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AUGUST 2018 #167



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CONTENTS

HEMMINGS CLASSIC CAR • AUGUST 2018 • VOLUME 14, ISSUE 11



20

FEATURES

- 20 **1934 McLaughlin**
- 26 **Comparison:**
1939 Ford Standard & De Luxe
- 34 **driveReport:**
1956 Mercury Monterey
- 64 **Driveable Dream:**
1950 Plymouth Convertible
- 68 **History of**
Automotive Design:
British-built Ford Model T & TT
Commercial Truck Bodies
- 74 **Museum Profile:**
Gilmore Car Museum
- 78 **Restoration Profile:**
1938 Buick Roadmaster
Sport Phaeton—Part I



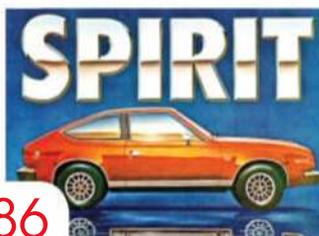
34



56



64



86

DEPARTMENTS

- 08 NEWS REPORTS
- 10 LOST & FOUND
- 12 AUCTION NEWS
- 14 ART & AUTOMOBILIA
- 18 PRODUCTS & PARTS
- 46 RECAPS LETTERS
- 86 DETROIT UNDERDOGS
- 88 REARVIEW MIRROR
- 89 I WAS THERE
- 94 ODDIES BUT GOODIES

COLUMNISTS

- 06 RICHARD LENTINELLO
- 40 PAT FOSTER
- 42 DAVID SCHULTZ
- 44 MATTHEW LITWIN
- 96 JIM RICHARDSON

CLASSIC TRUCK

- 90 1948 GMC HIGHLANDER

48

SPECIAL SECTION: COLLECTIBLE '70s CARS

- 50 FULLSIZE CONVERTIBLES
- 52 DETROIT SUB-COMPACTS
- 56 PERSONAL LUXURY
- 58 1977 AMC MATADOR

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The Hidden Gem Right Next Door

With a garage full of British sports cars and a recently purchased 1961 Pontiac Ventura “bubbletop” (more about this next month), I’m now the proud owner of my first Chevrolet. More specifically, a 1969 Camaro.

I truly was never interested in buying a first-generation Camaro as I always preferred the Firebird version, but this little F-body was too good a deal to pass up. I’m a big proponent of unrestored original cars, and this Camaro is as original as the day it rolled off the Norwood assembly line. I’m grateful that it’s now mine.

Where did I find this gem? Well, right next door, of all places.

While I was unloading the 26-foot U-Haul filled with my collection of tools and car parts during my move back to New England in July 2016, my new neighbor, also Richard, walked up to me with a bottle of champagne to welcome us to the neighborhood. I told him that I work for Hemmings, which he knew of, and that I collect and restore old cars. Then he saw the transporter deliver three of my Triumphs. Yet not once did he ever mention that he owned a Camaro.

Early one morning about 5:30, one of my four rescue dogs had to go outside. While waiting for Angelo to do his business, the sun began rising, which lit up the inside of Richard’s garage. I could see through the dirty window the outline of a car’s rear window. During breakfast I told my wife that there’s a car in Richard’s garage, and I’m almost positive that it’s an early (1967-’69) Camaro or Firebird.

Laurie looked at me with that ‘yeah right’ kind of look and said, “you can tell what car that is from 100 feet away by only seeing a small area of the rear window?” “Of course,” I replied. “The shape and angle of that window can only be an early Camaro or Firebird. We car guys know this stuff.”

Later that day, I jumped the fence to peek through the garage window, and lo and behold, it was a first-generation Camaro. I just had to get a closer look, even though it was covered in a thick layer of dust and surrounded by all sorts of gardening equipment and a variety of household junk. The car looked like it had been sitting there for more than a decade.

Three days later, when another neighbor came by to cut Richard’s grass, I learned that Richard had been taken away to an adult-care facility due to some serious health issues; he was only 72. I asked about “that old car in the garage,” and was told that Richard bought that “Mustang” new, but he hadn’t driven it for a very long time. “Would you like to see it,” asked

the neighbor. “It’s not worth anything because it needs so much work.”

After seeing it up close, but still not able to give it a close inspection due to all the junk surrounding it, I could at least tell it was all original through the layers of dirt; so I asked about



buying it. “Not while Richard is still alive can it be sold,” came the reply.

Sadly, Richard passed away a few months later, but I still had to wait until his estate was settled. Finally, on May 10, the executor of Richard’s estate came by and told me that although there were many others who made offers to buy it, they selected me, because I promised not to flip it or to restore it, and to get it running again.

Soon, I will be pulling the Camaro out of the garage for the first time in decades; the registration sticker shows 1995 as the last time it was registered. What I do know is that Richard bought it new and, being the frugal type, as told to me by all the neighbors, he didn’t order any options. It’s the base V-8 model, which means it has the two-barrel 307 engine and four-wheel drum brakes. Although Richard did splurge for the Powerglide automatic, he didn’t order the floor shifter, so it’s a console-less, column-shifted Camaro. Odd and rare, yes, but not very desirable.

Fortunately, it still wears its factory-applied Fathom Green paint, so I know it was never in an accident during the 66,921 miles Richard drove it. But there is rust. Nonetheless, my goal is to try to preserve as much of its originality as possible, and repair only what’s needed. The drum brakes, column-shift, and 307 will remain, because that’s how this car was built. 🐾



...I jumped

the fence to

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the garage

window, and

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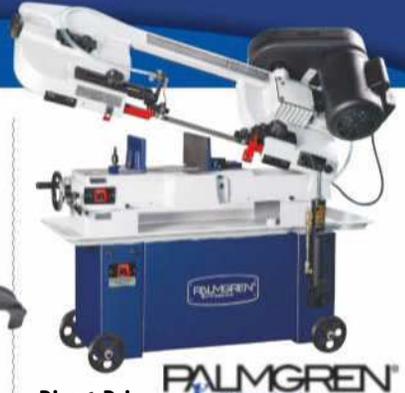
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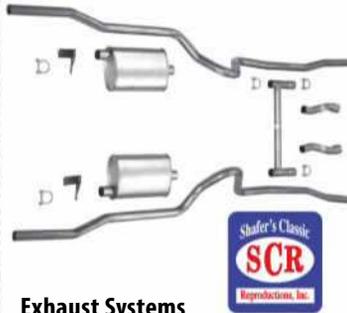
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Streamliners Exhibit

WHETHER DESIGNERS INCORPORATED STREAMLINING INTO THEIR DESIGNS as a matter of functionality or artistic beauty, there is no mistaking the signature appearances of this style. The Portland Art Museum celebrates these bold designs with its "The Shape of Speed: Streamlined Automobiles and Motorcycles, 1930-1942" exhibit. The display runs June 16-September 16. Among the classic streamliners shown will be the Stout Scarab, Airmobile, Cord 812 SC sedan, Zephyr, Imperial Airflow, and a sharknose from Graham-Paige, among many other examples from around the world. The museum is located in downtown Portland, Oregon. Be sure to visit www.portlandartmuseum.org for operating hours and admission fees.

De Sotos Down South

THE 33RD ANNUAL National De Soto Club Convention will have a Southern flair this year as the old Mopar marque gathers in Branson, Missouri, August 22-26. All De Sotos are welcome. Among the activities slated are tours of the Ozark and Branson area, including stops at the Titanic Museum, the Branson Scenic Railway, and the Auto and Farm Museum, as



well as the Celebrity Car Museum. The host hotel is the Stone Castle Hotel in Branson and the car show will take place on Saturday at the Auto and Farm Museum. Registration and an itinerary are available at www.desoto.org/convention, and you can call Fred Roman at 816-590-3685 if you have any questions.

Oldsmobile National Meet

THE OLDSMOBILE CLUB OF AMERICA GEARS UP FOR ITS ANNUAL NATIONAL MEET as the Rockets head northeast to historic Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. The meet will feature a swap meet, car show, and several tours that include trips to the Eastern Museum of Motor Racing, the Harley-Davidson Factory, and the AACA Museum in Hershey. The event will take place July 31 to August 4. A full schedule and hotel information is available at www.oldsmobileclub.org.

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4 • Antique Ford Day • St. Joseph, Illinois
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4-5 • Summer Elkhorn Swap Meet and Car Show
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9 • Hemmings Cruise-In • Bennington, Vermont
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Again With That Buick

HERE WE THOUGHT BECAUSE WE HAD A PERIOD PHOTO OF THE FLXIBLE-BUILT Shriners Buick (see HCC #162) we could close the books on that mystery. But not when Walter M.P. McCall is on the job.

Walter, editor of The Professional Car Society's magazine, wrote in to inform us that Buick never built a flower car on the 1942 to 1948 Buick chassis.

"Flxible *did* build three Buick flower cars, and one Cadillac, in 1940-'41," Walter wrote. "In 1942 the company introduced a radically different hearse that *looked* like a flower car but wasn't. The *Flxible Innovation* was a coupe-style funeral vehicle with a smooth rear deck. Just six were made, five on '42 Cadillac commercial chassis, and one Buick."

He included a photo of one of the Cadillacs for us to compare. Thanks, Walt!



Pucker Up

WAY WAAAAAY BACK IN THE SEPTEMBER 1995 issue of *Special Interest Autos* — specifically in that issue's Lost & Found column, the predecessor to this very page — we first came across an unusual fiberglass-bodied roadster. At the time, Bill Cathcart of Windham, Connecticut, had just found it and was looking for answers about it. These days, the car's current owner, John Erickson of Auburn, California, is asking the same questions.

What John knows about it: It's based on a 1942 to 1946 Studebaker 110-inch-wheelbase chassis and powered by the Studebaker's flathead six-cylinder engine. It still has the 1993 Maine license plate that Bill found on it. And that's about it. Even fiberglass-car researcher extraordinaire Geoff Hacker doesn't know much about it.

So, once again, we're left wondering who built it and when. John would also like to know how it managed over the last 20-something years to make its way to California.



Sincerest Form of Flattery

FRIEND OF HCC JOE PEPITONE CAME ACROSS THIS "TUCKER" RECENTLY AND wanted to see if we had any input. We do; it's not. That's not to say, however, that we know what's going on with it.

Given the publicity and anticipation for the Tucker sedan, we shouldn't be too surprised somebody took inspiration from the Tucker when building their own postwar special. The grille on this roadster, the third-eye headlamp (points for making it move with the steering!), the voluptuous fenders, and the full wheelcovers are all reasonable facsimiles of the real thing.

However, given the evidence submitted against the controversial Tucker convertible, it's a stretch to think that a little roadster like this was even on the books, let alone built.

So the questions we're left with: Which Kansas farmer cobbled this thing together? And does it survive to this day?

 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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Pebble Beach

IT'S AUGUST AGAIN, AND THAT MEANS IT'S time for California's Monterey Peninsula to become the center of the classic-car universe, with five different auctions. The auctions are slated to take place August 23-25 and include Mecum, RM Sotheby's, Bonhams, Russo and Steele, and Gooding & Co. Last year, among the great deals was this 1961 Cadillac Eldorado Biarritz that was fully loaded and came across the block at Gooding & Company. With a recent restoration, it found a new home for \$52,800. Be sure to visit each auction site for a list of current consignments and check our daily online newsletter and website at www.hemmings.com/newsletter for the latest news and centralized coverage of Pebble Beach.



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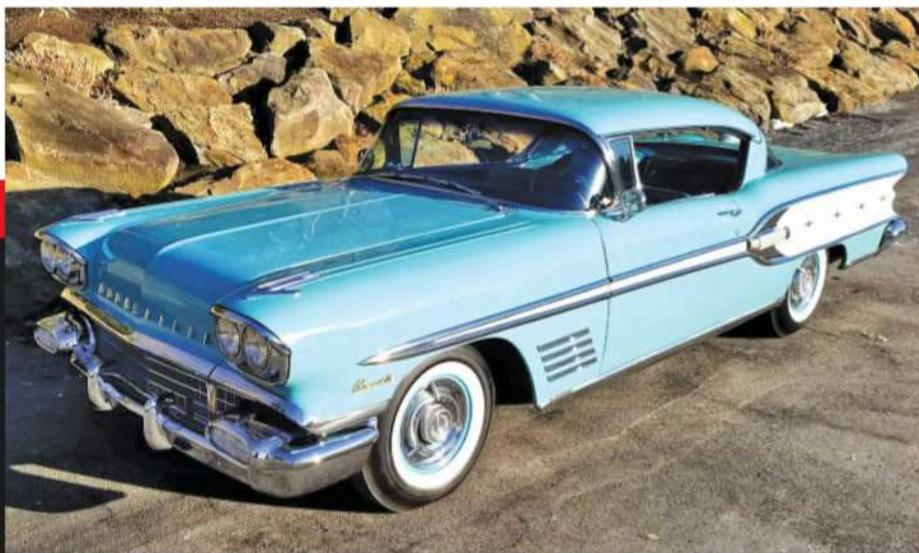
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Hostetler's Hudsons

WORLDWIDE WILL CONDUCT THE AUCTION OF THE HOSTETLER'S HUDSON AUTO MUSEUM'S collection this August 4 in Shipshewana, Indiana. The museum's board decided to permanently close the museum and liquidate the collection of over 50 cars when the museum faced mounting debts and decreased attendance. Eldon Hostetler had built up an impressive collection of Hudsons that included examples from almost every year, from fire trucks to a rare woodie. One of the jewels of the collection is a 1931 Series U "Greater Hudson" seven-passenger touring car believed to have been commissioned for Herbert Hoover's trip to Panama. Expect to see some of the finest and rarest Hudsons cross the block. For more information, visit www.worldwide-auctioneers.com.

AUCTION PROFILE

CAR:	1958 Pontiac Bonneville Sport Coupe
AUCTIONEER:	RM Sotheby's
LOCATION:	Fort Lauderdale, Florida
DATE:	April 6, 2018
LOT NUMBER:	1123
RESERVE:	None
AVERAGE SELLING PRICE:	\$40,000
SELLING PRICE:	\$58,300



RM SOTHEBY'S

FOR 1958, BONNEVILLE BECAME ITS OWN model instead of having a designation within the Star Chief line. The Bonneville did keep the Star Chief base engines and wheelbase, but it was slightly longer. Two body styles were available in the sport coupe and convertible, with over 9,100 sport coupes coming off the production

line as a part of GM's 50th anniversary celebration. It was also selected as a Pace Car for the Indianapolis 500.

This Bonneville was truly a highly optioned first-year example with power antenna, windows, steering, and brakes. It also featured the Wonderbar radio, electric clock, safeguard speedometer, twin halo mirrors, and spinner wheel

covers. The Bonneville underwent a complete body-off restoration and was finished in Marlin Turquoise with ivory and turquoise interior. The engine was the base 370-cu.in. V-8 with automatic transmission. Sixty years later, this car remains a tangible symbol of the chrome and colorful hues that dominated the late 1950s.

AUGUST

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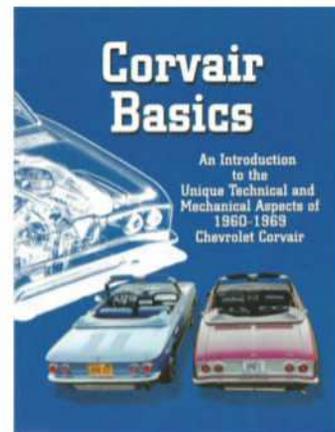
A sturdy, comfortable, grime-resistant work shirt is as much an indispensable tool for your garage as is your favorite set of wrenches. Busted Knuckle Garage now offers a stylish, practical short-sleeve shirt that will be perfect for the warm months. Made of soft, 65-percent polyester/35-percent cotton "TouchTex" by Red Kap, this shirt features a six-button front placket, two button-through pockets, and a convertible collar with stays. It comes in a snazzy, dirt- and oil-hiding shade of dark gray and is emblazoned with this firm's comical logo—"Repair & Despair Under One Roof"—silkscreened small on the front, large on the back. It's available in adult sizes Medium through 3XL, and can be personalized for a true professional appearance.

Corvair Basics

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\$45 USA/\$49 CANADA

This fascinating book regarding the mechanical construction and maintenance of all Corvairs is actually Free: that is, when you join CORSA, the Corvair Society of America. You will receive this book automatically as part of your membership, along with a DVD version. Within the 186 pages of the softcover version, you'll discover everything you need to know about what makes Corvairs tick, and how to maintain them and keep them performing at their optimum. The 40 chapters cover every mechanical and electrical system on the car, there are tips on new and used parts and where to find them, and there is tuning and lubrication advice. But it's Chapter 5 that every potential Corvair buyer must read, as all the important details on buying a Corvair—such as what and where to look to ensure you're not buying a dolled-up parts cars—will prove invaluable. This is one of those must-own books that every Corvair owner has to have in their library.

— RICHARD LENTINELLO



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It began with dogs in cars, and grew to encompass the entire animal kingdom. Hey, keep both paws—or hooves—or flippers—on the wheel! For nearly 20 years, Dutch fine artist, photographer, and graphic designer Ed van der Hoek has been creating colorful, whimsical animals-in-autos art that is guaranteed to put a smile on the face of even the most serious classic-car lover.

This Oostvoorne, Netherlands, resident was educated in drawing, etching, and painting at the Willem de Kooning Academy, but the inspiration behind Ed's trademark style developed much earlier. "My childhood was filled with images of cars and dogs," he tells us; "At one time our family owned a blue Mini Cooper with white racing stripes, and two hunting dogs. In the occasion the driver was out to do some shopping, the 'front dog' always moved over to the driver's seat. This situation was etched in my mind for a long time. The dogs in cars were already starting to feature [in my art], initially in a raw and primitive way, but gradually, more and more people granted me commissions to paint their cars and pets. My collection of different cars started to grow, and by sticking to my very own style, people started recognizing my work from 'miles away.'"

Ed paints primarily in acrylic on canvas, with originals measuring 39 x 39 inches; his artwork is available through the Dutch-language website www.edart.nl, and through etsy.com, where he offers affordable signed, numbered, archival-ink prints (in 5.5 x 5.5-, 8 x 8-, 10.6 x 10.6-, and 15 x 15-inch sizes), art cards, and calendars. Contact Ed to discuss original works, custom-size prints, and personal commissions.



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3 PIECE DUAL CHUCK TIRE INFLATOR SET WITH HOSE

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125 AMP FLUX-CORE WELDER

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New vent window assemblies for the 1955-'57 "Tri-Five" Chevy (including two- and four-door hardtop/Nomad, sedan/wagon, and convertible models) have just been introduced by Classic Industries. The OER reproduction assemblies include the inner frame, outer frame, rubber seals, and vertical division bar, all assembled and ready for installation. Each is available with clear, green-tinted, or smoke-tinted glass. The sliding latch is preinstalled on hardtop/Nomad and sedan/wagon assemblies. Mounting hardware is not included. Cost: \$279.99/each.



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Reproduction vent window weatherstripping is now available for the 1965-'68 General Motors B- and C-body two- and four-door hardtops and convertibles. These new vent-window seals are top-quality reproductions that use superior EPDM dense rubber compound to defend against the elements and noise. Each piece contains only virgin rubber, with no fillers or accelerators that cause other brands to deteriorate and fail. American-made steel core inserts are galvanized to prevent rust and add strength to each strip. Each set comes with the four pieces seen here and is made for the vent window with rear division channel. Cost: \$149.95/set.



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Wheel Vintiques is proud to announce new OE steel wheels for classic trucks. These are perfect for '50s or '60s GM or Ford pickup trucks and are a suitable replacement for original six-lug wheels. These reproduction wheels measure 15 inches, with widths from 6 to 8 inches. Direct-fit bolt pattern is 6 x 5.5 inches, which is standard for most six-lug truck fitment. Each wheel also accepts original 10-1/8-inch "dog dish" center caps. Available with a choice of finish options including primer, chrome plating, and custom powder coating. Contact Wheel Vintiques for your specific application. Cost: Starting at \$84/each.

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Government Melts Over 270 Million Silver Dollars

But collectors get an unexpected second chance

It's a *crime*.

Most Americans living today have never held a hefty, gleaming U.S. silver dollar in their hands.

Where did they go? Well, in 1918, to provide aid to the British during WWI, the U.S. government melted down nearly half of the entire mintage—over 270 million silver dollars. If all those missing silver dollars could be stacked, they would tower over 400 miles into the sky! If laid in a chain, they would span 6,400 miles—enough to stretch from New York to Los Angeles more than 2½ times!

These vanished coins were not just any silver dollar—they were America's largest circulated coin, the beloved Morgan Silver Dollar. Each Morgan Dollar is struck from nearly an ounce of 90% fine silver and measures a massive 38.1mm in diameter. Morgan Silver Dollars were the engine of the American dream for decades. Created by famed American coin designer, George T. Morgan, they feature Lady Liberty's radiant profile and a majestic eagle, symbols of American strength and prosperity. Since their inception in 1878, they jingled in the pockets of famous and infamous Americans like John D. Rockefeller and Teddy Roosevelt, and desperados Jesse James and Al Capone. Today, Morgan Silver Dollars are the most collected coin in America.

Lady Liberty takes a Final Bow

Just three years after the massive meltdown, the government gave the Morgan Silver Dollar a final chance to shine. In 1921, facing a serious shortage, the mint struck Morgan Silver Dollars for one more brief, historic year. Today, the last-ever 1921 Morgan Silver Dollar belongs in the hands of collectors, history buffs, or anyone who values the artistry and legacy of this American classic.

A Private Vault Gives Up its Secrets

Millions *more* silver dollars were melted over the past ninety years and today, private hoards account for virtually all the surviving Morgan Silver Dollars. We should know—we hunt for them every week. In fact, on one buying trip into America's heartland, as we were guided into a wealthy owner's massive private vault, we were thrilled to discover a hoard of nearly two thousand 1921 Morgan Silver Dollars, all having actually circulated in American commerce nearly 100 years ago! We wasted no time in securing the entire treasure trove of silver dollars into our own vault.



Saved from Destruction, but Bound for Extinction

It's been estimated that only 15% of all the Morgan Dollars ever minted have survived to the present day. And the number grows smaller with each passing year. The 1921 Morgan Silver Dollar is the last of its kind. But you can get one now before they're only a memory. Your chance to own this legend won't last long, so get yours today—and at a fantastic value!

Don't Miss Out on this Incredible Low Price Offer

Today, you can secure your very own 1921 Morgan Silver Dollar—the last Morgan Silver Dollar ever struck—for the incredibly low price of just \$29.95 each! Plus, you can buy with complete confidence. If you aren't completely satisfied with your Morgan Silver Dollars, you can return your coins within 30-days for a full refund (less s/h). So don't wait—order your 1921 Morgan Silver Dollars today!

1921 Last Morgan Silver Dollar	
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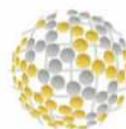
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The Comeback Kid

The 1934 Buick Series 90, and this Canadian-built McLaughlin sister model, heralded the revival of the Buick division

BY DAVID CONWILL • PHOTOGRAPHY BY RICHARD LENTINELLO





Buick picked a bad time to go to eight cylinders. Oh, no doubt it seemed necessary when the decision was made. All the other middle-priced marques were doing it. The overhead-valve “valve-in-head” straight-sixes that had been Flint’s mainstay since 1914 were wonderful engines—there are a lot of them in GMCs that became so legendary among the drag-racing set in the 1950s—and helped establish Buick as a leader in its class. But when the straight-eights came out in the summer of 1930, it was right into the teeth of the Great Depression. All new-car sales were in the tank, but particularly hard hit were the expensive and the prestigious. Even the rich preferred not to flaunt their wealth with stylish and powerful machinery—better to buy a Chevrolet or Ford, and go incognito.

That means that Buick’s Series 90, which arrived for 1931 along with its big straight-eight engine, was also ill-timed. The Buick division, which had been a GM standout through the 1920s, seemingly didn’t know which way to go when the Depression hit. To remedy this, the GM board put future corporate President Harlow Curtice in charge, and he came at the problem with an avowed philosophy of “More Speed for Less Money.” He sacked conservative Chief Engineer F.A. Bower and replaced him with the dynamic Charles Chayne. Together Curtice, Chayne, and Harley Earl would work to breathe new life into Buick.

Unlike any Buick before, the Series 90 (which the division would call “Limited” beginning with the 1936 models) shared the General Motors C-body with Cadillac. Also unlike any previous Buick, the Series 90 is recognized as a Full Classic by the Classic Car Club of America

“Fine” and “Distinctive,” as stated by the CCCA, are certainly

subjective qualities, but... well, just look at the car on these pages. It’s not custom coachwork, but with its wood-framed construction, it’s not far off. Buick’s “Wind Stream” styling was heavily updated for 1933, and the 1934 models only refined it. In addition to 1933’s lowness, vee’d grille, streamlined skirted fenders, and switch to metal wheels, the 1934’s featured pod-shaped headlamps (which boasted 20-percent more illumination from four different settings—the kind of luxury features CCCA likes), and horizontal hood louvers. The Series 90 also picked up several new body styles with the departure of the Series 80, including the handsome and sporty 96C convertible coupe featured here.

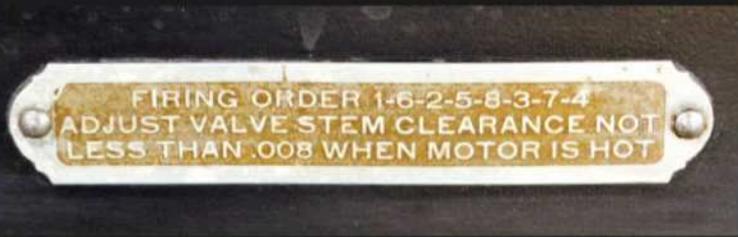
As for high price and limited quantities, the U.S. factory levied its customers \$1,945 for a Series 90 Convertible Coupe—not the most expensive Series 90, but more than any lesser 1934 Buick. For comparison, an Oldsmobile L-series convertible coupe cost \$975, and even a La Salle convertible coupe, like the one that paced that year’s Indianapolis 500 race, was only \$1,695. While 1934 was a relatively good year for Buick, with 37,000 more units produced than in 1933 (for a total of 78,000), Flint manufactured only 68 Model 96C’s for the 1934 model year, and the McLaughlin factory in Oshawa, Ontario, Canada, produced only four. You’re looking at the only known survivor.

McLaughlin was much like General Motors in that it had its origins in one of the largest vehicle builders in Canada, the McLaughlin Carriage Company, which had been doing business since 1869. With the arrival of the automobile, Colonel Sam McLaughlin, the son of the company’s founder, was quick to see the potential for the new vehicle and the consequences for the old. He quickly sold out to a competitor and opened a new

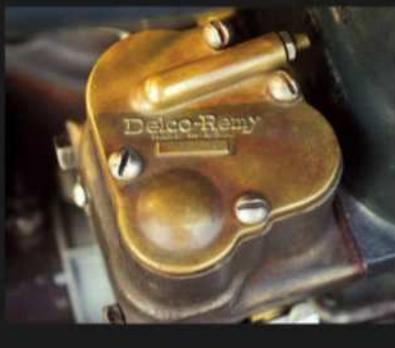


While closed Series 90 cars got plush mohair velvet upholstery, open cars received less-luxurious but more weather-resistant leather. Instrumentation included ammeter, temperature gauge, oil-pressure gauge, speedometer, and clock. "Octane Selector," like the spark levers of old (and today's computers), allowed adjustment of ignition timing based on the fuel grade onboard.





A 286-cu.in. Buick eight finished 6th at Indy in 1934, this car has a 344.8-cu.in. version. Brass Delco-Remy device on the carburetor permits starting by depressing the accelerator, a new feature that became a Buick hallmark.



business, McLaughlin Motor Car Company Limited, in 1907.

Soon circumstances caused McLaughlin to begin sourcing its engines from the Buick Motor Company, and in 1918 the company was brought into the General Motors fold as a part of General Motors of Canada, Limited. Sam McLaughlin remained prominent in management and from 1923 to 1942, Buicks were sold in Canada under the hyphenated McLaughlin-Buick name. Thanks to Canada's position in the British Empire, McLaughlin-Buick was well positioned to sell not only to Canada itself, but across the globe.

It's not known where this particular McLaughlin spent its early years. Between its own automaking and whiskey production, the Walkerville/Windsor, Ontario, area was flush with cash in the 1920s, so it's entirely possible this McLaughlin-Buick didn't stray far from the factory where its engine was born. What we do know is that in 1976 it was taken apart for a full restoration, which took until 2007 to complete. It currently resides at the NB Center for American Automotive Heritage in Allentown, Pennsylvania, one of many, many Buicks in the possession of Italian businessman Nicola Bulgari, great-grandson of Sotirios Bulgari, the founder of the luxury brand Bulgari.

Born in Rome in 1941, Nicola is a lifelong fan of Buick, and American cars in general. His first car was a 1937 Buick, purchased in his late teens. He is quick to point out the capabilities of American cars from the 1930s, '40s, and '50s in comparison with their diminutive and fragile European counterparts. His collection spans both Allentown and Rome, though all cars are serviced here by his friend Keith Flickinger, the curator of the collection, and his staff.

Better still, Bulgari isn't just a collector, he drives his cars frequently and for respectable distances, a practice we heartily endorse. This car is well suited to such use, not only because of its 116-hp, 344.8-cu.in. straight-eight—the largest displacement Buick would produce before 1957, and an ancestor of the 320-cu.in. straight-eight that would replace it in 1936, most notably in the new Series 60 Century. Power flows through a conventional, floor-shifted three-speed manual transmission. The 1934 versions of the Buick transmission sported both synchromesh and improved helical gears along with a shorter throw, easing shifting.

On the road, the Series 90 benefits from Buick's new-

for-1934 coil-sprung knee-action front suspension (a superior design to the licensed Dubonnet system used on contemporary Chevrolets) attached to a stiff frame with a stout X-shaped center crossmember, rear anti-roll bar, a 136-inch wheelbase, cushy 7.50-16 ("Air Ride") tires, and vacuum-boosted mechanical brakes. Center-point steering also makes the Buick easier to control than earlier iterations.

Series 90 cars also received safety glass on all windows, not something yet found in every car in 1934. Freewheeling, an overrunning clutch on the rear of the transmission that avoided engine braking, was also standard and allowed for better fuel economy. All Buicks for 1934 also boasted a new feature: starting via the accelerator pedal, something that would go on to be a hallmark of Buicks until 1960. Surprisingly, while the new, cheaper Model 40 cars used downdraft carburetion, the senior Buicks all retained updraft Marvel-Schebler induction, which would endure until the 1936 models arrived.

The 1936 Buicks would mark the complete reinvention of Buick as a prestigious near-luxury car with an emphasis on performance and handling, but the elements first appeared soon after Curtice and Chayne were put in charge. The 1934



Golf-bag doors were a sporting touch found on many upscale cars in the 1920s and '30s. The Series 90 looked at home at the country club alongside Cadillacs and Packards.

Buick Series 90 was a first step on that path to resurgence. That, combined with its fine and distinctive styling, high price when new, limited production, and other exquisite elements make it a true classic in every sense of the word. 🏎️

owner's view

"Mr. Bulgari is obsessed with 1934 Buicks; he currently owns one of every model Series 90, as they truly defined General Motors' subdued elegance that made them, at times, more desirable than its big sister, Cadillac! Cadillac was obviously the top brand, but were a little heavy when it came to driveability compared to the Buick. Buick's straight-eight, valve-in-head engine was a fantastic advancement and gave the car the extra smoothness it needed with the front suspension being independent."

—Keith Flickinger, caretaker, NB collection





Fraternal Fords

*Ford's 1939 Standard and De Luxe:
siblings that couldn't be more different*

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEFF KOCH





Ford's 221-cubic-inch "flathead" V-8 was a popular \$20 option to replace the V-8 60 in 1939 Ford Standard models.

What we have here is a pair of 1939 Fords, painted Jefferson Blue and built a month apart, that are about as different from each other as they could possibly manage to be, and still be 1939 Fords.

We're not just talking about the little details—things like cowl-mounted wipers on the open cars and roof-mounted wipers on the closed models, the top-hinged front glass enjoyed by the closed cars that the open ones lacked, or the other inevitable differences between coupe and convertible. This pair of concours-quality 1939 Fords, owned by Lee Gurvey, exemplify Ford's desire to have two cars fundamentally the same yet as different as possible, on sale side by side in showrooms.

Why would Ford build two such different models? It's easy to surmise that Henry was living up to his cheapskate reputation, or that he never really understood the value of styling as a sales tool. Or maybe both: By bringing forth the 1940 models as a De Luxe and keeping the 1938 model around as a rehash for 1939, the company gets out of paying for a year's tooling—or at least can kick the can up the road. Though this may have been an unintended consequence, it wasn't Ford's true motivation. It's also easy to look at the price differences between the pair (\$599 to start for the Standard Coupe, \$788 to start for the De Luxe Convertible Coupe) and guess that the De Luxe was a big step up, moneywise, but this has more to do with the differing body styles. A De Luxe Coupe was just \$20 more to start than a Standard Coupe, and there was no open '39 Standard model to compare with the De Luxe Convertible Coupe.

Rather, having such different-looking Standard and De Luxe model Fords was a way to keep product differentiation alive. The “De Luxe” name had been an upmarket Ford trim level clear back to the Model A days, but, starting in 1938, Ford launched the De Luxe Ford line as a marque within a marque, with no dealer network of its own. Once Mercury joined the FoMoCo family for 1939, Ford had five lines: Ford, De Luxe Ford, Mercury, Lincoln-Zephyr, and Lincoln, briefly aping GM’s five-marque approach. A given year’s Standard models would be a decontented version of the previous year’s De Luxe model, with the new De Luxe model a preview of next year’s Standard model.

And yet, for two such different cars, the chassis was essentially the same, and the same as it had been since it launched in 1935: a 112-inch wheelbase, 16-inch steel wheels, torque-tube drive, solid axle with transverse leaf springs front and rear (in the face of advances like Chevrolet’s fussy-but-comfortable “Knee-Action” Dubonnet-type independent front suspension), and worm-and-roller steering. The front crossmember differed, depending on the engine selected.

The big chassis advancement for 1939 was that, after years of Henry fighting against it, Lockheed-developed hydraulic drum brakes were finally standard-issue on all models. “The safety of steel from pedal to wheel” mechanical and cable-actuated brakes had been abandoned at long last. Considering other mass-production companies adopted the hydraulic system years before (Chrysler as early as 1924!), this shouldn’t have been news. Ford made little of the advancement, burying talk of it on page 14 of its 16-page dealer brochure, and making no special note of the move while still giving it a cursory mention in magazine ads.

Was it the founder’s wish to avoid complications that prevented their earlier inclusion in his cars? Was it Henry’s stroke,

at the age of 75 in 1938, that finally released his iron grip on the engineers and allowed them to make some long-overdue technical advancements? Or was it that Henry didn’t hold the patent, was cheap enough to avoid paying, and was smart enough to simply wait, having learned from his Selden patent-infringement adventure? Whatever the case, a chassis, eight cylinders, a couple of body stampings, and a showroom were about all the Standard and De Luxe models shared.



The De Luxe model’s new “helmet” hood offered simpler access to the legendary flathead Ford V-8 engine.





Gray broadcloth upholstery, three-spoke steering wheel, and brown-faced gauges with a modern font graced the Standard Coupe.

Their standard-issue engines were different. In a world of six-cylinder engines, Henry Ford would have rather had a V-8, so instead of bowing to convention, he built a smaller version of his successful flathead engine. Ford's V-8 60, launched for the 1937 model year, measured in at a miniscule 136 cubic inches (2.6-inch bore and 3.2-inch stroke) and was in line with Henry's desire to have a frugal V-8-powered car that could smash the Sixes that sold for similar money; the 1939 Standard Coupe started at \$599.

Problem was, the V-8 60 was slow: Period ads touted its frugality with fuel, while Ford brochures quoted 22-27 mpg. But cars had grown, and while a V-8 60 engine would have lived up a Model A significantly, by 1939 there was just too much Ford for a V-8 60 to lug around with any authority. Its three-speed manual transmission was similarly scaled down, and a number of improvements instituted in 1938, such as better transmission synchros and improved water jacketing, carried through into 1939. The V-8 60 used 4.11 gearing in the rear axle, in order to get it up to speed a little quicker.

The De Luxe, and plenty of Standards too, ran the 85-hp, 221-cu.in. flathead V-8 that had been a hit since its 1932 launch. It had been considerably improved for 1939: the crankshaft's main bearings were increased to 2.5 inches; a bigger crankshaft and heavier connecting rods shored up the bottom end; compression was boosted to 6.2:1; and new 24-stud cylinder heads, phased in late in the 1938 model year, continued. The official horsepower rating remained 85 hp, though gross power, which was measured without fan and muffler, was actually 93 hp; torque jumped to 155 lb-ft.

In 1938, an aluminum intake manifold was standard, but a cast-iron truck manifold was an option; for 1939, production ran 50/50 between aluminum and cast-iron intake manifolds. What's more, the 221-inch flathead was just a \$25 option in Standard models. That's right, adding in just the bigger engine would leave you with a Standard model that cost more than a comparable De Luxe Coupe. The rear-axle ratio with the 221 V-8 is a numerically lower 3.78. This Standard Coupe has the optional 221-cu.in. V-8.

The front ends were different. The Standard two-piece grille largely carried over from 1938, simplified and de-chromed, with



the hood reshaped to split the top of the horizontal grille bars. A "Ford" script resided above each front fender, surrounded by a semi-circle of chrome trim. De Luxe models had more than a whiff of Lincoln about them; the one-piece waterfall grille echoed styling cues begun by the Lincoln-Zephyr and they were copied in the new upscale Mercury line. The Standard hood was largely flat, allowing for the body between hood and fender to remain on the car, making maintenance a challenge; indeed, the hood sides are considered extensions of the grille, as they are vented in a pattern to match the grille. The De Luxe hood, a single piece nicknamed the "helmet" for its wrap-around contours, lifted up entirely and allowed far easier access to the engine compartment.

The hood releases were different. Both proudly proclaimed to be V-8-powered models on the hood-mounted chrome trim, but the Standard offered a hood opening that rotated 90-degrees counterclockwise to unlatch, while the De Luxe had a chrome lever that pulled out to release. The hood ornaments were different too, each a variation on the streamlined Art Deco theme; the Standard had a separate insert that proclaimed either "60" or "85," to denote horsepower.

The front fenders were different. De Luxe models had the headlamps streamlined into them, while the 1939 Standard fenders echoed those from '38, with the headlamps standing upright and fared into the fender catwalks. Standard and De Luxe headlamps



De Luxe Convertibles used russet leather-and-artificial-leather seats, white-faced gauges, and an upscale “Banjo” steering wheel.



look similar, but are in fact unique for each model. Standard headlamps came to a point at the bottom, while De Luxe lenses were more rounded down below. There was even an update in the De Luxe '39 fenders, appearing in March, with new lower contouring in front.

The rear fenders changed across the board from 1938, whether De Luxe or Standard, and are interchangeable between '39 models. Of course, a Standard received a single taillamp (except in states where two rear lamps were mandated), while a De Luxe model automatically received a pair. The De Luxe Convertible added a second step on the passenger's-side rear quarter for easier in-and-out of the rumble seat.

Interiors didn't come in a lot of color variety, and were designed to complement every available exterior color. Taupe broadcloth was the base seating material on the closed Standard, although Mohair was extra-cost on 60-hp Standards; open De Luxe models received a russet-colored blend of genuine and artificial leather. Door panels were upholstered to match the seats. De Luxe models added an armrest and vertical pleating to the door panels. Also, the shade of mahogany on the doors and dash of the De Luxe models was slightly warmer.

A three-spoke steering wheel painted Zephyr Beige came on the Standard, while the “Banjo”-style steering wheel had a Zephyr Beige hub, Cameo Gray rim, and rustless steel spokes



Ford's biggest news for 1939 was the addition of hydraulic brakes, but period advertising makes little mention of it in the copy. Also, no mention of the separate Ford and De Luxe lines.



at the 3-, 6-, and 9-o'clock positions, collected in tiebars. Even the window crank handles were different: The Standard offered a handle with a deep bifurcation down the middle, as if to resemble two pieces of metal joined together; the De Luxe handle was a single piece with a peak running down its center.

As you might imagine, the De Luxe came with far more goodies: floor control for headlamp high-beams (with a dash indicator), cigar lighter, ashtray, dual sunvisors, locking glovebox with wind-up clock, radio speaker grille, edge-lighted instruments, and more; De Luxe models with a back seat also received a rear-seat ashtray. The gauge clusters offered largely the same gauges: speedometer with odometer and trip odometer, and a combination fuel/oil/water temp gauge, although with different

fonts and facings (De Luxe models had plain black numbers on a white background, while the Standard had wider, stylized numbers on a dark background). An ammeter was given to Standard models with a three-brush generator; battery gauges were given to two-brush-generator Standards and all De Luxes.

The wheels and tires were different. Standard models ran 5.50-16 blackwall tires on 16 x 3.5-inch steel wheels, painted black; De Luxe models ran 6.00-16-inch blackwall tires on 16 x 4-inch wheels, painted body color. Whitewalls were optional, with the wide white stripe on both the inside and outside of the tire, though only in the 6.00-16 size. The hubcaps were different: plain chrome caps with the traditional 8-in-the-V logo were selected for the Standard car, while the De Luxe, had a simpler, less-stylized "V-8" logo surrounded



Cavernous trunk, with tire standing up near the passenger compartment, made the Coupe a favorite of traveling salesmen.



Rumble seat was finished in the same materials as the interior. Two steps on the passenger's side simplified access.



I was in high school from 1946 to 1950, and in those years, I thought the '39 Ford De Luxe was the best-looking Ford made up to that time. The Convertible Coupe, particularly—I can't think of any better-looking Ford. The teardrop headlamps, that neat little grille; the lines are all proportioned well. The dash is slick, it was the last year of the floor-shift, was the last convertible with rumble seat, and of course was the first year for hydraulic brakes.

The reason I bought the coupe ... it was restored by Lloyd Duzell, a Ford guru in the Chicago area. He was a craftsman and a super restorer, and he built that coupe for himself. That would be his car when he retired, his Dearborn-award-winning car, and it won. It got 98 points—they deducted two points because the battery exploded before the show and they had a non-Ford battery in as a last-minute replacement. But I knew Lloyd, and wanted to have that car.

by a series of concentric rings, a Streamline-era trick to help convey the illusion of motion and speed even when stationary. The logos in each hubcap were painted Ford blue.

The bumpers were different. All sported chromed extensions designed to protect the delicate bumper from the inevitable in-town touch, but the Standard car's bumper was smooth, while the De Luxe's bumper had a slight indentation down the center, which was then given a stripe of blue paint. And the bumper overrides are different too.

The running boards had different ribbing for Standard and De Luxe models; Standards received fine ribbing, while the De Luxe had smoothed inserts that separated bands of tightly ribbed rubber. Even the exhaust was different, with De Luxe models sporting a fluted chrome tip that redirected exhaust gases down and away from the car, rather than an open pipe that allowed emissions to float up and possibly dirty the rear of the car.

That's a lot of extra stuff for \$20, even in 1939 money.

And none of this even touches on the relentless component improvements that Ford demanded of itself and of its suppliers; a late-1939 model and an early '39 may have a completely different selection of components, depending on the factory, build date, and other factors.

Ford production worked out to 487,031 units for the model year—better than 1938, but roughly half of the 1935-'37 sales numbers. Calendar-year registrations were at 481,496, and calendar-year production was 532,152. A total of 38,197 coupes (combining Standard and De Luxe production) were built for the 1939 model year, along with 10,422 Convertible Coupes. Ford's two-tiered gambit was starting to work, but with Mercury in the fold, a De Luxe Ford was starting to look redundant. The De Luxe Ford line was scotched after 1940, as Mercury gained traction in the marketplace. 🚗



Goldenglow Grandeur

One of the most striking cars of the Fifties, the 1956 Mercury Monterey Hardtop Coupe

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY
BY MATTHEW LITWIN







It's no secret that Ford Motor Company launched its Mercury division in 1939 as the middle step between price-leader Ford and premium-luxury-brand Lincoln. Corporate brass and product planners then switched gears in 1949 and based the single-series line on the smaller Lincoln, then reverted back to Ford-based platforms three years later. Both the buying public and the contemporary media were left pondering what kind of message was being handed down from Dearborn's automotive deities in such a short window of time. Was Mercury a baby Lincoln, or a well-tailored Ford?

Just how much did this indecisive tug-of-war affect sales? Officially, the jury is still out, with pundits pointing to a series of events that had a variety of impacts on the early Fifties automotive atmosphere. Conversely, it's easy to see Mercury's dramatic market-share swing: from 16th in 1948 to sixth in 1949, and then from sixth in 1951 to ninth in 1952. While Dearborn continuously questioned why Mercury was a slow seller, division managers fought through an arduous uphill battle to retain and recapture sales. Amid the ambiguity, however, a sizable budget had been approved that permitted the extensive restyling of both the Ford and Mercury divisions for 1955, which both used to great effect.

At Mercury, this meant an all-new chassis featuring a revised ball-joint front suspension, slightly reconfigured rear shock placement, bigger brakes, and a wheelbase stretched to 119 inches (wagons utilized Ford's 118-inch wheelbase platform), along with a wider rear track width. Between the frame rails sat one of two new engines: a 188- or 198-hp 292-cu.in. V-8. Backing the 188-hp Y-block was Ford's standard-issue three-speed manual, while a redesigned three-speed Merc-O-Matic automatic transmission backed the 198-hp version of the 292.



The Monterey's airy cabin features two prominent factory options—power steering and the Town & Country Signal Seeking AM/FM radio—along with the less-obvious power brakes. Dearborn required the exterior two-tone motif be replicated within.

An improved ride-and-handling package can only sell itself so far, thus stylists sculpted a new front end, highlighted by a dramatically revised two-bar bumper and headlamp bezels with a forward rake. The A-pillars were reconfigured to accept a curved windshield, giving the greenhouse a fresh, airy appearance. Reshaped rear fenders, featuring Z-shaped side trim encompassing a faux vent, provided performance panache. Meanwhile, the

interior contained a revised instrument panel, complemented by a wider array of upholstery and color combinations.

Amidst the changes, Mercury was transformed into a true stand-alone division within Ford Motor Company in the spring of 1955. Mercury was further bolstered by the addition of the new top-of-the-line Montclair series. By the end of the model year, total output jumped from 259,305 units in 1954 to 329,808, an increase of 27.19 percent. It was Mercury's best year on record, proving the dramatic update was worth the investment, further cementing the notion that the 1956 models only needed tasteful refinements, including exterior trim. And while a fourth series was unveiled—the entry-level Medalist—mechanically, the 1956 models initially received two versions of the new 312-cu.in. Y-block (a third was added mid-year), along with a 12-volt electrical system. The public's response was again enthusiastic, with total sales culminating at 327,943 units, our feature Monterey among them.

The owner of the Mercury featured here, Claude Poisson of Manchester, New Hampshire, sums up his tale of collector-car ownership with, "I always loved old cars." On the surface, it is a basic, reflective statement, one that serves as a foundation common to all of us who have an affinity for the greater hobby. But when Claude spoke about them, you could sense the profound difference behind their significance and how it changed his life, as he went on to explain: "In the early Nineties I went into the hospital thinking I was having a heart attack. My doctor told me that I needed to get off the couch and exercise. So, one of the things I started doing was walking around at the cruise nights," Claude recalls. "I would make sure to look at every one of the cars, and I found myself reminiscing about the ones I used to own."

Like most of us, Claude's interest in cars took root early in his life. A native of Canada, his family moved to a farm in the States when he was eight. At the time, his father owned a 1951 Chevrolet; a car that both him and his brother first learned to drive in. A 1958 Ford followed, and when Claude earned his license at age 17, he drove the family's 1963 Rambler Classic. Then there was a short stint behind the wheel of his brother's 1962 Impala. The first car Claude purchased on his own was a 1967 Plymouth Fury III. Clearly, there was no brand loyalty in the Poisson family, but there was one underlying commonality. "They were all four-doors," says Claude. "I always thought it was an inconvenience to own a two-door car because you have to keep getting out to let people in and out; but with a four-door they can get in on their own."

"With the memories flooding back, my wife, Louise, noticed my growing interest and one day she said, 'It's time.' So, we decided to start looking. She was a good sport about it. Louise was the one that did the pushing.

"I bought a copy of *Hemmings Motor News* and spotted an ad from Goldenrod Garage in Freeport, Maine. Without any intention of buying one specific car, we decided to go and take a look at what else he had in his inventory in early September. While walking around, we both spotted a 1947 Chevrolet Fleetline that really appealed to us. It was parked on a second floor in the middle of all these other cars packed almost bumper-to-bumper. It ran soundly, and after examining the Chevy further, we negotiated its purchase, plus he delivered it to our home. We drove that Chevy until the end of the month and then did a little bit of work, such as re-detailing the engine bay and repainting the body. We continued to drive the Fleetline until 1999. That's when I became aware of the Mercury," recounts Claude.

The Mercury Claude referenced is the car pictured here: a 1956 Monterey Hardtop Coupe. First appearing as simple nomenclature to identify a limited production, specially trimmed, top-of-the-line Club Coupe in 1950, "Monterey" was reassigned

by Mercury two years later as a new upscale series. The decision to do so provided the division with more than one line of mid-priced cars for its customer base, at a time when Mercury was saddled with an identity crisis.

"A friend of mine—Dennis—had purchased the Monterey for his wife; he was going to restore it. Mercury had built it on July 21, 1955, so it was a very early model, originally finished in two-tone Goldenglow Yellow and Raven Black. I mention that because he was going to paint it a different color. When I saw the car for the first time sitting in his garage he already had removed the front end, but had not stripped the original paint off yet. Apparently, just after he started to work on it, she decided that she didn't want the car.

"I was immediately attracted to the body style," says Claude. "And every time I stopped and looked it over, I kept telling him how much I liked it, and Dennis eventually offered it to us. Louise and I looked the car over one last time, and I asked her if she could drive it."

Louise adds, "I had driven the Chevrolet numerous times, but I didn't feel comfortable with it. I didn't want to damage it because it was hard to see over the top of that big hood. When I



New to the 1956 model year was Ford's venerable 312-cu.in. V-8 engine, which helped Mercury set 20 performance records on Daytona's beach. Coupled with a Merc-O-Matic, it made 225 hp.



As much as we enjoyed the Chevy, we bought the Mercury in part because it was a car we both could drive and enjoy riding in equally. Though this ended up being the first two-door car I ever owned, I had long appreciated the body style; the Fords and Mercurys just got it right this year, in my view. They are a lot more stylish. The best part about this is when we arrive at a show and share the Monterey with others. People love to reminisce; and bringing back a few memories and sharing them with each other is a very rewarding aspect of preserving or restoring an old car.

—Claude Poisson

looked at the Mercury I said I could drive it easily."

Claude and Dennis then quickly reached an agreement, at which point the car was reassembled without any actual restoration work having been performed. Dennis then delivered it to the couple in early fall. Powered by its original 225-hp 312-cu.in. Y-block V-8 and Merc-O-Matic combination, the Poissons proceeded to drive it across northern New England, and into their native Canada, to attend countless cruise nights and shows. Over time, however, the Mercury's condition had Claude considering its future.

"We drove it regularly until 2013, and that's when we decided it really needed a restoration. The paint was fading, the seats were sagging, and on several occasions, we would have to hold a door closed while making a turn," laughs Claude. "It was just tired. So, we brought it back to Dennis, who did the restoration from the fall of that year until it was completed in the spring of 2015. Since then, we've continued driving all over the region to attend various events, including a few concours that it's been accepted at."

And that was the real impetus for the purchase after all—driving the car. Which is what we were able to experience during our visit with Claude and Louise when they suggested we use the Monterey to scout a location for our photo shoot along the shore of nearby Massabesic Lake.

We were reminded to lower our head while entering the cabin. Despite the tall appearance, nearly all of Detroit's mid-Fifties cars had been designed with a lower profile, and thus a lower center of gravity. Once inside, however, the aforemen-

tioned greenhouse redesign lent itself to superior 360-degree visibility with plenty of headroom. Aiding the comfort factor was a firm, yet inviting front split-back bench seat, easily adjusted to our driving posture.

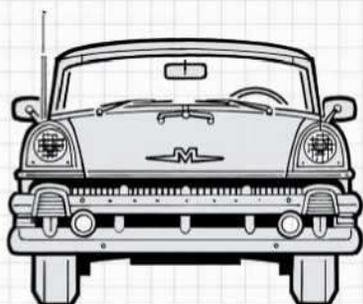
Rather than just twist the key and go, we had to shift the Merc-O-Matic into neutral in order to start the engine. Then it's back into "Park" if you plan on exiting the coupe, "otherwise it'll roll away from you," cautions Claude. With the side windows rolled down, we accelerate onto a side street; the din of Manchester's afternoon bustle trying to disguise the soft rumble of thunder emanating from the Y-block's stock dual-exhaust system.

The Monterey had been ordered with power steering and brakes, both of which we found to be very responsive. Drum brakes have a habit of pulling in one direction or another if not adjusted correctly, but that was not the case here. "Effortless," though an advertising cliché, describes both features perfectly. And remember the lower center of gravity? Coupled with the chassis redesign, the big Mercury was smooth and even, no matter the turning radius we encountered. The Merc-O-Matic managed both up- and down-shifts with nary a hint of body-jarring shift-lag. We should also add that, although Claude opted to install period-correct bias-ply tires on the 15-inch wheels, the dreaded "road wobble" had been kept at bay. Not once did we experience the need to chase the Mercury by continuously sawing at the steering. During the drive to and from the lake, it was easy for us to fall into a nice rhythm of simply enjoying mile after mile of pavement on that sunny spring day; yearning for a longer drive to anywhere. Which helps explain why the Poissons ceaselessly drive the Monterey across the Northeast. 🚗

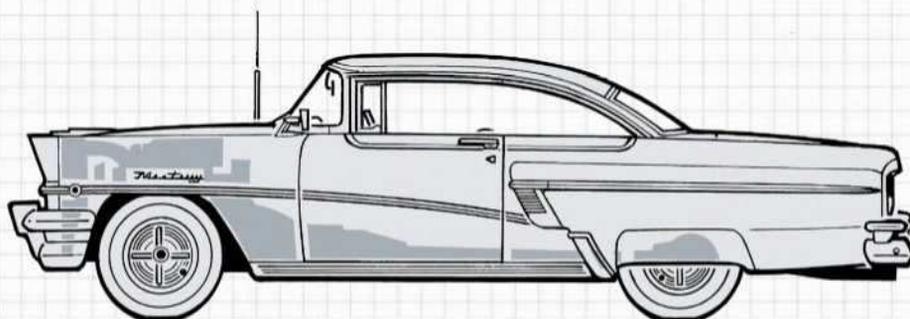


1956 MERCURY MONTEREY HDTP CPE

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



58 inches



119 inches

SPECIFICATIONS

PRICE

BASE PRICE	\$2,630
OPTIONS (CAR PROFILED)	Power brakes (\$45); Town & Country AM/FM radio (\$140); whitewall 7.10-15 Tires (\$35); power steering (\$81)

ENGINE

TYPE	Ford Y-Block OHV V-8; cast-iron block and cylinder heads
DISPLACEMENT	312 cubic inches
BORE X STROKE	3.80 x 3.44 inches
COMPRESSION RATIO	9.0:1
HORSEPOWER @ RPM	225 @ 4,600
TORQUE @ RPM	324 lb-ft @ 2,600
VALVETRAIN	Solid lifters
MAIN BEARINGS	Five
FUEL SYSTEM	Single Carter four-barrel carburetor; mechanical pump
LUBRICATION SYSTEM	Full pressure
ELECTRICAL SYSTEM	12-volt
EXHAUST SYSTEM	Dual exhaust

TRANSMISSION

TYPE	Merc-O-Matic three-speed automatic with three-element torque converter
RATIOS	1st 2.40:1 2nd 1.47:1 3rd 1.00:1 Reverse 2.00:1

DIFFERENTIAL

TYPE	Semi-floating, hypoid drive gears
GEAR RATIO	3.15:1

STEERING

TYPE	Worm-and-roller; power assist
RATIO	20.0:1 gear; 25.4:1 overall
TURNS, LOCK-TO-LOCK	Five
TURNING CIRCLE	43.2 feet

BRAKES

TYPE	Four-wheel; vacuum assist
FRONT/REAR	11 x 2.25-inch cast-iron drums
REAR	11 x 2.00-inch cast-iron drums

CHASSIS & BODY

CONSTRUCTION	Welded and bolt-on steel body panels, separate steel ladder frame with box-
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BODY STYLE LAYOUT

section side rails
Two-door, six-passenger coupe
Front engine, rear-wheel drive

SUSPENSION

FRONT	Independent; control arms with coil springs, anti-roll bar, hydraulic shock absorbers
REAR	Live axle, semi-elliptic leaf springs, hydraulic shock absorbers

WHEELS & TIRES

WHEELS	15 x 5-inch, stamped steel
TIRES	7.10-15 bias ply, BFGoodrich Silvertown whitewall

WEIGHTS & MEASURES

WHEELBASE	119 inches
OVERALL LENGTH	206.4 inches
OVERALL WIDTH	76.4 inches
OVERALL HEIGHT	62.4 inches
FRONT TRACK	58 inches
REAR TRACK	59 inches
CURB WEIGHT	3,590 pounds

CAPACITIES

CRANKCASE	5 quarts with filter
COOLING SYSTEM	20 quarts (with heater)
FUEL TANK	18 gallons
TRANSMISSION	21 pints (with overdrive)
REAR AXLE	3.5 pints

CALCULATED DATA

BHP PER CU.IN.	0.72
WEIGHT PER BHP	15.96
WEIGHT PER CU.IN.	11.51

PRODUCTION

1956 MONTEREYS	105,369
HARDTOP COUPES	42,863

PERFORMANCE*

0-60 MPH	11.0 seconds
¼-MILE ET	18.2 seconds @ 78 mph

*Contemporary magazines did not test a 1956 Monterey; results listed here are from a road test of a two-door '56 Montclair, equipped with a 312/automatic powertrain and optioned with power brakes and steering, published in *Motor Trend's* March 1956 issue.

PROS & CONS

- + Eye-catching two-tone color
- + Responsive 225-hp, 312-cu.in. V-8
- + FoMoCo's graceful-yet-sporty styling
- Some trim is unobtainable
- Bound to forget to put it back in park after starting
- Brand respect still lags behind Ford and Lincoln

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The Royal Runabout Mystery

There's a story that's been going around for years concerning the origin of the Metropolitan Royal Runabout, an elegant little show car displayed by American Motors in the early 1960s. According to the story, published in a well-regarded car magazine, workers at the Austin plant in Birmingham, England, where Metropolitans were produced under contract for AMC, wanted to bestow a gift on their beloved Queen Elizabeth II. In that spirit, they created an exclusive Metropolitan just for her, on which they lavished special exterior trim, including crown-shaped badges, unique wheel covers, custom interior trim, and special paint. Although Queen Elizabeth appreciated the thought, she accepted the one-off car with great reluctance. The reason? She didn't like it; apparently she thought the little puddle jumper was beneath her dignity. "We are not amused." It's an entertaining story, but not a word of it is true. *Here's what really happened.*

In 1960, the good and loyal workers of the Austin Division of British Motor Corporation decided to present a specially trimmed Metropolitan convertible to Princess Margaret, sister of Queen Elizabeth II. They felt she would be an ideal recipient because the little Met was youthful and carefree, just like her. Having the Princess as an owner could only help the car's image. Austin management felt that if she were going to be driving their product they might as well do the thing up right. So, the Austin workers set out to produce a one-off Metropolitan just for Princess Margaret.

To create the exclusive car, Austin started with a stock 1960 Metropolitan with right-hand steering. These were readily available because the company had earlier begun selling Austin-badged Metropolitans in Great Britain and other Sterling markets, in addition to the left-hand models they produced for North America and other LH-drive markets. (Some RHD Mets were even sold in America to police departments, where they served parking patrol duties.) Austin

had the Princess' special Met painted an elegant black, in a single-tone paint job rather than the two-tone scheme that was standard on all Met's since 1956. The car was then fitted with elegant green leather upholstery for the bench seat and interior trim, along with green carpeting. It gave the little Met a tasteful, stylish look, in keeping with the dignity of the royal family.

A set of medium-wide whitewall tires were fitted and that was it. There were no special emblems or badges, not even fancy wheel covers—they retained the stock dog-dish hubcaps. Even the standard zigzag side moldings were retained. And the car wasn't called the "Royal Runabout," though it earned that name soon enough.



Princess Margaret loved her little Met and drove it often, catching the attention of the press, and local hooligans as well. Four youths stole the car one day and took it for a joyride. When the *London Daily Express* heard what had happened, they duly

reported that the Princess' "royal runabout," as they dubbed it, had been nicked by hoodlums. The car was eventually recovered, and one of the youths was caught.

On this side of the pond, a few marketing types at American Motors caught wind of the story and decided to capitalize on it by creating a show car they would call the *Royal Runabout*. The craftsmen at AMC Styling got to work creating a really sweet little car, one that had nothing in common with Princess Margaret's. They settled on a single-tone deep maroon paint with gold accents on the door top recesses, thick whitewall tires with beautiful wheel covers, and a hard metal spare-tire cover painted to match the body. On both front fenders rode the Metropolitan script along with a stylish badge, while on the rear fenders was script spelling out "Royal Runabout," with a crown emblem. The interior was done up in maroon and gold leather. It was tremendously sumptuous for a small car back then.

The AMC *Royal Runabout* served as a show car for a while and then disappeared for several years. It was later owned by an individual who lived in California, was sold to a lady who took it to Hawaii, and at last word was in Mexico. Whether it still exists isn't certain. 🐞

...apparently she thought the little puddle jumper was beneath her dignity. 'We are not amused.' It's an entertaining story, but not a word of it is true.

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“Numbers-Matching”

For many years we’ve heard about the importance of “numbers-matching” when it comes to American muscle cars, particularly Corvettes; knowing a car’s numbers will help you avoid buying a fake model, one that has been transformed. These “transformations” have happened to the great Classics, too, and still do occasionally. The CCCA has been quite diligent in identifying such cars, but it’s inevitable that a few will slip under the radar.

New bodies have been created—usually phaeton or roadster bodies—to replace a car’s original body, often a sedan or limousine, which is deemed by many as less valuable. Sadly, and ironically, the closed bodies often represented the coachbuilders’ best designs and workmanship. Another all-too-

common practice was the swapping of an original open-car body for an original closed-car body. In both instances the original closed body was often discarded or stripped of its hardware and other parts. I consider this truly unfortunate. And not all changes involved body swaps. On a few occasions, a coupe was transformed into a roadster.

Interestingly, the CCCA recognizes Full Classics that have replacement bodies that were available during production, that is, a 1936 Cadillac V-16 whose Fleetwood limousine body is replaced by a Fleetwood convertible sedan is deemed acceptable.

At least twice a year, I receive a call from someone regarding a Classic Lincoln they own or are considering buying, wanting to validate the car. On occasion, I have investigated a Classic Lincoln that interests me and done the same thing. The procedure always begins with the car’s serial number and engine number. On most prewar Classic Lincolns, those numbers are one and the same.

Next are the body numbers. Custom-body companies normally placed their body tag at the base of the cowl. All Lincoln bodies, whether factory-built or built by a custom coachbuilder contain a body plate affixed to the wooden base of the front passenger seat. That plate contains a number indicating the body type (type 204-A is a Town Sedan), the body builder (each

body builder, including Lincoln, was assigned a number), and its production number. Most of the great Classics of the Teens, ’20s, and ’30s, particularly those with custom bodies, contain number stampings that help serve as identification of these bodies.

It’s very rewarding to help the new owner of a Classic Lincoln discover his or her car’s history. Those numbers tell the entire story—the body style, who built the body, and the car’s number in the production sequence.

On the other hand, it’s awkward telling the owner of a Classic that the car carries a

replacement or replica body. In many cases, the car’s serial number and engine are still original to the chassis. When the Lincoln Car Records are checked, we discover the body type the car carried when it left the factory. Most often, a five- or seven-passenger body

was replaced with an open-car body.

There were also body swaps performed “during the era,” that is, a Classic car was rebodied by the factory or a custom coachbuilder with a different, usually newer, body. In some instances, an owner liked a particular body and had it installed on a newer chassis. In other instances, an owner liked a particular chassis but wanted a new, “modern” body. And, on a few occasions, the body from one marque was removed and installed on another. A Packard roadster body installed on a Duesenberg chassis comes to mind; this car has survived.

In these latter instances, since the changes were made “during the era” these cars are accepted as Full Classics by the CCCA. Cars with newly built bodies are not accepted as Full Classics, but I should note that this doesn’t always hurt their value in the marketplace, as proven by some very bullish auction prices.

Some Classics also carry bodies that required extensive restoration that bordered on a total re-creation of the car’s original body. These are considered authentic because the chassis still carries the original body structure.

So, do your due diligence when considering any car, but particularly when it’s a Classic that’s selling in the six-figure range. Marque clubs and automotive libraries contain a wealth of information. 🏠



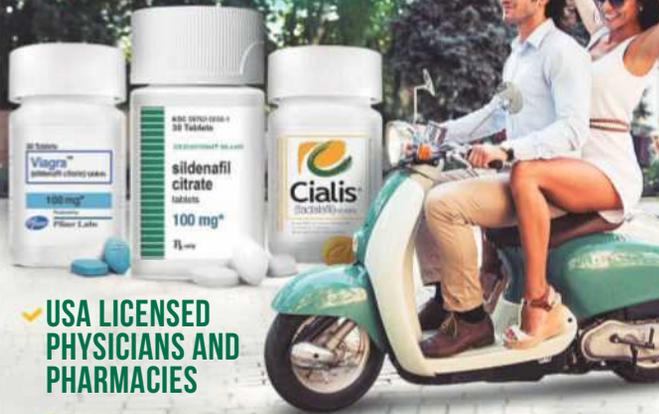
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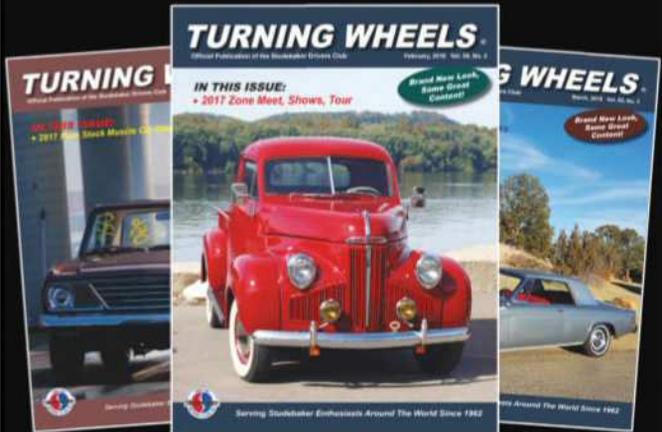
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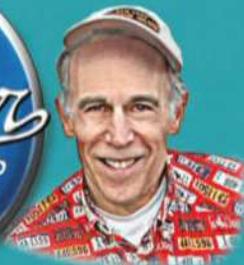
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My Favorite Conundrum

Having been immersed in this hobby since birth, I've come to expect a pair of questions when I attend a show, or, in more recent years, while conducting a photo shoot for our Hemmings publications. The first is always what kind of antique car is in my garage. Without hesitation, my typical response is "Running or resting?" That nod to reality aside, I will go on to relay details that strengthen the vintage-metal kinship with the car owner next to me, while allowing the natural light to work its magic on the car beyond my camera lens. It's the other question—"What's your favorite?"—that usually gives me pause.

Two top choices come to mind relatively easily, my 1952 Buick Roadmaster and a particular 1929 La Salle Town Sedan I've been smitten with since my diaper days. That's not indecisiveness. The truth is, asking me to specify a single car from more than a century of automotive history is like asking parents which of their newborn triplets is their favorite. Therefore, my usual answer is: "Which era?"

Having had years to reflect, I'll start with the Eighties. Not the best decade for Detroit, but in my humble opinion it's the last period in which the domestic manufacturers had true visual distinction. Take the 1985 Pontiac Grand Prix; its prominent quad-split grille, and tasteful trim that accentuated its crisp lines, looked both sporty and elegant. Or Chrysler's '83 Imperial, with its formal grille flanked by hidden headlamps, and a sharp body that warmly embraced a bustleback design far more gracefully than Cadillac.

Seven years earlier, it was hard to miss the racy urethane nose on the 1976 Chevrolet Chevelle Laguna S-3; its reverse rake enhancing the colonnade's aerodynamics. Or, going one step further, the stately styling of Buick's same-year Century Custom coupe, which was a well-blended concoction of the formal-roof Regal, an aero-friendly nose, and five-spoke Road Wheels. I find it hard to ignore the simple-yet-appealing lines of Ford's early Mavericks that offered ample economical room. The real standout, though, was American Motor's '71-'74 Javelin, with its uniquely exaggerated fenders perfectly sculpted into the long hood/short deck profile. Nor can we forget its angular, uncomplicated, flight-cockpit inspired instrument panel.

My list gets more complicated when I consider what was available before the Seventies. Amid the cornucopia of market segments was Mercury's 1969 Marauder X-100. Highly underappreciated today, it combined Lincoln styling with Mercury's comfort and Ford's thunderous 429-cu.in. engine, all for an attractive price. One of the most striking designs of the Fifties has to be Ford's effort for 1957 across the



board. Pick a model, and I'll nod a quick approval, even to the Rancho. Though, if I'm being honest, the incredibly sharp fins adorning Cadillac's same-year Eldorado Biarritz will always distract me.

The prewar era is a completely different story. You

have all the usual suspects—Duesenberg's Model J, any V-12 Cadillac, the incredibly elegant '32 Marmons, the 1930 Packard Speedster, Ford's '34 Phaeton, De Soto's 1932 SC Roadster, or the simplistic-yet-cozy American Bantam. And I'd be remiss if I didn't include the true rarities of the domestic industry, offerings from Otto, Bell, Midland, and Trumbull, to name a few—the latter's tale perhaps more compelling than any other storied manufacturer. And then there's the 1932 Graham.

After struggling to maintain sales during the early days of the Depression, the Graham brothers turned to Amos Northup of Murray Corporation to craft a bold, new design. Furnished with a new chassis, Northup broke long-standing design traditions and provided skirted fenders, complemented by a swept-back radiator shell devoid of a radiator cap, which had been tactfully hidden under the hood. Timing was fortuitous, as the company was also unveiling its new "Blue Streak" eight-cylinder engine, the name proving to be so popular it was used by media and public alike to describe the cars. The sheer brilliance of the Murray design shined brightly on the Model 57 convertible I spotted in 2009, its color combination, dual side-mount spares, and beltline molding becoming a captivating masterpiece of mobile art that was nearly impossible to walk away from.

The point is, the industry, and the hobby it spawned, offers tremendous diversity—so many gems from so many eras to choose from. There's something for everyone, and if you're like me you'll be hard pressed to pick just one.

So, what are your favorites? 🐞

“
The truth is,
asking me
to specify a
single car
from more
than a century
of automotive
history is like
asking parents
which of their
newborn
triplets is their
favorite.”

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WOW, WHAT A THROWBACK TO the past seeing the Chitty Chitty Bang Bang reproduction in issue #163. You know, it wasn't a week before that my wife had dragged out a box of movies and there it was, *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* that we had bought years ago to watch with our kids. So, now the grandkids and I were watching it, and they loved it, and boy, what memories it brought back for me! Then a week went by and the mail came, the grandkids were with us, and they were running all about the house hollering "Chitty Chitty Bang Bang," so I, wondering what all the commotion was, came into the room and they were holding the new *HCC* issue with the car on the cover! Thanks for such a great, diverse magazine; keep the great stuff coming. Now I need to go find that issue, as it seems to continually disappear for some strange reason whenever the grandkids show up.
Charles Baker
Georgetown, Texas

AFTER READING RICHARD'S article in *HCC* #165 and his exceptional description of a 1941 Dodge four-door sedan, he slapped me back to my roots. He has shown me how truly beautiful a common man's car was and still is. I came from a blue-collar family and as a kid lived in a neighborhood that was a sea of four-door sedans, so I really didn't think of them as cars I would ever want or, especially, as works of art.

As a kid, I bought my first model to build. It was a 1959 Chevrolet Impala Sport Coupe. From that time on, I was in love with two-door sedans and hardtops. I'm now 70 years old and want to thank you for reminding us of the simplicity and the beauty of the four-door sedans that were the mainstay of the working man's transportation to work and his family's pleasure. I'm seriously thinking of buying a 1934 Chevrolet Master four-door sedan, if I can find one unrestored, to work on while thinking of my dad.
Ken Scott
Tipton, Indiana

THANK YOU, RICHARD, FOR AN excellent, perceptive column on four-door sedans. My grandfather and father only bought four-door sedans, so I grew up with four-door cars. I'm 77 years young and bought four-door sedans until a few years ago. Two years ago, I

purchased a Corvair convertible and a 1947 Ford two-door sedan; I broke a 90-year-old family tradition. What else can I say?
Aaron DeRoy
Wilkes Barre, Pennsylvania

RICHARD, THE TIMING OF YOUR commentary on four-door cars was perfect, as just a couple days later I went to pick up a 1960 Bel Air four-door. It has been repainted but has the original chrome and windows, and a 235-cu.in. straight-six with three-speed on the column. The only non-stock part is a split manifold with a pair of Smithy's mufflers, so it sounds great. It's the classic family sedan. The price was very affordable for getting into owning a classic car. If it had been any other body style, it would have been twice the amount or much more. This is a great driving car, and I get thumbs up every place I go. I don't think I'd enjoy it any more if it had fewer doors.
Ken Alarie
Papillion, Nebraska

RICHARD'S OBSERVATIONS ABOUT preserving four-door sedans reminded me of a couple of things. Have you noticed that the scale modelers bend way over backward to avoid producing scale models of sedans? Convertibles, hardtops, two-door sedans, coupes, sure, but the only four-door cars are the ones where they're forced by circumstance, like limousines. I, like you, always thought this was silly.

Back when I was in college, we had a guest lecturer, and one of her remarks was, "Why do Americans think they need more doors in their cars than in their houses?" Said I from the corner of the hall: "Because, you don't have to climb over the furniture to get into your house." The discussion kind of went downhill from there.
Geo Hamlin
Clarksville, Maryland

I AGREE WITH THE VALUE AND beauty of many four-door cars. Of the six cars my dad owned when I was growing up, five were of that type. The exception was a 1954 Roadmaster Riviera hardtop that was purchased with the idea that my sister and I, who were toddlers at the time, would be in jeopardy in the back seat of a sedan with no

seatbelts and the possibility of opening one of the back doors while the car was in motion.

The pinnacle was our 1963 Cadillac six-window Sedan de Ville. There wasn't a bad line in the styling, and it was better-proportioned than the contemporary Coupe de Ville, which had a short top and greenhouse, and a long rear deck. Not a bad design, but it looked a little off compared to the four-door sedans that year.
Jim Kroeger
Fairlawn, Ohio

RICHARD, I TOO LIKE FOUR-DOOR cars. I like that they are easier to get in and out of, and the doors are shorter and lighter, while the high-end models have very nice interiors. When you are driving down the road, you get the same view out the windshield no matter the number of doors, and vintage four-door cars are much less expensive to buy. A 440 or Hemi V-8 will be just as fast in a four-door Belvedere as it will be in a Road Runner.
Neil Ternet
Monroeville, Indiana

THE STORY FROM ARTIE FINNEGAN in "I Was There" in *HCC* #165 about working on Corvairs at a Chevrolet dealer in the 1960s had so many inaccuracies and fallacies, I wouldn't know where to start to list them all. For one, you can remove any Corvair radio in less than 10 minutes without removing the dash (that is welded in anyway). I also started working at a Chevy dealer as a teenager in 1965 as a helper with the mechanic who worked on all the Corvairs. Artie and I must have lived in alternate universes because my experiences with Corvairs were the very opposite of his. Some mechanics with crude techniques and poor attitudes damaged the reputations of many good auto mechanics in the eyes of the public back then.
Dan Brizendine
Circle City Corvairs Club
Indianapolis, Indiana

IT WOULD BE NICE IF YOU COULD occasionally run a Gus's Garage-type article for us old-timers; we would enjoy reading the old stories and younger readers would learn how things were done in the past. For instance, toward the end of World War II, new cars

were't available and used cars were at a premium, so most folks tried to make what they had last as long as possible. Popular magazines of the period, such as *Popular Science* and *Popular Mechanics*, and other publications that would interest an 11-year-old boy, carried stories and advertisements on how you could keep your old car running and looking good.

One such story was, "Paint your car with a Powder Puff." Yes, you're reading that right. This company would supply you with a "Special Powder Puff" and the paint to do the job. Also, during this same period, a West Coast company offered to refurbish your Ford, most any year 1932-1937. They would rebuild the engine and transmission, replace the clutch, service the brakes, and run the undercarriage through a solvent bath to clean and remove the years of dirt; the two springs and all-important shackles and steering would be serviced at this time, too. Additional refurbishment, such as paint and interior, could be done at this time if you had the money. In the end, you would have "A New Car"!

Len Pascale
Aquebogue, New York

WALT GOSDEN SCORES AGAIN

with "The Soft Side" in HCC #165. How lucky we are that Walt has the resources to explore the interesting but seldom-discussed world of automotive upholstery; more articles like this, please.

Here's a suggestion: How about a look at how new cars were purchased in the past? Were most cars built to order, or were they selected from dealer stock? As an automotive sales literature collector, I know that dealer accessories brochures often listed equipment that today would be installed at the factory. I've heard that two-tone paint schemes sometimes were applied in a dealer's body shop. Did dealers typically order an array of models in assorted colors with no optional equipment, then upgrade them on-site to customer spec?

Pete Kraus
Lilburn, Georgia

MR. LITWIN'S ARTICLE ON TAKING

his 1964 Buick on an impromptu road trip (issue #164) was not only interesting, it confirmed that one of my "bucket list" items, driving my 1966 Pontiac Bonneville from Cleveland to St. Augustine, Florida, wasn't such a bad idea.

This past month, my friend Patrick and I drove the 900-mile run in 15 hours,

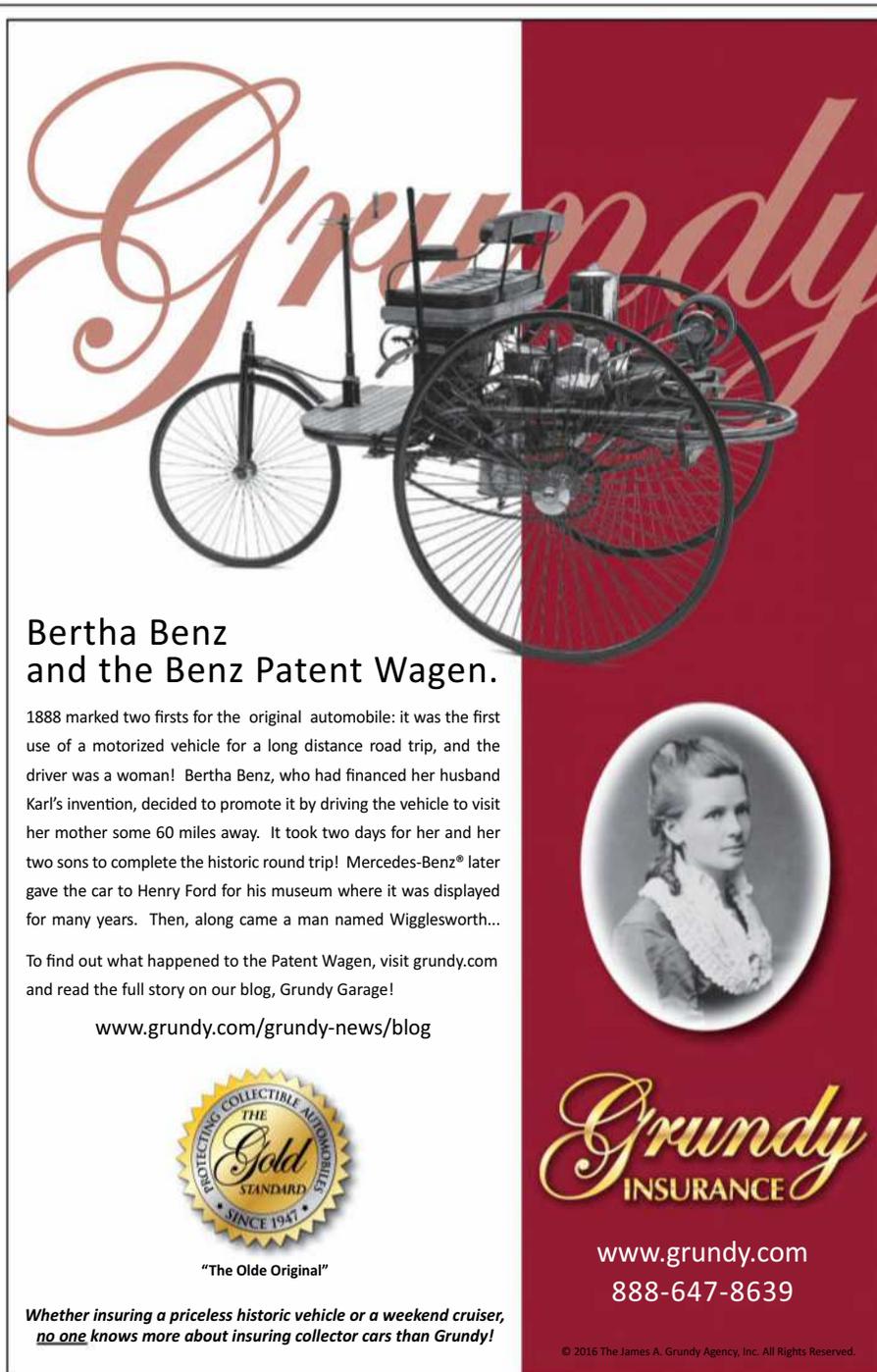
with only one issue; the A/C compressor, which had not been used since I got the car, decided to, literally, fall apart. We made a quick assessment, cut the belt, and made the rest of the trip with no further issues. The 52-year-old Pontiac averaged 75 mph and 15 mpg.

While we got a lot of thumbs up and comments when we stopped anywhere, we both agreed that it never felt like we were riding in an old car. As Mr. Litwin alluded to, these older cars were great on the highway then, and continue to be

so now. Thank you, Matthew, for your inspiration. We drove the Bonneville just over 3,000 miles in eight days and she's ready for another trip this summer to Ocean City, Maryland.

Rex Lewers
Strongsville, 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.



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 and read the full story on our blog, Grundy Garage!

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SPECIAL SECTION: COLLECTIBLE '70s CARS



A Decade of Change

BY RICHARD LENTINELLO • IMAGES COURTESY OLD CAR BROCHURES AND THE AP

50
FULLSIZE
CONVERTIBLES

52
DETROIT
SUB-COMPACTS

56
PERSONAL LUXURY

58
1977 AMC
MATADOR

When the first gas shortage hit in 1973, automakers had already been in scramble mode to meet the more stringent federal crash regulations for that model year and the additional requirements for 1974. As a result, most cars were soon saddled with the biggest, heaviest, and ugliest bumpers ever bolted to an automobile. Style and design were now a secondary consideration, as meeting the 5-mph bumper standards had become a priority.

Yet, achieving better fuel efficiency was every auto manufacturer's number-one goal, as gas mileage had become the primary selling point when it came to new cars. A surge in fuel prices from 38 cents per gallon in 1973 to 55 cents a little more than a year later resulted in sub-compact cars becoming all the rage. The existing Pinto, Vega, and Gremlin were joined by the Monza,

Starfire, Skyhawk, Astre, Bobcat, Pacer, Chevette, Sunbird, Omni, and Horizon over the next few years. These Detroit combat troops waged America's war against OPEC.

Before the decade ended, smaller, more fuel-efficient cars were in greater demand than ever before. To help fight the growing threat of small cars from Japan, the Big-Three automakers downsized their fullsize models. Gone were the big boats of yesteryear, replaced by cars of more manageable size and weight.

And with fuel efficiency being the new catch phrase, the muscle car was killed seemingly overnight. While some of the names lived on, such as Charger, GTO, Road Runner, Chevelle, and Trans Am, the cars themselves became mere shadows of their former muscular glory. This was especially true of the once mighty Mustang, which was replaced by the Mustang II.



Oddly enough, the 1974 Mustang II was one of the bestselling Mustang models of all time.

Pending regulations helped kill the American convertible, too, which made the 1976 Cadillac Eldorado the first true collectible of the modern era. Enthusiasts and investors everywhere scrambled to own one, thinking it would be the last U.S.-made convertible ever produced. And, in an odd way, this Eldorado helped fuel greater interest in the car hobby.

During this decade of change, there were many other coveted cars. Besides the 454/455/429/440- and Hemi-powered muscle and pony cars of the early '70s, there were the gorgeous first-generation Monte Carlo, the sleek boattail Rivas, the luxurious Grand Prix, the 1978 Corvette Pace Car, and, of recently emerging interest, the classy and well-appointed Cordoba. And who today doesn't want to own a Pacer? 🚗

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Fullsize Convertibles

With few models to choose from, the big '70s-era convertibles were the best of the breed

BY RICHARD LENTINELLO • IMAGES BY THE MANUFACTURERS

After the 1960s, increasing government legislation, with the convertible body style being its primary target, was making it harder for auto manufacturers to produce the cars they wanted to build, and that the public wanted to buy. The convertible's days were numbered, but during the first half of the 1970s, there were still several droptop models being built to satisfy every motorist's desire to enjoy driving with the sun beating down upon them. Other than AMC, every U.S. car manufacturer offered a convertible; here were your choices...

BUICK

Of all the different car brands, Buick had the most variety when it came to convertibles. The \$4,802 Electra 225



was only manufactured for 1970, with 6,045 produced. The Wildcat Custom was also only made this year, and it is the rarest '70s-era Buick with just 1,244 built. The LeSabre Custom was built from 1970-'72, with a total production run of 6,380. The

LeSabre returned for 1974 as the Luxus, and 3,627 were built, followed in '75 as the Custom again with 5,300 produced.

The most popular fullsize Buick convertible was the handsome 1971-'73 Centurion, of which 10,296 were made.

CADILLAC

When it came to fullsize convertibles during the '70s, everyone, it seemed, wanted an Eldorado, but for 1970 there was also the \$6,068 de Ville, which 15,172 buyers selected. The 1971-'76 Eldorado started out at \$7,751 with 6,800 cars made, but for its final year, when it was the only convertible made by a U.S. manufacturer, buyers scrambled to get one of the \$11,049 Eldorado droptops; 14,000 were produced.

CHEVROLET

For 1970, the ever-popular Impala was one of the lowest-priced fullsize convertibles costing \$3,377. From 1970-'72, a total of 20,594 Impala droptops were built. For 1973, the \$4,345 Caprice was available in its place, which lasted through 1975; a total of 20,358 Caprices were produced.

CHRYSLER

Only for the 1970 model year did Chrysler offer a fullsize convertible, with the Newport being the more affordable at \$4,769; just 1,124 were made. The well-appointed 300 Series cost \$5,195, which limited its production run to only 1,077 units.

DODGE

Like Chrysler, 1970 was also the only year for a fullsize Dodge convertible with the \$3,527 Polara getting the nod; only a mere 842 were built, making it quite rare today. The other Dodge droptops were the midsize Coronet and the Challenger, with the Coronet R/T being the rarest with just 296 produced.

FORD

A total of 6,348 XL convertibles were built for the 1970 model year, the only time this \$3,501 fullsize car was offered. For 1971, it was the \$4,094 LTD that was available in convertible form, and then again in '72, its final year; a total of 8,307 were made.

MERCURY

Aside from the Cougar, Mercury offered only two fullsize convertibles, and they were only available for 1970. There was the \$3,429 Monterey, of which just 581 were made, and the \$4,047 Marquis that saw an equally limited production run of 1,233 examples.

OLDSMOBILE

The high-end Ninety-Eight for 1970 cost a cool \$4,914, yet, even with 3,161 examples sold, it was dropped after this year. It was replaced by the more affordable Delta 88, which was also available in 1970 but for \$3,903; 3,095 were built. During the 1971-'75 period, it became known as the Delta 88 Royale and had a price tag in its final year of \$5,213. During its five-year production run a total of 24,768 were built.

PLYMOUTH

Buyers wanting a fullsize Plymouth convertible had only the 1970 Fury III to choose from. With a base price of \$3,415, just 1,952 buyers wanted one. The only other similar-sized Plymouth droptops this year were the Satellite and Road Runner. Priced at \$3,006 and \$3,289, respectively, only 701 and 824 were made.



PONTIAC

The only '70s-era Bonneville convertible was the 1970 model; at \$4,040, only 3,537 were made. The plainer Catalina was offered in 1970-'72 starting out at \$3,604, and by the time production ended a total of 8,121 were produced. The most popular fullsize Pontiac convertible was the Grand Ville that was offered from 1971-'75. In the Grand Ville's final year, it had a base price of \$5,858, and saw a production run during its five years reach a total of 15,963 examples. 



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RICHARD LENTINELLO

Detroit New Sub-Compacts

Domestic economy cars that captured our budget-conscious attention

BY MATTHEW LITWIN

The utilitarian and affordable compact car can trace its origins to the 1930s or earlier, but it didn't attain a self-supporting customer base in America until the 1950s, when Crosley and Nash were the primary players, later joined by Studebaker. That changed by 1960 after the Big Three recognized a growing sales loss to an increasing number of efficiently small imports. By then it had become obvious that European and Japanese manufacturers were successfully selling even smaller, sporty sub-compacts in the States, prompting Detroit to respond. As the 1970s unfolded, the sub-compact market exploded in a buying frenzy. Here's a quick overview of the small-car scene.

AMERICAN MOTORS

AMC was the first to offer a domestic-made sub-compact with the April 1, 1970, release of the Gremlin. The 96-inch wheelbase chassis borrowed heavily from the Hornet sedan, using most of its components from the doors forward. First offered as a two- or four-seater, the Gremlin's base price was a svelte \$1,879 or \$1,959, respectively, which included a 135-hp 199-cu.in. straight-six engine. The Gremlin would be offered through 1978, attracting 523,091 buyers. For 1979, the line was thoroughly restyled, and renamed Spirit, attaining an inaugural production run of 52,714 units.

Joining the Gremlin in 1975 was the 77-inch-wide Pacer. Built on a 100-inch-wheelbase chassis, it had a 90-hp 232-cu.in. straight-six. Priced at \$3,299, the uniquely-designed, polarizing Pacer was perfectly pointed into the upscale segment of the sub-compact market, finding 72,158 buyers. Another 117,244 Pacers were produced in 1976, boosting output through 1979 to 279,112 units.

BUICK

Although GM's H-body platform first appeared in 1971, it wasn't given a Buick badge until 1975. Named Skyhawk, it was based on the upscale Chevrolet Monza and included 2+2 styling with a European flair and a torque-arm rear suspension system, all bolted to a 97-inch-wheelbase chassis that weighed less than 2,900 pounds. The Skyhawk's striking standard feature, however, was its 110-hp 231-cu.in. V-6 engine, making for a sporty sub-compact capable of 0-60 mph times under 12.5 seconds. The advent of turbocharging the V-6 in 1978 meant even quicker acceleration. By the end of the decade, the Skyhawk had found 116,949 buyers.

CHEVROLET

Chevrolet entered the sub-compact race with the Vega in 1971. Its H-body chassis was extensively designed with a computer, a first for an American car. The Vega used an all-alloy engine, which had teething issues, but that didn't stop sales from reaching 269,900 units in its first year, and another 390,478 for 1972. Ultimately, the H-body platform was prosperous and versatile as the years progressed, as demonstrated by the unveiling of the Cosworth and separate-model Monza editions in 1975. Collectively, 2,582,049 H-body cars had been built by the end of the decade.

Adding to the division's assault on the sub-compact market was its attempt at a "world car" with the 1976 Chevette. It was first offered in two trim levels in two-door hatch guise, costing less than \$3,100. Often the subject of tales of horrid dependability, the 94.3-inch-wheelbase platform and its series of four-cylinder engines were continuously improved through the remainder of the decade. Whether your memories of the Chevette were fond or not, the tiny Bowtie endeared itself to 989,368 buyers through 1979.

DODGE

Like Chevrolet's Nova, Dodge's Dart enjoyed continuous relevance with its customer base since the early Sixties. Though it never attained numbers completely equal to Chevy—or Ford—the Chrysler division concentrated much of its economy production effort on the compact market, nonetheless. Filling their sub-compact slot for much of the 1970s was the imported Colt, but that changed somewhat with the introduction of the hatchback-styled Omni in 1978. Long proven not to be a copy of VW's Rabbit, the L-body Omni, sporting a 99.2-inch wheelbase, was Chrysler's first "metric" car, featuring relatively advanced engineering on a mass-produced, American-made scale. Power came from a 75-hp 104.7-cu.in., transverse-mounted, four-cylinder that provided the division with its then-highest mpg rating. Initially costing \$3,976 in base trim, and aimed squarely at the Chevette, it found 189,308 buyers in its first two years.

FORD

Ford's assault on the compact market—comprised of its Falcon, Maverick, Fairmont and Granada—was massive, with a combined production total of 4,517,685 cars. Dearborn was also a mass mover of sub-compacts.

Though the Pinto is often remembered for problems early on in its history, the 94.4-inch-wheelbase small car, introduced for the 1971 model year, was instantly popular with buyers on a budget. Initially offered in two body styles with either a 75- or 100-hp four-cylinder, the 1,900-pound, \$2,000 car found 352,402 buyers in its first year. Pinto's peak output was 544,209 examples in 1974, helping push cumulative 1971-'79 production to 2,965,900 units.

FORD MUSTANG II

We've purposely omitted pony cars from this list, given their own segment within the domestic market, but we'd be remiss if we didn't at least mention the Mustang II. The decision to downsize the model was fortuitous on many levels. Released in 1974 and based on a 96.2-inch-wheelbase version of the Pinto chassis, it was only slightly smaller than the first-gen Mustang, with coupe and fastback styling reminiscent of yore. Considerably smaller and lighter than the 1971-'73 editions, all it lacked was tire-smoking performance. That didn't seem to matter when the \$3,400 (average) car hit showrooms, just as the first oil embargo hit the pumps. Often scoffed at today, the Mustang II saw an impressive 1,107,718 examples built.

MERCURY

While parent division Ford welcomed the Pinto in 1971, up-scale Mercury didn't receive a sub-compact until 1975. When announced, the badge-engineered Bobcat was mechanically identical to its sibling—including a choice between the base 82-hp four-cylinder or optional 105-hp V-6—but was differentiated visually by adapting a Mercury-styled grille, altering the tail panel trim, and providing finer interior accoutrements. Volume sales were hardly Mercury's forte, even in the Seventies, and the Bobcat's higher \$3,335 (1975 average) price tag meant that prior to 1980 it had attained only 190,385 discerning buyers.

OLDSMOBILE

Badge engineering was clearly a common theme in Detroit in the '70s, as demonstrated by GM's deployment of the H-body chassis to multiple divisions, including Oldsmobile. Like Buick, the Lansing-based automaker received the platform in time for the 1975 launch of the Starfire, a name resurrected from its past. It was an equal blend of basic Monza styling and Buick's

110-hp, 231-cu.in. V-6. With interior and exterior trim massaged to suit Olds, its base price was adjusted to \$3,873, which attracted 31,081 customers. Although 116,951 examples were ultimately produced prior to 1980, individual model-year output never surpassed its first-year figure.

PLYMOUTH

Plymouth had long-enjoyed the success of badge-engineering via the Dart/Valiant connection, and that corporate marriage continued with the 1978 release of the sub-compact Horizon. Identical to Dodge's Omni in all but trim and comfort features, it even shared the same base price of \$3,976. Yet, the Horizon outsold its divisional counterpart handsomely: 95,817 in its first year on the market, and another 140,463 the following year.

PONTIAC

Pontiac received the H-body chassis in two phases. The first phase was a baseline Vega, including its 140-cu.in. four-cylinder, which was visually massaged and renamed Astre in 1975. The model had been a Canadian sales success since 1973; it was hoped the trend would continue in the U.S. Offered in three trim levels at an average of \$3,202, the line attracted 64,470 buyers. The following year, the second-phase Sunbird joined the fray for \$3,431. Based on the Monza Town coupe, its standard engine was, again, the Vega's 140; however, the Buick 231 V-6 was on the option chart, helping the new model attract 52,031 consumers.

Both models would ultimately suffer the same fates, but in different years. The Astre experienced a scant three-year production run, claiming 147,642 in sales, whereas the Sunbird line would see the dawn of a new decade. By the conclusion of 1979, a total of 291,988 had been sold. 🚗



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Personal Luxury

Detroit embraces coupes for comfort

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEFF KOCH



Personal-luxury cars were nothing new by the time 1970 rolled around, but the genre had taken on a life of its own once the muscle era saw its sad decline. Sales of intermediate-sized cars had been steady throughout the 1960s, roughly 20 percent of the market, when in 1972 they suddenly took the lead. Fully 75 percent of these were two-doors, and half of those were personal-luxury models. From 200,000 cars in 1970, sales topped one million in 1975. Big, soft, insulating—fuel crisis or not, these were the right cars at the right time.

And this filtered through Detroit's lineups. The major players in the personal-luxury field, such as Chevrolet's Monte Carlo and Ford's Thunderbird, received new underpinnings in 1973 and '74, respectively (with the big 'Bird downsized again in '77), while Chrysler's Cordoba rode restyled B-body chassis designs dating to 1962. But it's more interesting to see what was happening in the lower registers.

The answers were inevitably similar. With power removed from the equation, Detroit loaded in the toys and the high-style visuals. Cars that traditionally got six-cylinder engines received V-8s backed

with automatic transmissions, so that you could float off on a wave of torque from a stoplight, and four-cylinder cars got sixes, and occasionally a V-8, too. Outside, chrome trim ruled the day—additional bright moldings, a special badge or some other filigree, color-keyed trim inserts in some of the moldings, full wheel covers (that were occasionally color-keyed to the body, if they weren't faux-wires), two-tone paint, remote door mirror(s), stereos that offered your choice of cassette or 8-track tape (along with AM, FM, and, in some cases, CB radio!) and power steering/brakes/windows/locks.

Inside, all was color-matching:

steering wheel, steering column, seats, door panels, carpets, seatbelts, and headliner. Adjustable seats (sometimes power-operated) were clad in the softest of fabrics. Air conditioning blew cool when the temperature of the world got too hot. The technology wasn't new; lots of it had been in cars for decades. What was new was bringing it down the line into smaller cars, and charging a premium for it.

Detroit originally offered small cars to compete against the imports, then quickly forgot their frugal nature by stuffing V-8 engines under their hoods, and lavishing them with every manner of luxury goodie under the sun. To wit: In the early 1960s, the Plymouth Valiant was a Slant Six-powered bare-bones economy machine. Optional equipment included a windshield washer, safety glass, an external mirror, and an AM radio. But by 1976, the cushy Valiant Brougham was approaching Imperial-levels of luxury, offering a choice of velour-clad bucket or bench seats, thick shag carpeting, wood-grain inserts on the dash, courtesy lighting, remote driver's mirror, sound deadening, and a carpeted trunk.

Witness: Ford's Pinto, formerly a 1600-cc economy car, could be optioned with a 2.8-liter V-6 engine, automatic transmission, air conditioning, a sunroof, and any number of option groups (exterior and interior decor groups, protection group, convenience light group, Squire Decor group for wagons,



etc). Soon you're spending base LTD money on a Pinto. Which was just fine by Ford, which didn't care which car you spent your five grand on... as long as you spent five grand. The strategy worked so well, Ford let the upscale Mercury division sell its own Pinto variant, called Bobcat, starting in 1975.

None of these cars were new: The Pinto dated to 1971, the Valiant a decade earlier. Much of their tooling had been paid off for years. But baked into each was the pure profit that the car companies needed to keep going, in an era when the economy was stagnating, the price of gas ate your paycheck, and bare-bones imports were making inroads on American highways.

Personal luxury cars were a hit, and they kept Detroit afloat for a few years. As American automakers regrouped for the next round of post-fuel-crisis cars, which launched in the late 1970s, option-laden, personal-luxury machines allowed us a retreat from the sad reality around us. 🐾



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Majestic Matador

The 1977 Barcelona II was AMC's midsize personal luxury car

BY THOMAS A. DeMAURO • PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEFF KOCH

Promising the premium features of the day for less cost, bulk, and fuel consumption than traditional fullsize luxury-cruisers, personal luxury intermediate coupes became hot sellers in the 1970s. Landau tops, posh upholstery, and power everything were the rage,

and lavish exterior trim was liberally applied to ensure that each special edition announced its owner's social standing to all who would see it out on the road or simply sitting in the driveway.

AMC wasn't about to be left out of this lucrative market, but knowing it needed a more progressive-appearing

contender than the conservative 1971-'73 two-door Matador, the company approved the development of a new midsize coupe. Richard "Dick" Teague, vice president of design, and his team were responsible for creating the modern fervently styled Matador Coupe, which debuted for the 1974 model year.

As if for a ride conceived for the hero in a science fiction movie, contemporary curvaceous shapes were applied to the popular long-hood/fastback theme, and they were blended with a few traditional AMC styling cues to create a unique appearance. The headlamps were recessed and located high in the broad grille so their tops aided in defining the hood's design, and a forward-jutting bumper satisfied Federal Motor Vehicle Safety standards. A central character line ran the length of the flanks, swept up near the rear wheel wells, and extended across the back of the car. An additional subtle crease complemented it on the lower body sides. Brightly trimmed round taillamps split by a license plate cove were set above the





prominent 5-mph rear bumper. The door glass was frameless, the previous year's vent windows were banished, and a B-pillar helped meet rollover standards.

Coupes were built on their own 114-inch wheelbase, while the existing four-door Matadors and station wagons retained a 118-inch spread between the wheel centers. The result was a 209.3-inch long and 77.2-inch wide Coupe featuring unit-body construction and coil-spring suspension with unequal length control arms in front and a four-link control arm layout in the rear.

The base Matador and luxurious Brougham came with a standard 232-cu.in. straight-six and a three-speed manual transmission. Optional was a

258-cu.in. six and V-8s consisting of a 304 two-barrel, 360 two-or-four-barrel, or a 401 four-barrel. An extra-cost Torque-Command three-speed automatic was mandatory with the V-8s. The 304/automatic was standard with the sporty Matador X, and the larger engines were optional.

The new Coupe drew critical acclaim from much of the automotive press, it became a flying car in the James Bond movie *The Man with the Golden Gun*, and it competed in NASCAR. The public also reacted favorably by purchasing 62,269 of them in that first model year.

By 1977 much had changed, however. Most mainstays of the personal luxury coupe market—the Monte Carlo, Grand

Prix, Cutlass Salon and Supreme, and the Cougar XR-7 etc. remained. A few had retired like the 1973-'75 Grand Am and the 1974-'76 Ford Elite. Yet more competition arrived with the Cordoba, and redefined Charger SE and Fury beginning in 1975, and the LTD II and newly downsized Thunderbird for 1977.

The Matador Coupe entered its fourth sales season without a significant restyle beyond the grille and parking lamps for 1976, and recent years had not been financially kind to AMC. Economic conditions and other factors lead to the company operating at a fiscal loss. Matador Coupe sales, also in steady decline from their 1974 high, were down to 6,825 for 1977. (Just 2,006 would be sold in 1978,

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Along with the Barcelona II's upscale interior appointments, this Matador further increased driver comfort via optional A/C, tilt wheel, 8-track tape player, cruise control, and the interior décor convenience group. The Barcelona package would return for 1978 sans the "II."



ury equipment to the Matador Coupe. Its exterior featured special two-tone paint, a padded Landau roof, opera windows with Barcelona accents; color-keyed headlamp bezels and bumpers; bumper guards; Barcelona emblems and hood ornament; dual remote mirrors; two-tone color-keyed slot wheels, and GR78 x 15 WSW tires. Inside were Nap Knit reclining seats, color-keyed custom door-trim panels and headliner, a Barcelona crest on the dash, and an AM/FM stereo.

This 1977 Barcelona II-equipped Matador was delivered to Davies Motors in San Diego to serve as a showroom traffic builder in late December of 1976. Additional options specified include A/C, "Adjust-O-Tilt" wheel, entertainment center that added a stereo 8-track tape player, maximum cooling package, bumper nerfing strips, cruise control, interior décor convenience group, and California emissions. The HD suspension package was also specified and included revised spring rates and shocks and the addition of a rear anti-roll bar to accompany the standard front bar.

California-bound Matadors required

a 304-cu.in. two-barrel V-8 engine with electronic ignition in place of the normally standard 258-six. (A 360 was optional.) A column-shifted three-speed automatic transmission, 3.15-geared rear axle, power steering and disc brakes, custom steering wheel, extra-quiet insulation, and more were standard. All totaled, the \$4,616 Matador Coupe's base price swelled to \$7,037 with options and other charges.

At the time, Fred Davies was managing the family-owned dealership, which had been established in 1907 by his grandfather. He told *HCC*, "In 1978 AMC was in decline, so we decided that after 71 years it was time to get out of the car business. This Matador Barcelona II was the last car on our showroom floor, so I decided to keep it."

A few years later, he donated it to the San Diego Automotive Museum. When the exhibits were revised and the Matador was retired, Fred bought it back around 2004 for the cost of storage fees and some maintenance that had been performed.

He had it shipped to his home in Aspen, Colorado, where it was reunited with two other AMCs that the Davies had kept

its final year.) The luxurious Oleg Cassini package, and the sporty X had been discontinued by then, but the new high-line Barcelona package had debuted in the Bicentennial year.

At \$799, the package was renamed Barcelona II partway through the 1977 model year, and it added even more lux-



The 304-cu.in. two-barrel V-8 was standard for Matadors sold in California in the 1977 model year. Note the factory markings and decals in the 101-mile Sand Tan engine compartment. Barcelona II exterior paint schemes were Sand Tan/Golden Ginger or Autumn Red/Claret.

since new—a 1967 Marlin that was Fred’s demo for that year, and a 1970 AMX that had been Fred’s Dad’s demo.

A few years later, Fred read an article in an AMC club newsletter on the Rambler Ranch in Elizabeth, Colorado. In 2007, he contacted avid AMC collector and Rambler Ranch owner Terry Gale to see if he would be interested in purchasing the low-mileage Matador.

“As soon as I saw the ranch and Terry’s

vast collection, I knew it was the appropriate place for the Matador,” he recalls. “I sold it to him for the sticker price on the window, mainly due to the irony of the situation. We had tried to sell that car when it was new but it didn’t move. It then took 30 years, but I finally sold it. Though it may have been worth more at the time, I was just happy to see it go to a good home.”

All other factors including relative collectibility aside, simply adjusted for

inflation, the AMC’s 1977 cost of \$7,037 would equal \$24,349 in 2007. Of course, Terry accepted the deal and added the like-new Barcelona II-equipped Matador to this collection.

Not surprisingly, with just 101 miles on its odometer, the Matador Terry purchased from Fred is the lowest-mileage car in the collection, which has been described as the largest in the world for Nash, Rambler, and AMC products. Terry relates, “It seemed like

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no one else was saving the history of this company, so I decided to do it.”

“My dad passed away in 1977, and while my brother was cleaning out the family farm, he contacted me about Dad’s 1954 Nash Ambassador Custom that was sitting out in the field. I decided to take it and restore it, and that’s how the collection began. My goal is to have a Nash, Rambler, and AMC from every year of production from 1917 to 1988.”

Currently 800 vehicles, including the display cars, projects in progress, and the parts cars, are housed on the 165-acre ranch, but many other makes are also represented... as are other products. Terry explains, “Besides the cars, I wanted to collect items from all the ventures that AMC was involved in, so I have a lot of Kelvinator products as well.”

He doesn’t drive this Barcelona II Coupe due to its low mileage, but he does own three others just like it, and one of them is driven periodically. He relates, “I get comments from people all the time telling me how beautiful it is. In the 1970s, some people said it was ugly, but in 2018 it’s beautiful. I guess the Matador was ahead of its time.”

The long-term plan for this low-mileage original is to simply preserve it in its present condition, as it’s the perfect time machine to experience a personal luxury coupe of the 1970s—AMC-style. 🐞



I get comments from people all the time telling me how beautiful it is. In the 1970s, some people said it was ugly, but in 2018 it’s beautiful. I guess the Matador was ahead of its time.



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SATURDAY, JUNE 23

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OVERNIGHT: Main Street, Downtown Fairport, NY - 4:30 p.m.

SUNDAY, JUNE 24

LUNCH: Northeast Classic Car Museum, Norwich, NY - 12:15 p.m.
PIT STOP: Doubleday Field, Cooperstown, NY - 2:20 p.m.
OVERNIGHT: River Street, Downtown Troy, NY - 5:30 p.m.

MONDAY, JUNE 25

LUNCH: Hemmings Motor News, Bennington, VT - noon
OVERNIGHT: Church Street Marketplace, Burlington, VT - 5:30 p.m.

TUESDAY, JUNE 26

LUNCH: Mt. Washington Auto Road, Mt. Washington, NH - 12:30 p.m.
OVERNIGHT: Water Street, Downtown Gardiner, ME - 5 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 27

LUNCH: Owls Head Transportation Museum, Owls Head, ME - Noon
OVERNIGHT: Front Street, Waterfront, Bangor, ME - 5 p.m.

THURSDAY, JUNE 28

LUNCH: Seal Cove Auto Museum, Seal Cove, ME - Noon
OVERNIGHT: Town Pier, Bar Harbor, ME - 4:30 p.m.

FRIDAY, JUNE 29

LUNCH: Rothesay Common, Rothesay, NB - 1 p.m.
OVERNIGHT: Riverfront Park, Moncton, NB - 5:30 p.m.

SATURDAY, JUNE 30

LUNCH: Library/Farmers Market, Prince Street, Truro, NS - Noon
OVERNIGHT: Alderney Landing, Dartmouth, NS - 4:45 p.m.

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Postwar Plymouth Pleasure

Making memories in a 1950 Special DeLuxe Convertible Club Coupe

BY MARK J. McCOURT • PHOTOGRAPHY BY RICHARD LENTINELLO

There's something to that old-car-lover's adage about desirability (and price!) going up when the top goes down. To one hardcore postwar-Plymouth fan, a convertible represented the ultimate version of the sedan he's owned and loved for decades. Taking a risk on a long-distance

purchase—and following that with years of hands-on refurbishing—would result in the Driveable Dream on these pages—a car that ticks all its owner's boxes for fun.

For decades, Chrysler advertised the vehicles of its Plymouth division on the merit of their value, and this was even true of the most exclusive models, including

the stylish, wood-trimmed station wagons and the sporty, youthful convertibles. Forties Plymouths represent good value even today, as West Hempstead, New York, resident Ed Flynn knows firsthand. Ed has owned a 1948 P-15 Special DeLuxe sedan for more than 40 years, and he was able to restore that car back to factory-original



Special DeLuxe

condition for a reasonable sum.

An itch to own a convertible was what brought him to the 1950 P-20 featured here. "I really like the Plymouths of that era," Ed tells us. "I found this car seven years ago. It was in Illinois. It was advertised as needing a lot of work, and I paid a relatively low price for it."

He wasn't quite prepared for what awaited him when the Plymouth was delivered to Long Island, though. "We had difficulty getting it off the tow trailer because its front tires were flat and wouldn't take air. The body was in bad shape, with faded factory paint and a lot of corrosion in the rockers. The engine was of the correct type, but wasn't original to this car and wouldn't

run, and there were no brakes... it was a mess," Ed says with a laugh.

The years hadn't been kind to this Special DeLuxe Convertible Club Coupe, as Plymouth had dubbed its two-door flagship for 1950. When it was displayed in the showroom, it cost \$1,982, just \$390 less than the priciest wood-trimmed, eight-passenger Special DeLuxe Station Wagon; for an interesting comparison, those figures roughly equate to \$20,525 and \$24,560, today. The topless model was undoubtedly the envy of the neighborhood, with its silent and swift electro-hydraulic folding roof mechanism operating to expose genuine-leather upholstered seats, and ample bright-metal body moldings glinting in the sun.

Outside of squared-off rear fenders, larger rear windows, and simpler grille and bumper designs, Plymouth hadn't changed much on its P-20 models in the second year of this generation. The four Special DeLuxe body styles still rode on a box-section frame, sharing a 118.5-inch wheelbase and 192.6-inch overall length, while the convertible remained relatively light at 3,295 pounds. In line with its cost, this variant had the second-lowest build number of the year, its 12,697 examples topping only the aforementioned wagon (2,057 built)—miniscule figures considering that model year 1950 production nearly reached 609,000 units.

Although the basic DeLuxe models





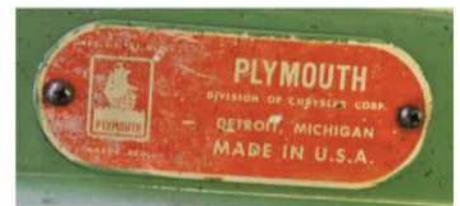
Its owner was able to confirm that Channel Green was this Plymouth's factory-applied color, as he found areas of that hue hidden under interior panels when the convertible was being refurbished with new Hunter Green vinyl upholstery. The column-shifted three-speed manual transmission, "Armstrong" steering, and unassisted drum brakes offer a driver the true 1950 driving experience.

rode on a shorter 111-inch wheelbase, all Plymouths offered an "Air Pillow Ride" through their independent coil spring front and semi-elliptic leaf spring rear suspensions with "Sea-Leg" tubular shock absorbers, and hydraulic drum brakes were used at all four wheels. The sole trans-

mission, a column-shifted three-speed manual, offered synchromesh on second and top gears, and, unusual for the day, the ignition key started the 217.8-cu.in. L-head straight-six. That engine used a one-barrel Carter BB carburetor and 7:1 compression ratio to make 97 hp at

3,600 rpm and 175 lb-ft at 1,200 rpm.

It would take some years and a lot of money and effort before Ed's L-head was doing its intended job of propelling the convertible down the road. "Working by myself, I pulled the engine and transmission together, because that's the best way to remove the drivetrain from this type of car," he explains. "My nephew, Kevin Faber, helped me bring the engine to Colvin Motor Parts in Merrick, New York, where Jim Olsen and Tom Quimpo led the rebuild. The original crankshaft was cut and reused, and the camshaft was good to use again, but other internal components like pistons and lifters were replaced.



While not the 217.8-cu.in. L-head straight-six this car was built with, it's a correct replacement. The one-barrel Carter carb wears an aftermarket air cleaner; note custom coil décor.

I had the carburetor rebuilt, and put in a new, three-row radiator, which runs at 145 to 150 degrees.

"A transmission specialist inspected the gears and internal assemblies, finding everything was acceptable. I had the flywheel cut so it would get a good grip on the new clutch, and the driveshaft was balance-checked before I fitted new front and rear boots, and reinstalled it. The exhaust system was changed behind the manifold, to the tailpipe. The entire drivetrain was rebuilt, forward of the rear end, and that rear end itself was fine—it wasn't leaking, so that was okay to go. And the brakes are all-new, including wheel cylinders, hoses, and the master cylinder," Ed tells us. "I saved all of the original parts I changed, including the original radiator, so I can give them to the next owner if I sell the car someday."

Our feature car's running gear wasn't all that required work—the cosmetics needed help, too, its owner revealed. "The convertibles are rare today because many of them rusted from water infiltration—floorboards rotted out, and it got into the frame. But this car had a very solid frame, and the floorboards were in relatively good shape; it was only the rocker panels that required total replacement. This was done by a local body shop, which also sprayed the original Channel Green color inside and out, using single-stage paint." The interior had been reupholstered using light- and dark-green vinyl sometime before Ed bought the P-20, but he elected to have it re-done in single-tone Hunter Green vinyl in a pleated pattern. Rather than laying regular carpet, he had a carpet-topped floormat installed, so it is removable for cleaning or drying, if necessary. "I had a new, clear plastic zip-out rear window installed in the old convertible top," Ed notes; "The top doesn't leak, and it's still in good condition. I like the light tan color... that may be age and patina, but it's a distinct color that I don't think you could

find today, and it looks good."

Ed had Kevin's help in reinstalling the Plymouth's engine and transmission—"It's a little tighter in this car than it was in my 1948 because there's not as much room in the engine compartment"—but he accomplished much of the reassembly solo, at home. It's still not finished, Ed admits "I've owned the car for seven years, and the whole time, it's been a work-in-progress that is ongoing. It looks good, but it's a five- or 10-footer. It's not a show car, it's a good, solid driver."

Since this Special DeLuxe has been roadworthy, it's been treated to changes of straight 30-weight Valvoline oil and regular applications of spray detailer, and has amassed a couple thousand miles as a local parade car and occasional weekend cruiser. "I've used it in the Easter parade in Garden City, New York, for the past couple of years. Driving my family and friends around with the top down on a sunny day is a lot of fun—that's what it's all about," he says.

So, we're curious—how does it drive? "It's not a race car, and it doesn't have power steering, so it's difficult to maneuver the car at low speeds, but it provides a very comfortable ride," Ed muses. "My 1948 Plymouth and this '50 model are very close in their operation. The transmission is the same, the drivetrain and front-end configuration, and the suspension didn't change much from 1948 to 1950. The feel of the cars is very similar, although the 1950 has a bit more power, perhaps because of the rebuild.

"I don't think most people today could just jump in and drive it, because it's nothing like a modern car, where everything is automatic and power-assisted," Ed continues. "But once you know how to use everything properly, it's easier. We're a little spoiled in today's cars, but when you operate this Plymouth, you're experiencing how things were almost 70 years ago." 🐾



We're a little spoiled in today's cars, but when you operate this Plymouth, you're experiencing how things were almost 70 years ago.





Wallace-Harmer Motors

British-built Ford Model T and TT commercial truck bodies

BY WALT GOSDEN • ILLUSTRATIONS COURTESY OF THE WALT GOSDEN COLLECTION

The need for commercial vehicles by the Allies in World War I resulted in a huge increase in demand for trucks manufactured in the United States. Packard, Pierce-Arrow, Nash, GMC, etc., all built trucks of assorted capacities to meet the needs of the war effort to move supplies and soldiers to the battlefield. Although the United States did not enter the

war until April of 1917, for more than 2½ years prior, several American car and truck manufacturers were supplying vehicles to Europe to be used in the war effort.

Four years after WWI ended, the company Wallace-Harmer Motors was created to satisfy the growing demand for trucks—specifically Ford Model TT trucks—and it created custom handcrafted

bodies for those commercial companies that required something special to suit their particular needs of transporting their products.

Two men, S.A. Wallace and G.F. Harmer, established Wallace-Harmer Motors Ltd. in the late summer of 1922. Its showroom was at Central House, Kingsway, London, along with a service depot five minutes away in the northside neighborhood of Clerkenwell. The

Many delivery trucks, such as this example, were based on a Model T passenger car chassis. The driver's compartment area above the beltline is quite elaborate, with divided windshield, decorative C-shaped roof supports, and an oval window above the seat back.



This body on a one-ton Model TT truck chassis has an elaborate ribbon-shaped sign and a huge painting of a fairy that was the logo for the Fairy Dyes company that bought the truck. Sidelamps were fitted below each oval window.



With special disc wheels fitted with solid rubber tires, and a heavy, substantial body and bed area, this truck was designed to haul sawdust. Colors most likely were bright red wheels and maroon coachwork.



◀◀ This van featured a fancy roof sign and three-dimensional panel for the body side, along with metal discs fitted over the wood-spoke wheels. All lettering of the well-known soap company's name was done by hand. This was one of the few trucks that also had a plated radiator shell and headlamp rims.

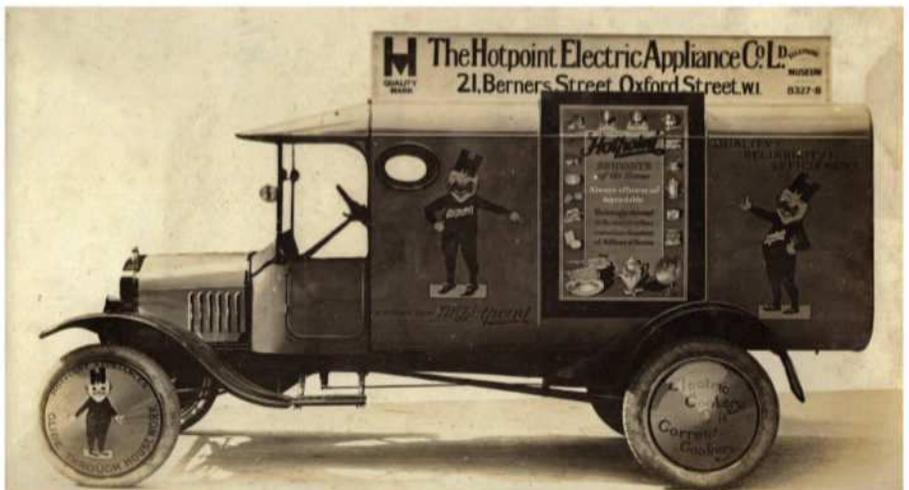
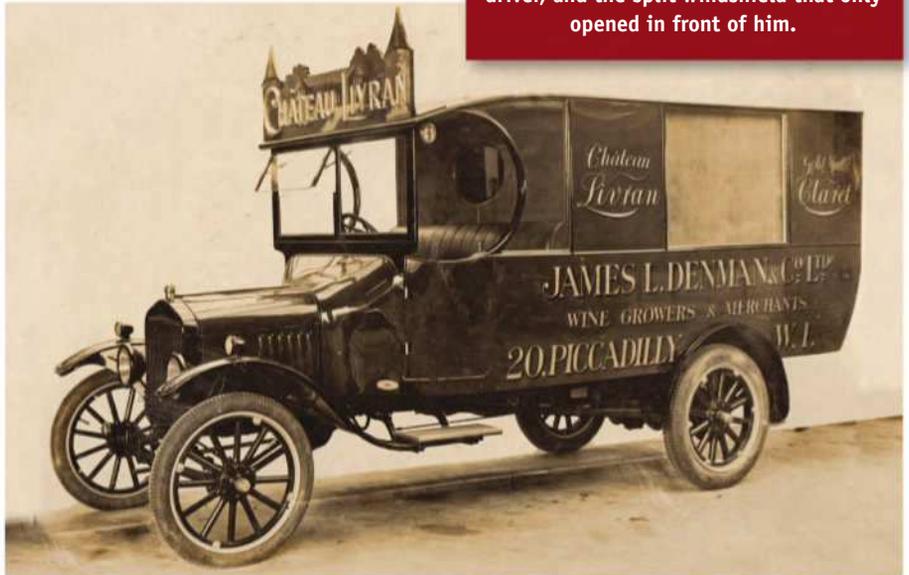
◀◀ The Wine Growers & Merchants panel truck had a showy, carved headboard above the windshield and lots of gold lettering that was shaded to convey a 3D image. The Wallace-Harmer body-builder's plate is mounted on the lower cowl. Note the large oval window behind the driver, and the split windshield that only opened in front of him.

Commercial Motor magazine for September 5, 1922, stated Wallace's "knowledge of the Ford and its capabilities is profound." His partner, Harmer, had been employed by Daimler Motors and "has a thorough acquaintance with British Trade requirements." Although their new business sold both Ford cars and trucks, the *Commercial Motor* magazine report noted, "Particular attention is being paid to the commercial vehicle section of the Ford business, for this branch of the trade is thoroughly well understood."

Wallace, an American, got his start in the business when he was hired away from General Electric in May 1916 by AEC, builder of London buses, and moved to England to take on the appointment of works manager. It was a three-year contract, and the energetic Wallace soon established his worth by designing and having installed a new chassis assembly track for AEC's production line, which resulted in a steadily increasing rate of production. After his contract ended, he then worked for the British Ministry of Munitions to improve the process of overhauling vehicles at the new repair depot in Slough.

When the war ended in November 1918, thousands of war-surplus vehicles, most in damaged condition, were brought back from the Western Front. Slough is a large town in Berkshire, England, 20 miles west of London, and immediately after the armistice a vast area of agricultural land just west of town was developed as an Army motor repair center. There, the Ministry of Munitions rebuilt and rehabilitated the war-ravaged vehicles so they could be sold to the general public, which was desperate for any vehicle after four years of war. In 1920, the government sold the 668-acre Slough repair complex to a private company, yet the repair of war-surplus vehicles continued until 1925.

During the war, Henry Ford and Percival



◀◀ The Hotpoint Electric Appliance Co. Ltd. panel van was painted in bright colors with the company's cartoon characters on the side. Note the metal wheel covers fitted over the wood-spoke wheels.



Just about all the vans designed and built by Wallace-Harmer featured oval side windows. Seal Laundry specialized as a "Shirt & Collar Dresser," as this was the era where most dress shirts had a separate collar.



The body built for Shearns Court Florists & Fruiterers employed a canvas top to both protect and advertise its goods.



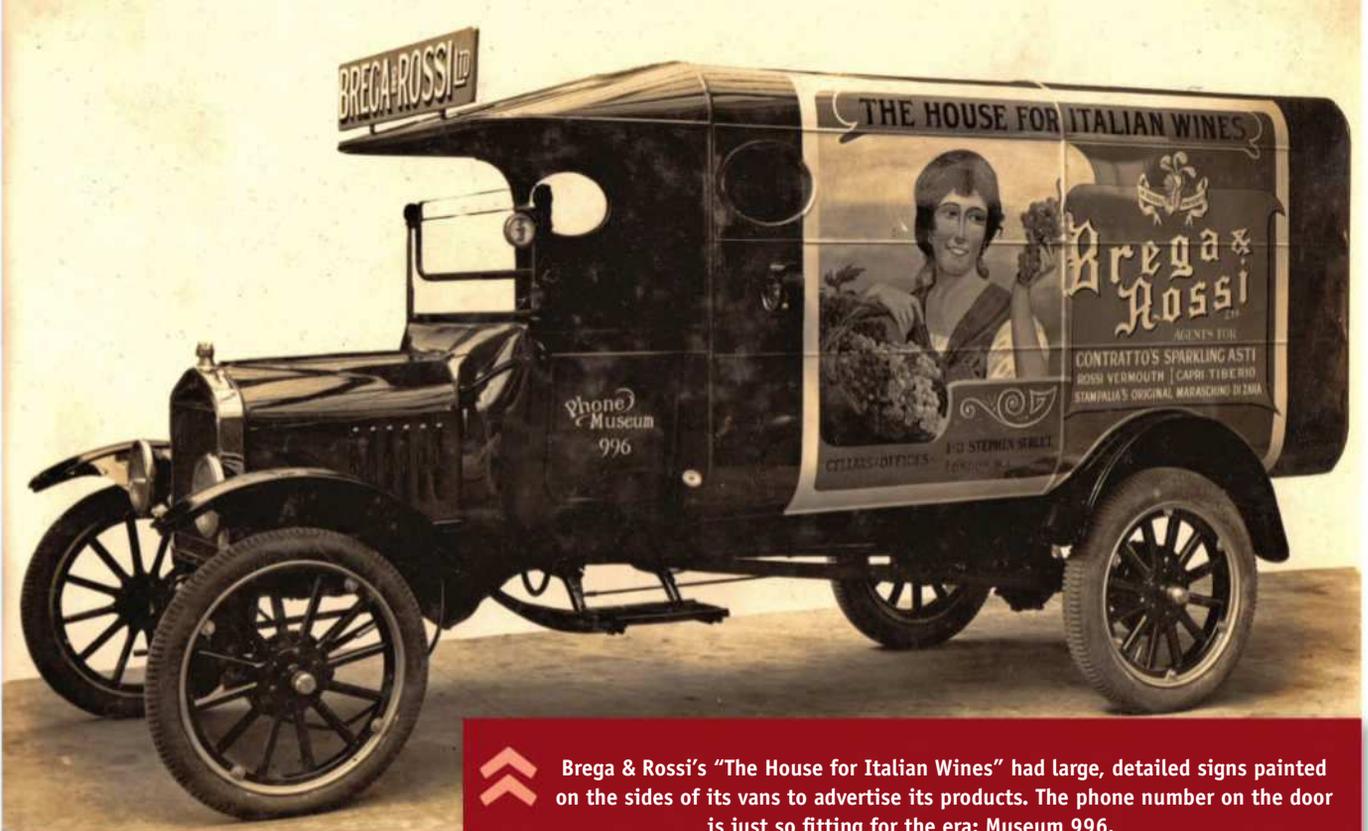
The variety of Model TT bodies was endless, and included this very basic dump body built for a cement company. It had pneumatic tires front and rear to carry the load.



Heavy, substantial timber was used to construct the cab and bed for the Willing's company truck.



The truck used by the Coal Merchants to His Majesty the King had a dump body fitted with steel-disc wheels with solid rubber tires at the rear. The Ford TT had a one-ton rating, but we're sure more was loaded into the bed.



Brega & Rossi's "The House for Italian Wines" had large, detailed signs painted on the sides of its vans to advertise its products. The phone number on the door is just so fitting for the era: Museum 996.



For this moving company, a Model TT truck was built using a wood bed with a removable canvas top. Note how the canvas top over the driver's compartment was separate from the bed section.



Large, curved wooden hoops that rose up from the sides of the body would be used to support a canvas tarp that was then tied down with rope, making its removal easy.



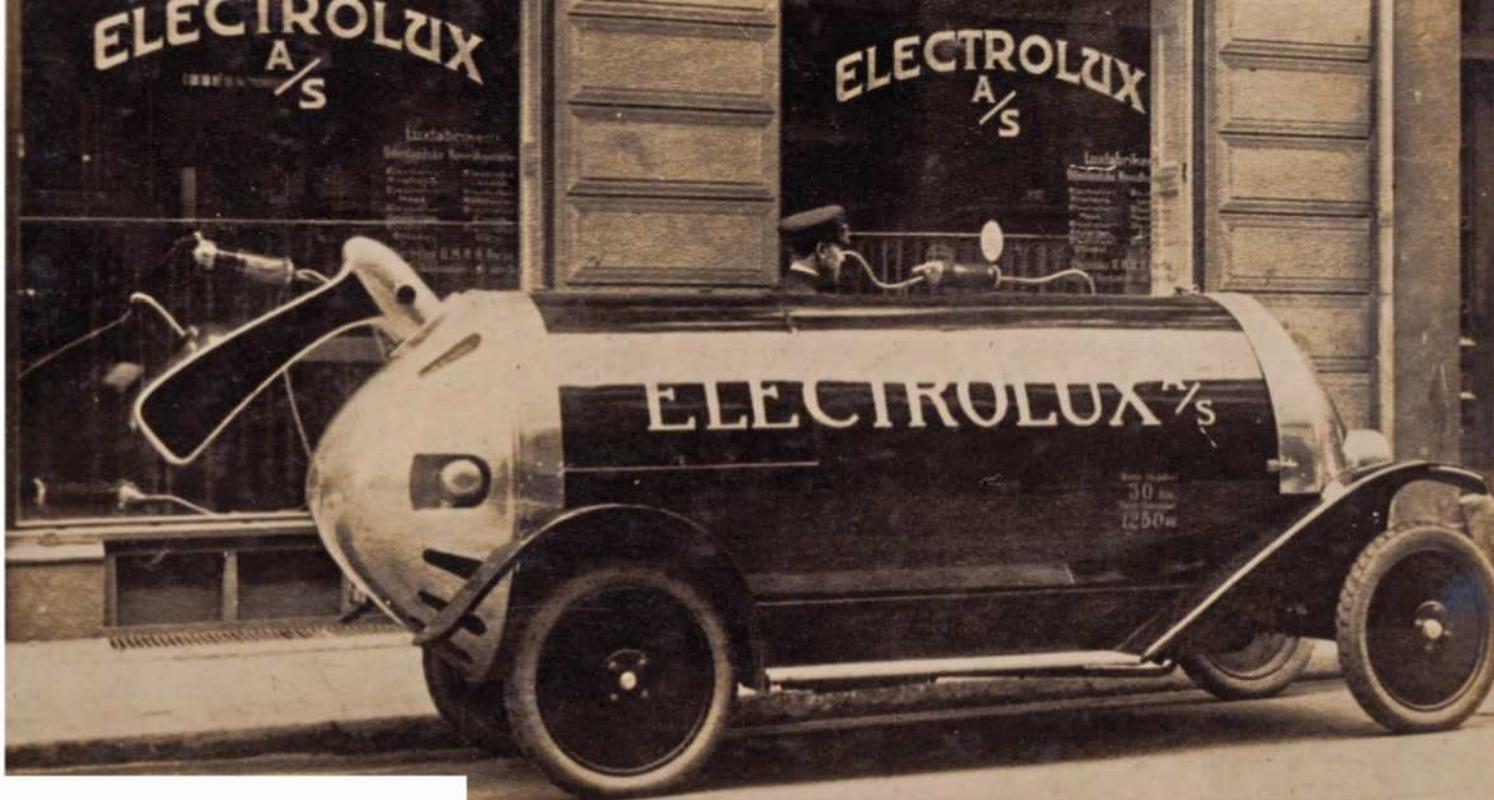
Although it was a plain, simple design, the style of this lettering is very attractive.



The sidewalls on these tires were either real whitewalls or painted to look like they were. Note the area above the windshield was open to the cab.



A Model T passenger car chassis was fitted with a panel body for the butcher to make deliveries. Note the fold-down windshield and oval window.



Perry, manager of the Ford agency in England and later the company's chairman, set up the England-based Ford Motor Company to produce both cars and trucks. In England, production of the Ford TT one-ton trucks started in 1917 at the Ford plant at Trafford Park, Manchester. These British-built Model TT trucks were supplied in either chassis form or with complete bodies. If ordered in chassis form, a body built to the original purchaser's specification, would be fitted. And, beginning in 1922, it was usually Wallace-Harmer Motors that got the contract to build the custom truck bodies for those Ford buyers.

Perry was also the chairman and managing director of Slough Trading Company Ltd., and previously had sold Ford cars in England. Though we have no written proof, it is most likely that Perry and Wallace knew each other, perhaps by the connection with the Slough Vehicle rehabilitation facility.

These rare photographs of the coachwork built on both the Ford Model T passenger car and Model TT one-ton truck chassis come from a hardbound album the salesman in the Wallace-Harmer Motors showroom used to give prospective customers a view of completed vehicles the company had built and sold. The book dates from late 1923 and shows some absolutely magnificent examples of the English coachbuilder's commercial bodies, as well as the skill and artistry of the sign painters. This was an era when the lettering and images were all hand painted. At least one Ford TT truck sold by Wallace-Harmer Motors exists today and has been restored in England. 🏠



The Electrolux company had a custom body constructed to resemble its new cylinder-shaped vacuum cleaners, which featured polished aluminum end caps. Solid disc wheels were fitted. Note the driver up top.



This bright yellow van with black trim had kerosene side lamps mounted to the windshield posts. This particular truck survives today, but not with this body.



A wire rack fitted to the roof of this Model T allowed the grocery company that owned it extra space for transporting its goods.





Gilmore Car Museum

51 years ago, a reluctant collector founded what's become one of America's largest and most-celebrated auto museums

BY MARK J. McCOURT • PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF THE GILMORE CAR MUSEUM



Museum namesake Donald Gilmore drove his wife, Genevieve, on the grounds in his 1908 Stanley EX Runabout, in the mid-1960s.

You've heard this story before. A man retires from his career and putters around the house for a while, and before long, his wife encourages him to find a hobby. What's different is that one such husband's late-blooming hobby would lead to the foundation of one of this country's finest collections of cars and automobilia. For more than a half-century, the Gilmore Car Museum has been growing and expanding in its unique setting, with a quest to offer visitors an overview of 20th-century American history, as seen through the windshield of the automobile.

It was Genevieve Gilmore who deserved thanks for what has become one of Michigan's top attractions. After all, it was she who suggested her husband Donald—who'd been born into a prominent family and married into another; in 1962, he retired from his seat as chairman of the

board of his father-in-law's pharmaceutical firm, The Upjohn Company—go to some car shows with friends, and she who gave him the vehicle that would represent his first ground-up restoration project. Kalamazoo native Donald initially waved off Genevieve's urgings, noting they already owned old cars, namely a 1935 London taxicab and a 1927 Ford Model T that had been converted to electric power to avoid gas rationing during World War II.

"Donald attended the Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance that year, and while he still didn't show much interest, within six months he'd bought the Best in Show-winner, a 1913 Rolls-Royce Silver Ghost [40/50 hp 'London-to-Edinburgh' Tourer]," explains Jay Follis, veteran marketing director of the Gilmore Car Museum. "His wife realized he must want this hobby, so she soon bought him a 1920 Pierce-Arrow touring car. It was pretty much a basket



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The first of numerous era-correct buildings to be added, a 1930s-style Shell service station, was constructed on the Gilmore campus in 1999. The Cadillac & La Salle Club Museum, opened in 2014, was built in the style of a genuine 1948 dealership in Toledo, Ohio.

case and needed a full restoration, so he erected a military surplus tent in his backyard and had guys from Upjohn Company come and work on it—they pretty much restored it in that tent.”

Jay tells us that Donald’s secretary retained copies of his correspondence, and those records, now in the Gilmore Car Museum’s archives, show how his personal collection began to grow. “He would get letters suggesting he buy this car or that one. He’d write back, ‘I have no interest.’ Next thing you know, there’s a receipt for the car. One letter told him about a collection of 12 early cars going up for sale in San Antonio. Again, he claimed no interest, but he bought them all.”

His collection having outgrown the tent in his backyard, Donald purchased two Hickory Corners farms with acreage totaling over 500, and designated an impressive 90 acres of this land for his automotive hobby. “This would be his playground. It was close to Kalamazoo, where he grew up, and halfway between Detroit and Chicago,” Jay says. “He put down 2½ miles of paved roadways on the property, and restored a house and the original barns that were there—the barns would be used

as offices until 2011. He built a machine shop, and another barn-styled carriage house to store his cars in, because he wanted it to blend in with other farm barns in the area. We have a letter that says, ‘This will hold 18 cars; I can’t imagine getting any bigger than that.’ Before it was done, he was well beyond that number. The collection kept growing, and they began bringing in other old barns, board by board, reassembling them on the property.

“The Gilmores would come here, dressed in period clothing, and would take friends for rides in steam cars,” he continues. “They had some prominent visitors, including coachbuilder and stylist Ray Dietrich, and Walt Disney, who owned neighboring property to the Gilmores’ winter place in Palm Springs. By 1966, Genevieve had proposed they share this collection with the public. She probably was really thinking, ‘What on earth did I start? This became much bigger than I imagined!’” There were 53 automobiles housed on the Hickory Corners property, as well as two steam-powered boats, one steam locomotive, and an accurate recreation of the Wright Flyer built by aviation pioneer Waldo Waterman, when the

Gilmore Car Museum officially opened its doors on Sunday, July 31, 1966.

A prominent early exhibit of this new attraction was linked to Walt Disney, Jay explains; “He was making the movie *The Gnome-Mobile*, in 1965, right after *Mary Poppins*. The studio used a 1930 Rolls-Royce as the star-car in this. Donald told Walt he wanted to buy that car. We have documents between Donald and Walt, who said, ‘I’ll sell it to you for the cost of shipping from Burbank.’ There was also a letter saying, ‘I’m sorry, we need to re-shoot some scenes with the kids, so the car can’t come out yet. But I know you want to open your museum, so I’m going to send you a set piece.’ What Disney sent was the back seat of that car, built about four-times actual size, so if you sit on it, you look tiny, like a gnome.” Upon contacting Disney’s top archivist, Jay learned this movie-set piece was the only such item ever gifted by Walt to an outside organization, as it’s Disney policy that all movie-set pieces are reused in other films, displayed in a retail property, or destroyed.

That fortuitous donation foreshadowed the unique attractions for which the Gilmore Car Museum would later



The first car in Donald Gilmore’s collection—a gift from his wife Genevieve—was this 1920 Pierce-Arrow, parked by the replica train depot that’s home to the museum’s mascot collection; recovered from Paraguay, this factory-built 1916 Packard Twin Six last raced in Argentina.



Open from April 1 to November 30, a popular lunch spot for visitors to the Gilmore Car Museum is George & Sally's Blue Moon Diner, a genuine 1941 restaurant that was restored and moved 800 miles from Meriden, Connecticut, to Hickory Corners, Michigan, in 2005.

become world famous. The first "satellite" museum—that of the Classic Car Club of America—would be established on the Gilmore campus in 1984, thanks to then-director Norman Knight, who was a Packard collector active in the CCCA. "Norm knew the club showed cars at different museums, and someone suggested they build their own," Jay recalls. "Norm said, 'Why would you want to go into the museum business? That means you have to compete with everyone else in the museum business. Why don't you go somewhere they already have a museum? We've got 90 acres... Why not just build a building, house your museum on our site, and you'll get all of our visitors?' They thought, 'Wow, that makes a lot of sense. We just have to build a building and take the cars there.' That's how it started. The CCCA started displaying cars here and realized it was a perfect fit."

Shortly after the turn of this century, the Gilmore embarked on a major expansion plan. An additional four buildings brought the total exhibition square footage to 92,000, while the Pierce-Arrow Society's satellite museum opened in 2005, around the same time

that a 1941 diner was restored and relocated on-site, in the quest to offer more car-related attractions. An Archives and Research Library was created in 2007 to contain a 28,000-piece donation of automotive advertising, concurrently with the establishment of the popular Model T Driving School. The H.H. Franklin Club created its museum in a replica of a circa-1918 Los Angeles Franklin dealership, with the Model A Ford Foundation, Lincoln Motor Car Foundation, and Cadillac & La Salle Club following suit by building period-correct 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s (respectively) dealer-style structures on the campus. With the opening of the \$5-million Automotive Heritage Center in 2012 came new facilities and new hours—the Gilmore Car Museum would now be open year-round, with around 400 of its nearly 600 vehicle-strong collection always on display.

"We're still growing, and this has helped us to be seen nationally and internationally—our attendance has gone through the roof! We bring in tourism from all around the world, with around 100,000 visitors each year coming from the USA and Canada, as well as countries

like China, Australia, Great Britain, and Sweden," Jay reveals. "There are at least two clubs that are currently in talks about establishing museums here with us. We're now constructing a new building, just for storage, and the exhibits are always changing. People who haven't been here in five years won't recognize it—especially if it's been 10 years! Even within the exhibits, we might take a couple of cars out during the week to change the oil and drive them around the campus, so there's always a fresh look."

"I think we're North America's largest auto museum, known for the quality and diversity of our collection. I tell people that visiting the Gilmore Car Museum is authentic time-travel because you can hop in a Model T that's from a particular era, and drive past a dealership that looks to be from that same era," he muses. "Donald never would have guessed that what he started as a reluctant hobby would turn into what we now offer." 🗨️

CONTACT:
Gilmore Car Museum
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www.gilmorecarmuseum.org



Prewar cars represent this museum's primary focus, but postwar cars on display include numerous products of the Checker Motors Corporation, which was headquartered nearby in Kalamazoo. Upwards of 400 vehicles are regularly shown in more than 12 buildings.





Roadmaster Reborn

*A Buick lover breathes new life into this
1938 Roadmaster 80-C Sport Phaeton—Part I*

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY TERRY SHEA
RESTORATION PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF BRIAN DEPOULI



Brian's father bought the car in 1984, after it had been used for years as a parade car in Ontario, Canada. The color scheme was chosen not by Buick, but a former owner. Brian is second from right, enjoying the big Roadmaster with a bunch of other kids.



In the years before he moved the Buick to North Carolina in 2004, Brian and his father had partially disassembled the car, including removing any bolt-on body panels and much of the auxiliary engine components.

Claiming membership in the Buick Club of America since he was three years old as his father was a fan, too, Brian DePouli has spent his life around the cars bearing the tri-shield emblem. In

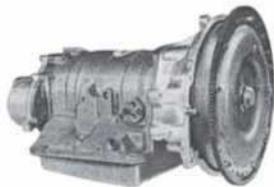
fact, it was Brian's father, Ed, already an owner of a 1938 Buick Roadmaster sedan, who bought the car on these pages, when Brian was just four years old (in 1984).

It's a bit of a mouthful, but

Buick called it the Roadmaster 80-C Convertible Streamline Sport Phaeton, or simply Sport Phaeton, or 80-C, for short. Technically, it's not so much a phaeton as it is a convertible sedan, but Buick was selling a near-luxury product

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As the project got underway and aided by simple, easy, and inexpensive digital photography, the entire assembled car was documented before continuing the disassembly process in preparation for a nut-and-bolt, body-off restoration.



Here is what the Buick's interior looked like just nine days later. When it comes down to a full, bare-metal restoration, everything needs to come out—everything! Thoroughness pays off in the long run, but requires lots of detailed work.

and surely the phaeton name fit.

Then living in New Jersey, Ed found the car in North Bay, Ontario, Canada. The big, open Buick had been used as a parade car in the area and was painted royal blue with white

fenders. Brian describes its condition then as "drivable, with some sort of vinyl interior; quote/unquote 'restored,' but not restored to a high level and not restored authentically correct."

Brian also reports that his father

drove the car around plenty when he was younger, both to local car shows and in parades. We can understand why Ed wanted to drive it around—and why Brian wanted to ride with him, as Buick's reputation for building such a

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Though the car was largely complete and relatively solid, pitting of the bright work, surface corrosion and other degradation was present throughout. Likewise, an older restoration had kept the car on the road, but was not authentic.



After moving the partially disassembled car down South, one of the first tasks was to have the body media blasted, work which was done while the body was still on the chassis, save for the bolt-on pieces. This revealed previous brazing.

fine car was mostly holding up some 50 years later.

Buick had been an innovator in the automobile industry since its formative years, and with the 1938 model year, made a handful of changes to the Series

80 Roadmaster models. Buick became one of the first automakers to use coil springs on all four wheels in 1938. It also upped the compression ratio of its overhead-valve 320-cu.in. straight-eight from 5.9:1 to 6.35:1 via the use

of domed aluminum alloy pistons. Horsepower grew, as a result, from 130 to an impressive-for-the-time 141. Torque, surely delivered smoothly by the big eight, was rated at 269 lb-ft, more than sufficient to move the

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In order to hold the body once it was removed from the chassis, this gantry was made out of 6 x 6 lumber. Notice the body here has been covered in an etching primer to prevent any corrosion to the previously media-blasted surface.



Despite the chains holding the body to the gantry (and eventually saw horses below supporting it), the convertible body, minus its doors, needed additional structural strength. So, four angle-iron supports were welded in between the door pillars.

4,325-pound car along.

The 133-inch wheelbase lent itself well to the more than 210-inch-long Sport Phaeton body. Of approximately 5,568 Roadmasters produced in 1938, just 350 Sport Phaetons were made. As

to how many still exist? Brian speculates about 20, perhaps half of those running. And of those restored to this level? "Only two or three of us," he says.

After talking about it for years as a father-and-son project, Ed and Brian

started on the restoration in 1994. "We started taking the car apart," Brian recalls. "That's about as far as we got. Time and money got in the way—you know how that goes." Indeed, we do. Despite the stall—which would last for



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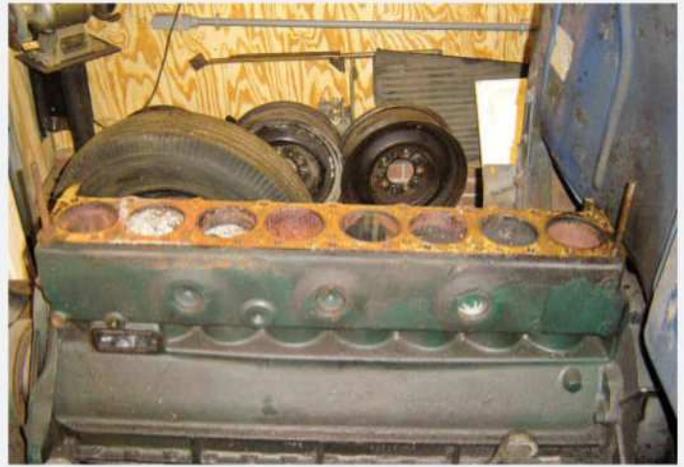


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For the process of removing the body from the chassis, friends were recruited and used both the gantry and an engine hoist to make a smoother effort of the chore, and were able to roll the chassis out underneath the suspended body.



Along with the body and chassis needing complete restoration, the engine also required a complete rebuild. Though suffering from corrosion and other maladies, the engine was still suitable for machining and rebuilding.

more than a decade—the project got new life.

In 1997, Ed gave the partially disassembled Buick to Brian as a high-school graduation gift. Still, it would not be until 2004, when Brian, then working for a NASCAR team, bought his first house in the Charlotte, North Carolina, area. After moving the car down South that year, he finally got started in 2005. “I went all the way down to the frame, and tried to touch every single nut and bolt and give it the restoration that it deserved—a full, authentic restoration back to the correct, original color that was on the car and everything,” Brian says, summing up the work of 12 long years completing the car.

As an engineer by education and currently the director of construction for a major automotive dealer group, Brian has done more than his fair share of project management. Short of writing a full-fledged project plan, Brian had a good idea of how things would progress. For instance, he knew that he could still

work on the engine, even if the bumpers were out getting rechromed. He also had a pretty good idea of where his skills were limited (upholstery and convertible top) and where he was willing to stretch his wings and learn as he went (body and paint).

Brian describes the car’s condition as it arrived in Charlotte: “Basically, everything from the cowl forward, with the exception of the engine, was off the car. From the cowl back was pretty much undisturbed. I had a rolling chassis with the engine and the cowl back. Initially, it was halfway taken apart, as far as the front was concerned. I pulled all that stuff out. I had no kids and wasn’t married at the time, and I had this house that was a good investment, but it was a little big for me, so I had all this room for parts. I started sticking fenders and hoods and stuff in a spare room. Then I proceeded with the disassembly from the cowl back: I took the seats out. I took the dash out, the instrument panel.”

As part of his plan, he also took

copious amounts of pictures using a digital camera, an affordable, modern tool that should be in every restorer’s toolbox. In addition to the photos, Brian bagged and tagged parts, nuts, bolts, fasteners, and anything else that came off the car.

With the interior and engine fully removed, Brian shipped the car off, complete with the body on the chassis and the removed body panels stashed in the interior, for media blasting. When it returned in the bare metal, the car showed lots of brazing work done by a previous restorer. Much of it Brian left alone, but some of it needed major work, and all of it needed a deft hand when being built back up for paint.

Rebuilding the engine did require some machine work, Brian reporting “a pretty good ridge in the cylinder walls.” He also had the crank machined and the connecting rods converted from babbitted bearings to insert bearings for reliability. Since the camshaft looked good, he didn’t touch that. But he did

owner’s view



Growing up, the car was always going to be my car. So, it was a high-school graduation gift... in a million pieces. But it was my car.

I left for college and the car stayed and we moved it around a couple of times in terms of storage. It is rare and it deserved an authentic restoration. I knew simply from experience, there were going to be setbacks along the way. Persevere through it and just keep working. While I was frustrated, I didn’t lose confidence in the fact that eventually I’d get it. I like the color combo the most about this car—it just pops!



Separated from the body and with the suspension and braking components removed, the frame with Buick's strong "girder X-type" design (clearly visible here) was stripped to the bare metal for refinishing and reinstallation of the other chassis components.



The chassis was completed in three months following its separation from the body. Shown here with the suspension, brakes, wheels, tires, driveshaft, and rear end installed, the chassis also displays Buick's then-innovative four-wheel coil-spring setup.

turn to his dad for some other engine bits. "From dad's collecting of parts over the years, I had NOS valves and valve springs, and I got piston rings and pins from Egge Machine." After the machining, Brian rebuilt the engine, though he admits, "It sat on the engine stand for a while."

Brian next tackled removing the open body from the chassis. To do this, he built a gantry in his garage. "Between my engineering background and general handiness, I built this gigantic wooden A-frame. Between that and using the cherry picker/engine hoist, we lifted the body off the chassis, rolled the chassis out, and put the body on an A-frame stand, and then started focusing on the chassis." He also reinforced the bare body by welding angle iron support brackets between the door pillars for structural strength while the body remained off the frame. That was in March of 2006.

Brian set to work right away on the chassis, taking it back down to the bare metal before painting it and reassembling it, installing new or NOS components where available—a tough task for the Roadmaster Series 80 chassis that was only in production for three years (1938 to 1940), with just under 16,000 made of all body styles when new, many of which have been lost over the years. Brian completed the chassis work in his garage, including flushing, sealing, and coating the gas tank, finishing the chassis to rolling condition by June of 2006.

Brian's next task was to begin tackling the body, but a full life well

beyond his garage—he now had a family, work, and other considerations, not the least of which was finances—kept him from doing all the work at once. Time and money are two things that may have drawn out this Buick's restoration over the years, but the lack of

either, at times, did little to deter Brian's resolve in getting it completed. Still, in next month's issue, we'll see just how it took him another 10 years or so to finish this award-winning restoration, the project never truly stalling, only moving at the pace of his life. 🏁



Get in the Spirit



BY THE MID-1970S, THE FUTURE WAS looking bleak for the guys in Kenosha, and by 1977, the men in suits even considered abandoning the domestic car market and concentrating solely on Jeeps and military vehicles.

The irony in all this is that the company that taught the industry how not only

to build compact cars, but also how to market them, was no longer a leader in a world suddenly gone mad for luxurious economy cars. The timing would have been perfect for another Nash Rambler, but this wasn't 1950, and the development funds had already been spent on the Pacer.

In a last-ditch effort, AMC transformed the Hornet into the Concord in 1978 (*HCC* #121), and it worked. The suspension was tweaked to give it a more civilized ride, styling updates followed period trends, and the emphasis was on luxury with more cushy interiors and thicker padded vinyl roofs with enormous B-pillars.

The following year, the Matador was gone. I still believe if AMC's executives moved the Ambassador sedan and wagon down to the 118-inch wheelbase Matador platform in 1975 and kept the Matador name only for the swoopy coupe, no one would have asked, "What's an Ambassador?" But, I was 12 years old, and no one asked me.

Joining the Concord and Pacer in 1979 was a reworked version of the Gremlin. The Spirit featured a more formal grille with dual headlamps and redesigned rear passenger windows that took away the kammback's personality. In addition to the familiar, truncated shape was AMC's last new body style before merging with Renault. The Spirit liftback featured a sloped rear roof providing more conventional lines and a large liftgate.

I've read interviews where Dick Teague said that the Spirit liftback accomplished what they were trying to achieve a generation earlier with the Tarpon/Marlin—a sporty fastback. This may not have been a bold move, but it helped. Underneath, the Spirit was a throwback with rear-wheel drive, ball joints, and high-mounted coil springs up front and leaf springs in the rear. Back-seat passenger room was still severely limited, much like any rear-wheel-drive compact at the time.

I owned a 1982 AMC Spirit, and I loved it. It was a great-handling car, had plenty of power, and generated a lot of strange comments and attention. It also returned incredible gas mileage even though it had the 258-cu.in. six-cylinder engine—the great 1964-era engine that Chrysler continued to build, with engineering updates, for Jeeps through 2004.

The engineering may have been old-school, but the Spirit did have some enhancements to help with fuel economy: lightweight aluminum bumpers, lock-up torque converter, and re-engineered camshaft and pistons in the straight-six. A four-speed,

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six-cylinder Spirit could outrun a similarly equipped Mustang, although no pony-car lovers would admit that.

In keeping with the trend toward luxury, the DL models featured upgraded trim, color-keyed wheel covers, custom bucket corduroy seats (or "sport" vinyl), wood veneers on the dash, steering wheel, and shift knob, and a quartz digital clock that worked beautifully. If you chose the Limited, you were treated to leather seats and trim, air conditioning, AM/FM radio, adjustable steering wheel, dual remote outside mirrors, and a center console with armrest.

A popular model was the GT, which featured full gauge instrumentation in the console and black-out trim on the outside. The GT was only offered on the liftback. The model's rally-tuned suspension included front and rear sway bars, "Hi-Control" leaf springs with "iso-clamp" pads, special strut-rod bushings, adjustable Gabriel Strider shocks, and heavy-duty brakes with quick-ratio steering.

The 5.0-liter AMC V-8 was available the first year, and transmission choices were the Chrysler-sourced TorqueFlite Automatic or a four-speed manual. The Pontiac Iron Duke 2.5-liter four-cylinder was also an option, although the six-cylinder remained the most popular engine.

There was also an AMX version, which could be ordered with the six-cylinder or the V-8. The AMX was pretty wild with fiberglass wheel flares, gold hood decal, blacked-out grille, rear spoiler, and aluminum wheels. Yet, the big news for 1980 was Ziebart factory rust proofing, making possible AMC's five-year, rust-through warranty.

For 1981, the 258-cu.in. straight-six was redesigned and made 90 pounds lighter and smoother, with higher low-end torque and requiring less maintenance. The following year, AMC replaced the metal valve covers with plastic ones, which were notorious for leaking; there are aluminum aftermarket valve covers available. Galvanized steel was big news in 1981 as well.

A five-speed transmission was added to the build sheet in 1982, the last year of the kammback body style. In 1983, the GT became a separate model.

The Spirit was laid to rest after 1983, ending a 13-year run of the Gremlin platform, which was based on the Hornet, which was based on the Rambler American, which was based on the Rambler Classic of 1963.

I know I didn't mention the Eagle. I'm saving that for another day.

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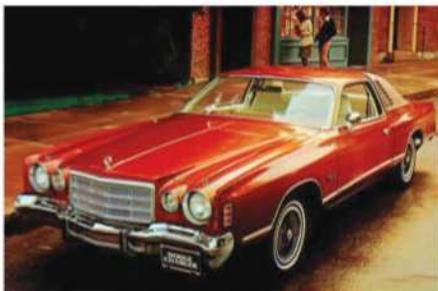
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3. Oldsmobile	891,499
4. Pontiac	748,842
5. Buick	737,467
6. Mercury	482,714
7. Plymouth	459,512
8. Dodge	421,122
9. Cadillac	309,139
10. AMC	283,275
11. Chrysler	244,938
12. Lincoln	124,756

Doug Bartholomew

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IN THE FALL OF 1970, WHEN I STARTED as the afternoon-shift garageman at the Postal Service Vehicle Maintenance Facility (VMF) in Evanston, Illinois, there was a decidedly mixed herd of trucks and cars: a couple dozen Dodge delivery vans, a few Ford station wagons, a pair of AMC sedans, the odd Studebaker van or two, a few Jeeps, a new Chevrolet stepside pickup, and an F-350 service/tow truck.

But, because the VMF also serviced postal trucks from the outlying northern Chicago suburbs, we occasionally ventured to the more remote facilities to fetch their vehicles for servicing in our four-bay garage. Among my duties was to gas up and wash all 40 or so vehicles on the lot. I also checked and changed oil, lubed chassis, mounted tires, and towed disabled vehicles.

A college student in my final year as a journalism major, I'd never turned a wrench nor worked in a gas station, but as the lady at the state employment office who found me the garageman gig had said, "No matter; they'll teach you. It's a learning opportunity."

Of course, one of the best ways to learn is from your mistakes, and I had no shortage of lessons. While backing a 1965 Rambler Ambassador mail car out of the four-bay garage, I heard a loud "wham." Immediately I stabbed the brakes. Upon looking to my left, I saw the foreman, his mouth agape, looking at me, and then at the garage floor. My driver's-side door lay flat on the pavement, busted glass and all. I'd left the door wide open while backing up. I soon learned the subtleties of installing door glass, and mounting and adjusting a replacement car door.

A cool part of the job was when a postal vehicle broke down. This gave me a chance to get out of the garage and bang around in that macho F-350 tow truck, which had a granny gear and could yank a molar from a T. Rex if given the chance. I was clicking along at about 40 mph on Chicago's busy Western Avenue with a large Dodge van in tow. Suddenly, without warning, the car in front of me decided to make an abrupt stop for a yellow light. I hammered the clutch and brake on the big Ford and prayed I'd stop in time. Some-



how, I did, but a split second later, I got slammed in the back when the Dodge van jumped the F-350's backside. Whiplash, anyone?

Most of our work on trucks and cars involved routine stuff such as tune-ups, brakes, tires, and washing cars. Sometimes, though, we tackled engine rebuilds, transmission repairs, and body and paint jobs. One snowy afternoon, the shift foreman sent me to the northern suburb of Glenview to deliver a 1963 Studebaker van on which we had just rebuilt the engine with new valves and rings. Apparently, the Post Office regulations required that we get at least another year of service out of this obviously clapped-out little stepvan with its tin-worm-infected side panels, and front bumpers with more bends than a Christmas turkey wishbone.

When I set out on my journey in the Studebaker—perched atop its high seat, which was halfway between sitting down and standing up—it was a full-blown blizzard. Visibility was maybe a couple of car lengths. Even with its rebuilt engine, the little step-van struggled to hit 50 mph. Making matters worse, the wipers were hard pressed to achieve the speed of a pendulum.

By the time I got to Glenview, the van was all but exhausted. I had the feeling the engine was just about done. Sensing the tired little Studebaker was chugging its last, I coasted into a driveway and came to a halt smack in front of an auto-dealer showroom. Within seconds, a pair of car salesmen ran out to un-greet me. In no uncertain terms, they suggested I "Get off the property, now!" Actually, not only was I not going anywhere soon in the dead mail truck, but I needed to use their phone

to call the foreman to fetch me and the clapped-out delivery van.

Another time we got a call from our "mother ship," the main Post Office in Evanston, to come and tow one of two 1965 Dodge trucks they kept on hand for rush deliveries. When I got there with the tow truck, I discovered a large puddle of antifreeze beneath the dead Dodge. I had a sinking feeling in the pit of my gut. It was only October 21, but we'd had a bad freeze in the low 20s the night before. Those two trucks were the only ones I hadn't gotten around to winterizing with fresh antifreeze. The coolant had frozen and cracked the blocks. Talk about a learning opportunity!

Once, I was dispatched to pick up a mail truck that had stalled smack in the middle of a one-way street, with parked cars on both sides. The driver was nowhere to be found. I circled the block and backed down the one-way street until the business end of the F-350 abutted the grille of the disabled postal van. Suddenly there was a ruckus of honking from the rear. Getting down from my rig, I noticed three men in leather jackets getting out of a black Cadillac. They were headed my way. "Better get that (bleep) truck out of the way," said one, "or you're in big trouble."

Thinking fast, I reached in the back of the tow truck, and I pulled out the 7-foot pry bar we used to lever a vehicle into position for a tow. As soon as the three toughs saw me brandishing the steel, Reggie Jackson style, they beat a hasty retreat to the Cadillac, slammed it in reverse, and roared away. Ain't carrying the mail fun?

After nine months as a postal garageman, with my sheepskin in hand, I traded my overalls for a sport coat, tie, and notebook, and became a rookie reporter for a daily newspaper in Peru, Indiana. 🐾



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Burly Wood

Behind the making of the Campbell-bodied 1948 GMC Highlander

BY MIKE McNESSOR • PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEFF KOCH

Eastern feng shui philosophy teaches that everything on Earth is comprised of five elements: wood, fire, earth, metal, and water. One of the keys to creating harmony and happiness in your environment is to strike a balance among those five.

Wait. What's this? New-agey pseudoscience propagated by a Vermont-based magazine? Perhaps. But, honestly: When was the last time you felt anything but a positive flow of energy at the sight of a well-crafted wood-bodied station wagon? Take for instance, this 1948

GMC ½-ton upfitted with a Campbell "Highlander" wood body by the Waterloo, New York-based Mid-State Body Company. It's like rolling feng shui for old-truck enthusiasts—all of its elements in perfect balance.

If a woodie moves you emotionally, that means it's twice as useful as the manufacturer intended. The wood-bodied wagon's *raison d'être* was to move people, literally, from place to place and, initially at least, it was a preferred method of hauling goods and passengers to and from train stations.

The first wood-bodied haulers were descended from horse-drawn express wagons, as the same firms that built wagons adopted their designs and construction methods to coachbuilding vehicle bodies. Many of these "depot hacks" had open bodies made with planks, but by the mid-1910s, demand for enclosed bodies was rising, and builders turned to the familiar rib-and-panel design as a weight-saving measure. While vehicle manufacturers advertised wood bodies on their new vehicles, the carpentry was being performed by independent shops.

Naturally, it was Ford, in 1929, that first attempted to mass-produce wood-bodied station wagons in-house. Ford's wooden parts were shaped at the auto-maker's Iron Mountain plant in Michigan, sent to Murray for assembly into panels, and then shipped off to Ford assembly plants to be installed on Model A chassis. The Model A station wagon was built until May of 1930, and total production surpassed 6,500 units.

By 1936, Ford was building completed wood station wagon bodies at its Iron Mountain facility that could then be shipped to its assembly plants around the country. Although only Ford was making woodies from scratch, wood bodies were available on prewar chassis from GM, Chrysler, Packard, Willys, Hupmobile, Graham, Hudson, Studebaker, and American Bantam.

In the years leading up to America's entry into World War II, woodies were increasingly viewed as upscale vehicles and consumer interest rose. Ford sold almost 10,000 of its redesigned Standard and De Luxe station wagons in 1940, while Chrysler introduced the four-door, eight-passenger Town & Country wagon in 1941. (The T&C set the bar high with an all-steel roof and a white ash and mahogany body by Pekin Wood Products of Helena, Arkansas.)

After WWII, Ford countered Chrysler with its Sportsman line of steel-framed wood-bodied cars, which are darlings among collectors today. Meanwhile, GM buyers in the postwar years could order woodies based on every division's cars and trucks. GM wasn't building wood bodies, relying instead on independent coachbuilders such as: Ionia, J.T. Cantrell & Co., Hercules, and the Biehl Body Company. GMC and Advance Design Chevrolet trucks with wood bodies were most often built by Cantrell and the Mid-State Body Co., in Waterloo, which was affiliated with Hercules-Campbell.

Mid-State had formerly been known as Waterloo Bodies and before that, the Waterloo Wagon Co, founded in 1881. By 1920, Waterloo had transitioned from wagons to wooden automobile bodies and, in 1932, the firm was sold to Robert Campbell, president of Tarrytown, New York-based Hercules-Campbell. Campbell changed the name, expanded the company's footprint in Waterloo, and diversified its offerings to include stake bodies, van bodies, and more for commercial trucks.

Just prior to WW II, Mid-State made a deal with GM to build station wagon bodies for Chevrolet, as well as wooden



Owner-rebuilt 228 GMC six-cylinder breathes through a Carter one-barrel carburetor and was rated new at 93 hp. Oil bath air cleaner was an option, the Fram oil filter was an accessory.



1947-'55 GM truck cabs were more spacious, better ventilated, and easier to see out of than previous haulers. Inside a wood-bodied rig, creaks and groans from the millwork are common.

bodies for Chevrolet and GMC trucks. Car body production and truck upfitting, however, was cut short by the nationwide switch to defense matériel production. After the war, when new cars were in short supply, Mid-State found a niche building wood-bodied station wagons for any used car or truck. Though a passenger-car body would require some chopping to make way for the new wood panels, a truck could be ordered as a cowl with windshield, making the perfect foundation for a woodie build. Mid-State's passenger car conversion business waned, but its commercial truck wood-body business kept rolling into the 1950s. The company fell on hard times before the end of the decade, declared bankruptcy, and eventually folded.

Campbell-bodied postwar Chevrolets and GMCs are uncommon today, and are even an unusual sight at woodie events. Arizona residents Don and Emma Gilbert found their 1948 Campbell Highlander GMC more than two decades ago among the classifieds in the National Woodie Club's magazine, *Woodie Times*.

"It was in Santa Fe, New Mexico, approximately 500 miles away," Don said. "We made the trip there in April 1997, pulling a trailer to transport it, and offered the seller his full price. When we arrived, he'd decided against selling it. His main concern was that we'd keep the vehicle stock, which we assured him we would, but still, he decided against selling it. Then in August he called—we were afraid he would back out again—

but this time he didn't."

The previous owner had refinished the wood body, and the blue-painted steel body panels were in good condition, but the GMC still needed a lot of reconditioning work, which the Gilberts tackled shortly after getting the truck home. "We didn't paint it, other than just some blending and fixing of small areas, but we spent countless hours rebuilding the engine and disassembling the entire front end down to the bare frame," Don said. "We rebuilt the suspension with new stock parts, and restored the interior including new or rebuilt gauges and speedometer, upholstery work, and interior wood refinishing."

The truck's front inner fenders, radiator support, and front hardware were treated to an application of powder coat. The Gilberts also replaced all 17 pieces of glass in the truck, sent the grille and bumpers out for chroming, refinished the door jambs, and replaced its weatherstripping.

The Gilberts haven't been shy about

showing off their restored woodie, even over long distances. "In 1999, we transported it across the country for the National Woodie Club's Silver Anniversary Tour, hosted by the Yankee Wood Chapter," Don said. "It started in Newburgh, New York, and went to Bennington, Vermont, with many stops in between. We have also driven it to Wavcrest Woodie Meet in Encinitas, California, multiple times, over 850 miles round-trip."

The GMC is powered by its original 93-hp 228-cu.in. straight-six, paired with an optional four-speed manual transmission. The final drive ratio is a deep, freeway unfriendly 4.11:1. "Sixty mph is its absolute maximum speed," Don said. But it's more comfortable at 55."

Road manners? The GMCs are typical of commercial vehicles from the period—though the Campbell body likes to make itself heard. "The body creaks and groans a little," Don said. But otherwise it's like driving a half-ton truck." 🐾



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VOLKSWAGEN 2-dr.	\$1639†	1764	160.6	60.6	94.5	4	53 hp./4 cyl.	6
RENAULT 10 4-dr.	\$1647†	1775	167.5	60.0	89.0	4	50 hp./4 cyl.	1
OPEL KADETT 2-dr.	\$1695†	1614	161.6	61.9	95.1	4	54 hp./4 cyl.	4
FORD CORTINA Model C 2-dr.	\$1815†	1923	168.0	64.9	98.0	5	65 hp./4 cyl.	5
RAMBLER AMERICAN 220 2-dr.	\$1839*	2669	181.0	70.8	106.0	6	128 hp./6 cyl.	9

*Based on manufacturer's suggested retail price for model shown in chart above. Federal taxes included. Based on total weight if any, distribution charges, optional equipment extra. †Price of Simca, Ford Consul, Renault 10 and VW U.S. model not included. Based on total weight if any, optional equipment extra.

1967 Rambler American 220

Life

August 4, 1967

ALUMA TRAILERS.....	45
BARRETT-JACKSON	3
BIRD NEST	87
BOB'S SPEEDOMETER.....	57
THE BRADFORD EXCHANGE	41
CENTRAL PA AUTO AUCTION	15
CHECK THE OIL.....	45
CLASS-TECH.....	87
COKER TIRE	1
COOL CRAFT COMPONENTS, INC.....	93
COVERCAR CONCEPTS.....	61
COVERCRAFT.....	81
FATSCO TRANSMISSION PARTS.....	80
THE FILLING STATION.....	87
GOVMINT.COM	19
GRUNDY WORLDWIDE.....	47
HAGERTY	9
HARBOR FREIGHT TOOLS	16-17
HEMMINGS CLASSIC CAR MARKETPLACE	95
HIBERNIA AUTO RESTORATIONS, LLC.....	87
HILL'S AUTOMOTIVE	93
BILL HIRSCH AUTOMOTIVE RESTORATION PRODUCTS.....	87
HORNETS REGION AACA	95
HYDRO-E-LECTRIC	82
INSPECTION STICKERS	59
J.C. TAYLOR ANTIQUE AUTO INSURANCE	45
KANTER AUTO PRODUCTS.....	43
LARRY'S THUNDERBIRD & MUSTANG PARTS.....	95
MECUM AUCTIONS	5
MOTORSPOT, INC.....	95
NATIONAL PARTS DEPOT	back cover
ORIGINAL PARTS GROUP, INC.....	inside front cover
RESTORATION SUPPLY COMPANY.....	82
ROBERTS MOTOR PARTS	87
ROCKAUTO.....	83
RPM FOUNDATION	inside back cover
SMS AUTO FABRICS	82
STAUER	11
STEELE RUBBER PRODUCTS	53
STUDEBAKER DRIVERS CLUB.....	43
SUMMIT RACING EQUIPMENT.....	7
TIRE RACK.....	13
UNIVERSAL VINTAGE TIRE CO.....	4
VIAMEDIC.....	43
VINTAGE CHEVROLET CLUB OF AMERICA.....	93
WOODWARD FAB / HECK INDUSTRIES.....	51

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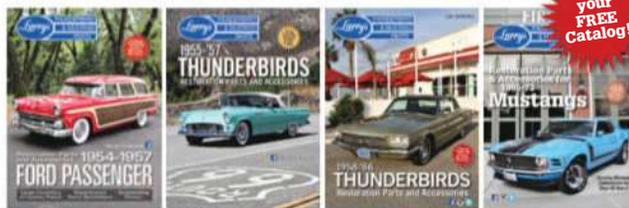


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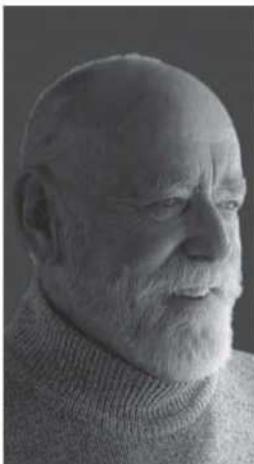
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Going Places



All of this led

me to post

Richardson's

Law, which

states that as

your speed

goes up, your

enjoyment of

the journey

goes down.



If you are going places these days, you have arrived. I am not talking about climbing into your high-end car and jumping on the freeway doing 80 mph, and cursing anyone who slows you down, until you reach your destination. At which point you are tense, tired, and cranky, and anyone in the car with you is just as irritated and anxious.

By "going places," I mean savoring the process of going places. For example, journeying out on a sunny Sunday drive in your vintage 1938 Pontiac, '68 Plymouth, or '48 Packard, perhaps on your way to a little town about an hour away where you and your family can have an ice cream. Or not. Because the ice cream is not the point—it's the journey that matters.

I'm talking about motoring along in your vintage car at a sedate pace on secondary roads with the windows down so you can enjoy the perfumed air of spring along with the occasional whiff of gasoline, hot water, and motor-oil fumes. You say things like: "That's an antique John Deere over there," or "Look at that old barn with the faded 'Chew Mail Pouch Tobacco' sign. I think I'd rather chew the mail pouch than the tobacco," or "Isn't that Freddie in his '56 Dodge coming toward us?"

Along with being mindful and enjoying your surroundings, you listen to that vintage engine ticking over. What a sweet old machine. What a beautiful day! That, as opposed to going into suspended animation in a high-velocity insulated cocoon until you get there, get there, get there.

Years ago, I took my father to his birthplace in Southern Kentucky, and we also saw where my great grandfather once owned a general store at a place called Gray John Hill in Northern Tennessee. My father's family left when he was just six years old, so he only had spotty memories of the area.

We asked for directions at a coffee shop in the little town of Celina, Tennessee—named after a family member's daughter—and from there we hopped on the expressway for about 10 minutes and we were there.

We drove up a wooded hill and met an elderly lady named Pearly McLaren who invited us into her modest home. She had a pistol on top of her tiny television, so we knew we had better be respectful. Turns out, she knew people from our family and was able to catch us up on what had

happened to many of them. It was then I asked her why my great grandfather had a general store so close to town.

She replied that the hill was only 10 minutes away by modern expressway, but in the old days if you were to go by horseback on the trail, you

would need two hours one way. And if you went down through the woods and meadows on foot, it would take you half a day to get there. That explained a lot.

Among other things, it told me how much of the richness of daily life we have sacrificed just to save

time. The trip by motorway was boring, but it only took 10 minutes. However, on foot you might have seen deer and raccoons, smelled the pine trees, and perhaps seen quiet ponds and neighboring farms; and you might chat with people along the way.

I have crossed the Pacific Ocean several times, but have experienced nothing in the process. No waves, no salt air, no storms, and no feeling for the sheer immensity of it. I was too busy watching old movies, pulling out my tray table for dinner, and dozing as best I could in my cramped economy seat to pay any attention to what was 30,000 feet below me and shooting by at 500 mph.

All of this led me to post Richardson's Law, which states that as your speed goes up, your enjoyment of the journey goes down. So, I say get into your old car and go for a meander, take it easy, and savor the machine and your surroundings. You'll feel alive, as opposed to becoming one of the living dead on the freeway trying to gettheregettheregetthere not realizing that you have arrived. After all, there is only here and now.

Don't misunderstand. I love speed as much as anybody, and I have a 2007 Corvette ZO6 to prove it. But what I love about speed is the adrenaline rush and the challenge of taking corners quickly. As Stirling Moss once said, "Speed is the new pleasure," but I'd add that it's not enjoyable for getting to appointments.

Now, if you will excuse me, it is Sunday afternoon, and my wife and I are going to climb into my 1939 Packard 120, put the top down, and take a trip over to the harbor to see the big ships, and perhaps stop for an ice cream or lunch someplace. Or not.

We have arrived at long last. Going places is such a real pleasure. ☺





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