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THE DEFINITIVE ALL-AMERICAN COLLECTOR-CAR MAGAZINE

MARCH 2018 #162



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Tucker

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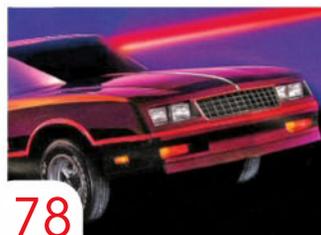
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Bertha Benz and the Benz Patent Wagen.

1888 marked two firsts for the original automobile: it was the first use of a motorized vehicle for a long distance road trip, and the driver was a woman! Bertha Benz, who had financed her husband Karl's invention, decided to promote it by driving the vehicle to visit her mother some 60 miles away. It took two days for her and her two sons to complete the historic round trip! Mercedes-Benz® later gave the car to Henry Ford for his museum where it was displayed for many years. Then, along came a man named Wigglesworth...

To find out what happened to the Patent Wagen, visit [grundy.com](http://www.grundy.com) and read the full story on our blog, Grundy Garage!

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jewelers have fallen in love with helenite," says James Fent, GIA Graduate Gemologist. "Clear green color in a stone this size is rarely found in emeralds but helenite has come to the rescue."

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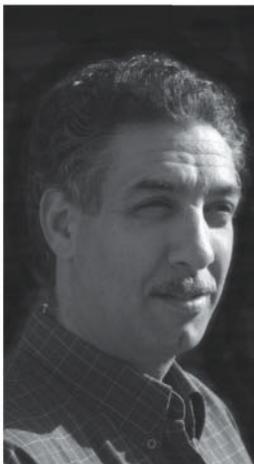
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The Tucker Experience

Whenever I get the opportunity to photograph a special automobile, it makes the time spent peering through the lens immensely rewarding. Over the years, I have been fortunate to have photographed literally a thousand or so cars; some were ordinary while others were exceptional, yet I always enjoyed my time with each of them. Regardless of whether the car was a perfectly restored show car or a disheveled-looking driveable dream, a valuable model of incredible rarity or a mass-produced stripped-down four-door sedan, each was a memorable experience.

But, the most historically significant car of them all was this issue's main feature, the Tucker.

Last October, I traveled down to Long Island to conduct several photoshoots. One was a gorgeous 1969 Buick Riviera finished in the striking color of Twilight Blue. The other car was an authentic replica of Chitty Chitty Bang Bang; its amazing story and how it was constructed will be featured very soon. Then I headed to the quaint village of Roslyn in Nassau County to visit the garage of Howard Kroplick. It was there that I got to see Tucker number 44.

My visit coincided with the Jewish holiday of Yom Kippur, and having arrived at Howard's garage in the late afternoon, that meant traffic was starting to build as those who celebrated had to be home by sundown. So, we couldn't take the chance and drive the Tucker out onto the crowded streets to a more prominent photo location; we choose instead to play it safe and stay within the garage's industrial compound. After I photographed the Tucker in a nearby alleyway, which I know wasn't the ideal spot, Howard said, "hop in and we'll go for a ride."

As soon as I sat down and closed the door, Howard proclaimed: "Do you realize that you are one of a few humans to ever ride in a Tucker?" That was a bold yet honest statement, and I immediately realized just how fortunate I was to experience a Tucker at speed. We drove around for about 20 minutes, around buildings

and through narrow alleyways, and we even did some quick circles in a big parking lot. Being the hardcore automotive enthusiast that he is, Howard was like a kid showing off a Mickey Mantle baseball card. With a big smile on his face, he loved demonstrating how easy it was to shift using that Cord shifter. Not having experienced a Cord before, I was amazed.



And he drove his Tucker with verve. Accelerating forcibly, making turns quickly, and standing on the brakes; it was quite evident that Howard was immensely proud of owning a Tucker, and he clearly enjoyed driving it. As one would expect, I was completely smitten by the whole experience.

Being the passenger, I found the "safety compartment"

a bit unnerving. We are all used to having an expansive dashboard in front of us, not a big open space of nothingness. Without any sight of dash, or the impediment of an engine/transmission tunnel or a firewall-mounted heater, I was able to extend my legs without coming into contact with anything, and I could even cross them. That felt very strange.

The pavement that we drove on wasn't the smoothest, yet the Tucker's suspension soaked up the bumps with ease. It drove like a '70s-era Cadillac; it rode that smoothly. Although it creaked a little, it had a solid feeling about it, and it accelerated similar to a standard V-8-powered sedan from the '50s. The big wide door, which had this dense-sounding "clunk" as it closed, made getting in and out of the car an easy task; I especially liked the small compartments fitted to the inside of each door. Oh, and for those of us who are tall, there was plenty of headroom. I really enjoyed the whole experience.

In August, the Pebble Beach Concours will be featuring a special class just for Tuckers. This is to celebrate the car's 70th anniversary since being produced. As one would expect of Pebble Beach, a display of several different Tuckers is surely going to be a spectacular sight. And there's a good chance that Tucker number 44 will be there, as well. 📷



Do you

realize that

you are one

of a few

humans to

ever ride in a

Tucker?

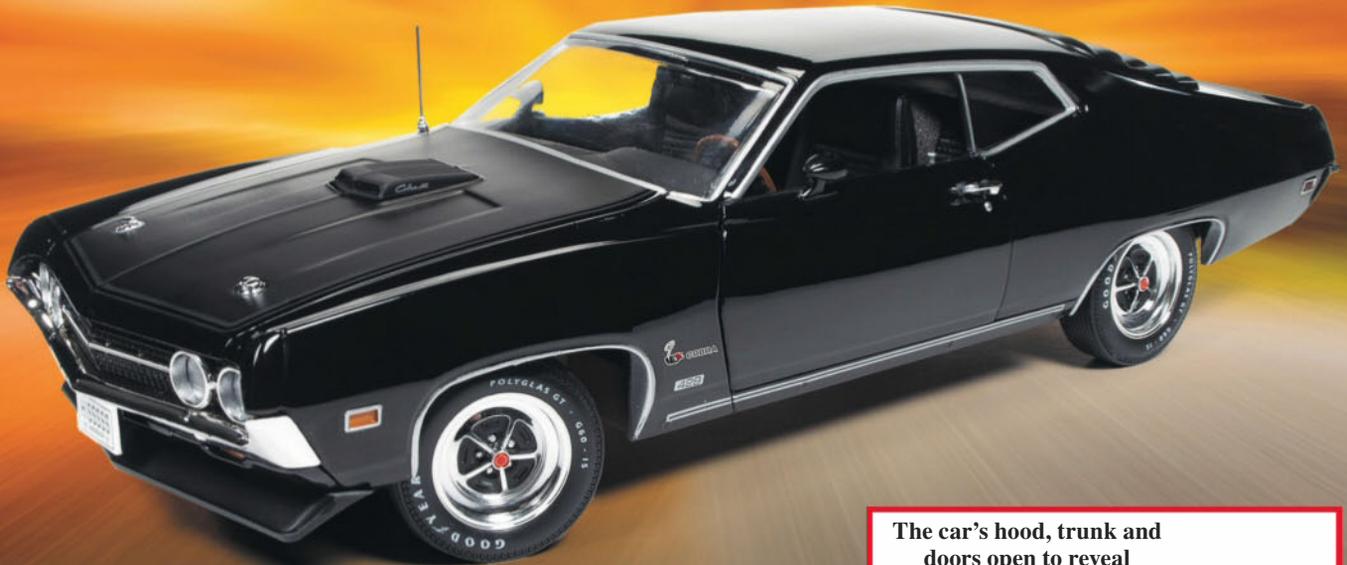


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Tuckered In

THE PEBBLE BEACH CONCOURS D'ELEGANCE HAS ANNOUNCED THE CLASS LISTINGS for the 2018 event, and they are proud to include Tucker as part of the festivities to celebrate the car's 70th anniversary. The rise and fall of the Tucker is perhaps one of the better-known stories of independent automobile production that captured the headlines back in the day. It will be a rare occasion to see some of the world's best Tuckers all together in one place. It's never too early to plan for Pebble Beach; this year's Concours will take place August 26. Visit www.pebblebeachconcours.net for more information.



Sooner Swap Meet

MARK YOUR CALENDAR FOR MARCH 16-17 for the Chickasha Pre-War Swap Meet. Located near Oklahoma City, this event has become a must-attend for locating hard-to-find parts for those who can't make the meets on the coasts or in Hershey. This show is geared for prewar-powered vehicles, parts, and transportation items only. The newly renovated Grady County Fairgrounds has more than 500 indoor spaces available, in addition to plenty of outdoor spots. So, if you're looking for old-school parts and services, especially brass-era items, visit the swap meet's website—www.pwsm.com—and take a look at what's planned for their 28th year.

Quick Update

THE AACA NATIONAL WINTER MEET AND SPECIAL GRAND NATIONAL SHOW scheduled for March 2-3 in San Juan, Puerto Rico, has been cancelled due to damages from hurricane Maria. There will be an event in Mobile, Alabama, March 23-24 instead. Visit www.aaca.org for more information.

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CENTRAL MACHINERY SUPER COUPON

Customer Rating ★★★★★

20 TON SHOP PRESS

• Pair of arbor plates included

NOW \$149.99

COMPARE TO MAXWORKS MODEL: GP2002 **SAVE \$72**

ITEM 32879 60603 shown

55628223

LIMIT 3 - Coupon valid through 5/8/18*

PITTSBURGH AUTOMOTIVE SUPER COUPON

Customer Rating ★★★★★

VEHICLE POSITIONING DOLLY

• 1250 lb. capacity

NOW \$69.99

COMPARE TO GOJAK MODEL: 5211 **SAVE \$199**

ITEM 62234 61917 shown

55630181

LIMIT 5 - Coupon valid through 5/8/18*

U.S. GENERAL SUPER COUPON

Customer Rating ★★★★★

26", 4 DRAWER TOOL CART

• 6200 cu. in. of storage
• 580 lb. capacity
• Weighs 97 lbs.

NOW \$99.99

COMPARE TO HUSKY MODEL: HDUC330810 **SAVE \$79**

ITEM 61634/61952 64096/95659 shown

55630817

LIMIT 4 - Coupon valid through 5/8/18*

Haul Master SUPER COUPON

Customer Rating ★★★★★

12 VOLT MAGNETIC TOWING LIGHT KIT

NOW \$99.99

COMPARE TO OPTRONICS MODEL: TL21RK **SAVE \$18.99**

ITEM 63100

55637692

LIMIT 8 - Coupon valid through 5/8/18*

CENTRAL PNEUMATIC SUPER COUPON

Customer Rating ★★★★★

3/8" x 50 FT. RETRACTABLE AIR HOSE REEL

NOW \$59.99

COMPARE TO KOBALT MODEL: SGY-AIR184 **SAVE \$39**

ITEM 69265/62344/93897 shown

55646104

LIMIT 3 - Coupon valid through 5/8/18*

BADLAND ZXR Battle Tested SUPER COUPON

Customer Rating ★★★★★

12,000 LB. ELECTRIC WINCH WITH REMOTE CONTROL AND AUTOMATIC BRAKE

• Weighs 86.4 lbs.
• 21" L x 10-1/8" H

NOW \$299.99

COMPARE TO WARN MODEL: 56467 **SAVE \$400**

ITEM 64046 64045 63770 shown

55649331

LIMIT 4 - Coupon valid through 5/8/18*

PITTSBURGH AUTOMOTIVE SUPER COUPON

Customer Rating ★★★★★

2 TON CAPACITY FOLDABLE SHOP CRANE

• Boom extends from 41" to 61-3/4"
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COMPARE TO HUSKY MODEL: HDUC330810 **SAVE \$50**

ITEM 60388 69514 shown

55668345

LIMIT 5 - Coupon valid through 5/8/18*

WARRIOR SUPER COUPON

Customer Rating ★★★★★

29 PIECE TITANIUM DRILL BIT SET

NOW \$99.99

COMPARE TO DEWALT MODEL: DW1369 **SAVE \$17.99**

ITEM 62281 61637 shown

55677682

LIMIT 9 - Coupon valid through 5/8/18*

CHICAGO ELECTRIC WELDING SUPER COUPON

Customer Rating ★★★★★

240 VOLT INVERTER PLASMA CUTTER WITH DIGITAL DISPLAY

NOW \$599.99

COMPARE TO HUSKY MODEL: H2DTWA **SAVE \$50**

ITEM 62204

55682511

LIMIT 4 - Coupon valid through 5/8/18*

PITTSBURGH SUPER COUPON

Customer Rating ★★★★★

TORQUE WRENCHES LIFETIME WARRANTY

• Accuracy within ±4%

Item 239 shown

DRIVE ITEM

1/4"	2696/61277/63881
3/8"	807/61276/63880
1/2"	62431/239/63882

YOUR CHOICE \$99

COMPARE TO HUSKY MODEL: H2DTWA **SAVE \$84.97**

ITEM 64046 64045 63770 shown

55683047

LIMIT 9 - Coupon valid through 5/8/18*

EARTHQUAKE SUPER COUPON

Customer Rating ★★★★★

950 FT. LBS. TORQUE BOLT BREAKAWAY 1/2" HEAVY DUTY COMPOSITE PRO AIR IMPACT WRENCH

NOW \$89.99

COMPARE TO CHICAGO PNEUMATIC MODEL: CP7749 **SAVE \$249.99**

ITEM 62835

55684062

LIMIT 5 - Coupon valid through 5/8/18*

CENTRAL PNEUMATIC SUPER COUPON

Customer Rating ★★★★★

20 OZ. GRAVITY FEED SPRAY GUN

NOW \$99.99

COMPARE TO KOBALT MODEL: SGY-ARR8TZ **SAVE \$49.98**

ITEM 67181/62300/47016 shown

55685680

LIMIT 8 - Coupon valid through 5/8/18*

PITTSBURGH AUTOMOTIVE SUPER COUPON

Customer Rating ★★★★★

PNEUMATIC ADJUSTABLE ROLLER SEAT • 300 lb. capacity

NOW \$199.99

COMPARE TO DURALAST MODEL: TR6201C **SAVE \$64.99**

ITEM 61160/61896/63456/46319 shown

55689380

LIMIT 7 - Coupon valid through 5/8/18*

CHICAGO ELECTRIC WELDING SUPER COUPON

Customer Rating ★★★★★

WELDING STORAGE CABINET

NOW \$149.99

COMPARE TO KLUTCH MODEL: 46348 **SAVE \$169.99**

ITEM 62275 61705 shown

55695933

LIMIT 5 - Coupon valid through 5/8/18*

PITTSBURGH SUPER COUPON

Customer Rating ★★★★★

9 PIECE, 1/4", 3/8" AND 1/2" DRIVE Wobble Socket Extension Set LIFETIME WARRANTY

NOW \$99.99

COMPARE TO KLUTCH MODEL: 40033 **SAVE \$149.99**

ITEM 61278 67971 shown

55698360

LIMIT 9 - Coupon valid through 5/8/18*

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The All-Seeing Eye of Google

OUR ROBOT OVERLORDS already play chess, track our consumer habits, and suggest who we should date, so naturally carspotting is next on their list of human activities to subjugate. Here, reader Marcus Smilen (or so Marcusbot1000 would like us to call him) sent us a hot rod on the road in Sunrise, Florida, which he spied via Google Maps.

So to our other android, synthezoid, and roboitoid readers, we ask: What other neat cars have you spotted via online mapping software?

Winged One-Off

REAR GULLWING DOORS? TESLA'S MAKING WAVES WITH THE FEATURE ON ITS Model X SUV, but it's not an entirely novel idea, as we can see from this photo that dream-car collector Joe Bortz sent us.

According to Joe, he spotted the prototype in a Chrysler facility while buying the AMVan concept car from the company, and was even offered the SUV, but declined it. "To me, it was just a showoff item," he said.

Joe didn't have any more details on the SUV—not even a name—and said he didn't believe it was ever shown to the general public. We're just as curious about the doors as we are about the existence of a four-door Blazer/Explorer-size SUV skulking around Chrysler design study halls during the early 1990s. Can anybody fill in the details here?



RE: More Portholes, Vern

SO LET'S PUT AWAY THE SUGGESTION THAT THE BUICK WITH THE Packard grille from HCC #160 was handmade. Hand-modified, perhaps, but many of you correctly pointed out that this vehicle started out as a Flexible-built flower car on a Buick chassis, complete with the distinctive raised cowl and hood in an attempt to somewhat normalize the post-flower-car conversion proportions.

As to who modified it and for what purpose,



some of you agreed with my notion of firefighters competitions, but many more saw those faded markings along the sides of the car, and identified them as Shriner markings. In fact, a couple of you pointed out this photo of what may be our subject car in action in a parade, posted to Flickr by John Lloyd.

Many thanks to everybody who wrote in with comments on this car.

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

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— Jeff from McKinney, TX

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MCCORMICK'S PALM SPRINGS

Amelia's March Madness

AS THE NCAA WHITTLES ITS FIELD DOWN to the Final Four, Amelia Island will have four big auctions running in conjunction with its Concours d'Elegance. The event is scheduled to take place March 8-11, with hundreds of collectible cars scheduled to cross the blocks. Look for lots of classics, show cars, daily drivers, and some manageable project cars that will find new homes. Hollywood Wheels, RM Sotheby's, Gooding & Company, and Bonhams will all converge on Amelia Island with an array of consignments. You can visit their individual websites, as listed on the calendar at right, or subscribe to our daily newsletter at www.hemmings.com/newsletter for one-stop coverage.



TERRY SHEA

Palm Springs Results

MCCORMICK'S PALM SPRINGS NOVEMBER AUCTION CAME TO A CLOSE TOTALING MORE THAN \$6.1 million in sales with a sell-through rate of 64 percent. The three-day auction featured an unusual car that once belonged to Charlie Chaplin: This 1936 Packard V-12 LeBaron All Weather Cabriolet was just one of 622 produced and is believed to have only 11,057 original miles. It had recently been repainted, but needed a little restoration as evidenced by some dents in the right rear fender and running board. When the smoke cleared, the old Packard saw a final bid of \$89,250. McCormick has an auction every February and November at the same location in Palm Springs, California, so be sure to visit www.classic-carauktion.com for more information.

AUCTION PROFILE

CADILLAC'S MID-LEVEL LUXURY CAR received a redesigned grille with bigger bumper and bumper guards for the 1953 model year. It still measured 5-inches shorter than Cadillac's other body styles and was a fine example of the third-generation Series 62.

This particular 1953 convertible has been with the same owner since 2012, with only 200 miles put on the odometer since then. The older restoration was finished with Pastoral Blue paint, and this car retained what was believed to be the original dark-blue interior. It's powered by the 331-cu.in. V-8, and it boasts a power top and the desirable power windows. The recent work included new brakes, making this a nice car to drive, show, and cruise. Many high-end collectors want cars that are near perfect, so perhaps it was its less-than-stellar condition that put off buyers from bidding any higher.



GREG KEYSAR/RM SOTHEBY'S

CAR:	1953 Cadillac Series 62 convertible	LOT NUMBER:	157
AUCTIONEER:	RM Sotheby's	CONDITION:	#3+
LOCATION:	Hershey, Pennsylvania	RESERVE:	None
DATE:	October 5, 2017	AVERAGE SELLING PRICE:	\$60,000
		SELLING PRICE:	\$53,900

MARCH

1-3 • **GAA Classic Cars** • Greensboro, North Carolina • 855-862-2257
www.gaaclassiccars.com

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Amelia Island, Florida • 800-237-8954
www.hollywoodwheels.com

10 • **RM Sotheby's**
Amelia Island, Florida • 519-352-4575
www.rmsothebys.com

16-17 • **Mecum Auctions**
Kansas City, Missouri • 262-275-5050
www.mecum.com



MECUM AUCTIONS

Mecum Meeting

MECUM HELD ITS FIRST COLLECTOR-CAR auction in Las Vegas from November 16-18, and saw 557 vehicles change hands, for a total of \$22 million in sales. American muscle represented most of the top-10, but there were also some nice '50s-era classics to be had. This 1955 Buick Special featured new paint, chrome, glass, and rubber. The interior had been detailed to original specifications, with a befitting red-and-gray upholstery. The 264-cu.in. V-8 was also complemented by a rebuilt automatic transmission. The Special found a new home for \$30,000. Mecum has an auction slated in Kansas City, Missouri, March 16-17, so be sure to visit www.mecum.com for a full schedule and the results of the November 2017 Vegas Auction.

 View and search through thousands of upcoming auction vehicles in one place at the Hemmings Auction Showroom, www.hemmings.com/auctions.



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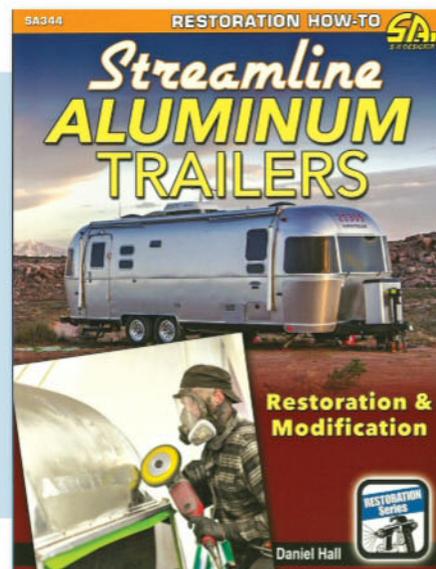
You don't have to be a "Mopar-or-no-car" enthusiast to appreciate the retro-themed beauty of this new, authentic-looking LED marquee sign. Sized 16 x 10 inches, the lightweight, easy-to-hang unit (item 158872) offers the appearance of an original Dodge dealer service sign, but takes less energy to power, thanks to its modern LED rope lighting. Indeed, it can run off four AA batteries (not included), or through an 18-inch-long mini-USB cord with an on/off switch. You can order this sign for home delivery, or pick it up in a Summit Racing store in Ohio, Nevada, Georgia, or Texas.

Streamline Aluminum Trailers: Restoration & Modification

800-551-4754 • WWW.CARTECHBOOKS.COM • \$29.95

In recent years, interest in vintage trailers, especially the sleek aluminum models, has gathered steam as a new generation of enthusiasts has come to appreciate their distinctive appeal. Trailer restorations are on the rise, and this book can aid in their rebuilding. Within the 176 pages of this softcover is all the information one would need to restore an old aluminum trailer. There are chapters on restoring chassis, flooring, doors, and windows; the electrical, plumbing, and heating systems; cabinets and appliances; and, of course, the alloy exterior. It's lavishly illustrated with quality color photos, accompanied by informative captions and text. If you own or plan on buying an old trailer, you'll find this book an invaluable resource.

— RICHARD LENTINELLO



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Whether you've finished performing a ground-up restoration, or recommissioned a long-dormant original vehicle, nothing adds a touch of period-realism like displaying it with era-appropriate license plates. The Florida-based plate experts at licenseplates.tv recently unveiled their "Year Of Manufacture" line, which includes true replicas of decades-worth of U.S. state and territory plates, all of which can be individualized with your preferred sequence of numbers/letters. These tags use correct fonts to emboss letters, numbers, symbols, and borders, and they're painted using accurate standard and reflective colors. This firm suggests its made-in-America "novelty" (not for legal on-road use) YOM plates are equally appropriate for use by collectors, automotive museums, and restoration companies; it also offers international plate designs, and motorcycle/nautical plates, and will entertain custom-build requests.



Continued on page 18

**ENTER YOUR
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As star of Chasing Classic Cars, Wayne takes viewers on his mission to uncover the world's most rare and exotic cars. As a sought-out master restorer, he's done body and paint work on rare car collections, from the du Pont family's cars, to David Letterman's. His lifetime of experience with cars is sure to provide us with an enlightening commentary.

Master of Ceremonies Bill Rothermel



Bill's broad knowledge and experience as an automotive historian and writer – as well as his role as master of ceremonies or judge in over 20 concours-level events nationwide – position him as an unrivaled expert. He's also a valued member of the board of directors of the Rolls-Royce Foundation, the AACA Museum in Hershey, PA, and the Boyertown Museum of Historic Vehicles. His lifelong interest in cars of all kinds and eras makes him a fascinating automotive commentator.

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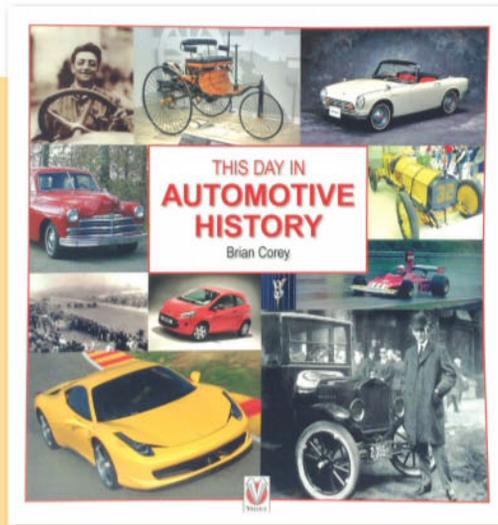
800-423-5525 • WWW.CALCARCOVER.COM • \$14.99

In the world of collectible petroliana, few brands used more evocative logos than California's native Gilmore Oil Company: its leaping red lion embodied power and speed. This 100-percent chino twill cap (item GLHK) sports a tastefully sized example of the "Roar with Gilmore" slogan in the front, and "MONARCH OF ALL" embroidered over the adjustable fabric strap and slider on the back. It will help you keep your cool with classic style.

This Day in Automotive History

800-458-0454 • WWW.QUARTOKNOWS.COM • \$30

Automotive history has been made every single day of the year, for as long as automobiles have existed. The sheer volume of important and notable happenings around the world have made compiling them a formidable task, but this is what Brian Corey has done in this new title from Veloce Publishing. It's a generously illustrated (more than 700 color and black-and-white images!) 196-page softcover that goes through the calendar year of dates, highlighting one major transportation-related happening for each day with a paragraph of information, along with shorter details of two or more additional events tied to that date. Did you know that the last car bearing the Packard name was built on August 19, 1958? Or that the very first magazine ad for a car ran on July 30, 1898, promoting the Winton Motor Carriage in *Scientific American*? How about that Henry Ford test-drove his Quadricycle for the first time on June 4, 1896? *This Day in Automotive History* is a fascinating read for trivia buffs and automotive enthusiasts, alike.



1970 Lincoln Continental Mark III

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Today's luxury-car buyers typically choose between dour white, silver, or black paint, with black, gray, or tan upholstery—but it wasn't always that way, as this 1:24-scale 1970 Lincoln Continental Mark III shows. The most delightful thing about this model is not its ample size or level of exquisite detail, but its genuine period color. Yes, Bright Aqua Metallic was one of an amazing 27 exterior hues available in 1970, and its matching Light Aqua-toned interior was one of 10 interior upholstery colors, black being one of five shades for the vinyl roof.

In typical Automodello fashion, this limited-to-150-examples, officially licensed model (item 24L030) is a heavy resin unit with no opening panels. It boasts the new-for-1970 concealed windshield wipers, and displays windows up on the passenger side, retracted on the driver's, to offer an unimpeded view of the carefully crafted interior. You can almost tell time on this Mark III's exclusive five-jewel Cartier chronometer, and the exterior's raised chrome foil emblems are to perfect scale. Lincoln enthusiasts will love this classy, colorful collectible.

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Cost: \$199.99.

CONTACT: OPTIMA BATTERIES, 888-867-8462, WWW.OPTIMABATTERIES.COM



De Ville Fillers

Filler pieces for Cadillac bumpers are often damaged or weakened over the decades and can be hard to find, but Honest John's has them for most Cadillacs including the 1974-'76 De Ville. This rear filler kit comes with five pieces and will fit all 1974-'76 RWD Cadillacs, except Seville and most hearses. Made with the same specifications as the originals so they look and fit properly. Cost: \$450.

CONTACT: HONEST JOHN'S VINTAGE CADILLAC, 888-592-2339, WWW.HONESTJOHN.COM



Buick Hangers

Waldron's Exhaust offers complete exhaust systems for a variety of old classics along with plenty of replacement parts. If you see your exhaust hanging low, hear excessive noise, or notice a decrease in power and acceleration, it's possible your exhaust hangers are becoming defective. Waldron's offers new hangers for the 1963-'65 Buick Riviera and Gran Sport. The hangers come in a set of six and are made to exact original specifications. Cost: \$265 (set of six).

CONTACT: WALDRON'S EXHAUST, 800-503-9428, WWW.WALDRONEXHAUST.COM

Tire Defender

It's the time of year to store away your car for the winter. You may have noticed during previous storage periods that your tires can form flat spots from sitting in one place. Race Ramps introduces Supercar FlatStoppers, which are designed to preserve the shape of hibernating tires up to 14-inches wide. Available in black or red, the ramps are solidly constructed to protect your tires' shape during long dormancies and throughout a wide range of temperatures until you are ready to drive again. Your storage facility or garage will appreciate them, too, as these non-skid ramps will not mark the floor. Cost: \$297 (black, set of four); \$327 (red, set of four).

CONTACT: RACE RAMPS, 866-464-2788,

WWW.RACERAMPS.COM



Wheel-Alignment Tool

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The Secret One Percent

Silver Eagles are issued by the U.S. Mint by the millions. In recent years, over 35 MILLION Silver Eagles have been issued per year. But less than 1% of all the coins struck in a given year ever earn a perfection grade. Take 2016, for example: while the U.S. Mint

struck nearly 38 million Silver Eagles, respected independent grading service Numismatic Guaranty Corporation (NGC) awarded the highest possible grade of perfect Mint State 70 (MS70) to less than 0.4% of that mintage!

Owning a perfect 70-grade Silver Eagle means owning something that less than 1% of the population can ever claim. Compared to their total mintages, relatively few Silver Eagles are submitted for grading by NGC, left instead to be scratched, nicked, and eventually worn down. Owning a graded coin gives you peace of mind, as both the coin and its grade are sealed in a protective acrylic holder. Professionally graded coins like these are universally accepted, but are also harder to find.

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THE BEST SOURCE FOR COINS WORLDWIDE™

Albert Champion



Champion recognized that America's attention was shifting from bicycle racing to motor racing. Like Joe Jagersberger, however, whom you have encountered in this column before, an accident and an injury would change the course of Champion's life and the auto industry.

In October 1903, Champion was invited to pilot the Packard Gray Wolf at Brighton Beach in Brooklyn, New York, against the Ford 999 and the Winton Bullet. The 999 and the Bullet were both also piloted by bicycle racers—Tom Cooper and Oldfield.

Champion lost control of the Gray Wolf, sheared off a fence post, and suffered a broken femur in the crash. He was hospital-bound for several months, and emerged with one leg two inches shorter than the other.

Perhaps sensing that his longevity depended on finding a safer means of support, Champion decided that he would rather be on the production end of things. In the spring of 1904, he departed for his home country looking for financial backing in a new endeavor. While there, Champion competed in a final bicycle race, using a specially fabricated set of pedals to compensate for his unequal legs.

Champion's friend, aircraft pioneer Édouard Nieuport, was in the business of producing ignition parts (primarily spark plugs and magnetos). Nieuport provided technical training to Champion and informed him of a Boston firm in the business of importing Nieuport products for the U.S. market. When Champion returned to the United States in 1905, he, along with two of the Stranahan brothers, incorporated the Albert Champion Company in Boston.

Within a few short years, Champion's company was producing eponymous-branded spark plugs, but as yet another Stranahan brother joined the firm, Champion may have been feeling squeezed out. A 1908 meeting with William Durant led to Champion departing the Boston firm and relocating to Flint, Michigan, to supply Buick with spark plugs of his own design. Durant soon formed General Motors and utilized the newly founded Champion Ignition Company for the corporation's needs.

While it is mighty impressive to have two separate and respected companies in the same field bearing one's name, it certainly creates branding issues. The Stranahans, suppliers to Willys-Overland as Champion Spark Plug Company, eventually sued Champion Ignition Company over use of the founder's name. Ultimately the suit was settled when Champion Ignition agreed to change its name to AC Spark Plug, a name familiar to generations of GM buyers.

Perhaps one of the more interesting innovations undertaken by Champion during his years in Flint was the recognition that the ceramic kilns used in the production of spark-plug insulators could be damaged by excessive heat cycling. To keep the kilns in constant operation, he founded the Flint Faience & Tile Company in 1921, creating art tiles for prestigious homes much like the famed Pewabic Pottery in Detroit. Appropriately, the Flint-area homes of many General Motors executives from the era featured Flint tiles.

Champion died in Paris in 1927 at the age of 49, the victim of an assault by a jealous husband. He left an estate valued at \$15 million. His name, a synonym for "winner," continues to grace products both by Champion Spark Plug (now a division of Federal-Mogul) and ACDelco, which has been a GM division since Champion's death. General Motors President Alfred Sloan eulogized him thus: "The keynote of Champion's success was, that he was never satisfied...his mind was open to the necessity for constant improvement." 🐞

ALTHOUGH THE TERM "HORSELESS carriage" implies a direct descent from the horse-drawn carriage, the bicycle and, in particular, bicycle racing, seems to have had a larger influence on the development of the automobile. Take, for example, Henry Ford's first effort: the Quadricycle, which was based on bicycle parts. The career of bicycle-racer-turned-race-car-driver Barney Oldfield is another instance. That late 19th-century velodrome races were often paced by motorcycle, motor trike, or automobile has probably not a little to do with it.

Another well-known bicycle racer who found himself drawn to the infant auto industry is Frenchman Albert Champion. Born in 1878, Champion was a successful velodrome racer who achieved fame at the age of 20 by unexpectedly winning the 1899 Paris-Roubaix bicycle road race. That victory led to an offer to relocate to Boston to race for a bicycle firm there.

Over the next three years, Champion racked up many victories, and reinvested some of his earnings in the purchase of a motorcycle. Perhaps, like Oldfield,

For the original experience Trust the original equipment.



Springs are the foundation of your restoration. Over time, steel springs lose the ability to carry weight, resulting in loose handling and suspension. EATON Detroit Springs are built to factory specs from more than 24,000 OEM blueprints - so your car will drive the way it was designed.



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DE SOTO SIX

PRODUCT of CHRYSLER



*Sedan de Lujo, \$955 at Factory
Special equipment extra*

\$845
and up, at the factory

MODISH, BEAUTIFUL—and FINE THROUGHOUT
De Soto Six, despite its most moderate price, has been singled out as a fashionable car. It is fit companion for the larger, costlier cars in the most exacting homes. It rides with a richness of ease unknown in its class. It is not merely amply powered but magnificently so, and it is fine throughout. In the De Soto Six, at last high quality and moderate price are joined together.

Visit De Soto Six exhibits at New York Automobile Show and Hotel Commodore, January 5-12

Also at Chicago Automobile Show and Congress Hotel, January 26-February 2.

DE SOTO MOTOR CORPORATION (Division of Chrysler Corporation), Detroit, Michigan

History of De Soto

The prewar years of Chrysler's oft-overlooked De Soto division

BY JEFF KOCH • IMAGES COURTESY OF CHRYSLER CORPORATION

Poor De Soto—the go-along-to-get-along middle child of Chrysler's lineup. It started out as a Plymouth with more gumption, competed with its adopted sibling Dodge for attention, and allowed its individuality to shine in the Airflow days, only to wither back into a life of conformity once that route proved unpopular. De Soto has been gone

nearly 60 years now—and is out of the living memory of a large percentage of American car enthusiasts, but that doesn't make the cars the company produced any less interesting today. And its prewar models, which are the focus of this story, were especially fascinating.

By 1928, just ahead of the Depression, Chrysler Corporation had a full-fledged multi-tiered automotive family: Chrysler on top, Plymouth to compete with Ford and Chevrolet in the

low-priced field, and a pair of middle-market brands—Dodge and De Soto. The presence of two sister nameplates fighting for the same slice of the market wouldn't seem to make a lot of sense at first glance. Consider: Dodge was a strong seller by 1920, the year that brothers John and Horace Dodge both died. The Dodge company was sold to investment bankers Dillon, Read & Co. in 1925 for \$146 million—the single largest cash deal in history at the time. Chrysler was interested in acquiring Dodge—in no small part for access to its facilities, factories, and dealer body—but was rejected. At that point, Dillon, Read still dreamed of merging Dodge, Packard, Hudson, and Briggs. But Dodge's sales were tanking, a move from four-cylinder to six-cylinder cars hadn't gone well, and in 1927 Dodge killed the Fours

outright, replacing them with a lower-line Six. By the spring of 1928, Dillon, Read started talks with Chrysler—the only viable buyer—and sold Dodge to Chrysler late that summer.

This, it has long been rumored, is why De Soto was created in the first place, to fill the space between Plymouth and Chrysler when Dodge was out of reach. In May 1928, as Chrysler's talks with Dodge continued, the *Detroit Free Press* announced Chrysler's intention to build a new marque—De Soto—with a six-cylinder

engine within the next quarter of the year. More than 500 dealers signed up to become distributors of the new mid-priced brand, with another 1,000 dealers joining them by the end of the year. Production started in July of 1928, and De Soto set a record: 81,065 cars in its first 12 months—a record that stood for nearly three decades. Dodge, which started with similar pricing to De Soto, was brought in as part of the company by the end of August that year; Dodge offered more wheelbases, series, and engines to choose from, and was positioned above De Soto in Chrysler's hierarchy.

The De Soto marque was named for explorer Hernando De Soto, who led Europe's first expedition deep into America, covering more territory than any other explorer of the period (including parts of what are now Florida, Georgia, the Carolinas, Alabama, Tennessee, Arkansas, Oklahoma, and Texas; his name is attached to

→→→→→ De SOTO ←←←←←
STRAIGHT EIGHT
CHRYSLER MOTORS PRODUCT

Convertible Coupe
with top folded and windows raised

There is something magnetic about genuine quality. Everyone has an instinctive, inborn yearning for fine possessions. It is man's ambition to move in a cultured environment, to live in a fine home and to own a fine motor car. Thinking people have discovered that it no longer requires wealth or extravagance to enjoy the best in life. Possessions of true quality are not always expensive. The truth of this is illustrated most forcibly in the motor car realm by the new Chrysler-built De Soto Straight Eight—a car of superb quality and yet at a low price.

→→→→→ \$965 ←←←←←
AND UP, F. O. B. FACTORY

WORLD'S LOWEST-PRICED EIGHT

1930

They're *still* Staring!



Even after Ten Months in the Spotlight . . .
DeSoto makes them Stop . . . Look . . . and Envy!

ANY CAR can get a hand the first time it rolls down the street. But you'll agree it takes real smartness to keep eyes turning months after January Motor Shows are past and forgotten. DeSoto has done just that!

Nine months ago we said, "Watch DeSoto start a new vogue. Watch it catch the eye and win the heart of smart America." And did it? You know the answer. It has jumped from 14th place in the industry to eighth place . . . during a year of careful buying!

DeSoto's different . . . but it "wears well." DeSoto is

daring . . . but it keeps its flair. Just as the smoothness of Floating Power grows on you. And the thrill of Free Wheeling . . . and Automatic Clutch.

Even the budget-book eyes it admiringly. For DeSoto is sparing of gas. Thrifty with oil. Positively parsimonious when it comes to repairs! The first cost? Just as interesting! Standard models begin at \$675; custom models at \$775, F.O.B. factory. All with Hydraulic Brakes and Safety Steel Bodies. DeSoto Motor Corp., Division of Chrysler Motors, Detroit, Michigan.

DE SOTO SIX - \$675 AND UP
F.O.B. FACTORY

1932

FLORIDA HIGHLIGHTS

SKETCHED IN AND AROUND MIAMI BY FLOYD DAVIS

THERE'S STILL NO EQUAL TO THE MOTORING THRILL OF DE SOTO'S AIRFLOW

TWO YEARS AGO, De Soto introduced the famous Airflow car. Today, its scientific weight distribution . . . equalized springing . . . seating for six . . . are still the most talked-about features in cars. And many are the efforts to copy them.

Spend a few minutes with De Soto's Airflow III. Feel the utter relaxation of travel that's silent, swift and sure. Test the economy of its Gas-Saver Transmission. See its custom-styled interiors . . . the new beauty of its extended front and modern, streamlined trunk. America's lowest-priced Airflow is still years ahead! Sedan or coupe, \$1095, list at factory, Detroit. Special equipment extra. Ask for new 6% Time Payment Plan.

DE SOTO Product of the Chrysler Corporation
Airflow COMPANION CAR TO AIRSTREAM DE SOTO

YACHTSMAN CARTER says of De Soto Airflow III—"Every car should have De Soto's safety . . . genuine hydraulic brakes, steel unit frame-and-body."

1935

Some People can't keep a Secret—



Here's how the News leaked out about the New DeSoto

IT'S hard to keep a good thing secret. Somebody slips the news to somebody else . . . and right away it's gossip with almost everybody!

We didn't intend to announce our new DeSoto until January. But the minute our dealers spotted the new models, they got all excited. They urged us to start shipping cars! They wanted to be all ready with a good supply when the formal announcement was made.

We thought it was clearly understood there was to be no peeking until the January Motor Shows. We shipped out several thousand cars . . . all in the deepest secrecy, of course. But when they arrived at the showrooms, somebody weakened.

DeSoto dealers were too tickled with what they had to keep quiet. They all tried to show someone the wonderful smart-

ness of the new models . . . had to brag a little about the new prices. So someone told a friend . . . and that friend told another friend . . . and so on.

Well, it's too bad we couldn't save our surprise for the Motor Shows next month. But there's nothing much we can do about it now. The news is out—your dealer has cars—and that's that! DeSoto Motor Corp., Division of Chrysler Motors.

AMERICA'S SMARTEST LOW-PRICED CAR

1933

locations all over the Southeast). De Soto's travels contributed greatly to European knowledge of the New World; presumably it was the idea of such wide-ranging travel, intrepid adventure, and pioneering spirit that inspired the Chrysler brain trust to name their car for ol' Hernando.

Starting at \$845, De Soto's debut model, known informally as the K-series, rode on a 109.8-inch-wheelbase chassis powered by a 55-hp, 174.9-cubic-inch straight-six. Chrysler trickled down some of its famed engineering prowess to the lower-line model, including Lockheed hydraulic brakes and an oil filter. All De Sotos offered a standard automatic windshield wiper, ignition lock, brake lamp, full instrumentation, steering hub controls for headlamps, and tool kit with grease gun.

Following the Spanish heritage of De Soto's namesake, the early model names were also Spanish. The Faeton (phaeton) took on an alternative spelling, as did the Coupe Business (business coupe). There was a sedan called Sedan—a name that translates across multiple tongues. There were *de lujo*, or deluxe, Coupe and Sedan versions. The five-passenger two-door sedan was called Coche (or "car"); the Roadster Espanol shouldn't need a translation.

For 1930, De Soto dropped all of the pretentious falso-Spanish naming, and launched the De Soto Eight, also known as the CF. The 207.7-cu.in. straight-eight put out 70 hp, and rode on a 114-inch wheelbase. "The world's lowest-priced Straight Eight" started at \$965. The CF launched simultaneously with the eight-cylinder Dodge, though the Dodge's engine had a 1/4-inch-longer stroke and five more horsepower. Later in 1930, De Soto replaced its original K-series six-cylinder model with the new CK-series, featuring a 109-inch wheelbase and a 60-hp 189.8-cu.in. straight-six—both shared with the Dodge Model DD. The CK started at \$810, but Dodge's similar DD line tripled the CK's sales.

By 1931, the Depression was in full swing, but De Soto was still trying. In January of that year, De Soto reworked its entire lineup. The

You'll get a New Thrill

BENEATH THE SPARKLING BEAUTY OF THE '695' DE SOTO, THERE'S PERFORMANCE WORDS CANNOT DESCRIBE



Save with De Soto's Gas-Saver Transmission, Safety-Steel

Body and Genuine Hydraulic Brakes

IF YOU CAN STAND to be a Great First in your life? If you begin to take them all for granted? Then it's time you become acquainted with the new De Soto. You get a hint of something extraordinary the instant you see the flash of its solitary line...the sparkle of its chromed-steel grille.

Your wonder grows when you step inside. Examine it look by look. The polished beauty of the instrument panel with its chromed-dial dials. The luxurious ease of extending French self condition. The exquisite pleasing and talking of the door panel. The infinite care lavished on each tiny detail...every appointment you can possibly think of in a car!

Then take the wheel and go exploring. Try to get a "view" out of the roughest road in town. Bumps and ruts are smoothed in the sight of the "Aeroflow" De Soto.

Then give the Soto's 80 horses the gas. Find extra evidence that makes other cars seem slow and cumbersome... proves that none you ever the roughest hills. Try the brakes; they are genuine hydraulics; money can buy no better.

Now for a final surprise! Usually a penalty is attached

to making a big, custom car...to heavy gasoline bills. But De Soto is different. There are savings up to 23 miles a gallon with the new Gas-Saver Transmission! Nothing like that economical for a car on big and general!

As for engineering, it's enough to say that De Soto is built by Chrysler Motors.

Nowhere else in the low-price field...not in any price field...will you find the genuine thrill that De Soto gives you. Drive it today! Call your nearest De Soto dealer.



De Soto is a big car...over 200 inches overall...with 60 more cubic inches, fuel room and head room than most cars available. You'll find new comfort in the high-back seats.

As with the beauty in the super-strength of a safety-steel body. This streamlined steel body is strong enough to keep the body and chassis the same size locked inside.

ONLY IN DE SOTO... ALL THESE FEATURES

- 14 Rubber Isolators
- 80 Horsepower
- 8-Speed Transmission
- Hydraulic Brakes
- Seamless Steel Top
- Wind-Deflector
- Self-Conditioning Seats
- Chromed-Dial Dials
- French Self-Conditioning
- 100-Point Inspection
- 100-Point Inspection
- 100-Point Inspection

Ask for the New Official Chrysler Motor Commercial Credit Co. 6% rate payable in 12 months. De Soto is a new car... Ask for the Official Commercial Credit Co. Finance Plan. De Soto... product of Chrysler Corp.

\$695

DE SOTO

COMPANION TO THE DE SOTO AIRFLOW III

PRODUCT OF THE CHRYSLER CORPORATION

1936

new six-cylinder SA had a new 205.3-cu.in. Six in the 109-inch chassis, while styling was tweaked gently, and the eight-cylinder line, known internally as CF, took on Dodge's 220.7-cu.in. straight-eight. With sales around 32,000 for 1930-'31, the halcyon days of the 1928 debut must have seemed very far away.

January of 1932 saw De Soto reinvent itself with a single new model, the Model SC. The SA six-cylinder was stroked to 211.5 cubic inches for 75 hp, dropped into a new 112.4-inch-wheelbase chassis (121 inches for the seven-passenger sedan), and secured via Plymouth's recently developed "Floating Power" rubber engine mounts. Furthermore, De Sotos no longer had shared styling cues: The SC was its own car. The eight-cylinder CF model was dropped, and De Soto wouldn't have another eight-cylinder in its line until the early 1950s. The SC was available in seven Standard body styles (starting at just \$675) and five Customs, plus a chassis for coachbuilders. Custom models added body-colored fenders, dual wipers and taillamps, a cigar lighter, and more for between \$60 and \$100.

The SC's replacement, called SD, launched in December 1932. A 2-inch-longer wheelbase, a body-color grille said to be inspired by Miller racing cars, and body lines with a nod toward the Streamline Moderne trend all came along with the SD. Prices were cut: A standard sedan started at \$665. Even so, sales remained a languid 23,000. The SD's gentle aero touches were not an accident. Chrysler's wind-tunnel engineers discovered that cars of the day were 30-percent more aerodynamic when the body was reversed. In a publicity stunt, driver Harry Hartz (who had amassed five top-five finishes at Indianapolis, including a trio of second places) drove a De Soto backwards across the country. Well, De Soto engineers reversed the controls and the ring gear, and Hartz used the rear window as a windscreen. But it was splashed all over ads of the period, and seemingly laid the groundwork for the future.

A GREAT NEW CAR

AT AN IRRESISTIBLE NEW LOW PRICE

FACTS ABOUT THE BRILLIANT NEW DE SOTO

- 1 BODY "FLOATS" ON 14 RUBBER ISOLATORS.
- 2 NEW, HIGHER COMPRESSION ENGINE... 93 H. P. ... FINER PERFORMANCE ON LESS FUEL.
- 3 FIRST COMPLETELY SOUND-PROOFED CAR.
- 4 FIRST SAFETY INTERIOR! SAFETY-STEEL BODY, ONE-PIECE SEAMLESS STEEL TOP, HYDRAULIC BRAKES.
- 5 "CITY RIDE" ON ANY ROAD... FOUR "AERO" HYDRAULIC DOUBLE-ACTING SHOCK-ABSORBERS.
- 6 NO "WIND-WANDER" EVEN IN A CROSS GALE... NO EDGING-OFF IN RUTS OR GRAVEL.
- 7 NEW DIMENSIONS... 199 INCHES LONG... ROOM FOR SIX... 20% MORE LUGGAGE SPACE.

You'll see it on the road... sometimes even half after miles of the most relaxed travel you've ever known. You see it in the mirror... you see it in the gold block letters, in the name De Soto. A new De Soto... at a new, low price, frankly competing in the low-price field!

Go see it for the sheer pleasure of knowing a great, new car. Stop inside... there's room for six. Skin over with after miles of the most relaxed travel you've ever known. You see sound-proofing with a whisper, and be heard. Marvel at the 1200 cubic inches of human nerves, eyes, ears, muscles.

Fast and figures... 87 features... price it's a new car! Ask for the Official Commercial Credit Co. Finance Plan. De Soto... product of Chrysler Corp.

DE SOTO SAVES YOU MONEY

Lean, Steel Floor for New Riders

New Safety Interior

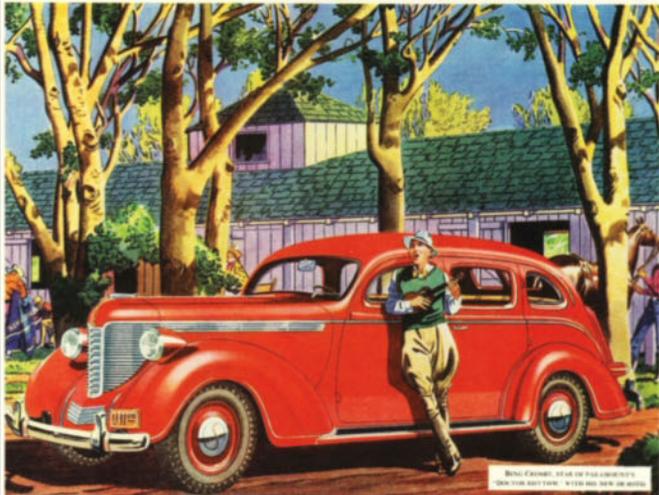
Protective Padding over Rear Seats

Instrument Panel in Safety-Steel

80-Point and 100-Point Inspections

1937

BING CROSBY SINGS HIS NEW DESOTO'S PRAISES



Thousands who drive De Soto agree with Bing Crosby...This big car costs Less to Buy...Less to Run...Saves Real Money!



IT'S AMERICA'S SMARTEST LOW-PRICED CAR

1. Improved V-8, 40 "Discovery" Engines.
2. Safety-Steel Body.
3. Rigger-Construction Hydraulic Brakes.
4. Automatic Safety Steering.
5. Airplane-type Shock-absorbers.

PUNNIES FROM HEAVEN! I'll save dollars with De Soto! says Bing. "I picked this car for its beauty and bigness—but I found that you save on De Soto's low FIRST COST—and every mile you drive. That sets auto men!"

It's a fact that today De Soto gives better VALUE... makes your car dollar go farther. You get dozens of FINE-CAR advantages—airplane-type shock-absorbers... "lightning-fast" pick-up... effortless handling... bigger, GENUINE hydraulic brakes... a new "conditioned" ride. Yes, thanks to Chrysler Corporation engineering, this Big car costs less to BUY...less to RUN!

See this great De Soto's VALUE—save you real money! De Soto's Division of Chrysler Corporation, Detroit, Michigan.

SEE YOUR DE SOTO DEALER

FOR A GREAT CAR, FINE SERVICE AND A SQUARE DEAL

Imagine such Luxury AT LOW PRICE!



These Great Features Cost Nothing Extra in the Big New De Soto

1. WIDE-ANGLE SAFETY-STEERING—Clear better road lighting... driver's seat's width.
2. SHOCK-RESISTING SHOCK-ABSORBERS—No shock jolts. Double feel of grip.
3. SAFETY-STEERING—Safe. Wide Steer. Room for six big people.
4. SAFETY-STEERING—Blended on steering post. No floor obstruction. More leg room. Easier, smoother shifting.
5. FINE-NEW WHEELBASE—Greatly increased stability. Rigger-Construction. Standard Electric Wheellock W. gear.
6. NEW, WIDE-ANGLE BODY—No flexing. 1. Use with finger-tip pressure.
7. SAFETY-STEERING—Light down gear, center and no speed change.
8. SAFETY-STEERING—Double-acting, low pressure. Swallow the bumps... smooth and tough roads.
9. SAFETY-STEERING—Blended on steering post. No floor obstruction. More leg room. Easier, smoother shifting.
10. SAFETY-STEERING—Vital engine parts have the superior construction of super-Standard engines, giving longer life.

There's no need for you to do without the modern improvements in automobile design and comfort. Think of it! In De Soto, you get the lightness, beauty and performance you want at the low price you want to pay!

You get Streamline Styling... luxurious interior... Safe Wide Steer... big Lounge Locker... new, easy Handy-Shift... Chrysler Corporation engineering! You get extra luxury today... added extra value!

Get the facts on De Soto's great value and low price! See your dealer today. He knows Division of Chrysler Corporation, Detroit, Michigan.

Visit the Chrysler Corporation exhibits at the New York and New York State.

New DeSoto

ABSOLUTELY THE MOST BEAUTIFUL LOW-PRICED CAR IN AMERICA

1938

As the SD launched, the firm swapped De Soto's position with Dodge in the corporate hierarchy. Dodge was now slotted between Plymouth and De Soto, with De Soto below Chrysler; dealerships were organized as Chrysler-Plymouth or De Soto-Dodge. The gambit was meant to boost Dodge sales while De Soto, now a near-luxury marque, felt free to find its way, experiment with styling, and make itself stand out from the competition.

Everything changed for 1934 when Chrysler's revolutionary Airflow launched. Firsts included a space-frame-type body, an engine mounted atop (rather than behind) the front axle, a passenger compartment contained entirely between the axles rather than atop them, and styling designed to slice through the wind rather than fight it. A dealer training film suggested that the Airflow was "not hogtied to engineering tradition or artistic fetishes." It was a streamlined masterpiece: flowing aerodynamic lines replaced hard angles, skirts were inserted into rear wheel openings, front fenders were blended into the body, and headlamps were cleanly integrated. The upright radiator grille was banished, with a wider nose incorporating headlamps in its place. The steel body itself, minus hood, doors, and trunk, was welded into a single structure, making for a body 40 times more rigid than previous.

By moving the engine forward, the rest of the passenger cabin could move up a whopping 20 inches, allowing weight distribution to approach the ideal 50/50 ratio. This, in turn, allowed for a softer rear suspension, which improved ride and handling as there was less rebound motion transferred from the suspension through the cabin. Passengers, who were seated lower despite the Airflow's taller body, could ride more comfortably over the rough roads of the day, and could enter and exit more easily, too. In the industry's first two-row, six-seat interior, and with an ergonomically placed steering wheel and excellent ventilation throughout the cabin, the driver was also more comfortable. De Soto had only a 115.5-inch-wheelbase version for its shared dealerships with Dodge, with a 100-hp

1939

241.5-cu.in. Six the only engine. Neither Dodge nor Plymouth received the Airflow; with a companion marque in the same store, they really didn't need it.

Airflow ended up being deeply influential—its engineering principles were widely adopted in the years and decades to come. Even Toyota copied the Airflow for its first-ever car, the AA of 1936. But there was one problem: Buyers stayed away in droves. For 1934, De Soto sold just 13,490 Airflows—an alarming 47-percent drop from an already-tepid 1933 sales year, taking De Soto from 10th to 13th place in the sales race. For 1934, the only De Soto you could buy was an Airflow; good thing dealers sold seven Dodges for every De Soto that year.

De Soto needed to do something, and quick. That something was the Airstream, a companion series to the Airflow. The 1935 Airstream was styled by Ray Dietrich, from the LeBaron coachworks, who joined Chrysler's design staff in 1934. Drawing on the 1935 Dodge and Plymouth coupe styling, they split the difference between Airflow-radical and a more conventional shape on a 116-inch wheelbase, just half an inch longer than the Airflow's. While Airflow sales slumped further in 1935, Airstream sales were robust enough to double De Soto's 1935 overall sales. For 1936, Chrysler expanded the number of Airstream models available: four DeLuxe and nine Custom models. Airstreams now rode Chrysler's 118-inch wheelbase, save for some high-zoot sedans on a 130-inch wheelbase. The Airflow, meanwhile, was pitched as the Airflow III, garnering barely 5,000 sales between the remaining coupe and sedan body styles. Calendar-year production rose to 52,789. The Airflow was put out of its misery at De Soto after a short 1936 year. One of the lessons management took away from its Airflow adventure: radical styling wasn't going to win any buyers. Not until Virgil Exner's "Forward Look" cars of the 1950s would Chrysler make a strong styling statement again.

For 1937, the Airstream name disappeared, 2 inches were sectioned out of the wheelbase (save for long sedans, which grew to 133 inches), and the engine was downgraded to a 228.1-cu.in.

"DeSoto fits our Family Budget!"



**MUCH BIGGER, MORE POWERFUL
YET PRICED AS LOW AS \$845***

PRICES \$20 TO \$48
LOWER THAN LAST YEAR



Easy, fast shifting. Gearshift mounted on the steering post—out of your way! You shift gears with a flick of the wrist.

YES, De Soto is the *ideal* Family Car—because it has every single feature a family wants...needs.

A new 122 $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch wheelbase—luxurious room for *six grown* people. Seats are wider...more head and leg room. Rear doors full width at bottom...for easy entrance or exit!

100-horsepower engine gives you a new, thrilling performance. But operating costs are low!

See De Soto—today. Take the family out for a drive in it. They'll love it...and you'll like its *New Low Price!* DE SOTO DIVISION OF CHRYSLER CORPORATION, Detroit, Mich.

MAJOR BOWES, C. B. S., THURS., 9-10 P. M., E. S. T.

A PRODUCT OF THE
CHRYSLER CORPORATION

DE SOTO

*DE LUXE COUPE	DE LUXE SEDAN
\$845	\$905

Delivered at Detroit, Michigan. Federal taxes included. Transportation, state and local taxes, if any, extra.

Insist on These Features in Your Next Car!

FLOATING RIDE... now all passengers ride smoothly "cradled" between front and rear axles.

BIGGER WINDOW AREA... greater vision... Safety Glass all around... Sealed Beam Headlights—50% to 65% better road light!

ADVANCED STYLING... De Soto's back is as beautiful as the front! Higher resale value.

SAFETY-SIGNAL SPEEDOMETER shows green, amber, or warning red as your driving speed increases.

The Great American Family Car

Six with 93 hp. Body shells were all-new too, though they didn't look significantly different than the previous season's Airstream. Sales rebounded to more than 81,775, and De Soto rose to 12th in the industry, ahead of Nash for the first time since 1933.

Model year 1938 marked De Soto's 10th anniversary. Changes were minimal: A new optional higher-compression engine made 100 horsepower, and the chassis was massaged to 119 inches between the wheel centers. To celebrate, the marque looked to the world of entertainment to help them get the word out on what was essentially a carryover car. Jack Dempsey, Eddie Cantor, Bing Crosby, Warner Oland (of Charlie Chan fame), Lowell Thomas, Janet Gaynor, Major Bowes, and even Robert Ripley (believe it or not!) appeared

in color print ads. In these, the sedan was always bright red (not the darker hue found on De Soto's sparse paint chart), the celebrity always posed at the driver's door of a front three-quarter illustration of the car. Even with the star-powered assistance, De Soto couldn't quite touch 39,000 sales.

De Soto pulled out all the stops on the 1939 model—the one that ad copy would call the "Hollywood Style" De Soto. The new look wasn't really far off of the Airflow half a decade earlier—headlamps were now solidly encased within the fenders, and sedans were now full fastback models, with bustleback trunks replaced by aero-flush rear decks. The rest of Detroit had caught up to the Airflow, stylistically; what once was adventurously ungainly had proven its worth over time, as other car companies adopted its concepts. The 1939 De Soto's grille was extraordinary, taking up the bulk of the peaked nose as well as the space between the headlamps. The wheelbase remained at 119 inches (seven-passenger sedans were 136 inches), with a new double-drop X-girder frame underpinning the style. Handy-Shift moved the shifter from the floor ("no more Wobble-Stick!" claimed the brochure) to the steering column; it controlled a new "Synchro-Silent" three-speed with optional overdrive. Independent front suspension offered greater control and a smoother ride. A total of 54,449 De Sotos were built for the 1939 model year.

Changes to the 1940 model involved toning down the 1939's brightwork and switching to new federally mandated round sealed-beam headlamps—said to be 50 to 65 percent brighter than the 1939-style headlamps, according to period ads. The wheelbase grew again, to 122.5 inches, and rear windows were now a single piece of glass. The new All-Weather Air Control system allowed

1941

as the Simplimatic name suggested, made motoring far easier. Shared with Chrysler, Simplimatic was part of the De Soto lineup clear through 1953. De Soto leapt to 10th place overall, with a division-record 97,000 units for the year.

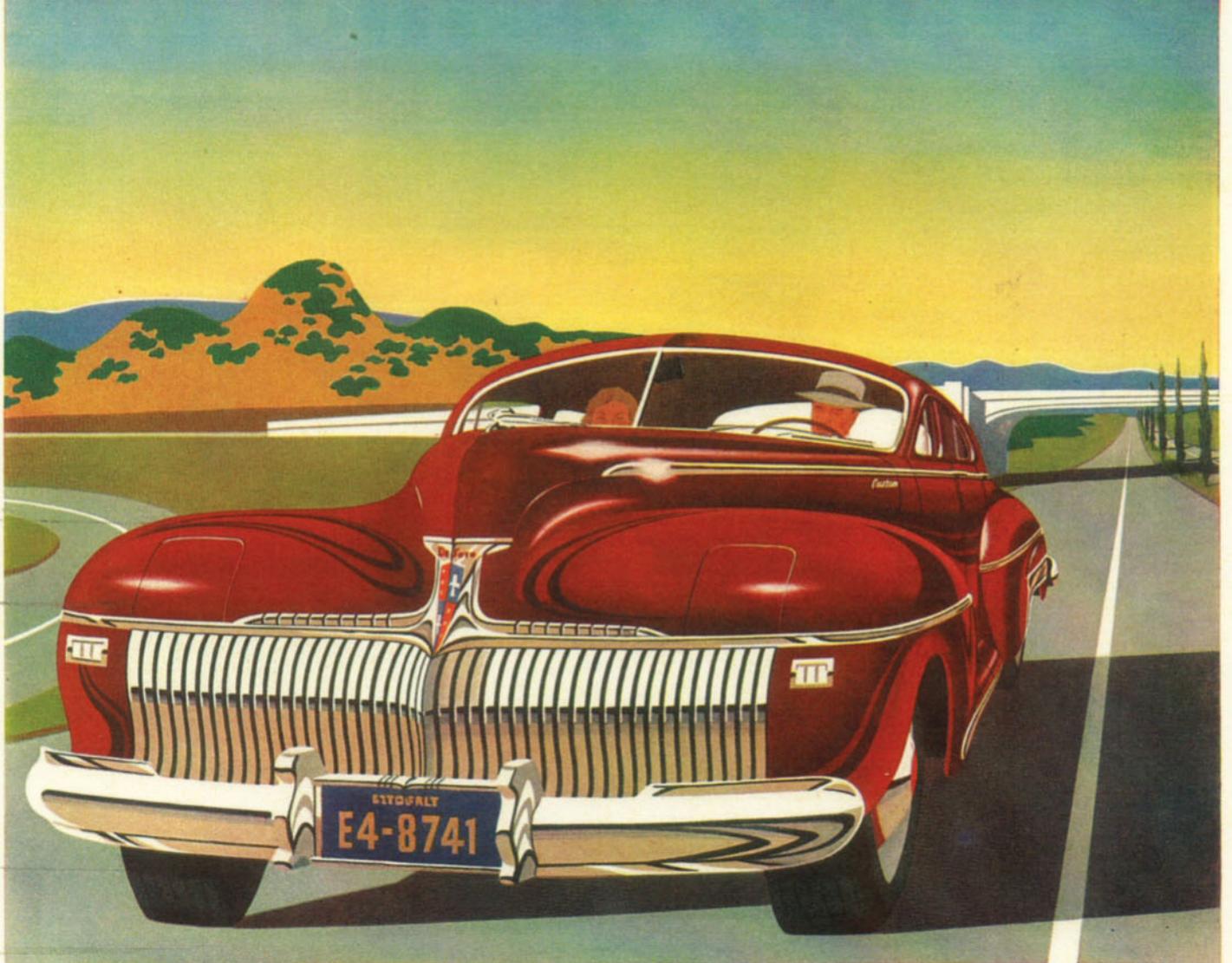
The 1942 De Soto's biggest feature was a new front-end design, featuring a full-width waterfall grille and hideaway headlamps the division called Airfoil Lights. Power was bumped to 115 hp, thanks to an overbore of the sturdy straight-six that displaced 236.6 cubic inches. The facelifted 1942 De Soto was destined to have a short shelf life. With America entering WWII on December 8, 1941, De Soto production crept to a halt on February 9, 1942. Fewer than 25,000 1942 De Sotos were built in the shortened production year. Once car production ceased, De Soto went to war. The factory built Martin B-26 Marauder fuselages, B-29 Superfortress noses, Navy Helldiver wings, and parts for both Sherman tanks and Bofors anti-aircraft weapons.

De Soto was a fighter by necessity. Whether it was for attention in the marketplace or against early perceptions as an upscale Plymouth, diminished expectations against other brands in the Chrysler family, the sales calamity of the Airflow, or WWII calling a halt on play just as De Soto got its magic back again, De Soto always had an uphill battle. Today, prewar De Sotos—examples from the marque's first 15 years of life—make for distinctive motoring. Brimming with style and technological advancements, yet sharing enough components with other Chrysler products that wear parts can still be located, a prewar De Soto is a car of particular interest for the active owner-driver—a car you don't see every day, one that's a cut above the fray, and one that even now can be driven and enjoyed without worry. 🐾

more fresh air, for greater passenger comfort. Engines, still 221.8 cubic inches, were now rated at 100 horsepower. Advertising shifted from Hollywood to the home, explaining how De Soto made an ideal family car. It worked. Sales around 65,600 looked good, considering the division's recent past, and may have been better had Chrysler not suffered a labor strike that year.

Model year 1941 was another all-new year for De Soto. New "Rocket" bodies (a name used by De Soto nearly a decade before Oldsmobile did) featured what would become a De Soto styling staple: the waterfall grille, stacked with tightly arranged chromed vertical bars. Just as important, a semi-automatic transmission called Simplimatic arrived on the De Soto option list, nearly eliminating the need for a clutch and,

SMARTEST ON THE ROAD



Styled to Stand Out — Built to Stand Up!

It's your New De Soto—with New
Airfoil Lights—Personalized
Interiors—New *Fluid Drive
and Simpli-Matic Transmission—
New 115-Horsepower Engine!

*Available at moderate additional cost.

HERE'S THE CAR that sets the style for others to follow—a car that's years ahead in looks and performance.

Note the unbroken sweep of De Soto's front fenders. New Airfoil Lights are concealed behind steel panels—a handy instrument panel control lifts the lids and turns on the lights at night!

Another exclusive note—De Soto's interiors are personalized to taste. You can have fine broadcloth, soft pile fabric or smart leather and whipcord in a wide choice of colors and you can choose from 13 exterior color combinations.

As for performance—a new Powermaster Engine boosts De Soto's horsepower

to 115! Combine it with new *Fluid Drive and Simpli-Matic Transmission, and you have *No-Shift Driving at its best!*

This year of all years, drive this De Soto. It's more economical than ever! De Soto Division of Chrysler Corporation, Detroit, Michigan. *Prices and specifications subject to change without notice.*

Hear Major Bowes, C.B.S., Thurs., 9-10 P.M., E.S.T.

SOME DEFENSE PRODUCTS OF CHRYSLER CORPORATION

Tanks Anti-Aircraft Cannons • Reconnaissance Cars Command Cars • Weapon Carriers Troop Transports Ambulances Tent Heaters Field Kitchens Cantonment Furnaces Marine Engines Industrial Engines.

*FLUID DRIVE DE SOTO

Airfoil Amazement

*De Soto's new-for-1942 design was both
advanced and finely crafted*

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY
BY RICHARD LENTINELLO







New rocket bodies, new personalized interiors, concealed running boards, and new airfoil lights! It's a car with the look of tomorrow...new today to make your dollars buy more in style—in performance," so read De Soto's ad copy touting the advanced styling of its new 1942 models. The company was immensely proud of the automobile it had created, with a look that really stood out from all the other cars on the road.

The 1942 De Sotos began being manufactured in August 1941, but due to the outbreak of World War II, the line was shut down the following February. With not even a full six months of production, just 24,771 De Sotos were built for the 1942 model year. Compared to the 99,999 cars that rolled out of the plant the year before, it's no wonder why so few 1942 De Sotos are seen today, and why they are highly coveted among De Soto enthusiasts and collectors alike.

Even during this production-short year, De Soto still offered two distinct lines—the De Luxe and Custom—and, like all the other major auto manufacturers, it did so in various body styles, totaling 16 different models. There were two- and four-door models, sedans and coupes, Town Sedans and Convertible Coupes. Each line also had a long-wheelbase sedan and limousine, which in De Luxe trim formed the foundation for

the ever-popular De Soto taxi cabs, thanks to their ability to accommodate seven adults with plenty of leg room. In fact, so popular was the 1942 De Soto taxi that it was featured in many Hollywood movies including *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty*, *Saboteur*, and *Pollock*.

The one highly distinctive exterior styling element that has made the 1942 De Soto such a matchless design is its signature hidden headlamps. This was quite advanced for the time, which is why De Soto proudly touted it in magazine ads and on postcards with the slogan, "Out of sight except at night!" While the limited-production Cord 810 preceded the De Soto with hidden headlamps, the De Soto has long been considered to be the first mass-produced automobile to incorporate such an advanced feature. The two metal flaps that cover the headlamps are mechanically activated by the driver via a plastic pistol-style lever from inside the car. By pulling on the lever, a metal rod is employed to lift and retract each of the flaps, thus exposing the headlamps.

Besides its hidden headlamps, the expansive grille is another distinctive feature that sets the 1942 De Soto apart from all other models. Running nearly the full width of the front end, the grille is made up of 37 individual vertical bars. Adding to the grille's



The instrument panel is a feast for the eyes. It's one of the finest-crafted and nicest-detailed dashboards ever seen in an American production car. All the necessary gauges are included; the vertical radio sits on the left side of the chrome speaker grille, with a clock on the right.



alluring appeal is a rather large decorative piece of chrome-plated trim that rises up to where the hood begins. This trim is made up of two pieces of metal, but the seam is concealed behind the De Soto emblem, leading the eye to believe that it's a single unit. The name "DE SOTO" is spelled out in red at the top, which matches the 18 individual red hash marks below. There are also two small bumperettes atop the bumper, and while they offer only minimal protection, they don't obscure the beauty that makes this unique grille such a striking piece of automotive sculpture. This whole assembly is truly a work of art.

Other interesting and fairly unique features include a cigarette case that's built into the steering wheel and the car's advanced radio. As stated in the De Soto brochure, "...the chic new Fifth Avenue Steering Wheel 'hands' a cigarette to you at the flip of a convenient lever." The pushbutton radio is a vertical unit residing near the center of the dash closest to

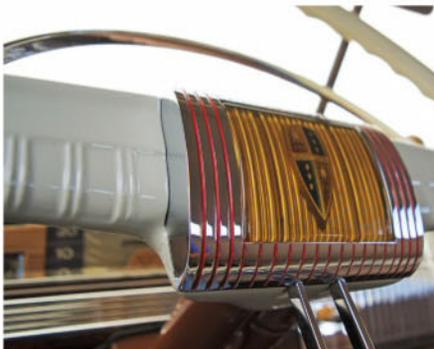


Colorful De Soto brochure proudly touts the car's futuristic look.

the driver. Featuring eight tubes, it was said by De Soto to offer "... high selectivity, long range, beautiful tone. It's one of the finest automobile radios made." Adding to the car's advanced design is an electric antenna, and there's even convenient lighting for the floors, the ash tray, and the glovebox to help aid in passenger comfort when driving at night.

Below the De Soto's long, shapely hood resides a straight-six flathead engine that displaces 236.7 cubic inches. With a compression ratio of 6.6:1, a

single-barrel Carter carburetor, solid valve lifters, and a four-main-bearing crankshaft, it develops 115 horsepower at 3,800 rpm; torque maxes out at 190 lb-ft at a really low 1,600 rpm, thanks to the crankshaft's long 4.25-inch stroke. A relatively low 3.91:1 rear axle ratio provides some helpful off-the-line grunt for the sizeable four-door sedan that weighs in at 3,315 pounds. While that may



Panel in the center of the steering wheel (left) opens to reveal cigarette stash. Comfort Master heater case (center) has attractive hammertone finish, and sits below dash on the passenger side. Special "FLUID DRIVE" emblem fixed to decorative glovebox door.



not seem as heavy as many modern automobiles, keep in mind that its six-cylinder engine produces only one horsepower for every 28.8 pounds it has to move.

One of the hallmark features of this prewar De Soto is its transmission, dubbed Simplimatic. As the automaker's brochure states, its "Another great Chrysler Corporation engineering achievement brought to you by De Soto...Fluid Drive with Simplimatic transmission gives you—for all normal driving—automatic shifting. Now you can drive all day without shifting. It's a thrilling new experience! The most important driving development in years!

"For all normal driving—you use just your accelerator and brake—De Soto does the rest. You can start, stop...travel cross-country or in city traffic without shifting or declutching."

The Simplimatic transmission features two forward gear ranges. The low range—first and second gears—are used for quicker starts and heavy pulling, while the high range—third and fourth gears—are for normal acceleration and cruising speeds. However, there was a "clutch" pedal, so to speak, which was used to select reverse gear or a forward range. The De Soto copy informed potential buyers: "To start you just step on the gas—and go! To stop—take your foot off the accelerator, apply your brakes. Don't touch your clutch or gearshift." So, as long as you didn't need to use reverse, a driver would be able to drive around throughout the day without shifting. But because this transmission is controlled by engine vacuum, its performance, especially off the line, can be considered quite sluggish.

Our spectacular feature car is one of only 6,463 Model S-10 De Luxe four-door sedans produced for the 1942 model year. Its condition is absolutely superb, and it very well may be the best of its kind anywhere in the world. Having been subjected to a lengthy, body-off restoration that lasted nearly 18 months, every

inch of this handsome sedan has been restored to perfection, and, most important, accurately. No detail has been overlooked.

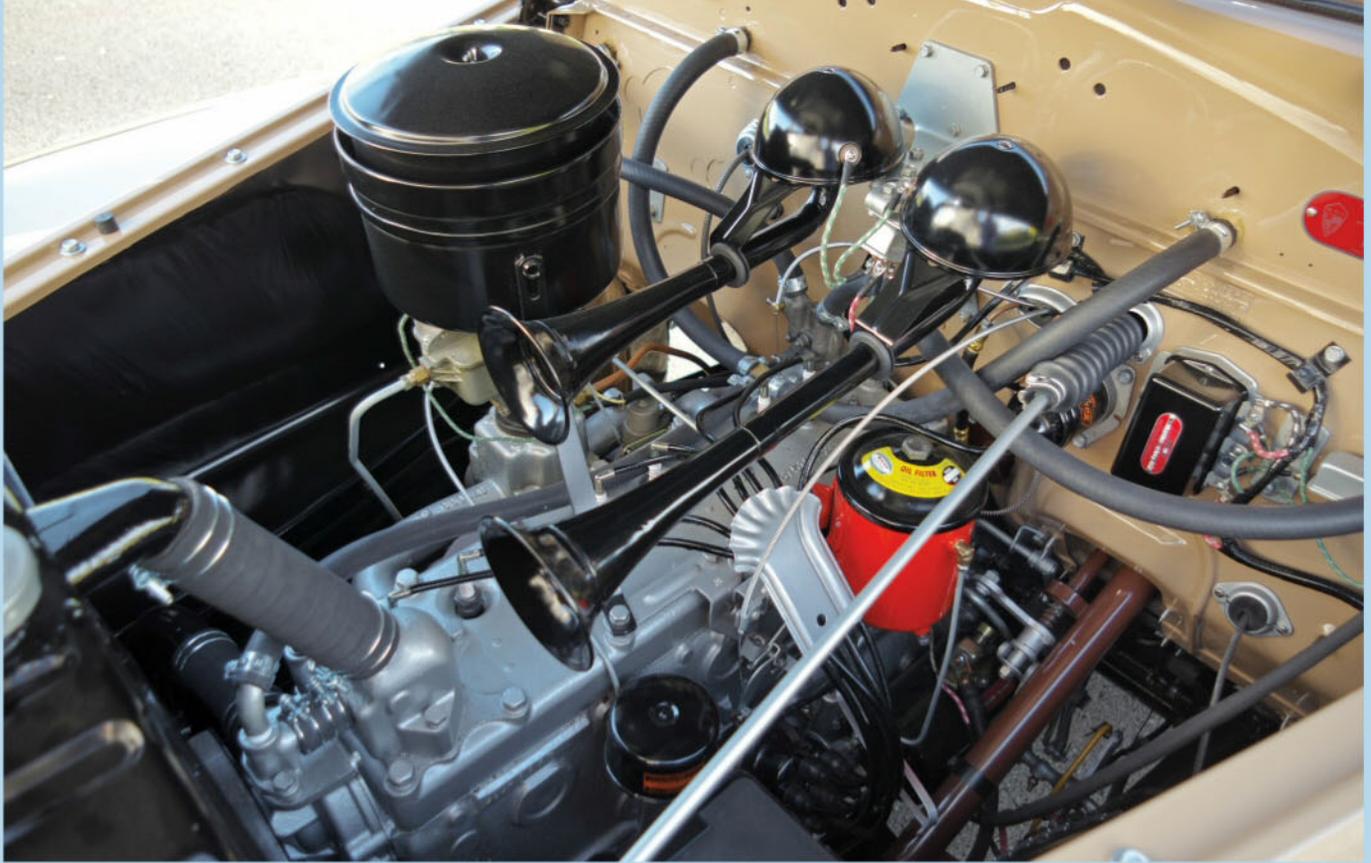
Riding on the standard-length 121.5-inch wheelbase, it has been finished in its original color scheme of Palomino Beige body with a Navajo Brown roof. It's one of many late prewar cars of the NB Center for American Automotive Heritage, which is located in Allentown, Pennsylvania. This private collection is the vision of owner Nicola Bulgari, a man who is extremely passionate about American cars, especially those of the 1930s, '40s, and early '50s. And it is Mr. Bulgari's quest to save and restore those American cars that most other collectors have forgotten about, mainly sedans, base-model coupes, and other low-line models. These are the real models that put Detroit on the map.

Keith Flickinger is the man responsible for resurrecting this De Soto, along with all the other automobiles that are part of the NB Center. As the curator, Keith oversees the Center, including the restoration and maintenance of all the automobiles. His brother, Kris, is the restoration manager who supervised the talented staff of nine restoration technicians who restored the De Soto from its previous poor condition; all told, the NB Center has a staff of 14 individuals, all of whom are dedicated to preserving Detroit's past. When asked what the most difficult aspect of this car's restoration was, Keith quickly replied: "finding parts, considering it was a 1942 automobile with a low production."

Besides being produced in limited numbers, being a one-year-only model made the restoration far more challenging and complicated than the restoration of a multi-year model car. For instance, because very few rubber parts are available for this model, the staff at the NB Center had to cast their own rubber components, such as the bumper bracket rubbers. They also had to cast a new hood ornament, due to the original acrylic one being badly cracked, along with new window-crank bezels, many of the knobs, and the steering wheel. And to ensure that this De Soto was restored to the highest level of factory-correct authenticity, the interior fabric had to be custom manufactured, as the original material was simply no longer available.

As to Mr. Bulgari's thoughts on the styling and design of his 1942 De Soto sedan, he said: "It's unique, like no other. Nobody tried to do anything like this design except De Soto. The detail and design itself was extraordinary and very unusual. It's also a wonderful driving car; however, I'm not a fan of the Fluid Drive, though I understand it was a step towards the future of automatic transmissions. Chrysler, Hudson, and Nash, I feel, were better-engineered cars at this time." 🐾





With its single-barrel Carter carburetor and 6.6:1 compression ratio, the flathead straight-six displaces 236.7 cubic inches and makes 115 horsepower. The firewall plate proudly states "MADE IN U.S.A."





American Ingenuity

Independent-built Tucker for 1948, showcased dreams of postwar America

BY DAVID CONWILL • PHOTOGRAPHY BY RICHARD LENTINELLO

Imagine the disappointment of the postwar car buyer when he discovered that all he could find in showrooms were slightly facelifted automobiles from 1942. Sure, some bodies looked new, like the 1947 Studebaker, the 1948 Hudson, and the offerings of the new Kaiser-Frazer Corporation, but if you lifted the hoods, what you found were the same old conventional mechanical components going back to the start of the Great Depression.

Of course, the savvy suits in Detroit knew that what mattered in the postwar seller's market was quantity, not quality or innovation, but there were many dreamers out there who believed it was time to give the consumer a taste of the future. The foremost

among them a man from Ypsilanti, Michigan, named Preston Tucker.

Tucker's love of automobiles went back to an early age—he learned to drive at age 11 and joined the Lincoln Park, Michigan, police force at age 19, purely out of a desire to pilot the high-



Accessories, like the fitted luggage, helped advertise the Tucker and raise money for production. The ID plate and hand-stamped "44" show that this was the 44th car built. Alex Tremulis helped assemble this one.



performance cars and motorcycles owned by the department. He worked various jobs in and around the automotive industry in Southeast Michigan and eventually moved into sales. He found his true love, however, in the 1930s with a yearly pilgrimage to the Indianapolis 500. It was there he met engineering genius Harry Miller, and the men immediately clicked.

After Miller's bankruptcy in 1933, Tucker persuaded Miller to partner with him and the two men collaborated on the famed Miller-Ford race cars of 1935. The front-drive, V-8-powered Miller-Fords experienced significant teething problems that kept them out of the winner's circle at Indy, but they became well-respected racers in the years afterward. Miller and Tucker continued to be close friends until Miller's death in 1943, but the Miller engineering influence would continue in Tucker's later work.

During the 1940s, Tucker's Ypsilanti Machine and Tool Company produced many experimental designs for the war effort, but his real dream was to produce an automobile. The saga of Tucker's efforts and the fall of the company are well documented elsewhere, but the car on these pages, No. 1044, the 44th built, is a great case study in the passion of the people involved in the Tucker design and its potential.

Car 1044 is both as typical a car as Tucker ever produced and special due to its order of production. As one of the final eight Tucker 48s assembled, it was hand built in the closed factory by loyal Tucker employees including designer Alex Tremulis—imagine if Harley Earl had come in after hours to assemble a few Corvettes. It's also typical due to its pre-production use of parts from other vehicles, things like the Lincoln steering wheel, the Kaiser door buttons, and the Cord transmission.

In fact, despite its futuristic looks and aura, the Tucker 48 harks back to many of the late, lamented Classics of the prewar era. The horizontally opposed O-335 engine was a product of Franklin (it also powered the Bell 47 helicopter that you may recall from the television series *M*A*S*H*) that stopped producing cars in 1934 to focus on aircraft engines. The Cord preselector transmission was a placeholder for an even better transmission that Tucker had intended but that wasn't ready in time for the 50 pilot cars. The involvement of Tremulis, a Cord stylist; Miller, who is credited with passenger-car engineering feats like the front-wheel-drive system also used on Cords; and Eddie Offut, a former Frontenac engineer, are yet further signs that the Tucker is a sort of liminal design bridging the performance aspirations





Radio and all instrumentation crowd behind the Lincoln steering wheel, leaving the passenger's side clear for a crash chamber. Glovebox is integrated into door, and pre-selector shifter sprouts from the steering column.



of the prewar era with the forward-looking philosophies of the immediate postwar years.

Futuristic elements abounded, however, including the rubber-based elastomeric suspension, center headlamp tied to steering inputs, padded dash, and passenger's crash cell. The spacious interior, with its flat floor, is another harbinger of things to come. Interestingly, all that space and the flat floor allow the front and rear seats to interchange—something that also presumably would have saved production costs.

Alas, despite considerable excitement, the public never got to experience the roomy comfort of a Tucker's interior, nor its technical sophistication. With only 51 cars completed, and not all of those surviving, driving or riding in a Tucker is something most will never experience. Thankfully, Howard Kroplick, of East Hills, New York, was not hesitant to bring *Hemmings Classic Car* readers along for the ride in No. 1044.

Howard acquired No. 1044 at the beginning of 2017 at the RM Sotheby's auction in Scottsdale, Arizona. It had only recently resurfaced after over three decades in storage in Ohio, and it was a remarkably low-mileage car, with only 8,000 or so under its belt. It had been repainted twice, however, since its auction sale

in 1950, from its original Andante Green to red in 1951, and to brown in the 1970s.

The 1970s repaint was also accompanied by the installation of a new Tucker engine and Cord transmission, and the re-covering of the original seats with tan velour fabric. Someone along the way also replaced the original suspension with coil springs—almost every Tucker had that conversion, since the rubber suspension components weren't reproduced until quite recently.

"I had a hunch," Howard says, "That the brown paint would keep the price down." But low price or not, Howard did his homework beforehand, including contacting marque experts across the country. One person that was recommended to him was Rob Ida, of Rob Ida Concepts in Morganville, New Jersey. Ida's grandfather had one of the Tucker dealership franchises back in the 1940s, and he has a real enthusiasm for the Tucker 48. On calling Ida's shop, Howard spoke to Rob's father, Bob, who suggested he also get ahold of Sean Tucker—great-grandson of Preston. Sean and his brother Mike are passionate about the family's heritage.

Speaking with Sean confirmed to Howard that No. 1044 was a worthwhile car. With the low mileage and years of storage,



The originally planned low-revving, massive 589-cu.in. engine was replaced early on with a Franklin flat-six engine originally designed for helicopters and significantly reengineered by Tucker to accommodate water cooling. Despite the odd engine, Tucker used a thoroughly conventional 6-volt, positive-ground electrical system and battery/coil ignition. Dual exhaust pipes split to six tips to hint at cylinder count.





It seems like every other year I purchase a car that is some kind of historic car, and last year I was thinking, “What should I get?” And I was looking at the Tuckers at the AACA Museum and I thought “That’s what I should get!” It’s the perfect combination of design, history, et cetera.

The Tucker has a lot of safety features throughout it. The dashboard is padded. The windows were designed to pop out in a crash; they focused on that in their advertising. It kind of reminds me of the way they promote Volvos. It was way ahead of its time for 1948. —Howard Kroplick

it was as close to an untouched original as anyone was likely to find, 70 years after the fact. With that information in hand, Howard traveled to Arizona, won the Tucker, and brought it back to Long Island to drive and enjoy.

As you can imagine, a Tucker on today’s roads is just as show-stopping, if not more so, than it was in the late 1940s. “It’s a real adrenaline rush,” Howard says.

Technical sophistication, Miller/Fronty engineering, and four-wheel independent suspension notwithstanding, the Tucker is no sports car. It’s big, like a shorter version of a 1948 Roadmaster—which may have been the target, given that the price was about the same. But that size, especially given the rear-engine configuration, makes for plenty of interior space. “It’s like sitting on a couch,” Howard says. The rear engine also makes for surprisingly good handling, Howard notes, “It’s almost like you have power steering—it’s so light in the front, it’s very responsive to turning.”

If you can put aside the irreplaceable nature of driving a Tucker 48, probably the most daunting thing is the gearbox. “The transmission is a Cord transmission. It has a preselect; you use a switch on the steering column and then clutch to shift gear. You really have to think about how to drive the car. It’s a little nerve-wracking at the beginning, but after a while, you’re kind of amazed.”

This may have been familiar to owners of Cords and Hudsons in the era, but reportedly it wasn’t widely liked by consumers, who were already seeing a different future based on Hydra-Matics and Dynaflows. If Tucker’s plans to field a fully automatic transmission had panned out, this likely would not have been an issue at all.

One benefit to the preselector gearbox, however, is the ability to downshift in corners without taking your hands off the wheel. Not that we advocate throwing a Tucker through the curves in such a manner. The ride is smooth and comfortable, which is per-

haps more a testament to the unknown installer of the coil-spring suspension. “The Elastomeric suspension was long gone,” Howard says. “It has springs now. One of the things we’re contemplating right now is a retrofit of the original. [The coil springs are] smooth riding, though. I didn’t have any problems with it.”

Certainly the 130-inch wheelbase (an inch longer than a ’48 Roadmaster) helps to mitigate any undulations in the road.

Braking, coming from the placeholder four-wheel hydraulic drums rather than the discs intended for production cars, is comparable to other cars of the era.

Power, likewise, is not dissimilar from hypothetical competitors like Buick. The Roadmaster had a 320-cu.in. straight-eight rated 150 hp at 3,600 rpm—the 335-cu.in. Franklin horizontally opposed six-cylinder churned out a hypothetical 166 hp at 3,200 rpm. Hypothetical, because a recent chassis dyno test at Ida’s shop suggested that figure to be 94 horsepower at 2,700 rpm, but Howard notes, “It’s got to be tuned up even further.” Not exactly an apples-to-apples comparison, anyway, given that in 1948 horsepower figures were measured from the flywheel with no power-robbing accessories installed.

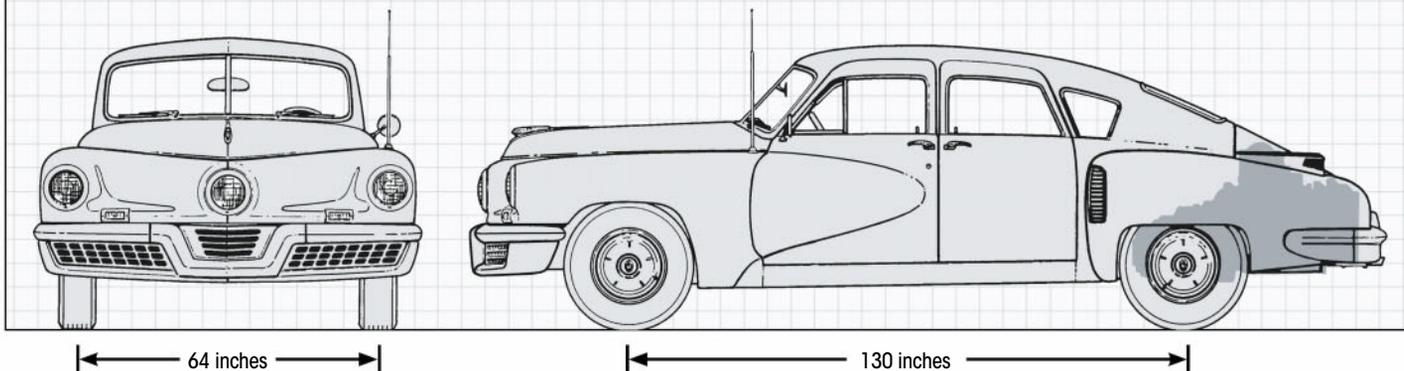
Despite the emphasis on safety, there are no seatbelts, and visibility is poor compared with newer cars—but again, no worse than most cars of the 1940s and early 1950s. A single rearview mirror and a driver’s side mirror provide the only means for determining what is behind you. “Rearview mirror is a little wanting,” Howard says, but notes that the instrumentation, at least, is all clustered in front of the driver—both for better viewing and to keep anything hard out of the crash chamber on the passenger’s side.

So, is driving a Tucker like entering the future? It’s like entering the future as seen from the perspective of the 1940s, and that’s really special. 🐼



1948 TUCKER 48

ILLUSTRATIONS BY RUSSELL VON SAUERS,
THE GRAPHIC AUTOMOBILE STUDIO ©2018 HEMMINGS CLASSIC CAR



SPECIFICATIONS

PRICE

BASE PRICE	\$2,450 (projected)
OPTIONS	N/A

ENGINE

TYPE	Horizontally opposed six-cylinder
DISPLACEMENT	334.1-cu.in.
BORE X STROKE	4.50 x 3.50 inches
COMPRESSION RATIO	7.0:1
HORSEPOWER @ RPM	166 @ 3,200
TORQUE @ RPM	372 lb-ft @ unknown
VALVETRAIN	Hydraulic lifters
MAIN BEARINGS	Four
FUEL SYSTEM	Stromberg AAV-26 two-barrel, down-draft carburetor; mechanical fuel pump
LUBRICATION SYSTEM	Full-pressure; mechanical pump
ELECTRICAL SYSTEM	6-volt, positive ground
EXHAUST SYSTEM	Twin mufflers, six tailpipes

TRANSMISSION

TYPE	Four-speed manual with pre-selector remote-control shifting; Synchronesh on gears 2, 3, and 4.
RATIOS	1st 3.67:1 2nd 2.13:1 3rd 1.41:1 4th 0.64:1 Rev. 3.96:1

DIFFERENTIAL

TYPE	Transaxle
GEAR RATIO	4.70:1
DRIVE AXLES	Independent; two U-joints per shaft

STEERING

TYPE	Worm and sector
TURNS, LOCK-TO-LOCK	3.5
TURNING CIRCLE	38 feet

BRAKES

TYPE	Four-wheel hydraulic drum
FRONT	11-inch
REAR	11-inch

CHASSIS & BODY

CONSTRUCTION	Steel body on perimeter frame, with subframes front and rear
BODY STYLE	Four-door, six-passenger fastback
LAYOUT	Rear engine; rear-wheel drive

SUSPENSION

FRONT	Independent, equal-length A-arms hinged in rubber (currently coil sprung), tubular hydraulic shocks
REAR	Independent half-shafts, trailing links hinged in rubber (currently coil sprung), tubular hydraulic shocks

WHEELS & TIRES

WHEELS	15-inch stamped steel
TIRES	7.00 x 15 Firestone whitewall bias-ply

WEIGHTS & MEASURES

WHEELBASE	130.0 inches
OVERALL LENGTH	219.0 inches
OVERALL WIDTH	79.0 inches
OVERALL HEIGHT	60.0 inches
FRONT TRACK	64.0 inches
REAR TRACK	65.0 inches
CURB WEIGHT	4,235 pounds

CAPACITIES

CRANKCASE	7 quarts
COOLING SYSTEM	24 quarts
FUEL TANK	20 gallons

CALCULATED DATA

BHP PER CU.IN.	0.50
WEIGHT PER BHP	25.51 pounds
WEIGHT PER CU.IN.	12.68 pounds

PROS & CONS

- + Historical significance
- + Cutting-edge engineering
- + Collectability
- Rarity
- No chance at quiet, undisturbed driving
- Expensive to acquire and maintain

WHAT TO PAY

LOW.....	\$1,110,000
AVERAGE.....	\$1,600,000
HIGH.....	\$2,300,000

PRODUCTION

1948.....	51
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CLUB CORNER

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Making a Hash

For years, two of the most controversial independent-built automobiles have been the 1955-'57 Hudson Wasp and Hornet. There's controversy over their performance, styling, and handling. But what causes the most discord and gets hardcore Hudsonites up in arms and ready to fight is the cars' parentage.

Many diehard Hudson people simply can't stand the fact that the 1955-'57 Hudsons are based on the Nash senior cars. In fact, they've dubbed these Nash-based Hudsons "Hashes"—and not in a friendly way.

A little background: After Hudson's all-new 1953 Jet compact failed to sell in the expected volumes, the company began to lose buckets of money. At the same time, sales of the big Hudson models were lagging as a result of going too long without a redesign. The Ford-Chevrolet sales war of 1954 was the final straw; by mid-1954, a thoroughly whipped Hudson Motor Car Co. was forced to merge with Nash-Kelvinator to survive.

The big Hudson body was outdated and rather stale, so management of the newly formed American Motors Corporation decided to create new senior Hudson cars on the two-year-old Nash body shell—the same way the Big Three built multiple car lines from one or two basic bodies. Cost savings were substantial. The company could also build all its big cars in one plant rather than two, for even greater savings. After AMC's Styling and Engineering people cobbled together a new Hudson, the old Hudson plant was sold.

The styling assignment was handled by Allan Kornmiller, a longtime designer in the Nash—now AMC—design studios. He was given specific guidelines such as making sure to include certain Hudson style marks while using as much Nash body tooling as possible. Oh, and there was the problem of 30,000 leftover 1954 Hudson instrument clusters; Kornmiller was instructed to somehow integrate them into the Nash dashboard. He went to work with a handpicked team, creating a 1955 Hudson that looked remarkably similar to what Hudson itself had planned as a facelift. The grille, in particular, is almost exactly as Hudson designers planned it.

To ensure the new Hudson was as authentic as possible, management decided to continue offering Hudson six-cylinder engines in the new cars, along with a new Packard-sourced V-8 engine. Yet, to hear today's angriest dissenters, the 1955 Hornet and Wasp cars were not really Hudsons at all; they view them as abominations of a sort.

"Just Nashes with Hudson nameplates," these critics say. They claim the remake ruined the senior Hudsons.

Reading through some old-car magazines, we don't find much written against

the Hudsons, but quite a bit in favor of them. For example, we found a road-test report by *Auto Age Review* that listed a 0-60 time of 15.4 seconds for a twin-carb '53 Hornet, versus a *Mechanix Illustrated* test by Tom McCahill, driving a '55 Hornet with the new V-8, showing a time of 12.4 seconds. The 1953 Hudson had a top speed of 99.8 mph, while the '55 model could do 106 mph. So, straight-line performance actually improved on the Nash-based car. We couldn't find a 1955 road test of the Hornet Six, but a 1956 test yielded a 0-60 time of 14.8 seconds—still better than the '54 model.

Regarding handling, McCahill said "The 1955 Hudsons have lost none of [their superb roadability] ... the car gets around the tightest bends just as well as it ever did.... These Hudsons are great, safe road cars and the brakes are as fine as any I've ever tested on an American car." He added, "If you're an old Hudson fan, you'll find the '55 Hudson your dish of tea."

As far as looks, *Auto Review* talked about the '55 model's "...sleek body lines, continental-styled grille and wraparound windshield." McCahill didn't take a stand either way, only remarking that the new Hudson "...resembles the old about as closely as Harpo Marx resembles Marilyn Monroe." The 1956 and '57 models got new styling courtesy of independent stylist Richard Arbib, and that wasn't well received. "Basically, a straightforward and pleasing design which is somewhat marred by over-enthusiastic application of trim..." said *Car Life*.

So, looks aside, most of the professional auto testers of the day liked the 1955-'57 senior Hudsons. So, why the controversy? 🐾



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of a sort.



I JUST FINISHED READING

David Schultz' column in *HCC* #161 and cannot agree more with what he stated. I have been involved with a local mixed-make car club, and we have some events and regular meetings throughout the year, but the information gained and shared lacks when compared to two other clubs to which I belong. The SDC (Studebaker Drivers Club) and the AOAI (Avanti Owners Association International) both have experts who are willing to regularly share their knowledge with their members. Both clubs' magazines have technical columns and the SDC has scheduled technical advice seminars at their annual meets.

Both clubs also have many local chapters scattered around the world and, for those who are tech-savvy, both have forums linked to their websites where individual questions can be rapidly addressed by someone who has already found a cure for a person's particular trouble.

Being a member of a club that can relate to the vehicle you own is worth many times the cost of joining those clubs!

Duane Miller
Eldridge, Iowa

I VERY MUCH ENJOYED

Richard's comments in *HCC* #161 on definitions used amongst various collectors, sellers, and users of old cars. In England, where I was born and lived for the first 50 years of my life, before coming here to live in Florida with my 1953 Jaguar XK120, the magazine, *Motor Sport*, employed Denis Jenkinson, who had been Stirling Moss' navigator during their record-breaking victory in the 1955 Mille Miglia.

Mr. Jenkinson was also the "Continental Correspondent" for that magazine, following the Grand Prix and Sports racing scene around Europe, and reporting on it until his death. He was always erudite, very observant, and to the point. He did not, as the saying goes, suffer fools gladly. He once wrote about the terms used in the old-car world and here are two of his observations:

"Original": This means that the car is exactly as it is when it left the factory; if the spark plugs, or tires, or anything else, have been changed, it is no longer 'original.'"

"Replica": This is a car that was previously produced by a factory. If they build another series (as Frazer Nash did),

it is a replica. If it is built by anyone else, it is a clone, or a fake. The same goes for the term: "Continuation."

"Antique": As used in the antique furniture trade, [this term] usually refers to something that is over 100 years old."

And to Mr. David Schultz' column about the wisdom of belonging to an automotive car club, when I lived in England I belonged to several. The chairman of one of them said to me one day: "Just remember, because you happen to like the same make of car does not mean that you will get on with the other owners...." He was right!

John Starkey
South Pasadena, Florida

REGARDING THE CHRYSLER

Slant Six article in *HCC* #159. In the 1970s, a girl I knew stopped by to see me because she'd heard that I was a car guy and wanted my opinion. A mechanic had said that her car, which had a Slant Six engine, wouldn't make the trip from New York to California. Upon opening the hood, I noticed a gaping hole in the block. I was surprised that it still ran. I concurred with the prognosis.

John Colasanto
Marathon, New York

PAT FOSTER IS RIGHT IN HIS VIEW

in *HCC* #160 of the 1949-'51 Nash cars as technically impressive and advanced automobiles, and I agree with almost all his points. But, in 1949, Nash was not the only American make with a unitized-body construction, and it was not the first one, either. As far back as 1937, the famous V-12 Lincoln Zephyr had a "body-and-frame construction, a single unit of steel girders to which steel paneling is welded. Great strength, for all its lightness, and maximum safety," said the brochure. In 1948, a year before Nash, the Hudson step-down models came with an "All Steel Monobilt Body-and-Frame with box-section steel girder protection even outside rear wheels," as stated in the Hudson brochure. Some even say these Hudsons were "overbuilt"!

I like the 1949-'51 Nash cars very much, and so it was a great pleasure to read about the Nash 600 Super in the same issue, and to enjoy the photos. Thank you so much!

Bram Visser
The Netherlands

I WAS SOMEWHAT TAKEN ABACK

by Mr. Stillman's comments in Recaps in *HCC* #160. What makes *HCC* such a great publication is the variety of vehicles and the skill of your writers to present them. While it's important for publications to present differing points of view from its readers, and Mr. Stillman has every right to voice his opinion, there's no need to get so fired up about a one-page column that the tone is downright bitter. Perhaps he had a bad experience with the brand when it was new. In that case, his comments may be justified to some extent. However, that was a long time ago, and it's time to get over it.

There is too much negativity in our world today, and it really has no place in the car hobby. These are the attitudes that discourage the younger generation from participating. The younger generation probably does not have the means or desire to sink a lot of money into a collector car, and their interest may be in a "newer" vehicle. I personally enjoy Detroit Underdogs as well as Mr. Stern's prose. While we all know that the Cadillac Cimarron will never be a CCCA Full Classic, as we all get older and time marches on, it's nice to be reminded of these cars that, at one time, were everywhere. And for those of us who own a single special car or have a modest collection, keep doing what you're doing. Let the rest vent their hostilities to their shrink.

Stan Bachmura Jr.
Bear, Delaware

I ENJOY EVERY PART OF HCC,

especially Detroit Underdogs, so I was somewhat taken aback by Mr. Stillman's letter. First, he was "amused" with people who "take enormous time and effort to restore cars that by all rights should have been junked and forgotten long ago." I, for one, commend and applaud those people who restore such automobiles, saving them from the scrap heap so that others can enjoy and experience cars that might otherwise be lost forever. I truly respect and appreciate people who spend their time and money on a classic car, knowing that they will likely not get their investment back. These people are not

Continued on page 47



Economies of Scale

What caused the dramatic attrition among independent automakers during the 1950s? After all, the stars were aligned for unprecedented market expansion: Even after the nation's fleet had been restocked following World War II, new suburbs and the nascent Interstate Highway System should have boded well for any automobile manufacturer. The whole country seemed pregnant with baby-boomers for 20-odd years beginning in 1945, creating an ever-growing market.

Against that backdrop, the country supported no fewer than eight independent automobile name-plates in 1950: Crosley, Frazer, Hudson, Kaiser, Nash, Packard, Studebaker, and Willys. Why would only two of them (Nash [Rambler] and Studebaker) live to see the 1960 model year?

One answer is hidden in plain view in this seemingly obscure winter photo of two new 1956 Chevrolet 210 four-door sedans about to serve as driver education cars in Brownsburg and nearby Pittsboro, Indiana. Brownsburg's Blanck Chevrolet Co. was already more than 25 years old when this photo was taken, and a second-generation Blanck was being groomed to take over a few years later. A third generation was operating the dealership profitably in its ninth decade, when the franchise was terminated for being too small during the 2009 General Motors "bankruptcy."

Most *HCC* readers are probably admiring the two-tone 1956 Bel Air Sport Coupe in the warm showroom. But one of the reasons most independents didn't survive the 1950s, economies of scale, is easily explained by considering one piece of exterior trim on the 210 sedans out front in the cold.

The long, swoopy stainless-steel molding across the center of the right rear doors on those 210s is Chevrolet Part #3759514. According to Impala Bob's GM parts expert Keith Graham, and Peter Sassone at Danchuk Manufacturing, that molding was used on all 1956 210 four-door sedans, and 210-trimmed Beauville (nine-passenger) and Townsman (six-passenger) station wagons. The production total for all three models meant that

General Motors had to buy at least 414,769 of those moldings, plus sufficient service stock, for the 1956 model year.

Studebaker's comparable 1956 models would be a Commander V-8 Deluxe four-door sedan or a Champion Six Deluxe four-door sedan. Both of those models had a similar stainless-steel spear across their rear doors that also served to split the colors on two-tone cars. However, Studebaker manufactured only 26,683 of those two models, combined.

Who would have been able to negotiate a better price per unit from a stainless-steel-trim manufacturer: the General Motors purchasing agent holding an order for more than 400,000 pieces, or Studebaker's purchasing agent,

shopping for the best price per unit on fewer than 30,000 units? The answer is obvious, because the up-front tooling costs would be amortized over far more pieces to fill the General Motors order.

So, would any independent be able to raise the price of its comparable car to reflect the higher cost per unit to build it? Not for long.

Consider: The 1956 Chevrolet 210 V-8 four-door models in this photo had a base MSRP of \$2,054. A comparable 1956 Studebaker Commander Deluxe V-8 four-door listed at \$2,125, well over three percent more than Chevrolet's offering. That's at least one more monthly payment, if not two, to drive a Studebaker in 1956.

Further, even when the parts are the same, economies of scale still benefitted The Big Three. For example, both Chevrolet and Nash used a BCI Group 24 replacement battery in 1956. But which company would have a lower OEM battery cost per car—General Motors, buying Delco batteries in-house, or American Motors, buying batteries "outside" from Willard?

"What's wrong with this picture?" For the independents, pretty much everything. Sadly, dealing with those economies of scale over thousands of parts going into millions of cars during the 1950s grew wearisome for all the independents. Ultimately, among other factors, it proved fatal for most of them.

Indeed, how were the independents able to compete at all for as long as they did? 🐼



So, would any independent be able to raise the price of its comparable car to reflect the higher cost per unit to build it?

doing the restoration to make a buck, but are doing it for the love of the car, past memories of the automobile, or love of the hobby.

And chastising *HCC* for featuring the Cadillac Cimarron under Detroit Underdogs shows that he is missing the point of the whole "Underdog" idea. I personally am not a fan of the Cimarron, but I can still appreciate what it is. Most people cannot afford the hundreds of thousands of dollars it takes to purchase and maintain "traditional" classics such as Duesenbergs, Packards, Cords, etc. With the Detroit Underdog feature, *HCC* is highlighting interesting older cars that the average Joe can buy and enjoy. The more people included in the collector-car hobby, the more likely the hobby will continue and grow. While I might not include some of these cars in my "dream collection," I still enjoy reading and learning about all of the automobiles you cover, regardless of what the "elite collector" might think of them.

I also do not agree that the Cimarron was the beginning of the destruction of the Cadillac brand. I believe that started long before the Cimarron came out, due to quality issues starting in the mid-1970s, and failing to recognize buyers' changing perceptions of what constitutes a luxury car.

Marty Behm

Dalton Gardens, Idaho

IT BUGS ME WHEN PEOPLE DUMP

on the Cimarron and similar cars. It's this kind of uninformed and narrow-minded thinking that produces labels like "wrong-wheel drive" and "more doors." To say that the Cimarron was a gussied-up Cavalier is inaccurate. Having spent my career in the automotive industry from every side, I can say with certainty that GM designed the J-car platform and the divisions produced their variants from it. While the family resemblance is undeniable, having owned two Buick J-body Skyhawks and having worked on and driven all of the other J-cars, I can say that none of them feel like the others. The J-cars were also good cars. I'm sure the same naysayers will jump on this as well. Most of the complainers either never had contact with any, or maybe they had a friend who used to beat the crap out of one.

The Hondas of the same era had

issues with structural rust, crappy three-barrel carbs, and head gaskets that only thought about sealing. Toyotas of the era had the worst automatic transmissions in the industry. Is anyone busting on them? Look at the first Lexus, Infiniti, and Acura cars. Talk about badge engineering. Can you dispute that the Toyota/Nissan/Honda cars these were based on didn't precede the "gussied up" variants? I collect cars and trucks from many eras, and I know they don't appeal to everyone. That's ok, because I do it for me, not anyone else. If you don't like it, move on and let the collector enjoy his car.

Dave Wilbur

Monroeville, New Jersey

YOUR READER LAMBASTING

Milton Stern and *HCC* was totally overboard. The column is called "Detroit Underdogs," and the Cimarron is probably the best example of an underdog, as it had so many strikes against it, as well as marking a horrible time in the history of Cadillac and GM. The backstory of it alone and what it represented makes it worthy of interest.

He can hate all he wants, but there are those who get Mr Stern's take on these forgotten gems. I wish the feature was expanded rather than just a column. Not everyone has the money to build a '57 Chevy tribute, clone, or any of the other sorts of monstrosities created on gearhead "reality" shows. So, is it really useful to discourage someone else's entry into the hobby with an economical underdog?

As far as I'm concerned, the more the mob hates it, the better I like it. I'd have a Cimarron, but my 1986 Oldsmobile Calais will have to do.

Also, many thanks to Mr. Foster, for describing the Nash wheel openings as exactly what they are: "enclosed wheel wells." They are not "skirted fenders" as so many incorrectly label them. A skirted fender has a skirt, a detachable trim for the rear wheel openings. The "skirted fenders" description is as incorrect and irritating as "two-door post." No one ever marketed, sold, or called a two- or four-door sedan a "post," nor referred to "post" anything in any ads, brochures, or period articles and road tests.

Dave Gregory

Tucson, Arizona

THE SPORT STEERING WHEEL USED

on the Li'l Red Truck in *HCC* #161 was designed for the Omni/Horizon. The wheels failed the car crash test, but not before 7,000 were produced. My friend in Production Control who handled these parts suggested they be used on the Li'l Red Truck; they were legal there.

Ray Daugherty

Lenoir City, Tennessee

I ENJOYED PAT FOSTER'S COLUMN

"The Doors" in *HCC* #161 in which the gullwing doors of the Bricklin and De Lorean cars were described by their designers as "sexy." I wonder if they thought they were sexy when they had to enter their cars outside in the rain because they couldn't open the doors in the garage where they would hit the ceiling? Or, when in a low-ceiling public garage, they couldn't get out of the car?

Jerry Ramsdale

Dallas, Texas

I JUST FINISHED READING

HCC #161 cover to cover: every article, letter to the editor, and column. I can honestly say this is your best issue ever. But what made this issue so good? As I was finishing the last article, I realized it wasn't about the cars, but the people who own them, treasure them, and enjoy them. For example: any magazine could have reported on a 1929 Pierce-Arrow, but Bob Bujak's story about his lifelong relationship with a car he first stumbled upon in a farmer's field at the age of 15 is, well... it's even more spectacular than his car.

When it's all said and done, I know that these are just cars; great, big pieces of complex machinery. But the way *Hemmings Classic Car* relates what they've meant to their owners is what sets you folks apart from the rest. Keep up the good work.

Jeff Clark

Safety Harbor, Florida

HI, RICHARD. I'VE BEEN MEANING

to tell you—I took the advice you gave in your column in *HCC* #158 about giving away old parts. I had a lot of Nash and Rambler stuff that I'd accumulated over the years for various cars I'd owned. I was holding on to it for goodness

Continued on page 49



The Ultimate Model Year

I think 1953 was the ultimate model year. The reason I pick 1953 is not because it's the year of my favorite car or even that I'm a huge '50s-car nut (my friends will tell you that my tastes skew significantly to the Interwar era). Instead, it just seems to me that every single manufacturer produced *something* that year I'd want to own. Every single marque, really! Even Kaiser-Fraser, which I've often thought of as being kind of overhyped, produced the beautiful Dragon model that year—a veritable rolling tiki lounge that I would be proud to have in my driveway.

Naturally, the easiest cars to find from 1953 are Fords and Chevrolets, thanks in no small part to the sales war in which they engaged that year (probably helping usher several independent makes into merger or retirement). Ford was celebrating its golden jubilee—as was Buick—and had very tastefully updated its new-for-1952 Coachcraft styling into something even better. I'll take a Crestline Victoria hardtop with V-8 power and a three-speed with overdrive, please.

Chevrolet was also particularly nice this year, with a new look heavily influenced by the 1950 Cadillac, now in the final year of its cycle. For this year's Chevrolet, I've always thought the two-door sedan carried its styling nicer than the Sport Coupe, which is what Chevrolet called its pillarless hardtops now that Bel Air was a trim line.

Even stodgy old Plymouth had a nice-looking car in 1953, with a new body much better suited to the times than its '40s-style offerings from 1949-'52, and trim that hadn't yet gone crazy as it would in 1954. The marque reached its zenith, for me, with the 1955 Belvedere Club Sedan—with the standard trim, thank you, but I digress... Dodge Coronets are also particularly nice for 1953 and have the added benefit of being available with the new Red Ram Hemi V-8.

Of course, Studebaker had a banner styling year for 1953 and, while I prefer the 1955 President Speedster, the Commander Starlight Coupe is certainly a pleasure to

behold. At the other end of the spectrum, I'm very fond of the “high-pockets” 1951-'54 Packard design, particularly the junior-series cars and especially the 1953 Clipper—in any body style; they're all attractive. The Pinin

Farina-inspired 1953 Nash line is also very nice, and I've always been surprised it didn't sell a bit better, though it may have been more tempting to buy a loaded Ford or Chevrolet for the



same money that year.

I'm sure to new-car buyers in 1953, Hudson's offerings (aside from the sophisticated-but-awkward Jet) looked a little dated, with their 1948-vintage Step-Down body shells, but I certainly feel the design had aged well, and I would adore a Hornet Club Coupe (or a convertible, or a Hollywood hardtop, or...). It doesn't even have to be a 7X, just regular ol' Twin-H power is fine, but preferably with a stick shift and that nifty cork-faced clutch.

The General Motors divisions above Pontiac were in their last year of a styling cycle, that for Cadillac, Buick, and big Oldsmobiles went back to 1950. I'm particularly fond of the Cadillac Series 60 Special—I came very close to buying one once; sitting in it just felt *right*. I'd prefer one with an actual Hydra-Matic, though, since quite a few were built with Dynaflo transmissions after the plant on Plymouth Road, in Livonia, Michigan, burnt down in August 1953.

I could go on, but there's only so much space here, so I'll end with what is probably my most coveted car of 1953. An automobile with a power-to-weight ratio better than a Ford V-8. It was compact, nimble, and quite handsome to boot. What car is that? Why the 1953 Willys Aero, of course. I'll take an Aero Eagle hardtop or one of the Aero Ace sedans that shares the hardtop's wrap-around rear window. The 90-hp F-head “Lightning” straight-six and overdrive will motivate the car quite nicely.

What is your favorite car of 1953? Is there a year you think had better all-round styling? I'd love to hear about it! 🐼

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knows what reason, but after reading your column, I donated a lot to friends and to car clubs in hopes they would either use it or sell it to help the club treasury. I also donated a lot of literature that I no longer needed.

The result—a garage that's a lot less crowded than before. It feels very liberating. I highly recommend it!
 Pat Foster
 Milford, Connecticut

RICHARD'S EDITORIAL IN

HCC #160 was an emphatic statement on just what our business, obsession, etc., truly means to our economy and identity. If we are culturally aware, we can see that the autos from the late '80s, early '90s, and early '00s are finding their niche and have delivered a much-needed shot of adrenaline into magazines, car shows, auctions, amateur restorations, and so on. Of course, the new super muscle cars of the last decade guarantee that power to the ground and the devotion to all things horsepower that experience cements, keeps our business of restoring these machines intact for some time to come.

That said, maybe we should lose the "old" moniker when we describe our business, as it tends to be more of an anchor than an air balloon. And in doing so, maybe we just call it what it truly is: the collector car industry.

This endeavor is wrapped around the love of the automobile. Prewar or postwar, pre-computer or post-computer, V-8s to turbo 4s, it really does not matter in the end. We all bleed the same slightly milky oil when we blow a head gasket. We need to unite, from the shade tree tuners to the "you paid what?" exotics; and quit calling this a "hobby," as that better fits stamp collecting, and turn our numbers into a powerful political lobby.

Easy to do? No. Nothing is easy, even when you fool yourself into thinking otherwise, like with that "easy restoration" 1977 Trans Am with no floors, trunk, engine, or title that you just scored on Craigslist from a guy that answered the door in a furry rabbit suit.

But just maybe we can have a voice, a very loud voice. Maybe a million-man cruise on D.C. Hey, that sounds like fun, regardless!

And while I appreciate Richard's closing thought, "Let's hope it doesn't come true," I feel we have another option other than hope. Pick up that phone and call your local representatives, write emails and even snail mail to your state senators. Let them know: We in The Car Collector Industry are generating 100's of millions of our economy annually, and behind that money is millions upon millions of votes—that's a lot of power. We love our country, we will protect our industry, we will protect our economy, and we will do so all the while protecting the earth.

I gotta go have a Bud now; I haven't typed this much since high school!

Tom Verlone
 Staten Island, New York

REGARDING OLDSMOBILE'S J-2

option, my friend Roger ordered a 1957 88 Club Coupe right out of high school, with the J-2 option and a stick shift. The dealer required him to make a \$500 non-refundable downpayment in case the deal fell through because he didn't want to be stuck with a bottom-of-the-line car with the J-2 option and a stick. Once delivered, this 88 turned out to be hell-on-wheels. It was the absolute fastest car around. Roger used it strictly for street racing and transportation to work. Sadly, it was rear-ended by a police car one night while parked in front of his house.

I was surprised that only 2,000 to 2,500 J-2 options were ordered in the 1957-'58 model years. For the \$83 the J-2 option cost, it was well worth it. Because of this Olds 88, I became an Oldsmobile fan for the rest of my life—I've owned seven. It's a shame that Oldsmobile is gone.

Bob Thies
 Cincinnati, Ohio

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

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White House Mobility

President Taft's 1909 White Model M steam car

BY TERRY SHEA

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARK J. McCOURT

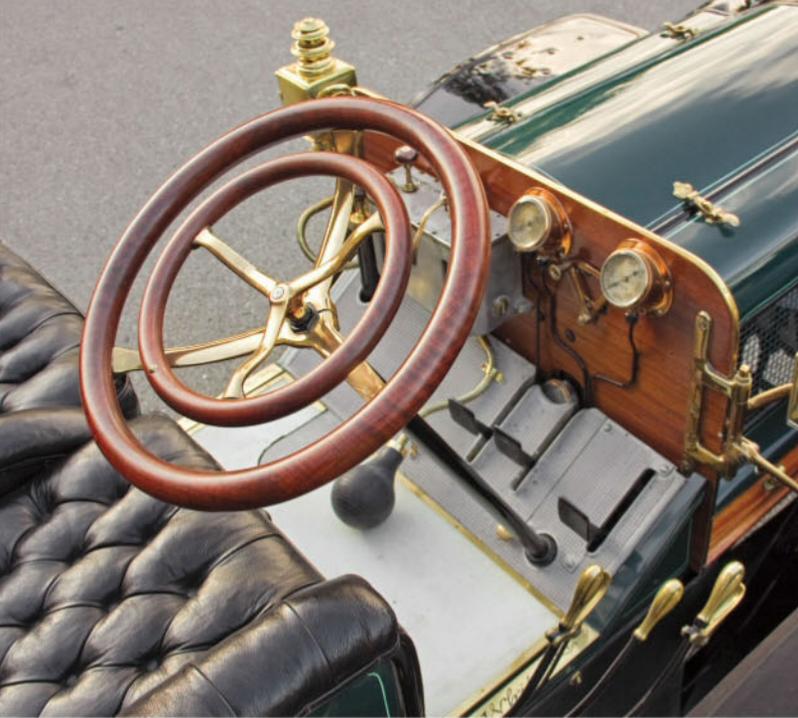
I am sure the automobile coming in as a toy of the wealthier class is going to prove most useful of them all to all classes, rich and poor.

—William Howard Taft

There is no history of the automobile that does not mark the 1908 introduction of Henry Ford's Model T, the revolutionary car that offered an affordable and reliable option for the common man and ushered in the century of the automobile. But there were other influences at work as well that same year.

The American people elected William Howard Taft president in November of 1908, yet before he entered Washington for his inauguration four months later, he lobbied for a small fleet of cars for the White House. Taft's desire to formally adopt the automobile came across as controversial. His predecessor—and later political rival—Theodore Roosevelt was no fan of cars and considered them dirty and noisy, as did many other people. Of course, Roosevelt, the former cavalry officer, was a noted horseman and favored travel by carriage, his loyalties firmly with the equine. But Taft, who served as





Unconventional controls on the 1909 White Model M steamer include a hand throttle on a concentric ring inside the steering wheel, gauges for steam temperature and fuel vaporizer, and pedals for the fuel-feeding air pump and simpling valve, along with a brake pedal.



Secretary of War under Roosevelt, would have none of it.

Congress ultimately approved \$12,000 before the inauguration to purchase three cars and convert the White House stables into a garage. The first official presidential automobiles were a 1909 Pierce-Arrow Model 36 brougham, a 1909 Baker electric, and the 1909 White Model M steam car featured here. The White ultimately proved to be Taft's favorite; the large, imposing automobile marking his presence at various events as well as about town.

Taft hailed from Ohio, as did the White Sewing Machine Company. Founder Thomas White's sons had succeeded in diversifying the company in the later years of the 19th century with the production of lathes, roller skates, bicycles, and kerosene lamps. After son Rollin White invented a new type of steam boiler in 1899, he began developing a car in a corner of the company's large factory in Cleveland. The company found success relatively quickly, becoming a known name in a crowded field of automakers in the first years of the 20th century. Thomas White was skeptical, and he spun off the

White Motor Company into its own entity.

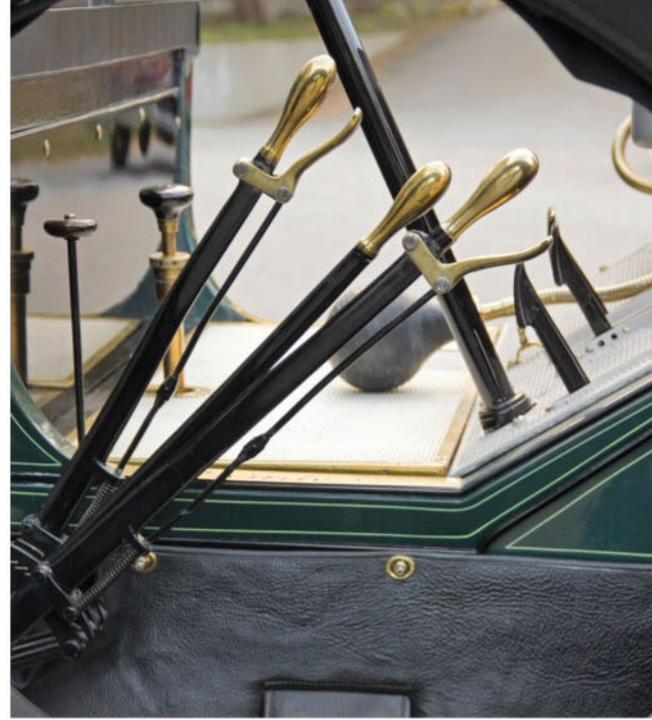
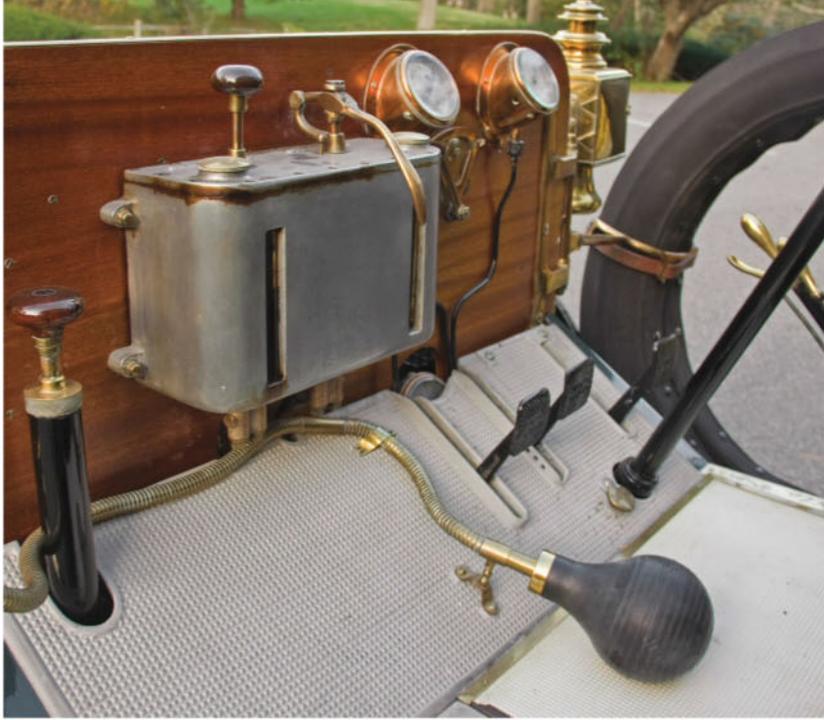
For 1909, it advertised two chassis, the Model O, producing 20 horsepower and riding on a 104-inch wheelbase, and the Model M, a far larger automobile with a 122-inch wheelbase to go along with its formidable 40-horsepower steam engine. White offered both models in several body types, with the Model O available with a runabout body listing for \$2,000, or limousine coachwork for \$2,800. The Model M came as a five- or seven-passenger touring car costing \$4,000, a limousine at \$4,800, or a landaulet for \$5,000. Taft's presidential Model M is listed on the actual White House appropriation voucher as a "seven-passenger steam touring car, complete with top." The price? An even \$3,000. Perhaps White considered a sale to 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue a worthwhile loss leader.

The most distinguishing feature of White's steam-powered car was the boiler. Rollin White patented the water tube generator that produced superheated steam to power the engines. In the opposite fashion of most boilers, the cool water entered at the top of a series of stacked coils, with the steam generated at the bottom of the stack. White's boiler used far fewer joints than most boilers, giving it fewer potential points of failure. The White boiler also used significantly less water than the typical boiler.

Though the length of tubing differed on the 20- and 40-hp models, both used a stack of nine connected coils, each made with 1/2-inch steel tubing. White boasted that in laboratory tests conducted at Cornell University, the tubing could "withstand a pressure of 18,000 pounds per square inch without showing any signs of rupture," at which point the testing apparatus was maxed out. But just to assuage the fears of any potential customers, the company pointed out that the relatively small level of water in the boiler ("less than one-third of a cubic foot" in the Model M) meant that any rupture in the coils would not result in any catastrophic or dangerous failure, merely a split tube or blown joint.

The White boiler used a gasoline burner to heat the boiler. A pump attached to the engine fed the fuel to a vaporizer for combustion. The heat generated by the burning gasoline passed upward in the boiler to heat the water and create steam. A flue moved the spent gases to the rear of the car. Given no possible interaction with lubricating oil in the combustion process, the gasoline was said to burn far cleaner than in a typical automobile engine of the day. White also lined areas around the burner with asbestos to deflect heat from the floor to keep any touch points





safe for passengers. With the water tank under the driver's seat, White placed the fuel tank at the rear of its cars.

The starting process from cold for the Model M involved lighting a pilot light and then waiting a few minutes for the vaporizer to heat up before turning on the main fuel line. Once in full burn, the boiler would heat the water for several more minutes until attaining full steam pressure, at which point the driver could take off down the road.

That steam-generating boiler powered a two-cylinder steam engine of rather simple design. A forged, one-piece, counter-balanced crankshaft, rotating in two main bearings, held a pair of forged connecting rods—one was connected to a high-pressure piston with a 3-inch diameter, and the other to a larger 5-inch diameter, low-pressure piston. The stroke for both pistons was 4.5 inches. The compound White steam engine operated sequentially, so that the unused energy from the escaping steam of the high-pressure piston went downstream to the low-pressure piston, which generated the same amount of power as the first due to its larger diameter.

Also attached to the connecting rods were the valves—one for each cylinder. In a steam engine, the valve regulates the flow of steam to either the top or bottom of the piston, depending on its position in the cylinder, ensuring a steady supply of steam where it's needed, and simultaneously allowing the exhaust of spent steam on the other side of the piston. White made its crankcases from aluminum, then still a fairly exotic material.

While a four-stroke internal combustion engine features only one power stroke for every four movements of the piston, a steam engine creates power on every movement of the piston in the cylinder, with steam pressure moving it in both directions. The two cylinders in the White steam engine reached top dead center 90-degrees apart, meaning that there would never be a moment where the engine was not powering the crankshaft.

When the driver pressed the throttle, the action controlled the volume of steam entering the engine and thus the power it produced. White engineers designed the cars to have the engine's crankshaft perfectly in line with the driveshaft, which, with no clutch, was directly connected to the two-range drive





The overall size of the 40-horsepower White steam engine is but a fraction of the size of similar-powered internal-combustion engines, but does not include the substantial mass of the steam generator/boiler under the front seats.

axle at the rear of the car. Power could be regulated from moving the car at a crawl to much higher speeds. A valve guide could be actuated by the driver to reverse the valves and thus the direction of the pistons, rotation of the crankshaft, and ultimately the car.

Today, President Taft's White automobile resides in the permanent holdings of the Heritage Museums and Gardens in Sandwich, Massachusetts, as part of a collection originally assembled by Josiah Lilly III, scion of the Indianapolis-based Eli Lilly pharmaceutical company. Lilly was not a lifelong car guy, but, in middle-age, inspired by an antique-car parade he witnessed, he began collecting cars and soon decided he would display them in a museum open to the public, along with other collections he acquired from his father's estate, including military miniatures and antique firearms.

Jennifer Madden, the director of collections and exhibitions at the museum, tells us, "He made a conscious decision to have a small museum, where all of the cars were in beautifully restored condition." The museum opened in 1969, a point at which "Mr. Lilly thinks he's done buying cars," says Jennifer, "when George Waterman Jr. from Providence, Rhode Island, writes Mr. Lilly in August and says, 'Hey, I have these two cars I think you might want to buy.'

One of those was the White steamer." Lilly and Waterman quickly made a deal and the White was off to a restoration shop in Cleveland almost immediately before returning to be exhibited since 1970.

[Editor's note:

This is the same George Waterman Jr. who purchased Hemmings Motor News from Ernest Hemmings in 1969. So, perhaps, he sold the White in order to fund the purchase of Hemmings.]

The Model M, with its long wheel-

base and 36-inch tires, was exactly the sort of car that appealed to Taft, who enjoyed riding in it around DC, according to historian Michael Bromley, author of *William Howard Taft and the First Motoring Presidency, 1909-1913*. Bromley's book, which he calls a "study of the political, economic and social impact of Taft's introduction of automobiles into the White House," explores the contributions that Taft's support of the automobile provided the industry, and ultimately the country. Taft's original chauffeur used to tell the story of the press and crowds getting a little too close for comfort, and Taft would have him hit the release valve, when a burst of steam underneath the car would have bystanders scattering.

Before Taft, Roosevelt—very much a populist president—did little, if anything, to support the nascent industry. Bromley explained to us what a difference Taft's election and introduction of automobiles to the White House had. "That whole story has been sort of lost under the Model T because it coincides with the rise of the Model T, introduced in 1908. People look at the Model T story and it just becomes automobiles, becomes automotive history in that whole period. I am looking at this, going 'Wait, there's a lot more going on here.'

When Taft introduced automobiles in the White House, he changed D.C. It went from the lowest per capita urban automotive ownership to the highest during his four years in office. So, something more than the Model T is going on here."

Taft's influence went way beyond the Beltway—long before the Beltway existed, of course. But, unlike Roosevelt, "Taft was a non-politician and he wasn't really sensitive to [Roosevelt's populism]," according to Bromley. "He was a judge, and so he kind



Armed with a \$12,000 Congressional appropriation, President William Howard Taft's office purchased three cars in 1909: a Baker electric, a Pierce-Arrow, and this White Model M 40-hp steamer that he considered his favorite.



of looked at things on face value... He realized very quickly the utility of these things... What he was doing was looking at this technology and saying 'This is cool stuff and this is stuff that is beneficial for the country as a whole.' And he deliberately went about showing off cars, being seen in this vehicle, publicizing its use, getting it out there, allowing it to be seen and promoting the whole idea of automobiles, and then addressing some of the questions that would arise from that. Primarily, the big question in those days was road building." One of Taft's supports of road building came in the form of having his Department of Agriculture testing different road technologies.

As Bromley points out, Ford would still have been Ford without Taft, but the president went out on a limb, taking a position that other politicians had not yet fully endorsed, seeing

The fuel tank must be pressurized before it can feed gasoline to a pre-heated vaporizer to fuel the boiler and make steam.

a great benefit of the automobile for all classes. On top of it, Taft truly enjoyed automobiles and riding in this White Model M. Advertised as "the Most Luxurious Car on the Market," the White and its scale seem appropriately fitting to the office of the president. 📷





Bullet Beauty

Thirty years on, this 1963 Ford Thunderbird still captivates its owner

BY MARK J. McCOURT • PHOTOGRAPHY BY RICHARD LENTINELLO

We're all born with our own, individual set of personality traits that may be readily expressed or remain latent, hidden under the surface until an experience draws them out. As a reader of this magazine, you're obviously now a keen enthusiast; did you love cars from the

time you could crawl, or can you pinpoint a particular car that later sparked your passion? It was Miss Sohigian's Thunderbird that galvanized a nine-year-old Steve Calautti's automotive interest. That 1964 Ford, belonging to his third-grade teacher, became an object of fascination that would influence his automotive tastes

for a lifetime, and would lead to an adult Steve becoming the decades-long caretaker of this 1963 Thunderbird.

"We would have recess outside, and the teachers' cars were parked nearby. Miss Sohigian's was beautiful: medium-blue paint, blue vinyl roof, dark-blue interior. She always kept it clean and shiny,



and I used to stare at it, studying the dashboard and console. I loved the outside of the car, but it was the inside that really mesmerized me—I'd never seen anything like it. I was in love, and that Thunderbird made such an impression on me. Really, I couldn't describe any other car in that parking lot," Steve says with a laugh.

He'd have ample opportunity to cultivate this interest, thanks to his after-school and weekend job, manning the pumps at his father's gas station from 1966 through the mid-'70s. "I saw a lot of cars come through the pumps and the repair bays, and Thunderbirds always caught my eye. But it wasn't like I had 'Thunderbird-itis' when I

stumbled onto this car in 1988," the Manchester, Connecticut, resident explains.

This Patrician Green Metallic Hardtop was parked outside of its original owner's home, and it caused Steve to slam on the brakes as he was driving by. Mary had cared for her Thunderbird since her husband purchased it for her 25 years earlier, from the now-defunct Backus Ford in Stafford Springs. She'd periodically pull it out of the garage to wash it, and was accustomed to strangers questioning her about the car.

"That color, in the sun, really stands out, and people were ringing her bell all the time," he remembers. "She even had

the dealership that originally sold it to them offer her \$6,000 for it, but she turned it down. I would stop in to see her periodically, and I always made sure my car was clean when I did that. One day, about eight months after I first met her, I visited, and she said, 'I think I'm ready to sell the car.' I said, 'Oh, I would love to buy it, but I don't have \$6,000.' She asked how much I had, and I told her I had \$2,000, and could probably come up with another \$500. She said, 'Well, you're going to need money for insurance and registration. If you want the car, I'll sell it to you for \$2,000.' I was beside myself."

The deal Mary offered Steve was



A hallmark of Sixties Thunderbirds was their stylish interior, famously incorporating front bucket seats divided by a center console; this car's upholstery and carpeting were installed at Ford's Wixom plant. A Swing-Away Steering Wheel was standard.

carburetor, it made 300 hp at 4,600 rpm and 427 lb-ft of torque at 2,800 rpm, ample figures to move the 4,195-pound unit-body down the road at super-legal speeds; of course, this being from Ford's "Total Performance" era, a six-barrel-carbureted, 340-hp V-8 was also available. A Cruise-O-Matic column-shifted automatic transmission was standard equipment, and its inherent convenience paired nicely with the stylish, bucket-seat interior's trademark Swing-Away Steering Wheel. This Thunderbird also boasted the optional, simulated "spinner"-equipped deluxe wheel covers.

Steve's mind raced as he gratefully committed to assume the care and feeding of this iconic 1960s Ford. "My father is a mechanic, and I bought the car without him even looking at it. I didn't crawl underneath it—it could have been rotted off the frame, for all I knew," he admits. "I was aware of some body damage, which happened when she backed into something and scuffed one of the rear quarter panels. After that, she decided she shouldn't drive the car anymore—she parked it in her garage, and bought a Town Car.

"It had sat for a very long time before I bought it," he continues. "I had all I could do just to get it home, because transmission fluid, power steering fluid, oil... they were leaking out of every gasket, like a spaghetti strainer." The Thunderbird showed 126,000 miles on its odometer at that point, and Steve's first order of business was to stop all those leaks. His trusted mechanic would replace the rocker-cover, transmission, and exhaust manifold gaskets, as well as tend to the cooling and exhaust systems.

Those repairs kept this car on the road for the next decade, but his subsequent purchase and restoration of a 1962 Ford Country Squire would relegate the

Thunderbird to the back burner. "In the late 1990s, the T-Bird was running great, but it needed suspension work, and the paint was kind of dull. My station wagon was just out of the body shop, and was beautiful. I drove the wagon for three or four years, never even starting the Thunderbird. Then I lost my storage, and had to move it. I remember sitting behind the wheel that day, looking at that dashboard, and saying to myself, 'Steven, you're falling in love all over again!'" he laughs.

This was the spark that would bring his beloved Thunderbird back into the spotlight. Steve had the engine and transmission rebuilt—noting the relative ease of parts-sourcing for this 390-cu.in. V-8—and soon thereafter, tackled the bodywork and paint. "I sanded it down and saw where there had been old bodywork, but that was just superficial stuff. I had that quarter-panel scuff fixed, and it didn't need much in the way of repairs before the entire body was repainted," he says. "As this was happening, I was thinking, 'I should have done the bodywork before the engine, because my beautifully detailed engine is covered in dust!'" The Thunderbird's interior remained good enough not to require restoration, only covering some threadbare carpeting with period-style white floor mats.

Upgrading the underpinnings represented the next projects to benefit this car, Steve reveals. "Shortly after I did the restoration work, I started thinking about all the money I'd put into it, about its Dixie-cup master cylinder, and that I needed to be able to stop better! I did some research on converting the front drums to discs, and found people did this conversion. I don't know if I could ever replace all the parts, since the list was extensive—including calipers from

sweet, considering the Thunderbird cost \$4,445 when it was new—the rough equivalent of \$35,860 today—and was already a desirable collectible. Her first-ever new car was painted a rich turquoise shared with the contemporary Lincoln Continental, built in the same Ford Wixom assembly plant. This Hardtop was the most popular body style in 1963, selling 42,806 examples and representing the majority of total (63,313) Thunderbird production, with the remainder being a blend of Landau (14,139), Convertible (5,913), and tonneau-equipped Sports Roadster (455 built) styles.

Our feature Driveable Dream was powered by Ford's FE V-8, which displaced 390 cubic inches through its 4.05 x 3.78-inch bore and stroke. With a 9.6:1 compression ratio and a four-barrel



Limited use led to the 300-hp, 390-cu.in. V-8 developing many fluid leaks, which were quelled by installing new gaskets. This engine, and Cruise-O-Matic automatic transmission, were later completely rebuilt. A front disc-brake/dual-master-cylinder conversion was performed for added safety in modern traffic, the switch to high-performance ignition wires and coil was made, and the car now rides on Granada wheels.

a 1979 Monarch, brake lines from a '73 Monte Carlo—but everything works together. The hardest things to find were 14-inch wheels that would clear the calipers, but I got a set from a Ford Granada with disc brakes."

The suspension system was most recently renewed, he explains. "I always thought it had a nice ride, but this car listed to the driver's side. I took a lot of 'diet-time' ribbing for that! Come to find out, one of the leaves on that side was broken." In 2016, the Hardtop received new front coil and rear leaf springs, replacement shocks, and a new set of radial tires. After these components were fitted, Steve learned just how compliant and smooth the luxurious Thunderbird was meant to be.

"There is nothing like getting in the driver's seat, sliding the wheel over to the left, and hitting the key; it just purrs," he tells us. "I don't know what kind of system it had on it back in the day, but my mechanic nailed this dual-exhaust perfectly when I asked for something that wasn't loud and obnoxious, just a little bit throaty when I

punch the gas. And this car certainly gets out of its own way: at 70 mph, there's still half a gas pedal to go. It's just nuts!"

Now being the longest-serving caretaker of this "bullet 'Bird," Steve continues to enjoy it weekly throughout the summer months, adding about 1,500 miles each year, with the odometer now closing in on (1)64,000 miles. "I've enjoyed sharing it with my nephew, Kris, who's grown very attached to it, and I've made great memories driving around with friends. I bring it to car shows for fun, not to be judged. It attracts a lot of attention, which I think is primarily due to the special color—I have yet to see another one like it, and it looks so nice with the chrome. The rocket design and afterburner taillamps look so space-age, and, of course, the aluminum interior trim is over the top!

"I am just never bored by this car; I love everything Ford was trying to do," Steve says with a smile. "Whenever I sit behind the wheel, it turns me on. It brings me right back to that school parking lot." 🐦



I was in love, and that Thunderbird made such an impression on me.





The Brazilian Willys

Designed by Willys-Overland but built in South America

BY PATRICK FOSTER • PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF THE PATRICK FOSTER COLLECTION

For anyone in America looking for a good economy car in the 1950s, the Aero Willys was an excellent choice. For any Brazilian looking for a good luxury car in the 1960s the Aero Willys was an excellent choice. It was simply a case of same car, different day. And different markets.

Willys-Overland's Aero Willys debuted in America for the 1952 model year to a very promising reception despite prices that were high for a small, somewhat austere automobile. Sales grew in 1953, lagged in 1954, and collapsed in 1955, at which time the company, now

part of Henry Kaiser's empire, withdrew from the U.S. automobile market. Frugal man that Kaiser was, he saved the Aero tooling in the hopes of someday using it again. A progressive thinker, Kaiser took a world view of things and believed he might be able to relaunch the car in some overseas country.

It so happened that Willys had an affiliate company in Brazil that was assembling Jeep vehicles from parts shipped in from North America. It also happened that Brazilians were very interested in American cars, which were known for quality, luxury, and

durability. The Brazilian company was owned mainly by local investors, and by 1960 an agreement was reached to begin producing the Aero Willys in their sprawling plant in São Paulo. It was a turning point for Brazil's auto industry, because, with the Aero, they would finally be manufacturing cars, rather than merely assembling parts produced elsewhere.

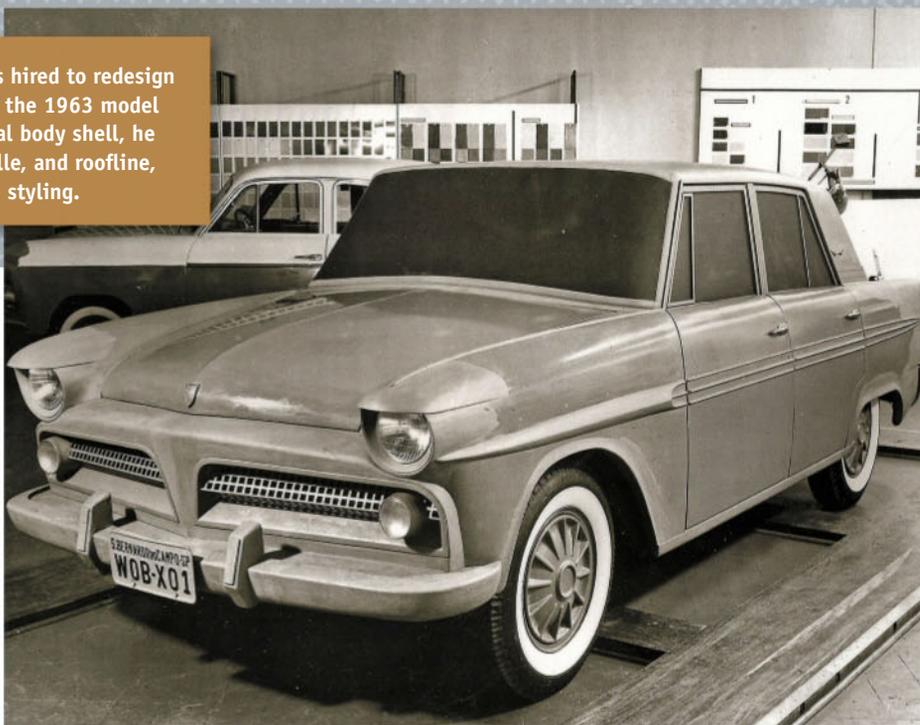
The initial Aero Willys cars built in Brazil were nearly identical to the American version circa 1955, and were fitted with the 161-cubic-inch Willys 90-hp F-head straight-six engine. The homegrown car proved extremely popular



» The initial Brazilian-built Aero Willys cars used the same tooling as the U.S. model. Henry Kaiser had it taken out of storage and shipped to his affiliate in Brazil. Shown is a 1962 model.

» Brooks Stevens was hired to redesign the Aero Willys for the 1963 model year. Retaining the original body shell, he designed new fenders, grille, and roofline, which greatly updated the styling.

with Brazilians, selling in higher-than-expected volume. Because of their American origins, Willys were viewed as prestige cars, though Brazilians especially appreciated that they were produced in-country rather than imported. Willys-Overland Brazil (WOB) thrived in the automobile market; the company had also negotiated for assembly of the low-priced Renault Dauphine compact, so their dealers had a range of models to offer. Then for 1962, management decided to upgrade the Aero Willys with new styling and a sharp new interior. Independent industrial designer Brooks Stevens, a long-time Willys and



» Clever use of design elements helped make the restyled Willys look larger and richer, important because it was pitched to affluent buyers.



Kaiser design consultant, was selected for the job.

Design parameters given to Stevens were to make the car look as new as possible, while also making it appear larger and more luxurious. The basic body shell had to be retained, but money was provided to restyle the exterior body panels. Stevens went to work and soon came up with a surprisingly handsome design. He gave it a squared-off roof line

like the 1958-'60 Ford Thunderbirds, providing more headroom, and then raised and lengthened the rear fenders so the squared-off fins extended past the trunk, which added needed length to the design. Front fenders stretched forward and were given sweptback wheel openings and a distinctive—and controversial—eyelid over the headlamp. The handsome front-end bears a surprising resemblance to the 1962 Chrysler Imperial, with twin

» This pre-production mockup shows off the lengthened rear fenders that helped give the Willys the look of a larger car. The squared-off roof panel actually increased interior roominess.



« Brooks Stevens stands next to his latest creation. Stevens used some of the same design details when he restyled the Studebaker Lark.



The Aero Willys 2600 debuted for 1963 and was an instant hit. As this brochure page illustrates at the bottom, Willys-Overland Brazil was a large company, with a broad range of model offerings including Jeep vehicles and Renault cars.

grilles separated by a body-color bar. Inset driving lamps were a nice touch. Stevens was able to retain the existing hood and decklid, though one can't help but feel the overall styling suffers for it.

Stevens finished off the restyle by adding bright belt moldings, a tapered side molding, and rocker panel moldings, along with slot-style steel wheels and fancy hubcaps that lent a very European flair to the car. Interior fabrics were even finer than before. Perhaps to add to the Euro-mystique, the company renamed it the Aero Willys 2600, a reference to the Willys 2.6 liter (161-cu.in.) six-cylinder engine under the hood. With dual carburetors, output was boosted to 110 horsepower.

Introduced for the 1963 model year, the new Willys quickly became a hit, with production registering a 40-percent boost. Production rose a bit for 1964, then fell a trifle for 1965. For 1966, the company, aware that rival Ford Motor Co. Brazil would soon enter the luxury market with the new Galaxie (using the circa-1965 tooling), introduced a more luxurious version of its car called the Willys Itamaraty (the



In response to growing competition from Ford Brazil, Willys introduced an even fancier version of the Aero called the Itamaraty. Featuring a bright new grille and revised styling, it was a strong seller for the company.

Aero Willys 2600

SOBRIEDADE DE ESTILO-NA BELEZA ARROJADA DE SUAS LINHAS

O AERO-WILLYS 2600 ESTABELECE UMA SUPERCLASSE
 É ele constitui a maior conquista da indústria automobilística brasileira, pois é o mais perfeito carro de classe jamais produzido no Brasil. O Aero-Willys 2600 constitui, realmente, um novo astro. É um orgulho possuir e dirigir o Aero-Willys 2600, um carro veloz, seguro e de grande estabilidade.

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In addition to the new Itamaraty, Willys-Overland Brazil also unveiled the stylish new Itamaraty Executivo 3000, which boasted a stretched limousine body and a 3.0-liter engine producing 132 hp. The first one was created for the president of Brazil. Styling of the Executivo was quietly understated, and very elegant.



This is the Aero Willys for 1967, in one of the last sales brochures issued before the company was sold to Ford. The Kaiser family was interested in getting out of the automobile business by this point and sold both WOB and Industrias Kaiser Argentina that year. IKA was sold to Renault.



Inside the Executivo were found all the luxuries one would expect in a car of state, including a television and a separate speedometer. Note the fold-down jump seat. Rear-seat air-conditioning outlets are seen here, along with the stereo system controls.

O carro que sempre conta a história de homens bem sucedidos.



WILLYS-OVERLAND
 Fabricante de veículos de alta qualidade

Revendedor WILLYS
 Praça Rui Soares
 São Bernardo




This is the fancier Willys Itamaraty for 1967. The elegant couple, with a manservant discretely nearby, illustrates how the Itamaraty was targeted to upper-class buyers.

name comes from a famous palace in the nation's capital Brasília). To create a larger, richer style, the 2600's rear fenders were lengthened, the decklid restyled to better conform with the overall squarish appearance, and rich new fabrics introduced to the interior. A vinyl top was soon offered.

Sales of all vehicles built by WOB

set a new record for fiscal 1966, a total of 68,479 units, making the Willys operation the largest automaker in South America. Interestingly, the number-two automaker was another Kaiser affiliate—Industrias Kaiser Argentina, or "IKA."

Hoping to gain broader recognition in 1966, WOB also offered to build a limousine based on the new Itamaraty, for Brazil's president. Dubbed the Itamaraty Executivo 3000, it boasted a 3.0-liter engine producing 132 hp and a stretched body. The latter was achieved by cutting the car in two, and welding in a center section that allowed much more legroom,

along with room for sideways-facing fold-down jump seats. A special padded top was added, and the interior was loaded with all the luxury items a head of state might need. Included were air conditioning, telephone, Sony television, Clarion sound system, Dictaphone, and, of course, a separate rear-seat speedometer, so *O Presidente* could keep an eye on his chauffeur's driving. Custom exterior trim helped make it a very special vehicle.

Two were built that first year, out of a


With the acquisition by Ford, the Willys cars were now called Ford Willys. Shown is a 1970 model.





Ford continued to offer the two models, Aero and Itamaraty. This is a 1970 Ford Willys Itamaraty.



total production of 18,327 Willys Aero-based cars. "The objective of [building the Executivo limousine]" reported WOB boss William Max Pierce in a confidential memo "is to maintain and improve our prestige, which would otherwise suffer greatly with the introduction of the Ford Galaxie."

By 1967, the newer and larger Ford

Galaxie was now being produced in Brazil and was cutting into Willys sales rather seriously. WOB introduced an upgraded Presidential limousine and also began offering an Executivo limo for business executives. However, Ford continued to eat into Willys sales, and by year-end, Kaiser-Jeep management in the U.S. decided to take its profits while it still could, and sold their share of Willys-Overland Brazil to the Ford Motor Company.

For 1968, Ford continued to offer Willys-badged cars and trucks, though they dropped the slow-selling limos, while adding a low-priced Willys cab for taxi fleets. The Aero-based cars were now

referred to as Ford-Willys. The company continued to manufacture the Willys-based cars to the 1972 model year, and it's estimated that, between 1968 and 1972, some 21,000-plus Ford Willys cars were produced.

Most surprisingly, more Willys Aero cars were produced in Brazil than in the United States. Of the original 1952-'55 models, some 91,377 were built in the U.S. By comparison, the Brazilian plant produced just shy of 117,000 cars. Sure, they took years longer to do it, but then again, the Brazilian automobile market was only a fraction of the size of the U.S. market. Any way you look at it, the little Willys Aero did well when it moved south. 🐞



The Brazilian Aero Willys cars remained in production through 1972, and nearly 117,000 units were built—more than were produced in the United States! The car on the left is a Ford Aero Willys, the car on the right is an Itamaraty.





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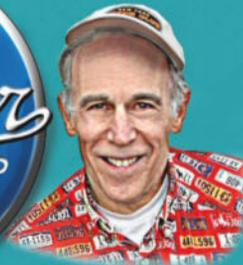


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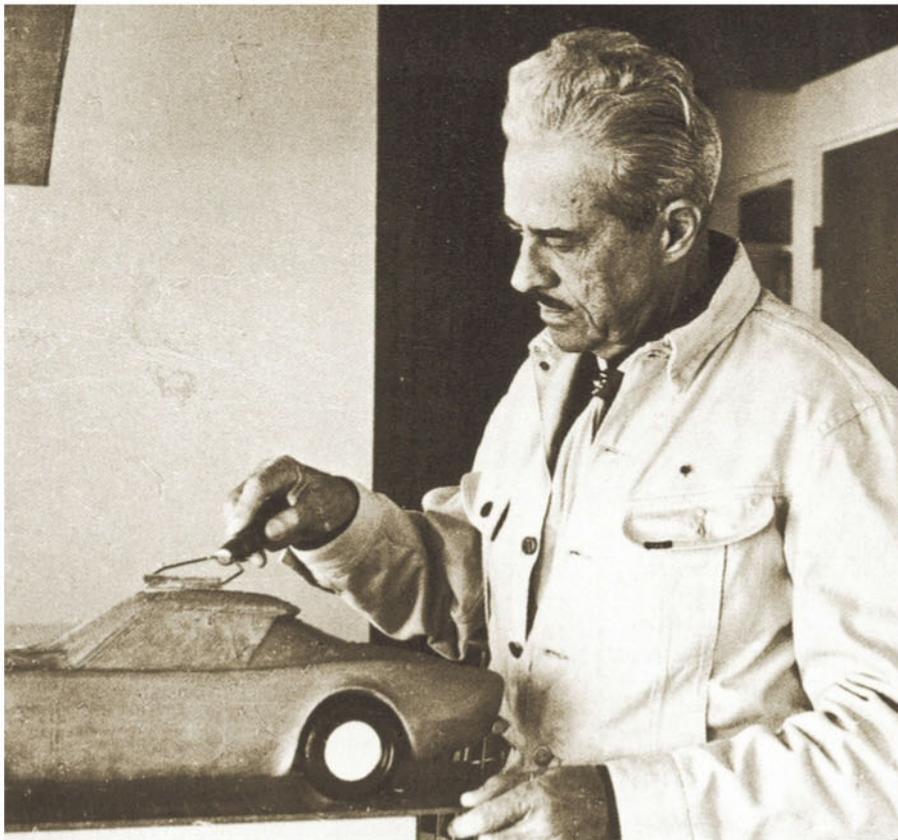


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Raymond Loewy

The father of Industrial Design



BY JEFF KOCH • IMAGES COURESTY OF THE PATRICK FOSTER COLLECTION, THE HEMMINGS ARCHIVES, AND AS CREDITED

It's tough to imagine today how a single voice and vision could have such a singular impact on American culture. Raymond Loewy had that voice and vision.

Set aside the hundreds of thousands of Studebakers that famously bore Loewy's imprint. He designed logos for Shell, Exxon (formerly Esso), BP, and Quaker State, which dispensed gas to Studebakers and every other car out there. He streamlined locomotives, and designed interiors for passenger trains and space stations alike. He penned Coca-Cola vending machines, Coke's iconic contoured glass bottle, the Lucky Strike cigarette logo, the U.S. Post Office's eagle logo, the International Harvester "man on a tractor" IH logo, the twin-globe logo for TWA, and the livery for Air Force One. Not one of these makes you think twice and ask, "What's that look like

again?" You hear the reference, you know the logo. Instant recognition.

Loewy was born in Paris in 1893, to an Austrian father and French mother. His intellect was profound. He attended the University of Paris, majoring in electrical engineering... when he was just 12 years old. In 1908, at the age of 15, he created a rubber-band-powered model airplane that won the prestigious J. Gordon Bennett award; Loewy would patent the design and sell model-plane kits in Europe. "As a boy I had liked both drawing and physics... [by age] 16 I had discovered that design could be fun and profitable, and this lesson has never been lost on me," Loewy said. He served in the French Army during World War I, rising to the rank of captain; Loewy was wounded in combat, received the Croix de Guerre, eventually accumulating four citations for valor, and

was awarded the Legion of Honour. Postwar, he moved to New York City.

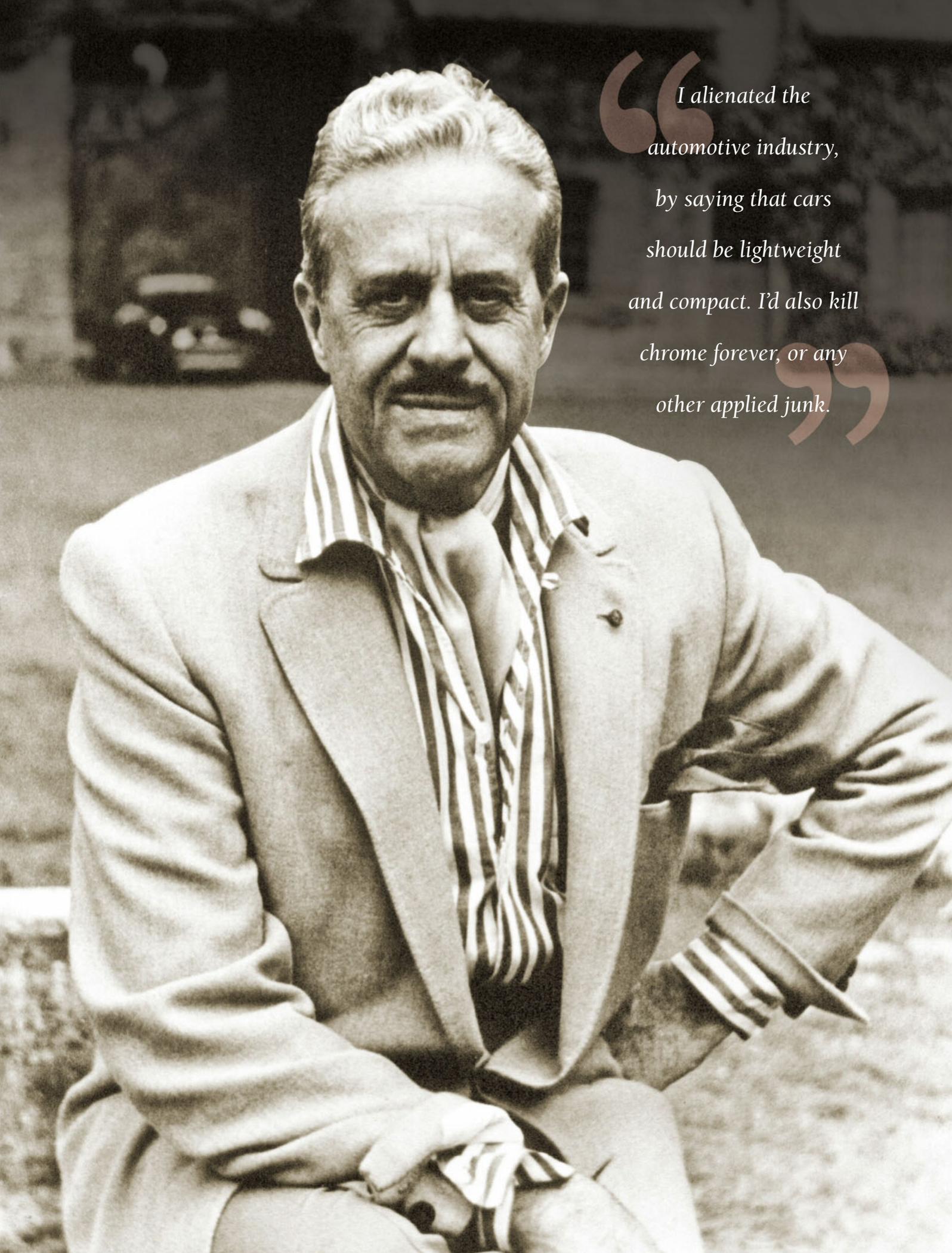
For a decade, Loewy was deep in the New York fashion scene: an illustrator for both *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar*, a window designer for Saks Fifth Avenue and Macy's, and ad designer for Neiman-Marcus and Bonwit Teller. Loewy dressed the part: Even in the Army he retrimmed his baggy uniform to be more form-fitting, and he remained impeccably dressed at all times in civilian life, changing clothes up to three times a day.

It was during his time in New York that the first steps to integrate engineering and art for mass production, the minimalist Bauhaus design school, came to prominence; it so swept the world that at least four industrial-design consultancies were established in New York by 1928. Among these was Loewy's group. His first industrial-design commission came in 1929, when Loewy was tasked to update the look of the Gestetner mimeograph machine. Within three days, Loewy had penned a new exterior shell; it would remain in production for the next four decades. It was but the first Loewy-designed item that would embody his "beauty through function and simplification" concept.

Loewy also adopted a principle that he came to call MAYA—Most Advanced Yet Acceptable. Technology could produce wondrous things that were both functional and aesthetically advanced, but "the adult public's taste is not necessarily ready to accept the logical solutions to their requirements if the solution implies too vast a departure from what they have been conditioned into accepting as the norm." MAYA was a mitigating factor for not going further.

Others came to embrace the same approach, including Walter Teague, Henry Dreyfuss, Harold Van Doren, Helen Dryden, and Norman Bel Geddes. Together, their push for minimalism and streamlining helped underpin the popular Streamline Moderne movement of the 1930s. But none of these designers had nearly the range of clients that Loewy amassed over the decades.

Loewy had always been fascinated with cars, and yearned to shake up Detroit design. His chance came in 1930, when he was hired as a consultant to the Hupp Motor Company. The result of his work, along with designer Amos Northrup, launched in early 1932 the F-222 and I-226. The Murray-built



*“ I alienated the
automotive industry,
by saying that cars
should be lightweight
and compact. I’d also kill
chrome forever, or any
other applied junk.”*



GOODING & CO.



The 1946 Loewy Lincoln was his version of what a 1941 Lincoln should look like. *The Saturday Evening Post* called it “The Fanciest Thing on Wheels.” His earliest radical car design was the 1934 Hupmobile, due to its major influence on aerodynamic theories at the time.

ahead of its time. Six- and eight-cylinder models were collectively known as “Aerodynamic,” and were available as a six-passenger sedan, a five-passenger Victoria sedan, or a rumble-seat coupe.

Hupp’s business problems saw the company part ways with Loewy, but he quickly hooked up with another independent car builder: Studebaker, then the fourth-largest car builder in America. Starting in 1936, Studebaker consulted with Loewy on exteriors, while designer Dryden worked on interiors. During World War II, Loewy continued his style studies; the Big Three were barred from doing so, but because Loewy was independent, his efforts continued. This allowed Studebaker to get the jump on the rest of Detroit’s new postwar cars by two full model years, and its all-new car was introduced in 1947. Features like fully integrated front fenders and the 180-degree wraparound rear window in the Starlight coupe made for an advanced design, years ahead of anything else Detroit was dreaming up.

Loewy and his team at Studebaker, led by Virgil Exner, continued with the “bullet-nose” Studebaker facelift of

bodies featured a V-shaped radiator grille, a swept-back windscreen, a gently rising roof as it extended rearward, rounded window frames, and a “cycle-fender” treatment with openings that framed the wheels and tires rather than sloping rearward. Running boards were flush with the edges of the fenders, and the industry’s first production full-wheel cover was an available option. Later, Loewy would call his deal with Hupp “the beginning of industrial design as a legitimate profession,” as well as “the first time a

large corporation accepted the idea of getting outside advice in the development of their products.”

His second Hupmobile, for 1934, was a car that could have competed with Chrysler’s Airflow for the most radical production car of the year. A wide, laid-back grille with headlamps integrated into the front fenders, a recessed rear-mounted spare, and a wind-friendly overall shape—dictated by the wind tunnel at the Guggenheim School of Aeronautics—gave the 1934 Hupmobile a look that was years



UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

Loewy’s designs of corporate logos were many, and have become an intrinsic part of American culture. So, too, is his blue, white, and gold paint scheme for the President’s Air Force One.





The Studebaker Avanti design team—Tom Kellogg, Raymond Loewy, and John Ebstein. The final result of their collaboration was the stunningly beautiful and contemporary-looking 1963 Avanti. Only the 1963 models had the round bezels circling the headlamps.



1950, and again with the '53 models (generally credited to Loewy, but largely the work of Robert Bourke). No creative endeavor ever truly goes unassisted, and we are compelled to note that beyond being a visionary designer, Loewy was a talent-spotter and a salesman. He could discover, manage, and groom young designers while pitching their ideas, under his name, to his clients.

The 1953 models were treated to a Loewy-led facelift for 1956, when all Studebaker car models received the Hawk designation. Bold, clean shapes on a budget had become Loewy's forte. But other car-industry jobs were not forthcoming. "I alienated the automotive industry," said Loewy, "by saying that cars should be lightweight and compact. I'd also kill chrome forever, or any other applied junk."

By 1961, Studebaker's new president, Sherwood Egbert, needed something to bring people into the showrooms—something as exciting as an E-Type Jaguar, but on Studebaker mechanicals. Though Loewy had not worked with Studebaker for half a decade, Egbert gave Loewy 40 days to whip up a finished design and scale model of a show-stopping Studebaker. Loewy hired a team that included John Ebstein, Bob Andrews, and Tom Kellogg, and decamped to a rented house in Palm Springs, and got to work. Loewy was the creative director. He posted a sign that reminded his team that "weight is the enemy." Chrome trim was reduced to a bare minimum—keeping in line with Loewy's aesthetic and keeping the tooling budget low.

A Coke-bottle body (a name that seems particularly apt here, as Loewy had redesigned Coke's contoured glass bottles some years previous), front fender blades

à la 1961 Lincoln, and the wheel openings were among Loewy's contributions to the Avanti. He also demanded a face without a grille—"Who needs grilles? Grilles I always associate with sewers," he would later say—although an opening below the bumper was necessary to keep the engine cool. Wraparound rear glass, an asymmetrical hood scoop... the Avanti looked like nothing else. Studebaker opted for a 2+2 seating configuration, using a Lark convertible platform. The complex compound curves of the body were beyond factory stampings of the day, so fiberglass was used for production. It was a sensation—one that Studebaker was ill-equipped to deal with when it launched.

Over time, Loewy also designed a number of cars for his own use. Perhaps best known among them is the 1946 "Loewy Lincoln," restyled along the lines of the 1941 Continental that Edsel Ford built for himself. A clear Plexiglas roof, integrated fenders, a custom grille, opera windows, a more prominent trunk,

and 24-karat instrument bezels and dash knobs were among its features. Later, his gold 1959 Cadillac coupe retained only the roofline, and nothing else; the telltale fins long gone, and the new nose featuring a grille that was perforated into the hood. It was Loewy's personal car through 1970. Coachwork was by Pichon-Parat, of France. He also built a BMW 507, E-Type Jaguar (along with a '56 Jaguar coupe that remained only a styling study), Lancia Flaminia coupe (which has more than a few hints of Avanti about it), and Rolls-Royce for himself over time.

Loewy retired at the age of 87 in 1980, and returned to his native France.

He died in his Monte Carlo residence in 1986, survived by his wife Viola, and their daughter Laurence. In the decades after WWII, Loewy's simplifying touch was everywhere in America—you couldn't live your life without seeing Loewy's influence. "I can claim to have made the daily life of the 20th century more beautiful," Loewy once wrote. And as was so often the case, he was right. 🐉



One of Loewy's most distinctive yet controversial-looking designs that caused a sensation when it was produced was the 1950-'51 Studebaker Champion Starlight.

Picking Up the Pieces!

Continuing the abandoned restoration of a rare 1957 Nash Ambassador Custom Country Club



BY MATTHEW LITWIN • PHOTOGRAPHY BY THOMAS A. DeMAURO
RESTORATION PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF FRED INGLE AND FRED'S CUSTOM WIRING & HOT RODS

Roughly a decade ago, a West Coast collector-car enthusiast bought a 1957 Nash Ambassador Custom Country Club. The top-of-the-line two-door hardtop—still sporting styling from Farina—represented the last of the big Nash models; all but the Rambler series was discontinued after this model year. Powered by a new 225-hp American Motors 327-cu.in. V-8, just 997 Country

Clubs were built during the 1957 model year. Whether the car's owner was driven by its rarity or his affinity to the once-proud company is unknown; however, its restoration was commissioned in short order, and Fred Ingle, proprietor of Fred's Custom Wiring & Hot Rods in Ontario, California, was hired for the task.

The Nash appeared both complete and devoid of obvious corrosion when it

was delivered to Fred's facility. In-depth inspection of the car and its components continued during its disassembly, with Fred and his staff carefully documenting, labelling, and organizing the parts as they went. This included removal of its engine, Flashaway Hydra-Matic automatic transmission, and torque tube/differential assembly, leaving the six-passenger unit-body Nash completely stripped. The car was



then mounted on a rotisserie to help gain unimpeded access to its undercarriage.

Rather than strip the body to bare metal via sandblasting—which, if done incorrectly, can warp the panels due to heat generated by the process—Fred used soda blasting instead. When completed, it was obvious that one fender had previous damage, and the rocker panels—along with some chassis bracing—would

need to be replaced. Due to the rarity of replacement panels, new ones would have to be fabricated.

While that process began, Fred rebuilt the Nash engine. Stripping the V-8 to a bare block confirmed that it had not been damaged, thus the 4.00-inch cylinder bores were merely cleaned, resulting in a slight .010 overbore. The crankshaft was polished and balanced, while the

cylinder heads were resurfaced and new valve guides installed. Both the distributor and the Carter carburetor were rebuilt and, once all the machine work had been completed, the engine was reassembled.

Things were progressing as any “normal” restoration should have, except that as the V-8 was completed, and the metal fabrication was just beginning, the Nash’s owner approached Fred with



Any form of documenting parts and their as-removed condition helps restoration projects. Here, several pieces of chrome trim have been spread out and photographed prior to being shipped for replating, thereby creating a visual inventory.



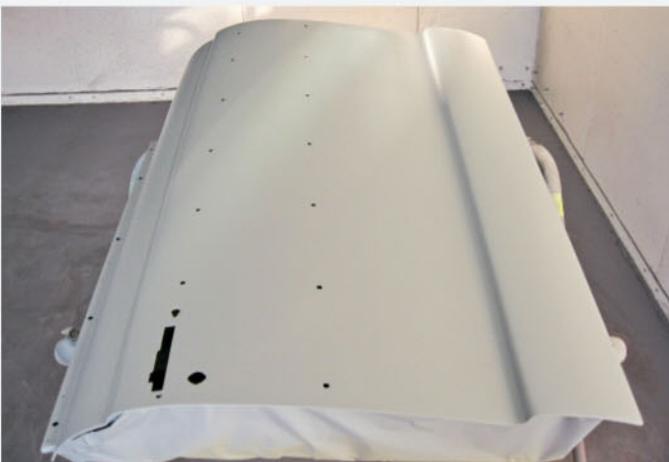
After disassembly, the body was mounted to a rotisserie, which provided easy access to every surface of the unit-body Nash for the restoration team. This included the underside, where some corrosion within and near the rocker panels was found.



A keen eye will note the temporary bracing within the door opening, which is helping maintain the car's structural rigidity. At this stage, a new outer rocker panel has been fabricated and is being test-fitted for correctness.



After fabrication work had been completed, the restoration team applied a skim coat of filler on each of the body panels where needed. The material was then sanded smooth, with special care taken to maintain factory body lines during the intensive process.



Using a DeVilbiss spray gun, two coats of DuPont primer were applied to the main body as well as the removed panels. After it was allowed to cure, the surface was sanded once again using multiple grades of sandpaper, this time with 400-grade used last.



As we've outlined in other restoration features, many components are restored as sub-assemblies, such as the dashboard here. The 1957 Ambassador Custom Country Club's dash featured an engine-turned insert, which was carefully restored and installed.



Receiving equal time in the paint booth were the Nash's suspension and other associated chassis parts, including this front crossmember. Each piece was media blasted, inspected, sealed in primer, and then—as seen here—finished in chassis-black enamel.



At this stage, the body has received its finish coat of Mardi Gras Red trimmed with Frost white paint. The car's suspension, engine, transmission, and remaining driveline system have been reinstalled, while the doors have been hung and balanced.



Reassembly of the hardtop's interior began with the installation of the completed instrument panel, steering column, and pedal assemblies. Hidden from view is a new wiring harness. Note that the owner resisted adding air conditioning from the parts car.



In many instances, bolt-on items—such as spark-plug wires and the carburetors—are secured to the engine after the latter has been reunited with the chassis. Accessory brackets, radiator, heater hoses, and throttle-linkage connections are also finalized.



While it may seem easier to begin installing new upholstery with door- and side-panel assemblies, the best method is to begin with hanging the headliner, as seen here. The top-down method enables all seams to be hidden by the lower panels with less effort.



Although the doors had been hung and balanced earlier, a second alignment was required during the reinstallation of the exterior trim. Improper installation wouldn't just look bad, it could lead to damage at the trim extremities, such as the door/fender junction.



disconcerting news: He needed to sell the Ambassador, and promptly posted it on the internet. Two days later, in the early months of 2009, Bill Bartels—a gentleman in the market for a Nash—received a call from a close friend.

“My father had always driven Nash products,” Bill explains, “and my friend’s father was a Nash salesman, so we both have had a deep appreciation for these cars. I’m not internet savvy, so when he spotted it, he called me. Not wanting to miss an opportunity, I called the owner right away.”

Bill goes on to tell us: “We talked for a while, and the seller informed me that he purchased the car for \$3,000, and a four-door sedan parts car came with it. The parts car had two desirable options—air conditioning and power windows—and he had intended to remove those items and install them in the coupe. One of the donor car’s fenders was also going to be used on the coupe, to replace the damaged fender. The gentleman also disclosed what he had invested, not only in terms of

the car’s original purchase price, but the expense of the restoration to that point.”

According to Bill, the discussion covered everything from the seller’s unwillingness to part out the Country Club, and Bill’s reluctance to move a car that had been stripped to 1,000 pieces from California to his home in Canfield, Ohio. Provided Bill could reach a new agreement with Fred, he would leave the Nash in Ontario—sight unseen—until it was completed. Ultimately, the three parties reached an agreement. Bill’s investment in the project matched that of the seller’s initial purchase price of \$3,000. “That’s all he wanted; he ate the restoration costs to that point, and I worked very closely with Fred thereafter to see the project through,” says Bill.

With negotiations completed, work resumed on the Nash. New rocker panels were completed and TIG welded into place, while minor imperfections were massaged out of the body. A skim coat of filler followed, where needed, and was then smoothed using 80-grade sandpaper. At least two coats of DuPont primer followed, which, after a proper length of cure time, was then sanded smooth using the step process, from 150- to 400-grade paper.

During the required cure time, other parts of the restoration took place, such as the rebuilding of the Flashaway transmission and the torque-tube assembly. Suspension components that had earlier been media blasted and inspected received a

proper coat of chassis black paint. In addition, brightwork had either been polished or sent out for replating.

When it came time to choose the final color scheme for the Nash, Bill deviated from his strong belief in maintaining a car’s factory-stock attributes. “When I was in college, the local Nash dealer had a single-car showroom, and sitting on the floor was a red-and-white hardtop. This coupe was originally painted Plum, but that two-tone still resonated with me. I had Fred change the color to Mardi Gras Red, trimmed with Frost White. That meant we had to change the upholstery as well, so we worked with SMS Auto Fabrics to obtain new material. By chance, a friend in the Nash Club was able to locate an NOS dash pad,” says Bill.

Fred chose a DuPont basecoat/clearcoat system, the basecoat consisting of three layers of acrylic enamel. The final coat was sanded—again, using the step process—with 1,000- to 3,000-grade sandpaper. Four layers of clearcoat followed, each of which was wet sanded after curing, culminating with a final wet sanding using 3,000-grade paper; 3M compound and polishing brought forth a mirror-like finish.

Final assembly could then begin, with the installation of the suspension, brake, and fuel systems, as well as a new wiring harness. While the fenders, doors, hood, and decklid were bolted into place and properly aligned, the interior



owner's view

I guess you could say that the project was a blind act of faith. Considering my cost for a restoration that had been started, I figured I couldn't go too far wrong. Ultimately, it cost me 3,700 man-hours; however, there is nothing I would have done, or would have asked anyone to do, differently. Because of my strong ties to the Nash brand, there was a great personal involvement in making sure this Ambassador ended up back in factory-new, running condition. It's a car I've always coveted, and I couldn't have hoped for a better result. Fred did the entire thing perfectly."

—Bill Bartels



began to receive its components, starting with the dash and instrument panel. A new headliner was installed before door and rear side panels were fitted. Carpet, recovered seats, and trim followed shortly thereafter, while the exterior received its brightwork. In early 2011,

Bill's Nash was completed.

"Fred and I developed a really close friendship along the way, and I received updates on a regular basis, but I never really saw the car until it was delivered," Bill recalls. "The result was exactly as I had hoped: a concours-winning finish. I'm

not really into displaying at car shows, but the only place this car was shown—at the Glenmore Gathering—it won its class. Since then, I drive it on average about 100 miles a month. It allows me to enjoy the car in nice weather, while helping minimize wear to the finish." 🐾



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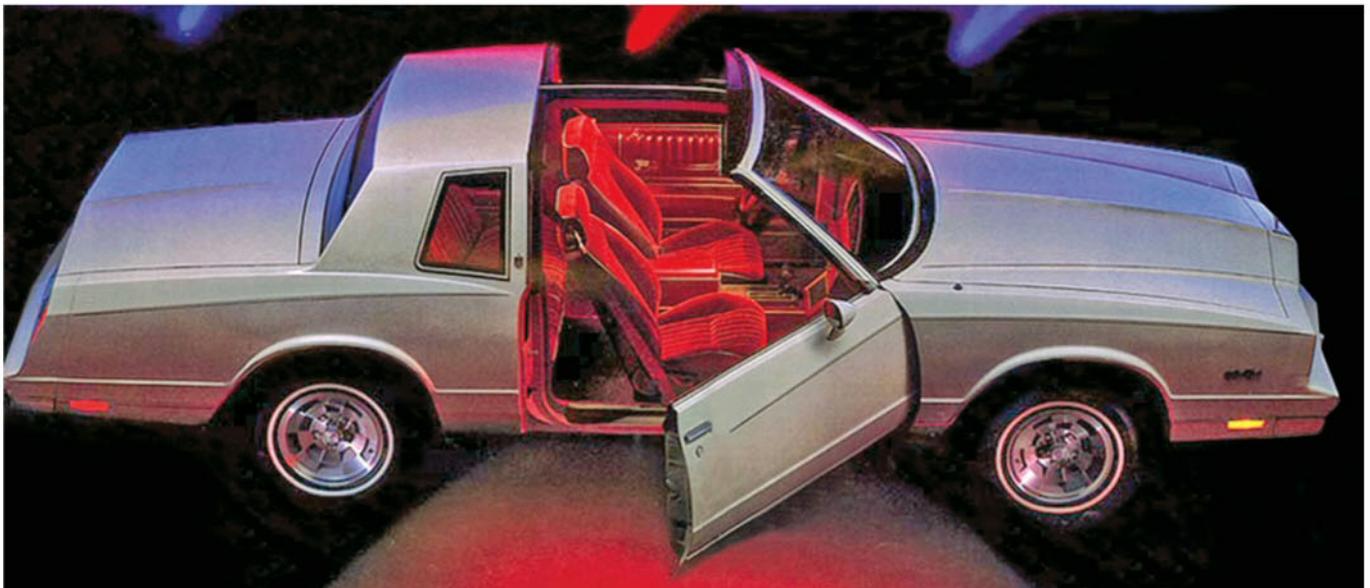


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Monte Carlo's pulse-quickenning style is sculpted to cut through the wind and turn heads wherever it goes. And you can personalize it further with the optional removable glass roof panels, bucket seats, sport console, Sport mirrors and aluminum wheels shown here. Monte Carlo's power steering takes only 3.3 turns lock to lock for maneuverability.

The power front disc brakes are air vented for rapid cooling. And the 14-inch steel-belted radial tires are all-season M + S-rated (Mud and Snow) designed for low noise, long wear and excellent traction.



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Suspension, tuned to the car's weight and powertrain, with large-diameter stabilizer bars, front and rear. The special SS trim, padded Sport steering wheel and gauges, with tach, set off the interior. And the SS exterior is instantly recognizable in your choice of four colors, from the distinctive rear spoiler and exclusive black-out trim to the Monte Carlo SS identification.

There's more to tell, but we'll let Monte Carlo SS say it. After all, action speaks louder than words.

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Silver Met*
Medium Gray Met.
Black*
Light Blue Met.
Dark Blue Met.
Light Green Met.
Medium Green Met.
Light Brown Met.
Cream Beige
Medium Brown Met.
Dark Maroon Met*
Light Blue Met.
Dark Blue Met.
Medium Brown Met.
Light Brown Met.
Medium Green Met.
Light Green Met.
Silver Met.
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From the driver's seat it's like a private club: a quiet, luxurious atmosphere surrounding rich upholstery. And adding even more to Monte Carlo's visible level of quality is the available CL Custom Interior shown here. Its deeply contoured 55/45 front seat provides individualized comfort for driver and passenger, separated by a padded pull-down center armrest. (This seat is also available with a six-way power adjustment on the driver's side.)

Monte Carlo's combination of engineering, style and comfort makes it one of America's most appealing personal luxury cars. Reserve your seat and enjoy the performance.

Big & Bold, and a Cougar

HAVING ALREADY GROWN TO mid-size proportions with a switch to the Montego platform in 1974, Mercury, a marque I miss very much, realized the Cougar name was much more saleable than Montego (*HCC #127, Detroit Underdogs*). As a result, Mercury dropped Montego in favor of Cougar for the 1977 model year. And with that switch, the Cougar gained a four-door sedan and, surprisingly, a wagon, that were almost identical cousins to the Ford LTD II.

“Cougar Villager Station Wagon—The first sporty family-sized wagon in the Cougar XR-7 tradition. The new wagon combines Cougar’s new front-end styling with the practical characteristics of a station wagon.” They weren’t kidding. The one-year-only wagon body was a 1976 Montego from the cowl back (so was the one-year-only LTD II station wagon).

The newly reduced Thunderbird sold like no other T-Bird before, and the Cougar was also more popular than any cat since its 1967 debut, selling about half as many copies as its first cousin. However, this was obscured by the fact that the numbers included the sedans and wagons. Today, though, if you placed an identically equipped 1977-’79 Thunderbird and Cougar XR-7 next to each other, the Thunderbird would command almost 30 percent more than the big Cougar. As a lover of Mercurys, this disturbs me and delights me at the same time. I am disturbed by the sometimes lackluster popularity of Mercurys, but I am delighted that one of these fabulous cars can be snapped up for a song.

“Crisp styling plus superb riding performance put Cougar oceans apart from its nearest rival,” according to the brochure.

With V-8s ranging from 302 to 400 cubic inches, mated to the C4 automatic transmission, the 1977 Cougar rode on the split wheelbases of 114 inches for the coupes and 118 inches for the sedan and wagon. Classified as a midsize car, the Cougar was as big as GM’s newly downsized full-sizers. To be fair, so were GM’s midsize cars for one model year.

“The two-door hardtop and four-door pillared hardtop models are the most affordable Cougars. Priced surprisingly low for a fine automobile, offering so much in styling,



comfort and driving satisfaction,” so said your friendly Mercury dealer.

The most desirable Cougar was the XR-7 coupe, but there was also a base coupe. Both featured opera windows and, when fully optioned, were firmly entrenched in the personal-luxury segment, so loved during the “Me Decade.” Vinyl was plentiful on all fully optioned models, especially on the four-door brougham and the XR-7, with a decorative strip running the length of the body side, a padded vinyl roof with louvers integrated into the opera windows, and a padded vinyl covering for the square spare tire hump on the deck lid. Most Mercury buyers checked off all the appearance options on the build sheet, which is why the ones you find are drenched in vinyl. It may not sound tasteful when I describe it, but the look is quite stunning in person, with several color combinations available. I dare say the Cougar wore its vinyl appliques slightly better than most from the “Ford Family of Fine Cars.” My favorite was the mint-green Cougar I saw at a show, with white vinyl accents and a white interior. It looked delicious.

“Cougar XR-7 is the luxurious and exciting extension of the spirited and untamed Cougar personality. The embodiment of personal luxury and comfort in a true intermediate-sized automobile.”

The Cougar XR-7 coupe included power disc brakes and steering, rear stabilizer bar, walnut woodgrained instrument panel, “XR-7” trunk keyhole door, decklid script spelling “COUGAR,” hood ornament, and sport-styled

roofline with back-half vinyl and the aforementioned louvered opera windows.

“On the freeways or in urban areas, Cougar is an eye catcher. Front to rear, its styling says excitement.”

Mercury offered two additional styling packages: the XR-7 Decor Option and the Midnight-Chamois Decor Option. The Midnight Chamois featured a half-vinyl roof, padded vinyl spare-tire hump, and Midnight Blue and Chamois interior with Tiffany carpeting. I remember seeing many Midnight Chamois Cougars back in the day, and they were beautiful. My mother’s best friend had a four-door with the Midnight-Chamois Decor Option.

For 1979, the final year of the fourth-generation Cougar, it received a redesigned grille with body-color inserts and a revised taillamp assembly. Through it all, production was always strong, with 1978 being the best year when more than 213,000 Cougars found new homes.

While the Cougars one finds online are usually XR-7 coupes, there are good deals when considering the other big Cougars. The two-door coupe averages at \$4,500. The four-door pillared hardtop is the bargain at an average of \$4,000. And, the XR-7 comes in at a whopping \$5,700 average. What about the wagon? Well, it is that one word that makes my eyes roll when I see it in an ad—“rare,” so it falls just below the XR-7 at \$5,500.

Do you want a car with distinguished styling and Mercury flair? Then the 1977-’79 Cougar should be on your list—“at the sign of the cat.” 🐾

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Delco Moraine

IN 1977 I WAS EMPLOYED AT THE

old Delco Moraine Division of General Motors in Dayton, Ohio, as a utility floor inspector in their Packaging Department. This entailed making sure the correct parts were put in the correct box, printed with the correct part number. We packaged not only the Genuine GM Parts brake components, engine bearings, and transmission plates that we manufactured, but also ACDelco's full line of brake parts. This meant that we packaged and had inventories of older GM, Ford, Chrysler, and other manufacturers' brake components. This was a restorer's heaven that more than one GM executive took advantage of.

The minimum order of these purchased OEM parts from other companies seemed to be 500 or so. Every year we were stuck with inventorying and paying taxes on these unpackaged parts, as the ACDelco Parts system rarely needed that many parts at once. GM did not like paying taxes on inventory.

That summer was different. We inventoried the unpackaged purchased and old GM stock, and wrote scrap tickets for all of it. Page after page of part numbers: master cylinders, wheel cylinders, calipers, boosters, pads, linings, repair/rebuild parts, and even mineral oil systems parts, all dumped into tubs for the local scrap hauler. I asked the scrap truck driver if he knew what he was getting, and he said he did, but there was nothing they could do until it was at their yard. As a car guy who had completely restored a 1956 Chevrolet 210, I was just ill.

That was the end of the full-service line of brake components in ACDelco Parts. I never heard whether the scrap yard identified and resold any of those parts, or what happened to the ACDelco parts already out at the warehouses.

The next winter, going back to college paid off for me, and I received a GM/UAW electrical apprenticeship.

Fast-forward two years; I was in the second year of my apprenticeship, and moved to the caliper assembly area at our North Plant for experience in troubleshooting relay- and PLC-controlled assembly machines. With these machines, we supplied completely assembled and



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tested brake calipers with pads installed, ready to bolt on axles at the assembly plants. The calipers for each body line were assembled in a dedicated room on the pallets of a continuous oval conveyor line; Corvette had its own room.

During the five years I spent in Packaging, we had experienced on-going complaints from customers that the unassembled Corvette caliper halves we packaged were rusty and unusable when they opened the box. They wrote nasty letters, sent the parts back via the parts houses, and then threatened to quit buying them. We had tried packaging wrapped in vapor corrosion inhibiting paper and then VCI paper inside a plastic bag—they still rusted. The process specification dictated that the raw machined casting was to be dipped in a clear anti-rust coating and dried before the part number changed, making it a service part. We had been assured that specification had always been complied with. I found those dip tanks and drying racks for that process stacked in the corner of the Corvette caliper room, covered with junk, and unused in years. All that the job setters there knew was they weren't allowed to get rid of them. By then, most Corvette clubs and parts jobbers had gotten the word and were buying aftermarket calipers.

I got to see and work on many interesting projects. We had the lines ready for production of the rotor for the rotary

engine, when its seal and fuel economy problems doomed it. Most interesting were some of the "mules"... the Audi with X-car drivetrain and running gear; then, in the mid '90s, the presidential limo built from a Caprice front with a 4-foot stretch, mated to a Roadmaster rear, sitting on a 3500-model truck frame and running gear. There was more than two tons of added weight to simulate armor.

It's sad. Delco Moraine, Inland, Moraine Assembly, and Delco Products are all gone now. I wouldn't have survived the monotony of working production, but the variety of electrical work I had in maintenance kept my interest for just under 40 years. If you wanted to work, you could buy a home, send your kids to college, and retire without starving. There were some brilliant people there to work with, along with some examples perfectly illustrating the Peter Principle. With that many people and that many personalities, I looked on it as "live entertainment—new show every day." 🍷



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

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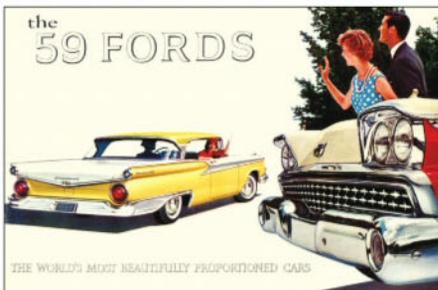
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FORD'S BRILLIANT RESTYLING ACCENTUATES the beauty and class of the offerings of the venerable automaker. The long and low Ford now has a flatter hood with less chrome trim. The grille and bumper have been completely restyled, with the rear fenders forming a housing for the backup lamps and curving around the new round taillamps. Also look for the Galaxie, the new top-of-the-line series, which will include the Skyliner and Sunliner convertibles. New Ford cars are available for as low as \$2,172.

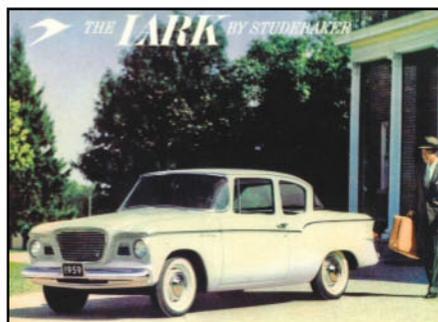
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- Daytona 500Lee Petty
(135.521 mph)
- Formula One.....Jack Brabham
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SALES RACE

(total model-year production)

1. Chevrolet 1,481,071
2. Ford 1,462,143
3. Plymouth 458,261
4. Pontiac 383,320
5. Oldsmobile 382,865
6. Rambler 374,240
7. Buick 285,089
8. Dodge 151,851
9. Mercury 150,030
10. Cadillac..... 142,272



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FACTORY PRICES

- Buick LeSabre.....\$2,740-\$3,320
- Cadillac*.....\$4,892-\$5,498
- Chevrolet Bel Air.....\$2,386-\$2,970
- Chevrolet Corvette..... \$3,875
- Chrysler 300E\$5,319-\$5,749
- De Soto Firedome.....\$3,234-\$3,653
- Dodge Coronet.....\$2,466-\$3,039
- Edsel.....\$2,629-\$3,072
- Ford Galaxie\$2,582-\$3,346
- Ford Thunderbird.....\$3,696-\$3,979
- Lincoln Continental* **..\$6,598-\$7,056
- Mercury Monterey.....\$2,654-\$3,150
- Oldsmobile 88\$3,178-\$3,669
- Plymouth Fury\$2,691-\$3,131
- Pontiac Catalina.....\$2,633-\$3,209
- Rambler.....\$1,821-\$3,116
- Studebaker.....\$1,925-\$2,590

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**Limousines excluded

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Old Blue

SCHOOL WAS OUT FOR THE SUMMER, and my dad didn't want me to be left home alone. How much trouble could a freshly minted 16-year-old boy get into? Much to my dismay, my dad made me go to work with him. This meant sitting in the car all day because he was a food service salesman. We were on the road between Tulsa and Coweta, Oklahoma, and I was acting as cold and unhappy as possible to show my disapproval, and my dad likely not concerned in the least that my day wasn't going as planned!

I happened to glance out the driver's side of the windshield at just the right time to see an old used-car lot come into view—Rocket Motors. They had a big vintage sign with a fake rocket pointed towards the sky, and alongside sat the most beautiful car I'd ever seen. I had no idea what it was at first, but it was love at first sight.

I suddenly realized that I had to give myself an attitude adjustment if I was ever going to talk Dad into stopping on the way back to look at it. For reasons that remain unknown to me, he agreed. Upon closer inspection, the car turned out to be a nearly grandma-fresh 1968 Buick Skylark Custom. It was wearing a new set of Cragar SS wheels and had been resprayed in a slightly incorrect shade of metallic blue. It had a light-blue vinyl interior with a bench seat with cloth seat covers installed over the factory vinyl, and the dash pad and steering wheel were cracked. Under the hood resided the two-barrel Buick 350-cu.in. V-8, backed by the two-speed ST300 automatic. In my eyes, it was perfect.

We returned the next day to bring the car home. The moment I sat in the driver's seat and turned the key, followed by pulling onto the highway, was then, and still is, one of the high points of my life. My mom was riding shotgun, as I only had a learner's permit, and she was very obviously not so thrilled with my choice of a "hot rod" as my first car. She was later proven to be correct in her suspicion that it could be too much to handle.

What followed was seven months of pure enjoyment; donuts in the high school parking lot, long high-speed runs down the highway, many one-tire burnouts, as



well as dates, and a few other adventures. I grew tired of looking at the dirty, old engine and decided to repaint what I could. My lack of mechanical experience didn't stop me from removing the carb and intake to aid in the cleaning and painting. When I was done, it sure looked good in Chevy Orange, however it didn't run right due to an improperly installed intake gasket. Off came the intake again.

The fun and games ended one cold and cloudy January day in 2001. I was pulling out of a gas station in my normal fashion when I hit some loose sand in the center median, and was suddenly

using all four lanes trying to keep it on the road. I was a hair past 50 mph when I jumped the curb and drove straight into a telephone pole. I had been showing off to a friend who was walking across the street; boy did he get a show. By the time the car stopped rolling backwards, I was able to climb out to survey the damage. The car was hurt pretty badly; the bumper was perfectly folded around the pole. The center of the frame and the end of the crankshaft had taken the brunt of the impact. The balancer was lying on the ground, and the engine had been ripped free from its mounts and shoved back

about one foot, crushing the firewall. The rear axle was kinked as well, from the drivetrain moving towards the back.

I had also managed to trash my forehead on the windshield, as well as my teeth on the dash. Standing in the street and looking at the carnage was, up to that point, the worst day in my life. Additionally, I still owed my dad \$2,800 for the car, and I only had liability insurance. Fortunately, the story didn't end there.

After getting my face put back together, I had to make a choice about what to do with my poor car. Most everyone said I should cut my losses and send it to the crusher with a lesson learned. I'm not that kind of guy, though; you just can't walk away from a love like that. So, I promptly tore the car apart, purchased a parts car from which to scavenge a good frame, axle, body panels, and other odds and ends. I then had the engine machined, and after getting it back, I assembled my first engine. To my continued amazement, it still runs well. Overall, it took about 18 months to get the car put back together on a shoestring budget. I had a buddy paint it for \$1,000. It wasn't perfect, but it was better than it was when I first bought it.

Now, about 16 years after I got her back on the road, it's still a love affair. I now own and operate a small auto-restoration business and get to spend most of my days working on and restoring cars and trucks, in addition to doing maintenance and repairs on newer vehicles. "Old Blue" sits in the shop and keeps me company while I'm working. The cheap paint job is starting to show its age, and the transmission leaks. The oil pressure is lower than I would like it to be, but every time I slide behind the wheel and take it for a spin, I'm 16 years old again. The memories come back as I take to the open road. I think about all the fun I had before I nearly destroyed the car, the heartbreak involved with that ordeal, and then all of the good times I had putting her back together. I think of my good friends who helped, friends like Bob Asher who helped me with the carpet and recovered my dash pad. Bob's been gone for a couple years now, but it seems like he's riding shotgun with me every time he is able.

I'm now divided between tearing the car apart for a well-deserved and proper restoration or just maintaining it in its current condition. I'm not really sure that I want to undo what I worked so hard to accomplish back then. Whatever I decide, rest assured that *Old Blue* and I will not be parting ways anytime soon. 🐾

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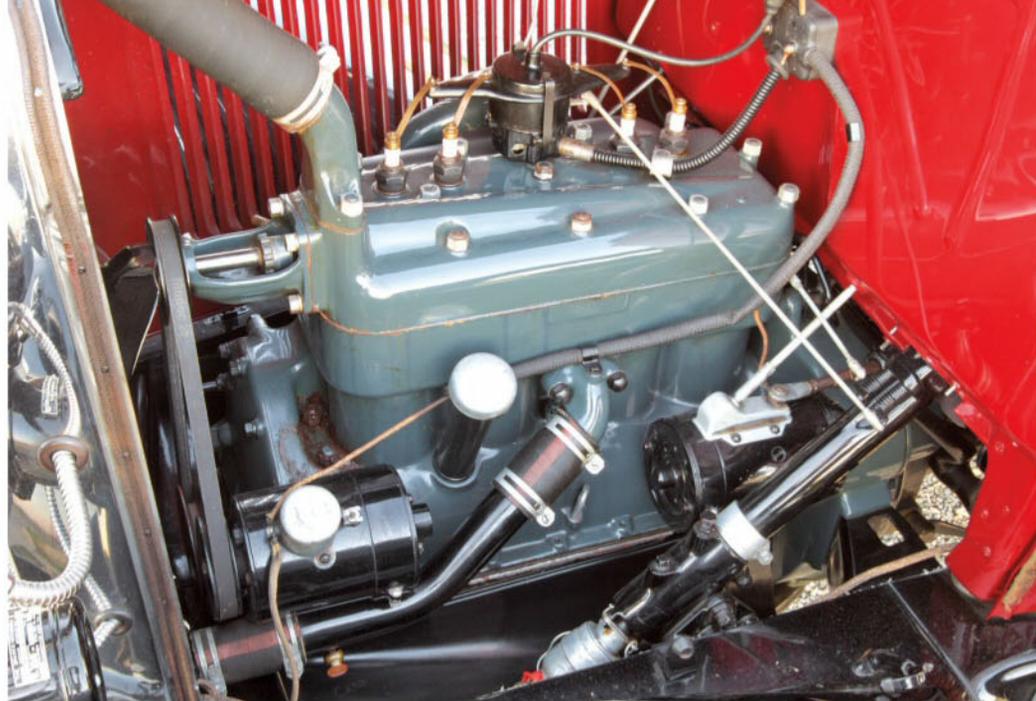
The 1931 Model A DeLuxe combined high style with hard work

BY MIKE McNESSOR • PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEFF KOCH

Ford was dealt a one-two punch in 1931 as rival automakers pounded away at the Model A's dominance and the Great Depression pummeled new-vehicle sales.

Ford was still the low-cost leader, but Chevrolet, Essex, Pontiac, and Willys were offering six-cylinder engines at competitive prices. Moreover, Chrysler's fledgling Plymouth brand had emerged as a serious

threat to the A, with a higher-horsepower four-cylinder engine and other advanced features: hydraulic brakes and shocks, "Floating Power" engine mounts to reduce harshness and vibration, and automati-



cally controlled vacuum spark advance.

Over the winter of 1931, Chevrolet overtook Ford in domestic automobile sales and never looked back. Ford finished the year in the number-two position behind Chevrolet, selling nearly 50,000 fewer cars. Where the plucky Bowtie division couldn't top Dearborn, however, was in the commercial vehicle market. In 1931, Ford hung onto the number-one spot in the truck race with a nearly 40,000-unit edge over Chevrolet, despite flagging sales industry-wide.

Of course, we all know the rest of

the story: Henry Ford rocked the industry in 1932 with the release of the game-changing 221-cu.in. V-8 that only cost buyers about \$50 more than the four-cylinder engine. But in the days before the flathead V-8, Ford was scrambling for new ways to stem market-share losses. Commercial truck sales were key to that strategy, and Dearborn's efforts to create some buzz around Model A pickup trucks brought about some interesting, and now rare, one-year-only designs. Among them, the De Luxe pickup—like the one featured here—with its cab-integrated bed sides and more.

A prototype for the De Luxe pickup was unveiled at a General Electric Refrigerator dealers' convention in March 1931 at the Statler Hotel in St. Louis, Missouri. It was painted white, and bristled with luxury-themed trim and accessories uncommon on trucks, such as a bright radiator shell and cowl band, as well as bright headlamp buckets, windshield frame, and outside rearview mirror. This jaunty one-off truck also had some features that didn't see production, such as twin side-mounted spares with stainless bands, a slanted windshield, and opera lamps on the B pillars.

Ford's publicity photos showed the handsome truck hauling a GE refrigerator—each wearing gleaming white finishes. This idea of an upscale delivery truck to tote its appliances apparently appealed to GE, so Ford placed an initial order of 325 bodies with Briggs Manufacturing. The production pickup, known in Ford factory parlance as 66-A, differed from the show truck, as it used Ford's standard cab with an upright windshield, had only one sidemount spare, and the opera lamps on the cab were eliminated. The signature

smooth bed sides remained, however, and the integrated cab-bed look was accomplished with panels that hugged the rear of the cab and were riveted in place. This gentrified A pickup was available not only in white, but in 38 colors offered by Ford.

Unfortunately, this stylized hauler didn't catch fire with truck buyers. Ford sold just 99 by the fall of 1931, and ultimately canceled its order with Briggs after fewer than 300 were produced.

The De Luxe pickup wasn't the only hauler that Ford attempted to take upmarket that year. The De Luxe line also included a De Luxe Delivery and a De Luxe Panel Truck. The Delivery was a Model A panel with bright trim, while the Panel Truck was an AA dressed up with shiny exterior bits. For businesses wanting the most prestigious hauler on the market, there was also a Town Car Delivery with an open cockpit, like a chauffeur-driven rig. Behind the driver was a special rounded enclosed cargo box ornamented with opera lamps and, of course, a full complement of polished trim, including stainless spare-tire bands, rounded out the package. This fancy panel found even fewer takers than the De Luxe Pickup—only 196 were built, making them a rare find today.

When the Model A Pickup arrived for 1928, it was anything but luxurious, and offered only with an open cab capped by a fixed soft-top. The closed-cab truck made its debut in August of that year, but in keeping with its all-business image, exterior colors on all trucks were limited to either black or green. In 1929, Ford's pickups were outfitted with black steering wheels to replace the previous year's red wheel, outside door handles were added on roadsters, and the color palette was

expanded to include black, blue, and two shades of green.

The Model A Pickup's one and only facelift came in June of 1930, when the boxy, upright closed cab was replaced with a lower, rounder, more modern-looking design. The restyled trucks also rode on 3 x 19-inch wheels (older Model A's used 21-inch wheels), shod with 4.75-inch tires. Other differences between the 1930-'31 Model A's and earlier Pickups included a taller radiator, a reshaped hood, broader fenders, a reshaped front bumper (rear bumpers were optional), and twist-on gas and radiator caps. While the bed panels were the same through much of the Model A Pickup's run, no other panels interchange between the 1928-'29 trucks and the 1930-'31 trucks.

Driving a Model A pickup today definitely makes you aware of just how far truck sizes have sprawled. The A's cab seems small enough to fit inside the glovebox of a new F-150—two full-sized guys will practically touch shoulders, and driver legroom is scant. To start the truck, you must manually open the throttle and retard the spark using the steering-wheel-mounted levers, turn on the ignition key, pull on the choke, and then engage the starter using the floor-mounted switch (just

above the gas pedal). Once the engine starts, you advance the throttle, then work the choke until the engine is warmed up. By turning the choke knob, you can enrich or lean out the air/fuel mixture.

The Model A's three-speed transmission uses a conventional H shifting pattern, but with straight-cut gears, shifting is best performed slowly. When downshifting, you must match your engine rpm to the road speed—double clutching certainly helps. The road manners of these trucks are surprisingly nimble, thanks to stiff suspension and quick steering. A Model A pickup feels happiest running along at around 45 mph, so hanging with traffic on secondary roads is definitely possible.

The owner of this month's feature truck, Ralph Lawrie of Folsom, California, isn't shy about driving and sharing his rare Rubellite Red De Luxe Pickup. "Being in California allows me to go to a show every Wednesday night, or to Saturday morning cars and coffee," he said. "Everyone hasn't seen one of these trucks, so people love to look at it."

Ralph and his wife, Phyllis, own four Model A's, so they have an appreciation for the breed. "This one I bought out of Rochester, New York, in March 2016," he said. "The seller was the second owner.

The original owner used it as a service truck for his business from 1931 to 1949, when he put it in storage. The guy I bought it from acquired it in 1962 and took until 1968 to restore it."

Even with its decades-old restoration, the truck proved it had no trouble holding its own on the show field, as Ralph discovered immediately after purchasing it. "I bought it and had it delivered to a friend's house near the upcoming Model A Ford Club of America show in Loveland, Colorado," he said. "I went out there, polished the truck, and then put it in the show. It won first place in the Red Ribbon (Touring Class), rather than the Blue Ribbon (Restored Class), because I didn't have metal valve stems on the wheels."

The whitewall tires, too, Ralph notes, are incorrect for a commercial rig, and he plans to change them. "I'm taking it to a national show in Reno in 2018," he said. "I've got the metal valve stems, but I haven't put them on." Lately, Ralph said he's been preoccupied with finding and adding to his collection that most unusual of 1931 commercial Fords. "I've been in the Model A club for almost 30 years, and I like to look for the unusual cars," he said. "The other rare car I'm trying to buy—there are only seven—is a Town Car Delivery." 🚚



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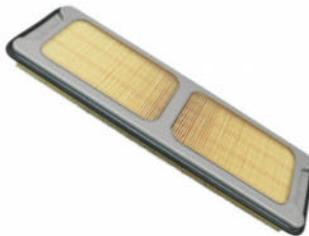
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600-15	1" or 3"	\$169.00
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950-14	2-1/4"	A \$229.00	820-15	1" or 2-3/4"	C \$209.00
670-15	Black	A \$147.00	915-15	1"	C \$209.00
670-15	2-11/16" or 3-3/4"	A \$173.00	600-16	Black	A \$144.00
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185/70VR14	CN-36	\$149.00	205VR15	CN-72	\$439.00
205/70VR14	CN-36	\$299.00	215/60VR15	CN-36 N4	\$419.00
155HR15	CA-67	\$239.00	215/70WR15	CN-12	\$359.00
165HR15	CA-67	\$209.00	225/50YR15	P7 N4	\$329.00
165VR15	CN-36 N4	\$259.00	255/60WR15	CN-12	\$449.00
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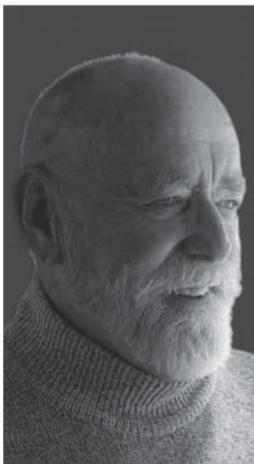
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I Love My Truck(s)

My uncle Fred had a business making surveyors' stakes out of the short ends of wood he scavenged at building sites. He sawed the scraps into strips and cut points on them with his table saw, and I bundled them. When he had enough to fill his orders, he would load the stakes into his 1949 Chevrolet 3100 pickup and make his deliveries.

To him, that truck was just a tool, but I loved it, because it was all business. It only had one visor, no radio or heater, and you started it with a pedal on the floor. It was strong, purposeful, and indestructible. It was a man's vehicle, and a man was what I aspired to be. You got a bench seat, some pedals, and a big steering wheel. Nothing fancy.

I am a descendent of people from rural Kansas and Oklahoma, where having a pickup was as important as having a Stetson. I have had pickups all my adult life, though I have yet to acquire the hat. I confess I have gussied my trucks up a little, but they don't have Kleenex dispensers, for example. However, they have allowed me to haul home a hydraulic lift, a big air compressor, and a spare Blue Flame six, along with a lot of other weighty items.

I have restored a number of cars in the last few decades, and my trucks have been indispensable, even though years ago my son would not let me drop him off at high school in my '57 long-bed Chevy. He would have preferred something less rustic, in view of the fact that he was sweet on a girl named Delores, who stood in front of the school. But now, 30 years later, he has his own old truck with which to humiliate his son.

If you're into hands-on restoration you need a pickup truck as much as your combination wrenches, and for your next project, I suggest a classic. They are simpler, cheaper, and more durable than anything made today, and they won't let you down. Ford made some great-looking ones in the '50s, as did Chevrolet and Dodge, and pretty much

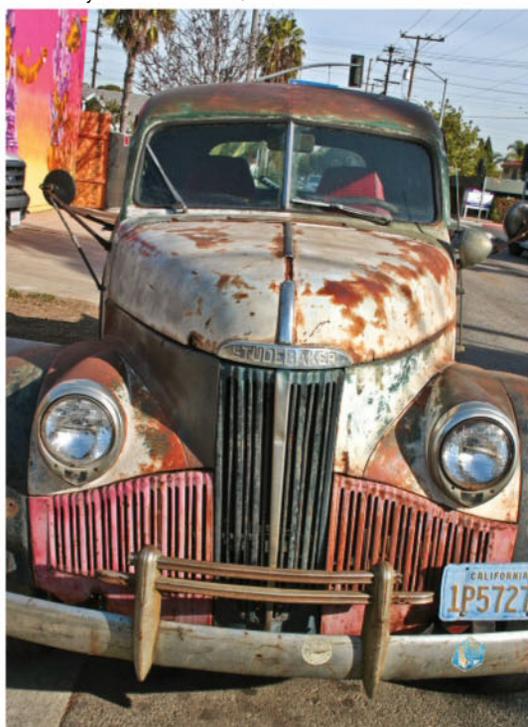
everything mechanical is still available for them.

And if you want something a little different, how about an International or a Studebaker? There is a 1947 Studebaker pickup a few blocks from my house, owned by a mechanic, and it's all there and restorable. It has the usual 169-cu.in. flathead six in it that makes plenty of torque, and if coupled with the Borg-Warner overdrive available that year, it would be freeway friendly.

Studebaker trucks were ubiquitous in

World War II, and fortunately share quite a few mechanical parts with Ford. I would approach the owner of this vehicle about acquiring it for myself, but if I did, my wife would have the divorce papers ready by the next morning.

Incidentally, it was Ford who came up with the "pickup" truck back in the early 1900s. You might think the term came about because people used them to pick up and deliver things like Uncle Fred did, but, at least according to one docent at The Henry Ford, that's not so. According to him, pickup trucks were called that because



the first ones were made as knockdown kits that you assembled and installed on an existing Ford Model T chassis. You ordered the kit from Ford and picked it up at the dealership when it arrived, hence the term. You put it together.

An SUV is a Swiss army knife. It does lots of things, but an Apache 3100 is a load toter, pure and simple, and I like things that way. Besides, if I want to restore an F-100 or a Studebaker M5, I can get most things for it from my local auto-parts store.

As Glen Campbell said in his 1981 song titled "I Love My Truck": "She starts right up if her choke ain't stuck." What more can a man ask? Besides, oddly enough, though I have two classic Packards—a '55 Bel Air and a '40 La Salle—it's my pickup that has participated by request in two weddings. Of course, that might be a cultural thing, given my heritage. All I can say is, if y'all want a truck at your wedding, restore one. You won't be sorry. 🚚

||
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