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APRIL 2021 #199



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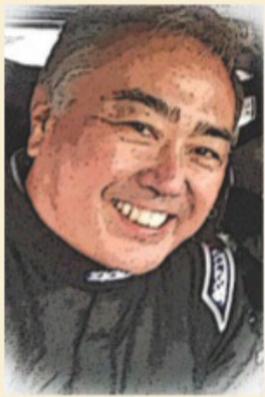
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*The 1962 Chevrolet 409 Bel Air Ushered In The Muscle Car Era*

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This beautifully restored 1962 Bel Air bubbletop features a set of 14-inch OE steel wheels, which are painted body color and equipped with original dog dish caps. The tires come from our BFGoodrich Silvertown product line—they feature a bias ply construction and 8.00-14 sizing, which is the proper fitment for a 409 car. Blackwalls are shown, but we also offer these tires in authentic one-inch whitewalls and wide whitewalls for earlier models. Our American Classic Bias-Look Radial is another great option if you're looking for the original appearance combined with the improved highway manners of a modern radial.

*Wade Kawasaki is the President and CEO of Legendary Companies, and is the Immediate Past Chairman of SEMA.*

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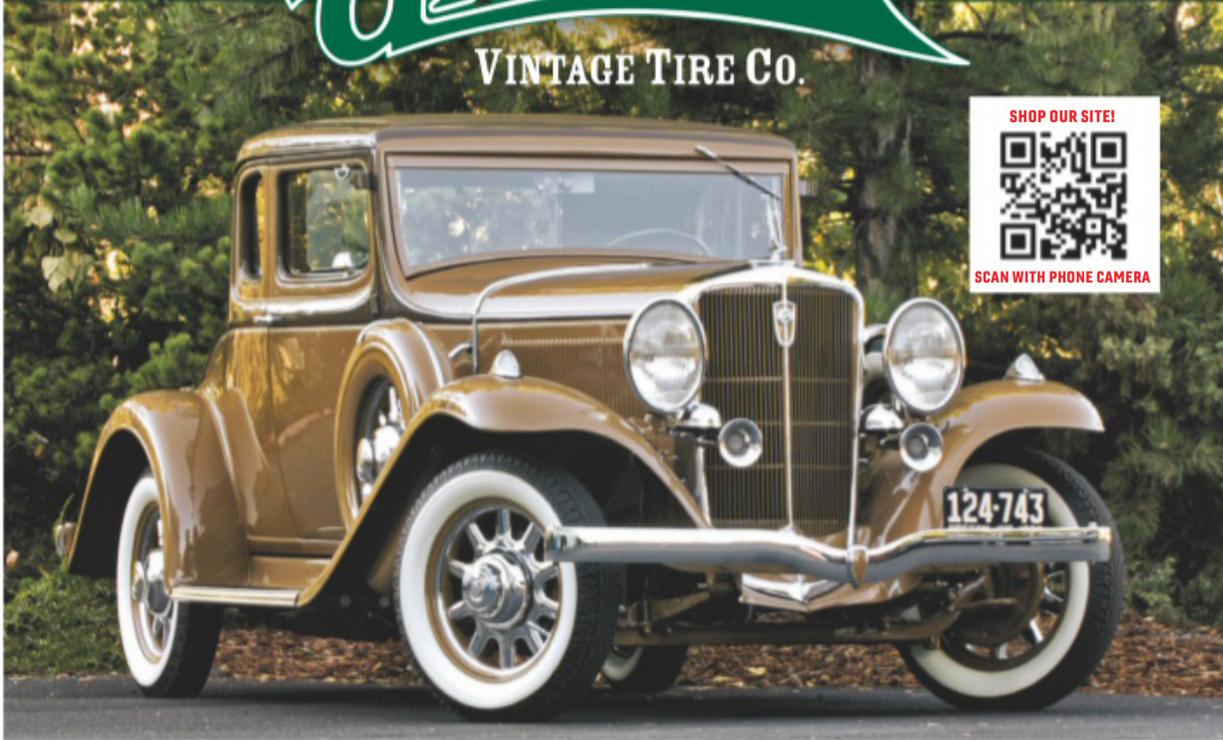


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## The Magic Inside

A good friend of mine used to say that the interiors of some cars had a certain “ambiance,” though he had a hard time conveying exactly what that was. In spite of his somewhat nebulous statement, I knew just what he meant, though I couldn’t define it any more distinctly myself. It was simply a vibe – a subtle satisfactory sense that would be realized shortly after stepping inside and getting comfortable. It only happened with select vehicles, and the feeling wasn’t necessarily the same from one to another. But there was definitely something there.

My friend had first been moved to opine on the subject way back when we were both teenagers, cruising around in what were already “old” cars from the ’60s and ’70s. This was the mid-1980s, and, if memory serves, the car that urged him to make his proclamation was another friend’s 1968 Thunderbird.

It’s become easy to forget, but for fans of the automobile, the dawning of the ’80s had been a dark time. It was painfully clear that a golden age of the automobile, the one that kicked off shortly after WWII ended, had peaked in the ’60s, and been stamped into something much less interesting as the ’70s wore on. Much has been written on the strangling of horsepower thanks to emissions controls and the neutering of styling as a result of crash standards. But the insides of cars suffered as well.

While the European automakers seemed to improve their interiors during the ’70s, the trimmings inside many American cars became plasticky and less ornate during that same period, save for a burst of available wild colors and patterned upholstery early on (I’m envisioning some orange plaid right now). But as the ’80s kicked in, interior styling got even more bland and colors narrowed mostly to blacks, tans, and grays, with the occasional maroon.

When my buddy showed up with that ’68 T-Bird, it seemed very much like an artifact from a time gone by... and we loved it. Our lot of muscle car worshipping gearhead teens might have turned our noses up at the four-door luxury barge. Instead, we were taken with the hideaway headlamps, those full-width taillamps with sequential turn signals, and the deep rumble from the 429 “Thunderjet” V-8, all of which seemed to draw straight from the muscle era.

The unusual rear-hinged “suicide” rear doors had another interesting feature: part of the faux alligator skin roof covering extended to panels at the trailing portion of each door, making the rear sail panels appear larger and, along with the stylized landau bars, giving the car the look of a

traditional limousine. The T-Bird’s relatively small backlight also contributed to the effect.

Once you climbed in through one of those weird back doors, it really did feel as though you’d stepped into a classic limo. The rear bench seat seemed like a broad sofa, and if you sat back into it comfortably, no one pulling alongside would be able to see you – very much as if you were being chauffeured in exclusivity.

We weren’t so interested in separating ourselves from the hoi polloi as we were in having our own little clubhouse on wheels. In this case, I’m talking about the kind of club Hugh Hefner might have hosted rather than something based in a treehouse. The plush upholstery, finely trimmed door panels, and soft lighting from the pillar-mounted lamps really did create an atmosphere. All that was missing was a humidor and some tumblers for sipping scotch.

In the years to follow, there would be select other cars that could offer a similar experience – I’m recalling an early ’70s Continental and a velour-trimmed Buick Electra among them. But that warm sense of ambiance my friend had once referred to wasn’t always about pure luxury. I’ve felt a different version in some ’60s four-door hardtops, in particular a ’60 Olds 98, with its tiny roof pillars, low-back seats, and warmly multi-toned cloth-and-vinyl upholstery. The openness of that car with all the windows down on a summer day was an experience unique to the big top-tier sedans of the late ’50s and early ’60s.

Much smaller and more intimate coupes could sometimes conjure their own positive feelings, if the details were right. One friend once had a 1980 Camaro Z28 with a light saddle-colored interior highlighted by corded cloth upholstery inserts that made it feel as though you were being swaddled in a warm, inviting place; it was much different from the confining cold, dark, vinyl caves that were more typical of Camaros and Firebirds of the day. Another buddy had a ’66 Mustang with bright red “pony” interior that made his coupe seem like an entirely different model than some other standard black-trimmed ’Stangs I’d sampled.

Detroit has gotten better at creating inviting spaces for its cars these days – they’re not all winners, but some get it sort of right. Still, I continue to peer into car cabins at shows and cruises to see what other vintage interiors might be worthy of sparking that old vibe again. Ambiance indeed. 🐦



The plush

upholstery,

finely trimmed

door panels,

and soft

lighting

from the

pillar-mounted

lamps really

did create an

atmosphere.



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## Boca Raton Concours Rescheduled

**THE ORGANIZERS OF THE BOCA RATON CONCOURS D'ELEGANCE HAVE CANCELED** the 2021 show due to COVID-19 concerns and have announced that the next show will take place February 25-27, 2022.

"We look forward to our continued support of a spectacular three-day Boca Raton Concours d' Elegance weekend in 2022," says Rita Case, CEO of The Rick Case Automotive Group. The event was founded and directed by the Rick Case Family and The Rick Case Automotive Group in 2007 to benefit the Boys & Girls Clubs of Broward County and the more than 12,000 at-risk young people it serves. To date, the event has raised more than \$11 million for the charity.

The 2022 show's Marquee of the Year will highlight prewar Chrysler and Imperial coachbuilt cars. Other feature classes at the event will include postwar Chrysler and Imperials 1946-'57 and 1958-'75, 100th anniversary of the Springfield Rolls-Royce, Morgan three-wheelers, Jaguar E-type 60th anniversary, a special 30 under 30 class through 1999, and a class for tuner cars through 1999. An expert panel of judges will be on hand to select the finest vintage, antique, classic, and exotic vehicles based on period, presentation, and style. For more information, visit bocaratonconcours.com.



## Gasparilla New Date and Venue

**THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS AT THE GASPARILLA CONCOURS D'ELEGANCE HAS** rescheduled its show from November to December 3-5, 2021. The move was made to provide the best opportunity to have the show under safe conditions for the participants, volunteers, and attendees. It will be held for the first time at the TPC Tampa Bay Golf Course, located in Lutz, Florida. The spacious venue will allow ample opportunities to accommodate the growing event. Space for sponsors and vendors has also increased, allowing for more investment opportunities with some proceeds going to Friedreich's Ataxia Research Alliance. All participant cars and attendee tickets will automatically be transferred to the new dates, but if you are unable to attend, contact the show for a full refund. For more information about the Concours d'Elegance, visit gasparillaconcours.com.

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**22-24 • Pate Swap Meet** • Fort Worth, Texas  
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**23-25 • Spring Jefferson Auto Swap Meet & Car Show** • Jefferson, Wisconsin  
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*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.*

## AACA Annual Convention Postponed

**THE BOARD AT THE ANTIQUE AUTOMOBILE CLUB** of America has announced that the 2021 Annual Convention has been rescheduled to April 15-17. With the current state of the COVID-19 pandemic, it became necessary to change the date of the event to ensure maximum safety for all involved. The event will still be held at the Sheraton Downtown Hotel in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Educational seminars are still planned, as well as trade show vendors, special automobile displays, youth activities, judging schools, First Lady's Breakfast, a pinewood derby, and National Awards Banquet. Each activity will be tailored to comply with COVID-19 health guidelines at that time. Registration materials and seminar information will be available soon. Visit aaca.org for more information.



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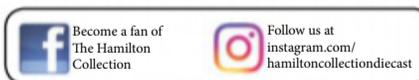
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## The Blackberry Chrysler

**OUT IN THE SECTION OF SOUTHERN OREGON AND NORTHERN CALIFORNIA THEY** call the State of Jefferson, the blackberry bushes grow easy, fast, and thick with fruit of a size and taste unequalled anywhere else in the country. And yet, landowners hate the bushes with a passion for how difficult they are to remove and how they swallow everything in their vicinity. Custom cars, for example, and the history that goes along with them.

Carl Judy took in this particular custom on trade many years ago, after a previous owner had freed it from a thicket of blackberries. "It appears to be more than an amateur build," is all Carl can tell us about it. Indeed, it's difficult to find many of the seams one would expect on a car like this that blends parts from here and there. The Studebaker front end stands out, of course, and we appreciate the Chrysler badge just above the radio speaker, but what else can you make out here?



## RE: Huxley's Crosley

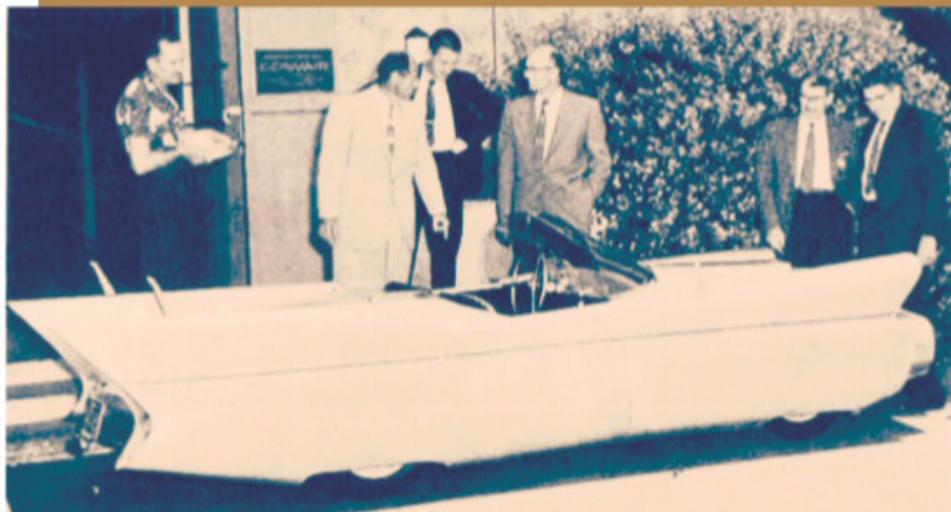
**CHRIS HOFFMAN, WHO INITIALLY BROUGHT THE HOMEBUILT** Crosley-based sports custom spotted outside the wreckage of a 1961 Hollywood Hills fire to our attention back in April 2018 (*HCC* #163), has an update on the car for us.

According to the May 29, 1957, issue of *Convairity*, Convair's in-house newspaper, the "Reynolds Wrap Special" was created by L.D. "Bink" Brown Jr., who at the time worked in the company's aeronautics flight test operations, based out of San Diego, California. Brown, according to the article, wanted a sports car, found he

couldn't afford one, so began to design and build his own. His design specified no compound curves and minimal welding, and he started with a cardboard model to make sure it looked just as he envisioned.

From there, he began with a wrecked Crosley, as we suspected three years ago. He had the frame extensively modified by Z-ing it front and rear, and widening the center section, so he and his passenger could fit around the torque tube that passed through the center of the cockpit. The body came from Convair's salvage yard — specifically, a load of .032-inch ST and SO aluminum sheet about to be recycled that Brown shaped by hand to match his cardboard template. The stock Crosley engine remained, though bored out .030 inches.

We also know from other *Convairity* issues that Brown displayed the car at SoCal-area shows, though we still don't know how it ended up in the Hollywood Hills four years later — or what happened to it since then.



 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](mailto:dstrohl@hemmings.com). For more Lost & Found, visit [blog.hemmings.com/index.php/category/lost-and-found](http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/category/lost-and-found).

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# Why Are Dealers Hoarding These 100-Year-Old U.S. Silver Dollars?

When it comes to collecting, few coins are as coveted as the first and last of a series. And when big anniversaries for those “firsts” and “lasts” come around, these coins become even more coveted.

Take, for example, the 1921 Morgan Silver Dollars. These 90% pure silver coins were the last of their kind, a special one-year-only resurrection of the classic Wild West Silver Dollar. Three years prior, the Pittman Act authorized the melting of more than 270 million Morgan Silver Dollars so their silver could be sold to our allies in the United Kingdom. Facing our own Silver Dollar shortage, the world’s favorite vintage U.S. Silver Dollar was brought back for one year only while the U.S. Mint worked on its successor, the Peace Silver Dollar.

## Dealers Begin Stockpiling Last-Year Morgans

Knowing what we’ve told you about special anniversaries, dealers around the country are preparing for a surge in demand. 2021 will mark the 100th anniversary of the 1921 Morgan Silver Dollar—the last-year-of-issue for the most popular vintage U.S. Silver Dollar ever minted. But slow-moving collectors may be disappointed in what they find when they seek out these coins.

Since the days of the Pittman Act, millions more U.S. Silver Dollars have been melted or worn down in commerce. It’s been estimated that as few as 15% of all the Morgan Dollars ever minted have survived to the present day. That number grows smaller each year, with private hoards now accounting for virtually all the surviving Morgan Silver Dollars. And that was *before* silver values started to rise...

## Interest in Silver Is on the Rise

As you can see from the chart on the left, in 2020, we’ve seen daily silver prices close as low as \$12.01 per ounce and as high as \$28.33 per ounce. That rise in value has led to a sharp increase in buyers’ interest in silver. We’re already seeing a surge of interest from collectors wanting to add vintage Morgan Silver Dollars to their collections. But at what price?

## Don’t Wait—Secure Your 1921 Morgan Silver Dollars NOW!

With this special offer, you can secure a last-year 1921 Morgan Silver Dollar ahead of the rush in About Uncirculated (AU) condition for just \$39.95! Mint marks vary.

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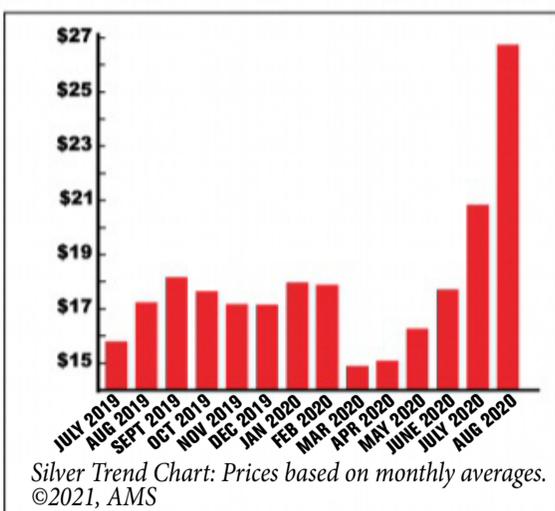
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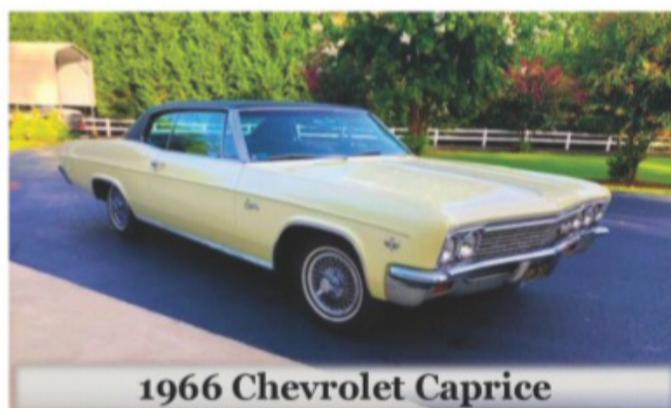
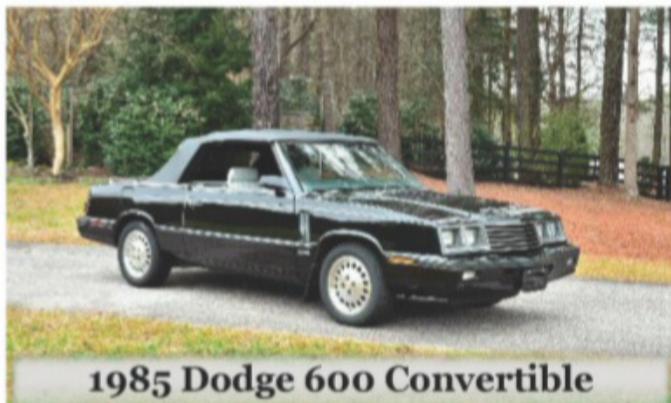
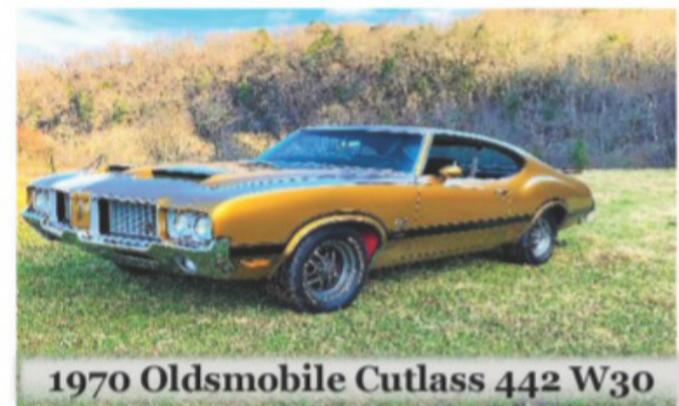
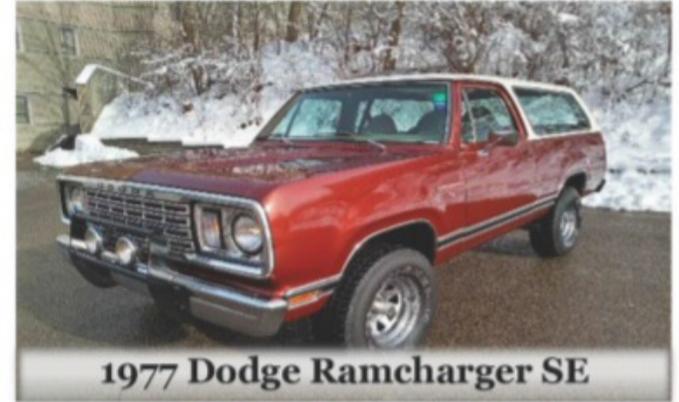
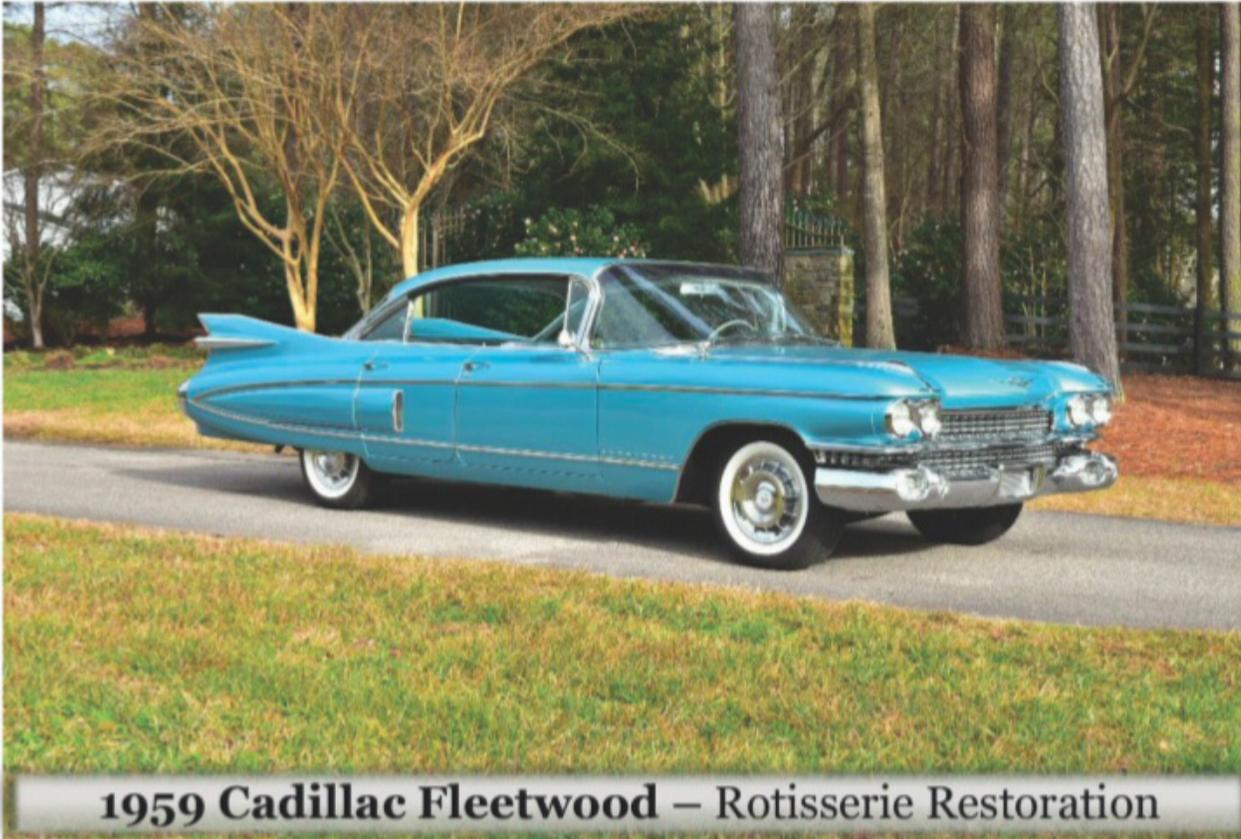
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## Do You Hear Crickets?

**IF YOU HANG AROUND ENOUGH**

car folk, you are bound to hear quite often, "I've never seen one of those in person." I know I've said it even about cars I have forced you to ponder in this column. However, this month's feature car I have not only seen in person, but also, a high school friend's family had one. I remember it well. It was yellow with a black roof.

I recall the first time I saw it. The 1973 Plymouth Cricket belonged to the host family of our AFS exchange student for the 1979-'80 school year, when I was a junior. Her name was Caroline, and she was from Austria. She is now a professor and author. Two years ago, we celebrated 40 years of friendship in her present town of Salzburg with her husband and youngest son.

I have to share that when she first arrived, a teacher asked her if she saw kangaroos in her country.

Being the strange person I have always strived to be, I stopped for a minute while walking up to their front door and looked over the Plymouth Cricket. Everyone else in high school oohed and ahed over Trans Ams, Mach 1s, and AMXs, while I was enamored with Vegas, Gremlins, and Pintos. I also loved Mustang IIs, my favorite Mustangs. So, it was no surprise that I took a liking to their six-year-old Cricket, which the father of the family drove to work, while his wife drove a

1976 Chevrolet Malibu Station Wagon (another underdog I have highlighted previously).

The Cricket, I was to learn, was not one of Plymouth's Mitsubishi-built "captivating imports," but the product of Chrysler's takeover of England's Rootes Group in 1967. It was

only here for a little shy of three seasons, and some have declared it a failure in the American market.

For a failure, a surprising number of them have suddenly come up for sale in the last few months. Are grandchildren organizing estate sales and accidentally finding Pop Pop's Plymouth Cricket in the garage under boxes of discards and refuse? Are collectors culling their herds? Don't laugh. There's a collector for every car ever produced. I saw a farm with more than four dozen K-cars, while driving cross-country a few years ago, and an hour later, I drove passed one with at least a dozen Chevy Monzas.

The Plymouth Cricket was an Americanized version of the Hillman Avenger, which debuted in 1970. The car in Onslow and Daisy's driveway on *Keeping Up Appearances* that doubles as a doghouse is a Hillman Avenger GL.

Power went to the rear wheels from a 1,250- or 1,500-cc OHV inline-four. With an all-coil suspension, the Avenger was popular and considered a superior handling and riding car, especially when compared to other British cars in its market sector at the time.

When introduced to Americans the following year, two body styles were available, a four-door sedan (saloon) and five-door station wagon (estate). The Cricket was equipped with front disc and rear drum brakes, whereas most American-

made subcompacts and compacts still had four-wheel drum brakes. The Plymouth Cricket had the 1,500-cc engine. Square headlamps would not be legal for a few years, so the Cricket inherited the Avenger GL/GT grille with four round headlamps.

Advertising focused on the Plymouth Cricket's price, rack-and-pinion steering, disc brakes, and room.

One of my favorite ads would not fly today. It features a rather "full-figured" family of four and states "Cricket. A little bit bigger than other little cars." In smaller print, it says, "Cricket's four doors open on an interior roomy enough to hold four full-size adults—and it has more total interior room than you'll find in Pinto, Vega or VW." Granted that isn't saying much because the rear seat in any of the competition was practically useless for anyone older than nine.

Crickets were no longer imported at the end of 1972, so midway through the 1973 model year (just before the first energy crisis), the Cricket was canceled in favor of the Mitsubishi-built Colt, which would have a more than two-decade lifespan in America. Had Plymouth waited just a few months, Cricket sales might have increased enough to make it worthy to upgrade the model to meet the all-new federal standards at the time.

In Canada, the newly arrived Colt was badged a Cricket.

As I mentioned earlier, Plymouth Crickets seem to pop up a lot recently. As of this writing, I found six, all in "barn find" condition. They look pretty solid, and each is listed for no more than \$1,100.

Why on earth would you want one? Why not? Here's an opportunity to arrive in something no one else has. I guarantee it. You will get asked a lot of questions like "What is that?" "Who made it?" "Is it a Mitsubishi?" Imagine the looks you'll get when you tell them it is not from the East, but from across the pond.

As far as Hillman Avengers go, they do also pop up at about the same rate in Europe, but for three times what a Cricket is worth. They also have a club network in England, so here's hoping most parts are interchangeable. 🐞

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## MY COMMENTS ARE REGARDING

the February 2021 article on the 1964 Pontiac Catalina ("The Wink," HCC #197).

I grew up in Forty Fort, Pennsylvania, about a block away from this car. I remember seeing it parked behind their home on Wyoming Avenue. The car was always in nice condition. I was a few years younger than Joe [original owner Joseph Shedlawski], but remember talking with him once as I commented on the Pontiac. Even then I recognized that car as special to that family.

Mention was made of Lou Boch of Boch's Auto Body, also in Forty Fort. His shop was small and set up behind his home on Murray Street. I lived just up the street and got to know Lou when my Saxony yellow 1968 Mercury Cougar XR-7 was hit in the passenger's side. The insurance company paying for the repair would not pay to paint the entire car, and by then (approximately 1974), there would be a color mismatch. Lou let me do the grunt work on my car in exchange for painting the entire vehicle. I knew nothing about bodywork, and he patiently taught me how to sand and prep the car for paint. This began decades of friendship with Lou. Lou was a perfectionist and spent a lot of time on his restoration and custom work. I continued to help him during busy times in the shop, and I still use the skills today to refinish antique radio cabinets that require lacquer and toners. Same sanding between coats, and good spraying techniques.

I left Pennsylvania in the early 1990s and lost touch with Lou. I understand the business is now closed. When I think back about how simple it was to just be able to help someone in that business without the hassles that would happen today with restrictions and such. That was a very special time.

What are the odds of sitting down and opening up HCC and having this come at you? Believe me, I couldn't be happier.

Frank Drost

*Eagan, Minnesota*

## THE "MUSTANG'S LASTING ALLURE"

column in the January 2021 issue of HCC (#196) brought to mind my first experience with the original pony car. It was in May 1964 and I was in Basic Training with the Army at Fort Jackson in Columbia, South Carolina. On a weekend pass in downtown, I was sitting on a park bench in front of the capital building passing time while waiting for a bus back to the post. Suddenly, a strange-looking car came around the corner in front of me and merged into traffic. It was a Mustang! Wow, it stood out from other cars like a neon sign.

In November of the same year, I flew to Tennessee on business. My flight landed in Johnson City and I had reserved a rental car ahead of time. When I got to the Avis office at the airport, I filled out the forms and the clerk handed me a pair of keys and said, "Your car is just outside the door to the left." So, I picked up my suitcase and walked out the door. I looked to my left and there, in all its sparkling beauty, stood a beautiful light blue metallic Mustang! Wow! I walked over to it and just stared at it for a moment, wondering if it was a mistake. Shouldn't it be some sedan instead? But, no, the key fit and I opened the door to take in the matching light blue interior. I tossed my suitcase into the back seat and climbed into the driver's seat. Oh boy!

The automatic shift lever was sticking out of the console. Fabulous! Driving downtown to my hotel was like a dream

come true. The Mustang was still new enough that it attracted glances from other drivers and pedestrians. I was king of the road. After my weekend business ended, I drove back to the airport and reluctantly turned in the car. But I took a photo of it before I left. I still have the photo.

So, did I buy a Mustang? No. Like editor Terry McGean, I waited and bought a 1967 Camaro. I always had been a Chevy guy at heart. But I never got over my early experiences with the first Mustang!

Richard Symmes

*Beverly, Massachusetts*

## MY WIFE BOUGHT ONE OF THE VERY

first Mustangs when they came out in late 1964. It's hard to believe that in just four years that car developed into the GT Mustang Steve McQueen drove in *Bullitt* in 1968. I know you're aware that the movie car sold in Kissimmee, Florida, at a Mecum auction for \$3.4 million.

Today, my wife drives a '90 Camaro IROC-Z that she bought new in 1992.

It was a dealer-registered car that the dealer's wife had driven only 200 miles.

Henry Link

*Via email*



## JUST GOT THIS ISSUE AND WOW!

What childhood memories the article about the '67 Mustang coupe brought back. In 1968, my Pop bought a '67 Mustang coupe "dealer demonstrator" in Frost Turquoise with a six-cylinder, automatic, and dealer-installed A/C.

This car became our family car (Mom's car) and Pop had his '63 VW Bug for work. We took many fun family vacations in that Mustang and, still to this day, I can't figure how Pop got all four of us and our luggage packed so neatly.

My love affair with the Mustang started with that '67 and, since I was born in 1964, I figure the Mustang and I are kindred spirits. My first car was a

'68 coupe and today I own three Fox-body Mustangs. Enclosed is a pic of my favorite of the three, my '88 5.0 LX convertible with 200,000-plus miles on the stock untouched drivetrain (one repaint and two tops).

Reader for life,  
Scott Garascia  
St. Louis, Missouri

### IN MY EARLY YEARS, NO CATALOG

was more eagerly anticipated than the Sears Roebuck Christmas issue, only to be supplanted by J.C. Whitney's "wish book" a decade or so later. Now, many, many decades later, Jim Richardson has revived many old memories ("Accessories After the Fact," HCC #196). That said, I am surprised that he overlooked a few of the obligatory "must-haves" of the Forties and Fifties. For example, if you had an external sun visors spanning the windshield, you needed one of those plastic prisms suction-cupped to the inside so you could see the traffic signals overhead. Long before GPS navigation systems were commonplace, we had a five-dollar compass clamped to the dash, which, with a pile of free gas station road maps for every city, we could navigate from coast to coast (a truly seasoned person could even neatly refold the maps!). Of course, no family car was complete without a shiny metal tissue dispenser attached below the dash. My dad's '39 Olds was dressed with those neat chromed fender guides that stuck up a foot or so, usually with an ornament on top. Additional grille guards, amber fog lamps, a chrome "fish tail" tailpipe extension, and red plastic reflector bolts replacing the license plate screws were considered essentials for the well-dressed car of that era. I recall that the tires on the Olds were whitewalls on both sides. Arguably, the worst accessories were those chrome, razor sharp "shades" extending out over the headlights. God help any pedestrian who got hit with those. Running a close second were the clear plastic seat covers that could instantly fry bare skin in the summer, and became like stiff, frozen metal slabs in the winter.

As the song made famous by an icon of that era says, "Thanks for the memories."

Lee Fowble  
Marysville, Washington



**THE YEAR WAS 1956 AND I HAD JUST** turned 16. I had saved my money from summer jobs, after school jobs, and weekend jobs, and had enough cash to buy my own first car. I lived in a

small town in central Washington with a population of 8,000. I found the car I wanted in the back of the lot in a dealership. It was a 1946 Plymouth two-door Special Deluxe sedan. The paint



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was pretty much gone and blue primer was showing through. The upholstery was in rags, the car wouldn't start, and it had a flat tire. I was able to negotiate a price of \$160, providing they fixed the flat so I could tow the car off the lot. I towed it to the local garage and told them I wanted them to flush the radiator, do a complete engine rebuild, and install a new clutch plate, new throw out bearing, new universal joints, and finally, check the rear end and fix anything that needed fixing. When it was ready, I drove to the local Firestone store for four new whitewall tires. I then drove it to the local body shop and told them I wanted all-white Naugahyde interior, including the headliner. I wanted a leaded-in trunk with a solenoid opener. I also wanted all window moldings and dashboard in black, and the car painted all black. At that time, I had, for all purposes, a new car for a total investment of \$900 and one very upset father.

I drove that car for eight years and sold it to another 16-year-old.

Robert F. Evans  
Seattle, Washington

## THIS IS IN RESPONSE TO PAT

Foster's article on "Those Rambler Trucks" and utility vans in *HCC* #197. He references a photocopy of a brochure he has showing such vehicles and questions if it is an actual brochure. Well, it is—I have one. The images in it are obviously rendered by professional AMC automotive artists, based on composite Rambler photographs. The brochure has the identification of AMX 6334, Litho in U.S.A. It is standard 8½ x 11 inches, and is four pages: the cover, inside spread, and back cover. The sample I have is in excellent condition. I acquired it probably 12 years ago on an online offering. It is the only one I have ever seen, and I have an extensive library and collection of 1963 Rambler literature, dealer items, advertising items; original AMC media and dealer material, dealer meeting notes, dealer invites and tickets to 1963 model unveiling; and posters, banners, and brochures from the U.S. and other countries. This utility van brochure is a "unicorn," for sure! I have looked for years to spot a 1963 Rambler panel delivery van, but none seem to exist. I think Pat might be right that AMC was ready to offer these vehicles, invested in the engineering specs, spent the money to print the



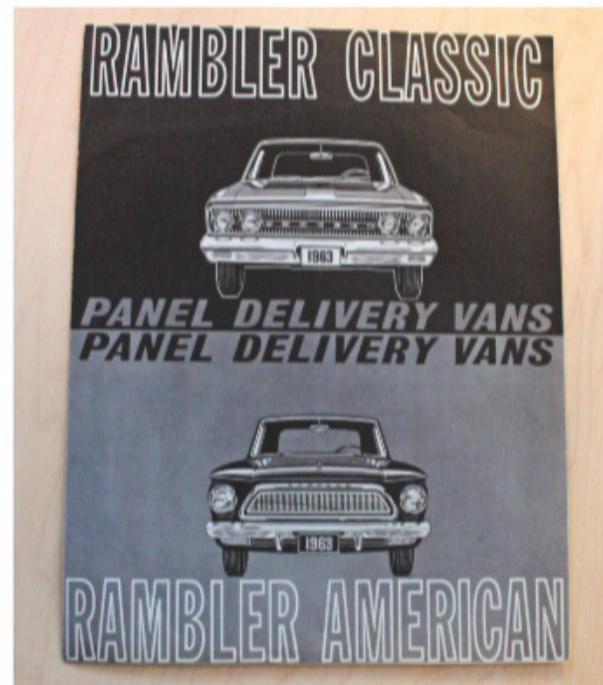
literature, then pulled the plug at the last minute. The vans do not appear in the 1963 Rambler Commercial Fleet Rental-Lease brochure, of which I have a copy.

Also attached is a photo of our 1963 Rambler that *Hemmings* included in a feature on Ramblers a number of years back. We've now owned it for 16 years. The car is unrestored—80-percent original paint (passenger lower needed touch up back in the '80s after elderly owner nicked garage door frame), perfect original interior, and an untouched aluminum-block, six-cylinder. I won't be cutting it up and converting it into a utility van, anytime soon!

Steve Isola  
Duluth, Minnesota

## THERE IS A MOVIE STARRING

George Raft called *Loan Shark*, made in 1952, where Raft's character goes undercover at a tire plant to catch loan sharks. He makes a suggestion to the sharks that they go buy a laundry service to make loans to housewives short on cash. In front of the laundry building are



parked several Nash Rambler panel trucks with the laundry name on the side. They look like Nash Rambler two-door wagons with the side glass replaced. That's the only time I have ever seen one.

Ed Jack  
Boone, Iowa

## I'VE BEEN READING HCC FOR

almost all of its existence. I read it cover to cover. I really enjoyed the article on vintage campers in the March issue (#198). We just sold our 1965 Airstream Caravel after restoring it and enjoying it for 13 years. One of our greatest pleasures was being members of Tin Can Tourists. I was glad to see the club mentioned in the article, but it didn't mention that after becoming moribund in the 1970s and 1980s, it was revived by Forrest and Jeri Bone as an all makes and models vintage



trailer and motorhome club. The club has grown tremendously and has many meets scattered around the country, especially Michigan and Florida. The meets are a great place to see these old campers, meet owners, and get restoration tips. You can check them out at [tincantourists.com](http://tincantourists.com).

Bob Tremitiere  
South Lyon, Michigan

### MY MOM BOUGHT ME MY FIRST CAR

magazine when I was seven years old in 1958. I still have that little book and a love for all things automotive. As a retired technical author, I wish to commend you and your staff on a superb publication. *HCC* is well written, and the photography is excellent. I especially enjoy reading about vehicles that have been in the same family for generations. And I can certainly relate to many of the experiences readers share in the I Was There column. I must admit, at first, I was skeptical about *HCC* including foreign cars, but reason prevailed. America isn't the only country with a rich automotive heritage. Far from it. And I've always been a VW fan, having learned to operate a clutch on my friend Ray's '56 VW Microbus. So, keep up the good work, and you'll always have a fan.

Matt Zehentner  
Waterloo, Iowa

### ONCE AGAIN, I REALLY ENJOYED

Terry McGean's column ("Sampling the Standard") in the March issue of *HCC*. I, too, had many pleasant experiences with those old Cadillacs. When I was 19, I worked at a Buick-Oldsmobile dealer in a small town named Burlington in southeastern Wisconsin. There wasn't a Cadillac dealer in this town of 8,000, so we ended up servicing the late-model Cadillacs of the town's affluent owners. I had the good fortune of driving many of these early to mid-'70s cars. I was always more into this type of car than the Trans Ams and Camaros that my friends loved.

Later, I left my job and went to work

at a dealer that handled late-model used cars. To my delight, they favored GM cars and we handled a lot of Cadillacs. The high point of this job was going to the Chicago metro area and driving back to Burlington in a car that had been purchased either at a new-car dealer or at auction. We bought cars that were traded in from several Cadillac dealers. Back in those days, many Cadillac owners traded every year. Often these dealers had limited storage space, and do you really need 10 one-year-old Coupe de Villes on your lot? Some of these dealers handled used cars reluctantly as the north suburban communities were so affluent that used cars were a nuisance.

Oh, how things have changed. I never did own one of those land yachts and, today, I feel that GM has sold out. I realize that the automotive industry has moved on and that you couldn't sell 1976 Eldorados today. My tastes have changed, too. I just feel fortunate to have lived in that time with those great old Cadillacs.

Dave Cook  
Via email

### I CONCUR WITH TERRY McGEAN'S

disdain for the lack of option choices when ordering a new car! ("Back to Basics," *HCC* #197) I have in my possession a booklet from Plymouth in 1959 that lists 29 separate body styles; four accessory groups; 45 separate options; and two transmission choices, all with prices.

I will admit modern cars have a lot of former options now standard, but the joy of customizing your new vehicle is now but a pleasant memory.

Harvey Eckart  
Berwick, Pennsylvania



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## The Birmingham Car

One of the more unusual automotive histories is that of the Birmingham car. A rather distinctive automobile, its story twists and turns and at times seems to defy logic.

According to published sources, the company was founded in Birmingham, Alabama, but its first two or three prototype cars were produced in Detroit, Michigan, in May 1921 by the Wright-Fisher Engineering Company. Around that same time, company management decided to establish Birmingham auto production in a factory in Jamestown, New York. Go figure.

Designed by Cyrus Weaver, the Birmingham automobile was described as "...the easiest riding car ever put on the market" and it just may have been. Its four-wheel independent suspension was a clever design that included three transverse springs and an independent "flexible" axle out back, plus two transverse springs up front. Apparently this design was similar to the short-lived Cornelian automobile produced by – we're not joking – the Blood brothers of Kalamazoo, Michigan. In fact, the design was so similar that Weaver decided he'd better buy up the patent rights to it. Thankfully, the Bloods obliged.

Production, such as it was, commenced in 1921. The Birmingham was a big car, riding a stately 124-inch wheelbase and powered by a 55-hp Continental Red Seal six-cylinder engine. Both four-door sedan and Touring models were produced. Various components, like the starter, generator, and such were mostly standard, off-the-shelf units. The body framing was hardwood, and the body itself was fabric – this being in that period when fabric bodies were somewhat in vogue. By 1924, the company reportedly switched to a steel body.

According to published sources, the mayor of Jamestown, one Samuel Carlson, agreed to serve as president of Birmingham Motors Corporation gratis, because he believed that having its own car company would benefit his town economically. Exactly why the founders of the company didn't also run it was not explained. However, it appears that Birmingham Motors may have been a shoestring operation because it hand-built a total of just seven cars initially, two or three in Detroit

and the rest in a temporary plant in Falconer, New York, near Jamestown. All of these cars were then used as demonstrators for salesmen, who fanned out across the country seeking investors to buy shares of the company's newly issued stock.

The vehicles themselves got good press exposure. A Birmingham auto was pictured in 1921 in Atlantic City, New Jersey, with Miss Margaret

Gorman, the winner of the very first Miss America pageant – she's the young lady in this accompanying photo. As you can see, the Birmingham was an elegant-looking machine with its commanding size, disc wheels, padded top, and bright radiator shell, though the fabric body looks a little care-worn in this



photo. Another Birmingham was displayed at the National Automobile Show in New York City in January 1922.

Apparently about \$300,000 worth of stock had been sold when a derogatory article appeared in a popular stock market publication. Although some claimed it was written by Carlson's political enemies, it eventually led to an investigation by the U.S. Post Office and a charge of fraudulent use of the mails to sell worthless stock. During a two-month period following that, the company assembled another 26 cars, apparently trying to prove it was a viable business. A stockholders meeting held that October resulted in mayhem, with one of the stock salesmen stabbed to death, and a Birmingham Motors official smashing through a plate glass window to escape harm.

By June 1923, the charges against the Birmingham officials were dismissed by the court. However, the exoneration proved nearly meaningless because the company's reputation and finances were damaged beyond repair. As Preston Tucker learned years later when he went through a similar ordeal, even though the battle was won, the war itself was lost.

Efforts were made to revive Birmingham Motors, but even a plan to rename the car as the Wright and sell it in Canada came to naught. By 1924 – some sources say 1925 – Birmingham Motors had reached the end of the line, after building perhaps as many as 50 cars. It's believed that none of them exist today. Too bad. 🐼



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## Israel's First Winner

Sometimes, through a series of coincidences, you will meet someone who has done something interesting or extraordinary. When I lived in Israel, a friend of mine, Aviv Collen, a fellow French car fan, invited me to photograph Israel's first officially sanctioned auto race in 27 years: the Peugeot 208 Cup Race held in Arad on June 16, 2018. Aviv was the track master. When Aviv was 16, he was also the track master at Israel's last officially sanctioned race, in 1991.

However, this isn't about Aviv or the Peugeot 208 Cup. Aviv collects French model cars, and he asked if I could pick one up for him from a gentleman who

dealt in rare model cars and happened to live around the corner from me in Jaffa. I went to the gentleman's home and met a most affable man in his 70s, and when he heard that I was an auto writer, asked me to wait a minute and went to his office to find his photo album. Ten minutes later, I learned that

I was standing in the apartment of the winner of Israel's first auto race. The story goes like this.

At the end of one of the most tumultuous decades around the world, and two years after the Six-Day War, PAZ, a subsidiary of Royal Dutch Shell, sponsored Israel's first "Road Rally," featuring speed and navigation and organized by MEMSI, the Israel Automobile and Touring Club. It was called the "The Great Race" and took place on September 29, 1969. First prize was a one-year supply of petrol. There were three categories: 1000-, 1500-, and 2000-cc. The cars entered were street legal and not modified. The course covered about 3 kilometers and required a navigator.

The gentleman I met, Avi Parnass, drove a 1969 BMW 2000. He won not only his category, but also, the overall race, thanks in very large part to his navigator, Yair Yankelevich, who died just a few years prior to our meeting. Avi still thinks fondly of the man who told him to go right, left, and straight ahead. The pair's winning time was 3 minutes, 14.6 seconds.

However, Avi and Yair had no idea they were the overall winners because after they finished their heat, they drove to Ashkelon to pick up his brother, and when they returned, they found

out the good news. They were also requested to complete the course again for the local TV news cameras, and when they did, Avi and Yair finished in an even quicker (but unofficial) time, with two of his tires also "finished." Avi has tried for years to get a copy of the newsreel, but alas, no one knows what became of it.

Avi relayed that, to be fair, the race was never fully completed because of heavy rains, and the part of the course that took place on the beach was practically impassable. An NSU, competing in the 1000-cc class, hit a boulder. Other cars also hit stones, so they stopped the race. In the end, there

were six or seven cars stuck in the sand.

This would be Avi's only race, but it would not be the end of his love affair with exotic, classic, and fast cars. Before the BMW, he owned a 1966 Peugeot 404. And another love affair would begin after he purchased an Israeli-specification 1972 Ford Mustang Mach 1 in bright red,

equipped with a 4.0-liter (250-cu.in.) inline-six with an automatic transmission. Every classic Mustang that I saw in Israel, including every Mach 1, was equipped with a straight-six mated to an automatic, since cars are taxed according to engine size and Israelis love automatics. He was driving the Mustang when he spotted a beautiful young soldier standing at a traffic circle, looking for a ride to her home in Haifa. Two soldiers were ahead of her in line for rides, but Avi had his eye on the young woman, Aliza, and they have been happily married for 47 years.

Today, Avi also helps people import collector cars to Israel through his company, Champarts Ltd. ([champarts@gmail.com](mailto:champarts@gmail.com)). On the day I met him, he had just taken delivery of a Pontiac Fiero for a client.

When asked about the return of officially sanctioned auto racing in Israel, he responded, "I'm happy people can enjoy what they like and be able to race here in Israel, making their dreams come true without having to go overseas to compete. I wish all the organizers the best of luck!"

I am always amazed at the interesting people I have met through my love of all things automotive. 🇮🇱



COLLECTION OF AVI PARNASS



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# Festive Flier

*This 1970 Oldsmobile Cutlass Supreme was built for Festival duty*

BY THOMAS A. DeMAURO • PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEFF KOCH







The 350 four-barrel Oldsmobile V-8 was returned to mostly stock specifications after having been modified for drag racing.

“I love Indy Pace Cars, and the 1970 Oldsmobile is striking,” Brenda Kalivianakis says. Her affection for the rare Rockets that served at the Brickyard runs in the family. Her dad bought a 1974 Delta 88 Royale 500 “Festival” car (*HCC*, September 2016) back in 1979 and cherished it for more than two decades. Brenda, an attorney from Fountain Hills, Arizona, and a divisional staff officer in the United States Coast Guard Auxiliary, inherited her father’s special Olds in 2000 and still treasures it.

She found this 310-hp 350-powered Cutlass Supreme convertible Pace Car/Festival car for sale online in 2015. The Y74 option for the Pace Car replicas included the W25 dual-intake fiberglass hood with low-restriction air cleaner, Super Stock II wheels painted body color, Pace Car decals, stripes, black lower body, sports-styled outside rearview mirrors, and raised-white-letter tires.

There were 268 Pace Car 4-4-2 convertibles ultimately built, as well as 358 Cutlass Supreme convertibles. While most weren’t sent to Indy, some were 500 Festival cars (with decals to identify them) that were used in the parade and in Indianapolis during the leadup to the event.

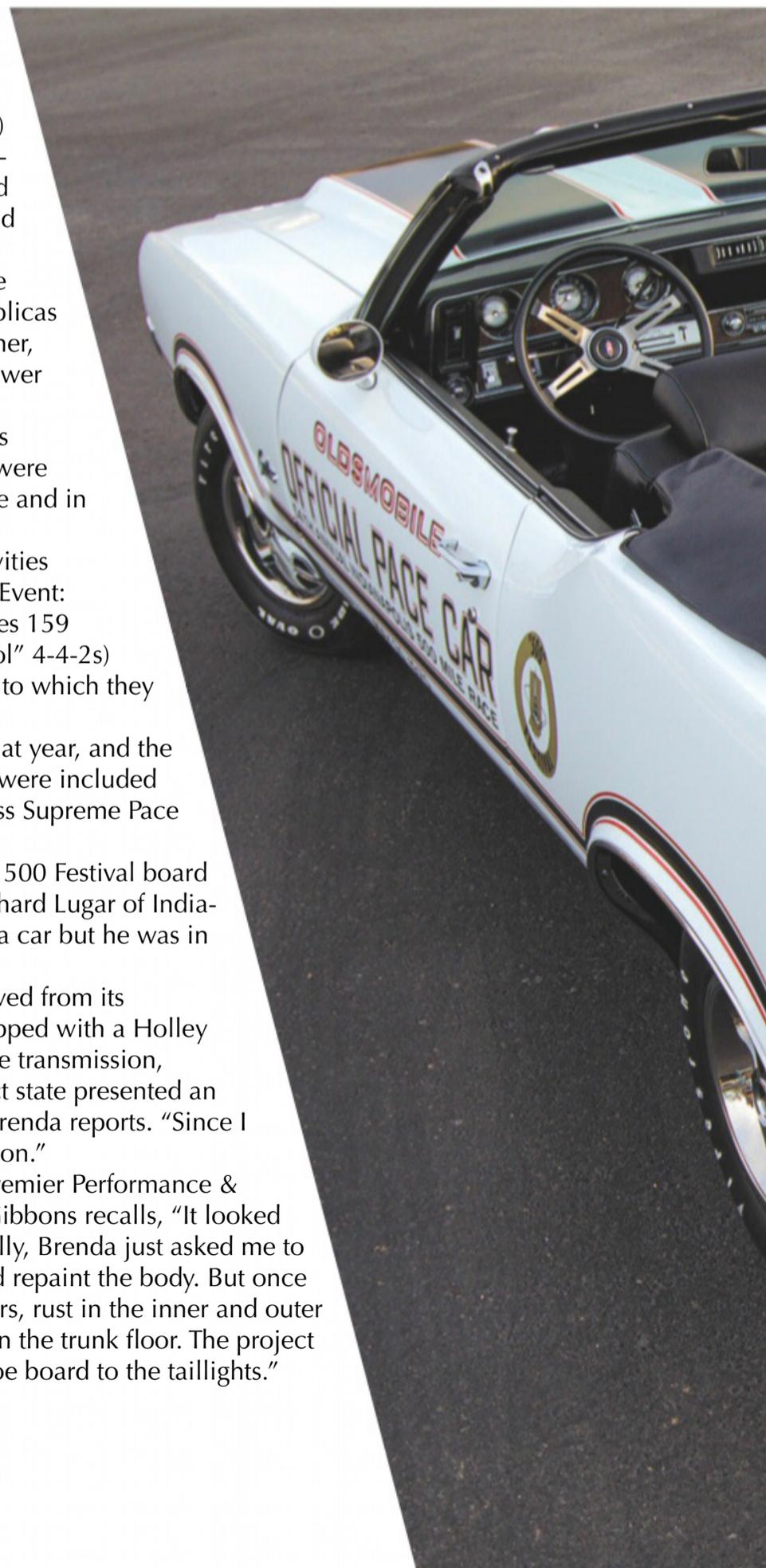
Providing additional information is an eight-page “Group Selling Activities Department” document with a revision date of 4/10/70 and the headings “Event: Indianapolis 500 Pace Car” and “Location: Indianapolis Indiana.” It includes 159 Oldsmobiles, their designated car numbers, VINs (except for the eight “pool” 4-4-2s) including the one for our feature car, and the names and job titles of those to which they were assigned.

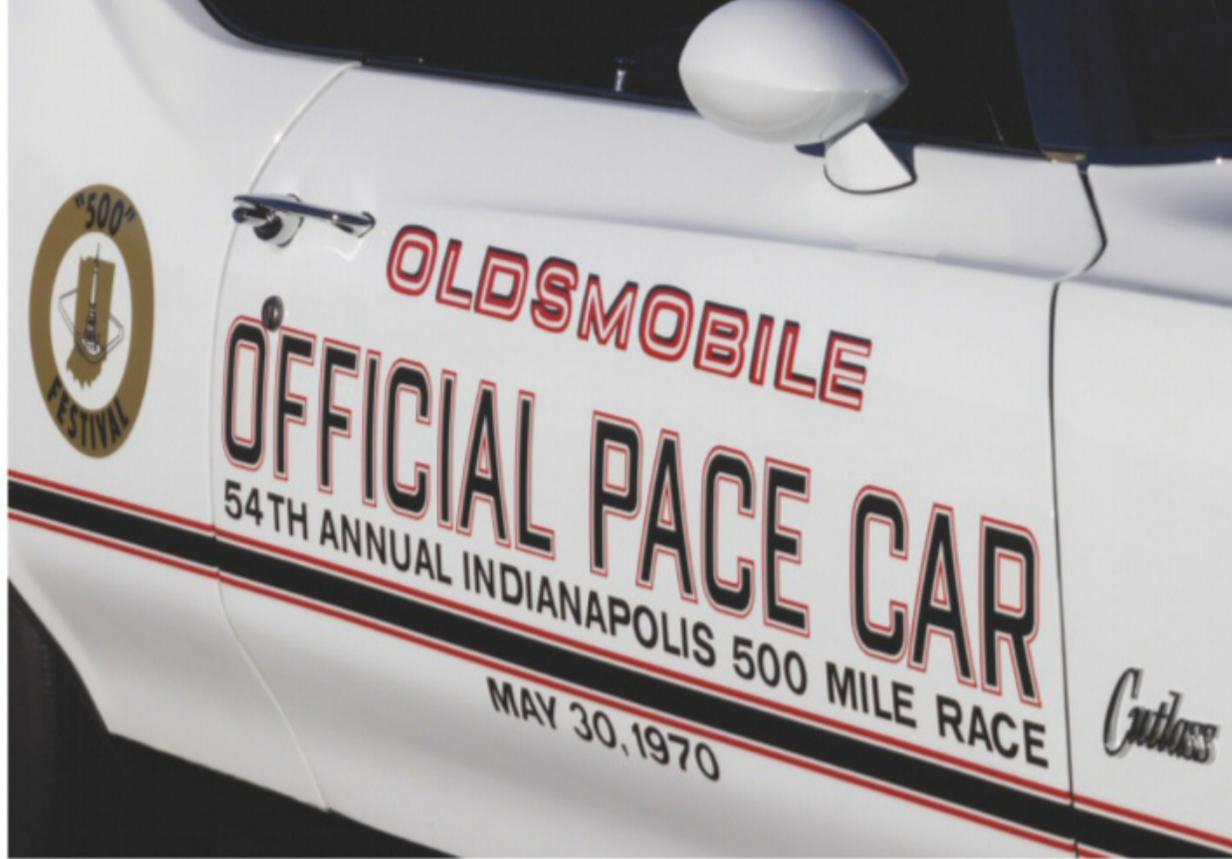
Famed driver and two-time Indy winner Roger Ward paced the race that year, and the two 4-4-2s that were specially modified to serve that purpose on the track were included among the 64 4-4-2 Pace Car convertibles listed. There were also 79 Cutlass Supreme Pace Car convertibles, and 16 Vista Cruiser station wagons shown.

Brenda explains that hers is, “One of the cars that was assigned to the 500 Festival board of directors, and one of the 33 used in the parade. Additionally, Mayor Richard Lugar of Indianapolis, who would later become a U.S. senator of Indiana, was provided a car but he was in mine (#25) instead on the day of the race.”

When she purchased this rare Oldsmobile, its condition was far removed from its earlier splendor, however. It had been previously drag raced and was equipped with a Holley carburetor, aluminum intake manifold, headers, a manual valve body in the transmission, and a 3.91:1 rear axle gear ratio. Yet, its modifications and less-than-perfect state presented an opportunity. “I really enjoyed driving the car hard when I first bought it,” Brenda reports. “Since I knew I was going to have it restored anyway, I drove it with reckless abandon.”

Following a few months of highway hijinks, the convertible went to Premier Performance & Restoration in Apache Junction, Arizona, in January 2016. Owner Glenn Gibbons recalls, “It looked like a hot rod when we first got it, with its big tires and engine mods. Initially, Brenda just asked me to freshen the underside, get it running well, go through the transmission, and repaint the body. But once we pulled up the carpet, we found multiple homemade patches in the floors, rust in the inner and outer rear wheelhouses, and some kind of tar-like substance over the rust holes in the trunk floor. The project progressed to a body-off restoration, and we replaced the floors from the toe board to the taillights.” Glenn did note that the rest of the body was in good shape, however.







**Options include A/C, HD radiator, Soft Ray windshield, Vari-Ratio power steering, AM/FM stereo, 8-track tape player, accessory group, and more. The Rocket Rally Pac and the four-spoke steering wheel were added during the restoration.**

The engine, anchored by a year-correct replacement Oldsmobile 350 block, had been recently rebuilt prior to Brenda's purchase, but it exhibited some driveability issues, so she asked Glenn to freshen it up short of resorting to a full rebuild. In the process, he noted that the block had already been bored .030-inch over and the engine was in solid overall condition. He replaced the camshaft with an aftermarket grind, which was a slight upgrade over stock.

Brenda tracked down a correct Rochester Quadrajet carburetor, iron intake manifold, and exhaust manifolds to replace the speed shop items. An HEI came with the engine, so Glenn swapped in a stock distributor and upgraded it with a Pertronix electronic ignition.

During the restoration, a four-speed 200-4R overdrive automatic transmission with a mild converter replaced the original Turbo 350, which was saved and stored. The 3.91 gear setup in the 12-bolt type-O rear end was swapped for a new limited-slip unit with a 3.42:1 gear ratio, and a W27 aluminum cover was added.

Premier Performance & Restoration also stripped and renewed the chassis and upgraded the suspension with Oldsmobile FE2-spec anti-roll bars and boxed lower rear control arms, among other items. The steering box and linkage were replaced, and a front disc brake swap was performed.

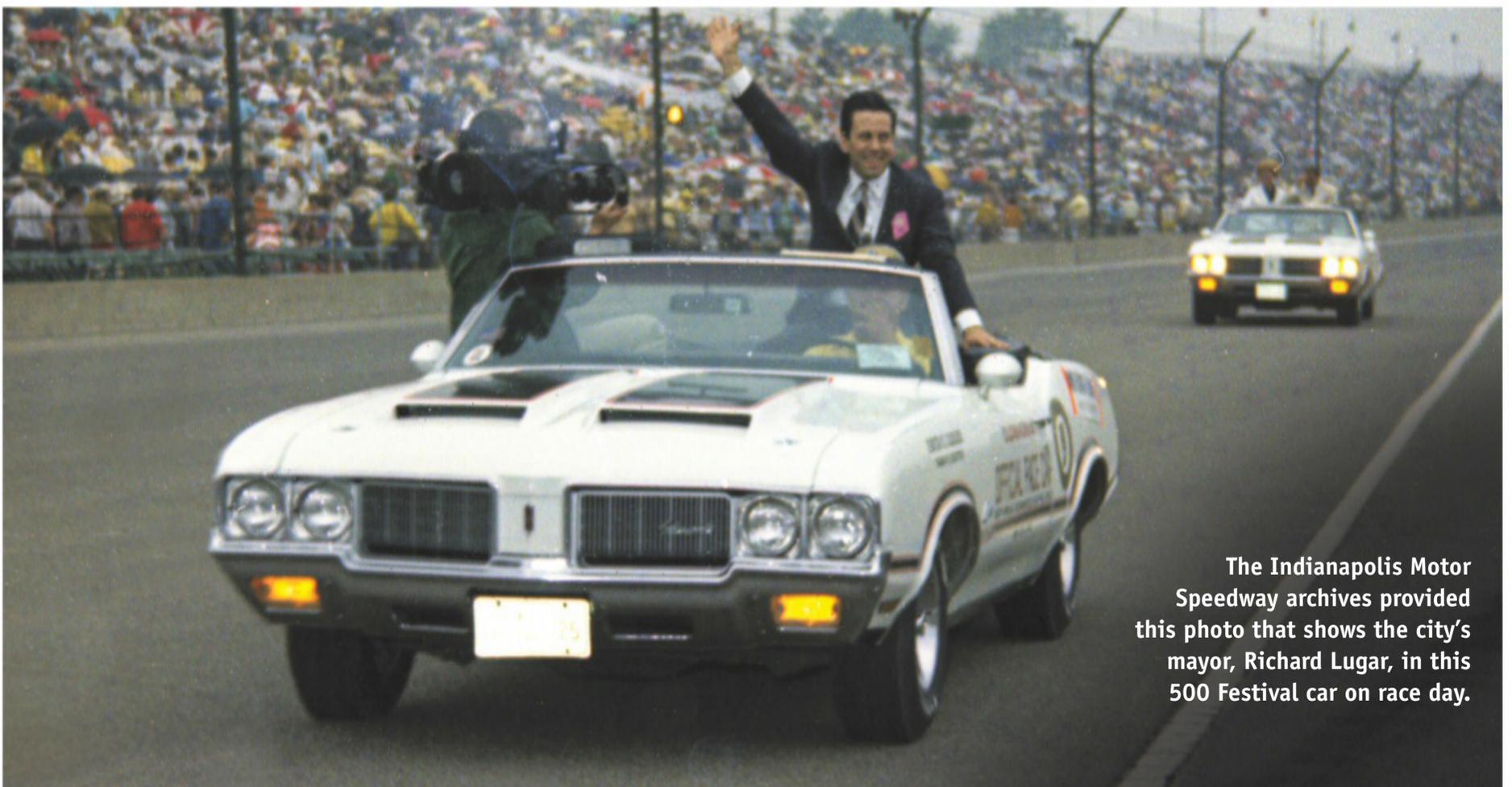
After installing the powertrain on the restored chassis and reuniting the body with the latter, Glenn delivered the Cutlass and its disassembled front clip to Mods Hot Rods in Fountain Hills, Arizona.

Brian Horstmann is the painter at Mods Hot Rods, and he explained that while the car was in bare metal, the body panels were bolted back on to set all the gaps before the body work was performed. It was disassembled to tend to the jambs, etc. then shot with multiple coats of primer surfacer from PPG, and the jambs and other hard-to-access areas were sanded. The panels were reattached for block sanding and taken off again for painting.

PPG products were also employed for the remainder of the refinishing process. A coat of epoxy sealer, and three coats each of DBC basecoat in GM code-10 Porcelain White (black for the lower body) and DCU 2021 clear were laid down. Wet sanding in steps from 1,000- to 3,000-grit paper followed, once the body was reassembled. Then, the surface was compounded and polished with 3M products.

Arizona Hot Rod and Upholstery refurbished the seats with covers from Legendary Auto Interiors, Vacuum Orna-Metal in Romulus, Michigan, restored the instrument panel, and Mods Hot Rods installed the interior that also included the cleaned-up original dash pad and reproduction four-spoke steering

INDIANAPOLIS MOTOR SPEEDWAY



**The Indianapolis Motor Speedway archives provided this photo that shows the city's mayor, Richard Lugar, in this 500 Festival car on race day.**

wheel, door panels, and carpet.

The same shop also got the engine running and installed a Gardner dual-exhaust system with trumpet tips and a reproduction 4-4-2 rear bumper with the cutouts. All the brightwork was polished and reattached, and a new front bumper and restored wheels shod with reproduction Firestone Wide Oval GR70-14 radial tires were bolted on.

Glenn then took the Cutlass back to Premier Performance & Restoration, where the convertible top mechanism was fitted (the top material was installed by another shop). Final tweaking and tuning were done before presenting the Cutlass Supreme to Brenda in the late summer of 2020.

She then had a decal set from Phoenix Graphix installed locally and performed other finishing tasks. Brenda confides, "The car was actually completed the day of the photo shoot for this article. After much consideration, I finally decided to install the festival decals that morning."

Her quest for knowledge regarding her father's Oldsmobile had led to her joining clubs. She's the model year advisor for the Oldsmobile Club of America for 1983-'84 Hurst/Olds and a past membership coordinator for the Hurst/Olds Club of America, as well as a director for three years.

She says, "Keith Coffey, the tech advisor for the 1970 Pace Car for the OCA, and Olds expert Fred Mandrick were also both very helpful with the restoration." She notes, "While I wanted the car to be returned mostly to stock, I also wanted to enjoy it, so the 1980s



“While I wanted the car to be returned mostly to stock, I also wanted to enjoy it...”

overdrive transmission as well as some additional factory options were added.

How does Brenda feel about the results? "The body lines are perfect," she says. "So far it gets more attention in public than any car I've owned. Everywhere I go I get stopped and people admire the Pace Car. It's a dream to drive. It can cruise at 75 or 80 miles per hour on the highway comfortably with the overdrive transmission, and it brakes and handles well. People warned me that a body-off restoration would make my Cutlass lose its feel of originality, but I disagree. This car feels absolutely like a new Oldsmobile that's right out of the factory."

With an Indy parade pedigree and a few unseen upgrades, this restored Pace Car and Festival car will continue to please its owner and impress the masses for years to come. 🏆

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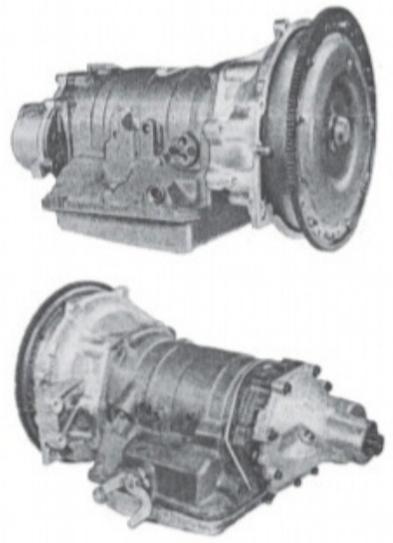
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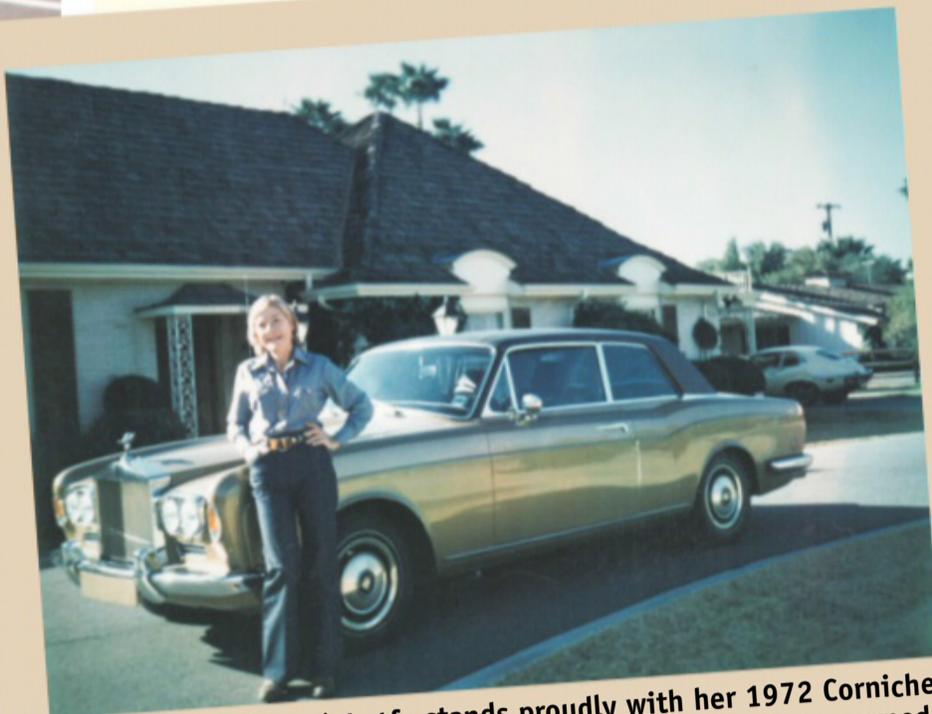
# Sybaritic Sophistication



*A 1972 Rolls-Royce Corniche has served with distinction for nearly 50 years*

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEFF KOCH





**"Tiny" (Linsenmeyer) Lufy stands proudly with her 1972 Corniche—a present she got for herself following a land deal that spanned one of Arizona's first Kmart stores. She would drive it more than 100,000 miles.**

**M**rs. Bertha "Tiny" (Linsenmeyer) Lufy of Phoenix, Arizona, was the youngest of eight. Her family owned a number of properties around downtown Phoenix, including the sites of the town's first Kmart and Circle K stores, and owned a couple of markets that bore her maiden name. Tiny may have lived up (or down) to her nickname physically, but by all reports she was a formidable woman of many talents: She was a world-class champion trap and skeet shooter, from the days when pigeons were not made of clay, and traveled extensively throughout the U.S., Mexico, and Europe on the competition-marksanship circuit. Later, she would pursue oil painting with the same vigor. During the late 1950s, in the days when Mercedes was still flirting with Studebaker, she bought a new Mercedes 220 S coupe ("Star Gazing," HCC #194)—a car she would happily drive for nearly the next decade and a half, for both family runs and longer trips to shooting events.

By 1972, no longer married but still shooting and traveling, she completed a land deal that brought one of the first Kmart stores to Phoenix. As a reward to herself, she decided to buy a Rolls-Royce. The pivot to English cars might seem a surprising one, given her fondness for her Mercedes, but her son Phil explains that "Mom, Dad, and I all had Jaguar 2+2s at the time," so perhaps a Rolls was the next logical step up. Tiny passed in 2013, and Phil was doing his medical residency in El Paso when she bought the car in '72, and missed out on some salient details. The closest we have as a witness to the events of the day is Tiny's son-in-law, Dan Pflumm, who married Tiny's only daughter. He still lives in Phoenix and became the keeper of Tiny's Rolls.



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“The Rolls was new, but was originally purchased by a Mid-western Chevy dealer for his wife,” Dan recalls. “The dealer’s wife didn’t want it—she didn’t like it. Now, this was well before the internet, and I have no idea how Tiny found it. But she located this car, flew to Indiana, and drove it back by herself. She did stop in El Paso because Phil was an intern there, completing his doctorate.” Phil remembers the day well: “I enjoyed being first in the family to see it,” he tells us.

What Phil got to see first, and what Bertha got to enjoy driving clear into the new millennium, was her 1972 Rolls-Royce Corniche. If you automatically associate the Corniche name with Rolls-Royce’s convertible line in the ’80s and ’90s, you’re not wrong. When the Silver Shadow launched in 1965, the line was available with two body styles—a two-door and four-door saloon. The two-door convertible variant arrived in 1966. Coupes and convertibles (or “drophead coupés,” in R-R parlance) featured bodies that were styled and built by Mulliner Park Ward, and while largely formal, the idea of a two-door luxury coupe automatically came with the suggestion of a more sporting, perhaps slightly rakish nature.

Starting in March 1971, all two-door Silver Shadow variants were called Corniche, whether the top went up and down or not. Two-door Corniche sedans were built beyond the life of the Silver Shadow, ending in 1982, although the Corniche DHC lasted clear through 1995. Roughly 1,100 Corniche saloons were built over the model’s decade of life, with 780 of them the Series 1 editions built until 1977.

With an MSRP of \$39,500 in 1972 (the year our feature car was built, and the equivalent of approximately \$246,000 today) the Corniche was a third richer than a \$29,200 standard-wheel-base Silver Shadow. (By way of comparison, the average cost of an American home was \$27,000 in 1972.) Paperwork revealed a purchase price of \$30,000 for this particular model—a steep discount off MSRP.

By 1972, the Silver Shadow and Corniche were well-established and had been accepted into polite society, but when it launched in 1965, the new Rolls was fraught with controversy—well, as fraught as anything involving Rolls-Royce could ever be. The Silver Shadow was 7 inches shorter and 3.5 inches





**Connolly hides trimmed the interior—the driver's seat shows signs of use over time, but not abuse. A full brace of gauges and toggle-style switchgear in the console speak to Rolls-Royce's history as an aircraft manufacturer.**



narrower than the Silver Cloud it replaced, yet offered more interior room. (It shared roughly the same dimensions as America's first downsized luxury car, the 1975 Cadillac Seville.) Rolls-Royce famously boasted perfection over innovation, yet the Silver Shadow featured unit-body construction, four-wheel independent suspension, 11-inch four-wheel-disc brakes on a triple-circuit system, and a derivation of Citroën's hydropneumatic suspension—all new for Rolls-Royce. These weren't adopted because they were trendy, but because they were right for the brand's reputation of opulence: all were proven technologies by 1965, and were combined to create the most technically radical Rolls-Royce built for public consumption to that point. Evolutionary upgrades in specifications that appeared on Tiny's 1972 model included radial tires, revised front suspension bushings that reduced road noise and made for a smoother ride, and ventilated front disc brakes.

Not that you get a high-tech vibe by looking at it. Rolls-Royce chief stylist John Blatchley was at pains to avoid filigree and styling gimmicks that would date the Shadow, regardless of body style. This instinct was born out, considering the last Corniche rolled off the line three decades later. It's cleanly styled, with a minimum of ornamentation, and only the polished Parthenon grille beneath the Flying Lady hood decor would clue in the uninitiated.

Behind the chrome grille was a remarkably contemporary engine. The block and heads were all-aluminum—not unexpected for a company that also specialized in aircraft engines. It also utilized a deep-skirt crankcase, heavy ribbing between cylinder banks, and huge 4.75-inch bore spacing. For a smooth idle, Rolls employed a two-plane crankshaft for improved balance, which demanded a complex intake manifold to produce even pulse intervals from the twin SU carburetors with 2-inch throats. Rolls-Royce launched its L410-series, 6.25-liter Rolls-Royce V-8 engine in 1959, and carried it over into the Shadow. When looming emissions legislation threatened to diminish its power, the engineers grew crank stroke from 3.6 inches to 3.9, and the V-8 displaced 6.75 liters at the start of the '70s. (Bore remained at 4.1 inches, giving the engine its internal designation.) All Corniches received the 6.75-liter engine. Rolls-Royce never specified power output, simply declaring it "adequate." Contemporary media puts the Shadow at around 200 horsepower, with the Corniche allowed 10 percent more, thanks in part to a lower-restriction (but still eerily silent) exhaust.

And while all parties concur that Tiny was a careful driver, they also concur that she enjoyed her adequate-plus-10-percent power and wasn't afraid to use it. Son Phil recalls, "She drove it into Mexico. She'd go anywhere in it—just throw her gun in the back of

the car and away she'd go." The odometer is confirmed to have rolled over once, such was her fondness for driving it.

Occasionally, Tiny would have to travel places where her Corniche could not follow and in those times, Dan was pressed into service to maintain it. "The Rolls-Royce dealer would charge \$1,000 for an oil change," he recalls. "Soon, we figured out that the Bentley filters fit the Rolls, and they were cheaper." Between Phil's Mercedes obsession and Dan's long-lasting service to keeping it running, the brothers-in-law decided that Dan would end up taking possession. Dan recalled that Tiny had installed sheepskin seat covers over the factory leather almost immediately upon getting the car home—perhaps a necessity in Phoenix, with its 110-plus-degree summers—and which would pay dividends in the decades to come.

Dan had possession of Tiny's Corniche for more than half a decade. "The paint was flawless. And that color! Golden Sand, it was called. Somehow that color showed no dirt at all—you could get away with not washing it for a month and no one could tell the difference.



**Launched in 1959, Rolls-Royce's all-aluminum L10-series V-8 grew to 6.75 liters in the early 1970s; all Corniches were so equipped. Twin SU carburetors mixed air and fuel, and a two-plane crank encouraged smooth running. Power rating was only ever described as "adequate."**

"And the upholstery was unbelievably soft! I wanted to condition the leather, so I took the sheepskin covers off, and the leather was still soft. I never put them back on." Dan describes it as "something I drove when I wasn't going to have to stop anywhere. It was a pleasure; I called it a magic carpet. Unbelievably smooth, it floated down the road. Power steering was effortless. The easiest car to drive you could ever want. Smooth and comfortable.

But it was not a car you want to park any place. With perfect paint like that you don't want it to get keyed."

Alas, the Corniche lives in new hands, outside the family, following our early morning desert photography session. "I wanted to keep it perfect," Dan admits. "I didn't like to park it out in public, Phil and I are both 81, and it became more of an inconvenience. My kids had no interest in it." And so it went, in fine fettle and ready to serve its new owner for many years to come in the sort of indulgent comfort you would expect from Rolls-Royce.

Compact, formidable, following its muse, and excelling in its execution. Are we speaking of the Rolls-Royce Corniche, or of Tiny, this example's longtime owner? The answer is yes. 🐾



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# Rare Air

*Reviving a long-dormant 1935 Packard Super Eight Convertible Sedan*

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARK J. McCOURT

RESTORATION IMAGES COURTESY OF ALLAN AND PAT KEHRLEY, AND ANGEL RODRIGUEZ SR.

If you've traveled through New York's Catskills region during the past two summers, you may have spotted an imposing Full Classic wafting down the road—an imperious vertical grille fronting some 16 feet of burgundy-leather-lined cream-yellow sheetmetal, trailing genuine old-Hollywood glamour in its wake. It's an incredibly rare sight, a

Dietrich-bodied long-wheelbase Packard Convertible Sedan, and thanks to the careful restoration of its engine, interior, and top, this special car is enjoying a new lease on life.

The firewall data plate reveals the origin of this Twelfth Series Model 1205—it was the 11th 144-inch-wheelbase Super Eight Convertible Sedan built for 1935,

delivered to its original owner that August in Newburgh, New York—but the car reveals nothing of its life before Allan and Pat Kehrley came to know it some 20 years ago. “This Packard was part of George Stephenson’s collection, along with the unrestored 1928 Lincoln Model L (“Modest Luxury,” HCC #168) we now own,” Allan tells us.



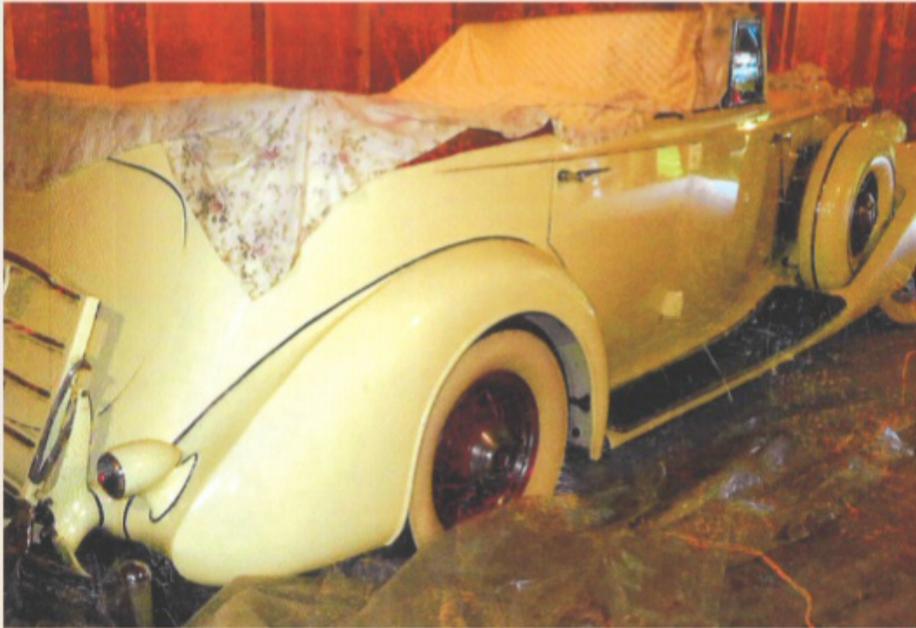
“George bought the Packard in 1972, and he’d had it repainted in a correct 1935 Packard color; it was originally dark green. Whoever painted the car did it the right way: The fenders were taken off, the gaskets around the headlamps and tail-lamps were replaced,” he explains. “He had a boot made to cover what was left of the factory top, which was really ratty and

not usable. He drove the car for a while, but stopped using it when the engine developed a bad leak in the water jacket. He died a few years later, in 2009. Almost 10 years on, his wife Kathleen stopped by and told us the car was for sale.”

Pat picks up the story: “She told us, ‘Somebody wants to buy the Packard. And when I told him how much I want

for it, he laughed at me and walked away. I’m not going to give it away!’ Allan said, ‘Kathleen, will you sell it to me for your price, today? She said, ‘I sure will!’ Well, I almost dropped my teeth, but she said yes, and that was it,” Pat says with a laugh.

According to paperwork provided by George’s widow, our feature car had 50,000 miles on the odometer when he



The Packard benefited from decades of dry, rodent-free indoor storage. The former owner asked Allan for help when the engine's water jacket began leaking, as the epoxy sealant he applied wasn't enough, and the car was parked until the Kehrleys bought it.



Replacement pistons, rings, and valves for the straight-eight were sourced from Indiana-based Packard specialist, Max Merritt Auto Parts. Like the first set of poured Babbitt bearings, these newly cast pistons needed work so the connecting rods fit inside.



The Kehrleys relied on Angel Rodriguez Sr.'s years of expertise when it came to selecting the colors of the interior's leather and carpeting from sample books. They chose era-correct hues that coordinated with Packard's deep red, as seen on the wheels and pinstriping.



A surprise was discovering the reddish-brown leather inside was factory-installed, and had originally been a very dark green. This seating material was beyond saving, with cracks and split stitching. Thankfully, it was intact enough to serve as patterns.



Diamond's Auto Interiors ordered nine hides to complete the interior of the Packard, keeping another three on reserve; each hide ranged in size from 25 to 60 square feet, but not all that surface area could be used, due to natural blemishes or tannery marks.



The convertible top folds into a well behind the rear seat, and rests on two protruding bumpers; this well was upholstered in the same Stayfast canvas as the top. The rear seatback is hinged, tilting forward a bit to provide clearance for the folding top.

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Removing the rear inner door panels revealed the dark green color this car's leather left the factory wearing in 1935; Angel recreated the design with exacting detail in leather. New reproduction door check straps were ordered from a Packard supplier.



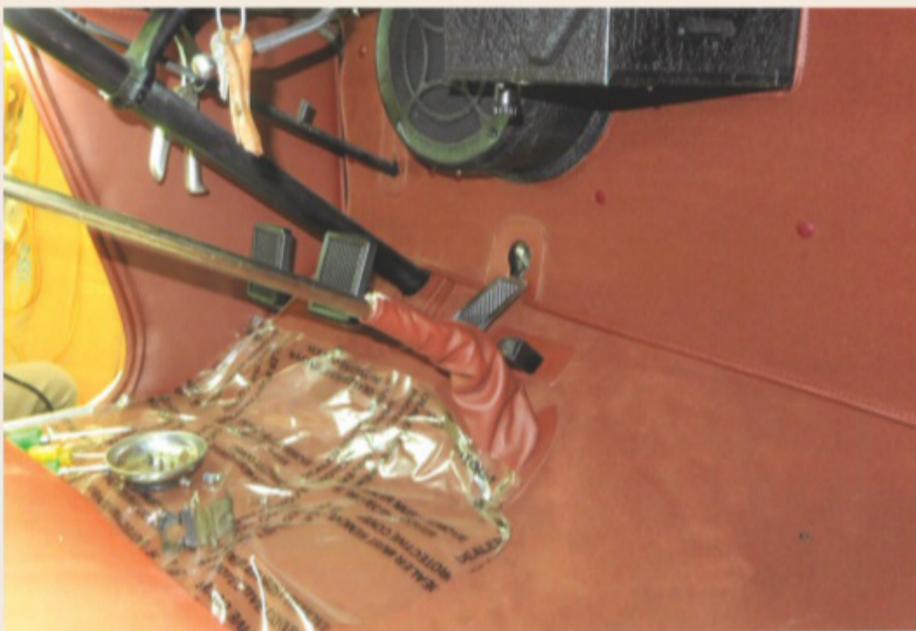
Virtually every square inch of the interior not covered in carpet was upholstered in new leather. The original door-capping wood trims were carefully hand-sanded to preserve their sharp lines and treated to fresh varnish, and metal hardware was polished.



The massive folding roof is very complex, and the frame required careful disassembly so the 84-year-old canvas could serve as a pattern. Its tacking strips were in fine shape, although some turnbuckles were broken; luckily, replacements could be sourced.



The top is laid out from the centerline of the car, working outward; the hand-built nature of this one meant Angel had to compensate. The canvas panel that will hold the glass rear window was mocked up with staples, removed, built, and made to snap in.



Quality carpeting was ordered in a color coordinating with the chosen hue of the leather. It was bound with custom-dyed trim that was also used to accent the convertible top, and leather formed the shifter boot. Note the factory radio and speaker under the dash.



Receiving the same attention to detail as the interior and top were the trunk and the dashboard's twin gloveboxes. The trunk was trimmed in bound carpet and leather, while the gloveboxes were lined in dark brown velvet-type material, like as-new in 1935.

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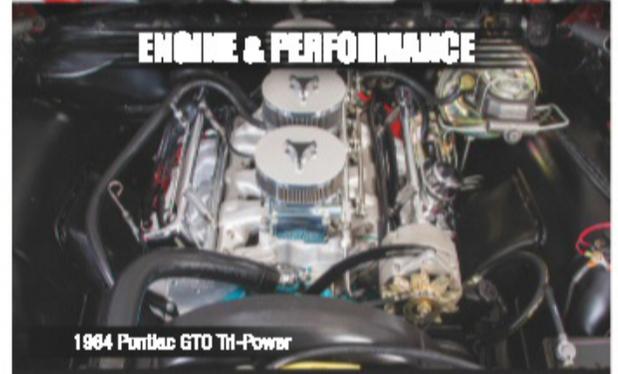
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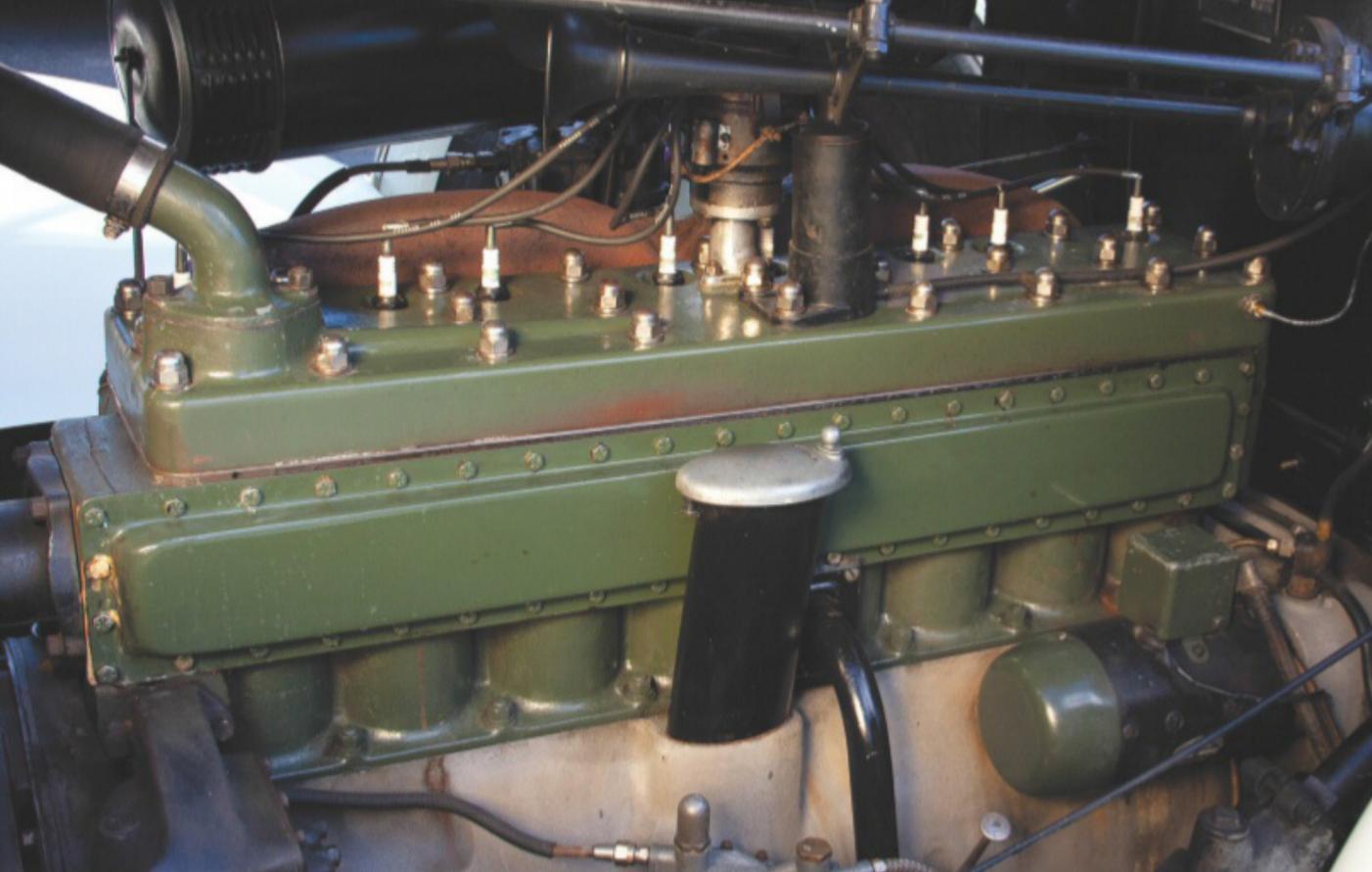
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**The 384.4-cu.in. eight was rebuilt with new pistons, valves, and poured Babbitt bearings. The Stromberg carburetor was simply adjusted.**

took possession, and it had been in dry storage since sometime in the 1950s. Allan knew the 150-hp, 384.4-cu.in. straight-eight needed immediate attention, as did the tired leather upholstery and convertible top. He would start with his favorite aspect, the engine work.

The Packard was trailered to the Kehrleys' home shop in January 2019, after which Allan inspected each mechanical system, starting with that roller-cam-equipped L-head engine. "The water

jacket on the side of the cast-iron block has some 40 bolts, and I only broke off three of them," he says with a wink. "I found the block was filled with crud, so I cleaned it out and installed new soft plugs." He determined that the steel-back copper lead alloy insert bearings, a new-for-1935 feature in this model series, required replacement; "I figured that was a simple fix, but you can't find insert bearings for a Super Eight anymore, anywhere!" He worked with Bill

Deckelman of Circle Machine & Cylinder in Obernburg, New York, who had poured Babbitt bearings done by Paul's Rod and Bearing in Parkville, Missouri. Those parts were initially outsized, but after this reputable firm had another go, the connecting rod bearings came back polished, fitting perfectly.

As in any old car that sits for years, this Convertible Sedan's fuel system needed help. "We took down the gas tank and brought it to Empire Radiator Co. in Albany. They cut a hole in the top, cleaned it out, and put a rubberized coating inside," Allan recalls. "The diaphragms in the double-action fuel pump were bad, I had to get new ones for the brake vacuum and gas sides of the pump. The fuel sender was rusted shut, and the mechanical part of the gas tank float had rusted away to nothing. I bought a correct replacement, and the gauge works perfectly now. I took the Stromberg Duplex carburetor apart and checked it, but it was in fine shape, and I only had to adjust the float."

Allan did the engine reassembly himself, including fitting new exhaust gaskets, and mentioned that the sticking clutch was eventually freed, but the three-speed transmission itself was in good



**More than 10 hides were needed to reupholster the seats, interior panels, and trim other areas of this 144-inch-wheelbase Convertible Sedan. Raising or lowering the top is a two-person job.**





One day, years ago, we were in George and Kathleen's garage, and she'd thrown a plastic sheet over the open Packard. At that time, their garage roof had a leak. That piece of plastic was bellowed down in a big bowl over the front and back seats, and it was full of water. We thought about saying something, but decided to keep quiet since it was none of our business... we never thought we'd someday own the car! She had a new roof put on the garage, and thank goodness that plastic never leaked! Someone must have come along and dumped out the water, because the interior wasn't hurt a bit. —Pat and Allan Kehrley

condition. Pondering this mechanical work, he says, "There wasn't a lot wrong with the car, really. Everything went back together nicely. People were telling me not to trust those poured Babbit bearings because they're not as good as inserts, but I've put 500 miles on them so far. The engine has 60 pounds of oil pressure, and it runs beautifully."

With the car again drivable, the Kehrleys contacted their trusted friends at Diamond's Auto Interiors in Middletown, New York. They'd been very satisfied with the interior restoration work this firm did on their 1957 Chevrolet Bel Air and 1931 Buick Model 56C ("Captivating Cabriolet," HCC #163), and were glad to work with Angel Rodriguez Sr. and Robert Shuback again. "That April, they called to say they were ready for it, so we took it down," Pat tells us. "They worked on it between other jobs, and had it finished by July."

At that point, this Convertible Sedan not only retained the remains of its factory-installed top, but its tired upholstery was original... only re-dyed from green. "The leather was completely shot, it was dry rotted and tough," Angel remembers. The 40-year-veteran upholstery specialist continues; "You could see the original

green color under the buttons on the seats and door panels; it had been painted the reddish-brown color that it was. Pat and Allan went through sample books and picked out a color that was pretty close to that. We initially ordered nine hides, and needed a little over ten to finish the seats, interior panels, and trim."

The Kehrleys' luck held when it was discovered that the wood framing in their open-top Packard was incredibly solid. Angel notes that only the floorboard under the driver's feet, which lifts up to access the engine, had to be replaced, but the rest of the wood was intact and serviceable. And he would refinish the grooved wood trim that caps each door, too, carefully hand-sanding each contoured piece before giving it a fresh coat of varnish.

The massive folding roof was a real job to restore, but its components were all there, and could therefore serve as patterns. "The top frame was in okay shape, but it needed some TLC," Angel says. Allan had glued and screwed a bow that had cracked, returning it to the correct shape and strength, but the frame's joints and hardware needed cleaning and reassembly so the top folded more easily—that said, it remains a two-person job.

"The top was Stayfast canvas, and I lined the top well in that, too," he recalls. "Pat asked to have the top binding trim match the leather. There was no match for that color in our books, so we got brown, and Robert dyed it. He did a masterful job; everything was color-coded to that car."

Angel even created some special custom touches for the Special Eight's owners, including removeable matching carpet floormats to protect the floors in regular use, and a pair of removable thick leather cushions—using the same dyed hides—that raise Allan and Pat's seating positions for better view of the road. "It just went so smoothly," he muses. "They were so happy to get the car back."

After many steps, the final piece of the Packard's restoration was fitting correct new eight-ply bias tires purchased from Universal Vintage Tire Co. and installed by Tire Discount Center. And the Kehrleys couldn't be more pleased with the end results: "I took pictures before and pictures after, and I swear, stitch by stitch is exactly the same," Allan says with a smile. Pat agrees, adding, "Angel explained what was going on, step by step. They'd say, stop in the shop any time, no worries. They did such beautiful work!" 🐾



# Mod Makeover

## Restoring Chrysler's factory flower-power "Mod Top" interior and roof trim

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY BARRY KLUCZYK

In his anthem for the era, Scott McKenzie's 1967 song advised anyone going to San Francisco to "wear some flowers in your hair." Chrysler did that one better and wore the flowers on the roofs of its cars.

Mopar's "Mod Top" option, offered on a number of 1969 and '70 Dodge and Plymouth models, was a bold and curious effort to market vehicles directly to women, using the popular flower motifs that had been co-opted from the counterculture movement into a mainstream fashion statement.

Offered in three color schemes, the floral print design was incorporated on the vinyl top and matching upholstery inserts, on the seats and door panels. Advertisements touted the "Pop Print" designs, but Barracuda and Satellite models were labeled "Mod Top" on quarter window decals (Barracuda) and vinyl top badges (Satellite). The Dodge moniker was "Floral Top."

It was an unequivocally distinctive design statement, but one that ultimately missed the mark. Over the two-year run, a scant 2,876 vehicles were ordered with it, with the vast majority—1,637 of them—1969 Plymouth Satellites. In fact, only a little more than 200 1969 Dodges were so equipped and none in 1970, making it a largely Plymouth offering.

It wasn't the first time Mother Mopar had tried to reach out specifically to her female customers. The 1955-'56 Dodge La Femme, with its pink-over-white exterior color scheme, pink rosebuds in the seat covers, and a custom purse filled with a compact, lipstick case, and more, was touted as being designed "with the ladies in mind." Crucially, it wasn't designed *by* women, and the all-male perspective on what women wanted didn't exactly win over the fairer sex. It's estimated that fewer than 2,500 La Femme models were built over a two-year production run, out of more than 500,000 Dodges sold in 1955 and '56.

Admittedly, the Mod Top option had broader pop culture appeal than a pink sedan that came with a lipstick case, but it was nevertheless a little *too* out there, even for the psychedelic Sixties. As with the La Femme, women voted with their checkbooks and the feminization of certain products, especially cars, was not what they wanted.

John Barcroft didn't know his '69 Satellite was an original

Mod Top car when he bought it sight unseen, after a friend's inspection in Arizona back in 1980. He paid only \$650 for it and drove the car home to Michigan.

"I learned it was a Mod Top when I picked up the car, because it still had the original material on the roof and inside," John says. "I had simply wanted a good Satellite to drive."

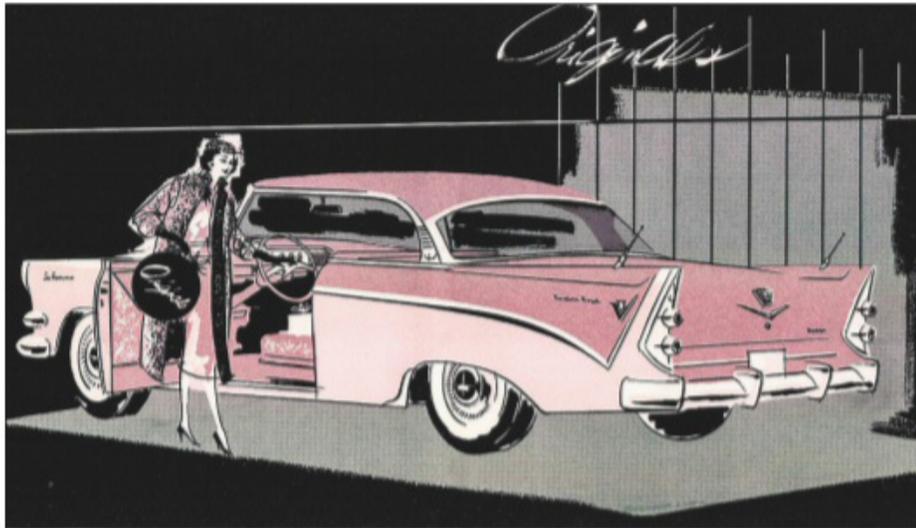
And drive it, he did. The car served as his daily commuter for the next 10 years, until a decade's worth of Michigan road salt took its toll. He sent the car off to have the body restored, but when the shop couldn't locate any original Mod Top material, the Satellite's roof was simply left unadorned; new seat covers were slipped over the original, cracked-and-split Mod upholstery.

Despite the nation's strategic reserve of NOS Mod Top material having been exhausted decades ago, John held out hope for a solution, which came relatively recently from Legendary Auto Interiors and its reproduction top and seat covers. The unique material itself is produced by Oregon-based SMS Auto Fabrics (see article on page 58), but Legendary builds it into the correct top pattern and sews up the seat covers. They also do the matching door panels that were part of the package, but those in John's car were in good enough shape to leave as is.

He turned to Bob Stedman, at Ada, Michigan's B&B Auto Upholstery, to handle his Satellite's Mod Top makeover. "There's nothing unique or different about installation of the Mod upholstery, compared to conventional seat covers," Bob says. "But the top requires more care and effort than standard vinyl roof coverings."

That's because the Mod Top material, including the seat cover inserts, has a more canvas-like feel, much like a convertible top. As a result, installation of the top has to be more precise, because the top doesn't have anywhere near the stretchable properties of conventional vinyl roof material.

Marketing miscue or not, 50 years later, the Mod Top package remains a dramatic reminder of a time that was unique in the culture—when youth was everything and companies took risks, shooting from the hip rather than relying on a room full of MBAs and their consumer clinic data. Flower power to the people!



*Originals*

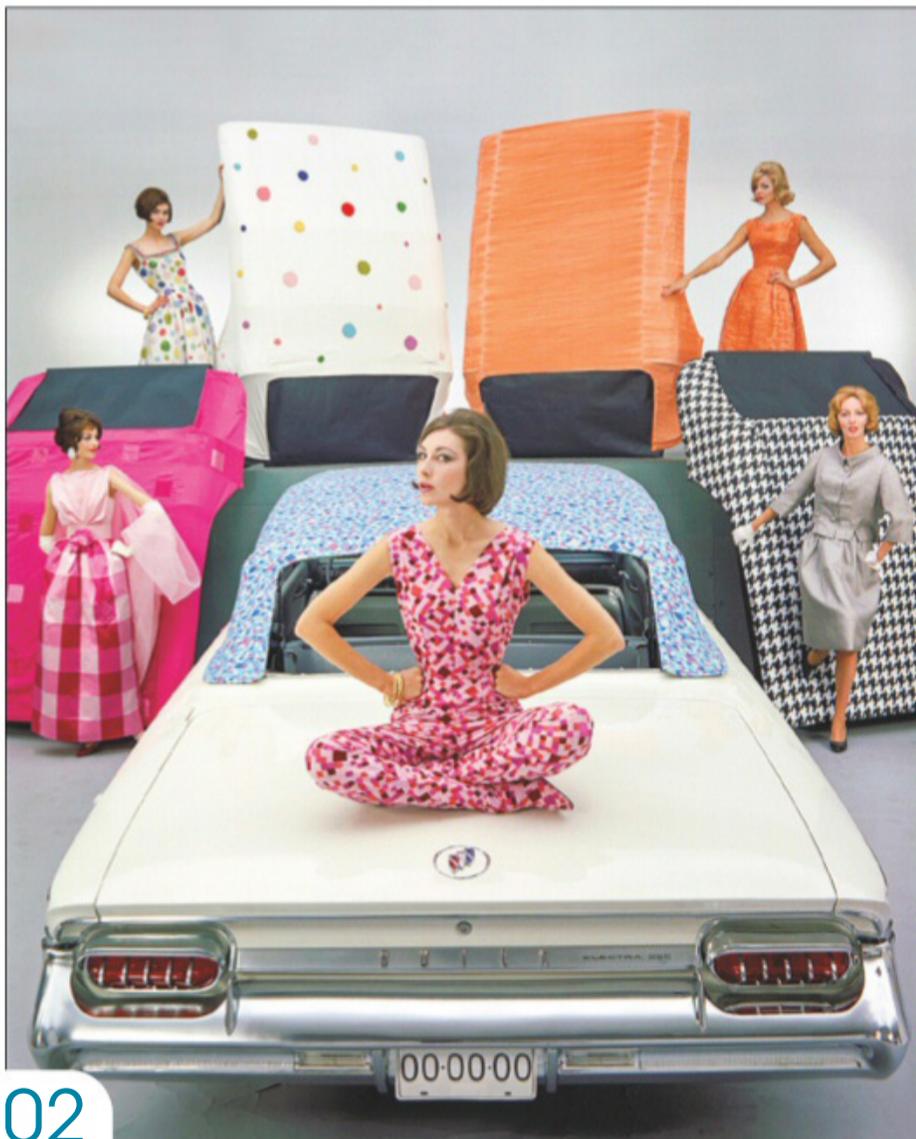
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01



02

1. The Dodge La Femme was an early attempt by Chrysler to market directly to women. Results were mixed and few of the pink-and-white cars were sold. 2. General Motors flirted with fashion tops eight years before Chrysler, with a series of proposed patterned roof coverings modeled on 1961 Buicks. The idea never left the design studio and none of the tops went into production.

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**Plymouth** CHRYSLER

**The 1969 Plymouth Satellite with Pop Prints**

Feel your wheels are sort of square? Slip into something a bit more flattering. Like this '69 Plymouth Satellite with its pop print vinyl top.

Of course, it isn't really pop art. But then it isn't an assembly line black, either. What it is depends on a gal's idea of what her car should be. Pop tops probably wouldn't have been an overnight smash with people like Queen Victoria or the Grand Duchess of Fenwick. However, if you view your car as an extension of your own fun-loving personality, you'll probably dig our new Satellite pop top.

Just driving this beautiful bouquet of flowers—something for your ego. You'll enjoy going out in any crowded parking lot.

Want our floral arrangement inside, too? We'll match your mod top with a mod interior. On the seats. And on the doors.

If the print pictured on our Satellite Hardtop doesn't win you over, there's another yellow floral pattern available on our Barracuda Sports Coupe.

Your nearby Plymouth dealer will be happy to show you all our women-winning ways. Features like our self-adjusting brakes. Optional puncture-resistant tires. The biggest selection of interiors we've ever had. More colors. More fabrics and vinyls. More choice in seat designs.

Only one thing's for sure, driving will never be dull again.

Look what Plymouth's up to now.

03

3. In ads for the Satellite and Barracuda, Plymouth took aim squarely at youthful female customers, hailing the "Pop Prints" option as something that wouldn't have appealed to Queen Victoria, while also calling out the brand's "women-winning ways." Women didn't buy it, figuratively and literally. 4. John Barcroft's '69 Satellite was an original Mod Top car, but when replacement material was unavailable during the car's body restoration nearly 30 years ago, the roof was simply painted with the rest of the car and left without a vinyl top.



04



05



08



06



07



09



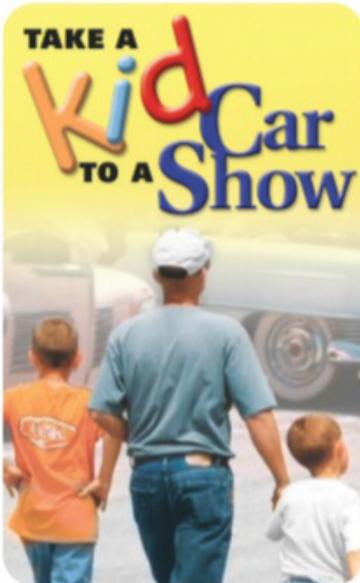
10

5. The inside hadn't been touched before this project, so all of the Satellite's upholstery was original, albeit torn and split beneath slip-on seat covers. 6. Because a new headliner was part of the makeover, every last bit of trim had to be removed from the interior. A lot of care is required to preserve original pieces and fasteners that may have become brittle over the years. 7. With the rest of the interior removed, it was easier to start with installing the new headliner, which came from Legendary Auto Interiors. With these B-bodies, it's generally easier to start at the rear and work towards the front of the interior. As with most cars of the era, the Plymouth's headliner is suspended with bows and glued around the edges. Pro tip: Record not only the order of the bows when the original headliner is removed, but also which holes they were removed from, as most positions have multiple holes for each side of a bow, which made installation easier at the factory.

8. Achieving a smooth, taut, and wrinkle-free appearance is not easy. It takes plenty of trial and error when it comes to maneuvering the material. A hair drier or heat gun is also essential to help stretch the material at the ends and smooth out wrinkles. When done right, like this one, the results are often better than the factory. 9. Next came the new carpet, also from Legendary Auto Interiors. The Satellite's floor showed some surface rust, so it was wire-wheeled in preparation for a coat of rust-inhibiting paint. After that, the new carpet was laid. The factory-correct two-piece loop-style was used here. 10. The original Mod Interior material was soiled and split but had held up remarkably well for half a century. There were three floral patterns and primary color schemes: yellow, blue/green, and green. This is the blue/green pattern.

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11



12



13

11. New foam padding underlies the new seat covers, as they're hog-ringed onto the seat frames. Like the headliner, a little heat helps the material stretch for a smooth, tight fit. 12. With the new seat covers in place, the seats themselves are reinstalled in the Satellite's cabin. 13. A close-up look at the reproduction material shows a faithful recreation of the factory floral pattern, as well as the correct Coachman-type grain pattern of the vinyl border area.



14

14. One thing that wasn't changed was the door panels. The original Mod interior inserts were still in excellent shape, so they were left in place. 15. Suddenly, it's the psychedelic Sixties again. Here's the Satellite's restored Mod interior. Far out. 16. There was enough leftover material with the interior restoration that B&B Auto Upholstery handcrafted a Mod spare tire cover for the car.



15



16

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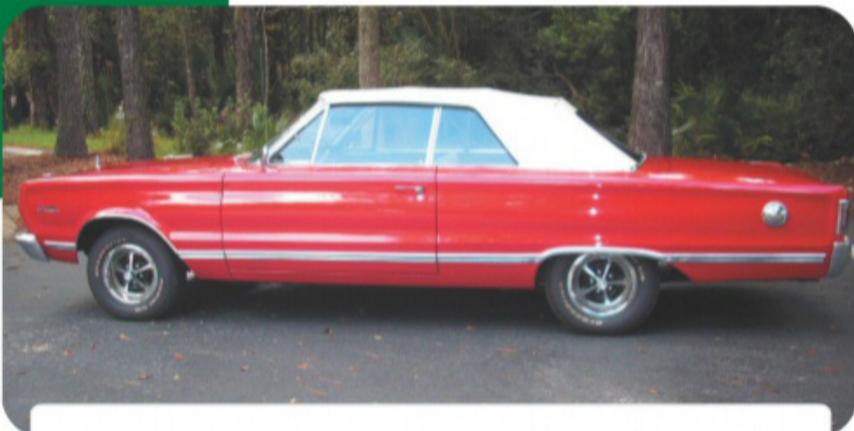
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17



18



19

17. Next comes the top covering. There's an art to installing a vinyl top, which is something best left to the professionals. Like installing the headliner, it takes enormous patience and plenty of adjustments to get it just right. It starts with making small centering marks on the roof, front and rear, to ensure the top's position. 18. Like the original Mod Top material, the modern reproduction has more of a convertible top texture that makes it tougher to pull and stretch than conventional vinyl top material. It can still be maneuvered and manipulated with heat, but it is simply not as pliable as conventional vinyl material. The backing of the top and the roof are both sprayed with DAP Weldwood contact adhesive and each is left to dry for about 10 minutes. That allows the top to be moved around when the top is laid on the roof. Installing wet on wet would trigger an instant adhesion. 19. The dry adhesive allows the top to be guided into place and centered relatively easily. Once it is correctly positioned, a heat gun reactivates the adhesive and locks the top in place.



20

20. After the top has been tightly tucked and wrapped to all the contours of the roof edges and pillars, the excess top material is sliced off and the window frame trim is reinstalled. 21. There's one thing missing on this psychedelic remake: the original Mod Top badges that were affixed to the sail panels. They were ditched when the original top was removed about 30 years ago. Owner John Barcroft hasn't yet located a replacement. 22. Here's the finished project in all its groovy splendor. The other manufacturers had their bold paint color choices, but it was only Chrysler who stepped out this far. Successful or not, you have to give it credit for taking the risk. 🎧



21



22

#### SOURCES

**B&B Auto Upholstery**

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# Beautiful on the Inside

*Interior styling by the General Motors Art & Colour Section, 1927-'37*

BY DAVID CONWILL • PHOTOGRAPHY FROM THE GM PHOTO ARCHIVE

Luxury and beauty often, but not always, go hand in hand. Just because a thing is expensive and of high quality does not necessarily mean it will also be pleasing to behold. Automobiles are no exception, and in the earliest days of the industry, style was often something of an afterthought. The

years of the General Motors Art & Colour Section, 1927 to 1937, were a period of transition for GM products where form became integrated with function in a way never witnessed before in the industry.

This is not to besmirch the attractiveness of General Motors interiors before 1927, but the arrival of Harley Earl to

head General Motors new Art & Colour Section that year heralded the start of a revolution in integrating quality with aesthetics at the automaking behemoth that was slowly overtaking Ford Motor Company as the world's largest.

That focus on styling would ultimately permeate the industry as a whole and

does to some extent even today — though perhaps “image” is a more apt term for the package of psychology that ultimately works on the 21st-century car buyer.

Trace all that back to the 1920s, when Earl came to General Motors at the behest of GM President Alfred Sloan and interjected stylists into the car-design process. Earl’s rising star would bring along not only his own successor, Bill Mitchell, but also the design careers of others, who would attempt to capture for competitors some of the styling magic that sold General Motors cars so well.

Only a few years earlier, GM had discovered almost by accident the formula that would allow it to harness public tastes as the ultimate selling tool. Unable to compete (then) with the volume of Ford, and thus its extremely low price, division chief “Big Bill” Knudsen discovered he could instead best his former employer by adding luxury features to the not-quite-cheap-enough Chevrolet. This didn’t cost much, but the effect was to offset the price difference sufficiently in the mind of a buyer to justify paying the extra cost of a Chevrolet Superior, versus the bare-bones Ford Model T.

The Art & Colour Section was the natural culmination of this trend. Earl would bring the artistic sensibilities of the coachbuilding world into the juggernaut of mass production via General Motors, extending it from the exclusive, hand-built vehicles of the super-rich to more democratic conveyances. Doing so

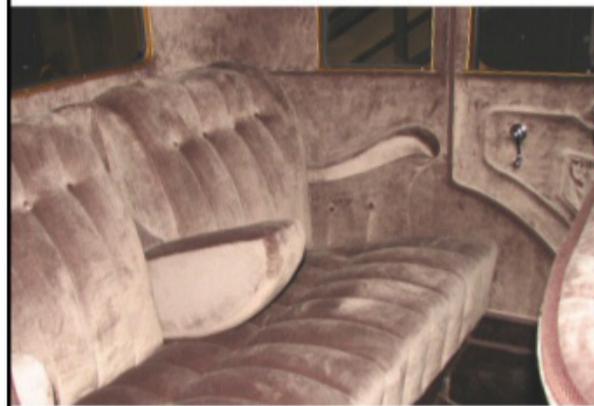
doubtless rattled some of the old guard — production bodies had long been the sole province of body engineers. Now, artists, too, were elbowing into the tug-of-war between number-worshipping business types and those who lived by the slide rule.

Fortunately for all concerned, the result was a great success. General Motors products quickly came to be considered some of the most stylish in the industry — their identity essentially inseparable from their looks. Earl became a feted celebrity, and he is well remembered as the prime exponent of longer, lower, and wider. His influence lasted well beyond the renaming of the Art & Colour Section to the Styling Section and he was made a vice president long before his 1958 retirement.

The influence of Earl and his associates at General Motors is typically recalled in terms of exterior styling, but the designer replaced the pure engineer on the inside as well. Just as touch screens in cars today recall the ubiquitous smart phone, the styling and interface of household radios swiftly began to infiltrate interior design in the late 1920s. That process accelerated as the economy underwent an ongoing death spiral from the autumn of 1929, just as the 1930 models were coming out, which steadily worsened throughout 1931-’33 and even into 1934.

With manufacturers of all goods competing for a constantly contracting consumer market, style came increasingly to matter. The discerning consumer with a few dollars to spend in the early 1930s

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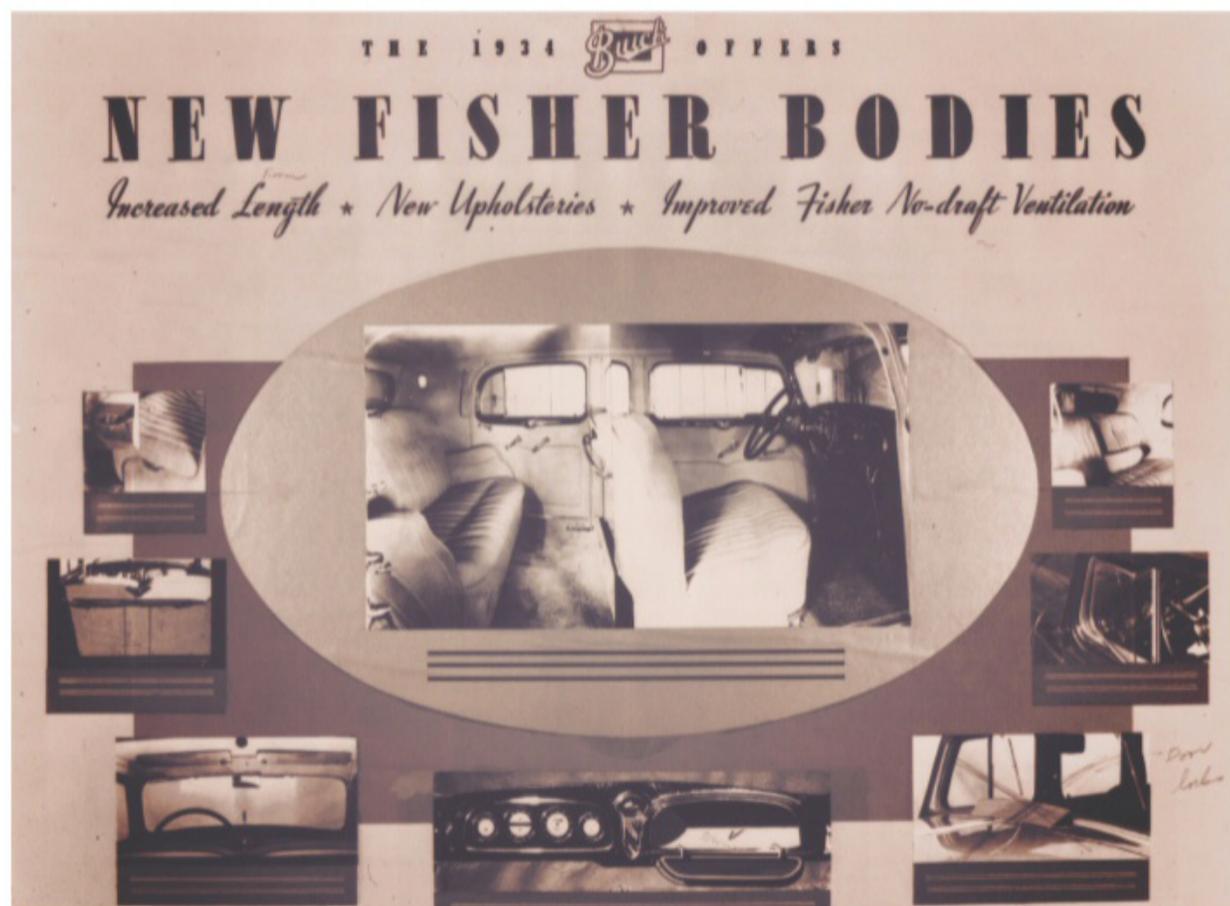
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This mock-up for an advertisement shows the pride Buick took in the Fisher Body interiors of its 1934 models. The un-captioned photos illustrate various interior features, and the image of the exterior cowl vent is crossed out with the notation “door locks.”

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could demand much in terms of quality, so at any price point design often became a deciding factor.

Even small items like gearshift levers, window regulators (cranks), and interior door handles became miniature works of art. Solid-metal construction by GM's Ternstadt Division (often touted in period advertising and actually a division within Fisher Body) mean those items only get more beautiful with wear and age. They will, of course, make any expert in crash safety wince—it was a simpler time.

Instrument panels steadily grew more streamlined, echoing not only radio but aircraft, speedboat, ocean-liner, and passenger-train influences. The 1927 Cadillac, for example, is pretty, but its various interior parts are not extremely

integrated. The steering column drop is a polished piece, but still very clearly a steering-column drop. The instrument panel is literally that—a gauge panel in the center of the dash.

By 1934, the dash was styled as a whole. Gauges were set directly into the dash in an integrated cove. The panel remained symmetrical, as in past practice, thanks to a glove compartment on the other side. Knobs were centered above the gearshift. The dash rail was finished in the exterior color, with the lower panels in a very high-tech-looking (for the era) black with nickel trim. The entire effect is radically modern when compared with seven years previous.

By the time Art & Colour became the Styling Section in 1937, even the interiors of Pontiac cars—just one step above Chevrolet—resembled, if not a living room on wheels, at least a tasteful parlor. Woodgrain was front and center, along with large, beige-and-brown instruments (shades of the New York Central Railroad's 20th Century Limited streamliner). An optional glove-compartment clock could also be added, if desired, for a kind of Cadillac-like quasi-symmetry. The woodgrain on the dash was echoed on the window garnish moldings. Plastic was present, but it hadn't yet swallowed up the metal. Bakelite knobs were more like pieces of jewelry than a dreary functional

default—especially since even they were molded with stylish detail.

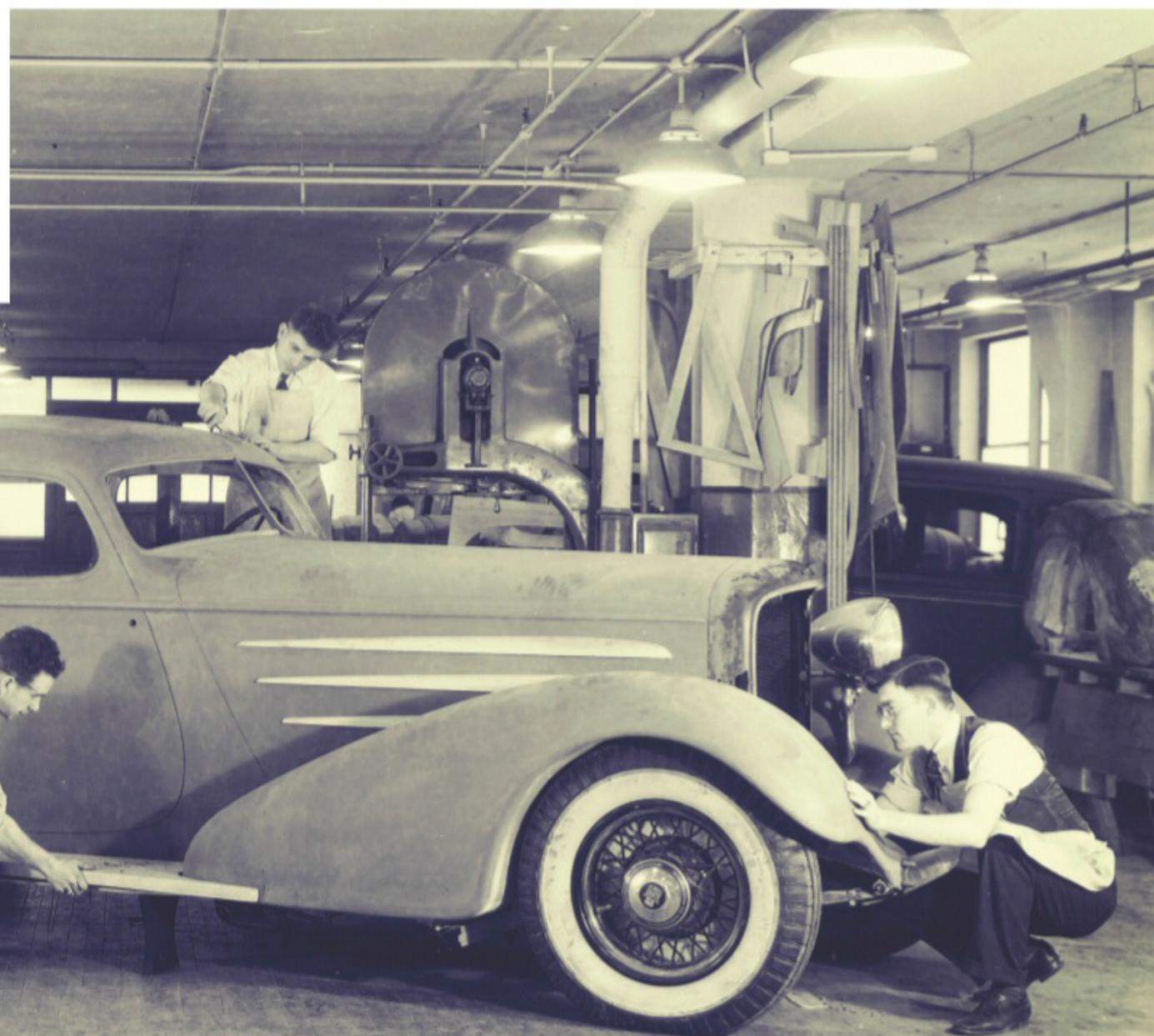
Upholstery fabrics and colors (colours?) were given careful attention and also resembled furniture, with the buyer's choice of taupe mohair or brown, patterned broadcloth upholstery. Though given the sensibilities of the Machine Age, it might be more apt to say that the furniture of the day took some inspiration from the automobile. Mohair, made from goat fur, was also a popular suiting cloth in the period. Broadcloth is a felted wool and feels rather like velvet.

The parlor-like aspect of a middle-priced car of that period was somehow oddly complementary with the unapologetically mechanical aspects still present in the interior. In modern cars those elements are devoid of style and strangely retiring, as if the parts themselves were designed by accountants (and, perhaps, as if the car itself wished it were actually the numb mobility pod of your nightmares). The 1936 Pontiac interior, in contrast, made no bones about being the cockpit of an owner-operated machine.

Insofar as color was concerned, the company had this to say about Earl's first project to hit the showroom floor, the 1927 LaSalle: "[I]n the automotive world, it is not enough that cars be colorful. Before the affect can be permanently pleasing, their colors must be handled



**ABOVE:** A smartly dressed woman looks right at home in the equally stylish interior of a 1934 La Salle. **BELOW:** Artists of the GM Art & Colour Section work on a full-size clay model of the forward-looking 1933 Cadillac Aero-dynamic Coupe Show Car for the Chicago World's Fair.





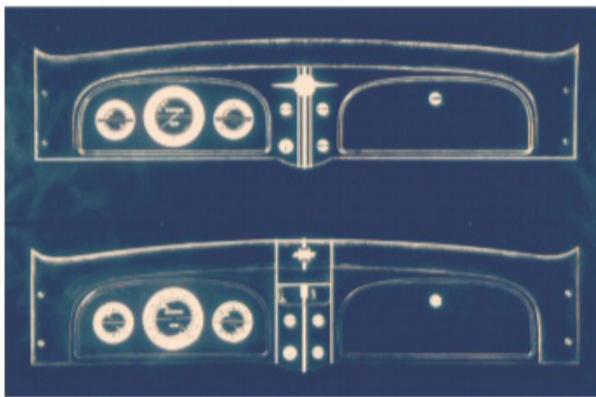
Art & Colour designers at work in the GM Building Annex (now Cadillac Place), circa 1933. The man in the upper right appears to be studying interior gauges on a blackboard dash design proposal similar to, but distinct from the 1934 Chevrolet designs shown below.

with ability and discrimination, in accord with sound principles and the dictates of good taste. They should be colored as Nature paints—with a mastery based on the appreciation of artistic values and knowledge of the science of color.”

Heady stuff, maybe puffery. But one almost gets the sense they believed it: That through the twin miracles of modern science and industry, anyone and everyone could have functional items that were also beautiful.

That certainly was the theme in 1933, when Chicago hosted a World's Fair. Ostensibly to celebrate the founding of the city in 1833, the exhibit was entitled “A Century of Progress International Exposition” and the message was definitely “times are tough, but we don't have to live in total austerity.” The appeal was not lost on the public, and those who flocked through the gates on the shores of Lake Michigan got a taste of pavilions devoted to all the arts and sciences then current—including automaking.

Many interesting sights were to be had in the automobile buildings, and among them was GM's first-ever show car: the Cadillac Aero-Dynamic Coupe. If the Aero-Dynamic looks conventional to modern eyes, it's only because the exterior so perfectly foreshadows the styling of 1936. Inside, the design is more of 1933, but the materials are all of the top quality expected of Cadillac. Bright plating abounds. The anti-strain “banjo” steering wheel, with its four, spring-like spokes,



even makes for a perfect blend of the practical and the beautiful.

As befits a Cadillac of the era, the Aero-Dynamic goes very far in the direction of luxury—but never outside the bounds of good taste. There's a considerable amount of gold trim inside, but somehow it avoids ostentation. There are even some seemingly whimsical touches where it comes to attention to detail: the sun visors are mounted with pearl-headed screws.

General Motors styling in the early 1930s was based on a delay system, where Cadillac design elements trickled down to the less-expensive divisions over time. Such visual luxury in a mass-market good held great appeal to consumers still buying in the depths of the Great Depression. Ultimately, GM's competitors would follow a similar course, steadily integrating styling into their vehicles. We can thank the Art & Colour Section today for a legacy of gorgeous, well-built cars that still bring joy and satisfaction some eight decades later. 🚗



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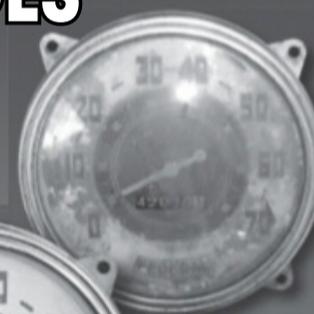
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# SMS Auto Fabrics

*How a quest to help restore vintage cars developed into a unique business*

BY TERRY McGEAN • PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF DOUG POLLOCK

Attempting to return a decades-old automobile to showroom condition is a quest filled with many challenges, chief among them finding new—or like-new—examples of those parts and pieces unique to that particular model. We're fortunate today to have the support of a vast network of outfits dedicated to providing those very specific bits long ago abandoned by the original manufacturers. But how did that tapestry of specialty providers come to be, and how did they get to develop such levels of expertise in long-obsolete goods?

For Doug Pollock, it began with a desire to fill an order. Back in the mid-1970s, Doug was a young man with a college degree in economics and an unclear path forward. He and a friend decided to open

an automotive repair garage in their native Portland, Oregon, drawing on their mutual interest in cars.

"There were a lot of older guys who were mechanics in our area, and we figured we could get those guys to work with us," he recalls, pointing out that he and his friend intended to work on older cars as a sort of specialty for the business. Before long, the garage started getting customers from Sweden, of all places.

"Portland, being a major port city, was a place these guys from Sweden would come to find old American cars. Even back then, there were a lot of enthusiasts of the big American cars of the '50s in Sweden, so they'd come here and buy them, bring them to us for some initial repairs, and then ship them back to their homeland."

Before long, Doug was locating parts for the overseas clients who were becoming regulars. It quickly turned into a great side business. "There were still a lot of junkyards around here back then, and they still had lots of cars from the '50s and '60s. I'd get letters with specific parts some of these guys were looking for, pull the pieces from the junkyards, and ship them out. I was able to turn a good profit doing this—the parts for those cars weren't all that valuable here at the time, but those guys would gladly pay to get them."

Then one day, a regular customer asked Doug if he could find some fabric to reupholster the seats of a '50s Cadillac. That was a fairly specific request, as that fabric was unique to a Cadillac of that year; it would also have to be the





right color. Doug was very interested in furthering his parts business and wanted to be able to provide anything the Swedish enthusiast needed, but finding the fabric soon proved to be a challenge.

"I talked to a number of people, including the three big upholstery shops in town, and nobody would tell me anything," recalls Doug. "They were stonewalling me, and I wasn't sure how to proceed."

Doug kept the parts business rolling, though not being able to come up with the requested fabrics frustrated him. But his luck was about to change.

"I was out in front of my house one day, working on an old Ford truck I had, when a friend from high school came walking down the street with his dad. We started talking and his father asked me what I was doing with myself. Probably because I was still frustrated about the whole fabric thing, I blurted out that I was trying to build up a parts business, but couldn't find the products I needed."

When Doug explained exactly what he'd been looking for, his friend's father said, "Oh, you should go down to Western Seat Cover. They have lots of stuff like that. They had a fire a few years ago, so they

moved all the old inventory upstairs into the attic, but there's lots of it up there."

Doug happened upon the building not long after and went in to find an older gentleman at the counter. When he explained what he was after, the man took him up to see the older stock, which included lots of the fabrics his Swedish friends were seeking.

"So, I started buying the goods my Swedish buddies needed, and then more letters started coming with more requests. So, I'd go back and buy more. Then I put an ad in *Hemmings* and started selling even more."

It seemed like the perfect arrangement, until... "Eventually, the old guy got tired of me coming in to buy pieces, and he told me if I wanted it, I needed to buy it all."

Doug didn't mind doing that, and the two worked out a price. But there was the small matter of actually paying for it all. Still, not a deal-breaker—Doug talked the owner into letting him pay off his tab over the course of a few months. But then the owner asked him where he was going to store it.

It wasn't until then that Doug realized he didn't have anywhere to put it all. Fortunately, his father had a simple solution:



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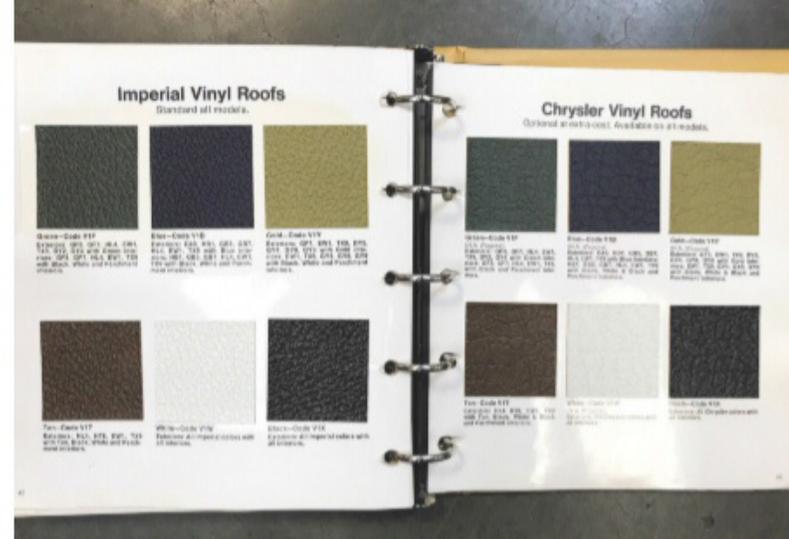
just build some shelves in the basement.

“So that’s what we did, and then my father—who was then already in his 70s—helped me move it all from Western Seat Cover to my basement. And that’s how the business started.”

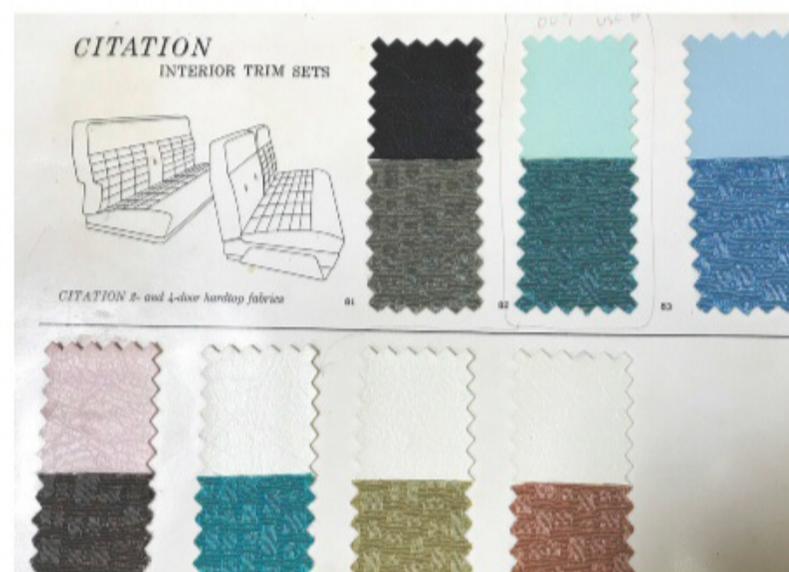
At this point, SMS Auto Fabrics was off and running, and inquiries for specialty fabrics were mounting, but there was the issue of Doug’s stock—it was, after all, a finite supply of material that was no longer being produced. But more good fortune was to come.

“A buddy of mine from Switzerland was looking for convertible tops, so I put him in touch with Robbins Auto Tops in Santa Monica, California. One day, I was down in southern California and I went there to stop in. The owner knew me from the parts business I did, so he asked what I was up to. When I explained about the fabric business, the owner says, ‘Oh, I’ve got a bunch—this used to be an upholstery business, too.’ He wanted to get rid of the old stock, so I put a deal together, loaded it up into a truck, and took it up to Portland.”

The experience pointed out a few key things to Doug. “I realized that I was pretty good at identifying the fabrics. Then I started to think about how many other people probably had old stocks of fabrics for older



Over the years, SMS has amassed a sizable reference library of original factory fabric swatch books to assist in identifying materials and upholstery pattern offerings. Vinyl top materials are also part of the SMS range of OE stocks.





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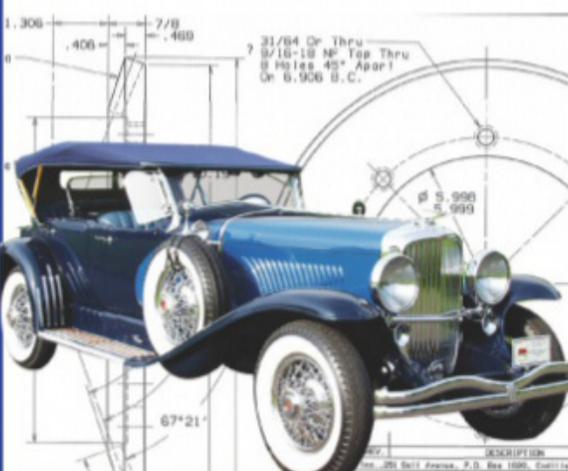


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For popular models, even large supplies of NOS materials will eventually be depleted. Realizing this years ago, SMS ventured into manufacturing, and now produces a wide variety of materials here in the U.S. that are just like the original stocks, including this early '70s Chevy truck plaid.



cars they didn't want anymore. So, then I knew I had to find that material."

And so he did, almost entirely through word of mouth. Though by this time Doug was running lots of ads in *Hemmings*, he never ran any seeking fabric—he found he didn't have to.

"Someone would call me looking for a particular fabric that they couldn't find. Then, often in telling me what they were looking for, they'd mention the local sources they had approached, usually saying something like, 'They had lots and lots, just not what I was looking for.' So I'd ask about those places, get a name and address, search them down, and then start asking questions. Pretty soon, I'd find that many of them wanted to sell. It just kept building like that."

This approach worked well for years, and Doug related that he still has an entire wall of notebooks with contact information for sources. But as the '80s turned to the '90s, Doug was becoming more and more aware of the next challenge to his business.

"Certain things were becoming obvious—if I wanted a particular fabric for a Cadillac or a Chevy, that was going to be hard. The guys who were into the popular cars had bought up all the good

old stock of fabric. I knew all the stock of great old fabrics would eventually run out. When that happens, you can do one of two things: If you're a salesman, you can try to sell someone something similar. But if you're a purist, like me, you want the cars to be right. That means you'll have to manufacture it yourself."

Initially, Doug tried to solve this dilemma the logical way—he sought out the fabric mills that had originally produced the materials he needed to see if they would make more. But it wasn't so simple.

"I found some of the places that made those fabrics in the '50s and '60s, but they basically blew me off—they were not interested in talking to me. Then I found some smaller places that could do it, but that didn't work out either. It soon became obvious that we were going to have to figure out how to produce it ourselves."

Getting into manufacturing was obviously a huge step for a business like SMS, but it seemed to be the only way. "We bought equipment, gathered some knowledge, and worked at it. Eventually I bought a mill that was going out of business. It just evolved out of necessity. Part of our challenge was that we do much shorter runs than the big mills did [when

producing for the automakers]. Today we weave around 1,200 different patterns."

Of course, not every car of the '50s or '60s had fabric seats—vinyl upholstery had become increasingly common during that time. But SMS had kept up there as well, following a similar pattern of seeking out and acquiring vintage surplus and then taking on the manufacturing when it became necessary. Here again, many of the vinyl materials manufactured for Detroit in the '50s and '60s hadn't been produced in the same form for decades; one example was the metallic upholstery featured in some cars of the era. But, with persistent research and effort, and some invaluable help from period experts, the proper techniques were put back into practice.

"I found a vinyl production guy who was 85 years old at the time. I pitched him on the phone, and he said, 'I understand what you're trying to do—I'll need a place to stay in Portland.' He was intrigued by the idea of producing the vinyl on a small scale—to him, that was a challenge. He came for six months and wound up staying for six years—he was 91 when he left."

As the stocks and manufacturing capabilities at SMS expanded, new challenges arose. One of the more daunting prospects involved reproducing



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# 2021 GREAT RACE ROUTE

## SATURDAY, JUNE 19

**START:** Alamo Plaza (Alamo front), San Antonio, TX - 8 a.m. to noon  
**LUNCH:** Courthouse Square, downtown San Marcos, TX - noon  
**OVERNIGHT:** Santa Fe Plaza, Temple, TX - 4:30 p.m.

## SUNDAY, JUNE 20

**LUNCH:** Historic Courthouse Square, Granbury, TX - noon  
**OVERNIGHT:** Horton Classic Car Museum, Nocona, TX - 5 p.m.

## MONDAY, JUNE 21

**LUNCH:** Heart of Route 66 Auto Museum, Sapulpa, OK - 12:15 p.m..  
**OVERNIGHT:** Main Street, downtown Joplin, MO - 5:00 p.m.

## TUESDAY, JUNE 22

**LUNCH:** Benton Square on East 5th Street, Rolla, MO - 11:45 a.m.  
**OVERNIGHT:** Main Street, downtown Cape Girardeau, MO - 5:15 p.m.

## WEDNESDAY, JUNE 23

**LUNCH:** Broadway and Water Street, downtown Paducah, KY - noon  
**OVERNIGHT:** Veterans Blvd., downtown Owensboro, KY - 5 p.m.

## THURSDAY, JUNE 24

**LUNCH:** Elizabethtown Sports Park, Elizabethtown, KY - noon  
**OVERNIGHT:** Griffin Gate Marriott, Lexington, KY - 5 p.m.

## FRIDAY, JUNE 25

**LUNCH:** Heritage Station, 11th Street, downtown Huntington, WV - 11:40 a.m.  
**OVERNIGHT:** Word Park, Neville Street, downtown Beckley, WV - 5:30 p.m.

## SATURDAY, JUNE 26

**LUNCH:** Main Street, downtown Galax, VA - 11:15 a.m.  
**OVERNIGHT:** Main Street, downtown Mooresville, NC - 5 p.m.

## SUNDAY, JUNE 27

**FINISH:** Hyatt Regency, Main Street, downtown Greenville, SC - 1 p.m.

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After getting into producing factory-style fabrics, SMS tackled the challenge of producing original-style vinyl materials. This, in turn, raised the need to decipher the techniques involved in replicating original embossing Detroit automakers frequently used in the 1960s and '70s. SMS now also produces ready-made seat covers.



The door panels of many American cars from the 1950s and '60s are wildly intricate, using multiple types of materials and construction processes. These panels are also commonly damaged on decades-old vehicles.



SMS strove to replicate what the automakers had once done, and can now accurately reproduce these elaborate assemblies; the company's inventory of patterns numbers in the thousands.

interior door panels. "I think the first one we did was for a '59 Ford—very elaborate. How would you make it? First you have to source all the materials, then you have to figure out the equipment, and then you have to figure out how to use it," Doug recalls. Reproducing door panels also required the ability to do embossing of vinyl.

"In the '50s, '60s, and '70s, all the American cars had these fancy embossed designs. If they'd just been sewn, a good upholsterer could replicate them, but with embossing, you've got a tooling issue, a machine issue, and then you have to have the right materials and people with some skill," Doug explains. "We bought equipment and started experimenting. Once you're doing something, you can get people [who have experience] to start talking—by asking specific questions, you can get specific answers. That's how we figured it out."

There was yet another facet of the interior that SMS would take on—producing ready-made seat cover sets. It was a natural progression, since more and more customers of fabric and vinyl were looking for qualified trimmers to turn those materials into the covers they needed. SMS started developing a pool of patterns for vintage seat covers that keeps expanding as new applications are developed and other stocks of correct patterns are acquired from other sources.

But the efforts to provide the seat covers, as well as door panels, don't always jibe well with the schedule of some restoration projects, which Doug says can be a source of frustration for some customers. "Everything we do, we approach as a custom project—we're not making 10 sets of something then waiting to sell them. If you come to us for door panels or seat covers, we're going to make them custom, just for you, and that's probably

going to take some time. With the detail involved in what we do, sometimes there just isn't any way around those delays."

In discussing these aspects of the work done at SMS, it becomes clear that the motivation for pushing forward beyond the selling of vintage fabric stocks came from more than pure business drive—an enthusiasm for the classic vehicles that require these materials and assemblies remains.

"The thing that's different about us from the places that do catalog sales is, if you come to me with some unusual car, with door panels or seat covers that have fancy embossing or some other elaborate designs, I'm going to do it because it interests me. I've done German cars, French cars, Russian cars, snowmobiles, airplanes—because I want to see if we can do it. In the end, you helped someone restore an art object. How great is that?" 🗨️

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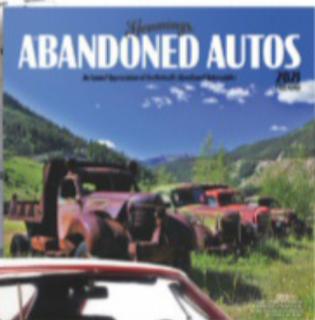
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## Jeff Nelson

Wheelabrator Corporation  
Balcrank division

### THE YEAR WAS 1968, AND I WAS

returning home to South Bend, Indiana, after my freshman year at Wake Forest University. I needed a summer job and it just happened that my father worked for the Wheelabrator Corporation in Mishawaka. He suggested that I apply for a job there.

I did just that, and soon realized that this was not going to be a typical summer job. For one thing, I needed to become a member of the UAW, which I did. I was assigned to work on the second shift at the Balcrank division. I had never heard of Balcrank, but I soon became familiar with its products.

Balcrank, from Cincinnati, Ohio, was then a recent acquisition by Wheelabrator. Balcrank produced auto lube equipment for service stations, and Wheelabrator thought it would be a good fit, since it was already in the automotive business, selling shot blasting hardware and foundry cleaning equipment.

As far as my job, I was to deburr pick-up screens for the basic pumps and I probably finished 500 units a shift. I was trained to grab a screen on the right side of the deburring unit, clean the piece, and place it in the left parts bin. It was pretty simple work. My day included a half-hour lunch break and two 15-minute breaks during the eight-hour shift.

Being a union shop, all jobs had classifications and the idea was not to encroach on another man's work. A big job in the shop was parts handler, and these employees would move parts around the facility, including the screens I worked with. After the left-side bin was filled, the parts handler would come and take it away. Pretty simple, I thought.

One early evening, I was done with all my work, just waiting for the handlers to come by. Well, about 15 minutes into the wait, I moved an unfinished bin of parts approximately 2 feet closer to my machine. At that point, I was immediately placed on a grievance stoppage and taken to the foreman's office. There, I was informed of the error and given three days off to think about my transgression.

Needless to say, I was a little upset

at the grievance! I never overcame the incident and was a target for the rest of that summer. I came back the following summer, of course, and continued the same job, a little wiser.

Generally, my coworkers were okay. The second shift was a wake-up call, and I realized that I didn't want that for the rest of my life.

I later returned to the company, then Wheelabrator-Frye, and worked as a salesman for four years, before it became part of Waste Management and the cleaning division of a worldwide consortium. None of the old Wheelabrator remains in Mishawaka today.

My experience at Wheelabrator helped me later, in the Army and beyond. It was good money and the experience was valuable. 📷



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# Considering Alternative Collectibles

## *Bidders thought outside the box with these less-common vehicles*

**IT'S HUMAN NATURE TO FIND COMFORT IN FAMILIARITY, WHETHER** that's in food, clothing choices, vacation spots, or collector vehicles. When it comes to the latter, there's a lot to be said for owning something like a Mustang or MGB — automobiles easily maintained due to their mechanical simplicity and widespread parts availability — but there's likewise enjoyment to be had in trying something different, standing apart from the crowd. It's a big old-car world out there!

"Just as we at *Hemmings Classic Car* take a 'big tent' approach to embracing car collectors of all stripes, Hemmings Auctions frequently offers alternatives to those known quantities," explains Auctions Editor Terry Shea. "For example, this past month we sold a 1928 Chevrolet National AB Sports Roadster, the perfect analog to a Ford Model A roadster. A legitimate

Porsche 550 Spyder, a racer that dominated in the mid-1950s, will likely trade hands in the mid-seven-figure range; a replica can offer all the thrills with a lot less of the worries of driving a multimillion-dollar car, like the Thunder Ranch Spyder example that recently changed hands via Hemmings Auctions. While a big-finned '59 Cadillac will always make headlines, a '58 offers a less-seen model with its own distinct design. And if the idea of a traditional hot rod or a factory-built prewar speedster strikes you as too cookie-cutter, why not consider a custom creation, an OHV straight-eight 1936 Buick speedster?"

Other recent sales of note included a driver-quality 1923 Ford Model T Tudor (\$14,700), a dual-quad 409-powered 1963 Chevrolet Impala SS convertible (\$60,900), and a sub-18,000-mile 1979 Volkswagen Super Beetle convertible (\$30,450).



### 1928 CHEVROLET

**Model:** National AB Sports Roadster  
**Reserve:** \$9,250

**Selling Price:** \$10,780  
**Recent Market Range:** \$9,640-\$17,210

There's something rakishly appealing about a roadster, and this black-trimmed green Chevy, with its characteristic steel disc wheels, had just the look. Its older restoration appeared to be holding up very well, with minor blemishes in its lacquer paint and a bit of glass delamination. The car wore good tires and was a veteran of numerous club tours, which spoke well of its mechanical health; minor fluid leaks were noted. No side curtains came with this National, but its interior was intact and correct. A responsive seller, ample photography, and a video helped move the veteran to the "sold" category.



### 1955 THUNDER RANCH

**Model:** 550A Spyder replica  
**Reserve:** \$38,500

**Selling Price:** \$49,350  
**Recent Market Range:** \$43,450-\$67,250

This sports car was built in 2002, reportedly at a near-six-figure cost, as a tribute to arguably the most infamous of Porsche's 550 Spyders: actor James Dean's *Little Bastard*. While that original car—and its driver—met a tragic demise, our feature 550A replica was said to remain show-ready, with fewer than 600 miles added from new. The finish of its fiberglass body was claimed to be excellent, like the condition of the interior and chassis, and the VW-based flat-four engine promised 160 hp and thrilling performance. The auction was extended an impressive 10 times as bidders fought to take home this prize.

### LEGEND

**Reserve:** Minimum price owner will accept

**Selling Price\*:** What the vehicle sold for, inclusive of buyer's 5-percent fee  
(\*sold as a Premium Classified following the live auction)

**Recent Market Range:** The low-to-high value range for the vehicle based on published results of 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](http://hemmingsauctions.com). If you have questions, comments, or suggestions, email Auctions Editor Terry Shea: [terryshea@hemmings.com](mailto:terryshea@hemmings.com).



## 1958 CADILLAC

Model: Eldorado Biarritz  
Reserve: \$76,000

Selling Price: \$81,900  
Recent Market Range: \$73,140-\$94,350

While 1959 represented the apogee of Cadillac's tailfin design, the previous model year was arguably GM's peak when it came to Harley Earl's preferred brightwork filigree. This example, claimed to have received cosmetic updates (some NOS) and minor mechanical refurbishments, appeared largely as it did when it left the factory. The triple-carbureted V-8 was intact, although a slight fluid leak was noted, and only one carb was functioning; the interior presented nicely. Registered as nonoperational in California, it was said to run and drive fine. Ample photos boosted bidder confidence to good result.



## 1936 BUICK

Model: Speedster custom  
Reserve: \$27,000

Selling Price: \$30,975  
Recent Market Range: \$25,550-\$39,600

Giving the vibe of a 1930s Indianapolis 500 competitor, this wild-looking open two-seater was built in 2011 in Argentina and recently imported to California. Its hand-crafted boattail coachwork was aluminum, better for keeping weight down, and power came from a rebuilt 233-cu.in. Buick straight-eight that exhausted spent gasses through a header feeding into single external side pipe. The eight was backed by a three-speed manual transmission. The speedster custom was said to be untested, and its fresh condition attested to a lack of road use. The seller answered numerous questions, and after 33 bids, this one-off had a new owner.

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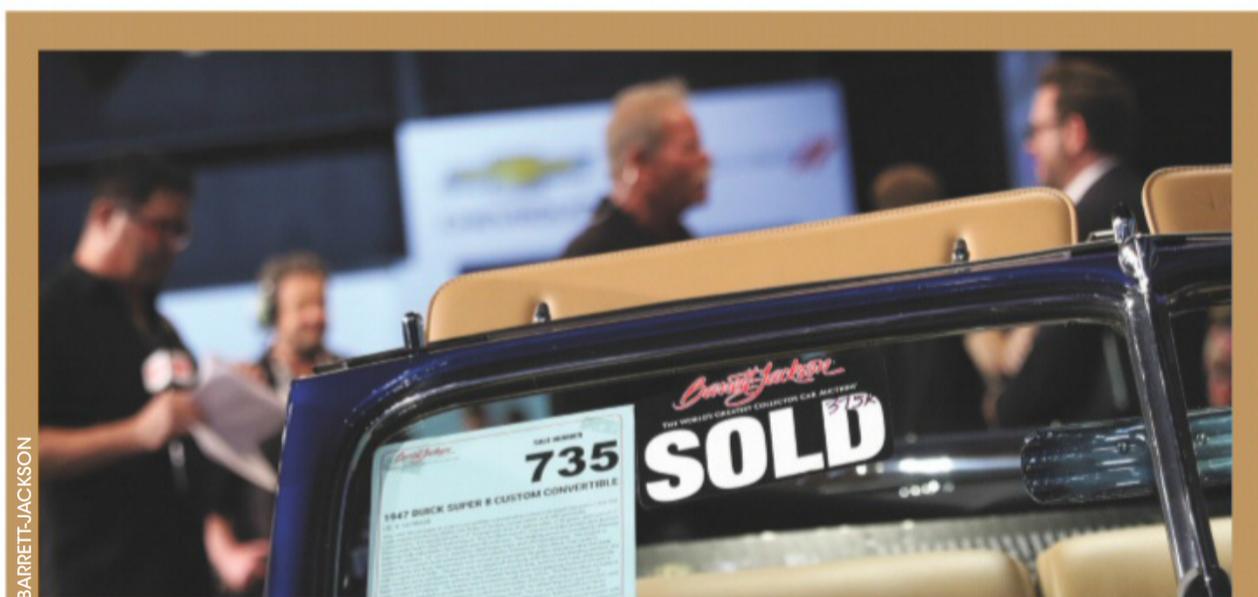


MECUM

## Houston Highlights

**MECUM'S HOUSTON, TEXAS, AUCTION, HELD DECEMBER 3-5, HAULED IN \$14.7 MILLION WITH AN 83-percent sell-through rate.** More than \$3 million of the sales were American cars, reaching as far back as 1909. One of the top lots from this group was a stately 1963 Lincoln Continental convertible that changed hands for \$106,700. The car's ground-up restoration took place in 2019 and included a rebuilt suspension, brakes, new leather interior, and more. The triple-black, four-door convertible showed 79,388 miles on the odometer and was powered by a 320-hp V-8 engine with an automatic transmission.

A 1954 Buick Roadmaster convertible, finished in Lido Green with an ivory/tan interior, also sold in Houston and netted \$62,700. It was powered by a Buick "nailhead" V-8 engine topped with a Rochester four-barrel carburetor and mated to a two-speed Dynaflo. The Roadmaster had a full complement of power-assist accessories, including brakes, steering, windows, and seats. The car's white convertible top was in full working order and the front and rear bench seats had been restored. Full results of the 442 cars sold by Mecum in Houston are now available at [mecum.com](http://mecum.com).



BARRETT-JACKSON

## Palm Beach Return

**AS OF PRESS TIME, BARRETT-JACKSON'S PALM BEACH AUCTION IS SLATED FOR APRIL 8-10** in West Palm Beach, Florida. Last year's show did not take place due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but the 2019 auction saw sales of more than \$30.18 million, a 99-percent sell-through, and the keys to 632 vehicles changed hands. Among the lots in 2019 were nearly two dozen unmodified, pre- and postwar American cars that sold for a total of \$925,100. Barrett-Jackson postponed its January Scottsdale auction until March, so be sure to check [barrett-jackson.com](http://barrett-jackson.com) for the latest information on the Palm Beach sale.

## Up Next

### MECUM PLANS TO HOST TWO EVENTS IN APRIL:

Houston, Texas, on April 8-10, and Denver, Colorado, April 23-24. The Houston auction, at the NRG Center, is expected to draw a field of 1,000 vehicles while the Denver auction, at the Colorado Convention Center, is expected to host an estimated 600 vehicles. This will be the first time Mecum has returned to the Mile High City since July of 2019, when more than \$10 million in sales were realized and 358 cars found a new homes. The top-grossing American muscle car during that two-day show was a 1970 Plymouth Superbird, sold for \$165,000.

A pair of auctions will revisit the South when Branson Auctions returns to the Branson Convention Center in Branson, Missouri, April 16-17, and Vicari Auction returns to the Mississippi Coast Coliseum and Convention Center in Biloxi, Mississippi, April 16-17 (in conjunction with the Crawfish Music Festival). Both auctions are currently accepting consignments, and working out the logistics of putting together a safe show for buyers, sellers, and spectators.

## AUCTION PROFILE

CAR ..... 1950 Studebaker Commander Regal Deluxe  
 AUCTIONEER ..... Mecum Auctions  
 LOCATION ..... Kissimmee, Florida  
 DATE ..... January 13, 2021  
 LOT NUMBER ..... W173  
 AVERAGE SELLING PRICE ..... \$14,500  
 SELLING PRICE ..... \$9,350



MECUM



**STUDEBAKER'S SECOND POSTWAR DESIGN, NEW FOR 1950, INCLUDED THE FAMOUS AND** distinctive "bullet-nose" front end and rear fenders that housed vertical tail lamps. The Commander was Studebaker's offering above the Champion line, and the Regal Deluxe was the middle option between the Deluxe and Land Cruiser. The Commander rode on a longer wheelbase than the Champion and featured bright chrome and trim that didn't take up the entire width of the front, standing out from many of the other cars of that era.

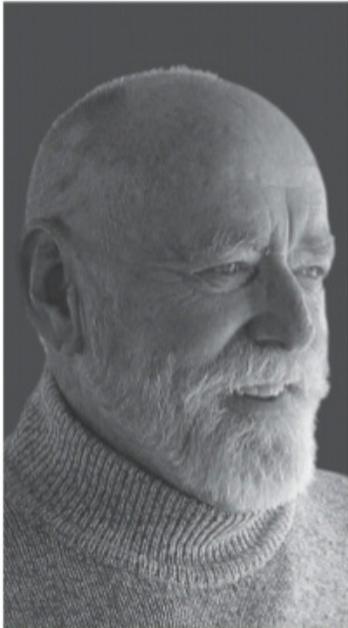
This Commander had undergone one repaint of its Shenandoah Green exterior. It was fitted with a rare front aluminum visor, and the flathead six engine was mated to a three-speed transmission with column shift. The original six-volt system was still functioning, and the car rode on BFGoodrich Silvertown whitewall radial tires. The Stratoline AM radio was also operational. The ready-to-go Commander needed some cosmetic work on the interior and was a nice example of a postwar Studebaker.

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## Take an Old Mechanic to Lunch

The Romans erected great buildings out of concrete 2,000 years ago that still stand today. But during the Dark Ages, the technology was lost. For centuries after that, structures were essentially big piles of rocks. There were no Romans around to ask by that time. That is, until the 19th century in England, when the process for making concrete was rediscovered. Which leads me to speculate that sadly, even though we have progressed exponentially in the last 100 years, we may still be losing almost as much as we have gained.

I have discovered that – even with old service manuals and how-to books from the period – there is no better way to learn how to restore and take care of your classic than to pick the brain of an older person who has been there and done that. By doing so, you may also help to preserve our understanding of important technology.

For example, a few years ago I was restoring a 1936 Packard 120 Touring Sedan, and, in the process of assembling the engine, I discovered that it had wooden rear main bearing seals. I had never seen anything like it, but then I had never restored a car that old before. So, in order to do the job properly, I consulted Cal Soest, chief mechanic at Custom Auto Service in Santa Ana, California.

Cal is in his 80s, and a living treasure of information on old Packards. However, because he works on classics for a living, I didn't want to bother him on company time, so I invited him to lunch. After a couple of chicken enchiladas, I picked his brain while he picked his teeth. He explained that wooden main bearing seals needed to be soaked in motor oil overnight before they were tapped into place. That helped make my engine overhaul a success.

As further proof of my premise, I ask how many of you know how to start a Ford Model A with a dead battery? Well, my late mechanic friend Jack Cooley showed me on his '29 Model A. There is more to it than you might think and if you don't know the drill, chances are your efforts will be in vain, and you may have to visit the emergency room shortly thereafter.

First, you open the petcock on the firewall to let the fuel flow down to the

carburetor from the fuel tank in the cowl, because there is no fuel pump. Then, you get in, and using the levers on the steering wheel, you retard the spark and set the hand throttle for a fast idle. Next, you turn on the ignition key. After that, you get out and pull the choke closed with the little wire loop sticking out through the radiator. Now, because your battery is flat, you need to hand crank the engine to start it.

The car is not a wind-up toy, though. You just fold your fingers, and place your hand *against* the crank instead of gripping it. Then, you slowly turn the engine until you feel a piston coming up on its compression stroke. You then just pop it over, removing your hand in one motion. You may have to do this a few times in order to get the engine going, but you don't want to wrap your hand around the crank, because the engine could fire too soon (backfire) and the crank could come flying back and break your arm. Lunch is a small price to pay for such knowledge.

Even much later classics still need their front wheel bearings packed regularly, along with their universal joints, and they also need regular lube jobs and yearly ignition tune-ups. The best way to learn how to do such things correctly is to take an old mechanic to lunch. A younger technician may be able to show you how to use an OBD-2 diagnostic scanner, but he won't have a clue as to how to clean and adjust breaker points.

So, I say join the club for your marque, and then go to meetings and do a little strategic hanging aroundsmanship. Get to know that guy with gray hair and a Vietnam Veterans cap. Chances are he will know how to set the timing on your Hudson or Pontiac, and how to deal with that funny whirring sound when you turn left. In addition, he may know how your car was when it came from the factory in the first place.

Sadly, as some of these potential mentors are going on to their reward, we are losing their knowledge, skill, and experience, and in doing so, we are losing what we need to know to keep our classic Road Runner or GTO on the road. Sure, you can find most things in the shop manual, but there is nothing like sitting down with an old mechanic and learning firsthand. Chances are, he will be flattered that you are interested. 🧐



...how many

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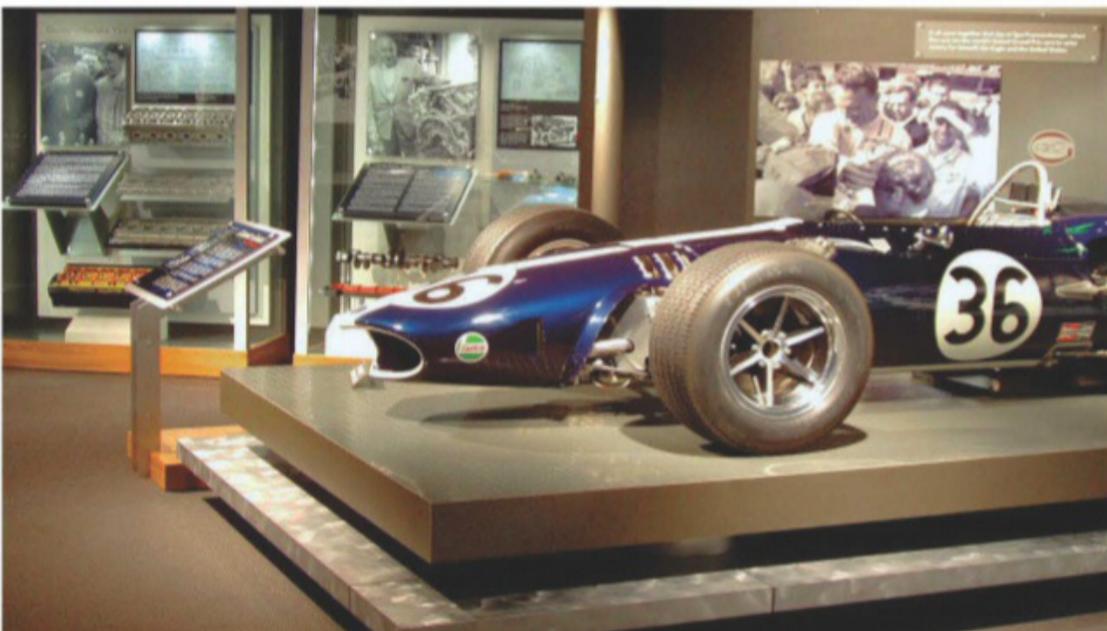


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