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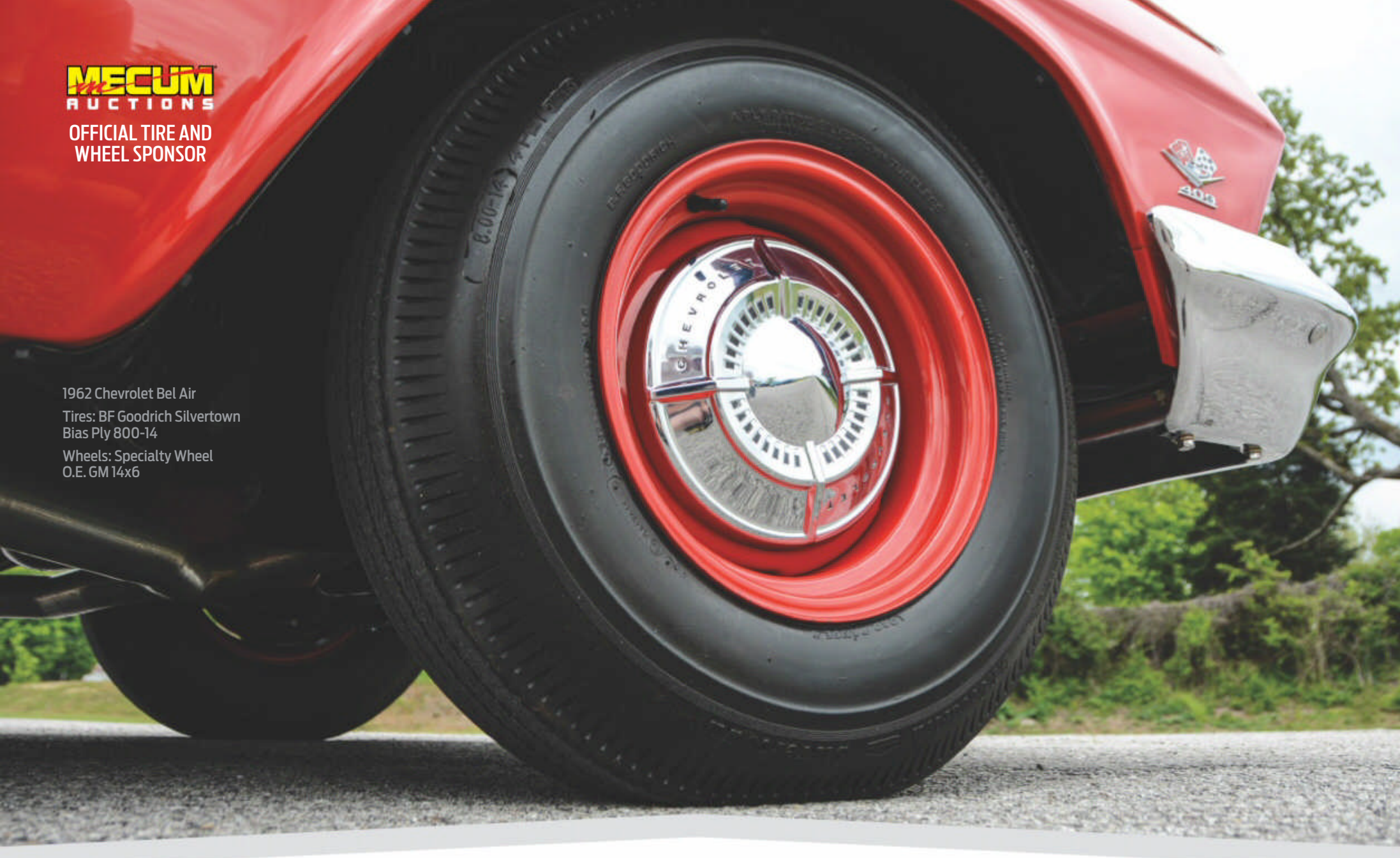

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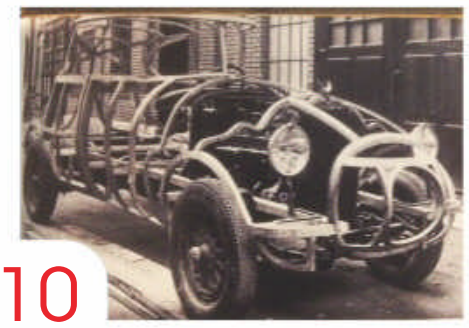

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Perfectly Imperfect

"That's a beautiful car!" The woman across the parking lot was admiring my 1967 Chevrolet Camaro RS. Naturally, I turned to smile and thank her as I made my way back to the car – I'd just been noticing how good it looked myself as it glistened in the Saturday morning sun. At the same time, I was fully aware that "beautiful" is a generous descriptor for this car. Like most owners of vintage cars, I know where all its faults are, though really, on this one, they're not hard to spot.

I've owned this Camaro for 20 years as of this fall, and though it looks, runs, and drives much better today, the term "restoration" could not be legitimately applied to any aspect of what has been done to it since I put my name on the title. Not because I haven't gotten around to it yet, but rather, because of a stipulation I made for myself when I decided to buy it, while owning two other first-generation Camaros and living in an apartment. I justified the purchase by telling myself that I wanted an early F-body that I could actually drive; therefore, I could not take this one apart like I'd done to the other two.

A little background: I've been infatuated with cars nearly since birth and zeroed in on American cars when I hit my teens. I bought my first at age 15 – a '72 Chevy Chevelle that had lived a hard life, despite it being only 11 years old when I got my hands on it. I learned a lot on that car, but it left my possession as an engineless carcass on the back of a wrecker headed to the junkyard (I know – I'd take that hulk back in a flash today). Next in line was a '69 Camaro that also needed help, but I got a couple years of use out of that one before it came apart. Fortunately, I still own it today, and it's now (mostly) whole again.

But the '69 was still in sad shape back in 2000, when I had the chance to buy the '67. I'd had typical plans to return the '69 to greatness, with a killer drivetrain, laser-straight body, and perfect paint. But as a busy staff editor with a modest salary, that felt more and more like a pipe dream. Or, at least, a project for way down the road.

I'm not really that patient, so when the opportunity to buy a running, driving, Southern-California-native '67 Camaro – and a Rally Sport no less – presented itself, I made a promise to myself (and probably to my girlfriend, and now wife) that I would not take that car apart. Instead, I would simply enjoy driving it, after having deprived myself of that experience since the '69 fell into disrepair more than a decade prior.

I've kept that promise… mostly. There was a several-year-long stretch where the '67 went into "paint jail" and eventually emerged with only touch-up work, rather than a completely new finish. After I became a dad for the second time as the Camaro sat in that shop, a paint job just didn't seem like the best place to put those dollars. I've made some upgrades along the way – four-wheel disc brakes to replace the four-wheel drums, an overdrive automatic to stand in for the Powerglide, and 15-inch Rally wheels wrapped in radials to replace the original 14s. It's got dual exhausts (but with stock manifolds), good gas shocks, and a fat front anti-sway bar. The Camaro still appears mostly as Chevrolet intended, but it's better on the road and remains reliable, and I made all of these upgrades progressively, so it was never sidelined for very long.

The Camaro has, for the most part, endeavored to hold up its end of the deal by remaining surprisingly dependable. I built a fresh small-block for it years ago, a nice 350 that made favorable power and torque while maintaining a relatively tame idle – perfect for a street cruiser with some teeth. But it remains on a storage stand because the '67's mild 327 just runs too well. Two pumps of the gas, a twist of the key and it's idling dead smooth and doesn't seem to use a bit of oil between changes. Someone carefully rebuilt that engine before I took ownership, and timid though it may be, I just can't bring myself to put it on the shelf.

Avoiding the powerful urge to hot-rod my Camaro and to give it the kind of paint job it probably deserves has meant that it's not going to win many drag races or show trophies. But 20 years on, I'm not feeling much regret. I don't have this car for racing or any other form of competition – I just wanted an early Camaro to drive and enjoy, and that's just how it's being used.

My chipped and scratched '67 still shines, and its poseur 327 sounds more serious than it really is through the dual exhaust, even if a Honda Accord could embarrass it away from a stoplight. But when I walk toward it in a parking lot – where I'm not too panicked about the possibility of gathering another paint chip – it still provides a reliable warm fuzzy; all the better when someone else notices, like the admirer last Saturday.

All of which leaves me thinking I can't be the only one to realize that the imperfect classic might just be the perfect way to enjoy the old-car hobby on a more frequent basis. It's certainly been working out for me lately.

"Like most owners of vintage cars, I know where all its faults are, though really, on this one, they're not hard to spot."

Write to our editor-in-chief at tmcgean@hemmings.com.

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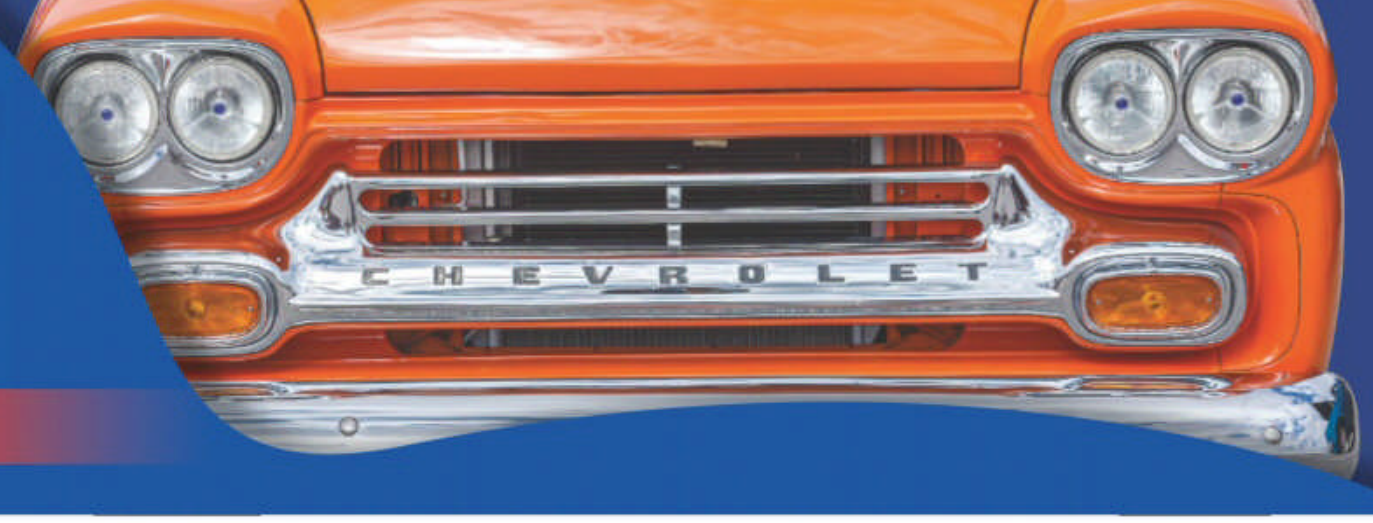

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BY TOM COMERRO

Hilton Head Cancelled, 2021 Event Announced

THE HILTON HEAD ISLAND MOTORING FESTIVAL AND CONCOURS D'ELEGANCE HAS been cancelled for 2020, but organizers have announced plans for 2021. Next year's festival will kick off on October 28-31 with the Savannah Speed Classic in Savannah, Georgia, and culminate on November 5-7 at the Port Royal Golf Club on Hilton Head Island, South Carolina, with the concours d'elegance. These two events happen within 30 miles of one another and combine a mix of vintage racing and gorgeous cars. The Savannah Speed Classic will take place at the Westin Savannah Harbor Golf Resort & Spa and features a 2.1-mile road course and street circuit where you will see some fantastic vintage racing. The Hilton Head Concours d'Elegance will feature Stutz cars as the main theme and honored marque. Other dedicated classes include the Jaguar E-type, the evolution of the electric vehicle, American cars of 1960, and more. For details visit www.hhiconcours.com.

Turkey Run Fun

AFTER SOME FOOTBALL AND FEASTING, YOU MIGHT WANT TO SWING BY THE TURKEY Run car show, November 26-29 at the Daytona International Speedway in Daytona Beach, Florida. The event has traditionally featured thousands of vintage, classic, and muscle cars on display, as well as for sale in the car corral. There's a large swap meet that exceeds 2,500 spaces, too. Spectator admission is $15 ($10 on Sunday) and registration for spaces is in full swing. For pricing and planned social-distancing information, visit the website at www.turkeyrun.com.

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14 • Springfield Swap Meet & Car Show
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229-896-2150 • www.moultrieswapmeet.com

26-29 • Daytona Turkey Run • Daytona Beach, Florida • 386-767-9070 • www.turkeyrun.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.

AMCs in Vegas

THE SOUTHERN NEVADA AMC CLUB WILL BE hosting its 15th-annual AMC Reunion Car Show in the Las Vegas area. The show will take place November 6-7 at the Railroad Pass Hotel and Casino in Henderson. Friday will include a special tour, followed by a free barbeque for all show participants and guests. Saturday will feature the car show and swap meet, followed by an awards presentation and dinner. The show is open to all AMCs, Ramblers, Nashes, Hudsons, Metropolitans, and Jeeps up to 1987. For more information and a registration form, visit the club website at www.snamc.amcrc.com.

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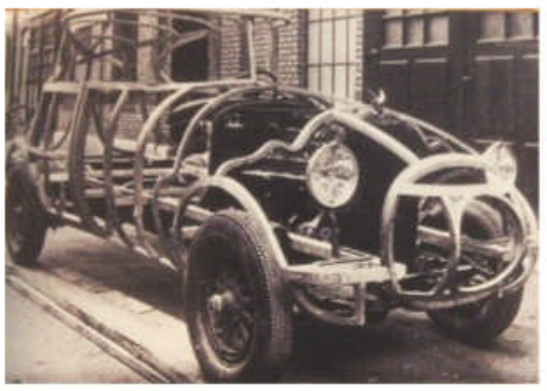
BY DANIEL STROHL



Jaray Chrysler

PAUL JARAY'S ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND CONTRIBUTIONS TO OUR UNDERSTANDING of aerodynamics as it applies to automobiles probably can't be overstated. Researchers and historians have dug into his narrative many times over the years, but it seems there's still much we don't know about his work. For instance, what's the extent of his relationship with Chrysler?

His fallout with the company, after winning a patent infringement lawsuit against it in 1934, is well recorded. However, as Jerry Sloninger noted in his profile of Jaray for a 1975 issue of *Automobile Quarterly*, Jaray had been messing with Chrysler products at least six years prior.

In 1928, as Sloninger reported, Jaray used a pair of Chrysler 72s in his scientific mileage comparison tests in Switzerland. One Chrysler still wore its stock five-seater body while the other, apparently, had been sent by Jaray to Haizer und Herrmann to have it rebodied as a Jaray-designed streamlined two-door coupe. The latter returned 61 percent better mileage (19.9 miles per gallon versus 12.3) and 17 percent quicker acceleration.

Ninety-plus years later, we have little confidence the Jaray Chrysler is still out there, but we're curious: Did this experiment lead to his relationship with Chrysler and/or to Chrysler's sudden infatuation with streamlining that produced the Airflow, or was it all a coincidence?

Grace's Doodlebug

FROM RUSS BESSONETTE OF GRASS VALLEY, CALIFORNIA, COMES THIS STORY OF one woman and the hot rod that returned to her.

"This car was originally built following World War II by someone familiar with aircraft assembly, and then acquired by Grace Curry in the mid-Fifties. She proceeded to drag race the car, doing her own wrenching. She decided to enter the car in the Philadelphia Autorama and drove the shiny gold-colored car through a crepe paper banner to kick off the show.

"Grace sold the car in 1957, and it passed through six or seven different hands, disappearing for some 30 years. In the late Eighties, Grace was raising llamas and her photo appeared in a national llama-raising magazine with her (maiden) name. Miraculously, the car's owner at that time saw the magazine and recognized the name. He was able to track Grace down and called her to see if she would like to buy it back. She declined, but said her son would be interested and a deal was made."

As Russ concludes the story, Grace is still around, living in a tiny home on her son's property in Grass Valley, right next to the car she drag raced as a young woman in Philadelphia.

RE: General Butler's Speedster

THE SPEEDSTER THAT GENERAL SMEDLEY Darlington Butler drove in the photo that Steve Harness alerted us to has elicited a number of different responses, so let's review.

First, Steve himself found a reference to the general purchasing an American Traveler Underslung while stationed in Panama. The car in the picture doesn't resemble an Underslung, but that eagle hood ornament looks almost exactly like the one found on an Underslung. Perhaps he liked it enough to transfer it from one car to the next?

A couple readers — Jeffrey Jonathan of Romeo, Michigan, and Bill Angerer of Foresthill, California — suggested it's a Kissel Gold Bug. Some of the overall shapes appear there, but the general's car appears taller, more imposing.

Curtis Heck of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, thought it might be a 1921-'22 Apperson Sportster, though we've yet to see any Appersons with that distinctive grille shape. The 1922 or so Franklin, which Lee Matthews advanced, does have that grille shape, though it appears more delicate than the grille on the general's car.

Could it be a custom build using parts from here and parts from there? Or does anybody else believe they know what it might be?

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

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BY TOM COMERRO

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Mecum Indy Results

ON JULY 10-18, MECUM'S INDY AUCTION, AT THE INDIANA STATE FAIRGROUNDS IN INDIANAPOLIS, saw impressive sales totaling more than $74 million, despite being delayed several months due to the pandemic. More than 1,800 vehicles crossed the block with a sell-through rate of 78 percent, and 346 were sold online, accounting for $10.3 million. Quite a few American classics came up for sale with some interesting pedigrees. Among those was a 1939 Packard Limousine, seen here, that sold for $165,000 and had previously served the Argentine government. The Super Eight Derham Phaeton was built to special order for Roberto Maria Ortiz and it would serve several presidents, including most recently, the Juan Perón regime. According to its documentation, the Packard was said to be a favorite car of Perón's wife, Evita. It was found in an Argentinian barn in the 1970s and brought back to the U.S. in 1977. The Packard featured a full nut-and-bolt restoration with careful attention paid to the woodwork. The right-hand-drive limo was finished in dark blue lacquer over red leather interior with a black canvas top and side curtains, with state seals on the doors and parade flags. Also selling was a classy 1936 Lincoln Model K sedan. The CCCA Full Classic was powered by a 414-cu.in. V-12 mated to a three-speed manual transmission. It was finished in black with maroon mohair interior and simulated woodgrain interior accents. Other features included amber fog lamps, dual wipers, and wide whitewall tires. The Depression-era Lincoln sold for a respectable $37,400. Full results from the show are now available at www.mecum.com.

RM Sotheby's Open Roads Results

RM SOTHEBY'S ONLINE OPEN ROADS, NORTH America auction took place in late July with nearly $2.9 million in sales. The overall sell-through rate was a healthy 57.6 percent and 14 American collector cars, ranging from a 1928 Ford Model A to a 1977 AMC Pacer, found new homes, accounting for sales of slightly over $600,000. This 1955 Buick Special Riviera Coupe was completely unrestored and original with only 4,875 miles on the odometer. Despite showing age in the chassis and engine compartment, the functional Riv still shined and was in good condition inside and out, while offering ample opportunity for a nice restoration project. The GM coupe hammered home at $19,250. Also catching our eye was a 1931 Model A tow truck finished in "Standard Oil" livery. Equipment and features included a hand-crank 3-ton Weaver auto crane, stone guard, fire extinguisher, step plates, light bar, and painted wire wheels with Firestone whitewall tires. The Ford wrecker sold for $21,450. Complete results are now available at www.rmsothebys.com.

RM SOTHEBY'S

AUCTION PROFILE

CAR	1958 Packard Hawk
AUCTIONEER	RM Sotheby's
LOCATION	Online only Open Roads, North America
DATE	July 23-31
LOT NUMBER	124
AVERAGE SELLING PRICE	$45,000
SELLING PRICE	$66,000

GREG KEYSAR/RM SOTHEBY'S

PACKARD HAWKS HAVE BECOME MORE popular over the years due to their limited quantities and their distinction as the last production cars built by Packard. Only 588 of these hardtop sports coupes were manufactured, but, because they shared the Studebaker Hawk platform, mechanical parts are readily available.

It's unknown how many exist today, but this one was finished in red over tan leather and equipped with a Twin-Traction limited-slip rear differential. Recent improvements included new wire wheels and whitewall tires (installed less than 250 miles from restoration) and a transmission rebuild. The rare and distinctively styled "Packardbaker" was powered by its original 289 V-8, carried chassis number 58LS1413, and sold for $66,000.

NOVEMBER

5-7 • GAA Classic Cars
Greensboro, North Carolina
855-862-2257 • www.gaaclassiccars.com

6-7 • Zephyrhills Festival
Zephyrhills, Florida • 813-312-4009
www.zephyrhillsautoevents.com

12-14 • Mecum Auctions
Las Vegas, Nevada • 262-275-5050
www.mecum.com

20-22 • McCormick's Classic Car Auction
Palm Springs, California • 760-320-3290
www.classic-carauction.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

RM SOTHEBY'S ANNOUNCED A NEW DATE FOR its Elkhart Auction, now taking place from October 23-24 in Elkhart, Indiana. More than 240 cars from the Elkhart Collection will be offered almost entirely without reserve. The collection features everything from British and Italian cars to American classics, modern sports cars, '50s convertibles, coachbuilt icons, and more. For a list of the full collection, visit www.rmsothebys.com.

Mecum's organizers have announced a special fall Indy show on the heels of the successful spring auction. The event will take place October 29-31 and more than 1,000 cars are expected to cross the block. Mecum said it will implement social-distancing and protective measures while preserving the excitement of live collector-car auctions. Enhanced online and telephone bidding will also be offered. Mecum's Las Vegas show in Las Vegas, Nevada, will also take place November 12-14 with more than 1,000 vehicles up for grabs. The Las Vegas Convention Center will host the event—more information is available at www.mecum.com.

Finally, in November, the annual McCormick Palm Springs Collector Car Auction will take place November 20-22 in Palm Springs, California. Nearly 600 cars are expected to come up for sale at the event. Last year's pre-Thanksgiving auction saw 330 vehicles sell, accounting for a healthy 65-percent sell-through rate and total sales of more than $5.7 million. For the latest details, visit www.classic-carauction.com.

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

BY TOM COMERRO

GMC Badge

CLASSIC INDUSTRIES • 800-854-1280 • WWW.CLASSICINDUSTRIES.COM • $64.99/SET
Reproduction GMC grille emblems for 1983-'91 models are now available. The emblems are made of injected-molded ABS plastic, and are painted in the factory red color to match the originals. The correct mounting studs and all attaching hardware are included for easy installation. These letters will fit 1983-'86 C- and K-model trucks, 1987-'91 R- and V-model trucks, and 1983-'91 G-series vans, Jimmies, and Suburbans. More details and photos of p/n 153802 are available on Classic's website.

Headliner Helper

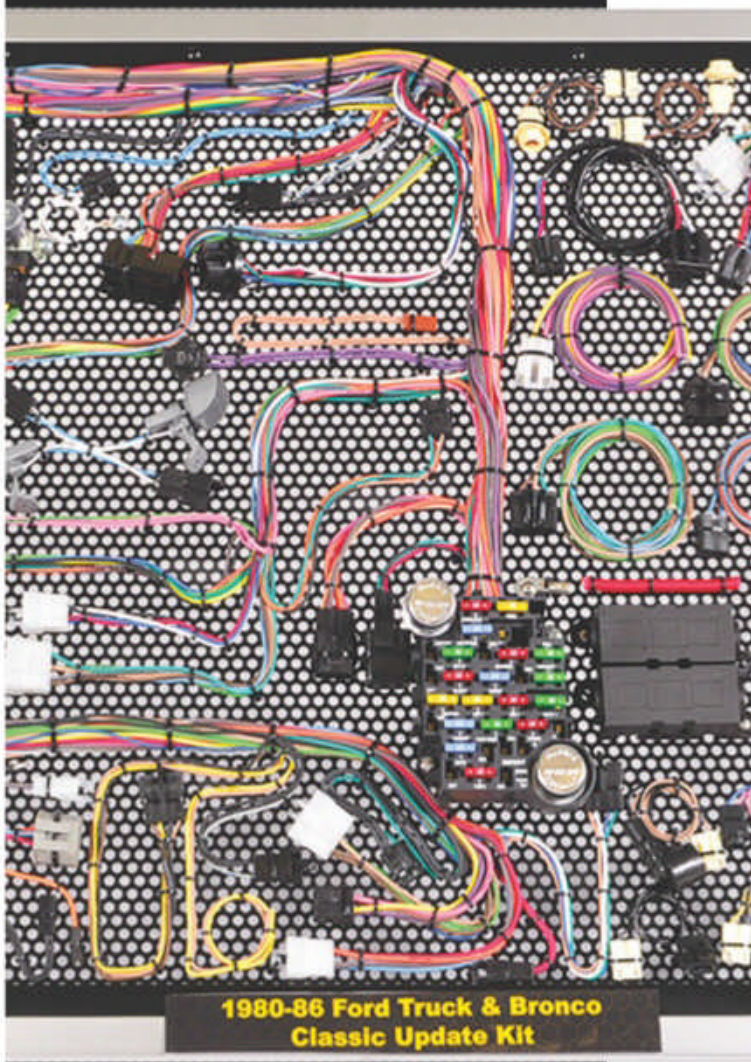
DANCHUK MANUFACTURING
800-648-9554
WWW.DANCHUK.COM • $55.95
Deteriorating tack strips can cause your vehicle's headliner to sag and there's no way to reuse or recondition them. Luckily, these new tack strips will make it easy to restore the interior ceiling of your 1956-'57 Chevy four-door hardtop to like-new condition. They're made from hard rubber, are perfect replacements for your old strips, and will make it easy to attach a new headliner or reattach your existing one. Once in place they will last much longer, too. For more information, ask about p/n 19382.

Hello Dolly

MILWAUKEE TOOL • 800-729-3878
WWW.MILWAUKEETOOL.COM • $89.99
The new Packout Dolly is a convenient way to transport tools and heavy equipment around your shop. The dolly has a capacity of 250 pounds, and its casters swivel 360 degrees, giving it great maneuverability. Loading and unloading is hassle free with the Quickstop lever that keeps the dolly in place as you work with it. It also features locking casters to stop it from moving when you're not around. Each is made of impact-resistant polymer, which provides durability and long-lasting performance. Inquire about p/n 48-22-8410.

Bronco Update

AMERICAN AUTOWIRE INC. • 800-482-9473
WWW.AMERICANAUTOWIRE.COM • $1,499
This Bronco and F-Series wiring upgrade is one of the most complete kits available for 1980-'86 Ford light trucks. Whether you're dealing with stock or aftermarket components, this versatile package is sure to meet your needs. Many original-style switch connectors are included, but, using the adapters and terminals in the kit, you can also connect the harness to aftermarket steering columns. Also included are feeds for coil, tach, water temperature gauge, oil pressure gauge, electric choke, windshield wiper/washer, and more. For additional information, visit American Autowire's website and inquire about p/n 510724.



C2 Style Steering Wheels

CON2R • 503-626-6390 • WWW.CON2R.COM • STARTING AT $500
These C2-style Corvette steering wheels are available in three offsets and feature a 15-inch outside diameter grip, with a stainless-steel frame and brushed, polished, or powder-coated spokes. Different grips are available in any combination of 15 injection-molded ABS colors. Custom-painted grips, solid wood grips, and leather wraps with matched stitching are also available.

Prices shown are presumed accurate at the time of printing; please confirm with seller prior to purchase.

INTERNATIONAL **UNDERDOGS**

BY MILTON STERN

Tempo Topaz Twins

I REMEMBER SEEING EARLY PHOTOS and drawings of the soon-to-be-introduced Ford Tempo, and my first thought was how it looked very Audi-like, in smaller scale. I wonder if I am the only one who saw this.

If anything, the Ford Tempo/Mercury Topaz twins were the next iteration of Ford's break from the square styling of its late 1970s and early 1980s offerings. The transformation of the Thunderbird from a clunky box to a streamlined road car was positively revolutionary. The Ford EXP was a fun take on economical cruising, and the trend would reach its zenith with the mid-1980s introduction of the Ford Taurus/Mercury Sable twins.

Always a leader in the 1960s, Ford had become somewhat of a follower in the late 1970s, as evidenced by its stubborn reluctance to downsize its full-size fleet and their road-hugging weight. Even Ford's revolutionary compactc of 1978—the Fairmont/Zephyr twins—still embraced rear-wheel drive and traditional styling, the same year Chrysler introduced the Horizon/Omni twins. Out of desperation and a need to survive, Chrysler would continue to lead in the small car ranks with the K-cars, built on a platform out of which it managed to squeeze at least 723 different models. (Yes, I know I am exaggerating.)

All of this is not to say Ford wasn't selling cars. There were plenty of people who wanted traditional, rear-wheel-drive cars. There still are. I am one of them. The late 1970s pre-downsized Fords and Mercurys are gaining in popularity, and the 1979 Lincoln Continentals will always be popular. But, a company can only follow for so long. The 1979 Panther-platform full-size models didn't sell much better than the 1978 models, because styling was somewhat uninspired and they arrived too late to the party.

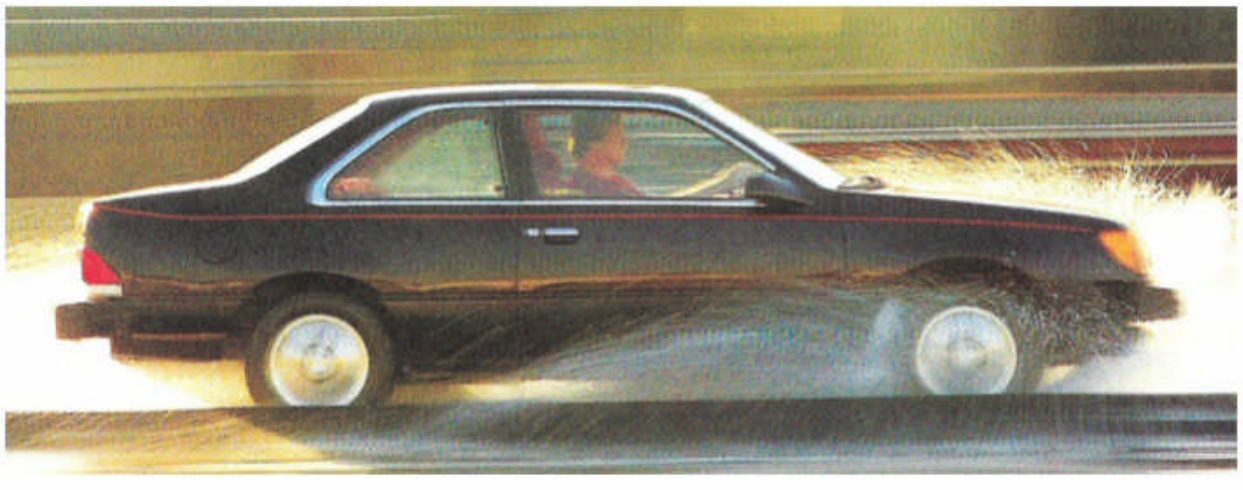
Filling in the space occupied by the Ford Fairmont, Ford's new T-car compacts arrived with a 99.9-inch wheelbase and MacPherson struts at all four corners, and more importantly, front-wheel drive. Engines would only be four-cylinders, two gas and one diesel. Two- and four-door models were available in three different trim levels. The Tempo and Topaz would have a 10-year run, 1984-1994.

The styling of the Tempo/Tapaz also fully embraced aerodynamics. I read an article recently that lamented the straying away from streamlined styling in the mid-1950s, after Nash reached the pinnacle with its 1949-'51 Airflytes. While fins were supposed to enhance handling, they really were more about style than functionality, and soon we were almost where we were before Chrysler's futuristic mid-1930s Airflows. It would take an energy crisis and CAFE requirements for the American automotive industry to rediscover the benefits of wind-tunnel testing, and for the public to appreciate the beauty of slippery cars.

Low front ends and raised rear decks, raked windshields, and even rearview mirrors that cut through the wind became the norm. Suddenly, a Triumph TR7 didn't look so different.

No two compacts at the time represented this sea change better than the Tempo and Topaz: with a drag coefficient of .36 to .37, they were very slippery in the wind.

The Tempo/Topaz were Ford's first cars built in America using independent rear suspensions with MacPherson struts. Other advancements were "Ford's first production fastburn" engine. According to the brochure: "the 2300 HSC (High Swirl Combustion) engine, developed specifically for the Tempo [Topaz], bridges the



gap that often separates economy from performance in many 4-cylinder engines." Specifically, the "induction system 'swirls' the fuel-air mixture as it enters the chamber. … It's this high swirling motion that allows the charge to burn at a fast rate to extract maximum power from the fuel."

The diesel was touted as a "diesel by design not by conversion."

Transmission choices were a three-speed automatic or a five-speed manual. There were 12 exterior color choices! And, there were four interior color choices! Oh, how I miss color choices.

There were enough options to create your own compact luxury liner, too, or you could opt for a nicely equipped commuter with plenty of standard equipment.

Interestingly, for 1987-'91 model years, an all-wheel-drive model was available in both the Tempo and Topaz. I wonder how many of these are still around.

By the end of their run in 1994, more than 2.7 million were sold. They were replaced by the Ford Contour and Mercury Mystique. In 10 years, I will write about those, and it will be just as interesting.

So, what's available? A lot! Why? Because by the 1980s, rustproofing was finally perfected enough to protect most cars from early rot, and maintenance intervals were much longer, allowing some cars to survive owner neglect.

I feel I have just found your next classic daily driver. None of those available were selling for more than $1,800. Pick one up now, enjoy and take care of it. In a decade, you will be a hit at the cruise-in.

Big in Japan

For the last quarter-century, a 1969 Corvair Coupe has felt at home while halfway around the world

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEFF KOCH
PHOTOSHOOT COORDINATION BY FRITZ SUGA AND HARAEMON

Fundamentally unchanged for years, the Corvair's 110 horsepower, 163.7-cubic-inch air-cooled flat-six could propel this coupe, with owner Yamada-san at the helm, to a top speed of 98 mph on the Wangan freeway near Tokyo, if he so chose.

Some of what you see here is a lie. It's not exactly a trick, but it's been designed to make you think that you're seeing something else. Can you believe your eyes? Know that the photo itself is unretouched, beyond some color tweaking by the art department to compensate for ink absorption and multiple other issues in transferring a digital image to the printed page. To be clear, we really parked this car in this location and photographed it as it sits: What you're seeing here is a 1969 Chevrolet Corvair living its life in Tokyo, a sleepy-if-stylish U.S. classic car in the middle of a bustling Japanese city. And it is. Sort of.

How so? For starters, the architecture in our background is Chinese. The Mazu Miao Temple, located in Yokohama's Chinatown district, is dedicated to Goddess Mazu, deity of the oceans and protector of fishermen and sailors. As a bonus, while the temple looks ancient, yet well-preserved as Yokohama sprouted up around it, Mazu Miao Temple only opened in 2006, after local residents pooled their resources and bought the land back from developers who wanted to build apartments. Power to the people, and all that.

Similarly, the Corvair is undoubtedly an American car. But, while it was built and sold and designed in America, for the American suburban sprawl, it is surely the least-conventional car a major Detroit maker had the temerity to introduce to the postwar public. Even for 1960, when every major car company (and a couple of independents) offered a new class of suburban runabout—the compact car—Chevrolet's effort stood out. (And Detroit's compacts were introduced as a direct result of Volkswagen getting more than a toehold in the American market; power to the people, and all that.) In a year when most car companies offered ¾-scale full-sizers as compacts, Chevrolet had the most foreign-feeling of the new domestic models.

Sure, Corvair was rear-wheel-drive, but the air-cooled all-aluminum engine was back there, too. Suspension was entirely independent on all four corners, a far cry from the leaf springs holding up the rear end of most American cars. Drape it in the latest in Detroit style (flat Vista roof, wrap-around rear glass on sedans, the bold lack of a grille), offer a couple of body styles, and let 'er rip. In its day, it was a bold step, Chevrolet hoping to give Americans everything they loved about the German import, only more of it. (Volkswagens have four cylinders? We'll give 'em six! Beetle seats four? Corvair seats six!) Thanks to its displacement-limited engine design, Corvair helped pioneer the use of turbocharging in American production cars: In 1962, 150 horsepower from 140 cubic inches topped the one-horsepower-per-cubic-inch mark and made this a muscle car from Bizarro World. In a market full of water-cooled, iron-block, front-engine, rear-drive passenger cars with solid rear axles, the Corvair may as well have been from the moon.

That said, to the Japanese, even though Corvair was an American car—in size and proportion, with a steering wheel that was resolutely on the wrong side of the cabin—it wasn't as foreign to their eyes as their cars were to ours, half a century ago. Consider: Honda automobiles were air-cooled from their start in the mid-'60s. Both the rear-drive S500/S600/S800 sports coupes and roadsters, plus the front-drive N sedan and Z coupe models of the early '70s, were air-cooled. Rear-engine models weren't so unusual, either: Hino built CKD (complete knock-down) kit versions of the Renault 4CV after the war, and the company's later automotive efforts, prior to merging with Toyota, (like the '60s Contessa) were also rear-engine. Mazda's first car, the petite, piston-engined R360, was both rear-engine and air-cooled; Subaru's first car, the Beetle-esque *keijidosha*-class (literally, *light car*) 360 launched in 1958, and was also

The interior was functionally the same as earlier post-redesign Corvairs, save for a deeper blue interior color, wider seats, and other minor changes. Corvair did not get GM's new-for-1969 steering-column-mounted ignition switch and lock.

rear-engine and air-cooled. Japan surrounded the Corvair with kindred spirits. So, these photos represent the least-American American car of its era, in a backdrop that suggests, yet masks, its actual location.

The improbability of a 1969 Corvair existing at all, much less half a world away from its place of creation, boils down to the Ralph Nader affair. Rather than kill the car once Camaro launched in the fall of 1966, as had originally been planned (but never really discussed openly with the public), Chevy continued to build the Corvair, with only minor changes and federally-mandated updates, as if to prove that it would not be bowed by Nader and the accusations leveled GM's way in *Unsafe at Any Speed*. The bad press actually strengthened Chevy's resolve to keep building Corvairs, even though it didn't much bother to advertise the car (Corvair garnered only a brief half-page mention in the 16-page full-line catalog for 1969). Just 6,000 were built for the 1969 model year—in Monza Coupe, Monza Convertible, and low-line 500 Coupe versions—with production ending in May. Those 6,000 cars were built for the 6,300-dealer-strong Chevrolet network, meaning not every dealer even got one.

Revisions for the runout year, as you might imagine, were minor: a new color palate inside and out, amber front side marker lights illuminated by clear bulbs, wider seats on Monzas, a new 10-inch rearview mirror replacing an 8-inch-wide mirror, new key head styles, clear window crank knobs, and revised front brake units. This Glacier Blue Monza coupe, packing 110 horsepower under that ventilated engine cover, is number 5,271 of the 6,000 built. It is owned by Takehisa Yamada, of Tokyo.

The Corvair is not totally unknown in Japan: Famously, an early-generation sedan was used in the superhero TV series *Ultraman* as the Science Special Search-Party Private Car, basically a staff car. Beyond this nationwide TV splash in the '60s, Yamada-san notes, today the Corvair is "not so famous, especially among young people. Car fanatics over 60 years know Corvairs, but even then, mostly they know only about early Corvairs. Often, they mention Ralph Nader. People who know about the later models are rare—many don't know about revised late Corvairs. But I find an interesting point; younger people who like lowriders are interested in Corvairs. Probably they want to know various things about all 1960s Chevys."

Though he's owned this example since 2015, Takehisa knew about this Corvair since it arrived in Japan in the mid-

1990s. "In 1996, I worked for NEKO Publishing Company; it specialized in motor things. In that era, Japan's economic condition was still stunningly good—like China in these recent 15 or 20 years. So, lots of interesting old cars were imported and sold. I worked for *Model Cars* magazine, but often I did some work for its sister publication, *Car* magazine.

"A 1969 Corvair Monza was imported to Japan, and we were offered to introduce it in our magazine. We went to take photos of the car, and made an article. The Corvair was a very beautiful car, like a new car—in original condition, and not restored. The importer told me that the car had been kept in a museum since it was new. I don't know if it was true or not. I fell in love soon, but it was sold quickly. I never met with it again for almost 20 years." In 2015, Yamada-san stumbled across his dreamy Corvair Monza on an internet auction, and was not about to let it get away again.

Once it was in his possession, he learned that time had not been entirely kind to the largely-idle Corvair. "The former owner lived near a salty beach, plus he drove the car very few times. The Corvair slept for almost 20 years. And the floor was OK; engine was OK too." And the rest? "Not good. The interior wasn't clean, the wheels were rusted, all tires were cracked, and the body side and doors were bad." It may be worth noting here that the Japanese are masters of elegant packaging, and so what many of us might see as usual old-car stuff might seem considerably more out of place there. At any rate, friends at Super Craft, in Tokyo, took their time to get things back into the shape you see here. By early 2019, this Corvair was returned to the road and ready to pack on the kilometers.

"I like its style very much," Yamada-san tells us. "To me, it looks like the Corvair Monza GT show car and Chaparral 2D. I love its name, 'Monza!' I think that name is so special. Plus, I like its compact size, history, and its handling feel."

Though Yamada-san enjoys American car culture (he also owns an original Meyers Manx, and is a fan of automotive artist Dave Deal, whose Deal's Wheels were later turned into a series of Revell plastic model kits), this is his first American automobile. Or…is it?

"I love its name, 'Monza!' I think that name is so special. Plus, I like its compact size, history, and its handling feel."

EMAIL YOUR THOUGHTS AND COMMENTS TO: **tmcgean@hemmings.com**

IN THE JUNE ISSUE (*HCC* #189), THE story on the Chevy brought such a great memory. In 1950, I was 16 years old. With the money I saved up shoveling snow and my paper route, I bought a 1940 Chevy coupe for $150. It smoked really bad. My mom said it must have hung around with other bad cars that also smoked. I decided to overhaul the engine, so I went to our local trade school in Springfield, Massachusetts. There, an auto mechanic teacher walked me through it. In order to get the pan down, I had to remove the tie rods, as they went under the pan. Also, in really cold weather, it was very difficult to shift from first to second on the "three on the tree," because of the vacuum system. After the car heated up, no problem. I drove the car for over three years; I wish I had it today.

Sanford Orenstein
Delray Beach, Florida

I ENJOYED MARK McCOURT'S article in the May issue (*HCC* #188) about the 1973 Volvo 144E. In the late 1960s, I was a Volvo salesman at Herb Estes Automart in Ann Arbor, Michigan. I did extremely well and won a trip to Sweden in the early '70s, where we took a long tour on a bus and visited the Volvo factory.

Herb eventually sold his dealership and the new owner felt I was making too much money and fired me.

I immediately went to work for Khan's Volvo in the Toledo, Ohio, area and did very well there. After some time, management took me aside and explained to me that their expenses were very, very high and in spite of my great sales, they were losing lots of money each month and could no longer afford to pay me!

I wound up selling chemicals for one of the customers I had sold a couple of Volvos to and eventually had my own distributorship for industrial chemicals!

Robert D. Ulrich,
Manitou Beach, Michigan

I JUST RECEIVED THE JUNE ISSUE (*HCC* #189) and Mr. Lentinello mentions some desirable Chevys in his column. One he mentions is the 1958 Delray. My dad traded our 1956 Chevy two-door wagon in on a used '58 Delray in 1960. I loved that Delray. It was a dark green two-door sedan with the reliable straight-six and three-speed on the tree. Its only options were a heater and a radio. But it did have electric wipers, which was a great improvement over the vacuum-powered ones.

My buddy and I used to dream about putting a V-8 in that baby—never appreciating what a great engine the six was. He was in auto shop, so he should have set me straight about that engine, but in high school all of us guys thought V-8s were tops.

The '56 wagon my dad traded was the first new car he ever owned. He worked at Bethlehem Steel and by 1956 he figured the family could afford and deserved a new Chevy.

Like I said, it was a two-door wagon (the 150 model) with the six and three-speed. It was two-tone green and light green. It was roomy as hell. He got the two-door because my two sisters were only three and four at the time.

I think I've only seen one other 150 two-door at all the car shows my wife and I have been to. I wish I had that wagon and that Delray now with their respective sixes in them.

Sam Gentile,
Allentown, Pennsylvania

I DIDN'T LIKE PAT FOSTER'S COLUMN in the March issue (*HCC* #186)…I loved it! I laughed so hard my hair hurt, and I'm bald.

It reminded me of when I was in the market for a Series 1 Jaguar XKE—you know, the super svelte, sexy one. It was in the right color: "Here I Am Red." The price was fair, and the car was an unrestored beauty with an obviously nice, new paint job. The leather was good, too.

Interested, I asked if I could drive it. The seller said, "Sure, under two conditions: one, remember that first gear is not synchro; and two, I'm going with you."

He handed me the keys and I turned it over, listened to the kitty purr…it sounded great. Revved it up, shifted into first, and off we went. I was so excited!

I loved the way it drove and looked. I was ready to get my checkbook out when I noticed something—a red light on the dashboard. So, I asked the seller what it was.

"Oh that? It's just the check engine light—no big deal."

Now for me, it was a big deal—in fact, it was a "no deal now" breaker.

I asked him if he could have it looked into, fixed, and I would come back and probably buy it.

He said he had already had it looked at and the mechanic said not to worry about it. (Yeah right!)

Then he told me that if I wanted it, I'd "have to buy it today because I'm leaving to go on a cruise around the world and won't be back for a very long time."

I said "Fine…Bon voyage!"

I hadn't been around the world, but I had been around the block a few times!

Mark Rue
San Antonio, Texas

I RECEIVED MY MAY COPY OF *HCC* (#188) and I want to offer my experience with regard to the article by Patrick Foster titled "Innovations of Distinction." He gives a one-sentence comment on a 1946 Studebaker in which self-adjusting brakes were introduced. He also had a small picture concerning 1950 Studebaker hill-holder mechanism.

As a young aspiring mechanic, I worked on a 1947 Studebaker to repair the brakes. The hill-holder feature was a setup of spring, lever, cam, and a pin/shaft, and required a hole in the brake shoe and lining. When in forward movement, the pin was held in place below the brake shoe. When the car stopped on a hill, the slight backward movement of the car somehow caused the cam to position the pin/shaft up through the hole and contact the brake drum, thus holding the car still. When forward movement began, the cam brought the pin/shaft down out of the hole to clear the brake lining in a safe position. The problem, which did sometimes occur, was that the cam would not bring the pin down, and thus it would scrape and gouge the brake drum. The self-adjusting feature would also fail, and uneven lining wear could affect the hill-holder operation.

The picture in the article indicates a 1950 model had a different system, and I would need more information to make any comment on that.

At age 84, I am no longer able to work on cars or trucks. I spent my last 17 years or so working on big trucks for a man who partially restored several Corbitt and Autocar trucks for truck shows in North Carolina.
Michael (Mickey) Young
Greensboro, North Carolina

I HAVE TO AGREE WITH MILTON
Stern in the July issue (*HCC* #190) that the beauty of a convertible is with its top down. However, there is a good reason for the tops being up at a car show, but first a little prelude. My first convertible ride was in my great-uncle's 1962 Oldsmobile in the beautiful countryside in Vermont. I had never been in a convertible before and it was a memorial event. Fast forward, my first personal experience in a convertible was a 1967 Amphicar that I restored. That really got me hooked, around town or on the water was thrilling. Later, we moved and brought it down from Rochester, New York, to Florida. All things were great until an 8-foot alligator and a water moccasin crossed our path! So, the Amphicar had to go, but [we still wanted] a convertible. We found a '64½ Mustang convertible and now currently have a '65 Sunbeam Alpine. The experience is so different when you ride in the county with the top down; it's the closest thing to being on a motorcycle. The open air and sun are just exhilarating. My wife and I now enjoy warm Florida night rides in the Alpine especially as the sun sets and paints a brilliant sky…it's so much fun. There is nothing like it.

So, back to the reason why tops are up at car shows. At car shows convertibles are judged and awarded based on their quality of restoration or general condition. The convertible top is a major part. Many cars can be devalued based on the quality of the top, inside and out. So, that's why it is up. Our '64½ Mustang won 1st place "Gold" at an all-Ford show based on the total condition, including the top, which the judges insisted be up for inspection.
Jeff and Kathy Heath
Ocala, Florida

ERNIE WILDER'S CHOICE OF THE '55
above the other two in the "Tri-Five" group was the right one in the September issue ("Bel Air of the Byways" driveReport, *HCC* #192). I always liked the simplicity of the design coupled with two-tone paint combinations.

My family had a '55 convertible in

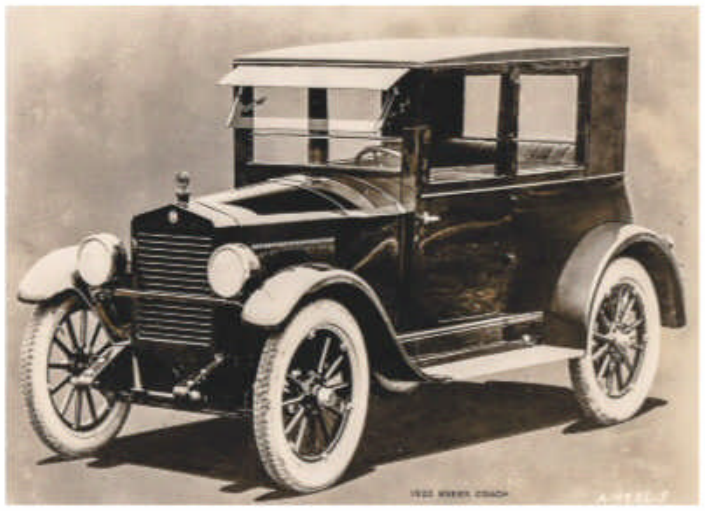
Continued on page 25

> "Cars became necessities rather than being used purely for pleasure."

Hudson's Coach

The American independent car companies took particular pride in introducing more than their share of automotive innovations. The Hudson Motor Car Company is a particularly good example.

Hudson was the automaker that introduced step-down design, in which the floor panel sat below the frame rails rather than atop them, allowing engineers to lower the car's height without losing interior room. When it debuted for 1948, it caused a sensation. Hudsons boasted the lowest rooflines in the industry, yet were big, roomy cars with gobs of headroom. An important additional benefit of the Hudson design was the amazing improvement in handling. When Hudson introduced its powerful Hornet on the step-down chassis for 1951, it created a car that would dominate NASCAR for the next four years. That's how advanced an idea step-down was – it allowed cars powered by flathead-sixes to run circles around V-8-powered cars. Step-down changed the way cars were designed.



I've always thought of Hudson as a youthful firm. The company was founded in 1909 by a group of ambitious young men who'd worked at other car companies and were itching to start their own business. Detroit storeowner J.L. Hudson stepped in with the necessary funding, and the Hudson Motor Car Company was born.

Right from the start it was innovative, the company's first car being a low-priced six-cylinder roadster when most sixes were big, expensive automobiles. Priced at a mere $900, the Hudson Model 30 was an immediate success. Seven years later, Hudson made a tremendous contribution in engine design by developing the fully counterbalanced crankshaft, which made high-speed engines possible. Seven years later, Hudson introduced the 1916 Super Six, with a fully balanced crankshaft. This advancement allowed far higher engine speeds and revolutionized automotive engine design.

The 1962 Rambler boasted a dual-circuit brake master cylinder ahead of almost everybody else – among American cars, Cadillac was the only other brand that had it – and it was one of the most important safety improvements ever introduced. But Hudson actually offered a dual-braking system years before those illustrious automakers. They called it "Triple-Safe" braking because it included the regular hydraulic brakes with a back-up mechanical brake system in case the hydraulic brakes failed. The third element in the "Triple-Safe" system was the emergency brake, which nowadays is called the parking brake, though back then you actually could use it to stop your car in an emergency.

Interestingly, after the Nash-Hudson merger, AMC continued to offer the "Triple-Safe" brake system on senior Hudsons, even though they were now essentially modified Nash models. Yet as safe as it was, it didn't offer the system on Nash cars – go figure. Hudson senior models had Triple-Safe braking right up to the end in 1957.

But perhaps Hudson's greatest accomplishment was its development of the "coach" body style, introduced on the 1922 Essex. Back then the majority of automobiles were "touring cars" – open vehicles with only a soft top and plastic side curtains for weather protection. The significance of the Essex Coach was that, for the first time, a manufacturer offered a closed car that was close in price to a touring car or roadster. To illustrate how radical that was, in 1912, a Hudson touring car was priced at $1,600, while an enclosed coupe was $2,250. That was the customary price spread between open and closed models, not just at Hudson but industry wide. It's why touring cars were so popular; they were simply more affordable.

But in 1922, Hudson shocked the industry by introducing the Essex Coach – a two-door sedan with plain, simple body lines for easier construction – for a mere $1,245, only $100 more than its two-door Cabriolet. By 1925, the price differential disappeared completely, as surging demand for closed cars drove down costs.

The rest of the industry followed suit and the age of closed cars had begun, greatly enlarging the market for automobiles. Cars became necessities rather than being used purely for pleasure. General Motors' executive Alfred P. Sloan Jr. said the introduction of the Essex Coach profoundly influenced the fortunes of Pontiac, Chevrolet, and Ford. You can't get a better endorsement than that.

Continued from page 23

black and white, with a white top — it was the prettiest on the block. It carried the standard 162-hp two-barrel setup.

Ernie's is the first I've seen with GM Autronic Eye. I was happy he didn't go the route of the continental wheel out back as so many late-to-the-party seem to do. It would have spoiled the beautiful photograph you printed at the close of the piece. It is that rear end that sets it apart from the two years that followed and is simply gorgeous in its plainness. On the specs, the shipping weight wasn't 2,166 pounds; likely you meant 3,166. Doesn't matter. Excellent article with your usual great photography, always in perfect weather!

Joshua Weiss
Hewlett, New York

IN REGARDS TO MILTON STERN'S article about the "Jolly Jowett Javelin" in the March issue (*HCC* #186), I disagree with his comments and praise of the automobile itself. He states that the Jowett Javelin is an advanced car for its time but that it missed its target. He fails to state what the target was. An "advanced" car for its time, 1947 to 1953? I don't think so…not at all. It had "all steel" construction just like the 1937 Ford. It cost 819 pounds. How many U.S. dollars is that?

Other "advanced features" were:

- Hydraulic brakes in the front with mechanical brakes in the back in 1947; Duesenberg racing cars had hydraulic brakes in 1914 and Duesenberg passenger cars had hydraulic brakes in 1921; Chrysler had four-wheel hydraulic brakes in 1924.
- The nose of the Jowett Javelin resembles a 1942 Chevrolet.
- The fastback profile resembles a 1947 Chevrolet and a 1938 Ford sedan.
- The engine has 50 horsepower; the early Ford V-8s had about 85 horsepower (1937-'40) with 100 horsepower in the 1947 model.
- Headlamps faired into the wings like the 1937 Ford and wide-spaced headlamps like the 1939 Ford Deluxe.
- Hidden running boards; I think he meant "no running boards."
- Aerodynamic styling just like the 1938 Ford Sedan.
- Access to the engine…remove two bolts. Please! Most American cars of the 1940s were superior to the thing!

Not to be unkind, but I believe Mr. Stern looks at British automobiles through rose-colored glasses.

Love your publications!

Robert F. Bateman,
Greenville, Rhode Island

I ENJOYED BOB PALMA'S SEPTEMBER column (*HCC* #192) about busting the Hudson Hornet myth. Do I have a Hudson Hornet story! My father, Freddy Krueger (honest!), owned and operated an American gas station/garage near Reading, Pennsylvania, in the 1950s through the '90s and often found himself being the second (or third?) owner of older cars. A '41 Packard Clipper, '48 Packard Clipper, '37 International panel delivery, and a '46 ('47?) Jeep readily come to mind. I was

Continued on page 27

matthewlitwin

> "...any contemporary SUV is a practical, well-rounded platform that caters to the adventurous, outdoor type between school lacrosse games."

Practical Appeal

Social media groups and car-centric websites were recently set ablaze when Ford announced the return of the once-beloved Bronco, arguably a vehicle that had a big hand in defining what we've come to know as the sport-utility market. Pundits will contend the original Bronco was not alone, thanks to intense competition that emerged from Chevy, Dodge, and the almost forgotten effort from Plymouth. International joined the fray years earlier, and Jeep, of course, had long been *the* key player in the proverbial outdoor sandbox of fun. (Naturally that famed name had to make waves of its own, announcing a Hemi-powered Wrangler within hours of the new Bronco's unveiling, adding fuel to the SUV fire.)

Aside from queries pertaining to the Toyota FJ-Cruiser-like exterior of the redesigned Bronco, the biggest question posed to me by my closest car compadres has been, "Would you buy one?" Past Blazer experiences aside, they forget that – at times – questions like this may put me in a precarious, treading-across-thin-ice position. In all honesty, my gut response was "no" after a few minutes of consideration. Perhaps at great risk of scorn, I didn't find the Bronco all that appealing.

I know all too well that *any* contemporary SUV is a practical, well-rounded platform that caters to the adventurous, outdoor type between school lacrosse games. A reminder came in the guise of an extended weekend of camping in New Hampshire's White Mountains a few months back, made possible by a cavernous SUV that swallowed enough food and gear for four with ease. Admittedly, the latest Bronco will likely blaze a new trail, but to what extent? Will a new (or, correctly, re-redesigned) Blazer follow within the next few years? Or how about a Ramcharger?

Given that the Dodge name was dropped a decade ago from the pickup line, a 20-something Ramcharger flows from the tongue like spring snowmelt in a Vermont riverbed. Ram, like Bronco, is bolstered by decades of earned respect from its devoted buyers, even though the name wasn't cast in chrome and bolted to the Dodge line of pickup bodies until the 1981 model year. It replaced the old D-Series nomenclature in a move that coincided with a smart, rugged-looking "Job-Rated" redesign. Other than its "Ram Tough" reputation, one thing that did migrate from the then past-to-present move was the oft-used ram's head hood ornament, a shiny appendage that was conspicuously absent from the 1962 Dodge trucks dealer brochure – featuring a D100 Sweptline on the cover – hanging on my garage wall.

Unlike other light- and heavy-duty rigs on the market, some would insist that, visually, the 1962 Dodge is the truck equivalent of Ford's Edsel. I admit that, at first blush, the Sweptline's design can be compared to a brick – rectangular, and flat on each side. Look a little closer and defining features emerge from the metal, such as the slightly recessed center section of the hood, which transitions to a dip in the grille and its flanking grille bar wings, if you will, acting as subtle eyebrows over quad headlamps. Along the length of the body is a defined, gently sloping beltline that kicks up slightly at the back end. Thin cab pillars deliver an expansive greenhouse, enabling its driver to see all the world has to offer with great ease.

Offered with a 6-foot 6-inch cargo box on a 114-inch-wheelbase drop frame, or a full 8-foot box on a 122-inch-wheelbase drop frame, the D100 Sweptline was delivered to your local dealer with an advertised 50 engineering enhancements administered to the series over the outgoing models. Moving those new changes to the jobsite was a choice between a 140-horse Slant Six engine, or 200-hp V-8, either of which would have been accompanied by a heavy-duty three- or four-speed manual. These drivelines proved that "Job-Rated" wasn't just a convenient salesman's tag line to more than 32,300 customers that year – a figure that included the more aggressive-looking Utiline series (or stepside, among other manufacturers).

There's a bit of family legacy built in with my affinity for the Sweptline, in that the wall art in question was once hanging in my uncle's workshop. We both were of the mindset that one could find equal parts enjoyment and practical use from a modestly styled, utilitarian-yet-rugged brick. Which brings me back to the new Bronco. Flashy? Yes. Fun? No doubt. But if I'm being honest with myself, I'd rather step into a first-gen example of Ford's compact SUV. Early Broncos were functional, boxy, and practical – with a high cool factor built in for good measure.

Continued from page 25

reminded of one of my favorites, a ’56 Hudson Hornet, as I read Bob’s column.

Often, my dad would help customers sell their cars, taking little or no profit, by placing signs in the cars’ windows and parking them along the Philadelphia Pike. Knowing he did this, a man — unknown to my dad — wandered in off the streets and wanted my dad’s thoughts on how to sell the car, a ’56 Hudson Hornet. A nice-looking car, the Hornet had a failed fuel pump and the owner had no interest in pursuing repair. At the time, my dad’s daily driver, the ’41 Packard, had seen better days and Freddy struck a deal. A creative sort, my dad rigged up an electric fuel pump as a replacement for the Hornet’s failed pump and soon the Hornet was back on the road.

Fast forward to 1967. My grease-monkey days were past, and I was a Purdue sophomore co-op engineering student living in Indy with “cars” a distant, but pleasant, memory. As one car replaces another, Skeet Bossler had replaced me

at the garage and the Hornet was ready for pasture. Around this time, Reading’s Fairground was readying for its annual Fall Demolition Derby. Brother Scott, too young to drive, convinced our dad into entering the Hornet in the Demolition Derby with Skeet as its driver. And drive he did — see accompanying photo. What many wouldn’t do to have that continental kit today!

Another day, I’ll tell the story of my ’48 Chevy that was replaced by a ’62 Impala and how the ’48 and I joined Skeet that beautiful fall evening at Reading’s fairgrounds.

Bill Krueger
Via email

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

1957 Rambler Rebel

How this plucky independent became America's Fastest Sedan

BY PATRICK FOSTER • ILLUSTRATIONS COURTESY OF THE PAT FOSTER COLLECTION

The 1957 Rambler Rebel is one of those special, highly unusual cars that come along only once in a blue moon: a one-year-only effort with outstanding performance that's mostly been ignored by both vintage car and muscle car fans. The fact that it was the fastest American sedan for 1957 makes the situation all the more curious.

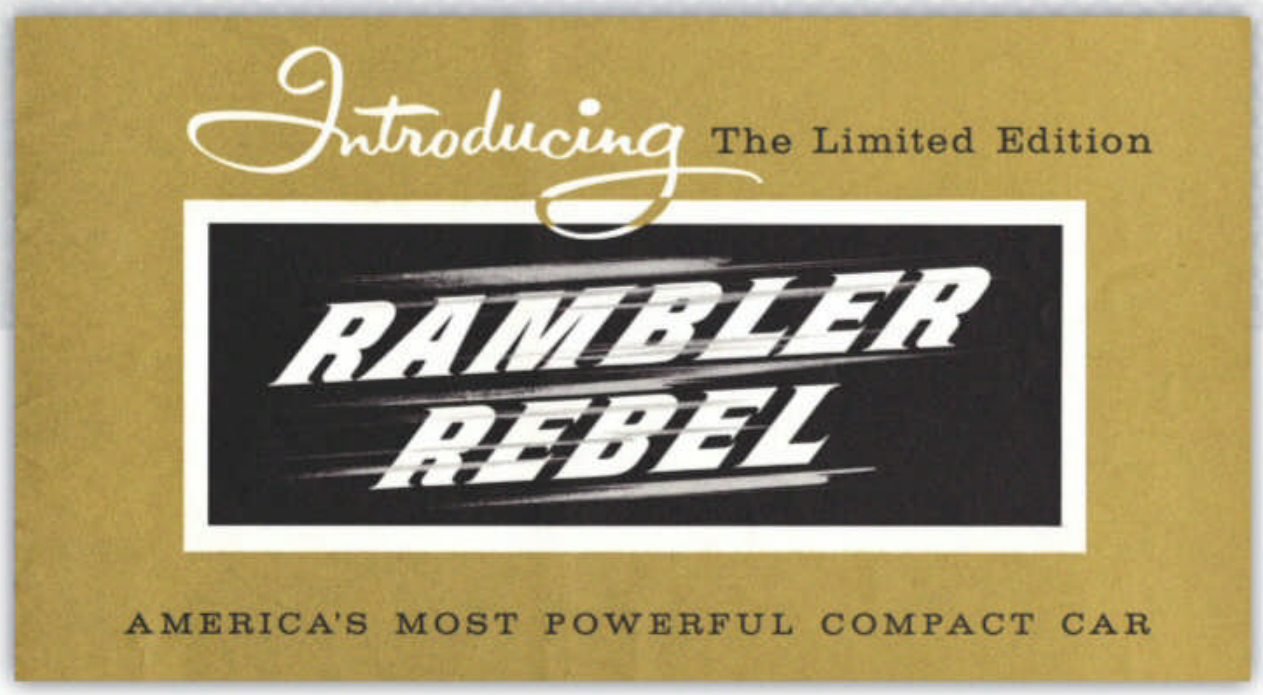
The idea of offering a four-door performance car came about as a result of low product development budgets. When American Motors was on the ropes in 1955, CEO George Romney made a decision to halt development of new senior Hudson and Nash models, instead pushing forward an all-new Rambler for 1956 rather than 1957. However, AMC was so short of money that Romney had to limit body styles for the new Rambler to four-door models only—both sedans and station wagons. Although it made sense because it focused on the most popular body styles, it came at the expense of having a glamour car like a convertible or two-door hardtop. To add a little spice, company designers also created four-door hardtop sedan and hardtop station wagon models, offered in high-fashion Custom trim. They helped add a dash of glamour to showrooms, and the 1956 Ramblers were well-received.

Because of budget constraints, styling for 1957 was almost identical to the prior year, with only the addition of a floating bar to the upper grille and altered exterior trim to differentiate them. But this year Rambler offered a V-8 for the first time, a new 250-cubic-inch, 190-horsepower engine AMC designed and produced, while the senior Nash and Hudson cars got a potent 327-cu.in. version of the same powertrain. In a flash of genius, someone at AMC suggested offering a really special version of the Rambler Custom four-door hardtop, powered by the Ambassador/

The fabulous 1957 Rambler Rebel was a limited-production, high-performance hardtop sedan powered by an AMC-designed, 327-cu.in. V-8 producing 255 hp. Rebel was the fastest American sedan in 1957. Right: American Motors created this unique sales brochure for the limited-production 1957 Rebel.

The Rambler hardtops featured extra reinforcing in the body sills, quarter panels, and door posts to ensure a minimum of body flex. This Rebel is pictured on the beach at Daytona.

Most of the press photos taken of the Rebel were black and white; the color ones in this article were given to the author by one of the AMC engineers who traveled to Daytona for the Speed Week event.



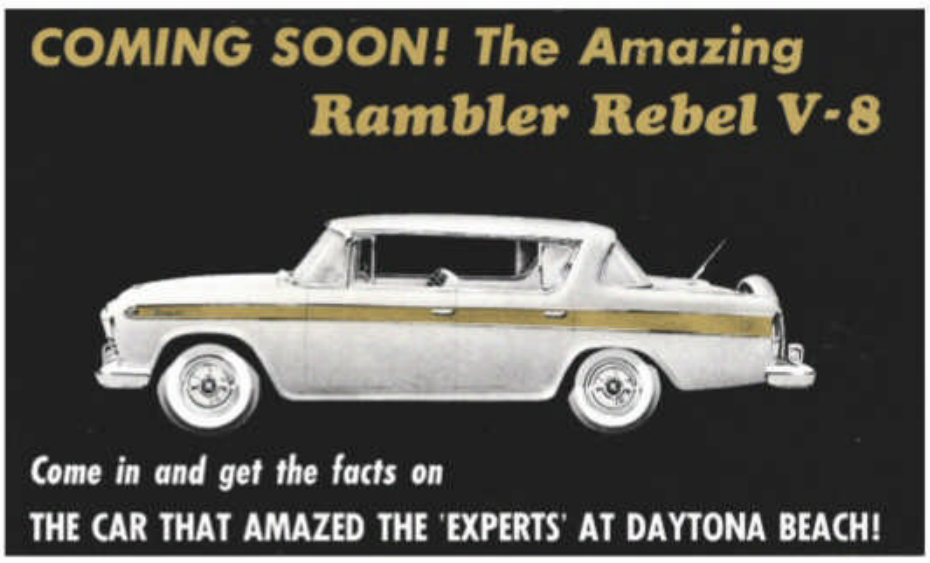
Hornet V-8. It would be fast and stylish, the ideal combination for a halo car. That combo—a midsize car powered by a V-8 from a full-size car—became the formula for later muscle cars that appeared in the Sixties. The hot Rambler was approved for production, albeit on a limited basis. How they got frugal George Romney to agree to it is a wonder, but he did.

The 1956-'57 Rambler had been designed from the beginning to accommodate AMC's new V-8 and, since the 250- and 327-cu.in. blocks were the same size, swapping in the 327 V-8 was an easy installation. The Rebel's new engine made 255 hp at 4,700 rpm and a whopping 345 lb-ft of torque at just 2,600 rpm. Because the factory would produce just 1,500 examples, transmission choices were limited to a heavy-duty T-85 three-speed manual with overdrive, or a beefy Flashaway Hydra-Matic, supplied by GM. A stout Borg & Beck pressure plate clutch was specified with the manual gearbox.

Rebel's suspension was beefed up to handle the extra power with heavy-duty adjustable shock absorbers as standard equipment and thicker front and rear anti-roll bars, along with flanged brake drums.

Starting to prepare for the 0-60 test run featured in *Motor Trend* magazine. For safety reasons, the full wheel discs were removed just prior to the run.

The two AMC engineers most responsible for the Rebel's success were Jim Moore (left) and Carl Chakmakian, two friends who shared an interest in racing.



AMC also offered this postcard to stir interest in the Rebel.

A '57 Rebel undergoing road testing at AMC's proving grounds test track in Burlington, Wisconsin. The Rebel got suspension modifications to help it handle the amazing power from its 327-cu.in. AMC V-8.

It was decided that just one color would be provided, a metallic silver-gray called, appropriately enough, Rebel Silver, offset by bronze-gold-anodized aluminum side trim with the Rebel name spelled out in script on the leading edge. Special full wheel discs were included for additional glitter. The Rambler's massive die-cast chrome grille provided an abundance of bright metal pizazz up front.

Style-wise, the Rebel was a great-looking car with clean lines that included a flat roof and bodysides: AMC stylists even eliminated the "shoulders" seen on most 1950s cars, in order to maximize interior width. The goal was to provide the same interior roominess as a full-size car with compact exterior dimensions. Wheel openings were large to show off the big 15-inch wheels, and unique wheel covers. The side trim's contrast with the silver paint was an especially attractive combination, and the reverse-slant C-pillars added a distinctive touch to the overall styling. It wasn't long before other companies copied AMC's reverse pillar look.

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Mercedes-Benz

To compensate for the lack of a B-pillar, AMC engineers specified greatly beefed-up rockers, quarter panels, and center posts for the four-door hardtops, so body fit has held up very well over the years. Rust has generally not been an outsized problem, probably due to the standard factory undercoating.

Inside, buyers were treated to the best, with full-floor carpets, special perforated-vinyl headliner, AMC's celebrated Airliner foam cushion reclining seats with Custom seat trim, clock, radio with a unique rear-mounted antenna, directional signals, Weather Eye heater, power steering and brakes, backup lamps, windshield washers, a padded instrument panel, and sun visors.

Anyone wanting even more luxury could order AMC's outstanding air conditioning system, Solex tinted glass, six-ply nylon "Blue-Streak" high-speed whitewall tires, a continental tire mount, and seat belts. The vast majority of Rebels came through very well-equipped, with 1,031 units fitted with the automatic transmission (the remaining 469 Rebels got the three-speed/overdrive setup) and 914 getting the continental spare tire. Nearly half—731 to be exact—were equipped with Solex glass. All were given factory-applied undercoating and backup lamps, but only 83 buyers ordered air conditioning. All but one was equipped with a factory radio.

In Daytona Beach testing, the Rebel was the fastest American sedan. Two awards were given: The Rebel's driver received a bronze "lead foot" award, while the slowest car's driver was given a "ballerina slipper" award.

Marketing decided to endow the new car with a special name—Rebel—which may have come from famed NASCAR driver Frank "Rebel" Mundy, who'd earlier campaigned both Nash and Hudson cars in NASCAR.

It turned out that 1957 was a big year for American performance cars, with red-hot examples from just about every U.S. brand. With a slew of new high-performance cars just begging to be compared, *Motor Trend* decided to do just that. Tested for 0-60-mph acceleration were an Oldsmobile with the hot 300-hp, 371-cu.in. V-8 with three two-barrel carbs; a supercharged 289-cu.in., 275-hp Studebaker Golden Hawk; a 290-hp

This press photo shows the Rebel at the start/finish line, but carries no identification of who the man standing next to the car is. The Rebel was clocked doing 0-60 mph in 7.5 seconds.

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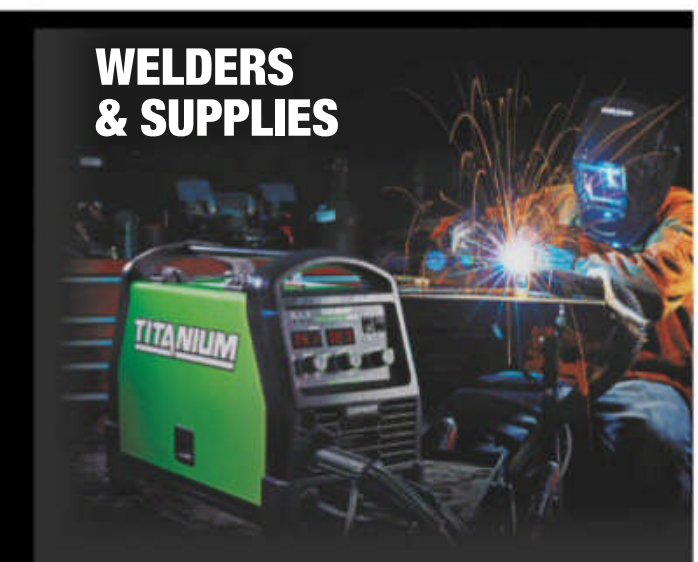
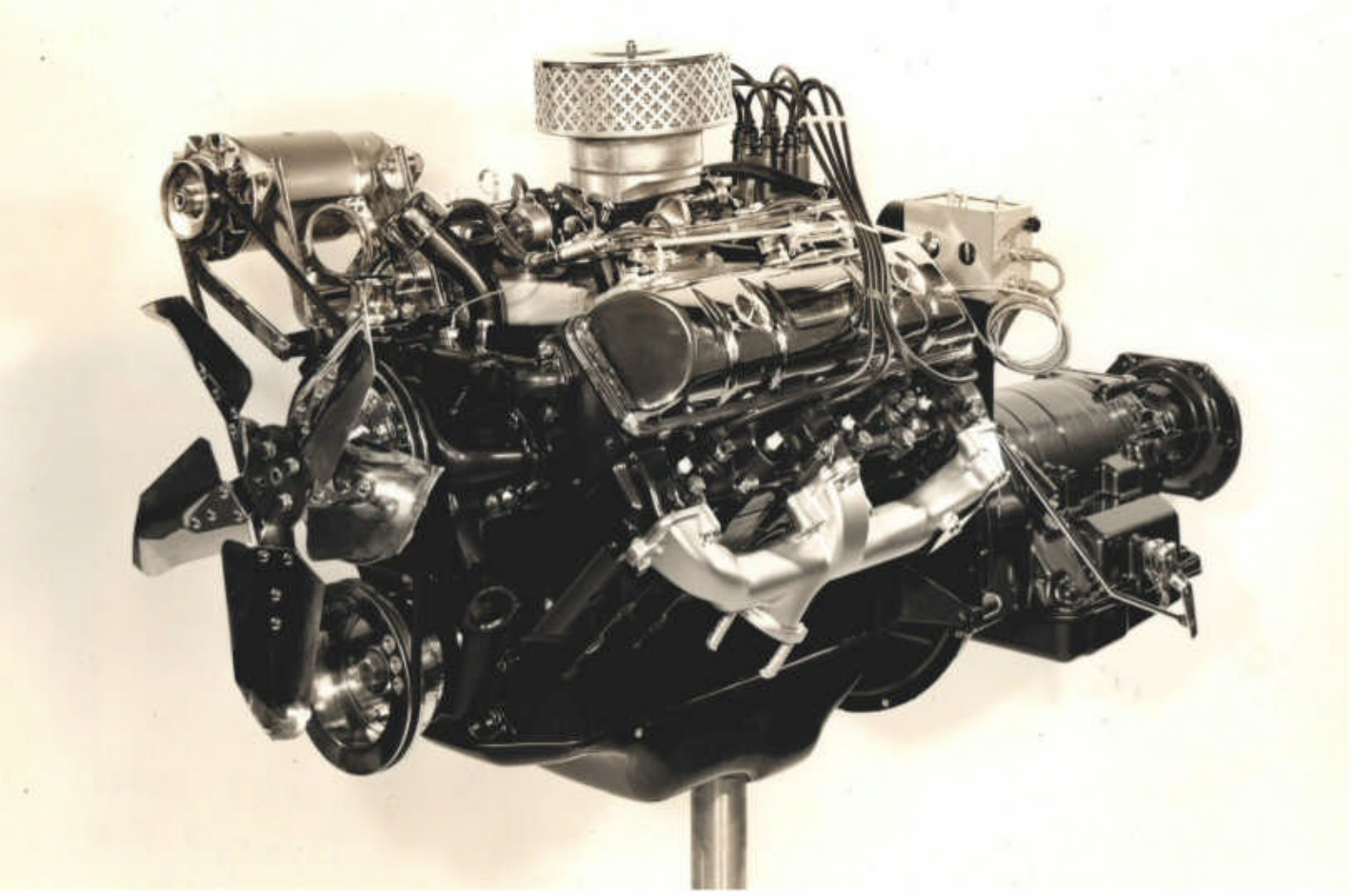


WELDERS & SUPPLIES

HAND TOOLS

OFF-ROAD



Until very recently, there were few images of the proposed AMC fuel-injected 327-cu.in. V-8, and no press photos. However, some months ago the author was able to acquire a small batch of press photos showing different views of what would have been a most remarkable engine. It's a shame it didn't make it to production.

Pontiac Tri-Power 347-cu.in. V-8; a 300-hp supercharged Ford and Thunderbird; a hot Chrysler 300C with a 392-cu.in. dual-quad V-8; a 345-cu.in., 345-hp dual-quad De Soto Adventurer; a Plymouth Fury with a dual-quad 318 producing 290 hp; two Dodges, including a D-500 powered by a Red Ram 325 that made 285 hp, and a D-500-1 with dual quads and 310 hp; and a Mercury Monterey M-335 pushing 335 hp from its 368-cu.in. V-8. The inclusion of a Rambler among these gorgeous hardtops and convertibles seemed almost silly; after all, Ramblers were economy cars, right? Its 255 hp actually put it down near the bottom of the list of performance engines.

But the Rambler's advanced unibody construction meant it was lighter than most American cars. Another plus: The selection of the three-speed manual with overdrive gearbox meant you got a 4.10:1 axle ratio standard, with stump-pulling 4.44 gears optional. (Hydra-Matic equipped cars came standard with 3.15 gears.)

To cut to the chase, the Rambler Rebel was shown to be America's fastest sedan for 1957. Admittedly, it was close: The Rebel's best 0-60-mph run was timed at 7.5 seconds, while the Chrysler 300C ran 7.6 seconds. But consider such legendary muscle cars as the Studebaker Golden Hawk's 8.7 seconds, or the blown T-Bird's 8.0 seconds, and you can appreciate what the AMC engineers were able to accomplish on a shoestring. Other results included the Plymouth Fury at 8.0 seconds, the Dodge D-500 at 8.8 seconds, and the Pontiac Tri-Power at 7.9 seconds. The only car that could beat the Rebel in acceleration was a fuel-injected Corvette, which did the run in 7.0 seconds to become the fastest American car, while the Rebel was the fastest American sedan.

Actually, the Rebel was originally going to offer the new Bendix fuel injection system as an option. According to 1957 Rebel expert Bill Lenharth, author of *The Amazing Rambler Rebel*, "Nash designer Bill Reddig told me they put the fuel injection in three prototype '57s and ran them on the test track. These were the same cars used to evaluate the suspension and handling needs of the larger V-8." AMC engineers claimed the fuel-injected Rebel would have done the 0-60 run in under 7.0 seconds, but in all probability, we'll never know for certain. The number built with fuel injection has never been completely resolved: some sources claim that six—not three—were produced. None were released to the public, though years ago one person sent me a photo purporting to be a fuel-injected Rebel still in existence in the 1960s. However, the photo showed only a tattered-looking Rebel with the hood closed, so there was no way to verify it had a FI-engine, or indeed, any engine at all!

In any event, in testing, the fuel injection system displayed cold-weather driveability problems to the extent company engineers felt it wasn't ready for production. Apparently, the few FI test cars were converted back to carburetors and sold.

Unfortunately, 1957 was destined to be the only year for the specialty Rebel. For 1958, AMC used the Rebel name on what had been the Rambler V-8. It was a nice car, with its 250-cu.in. V-8 producing 215 hp. It was very quick, but not quite the rocket the '57 Rebel had been. AMC would go on to great success with its economical cars, not returning to the performance market until 1968, when it introduced the new Javelin and AMX.

This photo from AMC's engineering archives is one of a small group that were shot in color during Speed Week.

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Star Gazing

A look at Dr. Philip Lutfy's dazzling Mercedes-Benz collection

BY JEFF KOCH • PHOTOGRAPHY BY THE AUTHOR OR AS CREDITED

In his 80 years, Dr. Philip Lutfy has owned at least 125 Mercedes-Benz automobiles. Probably. It could be more. "It's between 125 and 150, for sure," he tells us.

In the last half century and beyond, he's owned a dozen gullwings, more than 20 Pagoda-top SLs from the '60s, and more Pontons than he can remember. Most generations of SL, plus plenty of coupes and sedans with rare options, have passed through his collection over the decades. And most of these have been made better at his hands. "I like to touch everything," he said recently. "I like to play with everything. Upholstery work, a repaint, complete restorations, you name it. I love to work on it, take it apart, and make it like it was when it was new. It's how I got so involved with restoring these cars."

Despite Phil's desire to improve any Mercedes that comes into his purview, originality is still a big deal to him. "I like as original a car as I can find. Original cars really turn me on. But if you can't get one, you get it restored and make it like new." And he's done lots of that.

If Phil was a full-time tradesman, someone in the automotive industry, restoring and refurbishing a gross of Mercedes over time would be an impressive number. But he wasn't a full-time restorer: he was (and remains) a hobbyist. A doctor by profession, he worked in an emergency room for years, later taking patients at his dad's Phoenix-based practice (and later still, taking over that practice). Between doing some of the projects on his off time, and commissioning others, the results become even more impressive. And in those years, he's become known as one of the most discerning connoisseurs of Mercedes automobiles.

He comes by his Mercedes enthusiasm honestly, as his family members were early adopters of the German marque, from the late 1950s. "My mother, Tiny, bought a '55 four-door sedan from a friend in Europe, and she brought it back to the States. We thought we'd try it and see how it held up." Turns out, it held up well enough that more Mercedes-Benzes entered the Lutfys' garage. "Later, Mom bought a European-delivery '59 220 S coupe to tour Europe on the skeet-shooting circuit, which I still have. Dad [Dr. Louis Lutfy] bought a 1960 220 sedan for us kids to take to college, and we had a lot of good service out of that." Louis was impressed enough that he (somewhat accidentally) bought one of the last hundred 300 SL roadsters built, with the alloy engine and four-wheel disc brakes (see photo caption on page 40); Phil still has it, too.

In time, Phil came to understand, and cherish, what Mercedes-Benz automobiles were all about. "The craftsmanship carried

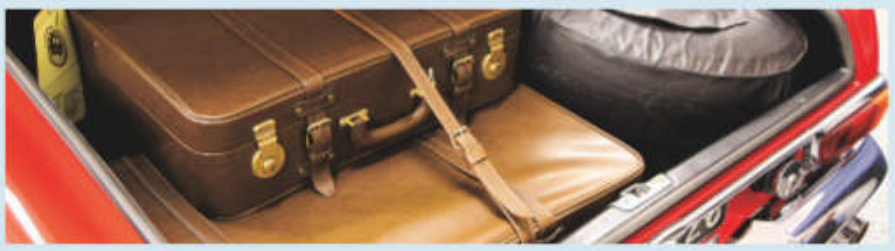
on from year to year, the traditions, and the engineering all appealed to me. The solid construction, and also frankly the styling, makes them very appealing, also." His collection started modestly, with a 190 SL. "I liked them to start out with and had a lot of fun with 'em. I'd find some nice cars, a few I had to refinish and work on, and I went from there. At one point, you could redo a 300 SL gullwing for about the same as it cost to redo a 190…so I started buying gullwings! They were pretty cheap at the time, so I could buy one, restore it, and put it on the market. Tom Barrett [a founder of Barrett-Jackson] was one of Dad's patients, and we got to be close, so I'd restore 300 SLs, both gullwings and roadsters.

"Then I got into the 300 S and 300 SC models from the 1950s; they were a lot of fun, too. I wish I had one; they're way out of my price range now." Today, Phil finds that "my tastes are changing" and he digs the W108/109-generation coupes and convertibles. "I've learned to appreciate power steering and brakes on these later cars. Some even had power windows, and some had a power sunroof, too."

He counts a 280 SE 3.5 convertible as the favorite car he's ever had in his collection. "They only made them in 1970 and '71—very rare. I've had two of 'em, both from collections. One I restored, and the other was original." Both, he mentions almost as an aside, set sales records when they crossed the block. As far as his favorite in the current collection (excluding the pair that his parents bought new), the French-registered red '71 280 SL (more about it in the photo caption) might have been his favorite for a while—Phil confesses that he's "very attached to it"—but the white '66 250 SE, four-speed convertible is a strong contender as well. "It's a convertible, it's a manual transmission car, it's the color combination, it's mostly original (it even has its factory tool kit still sealed in a factory plastic bag marked "250 SE")… and it has all of the Hepco luggage."

Ah yes, the luggage: Virtually every Mercedes Phil owns, and plenty he's sold over the years, has a full complement of correct-era factory-accessory Hepco fitted luggage. "Those cases are just not available—they're very hard to find, and all the more fun when you do find them." He tells a story of accidentally bidding online against a friend and spending $4,000 for the luggage—and another $1,500 to refinish it. (That may have been a few years ago, judging by recent prices we've seen on genuine period Hepcow luggage sets.)

In his 80 years, Dr. Philip Lutfy has owned at least 125 Mercedes-Benz automobiles. And he's made every single one of them better than when he bought them.



As outlined in the October 2019 issue of *Hemmings Classic Car*, this five-speed 280 SL was likely on the Mercedes stand or the Phoenix Tire stand at the 1971 Paris Motor Show. Not mentioned in the story is that French filmmaker Claude LeLouch, he of *C'etait un Rendez-Vous* (that 9-minute, pre-dawn, full-throttle blast through Paris allegedly done in a Ferrari, but in fact done in the filmmaker's personal 450 SEL 6.9) was the first owner. It was originally a radio-delete car.

STEPHEN HERALDO

Sporting silver paint and an automatic transmission, this '69 280 SL is a rare example that Phil has owned twice. He restored it after he purchased it from the original SoCal owner, cleaned it up, and changed the interior from black to red; it then sold at auction. When it went up for resale some years later, the seller contacted the Mercedes-Benz Classic Center and discovered the interior had been changed. He wanted out of it, and Phil ended up back with the SL.

For most of us, the opportunity to see/sit in/drive a W113-chassis SL is a treat. For Phil, when he sees this dark green four-speed SL, he's drawn to... the luggage rack. "That roof-mounted luggage rack is very rare. It holds a suitcase in the middle, and on the side it's relieved for two pairs of skis." Leather straps hold the items in place. "You could install the roof rack without metal strips on the top." You'd have to: No one reproduces them.

STEPHEN HERALDO

One of just 830 fuel-injected coupes built between 1958 and ’60, and fully restored in its original Derbyblau (dark blue) hue, this ’60 220 SE was a European-delivery car and has traveled fewer than 36,000 miles. It also has its factory-installed Webasto sunroof. “The sunroof was an unusual option,” Phil said. “I was told they only did 20 of them. I’m not sure I believe that; I’ve owned three of them over the years.”

“Dad...got a burr under his saddle and decided that he wanted a new 300 SL in 1963.” A continuation of the original gullwing 300 SL, its name came from its three-liter straight-six, and the term *Sport Leicht* (Sport Light), referring to the aluminum body panels. The new-for-’57 roadster kept the coupe’s high technology, and most of its style, while increasing its livability thanks to the conventionally-opening doors. A total of 1,858 300 SL roadsters were built through 1963, though not all of these were the same: The last 209 received a light-alloy block and four-wheel disc brakes. This is one of those cars. As a bonus, “the dealer was discounting them to move them out of inventory; the sticker was more than $12,000, but Dad paid an even $10,000.”

For years, if you'd ask Phil what his favorite Mercedes was, he'd say it was a W113 SL. Now? "My tastes are changing. I like more of the later Mercs, the '70s cars, 250s and 280s, SE and CE coupes and convertibles. I love the lines of those. This white convertible, I like that style." Not only is it an unrestored factory car, but it's also a stick shift, and has a full complement of Hepco luggage. "I've learned to appreciate the power steering and brakes on the later cars," Phil says.

This European-delivery 220 S coupe was purchased by Mrs. Bertha "Tiny" (Linsenmeyer) Lutfy — Phil's mom — in 1959. "[It cost] something like $5,800 with overseas delivery in 1959, while it was $7,000 through the local dealer." Tiny was on the European marksmanship-competition circuit and was a world-class trap-and-skeet shooter. She wanted the works — convertible, fuel injection — but was advised against all of it save for whitewall tires and a Becker radio.

"A friend in Belgium acquired this Anthracite '67 250 SL for me. It's just an honest, clean 250. It's all original except that someone put a clearcoat over the original paint. It's a radio-delete model, too; I've found that Europeans don't like to spend on accessories. I've had several W113-chassis SLs like that." Phil should know — he's owned more than 20 of them over the years.

Jeffrey Hunter was known primarily as an actor in Western pictures, particularly some John Ford classics like *The Searchers*; it is Phil's understanding that Mercedes gave Hunter this car — a black, fuel-injected 1960 220 SE convertible — to sell his Hollywood pals on the idea of owning a Mercedes. "[Hunter] had a mechanic who serviced his gullwing and the 220; Hunter later gave the 220 to his mechanic after he'd promised not to flip it. I bought it from the mechanic's estate."

This was the first postwar Mercedes coupe with more than 3 liters under the hood. Though it rides the same basic platform as the white '66 convertible seen elsewhere, this '70 280 SE 3.5 comes with an important difference: a Bosch D-Jetronic-fuel-injected 3.5-liter V-8, good for 197 horsepower. Those aren't muscle car figures, but the M116-family V-8 allowed a 130-mph top speed. "What a wonderful driving car," Phil reports. "Big and heavy, but with enough horsepower to make it feel... liquid. Very usable." This example also sports the rare sunroof option.

SECond to None

The 560 SEC was Mercedes-Benz's pillarless, peerless '80s flagship coupe

BY MARK J. McCOURT • PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEFF KOCH

The genius of Bruno Sacco was on full display in the SEC, and yet, he was only getting started. The Italian-born designer—an alum of the Polytechnic University of Turin and Carrozzeria Ghia, who, at age 24 in 1958, was hired by Mercedes-Benz in Sindelfingen—would take over the automaker's Styling Department in the mid-1970s and lead it until his 1999 retirement. Under his watch, this company would build the trendsetting 190 and 300 E, and reimagine the venerable SL for the 1990s and beyond. But the first major production-model project bearing his signature was the 126-chassis S-Class flagship, in both its four-door sedan and two-door coupe forms. The sedan was influential and enduring; his coupe, the SEC introduced in 1981 and built through 1991, was a masterpiece.

Germany's oldest and most venerated automaker had a long history of creating elegant and expensive solid-roof two-doors that were derived from its top-of-the-line luxury sedans. In the postwar era, Mercedes-Benz would hand-build its first Sonderklasse (Special-class) short-wheel-base two-door. The car was powered by the aluminum-head, single-overhead-cam straight-six engine used under the hood of the world-beating, new racing sports car the company was concurrently develop-ing, and which would reach the road in 1954 as the gullwing-door 300 SL coupe. Just over 300 examples of that 300 S, and its more powerful 300 Sc sibling, would be built in eight years.

The generation of S-Class coupes that really set the tone for the SEC was the one bearing the company's internal chassis codes W111 and W112. Introduced in 1961 as the 220 SEb, this car bore notable family resemblance to its "fintail" sedan counterpart, but shared no body panels with the four-door. Indeed, the well-proportioned four-seater featured hardtop construction without a fixed greenhouse B-pillar, offering a graceful airy profile with all four side windows retracted into the body. A 300 SE version added advanced technical features including four-wheel disc brakes, a four-speed automatic transmission, and air suspension. It was the 280 SE 3.5 of late 1969 that cemented this generation of coupe as the SEC's spiritual muse, thanks to the 3.5's eponymous new, fuel-injected SOHC V-8 engine, which displaced 3,449-cc (213.5-cu.in.) and made 230 hp. The 280 SE 3.5 coupe would be sold for just two model years, before being ostensibly replaced by the very different, third-generation SL-based 450 SLC of 1973-'81.

The 1979 debut of the W126-chassis S-Class sedan marked a new, Sacco-style era in Mercedes history. That, lighter, stronger car was filled with advances for the brand, including special crash-protection chassis measures under a notably aerodynamic (0.36 Cd, coefficient of drag) skin and the availability of alloy-block V-8 engines. Numerous features, soon to be industry-commonplace, would first appear in this car, among them supplemental restraint airbags, seatbelt pretensioners, and traction control.

Two years after the four-door S-Class made the scene, the automaker showed its coupe variant at the Frankfurt Motor Show. This two-door used a slightly shorter wheelbase than the standard sedan (112.2 inches versus 115.6), but bore a distinct family resemblance to its more practical sibling, despite its body being thoroughly reengineered under the skin. The work that went into creating a hardtop whose inherent strength resisted twisting and distributed side-impact forces, involved the incorporation of a high-strength roof frame and welded tubular A-pillars. The result was an incredibly solid, if heavy, car that weighed 3,615 pounds—just 25 pounds shy of the 121.1-inch-wheelbase SEL sedan.

Moving that mass was exclusively the duty of eight cylinders, for the first time in the lineage of the S coupe. Two displacements were initially available: 3.8-liter (234-cu.in.) and 5.0-liter (303-cu.in.). A focus on efficiency at that time meant both versions favored economy over performance. U.S. emissions regulations meant that buyers here initially got the smaller V-8, which, with an 8.3:1 compression ratio, multipoint fuel injection, and a catalytic converter, made 155 hp and 196 lb-ft of torque. Following Mercedes' longstanding naming style, that displacement was reflected in the model name: 380 SEC.

This engine sent its output rearward through a four-speed automatic transmission, and each corner of the car was suspended independently. The front wheels absorbed bumps through a zero-offset geometry double-wishbone setup, with gas-pressure shocks, coil springs, and an anti-roll bar. The rear suspension consisted of coil springs, semi-trailing arms with anti-squat geometry, and an anti-roll bar. Disc brakes were controlled by an anti-lock system, and new floating front calipers offered room for larger rotors behind 14-inch forged alloy wheels, along with inside-wheel-mounted brake cylinders that could be cooled more efficiently. The traditional large steering wheel controlled a power-assisted recirculating ball system.

Even if its mechanicals were largely carried over, the SEC wasn't simply a sedan minus two doors and a B-pillar. Sacco and his design team gave it a dynamic, elegant look by specifying a sleeker roofline with a rakish C-pillar, and a low, SL-inspired nose that resulted in an impressive 0.34 Cd. The new grille treatment featured a large three-pointed star centered in a wide, slender aperture that was neatly integrated into the leading edge of the hood; a stand-up ornament was not offered on the coupe. Compared to the sedan, the front fog lamps were relocated from next to the main beams to below the bumper, improving both the sporting appearance and lighting performance. Because of American regulations, cars built for our market were saddled with inset sealed-beam headlamps, rather than bearing the flush glass units that buyers in other markets enjoyed. And perhaps the most curious engineering treatment—one exclusive to the SEC, which showed the depth at which every detail of this flagship coupe was considered—was the aerodynamic fairing design of the door handles. Like the characteristic deep-ribbed shape that Mercedes-Benz taillamps had adopted in the 1970s, this was designed to keep the handle grips clean in foul weather.

Opening that substantial door, lucky passengers were greeted with an interior that was very similar to that of the four-door S-Class, save for individual rear seating for two. When front seat occupants closed the door, and the ignition was switched on, a cleverly conceived

The SEC driver enjoyed comprehensive, legible instrumentation, along with a gated automatic shifter that facilitated manual shifting. The rear compartment was comfortable for two. The front seatbelts extended to the front seat via electric arms.

arm, through which the seatbelt threaded, electrically extended to bring the belt within easy grasp over the outboard shoulder. The interior design was restrained and efficient, and the materials used were of typical Mercedes caliber, with fine leather, fabric, carpeting, and wood trim enhancing the ambiance of quality.

Despite its $51,956 MSRP—costing $5,523 more than the 380 SEL and a startling $10,223 more than the two-seat 380 SL—the 380 SEC was very well received by the public and professional testers, alike. In its April 1982 issue, *Road & Track* wrote, "The new Mercedes coupe is a stylish personal car that does so many things so very well. It has much of the performance and road manner of a lusty GT car, the elegance and plushness of a limousine, and the prestige of the 3-pointed star (missing from the hood as an upright ornament, but found there as an emblem). Critics might question the price, but the excellence is indisputable."

Like the S-Class sedan, the coupe would receive notable upgrades in its lifetime. A new 5.0-liter V-8 made it to the USA in 1984, creating the 500 SEC with 184 hp and 247 lb-ft of torque. For the 1986 model year, numerous substantial changes were adopted. A 420 SEC was available in overseas markets, while the U.S.-market SEC was now called the 560,

reflecting its engine's further increased displacement. Our coupe finally received flush glass headlamp inserts, which complemented sleeker bumpers and smoothed, extended lower body fairings, as well as wider tires on new-style 15 x 6.5-inch alloy wheels; the latter actually affected the Cd, which jumped a point to 0.35.

That eponymous 5.6-liter (338.5-cu.in.) engine underhood made 238 hp at 4,800 rpm and 287 lb-ft of torque at 3,500 rpm, sufficient to move the now-3,815-pound car from 0 to 60 mph in fewer than 8 seconds, and on to 140 mph. Depending on year and market, the European-specification 560 SEC made between 275 and 300 hp, and 317 and 336 lb-ft of torque, and was capable of up to 155 mph. Other important mechanical changes instituted included the standard fitment of a hydro-pneumatic self-leveling rear suspension and limited-slip differential, while safety improved with standard driver (1986) and front passenger airbags (1989), plus traction control in 1991.

Our feature car was built that final year, which represented the last appearance of the 126-chassis SEC. It sports the modernizing body-color bumpers and lower trim common towards the end of the run. On the showroom floor, this car stickered for $82,900, the rough equivalent of $156,900 today—second only in price to the $89,300 500 SL. The significant cost of entry for an S-Class coupe ensured its exclusivity, but this model was still an unqualified success. Like its four-door counterpart—the best-selling S-Class generation of all time, at 818,036 units—the SEC sold well around the world, with 74,060 examples built. It's an appreciating modern-classic today.

The replacement for Mercedes-Benz's flagship hardtop coupe had a new brief for the '90s: It would be even more aerodynamic, powerful (a V-12 was available), and imposing. Bruno Sacco's team designed that car under fresh safety, performance, and technological constraints, and while they did a fine job, the 140-chassis hardtop never equaled its predecessor's popularity. That new SEC looked to the future, but the 126-chassis proved the apex of Stuttgart's flagship two-door style could never be surpassed.

The 126-chassis S-Class coupe was always powered by a fuel-injected, all-aluminum V-8 engine that displaced between 3.8 and 5.6 liters. This final-year 560 SEC sports the most powerful version that made 238 hp in U.S. trim, up to 300 hp overseas.

Image Makers

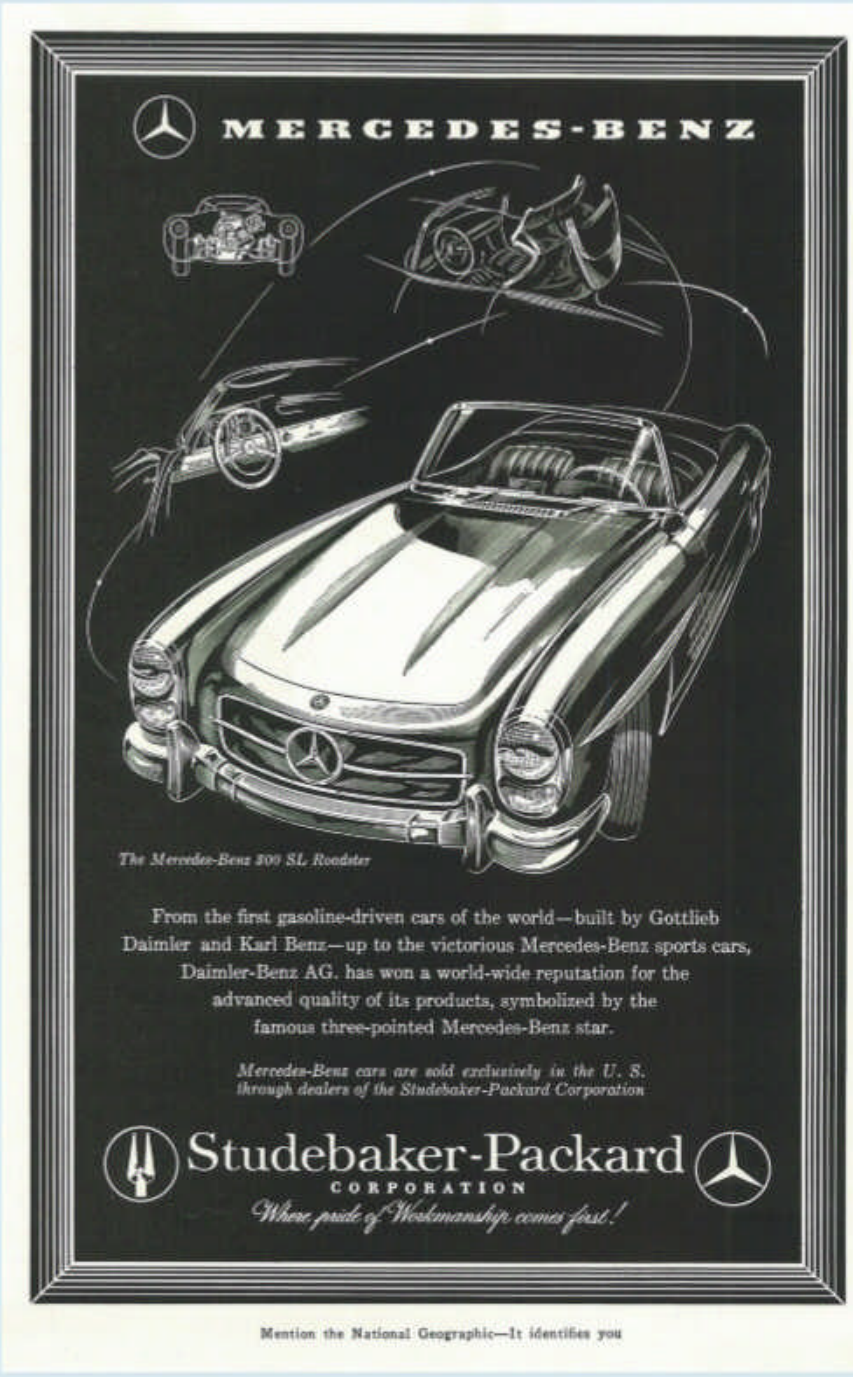
Twenty-five years of Mercedes-Benz print ads

BY JEFF KOCH • ADS COURTESY THE AUTHOR'S COLLECTION

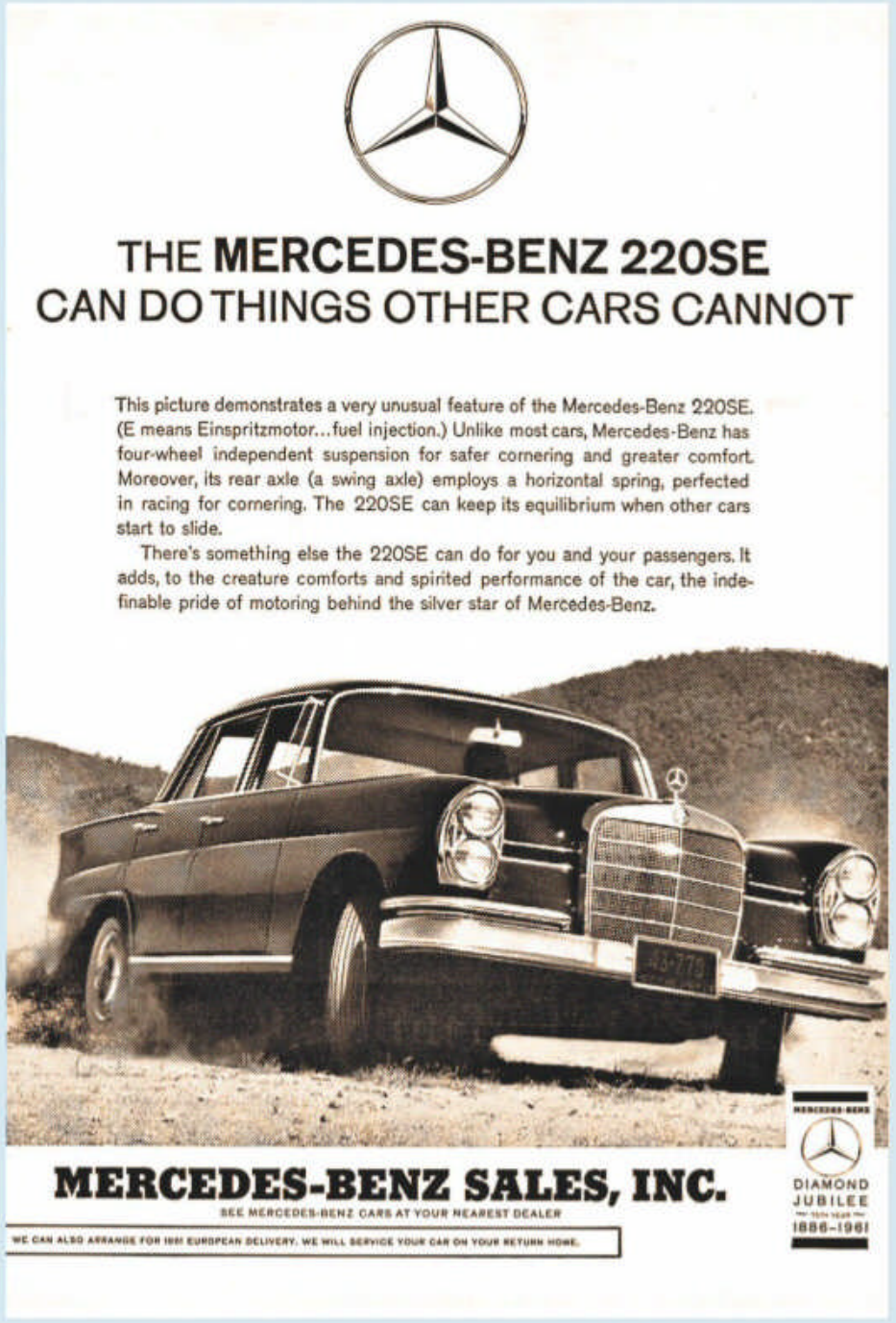
Mercedes-Benzes were always solidly built, well-engineered, and elegantly crafted automobiles. But they cost *how much?* When the marque first burst onto the scene in the United States, many didn't know what to make of Mercedes-Benz. Initially sold (as so many intriguing European cars were) through importer Max Hoffman starting in 1952, by 1957 Mercedes models were offered through Studebaker-Packard dealers as a range-topper. Mercedes-Benz USA formed in 1965.

Once the company gained a toehold in the U.S., word of mouth spread quickly; its automobiles drove differently enough than most cars of the day that keen drivers evangelized the marque's prowess. The flowing fenders of the 1950s cars (which recalled '30s and '40s cars—meaning "old" in American minds, used to a constant barrage of new, new, new) were soon sharpened into more modern and stylish shapes as engineering and safety advances continued apace. In the inflation-wracked 1970s, when the idea of a $15,000 car was an eye-opener for most, Mercedes pointed to its resale value—a consequence of refusing to play Detroit's annual-update game. In the late 1970s, when dieselmania swept America, Mercedes calmly told the world that it had been there for decades.

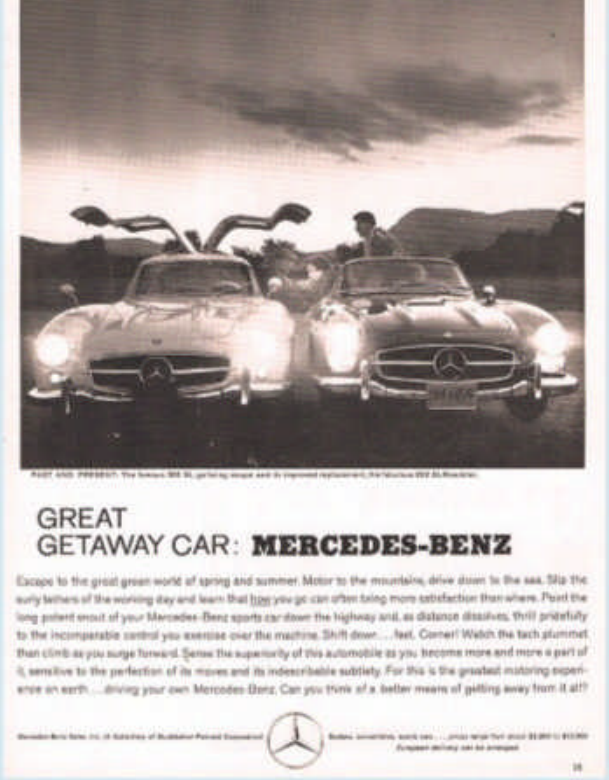
With one eye toward its rich and varied history, and another toward providing leading-edge safety, engineering, and technology, Mercedes' ads enticed buyers with a wide range of carefree imagery and common sense alike. The ads just got buyers into showrooms: Presumably, a drive would do the rest.



One of a series of ads that ran in *National Geographic*, showing the Mercedes SL that was available through Studebaker-Packard dealers in 1957. Evocative sketches emphasized the nose, where the fuel-injected power lived.



Seeing Mercedes affect a performance posture was not new, but seeing a fuel-injected, independently suspended 220 SE sedan sliding around a dirt road like a NASCAR refugee was a bit of an eye-opener.

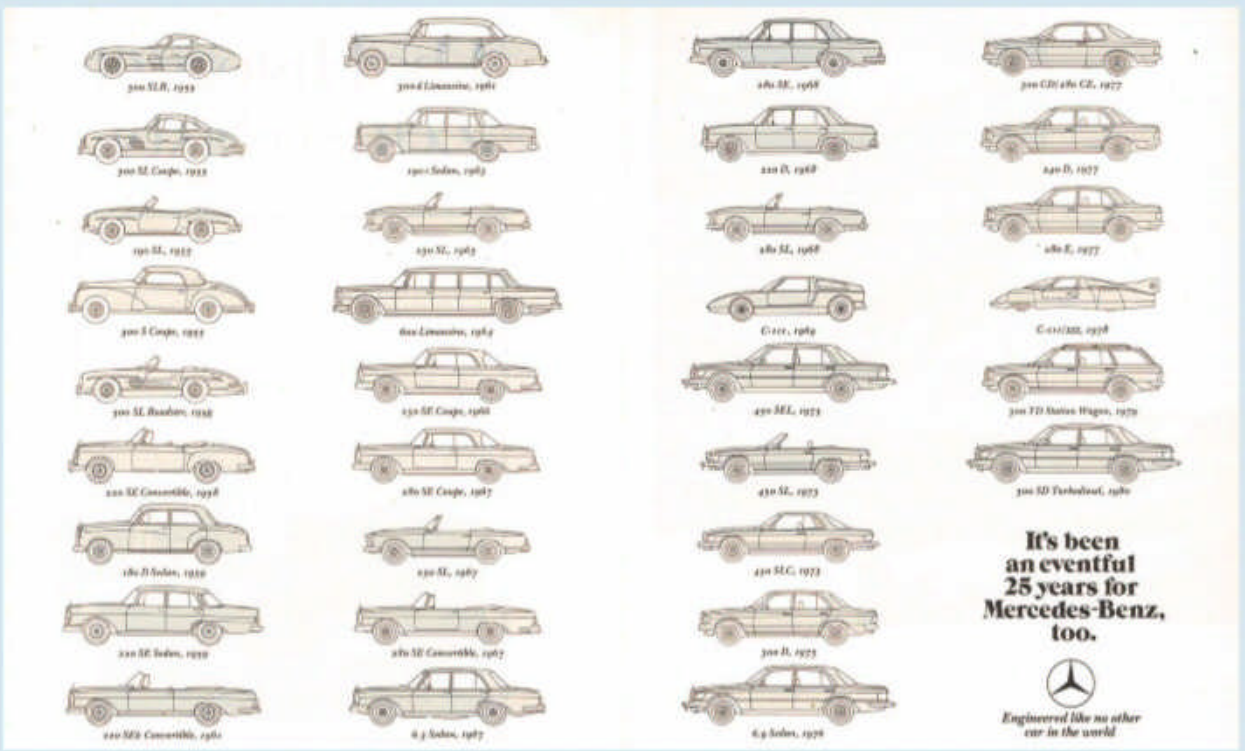


Evoking the past is popular in ads... but what if that nostalgia is for just five years earlier? Such was the danger Mercedes ran into when it presented a discontinued gullwing next to a new 300 SL roadster in 1960.

Was that a chauffeur or the valet ready to pile this merry trio into their new fuel-injected 300 d sedan? Did he escort them home or send them on their merry way? Either way, the illustration underscored the "sophisticated" tagline.

Mercedes predicted the downsizing trend and advertised its new 450 SE as "not as big as a full-sized American car" but with plenty of room inside, despite being packed with safety features and modern engineering.

At the height of muscle car madness, in 1970, Mercedes-Benz suggested that its machines were designed to tackle actual roads, with bends and such, rather than just 1,320 feet in a straight line.



This two-page spread ad appeared exclusively in July 1980's *Car and Driver* magazine—its 25th-anniversary issue. The resulting piece was a good spotters' guide for the many Mercedes models available through 1980.

Bona Fide Bowtie

Cruising with class in an unrestored 396-powered 1968 Impala Custom Coupe

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY THOMAS A. DeMAURO

There's no overestimating the influence that riding in the family car can have over children. Impressions made during those formative years, of time on the road with our parents during summer vacations and countless other long-distance adventures, become the remembrances that many of us seek to experience again in adulthood.

"My father owned a 1968 four-door hardtop," Don Bock of Woolwich Township, New Jersey, offered as his primary reason for gravitating toward full-size Chevrolet Impalas. "I have always owned 1968 models, but I lean toward the Custom Coupes."

Among the 16 Impalas (mostly SS cars) he's held title to, is this one that he found in March of 2001, on an online auction site. Don reports that it was, "Just as it is now before lots of cleaning and detailing… but no repainting."

What made the then-62,000-mile Impala extraordinary was the fact that it

had never been restored. It retained the original Seafrost Green finish and gray-green cloth-and-vinyl interior, as well as its optional, factory-installed L35 396-cu.in. big-block engine, Turbo Hydra-Matic, and 12-bolt 3.07-geared rear end.

Additional extra-cost items, which boosted its $3,120 base price (including $99 destination fee) to $4,364.95, included power assists for steering and brakes, A/C, tinted glass, dual exhaust, tilt wheel, front and rear bumper guards, AM radio, rear-seat speaker, deluxe seat and shoulder belts, floormats, clock, auxiliary lighting, door-edge guards, wheel covers, and 8.25 x 14 whitewall tires.

Don, the R&D Manager at American Autowire, has since added an original-equipment AM/FM stereo and a host of new old stock accessories, including a Vigilite light monitoring system, rear defogger, vacuum trunk lid release, and a tissue dispenser.

The Impala series was positioned in Chevrolet's full-size lineup above the entry-level Biscayne and mid-pack Bel Air, but below the top-of-the-line Caprice. The new-for-1968 Custom Coupe shared the Impala's updated exterior and interior styling as well as its trim.The Z03 SS option and the Z24 SS 427 package were also offered for two-door Impalas.

When introduced partway through the 1965 model year, the Turbo-Jet 396 big-block engine, with its unique canted-valve head design, was offered in two versions for full-size models. The L78 396 was rated at 425 hp at 6,400 rpm and 415 lb-ft of torque at 4,000 rpm, and was shared with the Corvette. It was a high-performance engine that idled, revved, and guzzled high-octane fuel as one would expect, and its price was commensurate with its capabilities. However, if you were willing to sacrifice some performance—and the associated speed parts that came with it—for a lower cost, smoother and quieter operation, and better fuel mileage, Chevrolet had you covered with the L35 396. This big-block produced 325 hp at 4,800 rpm and 410 lb-ft of torque at 3,200 rpm.

The 325-hp 396 engine hasn't been rebuilt and doesn't need to be any time soon. The A/C has been maintained and works well, and the date-coded sparkplug wires are reproductions.

Though the L78 was replaced by the L72 427 in the big Chevrolets for 1966, the L35 engine remained optional. For 1968, the original owner of this Custom Coupe chose the 396 over the standard Turbo-Fire 200-hp 307-cu.in. small-block and the two optional 327s, rated at 250 and 275 hp, respectively.

The L35 396 featured a Rochester Quadrajet with small primaries for efficiency and large secondaries for power, an iron dual-plane intake manifold, a mild hydraulic camshaft, and cylinder heads with oval intake ports and valves that measured 2.065/1.72-inches. A two-bolt main engine block housed a cast nodular-iron crankshaft, forged-steel connecting rods, and cast-aluminum pistons. The L35 had a 10.25:1 compression ratio and used a breaker-point ignition system. For the full-size cars of 1968, only the optional 427s were more powerful—rated at 385 and 425 hp.

Except for a carburetor rebuild and new rocker cover gaskets, Don says that the 396 in his Chevrolet hasn't required anything over and above typical maintenance since he's owned it. The same holds true for the three-speed Turbo Hydra-Matic, 12-bolt differential, and the suspension. He did install NOS brake shoes for the 11-inch four-wheel drum system several years ago.

Don knew when he purchased the Impala that he wanted simply, "To improve the overall appearance without restoring it." Aside from a few minor touchups, the lacquer finish is original. Regarding its preservation, he explains, "I use Meguiar's Quik Detailer on it, but once every three to four years, I have to buff the paint with a light compound because the top surfaces get a little dry looking and show crows' feet. I can't use wax because it gets in the crows' feet and makes the paint look dry and flat."

The gray-green interior has been preserved so well that Don says it has won best restored interior at three shows. "Then I had to tell the show organizers that the interior hadn't been restored, and they couldn't believe it."

A reproduction Gardner exhaust system was installed in 2015, and this car served as the prototype for the company to develop its system for 1967-'68 models.

Also in 2015, to enhance the driving experience, Don upgraded the chassis with some NOS pieces from the F41 Special Performance Front and Rear Suspension option. A thicker 15/16-inch anti-roll bar was swapped into the unequal-length control arm and coil spring front suspension,

Except for added factory-offered accessories, such as the AM/FM with stereo multiplex unit, tissue dispenser, and a few more, the gray-green cloth/vinyl interior is all original and consistently wins awards at shows.

the four-link rear layout received the coil springs and the ⅞-inch anti-roll bar, and F41-spec spiral shocks were installed all around. Optional 15 x 6 steel wheels replaced the 14-inch wheels, and modern BFGoodrich radial 225/70R15 tires with throwback red lines were mounted. "The car drove a whole lot better after those changes," Don recalls.

Typically, he adds about 1,000 miles per year to the Custom's odometer, but he does make some special excursions, including a trip to Indy around 2011 and another to Dayton for the 2018 National Impala Association Convention. Traveling from his New Jersey home to Ohio and back, plus additional jaunts while he was there, totaled over 1,100 miles. Don reports that the Impala, with just him and his luggage aboard, averaged 14.5 mpg overall on a steady diet of unleaded premium. "Occasionally I'll add a can of octane boost or lead substitute, but normally it just runs pump gas," he says.

"It pulls pretty well being a 396. A friend who has restored cars summed it up best when he drove it in Dayton at the convention: 'There's something to be said for nice all-original cars and just flicking the key and having them roar to life.'" In addition to extended road trips, Don drives his Chevrolet on dry days from April through November on salt-free roads, and he periodically takes it to work.

The Custom Coupe has also racked up plenty of accolades. "It's been certified by the Antique Automobile Club of America at National Meets and the Vintage Chevrolet Club of America in the Historic Preservation of Original Features three times each and won best-of-show in HPOF three times," according to Don. It has also done very well at myriad local events. "It's not the highly popular SS and it doesn't have a four-speed, so I'm amazed by all the attention it gets," he says.

"I would drive cross-country in this car anytime—just put the key in it and go—because for all the places it's seen, it's been really reliable. My wife, Kim, has asked me, 'Why did you keep this Impala instead of all the other flashier ones you've owned?' When she then mentions that this car, 'rides and drives really nicely, like a new car,' I say, "That's why I kept it!"

Preserving a vintage vehicle as original as this one is a responsibility that Don doesn't take lightly. "I'm thankful to be its current caretaker, I have no intention of ever selling it, and I plan to keep it original for as long as it's feasible."

"I would drive cross-country in this car anytime—just put the key in it and go…"

The Vigilite light monitoring system confirms that the front and rear lights are working by using fiber optics to illuminate jeweled indicators mounted in housings on the front fenders and rear package tray. The latter can be viewed through the rearview mirror.

Though this Impala was sold by Ken Stucky Chevrolet in Moundridge, Kansas, a friend of Don's found the "Bock" dealer nameplate at a swap meet and Don decided to install it.

First Run Revival

A comprehensive restoration returned this 1926 Pontiac to its glory days

BY DAVID CONWILL • PHOTOGRAPHY BY MATT LITWIN
RESTORATION PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY JAMES MARTIN

Billy Durant may have created General Motors, but it was Alfred Sloan who made it the corporate powerhouse it became. At the heart of the Sloan conception of GM was the idea of "a car for every purse and purpose." The divisional structure at GM was intended to push one up the corporate hierarchy as one's means increased—when you worked in the mailroom, you drove a Chevrolet; by the time you made it to the boardroom, you owned a Cadillac.

The trouble was, back in the mid-1920s, there were some pretty significant holes in the GM lineup, including a big one between Chevrolet and Oldsmobile. Another gap existed between Olds and Buick, and a larger one came between Buick and Cadillac. A 1925 ad illustrates the issue. "General Motors," it said, "offers 46 types of open and closed cars, ranging in price from $525 to $4,485." It then went on to mention Chevrolet models from $525 to $775; Oldsmobiles from $875 to $1,115; Oaklands from $975 to $1,295; Buicks from $1,125 to $1,995; and Cadillacs from $2,995 to $4,485.

To deal with those holes, without badly disrupting the status quo, the corporation introduced its companion makes: La Salle, Viking, Marquette, and Pontiac. La Salle bowed for 1927 and was priced at $2,495 to $4,700. The V-8 powered Viking came out for 1929, with a factory price of $1,595 for any body style. Marquette was the latecomer: Its models, priced $990-$1,060, were available only for 1930.

Viking and Marquette, which were paired with Oldsmobile and Buick respectively, didn't last long at all. Both were discontinued after 1930, wiped out in the first dip of the Great Depression. La Salle, a kind of junior Cadillac, did well enough to hold on through 1940 (and persisted long enough to be considered for a revival in the '60s, before being name-checked in the theme song to *All in the Family*), but the lasting member of the quartet was Pontiac—which outlived its parent, Oakland, entirely.

Modern enthusiasts are most familiar with Pontiac's post-1954 offerings, thanks to Bunkie Knudsen's dramatic reimagining of the moribund marque as a performance division. Pontiac would never have made it out of the 1930s, however, if it hadn't had a lot to offer to buyers looking to move up from Chevrolet but not quite ready for even the cheapest Oldsmobile.

Perhaps the secret of Pontiac's success was its early debut. It was the first companion make to arrive when it came out for 1926, and it offered only two body styles initially—a two-door coach (sedan) and a coupe, both priced at $825. The Fisher bodies were very similar to their Chevrolet counterparts, but Pontiac offered a 40-hp flathead six-cylinder and a 110-inch wheelbase, versus Chevy's $645 Superior V coupe with a 26-hp OHV four and 103-inch wheelbase. It was quite an upgrade for $180 (about $2,700, adjusted for inflation).

The most striking feature of the Pontiac engine—a fresh design from the engineers at Oakland with a block cast by Campbell, Wyant, and Cannon, in Muskegon, Michigan—was its split cylinder head. Although the six was of an inline configuration, it actually wore two heads—each covering a trio of cylinders. In the small middle gap was the distributor, which could be removed without disturbing the heads and vice versa. Easy head removal was a key feature in the mid- to late-1920s, thanks to the era's terrible gasoline quality and the need to frequently scrape carbon buildup from combustion chambers.

The split-head six displaced 186.5-cu.in., courtesy of a 3¼-inch bore and a 3¾-inch stroke. It developed its 40 horsepower at 2,600 rpm, thanks to 4.8:1 compression. The critical specifications of the Pontiac engine would remain identical until the 1929 model year, when its displacement was increased to 200-cu.in. and output jumped to 60 horsepower. Along the way, some GMC trucks also utilized the design.

Aside from the longer wheelbase, the 40-hp Pontiac brings to mind Ford's Model A. A coupe like this one weighs 2,270 pounds, while a 1928 Ford Model A coupe with a rumble seat weighs a comparable 2,265 pounds, suggesting that it shares the A's renowned acceleration while simultaneously offering a more comfortable ride.

Unfortunately, one rarely sees 1920s Pontiacs today. That is partially attributable to their relatively small production numbers: Only 42,000 or so of the earliest-design Pontiacs were constructed, and when the "1926½" cars built between August 1926 and January 1927 are included, the number jumps to 207,553. Compare that with more that 500,000 Ford coupes produced between late 1927 and early 1932.

James Martin, the owner of our feature car and the driving force behind its restoration, also points at low survival numbers as a big factor. "As best we can tell, there are fewer than 50 1926 Pontiacs existing today. I've been able to identify about 33 that are currently, or were formerly, registered with the AACA and Pontiac-Oakland Club International."

It was through the POCI that James found this car, which had been advertised in the club's publication, *Smoke Signals*. The seller, Glenn Kundell, was the son of a St. Helens, Oregon, Pontiac dealer. Glenn's father had purchased the car in 1950, in Portland, and had displayed it in the showroom to celebrate the division's Silver Anniversary and show how far cars had come in that time.

Considering the scarcity of first-year Pontiacs, James' find was

It takes 14 yards of fabric to cover the interior. Luckily, Helen Reinhold was able to source 17 yards of the correct material from an upholsterer going out of business. The horn button is one of the few reproduction parts on the car.

The original Faerie Red pinstripes telegraphed through the brushed-on repaint, especially in direct sun. To ensure that they were reproduced properly, the car was rolled into the open and their location was carefully recorded before paint stripping began.

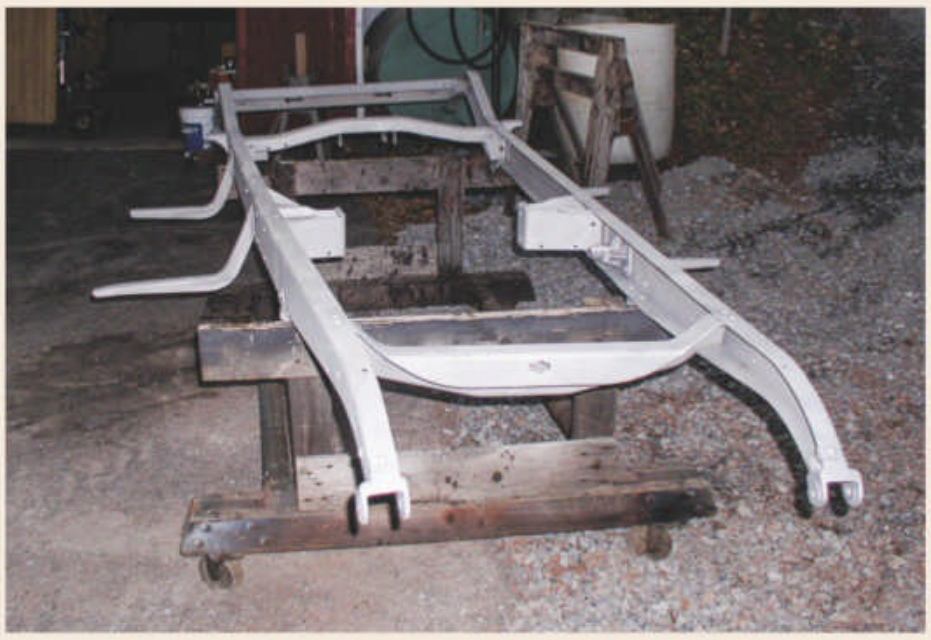
Linseed oil was used to dissolve the brown paint to confirm the original color, just one of several clues indicating this car was produced before August 1926. All of the earliest 1926 Pontiac coupes were finished in Sage Green Duco Lacquer from DuPont.

The only chassis parts destined for replacement were seals, bearings, brake linings, tires and tubes, and the DOT chassis oilers. Those were among the most difficult of the missing pieces to source, as they had all been switched to Zerk fittings.

The 1926-vintage 12-gallon fuel tank was so full of holes as to be beyond repair. Reinhold's Restoration contracted with a local craftsman to fabricate a new one from scratch. The original filler neck and fuel level gauge assemblies were reused.

A Harrison-built "honeycomb" cellular radiator was original equipment on the Pontiac, but the design is difficult to clean and repair. James sent it off to be rebuilt using the original top and bottom tanks and a fresh core of the correct design.

Low survival rates of pre-1936 GM vehicles are often attributed to the wood framing inside the Fisher bodies — when that goes, it usually takes the rest of the car with it. Luckily, this Pontiac had been carefully stored and the wood was largely fine.



The channel-section frame with its three crossmembers was stripped of all other components and refinished to provide a suitable basis for rebuilding the rest of the car. Although nearly 80 years old, it required no straightening or crack repair.

New connecting rods and aluminum pistons were sourced from Egge Machine Company to replace the original semi-steel cast pistons and drop-forged rods. Remarkably, a replacement starter was located in a junkyard near Junction City, Kansas, and rebuilt locally.

The advantage of such a thorough teardown and rebuild is that every component can be treated to complete rehabilitation. This spread shows refinished pieces from the engine and transmission. Martin Senour automotive paint products were used throughout.

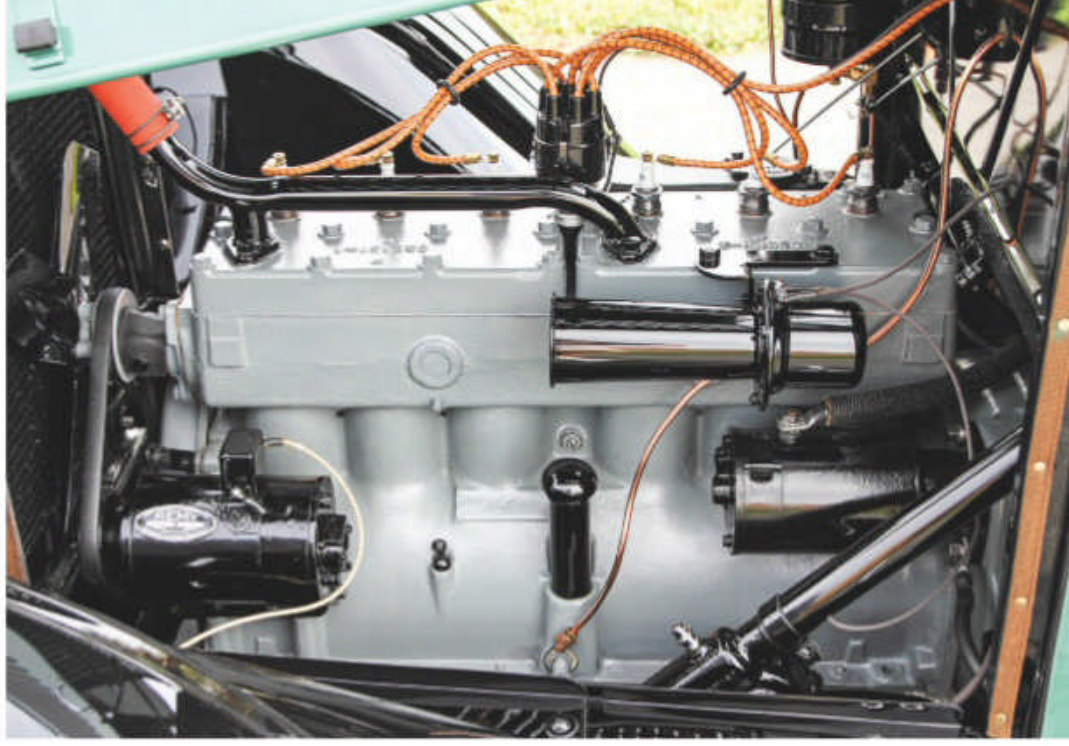
Twelve-spoke artillery wheels are typical of the mid-1920s. The natural-wood spokes were trendy at the time. Original tires were 4.75-20 from U.S. Tire, Kelly-Springfield, or Ajax. During restoration, Firestones of the correct size were substituted.

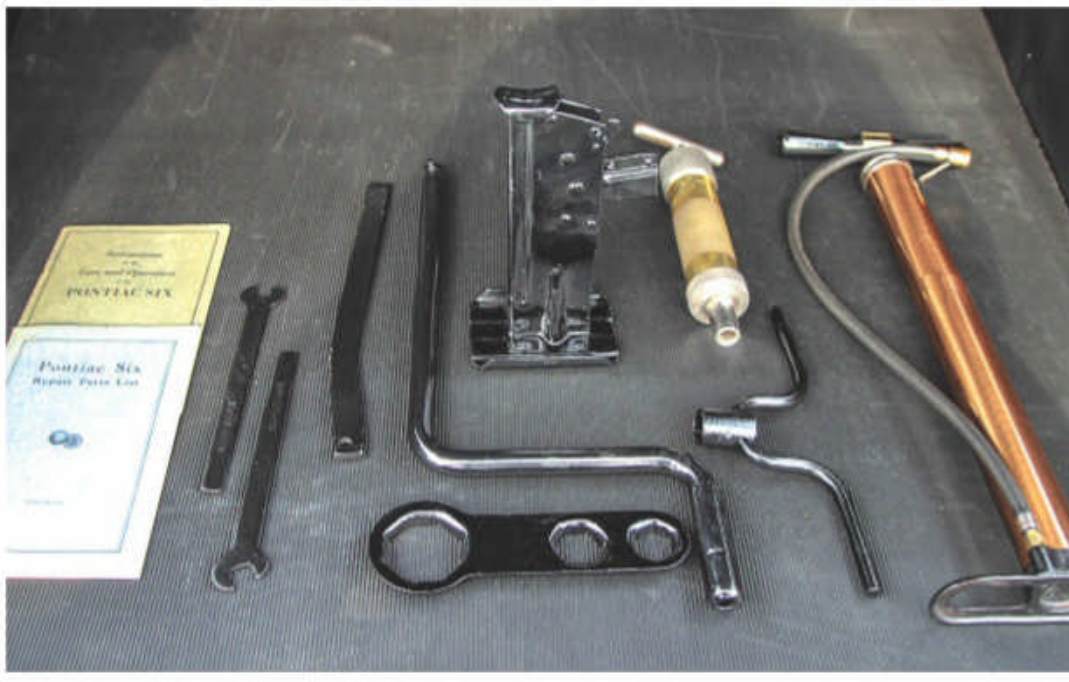
As the companion make to Oakland, Pontiac was named not only for the historic Native American leader, but for the city in Michigan that was both the seat of Oakland County and the location of the marque's factory. Pontiac radiator mascots are coveted.

The assembled chassis shows the level of hidden detail that goes into a thorough and correct restoration. Note the "split" head on the 40-hp, 186.5-cu.in. six-cylinder engine, which introduced several economies of manufacture and simplified maintenance.

owner's view

I've always been a fan of '20s and '30s GM cars and trucks. Growing up on a farm in rural southeastern Pennsylvania, my father always talked about cars of this era and collected lots of items related to the period. The old-car interest and itch rubbed off and has stuck with me. Dad favored Fords, but I do remember him talking about how efficient Oaklands were at hill-climbing events. Today, most people connect Pontiac only to the great performance cars of the '50s and '60s. Few know the history of how Pontiac got to its heyday. I get a lot of pleasure watching folks' expressions when they learn this is the first year for Pontiac.





The missing horn and starter were tracked down and restored but the bracket attaching horn to engine was fabricated. A tool set had to be tracked down one piece at a time. It consists of (clockwise from left) owner's manuals, tappet wrenches (straight and 30-degree), rim wrench, starting crank, jack, DOT lubrication gun, tire pump, spark plug wrench, and hub cap wrench.

remarkably intact. "The car was about 90 percent complete," he recalls. "It had some superficial rust. The floorboards were warped from age, but the wood in the Fisher Body was in excellent condition because the car was stored under cover from 1986 until I purchased it in 2003. It had one hand-applied brown coat of paint; the rubber top had been replaced by a cloth top. The corduroy interior was dirty and brown from age."

Before embarking on a restoration, James carefully evaluated what he had. The brown paint, applied directly over the original Sage Green, had actually preserved a great deal of information—most notably the factory-applied Faerie Red pinstripes.

"The original striping was apparent when the car was placed in the sun. Prior to stripping the paint (using industrial paint stripper), the car was put in the sun and the striping traced. Measurements and photos, along with original factory materials, were used to document the correct location of stripes."

The missing pieces were, perhaps, the most challenging aspect of the restoration. To complete the car, James needed to track down the horn and its bracket, four hub covers, the starter, the chassis oilers, the tool kit (a jack and its handle, a grease gun, tappet wrenches, a screwdriver, a hub-and-spark-plug wrench, and a tire pump), a window crank, the carburetor, and a correct battery. To aid him in this search, he enlisted Reinhold's Restoration. The 80-plus-year-old proprietor, Richard Reinhold, personally worked on much of the restoration himself, aided by his sons and a daughter.

Most of what was on the car was reconditioned rather than replaced, though some pieces, like the original horn button and the bracket attaching the horn to the engine block, had to be reproduced. The bracket was a relatively simple matter of metal fabrication, but the horn button comes from the new, high-tech friend of the restorer: a 3D printer.

Sheer good fortune also played a role, as James relates: "The car came to me with grease Zerk fittings. However, the first-edition Pontiac Six Repair Parts List specifies 23 DOT chassis oilers of five different design configurations. Where to find them? As dumb luck would have it, my brother and I were at Hershey, and during a rainstorm ducked under a vendor tent to stay dry. Unbelievably, a plastic bag of over 50 oilers was on the bench. I purchased them immediately."

Similarly, the missing trunk lock came up as an incidental aside with the man who repaired the original ignition switch. As it turned out, he had one available.

All this effort paid off, and the restoration process, which took from 2004 to 2008, created an incredible example of the first Pontiac. The car made its debut at the 2008 Fall Hershey AACA Show, where it earned its First Junior Award, the first of many it has racked up over the ensuing years.

#1

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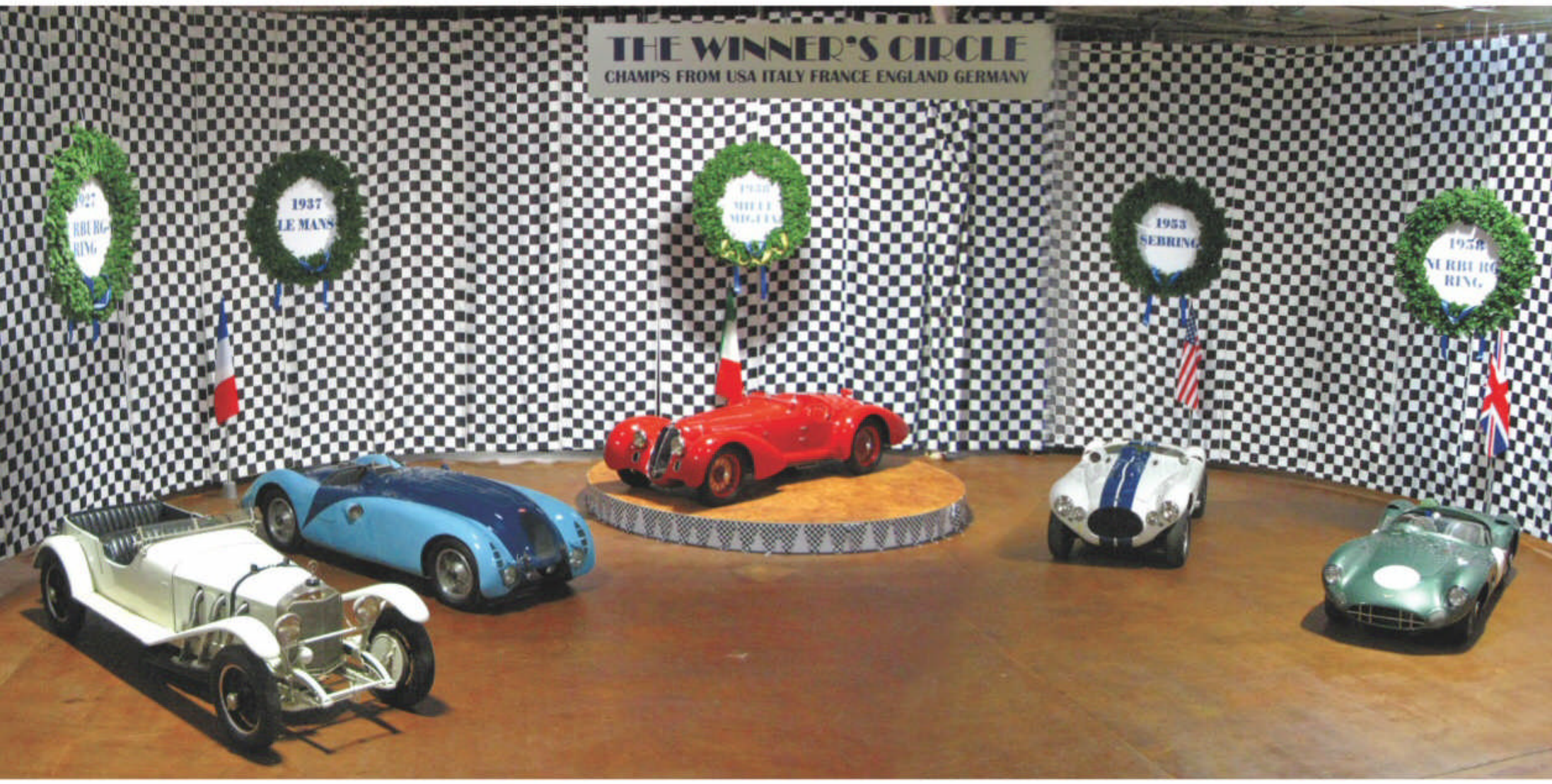


BY JIM DONNELLY • PHOTOGRAPHY BY THE AUTHOR AND COURTESY OF THE SIMEONE FOUNDATION AUTOMOTIVE MUSEUM
ADAPTED BY MARK J. McCOURT FROM *HEMMINGS SPORTS & EXOTIC CAR*—JUNE 2013

Think for a moment about the last time you visited an art gallery where objets d'art are offered for sale. Lots of the merchandise is pristine, brightly lit, spiffy for potential buyers. Then, contrast that image with what you experienced during any visit to a lauded museum, be it the Louvre, The Henry Ford, or the Buffalo Bill Historical Center in Cody, Wyoming. In those halls, you will find exhibitions that were selected on the sole basis of antiquity, or authenticity, with little or nothing done to make them shinier or more presentable. True artifacts don't need that.

That is the sensibility that Dr. Fred Simeone brings to the world of car collecting. His introduction to the hobby came from canvassing used-car lots and junkyards in his native Philadelphia for classic-era castoffs and parts. His personal collection numbers 65 cars, virtually all of them racing sports cars with documented heritages. Most participated in, or even won, events of great significance. But many of them are not restored. They are displayed in the museum that Fred created through his foundation in as-acquired, as-raced condition exclusively. Some of them have gone a long time since their last date with wax and a buffer.

"Every car has a story. And I've always thought that cars that were preservable ought to be preserved," Fred explained. "I never went out for trophies or things like that. I didn't care about that. I don't think the purpose of collecting is to make the perfect car. That seems to be what the purpose of car shows is today, where the winner is the most perfect car. That's not part of the study of automotive history, it's more the study of restoration craftsmanship."

Fred undertook a global effort to locate the race-bred cars in his collection, but the story of the cars and his museum begins, and remains fixed, in Philadelphia. He is a second-generation physician, born in the working-class neighborhood of Kensington. His father, Anthony, was a general practitioner who happened to really enjoy cars, old ones. Fred loved him and wanted to emulate him. The elder Dr. Simeone began taking his son along on house calls, which physicians still made in those years. Afterwards, they'd head to area junkyards for shopping. One of the first collector cars Fred owned was handed down by his father, an Auburn Speedster they'd rescued from a junkyard and got running with castoff components. Even

In the Americans at Le Mans display is a 1967 GT40 Mk IV, still in as-raced condition; the yellow GT40 Mk II that ran in 1966; and the one-of-four factory-replica 1929 duPont Model G Le Mans Speedster.

One of five Corvette Grand Sports built by Chevrolet in 1963, this example, #002, appears as it did in contemporary competition because it's the only one of those cars never to be restored.

JIM DONNELLY

The man behind the collection, retired neurosurgeon Dr. Fred Simeone, has created a uniquely engaging living museum that celebrates international competition through genuine race cars.

true classics were simply viewed as aged used cars back around 1950. There was no such thing as a restoration. Fred recalls that his father charged all of three bucks for an office visit.

"My father wanted to be a doctor first, so we couldn't afford to play [with expensive cars]," Fred chuckled. "But what I did get was the opportunity to learn. He always had literature and magazines around, so I always had an opportunity to read extensively while I was growing up. And that's what gave me my head start. I couldn't afford one of my best cars now. But if you learned, you could be ahead of the curve in the Seventies, which I was, you could get things that were really important. People then weren't understanding Alfas, or even Ferraris to the fullest, and weren't putting their place in history. You needed to read, follow the competition results, to do that."

Fred followed his father into medicine and proved a prodigy when he studied at Temple University and then at the University of Pennsylvania Medical School. Following residencies at Penn and the Mayo Clinic, Fred joined the full-time faculty at Harvard Medical School, practicing neurosurgery and doing research. When his father became ill, he returned to Philadelphia and accepted a chairmanship at Pennsylvania Hospital, where he developed a residency program in neurosurgery. Fred's early research specialty was on cerebral vasospasms, the sudden constriction of blood vessels in the brain, often from an aneurysm. As a professor of neurosurgery at Penn, he created a fellowship under which neurosurgeons and orthopedic surgeons trained together on complex procedures. He co-authored a medical textbook, *The Spine*, which is still considered a standard in its sixth edition.

Over 35 years, Fred cemented a reputation as one of the preeminent neurosurgeons in the world. In 2008, he retired from active medical practice and began to focus on his collection, and with doing a new kind of professorship, to convince collectors that preserved cars often are more significant than restored ones. As he said, "I have no cars that don't have their original bodies, and only two that don't have their original engines. I looked around for important original examples, went to *Hemmings Motor News*—I've subscribed since the very beginning—joined the clubs, networked with the dealers, did a lot of reading. When the Harrah's

collection was sold, there were three cars that I thought were really important, and I was able to get them because the prices at that sale were very reasonable. I got some from people who retired."

The Simeone Foundation Automotive Museum has a fascinating backstory. When Fred created a nonprofit foundation with the idea of displaying his cars to the public, he originally envisioned a location along the Benjamin Franklin Parkway, near the Philadelphia Museum of Art, of Rocky Balboa fame. That would have been impossibly expensive, given the cost of downtown real estate. Instead, the foundation selected a former engine-rebuilding plant in an industrial section of South Philadelphia. The building has a side benefit: a huge parking area that allows the museum to take a selection of its racing cars out of the building and onto the property for a public workout on the second and fourth Saturdays of each month. The cars never leave the heavily secured museum site during these Driving Demonstration Days. That means not only that visitors are assured that a famed car won't be on loan or at a concours someplace, but also that insurance costs for the collection are minimized.

And the cars. Oh, goodness, the cars. They are fully authentic, grouped loosely by era, racing discipline and tracks. There are no fenderless cars of the formula or Indy variety. As Fred explained, "They're in the collection because they have a racing history, and not only that, a road racing history. I do have one Indy car, but the only reason is that it's the sister car to the one that won the Le Mans road race in 1921 (the Grand Prix d'ACF, won by Jimmy Murphy in a Duesenberg) and America didn't win in Europe again until 1966. It was something that I got, disassembled, from my dad, and neither of us even knew what it was, one of the three French Grand Prix cars." He likes the style and design of sports racing cars, those with fenders and separate headlamps, and finds them more approachable than Indy or Formula 1 cars. The same holds true for the C- and D-type Jaguar: "I think I could drive it at least a little bit like the way it was intended."

The Simeone Museum's holdings include both those cars. They're in a huge display that runs along one wall of the building and replicates the pits at Le Mans. That exhibit numbers, in part, one of two 2.0-liter Aston Martin Le Mans four-place cars built in 1936, a 1938 Peugeot Darl'Mat Le Mans, a 1954 Ferrari 375 MM once owned by the actor William Holden, and the famed long-tail Porsche 917 LH that became known as the Hippie Car when it raced at Le Mans in 1970. Among

the Alfa Romeos are a 1934 8C 2300 Spyder that raced at Brooklands in 1938, and the 1975 Targa Florio-winning T33/TT/12 shared by Arturo Merzario and Nino Vaccarella. A totally original 1938 BMW 328 has 16,000 actual miles. The 1937 Alfa Romeo 8C 2900A, which placed second in that year's Mille Miglia, is one of two known to exist. A Ferrari 250 Testa Rossa, Maserati 300S, Corvette Grand Sport, Ford GT40 Mk II and Mk IV, Le Mans Stutz, and "Blower" Bentley 4.5-Litre are some of the other stars.

Among his other accomplishments, Fred has co-authored a provocative book, *The Stewardship of Historically Important Automobiles*, that argues forcefully on preserving original cars. The museum's crowning exhibit, called the Winner's Circle, makes that point concretely. Its five cars are all winners of global events in as-raced condition: A 1927 Mercedes-Benz Sportwagen (Eifelrennen Nürburgring, Otto Merz), 1937 Bugatti 57G "Tank" (Le Mans, Jean-Pierre Wimille/Robert Benoist), 1938 Alfa Romeo 8C 2900B MM (Mille Miglia, Clemente Biondetti/Aldo Stefani), 1952 Cunningham C-4R (Sebring 1953, John Fitch/Phil Walters) and 1958 Aston Martin DBR1 (Nürburgring 1,000km, Stirling Moss/Jack Brabham).Their value today: inestimable. Obviously, Fred was smart to buy when he did, long before most people realized that obsolete race cars had historic worthiness.

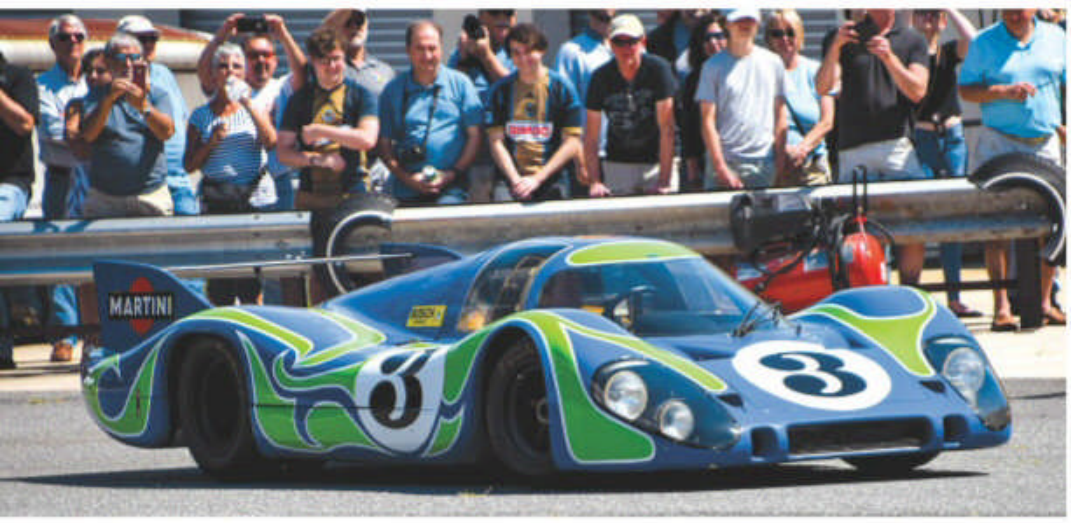
"What I did—which turned out to be smarter than I thought—was, if I thought I could get a really, really great car that I could afford back in the Seventies, and it wasn't a sports racer, I could use it as potential trading material," Fred disclosed. "In four instances, that turned out to be the smartest thing I ever did. I got our Cobra Daytona coupe in exchange for a very wonderful Mercedes-Benz roadster. I got the Aston Martin DBR1 in trade for a 2.9 Alfa Spider road car. If you've ever seen the black Ferrari with the whitewalls that used to belong to Edsel Ford II and went to the Petersen museum, I traded that to a Frenchman for the Bugatti Tank. I started this when I began my practice in 1970. For certain cars, their unrestored appearance made them less desirable to buyers at the auctions I went to, but much more desirable to me."

As Fred's collection grew, it received in some cases more international attention than it did in America. This culminated in 2019, when—after studying in detail 100 of the world's greatest collections—The Classic Car Trust (www.tcct.com) in Liechtenstein awarded his as the number one in the world. That study was based on a granular detailed analysis of the quality and value of the cars, as well as the contribution of the collection to society.

The current focus of the Simeone Foundation has been on education, particularly of middle school youngsters. It's one of Philadelphia's best sources for STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, Mathematics) learning, and offers numerous opportunities including free downloadable lesson plans, educational automotive lectures, and book launches. With the recent acquisition of one of the largest and oldest automobile literature collections in America, the foundation's expanded research library has been a source of increasing interest to writers and collectors for historic authentication. As Fred notes, "The museum exposes the objects for studious reflection, for historical reminiscence, and the appreciation of beauty and technical finesse."

Dr. Simeone exercises the special-bodied 1958 Ferrari 250 Testa Rossa on the museum grounds, revving its 300-hp, 2.95-liter V-12 engine for the crowd assembled during one of the popular Demo Days.

ANDREW TAYLOR



Exercised during a Demo Day, this 917 LH — the near-240-mph, long tail "Hippie Car" that finished second at Le Mans in 1970 — is one of the most famous and eye-catching Porsche racers of all time.

Ahead of the 1928 Stutz BB Blackhawk Speedster, once in the infamous A.K. Miller collection, is the 1929 Stutz Model M Supercharged that led at Le Mans before succumbing to a split fuel tank.

CONTACT:
Simeone Foundation Automotive Museum
6825 Norwitch Drive, Philadelphia, PA 19153
www.simeonemuseum.org

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY RICK HANMORE

Dad's New Riviera

MY FATHER WAS A CAR GUY, JUST not in a mechanical sense. I never saw him turn a wrench, but he always loved cars. Every year, when the new models were introduced, we would visit showrooms to check out the latest that Detroit had to offer. His business did well enough to afford to feed his passion for new automobiles, so there was never anything more than two years old in our garage. Mom and Dad each had their own car, and in the early Sixties, the list included some that I would love to have today. There was a 1959 Oldsmobile 88, traded for a baby-blue '61 Buick Electra, and then came a '62 Oldsmobile Starfire: all were convertibles. The string of convertibles ended with a beautiful 1964 Buick Riviera, deep blue with a silver interior. Not gray, mind you, but silver vinyl seats and door panels with black and woodgrain trim. Even then, as a 14-year-old kid, I remember thinking what a stunning car that was!

As for me, I was, and still am, a model-car builder. I have been involved with scale automobiles of many types all my life, and if there is indeed a "car gene," my dad passed that on to me. I learned early on how to paint my models with the small rattle cans of hobby spray paint. I fashioned a hook of sorts that suspended the model body, which I hung from the handle of the open overhead garage door. That provided me with a place to paint that was sheltered, but open enough so that the paint fumes would blow outside and not into the house. If you are thinking that this is a story about getting paint on my dad's car, you are wrong—it gets worse than that. I was aware of overspray getting onto the family cars, so I wouldn't paint if the car was in the garage.

Very often, my father would park in the driveway, nosed up to the garage door. Not wanting to get overspray on the hood of the car, I had figured out on the Starfire that I could get in the car, slide the automatic console-mounted shifter into neutral, and the car would slowly roll backward down our gently inclined driveway, just enough to be safely clear of my painting area. I had done this a number of times when I wanted to paint (without parental guidance, of course). I would roll the car back about a car length, and then slide the shifter back into park.

The Olds was barely rolling, so when I clicked the lever back into park, the car would stop. Back then, you didn't need a key to move the shifter on an automatic transmission. That feature came along later, probably to guard against idiots like me. It got so routine that I could lean into the car, over the closed door, and slide the shifter back and forth. I didn't even have to get into the car. I know that was a dumb thing to do, but it worked every time! I had been allowed to drive the family cars in the yard from time to time, but I did not have free access to the keys.

One day, I was getting ready to paint another one of those three-in-one customizing kits. I opened the garage door and there sat the new Riviera, with its gleaming Diplomat Blue paint, about a foot from the door opening. The Riviera was too close to my painting area, so I decided to move it back, as I had done numerous times with the Oldsmobile. I leaned in the open driver's window, slipped the car out of park, and it slowly began to roll back. After about a car length, I pushed the shifter back to the park position, as I had done with the Starfire, but it wouldn't go. All it did was make a grinding sound as the car continued to roll and pick up a little speed. No pushing of buttons or movement of the shift lever made any difference. I began to panic.

The incline of the driveway increased as it neared the street. I pushed myself off the door and tried to stop the progress of the car by grabbing the vent

window post. The Buick just dragged me along as if I weighed nothing (and looking back, that was the second stupidest thing I did that day). By the time I tried to open the driver's door so I could jump in and hit the brakes, it was too late. I ran alongside the Riviera, barely keeping up as it quietly rolled down the last 20 feet of the driveway and into the street.

Fortunately, our home was located on a dead-end street with only five other houses, so there was no traffic. Still, my heart was pounding as the car easily crossed the pavement, heading for the curb on the other side. I thought it would stop when the rear tires hit this, but it takes more than that to halt a 4,000-pound Buick. I watched as the rear wheels jumped the curb, followed shortly by the fronts. The car finally stopped about a foot from Dr. Weiner's rose bush, sitting fully on his lawn facing the street and our house. Naturally, now it would go into park!

What to do? The whole thing had happened so quickly and silently that no one was running out of the house screaming. Not from our house, or our neighbor's house. There I was, standing on my neighbor's lawn next to my father's car, and nobody was aware. Nobody saw it happen. I am now reminded of the scene in the movie *A Christmas Story,* where Ralphie almost shoots his eye out, but then realizes that no one saw it happen. I thought for a moment that if I could somehow get the keys, I could pull the Riviera back into the driveway before anyone figured out what I had done. It was worth a shot. Of course, I bumped into my father as soon as I entered the house. With as much calmness as I could muster, I asked if I could have the keys to the car because I wanted to move it.

He asked me why. There was no way out now. I had to tell him that I had tried to move it, but it rolled down the driveway. He looked out of the window and saw his brand-new Riviera neatly parked on our neighbor's lawn. If there was a "for sale" sign in the windshield, the image would have made more sense. I offered to move it (perhaps to save him the embarrassment of going over there), but he declined. He was obviously irritated, but surprisingly, I didn't get chewed out. I was given that disappointed dad look and told never to try that again.

He walked across the street, got into his new car, and drove it up the driveway and into the garage, closing the overhead door behind it.

I found a new place to paint.

BY MARK J. McCOURT
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Four Score

A quartet of collector cars that smashed their reserves

SINCE HEMMINGS' FIRST ONLINE AUCTION IN AUGUST 2019, THE number of vehicles offered, as well as the number of followers and active bidders, has steadily increased. Hemmings Auctions Editor Terry Shea tells us that the sell-through rate has remained well over 80 percent since April 1, with submissions coming in at record high volumes. This has meant there are vehicles for nearly every taste and pocketbook.

While Hemmings Auctions specialists do market research and work closely with sellers to set fair reserves, those dollar figures are sometimes found to have little bearing on the sale of the car or truck at hand. The highlighted writeups that follow illustrate a few of the vehicles that surpassed their reserves by a substantial margin — a testament to the desirability of those cars and the way in which they were presented.

Some highlights among recent completed auctions include a 1971 Pontiac GTO Judge (numbers-matching, recent body-off restoration; $42,000), 1971 Buick Gran Sport 350 convertible (Fire Red respray, factory drivetrain; $23,625), a 1952 MG TD (rare Mark II competition spec, wire wheels; $16,800), 1985½ Porsche 944 (largely original, with minor needs; $4,800), 1998 BMW M Roadster (around 20,000 miles, single owner; $24,150), 1992 Ford Bronco Eddie Bauer edition (classic green and tan livery, under 60,000 miles; $28,875), and a 1997 Chevrolet 1500 Centurion Crew Cab truck (custom-built four-door 4x4; $9,500).

1985 CADILLAC

Model: Seville
Reserve: $6,000
Selling Price: $18,060
Recent Market Range: $4,930-$8,110

The "bustleback" Seville of the 1980s has long been a polarizing car, its neoclassical lines firmly dividing onlookers, but that car's mechanical package — with a fuel-injected 4.1-liter V-8 driving the front wheels — was undeniably competent and up to date. This was a single-owner, double-blue example with just 22,000 miles on the clock, and it presented like a car decades newer, so good appeared its condition. Dealer-installed wire wheels added a custom touch that tickled bidders' fancies, as the auction was extended eight times and the selling price exceeded the reserve by a substantial margin.

1936 PLYMOUTH

Model: P2 Touring
Reserve: $4,000 (seller dropped from an initial $7,000 reserve)
Selling Price: $15,225
Recent Market Range: $6,510-$11,210

The P2 four-door was Plymouth's most popular car in 1936, and its appeal remained evident in the authentic-looking example sold through Hemmings Auctions nearly 85 years later. It presented well for its age, with reasonable-condition undated black paint, a recently refreshed cloth-upholstered interior, and a mechanical sorting that was said to promise a good-driving L-head six-cylinder engine and properly functional brakes behind stylish artillery wheels. A reconsidered reserve ended up good for both bidders and the seller, with the Plymouth more than doubling its original hoped-for price.

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

Hemmings Auctions is a live, online-only collector-car auction staffed by live customer service professionals ready to help bidders and sellers with any questions. See more at hemmingsauctions.com. If you have questions, comments, or suggestions, email Auctions Editor Terry Shea: terryshea@hemmings.com.

1963 AUSTIN-HEALEY

Model: 3000 Mk II
Reserve: $34,500
Selling Price: $36,750
Recent Market Range: $33,660-$42,520

This BJ7-chassis Big Healey had spent its life, up to this sale, in the care of a father and son. The straight, non-rusted body was repainted to a fine standard 10 years ago, while the engine bay retained aged factory finishes, and the red interior was a mix of replacement and original components. The numbers-matching straight-six engine was said to run well, its overdrive-equipped transmission properly working and the undercarriage displaying minor fluid leaks. A video with this listing showed the 3000 in motion, and the responsive seller answered the questions of interested parties, to good result.

1929 FORD

Model: Model A
Reserve: $18,500
Selling Price: $42,000
Recent Market Range: $16,750-$25,810

This rumble-seat/dual-sidemount spare-equipped Model A Roadster proved the classics will never go out of style. It was restored by a previous owner in the 1990s, and recently given fresh basecoat/clearcoat paint in cheery Washington Blue over Straw wheels; a set of unmounted new tires was included. The brown vinyl upholstery looked equally nice against a restored gauge cluster. Ford's 40-hp engine was said to run well with an occasional minor oil drip, and a Borg-Warner five-speed gearbox made the car more usable on today's roads. The A caught bidders' attention and surpassed its estimates handily.

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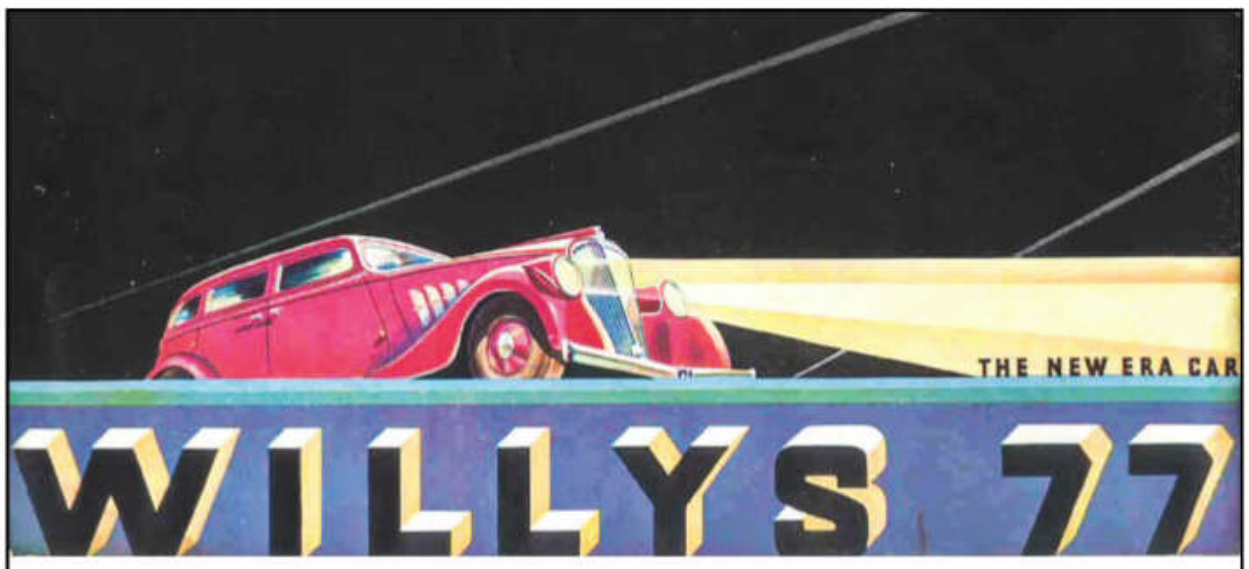
REARVIEW MIRROR 1933

BY TOM COMERRO



THE WILLYS 77 IS STREAMLINED FROM FRONT TO REAR, WITH SMOOTHLY ROUNDED contours and graceful lines. The reduced wind resistance provides better performance while lowering your bill at the gas pump. Equipped with Willys' patented "Floating Power," engine vibration is minimized, and the "Float-O" oiling system ensures only the cleanest oil lubricates the moving parts. The 77 is now available in six body styles, beginning at $335.

EXPENDITURES

(per capita)

Auto parts	$2.39
Auto purchase	$6.36
Auto usage	$24.66
Gas and oil	$11.93
Intercity transport	$1.59
Local transport	$5.57

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CHAMPIONS

Indy 500	Louis Meyer *(104.162 mph)*
24 Hours of Le Mans	Raymond Sommer and Tazio Nuvolari *(81.40 mph)*

SALES RACE

(total model-year production)

1. Chevrolet	486,261
2. Ford	334,969
3. Plymouth	298,557
4. Dodge	106,103
5. Pontiac	90,198
6. Buick	46,926
7. Studebaker	43,024
8. Hudson	40,928

Advertisers in this issue

The Royale Treatment

When it comes to driving cars, I'm pretty jaded. I suppose that's because I had driven around 4,000 of them before my 17th birthday. You see, I worked at a carwash that summer, and my task was to wipe the cars down and then drive them around for the crew to do the windows.

I lost that job after I started a big Buick Century, stood on the gas, and wound up in the shrubbery of a clinic next door. The boss gave me a tongue-lashing for "whizzing around," and at the end of the day he handed me my final paycheck.

Later, I began a career driving lots of cars, and writing about the experience, and I am still at it. So, you might ask, which one was my all-time favorite? And to that I suppose I would have to say it was the Kellner-bodied Bugatti Royale in the Briggs Cunningham Museum in Costa Mesa, California, although I didn't really drive it.

Permit me to explain: A magazine for which I was employed as art director sent a photographer and me to take pictures for a story on the 100th anniversary of the automobile, based on the generally accepted premise that that Karl Benz's 1885 Patent-Motorwagen was the first internal-combustion-powered automobile.

Curator John Burgess – who was an eminent automotive artist and had been with the museum for many years – and I hit it off. The editor specifically wanted shots of the Bugatti Royale, but because of its size, and the numerous cars around it, the photographer was unable to get a picture, so Burgess offered to take it outside.

The staff lugged in two big six-volt batteries and hooked them up. Burgess hit the starter, and the huge 778-cu.in., single overhead-cam, three-valve-per-cylinder straight-eight turned over a few times and thundered to life. Burgess gingerly eased the car down the rows of classics, out of the museum and into the parking lot. Then he motioned for me to jump in.

I discovered that the Royale wasn't just big – it was gigantic. The dancing elephant mascot, sculpted by Ettore's brother Rembrandt, was a Ford Fiesta length away down the long hood. The automotive leviathan leaped with but a faint touch of the throttle, and John told me to grab the wheel and turn the car. I did so and discovered that the steering was quite light. He told me that's because the car was built for Bugatti's daughter who was rather petite.

The big Bugatti accelerated quickly, though its mechanical brakes took a bit of pressure to slow the 21-foot-long, 7,000-pound machine. The engine rumbled and thundered like a diesel locomotive; in fact, it was later produced to power passenger rail cars in France. It made 300 hp at 3,000 rpm and produced 579 lb-ft of torque. Burgess pointed out that the car had a three-speed transmission, but you could pull away from a standing start in high gear and cruise all day.

Excluding the prototype, destroyed in a 1931 crash, six Royales were built, and all survive. They were intended for royalty – hence the name – but the royalty of Europe was close to extinction in the 1930s. One Royale had been ordered for King Alfonso XIII of Spain, but he was ousted in 1931. King Zog of Albania also ordered one, but after having dinner with the king, Bugatti refused to sell him a Royale because of his abominable table manners.

The interior of the Royale is as opulent as a Fabergé Easter Egg. The car is spectacular in every respect. It was built with the passion of a great designer, like all of Bugatti's creations. Beyond the superb craftsmanship and the impeccable styling, the engineering is also impressive and unique. For example, the wheels and brake drums are cast as a unit in aluminum, with steel linings inserted.

Unfortunately, Bugatti's timing couldn't have been worse. The advent of the Great Depression and later, World War II, meant that none of the Royales wound up in the hands of royalty. Three of them, including the one in the Cunningham Museum, were bricked up and hidden at Bugatti's family estate at Ermenonville, France, outside of Paris, and another was even lowered into a Paris sewer to thwart Nazi thieves.

Briggs Cunningham bought his Kellner Coupe, along with a second Royale, the Berline de Voyage, in 1950 for $571 and two household refrigerators, to sweeten the deal. He sold the Berline but kept the Coupe and had it restored in 1951, for a cost of $2,858. Later, the car was sold at auction for £5.5 million (about $9.7 million) in 1987, and more recently it was sold for $15.7 million. That was a pretty nice return on Cunningham's original $285.50 investment.

We did a few more laps around the museum's parking lot, impressing the lucky patrons, after which John Burgess carefully reparked the Royale. In a way I am glad I only got to steer it. My foot could have slipped off the clutch and I could have run this rare, multi-million-dollar masterpiece into the adjacent shrubbery. I don't think my insurance would have covered it.

"The automotive leviathan leaped with but a faint touch of the throttle..."

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