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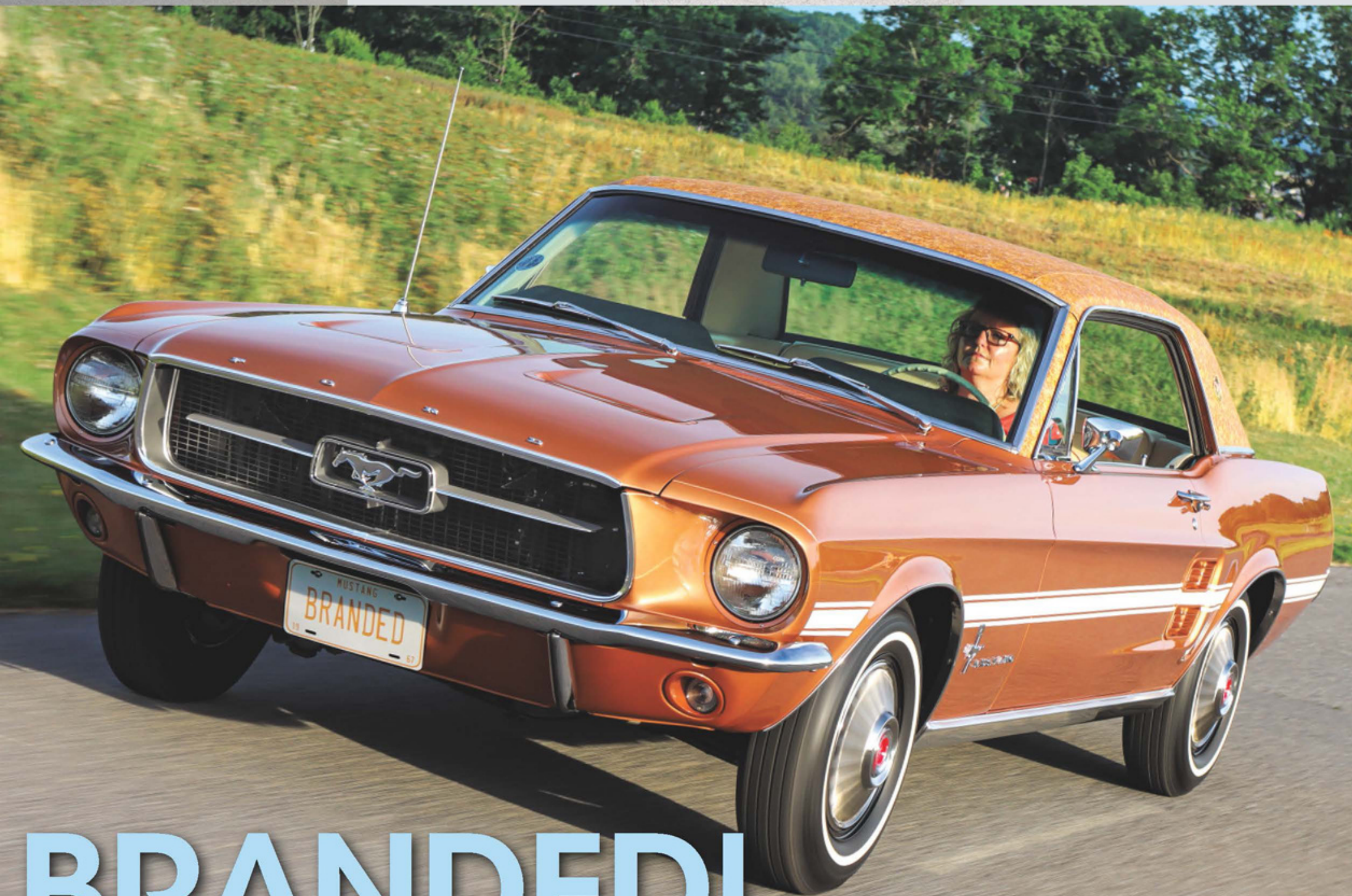
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Matthew Litwin, Senior Editor

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Jeff Koch, West Coast Associate Editor

Daniel Strohl, Web Editor

Roberta Conroy, Graphic Designer

Joshua Skibbee, Graphic Designer

Tom Comerro, Editorial Assistant

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Jim Richardson, Bill Rothermel

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David Richied, Web Developer

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Cody Walton, Web Developer

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ISSN# 1550-8730 • [www.hemmings.com](http://www.hemmings.com)

Published monthly by Hemmings • 222 Main St., Bennington, VT 05201

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Subscription rates in the US and Possessions; 12 issues for \$18.95. Canada \$30.95; (CDN price includes surface mail and GST tax). All other countries \$32.95 in US funds.

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## POSTMASTER:

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Hemmings Classic Car is a publication of

American City Business Journals, Inc.,

120 West Morehead St, Charlotte, NC 28202

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**LUNCH:** Clinton Library, Little Rock, AR – 11:45 a.m.

**OVERNIGHT:** Russellville Depot, Russellville, AR – 5 p.m.

## WEDNESDAY, JUNE 28

**LUNCH:** Community Center, Eureka Springs, AR – 12:15 p.m.

**OVERNIGHT:** Main Street downtown, Joplin, MO – 5 p.m.

## THURSDAY, JUNE 29

**LUNCH:** Commercial Street, Emporia, KS – noon

**OVERNIGHT:** Old Town, Wichita, KS – 5 p.m.

## FRIDAY, JUNE 30

**LUNCH:** Courthouse Square, Great Bend, KS – noon

**OVERNIGHT:** Main Street at Stevens Park, Garden City, KS – 5 p.m.

## SATURDAY, JULY 1

**LUNCH:** Colorado Welcome Center, Lamar, CO – 11:45 a.m.

**OVERNIGHT:** Pueblo Union Depot, Pueblo, CO – 5 p.m.

## SUNDAY, JULY 2

**FINISH:** Tejon Street, Colorado Springs, CO – 1 p.m.

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## Fuel for the Future

As we planned the elements for our latest tribute to the American “pony car,” the news from Detroit revolved around big changes coming from Dodge, as it was officially announced that 2023 would be the last model year for the Challenger, as well as its Charger stablemate. While our focus around here is vintage vehicles, I’ll still be sad to see these two models go away—I get some sort of Zen sense knowing that there are V-8-powered, rear-wheel-drive passenger cars sitting on showroom floors.

The situation with those models is almost strange in a way—an auto manufacturer that has spent untold millions in vehicle development and marketing hoping to win consumer favor, willfully discontinuing a product that’s still selling well. Dodge has been touting the future of its performance cars, unveiling a concept that carries the Charger nameplate but which is a fully electric vehicle. The new car looks great, and performance is said to be astounding, but it’s a very different animal than the one it will replace. Time will tell if enthusiasts embrace an electric future, which is another topic entirely.

Altering its approach to speed and power is something Dodge is doing to evolve and adapt, and I couldn’t help thinking about Detroit’s maneuvering in the ’70s, back when other forces beyond the Motor City were influencing product decisions. Concerns over exhaust emissions played a huge role in curtailing what had been a steadily escalating horsepower battle, further dampened by sharply rising fuel costs. Safety concerns and insurance lobbies had an impact on vehicle styling, and for a time, it seemed like most of the wow factor had been drained from the American car lines.

But consumer desires still burned with enthusiasm for some combination of performance and style. Our Buyer’s Guide on Chevy’s Camaro of the late ’70s cites production figures that provide proof of this, as do sales figures mentioned in our feature on the ’78 Firebird. Both car lines experienced all-time-high sales that seem astounding today, given that GM’s F-body was a something of a specialty car, rather than a mainstream offering. America had been hooked on the pony-type car with the

very first Mustang, and that magical combination of sporting style and practical nature still held strong appeal.

And many of those consumers were steadfast in their tastes, regardless of what the world around them tried to impose. So, when Ford revamped the Mustang into the Mustang II, using the Pinto’s underpinnings and limiting engine choices to four- and six-cylinder offerings, buyers made noise—many still wanted a V-8 for their Mustangs, fuel crisis be damned. Dearborn set to work shoehorning a 302 where it had not originally been intended to live and got it to market for the Mustang II’s sophomore season.

Later, when GM was finally redesigning the F-body’s platform after producing its second generation for 12 model years, it considered, and reportedly worked on prototypes using, front-wheel drive. Again, consumer acceptance came into play, and the new Camaro and Firebird ultimately maintained their rear-drive configurations. Ford tried something similar in the late ’80s when it was planning a front-drive model to replace the then-current Fox-platform Mustangs, and again, the outcry from fans seemed to alter the outcome—Mustang devotees would rather stick with something that was already long in the tooth than accept a replacement that deviated too sharply from the features they most admired.

And so, as I ponder the end of a car line I’ve found appealing for some time, I’m wondering if others like me will find some sort of solace in upcoming products aimed at our tastes. That new electric Charger has been presented with the traditional American car enthusiast in mind, and I’m glad to see that Dodge has an interest in maintaining those potential buyers. As this is written, Ford has just taken the wraps off the next-generation Mustang, and it’s very much in keeping with the model’s lineage, especially the available V-8 engine and rear-wheel drive.

It’s difficult to see exactly what the future holds for the automobile at this moment, but it’s good to see that the automakers are still interested in providing us some of what we want, rather than just what we need. I’m hoping for cars that will continue to fuel our passion well into the future. 🍷

...many still

wanted a

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fuel crisis be

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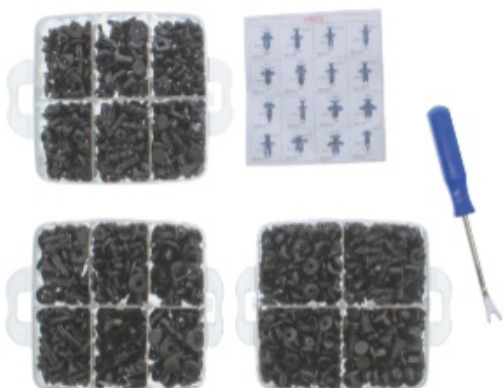


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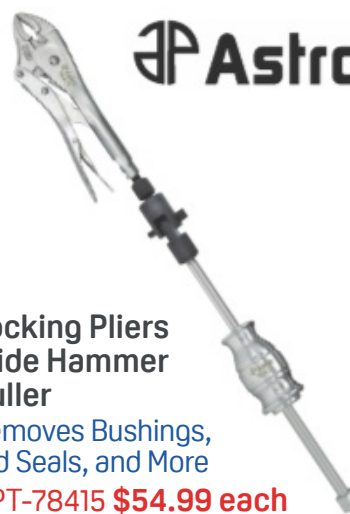
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## Arizona Concours d'Elegance

**THE ARIZONA CONCOURS RETURNS TO SCOTTSDALE DURING ARIZONA CAR WEEK** at the newly renovated Scottsdale Civic Center. Expect to see collector cars from all over the country with roughly 100 rare and exotic automobiles invited and exhibited. This year's theme will focus on the art of aerodynamics and pre-aerodynamics with special classes devoted to the Brass Era (pre-1916) and the Vintage Era (1916-1927), plus the "Birth of a Concept" class devoted to pre-war sports and race cars. Plus, two other classes will celebrate 1930s aerodynamics with a nod to American and European coachwork from that decade. Standard general admission tickets can be purchased until January 12 (no refunds) and the Concours d'Elegance will take place January 22, rain or shine. Visit [arizonaconcours.com](http://arizonaconcours.com) for more details.



## Carlisle Calendar

**THE 2023 SCHEDULE FOR CARLISLE EVENTS HAS** been finalized with more than a dozen shows planned for the upcoming year. Most of the events will take place at The Carlisle Fairgrounds with a handful at the nearby Expo Center. The only event not taking place in Carlisle is the Auto Mania show at the Allentown Fairgrounds in Allentown, Pennsylvania, slated for

January 20-22. Most of the events feature swap meets, car corrals, auctions, and a themed car show, with thousands of cars shown across the grounds. There will also be two additional auctions in Lakeland, Florida, at Lakeland's Winter and Fall shows. The 2023 dates for the events are as follows:

- January 20-22: **Auto Mania**, Allentown Fairgrounds
- January 27-28: **Winter Auto Expo**, Carlisle Expo Center
- February 10-11: **Lakeland Carlisle Auction**, Sun 'N Fun Expo
- April 19-23: **Spring Carlisle**, Carlisle Fairgrounds
- April 20-21: **Spring Carlisle Auction**, Carlisle Expo Center
- May 12-13: **Import & Performance Nationals**, Carlisle Fairgrounds
- June 2-4: **Ford Nationals**, Carlisle Fairgrounds
- June 23-24: **GM Nationals**, Carlisle Fairgrounds
- July 14-16: **Chrysler Nationals**, Carlisle Fairgrounds
- August 4-6: **Truck Nationals**, Carlisle Fairgrounds
- August 24-26: **Corvettes at Carlisle**, Carlisle Fairgrounds
- September 27-October 1: **Fall Carlisle**, Carlisle Fairgrounds
- September 28-29: **Fall Carlisle Auction**, Carlisle Expo Center
- November 10-11: **Lakeland Carlisle Auction**, Sun 'N Fun Expo

For specifics about each event, visit [carlisleevents.com](http://carlisleevents.com).



## Pony Cars Forever

**THE UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE IS CELEBRATING** the days of America's pony cars with five new stamps from the popular automotive era. A ceremony unveiling the new stamps took place during The Great American Stamp Show, in Sacramento, California, this past August.

Scott Bombaugh, the Postal Service's chief technology officer, spoke at the ceremony about his mother's 1970 Mustang. "My brother learned to drive in that car, but by the time I was ready to drive, my parents sold the Mustang and had a Pinto wagon," Bombaugh says. "Is it any wonder I have bought two Mustang GTs since then?"

The five cars to be featured are the 1967 Mercury Cougar XR-7 GT, the 1969 Ford Mustang Boss 302, the 1969 Chevrolet Camaro Z/28, the 1969 AMC Javelin SST, and the 1970 Dodge Challenger R/T.

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## Gremwagon

**THERE'S NO INFORMATION ATTACHED TO THIS IMAGE** of a wagon-bodied, Gremlin-nosed AMC small car that was recently posted to Facebook that would suggest the mockup was a serious attempt to make the Gremlin into something other than a chop-back subcompact sedan. In fact, there's no information attached to it at all, and AMC enthusiasts have been trying to discern whatever they can from the image since.

We know, for example, that the schnozz comes from a 1977-1978 Gremlin, though those wheel covers came on 1973-1975 Hornets. We also know that AMC execs were looking to keep Gremlin sales from collapsing during the late Seventies—hence the redesigned front end, along with several other changes. Could the mockup above have been another proposal for juicing Gremlin sales?

On the other hand, AMC had the Hornet Sportabout at the time, and two small-car station wagons would've been overkill. Instead, as some have pointed out, the divided rectangular quarter windows look a whole heck of a lot like the glass on the early XJ Cherokee renderings and clays, circa 1979, back when the XJ was more seen as a downsized replacement for the full-size SJ Cherokee and not as a separate model in the Jeep lineup. Could the mystery mockup have actually been an XJ Cherokee styling study in disguise and had absolutely nothing to do with the Gremlin?



## Coffey's Cobra

**JERRY COFFEY BADLY WANTED A SPORTS CAR. HE DREAMED** about a Jaguar XK120, but in reality, he'd take any low-slung roadster. He searched high and low until he finally found a Cobra. Er, make that a COBRA.

While commuting to Villanova as a student in the Fifties, he spotted it behind a gas station not far from campus and discovered that the owners of the gas station, the Stepler brothers, built the car from a pair of wrecked cars—they decided to cut the roof off a 1937 Ford, cut down its doors, section it, and replace everything aft of the doors with the front fenders from a 1952 Ford. The flathead V-8 drivetrain remained stock to the 1937 Ford. The two then finished off their handiwork using lots and lots of lead. "It had to have been two inches thick," Jerry says.

The brothers called it a Cobra, and Jerry's father jokingly determined the name was an acronym that stood for Collection Of Bodies Rearranged Artistically.



Jerry bought it for \$110 and got it spruced up enough to drive it to and from school. "It wasn't really a sports car, but I called it one," he says. It wasn't the lack of speed that kept him from using the COBRA longer than that winter, however. Instead, Pennsylvania at the time had a stringent twice-a-year safety inspection, and none of the inspection stations in his area wanted to even look at the car, so he kept the COBRA only as long as the inspection remained valid, then sold it the following spring.

What happened to it since, he doesn't know.



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).



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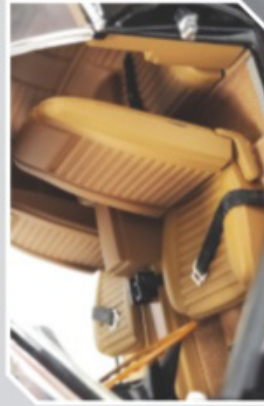
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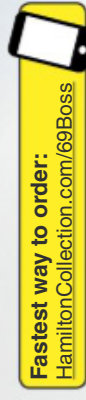
From the outside, it resembled the previous Boss 302 model, but beneath the hood sat the massive Boss 429 engine! *A powerplant so big that the suspension had to be modified and the battery moved to the trunk!*

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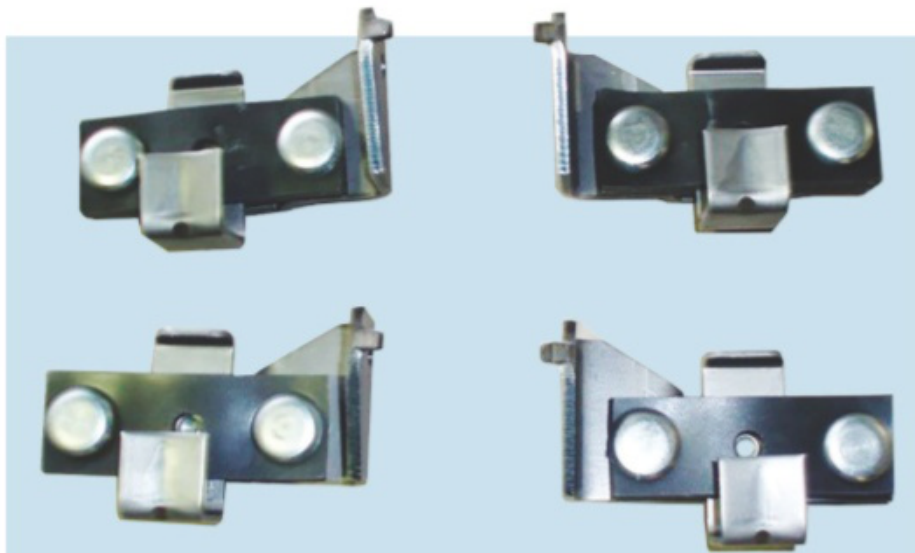
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Prices shown are presumed accurate at the time of printing. Please confirm with seller prior to purchase.



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## I ALWAYS ENJOY RECEIVING HCC IN

the mail each month. I recall a story about how Crosley won the first race at Sebring, so I am hoping you can help me with a little bit of history. I always thought the Sebring race in Florida was 12 hours. A friend recently told me when he was a lad, he went to Sebring at 1:00 am during a 24-hour race. When and how many times did Sebring run 24 hours? I had an LP vinyl record titled "Sounds of Sebring" when I was a teen. Keep up the good work!

Dan Deckman

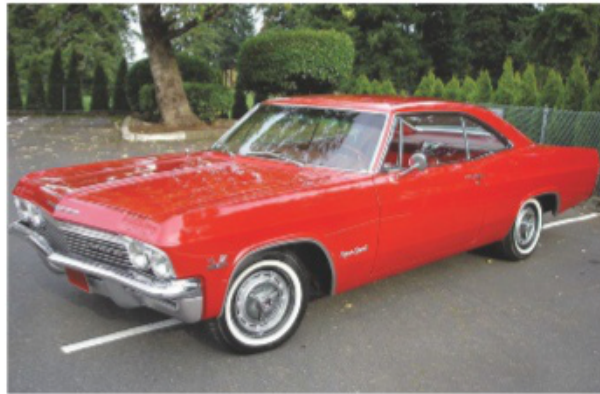
Hamburg, New York

*Since the first (and only) six-hour contest at Sebring in 1950, which was indeed won by a Crosley Hot Shot, there have been 122 official race events at the famed facility that followed. Of that figure, records show that 70 were 12-hour races, 17 were official test sessions, 10 were three-hour races, 6 were four-hour events, another 6 were one- to two-hour races, a further 6 were SCCA short format contests, 4 races were 20 laps or less, 2 races were 1,000-kilometer contests for Europe's World Endurance Championship series, and 1 event was limited to 30 minutes. There has never been a 24-hour race held at Sebring; however, because of the length of the race during the late winter months, night test-and-tune sessions during the race weekend are held for drivers and crews. It's very possible that your friend attended one of these test sessions during the overnight hours.*

## I BOUGHT MY 1965 IMPALA SS IN

1967. It had been bought new by a retired couple who got it to pull their Airstream trailer. It was red with a matching interior, and yes, it was equipped with a 396/425 with 3.73 Positraction rear end. After two years they wanted a truck instead. I bought my SS from a Seattle Ford dealer that my brother Frank sold cars for. Although it was powerful, a few tweaks made it even faster. I had a performance dual-point distributor installed and re-jetted the carbs, and then added headers and Walker Continental glass-pack mufflers. I also changed the shift linkage to Hurst Competition Plus. I did enjoy it. A few years later I got married and the car was sold. I did buy another '65, but it was an Impala Sport Coupe with a 327 V-8 and automatic transmission; it also had power steering and brakes.

From time to time, when talking with



old friends, my mind goes back to when my only worries were which drive-in to hit tonight, and with whom? I did race the 396, and not always on the track. I once drove to Oakland in nine hours and then did it in 10 on the way back. Both cars are gone now. I sold the red one to a vet returning from Vietnam; the blue car went to a relative in need. They'll be in my memories forever. Daniel Kavanaugh  
Member Vintage Chevrolet Club of America; via email

## I ENJOYED READING TERRY

McGeen's column, "Source of the Spark" (HCC #217). It brought back good memories of when I had that first spark in me. I grew up in the '50s and '60s, so now I'm a retired 60-something car lover. The earliest I remember is when I was about 10 years old, seeing my neighbor drive by my house in his new '64 Ford Galaxie. It was Buckskin Tan... what a beautiful car. I remember being totally in awe of that car. Ever since then, I've had a love affair with classic and antique cars. I especially love the Brass Era cars, but I like anything that strikes my fancy between the 1920s and early 1970s. I've always wanted to own a classic or antique but never could afford to, which is something I've been saying for about 30 years now. But I still have the dream of someday actually owning one. I've especially loved the 1959 Cadillac, but it's definitely out of my price range, so I've lowered my standards, and I will settle for a 1952 Chevy Deluxe or Bel Air, which is the car I grew up in. It was a two-tone,

Bittersweet body and Beach White roof. If I could find something similar someday, I would be happy.

Jeff Blazejovsky

Stafford Springs, Connecticut

## THE ARTICLE ON THE '57 BUICK

Super Riviera in the September 2022 issue ("Bit by Bit," HCC #216) was quite interesting, particularly the comments about the brakes. The author states, "Those rebuilt drums[...]were not up to the task of slowing the big Super[...]". Is it possible that the rebuilder turned the drums to an oversized dimension that was beyond specifications? That happened to me once back in the '70s (with a '63 Econoline van) and it took many months for the brake shoes to wear in to fit the out-of-spec drums. In the meantime, I had to plan my stops in advance. Another point: Upgrading an all-drum braking system from a single master cylinder to a dual master cylinder is a recommended "safety upgrade," but it does not affect stopping performance. Upgrading an all-drum braking system to a disc/drum braking system usually improves braking performance and *requires* a dual master cylinder and a brake fluid proportioning valve. I recommend upgrading brake fluid to DOT 5 silicone only if the entire hydraulic system is to be replaced with new hardware, as the older glycol-based fluid is incompatible and difficult to flush completely from existing lines. I currently own a full size '66 Ford Galaxie with bias-ply tires, non-power drum brakes, breaker-point ignition, and a two-barrel 289 V-8. It runs straight down the road, keeps up with traffic, corners well, and stops efficiently. It does what it is supposed to: drive like a '60s classic. I have no current plans to "upgrade" any of these features.

Ray Keto

New Bern, North Carolina

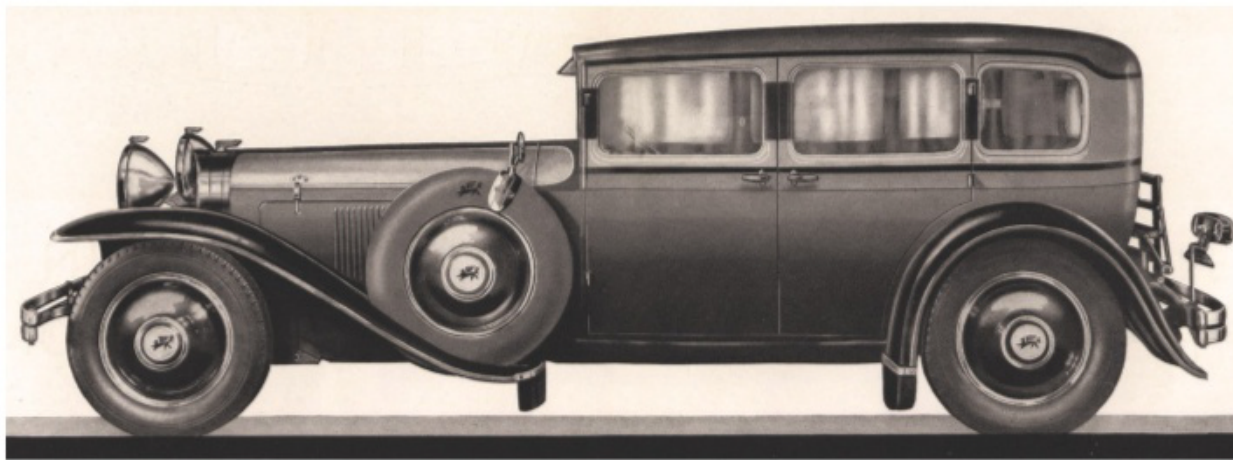
## I ENJOYED YOUR ARTICLE ON THE

'54 Chevy Bel Air (HCC #217). In it, the owner mentioned the good acceleration and wondered how it would have compared to a stick-shift on the same model. Back in 1962 I had a low-mileage '56 Chevy six with a three-speed. I could easily run away from a '56 with an automatic—off the line the Powerglide was much slower. We never tried it with a rolling start though.

Alex Magdaleno

Camarillo, California





## YOU'VE PROBABLY HEARD THIS

already: the car in the photo at the top of page 51 in the October 2022 *Hemmings Classic Car* that is identified there as a Cord L-29 is in fact a Ruxton, as evidenced by the Griffin hubcaps, the lack of running boards (note the mud flaps), and the elaborate paint scheme. There was no historical or engineering connection between the two marques. For the Ruxton's design and corporate history, the definitive source is supposed to be Joe Fasnecht's *The Ruxton Automobile: History and Authenticity Guide* (Featherston, 2014), but it is scarce and expensive. As I write this, Abe Books offers a new copy for \$1,800. A shorter, informative history of the marque is available at [collierautomedia.com/the-mythical-ruxton-the-greatest-american-car-that-never-really-was](http://collierautomedia.com/the-mythical-ruxton-the-greatest-american-car-that-never-really-was).

Very truly yours,  
A. C. W. Bethel  
Via email

*Actually, the mistake we made was in running the same caption twice — the caption that appears under the image at the top of page 51 in the October issue in Bill Rothermel's piece, "American Pioneers of Front-Wheel Drive" was repeated from the image on the opposite page, where it was correctly used. The correct caption for the image of the sedan should have read, "Constructed by Moon Motor Company, the 1929 Ruxton had front-front-wheel-drive. Only 375 in total were built in four factory body styles."*

## WHEN I GOT THE OCTOBER 2022

issue, I flipped through it as I usually do to see what treats lay in store. Then I flipped through it again. It appears that this is your "Blue Issue," as four out of the six feature articles are about blue cars. And many of the ads have blue cars. Did you get a bargain on blue ink? Seriously, the articles are wonderful, and the cars are fabulous — and I do like blue. Can't wait to see what color scheme the next issue has.

Dave Renner  
Houston, Texas

*Well, that wasn't our intention, but we certainly did gather quite a few blue cars for that issue. With our efforts to provide a broad mix of makes, models, eras, body styles, and so on, coordinating colors would be a tall order. This was more like solving a Rubik's Cube accidentally.*

## TERRY McGEAN'S EDITORIAL IN

issue #217 ("Source of the Spark") really hit home. I have a few years on Terry but understood when he wanted to motor the Hemmings Model A Cretors popcorn truck downtown to the cruise night. Model A Fords are fun to own and drive. I bought my 1929 Fordor in December of 2020, after joining the San Diego Model A Ford Club along with the parent organization, the Model A Ford Club of America (MAFCA). I also have a 1956 Chevy 210 four-door that I bought in 2013 and I belong to the Classic Chevy Club of San Diego. Both cars get a lot of thumbs up, waves, and smiles, which makes the fun of owning and driving collector cars even more rewarding. So many people have stories or questions about the cars and are amazed at how they don't have power windows, power brakes, or air conditioning. I was telling some people how, on a recent drive with the Model A Club during a very warm day, I had all the windows open, including the windshield, and was very comfortable. They didn't know the windshields swung out for Model A-era "air conditioning." The wind-wings on the Chevy are its A/C.

Being 79 years young, I delivered newspapers on a bicycle (not electric either) while I was in elementary school and junior high school. On rainy days or when my bike broke down, my mom would drive me on my route in her Model A Tudor and I would throw the papers while standing on the running board. I loved that car — my brother and I remember her driving us to places and taking us to drive-in movies in it. It took me way too long to finally get my own collector cars but it's great to be able to drive them and share them with others.

Terry also mentioned in his excellent editorial how we see young people getting involved in the hobby and with cars older than they are. The September/October issue of MAFCA's magazine, *The Restorer*, has two pages recognizing 2022 winners of the Model A Youth Restoration Awards. All 10 youth being recognized own and are restoring Model A's and planning on driving them, some after they get their learner permits. They will be great drivers, since you have to pay attention and plan ahead while driving with mechanical brakes, 40 hp, and double clutching to shift. Great way to motor for fun!

Thank you for publishing an outstanding magazine.

Marvin Munzenmaier  
El Cajon, California



## IN THE OCTOBER ISSUE, PAT FOSTER

wrote a great article on the IKA Torino. Coincidentally I saw one at a car show in Bayside, Queens, New York City, last month. Incredibly, not only did it have Argentinian plates, it had been driven from Argentina to New York by way of Alaska. The owner and driver of this quest is Hector Argiro, whose lofty goal is to circumnavigate the globe by himself with the Torino. He started on this quest from Buenos Aires on November 24, 2016. In five years and six months, he covered 65,000 miles, visited 19 countries, and crossed the continental U.S. from Alaska. He has some corporate sponsors but relies heavily on the kindness of strangers. His car on this epic journey is a 1969 Torino 380, which Hector bought used in 2006 for 8,000 Argentine pesos and spent three years restoring. He named it "Balboa." You can find out more about Hector and Balboa at [elmundoentorino.com](http://elmundoentorino.com) or his Facebook page, [facebook.com/elmundoentorino/](https://facebook.com/elmundoentorino/).

George Holt  
Via email

*Continued on page 16*



## WHEN I FIRST GLIMPSED THE COVER

of the October issue of *HCC*, I thought I was seeing my old Chevy Bel Air. But alas, it was a '54, and mine was a '53. Except for the grille and taillamps, it looks like the same exact car. I bought mine as a senior in high school in 1964 to replace my used-up '54 Mercury. The Chevy was certainly as nice a car as the '54 in that issue and was a fine running car until, in 1964, California started requiring aftermarket smog devices on cars. So, I dutifully went down my father's friend's gas station and had him install the new Norris-Thermador smog device. It consisted of a conical rubber plug shoved up the crankcase breather pipe, and a PCV valve on a hose between a new oil breather cap in the valve cover and the intake manifold. Almost immediately, while taking off from an arterial stop sign or especially a green light, the car would be enveloped in a blue cloud of smoke. It didn't smoke while going down the road. I drove the car this way for short while keeping watch on the oil level. Then on a short trip down the coast from San Francisco—down to Half Moon Bay and back—that smog device sucked every ounce of oil out of the crankcase and blew the engine! I found out later that this is what happened with that smog device unless the rings in the engine were perfect. I sold the car to a random mechanic and moved on.

Ed Bonuccelli

*Via email*

## REALLY ENJOYED THE DRIVE REPORT

on the '54 Chevy, as I've always liked them, even if they are six-cylinder only and don't have the modern styling of the '54 Ford. They are just nice cars. Two things I need to point out though: All '54 Chevy engines had aluminum pistons. In '53, only engines destined to be paired with the Powerglide automatic did, but in '54, all did. Also, in '54, the Ford was the sales winner, in terms of model year. Otherwise, great piece. I also loved the '53 Merc wagon. What I love most is how both of these cars were kept stock—no LS engine, no 12 volts, no disc brakes, no rack and pinion.

Mike Benardo

*Vallejo, California*

## AFTER RESTORING FOUR AUTOMO-

biles, I appreciate Jim Richardson's column "In the Beginning" (*HCC* #217).



I have one thing to add besides keeping track with pictures and notes for reference: Consider a second car.

Michael Beaucage

*Davis, California*

## I REMEMBER WELL THE FIRST TIME I

really got interested in cars. When I was eight years old, our family lived in Northeast Philadelphia. The Kutner Buick dealership's new car/used car storage lot was behind our row house. I became fascinated by the lovely colors of the new cars and soon had my favorites. Red/white was the best followed by aqua/white. There were so many choices, it was real eye candy. I was out back playing one day when a new Buick pulled out of the service entrance. As it stopped at the corner, the whole front of the car hit the ground with a tremendous crash. Lots of yelling ensued. I didn't know what caused this, but it looked like the mechanic messed up big time. I also remember watching the guys re-groove bald tires on the used cars. This involved using a hot iron to carve "new" tread into bad tires—a shady practice that I think is now banned. The funny thing is that I seem to be the only one to remember this, even though one of the mail-order houses used to carry the "tire-carving tools."

Don Moore

*Erial, New Jersey*

## AS AN UPHOLSTERER OF FOUR-PLUS

decades, I thought I'd add my two-cents' worth to your article on the GM scissor-top cars. You mentioned making sure that the switches and relays function properly, but I can tell you from personal experience that would be the least of your worries with this particular setup. Due to the roof's unique way of folding, examples that have been neglected or had tops poorly installed have issues with the vari-

ous bushings and pivot points that make everything work properly. When abused, the folding arms are also prone to bending, and once that happens, things get expensive fast! I can also add that I never met an upholsterer who enjoyed working on these particular tops—they really are a pain compared to your usual convertible setup!

Steve Z.

*Via email*

## THANKS FOR ALL THAT WENT INTO

the October 2022 issue of *HCC*. The '54 Chevy was a very nice car for its time, but I really enjoyed the '53 Mercury wagon feature. I've always liked the style of wagons, in a form-follows-function nature. But it also reminded me of the sky blue, stick-shift '53 Merc two-door sedan that I had in high school. While cruising the drive-ins one Saturday night in 1963, a friend's '55 Chevy stalled, and he asked me to give him a push start. I told him I was afraid of what my big bullet-nose bumper guards might do to his car, but he was beyond caring, so thereafter his Chevy sported a pair of custom grooves in the trunk lid. The focus on front-wheel drive was also of great interest. Growing up in Fort Wayne, 30 miles south of Auburn, we saw Auburns, Cords, and the occasional Duesenberg as just less-commonly-used cars.

Incidentally, I am guessing that I am not the first to mention that the photos of two different cars at the top of pages 50 and 51 shared the same caption.

Phil and Jeannette Waldrop

*Jasper, Georgia*



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





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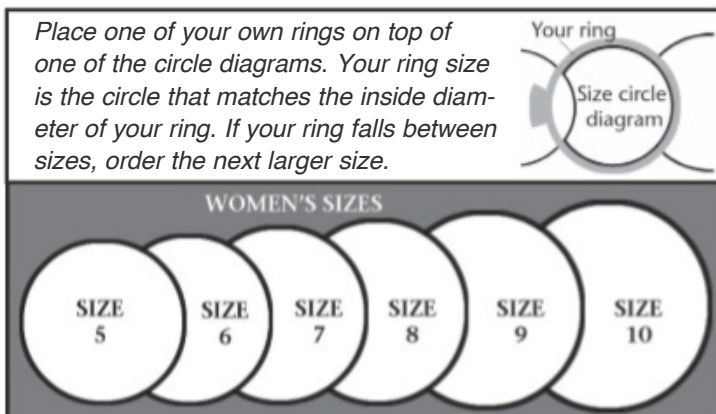
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## Happy Holidays!

As of this writing, we're barely into the month of September, the official precipice of another holiday shopping season. Soon, everything will be on sale under the oft-used "lowest prices ever" banner, including any self-propelled machine produced by the array of vehicle manufacturers the world over. It's an opportunity to slide into a new set of wheels with fresh enthusiasm—as if the holidays were different than any other sale during the year.

The whole phenomenon of using the holidays as an excuse to buy a new set of wheels is hardly a new concept. I remember my first ride with great fondness: a tri-tone three-wheeler from Louis Marx & Company called "Big Wheel." The red, blue, and yellow plastic sensation was delivered under the family tree with a big red ribbon attached to it, at a time when the arrival of the annual Sears Christmas Wish Book turned youthful reckless-abandon-intentions into actions worthy of sainthood. The latest edition of *Hemmings Motor News* sitting alongside the miles-deep Sears smorgasbord in our abode was the icing on a monumental Christmas cake.

Marx & Company put some thought into the Big Wheel. It was an uncomplicated machine of freedom. A simple nine o'clock/three o'clock position handlebar manipulated rudimentary direct steering; the low-profile seat-back offered three-position seating for one; an automotive-like hand brake enabled quick, 180-degree spins (akin to the drifting so prevalent today), and power was derived from whatever one ingested before venturing out into the neighborhood looking for a race. Or, sometimes, a demolition derby.

It was a good idea to exclude things like an odometer (mileage was far from our minds), real rubber tires for better grip during launches (the sidewalls were all that remained of the front "tire" in mere months), air bags, a roll cage, and seat belts. When sizing up another rider in our weekly crash fests, it was necessary for the rider to recoil his or her legs in microseconds. Or, while performing jumps, abandon the helm if the looming impact looked like it would chew up the folks' entire insurance deductible and then some.

Not one of us considered the probability of broken bones while smashing headlong into the wobbling rear wheel of a fellow competitor. The

front wheel was a fine battering ram that delivered pinpoint blows, and more than once we were successful in disabling "lesser," imitation Big Wheels.

Unfortunately, we also learned that the handlebars were not meant to sustain the same high-powered impacts as the front wheel; a dreadful flip off the front stoop left my Big Wheel in nine o'clock-steering mode for months before a replacement arrived... in December. Rather than a "standard" Big Wheel, though, my brother and I received matching black Marx-produced Big Wheel "Cobra Cycles" during our next seasonal stroll into sainthood—replete with sinister king cobra decals plastered all over the plastic, and customizable rear vanity plates. It was

the company's latest model, and we were the envy of fellow riders.

Somewhere along the way, the plastic tricycles gave way to a host of proper bicycles that, to the chagrin of my parents, also received the blunt end of our combative nature. Chain guards were the first to be removed, as the few ounces of stamped metal somehow made our steeds just that much faster on "the superspeedway" carved out of the woods. Ample "short track" hijinks turned our foot pedals into blunt rods, while a growing proficiency with dad's Channellocks "corrected" wheel spokes on a weekly basis.

In hindsight, the left-to-our-vices approach to our long road of maturity may have destroyed some equipment, tools, decorative structures—such as the stone wall dad rebuilt almost nightly—metal garbage cans (that doubled as super-sized bowling pins), stackable-yet-flimsy metal shelving, and definitely an ego or two, but in time it produced a deep appreciation for things to come. Like our first set of *real* wheels. One with an engine, seats for friends and family, seat belts, and so on. Which in turn necessitated steady income and a boat-load of respect for torque.

That ride didn't come from the Sears Christmas Wish Book. It came from a thought-provoking ad, like Lincoln's 1941 "Magic Carpet for Christmas" campaign; Plymouth's 1948 "My daddy's been a good boy, too" promotion; Cadillac's 1956 "The Christmas They'll Never Forget" push; and Dodge's simplistic 1962 D-100 litho, with Santa in the front seat and the cargo box brimming with wrapped gifts. 🎁



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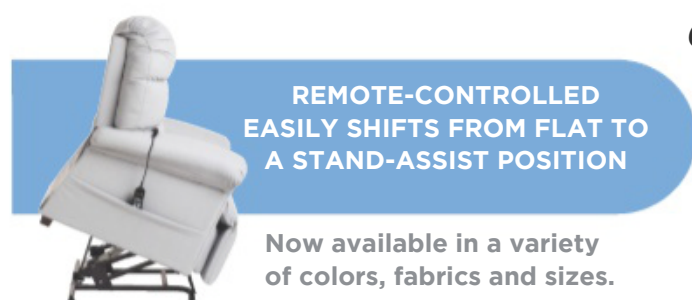
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## American Austin

A number of foreign cars were assembled in North America well before the practice became so ubiquitous that it swamped the domestic makers.

The “Springfield Rolls-Royce” was produced in Springfield, Massachusetts, from 1921 to 1931. From 1963 to 1998, Volvo assembled cars in a small plant in Halifax, Nova Scotia. And in Butler, Pennsylvania, a version of the U.K.’s famous Austin Seven was produced under license. Dubbed the American Austin, its story is particularly interesting.

The American Austin Car Company was incorporated in Delaware in 1929. Though that location was chosen for tax purposes, production was centered at the former Standard Steel Car Company in Butler. Assembly began with the 1930 models.

All this came about because the Austin Motor Company of England felt its popular Austin Seven would find success in America. The car was simple and unpretentious yet well-built, like the best-selling Ford Model A, and even lower in price. The fact that most Americans preferred larger cars apparently didn’t occur to Austin or its American affiliate.

In terms of specifications, the American Austin was a four-cylinder car riding a diminutive 75-inch wheelbase, compared to the Model A’s much roomier 100-inch chassis. Tread was a narrow 40 inches for the Austin, and overall length was just 122 inches. The Austin’s 45.6-cubic-inch engine was rated a bare 15 hp; Ford’s 200.5-cubic-inch four offered 40 hp. Though its engine was a tad noisy, the little Austin could hit 55 mph on level road, provided there was no headwind. The car weighed only 1,130 pounds, so tires were expected to last 20,000-40,000 miles—almost unheard of in those days. Austin’s fuel economy, up to 40 mpg they said, was a minor advantage to Americans, considering how cheap gasoline was.

Three models were offered initially: a basic roadster, a coupe, and a Deluxe coupe, priced \$445, \$465, and \$550, respectively. Comparable Ford models were tagged at \$435, \$500, and \$550, respectively, so American Austin’s price advantage was only with the standard coupe. Since the Model A was a much more substantial product in every respect, Austin’s few dollars of price

savings were hardly a great advantage. Selling the American Austin must have been a tough job.

Styling, by Count Alexis de Sakhnoffsky, was quite good, despite the limitations of size. The coupes wore a sturdy, big-car look. The roadster’s appearance was sporty, even offering a smart “Duesenberg sweep” paint scheme.



Production was straightforward, with fully painted and trimmed bodies supplied by Hayes. Butler built and painted the chassis and wheels and assembled everything into a finished car. An output of 100 cars per day was the initial goal, or roughly 25,000 cars per year without overtime. Nearly all

production equipment was new, and the factory boasted one of the best-equipped machine shops in the industry.

The new car was pitched as a supplement to the family bus, a “second car” in a two-car family. Why use two tons of plush, rubber, and steel, the factory argued, just to carry one or two people from hither to thither? Using an Austin for local driving helped the big family car last longer.

But American Austin didn’t find success in the U.S. The biggest problem was timing; the new car debuted a few months after the Great Depression started. That event killed off many established car companies, so it’s not surprising it dragged down newcomer American Austin. Additionally, the product was never really “right” for America. Great Britain is a land with old, narrow streets, where small cars make a lot of sense. America is a land of broad highways and vast spaces. Big, comfortable cars made sense here.

By 1933, with sales going nowhere, American Austin slashed prices, with a stripped Business Coupe tagged at \$275 and a Special Coupe at \$295. One would think such low prices would have spurred sales, but the tiny Austin became the butt of jokes, featured in films with great comedians like Buster Keaton, as seen here. Kids would gag owners by picking up and moving their cars overnight. It showed in sales numbers—by the end of 1930, fewer than 10,000 cars had been built. The company eventually went into receivership. It returned for 1938 restyled and re-engineered, as the American Bantam. That’s another story. 🐼





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# Pony Branding

*This 1967 Mustang's dealer-installed appearance package was initially developed to increase used car sales*

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY THOMAS A. DeMAURO • PROMOTIONAL MATERIAL PROVIDED BY FRAN COSENTINO





Leave it to Ford to so thoroughly support its already hot-selling Mustangs that it created a dress-up kit to make its *pre-owned* ponies stand out on dealer lots.

A runaway hit like the Mustang could've easily created a glut in the used-car market when they were traded in to dealerships in high volume for newer models. One way to move those second-hand gems more quickly was to provide them with affordable visual enhancements. Thus, Ford created the "Branded Kit" and tasked DSI Corporation of Plymouth, Michigan, with producing it.

For a dealer cost of \$47.25 in 1968 dollars (about \$385 today), the kit was delivered in a mailing tube

that contained the ready-to-install vinyl top, which was available in 15-different bold patterns/colors across four categories — sculptured, tweed, paisley, and leather. Also included were "Thoroughbred" tape stripes in blue, white, red, gold, or black, a pair of C-pillar running horse emblems in silver or gold tone, chrome trim for the top's lower edges, plus two cans of glue and installation instructions.

The "B" version was marketed for 1964½ to 1966 Mustangs and "A" was for 1967-'68 models. In some instances, the over-the-counter Branded Mustang Kits were applied to new models, as well.





An emblem for each C-pillar was included in the Branded Kit.



Multiple combinations of roof colors and patterns, and stripe hues were offered in the Branded Kit.



A merchandising kit was also offered for dealership displays and for placing local ads.



This NOS Branded Kit reveals its contents and how it was shipped. Fran relates that the screw-on C-pillar moldings were specific and had their own Ford part numbers cast into the back, as seen here.



Marlene and Keith White of McKees Rocks, Pennsylvania, purchased this Branded 1967 Mustang in 2019. “Our friend Fran Cosentino had the car restored, but found that he was not getting it out enough for people to see and enjoy,” Marlene recalls. “I love the color and the way it complements the roof, so when he thought about selling it, I knew I had to have it.”

Fran says he’s always been on the lookout for interesting special edition Mustangs. He recalls that, once he began delving deeper into the Branded cars, “All things ‘Branded’ started coming to me.” He ultimately acquired six Branded Kits, a set of uber-rare Branded cufflinks, and, in 2011, this Mustang, which even sported a seemingly one-off Branded fender emblem.

He didn’t reinstall the badge during the car’s subsequent restoration because, “It had been difficult enough to convince people that the Branded Kits from Ford actually existed,” he laments, “so I didn’t want to confuse the issue further with an item I couldn’t verify as being part of it. The badge may have simply been made by a dealer trying to take the package a step further.”

Fran entrusted Russ Turack, owner of RST Restorations and Storage in Wyano, Pennsylvania, to transport the car from Texas to the Keystone state and undertake its resurrection. He began by tearing down the Mustang and having its shell stripped to bare metal via sandblasting. Though all the existing panels required dent or ding repair, he recalls, the body was essentially rust-free. “There were just a few pinholes in the front floor pans and one in the rear quarter panel,” he explains. He did, however, replace the hood, headlamp buckets, and battery apron because they were too dented.

After the epoxy priming, metalwork, grinding, filling, block-sanding, filler priming, more block-sanding, and sealing were completed, Russ repainted the Mustang in its factory hue of Burnt Amber. Five basecoats of BASF R-M Diamont were applied, followed by four coats of R-M DC92 clear, and then came wet-sanding up to 2,500-grit, and buffing with Mothers-brand cutting compound.





He installed the NOS Branded Kit that featured a “sculptured” top, and when he discovered that the included stripes were too old to use, he had exact replicas made. The Mustang’s stainless body trim is original, straightened, and polished, and the chrome bumpers, door handles, grille molding, and taillamp bezels are reproductions.

Unfortunately, the 200-hp 289-cu.in. two-barrel V-8 had filled with water at some point before Fran purchased the Ford. Since it wasn’t salvageable, he sourced a date-code-correct replacement engine that had already been rebuilt to stock specifications.

He recalls, “Since I intended to drive the car once it was finished, I had Russ upgrade it with a four-barrel carburetor and intake manifold, a Pertronix electronic ignition, and dual exhaust. It was restored to about 95-percent correct. Once it was finished, however, I felt it was too nice and too rare to drive very often.”

Marlene and Keith have since had the stock Autolite 2100 two-barrel carburetor, its matching intake manifold, and a correct single exhaust system installed. Russ says of the engine, “It’s as accurate as can be.”

As a result of suffering the same fate as the 289, the C4 Cruise-O-Matic three-speed was swapped by Russ for another

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**M**y husband and I love to hear the stories behind the cars people bring to the shows, and I love telling the story of Ford creating this dealer-installed option and showing the documentation to interested Mustang enthusiasts. Usually, at the start of our conversation about the car, people are skeptical that Ford created this package. After reviewing the paperwork, however, many say "I never saw a Mustang with this kind of top before, I learned something new today." Everyone wants to touch the roof. People ask all time, and I always say, "Yes." — *Marlene White*



The 289-cu.in. engine was rebuilt to stock 200-hp, two-barrel specs, but an electronic ignition was added for reduced maintenance.



correctly date-coded unit; he then sent it to Albright's Transmission Services in Youngwood for a stock rebuild. He also replaced the bearings and seals in the 8-inch, 3.00:1-geared rear axle.

The coil-spring-front/leaf-spring-rear suspension was renewed at RST using stock replacement parts. Russ also upgraded the front brakes from manual drum to power-assisted discs and restored the rest of the system.

In 2012, the Branded Mustang was road-ready, and it went straight to the Carlisle Ford Nationals where Russ and Fran recall, "A lady made an offer to buy it as we were taking it off the trailer." For 2014, it participated at the same venue in the 50th Anniversary Special Edition Mustang invitational display, at other

celebratory events in Dearborn, Michigan, and the Woodward Dream Cruise.

When Fran sold the Ford to Marlene and Keith in 2019, it joined their stable of special-interest cars that currently includes a low-mileage, unrestored, 1962 Chevrolet Impala and 1971 Ford Torino wagon, as well as a 1967 Mustang Pacesetter Special that was also purchased from Fran. Current projects include three convertibles: a 1967 Camaro, a 1969 Buick GS 400, and a low-mileage 1983 Mustang.

"Our cars are happiest when we drive them," Marlene believes, "so we try to get them out on the street as often as we can." She reports, "The Branded Mustang starts every time, it eas-



In 2012, the factory Parchment interior was completely restored and an A/C system was added using stock Ford components.





ily keeps up with the other cars on the road, and its transmission shifts well." Steering effort is "low, but it feels sure," she says. "The car takes bumps in stride, body lean is mild in the curves, and it rides smoothly." Braking feels "secure with no pulling."

She continues, "Inside, the noise level when on the highway isn't bad, and you can hold a conversation easily. Since the interior is light in color, the surfaces of the bucket seats don't get very hot, and they are comfortable, though their adjustments are a bit limited." Marlene goes on to say, "The driving position is perfect for me, as the steering wheel is sized right, the instruments are easily readable, the pedal location is natural, and visibility out the windows is fine." She concludes, "The more we drive this car, the better it gets."

Marlene and Keith have shown the Branded Mustang regularly, and it earned an AACA First Junior in 2019, a Mustang Club

of America (MCA) Concours Driven Gold in 2021 and 2022, an AACA First Senior in 2021, and an AACA First Grand National in 2022. Thus far, the pony car has also been featured in several Mustang-focused magazines, as well as on Australian television and the *Ford Performance* website.

According to Fran, Branded Mustang sightings are nearly non-existent. He's only seen one other authenticated example in the States, and photos of another that's in Europe. He affirms, "Marlene is now the caretaker of the Branded car and its history; I know it's in good hands."

To that end, she and Keith still maintain a full show schedule, and the Branded Mustang garners attention and collects accolades wherever it goes. Apparently, the allure of this dealer-installed appearance package is just as strong today as it was in the late 1960s. 🐾

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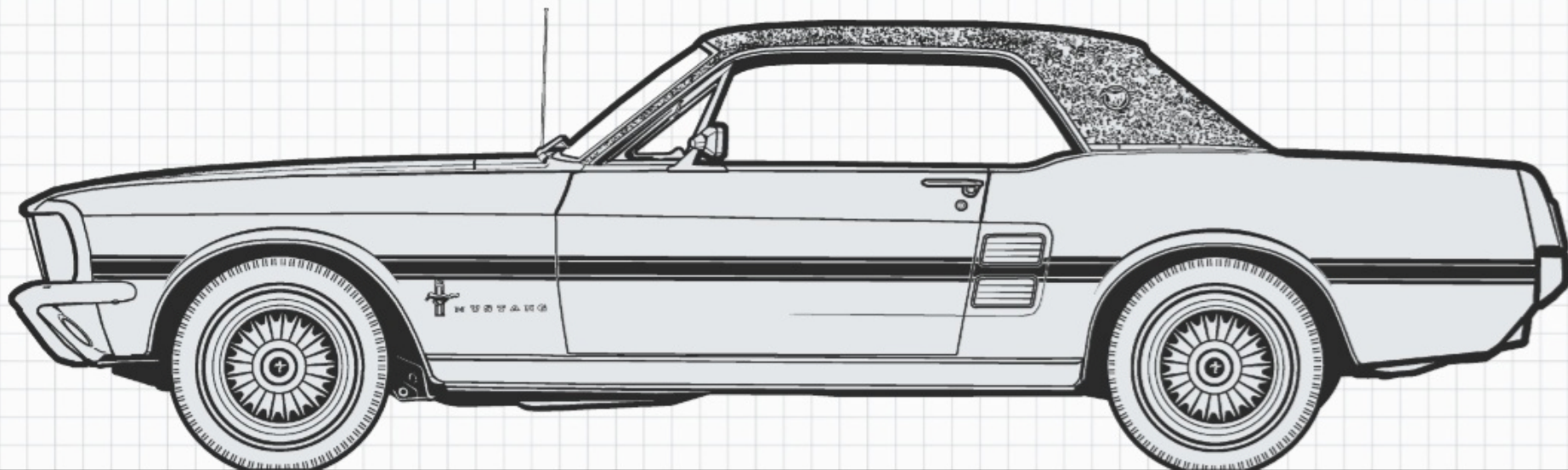
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# 1967 FORD "BRANDED" MUSTANG

ILLUSTRATION BY ROBERTA CONROY



## SPECIFICATIONS

### WHAT TO PAY\*

LOW	\$9,500 - \$19,000
AVERAGE	\$20,000 - \$37,000
HIGH	\$38,000 - \$46,000

*\*Figures are simply for a 1967 Mustang with a 200-hp 289 two-barrel V-8 because there isn't enough information available to determine how much the Branded Kit adds to the value.*

### PRICE

BASE PRICE	\$2,461.46
OPTIONS	289-cu.in. 200-hp engine; A/C; Cruise-O-Matic transmission; power steering; power disc brakes; console; wheel covers

### ENGINE

TYPE	Ford OHV "small-block" V-8, cast-iron block and cylinder heads
DISPLACEMENT	289 cubic inches
BORE X STROKE	4.00 x 2.87 inches
COMPRESSION RATIO	9.3:1
HORSEPOWER @ RPM	200 @ 4,400
TORQUE @ RPM	282 lb-ft @ 2,400
VALVETRAIN	Hydraulic valve lifters
FUEL SYSTEM	Two-barrel carburetor, mechanical pump
EXHAUST SYSTEM	Single, with muffler

### TRANSMISSION

TYPE	C4 three-speed automatic
RATIOS	1st/2.46:1 2nd/1.46:1 3rd/1.00:1

### DIFFERENTIAL

TYPE	Hotchkiss-type, semi-floating hypoid
GEAR RATIO	3.00:1

### STEERING

TYPE	Recirculating ball nut, power assisted
TURNING CIRCLE	37.2 feet

### BRAKES

TYPE	Hydraulic, four-wheel, power assisted
FRONT	11.25-inch disc
REAR	10-inch drum

### CHASSIS & BODY

CONSTRUCTION	Unit-body platform
BODY STYLE	Two-door, hardtop
LAYOUT	Front engine, rear-wheel drive

### SUSPENSION

FRONT	Independent, coil spring, direct-acting hydraulic shocks, anti-sway bar
REAR	Solid axle, leaf springs, direct-acting hydraulic shocks

### WHEELS & TIRES

WHEELS	Stamped steel
FRONT/REAR	14 x 5 inches
TIRES	BF Goodrich Silvertown
FRONT/REAR	6.95-14

### WEIGHTS & MEASURES

WHEELBASE	108 inches
OVERALL LENGTH	183.6 inches
OVERALL WIDTH	70.9 inches
OVERALL HEIGHT	51.6 inches
FRONT TRACK	58 inches
REAR TRACK	58 inches
CURB WEIGHT	2,885 pounds

### CALCULATED DATA

BHP PER CU.IN.	.692
WEIGHT PER CU.IN.	9.965 pounds

### PRODUCTION

The number of 1967 Mustangs that received the Branded treatment as new and used cars is not known.

### PERFORMANCE\*

0-60 MPH	N/A
¼-MILE	N/A

*\* No 1967 289, two-barrel Mustang road tests could be sourced.*



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# Rough and Ready

*This 1935 Studebaker Dictator Custom 2A sedan is a useable antique*

BY DAVID CONWILL • PHOTOGRAPHY BY EMMA DENNIS AND MATTHEW LITWIN





**M**odern cars are fast, smooth, silent, efficient, and well-connected to the information superhighway—but they’re boring. Why would you choose one when there is literally the entirety of automotive history from which to select an alternative? It’s no wonder the average driver can’t wait to become a passenger in his own \$40k self-driving bubble. A 1935 Studebaker Dictator is none of that.

Fast? It will do all legal speeds, though its 88-hp, 205-cu.in. flathead six-cylinder and three-speed manual transmission mean it doesn’t squirt up to 60 mph in 8.3 seconds like your crossover—and it’s happier cruising the 55-mph two lanes than gobbling up miles of 70-mph interstate. I guarantee you’ll have more fun getting up to speed, however, since you’re actually a part of the process, working the floor-mounted

pedals and gear selector, listening to the engine rpm change and the whine of the unsynchronized first gear (so much for “silent”) as you gather speed from a stop. It’s 17 seconds of enjoyment, instead of 8.3 of silent nothingness.

The engine in our subject car is a rugged sort. When owner Wallace “Keck” Crouthamel of Spencerport, New York, bought it, he was told, “It runs fine, it runs beautiful.” Although that is seemingly





**The Dictator's simple, robust, 205-cu.in., flathead, six-cylinder engine was rated at 88 horsepower making for a perfectly adequate power-to-weight ratio.**

two different levels of condition in one, it wasn't too far from the truth. "It would run with a prime," Keck recalls.

"I'd had it a couple years," Keck told us, when we photographed his car at the Studebaker Drivers Club Northeastern Zone Meet in Rutland, Vermont, "but it was not regularly running until this year, because there was stuff I had to do."

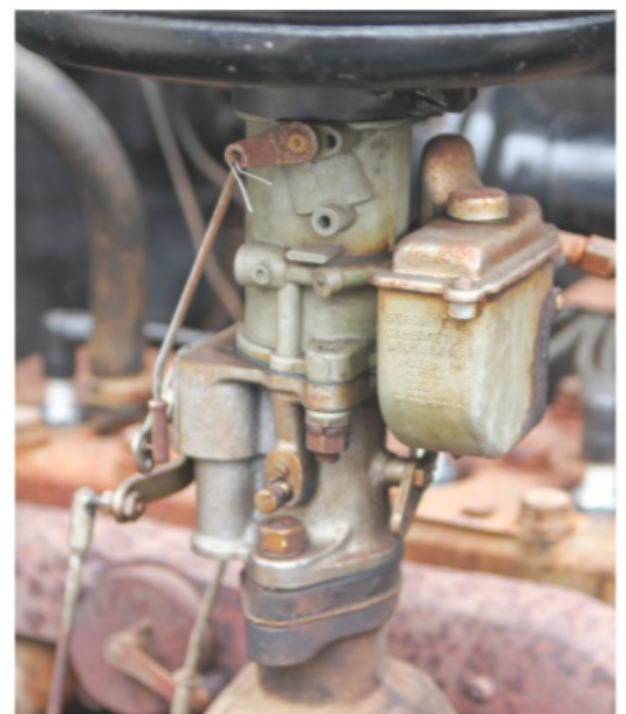
That "stuff" was what Keck characterizes as "Old Cars 101": Fuel, air, and spark. The biggest problem initially was the fuel system, which wasn't reliable until the line from the tank had been unplugged using braided-and-coated aircraft wire, the fuel pump rebuilt, and the tank itself de-sludged from years of sitting—perhaps the most trying part of the process, because the tank came out in a mere 30 minutes, but took three days of careful positioning to reinstall.

"A lot of people tell me I'm crazy, but I actually didn't need a lot of parts. The difficulty is figuring stuff out as you go. I didn't want to just take things apart." Luckily, Keck's not alone in facing the Stude, both because he's a part of the SDC and because, as he says, "I have friends who are good old-car mechanics." There's your information superhighway—

though the car itself is better for escaping our always-connected society than staying in touch with it while underway.

Smooth? Well, it's got leaf springs, a solid rear axle, and an early independent front suspension that incorporates a transverse leaf spring doing double-duty as the upper control arms. That system was called Planar and cost \$35 more than the standard front axle; it raised the cost of a Dictator Custom four-door sedan like this from \$770 to \$805, a price more on par with Hudson's Big Six than a Ford, Chevrolet, or Dodge. The Planar IFS was designed by Studebaker's well-known engineer Barney Roos, and was good enough to last through 1949. It's smooth, yes, but not numb. You use both hands on the wheel (one occasionally doing other duties, like shifting), both feet on the pedals, and you keep your eyes on the road since there's no computer to keep you from drifting out of your lane or tailgating.

As for handling, we didn't shove it into any corners at twice their posted speed or anything, but Keck also looked completely relaxed during his normal driving duties. Possibly helpful is that he's been through the first-year



(1934 used cable-operated mechanical brakes) hydraulic-drum braking system twice already.

"First, I rebuilt the wheel cylinders," he recalls, "but during a sudden stop the brakes went soft. Then I had to redo the master cylinder." Dialing in the adjustment was a bit of a trick, however, as instead of the familiar star-shaped adjuster, a special tool is required to fine tune the shoe-to-drum clearances. Thankfully, a friend with a De Soto had the same system. "Now it has brakes and they're pretty good, but they might need further bleeding."

There's nothing strenuous about driving the car and where I was, ensconced on the lovely, soft original mohair of the spacious back seat, the ride was positively relaxing—withstanding the excitement of the surroundings. Heating and ventilation are handled by completely mechanical means. It was too warm for the heater, but the rolled-down side windows and tip-out windshield provided more than adequate breezes to keep us cool while underway. In fact, at one point Keck had to





**Missing glovebox door notwithstanding, the Studebaker is remarkably complete. Note the paucity of driver distractions here: clutch, brake, accelerator, shifter, wheel, and five instruments; nothing else.**

adjust the windshield closed slightly, as we were a bit too well ventilated at highway speeds.

The body of the Studebaker, if not the unquestioned style leader of 1935, is at the very least an excellent example of automobile design in the era where the industry's initial streamlined designs started embracing the pontoon fender. Parked outside the Century of Progress exhibit in 1933-'34, it would have been a very up-to-the-minute car. It would have still looked good in the parking lots of the San Francisco and New York World's Fairs in 1939-'40. As to how it compares with the greige crossover, it certainly goes without saying that nothing since the advent of the 5-mph bumper has really been styled as well as anything from the 1930s—inside or out.

Decorative streamlining (dare we call it "speedlining" like the railroads used to?) aside, the Studebaker isn't particularly efficient in the modern sense of the term. The experience of the Chrysler and De Soto Airflow had taught '30s auto stylists that consumers weren't ready for scientific streamlining, they just wanted their cars not to look like bricks in the wind. Of





course, any streamlining is really only effective at relatively high speeds.

Around town, the simpler, lighter Stude probably does better on gas than the 3,500-pound crossover. Even if this one had the optional overdrive (co-developed by Chrysler and Studebaker engineers along with Borg-Warner, which would manufacture the units for the next 40 years), at 70 it wouldn't be very much fun. You could cross the country in a car like this, easily enough, but do it on the two-lane blacktop as intended. There's nothing to see on the super slab anyway.

On his way to the zone meet, Keck himself kept off the high-speed New York Thruway, selecting to make the 329-mile trip on Route 29 instead.

"I kept it under 50," he says, "because that's what it likes. I didn't want people held up because of me and I still have to go back home again."

Who is Keck and why does he own this patinated example of a provocatively named Studebaker from 15 or so years before he was born?

"I'm a fan of what they call orphan cars: Hudsons, Packards, et cetera, always caught my eye. If I ever win the lotto, the next car I'd get would be a Nash. If I'm driving through the country and I see a car of this age, I stop and take a look." He found this one near Gregsville, New York.

"I stopped to look at this one and although it was unrestored, it was all there and intact: doors, upholstery, and wiring. It was much further ahead than the basket cases I'd seen people restore and I figured that if I bought it, it would be a driver instead of a project."

It would seem he was correct, and some of the credit goes to what a solid car the Studebaker Dictator actually was.

The folks in South Bend evidently had only the dimmest idea of what was going on in Italy in 1927. It's the only way to explain how they settled on renaming the former Standard Six as Dictator—not really a compliment even then, though perhaps some dim admiration for making the trains come on time appealed to the efficient organization men at Studebaker.

Supposedly, the idea behind the name was to convey how Studebaker's then-cheapest model dictated the standard by which its competitors would be judged. The Dictator, then, was not The Standard of the World, but at least meant to be the unquestioned leader of the low-price, six-cylinder field (later the mid-price, six-cylinder field as low-priced cars moved away from four-cylinder engines).

A decade later, a couple years after Mussolini thumbed his nose at the League of Nations in Ethiopia, and shortly after Hitler tore up the treaty of Versailles, Studebaker quietly resurrected the Commander name and substituted it for Dictator.

Controversial naming aside, the Dictator was a good car in 1935 and it's still a good car today. Studebaker may be gone, but its passionate fans remain, making those cars excellent to own even now. Keck's going to take advantage of those resources further for this car, with a windshield-wiper motor rebuild and a second taillamp planned for the near future. 🐞







What draws even casual observers to the Dictator are its striking details from the transitional period between Art Deco and Streamline Moderne.



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spotlight  
america's pony cars



1978-'81

Chevrolet

Camaro

*Forty years after the last second-gen F-bodies rolled off the line, the entry-level models remain a decent value*

BY JEFF KOCH • PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF GENERAL MOTORS





1978 CAMARO RALLY SPORT COUPE

Life, the cliché goes, is what happens while you're making other plans. History has revealed that even mighty GM's plans were altered: In 1975, a new Camaro started development for 1980; in 1977, the program was put on hold while the engineers turned their attention toward front-wheel-drive cars. That year, a Pete Estes-led group of worldwide product planners decided the new F-body should be front-wheel-drive and the release of this new platform was postponed until 1982. While the launch date stuck, GM management decided it didn't have the purse strings to make the then-hot-selling F-body a front-driver, and with Irv Rybicki replacing Bill Mitchell as GM's Design VP, the third-gen F-body got underway again.

That meant that the car featured here, the late second-gen Camaro, was originally destined to end in 1979. Instead, it was built clear through 1981. Sales of all models were at 152,000 in 1980 (respectable for such a big car during a fuel crisis) and just over 126,000 in 1981. That's 275,000 second-gen Camaros

that weren't supposed to be built, if GM had its way. But those numbers pale in comparison to 1978's 272,000 and 1979's 282,000 built. That's 829,000 Camaros over its last four years of life. Winnow out the hot Z28 models and you're looking at just over 600,000 plebian-yet-popular Camaros that people bought as clean, sharp, attractive, nice-driving, smooth-riding ordinary daily-driven cars — cars that could coddle as well as give a majestic feel behind that long hood. Would this generation have remained as interesting without that little gestation hiccup letting it live beyond its planned life? And can a modern collector/enthusiast be able to take advantage?

Thanks to those sales numbers, plus the millions built since the second F-body's mid-1970 launch, this generation of Camaro is not particularly rare... though 40 years after production ceased, plenty have succumbed to uncaring owners, questionable hop-ups, donating bits and pieces for "more valuable" models, and rust in parts of the country where salted





350-CU.IN. V-8

winter streets were the norm for a portion of each year.

Of course, the Camaro was still subject to the marketing and engineering divisions' need to make an older car seem new, and so there were changes a-plenty. For 1978, the Camaro received a new urethane nose and tail (with license plate recess) hiding 5-mph bumpers, which replaced the exposed aluminum bars it had worn since 1974. Redesigned front fenders helped better integrate the new nose. Tri-color taillamps graced the rear. The luxurious Type LT variant continued, and the spirited Rally Sport returned after an absence. Smoked-glass T-tops became available, as did color-keyed rally wheels. The standard transmission with the 305 was a four-speed manual, except in California, where GM chose not to sell any more stick-shift Camaros through the end of the second-gen's production run.

For 1979, the Camaro was largely status quo. A new instrument panel was introduced; Rally Sport was its own model, rather than an optional package on base coupe and Type LT models; the more luxurious Type LT was replaced with the plush new Berlinetta model; tape decks and CB radios became optional; and the rear window forced-air defogger was replaced with electric thread.

Model year 1980 saw only minor changes beyond the powertrain selection (see Engines and Drivetrain); wire wheel covers replaced the Berlinetta's polycast wheels, and the vinyl top option was taken away. For 1981, you'd think that Chevy

would have been happy to coast through the year, knowing that a new model was on the horizon, but the division kept introducing incremental advances. Halogen headlamps, power brakes, and a space-saver spare were now standard; the Rally Sport model went away again; a Check Engine light appeared in the dash; and automatic transmissions received a lockup torque converter. Those last two features were related to the bigger news: Computer Command Control made the 1981 Camaro the first to have a computer-controlled carb mixture, that new torque converter, and more.

Judging by production numbers and current price guides, and taking out the Z28 numbers, which are not within the scope of this story, the '80s second-gen Camaro models are more rare than their '70s brethren, yet the '70s models are

still worth more. Go figure. No matter how you slice it, that makes the later cars bargains.

## ENGINES AND DRIVETRAIN

Three engines were available for 1978: the venerable 110-hp L22 250-cu.in. inline six, the 145-hp 305-cu.in. V-8, and the 170-hp LM1 350-cu.in. V-8. California cars saw 10 horsepower knocked off the V-8 power ratings, and a whopping 20 less with the six. (Z28 got a higher-output 350.) A year later, the six gained five horsepower, but the 49-state 305 dropped to 125 hp.

The bulk of 1980's relevant changes were under the hood. The old inline six was exchanged for a pair of V-6 models: California got the even-fire 110-hp Buick-sourced 3.8-liter V-6, while the rest of America got the odd-fire 229-cubic-inch 115-hp Chevy V-6. A small-block with a smaller bore, the new L39 (267 cubic inches) debuted with 120 horsepower on tap; it was not available in California. The 305-cube LG4 pumped out 155 horsepower, whether it was in California or not. The Z28's LG4 305 gained another ten horsepower, while the sole remaining 350, the LM1, was available only in the Z28 and good for 190 horsepower (the most powerful Z since 1974). For 1981, the second-gen Camaro's run-out year, engine choice remained the same as '80, but with a little less power across the line of V-8s. Thanks in part to CCC, the sole California-only engine in the Camaro was now the Buick V-6.



1978 CAMARO COUPE





1979 CAMARO RALLY SPORT COUPE

The V-8 models would be easiest (and most economical) to rebuild; a seemingly endless array of parts, from cylinder heads to carburetors to camshafts and more, can be employed from the aftermarket or from later parts cars, incorporating newer technology to invisibly boost power and/or efficiency.

Manual transmissions included three-speed and four-speed (Saginaw) gearboxes, available with different engines over the four-year span. That said, the vast majority of this generation Camaro is backed by the venerable TH-350 three-speed automatic, which is easily rebuilt even today. The 1981 model's CCC-controlled lockup torque converter only locked up in third gear. No four-speed manuals were available with 350-powered Camaros in 1981.

A variety of final-drive gear ratios, from 2.73 to 3.73, were available depending on model year, transmission, whether or not you lived in California, whether or not someone selected a non-stock ratio when ordering the car, whether or not you lived 4,000 feet or more above sea level... The good news is, most Camaros came with an 8.5-inch ring gear inside a durable 10-bolt rear. Regardless of the ratio it may now employ, better acceleration is a gear swap away—and as it's a change no one can see, no one will grumble about you "hot rodding" a nice old stock Camaro.

BODY AND CHASSIS

The second-generation Camaro's body is all steel and changed only slightly throughout production. The front end sheetmetal

WHAT TO PAY

	Low	Average	High
1978			
Camaro	\$4,000	\$9,000	\$14,000
Type LT	\$4,000	\$9,500	\$14,500
1979			
Camaro	\$5,000	\$10,500	\$19,000
Berlinetta	\$5,250	\$10,500	\$19,500
1980			
Camaro	\$4,500	\$8,500	\$13,500
Berlinetta	\$4,500	\$9,000	\$14,500
1981			
Camaro	\$4,000	\$8,000	\$12,000
Berlinetta	\$4,100	\$8,100	\$12,750

Source: NADA.com

PARTS PRICES

AC compressor .....	\$375
Bumper cover (front lower support) .....	\$350
Bumper cover (rear urethane) .....	\$480
Carburetors (remanufactured).....	\$220
Exhaust manifold .....	\$380/pair
Front end rebuild kit .....	\$250/kit
Fuel pump (mechanical).....	\$30 starting
Fuel tank.....	\$150 starting
Heater core assembly.....	\$95
Pitman arm .....	\$87
Quarter patch panel (lower).....	\$40
Quarter panel repair skin .....	\$160
Radiator support assembly.....	\$360
Radiator .....	\$230-\$400
Roof panel replacement skin .....	\$380
Steering gear box.....	\$210
Tail lamp lenses .....	\$165
Tires .....	\$167
Water pump .....	\$45
Weatherstrip kits (complete).....	\$430

1980 CAMARO BERLINETTA COUPE





and doors interchange from '78-'81. Restoration boffins will note that a post-'75 wraparound-rear-window quarter will fit, as will 1975-and-later floors, which were modified to clear the catalytic converter.

The unit-body Camaro uses a removable bolt-in front subframe that provides engine and front suspension anchoring, while from the firewall back, the construction is unit-body. Badly rusted cars can suffer from rot in the rear frame members and at the points where the front rails bolt to the floor pans.

The F-bodies of this period didn't put up much of a fight against road salt. Prepare to get that car on a lift for a thorough inspection. Rust will show itself in the floor pans, all around (and particularly behind) the front and rear wheel openings, lower fenders and quarters, rocker panels, along the bottoms of the doors where the sheetmetal skin is folded over, subframes (particularly the front mounts), rear spring pockets, the points where the quarters and rockers meet, under the vinyl roof if so equipped, and in the corners of the doors as well. The lower cowl is a rust hotspot, too, but can't be seen without removing the front fenders. Remember that the hood, doors, decklid, and bumpers are easy enough to replace without repair—but the unit-body structure is a far tougher fix.

Another potential cause of rust is the removable panels of T-roof cars—they're notorious for leaking—so if the model you're looking at is so equipped, take extra time to make sure everything is clean and dry under the carpets. Unit-body cars flex when large chunks of the roof are removed, so also check for body panel cracks in T-top-equipped models. The good news is that reproduction and NOS replacement steel (and even softer parts, like our target models' bumper caps) is amply available.

There are two kinds of second-gen Camaro: those which have had their door hinge pins replaced because of sagging, and those that need their door hinge pins replaced because of sagging. The massive doors on these cars put a strain on their mechanisms; unattended, this can wreak havoc in the door jambs around the striker plate. Luckily, repair kits are easily found.

## SUSPENSION

Upper and lower A-arms, ball joints, coil springs, an anti-sway bar, and telescoping shock absorbers live up front, while leaf springs and shock absorbers prop up the rear. Basic Camaros were tuned for comfort over sport, though even base models had a  $\frac{15}{16}$ -inch front anti-sway bar as standard. GM's spring rates changed from year to year, model to model, and engine to engine, and accounted for myriad options. Replacement components, whether stock replacement or slightly beefier aftermarket pieces, are readily available from your favorite Camaro parts supplier.

## INTERIOR

The Camaro's cabin is a fine place to do business. Pieces for the '79-up instrument panel may be harder to come by, as they were made for fewer years than the '78 dash that dated back to 1970. Bucket seats are comfortable and supportive, and replacement seat cover kits, as well as replacement material, are available to reupholster whatever cloth or vinyl has worn out over four decades of use. Plastics tend to get brittle; replacement components are amply available.

## IN CONCLUSION

Early Camaros remain plentiful for many reasons: They're attractive, they're easy to fix and sort out, and that low-slung cabin with its forever hood instills a sense of power—even if a six is running the show. And because so many of these later cars were made, there are still enough of them out there to be fairly plentiful and correspondingly inexpensive. What's more, they're easily upgraded—the

Camaro benefits from one of the most aggressive aftermarket parts programs ever. If you're looking for a Camaro to modify, save some money and get a Sport Coupe, Type LT, or Berlinetta. Or maybe just leave it be and enjoy it as it came from the factory. Or install some quiet upgrades—suspension and steering parts will bolt on from a Z28, and you can transform its handling on the cheap. That's one of the joys of Camaro: You can easily make it whatever you want it to be. 🏁

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1978 CAMARO TYPE LT



1979 CAMARO BERLINETTA



1979 CAMARO SPORT COUPE



1980 CAMARO RALLY SPORT COUPE

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# Flight of Fury

*A penchant for Mopars leads to the acquisition of  
a 1960 Plymouth convertible*

BY MATTHEW LITWIN • PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVID CONWILL





Vintage vehicle enthusiasts can usually pinpoint when an infatuation with a particular make or model began to take root. Often, it happens during formative years, when we're more susceptible to impressions that leave an indelible mark. It could have been something as simple as the first "new" car that arrived in the family driveway, or maybe a dramatic win at a local drag race during those teen years. Maybe it was the fleeting glimpse of something special during a routine trip into town. For New Cumberland, Pennsylvania, resident John Rudy, it was a television show.

"I lived with my grandmother, and she loved watching *The Lawrence Welk Show*. We used to have to watch it with her. Well, the show was sponsored by Dodge for several years, but there was a little window of time when Plymouth was in the

show title during the late Fifties. They'd always splash the newest, best cars in the ads, and that's when I really began to fall for the Mopars. Particularly the big Fury convertibles when they came out. I'd go to school and tell all my friends how good the Mopars looked," John reminisces.

It's easy to understand how easily John could have succumbed to the force of Plymouth's sporty Fury. After the model was first presented as part of the 1955 lines, within two scant years, Virgil Exner's "Forward Look" design had not only dramatically reversed a corporate sales slump, it also received a redefining visual facelift. Simultaneously, engineering introduced a new 118-inch wheelbase chassis (save for station wagons) featuring a front torsion-bar suspension system and a reconfigured mounting system for the upper control arms. These subtle-yet-advanced



changes worked in unison to dramatically improve straight-line ride level and cornering stability, and to reduce nose-diving during hard braking.

Furthermore, in addition to the usual six-cylinder, no fewer than four V-8 engines were offered to customers. An exception to the array of power choices was found with the Fury hardtop, a spirited new model that was introduced in January. Unlike its divisional siblings, the Fury received a 290-hp, 318-cu.in. V-8 engine as standard equipment.

Between the fresh look and refined engineering, Plymouth proclaimed, “Suddenly it’s 1960.” The truly all-new investment for the 1957 models paid huge dividends, as the division manufactured 762,231 cars—a 44.3 percent gain over the previous year and its best performance in decades—enabling Plymouth to leapfrog its way into third spot in domestic sales, a spot it had relinquished in ’54. In what seemed like a natural state of existence, the “low-priced three” were reunited, in a way. However, the smashing of sales barriers came with a price.

Expectations for Plymouth were high going into the 1958 model year. With more than \$300 million spent on the corporate redesign a year prior, model year updates for ’58 were probably best described as modest. So, too, were the few noteworthy engineering advances: a fuel-injection system found on the optional Golden Commando V-8, and a Sure-Grip differential that was restricted to a few specific final-drive ratios in select models, neither of which produced “gotta-have-it” orders. A recession didn’t help matters, either. The result was a staggering 44-percent drop in production, yet Plymouth clung to the coveted third position in the industry due to the simple fact that, collectively, Detroit witnessed a 30.6-percent decline in sales overall.

A year later, Chrysler Corporation invested another \$150 million in its five divisions, which were to include more obvious visual refinements and mechanical enhancements. Much of the focus was aimed at Plymouth, both internally and at the dealership level. Although the core of the two-year-old body remained, the grille/bumper design up front and the tail details were heavily revised. The torsion-bar suspension system, hidden below the front end, was altered to accommodate shorter bars. Cabins were updated, too, while new options appeared, such as the now-iconic front swivel seats, as well as self-dimming rear-view mirrors and electronic headlamp dimmers. Demand for V-8 power was on the rise, and many of Plymouth’s offerings boasted

new power ratings aimed at keeping the cars competitive against market rivals.

Conversely, concerns regarding build quality had begun to surface, and the body soon proved to be uncharacteristically susceptible to premature rust. Despite the push for dealers to treat the corporation’s high-volume name plate accordingly, the effort netted a mere 11.6 percent gain, bringing into question Plymouth’s ability to defend its third-place ranking against Rambler, whose sales had doubled during the year. There were other contributing factors, though.

On the corporate level, what had been Plymouth-De Soto at the onset of 1959 had become Plymouth-De Soto-Valiant within the model year. This would only be the beginning of a continuous shuffle. In 1960, the divisions were aligned as Chrysler-Plymouth-De Soto-Valiant, which gave way to Chrysler-Plymouth in 1961 after De Soto was discontinued and Valiant was absorbed by Plymouth. If that were not enough, during 1960, Plymouth was given its own sales outlets, removed from Dodge. This was done in the hopes that Plymouth would experience a stand-alone sales boost. However, that effort was undermined almost immediately when Dodge dealers were given the full-size Dart, priced just \$20 more than Plymouth’s entry-level Savoy. Add to that Chrysler’s welcoming of the Newport, brought forth to fill the gap created by the dearly departed De Soto; it cost only a few hundred more than a V-8 powered Fury sedan. Confused? So were buyers.

Tucked in amongst the corporate shuffling, see-saw sales trends, and the quality control conundrum were Plymouth’s new 1960 full-size cars. New, because on the corporate level, the chassis (save for Imperial) were switched from a traditional body-on-frame design to true unit-body construction. Although its wheelbase still measured 118 inches in all but the station wagons, Plymouth was all-too eager to take advantage of the fantastic engineering that went into the design.

The division’s “Solid Plymouth” sales campaign proclaimed that the unit-body provided 100-percent-greater body rigidity, attributed to roughly 5,400 welds used to create the structure, which included a system of robust inner box-section rails that rose from the sills, outlined the tops of the doors, and descended to the rear wheel openings. To ward off previously problematic rust, the assembly line administered six chemical sprays and seven dunks into chemical baths, after which each body







The base engine within the Fury series was the 230-hp version of the A-series “polysphere” V-8.

was finished with four coats of enamel paint. To help suppress noise transfer throughout the structure, the suspension was redeveloped with more compliant suspension bushings, further bolstered by liberally applied sound-deadening coatings and fiber matting. Furthermore, the powertrain was isolated from the body on its own front subframe, later known more commonly as the “K-frame.”

Speaking of the powertrain, there were advances there, too. Gone was the dated L-head six cylinder, replaced by a version of the Slant Six found in the Valiant, but one that instead touted 145 hp from 225 cubic inches of displacement. At the opposite end of the power band was a new 383-cu.in. SonoRamic Commando V-8 that featured “cross-ram” intake manifolds, dual four-barrel carburetors, and 330 horsepower in full song. They were joined by long-established stalwarts: the two-barrel, 230-hp 318-cu.in. “Fury V-800,” the four-barrel “Super Pak” version of the 318 rated for 260 hp, and the “Golden Commando 395” 361-cu.in. V-8 rated for 305 hp.

Sporting new cowl-forward front ends, a fresh application of trim, and more pronounced “stabilizer” fins outside, each Plymouth’s cabin was refined with a growing slant towards space-age interests. One of the more unique traits was the slightly rectangular steering wheel found within the top-of-the-line Fury series, which now consisted of four-door sedan and hardtop body styles, as well as a two-door hardtop, and our featured two-door convertible.

Since graduating high school in 1964, John has spent his time hunting, accumulating, and restoring a vast array of Mopars, and he’s especially drawn to the 1957-’60 Forward Look cars. Since they comprise an overwhelming portion of his collection, it should have been no surprise that when word reached John of a 1960 Fury convertible available in a nearby estate, he jumped at the opportunity to investigate further.

“I was alerted to this Plymouth two years ago and I wasted little time in stopping to look at it. I’ve had several over the years, and it’s not uncommon to find them in a condition where you could have a party on the ground between the doors—they can be that full of rust. But this one was in fantastic condition.





“It’s artwork to me. But this isn’t art that I let sit in the garage; this is art I like to drive and enjoy.”

The estate of the original owner told me that he had the car restored. I crawled all over the Fury and couldn’t find anything wrong with it, so I bought it. The title was goofed up—it said sedan instead

of convertible—but because it was a Pennsylvania title, it wasn’t a deal-breaking issue to correct,” reports John.

During our visit, we had an opportunity to experience the unit-body Fury on the country lanes surrounding John’s residence. The convertible had been equipped from the factory with a standard interior, meaning there were no optional swivel front seats drawing us into the cabin. What did welcome us was pure supportive comfort with ample legroom, and ample shoulder space between me and colleague David Conwill.

About the only thing that felt out of sorts was the rectangular steering wheel, but only in how it should be gripped for control. Once firing the standard two-barrel 318 under the hood, and managing the push-button TorqueFlite automatic into drive, it was easy to see why the wheel was designed in such an elegant fashion: It didn’t impede forward straight-line vision.

All the refinements Plymouth boasted came forth during our driving experience. Both the optional power steering and brake systems responded in a manner typical of the era, while the chassis and torsion bar suspension worked in unison to provide a smooth and level ride. Uneven hazards were isolated and swallowed, and while not to a level of say, a period Cadillac, the effect was still enough that the feeling of road imperfections was but a blip on the radar. Throttle response was quicker than anticipated, and cornering was far more comfortable than other rides, even when pushed just a skosh harder than “normal” conditions.

“You can see why Plymouth sold nearly 55,500 Furys,” comments John, who adds, “For what was supposed to be a low-priced car, they ride like a dream, and they look good, too. It’s artwork to me. But this isn’t art that I let sit in the garage; this is art I like to drive and enjoy.” 🚗



An iconic feature found within the Fury was the rectangular steering wheel with its unique horn bar. TorqueFlite automatics in this generation Fury were of the push-button variety.







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# Upwardly Mobile

*America's Low-Price Three Enter High Society*

BY BILL ROTHERMEL • IMAGES PROVIDED BY THE AUTHOR



MAKES ELEGANCE AN EVERYDAY AFFAIR

The 1967 Caprice Custom Sedan. Elegance begins with Body by Fisher, of course.

Every year one or two cars stand conspicuously apart. Like '67 Caprice by Chevrolet.

Caprice for 1967: A beautiful car where styling begins with Body by Fisher. Front fender lamps integrated into the total design. Rear fender skirts you specify for hardtops. Bright wheel moldings and wheel covers that distinguish Caprice from other Chevrolets.

Luxury keeps right on going inside, too. Plush carpeting is everywhere, even part way up the doors. Walnut-toned accents decorate instrument and door panels. A front seat folding armrest in the sedan. (If Strato-bucket seats are your preference, you can order them in the coupe.) That's the out and inside of style. Now standard safety features. A long list, including the GM-developed energy-absorbing steering column, dual master cylinder brake system with warning light, energy-absorbing instrument panel with smooth contoured knobs and levers, four-way hazard warning flasher.

The inventory of things to add is more impressive than ever before. Like the new 8-track stereo tape system, complete with a free 80-minute tape. Like the Comfortilt steering wheel. Comfortron automatic heating and cooling; set it once and stay that temperature all year long. Not to mention Turbo-Jet V8 power you can add.

There are four 1967 Caprices: sedan, coupe, two wagons. They're all salon-styled and Chevrolet-priced. And they're at your Chevrolet dealer's now.

**GM**  
MARK OF EXCELLENCE

**CHEVROLET**  
Everything new that could happen... happened!

THE GRAND CHEVROLET  
'67 CAPRICE

Chevrolet's Caprice Custom was introduced as a specially-trimmed two-door hardtop. Initial sales were so successful, not only did it become a stand-alone model, four-door versions were added to the lineup.

America's automobile market boomed during the Fifties. The occasional Corvette, Nash-Healey, Kaiser Darrin, and Thunderbird notwithstanding, full-size cars ruled the new car market. Volkswagen's Beetle, and a few other imports, were novel, too, but they were still mere blips on the radar. "One size fits all" could have been the mantra of domestic manufacturers, but things began to change with the back-to-back introductions of the compact 1958 Rambler American (technically a re-introduction) and 1959 Studebaker Lark.

Though compacts were hardly new, the Lark and Rambler American were met with unexpected enthusiasm. Hence the "Big Three" introduced new compacts for 1960: the Ford Falcon, Chevrolet Corvair, and Chrysler Corp's new Valiant line. In March the same year, Mercury offered the upmarket Falcon-based Comet, followed by GM's so-called "senior" compacts

in 1961: the Buick Skylark, Oldsmobile F-85, and Pontiac Tempest. A year later, Chevrolet added the more conventional front-engine Chevy II. There was a consequence, however, in that a size and price gap was exposed between the compact and full-size models.

Ford was the first to provide a solution with its 1962 Fairlane, which was a foot shorter than a full-size Galaxie and eight inches longer than the Falcon, birthing the intermediate car. GM responded quickly: Chevrolet unveiled its mid-size Chevelle in 1964. Simultaneously, the basic Fisher body shell was delivered to Buick, Olds, and Pontiac, which in turn applied their respective compact nameplates.

Other gaps were similarly filled. Consider the Ford Mustang that spawned the "pony car" market and later included Camaro, Firebird, Cougar, Javelin, Challenger, and Barracuda. Pontiac's 1962 Grand Prix and Buick's '63 Riviera joined the Thunderbird in the personal

luxury car market. At the upper end of the spectrum, Oldsmobile introduced the front-wheel-drive Toronado for '66; Cadillac, the Fleetwood Eldorado in '67; and Lincoln, the Continental Mark III in '69. Even American Motors found itself offering everything from the Rambler Americans to full-size Ambassadors, sporty Javelins, and intermediate Rebels and Marlins. Let's not forget the performance versions that evolved, too. The effect was dizzying to buyers who faced more choices than ever.

This "Something for everyone" approach wasn't new. It was part of Alfred Sloan's plan for General Motors during the Twenties, believing buyers began with a Chevrolet, moved up to an Oakland, then Oldsmobile, Buick next, and finally Cadillac. The short-lived companion makes added stepping stones. Flash forward, and consumers' taste for luxury options on automobiles burgeoned in the



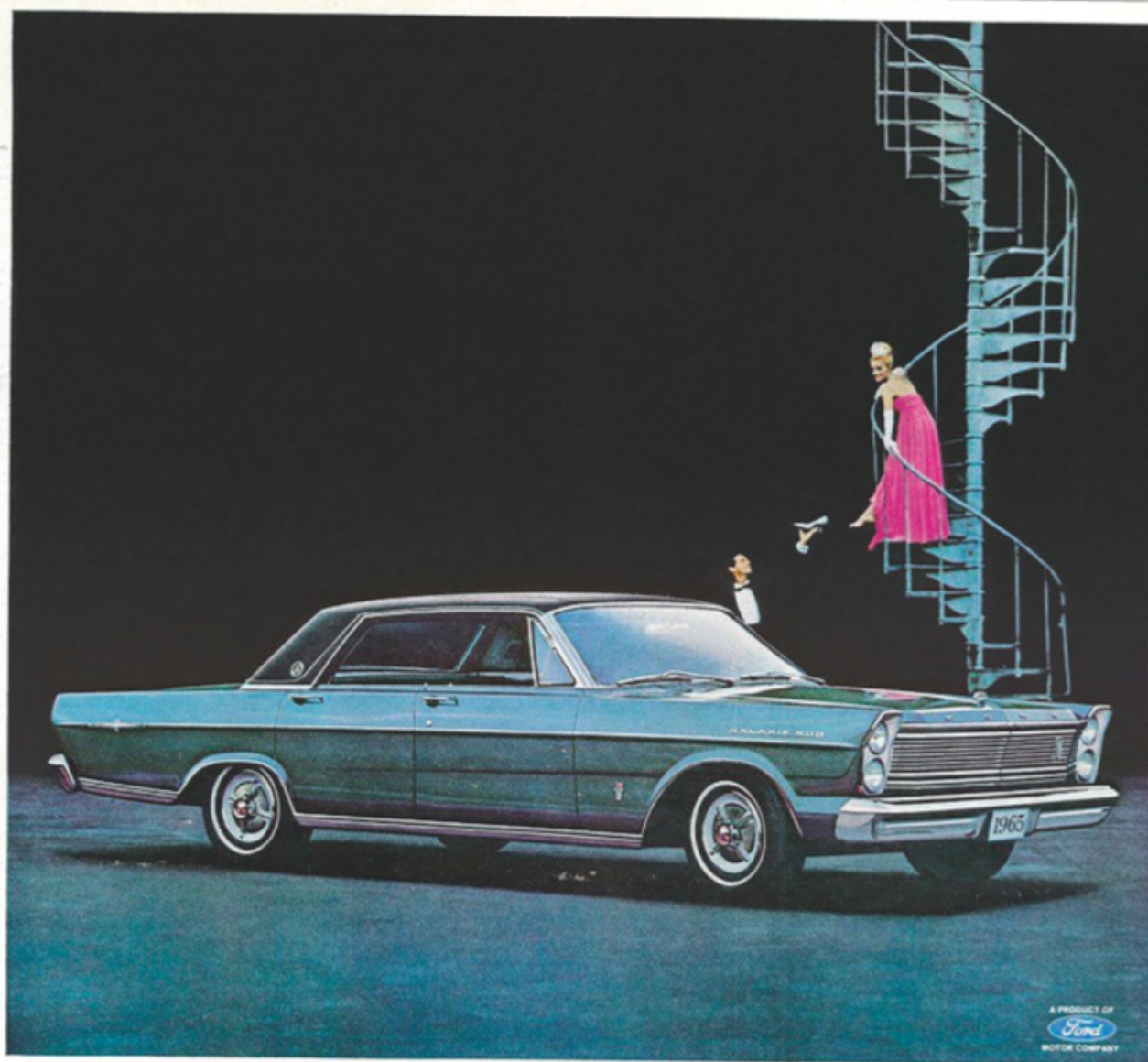
Fifties and Sixties. Air conditioning, power accessories (like windows, door locks, seats, and antennas), AM-FM multiplex radios with tape players, vinyl roofs, tilt steering wheels, and special interiors were in demand and no longer relegated to luxury cars like Cadillac, Lincoln, and Imperial.

Despite the proliferation, the full-size car remained dominant, commanding the greatest market share. Year-after-year, full-size Chevrolets were the best-selling cars in America. Of the 2,383,504 new Chevrolets built in 1965, an astounding 1,647,614 were full-size models! Chevrolet and its low-price competitors from Ford and Plymouth sought to strengthen their market share by tapping into the growing demand for more luxurious, well-equipped models.

## THE BONNEVILLE BROUGHAM

Surprisingly, it wasn't Chevrolet, Ford, or Plymouth to strike first; rather, it was Pontiac, which announced the up-level Bonneville Brougham in 1964. Not a separate model, it was offered as a \$247 option package on the Bonneville Vista hardtop sedan.

Inside, custom "Preston" nylon knit fabric covered seats that boasted front and rear armrests, while outside a custom Cordova vinyl roof with special "Brougham" trim completed the package. Pontiac cleverly advertised the car in "triple black" fitted with the division's distinctive 8-lug wheels, adding to its luxury appeal. Sales were not recorded, yet they were good enough for the option to remain available through 1970 when it was replaced with the Grand Ville Brougham as a stand-alone model and Pontiac's top car.



Is there nothing exclusive left for the rich? For instance—what car offers you more luxury than Ford's new Galaxie 500 LTD? LTD has: a new, stronger body creating a new level of quiet comfort; upholsteries so costly they are matched by few cars at any price; richly panelled interiors; lights everywhere—in the doors, ash tray, glove box, trunk. Silent-Flo ventilation system is standard on the 4-door LTD. In fact, LTD has everything but a luxury car price. (Probably you can do without that!)

Best year yet to go Ford!  
Test Drive Total Performance 165  
**FORD**  
Mustang Falcon Fairlane Torino Thunderbird

LEFT: Ford's clever 1965 Galaxie 500 LTD versus Rolls-Royce.

ABOVE: Stand-alone ad announcing the Galaxie 500 LTD.

## Ford quieter than Rolls-Royce?

"Dammit, sir!  
Those upstart American  
car-makers  
just don't know their place..."

—London Daily Mirror, October 26, 1964

"The silence," continues the world's largest daily newspaper, "comes from the Ford Motor Company of Detroit. You know, those cheap who built the Tin Lizzie—the Model T."

They were having a little quiet British too with our recent advertisement describing the mechanical noise in which 1965 Ford's built-up and built-up, with 390-cu. in. V-8 engines only quieter than the legendary Rolls-Royce.

People must react strongly to this news. A radio station in New Orleans interrupted its rock concert to say "Shameless a driver."

"Silence?" (But we'll let they hadn't taken a test drive in the new Ford.)

For years, said the London Daily Mirror, Rolls-Royce has ruled that "at 60 miles per hour the loudest noise in the Rolls-Royce comes from the electric clock." They pointed out that "noise caused out by a flux of acoustic waves."

Ford was 2.4 decibels quieter than a Rolls-Royce. And you do get the luxury of quiet. And quiet is decisive evidence of strength, solidity and quality in a car.

If you'd like to take sides in the Rolls-Royce controversy, we know the best place to start: at your Ford Dealer's. Stop by and take a test drive in a 1965 Ford. We think you'll be pleasantly surprised by what you see... and what you don't hear!

Don't you get it yet? Well, the Daily Mirror tell you that the new Ford is 2.4 decibels quieter than a Rolls-Royce. And you do get the luxury of quiet. And quiet is decisive evidence of strength, solidity and quality in a car.

**FORD**  
Mustang Falcon Fairlane Torino Thunderbird



## THE FORD GALAXIE 500 LTD

Of the traditional "low-priced three," Ford was the first to offer a premium full-size luxury car. Named the LTD, it was an upmarket version of the Galaxie 500 series that displaced the former top-of-the-line Galaxie 500XL to a sporty trim level one notch below. Introduced at the beginning of the 1965 model year, it was available in both two- and four-door hardtop variations; starting prices were \$3,167 and \$3,245 respectively.

Standard equipment included a 200-hp 390-cu.in. V-8, Cruise-O-Matic transmission, full-length rocker and lower quarter panel moldings, wheel lip mold-

ings, four-spoke wheel covers, hood ornament, horizontally stretched star emblem on the rear quarter panels, and circular LTD medallions on the C-pillars. On sedans, a thin, bright molding wrapped around the base of the C-pillar and below the rear window.

Inside, the Scotchgard-protected "Pinseal" nylon upholstery was stretched over thick padding, with rear-seat passengers treated to a fold-down armrest. Door panels were exclusive to the LTD with a large, pleated vinyl design and color-keyed carpet along the bottom portion, accented by bright trim with simulated walnut wood and door-mounted courtesy





## '66 CAPRICE BY CHEVROLET

More than an elegant new car,  
it's a luxurious new series:  
four models in all. The Caprice Customs,  
made by Chevrolet.



Caprice Custom Coupe with Strato-bucket seats and center console you can order

Coupe, Sedan and Wagons now. And elegance is everywhere you turn. Rich fabrics. Supple vinyls. Deep-twist carpeting underfoot. The look of hand-rubbed walnut.

For the Coupe, there's a rakish new roof line you won't see on any other Chevrolet. Slender new Strato-bucket seats and center console, on order. Wagons—two-seat and three—have the look of wood along each side and in back.

Caprice rides so hushed and steady, you'll think you're gliding above the road instead of on it. As for performance, we offer all you'd ask: Turbo-Jet 427, for one, a 390-hp V8 that's smooth and quiet.

Caprice: not the car for everyone, but maybe the car for you. See, at your Chevrolet dealer's.



Chevrolet Division of General Motors, Detroit, Michigan

**ABOVE:** Chevrolet debuted the Caprice Custom during 1965 and within months it became a stand-alone model. **BELOW:** The 1965 Caprice Custom's interior ad.

lights. Walnut appliqués adorned the instrument panel, too, and the headliner and sun visors were finished in a gabardine fabric. Pedals were trimmed in bright metal and an electric clock was standard.

Ford was so confident in its new offerings that it claimed the cars were quieter than a Rolls-Royce. J. Walter Thompson, Ford's ad agency, pitted a 1965 Galaxie 500 LTD four-door hardtop, a Galaxie 500XL, and a Galaxie 500 sedan against a Rolls-Royce Silver Cloud, with Ford declared the winner (even if it was incrementally so). Ads proclaimed, "Don't whisper in the back seat of a '65 Ford if you don't want to be heard in the front."

Ford sold 68,038 hardtop sedans and 37,691 hardtop coupes in the LTD's first model year. By the time the Caprice arrived, Ford bragged that the new LTD comprised nearly 17 percent of its full-size car purchases. Strong annual sales and high customer satisfaction gave the LTD top-tier status in the Ford lineup well into the 21st Century.

## THE CHEVROLET CAPRICE

Chevrolet General Manager Semon E. "Bunkie" Knudsen was no stranger to special models. Formerly with Pontiac, Knudsen was the one to issue the directive in late-1963 that Chevrolet Styling fit a 1964 Impala four-door hardtop sedan with a vinyl roof covering and full custom interior. It was called the Impala Brougham, which arguably led to the development of a new model.

The debut of the Caprice Custom Sedan occurred at the February 1965 Chicago Auto Show. For \$242.10 over the base \$2,850 Impala, option Z18 included deeply cushioned seats in premium cloth and vinyl, with a fold-down center armrest for the rear seat passengers. Real wood accents highlighted the steering wheel, instrument panel and door panels, and deep-twist carpeting covered the floor and lower door panels. A special headliner and side-trim panels in the trunk hinted at even more luxury.

Outside, hand-applied dual pinstripes color-coordinated with the interior, as

If you hear a squeak in this car  
it's probably the  
piccolo player on your FM stereo

The pleasant sounds you hear, the unpleasant you don't. That's one of the luxuries of riding in this new Caprice — with its acoustically insulated Body by Fisher, graced by a Jet-smoother ride. Take the road noises you hear in ordinary cars, for instance. The closest thing to these you're likely to pick up are the sounds of Bourbon Street and

Tin Pan Alley — coming in loud and clear over the 4-speaker multiplex AM-FM stereo radio you can order in any of the four elegant new Caprice models. Other creature comforts include Strato-bucket front seats and a fully instrumented console available in the Custom Coupe. Why not have a quiet talk about a new Caprice with your Chevrolet dealer.

Caprice—elegance the Chevrolet way





1966 Caprice Custom Wagon at the Biltmore House and Gardens in Asheville, N.C.

### Elegant '66 Caprice Custom Wagons—priced the Chevrolet way

Every inch new, from headlights to taillamps. On the outside: bold smartness of gleaming wood-like paneling.

On the inside: luxury vinyl upholstery, deep foam cushioning, lush deep-twist carpeting. Instrument-panel inlays with the customized look of hand-rubbed walnut. Seat belts front, rear and in the third seat in three-seat models. (Ask passengers to fasten them before taking off. You, too—get the habit!)

On the practical side: over 100 cubic feet of easy-loading cargo space. There's a smooth

sedan-like ride from big coil springs and new softer shock absorbers at each wheel. And a selection of V8 power available: a

196 Turbo-Jet at 325 hp—or 427-cubic-inch Turbo-Jet engines at 390 and 425 hp.

On the price side: much less than other cars this elegant. They're altogether new, altogether luxurious, altogether Chevrolet. A new standard in ride, in power, in comfort. 1966 Caprice Custom Wagons—at your dealer's now.

... Chevrolet Division of General Motors, Detroit, Michigan.

Caprice  
CHEVROLET



well as a black-accented grille and rear trim panel, came from the Impala SS, as did the three-spoke spinner wheel covers, albeit with Caprice badging. *Fleur-de-lis* Caprice emblems were affixed to the C-pillars. An unusual feature was the use of a heavier gauge steel frame compared to other 1965 Chevrolets. Full-length rocker panel reinforcements added structural rigidity as did a stronger underbody cross-bar. The suspension, in turn, was tuned for a softer ride, and revised body mounts and extra details added up to a quieter car than its siblings.

A 195-hp, 283-cu.in. V-8 was standard; optional equipment included the new 396-cu.in. Mark IV V-8 engine. Despite a short model year, the Caprice was a resounding success with sales of 37,518 units. Chevrolet gave the model stand-alone status for 1966, adding a Custom Hardtop Coupe and two station wagon models. The coupe was given an exclusive (to Chevrolet) formal notchback roof and Caprices received their own variation of the full-size Chevrolet taillamp lens along with special wheel covers. These additions netted 210,515 sales, giving the Caprice a strong foothold as the ultimate Chevrolet model for years to come.

## THE PLYMOUTH VIP

Plymouth joined the fray in 1966 with the VIP in two-door and four-door hardtop guise, a new top-of-the-line model a step above the Fury III. The VIP was offered only with V-8 engines, and its interior fea-

# There's a little bit of VIP in all of us.

Isn't it fun when you ride in a really elegant car? With all the trimmings?

Seats upholstered in fine fabrics: vinyls or pleated leather, front pull-down armrests, reclining passenger seat.

And outside, a color keyed tex-

tured vinyl roof, multiple taillights, premium rear applique, deep dish wheel covers. Maybe a high torque engine of, oh, 440 cubic inches smoothing your ride. Automatic temperature control with air-conditioning. Reading lights in rear.

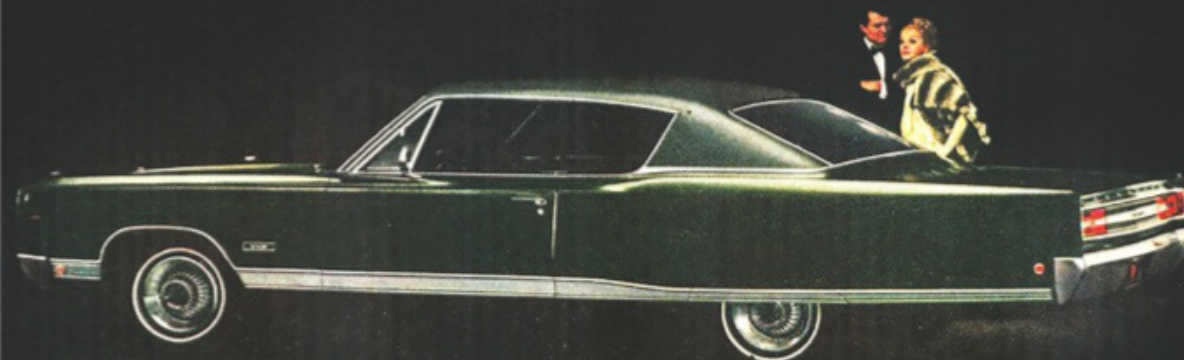
Ah! There's a lot of VIP in all of us.

And now Plymouth makes available all those only-when-you-get-to-ride-in-a-millionaire's-car things in a Plymouth.

The Plymouth VIP.

Isn't it fun to ride in an elegant car? And now that Plymouth makes one, isn't it practical?

Plymouth VIP ❤️ And the beat goes on.



Plymouth



**LEFT:** Caprice custom was quick to add several body styles, including a station wagon.

**ABOVE:** Not one to be left out of a good market segment battle, Plymouth introduced its upscale VIP for 1966.

tured fold-down armrests front and rear, tufted seats, simulated walnut grain inserts to the front seat trim and door panels, and reading lamps on the C-pillars. Outside, the prestigious VIPs had vinyl inserts of simulated walnut wood grain on the body side moldings and C-pillar brightwork, along with rear-wheel fender skirts. Plymouth built 5,158 coupes and 12,058 sedans that first year.

The VIP was never a serious sales contender against Ford and Chevrolet and output never broke 20,000 units per annum through the 1969 model year, when it was replaced with a \$152.75 optional Brougham package for the Sport Fury for 1970. Included was a split-bench front seat with passenger-side recliner on

four-doors. Two-door editions received individual front seats with a wide fold-down armrest. Both offered a choice of cloth and vinyl or all-vinyl seating. Broughams were identified on the exterior C-pillar with a small medallion.

Chevrolet, Pontiac, Ford, and Plymouth continued to move upmarket during the ensuing years while blurring the lines between entry-level and luxury marques. While full-size cars remained popular, the personal luxury car dominated the market during the Seventies. Buyers' preferences changed: Monte Carlos, Thunderbirds, and Cordobas took the place of the former full-size sales leaders, though arguably, the consumer was the winner due to endless model choices. 🚗





*This is Caprice Custom Coupe with roof styling unlike any other car's, with side view mirror and seven other standard safety items.*

**Statement of Ownership, Management and Circulation**, as required by Act of August 12, 1970; Section 4675, Title 39, US Code. Date of filing: September 30, 2022. Title of publication: **Hemmings Classic Car**. Published monthly with business offices on 222 Main Street, Bennington, Vermont (Mailing address: PO Box 196, Bennington, VT 05201). Publisher: Jonathan Shaw, (same address). Editor: Terry McGean, (same address). Managing Editor: Sadie Buckallew, (same address). Owner: Hemmings Motor News, Inc., P.O. Box 256, 222 Main Street, Bennington, Vermont 05201, Directly or indirectly through Intermediate Corporations to the Ultimate Corporate Parent, Advance Publications, Inc. Sole Voting Stockholder: The Advance Voting Trust, 950 Fingerboard Road, Staten Island, NY 10305. Known bondholders, mortgagees or other security holders: none.

	Average no. copies each issue for preceding 12 mos.	Actual no. copies of issue nearest to filing date
<b>Circulation</b>		
A. Total no. copies printed	127,940	123,549
B. Paid/requested circulation		
1. Paid/requested outside county mail subscriptions	118,746	113,429
2. Paid in-county subscriptions	0	0
3. Sales through dealers and carriers, street vendors and counter sales	2,744	2,975
4. Other classes mailed/USPS	0	0
C. Total paid/requested circulation	121,490	116,404
D. Nonrequested distribution by mail		
1. Outside County	42	43
2. In-county	0	0
3. Other classes mailed/USPS	224	180
4. Outside the mail	30	30
E. Total nonrequested distribution	297	253
F. Total distribution	121,787	116,657
G. Copies not distributed	5,844	6,892
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# Birds of a Different Color

*Pontiac's Sky Bird, Red Bird, and Yellow Bird of 1977-'80*

BY BILL ROTHERMEL • PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVID CONWILL AND MATTHEW LITWIN





For those fans of American performance cars, the world came to an end (at least temporarily) after the 1974 model year. The GTO, once the king of muscle cars, had been relegated to a 350 V-8 on a chassis shared with Pontiac's compact Ventura, and it was conspicuously absent from the model lineup the following year. Furthermore, the special Super Duty 455 V-8, available in Firebirds, was never to return.





**Pontiac's 1978 Firebird Sky Bird was offered with the divisions array of engine options; however, this one was delivered to its original owner with a 170-hp version of the 350-cu.in. V-8.**

Beginning in 1975, catalytic converters were the new norm and necessitated the use of unleaded fuel; 5-mph bumpers were now passe; and computer-controlled engines were in their infancy. The last vestiges of performance were struggling to survive. For Pontiac, whose sales success of the late Fifties to the early Seventies relied on performance, things looked bleak.

Sure, you could still order a big 455 in your new Grand Ville, Bonneville, Catalina, Grand Prix, Le Mans, or Grand Am, but it was a detuned version of what once ruled the streets. Firebird, Pontiac's sporty pony car, shared its engine lineup with other Pontiacs, so it too was subject to the downgraded performance of its siblings. Ironically, in this era of weakened performance, the Firebird had its best sales years, thanks to the meteoric rise in Trans Am sales.

The second-generation F-body Firebird and Camaro were introduced in 1970. Pontiac offered four flavors—base, Esprit, Formula, and Trans Am. While the Formula and Trans Am were geared to those looking for all-out performance, the base model appealed to folks on a budget, and the Esprit to a buyer who wanted a little luxury with their sportiness. Esprits typically included such standard upgrades as body-colored sport mirrors with lefthand remote, color-keyed seat belts, center console, bright exterior moldings, and concealed windshield wipers.

As the Seventies progressed, Pontiac recognized that 30 percent of Firebird buyers were women. Not everyone wanted the macho image of the Trans Am and GM marketers smartly realized it was necessary to offer alternatives to the bad boy image of Pontiac's performance flagship. The Esprit was the perfect choice and Pontiac, looking to expand market share, used the Firebird as the basis for three special editions.

The first of three special Esprits debuted at the Chicago Auto Show in February 1976 as a show car. Called Blue Bird, it was for all intents and purposes a "tape and paint job" that became known officially as the "Esprit Luxury Appearance Package."



The car proved a hit with consumers and Pontiac announced in May 1976 that a production version was to be introduced for the 1977 model year. There was only one problem: Reportedly, the Blue Bird Body Company of Georgia, a builder of school busses, had trademarked the name for automotive use and objected to the use of Blue Bird on another company's vehicle. Pontiac thus changed the name to Sky Bird.

With the naming issue resolved, the package—RPOW60—moved to production, consisting of unique body-colored cast aluminum wheels, two-tone paint, accent stripes, blue-painted grille, blue-painted taillamp bezels, Sky Bird decal identification, a Formula steering wheel, custom seat belts, and the choice of a blue vinyl or velour cloth interior. The exterior received Code 21 Lombard Blue, a color borrowed from Pontiac's Astre (a twin to the Chevy Vega), while the lower accent color was not shared with other Pontiacs. The full array of Firebird options was available for Sky Birds, enabling buyers to custom-build the vehicle of their choice.

In addition to the body-colored "snowflake" wheels not shared with any other Pontiac, the 1977 Sky Bird had another unique feature. Formula steering wheels came in one color,





regardless of the Pontiac model: black. Sky Birds, however, featured a specific blue Formula-style steering wheel not offered in other Pontiacs.

The Sky Bird package was renewed for the 1978 model year. Adding \$461 to the Esprit's bottom line, its Lombard Blue paint code was changed to 30. Pontiac chose to promote the special model in a print ad featuring the Special Edition Solar Gold Trans Am, a Mayan Red Formula, and the Sky Bird. It cleverly stated, *"There's a Firebird for every purpose. Except standing still."*

In addition to the continuation of the Sky Bird package, 1978 welcomed a companion Red Bird model. Like its special sibling, it debuted at the Chicago Auto Show, this time in February 1977. The special Red Bird package was identified by RPOW68 and featured a Roman Red (Code 72) exterior for the upper color and a unique color for the bottom band called Red Bird Red (Code 42). Red Bird's interior was Carmine Red with gold accents similar to those used on Special Edition Trans Ams for '78. While the Sky Bird was discontinued for the 1979 model year, the Red Bird remained available for an additional year; the '79 models used Mayan Red (Code 75) for the upper color. The bottom color remained the same, but the code was changed to 80. Firebird sales set a record for 1979—not bad for a car whose basic design was now ten years old.

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As an added twist, the new-for-1980 Yellow Bird became the third and final special-edition Esprit appearance package; its yellow color was not shared with other Pontiacs. The upper color was Code 56 with the lower accent color Code 37. Oddly, the unique hues weren't given names in Pontiac brochures and marketing materials. Unlike the Sky Bird and Red Bird, the interior of the Yellow Bird was a contrasting color—Camel Tan—with gold accents like those used in the aforementioned Special Edition Trans Ams. The Yellow Bird was a one-year-only special, ending the trilogy of unique Esprits. Production records don't exist as

The Sky Bird's interior was finished in blue vinyl or cloth upholstery, in addition to a special blue Formula-style steering wheel, the color of which tended to deteriorate — even when restored.





to how many were built, though online sources indicate about 4,000 units over four years. Considering overall Firebird production, that's not a lot of cars and survivors are few.

The original owner of our featured Sky Bird was Patricia Lovass, a military nurse who took delivery of her new 1978 edition while living in Colorado. Her special Esprit came equipped with lots of options, including a 170-hp version of Chevrolet's 350-cu.in. V-8, automatic transmission, air conditioning, remote decklid release, sport gauges, and heavy-duty alternator, among others. Patricia regularly used the car; in fact, she drove it what some would consider to be a considerable 157,000 miles in three decades—including a move to Virginia—before donating it to the AACA Museum, Inc., in Hershey, Pennsylvania, on December 7, 2009.

Despite well-intentioned regular maintenance and care, the Sky Bird showed the kind of wear and tear most 30-year-old vehicles typically accumulate, especially rust that had begun to appear on the rear quarter panels, a not-uncommon malady that affects F-bodies of this era.

AACA Museum, Inc., Executive Director Jeff Bliemeister, who was the



1970-'81\* 2<sup>ND</sup> GENERATION FIREBIRD SALES

Year	Esprit	Trans Am	Total Firebird Sales
1970	18,961	3,196	48,739
1971	20,185	2,116	53,124
1972	11,415	1,286	29,951
1973	17,249	4,802	46,313
1974	22,583	10,255	73,729
1975	20,826	27,274	84,063
1976	22,252	46,701	110,775
1977	34,548	68,745	155,736
1978	36,926	93,341	187,285
1979	38,642	117,108	211,454
1980	17,277	50,896	107,340
1981	10,938	33,493	70,899


\* Source: 75 Years of Pontiac – The Official History by John Gunnell

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Museum's Curator at the time, remembers going to pick up the car in Virginia on a snowy winter day. "The roads became treacherous, and it was a tough go, but I made it home safely with the Firebird in tow," he says. While Jeff was returning to the museum, he was struck by a thought. The Museum has (to this day) an ongoing relationship with Penn College of Technology (PCT) in Williamsport, Pennsylvania, and their automotive restoration program. Previously, the school, along with the Susquehannock Region of the AACA, spearheaded the restoration of two museum vehicles: a 1970 Chevrolet Chevelle SS 454 LS6 and a 1965 Ford Mustang convertible. Why not the Firebird?

Roy Klinger, head of the restoration program at the college, was contacted, arrangements were made, and the Firebird was subsequently delivered to the school. The students worked on the

Sky Bird for 32 weeks (equating to two semesters) repairing the rust, painting the car, and installing the interior and new parts that had been generously donated by National Parts Depot. The Hershey Region of the AACA provided an additional \$5,000 donation to support the project.

"It was a really straight car," Roy says, "and the rust was confined mostly to the lower rocker panels. We were unable to get an interior to match the original vinyl, so a velour cloth interior was installed, but otherwise, the car is restored to its as-built condition. The Susquehannock Region members were able to source original decals, but not all the striping, so the students painted them to match the originals."

After the restoration was completed, a ceremony was held at the Museum in conjunction with its annual car show on June 25, 2011. Jeff, members of the staff and faculty at PCT, students who worked on the car, members of the Susquehannock and Hershey Regions of the AACA, and most importantly, the Sky Bird's original owner, Patricia, were all in attendance to take part in the dedication. Thanks to many generous people, the Sky Bird had officially returned to the nest to become part of the Museum's permanent collection. Check out the AACA Museum, online at [aacamuseum.org](http://aacamuseum.org). 



The Sky Bird package mandated a two-tone blue paint scheme, along with matching blue "snowflake" wheels. Blue tape stripes and "Sky Bird" decals were also included.





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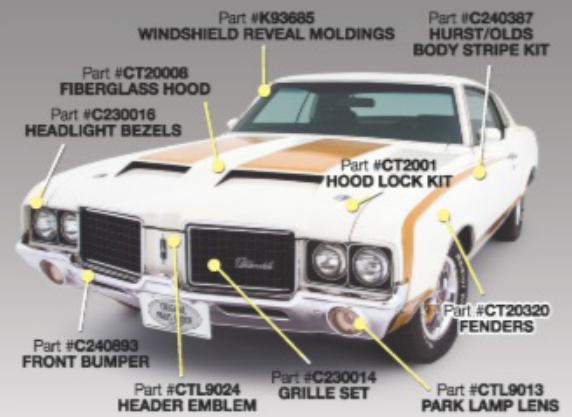
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# “Smart, Tough, Thrifty”

*Follow a lifelong Henry J fan’s home-garage restoration of his 1951 Deluxe*

BY MARK J. MCCOURT • PHOTOGRAPHY BY MATTHEW LITWIN

Its story begins as so many others do in our hobby, with fond childhood memories of a favored family vehicle, and ends with the restored car before you on these pages. Filling in the middle are tenacity, luck, and some clever workarounds. This first-year Kaiser-Frazer Henry J Deluxe is a rare survivor that was brought back to as close-to-stock condition as its dedicated owner could reasonably make it, and it represents a decades-held dream come true.





John Kunkel recalls the Henry J sedans that passed through the hands of his father and older brother, especially the new 1953 Corsair Deluxe that was, in its day, the Kunkel family motor. This gearhead from youth has owned and appreciated many other types of vehicles, but that economy car from the postwar independent automaker has a special place in his heart. "I've been going to car shows for years, and you see so many Chevilles, so many Mustangs, so many Camaros, so many Corvettes. After a while, they become so common," John muses. "I personally like cars that are different, unusual, that you don't see often."

In a conversation with his son circa 2012, John mentioned he'd buy a

Henry J if he found one, but he had a particular specification in mind: it would need to be an early 1951 Deluxe model, the one without an external trunk opening, but with the straight-six engine and an overdrive transmission. "That narrowed it down pretty hard," he recalls with a smile. "My boy found this car on the internet, for sale out in Colorado."

The Deluxe that would soon relocate to south-central Pennsylvania ticked all the right boxes. It was one of 43,442 1951 models in this trim powered by the Willys-built "Kaiser Supersonic" 161-cu.in. flathead inline-six that sported a 3.12 x 3.50-inch bore and stroke, 7:1 compression ratio, and 1-bbl Carter YF carburetor. When the 2,341-pound car

was new, the engine's conservative output—80 hp at 3,800 rpm and 133 lb-ft at 1,600 rpm—provided adequately peppy performance with help from the column-shifted three-speed manual transmission with Borg-Warner overdrive. That desirable option allowed the six-cylinder Henry J to comfortably cruise at 55 mph, a speed with which its unassisted 9-inch drum brakes could readily cope.

John did something he says he wouldn't do again, though it worked out in this instance: He bought the 1951 Henry J sight-unseen. "The guy I spoke with seemed like an honest man. He said the car ran, but not good. It stopped, sorta. It needed some work but was originally a Southwestern car and there wasn't a lot of





The Henry J, purchased sight-unseen, spent some 25 years in storage in New Mexico before it lived in Colorado, explaining its sunbaked appearance. It rolled on 14-inch wheels, but the car's new owner had correct 15-inch versions in his family's parts stash.



One of the more unusual aspects of this car was the custom interior its previous owner had installed. He'd replaced the headliner, door and rear side panels, and the dashboard's knobs with wooden facsimiles. John disassembled everything for the restoration.



John opted to leave the Henry J's body attached to its frame to avoid misalignment as he removed rusted passenger-floor sections using a metal cutting wheel, and MIG-welded replacement sheetmetal he'd harvested from a Comet and bent on his homemade metal brake.



With the frame and suspensions exposed, the components were cleaned and treated with chassis-black paint. John ran new brake lines and replaced the master and wheel cylinders. Tubular rear shocks were easier to source than the fronts, which came from Monroe.



Every panel that could be removed from the body shell was, and each was treated individually. This ensured complete paint coverage from every angle, minimizing the possibility of future corrosion, and also eliminated the need to redo large areas if a flaw occurred.



John re-hung the fenders as he worked his way around the Henry J. Before he painted the interior, he had to weld up the screw holes in the roof supports, side panels, and rear floor that resulted from the last owner having used wood instead of correct materials.





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**1964 Rolls-Royce Silver Cloud III**  
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**1941 Packard 110 Woodie  
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**1960 Edsel Ranger Convertible**  
Sold for \$52,000



**1948 Allard M1 Drophead  
Coupe**  
Sold for \$58,802



**1967 Ford Mustang Sports  
Sprint Convertible**  
Sold for \$76,650





**This car's 161-cu.in. straight-six was a set of points and a new muffler away from running well. Its Carter carburetor and ancillaries would be rebuilt.**

rust. I figured, if they're that hard to come by and I'm going to get one, now's the time to do it," he tells us.

Once the car was delivered, its new caretaker wasted no time in evaluating his purchase and diving into its restoration. He'd bought a reasonably complete J with recently recovered seats, and, oddly, timber trimmings throughout the interior including a wood-slat headliner, wood side panels, and matching dash knobs.

"It would start and run, but not very well. When you revved it, it started breaking up," John remembers. "The first thing I did was an engine compression check; surprisingly, the compression was great on all six cylinders. So I checked the timing

and vacuum, and found the points in the distributor were cheap replacements. I put in the proper points that had more spring tension, which stopped them floating due to low spring pressure. That made a big difference, but it still wasn't right. I kept working on it and took off the exhaust system. I found the muffler was really heavy. I cut the top off and found it was jam-packed full of nuts! Replacing the exhaust system made all the difference—it ran like a top!"

As he worked on the engine, John came to believe it had previously been rebuilt since there was very little sludge in the oil pan and each component had been repainted. The transmission was likely

given the same treatment since it showed no signs of typical Henry J first gear and synchronizer wear. The overdrive wasn't working, but studying a shop manual's wiring schematic clarified why: Improperly connected wires had shorted out its governor. John didn't trust the rest of the car's 60-year-old wiring, so he made a replacement harness. He would also rebuild components like the carburetor, generator, starter, and the distributor, and source new brake hydraulic lines and cylinders, plus new Monroe front tubular shocks.

The Kunkel family's history with this model benefitted our feature car, since both John's father and brother had stashes of spare parts that were crucial in this restoration, including that shop manual. He'd also been collecting Henry J parts when he came across them in hopes of someday having his own to restore. A derelict 1963 Mercury Comet belonging to John's son would prove useful when it came to sourcing sheetmetal to replace corroded sections of the passenger-side floor and rocker panel.

Early 1950s Kaiser-Frazer cars don't enjoy the replacement parts support of collectibles like the Ford Model A and MGB, so John had to get creative at many points in the restoration process. He found that the roof and trunklid sheetmetal of that Comet were reasonable approximations of the Henry J's own, so he used a metal cutting wheel to harvest sections that he then re-formed in the homemade sheetmetal brake he made using three pieces of four-foot-long angle iron, a hinge, and C-clamps. "It was a bit



**This Henry J's previous owner had reupholstered the seats, but John would have to replace interior side panels and headlining using proper automotive materials. He opted to fit carpet instead of rubber mats.**







crude, but they bent up nicely,” he says modestly; “The metal was a good-enough gauge that you could hammer it and weld without it burning through.” John left the Henry J’s two-door body on the frame to ensure it would remain square as he cut out and MIG-welded back those sections of passenger floor and sill.

Having completely disassembled the sedan before repairing its relatively minor rust, John began painting each piece individually. Rather than return it to the factory shade of pale green he didn’t like, he chose to spray the body in Ford’s classic Wimbledon White acrylic enamel, of which he purchased two gallons. “I like the clean look of that color, and considering I was painting it myself, outside, white hides a lot of flaws that would be very obvious in dark colors,” he admits. “I’d take a fender out on a nice day and prime it, sand it, and then paint it. The next day I’d paint another fender, a door, or the hood. It’s not the best way to work, but I found if you have a bad day and things don’t go right, you don’t screw up the whole job, just one panel. Doing it individually, you also have paint behind door hinges, inside and outside every panel, and from every different angle. You can’t do that when the car is all together.”

That the front and folding rear bench seats were already restored with white vinyl upholstery took one large task off John’s plate, but he had a lot to contend with in returning the rest of the interior to its correct state. He opted to fit custom-sewn aftermarket carpet to the floor rather than the original-type rubber mats to improve sound deadening and reduce the chance of condensation corrosion. New door and rear side panels were made from 1/8-inch



Masonite that John glued automotive-grade material to using adhesive spray; that material was also used to cover the spare wheel that resides in the 15-cu.ft. cargo area behind the rear seat.

Another custom installation was the five-bow fabric headliner, made by a talented seamstress in North Carolina. “I’d never installed a headliner in my life, but she did a nice job and it fit right up,” he says with a smile. Unfortunately, factory Henry J dashboard choke, heater, headlamp, and other knobs have eluded John to this point, but he’s made do with generic items that, to the untrained eye, look stock.

The attractive styling of this demure compact—squint at the greenhouse and finned fenders, and it could be a scaled-down 1948 Cadillac coupe—was set off with minimal but impactful brightwork. John faced yet another challenge when it came to the dented and bent front bumper. “The chrome shop redid the back bumper, grille, and other parts, but said they wouldn’t touch the front bumper,” he recalls. “I searched for a replacement but couldn’t find one in better shape, so I spent several weeks working on that thing—straightening, pulling, twisting, and grinding. The front bumper isn’t as thick as it used to be, but when I took it back, they re-chromed it.”

It’s the details that meant the most to John as he wrapped up the three-year restoration process. His beloved Henry J once again rides on factory 15 x 5-inch wheels, which came from the Kunkel parts stashes, replacing the incorrect 14-inch wheels that were on the car when he received it. The previous owner thankfully still had the correct full wheel covers, and kindly sent them to John at no additional cost.

In the years since the work was finished, the smallest Kaiser-Frazer has turned heads and inspired discussions. “Older people who remember the Henry J from back in the day offer a lot of nice comments,” he tells us. “I’ve heard, ‘I haven’t seen one of those in 25 years!’ It seems most that you see today will have a big V-8 under the hood, the firewall and dash are cut, it’s got big tires on the back. Drag strips cleaned out the Henry J’s back in the 1960s, and it’s unusual to spot a stock one. Mine’s not 100-percent, but it’s a lot closer to being there than most.

“When you see the car up close, it’s far from perfect, but I’m happy with it,” John continues. “I mean, I built the thing in my garage, painted the car outside piece by piece, and put it back together. It’s not professional, but it’s mine.” 🐞

“When you see the car up close, it’s far from perfect, but I’m happy with it...”





## Mecum Auctions – 2022 Harrisburg Sale

*A long-awaited return to Pennsylvania hammers in \$40 million*

**FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE 2019, WISCONSIN-BASED MECUM AUCTIONS** returned to Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, to resume what had been an annual stop on its event calendar. As had been the case during pre-pandemic days of yore, the city's Pennsylvania Farm Show Complex hosted the four-day event that commenced on July 27. This year's catalog was brimming with more than 1,100 vehicles, bolstered by an array of automobilia.

American muscle cars and sports cars dominated the top 10 sales positions, with six claimed by various Corvettes. Surprisingly, it was a pair of European performers that took the top two positions: a 2021 Mercedes-Benz AMG GT Black Series edition that achieved \$473,000, followed by a 1985 Lamborghini Countach LP5000S that brought \$467,500. Along with the trio of pony cars we present here, Mecum sold 863 lots (equating to an 81-percent sell-through rate) and grossed \$40 million in overall sales, besting

the 2019 Harrisburg sale by 30 percent. For more results from this sale, and details pertaining to upcoming Mecum auctions, visit [mecum.com](http://mecum.com).

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### 1966 FORD MUSTANG

**Reserve:** Undisclosed  
**Selling Price:** \$22,550

**Avg. Market Range:**  
 \$25,000 - \$35,000

Mustangs are a common sight at auctions for the simple reason that Ford built hundreds of thousands of them. They were incredibly popular when new. Plus, Mustangs make great subjects for modifications, whether using OE-style or aftermarket components. In fact, it's become somewhat unusual to see a restored-to-stock straight-six-powered coupe. Such was the case with this 200-cu.in., automatic-equipped example from 1966 finished in Wimbledon White over a red cabin. The restoration even went so far as to blueprint the straight-six, a practice far more common with high output V-8 rebuilds. Everything was reportedly restored to factory specs, save for a camouflaged stereo upgrade.



### 1973 PONTIAC FIREBIRD FORMULA

**Reserve:** None  
**Selling Price:** \$35,200

**Avg. Market Range:**  
 \$30,000 - \$50,000

While it may seem everyone lusts for Trans Ams, lesser Firebirds still abound, and can often offer an excellent alternative. Take this Formula from 1973, for instance. With the exception of the twin-snorkel hood, Rally II wheels, and blacked-out twin recessed grilles, it didn't look all that racy, yet under the hood was a matching-numbers 400-cu.in. engine backed by a TH-400 automatic for plenty of go and minimal gear fiddling fuss. PHS documentation confirmed the F-body's build traits, right down to the Deluxe dark red interior and Florentine Red paint. One admitted upgrade: The engine was rebuilt with a Ram Air IV camshaft.



### 1969 CHEVROLET CAMARO RS

**Reserve:** Undisclosed  
**Selling Price:** \$66,000

**Avg. Market Range:**  
 \$30,000 - \$47,000

Sometimes it seems like there are more first-gen Camaros on the road now than what Chevrolet built new. It's a sentiment that emphasizes just how popular GM's pony car is among today's enthusiasts. This 1969 Camaro in RS trim, however, was an exceptionally well-documented, genuine article, touted as being a highly original example that had been delivered new to Pape Chevrolet in New York City's Bronx borough. It boasted a matching-numbers 250-hp version of the division's 350-cu.in. V-8, along with no fewer than 26 factory options. It even came with the original registration and license plates. In a word: Impressive.

### LEGEND

**Reserve:** Minimum price owner will accept

**Selling Price:** What the vehicle sold for (including the buyer's premium)

**Average Market Range:** Values coincide with current market trends for vehicles rated from condition #2- to #1, respectively





RM SOTHEBY'S

## RM Sotheby's Monterey Results

**A RECORD-SETTING WEEKEND OF TOTAL** auction sales were realized at RM Sotheby's in Monterey, California, with more than \$239 million and 95 percent of all lots changing hands. Narrowing down the coverage to just American classics, more than \$12.6 million sold with nearly 40 percent of that coming from a 1935 Duesenberg Model J Convertible Rollston that raked in \$4.68 million. The Duesy aside, more than a dozen American classics sold, including a 1928 Chrysler Imperial Series 80L Touraulette by Locke (above left). The early Imperial was thought

to be one of just two known survivors and was a Classic Car Club of America "Full Classic." The two-door phaeton was equipped with adjustable front bucket seats, a fully foldable top that tucked away flush with the rear panels, and two-tone paintwork. Its exterior was also complemented by a tan lattice-type wicker weave that was still in nice condition throughout. It was powered by a six-cylinder, L-head engine mated to a three-speed selective transmission. Inside, the Chrysler Fedco plate remained on the dash, the original body tag was

present under the carpeting, and it was furnished with black leather. A former *Special Interest Auto* featured car, it rolled off the block for \$112,000.

Also selling was a 1934 Auburn 1250 Salon Phaeton Sedan (above right), complete with its numbers-matching engine block and fully detailed ownership history from the Great Depression days in Florida to its last three decades in a private collection. The Auburn came fully equipped with period accessories including Pilot Ray driving lamps and an Auburn-Crosley radio. It was fully restored to its current scarlet paint job, complemented with a tan interior and cloth top. Despite its minimal use and long-term storage, the car had minimal wear and few imperfections, plus all the proper trim and details. The Auburn, equipped with its powerful 12-cylinder engine, sold for \$207,200. Full results from Monterey are available at [rmsothebys.com](http://rmsothebys.com).

## Gooding Results

**MORE ACTIVITY FROM MONTEREY TOOK** place at Gooding & Company's auction at Pebble Beach. When the final tally was taken, total sales eclipsed \$109 million with a strong sell-through of 85 percent. American classics accounted for \$4.91 million during the two-day sale, among them a 1930 Cadillac Series 452 V-16 roadster. The Caddy was thought to be one of just 10 original roadsters to exist, with previous owners including Friendly's founder S. Prestley Blake, Briggs Cunningham, and Classic era historian Mark J. Smith. It was powered by a 452-cu.in. OHV V-16 engine with better breathing through twin updraft single-throat carburetors, which was paired with a three-speed transmission. It underwent an extensive restoration in 1999 with effort applied to all its body panels, hardware, and wooden structural underpinnings. It kept its originality all the way down to the



brass Uppercu Cadillac dealership plate on the fuel tank. When the bidding ended, the V-16 roadster sold for \$1,655,000.

Also selling was a meticulously restored 1941 Packard 120 Station Wagon with coachwork by Hercules. It was a rarity, as allegedly only 58 Packard 120 wagons were made for that model year, and this example is thought to be one of just 14 known to exist. Its ability to haul several passengers was made possible with a 282-cu.in. straight-eight, with a Carter 476-S Duplex carburetor; the engine was mated to a three-speed gearbox with overdrive. The Hercules woodwork was brought back to proper status and the wagon picked up a "Best Wood" award among more than



GOODING & CO

300 other woodies at the 2014 Wavecrest Woodie Meet in California. Its paint was also fully restored to its original maroon hue, complemented inside with tan upholstery and wood headliner and door panels. The ready-to-go wagon was perfect for touring, shows, and hauling provisions and passengers a full eight decades after it left the factory. When the bidding ended, the Packard sold for \$268,800. All results from the Gooding auction are now available at [goodingco.com](http://goodingco.com).



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the seller pays only a \$99.95 listing fee. The winning bidder is responsible for a 5-percent fee on all completed auctions. The following are examples of auctions that transpired during the month leading up to press time. If you have questions, comments, or suggestions, email Director of Auction Operations Terry Shea: [terryshea@hemmings.com](mailto:terryshea@hemmings.com).



## 1941 PACKARD ONE-TWENTY

**Reserve:** \$23,500

**Selling Price:** \$26,250

**Recent Market Range:**

\$22,000-\$35,450

It's surprising how much value post-Classic era Packards offer in today's market, as this '41 120 sedan proved. Wearing a four-year-old restoration that was performed with driving in mind, the four-door presented smartly with no noted exterior flaws, up top or underneath. The cloth-upholstered interior looked equally fresh, and a retro-style modern stereo was present. Just 205 miles were added to the 282-cubic-inch straight-eight since a rebuild that included a 12-volt conversion and electronic ignition. The three-speed manual had a rebuilt overdrive, and the shocks and brakes were new in 2018. Radial tires were fitted. The seller engaged with enthusiastic bidders, and the 120 sold easily.



## 1976 TRIUMPH TR6

**Reserve:** \$19,000

**Selling Price:** \$26,250

**Recent Market Range:**

\$17,250-\$25,450

The introduction of Triumph's TR7 cemented the classic status of the beloved TR6. This 26,967-mile example from that model's final year embodied its best traits, including a tidy straight-six engine and four-speed manual ("few weeps" were noted), folding vinyl roof (claimed factory-installed, with one non-functional snap), and fully independent suspension (called "original and tight"). The 46-year-old Pimento red paint was said to exhibit some buffing damage, but the black vinyl interior looked excellent. The undercarriage was similarly good, with only minor surface corrosion on cast-iron parts. Red-line Michelin tires were more than 20 years old. This TR handily surpassed its reserve.



## 1927 CHRYSLER SERIES 50

**Reserve:** \$9,500

**Selling Price:** \$31,500

**Recent Market Range:**

\$7,250-\$12,550

Chryslers have long been lauded for quality engineering, with this restored Series 50 two-door sedan illustrating how far back that reputation went. It presented nicely with no rust and only minor paint and glass blemishes. The interior blended newer and older finishes, all intact and looking correct. Under the hood, the clean, 170.3-inch four-cylinder was claimed original; it was noted to smoke upon starting and weep oil from the pan. The undercarriage looked presentable, while brakes functioned properly, and the whitewall tires were of unknown vintage. Amazingly, this car came with the original owner's 1927 diary, making it a complete and appealing historical package that sold strongly.

### LEGEND

**Reserve:** Minimum price owner will accept

**Selling Price\*:** What the vehicle sold for, inclusive of buyer's 5-percent fee  
(\*sold as a Make Offer listing 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





## 1949 BUICK ROADMASTER ESTATE WAGON

Reserve: \$75,000  
Selling Price: \$86,100

Recent Market Range:  
\$45,000-\$75,000

Buick's Model 79 Roadmaster Estate Wagon was the ultimate luxury-utility vehicle that GM offered in 1949, with its real maple, elm, and mahogany woods and leather trimmings. This example had an older restoration said to have been refreshed with recent wood varnish and new chrome plating; it was described as "show worthy." No specific paint or undercarriage damage was noted, and the six-passenger interior appeared nearly new. Fewer than 6,700 miles registered on the odometer, and the Buick was said to be "immediately ready to use and in very good driving condition." Its rarity (according to the seller, fewer than 20 are known to exist) and desirability pushed it to impressive heights.



## 1989 ISUZU IMPULSE TURBO

Reserve: \$8,500  
Selling Price: \$21,000  
Recent Market Range: \$7,100-\$13,100

The car side of Isuzu's business was never strong in the U.S., although its products were usually quite interesting, especially the Giorgetto Giugiaro-styled, rear-wheel drive, turbocharged Impulse sport coupe. This low-mile, final-year example was hugely rare, especially considering it had just one owner from new. Minor paint blemishes were noted, along with repainted areas, and only surface rust marred the undercarriage. The interior was well preserved, and all accessories worked properly. The sub-39,000-mile, 140-hp turbo four and five-speed manual enjoyed regular maintenance. This fascinating car blew away its pre-sale estimates because it would be virtually impossible to duplicate.



## 1941 LINCOLN CONTINENTAL

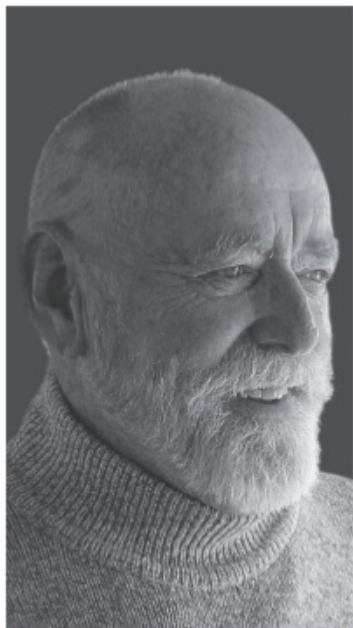
Reserve: \$29,000  
Selling Price: \$34,650  
Recent Market Range: \$26,210-\$39,520

Edsel Ford's genius decision to put his one-off Continental into series production established a legendary nameplate for Lincoln. This 83,171-mile 1941 coupe was said to be "very highly original" and retained its factory-applied Volanta Coach Maroon paint, while the brightwork appeared to have been rejuvenated like the cloth-and-leather trimmed interior. That driver's compartment was revealed to have a bit of repaired seat damage, and the dashboard components functioned correctly. The numbers-matching 292-cubic-inch V-12 was rebuilt some 30,000 miles ago, although the rear main seal and transmission were noted to weep a bit. It took an impressive 34 bids to find this popular Lincoln a new home.

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... I am

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and add an

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//

## Back to the Future

I have spent a lot of time since my adolescence working on and restoring old internal combustion engine cars, and I have been immersed in the Southern California car culture from my earliest memories. My father fixed cars, too, when I was young, and I loved watching him and his motorhead friends do their magic. I also liked the smells of paint and gasoline. But most of all I enjoyed the comradery the guys shared.

That being said, I am thinking maybe I should get with the times and add an *electric* car to my collection. I won't take a position on whether they are better for the environment—it's just that the EVs of today are intriguing, even though the concept is nothing new. Prior to 1910, they easily outsold petrol-powered automobiles. There were big indoor charging stations in the cities where you could charge your chariot while shopping. Women loved them.

If I could have my pick, I would take a Porsche. A 1900 Lohner-Porsche Electromobile, that is. It could hit 37 kph using electric wheel-hub motors invented by Porsche himself. But it wasn't Ferdinand's first electric car—that was the record-setting 1898 Egger-Lohner C.2 Phaeton. It could do a hair-mussing 25 kph (15.5 mph) and was Porsche's first automobile. Sadly, should a Porsche Electromobile become available, the chances of me being able to afford it on a scribbler's pay would be nil.

In fact, I would happily settle for a 1917 Detroit Electric 62A convertible coupe. I drove one years ago, and I must say, it was quite a treat. It only had a top end of 20 mph, but it was supremely comfortable, easy to drive, and totally silent. Amazingly, in testing back in the day, one of them did a whopping 211.3 miles on one charge. As for the speed, it was sufficient for city use—where were you going to go? Both the pavement and the infrastructure ended at the edge of town.

Surprisingly, speed isn't a problem with electric cars. Range is the bugaboo. Electric cars and golf carts were kept slow in the past, because if you pushed them too hard, their range was reduced to almost nothing. Now, a tweaked Tesla can do 0 to 60 in an astounding 1.9 seconds! Driver Eric Ritter with Team Vesco put a couple of electric motors and a slew of batteries in an old streamliner called

the Little Giant, from 1958, and did 353 mph at Bonneville recently, setting a new electric car land speed record.

The gasoline-powered automobile finally won out over the electric car with the invention of the self-starter by Charles F. Kettering at Cadillac, in

1912. He patented it three years later. Thanks to the starter, the internal combustion engine cars prevailed over the electrics of the era, mostly due to the latter's limited range and the lack of charging stations in all but the big cities.

Electric cars and trucks never died out completely, even though the last Detroit Electric

was produced in 1939. For the next few decades after that, electric power was mostly relegated to golf carts and forklifts used inside warehouses, though there were also trucks and buses to be found.

Then, in 1987, Roger Smith, head of General Motors, chose to enter the World Solar Challenge race and hired a company to build GM a vehicle at a cost of \$2,000,000. The result, called the Sunrayer, won the race at an average speed of 42 mph. The success of the Sunrayer led directly to the GM Impact prototype, which led to the EV1 production car.

I did a *Drive Report* on a 1990 EV1 for this esteemed publication, and I must say, I was impressed. The interior of the two-passenger car was cozy but not cramped. And though the key was on, I still looked around for a way to "start" it. Suddenly, a touch on the throttle had an instant effect. Acceleration was great, and we were—silently—up to 80 mph on the freeway in no time.

The EV1 was superb in all but range, which was only about 70 miles. It cost GM a billion dollars to develop, and the company lost a fortune on it. You could only lease them, and nearly all of the surviving examples were crushed or disabled in 2003. One of the few remaining is rumored to belong to film director Francis Ford Coppola, who hid his when GM came to retrieve it in 2003.

Today, with California mandating that only electric cars be sold in the state by 2035, General Motors planning to go all-electric, Tesla doing well, and all the other manufacturers gearing up to go electric, it appears we will be going back to the future, but with convenient charging stations. It'll be 1910 all over again. And maybe we will even go back to taking trains for long-distance travel. 🚂



GENERAL MOTORS



# Hemmings

## 2023

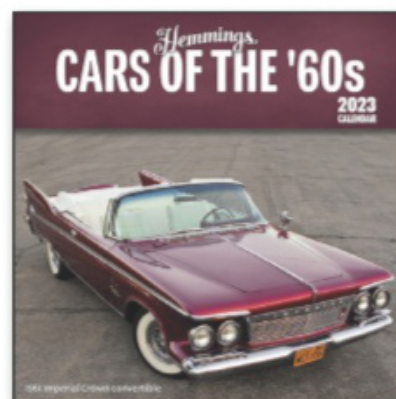
### COLLECTOR CALENDARS

#### SEVEN TITLES TO CHOOSE FROM

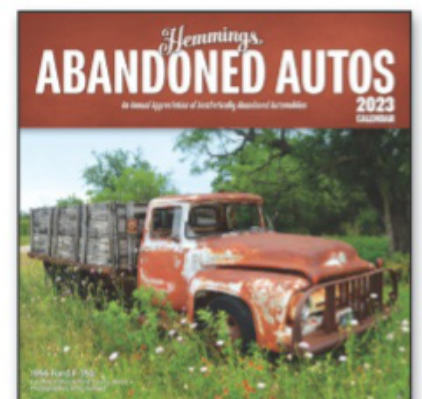
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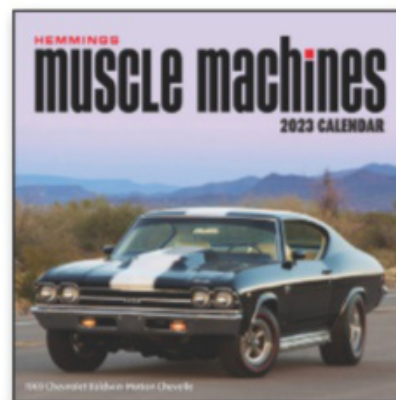
Classic Car  
#CC23



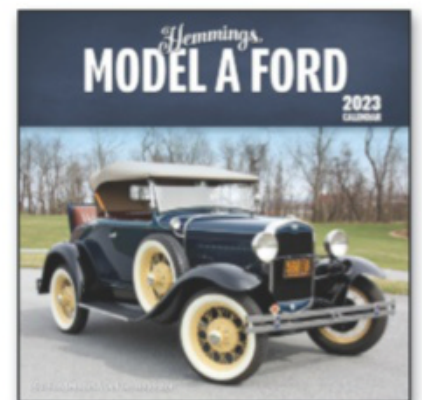
Cars of the '60s #C623



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