

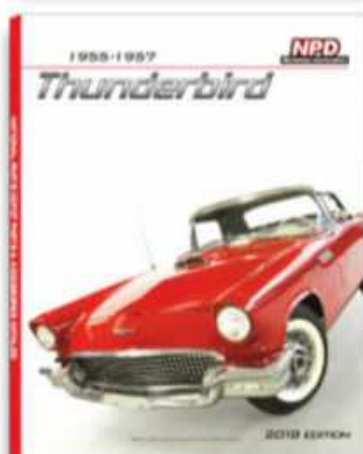
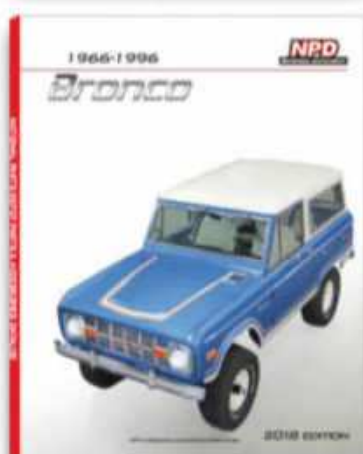
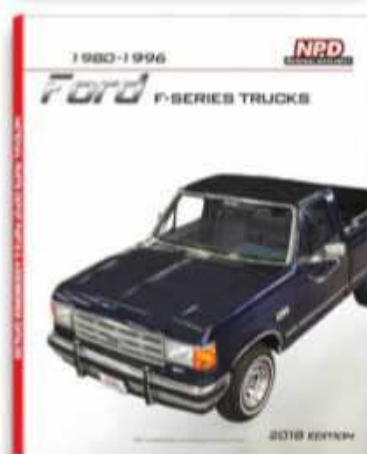
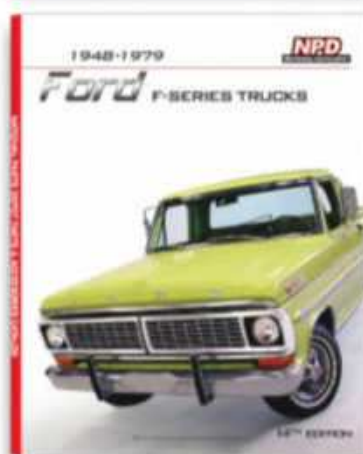
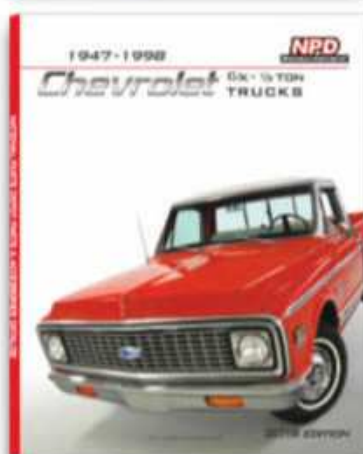
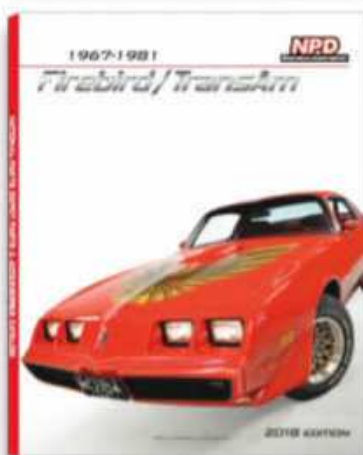
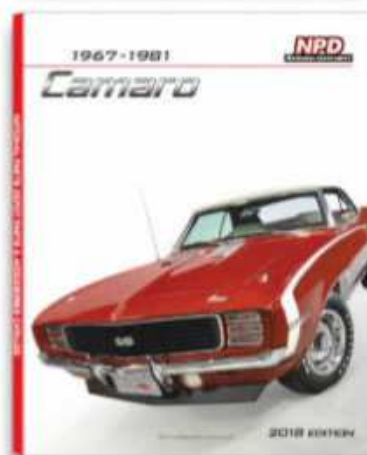
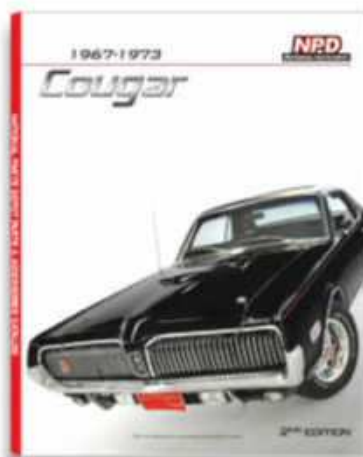


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Collecting Books

Besides my 1968 Triumph Spitfire, which is the first car I ever bought and still own, I would have to say that my most prized possession is my automotive-book collection. Unlike buying a car, assembling a worthwhile collection of books takes years, if not decades, before you find and purchase all the books that you need, and want. Of course, such a collection never really stops growing, thanks to the world's publishers that keep issuing new books month after month. Thankfully, most of the new automobile books that are being published today offer little in terms of new content, being little more than rehashes of the same rehashed information, so the growth rate has slowed tremendously.

If you're a serious car enthusiast, but lack a solid collection of focused reading material, you will limit your ability to know all that's important about those cars that you are interested in. Not only will an automotive library provide you with a more comprehensive education about a given car, it will also increase your appreciation for it. Besides, reading is a whole lot more entertaining and satisfying than watching all that reality garbage and those truly stupid car shows on TV.

Unlike my wife, who's read every Stephen King book and those of Michael Connelly, I always felt that reading fiction is a waste of time, simply because I'm not learning anything. I couldn't care less about some author's fantasy writing. But sit me down with an encyclopedia, or a book about Italy, architecture, art, or even a cooking, and I can get lost for hours.

My car-book collection now encompasses nearly every square inch of wall space in my office; the neighboring closet, which snakes under the staircase; the parlor; and our library. There's even a few boxes of books stashed in the basement.

The first three car books I ever bought were *The Story of Triumph Sports Cars*, Mark Donohue's *The Unfair Advantage*, and *The Cobra Story*. I purchased each of these books when they were first

published, so I guess that was around 1972. Since then, I've managed to increase the size of my book collection to somewhere around 1,200 volumes, inclusive of most issues of *Automobile Quarterly*.

As a diehard Alfa Romeo, Cadillac, Pontiac, and Triumph enthusiast, I buy practically every book that's published on those marques.

Nonetheless, it's still exciting to dig through milk crate after milk crate at Hershey and other swap meets looking for that elusive book that I don't have, even if the information in that book is redundant with those books I already have. But the hunt is the fun part.

More important, I buy books about cars that I have never even owned, nor will ever own, just so I can increase my knowledge on the subject. Learning about cars other than those in your sphere of knowledge will help you become more aware of your car's place in the hierarchy of the collector-car hobby, and why it

occupies that position. Besides, if you can't afford to buy the car of your dreams, having a book about it is the next best thing; thus I have books on Bugatti, Cord, Cisitalia, and Rolls-Royce, to name just a few. But my two all-time favorite books in my collection are *Touring Superleggera* and *The Immortal 2.9*.

Without question, the most important books in my collection are the Crestline series, of which I have nearly all; the information within is matchless. It took me three years to assemble this collection, and I'm still not done. Other significant books include all the Standard Catalogs and the full set of *The World of Automobiles* encyclopedia that I bought on a bimonthly schedule from Time Life back in the mid-'70s; this 22-volume set is jam-packed with all sorts of car-related information that you simply can't find anywhere else.

As to the 2,000-plus car magazines I have packed away in cardboard boxes, well, that's another story for another time. 📖



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California Tribute

THE 2018 PALOS VERDES CONCOURS D'ELEGANCE RETURNS TO THE ZAMPERINI FIELD in Torrance, California, on Sunday, September 30. This will be the 25th edition, and the theme aims to highlight "California Style." It's open to all makes that have contributed to the history of the California car culture including woodies, American convertibles, sports cars, and prewar classics that display custom coachwork by California designers Murphy, Bohman & Schwartz, and Darrin. More than 200 automobiles will be on display, and beneficiaries of the proceeds will be the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Los Angeles Harbor and the Western Museum of Flight. Go to www.pvconcours.org for more information.

VCCA Southern Fall Tour

THE VINTAGE CHEVROLET CLUB OF AMERICA WILL FEATURE ITS 15TH SOUTHERN FALL Tour this October 1-6. The tour will be hosted by the Greater St. Louis and Cedar Valley Regions and will take place a little farther north this year. The tour will be based around Dubuque, Iowa, with the tour highlighting the Mississippi River area. Some of the stops include the National Mississippi River Museum & Aquarium, a lunch cruise aboard the *American Lady*, and a visit to the baseball field in the movie *Field of Dreams*. The event is open to all 1912 to 1954 Chevrolet vehicles. To register contact Sandra Gurnow and Rich Hardt at sandy50sunshine@yahoo.com or 314-374-3159.



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TWO SWAP MEETS ARE SCHEDULED TO TAKE PLACE IN the Sooner State this month, both of which are well known and great alternatives if you can't make Carlisle or Hershey. The largest swap meet in Oklahoma is the annual Chickasha Fall Swap Meet, scheduled for October 18-20. All vendors feature all-years car parts. It offers free admission for spectators. The Norman Fall Swap Meet takes place at the Cleveland County Fairgrounds October 25-27, with indoor and outdoor spaces, plus free admission, too. For more information, visit www.chickashaautoswapmeet.com and www.normanswapmeet.com.

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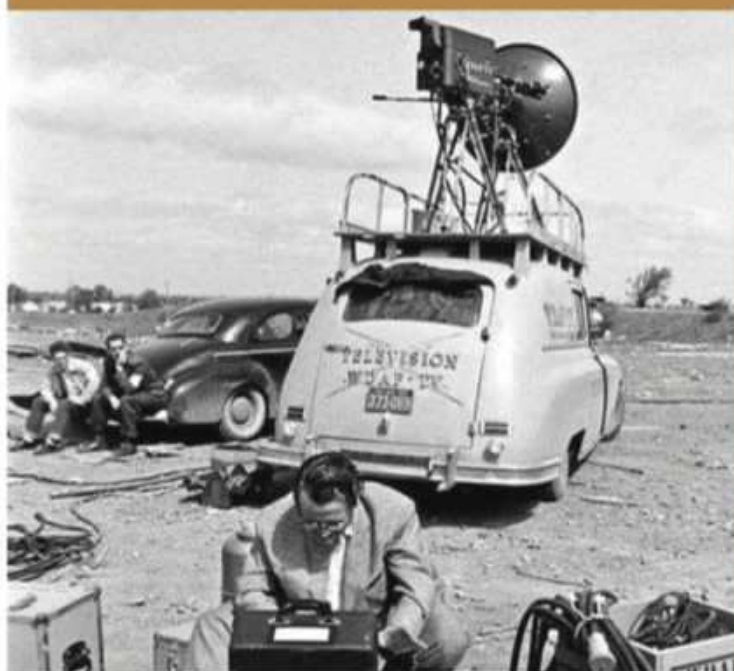
OF ALL PLACES, NICK STIEME CAME ACROSS THIS ONE-OF-48 EISENHARDT- AND Hess-built 1959 Lincoln limousine behind a Nissan dealership in Switzerland. As he describes it: "Some exterior trim (parts of rocker panel trim, one hubcap, and trim at the front of the hood) is missing, and there is obviously rust damage. Interior trim seems to be complete. According to the owner the engine is running (?) and the brakes have been fixed. But an extensive restoration would be required."

It's for sale, though finding a parts car in Switzerland might prove difficult.

WDAF Packard

LONG BEFORE MEDIUM-DUTY satellite trucks swarmed every disaster location for live cable news coverage, television stations had... a Packard?

That appears to be the case in this circa 1957 photo of WDAF newsman Walt Bodine on assignment covering the aftermath of the Ruskin Heights (Missouri) tornado.



Steve Olson sent us the photo with questions about the Packard.

"Did Packard make a sedan delivery?" he asked. "Did some coachbuilder make it as a funeral car/ambulance?"

Given that satellite broadcast vehicles didn't really standardize on commercial truck chassis until after the construction of CONUS-1 in the mid-1980s (see it in the Newseum in Washington, D.C.), pretty much any vehicle, up to and including intercity buses, was repurposed into a remote-feed broadcaster. So we can certainly subscribe to the repurposed professional car theory, but we'd love to hear from somebody who knows more about this particular Packard.

Gosh, a Gisler

THE SPORTS CAR THAT GOES BY THE NAME GISLER should look familiar to longtime Lost & Found readers; *Special Interest Autos* featured it in the predecessor to this department way back in July 2000.

At the time, Wayne Graefen wondered what the story on the car was after he photographed it. Today, we're hearing from Lloyd Parker of Camarillo, California (who owned the Gisler for a time in the 1990s. He said he bought it because he thought it looked like a Dual Ghia; we think it more resembles an Edwards America) who asked us the same questions Wayne asked.

Here's what we know about the car. It's bodied out of aluminum, and it sits on a Kaiser Henry J chassis with a Kaiser six-cylinder engine under the hood. Here's what we don't know: Pretty much everything else about the car.

Sports custom researcher Geoff Hacker informed us that Scott Perrot of Portland, Oregon—who Lloyd sold it to in the mid-'90s—still owns it. And Lloyd said he once spoke with the brother of the man who built the car, a man with the last name of Gisler, who said it was built in 1952 or 1953 in San Diego.

Anybody with more information, please let us know so we can hopefully piece together a more complete narrative on the Gisler.



✿ 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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FT. LBS. BOLT BREAKAWAY

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MODEL: CT8850PDB,
CT88185, CT8720

ITEM 64195/63852/63537 shown

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RAPID PUMP® 3 TON STEEL HEAVY DUTY LOW PROFILE FLOOR JACK

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FREE WITH ANY PURCHASE

1" x 25 FT. TAPE MEASURE

- Thumb Lock
- Rubber Wrapped Case

LIFETIME WARRANTY

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ITEM 69030/69031 shown

96682476

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Customer Rating

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ITEM 64417, 64418, 61363, 68497,
61360, 61359, 68498, 68496 shown

96684982

LIMIT 4 - Coupon valid through 12/10/18*

CENTRAL PNEUMATIC SUPER COUPON

Customer Rating

3 GALLON, 100 PSI OIL-FREE AIR COMPRESSORS

A

MODEL: 69269/97080 shown

B

MODEL: 60637/61615
95275 shown

• Air delivery:
0.6 CFM @ 90 PSI
1 CFM @ 40 PSI

SAVE 59%

YOUR CHOICE
\$39.99

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\$98.62

MODEL: PCFP02003

ITEM 69269/97080 shown

96685230

LIMIT 5 - Coupon valid through 12/10/18*

HaulMaster SUPER COUPON



72" x 80" MOVING BLANKET

Customer Rating

SAVE 70%

COMPARE TO
BLUE HAWK
\$19.99

MODEL: 77280

ITEM 69505/62418/66537 shown

96686135

LIMIT 3 - Coupon valid through 12/10/18*

SCISSOR SUPER COUPON

Customer Rating

30" SERVICE CART WITH LOCKING DRAWER

- 350 lb. capacity

NOW \$59.99

SAVE \$210

COMPARE TO
BLUE-POINT
\$270

MODEL: KRBC3TD

ITEM 61161/90428 shown

96686174

LIMIT 4 - Coupon valid through 12/10/18*

PITTSBURGH AUTOMOTIVE SUPER COUPON

1 TON CAPACITY FOLDABLE SHOP CRANE

- Boom extends from 36-1/4" to 50-1/4"
- Crane height adjusts from 82" to 94"

Customer Rating

COMPARE TO
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\$199.99

MODEL: 46218

ITEM 69512/61858/69445 shown

96686272

LIMIT 4 - Coupon valid through 12/10/18*

drillmaster SUPER COUPON

Customer Rating

4-1/2" ANGLE GRINDER

SAVE 65%

COMPARE TO
PERFORMAX
\$28.99

MODEL: 2411-1



NOW \$14.99

COMPARE TO
PERFORMAX
\$28.99

MODEL: 2411-1

ITEM 69645/60625 shown

96686366

LIMIT 9 - Coupon valid through 12/10/18*

COVERPRO SUPER COUPON

10 FT. x 17 FT. PORTABLE GARAGE



Customer Rating

SAVE \$100

COMPARE TO
SHELTER
LOGIC
\$270

MODEL: 76377

ITEM 62859/63055/62860 shown

96686741

LIMIT 3 - Coupon valid through 12/10/18*

CENTRAL PNEUMATIC SUPER COUPON

20 OZ. GRAVITY FEED SPRAY GUN

- 1.4mm tip included

NOW \$9.99

COMPARE TO
KOBALT
\$49.98

MODEL: SGV-AIR88TZ

ITEM 67181/62300/47016 shown

96687333

LIMIT 9 - Coupon valid through 12/10/18*

BADLAND ZXA Battle Tested SUPER COUPON

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

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



Customer Rating

COMPARE TO
WARN
\$699.99

MODEL: 96820

ITEM 64045/64046/63770 shown

96687359

LIMIT 3 - Coupon valid through 12/10/18*

CENTECH SUPER COUPON

Customer Rating

2/10/50 AMP, 12 VOLT BATTERY CHARGER/ENGINE STARTER



SAVE 50%

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MODEL: SE-1250

ITEM 60581/60653 shown

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MODEL: EM5000SXK3

ITEM 68529/63084/63083
ITEM 68526/63082/63081 shown
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Customer Rating

3/8" x 14 FT., GRADE 43 TOWING CHAIN

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MODEL: 426920

ITEM 60658/97711 shown

96688336

LIMIT 7 - Coupon valid through 12/10/18*

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2 PIECE VEHICLE DOLLIES

- 1500 lb. capacity

Customer Rating

SAVE 50%

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\$89.99

MODEL: 27918

ITEM 60343/67338 shown

96688488

LIMIT 3 - Coupon valid through 12/10/18*

VOYAGER SUPER COUPON

12" TOOL BAG

Customer Rating

SAVE 75%

COMPARE TO
AWP
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MODEL: 3L-2216

ITEM 62163/62349/61467 shown



NOW \$8.99

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AWP
\$19.98

MODEL: 3L-2216

96688566

LIMIT 9 - Coupon valid through 12/10/18*

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- Drill 28 hole sizes from 1/8" to 3/4"

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ITEM 69087/60379/91616 shown

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IRWIN
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MODEL: 15504PKSM

96689324

LIMIT 8 - Coupon valid through 12/10/18*

PITTSBURGH SUPER COUPON

9 PIECE FULLY POLISHED COMBINATION WRENCH SETS

Customer Rating

LIFETIME WARRANTY

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SAVE 66%

COMPARE TO
HUSKY
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MODEL: HCW10PCSAE

ITEM 42305 shown



TYPE

ITEM

SAE 69043/63282/42304

METRIC 69044/63171/42305

96689740

LIMIT 8 - Coupon valid through 12/10/18*

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BONHAMS

Den Hartogh Ford Collection

BONHAMS SOLD THE MASSIVE COLLECTION OF FORDS ON-SITE AT THE DEN HARTOGH MUSEUM

in the Netherlands on June 23, with a 100-percent sell-through rate. The impressive collection featured more than 300 lots that included 200-plus Fords and Lincolns along with 50-plus motorcycles. Each lot was sold individually with no reserve, and legions of Ford fans went home with a part of the collection.

At one time, the Den Hartogh was certified as the largest Ford museum in the world, and its origins date all the way back to 1956. The collection featured cars ranging from a 1903 Model A Open Tourer to a few postwar late-1940s cars and pickups, but most of the selection consisted of prewar Fords and Lincolns. Also included were specialty vehicles such as fire trucks, hearses, and snowmobiles. The sale was brought about due to declining attendance and dwindling interest in the museum. A grand total of over \$7.18 million in sales was recorded. A full rundown of the results are available at www.bonhams.com.

Branson Bravado

THE BRANSON FALL AUCTION WILL TAKE

place October 19-20 at the Convention Center in Branson, Missouri. This will be the 40th year of the event, and the Branson auctions are as big as ever. The spring sale saw a robust 81.5-percent sell-through, with over 200 cars available for sale. Total sales hit \$2.88 million, and among the lots sold was this iconic 1957 Chevrolet Bel Air convertible.

Adorned in red with silver interior, it was equipped with the 283-cu.in. V-8 Power Pack with power convertible top, brakes, and steering; it hammered home for \$69,300. Branson is filling out its roster, so be sure to visit its website at www.bransonauction.com for the list of consignments and auction information.



BRANSON

AUCTION PROFILE

CAR	1946 Ford Super De Luxe station wagon
AUCTIONEER	RM Sotheby's
LOCATION	Hampton, New Hampshire
DATE	June 24, 2018
LOT NUMBER	918
RESERVE	None
AVERAGE SELLING PRICE	\$105,000
SELLING PRICE	\$123,200

FORD RESUMED AUTOMOBILE PRODUCTION after WWII and had kept a stock of 1942 wagon parts in storage for the day civilian assembly could resume. As a result, the 1946 vehicles had few changes from the prewar models. All wagons were now manufactured as Super De Luxe models with slight changes incorporated in the mechanicals.

This wagon had changed hands a few times since August of 2007, and received a complete rebuild that was finished in 2011 including wood, complete mechanicals, and cosmetic



RM SOTHEBY'S

touches. The wood is finely varnished with bird's-eye maple framing, and the interior features a black artificial leather roof, brown leather seats, and red accents on the dash. The mileage shown was believed to be correct at above

84,000; the engine and exhaust showed very little wear and tear.

This was an authentic, well-preserved wagon that sold for an above-average price. Both seller and buyer had to be pleased about the price.

OCTOBER

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4-6 • **Vicari Auctions**
Biloxi, Mississippi • 504-264-2277
www.vicariauction.com

6 • **Silver Auctions**
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www.silverauctions.com

8 • **Bonhams**
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415-391-4000 • www.bonhams.com

8 • **Morphy Auctions**
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www.morphyauctions.com

11-12 • **RM Sotheby's**
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19-20 • **The Branson Auction**
Branson, Missouri • 800-335-3063
www.bransonauction.com

25-27 • **Mecum Auctions**
Chicago, Illinois • 262-275-5050
www.mecum.com

BARRETT-JACKSON



Barrett-Jackson Northeast

AT THE MOHEGAN SUN CASINO IN

Uncasville, Connecticut, in June, Barrett-Jackson concluded its third-annual Northeast auction. The four-day auction saw 662 vehicles cross the block with a sell-through rate of 99.25 percent. Final sales were just short of \$25 million, and \$1.245 million was raised for charity. This 1937 Packard 120C was one of many prewar cars available. It had several mechanical and cosmetic updates. It sold for \$49,500. Full results are available at www.barrett-jackson.com.



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www.tirerack.com/sprintclassic

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www.tirerack.com/quatrac5

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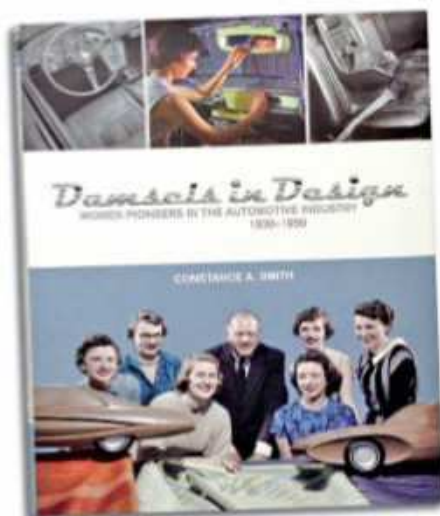
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Damsels in Design

610-593-1777 • WWW.SCHIFFERBOOKS.COM • \$34.99

The 2014 appointment of Mary Barra to the loftiest position at General Motors—chairman and CEO—signaled a major shift in the role of women in America's automotive industry. As the first female CEO of a Big-Three car company, Barra is a pioneer, although she's not the only woman to put her stamp on this male-dominated industry. Another female GM veteran, accomplished designer Constance A. Smith, has written a fascinating new book that celebrates numerous little-recognized women who worked on automakers' interior- and exterior-design staffs between 1939 and 1959. Taking its title from Harley Earl's publicity-garnering female styling team



of the mid-1950s, this handsomely presented 192-page hardcover (ISBN 9780764354359) includes amply illustrated biographies of notable designers Helene Rother (GM and Nash), Leota Carroll (Ford), Audrey Moore Hodges (Studebaker and Tucker), Elizabeth Thatcher Oros (Hudson), and many more. Smith offers a well-rounded history of each of the individuals she honors, and makes special note of the many innovations that originated with female engineers and designers. Every automotive historian, both casual and serious, should study and enjoy this important work.



Four on the Floor

WWW.ETSY.COM/SHOP/CQQLAUTO • \$16.99

(+\$1 FOR 2XL; +\$2 FOR 3XL)

When George Hurst formed his eponymous company in 1958, he probably never imagined that his performance-

focused parts and accessories would become legendary, and that within a decade Hurst would be a valued OEM supplier to virtually every American automaker. Whether you're a racer, a casual car lover, or an originality-focused restorer, you recognize the classic Hurst four-speed shifter knob. That red-and-black Hurst "H" with the white ball-topped stick-shift decorates the left front of this officially licensed Hurst Competition Plus Floor Shift T-shirt, while a large version of the "Competition/Plus by Hurst" shift knob—based on the original 1960s water-transfer decal logo—covers the back. These bright graphics are screen-printed by the U.S.-based firm of CQQLAuto on 100-percent, pre-shrunk white cotton shirts that are available in men's sizes small through 3XL.



New Life for Old Plates

724-884-3782 • TONYSIKORSKI77@AOL.COM • \$2,500-\$3,500 EACH, DEPENDING ON PLATE AND SCULPTURE SIZE

Longtime *Hemmings Classic Car* readers will undoubtedly recognize the whimsical automotive sculptures of Automotive Fine Arts Society member Tony Sikorski (Auto Art, HCC #13). This award-winning Pennsylvania resident's skill for designing highly stylized vehicles with an exaggerated sense of motion—and his use of materials including corrugated cardboard and wood, plus steel and aluminum, the latter seen in the vintage license plates that star in these pieces—means Tony's new sculptures are anticipated by collectors around the world. His latest creative inspiration has manifested itself in the "Autotag Racing" and "Autotag Touring" series.

"I'm always looking to do something different, and I came up with this idea about two years ago; I made two pieces for Hershey, using older Pennsylvania and Ohio tags. They turned out nice," Tony explains. "I started to make them bigger, longer, and with more speed to them. My favorite decades for car design were the 1920s and 1930s, so those are the eras I most often style the Autotag Racing and Autotag Touring cars to emulate."

Tony searches for fully embossed older license plates that show their years in patina and wear, as he finds those plates offer the most personality. The remainder of the sculptures is made from hand-carved, -sanded, and -painted wood. Finished sizes range from roughly 30 to 40 inches in length, as pre-World War II plates are longer than newer ones. "Each one is one-of-a-kind, and they're really fun to make. I'm excited about this!"

Continued on page 16



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Ford Authorized Service

800-708-5051 • WWW.GARAGEART.COM • \$299.95

You don't have to wrench on your own Blue Oval classic to appreciate the nostalgic charm of this vintage-looking Ford Authorized Service sign, which looks as if it could have hung over a dealer's service counter. Measuring a generous 22 inches in diameter, this sign (item GAD-Neo-5FRDBK) backs up its hand-blown white-and-blue neon tubes with crisp silkscreened graphics that shine through, even when the neon isn't lit. Each sign is manufactured to order, carefully packaged to avoid damage, and is estimated to ship two to three weeks after the order is received; FedEx Ground shipping in the continental U.S. is free.

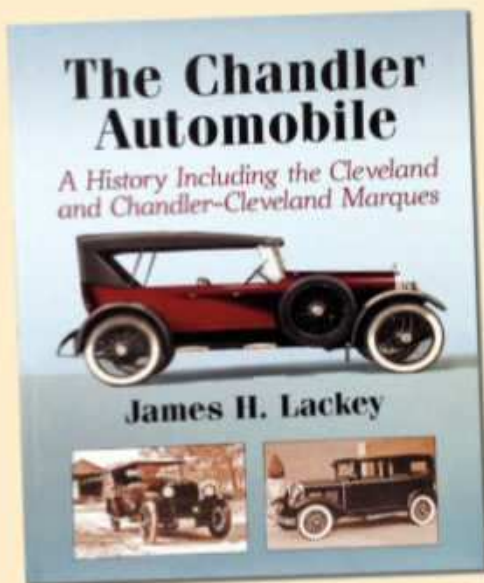


The Chandler Automobile

800-253-2187 • WWW.MCFARLANDPUB.COM • \$75

There were vast numbers of automakers, both accomplished and hopefuls, established in the United States in the 1910s. Most would not survive that decade, but a few—like the Chandler Motor Car Company of Cleveland, Ohio—would quickly prosper, carving out a sales niche, thanks to a blend of experienced management, good design and build quality, and smart marketing. Chandler's bright flame would burn out before the stock market crash of '29, but this firm made its mark on automotive history.

Automotive historian James Lackey, author of the seminal *The Jordan Automobile: A History*, has put together the first truly definitive work on Chandler and its Cleveland companion marque, in this handsomely presented 264-page hardcover (ISBN 9781476663937). Lackey introduces readers to the personalities behind this firm, walking us through its ups and downs in a year-by-year fashion. The amount of detail in the text—covering both the internal workings of the company and the ongoing evolutions of the cars it produced—is noteworthy, and it's enhanced by nearly 400 fascinating period images and black-and-white/color advertising illustrations. Of particular interest are the numerous famous people who endorsed these cars, the models' competition prowess, and the lists of specifications that are sure to be incredibly useful to any Chandler or Cleveland owner or enthusiast. With searchable chapter notes, a bibliography, and index, this important book will be a go-to reference in perpetuity.



1952 Hudson Hornet

888-209-2263 • WWW.ACME DIECAST.COM • \$129.95

The latest 1:18-scale collectible from Acme Trading Company—a 1952 Hudson Hornet Convertible Brougham—is a work of art. Representing one of an estimated 360 Hornet Convertible Broughams built for this model year, this die-cast offers an incredible amount of detail. Lift the hood, which raises on scale hinges, and you'll see a very colorful and lifelike "Miracle H-Power" 145-hp L-head 308-cu.in. straight-six, its two Carter carburetors topped with accurate "Twin-H"-emblazoned red air cleaners. The Symphony Green paint is well-applied, and panel gaps are tight, yet you can also open the trunk to remove the spare wheel or pop the tiny fuel filler door and glovebox. The interior is equally appealing, with rich green flock carpeting, a sliding/folding front seat, and legible instrumentation. A simulated top boot is included to display the model's interior, along with a very realistic molded plastic convertible roof, complete with "wrinkles" and painted interior bows. It's estimated that just 500 examples of this Hudson (item A1807503) will be built, so if you want one for your scale-model collection, you'll need to act fast.

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SPEEDCAR NUMBER 9

In 1912, The National Motor Vehicle Company fielded a 5 car team in the second-ever Indianapolis Motor Speedway 500-Mile Race. Number 9 was one of those cars, but actually was numbered 11 for that race. Joe Dawson in team car #8 won the race, but #11 was a DNF due to a catastrophic crash. From that point, #11 passed through multiple owners' care during which time it was given the paint and number you see here.

Jim Grundy, a noted National collector, acquired the car around 1990 and drove it as found for several years. He later commissioned its full restoration back to the original number and livery that it wore during that fateful 1912 race. It remains in his collection to this day. It last saw a racetrack in 2012 at the Milwaukee Mile, where it lapped the historic oval with other Vanderbilt Era racers.



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Blast Away

TP TOOLS & EQUIPMENT • 800-321-9260

WWW.TPTOOLS.COM • \$1,499

TP Tools offers Skat Blast Cabinets that are perfect for removing rust and paint with precision and speed. The cabinets feature a 12 x 33-inch window with a large work area that's 46 inches wide x 28 inches deep x 28 inches high. The 90-watt floodlights give you great visibility while you work. The foot-pedal-operated gun is powerful yet quiet. The Vac-50 HEPA Vacuum with HEPA filtration collects 99.97 percent of all dust particles. Parts are inserted through the sizeable side door and then blasted using the foot pedal. They're great for cleaning springs, lamps, fuel pumps, carburetors, manifolds, interior, under-the-hood parts, wheels, air cleaners, pistons, valves, and more; it's capable of holding objects up to 200 pounds.



Fit Firewalls

ORIGINAL PARTS GROUP • 800-243-8355

WWW.OPGI.COM • \$339 (1964-'67); \$299 (1968-'72)

For the Oldsmobile Cutlass, Original Parts Group has reproduced several new items including a firewall assembly. Available for 1964-'72 Cutlasses, the heavy-duty stamped-steel firewalls feature every contour and shape found on the factory originals. The reproductions have the correct accessory mounting holes and flanges for the right fit. Note that the installation does require welding and the brackets for supplemental body bushings are not included with the panel; OEM brackets must be used. For more information, be sure to visit OPG's website.



Sticker Shock

BOB HOYT'S CLASSIC WINDSHIELD STICKERS • 708-567-5380 • WWW.INSPECTIONSTICKERS.NET • STARTING AT \$20

If you're looking for a period-correct restoration, you want to nail down every possible detail. One area you might simply overlook is the inspection sticker. Fortunately, Bob Hoyt's Classic Inspection Stickers will allow you to have any classic inspection or registration sticker issued in the United States from 1920 to 1989. Of the more than 3,000 stickers in stock, it has auto logos, muscle car and race track stickers, and gas-rationing stickers, as well as vintage stickers for under the hood and door jambs. Custom designs are also available, plus the company will gladly reproduce any sticker made before 1992, should you need a new one or it isn't in stock. Note: These are not to be used to replace your modern inspection sticker.



“1:18-Scale 1917 Coca-Cola Ford Model T”

Looking as good in 1917 as it does 100 years later ... and for generations to come!

Rugged Die-Cast Construction in 1:18 scale

Features Ford and Coca-Cola logos and graphics

Tapered hood design with curved top first introduced in 1917

Measures an impressive 10.5" long.

Engine crank on front actually turns

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LEO Baekeland

POLYOXYBENZYL METHYLENGLYCOLANHYDRIDE, BETTER known by its easily pronounceable trade name “Bakelite,” is the stuff of great significance and great misinformation in the world. It is named for its inventor, Belgian chemist Leo Baekeland.

Before the industrial revolution, and even in its early years, most products were made from natural materials: leather, bone, ivory, wood, metal, plant fibers, animal hair, etc. The only materials similar to plastics were also natural in origin. Think of latex from rubber trees or shellac from the lac beetle. As human industry began to produce more and more, these natural sources became a bottleneck in production.

One of the earliest artificial plastics was celluloid, a highly flammable material that had the added disadvantages of being expensive and difficult to produce. In the early years of the 20th century, the time was ripe for a replacement.

Born in 1863 in Ghent, Belgium, just a few months after Henry Ford, Baekeland came from a modest background—his mother was a maid and his father repaired shoes.

Baekeland attended the University of Ghent thanks to a scholarship. There, he studied chemistry. By the age of 21, he was Dr. Baekeland and a professor.


Baekeland’s first experiments had to do with developing photographs. After a visit to the United States in 1889, he was persuaded to relocate here. Before a decade had passed, he had invented and sold a new type of photographic paper called Velox. Under the terms of its sale to Kodak, Baekeland also agreed to do no further photographic research for 20 years, and he set about to study plastics.

Baekeland was interested in perfecting earlier experiments with phenolic resins, which had failed to produce a useable material. The difficulty was that in order to create a phenolic resin, extremely high temperatures were

required, but those same high temperatures caused the mix to foam up. Upon cooling, the result was porous and fragile.

Around 1907, Baekeland discovered the secret to success, performing the last step of the process under pressure, which prevented the foaming. He produced an egg-shaped chamber he dubbed the “Bakelizer” to heat the mixture to 300 degrees Fahrenheit while preventing the creation of bubbles. The resulting plastic was hard, could not be melted, and was insoluble. He was granted a patent for the process in 1909.

Bakelite was the right product for the times as the automotive, aviation, and electronic industries were all on the rise and all needed a material like Bakelite. Distributor caps, electrical connections, knobs, and even entire car bodies, such as the Trabant, have been made from phenolic resins impregnated with fiber—materials based on Baekeland’s original. Colorful Catalin, developed upon the expiration of Baekeland’s patents in the 1920s, was used to create many consumer goods in the 1930s and ’40s, and is a hot collectible even today.

Bakelite itself, usually black or brown to hide the fibers inside, is still produced by the Union Carbide Company. It remains heavily used whenever a moldable, easily machined, electrically inert, heat-resistant material is required. 





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Edwardian Excitement

Long before Pontiac, Oakland cars, such as this 1910 Model 24, built a reputation through performance

BY DAVID CONWILL • PHOTOGRAPHY BY RICHARD LENTINELLO







Brass and varnished wood abound in the open cockpit. Note that the U.S. had not yet settled on left-hand drive.



Ignition is via magneto. Note that the cylinder heads are integral with the cylinder block, but the crankcase is separate.



The ring gear is the only clue that this car was retrofit with electric start. Brass and pinstripe details extend under the car.

All the grit and nerve of a touring car—all of its staunch stick-to-it-iveness—comes out in a hill-climbing contest. The Oakland, in that field, is first.”

It’s a bit wordier than a mere photo of a GTO making a turn onto Woodward Avenue with the caption “You know the rest of the story,” but that’s because those words, published in 1910, were the beginning of the story. Most are familiar with the origins of the Pontiac marque, in the 1920s, as a companion make to Oakland—the child that devoured its parent. Pontiac didn’t begin cultivating a performance image until the 1950s, but Oakland had laid the groundwork four decades earlier.

Hill climbing, an exhibition of torque and tenacity, is the spiritual predecessor to drag racing. In the early days of the motorcar, the ability of a powerplant to propel a chassis to the top of a steep, often rough, hill was an important measure of its worth. Even in flat country, potential buyers were aware that a car able to climb hills with ease would prove plenty durable, and dare we say, fun, on the street.

In 1910, Oakland was a relative newcomer to automobile manufacturing, though not to vehicle making, as it had grown out of the Pontiac Buggy Company. Oakland started by making a two-cylinder car, based on a rejected Cadillac design, in 1907. Rather quickly, Oakland switched entirely to fours, like the Model 24 (advertised, along with the Model 25, as a Model 30—for its horsepower) seen on these pages.

When Oakland production began, cars had finally begun to look like cars, and by 1910 the industry had begun to recognize the important psychological components of styling and advertising. The “high-powered runabout” was the aspirational car of the era—rakish, 50-horsepower sports models with minimal practical value.

A would-be volume maker like Oakland, which had been folded into General Motors on the death of its founder in 1909, couldn’t offer a true high-powered runabout, but the good power-to-weight ratio of the Oakland runabout (wearing a conventional runabout body molded from laminated wood and clad with steel) could be capitalized upon to market an otherwise conventionally styled car to a performance-conscious public.

“Automobiles in 1910 were not an everyday thing,” says Paul Phillips, the Atlanta, Georgia-based owner of our feature car, “They were for the sporting gentleman, for something different. Manufacturers used racing to prove the desirability of their product, touting hill-climb results,” and for good reason, he continues. “It’s a fairly lightweight car. It’s a big, 30-horsepower. In 1910, that was not bad—you had a good power-to-weight ratio.”

Part of that good ratio comes from the shorter wheelbase of the Model 24, which at 96 inches, was 4 inches shorter than the Model 25 touring car. That spells fewer pounds hauled around by the same 201-cu.in. side-valve four-cylinder engine, breathing through a brass, up-draft carburetor. Of course, this is all relative, and 108 years on, it has to be viewed through the light of period conditions and expectations—right down to the leaf-sprung (semi-elliptical front, fully elliptical rear) suspension with no shock absorbers.

“It’s pleasurable to drive if you’re keeping at a sedate pace,” Paul says, “At something like 30 mph or less, it behaves reasonably well. It’s got good power and performance—even compared to things that we expect. When you get much above 30 mph, it gets to be more like driving a wagon or a tractor—the wooden wheels start to wobble a little bit, the suspension geometry with a fixed axle, that all starts to come into play—everything starts to get a little squirmy. But if you keep it lower than that, it’s a real pleasure. It’s got enough torque that you’re not shifting all the time. It shifts pretty smooth, pretty easy.”

Incidentally, that shift pattern—in a three-speed, sliding-gear transmission—is backward from modern practice. Ron Laird, of Sebring, Florida, who commissioned the restoration on our feature car before selling it to Paul, described it for us. “It’s switched side to side over a standard three-speed: Over to the right and forward

is reverse, straight back is low, out and over to the left is second, and then straight back is third.” Between that and two-wheel, rear-only mechanical brakes, “you just have to be real careful and think a little bit when you’re driving it.”

The earliest history of this Oakland is unknown, but it is one of very few runabouts to survive to the present. Ron found it in the Phoenix, Arizona, area.

“We had a 1948 Pontiac and we’d been trailering it some, and I told my wife, ‘If we’re going to mess around with trailering, we might as well have an older one.’ So, we started looking and this was the first Oakland runabout we’d ever seen. We’d seen the touring model but we’d never seen this runabout before. I have seen two others, and I know of one in Australia—I know there’s not many of them around. We negotiated over the phone and hired an appraiser to inspect the car. Then we purchased it sight unseen. From 20 feet away, it was an attention getter, but it was not a point-judged car. So, we had it re-restored.”

After a decade of showing the car, Ron, who is now 82, simply grew tired of dragging a trailer everywhere and decided to switch entirely to cars he could drive. While showing the Oakland, Ron and his wife had made the acquaintance of Paul and his wife, who were looking to expand their own collection. “We wanted to add something else to the collection and we both had always been intrigued by brass cars,” Paul says. “They’re so different, but they’re so impressive both in what they do and what they did in their day. We really were intrigued by the possibilities. We decided we would like to take this one on. It reflects an end of the spectrum that is important. I’ve got this, I’ve got the 1940s stuff, I’ve got late-model Porsches, I’ve had



antique Porsches—they all fit into a unique place in the history of cars and they’re all so different. I like having the diversity of different kinds of things to experience.”

A deal was struck and Paul brought the Oakland up to Atlanta in December 2017. Under AACA rules, the change of ownership meant that the AACA Grand National Senior winner was now eligible to go back through judging. That was the perfect justification to freshen up Ron’s restoration and have a lot more fun with the car. Paul continues:

“We did a little bit of finessing just to bring it up to a new level of shine and presentation and everything, and I’ve had some good help from one of my detailing buddies on that. He loved getting in there with the hand-application stuff. The underside of the car hadn’t been thoroughly detailed in quite some time, so we made sure to do that. It’s got a lot of pinstriping and little brass detail points all over the place. We were just being thorough in that. Engines of that era throw a lot of oil and we wanted to get that cleaned up.”

It pays off come show time, though, as the car never fails to attract attention and just generally put smiles on the faces of everyone, Paul and his wife included. “You get lots of people who can’t believe what they’re seeing. I think interest in brass cars is picking up. If nothing else, it’s a novelty for folks. They’ve never seen one of these things outside of a museum. But these cars can come out and drive around—they’re pretty impressive machines.

“We’re really enjoying the experience with the car and looking forward to doing a whole bunch more.” That is, after all, what it’s all about. 🐞





Sundancer

AMC's interesting, ill-fated early 1980s attempt at bringing back the convertible, in two flavors: Concord and Eagle

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEFF KOCH



The death of the “Great American Convertible” from the mid-’70s through the early ’80s has led to a lot of soul searching, head scratching, and finger pointing over the years. Who pulled the trigger? Who’s to blame? Was it the government publicly mulling over zealous safety regulations? Was it the advances in air conditioning that had made cool, enclosed air more desirable—and cheaper—than sun and a natural breeze? Was it Detroit, which refused to spend the millions tooling for a body



All Sundancer interiors were finished in Nutmeg, a warm, neutral color that worked with AMC's color palette. All Sundancers were based on Limited models, which offered additional interior spiffs like premium carpeting and seats trimmed in Chelsea leather.



style that was shrinking in sales from year to year? And if Detroit stopped making convertibles because of slow sales, wasn't it really our fault? How did we ever get to a place where convertibles weren't cool enough to buy?

But there will always be an aftermarket: Dozens of convertible-conversion outfits sprang up in the wake of Detroit abandoning the soft-top. Jack Griffith was among the builders scrambling for traction in a post-convertible world. The difference is, he had a track record: He is recognized as the creator of a Ford V-8-powered TVR called the Griffith.

But Griffith couldn't stay away from cars. Seeing a demand for convertibles, his first convertible conversion (via his firm, The Griffith Company) used the second-generation Toyota Celica coupe. The Sunchaser was available from 1979-'81, and sold a couple of thousand units over its lifetime—enough to sustain a small company. Based on the Sunchaser's success, Griffith pitched the perpetually bucks-down AMC on a showroom traffic-builder in the mold of the Sunchaser, and AMC lunged at the opportunity. In mid-1980, Griffith announced the second model in its burgeoning convertible-conversion empire: the AMC Sundancer.

The Sundancer might have been the most exciting thing to happen to the old Hornet-based chassis since, well,

since Kenosha put power to the front wheels of a Concord and called it Eagle. To be fair, the Sundancer wasn't a true convertible; it was a targa, both to simplify the conversion and to help the structural rigidity that would be lost when the steel top disappeared. But compared to the popular but deeply compromised T-roof options of the day, this was as close to real drop-top motoring as you could get. It was also the first AMC convertible since the demise of the 1968 Rambler Rebel nearly a decade and a half earlier.

Because the chassis of Concorde and Eagles were unit-body construction, as was AMC's tradition back to the 1950s, Griffith's 14-piece welded-steel structural frame bolstered chassis strength before the roof was removed. The roof was cut across the top of the windshield, at the C-pillars, and on the B-pillars above the shoulder harnesses, in order to retain the factory-mounted seatbelt positions and to remain in accordance with federal law. Hidden within the targa bar's skin was a welded, heavy-gauge steel-tube understructure, with rolled support gussets, which was welded to the steel door pillar for strength. The outer covering was made of fiberglass, finished in satin black; a series of decorative ribs helped convey a feeling of motion.

The top insert used a removable lightweight fiberglass core, and was finished with a black outer vinyl roof surface



View out the back with the top up was compromised, but the solid roof panel helped quell noise and buffeting. Below: AMC's 258-cu.in. six-cylinder was legendary for its robust nature, and this unrestored, 100,000-plus-mile 4.2-liter straight-six is barely broken in.



and a padded-vinyl top headliner, that stowed in a vinyl pouch. The remaining steel across the top of the windshield was covered in matching vinyl. The actual folding convertible top was made of grained polyvinyl with transparent plastic windows, utilizing easy-latch cam fasteners for a simplified up-and-down. A vinyl boot protected the lowered top and made for a more finished look.

All AMC Concord and Eagle options were available on Sundancer, although Griffith always started with Limited

models, which meant standard wire wheel covers, premium door panels, individually reclining seat backs, an under-dash shelf, 18-ounce carpeting, and a luxury woodgrain steering wheel. The top engine was the venerable 258-cu.in. straight-six, putting out an even 100 horsepower. (Concord wasn't available with a V-8 after 1979.) Three-speed automatic and four-speed manual transmissions were on the docket for 1981, but a five-speed manual with overdrive was offered for 1982. Sundancers only had one interior color choice—Nutmeg,



The engine for 1981 was the 100-hp, 258-cu.in. straight-six; even if a V-8 was available, it wouldn't fit thanks to packaging issues with Eagle's four-wheel-drive system. Air conditioning wasn't mandatory, but it was ordered frequently with the high-zoot Sundancer.



finished in creamy warm brown Chelsea leather. A single available color interior was meant to aid building efficiency at the Griffith plant; Nutmeg was also sufficiently neutral to work with the majority of AMC's 15-color palette for 1981.

Cars were ordered through AMC dealers, sent to Griffith's factory in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, for conversion, and then returned to Kenosha for distribution through its dealer network. Griffith matched AMC's 12-month/12,000-mile warranty, which was voided after all of the roof-cutting. Pricing started at \$10,500—a 40-percent premium for a Concord, and frankly a lot of money for a brand that promoted itself to be sensibly priced. The dealer cost on the conversion was \$2,995 and was set to retail for \$3,750, although later models saw the conversion add a cool \$4,000 markup. Because of this, Sundancers were frequently used as showroom-traffic generators, thus they were ordered by dealers rather than buyers.

To put it bluntly, the Sundancer was not a success. Slow sales, which totaled roughly 200 examples for the 1981-'82 model years, never lived up to the promise of the Toyota that inspired it. Griffith's plans to open a conversion facility in Wisconsin were never realized, and the Sundancer did so poorly that Griffith couldn't muster the capital it needed to retool for Toyota's redesigned new-for-1982 Celica.

There was also the question of timing. By 1982, Detroit was gearing up for convertibles once again: Chrysler had K-car convertibles en route, Ford spoke of a Mustang convertible,

and General Motors hit both the low end of the soft-top market with the Chevrolet Cavalier and the high end with the Cadillac Eldorado. Suddenly, the niche was mainstream again, and Griffith was out in the cold. With no one buying Sundancers, no money to invest in its bread-and-butter model, and with the company's whole *raison d'être* having disappeared, thanks to Detroit getting back in the game, Griffith's company was sold off soon after Sundancer production ceased at the end of 1982. All production records and extra parts went with it.

And so, records don't exist for the split between those built on two-wheel-drive Concord chassis and four-wheel-drive Eagle chassis, but we were able to find someone who has both. Terry Gale of Elizabeth, Colorado, has dedicated his adult life to collecting rare and unusual specimens of AMC. He has not one but two Sundancers: a 1981 Eagle and a 1982 Concord. Both run the 258-cu.in. straight-six and three-speed automatic transmission. The Deep Night Blue 1981 Eagle features the Sport package that explains the brace of factory gauges along the bottom of the instrument panel, ahead of the shifter; the 1982 Concord is medium-brown metallic.

The Eagle came into Terry's possession first, in the year 2000. "It was a low-mileage car when I got it," Terry says. "A friend left my business card on the owner's windshield. He was a painter, and he liked Eagles. I traded him a wagon straight across for that Sundancer. Wagons, I can find. Sundancers, not so much." The odometer shows less than 50,000 miles.



This 1981 Eagle came with the Sport package, which included a floor-mounted shifter for the three-speed automatic and this brace of factory-installed under-dash gauges. High-spec trim featured plenty of faux-woodgrain around the interior.



The Concord was an online purchase a few years ago, and, save for a thorough cleaning, some replacement trim pieces, and a new carpet, precious little has been done to it. The wheels are from a 1979 Concord. It's loaded: cruise control, tilt wheel, air conditioning, and power everything, except for windows. Its mileage has just passed the 100,000-mile mark.

The arguments regarding who killed the convertible in that sad seven-year stretch will likely go on forever. One thing is certain, when a door is closed, a window of opportunity opens, and in this case, for Jack Griffith and AMC, opportunity also blew the roof clean off. Today, collectors like Terry reap the benefits. 🏆



Fred Harley's 1911 Buick 33 touring car (right) made the trek from Cary, North Carolina, but Patrick O'Neill's 1912 Buick 35 touring car had a shorter commute, arriving from nearby Gibsonia, Pennsylvania.

Chagrin Falls, Ohio, resident Robert McAnlis brought his extravagant and rare 1911 Locomobile M-48 six-cylinder Torpedo (left) that cost thousands of dollars more when new than the more practical 1915 Dodge Brothers four-cylinder model that's next to it, and owned by Daniel Kerr of Russellton, Pennsylvania.





Tim Hund of Norfolk, Virginia, owns this superbly restored 1932 Auburn 8-100A Phaeton.

A Grander Gathering

Hundreds of captivating vintage vehicles competed at the 2018 AACA Grand National Meet

BY THOMAS A. DeMAURO

With 504 collector cars, trucks, and motorcycles vying for various AACA Grand National awards in over 100 classes, the University of Pittsburgh's Greensburg campus was overrun with skillfully restored and properly preserved rolling masterpieces from the club's membership ranks. A stipulation of this annual event is that only vehicles that have achieved AACA Senior status in a past year are eligible.

The Western Pennsylvania Region Antique Automobile Club of America hosted the May 31-June 2 meet and ensured that it ran like a finely tuned classic. Various activities, including tours of local car collections, were offered, and social get-togethers were held at the Greensburg Ramada host hotel.

On Friday, at the Westmoreland Fairgrounds, the exquisite 1935 Packard 1204 Super 8 owned by Gregory and Cheri Haack of Freeport, Illinois, earned the Second Annual AACA Zenith award. It recognizes the best restoration from a field of 16 contenders chosen at National Meets during the previous year. A group of AACA Senior Master judges and three guest judges expertly examined these vehicles for several hours before reaching a decision.

Walking the show field on Saturday provided a live-action automotive history lesson. The selection and quality of the mechanical marvels on display was awe inspiring, and many owners gladly shared knowledge of their vehicles with inquisitive spectators. By 3 p.m., the judging was completed and participants filed out, creating a parade of color and style in the process. Recognition for the time, effort, and resources the owners invested in their vehicles came at the awards banquet a few hours later. To experience the grandeur of an AACA Grand National Meet for yourself, visit www.aaca.org to learn more about the 2019 event. 📸

The Ford Model T contingent was well represented (from right to left) by Les Anderson's 1925 coupe that came all the way from Kanawha, Iowa; Raymond Gravelin's 1923 touring from Woodstock, Connecticut; Protus Phillips' 1923 roadster from Gouldsboro, Pennsylvania; and Keith Randall's 1916 touring hailing from Springfield, Virginia.





Jim Horn and his 1931 Ford Model AA mail truck are from Coatesville, Pennsylvania. He purchased it in 2005 and it required 10 years and more than 5,000 hours to restore. The cargo body was built by Jim's Dad, Edward Horn Jr.



©GREG HAACK

This year's Zenith award winner, the 1935 Packard 1204 Super 8, was primarily restored by its owner Gregory Haack with help from a friend who was a mechanic. The project ensued in 2008.



The York-Hoover Body Company of York, Pennsylvania, supplied the body for this 1936 Hudson Terraplane panel delivery truck. J. David Sollon of Canonsburg, Pennsylvania, owns this example.



Larry Jenkins of Belleville, West Virginia, purchased his 1940 Plymouth PT-105 six-cylinder pickup in 1986 out of Sweetland, and it underwent an 11-year body-off restoration that began in 2001.



Arriving in his stately 1942 Cadillac Fleetwood limousine, owner Anthony Iezzi of Plum, Pennsylvania, says he drives it regularly and would take it anywhere. Civilian automotive production stopped to concentrate on the war effort during the 1942 model year, making this car quite rare.



Joe Parsons' father had a Studebaker dealership, so Joe has a deep appreciation for the brand. The Raleigh, North Carolina, resident bought this 1955 Speedster three years ago, and has since had it repainted and fitted with restored trim.



Representing Chrysler's 300 letter cars, Randy Guyer of Minnetonka, Minnesota, says his example is the last 300-F convertible produced for 1960. Of the 10 years he's owned it, nine of them were spent restoring it.



James Hayes of Palmyra, Pennsylvania, is the second owner of this 1967 Ford Fairlane 500 four-door sedan (right), which retains its original Frost Turquoise paint and its 289-cu.in. V-8. Next to it is Howard Finney's immaculate 1967 four-door hardtop Buick Skylark.



Purchased new by his grandfather, this 1967 Chevrolet II Nova has been owned by Chuck Swanson of Manlius, New York, since 1988. Chuck restored the 327-cu.in. four-barrel V-8 and Powerglide-equipped Nova between 2001 and 2004.



Dave Powers of Rural Valley, Pennsylvania, bought his white 318-powered 1980 Dodge Mirada new, and it was featured in *Hemmings Classic Car* in 2007. Ron Ladley from Barto is the original owner of his black 3,800-mile 1978 Lincoln Continental Town Coupe. Granville resident Edward Goss owns the yellow 1978 Pontiac Firebird Formula.



Bob MacDowell's 390-cu.in. four-barrel V-8-powered 1968 Parklane convertible features Yacht Deck Paneling. The Coraopolis, Pennsylvania, based Mercury wears a 1986 repaint very well, which is a testament to the quality of the work and the care it's since received.



I remember

being treated

like royalty for

the day and

being asked

to instruct

a beautiful

actress on

how to drive

the car.



A Little Luxury

Back in 1977, I received a phone call from a film producer asking if I would be willing to rent out my 1953 Nash Rambler Country Club hardtop for a day. He wanted to use it in a sales film he was working on for American Motors. Unemployed and flat broke, I quickly agreed.

A few days later, I reported to him at his palace of a home in Greenwich, Connecticut. I forget his name, but he was a really friendly guy and his lovely wife cooked breakfast for the entire film crew, me included. We then caravanned to a downtown gas station that had been rented for the shoot.

The film was being made to introduce the new AMC Concord, touted as a compact luxury car. I remember being treated like royalty for the day and being asked to instruct a beautiful actress on how to drive the car. I got paid \$100 for my efforts—nearly a week's pay at the time if I'd had a job. The idea behind the film was to show how AMC had been first with a compact luxury car—i.e. my 1953 Rambler.

Well, my Country Club was certainly very well-trimmed, but looking back I'm not sure it quite earns the honor of being the first American compact luxury car, nor do I believe the AMC Concord was either. I'm thinking perhaps that honor goes to the Studebaker Lark Cruiser, as produced from 1961 through 1966. Much like the Concord, it was a car created out of desperation.

By 1961, Studebaker was facing the same problem so many other independents had to face: how to create a full line of exciting new cars when you're broke and can barely afford a facelift. Its earlier effort, the 1959 Lark, succeeded so well the company reported the best profits in its 100-plus-year history. But when the Big Three entered the compact market for the 1960 model year, Lark sales tumbled, even though management added new models that year, including convertibles and four-door station wagons. Having run out of new body styles to add, by 1961 the only other option was to upgrade the vehicle's trim and try to find an additional market niche. So, management decided to add a long-wheelbase model trimmed

in a luxury fashion. Reviving an old, honored name customarily reserved for the firm's long-wheelbase sedans, they called it the Lark Cruiser, and priced it at the top of its sedan line.

This actually made a lot of sense because when the Lark debuted, the company had dropped its conventional—though very dated—fullsize cars, leaving Studebaker's traditional sedan buyers

with nothing to choose from but 108.5-inch wheelbase Larks. The new Cruiser, built on the longer 113-inch station wagon chassis, was a larger, roomier car than the Lark, and its plush trim endowed it with a measure of class. With 5



inches more legroom and 4-inch-wider rear doors, the Cruiser's interior room seemed nearly as large as a fullsize car, and easily the best in the compact class.

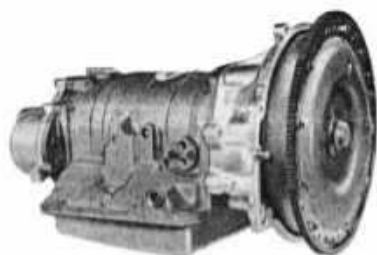
Studebaker went further and provided the Cruiser with a standard 259-cu.in. V-8 or optional 289-cu.in. V-8 with up to 225 hp on tap. Sure, automatic transmission, power steering and brakes, and air conditioning were optional, not standard features, but that was the norm for the early 1960s when even Cadillacs didn't come standard with A/C. The Cruiser was a good-looking car, although, with a base price of \$2,458, it faced stiff competition from Chevrolet's Impala and Ford's Galaxie, \$2,590 and \$2,592, respectively.

The Cruiser returned for 1962, with a handsome facelift courtesy of Brooks Stevens. Rear fenders were lengthened to give a larger, more "important" look to the car, while a bold, new grille, smacking of Mercedes-Benz influence, provided additional length and prominence to the styling. However, the Cruiser lost its one big advantage, because this year all Studebaker four-door models were produced on the 113-inch wheelbase. Ideally, the Cruiser should have been upgraded with its own extended wheelbase, perhaps 116 inches, but the company lacked the funds to do that.

The final year for all Studebakers was 1966, and by then, designer Bob Marcks had elevated Cruiser interior trim to Cadillac levels. Priced at \$2,545 in V-8 form, the Cruiser was as elegant a car as you could want. Sadly, Studebaker's string had run out, and hardly anyone even noticed the stylish Cruiser. Too bad. 🐼

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//
My suggestion
for automotive
happiness,
beyond
owning
the actual
vehicles
themselves,
is to own
particular
car parts and
other stuff.
//

Because It's Neat

Have you ever bought car parts or automobilia for cars that you know without doubt you will never own, or ever come close to owning? I, like other people, have a lot of things I do to make myself happy, some temporary, some long lasting. Although car parts are exactly what their term indicates—parts used to make motor cars function for use as transportation—they can also be beautiful to look at. They're objects of metal, wood, and “stuff” that have lasted until today, some for over a century. All the parts were made from drawings that were hand rendered, not electronically generated. Even internal engine parts can be great to look at, not only for their inherent aesthetics but for the amazement they provide when you think of how they functioned.

Two of my favorite car parts in my automobilia collection are a pair of cast-iron pistons that came out of a 1908-'10 four-cylinder Simplex engine; they weigh 10 pounds each! It is mind boggling to think that, when new, 40 pounds of cast iron were slamming up and down at a rate sufficient to push a car to 70 mph if required. These pistons are just beautiful to look at. The same goes for a huge 20-inch wood-rimmed steering wheel with cast-metal spokes that I restored, as it was in very poor condition. It was originally fitted to a pre-1915 Pierce-Arrow solid-tire truck.

Early brass lamps can be works of art, design wise, especially the self-generating headlamps. You just need patience and lots of polish and rags to remove decades of tarnish in order for them to shine and reflect your image the way they did early motorists' a century-plus ago.

One of my most recent acquisitions is a carpet-covered metal box that served as a foot warmer that burned a brick of coal for heat. I bought it at auction, and it is just so interesting when you think that it provided a much-needed function when my grandfather was young. It will have a place of honor resting on the rear floor of

my Packard touring car, but no, I will not fire it up, although I am sure it still works.

I am very passionate about my collection of coachbuilders' emblems. These emblems were usually located at the lower cowl of car bodies, and are a constant reminder of my favorite old-car topic and area of historic interest and study.

Some car parts were functional, but in themselves can be considered art objects. This is especially true for hood ornaments, aka “mascots.”



Can you imagine a cast-glass figure mounted in a metal base that was electrified to shine so you (and everyone else) could see it at night? Keep in mind these figures sat directly over a radiator that held gallons of water. Electricity, sitting on top of water, makes sense—right?

Some of these glass mascots had a dial in their base that you could turn to let the lamp bulb that illuminated it shine

a specific color, and that color could be changed depending upon your mood.

Pressed steel toys, made to resemble the current vehicles of the time, have always been around and were once very popular in the USA. Many of the steel toys have survived because they were well made, and the steel used was usually the same thickness as the fenders of a real car. Many of these toys now have rust, heavy play damage, etc., and a lot of collectors seek the best possible examples, condition wise. I prefer the beat-up, well-used toys the best, as they give me great pleasure to restore them; this enthusiasm is also shared by my brother, Steve. Those beat-up ones are still making the current 50-plus year-old owners happy so many generations and assorted owners later.

My suggestion for automotive happiness, beyond owning the actual vehicles themselves, is to own particular car parts and other stuff. Look at them, admire their design and construction, and enjoy the experience. Share these objects with friends and tell them why they make you happy. They will understand, and it will make them smile and be happy, too. 🐶



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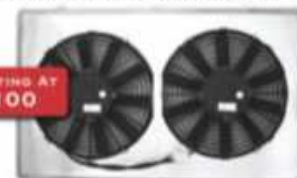
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surprisingly,

American car

companies

have

operated

factories

around the

world since

Grandma

learned how

to drive a

Model T.



Kaiser-Willys, Built in America?

American car companies have rebadged imported cars for years—Buick Opel, Dodge Colt, Chevrolet Courier, etc. These cars were either manufactured by their European or Asian subsidiaries, or companies in which they held a portion of ownership. World cars became a thing with the Chevrolet Chevette, Plymouth/Dodge Horizon/Omni, and Ford Escort. And by the mid-1990s, there was always at least one new model from the Big Three that was based on one of their European or Asian platforms. Today, just about every car has components from around the globe.

Think about this: The company that built the little vehicle that helped the Allies win World War II, the Jeep, has been owned by the Germans and is now held by the Italians.

Not surprisingly, American car companies have operated factories around the world since Grandma learned how to drive a Model T. When Nash and Hudson merged in 1954, for example, the new American Motors Corporation built cars in five states and 44 foreign cities.

During World War II, Willys Jeeps were manufactured by both Willys and Ford. So many Jeeps were built and exported to Europe during the war, that England has a fairly large cottage industry devoted to restoration parts for military-issue Willys Jeeps, including reproduction canvas tops, entire body tubs, and all the accessories that were attached including shovels, tools, canteens, etc., and, of course, mechanical components—enough to completely restore one to original specs.

Not only did it export many boatloads of Jeeps during WWII, but Willys was also quite the worldwide manufacturer of Jeep-based products, and by default Kaiser and Frazer automobiles as well, along with a Studebaker and a few Ramblers through licensing deals.

Let's head to the Netherlands. In 1947, Dutch company Nederlandse Kaiser-Frazer (NEKAF) was formed with a new factory in Rotterdam. NEKAF assembled more than 6,000 1949 Kaiser automobiles with parts imported from the U.S., and locally sourced batteries, tires, upholstery, carpet, and glass. Kaiser automobiles were manufactured

there through 1954 and exported to Europe, South America, and the Middle East. After Kaiser purchased Willys, NEKAF began assembling Jeeps in 1954, including pickups and station wagons through 1963.

Let's go to Argentina. In 1954, Kaiser was the only company to accept an offer from Brigadier General Juan Ignacio San Martín to build cars in Argentina. Kaiser created a wholly owned subsidiary named Kaiser Automotores, a holding company that owned part of the newly created Industrias Kaiser Argentina S.A. (IKA). The first Jeep rolled out of the plant on April 27, 1956.

Also built in Argentina were Kaiser Manhattans, renamed Kaiser Carabelas. As one might expect in a country that eats more beef per capita than just about anywhere else, the fabulous Kaiser vinyl and fabric interiors were replaced with leather. From 1958-'62, 2,158 Carabelas were built alongside Jeeps. In 1962, Rambler versions of cars licensed from AMC replaced all the Kaiser-based passenger cars. The Torino took on the look of an Italian-inspired third-generation Rambler American and is quite popular in the hobby today.

Let's go to Israel. When Ford cancelled its plans to build a factory in Israel in 1948 under threat of a boycott from the Arab League, Kaiser-Frazer moved in and began production in a new manufacturing facility near Haifa in 1951. It built Kaiser and Willys cars and trucks, along with Mack trucks. In 1959, it began assembling Studebaker Lark VIs to help potential buyers bypass heavy duties on imported vehicles. Automobiles it produced included the CJ-6, mainly for military duty; the FC-series trucks, which featured bed sides built from the wagon stampings; a troop/cargo carrier; and an ambulance based on the Willys wagon. The Haifa plant closed in 1976, but in another facility, in Nazareth, Jeep-based military vehicles are still manufactured.

And, we all know the story of the Aero Willys in Brazil (HCC #162). I have seen numerous Willys trucks in Israel, but I have yet to see an Aero. I wonder how many Kaiser products are still on the road in The Netherlands? 🇳🇱





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MILTON STERN'S COLUMN IN HCC

#166 could have been a serviceable article on compact trucks if he hadn't felt compelled to add a highly judgmental paragraph expressing his personal biases in a way that added nothing and really ticked me off. He writes:

"I find it ironic that many people who buy enormous pickups do not use them for their intended purpose... I laugh when I pull up next to one that hasn't a speck of dust on it, and I see the driver in a suit, drinking an \$8 coffee. I think, 'The only thing he has ever hauled in that truck is a 5-pound wheel of artisan cheese.'"

The paragraph reeks of condescension, judgment, and arrogance. I own a 2013 Ram pickup, which has never been off road or on a farm—and never will be. It's garage-kept and meticulously maintained, so Milton is unlikely to find a speck of dust on it. However, if I purchased my truck to haul 5-pound wheels of artisan cheese, then it's meeting my intended purpose.

In the future, Mr. Stern should stick to providing opinions that are relevant to the vehicles being discussed and avoid the social commentary.

Dennis Fyffe

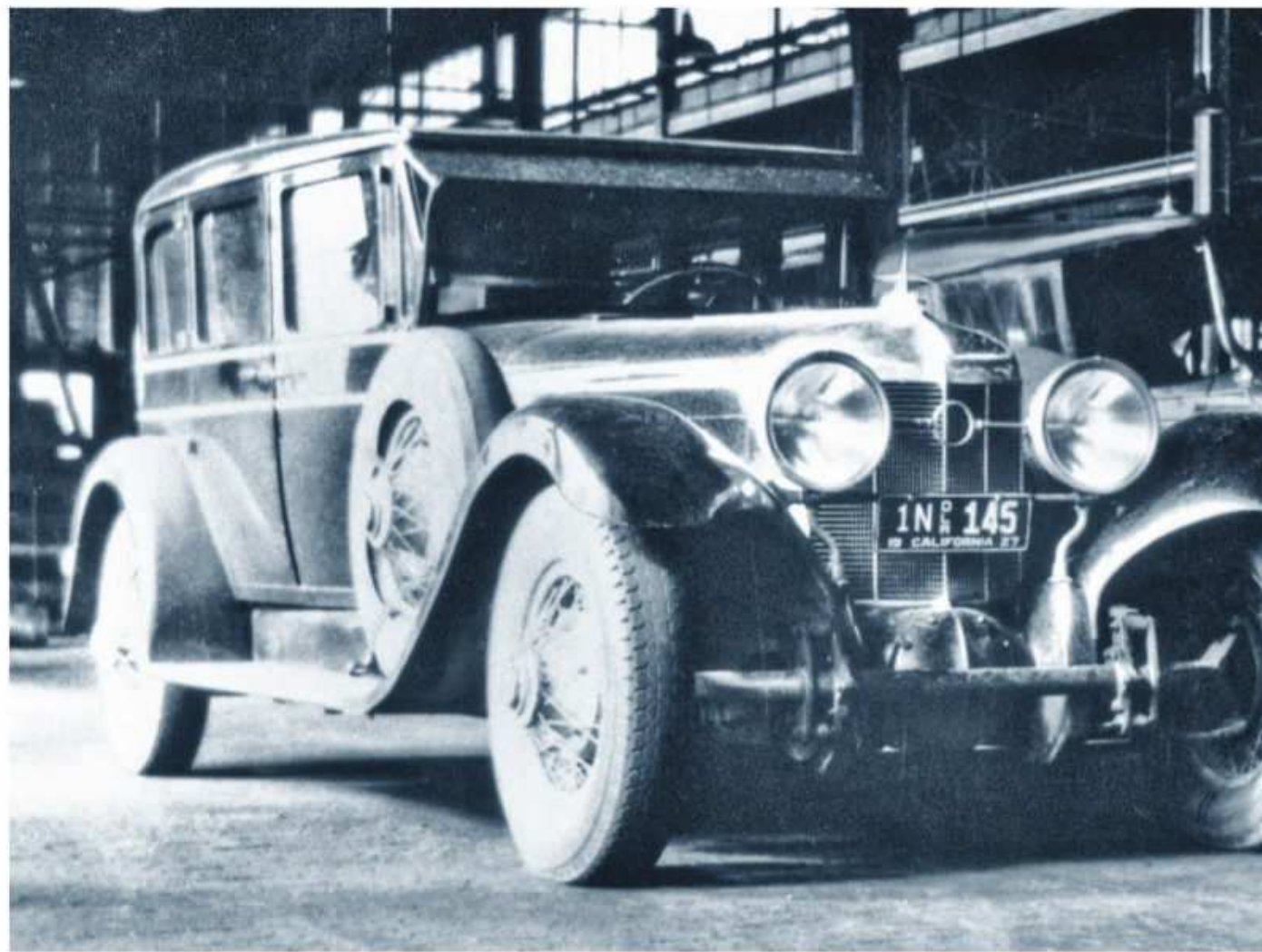
Princeton Junction, New Jersey

GREAT EDITORIAL ON CORD BY PAT

Foster in HCC #165, but a correction is in order. There are three errors in this one statement: "The initial Cords were the 1930 L-29 models introduced in late 1929 (hence the 'L-29' designation)."

First, production began in March 1929. Second, this model Cord was actually officially called the "Front Drive." The designation by which we call it today—"L-29"—was only used internally.

Thirdly, as is common practice, orders and other secretive projects are often assigned alphanumeric codes by manufacturers. The original order from the Auburn Automobile Co. to the race car shop of Harry Miller, was "L-27." This project called for a 1927 Auburn frame (internal designation "L") and engine to be converted to front-drive. If you study the attached photo of the L-27, you will see a 1927 Auburn with a completely redesigned front end, including tubular front axle and transaxle case; La Salle headlamps (sans the LaS logo); and the trademark Miller radiator shell. Also note, the car is sitting in the Auburn assembly line and wears a 1927 California dealer license plate (home



of the Miller race shop). By the time the project was ready for production, it was approaching the 1929 model year, thus the code name was changed to "L-29" [editor's note: This proves that Pat was correct]; however, again, these Cords were marketed by the model name "Front Drive."

For the true automotive cognizanti, I will add there was later an L-30 that was identical to the L-29, except for an engine displacement increase from 299 to 332 cubic inches. Cord Front Drive production ceased in December 1931, making the 1932 model year the rarest. A total of 5,010 "L-29s" were built, of which five percent are believed to survive today.

John Baeke, MD

Solvang, California

SO GLAD TO SEE THE SPECIAL

Section: Collectible '70s Cars in HCC #167. As a teenager growing up in the '70s, these are the cars that provide memories for me, thus these are the ones I want to read about and see in *Hemmings*, just like older readers want to see cars from the '50s and '60s. My first car was a 1975 Chevrolet Monza, with Cragar wheels, plexiglass headlamp covers, a flat-black stripe at the lower door/rocker panel area (to hide rust), and an aftermarket 8-track player. A definite sweet ride

for an 18-year-old. Although I now have a couple of Studebakers, someday I hope to buy an AMC Pacer or maybe a 1974 Monte Carlo (the car I used to learn how to drive). And as an added bonus, I loved the Detroit Underdogs section, especially the photo of the AMC Spirit GT.

Bob Bartolt

Cincinnati, Ohio

JIM KROEGER'S LETTER IN HCC #167

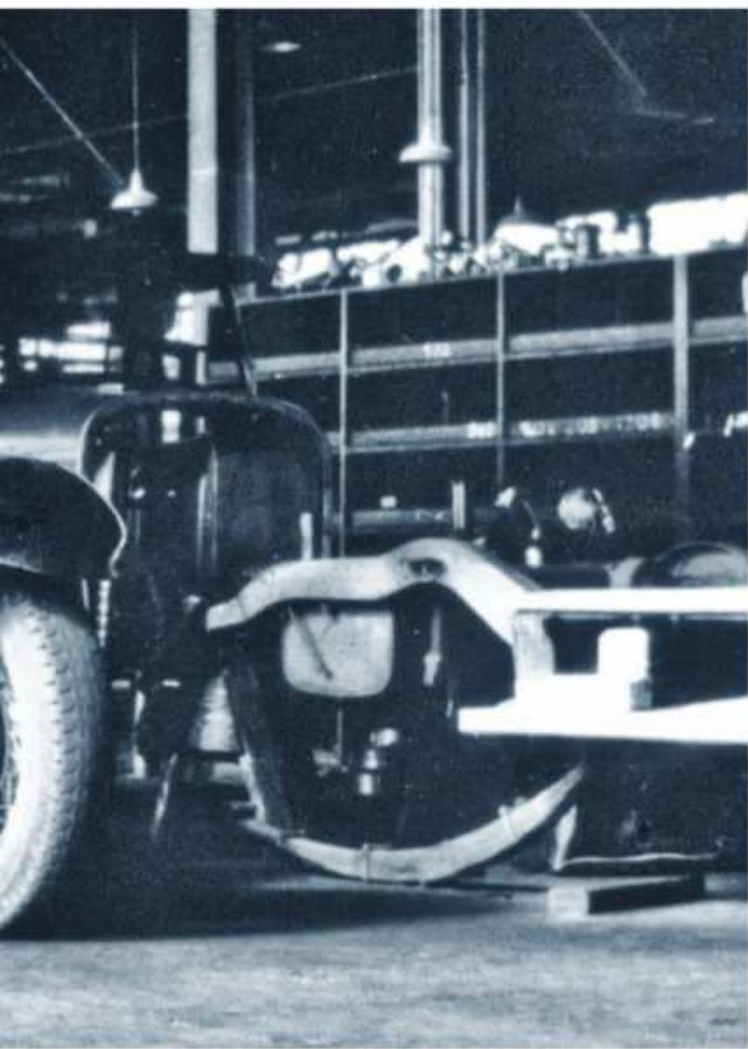
about Richard's column in HCC #165 about four-door sedans reminded me of a product from long ago. He stated that his father may have been concerned about the kids opening the rear doors of the car at the wrong time. I remember accessory suppliers like Western Auto and JC Whitney selling replacements for the rear inside door handles that eliminated the actual handle, and were just a decoration. That would have solved the perceived problem.

Bill Brauch

Lebanon, Connecticut

RICHARD'S ARTICLE, "COLLECTIBLE

'70s Cars," with the section on Buick convertibles, brought back several memories. In 1971, GM wanted a full-width back seat, and the hydraulic-ram bumpers didn't lend themselves to that, hence the all-electric scissors top on the fullsize cars.



Along with that came the addition of the station wagon clamshell tailgate. These both required precise adjustments never seen by body mechanics before.

I can still clearly recall the day two 1975 Buick convertibles sat side by side on our showroom floor: a light blue LeSabre and a dark blue Centurion, both with their top down. Just as in years past, the LeSabre "B" body sat on the "A" body chassis using the 350-cu.in. V-8 and TH350 transmission, while the Centurion sat on the "C" body chassis with a 455-cu.in. V-8 and a TH400 transmission.

Because of our location, Marin County, California, the Centurion was the better seller, despite the price difference. We were a small single-car-line dealership; back then we were the number-one-selling dealer for convertibles. The 1982 Riviera convertible modified by ASC was allocated two per dealership, and we bought many from other dealers that couldn't sell them, along with some 1987 Century models modified by Hess Eisenhardt. The 1984 Cadillac Eldorado convertible, also modified by ASC, caused quite a stir and some

lawsuits with the guys that paid big bucks for the 1976 convertible.

Phil Aubrey
Merlin, Oregon

REGARDING LEN PASCALE'S LETTER in *HCC* #167, I don't know if Len is aware of this, but the entire collection of "Gus and the Model Garage" stories is online at www.gus-stories.org/index.htm. Not only are the stories there, but the site also contains the original art that accompanied the stories, assorted ads from various eras, and a complete set of *Popular Science* covers as well.

Frank Williams
Acworth, Georgia

DAVID CONWILL'S ARTICLE ABOUT '60s six-cylinder engines was my favorite in *HCC* #166. A lot of my car friends lambaste inline-six engines as anemic and slow (one even considers them worthless "boat anchors"), but I absolutely love them because of their renowned ruggedness and economy.

I own a truck with an inline-six, and

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some friends and family members have had several of the six-cylinder engines mentioned in this article: My 1990 Ford F-150 XLT Lariat has the 300 six-cylinder, and I cannot get over its great gas mileage and ample power. My grandfather owned a 1966 Chevelle with the 250 straight-six, which took his family from Tucson to Pittsburgh (and back) two times in the early 1970s with zero issues. My grandpa recently told me and my dad that it was the worst car he ever owned simply because it did not have a V-8.

My great-aunt owned a 1978 Ford Granada with the 250 "Thrift Power" six-cylinder. It proved so reliable that she drove it for over 20 years. Lastly, my friend owns a 1968 Firebird that he and his dad just finished restoring. It had the 230-cu.in. Overhead Cam Six, but they opted for a Pontiac 400 V-8. Guess what they did with that inline six? They literally buried it because supposedly no one wanted to buy it; this made me cringe.

William Graessle
Tucson, Arizona

AS AN OWNER OF A 1939 FORD

De Luxe, it was interesting to read about the differences between the De Luxe and Standard models in *HCC* #167. Another significant difference is the design of the radiators for the 85-hp engine. The De Luxe radiator was mounted lower in the frame, and the core was split vertically into two halves, left and right. This allowed passage for the hand-crank rod. The top and bottom tanks were common to the two halves, however. The cooling fan for the De Luxe radiator was moved down also, and was bolted directly to the end of the crankshaft, while the fan for the Standard model remained attached to the generator pulley.

With the lower radiator position, the hood side louvers were eliminated in the De Luxe. One wonders how much these changes were motivated by improved air flow and cooling, or by just styling.

Larry Kenworthy
Gaithersburg, Maryland

"BACK IN THE DAY," WHILE DRIVING

home from a date on Route #1 (Philadelphia's Main Line) in my dad's 1941 Chrysler, I was passed on the left by a car with a (presumably) neon sign that said "You have just been passed by a Tucker." I had heard about this new car but had never seen one, so this was my first "fleeting" look at one. Needless to say, I was fascinated with the

car, and even more so after seeing one in the daylight. It has remained one of my favorite cars of all time.

Don Van Arsdale
North Palm Beach, Florida

THANKS FOR THE FINE AND UNUSUAL

article about the elegant 1941 Dodge Luxury Liner in *HCC* #165. It is indeed elegant with just enough, but not too much, decoration to provide daily pride of ownership.

Richard stated that it was well engineered and a pleasure to drive; this is very believable. I have experience with the De Soto M6 Semi-Automatic transmission that was in my 1953 Firedome, and also much experience driving a 1953 Pontiac with the four-speed Hydra-Matic and straight-eight. The De Soto transmission was a pleasure—very smooth and I could control shift timing to suit myself with truly minimal effort.

My family had a 1953 Plymouth two-door Sedanette with the same displacement engine and a three-speed standard-shift transmission. It was the best-riding car I ever drove. It accelerated well around town and was a pleasure to drive, although it did not do well at highway speeds—maybe it had the same 4.3:1 final drive ratio as the 1941 Dodge.

I remember riding in Dodge and De Soto taxis as a boy in the late 1940s; the style made you take notice, and the back seats were very roomy. I suspect that some of those cabs had extended lengths so that the rear seat could accommodate luggage or extra passengers. The Fluid Drive would also be convenient for cabbies driving in heavy downtown Chicago traffic.

Dennis Davis
Hebron, Indiana

TERRY SHEA'S ARTICLE IN HCC #166

about the 1960 Rambler brought back memories. My wife and I bought a used 1960 Rambler in 1964 as our first car to supplement our Vespa scooter in Boston. As the article states, the Rambler was really basic, with no power assists, radio delete, etc. But its Achilles' heel was the oil-filter delete. It served us well but ultimately needed a quart of oil about every 100 miles, so it was passed on to a mechanic, still in otherwise very good condition.

Allen Ward
Cape Cod, Massachusetts

REGARDING THE 1940S AND '50S

Chevrolts with split manifolds, here's my two-cents worth: All the previous writers

must have been from the wealthy side of the tracks. This Iowa farm boy didn't have money for fancy mufflers. I used tractor mufflers, which I thought sounded great on my 1946 Chevrolet Fleetline (white over blue with fender skirts, the three chrome strips, and Moon hubcaps—what a beauty). I had the manifold split by a local farm welder. Exhaust pipes were from junked cars from out behind the local Fronter gas station, cut with a hacksaw, bent and welded with an old arc welder. Many Saturday evenings were spent in second gear cruising up and down Floyd Monument Hill just south of Sioux City.

Robert Galland
Arcadia, California

I HAD TO CHUCKLE WHEN I READ LEN

Pascale's letter in *HCC* #167, when he referred to Powder Puff paint jobs. One of my dad's favorite stories was how he and my mother spent an afternoon performing a "powder puff" paint job on his 1936 Ford coupe; that would have been in the middle-to-late 1940s. He claimed it didn't take long and it looked great!

Bob Kauffman
Reading, Pennsylvania

CONCERNING THE ARTICLE ABOUT

the 1934 Buick Series 90 McLaughlin in *HCC* #167, Dave Conwill mentioned that it had free-wheeling—an over-running clutch on the back of the transmission. The 1932-'34 Buick, like the 1932-'33 Cadillac and a few others, used a vacuum-controlled system to automatically control the clutch and was used for the free-wheeling. There was no over-running clutch transmission on this car. The vacuum clutch was a safer, quicker way of using free-wheeling by releasing and engaging the clutch.

The over-running clutch-transmission-type caused accidents, as it was difficult to get out of free-wheeling and back into engine braking as the car was running down a hill with no engine braking and the mediocre brakes of the day trying to slow down the car.

Terry Wenger
Madison, Wisconsin

BACK A FEW LIFETIMES AGO,

around 1964, my friends and I were leaving my aunt's house in Ontario, California, when, after driving a few blocks, we saw a blue Tucker parked in a driveway. Being a car nut and driving a 1940 Ford, I pulled in front of the house

and saw the owner in the garage with his Franklin and a REO. He said he acquired the Tucker in the early '50s out of a warehouse in Los Angeles, and had installed a Franklin engine in it. He showed us the engine and explained that it was out of a helicopter. He then took us for a long ride and even drove down the San Bernadino Freeway for a few miles. The Tucker was quick, smooth, and very comfortable. The select-shift Cord transmission worked great. What amazed us were the brakes and the fact that when he made a sudden stop, the car sort of squatted down, not throwing the passengers forward.

When we went back to his house, he gave me a copy of a book on the Tucker called *The Indomitable Tin Goose*. I know the authors name is Charles E. Pearson but don't remember if that was his name. He did sign the book for me.

I later loaned it out and never saw it again.

Nick Bernard
Meridian, Idaho

KUDOS TO JEFF KOCH FOR THE NICE

Carlisle Productions synopsis in *HCC* #166. Concise, informative, and positive. The Millers deserve their success.

To wit: In September 1976, a friend and I drove a 1969 Camaro SS 396 Pace Car to Fall Carlisle to sell a 396/4-speed with the smog equipment intact! I bought it off the street in Indianapolis for \$900. We freshened it up a little and sold it for \$1,850 at Fall Carlisle, and thought we were in high cotton... Well, I guess we were.

Once at Carlisle, the rubber fuel hose from the tank to the fuel pump began leaking overnight. It was parked on a slight downhill, so when we got to the car the next morning, it was out of gas. We fixed the hose when one of the Millers came by and asked what was wrong. We said we needed some gas, having explained what happened. He disappeared and came back with two gallons of gas for us and wouldn't take any money for it.

That's customer service that hasn't been forgotten 42 years later.

Bob Palma
Brownsburg, Indiana

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RECAPS LETTERS

MY FATHER WAS A CHEVY MAN AND

had a 1963 Impala and a '61 Corvair Lakewood station wagon. It was one of three Corvairs he owned, and all three were driven over 100,000 miles with very little repairs. He was fanatic about changing the oil every 2,000 miles.

Between my older brother and myself, no car should have had that kind of abuse. That poor Powerglide being slammed in gear with the pedal to the metal. Dad never knew, but those engines were "blown out" regularly.

He used all the Corvairs in the snow as the Impala didn't move as well. Besides the wagon Dad also owned a '66 Corvair four-door sedan and one of the last '69 models. All were base engines.

Just thought that this great car should get something good said about it. I now regret the treatment we gave them years ago. Bill Rogers

Hannacroix, New York

I CANNOT AGREE MORE WITH DAVID

Conwill's column in HCC #168 on adding of accessories. There's a section of the old car hobby who believes a car should be restored only in an "as built" condition.

First off, an "as built" car requires documentation, without it you are only guessing, and few cars come with such proof. Secondly, most cars never even leave the dealer lot in an "as built" condition, due to the way many dealers operate (and with full factory support.) Plus, some cars are built in an unfinished condition with the intention of allowing the customer to finish to suit. Third, even customer-ordered cars are often changed to suit the customer's tastes and needs. As a result, few cars ever spent their service life in an "as built" condition. The bottom line is that "as built"

is mostly a pipe dream and not representative of the true conditions of the times in which it was built. I feel that if your old car doesn't exactly suit your needs and desires, then it is either in the wrong hands or needs to be made over to do so (but only if it is not an original car).

My own "project car," a 1967 Monza four-door, is going to be a very mild custom. It left the factory painted gold with a matching interior, but I'm restoring it with a beige over maroon two-tone paint with two-tone saddle interior, along with a few accessory additions or upgrades to better suit my needs and desires. Sure, I expect knowledgeable people in the Corvair hobby are going to question my making a "custom" car out of it, but I'm going to tell them to look closer. For the most part, all I'm doing is playing with the materials and colors pallets, and most of the rest is of vintage materials or mostly hidden from view.

Paint comes out of a can, and upholstery material is easily changed. So, since the car was not an original (it was a condition 5) when I got it, why not make it my own? I'm keeping it close to stock, because I like the look of that year and model. Thus, it will more closely resemble something that the company might have done for an executive or his wife, or maybe a big car show, like the New York Auto Show (which they often did). But the important thing is that it will be my keeper car, the car I've always wanted, as it will best suit me. After all, isn't that why we keep such cars?

Mark Corbin

Galion, Ohio



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



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Flights of Fancy

Ford's innovative and oh-so-stylish Thunderbird

BY RICHARD LENTINELLO

IMAGES COURTESY OF FORD MOTOR COMPANY



50
SOARING HIGH,
A HISTORY

58
REVISED
FLIGHT PLAN,
1977 T-BIRD
driveREPORT

On October 22, 1954, Ford released its new Thunderbird to a waiting public anxious to see the new sports car from Dearborn. Ford predicted it would sell about 10,000 Thunderbirds during its first year of production, but on that autumn day alone, Ford dealers wrote orders for more than 4,000 cars. The stylish new two-seater was a big hit, and by year's end a total of 16,155 Thunderbirds had been produced. And so began one of America's most successful, desirable, and storied model lines of all time.

Today, the Thunderbird represents all that was great with Detroit back in the day. Be it the so-called small 'Birds, the practical square 'Birds, the sleek bullet 'Birds and just about every Thunderbird model produced since, each and every model has a distinct design and unique style all its own.

During the Thunderbird's 46-year-long produc-

tion, a run that has spanned six decades, 11 different designs were offered. While longevity and style don't necessarily go hand in hand, if it were not for the Thunderbird being so stylish, with a history of giving the buying public a fresh, exciting look every few years, it never would have remained in production for as long as it did.

The key to the Thunderbird's success and longevity centers on its many unmatched designs. Regardless of which year or model, Thunderbirds never looked like any other car on the road. Instead, they were blessed with an exclusive style and elegance that empowered them with an inimitable character all their own; they have always driven on their own path. The highly creative Ford designers and stylists consistently gave the Thunderbird a matchless blend of unique form combined with great beauty, and with a touch of grandeur to boot. And while some designs

may have bordered on being conservative and others dramatic, no Thunderbird ever followed current design trends of the day. Incomparable is what the Thunderbird has always been.

Adding to their special appeal was Ford's different-by-design approach to features that were treated by other manufacturers as merely mundane. For instance, the Swing-Away steering wheel allowed easier entry and exit for the drivers and quickly became the talk of the town. It's one of many hallmark Thunderbird design features, which also include the distinctive round-port windows on the early hardtops. Another unique Thunderbird feature, appearing for the first time on the 1965 models, was the sequential taillamps, a first on any automobile.

As I stated before, the Thunderbird's style through the years can be summed up best by using the line "The I's have it": individual, innovative, and idiosyncratic. 🐦



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Soaring High

Enduring and alluring, Ford's Thunderbird captured America's quest for stylish motoring like few other cars ever achieved

BY JEFF KOCH • PHOTOGRAPHY FROM HEMMINGS ARCHIVES

Over half a century of not-quite-continuous production, Ford built 4.4-million Thunderbirds. Much like Elizabeth Taylor's efforts on the silver screen, early successes were instrumental in forging the path for later triumphs—but later efforts still have much to recommend. Despite changing

body styles and engine displacements and despite swinging from sporty to personal luxury to full-on luxury, and back again, Thunderbird always meant the same thing. Much like Liz, it's a touch of class in a world of the ordinary...something that was a cut above.

Regardless of comparisons to the Corvette, Thunderbird was never meant

to be a pure sports car. In the mid-1950s, sports cars were spindly little things, powered by small engines, covered in fragile bodywork, with little in the way of creature comforts. Designed around a V-8 engine and a Ford passenger-car frame cut down to a 102-inch wheelbase, Thunderbird was always a "personal" car—lively though, without the discomfort and



1956

unreliability of a sports car, and with two seats, a trunk for longer trips, and high style with minimal brightwork.

With a full complement of Detroit-style power options on the menu—steering, brakes, seat, windows—Thunderbird was a very different automobile from Chevrolet's Corvette. Initial T-Bird power was via a 292-cu.in. four-barrel Y-block V-8; for 1956, a four-barrel 312-cu.in. Y-block was an option. For 1957, along with a mild facelift, Ford added a pair of high-performance 312-cu.in. V-8s: one with a pair of four-barrel Holleys good for 300 horsepower and a second with a McCullough/Paxton supercharger rated at an astounding

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1960

340 hp. After three seasons, 53,166 two-seat Thunderbirds were sold.

The Thunderbird made Ford no profit, even though it outsold Corvette by a factor of six, and it could easily have been axed. But the general public liked the idea of a new Thunderbird—one with a back seat and more room for luggage. The marketing department's positive research freed up development money. The all-new 1958 Thunderbird,

available as a coupe or convertible, was a car of well-chosen compromises. It featured unit-body construction, which allowed a low 52-inch roof height, 6 inches of ground clearance, and ample room for four. Ford's sales increased (nearly 38,000 sold in 1958 alone, with a whopping 198,191 "Squarebirds" sold through 1960) despite the Eisenhower recession of '58, and can only be seen as a victory.

Through this second generation of Thunderbird, ample helpings of performance and luxury were added. The convertible was a late addition to the model range in the summer of '58. Leather

seats came for the 1959 model year, as did a fully automated pushbutton convertible top. Air conditioning became available and a sunroof was optional for 1960. The base engine was the new FE-family V-8, a 300-hp, 352-cu.in. running 10.2 compression; a dual-four-barrel intake was optional. Late 1959 saw the arrival of the Thunderbird 430 Special V-8, a MEL-family engine rated at 350 hp and 490 lb-ft of torque. For 1960, a 360-hp 352-cu.in. V-8 joined the powertrain list.

New-for-'61 Thunderbirds measured out to within an inch of the previous generation, but looked lower, longer, and



1958-1966 Thunderbird

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1962

wider, with a tapered nose and jet-aged styling cues. All of Thunderbird's engines were 390-cu.in. Ford FE V-8s, up to a triple two-barrel, 10.6:1-compression-ratio Q-code good for 401 hp, paired to the FMX three-speed automatic transmission. Options like the Swing-Away steering wheel (functional only in park, the steering wheel moved 18 inches toward the center of the cabin for simpler ingress/egress) only cemented Thunderbird's exalted status. As the third-generation 1961 models arrived, Thunderbird owned the personal-luxury market.

The new 1962 Sports Roadster version added Kelsey-Hayes wire wheels and a fiberglass tonneau to cover the rear seats and give the appearance of a two-seater. For closed-car fans, the new Landau model offered a vinyl roof with S-shaped bars on the wide C-pillars. No individual year in the third generation of Thunderbirds reached 1960's peak, but over the three-year average, this generation of Thunderbird sold better than the one previous, with more than 214,000 total examples built.

The 1964 restyle drove the fourth-generation Thunderbird upmarket and toward more-luxurious territory. Ford sought to build distance between T-bird and Mustang by formalizing the former's styling, with additional chrome, a blunter nose, and a more formal tail treatment. Multiple models were available: hardtop, convertible, Sports Roadster, and the

popular Landau. A variety of upgrades arrived for 1965 including standard front disc brakes and new sequential turn signals. For 1966, the standard 390-cu.in. V-8 was bumped to 315 hp, and an optional 428-cu.in. V-8 (and its attendant 345 horsepower) became available. The '66 model's facelift saw a revised nose and tail treatment. With more than 236,000 examples built from 1964-'66, it became the bestselling Thunderbird generation yet. Convertible sales did dwindle, and the 1966 model was the last open Thunderbird of the millennium.

By 1967, the personal-luxury car

market had caught up to Thunderbird. With the popularity of the Mustang (plus the impending Mercury Cougar), Ford abandoned any pretense of Thunderbird sportiness, and nudged the fifth-generation model toward Lincoln territory. A four-door sedan with rear-hinged rear doors joined the lineup, riding an all-new full-frame chassis. The nose, designed to resemble a jet engine air intake, featured a full-width grille and hidden headlamps. Full-width rear taillamps retained sequential turn signals. The engine lineup (315-hp 390, 345-hp 428) was a carryover from '66, but for 1968, Ford introduced the new 360-hp, 429-cu.in. Thunder Jet V-8. The move



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1966

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1968



upmarket didn't quite fly: Just 192,000 Thunderbirds sold through the end of 1969. A 1970 facelift saw reshaped body panels, including a dramatic beak-like V-shaped grille, giving the fifth-generation Thunderbird an additional 86,000 sales to its credit.

Ford continued on its budget-luxury route, and the new-for-1972 model shared much with the Lincoln Continental Mk IV. The sedan was quietly dropped, and Thunderbird consisted of a single two-door 429-powered hardtop model. The beak was back, but only briefly: an egg-crate grille and a battering-ram bumper were the new face of Thunderbird in 1973, to accommodate new federal bumper laws; the rear followed suit a year later. Sure-Track brakes, an early anti-lock braking system, was an option. For 1974, Ford installed its biggest engine yet in Thunderbird: 460 cubic inches, although the extra cubes only drank unleaded fuel. Four-wheel disc brakes became available for 1975. The 1974-'76 models differed only in trim and options. Just over 299,000 examples were built during the five-year span, with most of the 5,000-pound sixth-generation Thunderbird's life spent suffering through the first OPEC's hangover.

The seventh-generation Thunderbird moved onto the full-frame, midsize Torino/LTD II chassis, dropping 10 inches in length and half a ton in the bargain—yet interior room remained constant. Hideaway headlamps returned, and thin pillars mixed with a “basket handle” B-pillar motif meant an airier cabin. The base engine was the Windsor 302-cu.in. V-8, but a pair of 351 V-8s and even a 400 V-8 were all available. Thunderbird's smaller size, mixed with a \$2,700 price cut, meant that this was Thunderbird's bestselling generation: 318,140 for 1977, and more than 955,000 sold between 1977 and 1979. Even with stiff competition from the Monte Carlo, Grand Prix, Eldorado, Toronado, and Riviera, the seventh-generation Thunderbird still sold more units in a single

year than it sold over any previous generation's entire lifespan. After 20 years, the market had finally come around to where Thunderbird had been all along.

The next round of downsizing, with the eighth-generation Thunderbird nestling into the Fairmont's unit-body “Fox” chassis, seemed perfectly timed for both the Thunderbird's 25th anniversary and the second OPEC fuel crisis. The result was a car 18-inches shorter and 900-pounds lighter than the previous model. For the first time in decades, despite the formal styling, Thunderbird could be seen to offer a hint of sport: Performance-oriented options like Recaro seats, Michelin TRX tires, and special-handling package were available. For 1980, the base engine was a 255-cu.in. V-8; the optional 302 Windsor made 140 hp. The venerable 200-cu.in. straight-six, the first six-cylinder Thunderbird ever, became standard for 1981; Ford's 3.8-liter Essex V-6 became the base engine in 1982, and the 302 Windsor was dropped from the lineup altogether. The straight-six T-Bird used a three-speed transmission, but all other models used Ford's AOD (Automatic Overdrive), marking the first time since the '50s that a Thunderbird was available with overdrive. It sounded like Thunderbird was in line with the times, but sales plummeted: Just 288,000 Thunderbirds were produced from 1980-'82. Personal-luxury cars were increasingly defined by European vehicles like the BMW 6-series, and Thunderbird's image was starting to feel staid.

Dramatic change came for 1983. The Fox chassis remained, but the ninth-generation Thunderbird put a bold and aerodynamically friendly face to the wind. Doors wrapped into the roof, à la Avanti, and chrome trim was curtailed. The 3.8-liter Essex V-6 remained the standard engine, with the returned 5.0-liter (302-cu.in.) Windsor still optional. For the first time there was a four-cylinder Thunderbird: the 130-hp Turbo Coupe, which





1975



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included sports suspension and a five-speed manual transmission. (An automatic Turbo Coupe arrived in 1984.) The carryover-from-1980 interior was changed for 1985 across the board, and in 1986, the V-8 T-Bird received fuel injection. The change got middle America's attention: From 1983-'86, more than

1985



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tires, and 190 horses from its 2.3-liter turbo Four.

For 1989, Ford launched its 10th-generation Thunderbird on an all-new chassis, codenamed MN12; it was shorter than the previous Thunderbird, but had a 9-inch-longer wheelbase, as well as four-wheel independent suspension for improved ride and handling. Ford designed the T-Bird to only accept V-6 power, and offered a choice of the 140-hp Essex V-6, or (in the new Thunderbird Super Coupe) a new supercharged version that put out 210 horsepower. The Windsor 5.0 was crammed into the engine bay in 1991, and was replaced by the 205-hp "Modular" 4.6L SOHC V-8 in 1994. More than 961,000 were built from 1989 through mid-1997, with sales over 100,000 units for six of its nine extant years.

Half a decade after the last MN12 model was introduced, Ford launched a new Thunderbird concept: a two-seat coupe/convertible that used styling cues from Thunderbird's past, yet seemed thoroughly modern. A production version sharing chassis with the Lincoln LS and S-Type Jaguar rolled into showrooms in 2002. Initial versions received a 252-hp 3.9-liter DOHC V-8, while 2003-up models were rated at 280 hp. It was aimed at empty-nest Boomer retirees who could afford the \$40,000 sticker price; once the early adopters got theirs, demand fell hard, and the 11th and final generation of Thunderbird was laid to rest at the end of the 2005 model year. Barely 68,000 11th-generation T-Birds were built.

Ford's iconic Thunderbird was the Elizabeth Taylor of automobiles: enduring, alluring, packing a combination of high style and adroit abilities, suffering from weight issues in the 1970s, and always, always bouncing back from the cusp of irrelevance to captivate the nation's attention, time after time. 🐦

610,000 of the aero-slick Thunderbirds were sold. A 1987 facelift (including new composite headlamps) saw Thunderbird garner another quarter-million sales in just two years. Both V-6 and V-8 versions were still available; Turbo Coupe featured an exclusive front end, four-wheel disc brakes with anti-lock control, 16-inch



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WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY THOMAS A. DeMAURO



Even a passing glance at any of the stunningly styled 1955 to 1966 Thunderbirds will reveal that they're automotive icons. Though those that came after haven't cultivated as large or reverent a following in collector circles, they're still significant and satisfying personal luxury cars to own and drive. Like any automobile, the Thunderbird had to advance in design, engineering, and technology to remain viable in an ever-changing market.

"Bigger" still translated as "better" in Detroit in the early '70s, so the re-

vised T-Bird for 1972, which shared a platform with the Lincoln Continental Mark IV, featured a 120.4-inch wheelbase, 216-inch overall length, and 79.3-inch width.

The OPEC-induced fuel shortage that arrived in late 1973 and an accompanying economic recession hadn't been beneficial to large personal luxury car sales, including the Thunderbird—which had grown to 225.7 inches long with a curb weight of approximately 4,800 pounds by 1976—yet it soldiered on with 52,935 examples sold that year.

Downsizing finally occurred with the 1977 Thunderbird, which became a mid-

sized model that shared its 114-inch wheelbase platform with the LTD II and Mercury Cougar. The sharp updated lines perpetuated the long-hood/short-deck theme but were now employed on a somewhat smaller subject, as the body length was reduced by over 10 inches. A handsome "wrapover" roof was employed, as were hidden headlamps and restyled full-width taillamps. Curb weight dropped by about 630 pounds from the previous year's T-Bird.

Engine offerings were revised as well, and a 302-cu.in. Windsor two-barrel small-block V-8 replaced the previously standard 385-series 460-cu.in. four-barrel

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The Media velour trim in Dove Grey is original, but the non-working Ford AM/FM Quadrasonic 8-track stereo was replaced with a non-Quadrasonic Ford AM/FM 8-track stereo.

big-block. A 351 Windsor, 351M, or a 400, each with a two-barrel carburetor, were optional. Power steering, power front disc brakes, automatic transmission, and AM radio were all included, and the front seating choices were bench, split bench, or buckets. To further entice buyers, the base price was drastically reduced to \$5,063 from \$7,790 in 1976.

However, for those buyers who desired more extravagance and exclusivity, and were willing to pay for it, the Town Landau was added partway through the 1977 model year. The “Brushed Aluminum Wrapover Tiara” equipped T-Bird was loaded with luxury equipment and a standard 400 engine, and its price tag was on par with that of the 1976 base model.

The 1977 Thunderbird was an instant success, with sales soaring to 318,140 cars. It was a new record, but it was then surpassed in 1978 with 352,751 T-Birds built. Even the lesser total of 284,141 for 1979, the final year of the styling cycle, was higher than the 1960 Squarebird’s record of 92,843. For 1980, the Thunderbird was downsized once again, but this time sales dropped off substantially.

Greg Myler first saw the new 1977 Thunderbird at his grandfather’s dealership, 22 Ford, in Monroeville, Pennsylvania. He recalls, “I always loved looking at the 1977-’79 Ford trucks that he drove, and the 1977-’79 Thunderbirds that were on the dealership lot. I now own a 1979 F-150 and the 1977 Thunderbird, so driving either of them really brings back some great memories.”

When he began searching for a Thunderbird in 2016, Greg already knew what he was looking for. “I didn’t want a big project, and I wasn’t really interested in having such a pristine car that I wouldn’t want to drive it anywhere.”

Ultimately, he purchased a Dove Grey 1977 T-Bird. “It was in very good original condition, with under 80,000 miles on it,” Greg explains. “The body was rust-free, and the interior was in excellent shape. It also had the original transmission rebuilt, so that would be one less thing for me to worry about. Though it appears that there was a partial repaint from the lower door level down, above that is original, as is the body-side paint stripe. For under \$4,000, I felt that I couldn’t go too wrong by buying it!”

His Thunderbird was equipped with the optional 351-cu.in. Windsor two-barrel V-8, automatic transmission, and a highway-friendly 2.50:1 rear gear ratio. It was also fitted with a host of comfort and styling options including the Interior



The 351 Windsor two-barrel V-8 is also original and has required only minor repairs and regular maintenance since the current owner purchased it.

Luxury Group, speed control, tilt steering wheel, SelectAire A/C, AM/FM Quadra-sonic 8-track stereo, Exterior Décor Group, tinted glass, and heavy-duty/handling suspension with HR70 x 15 white-wall tires.

All of the T-Bird cabins were smartly finished, but the extra-cost Interior Luxury Group coddled occupants with Media velour trim on the seats and the décor door and quarter trim panels, and provided 18 ounces plush cut-pile carpeting. Also included was a manual passenger seat recliner, twin ashtrays, high-gloss instrument and door panel woodgrain appliques, luxury steering wheel, passenger’s-side illuminated visor vanity mirror, courtesy lights, day/date clock, automatic seatback release, color-keyed deluxe seatbelts, Convenience Group, Light Group, and luggage compartment trim.

The Exterior Décor Group consisted of a vinyl roof that Ford called “Valino grain,” dual sport mirrors, dual accent paint stripes, and on Greg’s car, Turbine Spoke cast-aluminum wheels.

When Greg isn’t enjoying his Thunderbird’s attributes on the road, he’s properly maintaining it and making repairs as needed. Mechanical items for the conventionally engineered Ford aren’t difficult to source, and Greg has found much of what

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owner's view



I really like the fact that this Thunderbird is just as stock as it was when the original owner took delivery of it in Carrollton, Ohio, on June 23, 1977. Plus, it's a car that I don't worry about driving to the store because it already has a few little door dings in it. Don't get me wrong, I wouldn't be happy about any door dings being added, but, since it's far more of a driver-quality original car, it wouldn't be the end of the world, either. I think this generation of Thunderbird is a bargain. There are a lot of them still in good shape that can be bought relatively cheaply, and they're great cars to drive.

he's needed at the local auto parts store.

Since he's owned the T-Bird, Greg replaced the fuel sending unit, a warped aluminum carb spacer plate, the starter, and the water pump. A local shop rebuilt the brake system with a new power brake booster, master cylinder, rear wheel cylinders, hoses, and front calipers, rotors, and pads. The hard lines were upgraded to stainless steel.

Greg drives his Thunderbird about 2,500 miles per year in dry weather. "It accelerates and handles pretty well," he reports. "It's a big, heavy car, so I'm not going to be winning any races, but it's more than capable of keeping up with traffic and easily cruising on the highway at 70 mph."

Following our photo shoot, we test drove the Thunderbird. Settling into the split-back bench seat provided living-room comfort, if little support. A twist of the key awoke the 351 engine, which settled into a smooth idle. Easing the column shifter into drive, we then headed out onto some local backroads.

Engine noise was minimal at low rpm and cruise speeds, but there was some intake roar when the gas pedal was floored and the two-barrel carb gulped air through

its single-snorkel air cleaner to feed the V-8. Though off-idle engine response was punchy—as Greg reported, the car wasn't fast—but to be fair, it wasn't designed to excel in that category.

The transmission shifted smoothly, and when prodding the gas pedal while cruising, it kicked down to a lower gear as it should. Though there was no tach, with its numerically low 2.50:1 rear gear, it's safe to say that highway cruising would be a nearly effortless low-rpm endeavor, with the engine barely exerting itself at Interstate speeds.

Over boosted by today's standards, the power steering allowed the wheel to be turned with very little effort and virtually no road feel. With the heavy-duty/handling suspension, the Thunderbird cornered pretty well, but of course still leaned a bit like many 1970s luxo-cruisers would. The ride was controlled while still soft, which is also typical of the era and the class of vehicle the Thunderbird represents. Braking required light pedal effort, and the disc/drum system competently hauled the car to a stop.

An average-sized-for-its-era steering wheel with deep finger grips afforded good gauge visibility. Five round pods

house the A/C outlet to the far left, a clock to the far right, and the speedometer in the center. Warning lamps and the fuel gauge are in the second pod from the left, and the temperature gauge and additional warning lamps are in the second pod from the right.

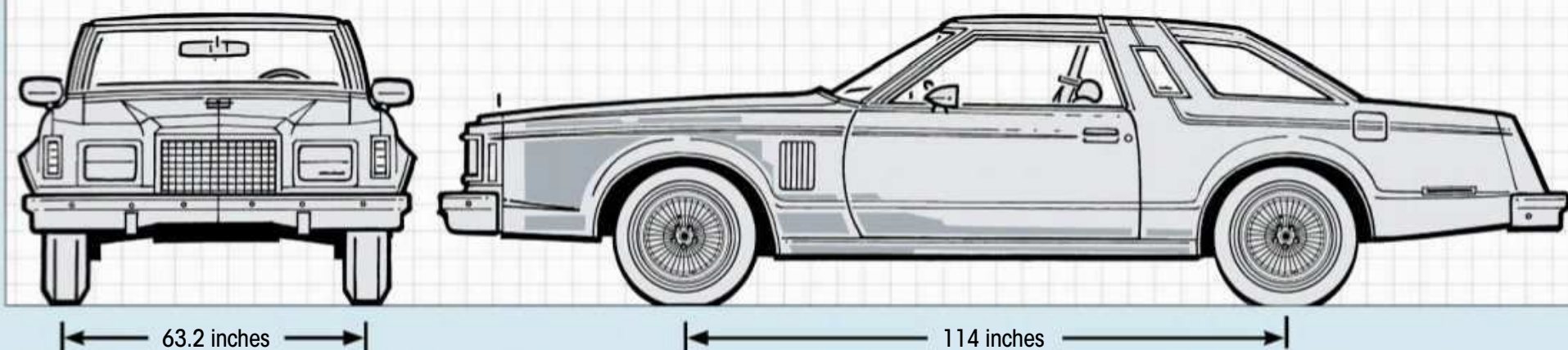
Command of the HVAC system is the sole domain of the driver, as the control panel was placed on the lower left of the instrument panel. Visibility was good all around, and the interior remained relatively quiet, thanks to ample use of sound deadening material.

A new Ford that offered contemporary styling, a practical size, ease of operation, increased fuel efficiency, an attractive base price, and the Thunderbird nameplate and reputation, proved to be a winning combination. Though it certainly appeased its target market for 1977 through 1979, collectors have been reluctant to embrace this generation, possibly because of the large bumpers and smog equipment-strangled engines. Today, prices are still quite reasonable, but that may change in the coming years, as more automotive enthusiasts discover the positive qualities of Ford's highest-selling Thunderbirds. 🐉



1977 FORD THUNDERBIRD

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



SPECIFICATIONS

PRICE

BASE PRICE	\$5,063
OPTIONS (AS PROFILED)	351 Windsor engine; Exterior Décor Group with Valino vinyl roof and Turbine Spoke cast-aluminum wheels; heavy-duty/handling suspension; HR70 x 15 WSW tires; Interior Luxury Group; speed control; tilt steering wheel; manual A/C; AM/FM Quad 8-track; tinted glass; front license plate bracket

ENGINE

TYPE	Ford Windsor OHV V-8; cast-iron block and cylinder heads
DISPLACEMENT	351 cubic inches
BORE X STROKE	4.00 x 3.50 inches
COMPRESSION RATIO	8.3:1
HORSEPOWER @ RPM	149 @ 3,200
TORQUE @ RPM	291 lb-ft @ 1,600
VALVETRAIN	Hydraulic valve lifters
MAIN BEARINGS	Five
FUEL SYSTEM	Two-barrel carburetor, mechanical pump
LUBRICATION SYSTEM	Full pressure
ELECTRICAL SYSTEM	12-volt
EXHAUST SYSTEM	Single with catalytic converter

TRANSMISSION

TYPE	FMX three-speed automatic
RATIOS	1st 2.40:1 2nd 1.47:1 3rd 1.00:1

DIFFERENTIAL

TYPE	Standard; hypoid drive gears
GEAR RATIO	2.50:1
DRIVE AXLES	Semi-floating

STEERING

TYPE	Recirculating ball, power assist
RATIO	21.9:1
TURNING CIRCLE	45.1 feet

BRAKES

TYPE	Hydraulic; front disc, rear drum; power assist
FRONT	10.72-inch vented disc
REAR	11 x 2.25-inch drum

CHASSIS & BODY

CONSTRUCTION	Welded and bolt-on steel body panels, separate frame
BODY STYLE	Two-door hardtop
LAYOUT	Front engine, rear-wheel drive

SUSPENSION

FRONT	Coil springs, direct-acting hydraulic shocks, anti-sway bar
REAR	Solid axle, four trailing links, coil springs, direct-acting hydraulic shocks, anti-roll bar

WHEELS & TIRES

WHEELS	15 x 6.5-inch Turbine Spoke cast-aluminum
TIRES	HR70 x 15 (currently Firestone P215/70R15)

WEIGHTS & MEASURES

WHEELBASE	114 inches
OVERALL LENGTH	215.5 inches
OVERALL WIDTH	78.5 inches
OVERALL HEIGHT	53 inches
FRONT TRACK	63.2 inches
REAR TRACK	63.1 inches
CURB WEIGHT	4,280 pounds

CAPACITIES

CRANKCASE	4 quarts
COOLING SYSTEM	16.5 quarts
FUEL TANK	26 gallons
TRANSMISSION	22 pints
DIFFERENTIAL	5.0/5.25 pints

CALCULATED DATA

BHP PER CU.IN.	.424
WEIGHT PER BHP	28.724 pounds
WEIGHT PER CU.IN.	12.193 pounds

PRODUCTION

1977 TOTAL	318,140
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PROS & CONS

- + Striking styling
- + Comfortable driver
- + Very well appointed
- Soft suspension
- Not highly valued today
- Not as powerful as earlier models

WHAT TO PAY

LOW

\$2,000 – \$3,000

AVERAGE

\$5,000 – \$6,000

HIGH

\$8,000 – \$9,000

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Membership:
Approximately 900 families

Bred For Business

Saved from the fate of becoming a hot rod, this 1940 De Soto Custom coupe still sports its original drivetrain

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY
BY TERRY SHEA

The business coupe, as clever an invention as ever rolled out of a factory from Detroit, probably reached its peak in the late 1930s and early '40s. Sporting the same rounded, streamlined bodies then popular, along with long, cavernous trunks, business coupes cut a distinctive line, for sure.

After the war, the business coupe soldiered on a decade or so, the last of the utilitarian, two-door post coupes with a package shelf in place of a back seat drove off the line in 1956. No longer useful to businessmen, those bulbous, big-trunked examples from the glory years, that survived, became the darling of hot rodders intent on stuffing a big V-8 under the hood and fat tires under the fenders.

So, when Jack Johnson went looking to complement his 1940 De Soto four-door sedan with a business coupe, it's no surprise he had a hard time finding an original example, or at least a largely original one with its factory-installed engine.

"I had been looking for a long time," Jack says. "I had looked online, the De Soto magazine—all over the place. I finally found one in northern Texas, a little over 1,000 miles away. I talked to the guy several times. We hemmed and hawed around. He said it ran, but it kind of didn't run. It was a little rougher than I thought it was, but I thought it was worth buying, so I went ahead and bought it." Jack and his wife, Cindy, trailered the car home.

Already familiar with 1940 De Sotos,







Custom models featured a more luxurious interior with deeper cushioning than standard seats, along with some extra chrome outside.

Jack knew what he was getting into with the Custom business coupe. Starting at just \$845, the coupe was the least expensive way to put a De Soto in your driveway in 1940. Like every De Soto that year, it featured a 100-horsepower, L-head, straight-six engine under the hood. Based on an earlier Dodge and Plymouth powerplant, the De Soto (and Chrysler) version used a longer block with wider bore spacings. In the 1940 De Soto lineup,

the “Super-Economy” engine displaced 228.1 cubic inches and produced 176 lb-ft of torque at just 1,200 rpm.

To get the engine running right required a bit of work from Jack once he got it back to his Madison, North Carolina, home. The first step was to rebuild the carburetor, and an overheating issue necessitated removal of the cylinder head. Jack explains: “It had a coolant tube that runs through the center of the flathead

six. And that was just about completely rusted out; I barely got it out of the block. But I got it out and put a new one in, and that solved the heating problem. I had the radiator boiled, too, but it was fine.” He also had to refurbish the entire braking system including replacing the master cylinder and the wheel cylinders.

One of the first companies to embrace aerodynamics, with the all-Airflow lineup in 1934, De Soto was



Solid Chrysler engineering is reflected in the four main-bearing, L-head, 228.1-cu.in. straight-six, which required a little work to get back into top running shape.



probably ahead of the curve on streamlining its models by 1940, though much of the competition had followed. The company had a few updates in store for 1940, including taller fenders, some changes up front to the grille, the side vents on the hood and, for the first time, fully internal hinges on all doors. De Soto advertised the look as "Smooth-Flow Styling—the latest advance in Streamlining."

Under that revised skin, De Soto engineered the 1940 models with a 3½-inch-longer wheelbase at 122.5 inches overall, giving the car a wider and lower floor, which offered more comfort for passengers. Sealed-beam headlamps were another innovation adopted by De Soto in 1940. Despite all those changes, the 1940 models were priced below the 1939s, the coupe carrying a \$25 discount over the previous year's example.

Overall, Jack's Custom business coupe (the "Custom" indicating a slightly more luxurious interior and some extra chrome on the body, most notably around the tail-lamps), presented fairly well. "The body was in pretty good shape," he recalls. "It had a bumper guard on the front, and was just totally gone. Some of the chrome was pretty rough—I had to have it replated." Though not all the shiny stuff got that treatment, as the thoroughly patinated grille can attest to. Sometime prior to Jack's purchase, the rust-free body was repainted in a non-metallic gray finish.

Since adding a new set of tires, he now enjoys driving the De Soto. "It seemed to have plenty of power," Jack says, "so once I got the heating issue solved and got the

*... I like going to car
cruises, and I see a lot of
Chevrolets and Fords—
stuff like that—but you
never see a De Soto.*

carburetor straightened out, it runs pretty good." Jack regularly drives the coupe to local cruises and sometimes to shows farther off, such as in Charlotte, some 100 miles or so from his home. A standing Friday lunch with friends from the job he retired from offers another regular chance to exercise the De Soto.

The odometer shows around 55,000 miles, and while Jack can't vouch for the originality of that number, the car's condition seems to support it as being the true mileage. As Jack points out, "It's still got the original interior, headliner, floor mats, and trunk liner." The liner covers the floor of a massive 43-cubic-foot trunk, made easier to use by its floor being even with the opening.

The car, too, gave up a bit of its history to Jack. "From what I understand, we think that car was originally delivered to New York. We found a pay stub from 1942 that was from somebody who worked in New Jersey; it was under the seats. Then somehow it ended up in Florida."



Though the driveline is almost identical to the 1940 De Soto sedan Jack also keeps, the coupe does have one advantage: It came equipped with the optional overdrive on the standard three-speed transmission, making highway drives a far more pleasurable experience for Jack and Cindy. "This overdrive, you can run 60 to 65 mph just fine with no heat or anything," Jack says.

While certainly not unheard of, De Sotos can be rare beasts at shows, an idea that appeals to Jack. "I wanted something different that you didn't see," Jack shares. "I like going to car cruises, and I see a lot of Chevrolets and Fords—stuff like that—but you never see a De Soto. Most times when I go to local cruise-ins, I've got the only De Soto."

As for hot rodding the car, don't worry about that, because Jack has no plans to go that route. "That's what everybody tells me, but I tell them, 'As long as that engine runs, I'll never turn it into a hot rod.'" 🐾





Oldsmobile Concepts

Unique and distinctive styling from the 1950s and '60s

BY PATRICK FOSTER • PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF THE PAT FOSTER COLLECTION

When it came to automotive styling in the 1950s and 1960s, General Motors was the preeminent company, with each of its divisions sharing in the glory. The number of show cars and concept models created by GM Styling during that glamorous decade was nothing short of astounding, while the special concepts developed by Oldsmobile were among the most exciting of those thrilling decades.

General Motors really began showing off its styling imagination in January 1949 when it sponsored a

special exhibition of its newest models in New York City, with a second appearance in Detroit the following April. Called "Transportation Unlimited," it was a forerunner to the most popular automotive displays of all time—the legendary Motorama shows. The first, held in January 1950, was dubbed the Mid-Century Motorama. The company skipped 1951 and 1952 because of the on-going war on the Korean Peninsula, though it did host smaller displays of special cars at a few venues.

Then January 1953 brought the fabulous GM Motorama, the biggest,

most exciting auto show to that point in time. A "road show" of styling and design, it traveled to New York City, Miami, Dallas, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Kansas City, showing off a veritable parade of wonderfully styled concept and production model automobiles. The new Corvette was there, as was the gorgeous Pontiac Parisienne concept, a "personal-sized" two-door town limousine.

One of the hits of the show was a long, sleek, sports car called the Oldsmobile Starfire X-P Rocket. A low-riding, fiberglass-bodied two-seater



One of the hits of GM's new Motorama show in 1953 was this long, sleek, sports car dubbed the Oldsmobile Starfire X-P Rocket. A fiberglass-bodied two-seater with a powerful V-8 engine, wraparound windshield, and a unique bumper/grille combo, it was meant to be a sort of "executive-class" Corvette.



Looking even more like a luxury-class Corvette was the 1954 F-88 show car. Note the "88" call-outs on the front fenders, and the pushbutton doors. A 1900 Oldsmobile runabout is in the background.



Looking very modern and sporty, the 1954 Cutlass concept sport coupe was the first Oldsmobile to wear what would become a famous Olds nameplate. From the hooded headlamps to the discrete tailfins, the styling just looks right.



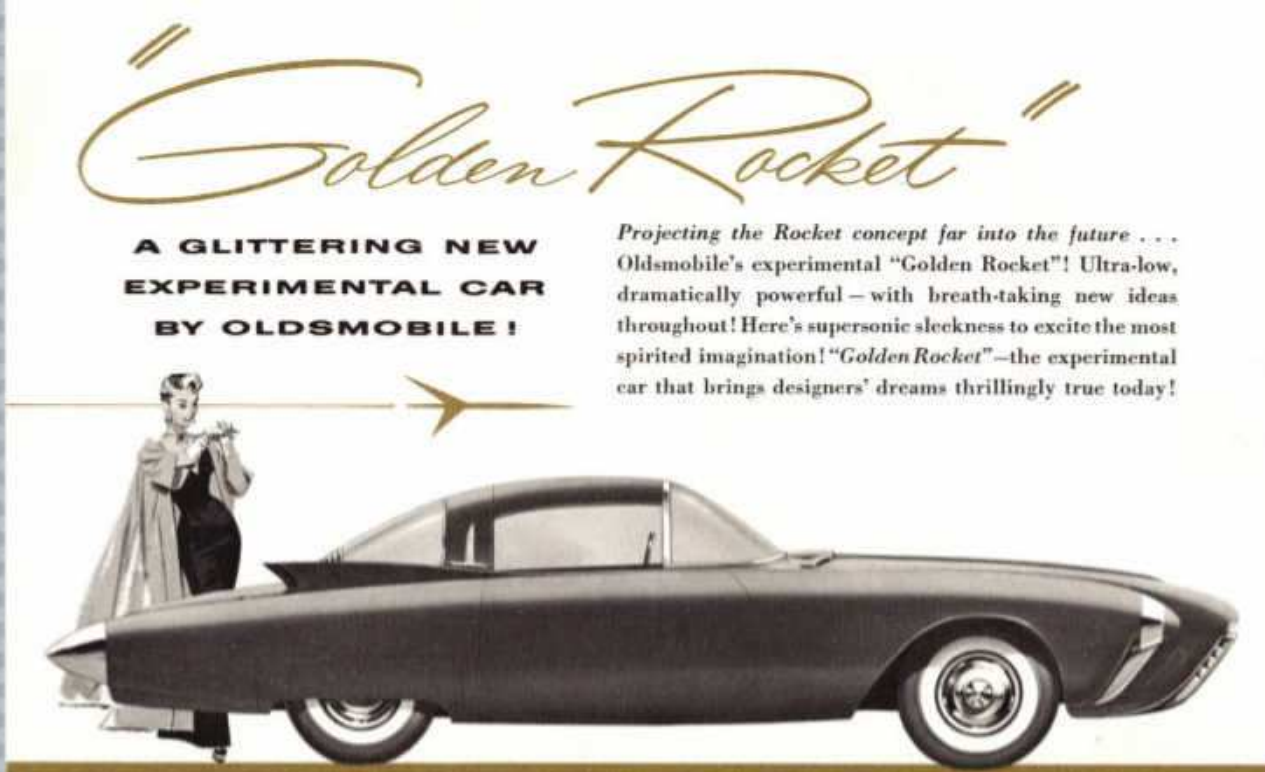
featuring a wraparound windshield, oval bumper/grille combination, and a 200-hp V-8, it was sort of an “executive-class” Corvette, appealing to a more mature buyer than Chevrolet’s elemental roadster. Painted Regal Turquoise, it was one of the show’s standouts. Extremely pleased at its reception by the public, division management planned follow-up “dream cars” to focus attention on the Oldsmobile brand.

The Oldsmobile division followed up for 1954 with another two-seat sportster, the F-88. Looking for all the world like a Corvette with an Oldsmobile front-end and exaggerated rear fender projections holding cone-shaped taillamps, the F-88 was painted gold with dark green wheel wells. The soft-top folded neatly into a well in the body, and exterior trim was held to

As early as 1955, Oldsmobile designers were considering where to place the extra headlamps for a quad headlamp setup on the 88 Delta concept. In this instance, though, the lower lamps were described as “driving lights” and are smaller than the upper lamps. The square-looking front contrasts with the sleek rear two-thirds of the car.

Surely, one of the most far-out concept cars of all time, the fabulous 1956 Oldsmobile Golden Rocket was a view of a future world of wondrous cars.





General Motors was so excited about the Golden Rocket that it printed up fliers extolling its features.

This side view of the 1959 Oldsmobile F-88 Mark III concept sports car shows its trim overall lines, and clean, low profile.

The front of the 1959 F-88 Mark III's styling looks more cluttered than the side. The hooded quad headlamps, large turn-signal lenses, and jutting nose with recessed mesh grille makes for busy styling — still very attractive, though.



a minimum for a clean, fast look. Small 13-inch wheels with three-blade spinner wheel covers were fitted to achieve a low height. Created under the direction of Oldsmobile Studio head Art Ross, the F-88 appeared production-ready. Powered by a 324-cu.in. Oldsmobile V-8 producing a reported 250 horsepower, it certainly would have been a more muscular “image car” than the six-cylinder Corvette. But for some reason, GM management decided only one division would field a production sports car, and that was Chevrolet. Too bad.

Also debuting for 1954 was the

dramatic Oldsmobile Cutlass. Named after the U.S. Navy's F7-U Cutlass fighter jet, the Olds Cutlass was a low-slung coupe boasting a canopy-style roofline inspired by jet aircraft, and an unusual louvered rear window. Small tailfins helped emphasize the aircraft motif, as did the rectangular exhaust outlets and rocket-pod taillamp housings. A combination bumper/grille contained driving lamps in split-grille inserts. Painted an eye-popping iridescent copper, the Cutlass was a stunning show car.

After creating three sports car

concepts it was time for a family automobile, so for the 1955 auto show season the designers at Oldsmobile conjured up a very handsome two-door hardtop called the 88 Delta. Everything about it was striking; the front end boasted a drop-down hood front that terminated just over a bright bumper/grille combination featuring thin, delicate horizontal ribs bisected by a vertical center bar and flanked by elongated headlamp ovals. The headlamps rode with the upper part of the oval, with large driving lamps set in the bottom half, a hint of what a





Oldsmobile described the 1963 J-TR concept as a “rakish four-passenger convertible” and we couldn’t agree more. The rectangular headlamps and simple grille give the front end a bold, aggressive look, while the body lines are crisp and modern.

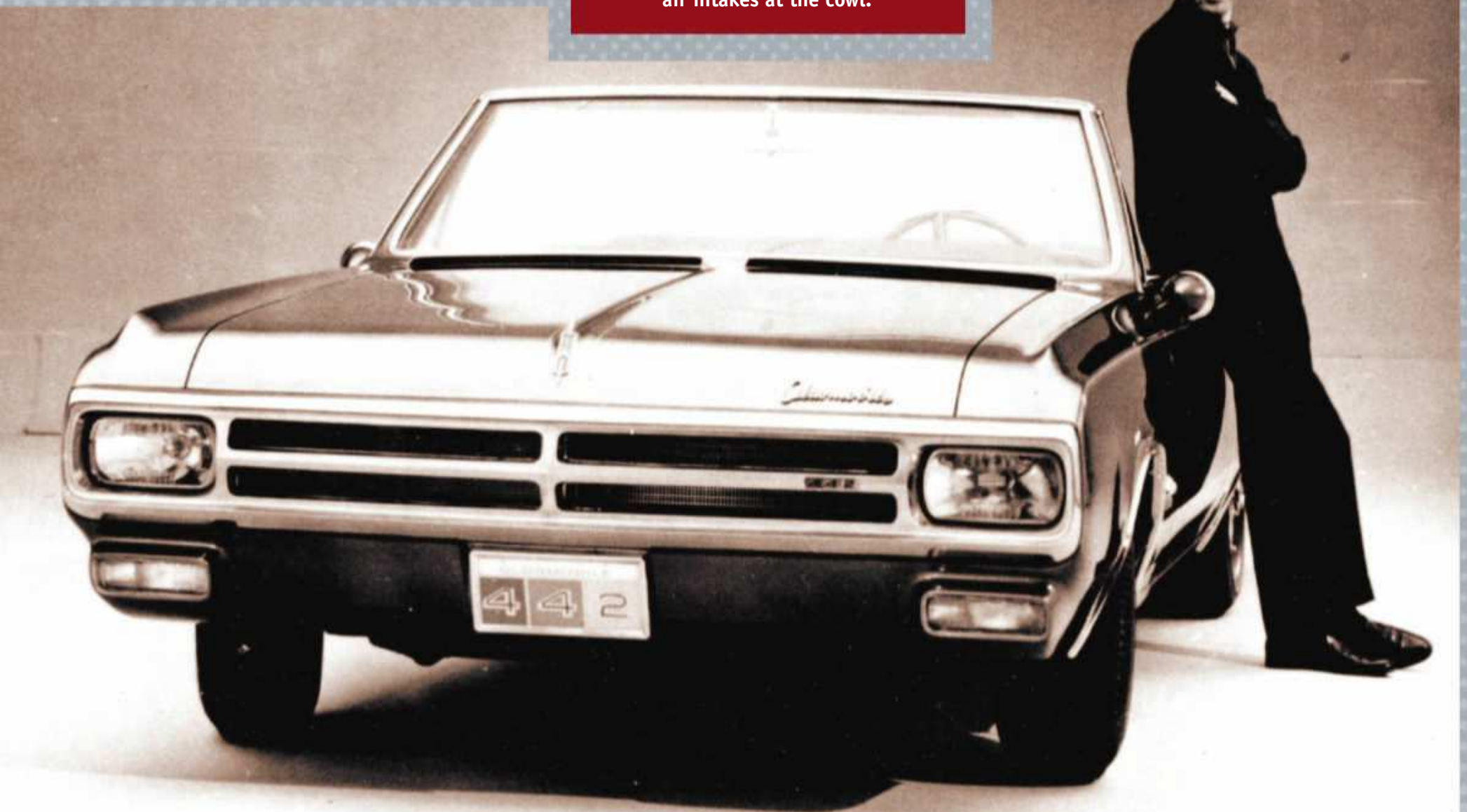
The El Torero concept debuted for 1963. It featured a custom-fitted interior in a Spanish motif. Notice the gold brocade over a black background, and the four bucket seats. A special fiberglass boot hides the folded top.

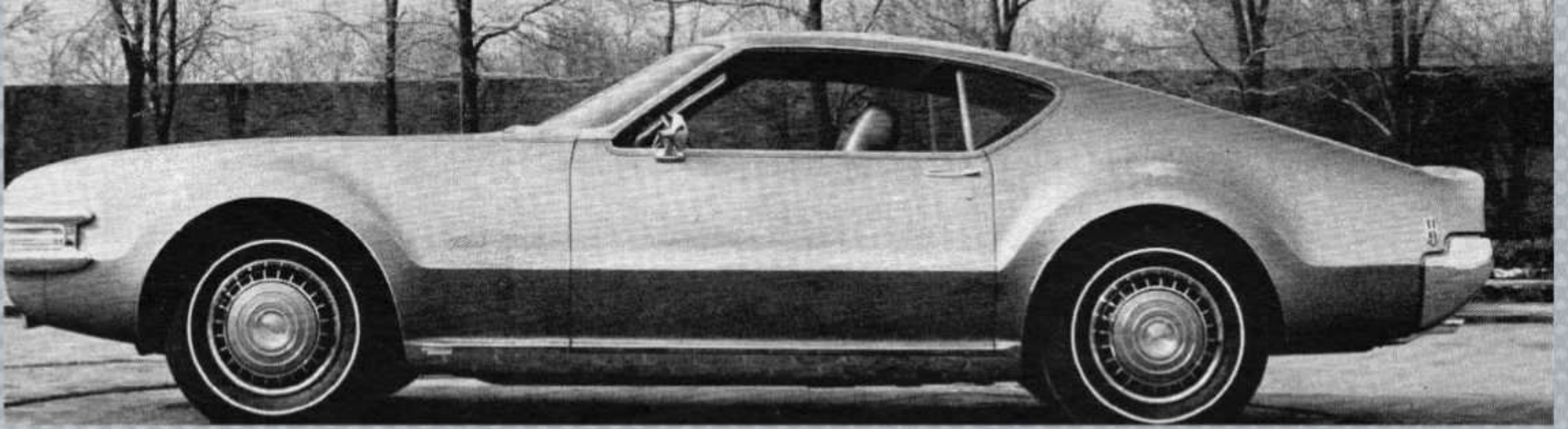
With clean styling highlighted by rectangular headlamps, a four-venturi grille with mesh inserts, and a low, wide stance, Oldsmobile’s 4-4-2 concept for 1964 was enough to make a grown man beg to own one. Note the dual sport mirrors and the air intakes at the cowl.

quad headlamp system might look like in the future. A low coupe roof arched forward to a wraparound windshield. The body flanks were ornamented with a low-set molding that surged forward at the front door to sweep over the open wheel wells. Rear fenders were discretely rounded, with no fins or protuberances to break up the sleek lines. The 88 Delta had an unusual two-tone paint scheme of dark blue upper body and light blue bottom, with a blue-tinted brushed aluminum roof and blue-tinted glass for all windows.

The 1956 Motorama brought probably the most exciting Oldsmobile of all time—the incredible Golden Rocket, a sports coupe that looked like it flew in straight from outer space. Smoothly flowing body shapes included a pointed, projectile nose flanked by fenders that came to a point, fronted by chromed Dagmar bumper caps, a fast windshield, and tapered, finned rear that combined to give the look of a futuristic rocket car. Trick features included height-adjustable seats that also swiveled, roof panels that lift upwards as the door opened out, and a steering wheel that folded out of the way for easier entry or exit.

Oldsmobile’s big news for 1959 was the F-88 Mk III, a sleek sports car with squared-off wheel openings, quad headlamps nestled under fender overhangs, and a simple mesh





The beautiful lines of this 1969 concept for a two-seat Toronado sport coupe makes you wonder why the decision makers at Oldsmobile didn't put it into production. A great deal of work went into getting the proportions just right, but obviously the designers were successful.



The 1963 4-4-2 concept looks even better from the side, where we see the large wheel openings, fantastic wheels, and long, sleek lines.



For 1966 the Oldsmobile Division unveiled this unique Pascha concept with plush interior trim that included front buckets with a fold-up center section for carrying a third person up front.



One of three Toronado concept cars created for 1969, this Toronado XX played a "luxury sports car" theme with a neatly integrated spoiler at the rear, functional reverse hood scoop, and a 455-cu. in./405-hp V-8 under the hood.



grille recessed inside a low, oval opening. A rethinking of an earlier concept called the F-88 Mk II, the Mk III predicted how styling would transition from the full-figured 1950s era, to the sleeker, more agile look of the 1960s. By the time Oldsmobile debuted the J-TR concept for 1963, that styling transition was complete.

The J-TR was a very handsome four-passenger convertible with unusual rectangular headlamps flanking a simple yet stylish recessed grille. Also, during 1963, the division introduced the El Torero, a big Olds 98 convertible featuring a Spanish motif, with four bucket seats done up in white leather with a red accent stripe, door panels in gold brocade with black cloth background, and a body sporting beautiful gold Firefrost paint.





The third Toronado concept for 1969 was this handsome station wagon. Notice how low and sporty it appears compared to standard station wagons of the period. That low profile is courtesy of the car's front-drive powertrain.



A bit over the top, the 1969 Apollo/4-4-2 show car sported metallic-candy-red smooth-grain leather upholstery, which was accented with black suede leather, with both door and interior panels trimmed to match. It was eye-catching, to say the least.



The 1969 Apollo/4-4-2 concept featured a striking look with sporty 4-4-2 exterior trim and an interior sporting four bucket seats patterned after, according to Oldsmobile, "space capsule couches."



The following season saw the 4-4-2 concept, which boasted an aggressive-looking four-oval grille with black inserts, and a "no-bumper" look. Rectangular headlamps, cowl-mounted air scoops, and gorgeous alloy wheels with spinner caps completed the look of a muscle machine ready for action.

For 1966, Oldsmobile showed off the Pascha concept, which was fitted with an elegant interior. Then, Oldsmobile stylists went to town for 1969 with three new Toronado concepts. Most unusual was the Granturismo two-seater, a shortened version of the big luxury coupe. Designers cut 9 inches off the stock wheelbase, shortening it to 110 inches, and cut rear overhang by another 5 inches. Overall height was trimmed to just a squeak over 50 inches, the whole process creating a sports GT of exceptionally fine looks. It was joined by the Toronado XX, a basically stock body powered by a 455-cu.in. V-8 with three two-barrel carbs, special cylinder heads, and a higher-lift camshaft. A fast-ratio steering box was fitted to provide a sportier feel and quicker-acting handling.

The third Toronado concept was the biggest surprise—a big four-door station wagon, bringing the interior roominess benefits of front-wheel drive to the family hauler. It's a shame none of these cars made it into production.

Oldsmobile also showcased a new Apollo/4-4-2 show car during 1969, with sporty 4-4-2 exterior trim and a knockout interior sporting four bucket seats patterned after, according to Olds, "space capsule couches." The metallic-candy-red smooth-grain leather upholstery was accented with black suede leather, with door and interior panels trimmed to match. It was very sharp.

So, the Oldsmobile Division—the oldest carmaker in America at the time, was in great shape for the coming decade of the 1970s, an era in which it would rise to new heights in styling, design, sales, and profitability. Oldsmobile was on a roll, one that would lead it to its greatest years ever. 🏆



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Studebaker National Museum

From carriages to cars, this Indiana institution brings 114 years of Studebaker history to life



BY MARK J. McCOURT • PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF THE STUDEBAKER NATIONAL MUSEUM

It was equal parts of historical forethought and promotional acuity that prompted the Studebaker Brothers Manufacturing Company to start acquiring noteworthy means of transportation, as well as preserving special examples of its own creation. Now, well over a century after Clement Studebaker bought the first in what would become a priceless collection of horse-drawn and motorized vehicles, the Studebaker National Museum stands in tribute to the legacy of one of the most beloved independent automakers, telling the story of four-wheeled transportation in America, from its earliest days to the present.

One of only three automobile museums in the United States—the others being the Auburn Cord Duesenberg Automobile Museum and The Henry Ford—to have earned the challenging, prestigious accreditation of the American

Alliance of Museums, the not-for-profit Studebaker National Museum, Inc. was created in 1985. It remains an integral part of the South Bend, Indiana, community, as Studebaker itself was, beginning in 1852.

“The company’s original vehicle collection and archives were deeded to the city of South Bend in 1966, with the agreement that the city would provide a suitable home to house and display the collection,” explains archivist Andrew Beckman. “It remained in the Studebaker administration building through the early 1970s, then was displayed in South Bend’s Century Center convention center downtown from 1977 through the late 1980s. We were in South Bend’s former Freeman-Spicer Studebaker dealership building up to 2005, when we moved to the current facility.”

“Our new three-story building has about 30,000 square feet of exhibit space, which gave us a blank slate to do differ-

ent things in different areas,” says assistant director Jo McCoy. “The architecture was designed to look like an old-fashioned factory, with paneled windows in the ceiling to let in light and air. Studebaker employed the ‘lazy S’ in its logo, and the door handles on the bathrooms have these. There was great attention to detail in the building’s design.”

This setting is ideal to house an impressive heritage. The collection started in 1887 when company founder Clement purchased the elaborate carriage that carried the American Revolution hero, French general Marquis de Lafayette, on a tour around the U.S. in 1824-1825. He followed that relic in 1889 with a more somber one: the 1864 barouche by the Wood Brothers of New York that carried President and Mrs. Lincoln to Ford’s Theater on the April 1865 evening that Lincoln was assassinated. “These were not Studebakers, but vehicles he felt were sig-

LAR



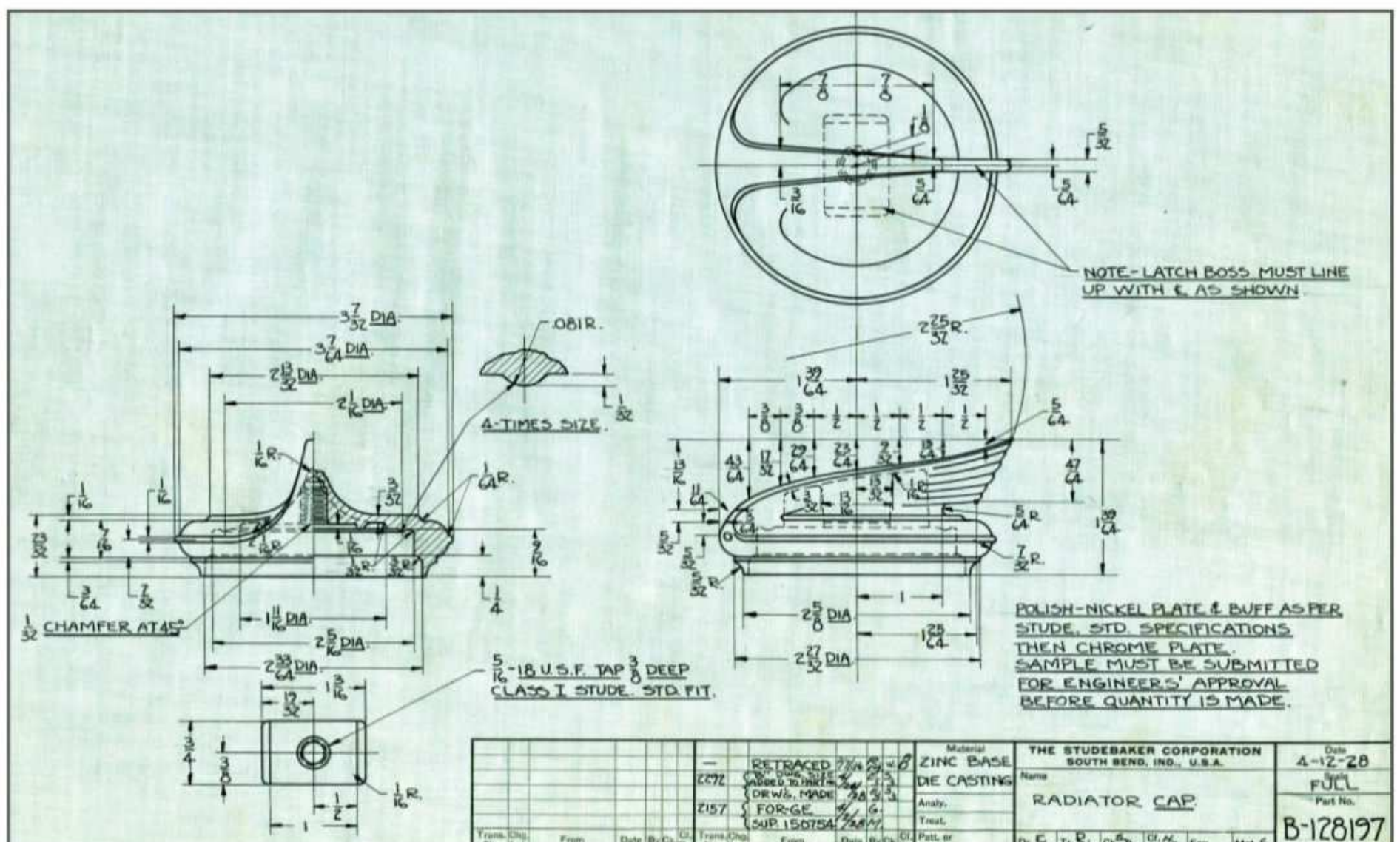


This facility has the largest collection of U.S. presidential carriages extant, the most famous example having provided Abraham Lincoln's last ride. This Brewster & Co. landau was used by Ulysses S. Grant during his second term in office from 1873 to 1877.

nificant to American history. As [his family business was] the world's leading horse-drawn manufacturer, Clement thought they should be part of a collection somewhere," Andrew tells us. "With thought to marketing, he felt if they'd ship these carriages to their various outlets, people might come to see them, and go home with a Studebaker carriage behind their horse, too. It was historical significance that started this collection, with some P.T. Barnum thrown in there too."

The Studebaker brothers still had the circa-1835 Conestoga wagon built by their father, John Clement Studebaker, that had carried the family and its belongings from the original family settlement in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, to Ashland, Ohio, and this, plus the aforementioned carriages, formed the basis for the company's corporate museum, which was formalized in 1916. "The Lincoln carriage was showcased at their Chicago branch, which stands today as the Fine Arts building on

Michigan Avenue," Andrew recalls. "They built their new administration building in South Bend around 1908—this was where the vehicles were shown—and were slowly acquiring others. In the mid-Teens, they purchased the Grant and Harrison presidential carriages, and added significant automobiles too, like a 1912 Flanders roadster, and the first Light Six produced in South Bend—it's serial number 1, from 1920, and has all of 18 miles on the odometer now. Studebaker kept some



This 1928 radiator cap blueprint is one of thousands of Studebaker and Packard factory engineering drawings in the archive collection.



Studebaker set numerous endurance driving records in the 1920s, and this green 1928 Commander roadster is one of four cars that averaged more than 60 mph for 18 days. At right, a 1950 Commander Starlight Coupe exhibits Studebaker's popular Bullet Nose styling.

endurance cars, military vehicles, and the 1964 Daytona—the last regular-production car built in South Bend, on December 20, 1963—as well as the very last car that came off the line in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, on St. Patrick's Day in 1966. When Studebaker closed, the collection included 37 vehicles.”

A visitor to today's Studebaker National Museum will encounter a collection that has grown considerably from that core 37; it now numbers 120, with a rotating 70 always on interpreted display. Andrew tells us this facility is home to the world's largest gathering of U.S. Presidential carriages, calling them its “cornerstone.” “We have the Studebaker carriage President William McKinley used at his home in Canton, Ohio, and even a pony cart that was used by Dwight Eisenhower on his farm in Gettysburg.”

On the car side, other fascinating Studebakers include a 1924 Light Six (see *HCC* #27/December 2006) with period aluminum coachwork by the Shanghai Horse Bazaar and Automobile Company of Shanghai, China. “They called it a ‘demi-coupe’ body, but it has hardtop styling: The window pillars fold down for a full hardtop effect,” he explains. “Of course, we have the ‘greatest hits tour’ of Studebaker, including a 1950 ‘Bullet Nose’ and a ‘53 Starliner. My favorites are probably the late-1920s/early-1930s Full Classic Studebaker Presidents. Those are such dramatic and luxurious cars, and people tend not to think of Studebaker producing that caliber of automobile.”

Less well-known, but equally notable, aspects of this company's—and South Bend's—automotive history are also represented in the museum's collection. The streamlined 1934 Bendix “SWC” (see *HCC*

#49/October 2008)—an experimental one-off commissioned by the prominent local Bendix Aviation Corporation as a showcase for that company's many products—shares display space with the Carrozzeria Ghia-built 1956 Packard Predictor show car (see *HCC* #20/May 2006), an original collection remnant of the short-lived merger between Studebaker and Packard.

This museum has become justifiably famous for its special exhibits and programming, which surprisingly, doesn't exclusively focus on native products. “We try to do two special exhibits each year that may or may not include a Studebaker component—if they do, that's great, but we're trying to tell a larger transportation story,” Andrew says. “Our current exhibit, ‘Ten Cars that Changed the World,’ is jointly curated with the Society of Automotive Historians, and we just finished an exhibit on American pickup trucks; we previously focused on American motorcycles, famous television and Hollywood cars, and sports cars from Italy and Great Britain.”

“We've also partnered with our local historical society and parks department on the Studebaker-Bendix Heritage Trail,” Jo adds. “In about an hour, you can see a number of Studebaker and Bendix landmarks, to enjoy the local history with our special twist.”

Thanks to the unbroken chain of stewardship of the remains of Studebaker, the facility also houses its corporate archives—said to contain 70 tons of material—which are open to research by appointment. “Our earliest records are from the 1860s, including a day-book signed in the hands of Clement and J.M. Studebaker,” Andrew reveals. “Our largest collections are the photography and engineering drawings. The photo

collection dates to the late 19th century, and we have a limited supply online at www.studebakerarchives.photoshelter.com. The engineering drawings collection contains Packard drawings dating back to the early 1900s, with the Studebaker collection being mid/late-1920s onward. We also have factory literature scrapbooks and news clipping scrapbooks going back to the 1870s.

“Another large collection is Studebaker's production records from 1936 up through the end. If you want to get an individual report—say you have a 1958 Commander hardtop, and want to know how the car left the factory—we have the original build sheets available. These reports come on our letterhead, with supporting material so people can decipher the jargon. The early stuff is on microfilm, so we transcribe that onto a period-correct form very similar to the document as it appears on the microfilm,” he notes.

Museums like this one are often offered vehicles and memorabilia, and Jo and Andrew encourage enthusiasts contemplating donating to contact the Studebaker National Museum's collections staff, or the curator, Aaron Warkentin. “We have a collections plan that guides our collecting here, and like any institution, our space and resources are limited. We will take it to the collections committee and see what the will of the committee is,” Andrew explains. “We must be good stewards of our resources.”

CONTACT:
Studebaker National Museum
 888-391-5600
www.studebakermuseum.org

Resurrecting a Rarity

The monumental 10-year restoration of a 1934 Studebaker President Land Cruiser

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY MATTHEW LITWIN
RESTORATION PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF BOB BELLING

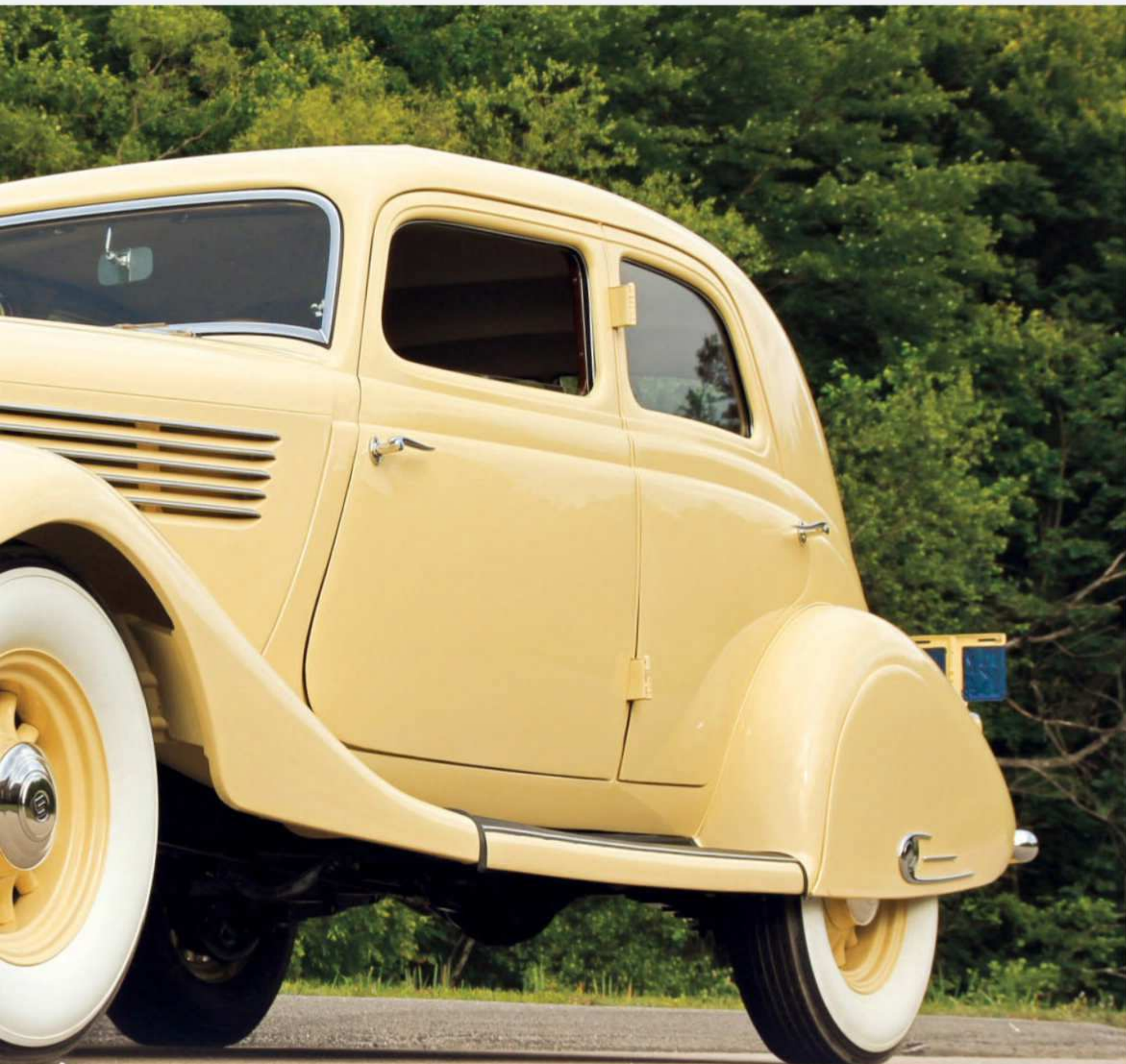


Before he had even earned a driver's license, Bob Belling purchased his first Studebaker, a 1953 Commander coupe, at age 15. Undeniably attracted to its styling, Bob added that his father had owned Studebakers, and, to drive home the point, stated that his grandfather—who worked at Pierce-Arrow while it was under Studebaker

ownership—also drove Studebakers.

The Columbia, Connecticut, resident still owns and drives the coupe he bought 52 years ago, yet his appreciation for the make goes beyond the long-term ownership. He's since added 11 other Studebakers—both cars and trucks—to his collection. Among them is this 1934 "Year Ahead" President Land Cruiser.

"I knew the mid-year Land Cruiser was rare," explains Bob. "Though the body style was available in other series, Studebaker built just 201 within the President line in 1934, so when I saw the remains of this one—accompanied by two donor cars—at a friend's place in Massachusetts, I took notice. While doing some work for him, I learned that he wouldn't have time to restore



it. Ultimately, I purchased the cars in 2007.”

Relocating the cars should have been a straightforward task, but Bob revealed that the process was anything but. “The Land Cruiser originated in Upstate New York, so it had been subjected to a lot of foul weather, even before it was abandoned. I knew it needed a ton of work, but it was so rusty that it fell apart while it was being strapped to the trailer.”

It’s likely most people would have instantly given up, but not Bob. Once everything had been delivered, he assessed what could be salvaged. The critical back half of the Land Cruiser’s body was retained, as were the four doors, much of the hardware, and several key parts that included the car’s serial number and body tag. The 123-inch-wheelbase frame

had split, while the front end had all but disintegrated over time.

“First, I pulled a solid frame from under one of the donors. Some work had already been done to it that probably saved it from destruction,” remembers Bob. “Then I moved to metalwork on the back half of the body. I fabricated numerous patch panels, as well as the entire floor



This pre-restoration image of the President Land Cruiser only hints at its condition beyond the doors. Its front end had virtually collapsed from corrosion, and the frame fractured as it was being loaded for its relocation from Massachusetts to Connecticut.



The Studebaker's restoration began with extensive bodywork that was performed one salvaged section at a time. This is the underside of the rear section, which was unique to the Land Cruiser design. New floor pans were fabricated, then MIG welded into place.



At this stage, repairs to the Studebaker's basic body shell have been completed. Each section still needs to be stitched together. A bucket loader assisted the effort and, after some tweaks, the seams were held together with several tack welds.



A great deal of patience was required to attain a proper body alignment, necessitated by door function. Any deviation, and none of the doors would open or close properly. After many adjustments, the seams were permanently fused using a MIG welder.



The next phase of the restoration was the body's interior framing. Original framing, exclusive to the Land Cruiser, was made from ash. Native ash was harvested, milled, and cut to final form using remnants of the original material as templates.



Powering the President series was Studebaker's 250-cu.in. straight-eight. Though the engine had been rebuilt years prior, a compression check and bearing inspection was performed; all was satisfactory. The 110-hp engine was cleaned and later painted.



Backing the engine was a three-speed manual transmission, supplied to Studebaker by Borg-Warner. Like the big straight-eight, the gearbox was found to be in excellent condition, requiring only cleaning and a fresh coat of Olive engine enamel.



Fabrication work wasn't limited to patch panels and wooden body framing. Missing decorative fender-skirt trim was unobtainable, so a new two-piece unit was cast after a mold had been made by combining Connecticut River silt and Elmer's glue.



Here, the front end of the Studebaker, test-fit against the frame a final time, is nearly ready for a finish coat of primer and six coats of paint. A keen eye will notice the Studebaker's main body shell in the background, already exhibiting paint.



With the engine and transmission installed, the restoration of the Land Cruiser's 123-inch-wheelbase chassis is nearing completion; only the differential assembly is required. Preparations are being made for it to be reunited with the main body shell.



With the body bolted back onto the chassis, final reassembly is progressing rapidly, with the installation of the front and rear fenders, restored artillery-style wheels, headlamp bezels, and other assorted trim parts that have already been replated.



Each of the seat frames had to be extensively reconstructed. The rear seats featured a factory "fixed" center armrest, effectively creating comfortable bucket seats, the framing of which can be seen here. Upholstery soon followed, completing the project.



The full elegance of the restored Studebaker is on display here, including the intricate upholstery pattern and woodgrain instrument panel (above). The 250-cu.in. straight-eight engine idles smoothly. A hallmark of the Land Cruiser is the flowing rear aerodynamic design, replete with a subtle two-tier beltline and quad-split rear window (below).

section that required an integrated 'hump,' which provided clearance for the differential. Each patch was tack welded in place, then I would check tolerances against the frame before completely welding the seams. After each section was done, I brought the body to bare metal and sealed it in self-etching primer. Then I moved forward to the next section, repeating the process until I got to the front end.

"Stitching the body together was difficult. I used a bucket loader to drop each section onto the chassis, but I still had to jockey them to get the alignment right so that the doors would function. Studebaker didn't use door shims, and there's

no real adjustments built into the hinges or latches. If I remember right, the hinges may be able to shift up or down an eighth of an inch—the doors must fit perfectly. I had to cut the welds several times. I'd get one side right, and the other moved a little and would be off. There was a lot of measuring and welding. Grinding the welds smooth and sanding the skim coat of filler was easy by comparison, though no less time consuming, before I could put a finish coat of primer and six coats of Tulip Cream on the main body shell.

"After that, I reconstructed the wood framing. Although Studebaker had shifted to steel construction, Land Cruisers had a

lot of ash framing within their structure. I had access to native ash, so I cut a couple of trees and sent them to be milled to the specifications I outlined, which was a tad thicker than the factory. Using the deteriorating scraps pulled from the body before the restoration started, I was able to cut patterns using my band and table saws. It came out so good, I varnished all of it, which will help protect the wood."

Next was the chassis. Prior work notwithstanding, Bob stripped it to a bare frame that was cleaned and refinished in chassis-black enamel. As the paint was curing, each of the leaf springs was disassembled, cleaned and inspected for stress cracks, and refinished. Other suspension parts received the same care. Bob also rebuilt the differential, explaining that, "The car came with a 4.70:1 gearset. I knew that the engine had enough horsepower to support a taller, highway-friendly gear, so I had 3.60 gears installed."

That engine was Studebaker's 250-cu.in. L-head straight-eight rated for 110 horsepower. Bob first performed a compression check, then removed the oil pan and inspected the crankshaft bearings. He explains: "I was told that the engine had been rebuilt earlier, but I wanted to verify that. Everything checked out, so I just put it back together, and refinished it. The Borg-Warner three-speed manual transmission didn't require anything beyond cleaning and new paint as well. When that was done, I started to reassemble the chassis."

While that work had been ongoing, Bob was seeking correct upholstery. It was a daunting task that, through a series of phone calls, led him to a loom maker in California.



owner's view



I have been immersed in Studebakers since I was 15, and had been restoring them for more than 10 years by the time I crossed paths with this car, so I was prepared for what I had to do. I can't say there were any surprises while working on this car because it was clearly going to be a major undertaking. Fortunately, the parts cars came with it, saving me time and effort. To date, I have never restored a Studebaker to make money; I did it because I like them. I knew what this Land Cruiser could be going into it, but it turned out to be far more than what I thought was possible. It's very rewarding.



That loom maker, in turn, told him to contact Mary Eaton of Deer Isle, Maine.

"Mary purchased parts from the company 25 years prior, so I wasn't sure if I could even get in touch with her. Well, I did, and we talked about the project. I sent a sample from what was left of the original material, and somehow Mary was able to replicate the pattern on her loom. For various reasons, it took her three years to make the 20-plus yards I needed, but it was worth the wait. It gave me time to restore the rear seat framing, as well as fabricate the entire front seat frame, with its integrated rear foot rest, thanks to a rusty piece I drove to Nebraska to obtain."

Final assembly now shifted into high gear. The body had been firmly secured to the completed chassis, the interior was installed, and exterior trim was the final touch,

though even the latter required some creative thinking.

According to Bob, "None of the car's fender skirts survived, so I had to fabricate a set. My friend, George Vassos, lent me his Studebaker skirts so that I could make patterns. Another buddy informed me that a Volvo station wagon was about to be crushed, so I went over and cut a large section of the roof; its metal was the right thickness.

"The skirts feature a decorative two-piece badge. The left-side parts were missing, so I decided to cast my own. Having never cast before, I did some research, then built a mold using Connecticut River silt and Elmer's glue. A heated metal plate within the mold kept the molten metal flowing long enough to fill the

cavity uniformly. It was later plated by New England Chrome in East Hartford."

With the last pieces secured to the car, Bob completed the 10-year restoration of the Land Cruiser; it's reportedly one of just three known to exist from the 1934 President series, as of this writing (editor's note: An "early" example is in Mexico in disassembled condition; the only other "Year Ahead" survivor is a right-hand-drive edition located in Tasmania). The timing could not have been better, as the Studebaker was finished just prior to its debut at the 2018 Greenwich Concours d'Elegance, where it was bestowed with the Chief Judge's Award. It will also be on display at our 12th annual Hemmings Motor News Concours d'Elegance in Lake George, New York, in September. 🏆

Richard Volpe

Production Manager
Glass Laboratories

THIS IS THE STORY OF WHY THE FIRST 1975 Cadillac Seviles were silver with silver interior, and why this had to be.

I was corporate general manager for a company called Silvatrim Corporation of America with factories in Brooklyn, New York, and South Plainfield, New Jersey, but at the time of the introduction of the Cadillac Seville, I was the production/plant manager for a company in Brooklyn called Glass Laboratories. Glass Laboratories was a plastic profile extrusion company that produced a patented, trademarked product called Silvatrim.

Basically, Silvatrim was aluminum foil incased in clear plastic. We manufactured the fixed external opera window trim for all the General Motors lines of the era. We also produced and supplied the steering wheel moldings (woodgrain and chrome) for most of the GM lines, as well as the interior woodgrain door pulls. Our chrome bucket seat moldings were used on most of the GM "A" body cars from the late 1960s into the 1980s. And we produced eight separate parts for the 1976 Cadillac alone, which included the rear "flubber" trim surrounding the rear taillamps and lower trunk panels. Over the years, we produced many other components for GM, Ford, Chrysler, and American Motors.

As production was about to begin in

mid-1974 for the new Cadillac Seville, we were contacted by a Cadillac interior design engineer, Vic Ducheck, and alerted to a problem that they had not foreseen. We had already shipped the steering wheel and door-pull trim several weeks prior to this call. I was concerned that it was a problem with one of our parts, but Vic went on to tell us that this was something completely different and it was on an emergency basis that he needed our help.

Vic explained that the new Seville had a frame around the door windows that was a part of the door; most other cars at that time had frameless windows. The interior and exterior of the doors were painted whatever the exterior of the car was to be. The interior of the door was then finished with the chosen leather color. Consequently, if, for example, you ordered a green exterior with tan interior, all the interior doors would have tan leather with a green metal frame above it. This was unacceptable. Cadillac wanted this frame to be chrome and common to all interiors regardless of color choices.

With full production of the car scheduled to begin in less than two weeks, this gave us very little time to design a suitable extrusion profile, produce the extrusion dies, and design and assemble all the necessary fabrication equipment to produce a finished product. Vic had the blueprints and all four doors flown to us overnight so we could begin the process. Upon inspection, it was determined that all the mitered

corners were compound angles and each one different from the other. The two rear doors also required a bend and swedge operation. This normally would take months of planning and manufacturing time to accomplish, and we now had a little over one week to get this done.

So, we had to put our entire machine and fabrication shops on a 24-hour, split-shift basis. In order to get us some breathing room that would allow us more time to prepare the parts for manufacturing, Vic arranged to have the first production 1975 Seviles produced with a silver exterior and silver interior in order to eliminate the possibility of the interior color clash.

Nine days after receiving the initial call from Vic, I personally flew to the Fleetwood body plant and installed the trim on the line while instructing the assembly personnel on the proper procedure for installation.

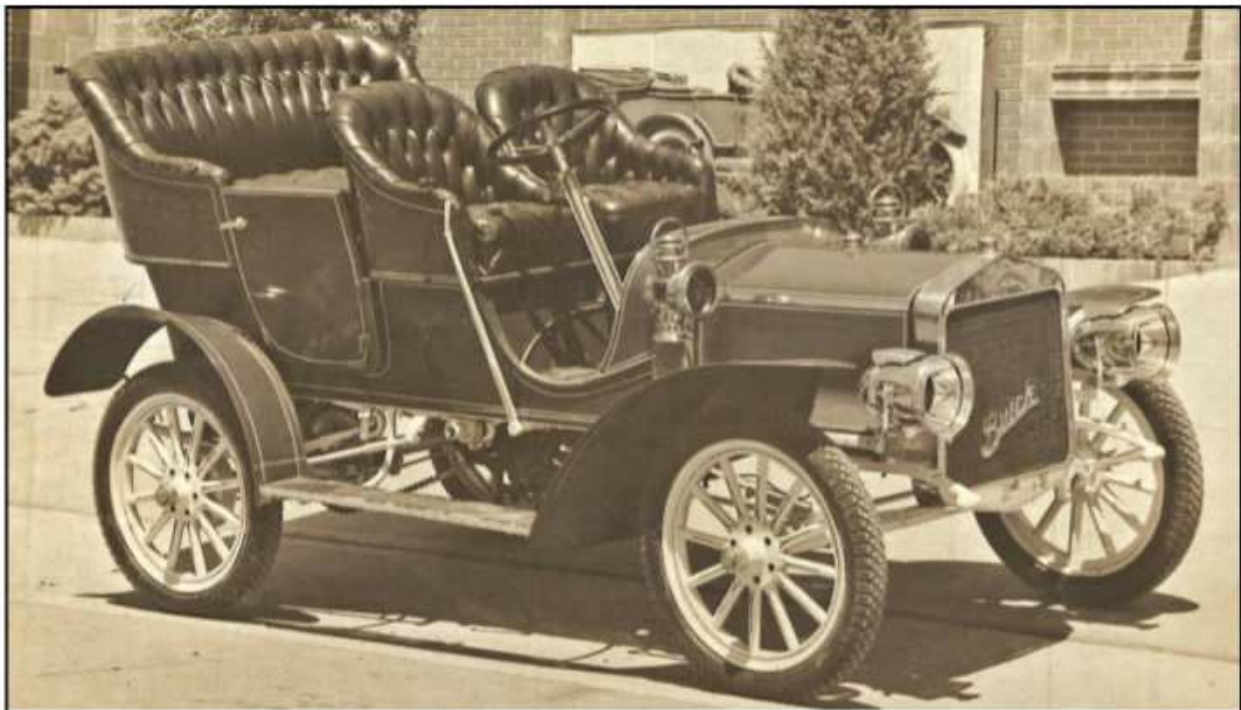
I have many other interesting stories relating to the days of working with the "Big Three," but this one stands out in my memory. It was exciting, exhilarating, and exhausting. 🏠



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



GENERAL MOTORS



BUICK RETURNS in its third year with their Models G and F, Roadster and Touring respectively. Whether you're looking for style or function, both will be maximized in these two offerings. Each Buick features a two-cylinder double opposed engine (capable of producing 22 horsepower) and planetary two-speed transmission. Buick is also the only car to complete a 1,000-mile, New York to Chicago, relay this year as well. The Model G is available for \$1,000 and the Model F can be had for \$1,250.

FACTORY PRICES

Buick	\$1,150-\$1,250
Cadillac	\$750-\$3,750
Ford	\$600-\$2,500
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Locomobile Model E....	\$2,900-\$3,700
Maxwell	\$780-\$3,000
Oldsmobile	\$650-\$2,250
Overland	\$1,250
Packard	\$4,000-\$5,225
Pierce-Arrow *	\$4,000-\$6,250
REO	\$650-\$2,500
Stanley	\$850-\$1,500
Studebaker	\$2,600-\$4,000
White	\$2,500-\$3,800

* Great Arrow only

SALES RACE

(total model-year production)

1. Ford	8,729
2. Cadillac	3,650
3. Rambler	2,765
4. REO	2,458
5. Maxwell	2,161
6. Oldsmobile	1,600
7. White	1,534
8. Buick	1,400

EXPENDITURES

(per capita)

Auto parts	\$0.59
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Gas and oil	\$1.36
Intercity transport	\$2.97
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ROYAL 408

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THE MOON MODEL A TOURER TURNED HEADS this year at the Chicago Auto Show. Equipped with state-of-the-art technology, the Moon is powered by a Rutenber four-cylinder engine and sliding-gear three-speed transmission, allowing the Model A to reach speeds up to 50 miles per hour. The Moon Model A is \$3,000.

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touring cars start at \$2,600 and the Town Car is available for \$4,000.

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My Summer with a “B”

THE MOST EFFICIENT WAY TO GET

from point “A” to point “B” is... why, with a “Bee” of course!

On Cape Cod in the 1950s, there were a lot of early Fords around. Some were used for lightweight use on cranberry bogs, some for cheap transportation, and some for just having fun driving on the beaches. Well, my summer girlfriend’s mother owned an exclusive and remote girl’s camp at the end of a seven-mile sandy peninsula. This location deterred the girls from leaving the premises while also discouraging visits from salesmen, campers, and, of course, boys. Well, that meant with my girlfriend having to work as a summer camp counselor, I would be spending the summer without a date.

However, one day I got a letter from my girl hinting that a few of my friends and I should come over some night and spend some time in the dunes. Okay by me. I got a hold of my friends, and borrowed a small dinghy with a tiny outboard motor and gave it a try. Disaster! We almost drowned. My only other option at the time was my primary vehicle, a 1940 Chevrolet. But, fitted with large 8.20 x 15 tires, the car was just too low to the sand to be of any use.

By luck, a close friend of mine was able to “borrow” an abandoned 1932 Ford sedan with a four-cylinder engine—basically a Model A, but with a fuel pump and the gas tank moved to the rear. It ran okay, and with a “stolen” inspection sticker and my insurance, we were kind of legal. To make it look as if it wasn’t the same car, I made it “inconspicuous” by hand painting it another color—I mean, many colors! Red, green, yellow, blue, and black. No one would identify the *Bee* now! With oversized whitewall tires, we would now be “beach-worthy” but, because of the *Bee*’s penchant to overheat on the hot sand, we had to remove the blue hood.

A few trips to the dunes at night proved workable. We now could climb the highest sand dunes and take unrestricted rides all over the peninsula. But, one night, while I was working late, my three Marine friends just out of a boot camp

asked to borrow my *Bee* for another evening trip over to the girl’s camp. So, off they went. What I didn’t know was that word of their coming had become known to the camp’s owner, and she and her older son were waiting in the dark. When the Marines came over the dunes on foot, two shots from a shotgun made them retreat to the *Bee* for a quick escape back to my house. What they didn’t know was that the camp owner had called the state police who were waiting back at the beach entrance with searchlights. Hiding in the dunes, it became a standoff. But the police gave up first.

A few days later, the Marines borrowed the *Bee* again for another attempt at storming the camp. Again, their success was foiled, and, while coming home, the Ford ran out of gas—between the high and low water tide mark! When I was notified next morning, I went back with two of the Marines to retrieve the car, only to

find that one of them had dug a trench all around the *Bee* to keep it dry. It worked!

That summer offered a few more memorable trips out to the point until the Marines were shipped out. With the summer ending and the camp closed, I no longer needed the old Ford, so it sat for a whole winter inside a barn for storage next to a sleeping Henry J. In the spring, I realized I had forgotten to drain the water and saw that the cold had popped the head on the engine. The *Bee* now became an unwanted vehicle, so I reinstalled the blue hood and put it out to await my decision. The faithful *Bee* had given us a truly exciting summer of crazy, daredevil rides.

A few weeks later a guy came by, saw the unused Model B and offered me \$15. (Fifteen dollars?!) Anyway, I agreed, and the *Bee* was taken away. But looking back, that little Ford gave us a summer to remember! 🐝



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The Die Hard

Thirty years since their debut, GM's 1988-'98 pickups are still like a rock

BY MIKE McNESSOR • PHOTOGRAPHY PROVIDED BY GENERAL MOTORS

If you're craving some '80s style escapism this fall, movie theaters around the country are rescreening the 1988 action classic, *Die Hard*, to commemorate the film's 30th anniversary.

Much has changed since a barefoot Bruce Willis stalked the halls, elevator shafts, and air ducts of Nakatomi Plaza as the indefatigable John McClane. For instance, concealed firearms are frowned upon aboard commercial airliners—even when the carrier is a New York cop. A limo driver bragging today that his car is equipped with “CD, CB, TV, and VHS” would first have to explain to many of his passengers what those initials mean. Also, Hollywood has thankfully stopped the practice of assigning vaguely German accents to movie villains.

Okay, so, what does a retro movie review have to do with the new-for-1988 GM pickups? We're glad you asked.

There's a scene at about the 45-minute mark where Los Angeles Police Sergeant Al Powell (played by Reginald VelJohnson) visits a 24-hour convenience store/gas station

and buys a shopping bag full of Twinkies for his pregnant wife. After an exchange with a wisenheimer store clerk (“I thought you guys just ate donuts?”), the plot thickens when Sgt. Powell gets a call from dispatch to investigate gunfire at nearby Nakatomi Plaza. Sgt. Powell exits the store, tosses the Twinkie bag into his cruiser, then walks across the parking lot, past the gas pumps, for a look down West Olympic Boulevard at the high-rise Nakatomi building looming in the distance.

It is here that Sgt. Powell passes two items of interest for sharp-eyed fans of GM light trucks:

1.) The crazy cheap gas prices on the sign: 75 cents for a gallon of regular, 78 cents for unleaded! In Los Angeles, no less!

2.) A shiny, red, brand-new-for-1988, GMC pickup that rolled up to the pumps to fill up on some of that cheap unleaded fuel.

Die Hard was shot between November 1987 and March 1988, so General Motors' GMT400 (and GMT480 three-quarter-ton and one-ton) light trucks were available, but they were still an unusual sight on the road.

In many parts of the country, they might still have been uncommon by the movie's July '88 debut, when a light-truck enthusiast/moviegoer would've been chewing popcorn, watching *Die Hard* in a theatre and thinking, “Hey, wow! It's one of the new GM trucks!” (Ask how we know this.)

The GMT400s were in many ways a major departure from the 1973-'87 GM pickups. The new styling looked very aero with flush-mounted glass, gently rounded transitions, and a curved front end. Plus, there was that spiffy new Sportside box with integrated fiberglass fenders and steps: a streamlined reimagining of the quaint old step-side. Though it seems remarkable today—in an age when new light trucks seem to grow with every passing model year—the GMT400s were actually fractionally narrower and lower than the trucks they replaced to help them punch a smaller hole in the wind, boosting efficiency.

Despite the smaller dimensions, however, the door openings on these trucks seemed enormous compared to older GM light haulers, and the new greenhouse was



Short box, standard cabs were still popular in 1988, pictured left, a Fleetside and the new Sportside. This (top) is the mid-level Scottsdale trim, though it seems austere today. New-for-'88 instruments (middle) were difficult to read in daylight, while buttons for climate control and radio were unpopular. A top-level Silverado (above) extended cab boasted buckets and an optional rear bench seat.



GMCs (above) were given a unique styling treatment with the redesign, but still used GM (Chevrolet) powertrains like the popular fuel-injected 5.7-liter small-block pictured left.

much larger for better visibility. Inside, the cabs were roomy, though it was here that many owners found a few things to gripe about. For starters, the instrument panel was arrayed with trendy half-circle, bar-type gauges that looked futuristic but could be difficult to read in the daylight. (These gauges were replaced with more conventional needle types, sometime around mid-year 1991.) The trendiness continued over to the stereo and climate controls, where everything was assigned its own button or rocker switch. This cluttered, overly complicated setup remained until the 1995 cockpit redesign, when knobs were mercifully offered. Also, the top-of-the-line Silverado interior used a sculpted seat where the frame, foam, and trim were all bonded together under heat. After some mileage, the foam in these seats often became rock hard and incredibly uncomfortable. The cheaper Cheyenne and Scottsdale-grade benches didn't have this problem.

Underpinning the GMT400s was a new semi-perimeter frame with a box front section that was immersed in hot wax to inhibit corrosion. Two-wheel drives rolled on typical unequal-length control arms with coil springs and an anti-sway bar, while four-wheel drives used a new torsion-bar independent front end. Out back were longer leaf springs for a smoother ride, with staggered rear shocks to help minimize wheel hop.

There was no question that the new torsion-bar equipped four-wheel-drive trucks rode and handled the bumps better than older trucks with straight front axles and leaf springs. But they also sagged a little more under the weight of a snow plow or heavy cargo. Ball joint failures early on didn't help the reputations of these trucks, initially, and the problem sparked a Technical Service

Bulletin. Chevrolet dealers replaced many, many sealed "maintenance-free" ball joints with greaseable ones under that program.

There were no surprises under the hood of the 1988 trucks. Base power in half-tons (as well as three-quarter tons) was provided by the rugged 4.3-liter V-6. The 305-cu.in. and 350-cu.in. V-8s were also on the table, as was the 6.2-liter diesel. The big 454-cu.in. big-block was reserved exclusively for one-ton trucks (until the arrival of the 454 SS sport truck in 1990). And the new engines were fuel injected. Back then, manual transmissions were still standard issue: Half and three-quarter tons were equipped with a five-speed Getrag transmission with an aluminum case, while one-ton models used a four-speed with a granny low that was optional on lighter trucks. Automatics included a three- and four-speed, but only the three-speed was available on one-ton models.

In a nod to changing buyer preferences, power steering was standard on GMT400 trucks as were front-disc/rear-drum brakes with power assist and rear ABS. Another new feature found on four-wheel-drive GMT400s was the Insta-Trac 4x4 transfer case that allowed shift on the fly from two-wheel drive to four-wheel high at any speed.

In retrospect, it's safe to say if any light truck deserved a cameo in *Die Hard*, it's the 1988-'98 GMT400/480 series, which also became the subject of the Chevrolet "Like a Rock" ad campaign. Like John McClane, these trucks had flaws, but earned a reputation for toughness that is reinforced by the number of 1988-'98 Chevrolets and GMCs still on the job today. With the possible exception of the 1990-'93 Chevrolet 454 SS and special-edition pace truck replicas, these pickups aren't considered vintage collectibles yet and still change hands for reasonable prices. 🚚



The Chevrolet Suburban (above), Blazer, and GMC Yukon didn't move to the new platform until 1992. (Below) Shifting into four-wheel-drive high from two-wheel drive while on the move was now possible with shift-on-the-fly Insta-Trac.



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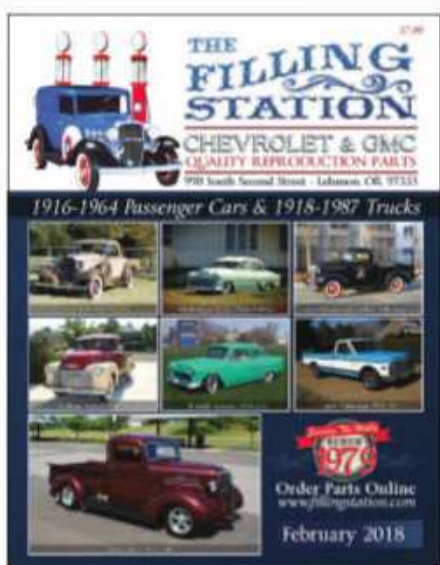
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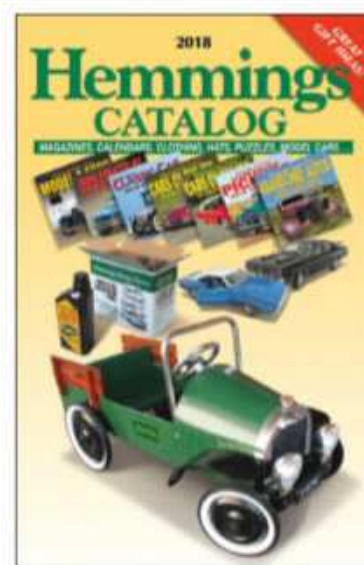
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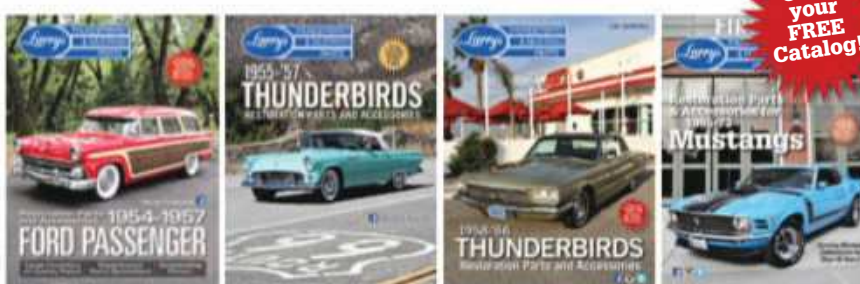


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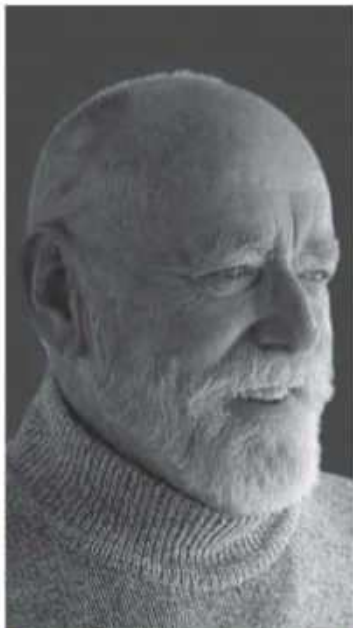


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Her main

objection

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outline of

the car that

had been left

on the lawn

when we were

finished.



An Expensive Education Pays Off

Back in 1960, I helped a friend paint his 1949 Ford. It was our first endeavor in this sort of thing, but we were full of the naive optimism that adolescence has to offer. The car had been well maintained all its life, but red oxide primer was showing in places under its original split pea soup green paint.

Our intention was to prime it, and then when my pal Ray got enough money together to do so, we would shoot it in candy apple lime green. We then went to the nearest Pep Boys and purchased eight rattle cans of the requisite primer. We bought the cheapest we could find, because it was only primer after all.

We were not equipped with a spray booth or even a spray gun, but that didn't deter us. After all, we had a couple of rolls of masking tape and a gallon of cheap lacquer thinner, so we were all set. And it was a nice sunny Southern California summer day, so we decide to do the deed in Ray's backyard. We stubbed out our Marlboros and went to work.

First, we wiped the car down with lacquer thinner. That made a huge mess, but we figured it would be covered up soon anyway. We then took his dad's *Sunday Examiner* and masked off the windows. We assumed the bumpers would be okay, so we left them uncovered. We then just removed the unsightly chrome strips and medallions because they were not cool, and then masked off the door handles.

Ray started at the front and I worked from the rear. We were soon enveloped in a black, sticky mist that got into our arm hair and made us itchy. Of course, we didn't wear masks. We were working outdoors so we assumed there was no problem. After the fourth can each, we were both light-headed from the fumes, so we kipped a couple of Ray's dad's beers and repaired to his back steps to consider our further actions.

At this point, Ray's Ford looked like a gigantic charcoal briquette. It was replete with fish eyes, runs, bugs, and dust stirred up from the grass on which it was parked. But we agreed that the overall effect was pretty good . . . or at least not that bad . . . and besides, it would all sand out when we decided to shoot on the color coat.

At any rate, we were feeling pretty proud

of our efforts when Ray's mom stepped out on the back porch and took strident umbrage at what we had done. I won't repeat her exact words because this is a family publication, and Ray's mom was a union steward in the shipyards and given to rather earthy language.

Her main objection seemed to be the black outline of the car that had been left on the lawn when we were finished. In hindsight, we probably should have wet down the grass before we started. We mowed the grass after moving the car, but it didn't help much.

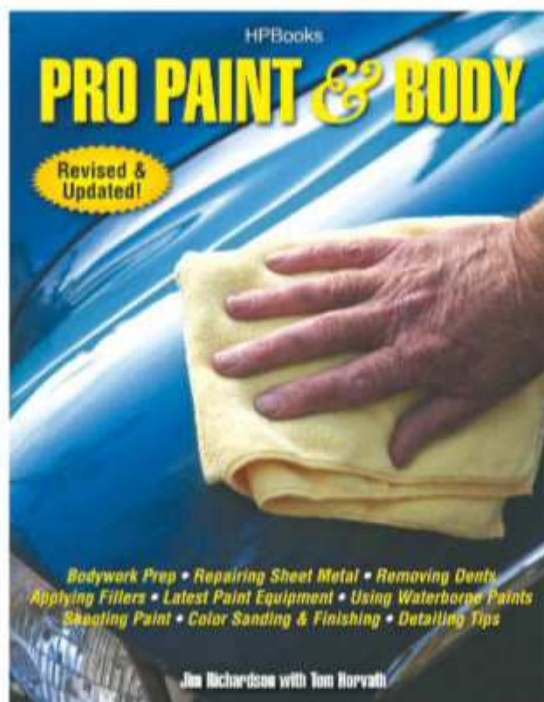
While Ray's mom continued heaping opprobrium upon us in a voice that could be heard half a block away, I decided I had done all I could at that point, so I climbed into my 1947 Chevy to go home and take a shower. My back stuck to the seat, and I took my T-shirt off after removing my pack of

Marlboros from the sleeve.

That was my first effort at painting a car, and I have to admit that it was less than optimal. Ray never did get around to the color coat on his Ford because he destroyed it in a contest of speed soon after. He then went on to destroy more cars when he became a highway patrolman, and I went on to paint more cars as my car hobby evolved into a lifelong passion.

Since then, I have painted a few show winners as part of their restorations, and have learned just how complex and time-consuming the job can be if you want the finish to be flawless and last into the future. So why did I bring all of this up? Well, mostly to warn novices that there is a lot more to it than one might think, and to consider their actions carefully.

In fact, I would say that before you try painting your car, you seek therapy. And then, if you are still hell bent on doing it, I offer my book, *Pro Paint & Body* from Penguin Putnam that I wrote with another pal named Tom Horvath a few years ago; it's available from Amazon. Tom has built Pebble Beach winners and is one of the finest restorers in the area. The book contains the pertinent information, but it can't supply the practice the task will take, although it may at least help you avoid getting attacked by a dangerous woman. 🐍





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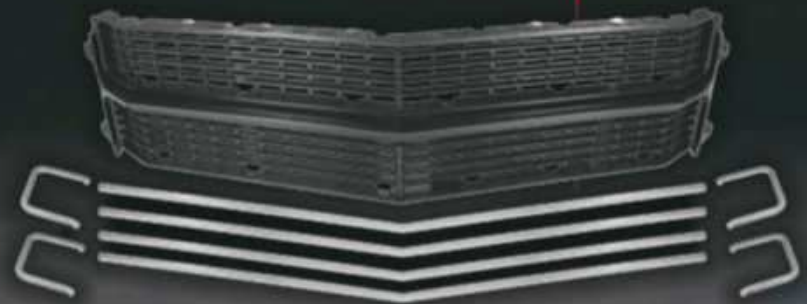
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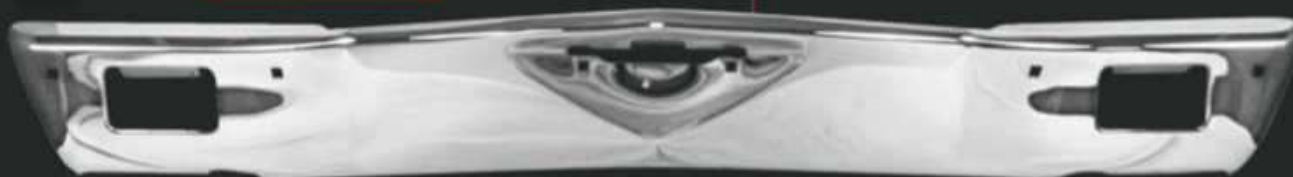
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