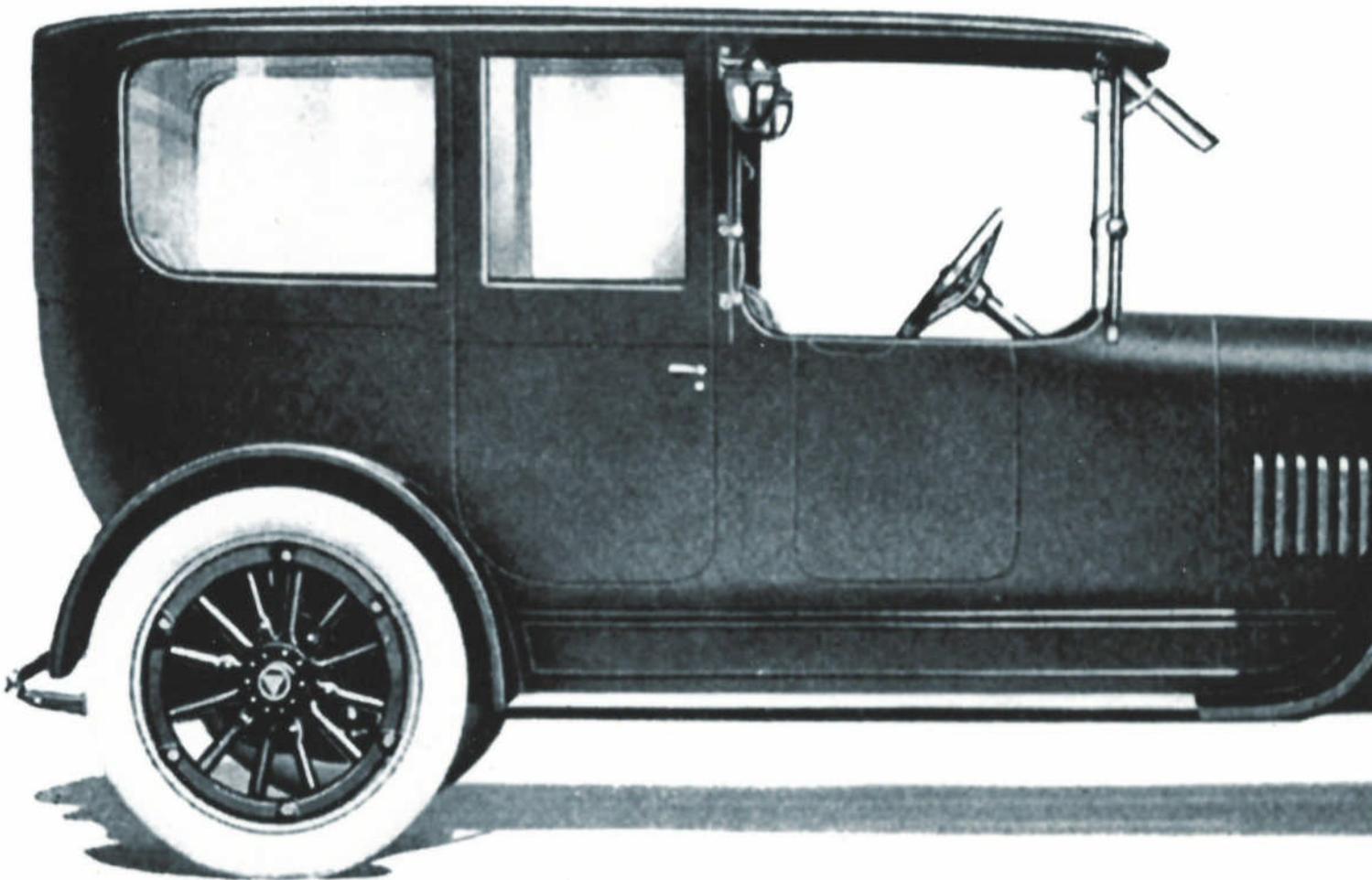
"My wife, Felicia, and I drive this car all over, and it runs just as great in Long Island traffic as it does on long trips to Virginia, Pennsylvania or Vermont. I've put more than 7,000 miles on it in the last four years, and it doesn't burn a drop of oil. It drives and handles like an Eighties car, rather than a Sixties car, and it's so tight, there isn't a squeak or a rattle," Paul says with a smile. "The last upgrade I plan to do is to swap in power front discs; I've already got all the parts. The drums work just fine, but those discs will be better.

"I've probably put another \$2,000 into it, and for \$4,000, I have a car I can drive anywhere. Forty-five years ago, this Torino was invisible, just another four-door sedan; now, everyone looks at it, and that Gulfstream Aqua is a color

*I've put more than 7,000 miles on it in the last four years, and it doesn't burn a drop of oil. It drives and handles like an Eighties car, rather than a Sixties car, and it's so tight, there isn't a squeak or a rattle.*

you don't see anymore. It's probably my favorite to drive of my four Ford collector cars. I know this Torino is worth more in parts than it is, whole—what guy with a rusted-out convertible or fastback wouldn't want that perfect floorpan, that power steering or air conditioning? This car doesn't deserve that fate; it's too nice to die. It's such a cool car to drive around." 🚗





# Hudson Styling

## *The Prewar Years*

BY PATRICK FOSTER

PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY THE HUDSON ESSEX TERRAPLANE CLUB LIBRARY AND THE PATRICK R. FOSTER HISTORICAL COLLECTION

In the earliest days of motoring, there weren't really any professional automobile stylists as we understand the term today. That's because there hadn't been any demand for them, so schools turning out people dedicated to forming the exterior shape of cars didn't exist. Instead, the men who engineered and built the vehicles usually decided how they would look. Refinements to body lines were either the work of engineers, or that of whatever body maker produced the body. As former Hudson stylist Don Butler noted in his book *The History of Hudson*: "Before styling began to emerge as a necessary

factor, stylists were rare, and body engineers applied whatever untrained styling touches they could muster."

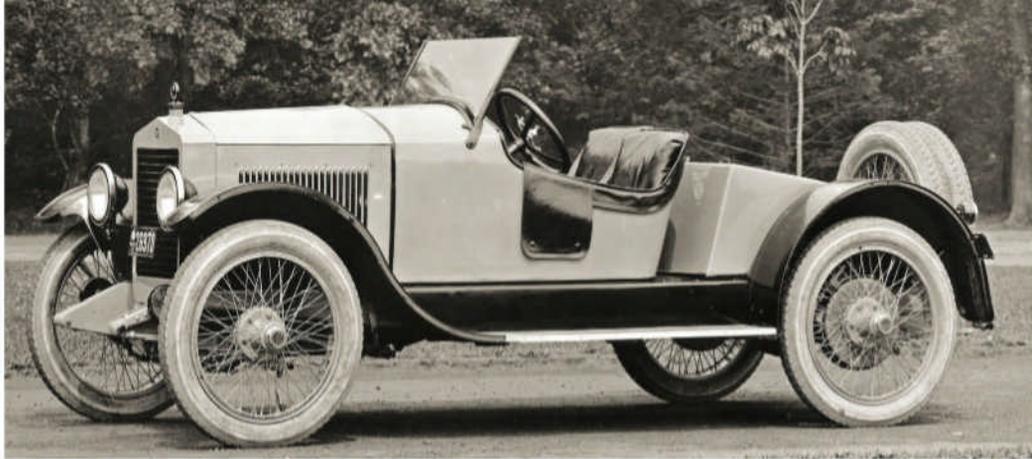
Thus, the 1909 Hudson looked the way it did because the young-but-well-experienced men who founded the company—Roy D. Chapin, Howard Coffin, Roscoe Jackson, and Fred Bezner—thought that's the way it should look. They did an excellent job, because the new Hudson was considered quite a sporty little car, with looks to match its power.

In 1919, Hudson engineers put together a very snazzy Essex roadster for the CEO of one of Hudson's supplier firms.

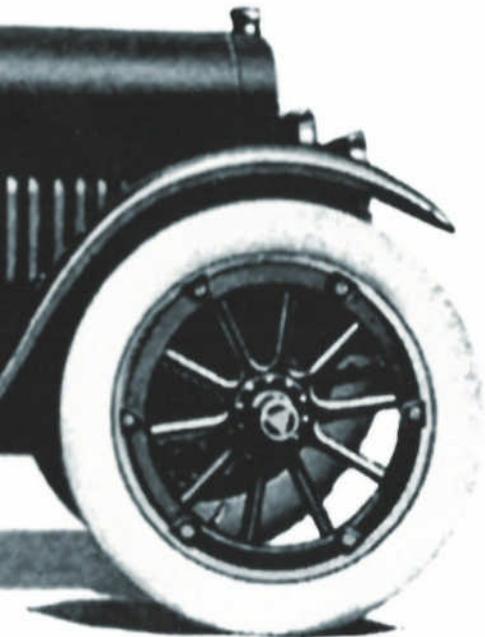
With cut-down sides and a sloping tail, it was a gorgeous little sportster, but it remained a one-off—apparently company management didn't see enough sales potential in it to warrant a production version.

As automobiles became more refined and sophisticated, their appearance became more important. Many automakers produced their own touring car and roadster bodies, but left production (and styling) of the more complicated enclosed models to companies that were better equipped to make them. One significant body supplier to Hudson was Biddle & Smart, of Amesbury, Massachusetts. The firm employed people who could style

One of the early limousine bodies styled and built by coachbuilder Biddle & Smart was this 1917 Hudson Super Six, featuring a luxurious enclosed passenger compartment and a semi-enclosed driver compartment.



Built for the chief executive of one of Hudson's supplier firms, this 1919 Essex Speedster boasts a sporty one-off body, probably created by Hudson engineers.



In 1920, Hudson built this experimental model with body styling features that never made it into production, including the sloped hood and unusual windshield. Note, too, the unusual forward-placed roof rack.



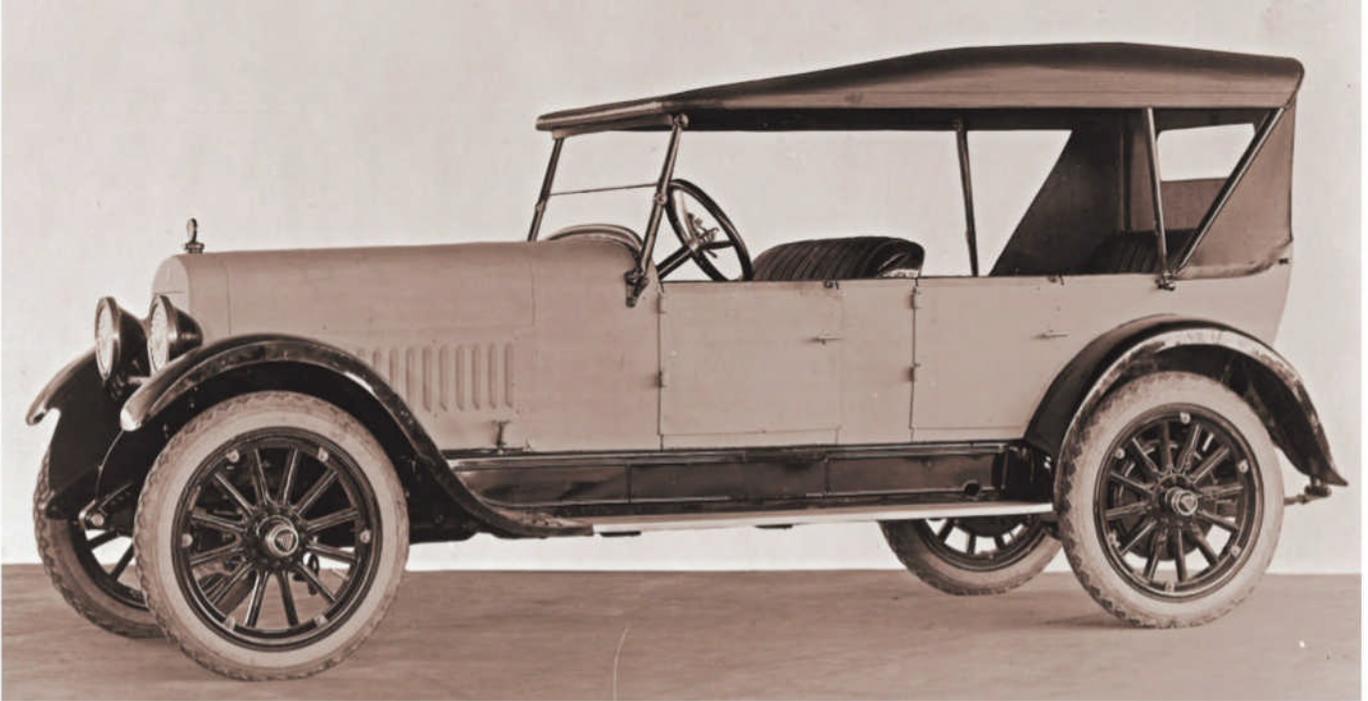
Another experimental body on a 1920 chassis is this Essex sedan, with an unusual rear window treatment, dual spare tires, and a unique opening windshield.

an automobile to perfection. The bodies it supplied to Hudson, such as the 1917 Hudson limousine seen above, were usually designed in-house, with input from Hudson, of course. The company probably also offered assistance to Hudson's designers with exterior styling details, even on models it didn't produce.

Biddle & Smart was founded around 1880 as a carriage maker, and made a successful transition to automobile body production, building limousine bodies for Peerless as early as 1903. In 1922, the company began supplying Hudson with seven-passenger sedan bodies made of alu-

minum, and, later, a five-passenger model. In advertisements, Hudson emphasized the quality of its Biddle & Smart sedan bodies: "The sedan is produced in the shops of one of America's largest established body builders, where work is never hurried and where the workmen have always specialized in the finest closed cars." Biddle & Smart

tripled its output during 1923 by focusing all its efforts on manufacturing bodies for Hudson. The sedan style was rapidly growing in popularity, and Hudson was enjoying the fruits of that growth. By 1926, Biddle & Smart was producing 400 bodies per day. But Hudson soon looked for additional help in styling its enclosed cars.



Hudson engineers continued to experiment with new ideas, such as the long-wheelbase touring car pictured here, which is a special engineering mock-up that didn't reach production. In 1924, they rebuilt the experimental 1919 Essex Speedster with modified styling, and a new name, "Essex Raceabout" (pictured below). It was purchased by Hudson cofounder Roscoe Jackson.

Early in 1927, the Walter M. Murphy Company, a small coachbuilder based in Pasadena, California, was commissioned to build a series of prototype cars for Hudson using Murphy's stylish new thin-pillar architecture. Six thin-pillared Hudson prototype sedans were delivered to Hudson for review. The great-looking cars were quickly approved by the board of directors for the 1928 model lineup. However, Murphy lacked the production capacity to build the number of bodies Hudson needed, so



This 1921 experimental car, which looks to be a seven-passenger touring model, demonstrates some of the methods used in styling early Hudsons. From the side, it appears to be a fully-functioning automobile, but a look at the front reveals the radiator is a fake, used to gauge its appearance on the car. The fake radiator would have been made of either wood or plaster.



In 1924, the 1919 Essex Speedster one-off car was rebuilt and treated to some minor restyling. Renamed the Essex Raceabout, it was sold to then-Hudson president Roscoe Jackson.



In 1929, Hudson's designers came up with a neat, though rarely seen, option for rumble seat coupes and roadsters. Called the "Rumble Roof," it provided passengers in the rumble seat with a degree of protection from the elements.

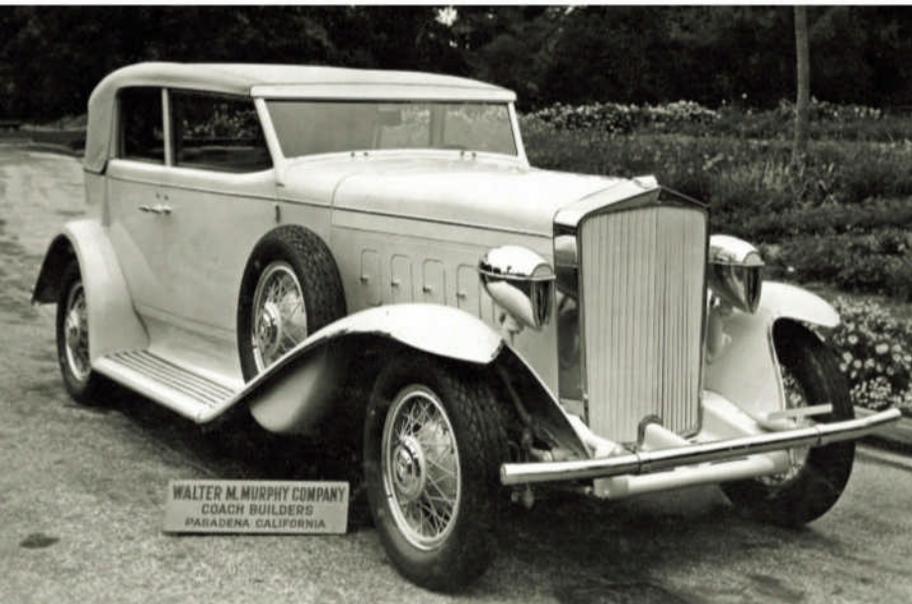


This factory-provided photograph shows a very stylish boattail 1930 Essex Speedabout. This may have been the only example produced and is believed to have been fabricated either as a show car or as an experimental concept.

Biddle & Smart was contracted to produce the Murphy-designed bodies.

One car that was produced in the Murphy shops was the close-coupled 1931 Hudson Special convertible sedan shown below. With its massive grille, stylish Woodlite headlamps, chrome bar bumpers, and low roofline, this stunning automobile was the perfect conveyance for a man of substance. It was created for Hudson president William McAnaney.

One person at Murphy caught the eye of Hudson management. Frank Spring was an interesting character, the somewhat eccentric son of a wealthy California land developer. After graduating in 1914 from the prestigious École Nationale des Ponts et Chaussées polytechnic institute in Paris with



In 1931, Hudson's president was William McAnaney, and the car he drove was this stunning 1931 Convertible Sedan with a custom body by coachbuilder Walter M. Murphy. With its massive grille and gorgeous Woodlite headlamps, this is one of the most exciting-looking Hudsons ever produced.

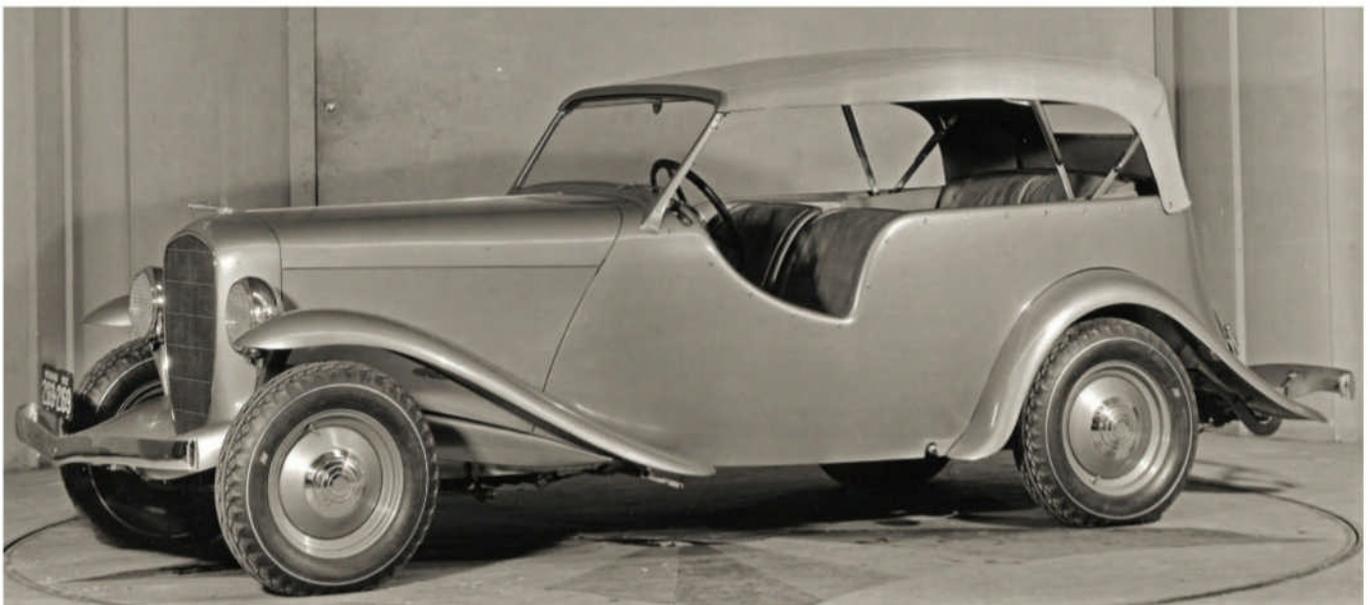


Head of styling at Murphy was Frank Spring, an avant-garde character who loved automobiles, motorcycles, and airplanes, and who owned several of each. This later photo shows Spring on his Triumph motorcycle.

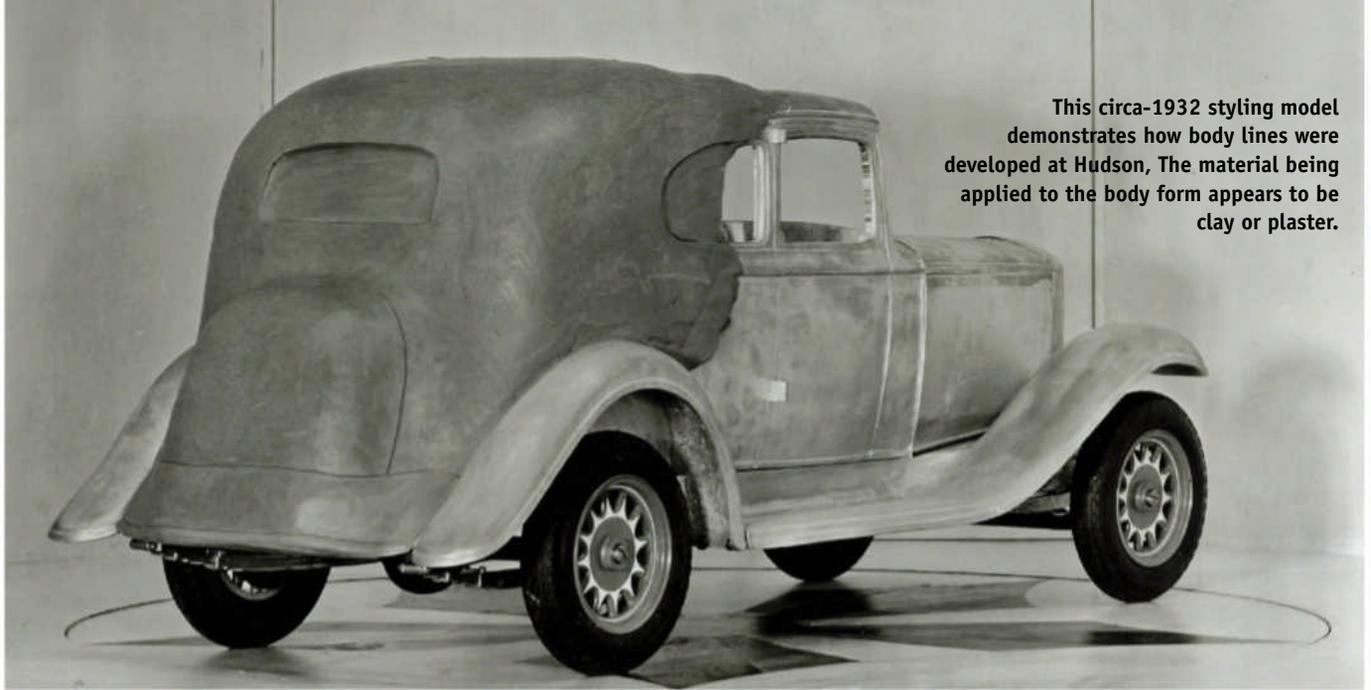
a degree in mechanical engineering, Spring went to work as an aeronautical engineer in the U.S. Army Signal Corps, assigned to aircraft production in Detroit. From 1919-1920, he worked for Paige-Detroit, then went on to design a car for the Standard Steel Car Company in 1921. By 1923, he was working for Murphy, rising to general manager. Because Murphy was a small firm, Spring performed engineering and styling duties while also managing the business. In some ways it was, artistically at least, the most productive period in his career. During his tenure, Murphy designed and built custom automobiles for Duesenberg, Lincoln, Marmon, Minerva, Packard, Rolls-Royce, Pierce-Arrow, Doble, and a host of other firms.



Like Murphy, the LeBaron coachworks was given a commission to produce a special 1931 Hudson Convertible Sedan. This very handsome automobile was painted a dark color, and featured a light top and double-bar bumpers.



Frank Spring designed this low-cut and sleekly styled 2+2 sports car on a 1932 Terraplane chassis. Note the soft, flowing lines, the raked windshield, and lack of running boards. Unfortunately, the company chose to not put it into production, so this car remained a one-off prototype.



This circa-1932 styling model demonstrates how body lines were developed at Hudson. The material being applied to the body form appears to be clay or plaster.



Hudson chief of styling Frank Spring, probably in the mid-1930s.

In an era of drab conformity, Frank Spring was a true individualist. He owned a series of motorcycles and sports cars and flew his own airplanes, as well, including an autogyro—sort of a cross between a helicopter and an airplane—that he crashed in 1932 while returning from that year's Indianapolis 500 race. Always interested in trying new ideas, Spring reportedly slept on the floor, rather than in bed, was a student of yoga and oriental philosophies, and a health nut, as well. He was an interesting character, to say the least.

With the onset of the Great Depression, custom coachbuilders began to shutter their businesses due to a near complete lack of orders. Thus, when Spring was offered a position with Hudson in September 1931, he wisely grabbed the opportunity. The fol-

lowing year, Murphy went out of business. Biddle & Smart also closed its doors.

Spring had been hired as a "style engineer" and was put to work designing Hudson's exterior and interior appearance. He soon employed a young Murphy veteran, Franklin Hershey, to be Hudson's chief of design.

Spring's styling influence within Hudson was first seen in the 1932 Hudson cars, which had slightly vee'd grilles with chrome bars and a modest slope to the windshield. That was also the year that the low-priced Essex Terraplane, styled along the same lines as the big Hudsons, was introduced. Sports car enthusiast Spring also designed a one-off experimental Terraplane sports car with cut-down door openings, lightweight fenders and no run-



Another gorgeous automobile designed by Frank Spring was this elegant Brougham five-passenger sedan, which rode a 132-inch wheelbase. The body for this particular car was built by Murray.



Multiple views of a sharp new sedan, circa mid-1930s, display a grille shape and texture which, although quite attractive, might have been too advanced-looking for the period.

Another gallery of views shows an early 1930s sedan with sweeping fenders, interesting twin-bar bumpers and a sloped-back grille shape.

ning boards, as seen in the photo on page 64. However, the Terraplane sports car was never put into production.

Although Hudsons were seldom considered style leaders during the 1930s, under Spring, the company introduced several models that were extremely attractive, including those for 1936 with their “fencer’s mask” grilles. During World War II, Spring and his team would work on perhaps their most influential design—the famous step-down Hudson. We’ll save that story for another day.

Spring remained in charge of Hudson Styling right up to the American Motors merger, but then retired—whether by choice or by suggestion is not known, but had he stayed on, he probably would have been relegated to Hudson studio manager, under AMC’s Styling Director (and former director of Nash Styling) Edmund Anderson.

Frank Spring died tragically in 1959 in a car accident; he was on his way to AMC headquarters to talk with management about his ideas for a sporty version of the Metropolitan. Unfortunately, those ideas died with him; for the record, the Metropolitan itself faded out of existence within three years. 🐾



Nearly completed styling mockup of what became the 1939 Hudson 112 sedan. This full-size mockup would have been made of either plaster or clay.



Another full-size mockup, this for the 1939 Hudson sedan.

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is COMING



JUNE 24 - JULY 2, 2017

## SATURDAY, JUNE 24

START: Main Street, Jacksonville, FL - 8:30 a.m. to Noon  
OVERNIGHT: Main Street, Downtown Tifton, GA - 4:30 p.m.

## SUNDAY, JUNE 25

LUNCH: West Broad Street, Downtown Newnan, GA -- Noon  
PIT STOP: 6204 Martha Berry Hwy, Armuchee, GA - 3:15 p.m.  
OVERNIGHT: Riverfront Pkwy, Chattanooga, TN - 5:15 p.m.

## MONDAY, JUNE 26

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

## TUESDAY, JUNE 27

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

## WEDNESDAY, JUNE 28

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

## THURSDAY, JUNE 29

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

## FRIDAY, JUNE 30

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

## SATURDAY, JULY 1

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

## SUNDAY, JULY 2

FINISH: Union & Seventh, Downtown Traverse City, MI - 1 p.m.

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Hemmings  
Motor News

HAGERTY



# Ed “Big Daddy” Roth

*From flame jobs to custom show cars to a socially unacceptable mouse, Ed Roth left his mark on American popular culture*



**The *Beatnik Bandit* is one of the world's most widely recognized custom show cars. A joystick controls acceleration, steering, and braking.**

JEFF DOW, COURTESY NATIONAL AUTOMOBILE MUSEUM

BY DAVID LoCHANCE • PHOTOGRAPHY AS CREDITED

Into the boardroom at Revell strolled a young modeler and designer named Jim Keeler, who hoped to interest the company in a series of new plastic model kits. Keeler outlined his ideas—a 1956 Ford pickup, a replica of Mickey Thompson’s *Challenger I*—until one middle-aged executive jumped up, overcome by impatience. “OK, OK. We’ll do that one. But I want to hear about this Roth guy.”

That story, told by Keeler and related by Pat Ganahl in his definitive biography *Ed “Big Daddy” Roth: His Life, Times, Cars, and Art*, gives you an idea of what a major figure Roth had become in the pop culture movement of the early 1960s, and how much excitement swirled around him. It’s not an exaggeration to call him a Renaissance man—he was a restless creator and rule-bender who also possessed a keen sense of his commercial market. Those two worlds existed side by side most clearly in his greatest creation, the character of Rat Fink, the nasty anti-Mickey Mouse that’s

been making cash registers ring for decades.

It was Roth’s revolutionary four-wheeled creations, which he brought on the car-show circuit and helped fuel the sale of his T-shirts, that attracted Revell’s attention, and the manufacturer, in turn, made him into a hot property, giving him a persona that was so goofy, it was cool. As a painter and car builder, he was an integral part of Southern California’s Kustom Kulture of the late 1950s and ’60s, part of the pantheon that includes Sam and George Barris, Dean Jeffries, and Kenny Howard, better known as Von Dutch.

Roth was born in 1932 in Beverly Hills, California. His parents had emigrated from Germany, his father working as a cabinetmaker and personal driver for a well-to-do widow. He graduated from high school in the Los Angeles suburb of Bell, and enlisted in the U.S. Air Force, which sent him to a remote tracking station in Morocco. He married his high school sweetheart, Sally, and, after his discharge from the Air Force,

the couple began a family.

He landed a job at Sears, dressing mannequins and designing store displays, and augmented his income by doing pin-striping and flame jobs in his driveway, at \$4 per car. A self-taught pinstriper, Roth advertised his business by lettering and striping his 1948 Ford sedan—aka *The Roth*—and, after teaming up in 1957 with Bud “The Baron” Crozier and Tom Kelley to open a shop called The Crazy Painters, eventually attracted enough work to leave Sears.

Crazy Painters developed a reputation for putting flames, scallops, and other custom paintwork on anything that had wheels, and soon branched out into a sideline, airbrushing shirts. A local club, the Drag Wagons, had asked for shirts bearing the club name, and Roth, who was skilled with an airbrush, added a caricature of each member. The idea caught fire, and the shop began advertising its “weird shirts” in *Car Craft* magazine.





ALAN MAVES, COURTESY SPRITZ BY FRITZ



FRITZ SCHENCK, COURTESY SPRITZ BY FRITZ

**The *Outlaw*, at left, was Roth's first fiberglass-bodied show car; it was on the cover of the January 1960 issue of *Car Craft*. The *Druid Princess*, at right, since restored by Fritz Schenck of Spritz by Fritz, was one of Roth's last show cars, appearing in late 1966.**

When Roth left Crozier and Kelley to open his own shop in 1959, he began advertising his "Weird-O" or "Weerdo" shirts, and continued with his custom paintwork.

It was here that he began working on the first of his scratch-built, fiberglass-body customs: the *Outlaw*. Roth had built traditional custom hot rods, but in fiberglass he found his ideal material, one that would allow his ideas to come to three-dimensional life. Breaking away from the traditional chopped-and-channeled "T-bucket" mold so many hot rodders copied, he created a shape that was entirely new, fashioning the body by building up the shape in plaster and wood and making a female mold. The *Outlaw* rode on a chromed, custom-built chassis, and was powered by a modified Cadillac V-8 crowned by four Stromberg 97 carburetors. It was a new kind of hot rod, if it was a hot rod at all.

Automotive historian Ken Gross said that, as a "pretty conventional hot rod person," it took him some time to appreciate what Roth was up to. "I came to the realization that Ed was very much a futurist," he says. With the *Outlaw*, "the whole T idea that Norm Grabowski and Tommy Ivo had done was taken by Ed to the next generation. He really was ahead of his time in his materials, con-

cepts and the breadth of his imagination."

Finished in late 1959, the *Outlaw* was Grade A car-mag fodder, just as Roth had intended. Show organizers, knowing the car was a draw, would pay Roth to display the *Outlaw*, while the stir it created helped bring customers to his booth. That's how he came to make his lucrative business deal with Revell.

Kids in the late 1950s and early 1960s were snapping up plastic model kits by the hundreds of thousands, spending their allowances and paper-route money at the neighborhood variety store or hobby shop on the latest releases. AMT, in particular, had tapped into the custom-car craze with its 3-in-1 customizing kits, and Revell must have been eager to cut itself a slice of the pie. When Jim Keeler presented his idea for a scale model of the *Outlaw*, they couldn't say yes fast enough.

It was Revell's publicist, Henry Blankfort, who thought that Roth needed a new image in order to stimulate sales. Blankfort came up with the nickname "Big Daddy," a nod to the beatniks' slang "daddy-o" and a reference to Roth's six-foot-four, 240-pound physique. Blankfort is also widely credited for putting Roth into his trademark tuxedo

and top hat, to try to clean up his slovenly image. It made for great model-box art, and Roth was a natural at mugging for the camera.

With the *Outlaw* finished, Roth began constructing his bubble-topped *Beatnik Bandit*, which emerged in 1961. Through the early 1960s, he turned out a car a year—the ground-effects *Rotar* in 1962, the twin-engined *Mysterion* in 1963, the Corvair-powered *Road Agent* in early 1964, the asymmetrical *Orbitron* in late 1964, the board-toting *Surfite* in early 1965 and the ornate *Druid Princess* in late 1966.

"I once asked him, 'How do you knock out a car a year?'" explained custom hot rod and motorcycle builder Fritz Schenck, who built a faithful replica of the *Outlaw* and restored the original *Druid Princess*. "And he said, 'You watch TV?' I said, 'Who doesn't watch television.' He said, 'You ever watch *Gilligan's Island*? I said, 'Yeah.' 'Watch one episode, and you've seen them all. They never get off of the island.' And he's right."

The model-car contract was lucrative, but it was the T-shirt business that really brought in the cash. Roth was the father of five boys, and he often found himself surrounded by kids as he drew his grotesque caricatures at shows, so he always had

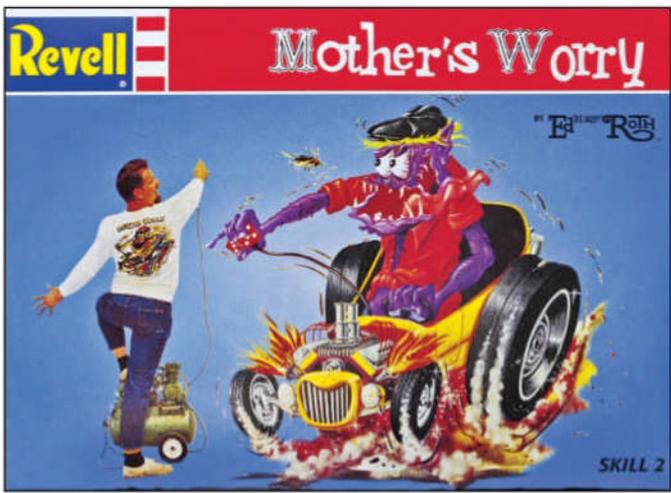


BEAU BOECKMANN, THE COLLECTION AT GALPIN AUTO SPORTS



BEAU BOECKMANN, THE COLLECTION AT GALPIN AUTO SPORTS

**The *Orbitron* of 1964 played on excitement about the advent of color TV, with its red, green and blue headlamps meant to create a single white beam. The twin-engine *Mysterion* of 1963 has gone missing; this recreation is in The Collection at Galpin Auto Sports in California.**



Revell had huge success in creating model kits of Roth's custom cars, and then branched out into offering kits based on his monstrous figures. Revell's publicist came up with Roth's "Big Daddy" nickname, and helped to reframe his image in the interest of sales.

a good idea of what they wanted. What worked commercially, he discovered, were designs that the kids would like, and the parents wouldn't—but not so offensive as to be banned by Mom and Dad.

This was the origin of characters like Mother's Worry, Drag Nut, and Mr. Gasser, grotesque figures with bulging, bloodshot eyes, and gaping mouths filled with needle-sharp teeth. And sometime in the mid-1960s, it gave birth to Rat Fink.

There are various stories about when Rat Fink first took form, but the story Roth told was that he sketched the creature as a counterpoint to Mickey Mouse after becoming sick of seeing so many children wearing the trademark plastic ears. He claimed that the name had been made popular by television comedian Steve Allen, though the real story is that the "F" in R.F. stood for something far more vulgar—and all the kids knew it, even if their parents didn't.

Roth's monsters could be bought on T-shirts and decals. If that weren't enough, the marketers at Revell realized that they could make three-dimensional plastic kits of these creations, too. Roth was hot, and everything that came from his studio turned to gold.

The second half of the 1960s was a time of shifting gears for Roth. He built an asymmetrical, Buick V-6 powered bike hauler called *Captain Pepi's Motorcycle and Zepelin Repair*, and turned his creative talents to a series of choppers and the first VW-powered trikes. When the mainstream motorcycle magazines wouldn't feature his creations, he brought out his own magazine, called *Choppers*. His deal with Revell had ended; as he would later complain, the Beatles' appearance on TV in 1965 had made kids want to trade their X-Acto knives for guitars.

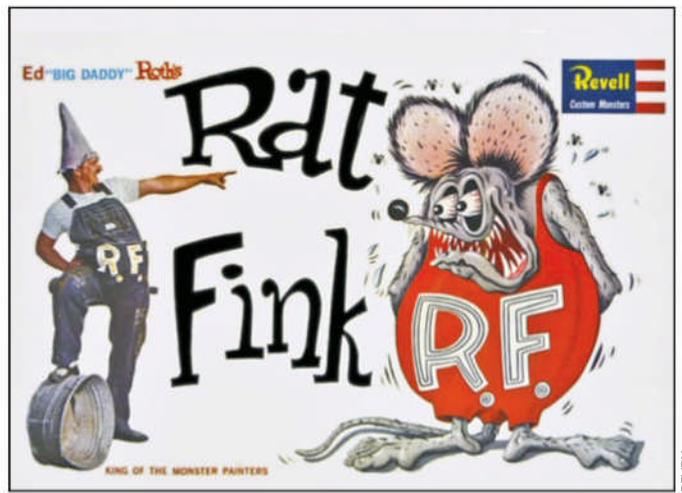
Roth eventually wound down his business, and in 1970 went to work for Jim Brucker, building the sets for the new Cars of the Stars museum in Buena Park, where several of his cars were on display. He also took a job at the nearby Knott's Berry Farm,

as a sign painter and artist, working under a pseudonym.

He had a revival in the early 1980s, once again marketing shirts, comics, decals, and more, and signing a licensing agreement with Kenner Toys for a series of monster-driven toy cars. He lived long enough to see his work rediscovered by art galleries and museums, and to be toasted by the mayor of San Francisco with a day

in his honor. He was still appearing at car shows across the country, and working on new designs, up until his death in 2001.

"I think Ed was a visionary," Ken Gross sums up. "He was rebellious in a fun way, and he kind of nailed it before anybody else did. Everything Ed did had a whimsical side. He had a great imagination, and he saw the fun side of hot rodding that nobody else had." 🐭



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Model kits were lucrative, but the big money was in T-shirts. Roth had a young following, and paid attention to the sorts of designs that appealed to them.



# Operation Skyliner

*A new mission changed the restoration of this 1957 Ford Fairlane 500 retractable hardtop from driver to show car*

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY MATTHEW LITWIN • RESTORATION PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF JASON TAGLIAFERRI

**W**hen John Tagliaferri purchased a 1957 Ford Fairlane 500 Skyliner in the summer of 2014, his original intent was to restore it to “driver” condition. In other words, highly presentable, but not meeting the strict judging guidelines that many national events adhere to. Helping John was his son, Jason, who owns Tag’s Upholstery in

Gloversville, New York.

The Ford had arrived, through a series of owners, from Arizona. Below the hood was a 285-hp version of the 312-cu.in. V-8 engine backed by an automatic transmission. According to Jason, while work had been done to it prior, the Ford was solid.

“The previous owner had removed the engine and transmission and had them rebuilt, but neither were tested,” Jason

tells us. “The newer paint was presentable. Inside, there was a standard on/off wall switch operating the top mechanisms. When we looked at the underside, the frame and floors were solid, but we saw that patches had been added to the lower quarter panels. As solid as it was, it still needed work. Having restored two other 1957 retractables to the International Ford Retractable Club’s 1,000-point judging



standards, we were familiar with these cars, yet Dad just wanted to clean it up, get it running and enjoy this one.”

They began the restoration as any other, starting with the car’s disassembly. The trim, front fenders, hood, engine, transmission, and the interior were removed, but the suspension remained bolted to the Ford’s frame, as did the main body shell. Jason did offer to remove the eight bolts that held the body to the frame, but John was opposed to the idea.

Next, they sanded the body to bare

metal and then sealed it in self-etching primer. After some minor metal repairs were made, Jason applied a skim coat of Rage Gold filler where needed; it was sanded using 80- to 320-grade paper. With the little bit of body work completed, PPG epoxy primer was applied, which was then wet sanded by hand. Meanwhile, John managed the refurbishment of many of the Ford’s small components.

“Dad went through and cleaned up things like the window regulators, all of the electrical switches that had been in

the dash, and the electric motors and limit switches that we didn’t need right away,” Jason recalls. “I left some of them required to operate the roof in the car because it was easier to primer and paint all of the joints properly with it half-open. As to the stainless trim, he sanded the pieces, took the dents and scratches out and buffed each piece.”

PPG paint was then matched to the Ford’s Flame Red and Colonial White factory two-tone color scheme. First, three coats of color were applied, followed by four coats of clear. The paint was then wet



Few photos of the Skyliner's restoration were taken because of the original intention to merely make a good "driver"; however, this one illustrates the overall condition of the chassis in the early stages of disassembly. Only a few patch panels were found and no rot.



Look closely at the forward lip of the folding roof, and you'll note the electrical system is still in place late in the disassembly phase. These components were left in order to keep the roof functioning, which would help later on during the primer and paint stages.



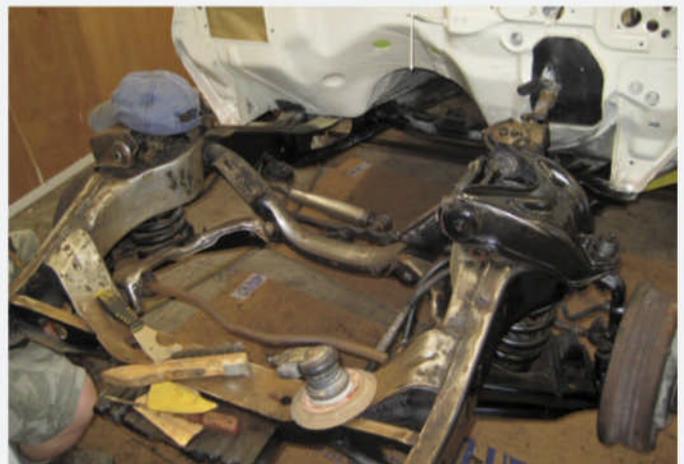
At this stage, after small repairs had been made to the quarter panels, the main body shell was sprayed in a layer of self-etching primer and Rage Gold body filler. A keen eye will note that the interior has already been repainted in Colonial White.



With the chassis and interior masked, the body has already received a final coat of epoxy primer, visible on the quarter panel. The rest of the body has been given three coats of Colonial White PPG urethane to complete one half of the two-tone finish.



Three coats of PPG Flame Red urethane have been applied to the Skyliner's flanks, completing the bulk of the body's restoration; four layers of clearcoat would soon follow. It was at this point when the restoration took on a new direction and meaning.



A decision to not remove the body from the frame turned out to be a hindrance, as the second phase of the project jumped into high gear. So as not to damage the new paint, the chassis had to be carefully stripped by hand or with small pneumatic hand tools.



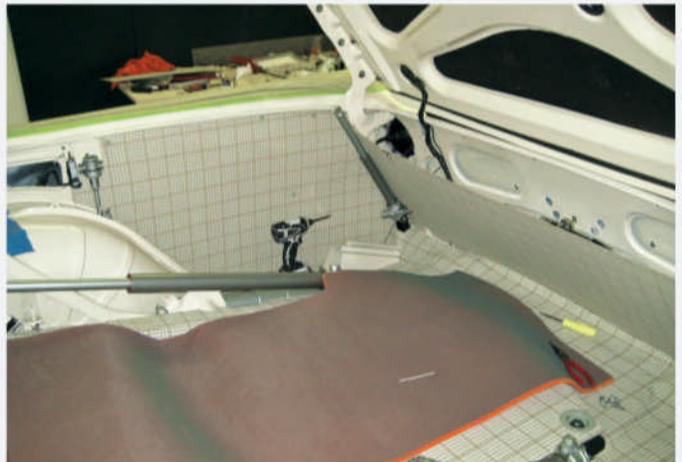
A previous owner's refurbishment effort had the 312-cu.in. V-8 engine and Ford-O-Matic two-speed automatic transmission already rebuilt. After careful inspection, all that was required for this restoration was a simple cleaning and proper repaint.



John, owner of the Skyliner, was able to assist with the restoration despite his medical condition. Here he is proudly showing off his careful effort to restore the primary instrument cluster and corresponding bezel, along with key pieces of dash trim.



Located behind the rear seat is the primary bank of 12-volt starter relays required to manipulate the folding hardtop. The process of restoring the wiring was tedious, as each unit had to be properly linked to circuit breakers and limit switches.



A foam pad—specifically, the material used to hide the bulk of the electric top wiring and corresponding mechanisms, some of which can still be seen—is used to protect the surface of the Ford's rear compartment as finish work progresses.



Final reassembly is progressing in the passenger compartment with the installation of the instrument panel and associated trim. Sun visors are in place, and both doors have already been hung and balanced. Also visible is the restored forward-hinged hood.



As with most restorations, interior upholstery is installed using the top-down system. Headliners, in the case of a retractable hardtop, are a little more complex at the forward edge. Seats and door panels were quick to follow.



sanded, starting with 1,000-grade paper before moving to an ultra-fine 2,000- and, ultimately, 3,000-grade paper. As the body was readied for reassembly, unfortunate news hit John and Jason in February 2015.

“Dad was diagnosed with a very rare and incurable heart condition,” Jason says. “He was in the hospital in Florida getting ready for a cardioversion (a process in which doctors shock the heart to stop it and then re-shock it to get it back into a normal rhythm) and asked about the Ford’s progress. Having received his early prognosis, he told me he wanted this to be one last showcase restoration; he wanted it to be ready for the next International

Ford Retractable Club National meet in July. I had three months to shift gears and take the car to the next level. Knowing I couldn’t say ‘no’ to my dad, I talked to a few experts, and they said it would be impossible. On the flight home I prayed about it and later talked to my friends, Pete and Mike. Together, we decided to put everything we had in us to getting it done,” says Jason.

Body repairs and paint had already been completed; however, the chassis had not been touched. Rather than risk damaging the new paint, the guys utilized a lift to gain access to the frame and suspension, the latter of which—along

with the brakes—was removed, allowing them to strip the frame and floorpan to bare metal. With no evidence of damage, the metal was sealed in primer, followed by Colonial White (and later undercoating) applied to the floorpans, while the frame received black enamel. The restored suspension was then reattached, along with new brakes.

Next, they turned to the 312-cu.in. engine and transmission, and determined that the rebuilds had been done properly. The V-8 only required new paint, while the transmission was simply cleaned. The electrical system, however, was a concern. “The wiring was a mess,” says Jason. “Aside



from the household wall switch, someone had redone most of it with cheap yellow wiring, making it a nightmare to trace. The top requires a series of relays, circuit breakers and limit switches, and those limit switches are the key to making the system operate in perfect order and timing. It was a very time consuming repair."

John returned from Florida and resumed his work on the small parts, including restoring the instrument cluster and repolishing the stainless trim, though his assistance was now limited due to his reduced stamina. New upholstery had been ordered from LeBaron Bonney, which was delivered just as the instrument panel and final wiring connections had been completed. Floor carpet, headliner and seats soon followed, while the fenders, hood and trim were carefully aligned and fastened.

"We ran out of time," says Jason. "We were putting things on the car as we were loading it into the trailer for the meet. Most everyone in the club, including the judges, were aware of my dad's condition and why we did the car, so they kindly gave us some leeway to add the last



details while they judged the rest of the cars. I can tell you they didn't cut us any slack, though. If it wasn't right, we didn't get the points. The last door sticker went on just as the judges were starting to look at the car."

We're happy to report that, as of this

writing, John has taken every opportunity to enjoy the Skyliner throughout the Adirondack region of upstate New York. Aside from earning 946 out of 1,000 points at the 2015 IFRC National, it also won a class award at the 2016 Hemmings Motor News Concours d'Elegance. 🏆

## owner's view



"The Ford was nearly complete and in pretty good condition, overall, but it required work to get it running; a lot of the basics had been done. Retractable are a little more difficult to restore because of the roof design and the electronics they require to function. The idea was to take our time and just restore it as a driver. Having done a few showcase Skyliners, I just wanted one I could jump in and enjoy driving whenever I felt like it. Obviously, that changed along the way, but I still love the outcome. I'm very proud of the work the guys did, and that I was able to help where I could." — John Tagliaferri



## 1949 Mercury



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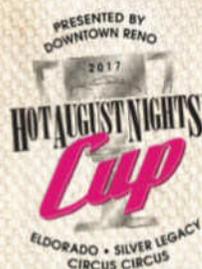


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# Falcon's Swan Song



**I WAS GOING TO TITLE THIS MONTH'S** column "Oh How the Mighty Have Falcon" or "It Ain't Over Till the Falcon Sings." Moving on.

The third-generation Falcon debuted on a shortened Fairlane chassis, adopting the long hood/short deck look made popular by the Mustang. These final Falcons don't command anywhere near the attention of the 1960-'65 models. That's too bad, because if you ask me, they're pretty cool cars. Surprisingly, no one ever asks me.

I purchased both of my Falcons for around \$300 in the early 1980s. Today, you couldn't touch a first- or second-generation Falcon for anywhere near Detroit Underdog prices, which is why you should consider a 1966-'70 Falcon when you are shopping for a Mid-Century Modern compact.

Still available as two-door sedans and four-door sedans and wagons, along with Rancheros (1966 only), the third-generation Falcons continued to be propelled by the "Thriftpower" straight-sixes of 170 and 200 cubic inches, as well as 260, 289 and 302-cu.in. V-8s over the course of their run. The good news was a heater/defroster was

standard. The bad news was the elimination of hardtops and convertibles. There were now 113 inches between the wheel centers, approaching midsize territory. Consider this: The full-size 1979 Ford LTD/Mercury Marquis sat on a 114.3-inch wheelbase.

My fifth-grade reading teacher, Mrs.

Dick, owned a red-and-white, two-door 1970 Falcon. I remember her saying it was funny how the Falcon kept growing and growing over the years. It seems most compacts grew in the 1960s.

So, why the change mid decade?

In the beginning, the Ford Falcon took the compact formula created by Nash/American Motors and perfected it. The Falcon was clearly the hottest seller among the all-new Big Three compacts of 1960 due to its conservative styling, friendly mechanicals, and roomy interior for such a small car. The Ford engineers and stylists were rumored to have parked a 1958 Rambler American in their studio and studied it. It's no wonder the Falcon's front suspension featured high-mounted coil springs, albeit with ball joints instead of trunnions. Take it from personal experience, replacing ball joints is much less involved than replacing trunnions.

The 1960s soon became the decade of sporty cars in the midsize field, which trickled down to the compact ranks, thanks in no small part to the Chevrolet Corvair Monza coupe and Ford's own Mustang. One could buy a base 1965 Mustang with a straight-six and a three-speed manual for not too much more than a Falcon and have a car that looked more youthful and fresh. Even Mary Richards initially drove a base-white Mustang with painted wheels and button hubcaps, while Rhoda drove a Falcon, which she didn't maintain very well.

The larger 1966 Falcon implied more





bang for your buck. Ford proclaimed, "This year, you get all of Falcon's famous thrift and handling ease wrapped up in a brand-new package! America's all time economy champ still saves you money every day, every mile ... Beneath this bold, new long hood/short deck design lies one of the toughest cars on the road."

To my eyes, the boldest change was inside. Gone was the plastic instrument cluster inserted in the all-metal dash (that the first Mustangs borrowed). In its place was a "forward-sweeping instrument panel with full padding standard," providing a more modern, integrated, and luxurious display.

Curiously, the Falcon did little to hide its midsize aspirations in wagon form. From the cowl back, the Falcon shared the Fairlane's body panels. In the 1966 brochure, the wagons are pictured, with no apologies for their similar DNA.

For 1967, front disc brakes were added to the build sheet, and the steering wheel was updated. Final year 1970 was a curious one. With the Mavericks stampeding out of the showrooms, the Falcon hung around offering sedans, coupes, and wagons, but no wagons were pictured in the brochure (production actually ended in December 1969). The end of the Falcon wagon would also mark Ford's abandoning the compact wagon market until 1978, with the introduction of the Fairmont (Pinto wagons were subcompacts).

Of note was the 1970½ Falcon, which was really a Fairlane in disguise that lasted barely a half model year.

Third-generation Falcons aren't available in large supply, probably because recommended oil changes were every 6,000 miles when the oil at the time wasn't really up to the task. Recently, I found a few decent examples going for around \$3,500. These were not #1 condition cars, but definitely drivers one could enjoy without any worry. There were also a few curiously customized third-generation Falcons with wild paint schemes, mag wheels, and straight-sixes mated to three-on-the-trees.

If you're looking for a car no one else will have at the next cruise-in, get yourself a third-generation Falcon, and park next to all the other Falcons at the show. I guarantee you will get a lot of attention. 🏆



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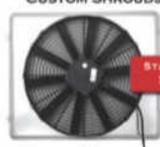
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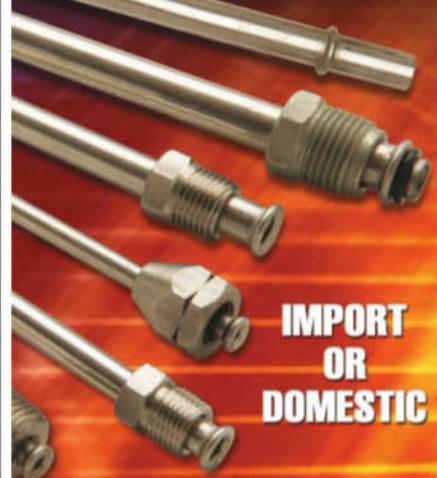
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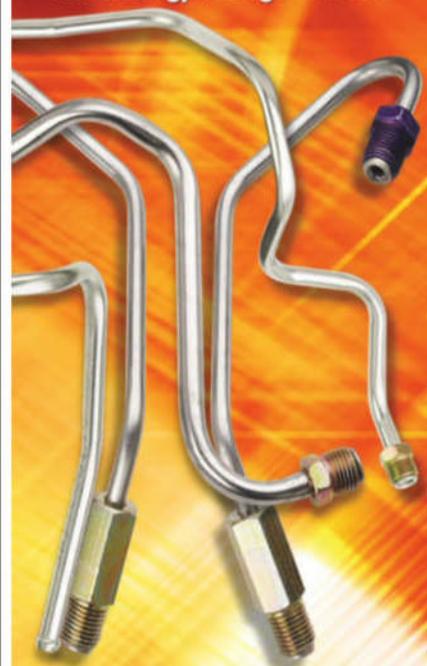
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## Jim Sens

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### I WAS FRESH OUT OF HIGH SCHOOL

in 1962 when I started working at White Motor Company in Cleveland, Ohio. The big sign over the entrance to The White Motor Truck plant read “WORLD LEADER IN HEAVY DUTY TRUCKS.”

I was put into a labor pool and was assigned a job as a chip puller. I had to crawl under gigantic lathes and pull out the chips with my hands and a pitchfork-like tool. The chips were razor sharp leftovers from steel bars that the lathe operators turned into fine machine parts that were used to manufacture the heavy-duty trucks.

Part of the job included loading the chips into small gondola-type railroad cars and then pushing the gondola cars to an area where a tow motor would pull them into the scrap yard where they would be loaded into a real gondola railroad car and sold for scrap. I was equipped with a rubber apron and rubber gloves, but they were not much protection from the razor sharp, oil-soaked chips.

At the end of each day, I was soaked in dirt, oil, and grime. It got so bad that my mother refused to wash my work clothes because they were as saturated with oil as I was. I was able to buy used work clothes from the “tool crib” at White Motor for about five dollars. At the end of each week, I would exchange them for a new set of used work clothes. I had the chip puller job for about three months before transferring to the assembly line.

In 1962, White was producing 45 heavy-duty trucks per day on an eight-hour shift. They were making a combination of conventional trucks, Models 4000 and 9000, and three different cab-over-engine (COE) models: the 3000 model, a gracefully curved low COE, which, when it was introduced in 1949, revolutionized the trucking industry, was made to order for beer delivery trucks that navigated through narrow alleyways; the 1500 Compact; and the 7400 Tall Diesel model.

Reporting to the assembly line foreman, I quickly found out that new assembly line workers were assigned to jobs wherever there was an opening due

to someone not showing up for work. The first week on the assembly line had me doing a different job each day. One day I was installing fenders, the next I was putting on tires and then installing batteries and taillamps. I was finally assigned the “permanent” job as greaser. The greaser was responsible for greasing and oiling each and every grease fitting, steering box and axle housing on every truck that came down the assembly line. The grease station was positioned right after the paint spraying booth.

The spray booth was a sight to behold. It was about 30 feet long, had running water coming down on both sides that would create a sort of vacuum that would attempt to draw the overspray into



the falling water. When the trucks came out of the spray booth, the paint was still very wet. Attempting to inject grease and oil into the grease fittings (including the Pitman arms, tie rods, leaf springs, prop shafts, U-joints, steering gearboxes, and axle housings) without getting paint on my coveralls was quite a challenge. By the end of the week, the front of my coveralls looked like a Jackson Pollock painting.

After working on different jobs on the assembly line for about five years, I was able to transfer to the Quality Control Department and became a Class A inspector. I was responsible for inspecting and

verifying that the work done at about 12 different stations along the assembly line was done according to the specs of each station. Each station was to verify that the right component was installed correctly in the right chassis including engine drop, fuel tanks, cab drop, tires, etc.

During my final years at White, I had the most rewarding job. I operated the dynamometers—which we called “The Rolls.” As each truck rolled off the assembly line, I would get in and start each vehicle and drive in on to The Rolls. I would check, verify, and record the model and serial number. I would then place chocks under the front wheels, wrap a heavy-duty chain around the rear cross member, and place a vacuum pipe over the exhaust pipe. I would then run the truck on The Rolls at a top speed of 85 mph for about 15 minutes running it through all forward gears. The most important part of this inspection process was to check for vibrations—which would indicate a major malfunction that could disable the vehicle once it was on the highway.

In the eight years that I operated The Rolls, I only detected one “vibration” and that was due to the wrong motor mounts being installed. In this case, the cab, engine, and transmission had to be removed. The correct motor mounts had to be installed before the cab and powertrain could be replaced. An expensive repair job, for sure.

I left White in 1978, two years before they filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy. Sadly, the White Motor Company Truck name has since disappeared from the heavy-duty trucking industry.

It’s been almost 40 years since I drove the last White truck off the assembly line, but I still search the highways for a White truck that I might have worked on. Today, I’m the guy you see at truck stops admiring the new generation of ultra-modern heavy-duty trucks, but wishing to see a White truck from my past. 🐞

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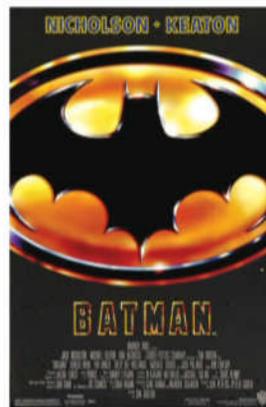
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# My Packard and the Soviets

**I GOT MY FIRST CAR BACK IN 1981** when I was 17 years old. My family was not rich, so they paid little attention to my interest in classic cars and my need to own one. Luckily for me, I had a wealthy uncle who owned a large butcher shop here in Reykjavik. He still owned his old and venerable Packard Clipper Custom, which he bought new back in 1955—a very expensive car in those days.

This old Packard had been sitting in his garage for several years, as he already had a much newer Mercedes for his daily driver. He had heard about my interest in classic cars, especially American cars, and one sunny Saturday afternoon in the summer of 1981, he showed up on our street in his big, beautiful Packard and handed me the keys. And he refused to accept any payments from my father, just had a cup of coffee and then asked me to drive him back to his house. I promised him I would keep the car forever, and preserve it in mint condition, which I certainly did.

This may seem like a nice, normal story, but, soon, the old Packard would direct me into adventures that have not been heard of before, at least not outside of Iceland.

During those days of the Cold War, we had a U.S. Naval Station located at the Keflavik Airport. Our country was, and still is, part of NATO, and has always stood along with the Western nations against the aggressive Russians, who

often flew very close to our country in their big prop airplanes.

There was a Russian embassy in the city center of Reykjavik, which had a certain mystique around it, so no one really wanted to get close to it. In the early 1980s, this embassy owned a unique car, a big, black GAZ Chaika, which happened to be produced with materials from the Packard Car Company, just like the older ZIS cars, which actually were 1942 Packards with very minor changes.

So the Soviet Chaika resembled my

1955 Packard, and as there was just one driveable Packard in Iceland and one Chaika, it soon ignited my temptation to drive past the Russian embassy frequently. This led to some misunderstandings, as it did one evening. When I was driving downtown, I was stopped by a man who spoke to me in Russian. Of course, I had no idea what he was talking about, but then suddenly he opened the rear door and sat in the back seat, handing me a paper note with an address in the city. Even though this man was not waving a gun or any other weapon, I was paralyzed with fear and saw no option other than to drive on.

As he was speaking Russian, I thought he must have confused my Packard with the Chaika, thinking that the embassy car was on the move. I drove to the house mentioned on the paper note and stopped the car. The man waited until another man came out from the house and they changed places. My passenger went into the house, and the new man waited in the car. I did not dare to move, and only five minutes later, the first man came back with a big envelope. The new guy went back into the house, and the first one told me to drive on (at least I thought so). Now I was getting really nervous, as I had no idea where he wanted me to go, but the only place I could think of was the Soviet embassy.

So, I drove there and stopped outside the house. This was definitely the right place, as the man went directly into the embassy. I drove quickly away, and now I was quite certain that this man was a spy. Therefore, I drove fast to the nearest police station and told the police the whole story and the address of the house we drove to. The police told me to relax and drive home and lock the Packard in my parent's garage, and keep it away from the streets for some time.

Two days later, I read in the newspaper that Soviet spies had been arrested in Reykjavik, and in the house I told the police about, lots of spy equipment was found, along with photos of the U.S. Naval Station. A few days later, the Icelandic Prime Minister asked me and my father to come to his office, where he thanked me personally for my brave job in



solving this spy case!

After this remarkable incident, I kept my old Packard away from the Russian embassy, as they could easily spot the car on their cameras, after their "comrade" got into trouble traveling in the wrong "Chaika." But, soon, my curiosity got bigger than my young and immature intelligence, and I started to drive again through the embassy street in my Packard, and usually very slowly. To the best of my knowledge, this caused little attention, but of course, you could not see the persons watching what the supervision cameras were broadcasting into the house. I knew they were watching, and I enjoyed driving slowly past the house, especially when the Chaika was not around. But then came the shock.

One Saturday afternoon, when I was driving down the street, I noticed that the door of the Russian embassy suddenly opened, and a young woman ran down the steps. She came towards me waving her hands, and it seemed that she wanted me to stop the car, which I did. She opened the front passenger door and threw herself into the seat, slammed the door and shouted something in Russian. Then I noticed two men running from the house. At this point there was nothing else to do than step on the gas pedal and drive off in a hurry. The 352-cu.in. V-8 engine in the Packard is powerful and had no trouble outrunning the 337-cu.in. V-8 in the heavy Chaika, which followed us through two or three streets, before it withdrew and turned back.

The young woman, who was just 20 years old, managed to say a few words in English, and I soon realized that she was running away from the embassy for good and away from the Soviet Union. I took her to the police station, and while we waited there, she was so afraid that she would not let go of my hands. So, I had no other choice than to wait with her and follow her into the interrogation room. There, she told the police that she was a political refugee and wanted to plea for asylum in Iceland. To make a long story short, she was accepted, and today is my wife of 35 years.

The old Packard is still with us, but soon after this incident, the old Chaika was driven to the Reykjavik trash dump and crushed with a big bulldozer, while bitter-looking Russian embassy men watched. The Chaika, and its resemblance to my Packard, had cost them a good spy network in Iceland, but most of all, a beautiful employee. Even though the Cold War has been gone for over 30 years, I have never driven past the Russian embassy again in my Packard. ☞

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## High Style

*Studebaker's 1950 2R5, nicely accessorized, made a bold fashion statement*

BY MIKE McNESSOR • PHOTOGRAPHY BY JIM DONNELLY AND TERRY McGEAN

“Loaded,” in the light-truck vernacular, once meant that the cargo box was packed to capacity and the rear springs were groaning. But in this age of \$50,000-plus pickup trucks, “loaded” more often refers to an overabundance of options: power-retracting running boards, 22-inch polished alloy wheels, heated and ventilated leather seats, touch-screen displays and more. Way more. The funny thing is, today’s loaded pickups are more capable than ever of pulling their weight while wirelessly streaming music and keeping the cabin temperature at precisely 68 degrees. But most new light trucks seem to spend most of their lives driving around, beds empty, serving as passenger cars.

Back when light trucks were used for commercial purposes, the available

options were all business, too: oil filters, oil bath air cleaners, dual taillamps and the like. When this month’s feature truck—a half-ton 1950 Studebaker 2R5—first rolled into showrooms, the big news for the model year included adjustable sliding seat tracks and tubular shock absorbers to replace the old lever type. Its option list consisted of the things gentrified truck buyers take for granted today: chrome bumpers, an interior rearview mirror, a right-side exterior rearview mirror and, if you really felt like treating yourself, you might even splurge for a radio.

By those standards, this hauler was dripping with extras. Behind the Studebaker L-head, straight-six engine was a Borg-Warner three-speed transmission with the optional overdrive; the front and rear directional signals were also period



accessories; inside, the truck was outfitted with a Studebaker Climatizer heater/defroster, and under the hood an accessory oil filter was installed.

The most obvious extra was that military-tent-like enclosure capping off the cargo bed. This was known as a “Caravan Top.” It was offered as an accessory by Studebaker, and was typically dealer installed and manufactured by the C.K. Turk Corporation, a tent maker based in South Bend, Indiana. The top’s enclosure was sewn together out of 10-ounce cotton canvas or “duck cloth” that was treated to be waterproof and mildew proof. The rear curtain could be zipped closed or rolled up out of the way when loading the truck’s box, and a small plastic window in the front of the top allowed the driver to see rearward.



The instrument panel features a sweep speedometer in the center, flanked by gauges for amps, fuel level, oil pressure, and coolant temperature. The brown knob attached to the stalk on the column operates the accessory Sparton Teleoptic turn signals. Sparton was a division of Sparks-Withington, based in Jackson, Michigan. Its automotive division began building horns that were standard on Hudsons and others. Studebaker's Climatizer heater was a 2R-series-truck option.

Under the canvas was a lightweight, high-tensile aluminum frame consisting of vertical hoops front and rear joined by three horizontal aluminum slats. It was an elegantly simple cap that could be removed if needed and didn't add a lot of weight to the truck. While the olive drab Caravan Top has sort of a nondescript, generic look and was made to fit almost any truck, it somehow seems especially at home atop the contoured box of a Studebaker 2R5.

The styling of the 2R's box was years ahead of its time and years ahead of the competition. Its sides were streamlined, with no exposed stake pockets or supports. The sides were also double-walled, which would become an industry standard in modern trucks. The 2R's bulging rear fenders looked integrated into the bed

sides, and they neatly echoed the styling of the front fenders, as well.

Notice the lack of side steps on the bed and running boards beneath the cab. Here too, the 2R series foretold light-truck styling trends that would become standard. Interestingly, the 2R's shared no body panels with Studebaker's passenger cars, though a few choice bits and pieces were swiped from the parts bins: headlamp rims and a hood ornament from the Champion, as well as hubcaps from the Land Cruiser and Commander.

The 2R5 rode on a 112-inch wheelbase and was available only with a 6½-foot box, utility or stake body. To get an 8-foot box, buyers had to move up to the ¾-ton 2R10 with a 122-inch wheelbase. (Any Studebaker light truck could also be ordered as a cab and chassis.)

When it came time to carry some freight, the half-ton's beefy chassis was up to the task. The frame rails were formed out of 1/8-inch steel, measured 7 inches tall at their highest points, and were a full 2¼ inches wide. Up front, the 2R5 rode on a solid axle with eight-leaf springs measuring 40 inches long and 1¾ inches wide. In the rear, Studebaker half-tons had nine-leaf spring packs that were mounted under the axle and measured 40 by 1¾ inches. Steering was unassisted with a variable-ratio box, while self-centering, self-adjusting hydraulic drum brakes at all four corners brought these trucks to a halt.

The 169.6-cu.in., 80-hp Econ-O-Miser engine was standard issue for Studebaker's light trucks as well as the Studebaker Champion passenger car. Midway through 1950, the 245-cu.in. Power Plus was made



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available as an option, while the Econ-O-Miser received a compression ratio increase from 6.5:1 to 7:1, raising the horsepower from 80 to 85. Studebaker didn't offer V-8s in trucks until 1955. Borg-Warner three-speeds were the only transmissions available in 2R5s, and a stump pulling 4.82-ratio rear gear was standard.

Studebaker truck interiors were very utilitarian and furnished in typical late 1940s/early 1950s commercial truck fashion: vinyl bench seats, rubber floor mats, metal door panels, and metal dashes. Standard features usually included dual sunvisors, armrests on driver and passenger's side, an ashtray, a

cab courtesy lamp activated by the doors, door locks, and a pressed-fiber headliner. The headlamp dimmer switch, vents, and engine starter were all foot-controlled.

While the 2R's styling looked cutting edge when the trucks hit the market in 1949, Studebaker's lack of resources meant that the same basic design would soldier on, with some updates and name changes, through 1959. By the end of the 1950s, Studebaker's trucks looked antiquated compared to Ford and GM's offerings, and the beleaguered automaker had little hope of reversing its downward trajectory.

Officially, the 2R series ran through 1953, then was given a facelift and name

change for 1954. Between the truck's introduction and 1953, Studebaker sold 110,500 2R5 1/2 tons, a high-water mark for its light-truck production and design.

Studebaker's time in the light-truck market was relatively brief. In 1940, it didn't manufacture any light haulers, and, prior to that, its trucks were factory-modified passenger cars. Studebaker's first true pickup was the M5, which it built from 1941-'48. In the automaker's typically thrifty fashion, it borrowed bits from its passenger car line and saved in tooling costs by stamping one running board which could fit either side as well as by making the front and rear fenders interchangeable.

The 2R series that followed in 1949 was a landmark, clean-sheet design, and it influenced light-truck styling for decades. By the end of 1963, the last Studebaker Champ pickup rolled off the line and Studebaker's memorable two-plus-decade run in the light-hauler business was over. 🚛



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## Star Power

*With the brand at the half-century mark, many old Western Stars are still rolling*

BY MIKE McNESSOR • PHOTOGRAPHY BY TOM TRENKA

**F**orgive yourself if you've forgotten about the heavy-truck manufacturing company started by Thomas White and his sons back in 1900.

Through a series of mergers and acquisitions too mind numbing to recount here, White Motor Co. has faded to black, though its subsidiaries—Autocar, Freightliner, and Western Star—have hauled on.

Autocar today is based in Hagerstown, Indiana, and builds cabover trucks for use in refuse collection or street sweeping, as well as terminal tractors for jockeying trailers around freight yards.

Freightliner and Western Star are now part of Daimler, parent company of Mercedes-Benz, FUSO Detroit Diesel, and Thomas Built Buses, among others. Freightliner is positioned as the lower-priced offering, while Western Star is marketed as a premium brand with a wide array of options, that allows customers to personalize their rigs. In this way, the brand has remained true to its original purpose.

Western Star has its roots in the Pacific Northwest, where the logging and timber industry was the major economic

powerhouse. Trucking there was tough business, and the severe duty took a toll on equipment. In the mid 1960s, White saw a need for a heavy truck that could take the punishment loggers could dish out hauling trees out of the deep woods.

So, the company built a new plant in the small town of Kelowna, British Columbia, Canada, to manufacture White Western Star trucks, beginning in 1967. The drivetrains were vendor-supplied, but the frames and cabs were built tougher than the competition—which there was very little of for this market back then.

The fledgling division's first trucks were 4900 series conventionals, assembled in large part by hand in 100-150 hours. At the Kelowna plant, assembly workers labored alongside company executives, engineers, and sales people, ensuring the communication needed to build these niche-market trucks. The 4800 series followed in 1971, featuring a shorter distance from the front bumper to the back of the cab than the 4900, thus affording a tighter turning radius and superior maneuverability—something Western



Star customers were demanding. The 4800 also helped cement the division's reputation for listening closely to customers as well as dealers and providing a myriad of custom options to suit any need.

Just 10 years later, Western Star became an independent manufacturer following White's bankruptcy. A pair of oil and natural gas companies from Calgary bought the Kelowna plant and formed Western Star Trucks. Western Star was sold about a decade later to an Australian businessman, who, in turn, sold it in 2002 to Daimler. Daimler shuttered the Kelowna plant and moved Western Star produc-



tion to Portland, Oregon. The birthplace of Western Star still stands, however, and was recently purchased by U-Haul. The company is planning to operate a storage and rental center on the site.

This month's feature truck—a 1969 White Western Star tractor—is owned by Tom Trenka of Pelion, South Carolina. It was ordered new to pull a King 50-ton lowboy equipment trailer, and it's packing a 30,000-pound Braden winch behind the cab.

Power comes from an 855-cu.in. Cummins NH250 straight-six diesel engine rated for 250 horsepower at 2,100 rpm, which Tom stirs with a Spicer 5x4 setup: 8500-series five-speed main with an 8000 four-speed auxiliary. The drive axles are Rockwell units with Hendrickson suspension, and the truck rolls on 12.00-20 tires.

Tom bought his Western Star in July 2006 at an equipment auction in Pennsylvania, complete with the trailer. He drove back to collect it with his Cummins-powered 1992 Dodge pickup, loaded the Dodge on the lowboy and made the 692-mile trek home in the Western Star, stopping off at the Fall AACA meet at Hershey. "The old Star didn't miss a beat," Tom said.

Today, the truck is semi-retired, but is still used to move around one of the 40 or so pieces of vintage construction equipment that Tom owns. "I know if I need to winch an old machine on to the trailer and get it home, this truck will do it," he said. 🐞

 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 editor at [rlentinello@hemmings.com](mailto:rlentinello@hemmings.com).

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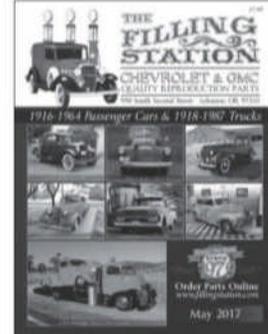
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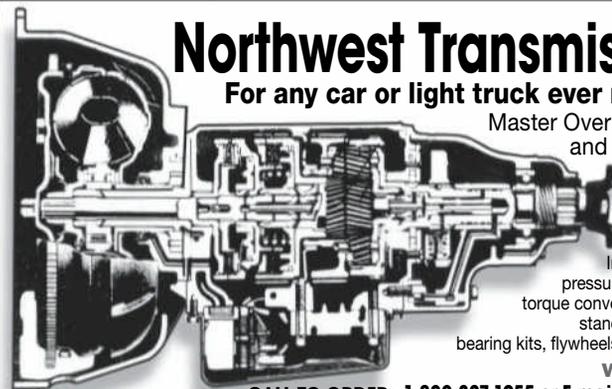
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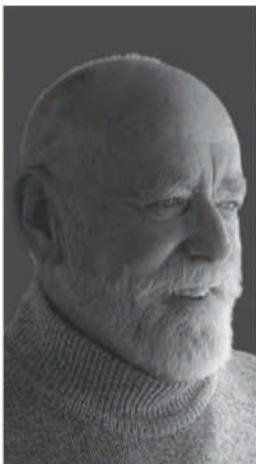
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Mid-'60s magazine ad



## Ridin' in Style

**B**ruce Haye, CEO of Ace Panel and Paint, picked me up yesterday morning in his 1961 Cadillac Coupe de Ville to go to a local car show. Along for the ride was his lovely daughter, Georgia, who is studying to be a nurse. Georgia was dressed in '50s garb to fit in with other participants at the show. I swung open the huge door, slid into the front, and we were off.

I hadn't ridden in a big mid-century luxury car in a long time and had forgotten how roomy, comfy, smooth-riding and quiet these majestic machines are. And this one is restored to perfection. There is not one ripple in all of those acres of flat steel panels, and the deep gold paintwork looks dazzling. It had been years since I had given the top-end cars of the 1950s and '60s much thought.

A friend of mine's family had a 1957 Eldorado convertible when we were kids, and when his mother dropped him off in front of the school, he would have to run the gauntlet of envious classmates who taunted him unmercifully about being a rich mama's boy who was too good to take the bus, or walk like the rest of us.

It got so bad that his mother resorted to taking him to my house two blocks away so he could walk the rest of the way to avoid attention, especially since he was also a fat kid who wore glasses. His life was tough enough without being branded a rich sissy.

After the show, I found myself envying my new friend Bruce, with his '61 Coupe de Ville. Of course, he worked hard to have his magnificent land yacht, because it had a bit of rust in it when he got it, and its previous owner had run it aground on a big rock and torn out the oil pan, and wrecked the transmission, as well.

I started looking in *Hemmings Motor News* to determine what such a big luxury classic from the '50s or '60s might cost, and I was astounded. If you don't need a convertible, you can get a very nice Imperial, Continental or de Ville for \$15,000 to \$25,000, ready to enjoy. And if you like restoring cars, you can get a good candidate for less than half that.

Okay, so your new acquisition won't out-accelerate a GTO, Boss 302 or Camaro SS, but it will loaf along at 80 miles per hour all day long, and you will be traveling in silent comfort with

air conditioning, and with your friends and your favorite sounds to entertain you.

Bumps will be implied rather than felt, and you can stretch out and relax. Even I, at six feet, two inches, and 215 pounds, am comfortable on one of those living-room-sofa front seats. Such cars will indeed accommodate six six-footers, and



you—as well as your friends and family—will arrive at your destination calm, cool and collected instead of grumpy, sweaty, and fatigued.

You get a lot of car when you buy a vintage prestige model, and because of that, you might

surmise that it would be a lot more trouble and expense to restore one, but in reality, it is still just a car with four wheels and an engine, so it is not inherently different from humbler makes, though it will be qualitatively way ahead of its contemporaries.

In fact, the advantages of a top-end car from the 1960s are many. As I said before, they are bargains, and they are very comfortable and well made. Also, likely as not, they have been well maintained by people who appreciated them and had the discretionary income to take care of them. They are not likely to have been someone's beater, either. And, wow, do they have an impact at car shows! They are big, majestic, beautiful, and rare, so people love to see them.

As Cheech Marin once said in a Cheech and Chong flick: "Some guys go for speed. I go for style." He related this as he was meandering along in his Impala low-rider special. And, as I mature, I am becoming more like Cheech every day. I learned long ago that speed kills, or at least wounds, and can get you into a heap o' trouble.

So, to avoid possibly finding yourself sitting on the curb in handcuffs, I suggest you consider a roomy cruiser rather than a booming bruiser. Besides, a '60s land yacht will go as fast as any sane person would ever want to go, and do it subtly and with dignity.

Just don't drop your adolescent son off at school in it. You may not be rich, but people will think you are. Driving such a car makes you look successful, just as it did in its day, and you can achieve that perception at a discount if you choose to tool around in a vintage Coupe de Ville, Crown Imperial, or Continental. 🏎️

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