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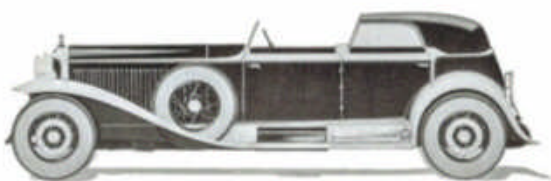
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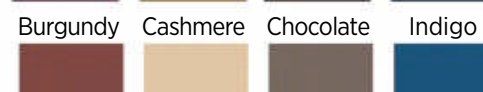
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## Corvette Mystique

With this month's Special Section giving the spotlight to America's favorite sports car, the Corvette, let's take a look as to why these high-performance two-seaters are so endearing to many.

For most of their existence, Corvettes have always been blessed with striking, wind-cheating shapes and powerful, earth-shaking V-8s, which are just two of countless reasons car enthusiasts across the world are obsessed with them. It's one of those rare cars that has always been a feast for the senses: Its racy silhouette and cozy interior combine with fierce acceleration and road-hugging handling to create a unique and exciting driving sensation, punctuated by the staccato rhythm of the engine's potent rumble. To touch it, sit in it, or drive it, is to become hooked for life. In simple terms, the Corvette is an icon—America's symbol of road supremacy.

Ever since the Corvette's debut at General Motors' 1953 Motorama, held in New York City's posh Waldorf-Astoria Hotel on Park Avenue, car enthusiasts have been crowding Chevrolet showrooms across America to sneak a closer look. They did it back in 1953 to get a glimpse of those Polo White beauties, and they just did it again with the release of the new mid-engine C8, a truly sensational sports car by all measures. And as the new C8 proves once again, Corvettes have remained remarkably affordable despite their relative scarcity, and have consistently delivered the high performance of an exotic European sports car for the price of a fine domestic automobile.

Through the years, the Corvette's shape has evolved from a Fifties-era cruiser, complete with subtle tailfins, to the magnificent exotic car for the masses that it has now become. In between, we welcomed the awe-inspiring Sting Rays of the mid-Sixties, the sleek contours of the second-generation Stingrays of the 1968-'82 era, and the conservatively styled, streamlined fourth-generation models built from 1984 to 1996, which then morphed into the modern-day C5 and beyond.

While each of the eight generations is distinctly different from the next, a family resemblance of artful styling cues ties them all together, maintaining that special Corvette look that is so prevalent in each and every model that Chevrolet produced. The long hood, front fender

vents, fastback rear, and those distinctive four individual taillamps—these are the hallmarks of the Corvette style.

Adding to the mystique of these beautiful, powerful sports cars is the fact that they are a relatively rare sight on the road. With an average annual production total of somewhere around 25,000 cars since the Corvette's inception, its numbers are fairly limited in comparison to other domestic cars. The Corvette is already a standout amidst your average road fare; its rarity makes it all the more captivating. A speeding Corvette—driving past, hugging the ground with its engine growling—commands attention, respect, and even awe from everyone it leaves in its wake.

Corvette ownership is like an addiction. Many owners find themselves wanting to drive, restore, and collect more than one. With eight different generations of Corvette models to date—each providing its own unique level of driving characteristics—many fans crave at least one of each model, so they can savor the taste of the Corvette experience as it developed through the years. Other enthusiasts are drawn toward only specific models from a particular generation. Still others desire only convertibles, or cars with big-block engines. The focus of a Corvette collection can be as diverse as the cars themselves.

Like many addictions, the Corvette is an indulgence that is savored in groups. With several hundred Corvette clubs scattered throughout the United States, Canada, Europe, and even Australia, 'Vette fans don't need to go far to find a fellow aficionado. Shows, rallies, races, and even cruise-ins bring Corvette lovers together. Through newsletters and websites, members share tips on maintenance, preservation, restoration, and repairs.

The Corvette isn't just a car. It is a cornerstone of automotive innovation, an instantly recognizable icon of fun, freedom, and muscle on the American road. 🏁

*After 22 years, I'm leaving Hemmings. It's been a great ride and I thank you all for supporting HCC and making it the success it is today—for that I will always be grateful. Ciao! —Richard*

Write to our executive editor at [rlentinello@hemmings.com](mailto:rlentinello@hemmings.com).





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## Newport Antique Auto Hill Climb

**INDIANA'S ANNUAL ANTIQUE VEHICLE COMPETITION IS STILL SCHEDULED TO TAKE** place on October 2-4, in Newport. A final decision on holding the event will be made in early August, but as of now, the hill climb features 31 classes of timed competition runs, over the town's 1,800-foot-long, 140-foot-high hill. More than 300 cars and pre-World War II motorcycles are expected to compete. The show recreates and celebrates the 1909-'15 events that were an early proving ground for automakers over a century ago. This will be the 53rd edition; other scheduled activities include a flea market, car cruise, Big Wheel races for kids, a collector-car auction, a car show, and of course, the hill climb itself. Visit [www.newporthillclimb.com](http://www.newporthillclimb.com) for complete details.

## OCTOBER

*Please note that these events are active as of press time despite the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. We recommend you verify the status of these events before making plans to attend.*

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## Carlisle Still a Go

**FALL CARLISLE IS SCHEDULED TO TAKE PLACE** from September 30 to October 4 at the Carlisle Fairgrounds, closing out the abbreviated 2020 show season at the venue. The Spring Carlisle show did take place in June, after two postponements and a brief brush with the state of Pennsylvania and its Department of Health. Carlisle was successful in arguing its case that other outdoor venues were not limited to 250 people, and the state agreed, withdrawing its suit against the event company. Carlisle hopes the October show will be the same kind of event that it's held in the past, but encourages everyone to observe social-distancing requirements that will likely remain in place when the fall show begins. The event is anchored around its incredible flea market, which typically draws in more than 8,000 vendors. In addition to the flea market, there is a two-day auction and a huge car corral, where you can find the vehicle of your dreams. For more information, please visit [www.carlisleevents.com](http://www.carlisleevents.com).

## ROA Meet Rescheduled for 2021

**THE RIVIERA OWNERS ASSOCIATION** has announced that its 2020 International Meet, slated to take place in Kalamazoo, Michigan, has been canceled (postponed, really, as the 2023 meet is now set to take place in Kalamazoo). The group's 2021 convention will take place in Branson, Missouri: Mark your calendar for June 21-24, as the scenic Ozark Mountain terrain will provide the background for the ROA International Meet. The

host hotel will be the Stone Castle Hotel & Conference Center. Details are still being hammered out, but expect to see the finest Rivieras from all over the country in attendance. The Branson area offers many tourist attractions, including The Branson Celebrity Car Museum—featuring over 100 classics and muscle cars—and The Branson Auto & Farm Museum. For the latest details, visit [www.rivowners.org](http://www.rivowners.org).





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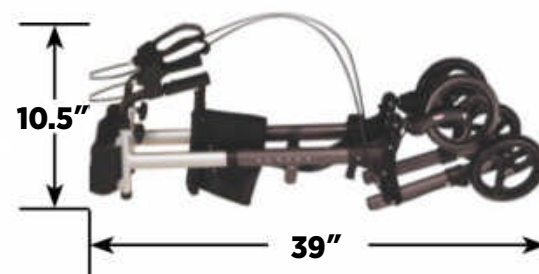
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## Canazzi's Studillac

**WE THOUGHT WE'D SEEN ALL THE REASONS FOR SOMEBODY TO BUILD A CUSTOM** car until we came across a recent article on Hank Canazzi's *Golden Ray Studillac*: a highly modified 1953 Studebaker Commander built as a precursor to fiberglass boat construction.

As Glenn Brummer wrote about the *Golden Ray* on *Undiscovered Classics* ([www.undiscoveredclassics.com](http://www.undiscoveredclassics.com)), Canazzi lived in Buffalo, New York, and, though he'd previously customized his Buick, he had more of an interest in boats and built a business selling boat kit plans. As part of that business, he wanted to dive into fiberglass. Not knowing how to work with the relatively new material, he decided to start with the Commander. He modified the front and rear ends, replaced part of the hardtop with acrylic, and swapped the windshield with an acrylic wraparound version before installing a hot-rodded Cadillac V-8 set up to run on butane.

The *Golden Ray* appeared in a *Trend Book* in 1960 and remained on the road in Buffalo until Canazzi sold it. It hasn't been seen since.

## Round-the-world Sterling

**WHILE PERUSING THE ARCHIVE PHOTOS** on the Chicago Auto Show's website recently, we came across something that caught our eye and that has subsequently proven to be a bit of a mystery: the around-the-world Guinness record-setting Rover Sterling 827.

Spotted in the background of a 1991 photo of the MG EX-E concept car photo, the mud-spattered Sterling appears in front of a sign declaring that it completed the trip in 39 days. With help from Mark McCourt, we heard from both Stuart

Schorr, who handled PR duties for the trip, and Mike Geylin, Stuart's boss at the time, but neither could recall much detail about the trip. "I do know I hosted them in NYC and Florida stops, including a lunch at the Carnegie Deli in NYC," Stuart wrote. "So funny. I wish I had pictures." Contemporary press clippings seem to be lacking as well.

We're curious not only about the who, the when, and the where details, but especially the why, the how, and the what. Why did Austin Rover, Sterling's parent company decide to pursue this record in the early 1990s? How did the Sterling fare throughout the trip? What happened to the 827 after the attempt and show circuit?




## GT40 Sketches

**IT APPEARS FORD'S ARCHIVES STILL HAVE** treasures to give up to the auto enthusiast community, as we see from the sketches that Ford designers drew up for the GT40 in 1963. The company's archivists recently came across the designs and posted them to the Ford Performance Twitter account.

While the Ford Mustang I concept car and the production Mustang share a name, Ford historians have been quick to point out that, in terms of lineage, the mid-engine Mustang I can more appropriately be called a GT40 progenitor than a production Mustang forerunner, and that's made very evident here. The renderings pull a lot of proportion, shape, and detail from the Mustang I, but add a closed roof and enough space for a Ford small-block V-8.

Very neat find, but now we'd like to know who sketched these renderings.



 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](mailto:Lost & Found, c/o Hemmings Classic Car, P.O. Box 196, Bennington, Vermont 05201), or emailed to [dstrohl@hemmings.com](mailto:dstrohl@hemmings.com). For more Lost & Found, visit [blog.hemmings.com/index.php/category/lost-and-found](http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/category/lost-and-found).



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to tables or desks. The controls are right on the steering lever so it's simple to operate, and its exclusive footrest swings out of the way when you stand up or sit down. With its rugged yet lightweight aluminum frame, the **Zinger** is sturdy and durable yet convenient and comfortable! What's more, it easily folds up for storage in a car seat or trunk. Think about it, you can take your **Zinger** almost anywhere, so you don't have to let mobility issues rule your life. It folds in seconds without tools and is safe and reliable. It holds up to 275 pounds, and it goes up to 6 mph and operates for up to 8 miles on a single charge.

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81260





## Eddie Vannoy Collection

**THE ORGANIZERS AT MECUM AUCTIONS** have released the results of the Eddie Vannoy Collection auction that took place June 26-30 in Jefferson, North Carolina. The sale eclipsed the \$15-million mark in collector-car and memorabilia sales, and among the lots sold was this 1958 Cadillac Series 62 convertible powered by a tri-power 365-cu.in. V-8. The blue-topped Alpine White Cadillac had power windows, seat, and steering, AM radio, and A/C. With all of its sparkling brightwork on full display, the classy Cadillac was sold for an impressive \$143,000. Other American classics of note included a 1965 Lincoln Continental convertible—a two-time LCOC winner that raked in \$78,100—and a 1941 Kenworth Beverly Hills fire truck that sold for \$209,000. Full results are now available at [www.mecum.com](http://www.mecum.com).



## Barrett-Jackson Online

**THE FAMOUS SCOTTSDALE AUCTION HOUSE HOSTED ITS SECOND ONLINE AUCTION THIS YEAR IN** July and offered an impressive array of classics, muscle cars, motorcycles, and memorabilia. Official results have not been tabulated yet, but among those we saw that sold was this 1957 Bel Air. The two-owner car was thoroughly restored and has only been driven 950 miles since completion. This Chevrolet was powered by a 283-cu.in. V-8 mated to a Powerglide transmission; its floor and body panels were all-original and finished with the proper red oxide primer. Options included power steering, power drum brakes, power top, tissue dispenser, twin antennas, electric wipers, Continental kit, and fully functioning quartz clock. It sold for \$77,000. Look for complete results at [www.barrett-jackson.com](http://www.barrett-jackson.com).

### AUCTION PROFILE

<b>TRUCK</b>	1953 Chevrolet 3100
<b>AUCTIONEER</b>	Mecum Auctions
<b>LOCATION</b>	Davenport, Iowa
<b>DATE</b>	June 18, 2020
<b>LOT NUMBER</b>	K11
<b>RESERVE</b>	None
<b>AVG. SELLING PRICE</b>	\$50,000
<b>SELLING PRICE</b>	\$41,800

**CHEVROLET'S ADVANCE DESIGN PICKUPS** were made with the customer's comfort in mind. The larger cabs provided some much-needed extra head and leg room, while easily allowing for three people to ride inside. The 3100 was Chevrolet's half-ton for that year, and the Advance Design showed off a tough, rugged appearance combined with the sleek and iconic lines that were synonymous with 1950s GM design.

This truck was newly restored and had been driven only 100 miles since completion. Its entire drivetrain had been rebuilt and the exterior was



finished in period-correct Juniper Green with black fenders and running boards. The oak bed was new with polished stainless trim, and the interior was also fully restored. Rounding out the restoration was a new suspension, along with brand-new bias-ply whitewalls. The popular Chevy trucks are popping up at several auctions these days and this one managed to change hands at a nice price.





# OCTOBER

## 1-2 • Carlisle Auctions

Carlisle, Pennsylvania • 717-243-7855  
www.carlisleevents.com/auctions

## 4 • Bonhams

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania  
212-461-6514 • www.bonhams.com

## 8-9 • RM Sotheby's

Hershey, Pennsylvania • 519-352-4575  
www.rmsothebys.com

## 8-10 • Mecum Auctions

Chicago, Illinois • 262-275-5050  
www.mecum.com

## 8-10 • Vicari Auction

Biloxi, Mississippi • 504-264-2277  
www.vicariauction.com

## 15-17 • Barrett-Jackson

Palm Beach, Florida • 480-421-6694  
www.barrett-jackson.com

## 16-17 • The Branson Auction

Branson, Missouri • 800-335-3063  
www.bransonauction.com

*Please note that these events are active as of press time despite the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. We recommend you verify the status before making plans to attend.*

## Coming Up

### CARLISLE AUCTIONS WILL TAKE PLACE IN

conjunction with Fall Carlisle, October 1-2. Bidding will be accepted online, in person, or by phone. Social-distancing guidelines are at [www.carlisleevents.com/auctions](http://www.carlisleevents.com/auctions).

RM Sotheby's still lists its Hershey show for October 8-9 at the Hershey Lodge. RM has been actively running online auctions, so there's a good chance the event will at least be online despite the cancellation of the Hershey swap meet and car corral. Consignments are presently being accepted, so be sure to contact the auction house at [www.rmsothebys.com](http://www.rmsothebys.com).

Barrett-Jackson's Palm Beach show, which usually takes place in April, was pushed back to October 15-17. As of press time, it is still a go—for the latest information, please visit [www.barrett-jackson.com](http://www.barrett-jackson.com).



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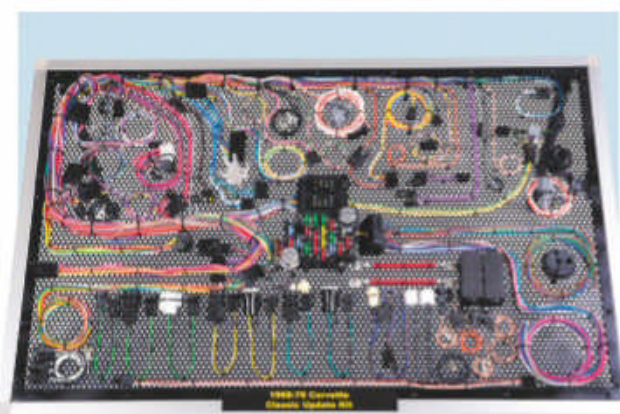
The Grypmat Pro, made of industrial grade silicone polymer, is designed to hold still without sliding or falling, no matter what surface you place it on, staying put while preventing scratches and dents on your car. Available in three sizes, it allows easy access to your tools, whenever you need them. Bendable and foldable, yet extremely durable, it can be set up any way you want, as it will return to its original shape. The nonmagnetic and antistatic mat will not damage metal or paint. Sizes are small (6 x 12 inches, six compartments), medium (8 x 12 inches, three compartments), and large (12 x 22 inches, five compartments). The Trio Pack Pro, p/n RFGM-TP3, includes all three sizes.

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## Corvette Wiring Update Kit

AMERICAN AUTOWIRE • 800-482-9473

WWW.AMERICANAUTOWIRE.COM • \$1,199

This is a complete Update Series wiring kit for the 1968-'76 Corvette that will modernize the electrical system while also providing a means to connect a variety of accessories. Highlights include a new ATO blade-style fuse panel and bulkhead connector assembly that mounts into the firewall opening without any need for modification. The "high powered" accessory connector makes it easy to hook up power seats, door locks, cruise control, electric fuel pumps, and other accessories. Front lighting includes all power and ground wires, plus extra-long leads for stock or modified vehicles, and an ignition-switched trigger wire for an electric fan relay, recommended for cars equipped with air conditioning. Instrument cluster wiring comes with original terminals, connectors, and lamp sockets, and the new harness connects to most popular aftermarket gauges. For complete details on the kit, ask about p/n 510717.



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A well-known expert has offered what might just be the best explanation for the '57 Chevy with, "people just liked them." But there's probably a little more to it. 1957 was the very height of American auto design. The longer, lower cars featured extensive styling, bold colors, and powerful engines. And...perhaps the most striking design element, those gorgeous fins.

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## E.J. Pennington



**EDWARD JOEL "E.J." PENNINGTON'S** clothes were fancy, his tastes expensive, and he regularly received "fake" telegrams from wealthy men begging him to let them invest with him. He was fond of summoning all of the men of influence in a small city and making impressive presentations to them. He could perform just enough real-world engineering and fabrication to put his marks at ease. He also traveled extensively, which kept his actions from ever catching up with him fully.

Pennington was born in Moores Hill, Indiana, in 1858. His father was a blacksmith, and it was from that technical background that his earliest schemes flowed. He promoted grandiose plans to utilize his patents to produce such varied products as wooden pulleys and freight elevators. His first application for an automotive patent came in 1893, when he was in Chicago, the time and place of the Columbian Exposition where many Americans were first being exposed to electric light. In such a setting, Pennington doubtless found

many folks excited to sink their funds into the next big idea.

It was also in 1893 that Pennington made perhaps his most lasting contribution to automotive history, for it is at that time he is credited with coining the term motorcycle. He also founded the Motor Cycle Company of Cleveland, Ohio, which held the rights to that first patent.

The very next year he was in Cortland, New York, persuading until-then-successful wagonmaker C.B. Hitchcock to produce his designs. The prototype engineered by Pennington, however, was incapable of going

more than a few hundred feet under its own power before seizing its overheated engine. Hitchcock went into receivership and Pennington skipped town—landing back in Cleveland where he filed a patent for an "impuncturable" (sic) pneumatic tire that failed completely to live up to the implications of its name.

In 1895, Pennington showed up in Racine, Wisconsin, where he talked his way into a partnership with Thomas Kane, a local manufacturer of furniture and stationary engines for dairy operations. The new company was called the Racine Motor Vehicle Company and the car itself known as the Kane-Pennington. The most notable aspect of the proposed vehicle was its patented "long-mingling spark ignition system" that supposedly permitted it to run on an almost unlimited variety of fuels—including candle wax.

After he failed to produce any of his four promised entries for *The Chicago Times-Herald* race held on Thanksgiving 1895, famously won by the Duryea Brothers, Pennington embarked for Great

Britain. There, he contributed his various patents to the newly founded British Motor Syndicate, an Association of Licensed Automobile Manufacturers-like attempt to corner the market on automobiles in the United Kingdom.

While in Britain, Pennington took orders and payments for an eponymous car, but it unsurprisingly came to nothing. He also promoted three- and four-wheeled vehicles for military applications, commissioning illustrations showing them wearing armor and bearing machine guns. Engineer F.R. Simms was sufficiently entranced with the concept that he developed it further and produced the world's first armored car in 1899, just as Pennington was fleeing back to the United States.

His first venture back on American soil was another attempt to manufacture Pennington cars (apparently the same design as the Kane-Pennington) in the Barnes bicycle plant in Syracuse. The manager of this plant, E.C. Stearns, would later enter the automotive sector on legitimate terms.

Simultaneously, Pennington developed the concept of the "Automobile Horse" and founded the Pennsylvania Steam Vehicle Company to build them. The product of this manufacturer was called the Tractomobile and it was a fixture to attach to existing horse-drawn vehicles to make them self-propelled. The company offered Automobile Horses separately or pre-attached to a vehicle.

Over the next decade, Pennington continued to promote various automotive ventures. After the success of the Wright Brothers, he began to incorporate aviation schemes into his promotions. He also used his numerous patent holdings in attempting to profit from successful companies—one of his last efforts was a failed 1910 suit against the makers of the Indian motorcycle for infringement.

In 1911, Pennington fell on a Springfield, Massachusetts, street and landed face first in a puddle. He subsequently developed meningitis and died. His passing elicited a lengthy obituary in *The New York Times* that called him an "Erratic Promoter" and noted that his career was remarkable primarily for the minimal difficulty he had with the law. 🐉



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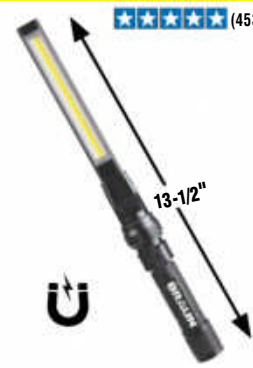
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# An Intriguing Alliance



**FOR EIGHT YEARS, I HAVE WANTED** to feature this month's Underdog, but I never quite knew where it fell in the domestic versus import spectrum. Now, I don't have to worry about that.

In the late 1970s, American Motors considered ending car production and focusing solely on the more profitable Jeep line, which gave it an edge over the competition. When AMC introduced the 1978 Concord, 1979 Spirit, and 1980 Eagle, the automaker realized it still had some fight left in it. However, to remain competitive, AMC also knew it needed a partner to help develop a line of cars to replace what, at the time, were 1960s-era-engineered offerings. Ironically, a 10- or 20-year-old platform today wouldn't even elicit a raised eyebrow.

AMC first looked to Peugeot to make a proposal, but when Renault caught wind of this, it requested to offer a proposal of its own. The rest, as they say, is history. That history actually dated back to the prior decade. Renault built Rambler Americans in a factory in Belgium, and Kaiser-Willys built Renault Dauphines in its factory in Israel. Later, Kaiser-Jeep was bought by AMC, which was the result of the merger between Nash and Hudson.

I love pointing out this fun fact: The compacts introduced in the 1950s—Nash Rambler, Aero Willys, Henry J, and Hudson Jet—are now Chrysler heritage cars.

Soon, AMC dealers started selling the American version of the Renault 5, the Le Car. Other Renault models arrived—the 18i sedan and 18i Sport Wagon, and the Fuego. While dealers were gaining

some market coverage with these front-wheel-drive models, the new partners were readying another car, based on the Renault 9, winner of the 1982 European Car of the Year, but to be built in Kenosha, making it an American car.

In fall 1982, the Alliance, a collaboration of Renault and AMC, was born. It shared exterior styling with its French cousin, but AMC stylists, led by Dick Teague, redesigned the interior to be more in line with American tastes, and they designed a new body style—a two-door sedan, not offered outside North America.

The Alliance was so advanced that it leap-frogged everything AMC had produced up to that point. The engine was a 1.4-liter, transverse-mounted OHC four-cylinder with fuel injection, sending power to the front wheels. With MacPherson struts up front, torsion bars suspending the rear, and a long wheelbase made possible by placing the wheels as outboard as possible, it was roomier and handled and rode better than most compacts on the market. Testers noted the smooth ride for such a little car. The French were always experts in making small cars with smooth-riding suspensions.

*Motor Week's* review praised the Alliance's ride and handling, while noting the slow acceleration. Overall, it liked the Alliance, including its styling and roominess for its size.

The front seats were set on pedestal tracks that were slightly inboard, increasing foot room for rear passengers, and there was room for five to sit comfortably. I have to note that if you were long-legged, while driving the Alliance, the

wide console would dig into your right calf. I know this from personal experience, and it's the reason the Alliance never made my bucket list.

*Motor Trend* said the Alliance was like nothing that ever came out of Kenosha before. The magazine awarded the Alliance its "Car of the Year" for 1983, exactly 20 years since the entire Rambler line won the award with a Classic/Ambassador platform that would spawn the third-generation Rambler American, AMC Hornet, Gremlin, Concord, Spirit, and Eagle.

Sales were good at first, but then the market shifted. Americans were looking for larger cars again, and AMC had laid the Concord to rest after 1983. This has always been the case in the American market, which is fickle when it comes to small cars. Most every small car that has been introduced in the last 60 years has grown in size until another small car is introduced, and the cycle repeats.

When the Encore, basically an Alliance with a hatchback, was introduced the following year, sales went nowhere; after two seasons, the Encore was renamed the Alliance hatchback. In 1985, a convertible was brought out, AMC's first since 1967. (Interestingly, if you are looking for an Alliance, you will find convertibles much more often than sedans.) Then, as a last-ditch effort to spark sales, the Alliance GTA—with a 2.0-liter engine and sporty cosmetics—was introduced in two-door sedan and convertible form. You will find these as well.

At this writing, a search revealed only one Alliance for sale—a 1987 convertible for \$1,750. That's right. A friend bought a 1987 convertible at an auction in Northern Virginia a few years ago for \$1,500. There were two GTAs recently advertised that went for little more than \$3,000. Just for kicks, I performed a search for Renault 9s, and I found quite a few across the pond. All were selling for around €2,800, or roughly \$3,150. To my delight, there was a Renault Alliance convertible for sale in France for around the same price.

If you're looking for a cheap convertible or compact sports sedan from the 1980s, the Alliance just may be the car for you—if you don't have long legs. 🐶



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# Magnanimous Mercury

*Enjoying the virtues of a  
1951 Sport Coupe that's all-original*

BY JEFF KOCH • PHOTOGRAPHY BY RICHARD LENTINELLO









**M**odel year 1951 was a downturn for most of America's car companies, but Mercury bucked the trend. Ford's upper-middle-class division mostly left well enough alone on its single-car line for 1951, focusing instead on trim changes. There was a new full-width grille, and minor rear styling revisions that included a one-piece rear window, and vertical taillamps in rear-quarter extensions that were a baby step toward the stylish tail fins that would dominate later in the decade. Engineers found two more horsepower in the 255-cubic-inch flathead V-8, bringing total output to 112 horsepower, and a new two-speed Merc-O-Matic fully automatic transmission was a \$168 option.

Despite selling only 17,000 more cars in 1951 than in 1950, Mercury vaulted from ninth to sixth place in U.S. sales, passing Oldsmobile and Dodge on its way to glory.

Mercury's most basic coupe was removed from the lineup for the 1951 model year, leaving the Sport Coupe (seen here, known as the Club Coupe in 1950) as the entry-level model. This Dearborn division built a total of 142,168 coupes, split between Sport Coupe—whose \$1,947 starting price represented a 1.5-percent drop from 1950's pricing—and higher-zoot Monterey trim. And every single one of them appeared to have been chopped, channeled, sectioned, shaved, or slammed over the last 70 years.

Our feature car is one that escaped the customizer's torch. The history of this particular Mercury is long—seven decades long—but with only three owners from new, not torturous. "It had been sold new in Eastern Colorado, the drier, ranching part of the state," owner Charles Mallory told us. The original dealer badge, from Plains Motor Company, advertising its location at Sterling's Busy Corner, remains attached to the trunk lid. "The first owner was a little old lady, or so the story went when it rolled through Barrett-Jackson sometime in the mid-1980s. She wasn't a little old lady when she bought it, of course, but by the '80s, it was an estate sale situation." The second owner, understanding how tough it was to find a '51 Mercury that hadn't been restored, rodded, or customized, bought it and took it home to Utah with him. It showed just 26,000 miles on the odometer.

Time marched on, and about a decade ago, the owner was getting out of the hobby. That collector had a 1939 Graham Hollywood Combination Coupe that attracted Charles' eye, and



**AM radio is one of the very few options chosen by the original owner of this 1951 Mercury coupe. The odometer beneath the semicircular speedometer reads just over 26,000 actual miles.**



he flew from Connecticut to Utah to inspect the Graham itself. "When I went to buy the Graham, this Mercury was just sitting there, Charles said. "I've always looked for one, and when I stumbled across this, I realized that it was the car I wanted."

"Style-wise, I always liked '51s better than the '49s and '50s because of the revised tail, that subtle tailfin treatment. Fundamentally, it's the only difference between a '51 and the earlier cars. Mostly it's just minor trim changes, different hubcaps, and the like. I just find the fin and vertical taillamps more attractive. For me, the '51 Mercury is it."

For a high-end car like a Mercury, it's sparsely equipped. "It's got a Touch-O-Matic three-speed on the column with overdrive, a radio, whitewall tires, skirts, and maybe one or two other things—no power windows or seat," Charles added. Its coat of Coventry Green lacquer remains the original paint as applied at the factory, and it still shines decades later.



**Mercury's famed flathead V-8 displaced 255.4-cu.in. in 1951, and produced 112 horsepower and 206 lb-ft of torque. With so few miles showing, this engine has never been apart for service.**









Charles confessed that there aren't many more miles on the odometer than when he bought it, or when the previous owner bought it in the '80s, though it is regularly exercised. "I have a few collector cars, and I haven't driven this one as much as the others until recently, because I took it to my place in Texas. I go there infrequently, once every two or three months or so. The roads are great there, and it's got terrific climate. I'd drive it 10-20 miles, then it would sit for a few months. That's not ideal—I prefer driving my cars with greater frequency, especially in good weather, which is why I recently moved it back to Connecticut." Now it receives monthly, rather than quarterly, exercise.

There, it sits among a cadre of like-minded machines: unrestored low-mileage originals. Charles continued, "Besides the low mileage, they're vault-like. You get in, and they feel like a brand-new car. My first choice with any collector car is something original and showing low mileage, and maybe not cosmetically perfect. Second choice would be an older restoration—one that's been used and proven. I'm not interested in perfect show cars, because I can't use them. An older restoration done right, used by someone who appreciated it, toured it and babied it, is a great combination, if done to a high standard. But nothing beats an original. I've had body-off restorations done by top people, and they come close, but I'd still rather have a low-mileage original car. And a bad restoration..." Charles' voice trails off in silent horror. "You can feel the difference with a restored car versus an original. You can tell the integrity is compromised, instantly."

This Mercury scratched another itch in Charles' collection. "Over the years, I've had a number of flathead-Ford-engined cars and trucks. For whatever reason, I'd never had one that was just... they never really felt right, for one reason or another. But what I loved about this Mercury was that it was as right as it could be; incredibly silent and smooth, it starts instantly, and it's so obviously the way it should have been from new.

"Because it's original, it's also very solid-feeling and tight; there isn't a rattle in it. It feels like a bank vault. That's what you experience in a low-mileage original car from a dry climate. And this is the one that I'd been waiting for. Cars like this are where

Mercury's reputation came from. It was babied, it's low-mileage, it's not restored—it checked all the boxes for me."

One newer addition, made for the sake of preservation, is the clear plastic seat covers that were in place when Charles bought the car a decade back, though he sees no need to remove them. "The whole interior is in remarkably good condition, but it's not perfect, which leads me to believe that the plastic was put on somewhere along the line, not from new. The plastic would have yellowed if from new, so it probably was installed in the 1970s or '80s. There's some evidence of wear under the seat cover, but very little. And I'm leaving it that way: it's certainly preserving the original aspects of the interior."

One aspect of maintenance and keeping things original seems counterintuitive. "How do I maintain it? I drive it," Charles said. I don't put large amounts of mileage on it, and I change the fluids in a reasonably regular fashion. Recently an exhaust manifold gasket let go, and I'll have to change that. But that's the extent of what's happened in my 10 years owning it, and I think that's a fatigue issue. Really, I haven't had to do anything else."

This generation of Mercury is popular hot-rod fodder, but this car is too nice to chop up. Its stock condition also makes it something of an outlier. A 1951 Mercury that hasn't been covered, chunked, and Carson-topped must be in the minority of those that are still extant. Still, Charles sees past the altering of steel for purposes and personalization and takes the long view. "It's iconic and sought after—one of the most stylish cars of the era, revered by collectors and hot-rodders for a long time. Lots of them were customized, and that's great, there's nothing wrong with that.

"I've noticed that good originals are out there although not in great quantities, but they must have been well-regarded because they've been saved. People obviously liked them and kept them. Cars that weren't loved just became dated and just disappeared. These Mercurys survived." Charles' 1951 Mercury Sport Coupe has done more than survive—it's thrived over its seven decades of life. 🏆





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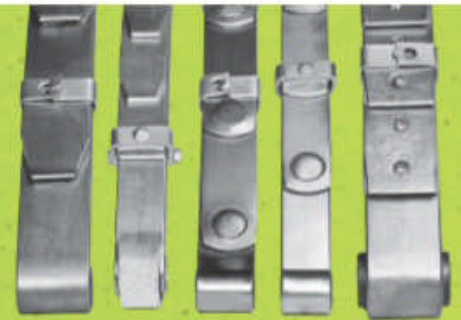


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## I ENJOYED THE ARTICLE ABOUT THE

Ford Starliners in *HCC* #191, but you left off a fact that might have affected the Ford Falcon selling 450,000 units. The 1960 Fords were over 80 inches in width. Because of this, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration threatened to tax them like trucks, because 80 inches was the maximum width for a car. Although the Imperial was the first to go over the 80-inch mandate, when Ford went over, it was different. After the NHTSA chastised Ford for the design, the 1961 models were 79.9 inches. The size also probably scared owners of 1955-'56 Fords, who were concerned about trading up to (and housing and feeding) a monster that was bigger than a Mercury of not that long ago. A Falcon would cause less frustration when it came time to park in a downtown space or a suburban garage.

The article on the Pontiac Ventura also brought back memories of the renaissance of compact cars from 1975 to 1978. General Motors had the Nova LN, Pontiac Ventura SJ, Oldsmobile Omega Salon, and Buick Skylark and Apollo S/R. They had a choice of engines and could ride on Camaro suspensions. The Ford Granada and Mercury Monarch were as classy as any full-sized luxury Ford product. The Maverick and Comet were well proven and had upgraded interiors. The same was true for the Dodge Dart and Plymouth Valiant. If the Aspen and Volare had been put together decently, they would have been driven for years. The Ford Fairmont and Mercury Zephyr were the base for Ford products to come. I would love to see more articles on these cars, as they were the backbone of post-gas-crisis households.  
Charles Winingham  
Alton, Illinois

## I VERY MUCH ENJOYED THE

feature on the 1961 Ford Galaxie. My brother bought a new Galaxie in black, with a red-and-white interior, three-on-

the-tree, and a 292-cu.in. engine. It was a beauty.

However, I must take exception with you using the term "Finned Fastback." I always thought a true "fastback" had a roofline that sloped to the rear bumper, with no horizontal flat space over the trunk. The Starliner clearly has a horizontal space over the trunk (about 3-4 feet worth). The classic "fastbacks," in my opinion, were the GM postwar sedanettes.  
Lee Gunton  
Richmond, Virginia

## REGARDING THE LETTER FROM MIKE

Porter in *HCC* #191, the 1958 introduction of the Impala hardtop did not eliminate the Bel Air hardtops; Chevrolet produced Bel Air hardtops in both two- and four-door versions through 1962. The only exceptions are the 1959 two-door (available in Canada only) and the 1962 four-door. Their volumes were much lower than their sedan counterparts, and that is why they're not as prevalent at car shows today.  
Bob Stark  
Land O' Lakes, Florida

## MIKE PORTER TALKS ABOUT THE

rarity of the 1960 Chevrolet Bel Air two-door hardtop he formerly owned, and wonders whether this model was built in other years after the Impala was introduced. I purchased new a similar 1961 model. I concur that the simpler trim on the Bel Air gave it a cleaner appearance than the Impala, though, of course, the interior was plainer. As I recall, the Bel Air's sticker price was \$100 or so less than the Impala, which was a noticeable amount of money for a young guy in those days. In 1962, the Bel Air was again offered; it continued the "bubbletop" styling of the 1961 hardtops, while the Impala adopted a more formal roofline. As far as I know, that was the end of a hardtop model in the Bel Air series. I don't have any statistics, but based on my memory of those days, there were far fewer Bel Air hardtops than Impalas.  
Fred Bagwell  
Richmond, Virginia

## IN RESPONSE TO THE ARTICLE

about the Suburban in *HCC* #191: I had a 1975 Suburban that was a carryall for a surveyor crew, and it was a beast. There were no interior amenities of any kind. It was a 4x4 with locking hubs and a rear locker differential. The Suburban was equipped with the crank-up rear window, a four-speed manual transmission, and two-speed transfer case. It would—and did—go anywhere. I am lucky to be in the company of two of these original haulers, built in 1935. My boss at Muscle Car City in Punta Gorda, Florida, has one that is restored, while the other is unrestored. It's amazing to think that Chevrolet would have a vehicle with third-row seating 85 years ago.  
Jay Smith  
Port Charlotte, Florida







**I REALLY ENJOYED THE ARTICLE ON** the 1953 Chrysler New Yorker station wagon in *HCC* #190. It brought back memories of the late '60s. Being young and foolish, I owned a 1953 New Yorker four-door sedan, dark green in color, with the same Hemi engine and Fluid-Matic Drive. After getting used to the operation of the transmission, I started to have fun with it. The engine output was unremarkable, so I installed exhaust headers and dual exhausts, with hot-rod mufflers of the day. This freed up the power, and the car was quite nimble for its size.

At a stoplight, I would push in the clutch and put the gear lever in second, with my foot on the brake, then let the clutch out. The car would just sit there until I hit the gas, and then it would almost burn rubber before taking off. In second

gear, the transmission would change up one gear, and then I would shift the lever into third, which would eventually change up to the highest gear. I recall very respectable 0-60 mph times for a big car. It was a real sleeper, which I greatly enjoyed driving, and it won a lot of stoplight drag races from unsuspecting opponents.

Bill Rogers

*Blue Mountain, Ontario, Canada*

**I REALLY ENJOYED THE I WAS THERE** story by Bob Marcks in *HCC* #191. I want to thank him for bringing back that greatest of all cars, the convertible. My father was one of the lucky people to be able to buy one of those beautiful 1982 Chrysler LeBaron convertibles, as he was told that the dealer was only allotted two examples. When he decided to sell it some


years later, I considered buying it, but before I could say "yes," it had been sold to a neighbor. It turned out okay, though, because the LeBaron had already worked its magic on me. I vowed that someday I would get one of my own, and, in 1989, I bought a bright red convertible. This car was so beautiful and fun to drive that it changed my life. I have had drop-tops ever since, including a red 1995 LeBaron convertible. I just want to say thank you again to Mr. Marcks for bringing convertibles back; I'm living the good life because of him.


I also want to thank him for his design of the 1964 Ford Galaxie. We had a black 1964 Galaxie 500 that was the best-looking station wagon I have ever seen. It was the first car I remember from my childhood, and when I go to car shows and see station wagons, I always think that nothing looks better than that 1964 Galaxie.

Sue Warner

*Odenton, Maryland*

*Continued on page 29*





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The idea

simmered for

eight years

until Rolls

decided

to build it

himself.



## Bantam Recreation

**K**arl Probst was a talented American engineer, who, in 1940, designed the very first jeep vehicle, the legendary Bantam “pilot car” prototype. Duncan Rolls is a talented Australian fabricator and builder; a few years ago, he decided to build an exact recreation of the Bantam jeep prototype from the ground up, and then went on to build 15 more Bantam jeeps, successor models to the original. I think most people would agree that recreating one Bantam would have been difficult enough, but 16 of them? That’s dedication.

Rolls, hailing now from Longview, Texas, has been interested in jeep vehicles all his life and began restoring them when he was 18. In 1996, he’d just finished restoring a 1943 GPW – the Willys jeep as produced by Ford – when he read an article about the Bantam pilot car, the first jeep vehicle, though it was never called that. Bantam built just one in that pattern, a prototype to try to win the Army contract for scout cars. The vehicle disappeared decades before Rolls heard about it – legend says it was used for parts – and he was surprised no one had tried to recreate it. The idea simmered for eight years until Rolls decided to build it himself. It wouldn’t be a replica; he would recreate the exact vehicle that no longer existed.

Research led him to conclude that the best approach was to take basic measurements from the Bantam BRC-60 model (aka Bantam Mk II), on display at the Smithsonian Institution’s National Museum of American History in Washington, D.C. The BRC-60 was the “production” version of the pilot car, though with substantial differences. Bantam built just 69 BRC-60s before introducing an improved BRC-40 model, of which it produced 2,605 examples before getting locked out of the jeep program. Smithsonian officials agreed to let Rolls measure and photograph the rare BRC-60. He took more than 200 photos of the vehicle, plus 18 pages of sketches and notes.

Comparing photos of the pilot car and the BRC-60, he realized there were lots of differences in the body, but not as many in the chassis. So, Rolls began acquiring Bantam parts from around the country. An early score was a batch that included a cowl from a 1939 Bantam

Roadster – the basis for the Pilot car – plus front and rear differentials, gearbox and transfer case, and a steering wheel. Hauling the load home in his pickup, Rolls thought to himself, “How difficult can this be?”

Some 3,000 man-hours and tons of money later, he knew. Rolls ended up having to fabricate a great many parts. The flywheel, for example, was copied on a CNC machine, while the starter and generator were reproduced from photographs. The entire drivetrain was rebuilt, with many parts made from scratch.

All he had to do with that cowl, by the way, was split it down the middle and add 6 inches of width, fabricate a firewall

from scratch, and shorten the overall height to match the measurements of the BRC-60. Oh, and repair all the rust damage it had. Those little filler pieces between the fenders and side panels? They took 10 days to fabricate because of the compound curves.

He was lucky to find two NOS taillamps, ignition and light switches, plus a set of the very rare instruments. But the bellhousing, steering box, engine timing cover, thermostat housing, clutch fork, and hand brake parts all had to be fabricated, which required finding a good patternmaker. The grille was painstakingly recreated using photographs of the pilot car, as was the windshield frame. Nearly every fabricated part he made three times, some as many as 10 times.

The body was mostly hand-fabricated, including the sides, hood, and corrugated floor. The curved hood was particularly difficult; he made that on an English wheel, also creating a few spares just in case.

Naturally, when the body tub was bolted to the chassis, nothing lined up quite right, so Rolls spent an entire week finessing things into shape. After that came seats, top, and upholstery, and he was done.

From that warm-up, Rolls went on to recreate a BRC-60, a Canadian BRC “pilot hybrid,” and 13 BRC-40s for various clients. But he built only one pilot car because, well, Bantam built only one. America owes Duncan Rolls its gratitude. He’s restored an important part of our history. 📷

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*Continued from page 27*

**I THOROUGHLY ENJOYED MATT LITWIN'S COLUMN,** "When Detroit Built Some Real Gems," featured in *HCC* #191. I think we all have encountered some of the same issues in one form or another, from just about every manufacturer. My experience with a new 1987 Pontiac 6000 STE was just the opposite of Matt's.

My STE was equipped with the 2.8-liter V-6 and four-speed automatic transmission, and the engine was the one item on the car that didn't fail. My Pontiac went 200,000-plus miles, and the only attention the engine needed (other than routine maintenance) was a water pump. It was back at the dealer many times for electrical issues, though. At around 80,000 miles, the steering wheel wouldn't turn in cold weather until the car fully warmed up. I learned to live with that malady as the car was out of warranty and the fix was more than I wanted to spend. It was a love/hate relationship with my Pontiac, but the car was comfortable and handled quite well. As for my new 1996 Oldsmobile Aurora, well, that is a story for another time!

Patrick Curran  
Woodstock, Connecticut

## **THE STORY OF THE S-10 BLAZER BY MATTHEW LITWIN**

reminded me of my own experience with the 2.8-liter V-6 from GM. In June of 1986, I purchased a 1986 Jeep Comanche XLS. I will have to give the little 2.8-liter V-6 engine a compliment, and in 125,000 miles it only let me down once, when the ignition coil failed. My ongoing headache was oil leaks. From the day I picked it up, if I drove it on the highway for an hour or so it would leak oil from the valve covers. The dealer tried to fix it for years, even after Chrysler purchased AMC. After repairs, the zone manager drove my Jeep locally and had no problem. When the dealer returned the vehicle to me, and I drove it from my home in West Norriton to southern York County, I arrived with oil dripping from the underside. The bottom of that truck never rusted.

After Chrysler took over, the company decided to replace the engine, which it did. Shortly after the dealer returned the truck to me, the flexplate cracked and the oil leaks continued. In 1989, I offered Chrysler a deal: If it would pay for an outside shop to do the work and supply me with a vehicle, I would let the company off the hook for the repairs. Chrysler agreed: I had the repair made by a local shop and did not have that problem anymore.

The 2.8-liter V-6 was inadequate, at best, for the job of powering that truck, but it did everything I asked (although slowly). Since then, I have had three Dodge trucks and have not had an oil leak. My present ride is a 2004 Dodge Ram 1500 Laramie with the Hemi and all-wheel drive. It has more than 207,000 miles on it and it's still going strong.

Harold Schwartz  
Red Lion, Pennsylvania

**OVER THE YEARS I'VE OWNED MANY FORDS, BUT MY** family and I have many happy memories owning Ford Pintos. I got married in 1974, and at that time my wife had a company car and I drove a 1966 Mustang fastback. Shortly thereafter, my wife left her job and the company car went with it. She tried to

*Continued on page 31*

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The bodies

on early cars

would be built

very much like

those on the

horse-drawn

carriages that

preceded

them.



## Early Coachwork—From Horse-drawn to Horsepower

The transition from horse-drawn wagons to motorized vehicles went fairly quickly, but the development of vehicle bodies, in all their variety, went through stages of progression, and an experimental period not often thought about or discussed.

As the motorcar chassis became more substantial and reliable, the designers and manufacturers of bodies, or “coachwork,” had to adapt to the new foundation for transportation.

The bodies on early cars would be built very much like those on the horse-drawn carriages that preceded them. A variety of hardwoods, glued together or fastened by hand-formed, forged metal brackets and screws, were used in body construction. Horse-drawn wagons were for the majority, fairly simple in design and often open. Enclosed, glass-window broughams, some fitted with a “landau” rear roof section that could be lowered in clear weather for fresh air and better views of the passing scenery, were seen in larger cities. These broughams were much more costly than an open carriage, and, like their horse-drawn predecessor, were often driven by chauffeurs. The broughams were powered by gasoline, steam, or batteries, depending upon the buyer’s choice of chassis.

The early automobile bodies were discussed often in publications of the era, and advertisements from distributors and builders were prolific. A copy of *The Horseless Age* magazine from 1903 carried an editorial on “Closed vehicles with side entrance” and their benefits, due to the fact that “our climate is considerably more severe than that of France and makes a closed body almost a necessity for country runs during the winter months.”

Rear wheels on open automobiles threw up the dirt of unpaved roads, so a “dust protector” for rear seat passengers of touring cars was promoted. Mounted to the rear of the body, this was a pair of rods that held in place a piece of

canvas, about three feet high and the width of the car. By keeping the dirt thrown from the rear wheels off of rear-seat passengers, it protected them and added to their comfort.

Prior to 1913, bodies were made of wood

and also rattan. These wood body panels were painted and varnished in the desired color, and required constant maintenance and refinishing to retain their appearance. For the wealthy, two bodies would usually be supplied – an open one for months of good weather, and an enclosed body with plate glass windows for winter use. Coachbuilders that had supplied bodies for horse-drawn carriages would adapt to now supplying bodies on a chassis with an engine of sufficient horsepower.

Motorcars built up to 1905 could be purchased as complete cars or as a bare chassis with all running gear attached, so the buyer could choose a custom body separately. Advertisements offering bodies, tops, and mud guards (fenders) abounded in the major automobile periodicals of the day, like *The Horseless Age* and *The Automobile*.

Rear tonneaus could be added to a two-seat runabout to convert it into a four- or five-passenger car. Early body manufacturers were Rattan Novelty Company of Indiana, C.R. Wilson Body Company of Michigan, J.S. Legget Manufacturing Company of New York, American Veneer Company of New Jersey, Springfield Metal Body Company of Massachusetts, and Cole & Woop of New York City. The manufacturers of tops, seats, and storm boots (covers) were also numerous.

Chassis were imported from Europe via the port of New York. Many were minus coachwork, but complete with hood, cowl, and fenders; this was done so the automobile would not be considered a complete product, lessening its import tax. Cole & Woop of New York City instructed customers, “You import the chassis and we fit it with our aluminum or wood bodies and save you money.”





drive the Mustang, but that didn't work at all. My brother Frank worked at Bill Pierre Ford in Seattle, so we went to test drive a new Pinto. It had automatic transmission and cost \$2,200, so the Mustang stayed and a new Pinto went home with us. It was a red three-door, and we drove it nearly 200,000 miles. The only replacement parts it needed were tires, brakes, regular services, and a new drive belt every 50,000 miles, but other than that, it had no problems.

I liked Pintos so well that in 1976 we added a Pinto wagon. Then, in 1980, we traded in the '74 Pinto on a new, fully-loaded coupe with air conditioning. These are great cars. I know you don't see many around anymore, yet go to Mexico and they are all over the place. Why? Because they are easy to keep going. Every time I see one of those "10 Worst Car" articles, and the Pinto is listed, it makes me mad.

Do they burn up? Bull! You take any small car, hit it hard in the rear end and the fuel tank will crush and fuel will come pouring out. There have been more car fires since cars have been downsized, so it only makes sense. The Pinto was a great car, and many of its parts, such as steering and front suspension, have ended up in hot rods. Yes, the Pinto was basic transportation, but it did its job well.

Daniel Kavanaugh  
Yelm, Washington

**I ENJOYED RICHARD'S COLUMN ON** British cars in *HCC* #191; it sounded so familiar! My dad was a manager of a body shop that was also a Renault and Citroën new car dealership. We had some great cars being worked on every day at the shop. Citroën, at that time, was selling the DS and SM models, and the SM—with

its Maserati drivetrain—was a car so far ahead of its time. I was into muscle cars, but the SM was so cool with its hydraulic suspension and advanced features like progressive power steering. A rubber button mounted on the floor was your brake pedal. I still remember the first time I drove one. My dad warned me to be careful and to watch out for the steering and the brakes. Being a young kid, of course I listened to my dad as I started out across the parking lot. I began to make a turn around some gas pumps, and when I turned the wheel, I nearly drove into them. I proceeded to hit the brakes, and almost went through the windshield. Wow! What a car! "I have to get one of these," I thought.

As time went on, we owned a 1963 Corvair Monza 900 two-door coupe, then we bought a 1970 MGB/GT. The MG looked like it was in great shape, but had been sitting in a barn and had not been driven for some years. When my family came for a visit, they walked into our house through the garage. My mom was British and saw the car. She asked if that was a British car, and when I responded "yes," she replied, "I knew you had it in your blood." My dad asked if I was crazy. And so, it began...

Glen Zabriskie  
Effort, Pennsylvania

**GOSH, HOW COULD YOU NOT MENTION** the amazingly unpopular Triumph Mayflower in your summary of British also-rans in *HCC* #191. Of the 35,000 Mayflowers made, from 1949 to 1953, 500 examples came to the U.S., through Fergus Motors in New York. This "Baby Rolls" wasn't all bad; it is a unibody, the suspension was later used in the TR-2,



and it has a synchro first gear. Unfortunately, the engine is a 1,247-cc Standard 10 flathead four-cylinder from the 1930s. Perhaps you should also have featured "British Not-So-Greats," but that may have required many more pages than you had available!

David Rutherford  
Brooksville, Florida

**I NOTICED THAT THE TOPS OF THE** headlamps on the 1961 Ford Galaxie Starliner in *HCC* #191 are blocked with chrome covers, and I question the degree to which this impacts headlamp performance. I've never seen it done this way—and, yes, I know it would look stupid—but don't these accessories actually cover the wrong half of the headlamp? With a standard reflector headlamp, it would seem that most of the light hitting the roadway comes from the upper half of the reflector, whereas the lower reflector mostly directs light upward. Is this correct and, if so, to what extent do these covers diminish the effectiveness of the headlamps? Thanks for a great publication.

Grey Pierson  
Arlington, Texas

Continued on page 33

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People of a  
certain age  
are growing  
nostalgic  
for those  
cars that  
were once  
ubiquitous.



## A World Gone Mad

**W**e are living in interesting times. COVID-19 has given me more time to watch what classics are underdogs, what prices they are commanding, and how long it takes to sell one.

For the last eight years, I have been writing about underdogs, first domestic and now international. At first, finding underdogs to highlight was a rather simple process. Now? Not so easy.

My choice of cars in the beginning was based on a few arbitrary, unilaterally decided-upon criteria. For example, priced less than \$7,000, available examples, and ease of maintenance, with ample parts and club support like the Ford Granada, Pontiac Astre, or AMC Hornet. I soon expanded the herd to include luxury cars that were selling for much less than their contemporaries, like 1951-'54 Packards, 1970s Cadillac Coupe de Villes, or 1963-'64 Chrysler New Yorkers. I had a few heated discussions about the latter category, but I continued to say that when it comes to some luxury cars, if you want one, you probably already have one, which is why several affordable examples are easy to find.

Now that I am approaching my 90th underdog, the world of cheap, obtainable classic cars has gone completely mad. It all started a couple of years ago when I was perusing the various auction results (my favorite sections) in an issue of *Hemmings Motor News*. There was a very nice Pinto Squire that sold for close to \$15,000. My jaw dropped. I knew the car and the owner, and yes, it was a pristine car, but who ever thought a Pinto would sell for five figures?

I have been asked, "What is this car worth?" My answer, "What someone is willing to pay."

What happened? A gorgeous Mercury Bobcat was featured in the pages of this magazine a few years ago, and there were plenty of letters to the editor questioning why it even appeared in *HCC*. I have received my own fair share of responses to my underdogs, in particular when I wrote about the Cadillac Cimarron. My column on the Ford Fairmont, early in my tenure, elicited a request for my dismissal from one dismayed reader. But, all that is changing.

Let's jump ahead to the present. The aforementioned Pinto was just the beginning. Soon after, a very nice Chevette was posted for sale and

within 24 hours, it sold for around \$7,000! Three similar Chevettes followed suit and others continue to pop up and sell quickly. I saw a base model 1976 AMC Matador, in beautiful condition, sell for \$2,500 in a matter of minutes, only to be flipped and sold for \$5,000 a few hours later. He didn't even bother to pick up the car. True story.

Are these anomalies? No.

People of a certain age are growing nostalgic for those cars that were once ubiquitous. Remember when every school parking lot had dozens of Chevettes, Mavericks, and Gremlins? Where are they now?

Second, I believe there is a growing appreciation for base models and entry-level cars, which were treated like throwaways and rarely survived, especially those from the 1960s and '70s, when a base model still looked like a base model.

There was a time when just about every car show featured only

top-of-the-line models with all available accessories, and then some. Not anymore.

What is your first reaction when you see a light blue 1960 Corvair 500 with painted wheels, black walls, bench seat, rubber floor mats, and a three-speed? There are no visual distractions to keep you from truly appreciating that Corvair's beauty, which is why no Corvair will ever be an underdog and why the 500s are as desirable as the Monzas, Spyders, and Corsas. In the early 1980s, you could pick up a Corvair for chump change. Now, fuhgettaboutit.

Also, there really aren't any entry-level, stripped-down base model cars available today. Consider this. What is the contemporary equivalent of a Chevette Scooter? My 2020 Chevrolet Spark with crank windows and a five-speed? If you buy a 1990s Ford Focus, do you think it will command high numbers like that Pinto in a decade or so?

Station wagons are no longer underdogs, because today they have been replaced by trucks masquerading as cars. I wish you a lot of luck finding an affordable classic wagon – even a Chevrolet Cavalier wagon.

Is all this good news or bad news? It depends on your perspective. Are you willing to buy a Pontiac 6000 in the hopes it will double in value? Or, are you in the market for one of the 1970s luxury cars that is now a dime a dozen? Today, you can afford either one.

One last thought: What is your reaction when you see a Yugo at a car show? Exactly. 🙄





**IN THE LATE 1950S, I WAS AN AP-**prentice automotive machinist in a small Colorado town. I have many fond memories of this job that gave me a chance to work on quite an assortment of engines. One in particular sticks in my memory: it was the engine from a 1957 Pontiac that belonged to a local rural mail delivery man. The thing that made this engine special was that it had gone more than 100,000 miles without its pan or cylinder heads being removed, so it attracted quite a lot of attention as nobody in the shop had ever seen an untouched 100,000-mile engine before.

Word quickly got out and almost every mechanic and car guy in town came to look at it. It was quite a sight as every moving part was worn well beyond factory wear limits, but nothing had failed. The rings were worn thin and knife edged, the bearings all had copper showing, and the cylinder heads contained badly worn valves, guides, seats, and springs. The owner attributed this long life to changing oil every 2,000 miles and never going over 60 mph. Rebuilding the short-block required a .040-over bore and a .020/.020

crank grind. The cylinder heads were beyond saving and were replaced by rebuildable junkyard heads. This engine was a subject of conversation for quite some time after it left the shop and it was a very long time before we saw anything like it.

I find it truly amazing that today you can disassemble a modern engine with well over 100,000 hard miles on it and find signs of the original factory cross hatch pattern in the cylinders. I have friends who go on about how great the old engines were and I enjoy talking about them (and loved working on them), but when someone brags about how long they lasted, I flash back to this 100,000-mile Pontiac engine. I would love to see how long a flathead Ford V-8 could be made to run with today's technology.

Charles Osborn  
Las Vegas, Nevada



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# 1955 Corvette

## First High-Performance 'Vette

BY TIM HOWLEY • PHOTOGRAPHS BY DAVID GOOLEY  
ADAPTED FROM *SPECIAL INTEREST AUTOS*—JULY/AUGUST 1997

NINETEEN fifty-five is a bewildering and little-known Chevrolet Corvette year with a mere 700 units produced. Corvette's lowest production year next to 1953. Yet it is a highly significant year, marking the birth of the V-8 and the beginning of Corvette high performance. To understand the year, you have to go back two years earlier to the Corvette's origins.

In the early Fifties, the European sports car invaded U.S. shores. It was led by the MG TD and Jaguar XK120, followed by the Nash-Healey, Austin-Healey, Triumph TR, etc. A sports car market of an estimated 20,000 had grown up overnight, especially in Southern California. Now GM's styling czar, Harley Earl, was keenly aware of this. In fact, he had a son entering college, whose classmates were driving around in new XK Jags and MGs. (See 1954 Corvette driveReport, *Special Interest Autos* #3, January/February 1971.)

Earl began sketching a mid-sized GM sports car with a V-8 engine. What Earl envisioned was a \$1,000 sports car for collegiates who couldn't afford Jags and MGs. He showed his simple sketches to Bob McLean, a recently hired designer engineer. McLean, in turn, laid out several full-sized views with major components in place. His version had a six-cylinder engine. At this point it was all pretty academic. No one upstairs had ordered a GM sports car. But a number of other events at GM at the time would change things.

Two GM Motorama cars, the LeSabre and XP-300, were meeting with wide public approval. The sports car styling was already there, it just had to be reduced in size. Then came the 1953 Motorama and the need for a Chevrolet entry. Earl's little roadster caught the attention of Ed Cole, who was then general manager of Chevrolet. Engineers assigned to the project included Bob McLean, Vince Kaptur Sr., Ed Cole, and Maurice Olley. But even at this point there was no serious thought of putting the car into production.

The original idea was to build, for show only, America's answer to the Jaguar. In fact, the wheelbase was set at the same 102 inches. It was a two-seat roadster with simple and very American lines, and for the time a minimum of chrome. The cockpit sat just forward of the rear axle and the engine sat as low as a Chevrolet six could without scraping up pavement. The chassis was a rather conventional X type, but the body was the new miracle material, fiberglass, or as it was called then, Glass Reinforced Plastic or GRP.

The front suspension was taken directly from the 1949-'54 Chevrolet passenger car, only the coil springs were a little heavier. The rear end was Hotchkiss drive, with leaf springs located outboard of the chassis. The stovebolt Chevrolet six was tweaked from 108 horsepower to 150 with a hot cam, higher compression ratio, three Carter YH carburetors mounted on the side to clear the hood, and dual exhausts. There were also solid valve lifters and dual-rate valve springs. Powerglide was the only transmission. A three-speed stick was never offered until very late in 1955. Later in the year, horsepower was raised to 155.

The Corvette was the Chevrolet Division's contribution



to the 1953 Motorama. It was the sensation of the show, and the widespread Motorama success was the main reason why the Corvette was immediately put into production. The next year, two other cars accompanied the Corvette to the 1954 Motorama: the Nomad station wagon and Corvair fastback. Both of these cars were based on the same chassis as the Corvette and had similar fiberglass bodies. In the case of the Nomad, the wheelbase was stretched to 115 inches and the overall length to 191 inches. The Nomad was so well received that it later became offered as a version of the 1955 Chevrolet. The Corvair's fastback styling inspired the Sixties Corvette Sting Ray.

Fiberglass was chosen for the body not only because it was then viewed as somewhat of an exotic, space-age material, but because the car could quickly be put in production in limited numbers. It would have taken much longer to gear up for Kirksite dies to stamp out steel bodies, and far more steel-bodied cars would have to be built just to break even.

The first Corvette rolled out of the factory in Flint, Michigan, the only place it was produced, in late September 1953. A lot has been written that it was not very successful at first. The truth was that Flint could only produce about five a day in the earliest months, and most of these went to important figures in major corporations and important political and military figures. By the end of 1953, only 300 Corvettes had been produced.

All of the original 300 1953 Corvettes were identical, white with red interiors. The base price of \$3,498 including Powerglide hardly reflected Earl's original intent, but it was still a lot less expensive than a Jaguar. The only extras were signal-seeking AM radio, heater, and whitewall tires. All were sold with all these extras except perhaps white-sidewall tires.





The Corvette went into 1954 essentially unchanged. Production was moved to St. Louis, where 1,000 cars a month could be built. Originally Chevrolet thought it could sell 10,000 1954 models. By now it was evident that sales would not meet expectations: 3,640 were built by model year end, but only about 2,500 had been sold. It would be 1956 before the Corvette would begin to sell in any numbers.

Quite a number of reasons have been cited for the poor sales performance of the 1954 Corvette. Originally it was planned to sell a lot of them to celebrities. The celebrities did not buy them in the numbers anticipated. There was, at the time, a widespread misunderstanding as to what constituted a sports car. While it certainly was a true sports car, many purists did not view it as such. As a sports car, the Corvette did not have roll-down side windows or a hardtop that could be attached. Consequently, it leaked to an annoying degree. The six-cylinder engine, lack of a manual transmission, and a degree of handling problems have also been attributed to the 1954 Corvette's limited sales.

But the overriding reason may have been lack of advertising and publicity. The division at the time simply was not geared to promoting the car. It was sort of a situation of, well now we have it, so what are we going to do with it? No road tests on the Corvette appeared until Christmas 1953, and little if any advertising appeared until almost the end of the 1954 model year. If you wanted a 1954 Corvette you almost had to discover it in a dealer's showroom.

For 1954, steel bodies were planned, which would have provided for much higher production. But fiberglass bodies were continued, which at the time did not permit very high production.

1955 saw the introduction of Chevrolet's new 265-cu.in. OHV V-8. The manual transmission was not available until very late in the year, and even then only an estimated 75 or so were so equipped, none of them sixes.

The V-8 engine offered in 1955 was technically not an option. The engine was a modification of the 265-cu.in. Chevrolet passenger-car engine introduced that same year. With its 195-horsepower rating, as opposed to 162 horsepower for the standard engine, it is similar but not identical to the 1955 Chevrolet with Plus-Power Package. It has a revised cam and solid lifters, but the compression ratio remains at 8.0:1. It is equipped with a four-barrel carburetor, automatic choke, and longer mufflers than previous six-cylinder models. V-8 ignition shielding consists of chrome distributor and coil covers with bails, braided and grounded plug wires, and wire carriers behind the exhaust manifolds. Valve covers of the 1955 V-8 models are chrome plated, with Chevrolet scripts. The 1955 Corvette did not share the 1955 Chevrolet's new ball joint front suspension. The old 1949-'54 Chevrolet front suspension was retained through 1962.

There were some modifications made at the front of the frame to accommodate the V-8 engine. There were some very minor cockpit modifications. For example, the manual choke space is blank on the instrument panel.

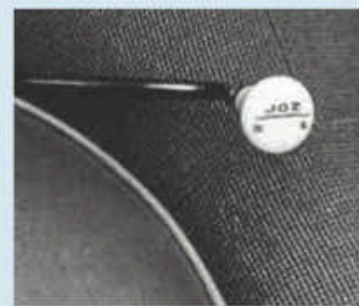
The "V" identification, a large gold "V" on the side, separates the eight from the six for identification purposes. Otherwise the models are identical in styling and detail. Six-cylinder models are virtual duplicates of the 1954 models and still have the six-volt electrical system. It is unclear how many six-cylinder models were produced for 1955, probably no more than a dozen.

For 1955 there was a choice of a Polo White, Harvest Gold,





**Symmetrical instrument layout makes oil and amp gauges difficult for driver to see. Baffling Powerglide control comes out of side of tunnel-like early Austin-Healy shifters.**



Gypsy Red, Corvette Copper, and Pennant Blue. 1955 is the most confusing of all model years regarding color. Just how many colors were factory applied remains a mystery. Also not clear are soft top colors and materials. Earlier models have a canvas top. Sometime during 1955, vinyl tops appeared.

Corvettes did not have power steering and power brakes until 1963, and the 1955 list of options was as basic as James Dean's wardrobe. The complete list was simply directional lights, \$16.75; heater, \$91.40; signal-seeking radio, \$145.15; Powerglide, \$178; windshield washer, \$11.85; parking brake alarm, \$5.65; courtesy lights, \$4.05; and whitewall tires, \$26.90. Except for radio, heater, and whitewall tires, the complete list was mandatory.

Some were sold new with blackwall tires, but only one has been found without a heater. \$2,774 was the base price for a six, \$2,909 was the base price for the eight. With either engine you paid extra for the Powerglide. If you ordered the six you got a 155-horsepower "tri-carb" engine. With the V-8 you got a 195-horsepower engine with four-barrel carburetor.

Hardtops were not available through 1955, but aftermarket hardtops were marketed by some dealers.

With the smashing success of the 1955 Chevrolet passenger car and the introduction of the V-8 on the Corvette, many will ask why only 700 Corvettes were built for the 1955 model

year, making this Corvette's lowest year of production, except 1953. The reasons are many and still do not provide a complete answer.

With over 1,000 unsold 1954 Corvettes on hand at the beginning of the 1955 model year, Chevrolet was slow to produce the 1955 models. In an article on early Chevrolet V-8 performance in *Special Interest Autos* #27, March-April 1975, Karl Ludvigsen wrote, "The art of creating hybrid engine/car combinations was still in its infancy, and anyway Chevy had first to meet the demand for the new engines from its own customers in that boom sales year of 1955. In fact, that's the reason why the Corvette, such an obvious choice to be given V-8 power, didn't get the new engine as an option until midway through the 1955 model year. Chevy wanted to keep the V-8 for the sedans, and use the Corvette to keep attention focused on the old Blue-Flame Six. It was just the opposite approach from what enthusiasts expected."

According to Bert Lukins, a 1955 authority in the National Corvette Restorers Society, Ludvigsen's statement is not completely accurate. The 1955 Chevrolet came as a V-8 from the beginning of its production in January 1955 through January 1956, when the 1956 Corvette began production.

Another factor in the 1955 Corvette's limited production was that Ford introduced its Thunderbird for 1955. While not exactly a sports car, the Thunderbird's all-steel body, roll up windows, optional hardtop, and more conventional styling gave it far wider appeal than the Corvette. Ford produced 16,155 Thunderbirds for the 1955 model year. Chevrolet's feeling, at least for the time being, was why even bother to compete. A further deterrent to 1955 Corvette sales was lack of a standard transmission for the V-8 until the very end of the model year.

However, the underlying reason had to be that the Chevrolet Division simply did not choose to build more than 700 Corvettes.

During this period, Zora Arkus-Duntov rescued the Corvette from certain extinction and made the 1956 model the first true racing Corvette. Still, production that year was only 3,467. 1957 production was up to 6,339. In 1958, a sharp recession year, production was up to 9,168. Still, it would be 1966 before Corvette production would equal and top that of the 1955 Thunderbird.

Our '55 Corvette driveReport car is owned by Jim Haight, founder of Bonanza Corvettes in San Diego. The business sells vintage and used Corvettes, and has about 100 in stock at all



**driveReport car has been personally autographed by its chief creator. Chromed valve covers distinguish Corvette engine from Chevy passenger car V-8s.**





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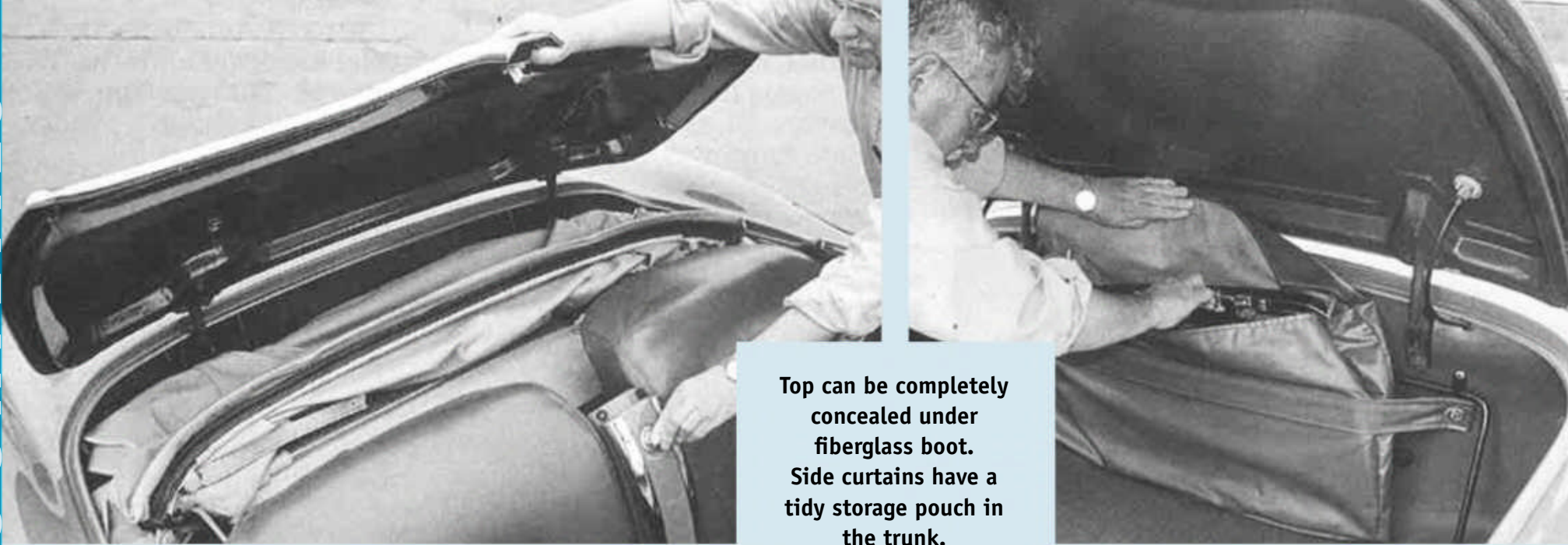
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**Top can be completely concealed under fiberglass boot. Side curtains have a tidy storage pouch in the trunk.**

times. Corvettes like this one are the personal property of the founder, not for sale at any price. Moreover, this one is an all-original car with 91,000 miles and is signed under the hood by Zora Arkus-Duntov, a key member of the original Corvette team and Corvette chief engineer in 1956.

Jim Haight bought the car 15 years ago from a friend who was going through a divorce. He believes it to be the finest all-original 1955 Corvette in existence. The serial number of this one is E55S001385, meaning it was the 385th of 700 built.

While any '55 Corvette looks as sporty as Rock Hudson, and most have the V-8 engine, underneath all are about as exciting as Mr. Peepers. Within this Motorama dream car lurked Aunt Maude's Chevrolet sedan, shortened, tuned, fitted with an open drive line and Hotchkiss rear suspension, and, horror of horrors, a two-speed Powerglide.

In retrospect, the chassis specifications look pathetic for a high-performance sports car. However, you must judge the model in mid-Fifties perspective, before Duntov got hold of it. While the car appears klutzy in comparison to Corvettes since, it compared quite favorably in performance and handling with other sports cars of its day. A '55 Corvette could sprint from 0-60 in under 9 seconds and easily achieve 100 mph.

Chevrolet made no bones that the Corvette was built to compete with the Jaguar XKs. Unfortunately this resulted in poor driver-to-wheel position, mediocre handling, and dicey brakes. Had Ferrari, Maserati, Alfa Romeo, Mercedes-Benz or Porsche been the target, the Corvette might have had a happier beginning.

From its inception, the early Corvette was a compromise. Springs were soft front and rear. Suspension and a large-

diameter anti-roll bar produced an annoying amount of understeer. Maurice Olley's suspension system placed the rear leaf springs far outboard and angled them inward from their fronts to ensure lots of roll understeer. Front suspension remained stock Chevrolet with only a stabilizer bar added.

We felt that the '55 Corvette gave a firm, smooth ride, and although hardly thrilling in the turns, was quite safe and forgiving. In fact, we were surprised at the rather small amount of lean. Overall, however, we had to rate it as a "boulevard" car as opposed to the XK120 with its stiffer ride and true sports car cornering capabilities. Looking back, we will be first to admit that in the 1955 road races where Corvette did compete, it fared quite nicely.

Among our minor petty peeves, the shifting arrangement left us totally confused. The automatic floor shift is reverse, then low, drive, neutral and park in an odd zig-zag pattern. Windshield washer is actuated by the floor pedal. Opening the doors is even more confusing. The forward knob is to open the door and the backward knob is a release control for the side curtains. Of course, there are no outside door handles. You will never get into the trunk until you finally discover that the unlock button is concealed underneath the trunklid. On the plus side, we liked the simple, straightforward arrangement of the instruments which are, left to right: fuel, temperature, tachometer, then battery, oil pressure, and, finally, a clock.

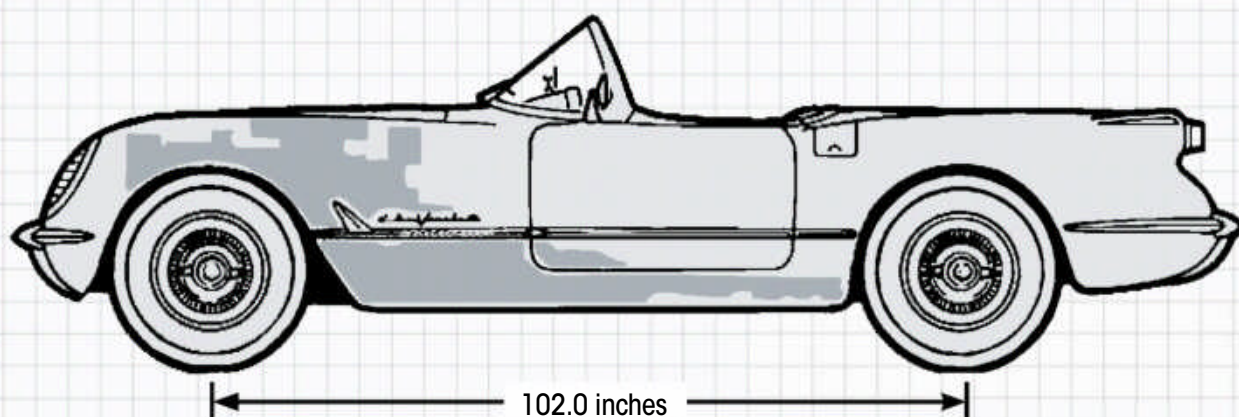
In an attempt to keep the car as low priced as possible, and a true sports car, there were side curtains instead of rollup windows, no outside door handles, a fabric top only, and no hardtop offered by the factory. There was a minimum of frills. Of course, all of this turned off the typical Chevrolet buyer, which was reflected in disappointing 1955 sales. 🐞





# 1955 CHEVROLET CORVETTE

ILLUSTRATIONS BY RUSSELL VON SAUERS,  
THE GRAPHIC AUTOMOBILE STUDIO © 1997 SPECIAL INTEREST AUTOS



## SPECIFICATIONS

### PRICE

BASE PRICE	\$2,909
PRICE AS EQUIPPED	\$3,389
OPTIONS	Carries all the mandatory options, which are directional lights, windshield wipers, parking brake alarm light, courtesy lights, plus the non-mandatory options of signal-seeking radio, heater, and whitewall tires

### ENGINE

TYPE	OHC V-8
BORE X STROKE	3.75 inches x 3 inches
DISPLACEMENT	265 cubic inches
COMPRESSION RATIO	8.0:1
HORSEPOWER @ RPM	195 @ 5,000
TORQUE @ RPM	N/A
VALVE LIFTERS	Hydraulic
MAIN BEARINGS	5
INDUCTION SYSTEM	Carter four-barrel
FUEL SYSTEM	Vacuum pump, camshaft driven
EXHAUST SYSTEM	Dual

### TRANSMISSION

TYPE	Powerglide two-speed automatic with torque converter
RATIOS	1st 1.82:1 2nd 1.00:1 Reverse 1.82:1

### DIFFERENTIAL

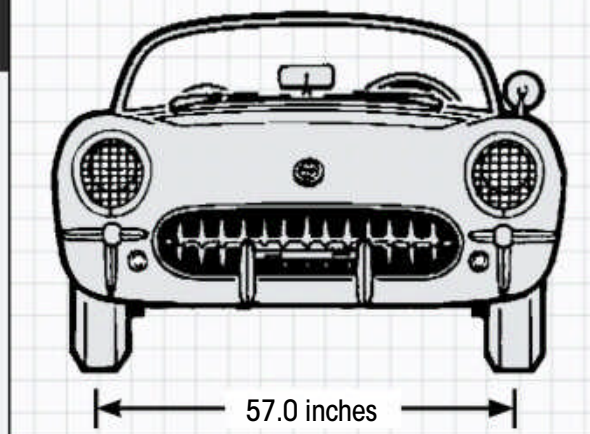
TYPE	Hotchkiss, spiral bevel gears
RATIO	3.55:1
DRIVE AXLES	Semi-floating

### STEERING

TYPE	Semi-irreversible worm and sector
TURNS LOCK-TO-LOCK	4.5
RATIO	16:1
TURN CIRCLE	36.75 feet

### BRAKES

TYPE	Four-wheel drums, hydraulic, internal expanding
DRUM DIAMETER	11 inches
EFFECTIVE AREA	154.4 square inches



### CHASSIS AND BODY

FRAME	Box-girder steel, X-member double dropped
BODY	Laminated fiberglass-reinforced plastic
BODY STYLE	Two-door, two-passenger roadster, manual top, side curtains

### SUSPENSION

FRONT	Independent, unequal A-arms, coil springs, stabilizer bar, tubular hydraulic shock absorbers
REAR	Longitudinal leaf springs, hydraulic shock absorbers
TIRES	6.70 x 15 four-ply tube type
WHEELS	Drop-center rim, pressed steel

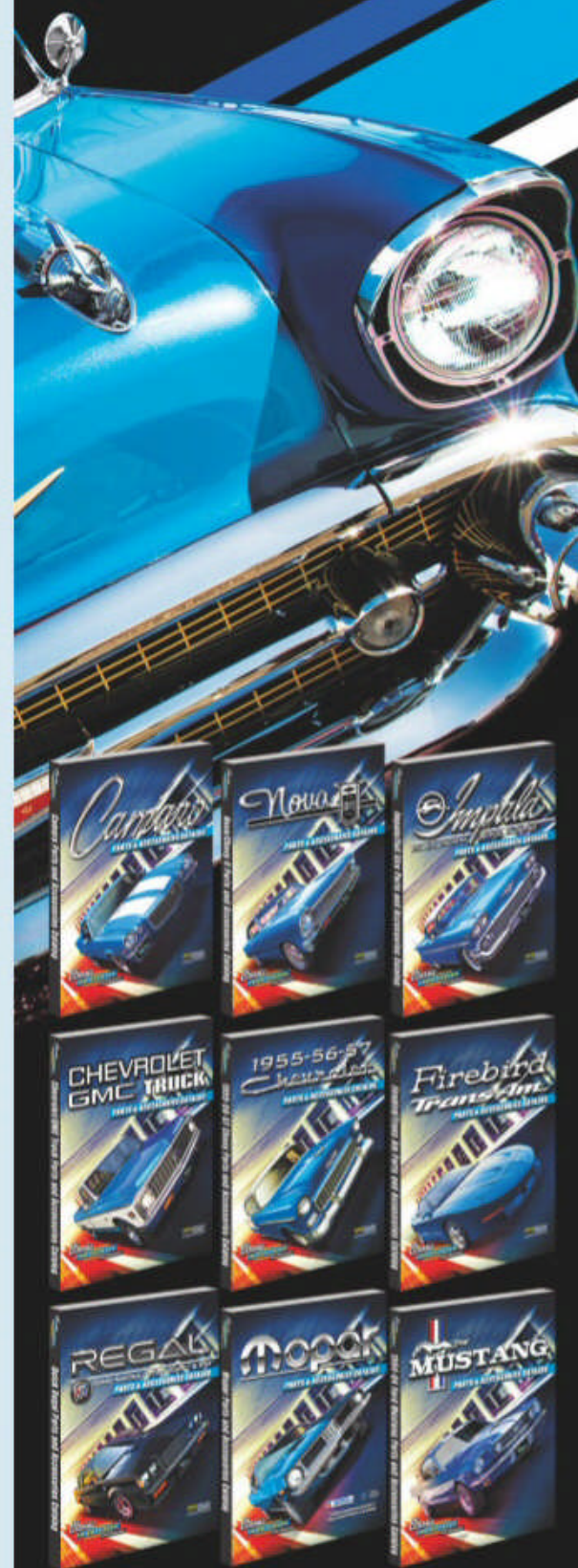
### WEIGHTS AND MEASURES

WHEELBASE	102.0 inches
OVERALL LENGTH	167.0 inches
OVERALL WIDTH	72.24 inches
OVERALL HEIGHT	51.25 inches
FRONT TRACK	57.0 inches
REAR TRACK	59.0 inches
GROUND CLEARANCE	6.0 inches
SHIPPING WEIGHT	2,750 pounds

### CAPACITIES

CRANKCASE	5 quarts
COOLING SYSTEM	17.75 quarts
FUEL TANK	17.25 gallons

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# Road Trippin'

*Building an L79 327/350-hp Corvette convertible for spirited touring*



BY THOMAS A. DeMAURO • PHOTOGRAPHY BY MIKE McNESSOR, TERRY McGEAN, AND JIM O'CLAIR  
RESTORATION PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF RICH ROSETTI

Corvettes were meant to be driven with enthusiasm and reverence, and the mid-year offerings (1963 to 1967) set notably high standards for styling, performance, and image. Their curvaceous body design, formidable engines, agile handling, and amply instrumented twin-cowl cockpit made them perennial wish-list darlings among driving aficionados, racers, and collectors.

Rich Rosetti of Albany County, New York, restored and mildly upgraded this 1966 example for the express purpose of piloting it often. Aftermarket shocks, electronic ignition, P215/70R15 BFGoodrich Radial T/A tires with redlines added, throatier mufflers, Hurst shifter, power steering, and air conditioning were all installed to enhance the behind-the-wheel experience.

"This is the car I'd wanted my whole life," Rich explains. "When I was a kid, a neighbor, who was about 10 years older than me, had a Nassau Blue 1966 Corvette convertible that he was restoring in his parents' driveway. Every time I saw it, I dreamed of the day when I would own one just like it."

Rich later became a home builder and then a commercial real estate developer, and he even owned two automobile dealerships. His car collection continued to grow, and today he has about 80 GM, Italian, and German models. Among the five mid-year Corvettes is this Nassau Blue convertible.

He found it in April 2006 in New Hampshire, through a *Hemmings* ad. It was a 100,000-mile driver with one repaint and its original, extra-cost L79 327, backed by an M20 four-speed and a 3.36:1 gear ratio Positraction rear axle.

Additional options included an AM/FM radio, power windows, and dark blue leather upholstery.

"After driving it for a few years, I wanted to do a mechanical restoration to make it more reliable for longer trips," he recalled. "It snowballed, however, and I ended up tearing it down completely. The joke around my shop is, 'Don't let Rich do an oil change on your car because he'll take it apart.'"

This project began in 2010 with the separation of the body from the chassis in Rich's fully equipped home shop. He relates that much of the work was performed simultaneously on different areas. The chassis was restored while the bodywork was in process and the engine was out for rebuilding. Rich received some help from friends and an employee.

The 350-hp L79 327 received a .030-inch overbore. Its forged-steel





crankshaft and rods were refurbished, and oversized forged-aluminum pistons were added. A stock-spec hydraulic camshaft with 342-degrees advertised duration and .447-inch lift was installed. The heads were rebuilt, and the 2.02/1.60-inch valve sizes were retained, as were the Holley carburetor and aluminum intake manifold. Rich's friend, Gary LaSota, rebuilt the M20 wide-ratio four-speed and rear end.

As part of the chassis restoration, single-stage PPG black acrylic urethane was applied to the ladder-type frame and certain other components over DP90 epoxy primer. Rich recalls, "Usually the finish is too shiny or flat in these areas on restored Corvettes, but this one is perfect. I got the code (95001) from the instructor when I went to PPG paint school in Connecticut around 2005."

Also meticulously restored was

the unequal-length control arm front suspension with coil springs and anti-roll bar, and the independent rear featuring a differential (attached to the frame via a rubber-isolated crossmember), double U-jointed tubular axle shafts, transverse-mounted multi-leaf spring, radius rods, and control arms.

The power-assisted four-wheel disc brake system with dual-circuit master cylinder was revamped with new 11.75-inch diameter rotors, pads, lines, and hoses. Its four-piston calipers were upgraded with stainless-steel sleeves during their rebuilds.

The fiberglass-reinforced plastic body panels were stripped with paint remover, and then lacquer thinner and Scotchbrite pads were used to eliminate the primer underneath. Rich explains, "I didn't want to sand the



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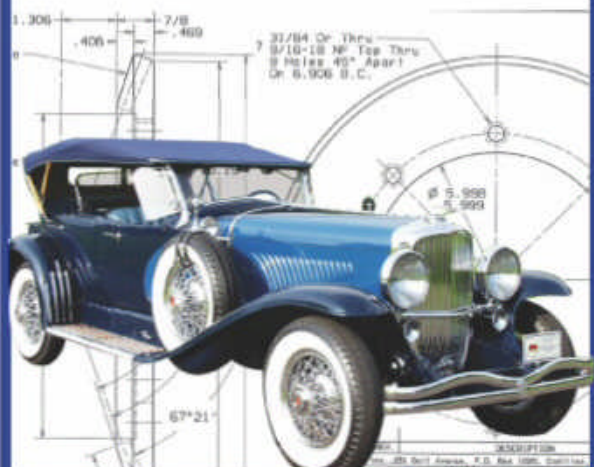
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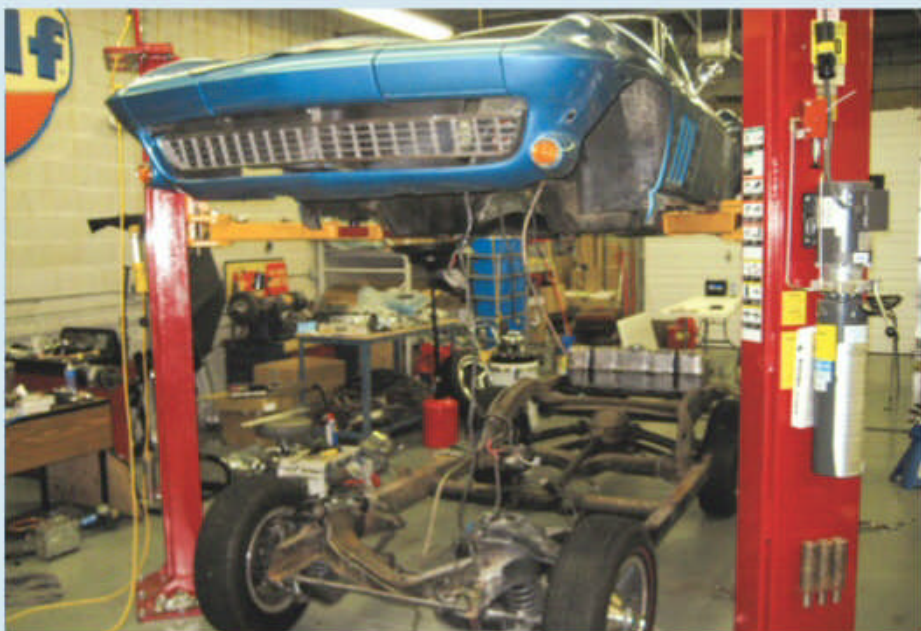


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The engine and transmission were previously hoisted out when only a mechanical restoration was being contemplated. Once that changed, all the fasteners and any other connections to the frame were removed and the body was lifted off of the chassis.



Here's the frame before its restoration. It will be sandblasted, small dings will be repaired, and the remaining rust pits filled. PPG epoxy primer will be applied followed by black paint. Fortunately, no major side-rail or crossmember repairs were needed.



The chassis was reassembled with both new and restored components. Once the engine returned from the rebuilder and was detailed, it was bolted in along with the refurbished bellhousing, new clutch, rebuilt four-speed, and non-stock Hurst shifter.



At the far end of the painted driveshaft, the rebuilt and detailed differential and suspension were mounted. Later, a reproduction multi-leaf rear spring was swapped in to ensure a proper ride height. High-performance shocks were painted to look stock.



With the stock heater box and blower motor removed from the non-A/C firewall, the positioning of the required openings and fasteners was revealed. Said pass-throughs are smaller and differently designed from what is needed for the factory A/C system.



To install the air conditioner components, this area had to be significantly reworked by cutting the openings' edges and filling in extraneous holes to revise the shapes, and by drilling additional holes for the relocated fasteners.





After the bodywork, epoxy primer was applied, followed by high-build primer, which was block sanded. Another coat of epoxy primer served as a sealer. The jambs and the insides of the doors were then painted body color and the doors were bolted on.

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Two applications of PPG paint in the Nassau Blue base color were followed by three coats of clear. The latter was wet sanded using up to 800-grit paper. Two additional coats of clear were sprayed and final wet sanding, with up to 3,000-grit paper, was completed.



The finish was then buffed and polished. For much of the project, the body was bolted to this rolling jig via its mounting points, to keep it from flexing. When the body was previously mounted to a rotisserie, X-braces added to its door jambs retained structural integrity.



About a year after they were separated, the body and chassis were reunited using a lift to lower the body onto its new frame mounts. Note the addition of the factory A/C compressor and brackets on the engine, and the condenser in the grille opening.



The interior was fitted with Dynamat Xtreme to reduce noise and vibrations, and the factory A/C system upgrade is shown in process. The shifter handle was protected with tape, and a reminder note regarding the steering system was affixed to the column.

body to remove the paint because I didn't want to reduce the sharpness of the character lines."

One of the louvered fender panels was replaced with an NOS piece due to damage, as was the section under the grille. Panel alignment and gaps were checked on an ongoing basis as the bodywork progressed.

PPG DP90 epoxy primer was applied to the body, followed by high-build primer, which was block sanded until all the panels were straight. Then, an additional coat of epoxy primer was laid down. PPG Deltron basecoat in Nassau Blue was sprayed in the door jambs, the doors were then mounted, and the body received two coats of color

and three coats of clear. The finish was wet sanded smooth, and then two more clear coats were shot. Wet sanding, compounding, polishing with 3M products, and a brilliant shine followed.

The powertrain was bolted into the chassis, as was most of the reproduction exhaust system, fabricated in stainless steel and upgraded with Magnaflow

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As the high-end restoration of this Sting Ray progressed to nearing completion, the grille was installed, as were the re-chromed front bumper assembly and crossed-flags emblem. The hood was bolted on next.



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Factory-installed options include dark blue leather upholstery, AM/FM radio, and power windows. A/C, power steering, telescopic steering column, and a teakwood steering wheel were added during the restoration.

mufflers. The body and chassis were reattached to one another and the rest of the exhaust was installed.

Adding air conditioning turned out to be more complicated than Rich initially expected. "I thought it would be a bolt-in since it was a factory system, but I had to modify the firewall because the configuration is different between the A/C and non-A/C cars. Space to work behind the dashboard, to install the system, was also limited."

A new convertible top, carpet, and door panels were also fitted, as well as the restored seats, featuring new foam and the correct dark blue leather upholstery.

With the restoration nearing completion, a few issues arose, however. The carburetor's secondaries weren't opening, but more serious was a rear main seal oil leak that ultimately required the removal and disassembly of the 327 V-8 to repair the crankshaft. Once the engine was reassembled and reinstalled, Gary worked out the carb issue and tuned the engine.

Except for a close call with the cast-aluminum Quick Take-Off (aka knock-off) wheels loosening up while driving, which prompted Rich to replace them with bolt-on reproductions, the Sting Ray has since been reliable over the 1,000-plus miles per year added to its odometer.

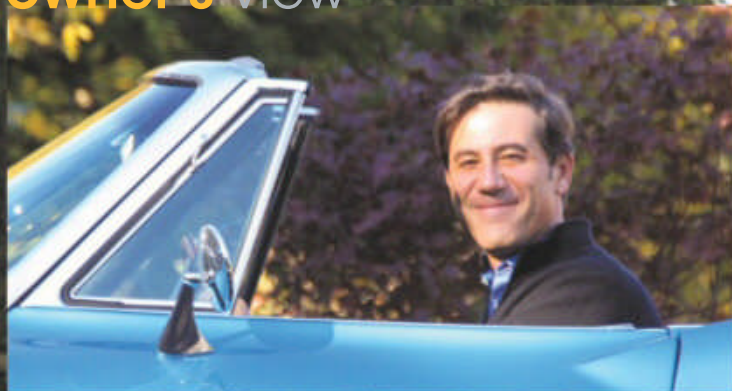
"I've made some good memories over numerous road trips," Rich recalls. "The Corvette pulls hard through the gears, provides a great connection with the road, and is probably the best-braking car of its era. By restoring it to my tastes and adding the options I wanted, it's almost like ordering a car from the dealer with exactly what I desired. If for some reason I had to get rid of my cars, this is the one I'd keep." 🏁

The 350-hp 327-cu.in. V-8 was rebuilt to mostly stock specifications, except for a .030 overbore, electronic ignition, and other small enhancements.





## owner's view



**A**esthetically, I think the mid-year Corvettes are one of the best-looking generations—they were really ahead of their time. When I was a kid, my neighbor's '66 Corvette inspired me to someday own one. I even bought a Schwinn bicycle in the same color, because I loved it so much. Though he sold his many years ago, he kept its hardtop, and a few years ago he gave it to me. I'm really pleased with how my '66 Corvette turned out. It's nice to finally have a car that I don't have to write a list of things to fix when I get out of it.



19<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL

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#6344 - Phoenix, AZ

2nd PLACE - \$500

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#3282 - Old Town, FL

3rd PLACE - \$250

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# Out of Hiding!

*Thrice a barn find,  
this rare 1927 Stearns-Knight  
Model F sedan is motoring again*

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY MATTHEW LITWIN

**H**anging out with a group of vintage car owners is like spending an afternoon with fishermen after they return to the dock. The parallels between the fish and car that got away are too remarkable to be a coincidence. The size of the fish that escaped the net equals the condition of a long-hidden Cadillac; its feistiness on the line as spritely as an Auburn roadster; sleekness in the water as slippery as the low-cut lines on a Packard Darrin. Or, more appropriately, a Chevrolet Corvette. You get the idea, and unless you were there to see it, these stories are either taken with a grain of salt, or swallowed whole.

If history has proven anything, it's that some of these tales turn out to be remarkably true accounts. One such reality is both the history and rediscovery of the rare 1927 Stearns-Knight sedan gracing these pages, now under the care of Judd Gregory, who maintains a residency in Manchester, Vermont.

"It's one of those stories about being in the right place at the right time," Judd told us. "Having recently sold my 1947 Lincoln Continental convertible, I was scrolling through a social media site and saw the Stearns-Knight. The post didn't include a price, so I dismissed it as not being a real 'for sale' listing, that is until it reappeared a week later with an asking price in the Albany, New York, area. I called the seller and went right over; I dropped everything I was doing. If it was real, I was going to be the one to find out."

The sedan that captured Judd's attention was advertised as an original, unrestored Model F. Judd discovered the sedan's heavily worn interior and exterior to be true to the listing, epitomizing the truest meaning of the words "barn find," but mechanically it functioned like the well-maintained, exceptionally tuned \$3,500 luxury car it was when new.

"A lot of people forget that in the mid-Twenties, the Stearns-Knight was every bit a luxury car as that of the larger Cadillacs and Packards, as well as Marmon and the like," Judd recounted. "What it lacked was the awareness of some of the other makes; its production didn't match that of its competition and, by the time Stearns-Knight was under Willys control, the company was already fiscally in trouble. Its stock plummeted to less than 13 cents per share and the doors were shuttered by December 1929."

Indeed, F.B. Stearns & Company had established itself as a luxury brand almost as soon as Frank Ballou Stearns had formally incorporated it within the confines of Cleveland, Ohio, in 1898. Two years prior, he had built his first car at age 17. By 1902, the Stearns-labeled cars included an exceptionally large, 6.25 x 7.50-inch bore and stroke, single-cylinder engine rated for 11 horsepower. Three years later, the Stearns two-cylinder model could achieve 40 mph. A four-cylinder 1907 Stearns — costing a whopping \$4,500 — became the first full-bodied car



EMMA DENNIS









**Massive steering wheel provides better torque to manipulate the steering linkage while parked; well-aged rear bench seat offers ample room for two. Odometer shows 8,100 miles; clock is original.**



to reach the summit of Pikes Peak with a full complement of seven passengers.

While the list of mechanical improvements and record-breaking headlines served the company well in the first decade of its existence, pushing production from 50 units in 1900 to roughly 873 in 1910, it was the news from 1911 that helped drive production to nearly 1,500 cars: F.B. Stearns & Company had become the first American firm to license the Knight engine, prompting the formal change to Stearns-Knight for the 1912 model year.

Briefly, the Knight engine was revolutionary. In lieu of a contemporary poppet-valve engine design, it featured a pair of concentric cast-iron sleeves that moved up and down between the pistons and cylinder walls. The air/fuel intake and exhaust gases flowed through ports incorporated into the sleeves. Aside from otherwise unobstructed ports, the engine offered a hemispherical combustion chamber for optimum flame propagation; it was also smooth and silent, which placed it in the same hierarchy as Packard's legendary eight. Longevity and trouble-free operation were other noteworthy characteristics favored

by discerning buyers, or at least those who knew of the company's mechanical prowess and exceptional build quality.

As the calendar turned to 1927, Stearns-Knight started the season with two trim levels: the six-cylinder Model D, which rode on a svelte 107-inch-wheelbase chassis, and the upscale eight-cylinder Model G, built atop a roomy 137-inch-wheelbase chassis. A minimum of eight body styles were available in either variant (the Model D was offered with 10) with a price structure comparable to its luxury contemporaries. The Model F, at least on paper, was forthcoming for the '28 model year, which was set to utilize the Model G chassis while simultaneously

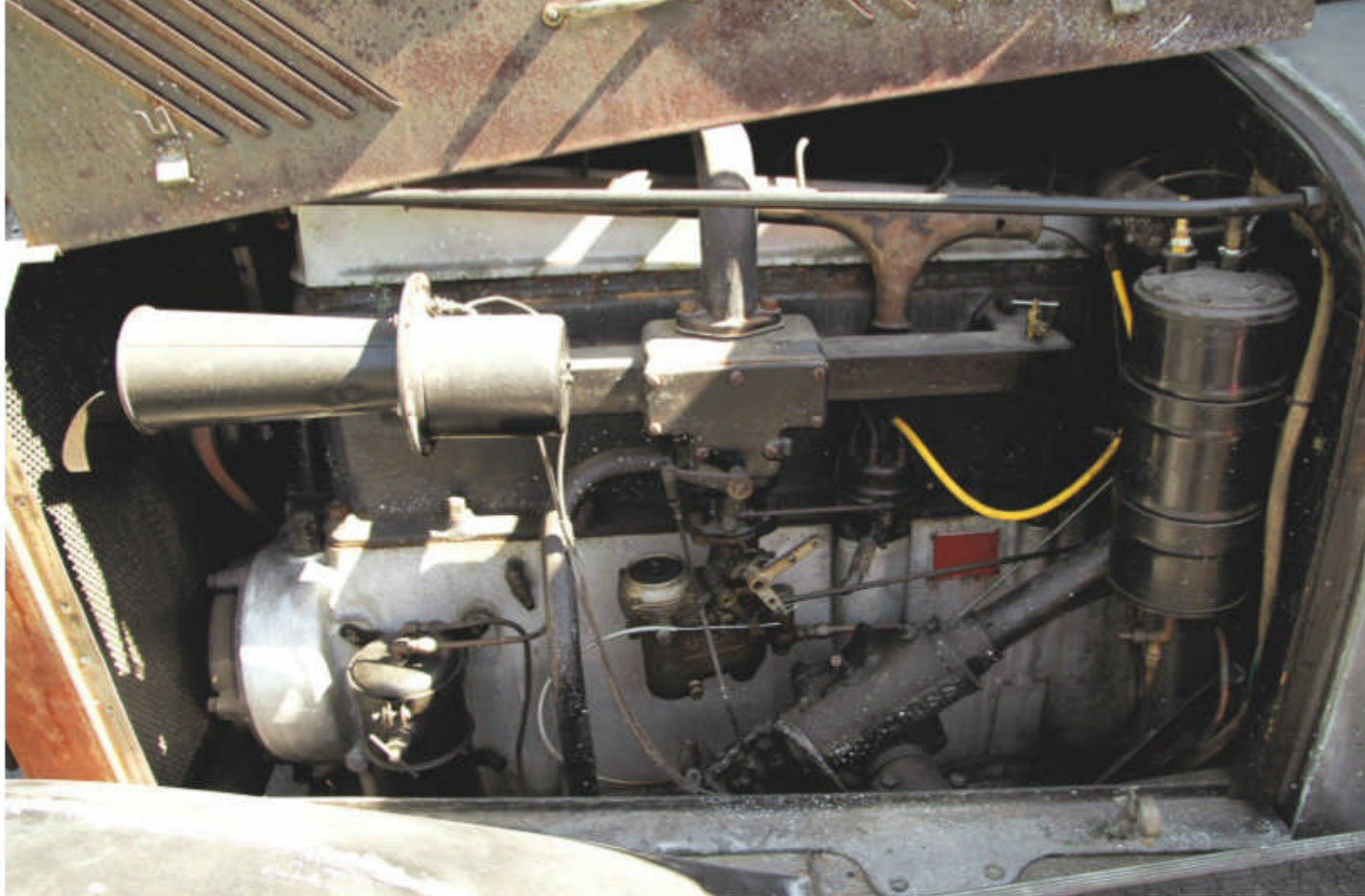
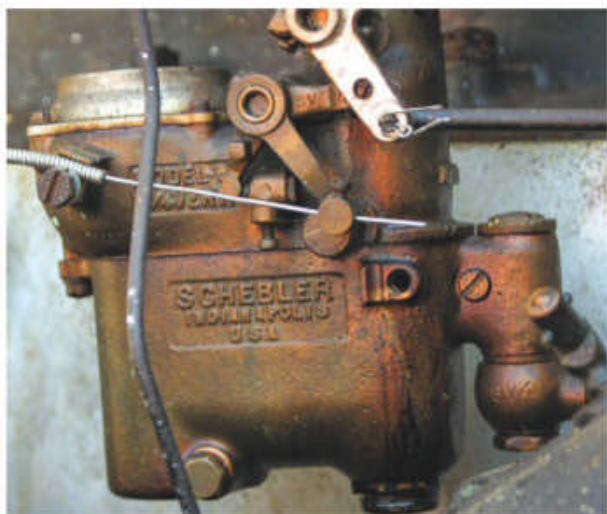
eliminating the smaller Model D. The Stearns-Knight confronting Judd, however, was a 1927 Model F, as indicated by the letter "F" prefix associated with its six-cylinder engine number. Furthermore, the car's listing in a copy of the Willys-Overland-Knight Registry helped cement its existence as a legitimate, known car from the Roaring Twenties.

According to Judd, "The seller pointed out that, at the time the car was accepted into the club registry, only a few of them were extant. Then he told me that only three people had owned the car since new. The first owner was a wealthy farmer from Averill Park, New York, who also turned out to be in the construction business. His name seems to be lost to history now, but if you believe the rumors, he drove the car two years until the stock market crashed, at which point he parked it in a barn until it was sold to a General Electric executive by the name of Bill Shimer in or about 1980. Bill used the car a bit until it was parked again and sold in roughly 2005 to Mr. Constantino of Schenectady. Although he registered the car with the club, he never registered the car at DMV. When he passed, his son listed the car for sale and I just happened



*I'm essentially the first person to drive the car legally in the last decade-plus; it's such a fun car.*





**This six-cylinder version of the Knight engine used in the Model F touted 288 cubic inches of displacement and 81 horsepower.**

to be the first guy to respond. I'm essentially the first person to drive the car legally in the last decade-plus; it's such a fun car."

At the time of our visit, Judd extended an invitation to drive his time capsule. Despite it being a luxury car, negotiating my 10½-size feet between the bench seat and door jamb took some effort. Once inside, there is ample space to spread out. The 360-degree view was both airy and unimpeded by the supporting roof pillars. Judd then provided tips to start the seemingly untampered 288-cu.in., 81-hp six-cylinder engine. After I pulled the choke

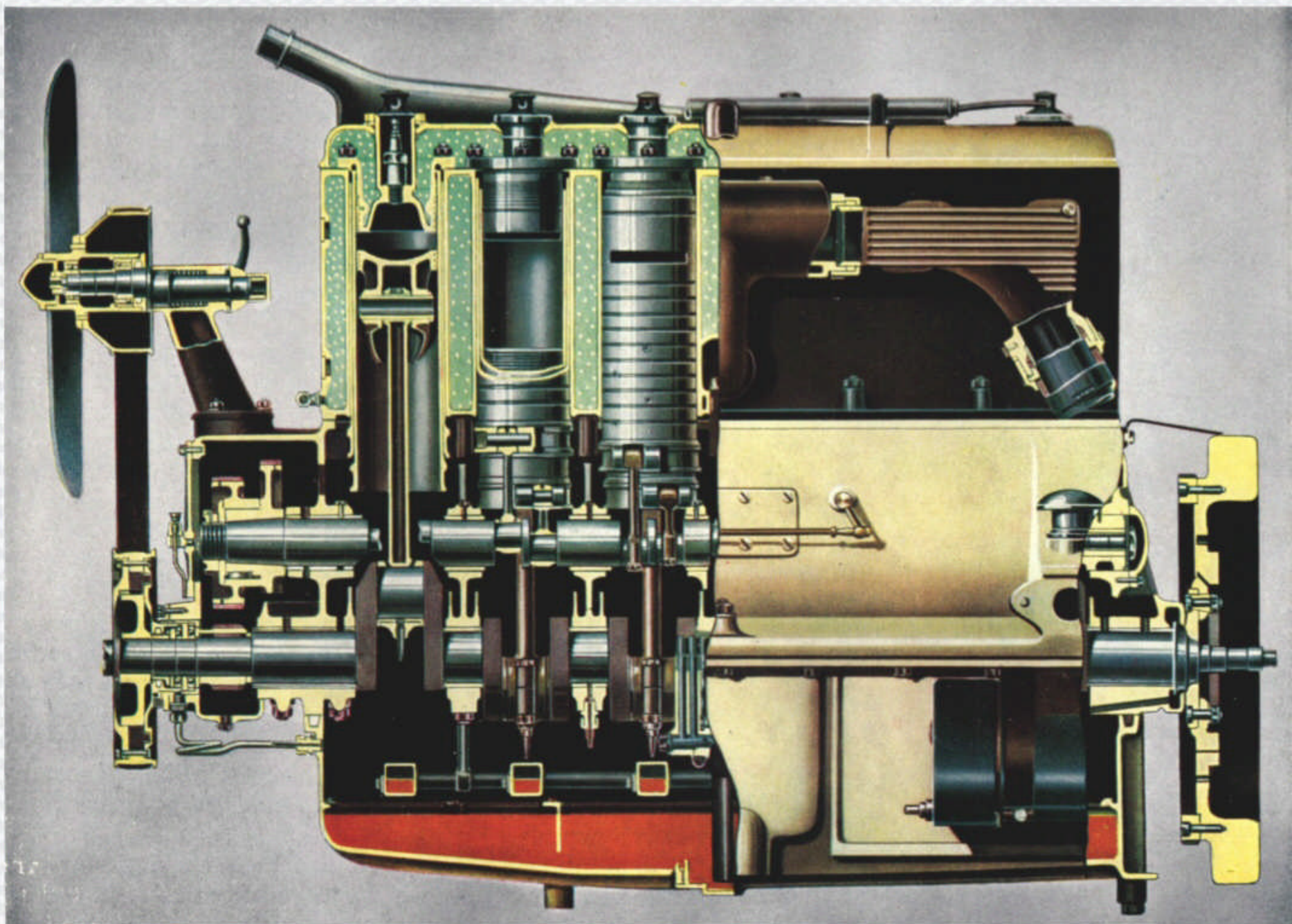
and depressed the floor-mounted starter, the legendary Knight engine settled into a smooth rhythm, allowing me to slip the three-speed manual transmission out of neutral and into first gear without double-clutching. Adjusting the spark and timing—typical of many pre-Depression cars—had, by this point, already been eliminated by Stearns-Knight.

Turning the steering wheel, which was linked to 32-inch artillery-style wheels, took tremendous arm strength, but, once the big sedan was rolling forward, steering input was akin to early power steering systems of the Fifties, while response time was far quicker than

anticipated. The front and rear leaf-sprung suspension absorbed the minor imperfections in the pavement with ease. Like most cars of the era, though, it took some forethought and pressure to activate the drum brake system to bring the 4,600-pound sedan to a safe stop. Perhaps it was due to our low cruising speed, but body roll while turning was virtually nonexistent and acceleration was incredibly smooth without any rear squat. These were traits consistent with many an upscale, prewar luxury car other manufacturers yearned to attain, proving that Stearns-Knight was, indeed, a symbol of excellence. 🏆







# Minerva in America

## *Belgium's leading builder of luxury automobiles*

BY WALT GOSDEN • ILLUSTRATIONS COURTESY OF THE WALT GOSDEN COLLECTION

**M**otorcars of European manufacture appeared in the United States prior to 1900, when wealthy Americans traveled to Europe and returned with horseless carriages purchased there to use at home. Intercontinental international travel at that time, and for the majority of the first half of the 20th century, was via enormous ocean liners. Goods and products were moved the same way, in the hulls of the ships.

After the armistice of the "Great War," it took the manufacturers of motorcars several years to resume production at levels they had seen prior to 1914. By 1920, factories were rebuilt and refitted, the workforce had recovered, and produc-

tion resumed to the point that European automobiles were offered for sale in America. New York City was the main port for import and export of goods, and with the Hudson River's deep harbor on New York's West Side, it easily accommodated large ocean liners and cargo ships. Thus, this is where most of the car dealerships had their service and storage garages.

The tariff leveled on the imported cars was significantly higher for a complete car than it was for a bodyless, running chassis. That chassis would usually be equipped with a firewall, hood, headlamps, tail-lamps, and often front and rear fenders as well. The majority of the European cars that were imported were luxury cars, and once on American soil were then fitted

with coachwork designed and built by American custom body manufacturers.

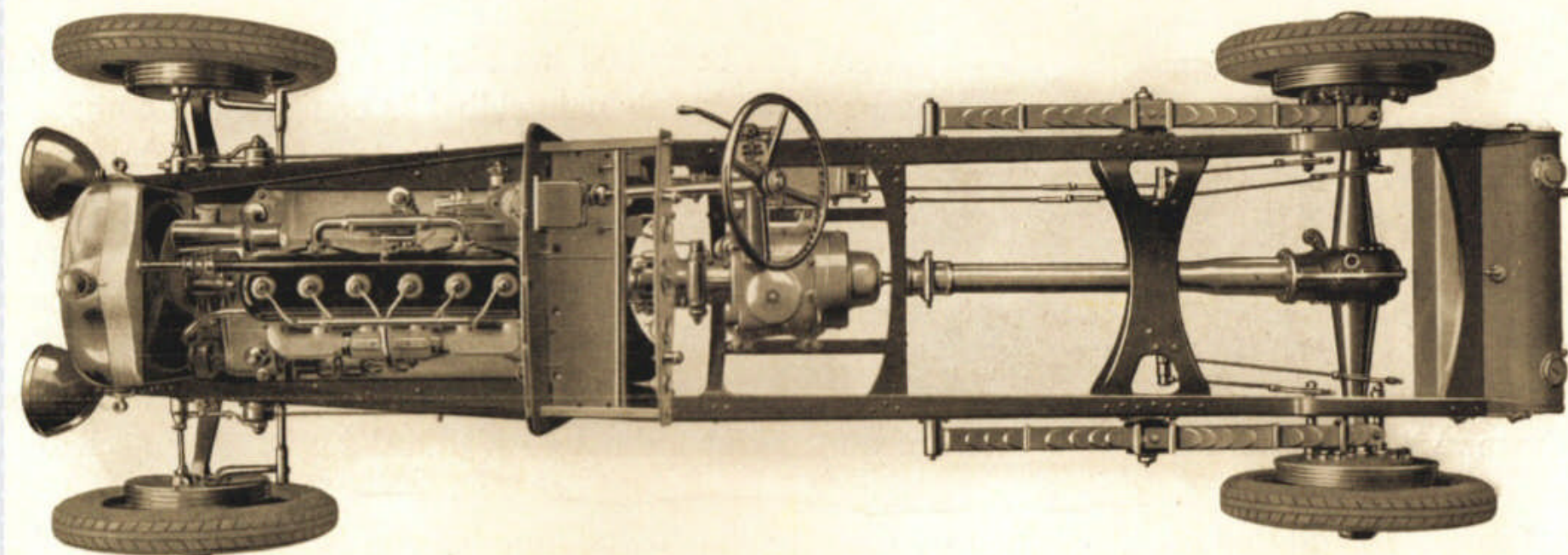
European automobile manufacturers usually had a variety of chassis that would meet the requirements of the customers, with an assortment of wheelbases as well as four-, six- and 12-cylinder engines.

Most American buyers were of moderate means and would not seek to own a brand of automobile that would be difficult to obtain parts for. These consumers also did not want to buy a rolling chassis, then pay the added cost of body design and construction. But wealthier customers

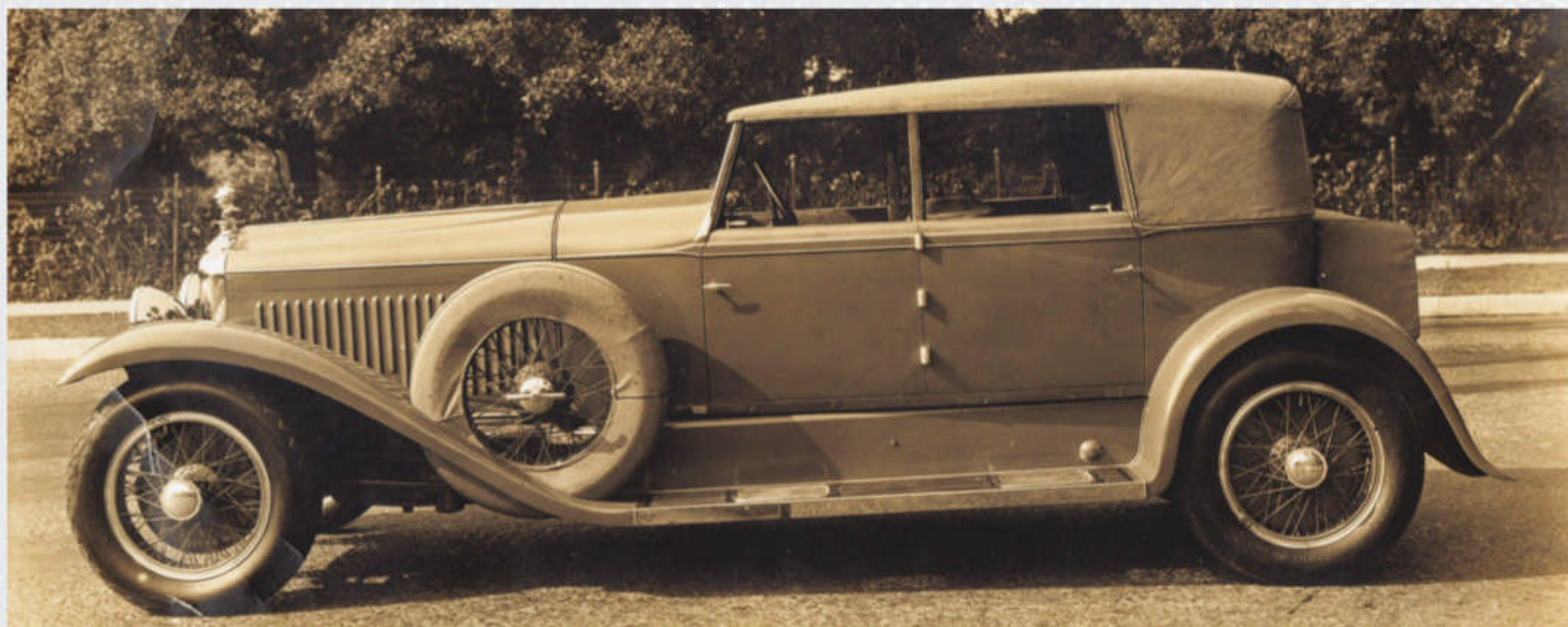
**The Minerva sleeve valve engine, shown here in the company's 1927 sales catalog printed in Brussels, Belgium.**



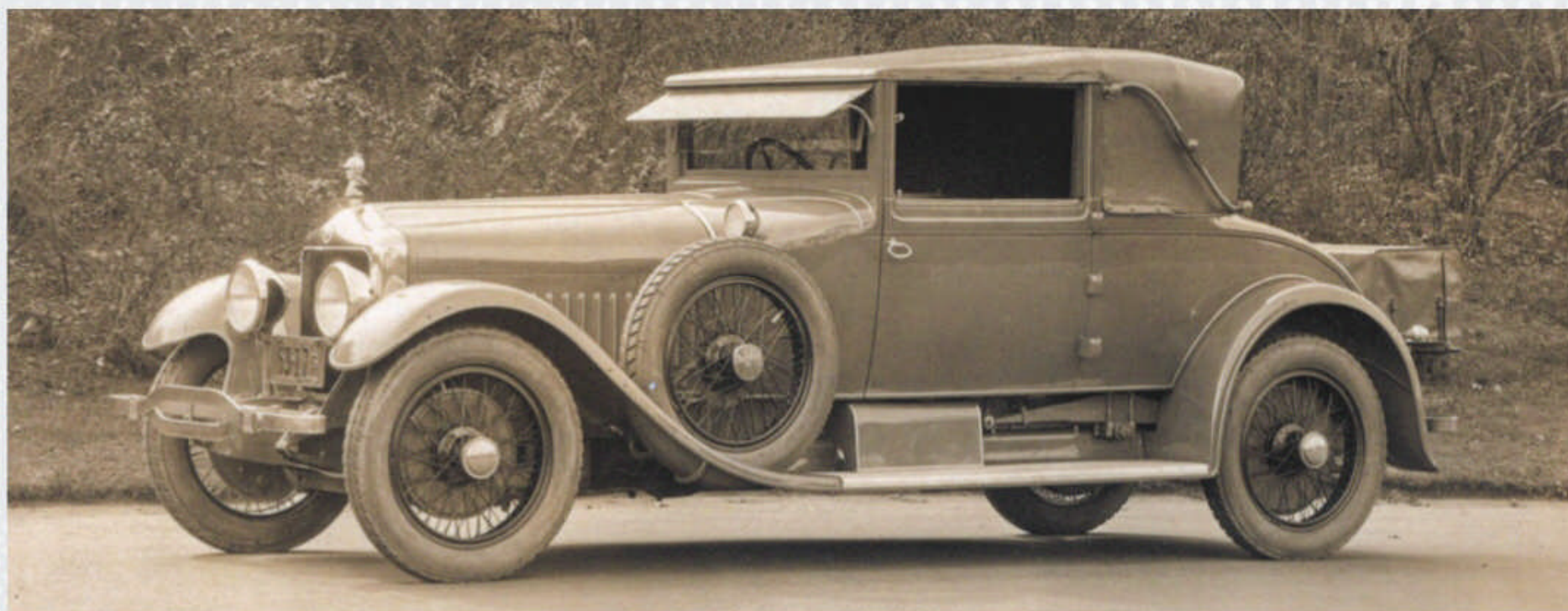
## MINERVA CHASSIS 32 HP.



The chassis of the largest six-cylinder car Minerva offered in 1927.

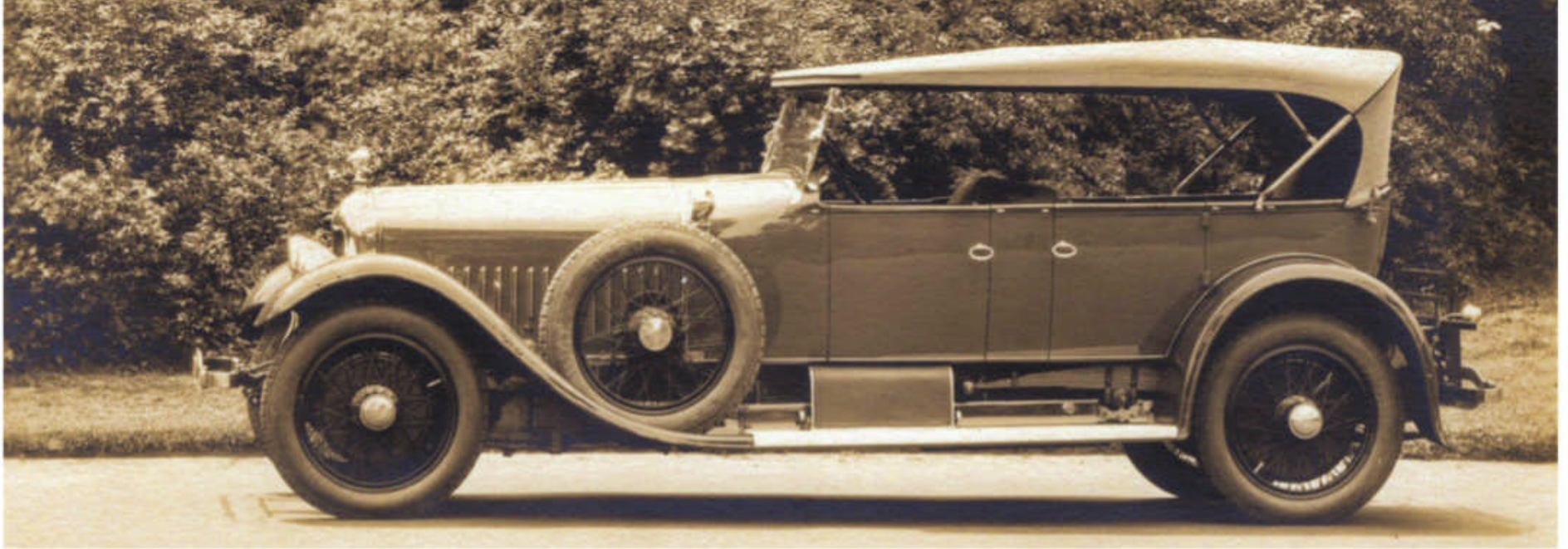


1928 Minerva Convertible Sedan with body by Walter M. Murphy of Pasadena, California.

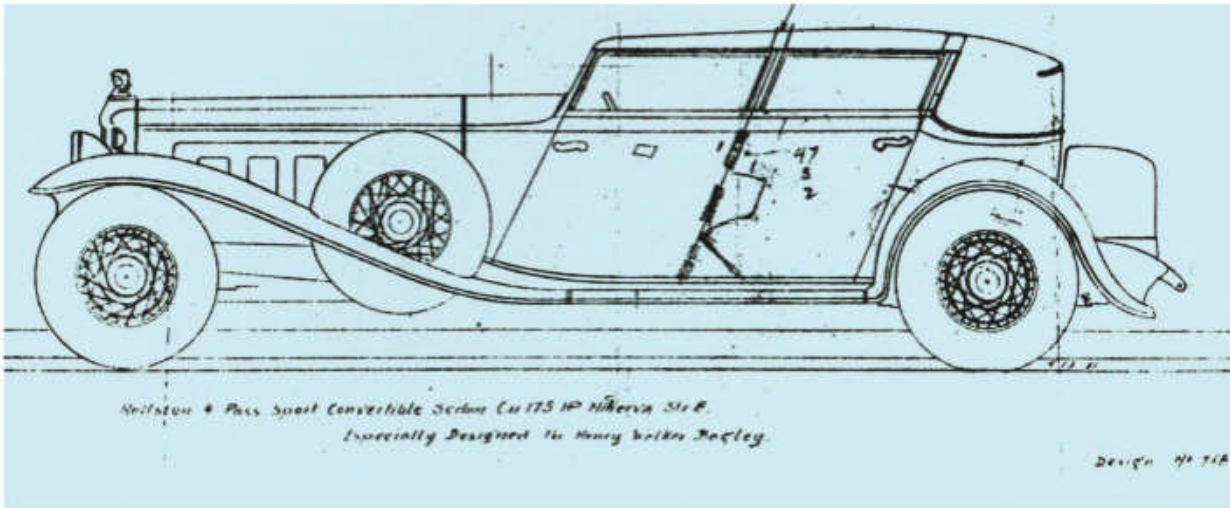


1925 Minerva Convertible Victoria with body by Derham of Rosemont, Pennsylvania. The color of the fabric on the top closely mirrors the color of the body and the fenders.

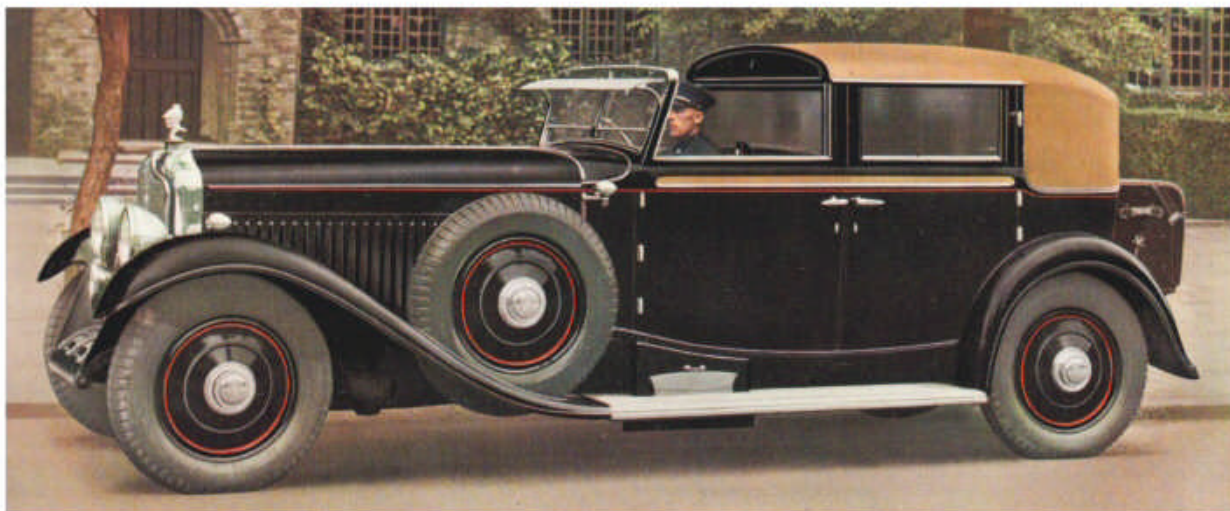




**1925 Minerva Touring Car with body by Rollston of New York.**



**Rollston built this four-passenger Sport Convertible Sedan. Its design number 768 presented a radical visual appearance due to the angle of the doors that were hinged at the B-pillar. It is a Model AL on a 153-inch wheelbase; this particular car still exists.**



**Not every Minerva in the USA had a body built by an American coachbuilder. Some cars were bought in Europe and then, after use by their owners, were shipped back with them aboard an ocean liner. This Limousine de Ville by Van den Plas is an example. Note the lack of bumpers — these would have been fitted once the car arrived in the USA.**

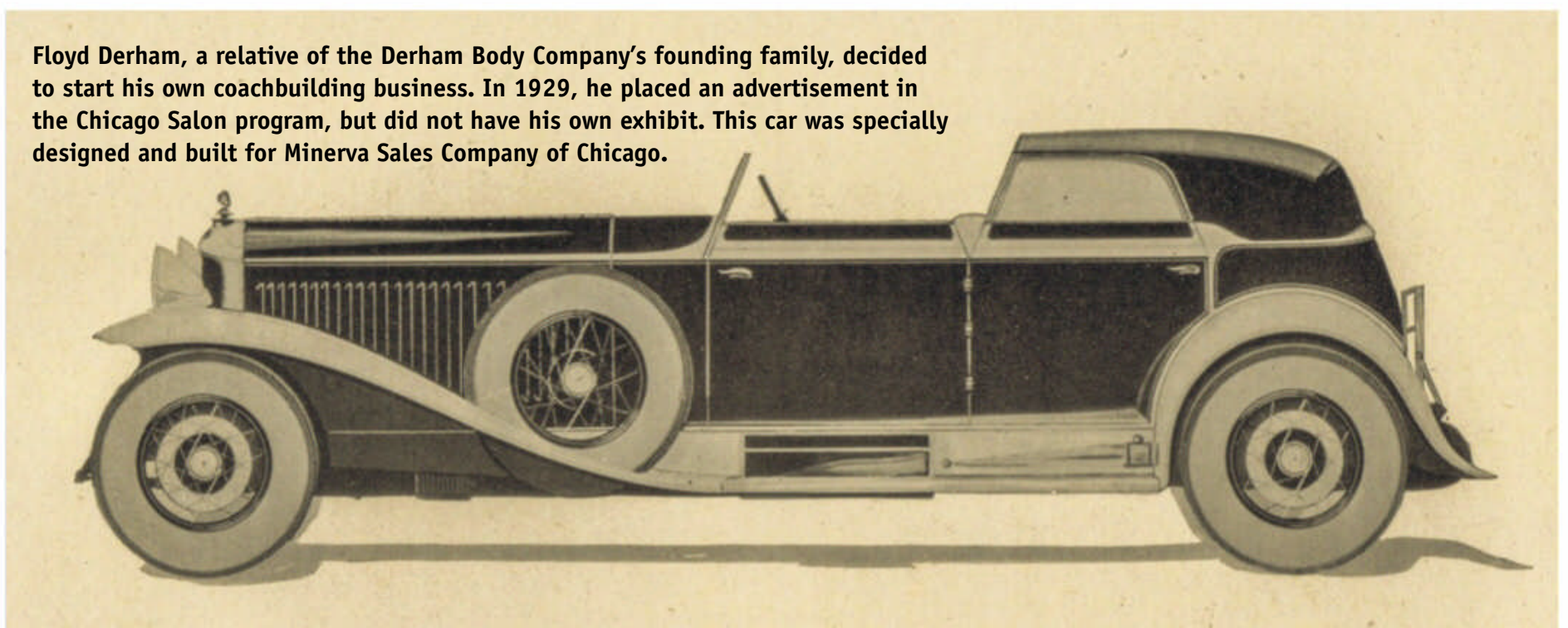
looked at luxury automobiles of European origin as owning something different — and even superior — to what was offered by manufacturers in the USA. For those who purchased coachbuilt European cars, it often took six months or more for the automobile to be built.

One such high-end manufacturer was Minerva. Based in Antwerp, Belgium, Minerva was founded by avid cyclist Sylvain de Jong, who started out building bicycles in the late 1880s, then motorcycles, before turning to the production of automobiles from 1902 to 1938. Minervas were equal to Rolls-Royce in terms of quality but were produced in far lower quantities.

In 1920, Minerva opened its first U.S. sales location, in New York City, at 222 West 66th Street on the Upper West Side, several blocks away from Central Park. The Upper West Side of Manhattan was the prime location for most of the car dealers and their service garages; the closer you got to the Hudson River, the more commercial the area became south of 60th Street.

Immediately after World War I, Emerson Brooks and Paul Ostruk were partners and agents of Minerva automobile sales. Affiliated with the Consolidated Motor Car Company in New York City, they built bodies during the 1910-1924 era. In fact, Ostruk was the prominent member of the "Bodies by Ostruk" group that manufactured custom bodies from 1924 to 1930. Ostruk designed many of the bodies it

Floyd Derham, a relative of the Derham Body Company's founding family, decided to start his own coachbuilding business. In 1929, he placed an advertisement in the Chicago Salon program, but did not have his own exhibit. This car was specially designed and built for Minerva Sales Company of Chicago.







### MINERVA SALES COMPANY

2415 Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Ill.

BEN D. SELTZER, *President*

*Representation and Service Also in NEW YORK, BOSTON and LOS ANGELES*

In 1929 Chicago, Minervas were sold on Michigan Avenue, but the sales agent had a very strong association with Minerva in New York City. That is where all Minerva cars were imported and entered the USA upon arrival.

## from the Paris Salon



SAOUTCHIK of Paris chose this fabric in a rich brown for the interior of this custom body on a Minerva chassis—his latest creation—exhibited at the Paris Salon.

The fabric—a Schumacher rayon broadcloth—is one of many devel-

oped by du Pont Fabric Development Service for the automobile trade.

Du Pont offers the services of this Department to American automobile body builders for the creation of modern upholstery fabrics.

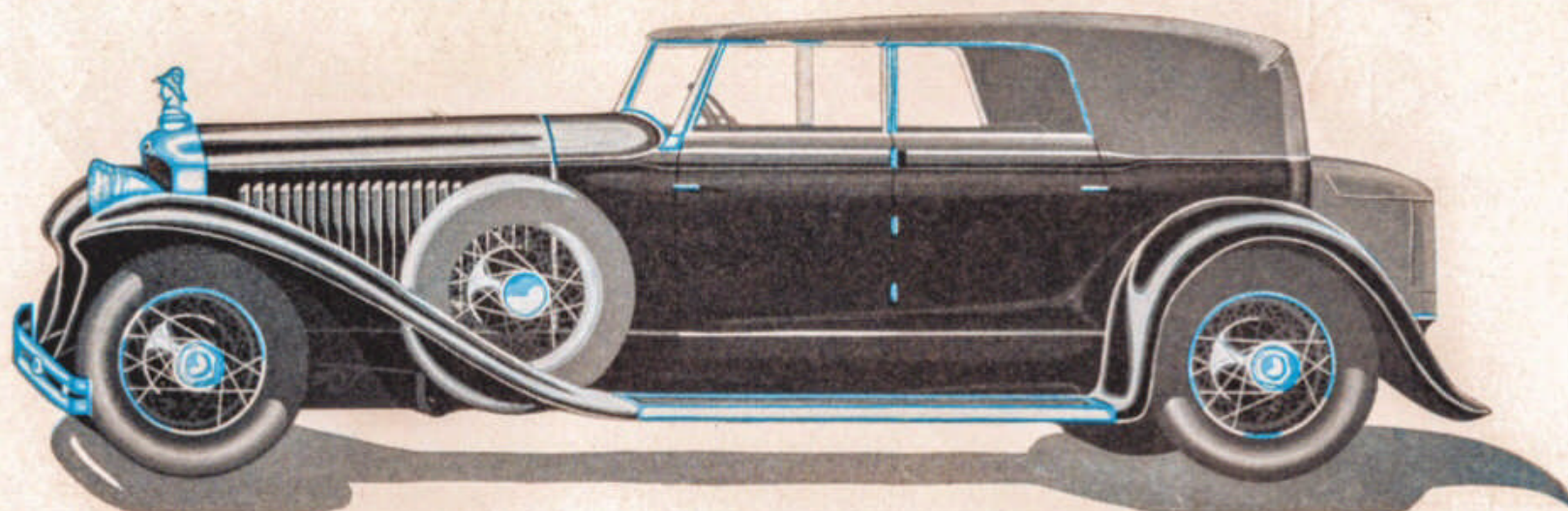


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A Town Car with European coachwork was used to promote DuPont rayon fabrics in 1929. There was a three-city connection here: This car was at the Paris Salon, the ad was in the Chicago Salon catalog, and the DuPont Rayon Company was located in New York City.



COLLAPSIBLE SEDAN

*Body by Murphy*

*Chassis by Minerva*

Walter M. Murphy Company

*Coach Builders*

PASADENA,

CALIFORNIA

A 1929 Minerva Convertible Sedan by Murphy, described as a "collapsible sedan" in the San Francisco Salon catalog.





built, but when LeBaron was founded by Ray Dietrich and Tom Hibbard, several bodies designed by LeBaron were also sold as "Bodies by Ostruk."

With very few exceptions, the Minerva chassis that were imported into the USA were all the larger 3- and 6-liter six-cylinder models; however, in its 1920 advertising, Minerva noted that both four- and six-cylinder models were for sale and the company had "a few chassis available for early delivery."

Within the next few years, the New York business changed locations but still remained on the Upper West Side of Manhattan. By 1922, Minerva was located next to the building where Paul Ostruk had his office. With a slight name change from its previous business, Consolidated Foreign Motor Car Co. was formed, and Paul Ostruk became more involved in the sale of Minerva automobiles. He continued to have a great relationship with the firm LeBaron, which was also in the same area. The press noted that coachwork was an "interpretation being accomplished by Paul Ostruk," which was built by LeBaron in shops it had under contract. In the same year, LeBaron had a Minerva on exhibit in its stand at the annual custom body salon, held at the Hotel Commodore. Minerva moved its showroom to 247 Park Avenue and continued to use the name Consolidated Foreign Motor Car Company.

By 1925, in addition to LeBaron, the Rollston Company would be displaying a Minerva in its exhibit space at the annual custom body salon, and this would continue for the next four years. Within the next two years, Minerva had "representation and service" in Chicago, Boston, and Los Angeles. One particular model, the AK series of 1927, saw a considerable number of sales because the late 1920s economy was very strong and gave support to the phrase "Roaring Twenties."

In 1928, with Minerva sales growing in California, Pasadena coachbuilder the Walter M. Murphy Company first showed its coachwork on the Minerva chassis at the New York Salon. The name of the dealer in New York was now Minerva Inc.

Minerva sales were also active in Chicago under Paul Ostruk's name, with Patrick Averall being the full-time representative there. While trying to establish an address in Chicago, Averall made contact with Ostruk's New York headquarters for sales, but 1926 finally saw a Chicago address for Minerva at 2415 South Michigan Avenue.

The Limousine Carriage Manufacturing Company, also on Michigan Avenue, would offer custom coachwork on the Minerva at the 1927 Chicago Salon. For the remainder of the Chicago Salons until the final one in 1932, Minerva automobiles were displayed. In addition to LeBaron and Rollston coachwork, Minerva saw the Floyd-Derham Company of Rosemont, Pennsylvania, exhibit a Royal Town Car at the 1929 Salon, and that car was specifically designed and built for Minerva Sales of Chicago. The two West Coast Salons, held in Los Angeles and San Francisco, also saw Minerva on exhibit, but only for three years, 1927 to 1929. The convertible sedan built by the Murphy Company would be shown at both West Coast Salons.

The stock market collapse in 1929 took a heavy toll on all luxury cars, especially those imported from Europe. Chassis were not ordered and "kept in stock" in advance, on anticipation of a successful sale. If a chassis was ordered, a significant amount of money would have to be paid to place the order for its construction, which, once finished, would take weeks to arrive by ship.

Minerva Motors of New York saw its final exhibition at the New York Salon in 1931, though a showroom address had not been evident since 1929. The Minerva company ceased automobile production in 1934. 🐞





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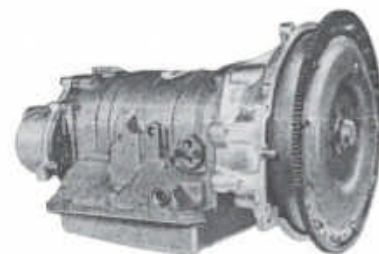
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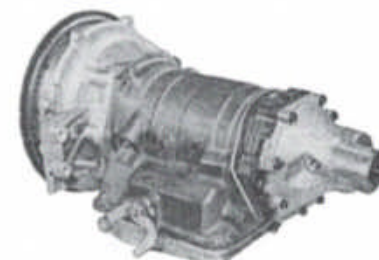
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# Farm to Market



## The 1948 Unimog plowed the way for a multi-tasking legend

BY MIKE McNESSOR • PHOTOGRAPHY PROVIDED BY DAIMLER

Vehicles that were part farm tractor, part automobile, never gained traction in the U.S., though not for a lack of trying. In 1938, Minneapolis Moline rolled out its UDLX Comfortractor, which looked vaguely like a Farmall crossed with a mid-1930s Auburn. The UDLX had a chrome front bumper and a styled radiator shell with outboard headlamps, full fenders, and an enclosed engine, as well as a cab with two seats. The UDLX was said to be capable of 40 mph on the street—so in theory, you could drop the plows and merge with traffic. But it also carried a lofty \$2,000-plus price tag which, back then, would've bought you a new sedan and a tractor with some money left in your overalls for fertilizer. By 1942, the ambitious UDLX was gone, after an estimated 125 were built. Today, nicely restored examples change hands well north of \$100,000.

After World War II, Willys hoped its "AgriJeep" concept would become America's most versatile farmhand: a rig that could do field and site work, then drive into town after unhitching from the implements. In practice though, the plucky Jeep couldn't pull plows, cultivators, mowing machines, or harrows as efficiently or effortlessly as a small tractor. Nevertheless, the Universal Jeep, as the production version was called (or CJ-2A), wooed civilian buyers and blazed a trail for generations of Jeeps—as well as a host of imitators.

Meanwhile, in post-WWII Germany, a new kind of four-wheel-drive vehicle was rising out of the ashes

to help power the *Wirtschaftswunder*, or economic miracle. It would truly become a multi-purpose tool for farming, logging, firefighting, snow removal, road building and maintenance, and military applications, plus much more. It would also become a favorite among recreational off-roaders and off-road racers, winning the Dakar Rally's truck class numerous times over the years, while also serving as a support vehicle for other racers. That jack-of-all-trades was called Unimog, its name shorthand for "*Universal Motor Gerät*" (*gerät* is German for tool or apparatus).

Despite its crude exterior, the original Unimog was an all-new and innovative design that had more in common with AM General's Humvee than the original Jeep. For starters, it was diesel powered: Under the cab sat the oil-burning Mercedes-Benz OM636 1.7-liter overhead-valve four-cylinder. The little engine made less than 30 horsepower, but its

rugged internals and fuel stinginess were ideal for agricultural, industrial, or military applications. That M-B diesel was paired with a six-speed manual transmission, which gave the operator ample gear selection when navigating rough terrain or driving on the road. At the front and rear of the Unimog were portal axles, which placed the housing above the center of the wheels and helped provide the truck's nearly 18 inches of ground clearance. The Unimog's axles were hung from coil springs, rather than leafs, which afforded superior axle articulation.

**An ad for the original open-top Unimog shows it pulling a plow to the apparent delight of its operator and copilot. Notice there's no Mercedes-Benz star in the grille at this point.**





Unimog Chief Designer Heinrich Roessler at the wheel of a prototype in October 1946, while designer Hans Zabel walks alongside.





**In December 1946, the first driveable Unimog prototype powered by a diesel engine was rolling.**

Meanwhile, its ladder frame was designed to be flexible, further helping keep all four wheels planted over uneven terrain.

The Unimog was the brainchild of German engineer Albert Friedrich—the former head of aeroengine design at Daimler-Benz—who saw a postwar need for an “engine-driven universal farming machine,” with four-wheel drive, a front-

mounted Power Take Off, and more.

In October 1945, American authorities occupying Germany gave Friedrich the green light to produce this truck/tractor mashup, but, with most of Germany’s factories either destroyed or confiscated by the Allies, finding a company with the capacity to build it was difficult. Friedrich ultimately made a deal with a silverware

maker, Erhard & Sons, which, until then, had no experience building trucks or tractors.

The team assigned to develop the prototype kept things elegantly simple, while managing to design features that would define Unimogs for decades. For the original, they settled on a 4.2-foot track width, which would allow it to straddle row crops on German farms. In addition to the vehicle’s four-wheel-drive capability, they added front and rear differential locks, provisions for front, center, and rear PTO drives, and mounting points for an array of implements.

By the end of 1946, a working prototype was being tested and it looked very much like the later production models. It rode on a 63.7-inch wheelbase and could crawl along at 330 yards per hour in the field or 30 mph on the road. One of the designers, Hans Zabel, is credited with coming up with the Unimog’s name, which is well known around the world today.

Erhard & Sons couldn’t mass produce the Unimog, so the concept was shopped around, finally falling to machine tool manufacturer Boehringer Bros. in Göppingen. The Boehringer Bros. factory was slated for dismantling, because it had produced armaments for the Nazi war machine, but a contract to build a civilian product saved it from that fate.

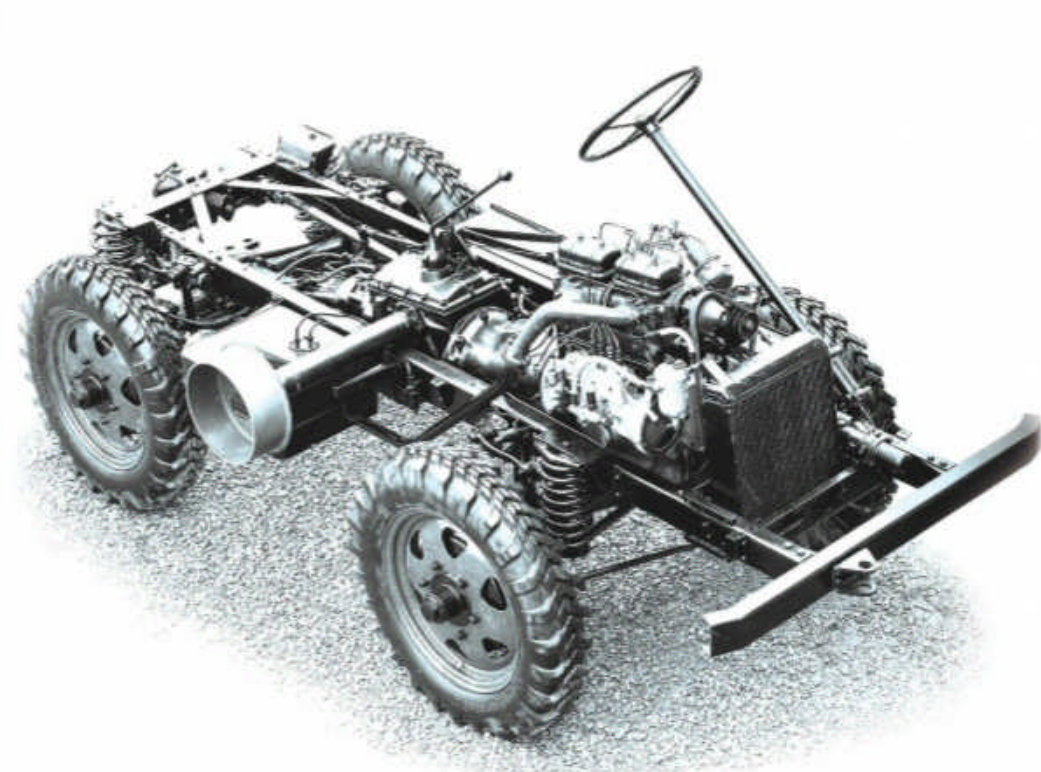
In 1948, the Unimog was showcased at the German Agricultural Society show in Frankfurt and, by August of that year, it had generated interest from an array of potential customers.







The owner of this 1949 Unimog is Jan Peters from Lower Saxony. At the time this photo was taken in 2019, he was on a charity run with the truck and covered more than 600 miles around Germany.



The early Unimog chassis was an innovative design that used coil springs all around, portal axles, and a frame designed to flex in order to keep the wheels planted over rough terrain.



A Unimog could not only tow a Stoll beet harvester through the field, it could later haul the vegetables in for processing.

By the summer of 1950, Boehringer had built about 600 Unimogs, all wearing an ox-head insignia—the ox's horns forming the letter "U." Daimler-Benz took over the Unimog in the autumn of 1950, purchasing the patents, and hiring the developers as well as the sales and marketing division. Unimog production was then moved into Daimler's truck plant in Gaggenau, Badenia. In 1953, the Mercedes-Benz star emblem was added to the Unimog's grille where it has remained on these trucks ever since. 🐂

Equipped with a fifth wheel, the versatile Unimog could also pull a dump trailer.





# I WAS THERE

I WAS THERE

## James Bellissimo

Glass assembly  
Chrysler Corporation



### IT WAS EARLY SEPTEMBER 1968.

Having just turned 18 years of age, I was hired at the Chrysler McGraw Glass Plant in Detroit as an assembly worker. The job involved placing vinyl over the tempered glass, sandwiching it together with another piece of glass, then trimming off the excess vinyl with a utility knife. The assembled windshield would proceed via a rubber-padded chain-driven line into an industrial oven where the glass bonded together, and the vinyl became transparent. The work was simple enough, but exhausting.

The assembly line rarely stopped. There were emergency buttons to disconnect the power only if the glass broke

or someone was injured. The assembly room was about 25 feet long; that was the distance required to complete the task of assembling the windshield. This particular glass room was kept at a cool temperature, not for the employees' comfort, but to keep the polyvinyl butyral (PVB) from discoloring. There were two temperatures in the plant, hot and cold. I was grateful to work in the air-conditioned area; working close to the oven where employees removed the windshield off the line was like being in a desert heat. The job did pay well, though.

Wages for an unskilled factory worker were around \$3.25 per hour. I worked the afternoon—3 to 11 p.m.—so a shift premium was added to my pay. We were also able to work weekends. With that income, you could live the American dream. A new car was affordable; less than \$3,000 would get you a new set of wheels, and average gas prices were only \$0.34 per gallon. At age 18, I felt like I was in the big leagues. Of course, factory jobs were not for everybody, and employee turnover was a big problem.

On lunch breaks, a frequent rendezvous was at a neighborhood corner bar located across the street from the plant. It was a Polish bar serving bombas (pints), pickled bologna, and boiled eggs. Some workers would stay at the bar and never return to their jobs.

A coworker let me use his birth

certificate as ID so I could enjoy the bombas. The owner/bartender glanced at the document and said I didn't look like I was 23. No kidding, I could pass for 15. Photo identification was not necessary in those establishments back then. Driver's licenses had photos starting in 1964, but it just wasn't a big deal to get served alcohol with no photo ID.

In looking back on those days, what stands out the most to me was that an 18-year-old could afford to buy a new vehicle, support a family, and put a down payment on a house. You had a choice of going to college, or working in a factory.

I lasted a year at the Chrysler McGraw Glass Plant, because Uncle Sam was looking for young blood. The lottery came in and I drew a high number, 167: at 144 and below you were off to Vietnam. I went into secondary teaching, ending up with a career in law enforcement.

Working in that glass assembly plant exposed me to a motley group of people, yet the experiences I had during that time are forever in my memory. 🍷



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## Unloading the Barge

**IN THE MID-1940S, MY DAD WORKED** as a truck driver for United Transports in Joplin, Missouri. At that time, Joplin was a trucking center for the tri-state area of Missouri, Kansas, and Oklahoma. Joplin officials decided trucking companies would be a great source of extra income, and put a special tax on each of them. That didn't work too well, and all the trucking companies moved out of the area.

My dad was given the opportunity to go to the Memphis terminal, to be the dock foreman. This terminal—located on President's Island, a large bit of land in the middle of the Mississippi River, between Tennessee and Arkansas—was supplied with automobiles coming down the Mississippi River on huge barges. These cars, mostly Chrysler and Studebaker models, were unloaded and then trucked throughout the Southeast.

To earn some extra money in the summer—even though I was not old enough to drive—my father allowed me to park the cars in their assigned lots, where the truckers would load them for delivery. There is nothing like getting into cars sitting in the hot summer sun and moving them to another location, one after another.

This earned me a job unloading cars off the barge, and we would work around the clock until the barge was empty, which usually meant about 24 hours of non-stop labor. I guess I got tired and careless one day, backed into a post on the barge, and damaged a car. I was immediately fired and not allowed back.

A couple of years later, at age 20, my experience helped me get a job as the night terminal manager at the Hazelwood terminal, by the St. Louis airport.

I checked in drivers, went over their trip reports, and made up other reports for management.

I was then transferred to the Chrysler assembly plant, just south of St. Louis. The trucking company located another employee and me to a small shack just outside the plant, along with a teletype machine. The assembly plant would send us shipping information, and we would forward this to the freight terminals involved. These depots would reship the automobiles to their dealer destinations. Because there was no heat in that small shack, it got very, very cold during the winter, and I was so glad to move on.

Later, my father was transferred as yard supervisor to the Kansas City, Kansas, terminal, adjacent to the Buick-Oldsmobile-Pontiac plant. Here, trucks would pick up the cars and ship them

mostly north. I left the St. Louis area yard to be with my dad and worked at the Kansas City terminal as a routing clerk. Shipping north, in winter I had to determine if a truck would need to drop off a car or two at the state line to meet winter load limits and then go back for them later; trucks at this time carried four cars. When the trains started shipping cars, many of the trucking companies went out of business, including the one my dad and I worked for.

Having been brought up around cars, I eventually ended up working as a credit manager at Firestone, and managed Goodyear and BFGoodrich stores over the years. I also spent five years as a sales manager for a small auto parts chain. I finally got away from auto-related jobs and spent 25 years in my own business, as a wholesaler whose car-related job was traveling in one. 🚗





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# Strong Sales Across All Genres of the Old-Vehicle Hobby

**AS THE WARM-WEATHER MONTHS HAVE MADE IT MORE ATTRACTIVE** for enthusiasts to venture (safely) outdoors, we're finding that veteran, pre- and postwar vintage and classic, and special-interest modern cars and trucks, continue to ring the bell at the online-exclusive Hemmings Auctions. Editor Terry Shea has shared that, as of this writing, his auction colleagues have reported 11 straight weeks of 80-percent sell-through, including the two most recent weeks when that telling metric reached 100 percent.

The wide range of ages, body styles, and performance envelopes represented by the vehicles offered through the site has appealed to fans of American cars and imports, alike. Among those that turned bidders into excited new owners were a 1929 Studebaker President FH cabriolet (one of four known extant to

the Studebaker Drivers Club; it brought \$44,625), an original 36,000-mile, 305-V-8-powered 1979 Chevrolet Nova Custom sedan (\$6,500), a triple-blue 1955 Cadillac Coupe de Ville with Hollywood provenance (\$19,950), and a trio of approachable Seventies sports cars from Italy, Germany, and Great Britain ('79 Fiat Spider 2000, \$10,500; '72 Porsche 914, \$17,063; '73 Triumph GT6 Mk III, \$18,900). Among the Premium Classifieds on offer were a "banker's hot rod" 1956 Chrysler 300B, a diesel-powered, SuperCab long-bed 1986 Ford F-250 XLT Lariat 4x4, and a *rosso corsa* (racing red) 2010 Ducati SportClassic GT1000 motorcycle.

If you haven't visited the Hemmings Auctions website recently, it's worth a few minutes of your time to see what dream rides are being offered. We hope you'll join in the fun.



## 1951 HUDSON

**Model:** Hornet  
**Reserve:** \$45,000

**Selling Price:** \$64,050  
**Recent Market Range:** \$44,000-\$56,000

The lowest-production, most glamorous body style of the hottest model of "step-down" Hudson really turned heads, as this restored Hornet convertible brougham proved when it exceeded its reserve by nearly \$20,000. While the 308-cu.in. straight-six was built with the Twin-H dual carburetors, those were swapped by a previous owner for a simpler-to-tune single carb (some original parts went with the car), and the engine was mated to a GM-sourced four-speed Hydra-Matic said to shift smoothly. The two-stage paint had trivial imperfections, and the canvas soft-top still appeared fresh.



## 1941 CHEVROLET

**Model:** Special Deluxe  
**Reserve:** \$14,500

**Selling Price:** \$26,250  
**Recent Market Range:** \$14,000-\$21,000

One of the most popular body styles for families in the prewar era was the two-door sedan, and this Chevrolet Special Deluxe represented one that was aspirational to many, so attractive were its ample red-trimmed brightwork and claimed show-quality interior. Its full restoration, finished by the car's second owner in the 1980s, was holding up very nicely—save for some minor swirls and chips in the paint—a benefit of careful, regular climate-controlled storage. The drivetrain was said to operate without issue, and the whitewall tires had many miles of life in them, being just two years old.

## LEGEND

**Reserve:** Minimum price owner will accept

**Selling Price:** What the vehicle sold for, inclusive of buyer's 5-percent fee

**Recent Market Range:** Range of selling prices for similar vehicles sold at auction over the previous 18 months

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## 2002 FORD

Model: Thunderbird

Reserve: \$15,000

Selling Price: \$18,113

Recent Market Range: \$15,000-\$22,000

Retro-themed cars were all the rage at the turn of the century, with standouts including Volkswagen's New Beetle, Chrysler's PT Cruiser, and this, Ford's 11th-generation Thunderbird. This two-seat convertible presented handsomely in its triple-black finish, shining from its porthole-window hardtop to its chromed alloy wheels. Fewer than 18,000 miles registered on the odometer, and that was borne out by the condition, said to be separated from showroom by minor leather creasing and some now invisible, painstakingly repaired body dings. The original tires went with the car, for future concours use.



## 1960 CADILLAC

Model: Eldorado Biarritz

Reserve: \$92,500

Selling Price: \$129,150

Recent Market Range: \$89,000-\$114,000

This Cadillac convertible — one of 250 believed to remain out of 1,285 built for 1960 — would smash the Hemmings Auctions record and become the top sale to date. Helping it achieve that honor was the condition, which appeared to be tops after a 2016 body-off restoration, followed by 400 subsequent miles on the road. This Biarritz received some replacement sheetmetal under a two-stage rendition of its factory-applied paint color. The choice to retain the original dash pad and some interior chrome, as well as swapping the air suspension for coil springs, meant it wasn't too precious to enjoy.

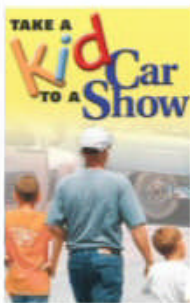
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**THE FORD FALCON IS BACK, WITH CRISP AND SMART NEW LOOKS. THERE ARE 13 DIFFER-**ent models available, from the Squire to the Thunderbird's compact cousin, the luxurious Futura. The Falcon delivered an impressive 32.6 miles per gallon in the 1961 Mobilgas Economy Run, returning the best fuel economy among any six- or eight-cylinder vehicle in the 25-year run of the event. Offering more models and more savings, the new Falcons carry a sticker price beginning at \$1,985.

## EXPENDITURES

(per capita)

Auto parts .....	\$15.01
Auto purchase .....	\$79.26
Auto usage .....	\$229.44
Gas and oil .....	\$67.55
Intercity transport .....	\$8.04
Local transport .....	\$10.72

## CHAMPIONS

Daytona 500 .....	Fireball Roberts (152.529 mph)
Indianapolis 500.....	Rodger Ward (140.293 mph)
Formula 1 .....	Graham Hill (42 points)



**RAMBLER CONTINUES TO STRIVE FOR** excellence with its new self-adjusting Double Safety Brake System, a standard feature that gives twice the protection from potential brake failure. Strength and safety are also enhanced with the single unit construction, as well as rustproofing protection against corrosion. Pick from the Classic, Ambassador V-8, or American, and park a new Rambler in your driveway for as little as \$1,832.



**CHEVROLET'S CORVAIR RETURNS WITH A SPORTIER IMAGE, AS A TURBOCHARGED ENGINE,** featuring more durable valves and guides, and chrome accents, is now available. The rear-engine responsiveness, combined with the fully-independent suspension system, provides precise handling, plus minimal sway, bounce, and swerve. Available in several different body styles and models, there is a perfect Corvair for your unique needs, starting as low as \$1,992.

## FACTORY PRICES

American Motors .....	\$1,832-\$3,023
Buick .....	\$2,304-\$4,366
Cadillac .....	\$5,025-\$9,937
Checker .....	\$2,542-\$3,004
Chevrolet .....	\$1,992-\$4,038
Chrysler .....	\$2,964-\$5,461
Dodge .....	\$1,951-\$3,407
Ford .....	\$1,985-\$5,439
Lincoln .....	\$6,074-\$6,720
Mercury .....	\$2,084-\$3,738
Oldsmobile .....	\$2,403-\$4,744
Plymouth .....	\$1,930-\$3,082
Pontiac .....	\$2,186-\$3,624
Studebaker .....	\$1,935-\$3,305



**THE STUDEBAKER LARK HAS A LOT OF** impressive features sure to attract potential buyers in the marketplace. The quiet ride is made possible through the double-drop design of the car's ladder-type frame; the self-contained, welded one-piece body; and the over-240 rubber cushions placed throughout the structure, minimizing noise and vibration. It's powered by your choice of the 112-hp Skybolt Six, or the optional V-8 that will provide some pep while keeping economy in mind. The Lark is available at your nearest dealer, priced from \$1,935.

## SALES RACE

(total model-year production)

1. Chevrolet .....	2,061,677
2. Ford .....	1,476,031
3. Pontiac .....	521,933
4. Rambler .....	442,346
5. Oldsmobile .....	428,853
6. Buick .....	399,526
7. Mercury .....	341,366
8. Plymouth .....	339,527
9. Dodge .....	240,484
10. Cadillac .....	160,840



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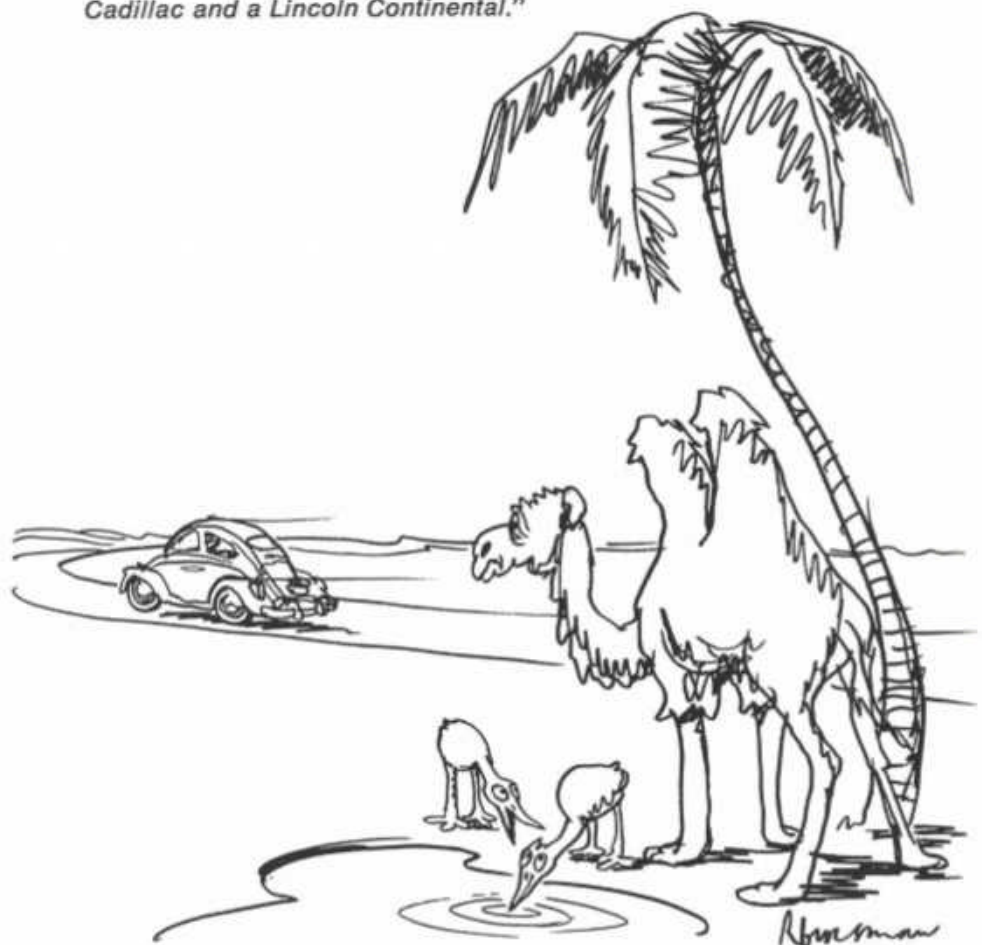
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## ODDIES BUT GOODIES



"It should be a scintillating conversation. I'm placing a VW between a Cadillac and a Lincoln Continental."

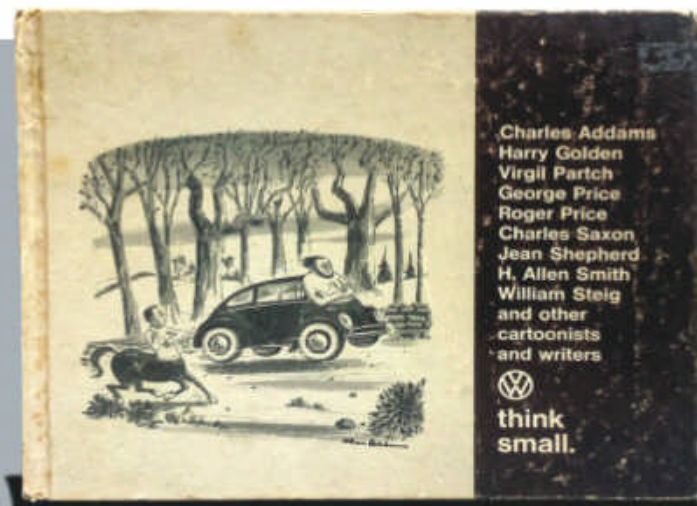


"It's given him an inferiority complex. Now he hardly ever mentions going seven days without water."

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1967

This 90-page hardcover—filled with delightful cartoons and short stories from 31 luminaries, including Charles Addams, Jean Shepherd, and William Hoest—was play on the famous 1962 Doyle Dane Bernbach advertisement of the same title, and was "Compliments of your Volkswagen Dealer."





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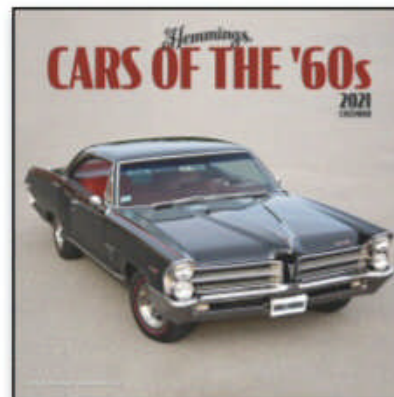
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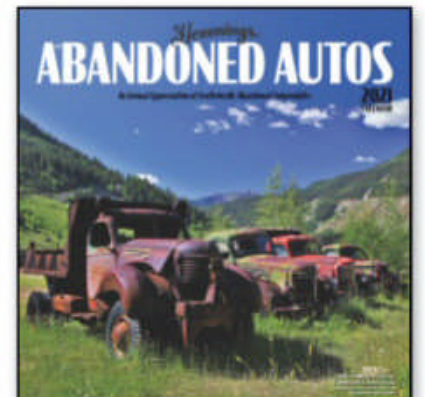
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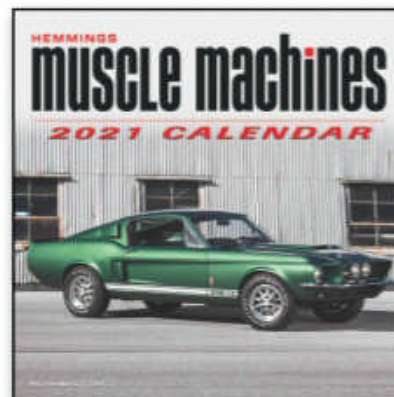
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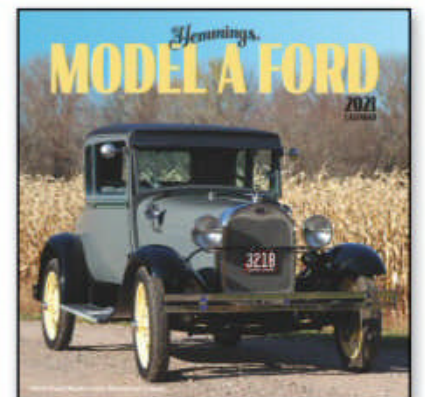
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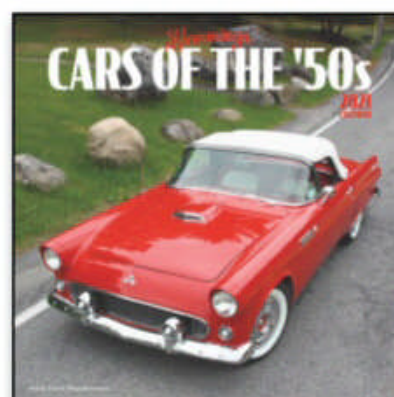
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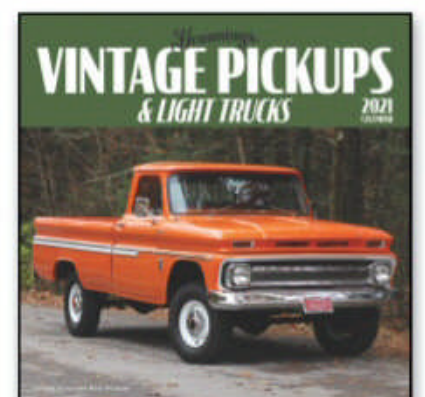
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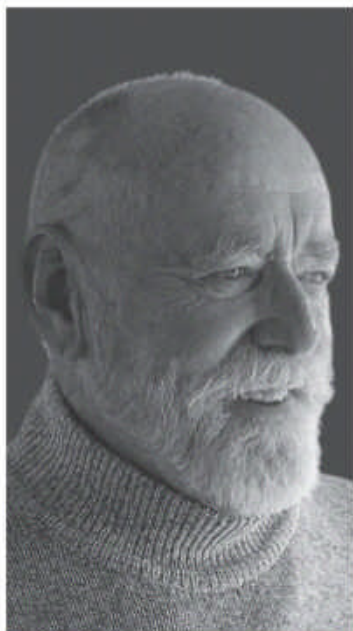


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Everyone

we passed

gawked at the

car, and some

waved and

gave us the

thumbs-up.



## White Lightning

I was tired and headachy after a day of viewing huge pigs, handsome steers, and prancing palominos, and glad to be leaving the Los Angeles County Fair. It was 1953, and I was 11 years old. On our way out, I barely noticed as we strolled past Oldsmobiles, Pontiacs, and Chevrolets – and then I saw it.

It was the most beautiful thing I had ever seen. It looked nothing like the sober family sedans around it. It was low, sensuous, and sleek. I didn't know it at the time, but I was looking at the 1953 Corvette. I was awestruck. My father had to threaten me with assault to tear me away from it. It was a turning point in my life: I decided then and there that, rather than becoming a fighter pilot, I was going to be a car designer.

It was only later I discovered that under the hood was Chevrolet's venerable 235-cu.in. Blue Flame six, albeit with a high-lift cam, three Carter side-draft carburetors, and dual exhaust, making 150 horsepower. Unfortunately, though, this was mated to a Powerglide automatic transmission.

As gorgeous as they were, the 1953 and '54 Corvettes didn't sell well. This was due to a combination of things. For one, it was a two-passenger car. Also, there were problems with body panel fit and water leaks, and it was a roadster, meaning it did not have roll-up windows. It also had no outside door handles, so you couldn't lock the car unless you wanted to cut a hole in the top to get in.

But worse than that, it had an automatic two-speed transmission, and that meant it was not a real sports car. Other shortcomings could be forgiven, but not having a gearbox that would allow you to race around the hay bales at an airport event would have turned sports car buffs away. Why pay a premium price for a two-seater without side windows if you couldn't race the thing?

The 235-cu.in. six-cylinder engine was heavy, but sturdy and pretty peppy at 150 horsepower. Other contemporary American sports cars made do with less. Consider this: The Nash-Healey had a big, heavy Nash six in it that made a mere 140 hp, and the Kaiser Darrin had to make do with a 161-cu.in. Willys F-head six that only made 90 hp. It makes you realize that – at the time – not having a V-8 was not a determining factor, unless you

wanted to go up against the Ferraris, Jaguars, and Allards of the day.

I did a story on a 1953 Corvette some years ago, and it was sort of a dream come true. I met Phil Roche in the parking lot of the Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, California (my alma mater), but we couldn't do a photo shoot there because the car was mobbed with incredulous students, some of whom,

surprisingly, had no idea what the car was. So, we took the car up into the hills behind the college, and Phil let me take it for a spin.

The acceleration was surprising. The inline-six made abundant bottom-end torque, and, though the car weighed 2,886 pounds, it could do 0-60 mph in 11.5 seconds. The reason the car weighed as much as it did was because under that stunning bodywork was basically a 1953 Chevrolet.

Handling was sure-footed, and the balance fore and aft was good. Steering was light and fairly responsive, and braking was fine. The only shortcoming

was that the engine reached its shift point too soon, and then you were in high range, at which point acceleration bogged down. There was just no way to keep the engine in its sweet spot.

Everyone we passed gawked at the car, and some waved and gave us the thumbs-up. For top-down summer touring, the '53 Corvette was ideal. And who wouldn't want to be seen in such a beautiful machine? As Corvette buffs know, the marque stuck with the six and Powerglide into early 1955, but it didn't sell well. GM even considered dropping it altogether until the automaker found out that Ford was coming out with the Thunderbird.

As a result, in early 1955 Chevrolet dropped its new 265-cu.in. small-block V-8 into the 'Vette, backed it up with a standard transmission, and had a contender. I never did get my 1953 Corvette, and I didn't become a car designer either, but I did fall in love with that car, and, though unrequited, it has been a life-long commitment.

Besides, there is nothing like the sound of a Chevy six in heat. Yes, once the Corvette got a V-8, and GM got serious about it, the Corvette became legendary, and the rest is history. A C7 Corvette Z06 even beat a Ferrari 488 GTB's lap time at the Nürburgring a few years ago. That's all great, but I still remain loyal to my first love, a 1953 Polo White Corvette. 🏁





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