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AMERICA'S COLLECTOR-CAR OWNERSHIP MAGAZINE

APRIL 2023 #223

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CONTENTS

HEMMINGS CLASSIC CAR • APRIL 2023 • VOLUME 19, ISSUE 7

PERSPECTIVE

- 6 Matthew Litwin
- 8 Garage Time
- 10 I Was There
- 12 Recaps Letters
- 26 Pat Foster
- 48 Lost & Found
- 78 Rear View Ads
- 80 Jim Richardson

MARKETPLACE

- 14 Hemmings Auctions
- 72 Swap Meet Scores

FEATURES

- 16 Cover Story
1925 Ford Model T
- 36 Special Feature
Gow Jobs Revealed
- 46 News Reports
- 50 1961 Chevrolet Impala
Convertible
- 56 Barn Find
1948 Crosley Station Wagon
- 64 1959 Ford Thunderbird

TECH

- 28 Restoration Profile
1973 Lotus Elan Sprint
- 74 New Products & Parts
- 76 Product Test





On the Cover: Photographer Drew Wiedemann caught up with Zach Suhr and his historic 1925 Ford Model T roadster—known as the “Gabby Garrison” car—in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.



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For the Man Who Gives Everything and Expects Nothing

If you're anything like my dad, you give your family everything. Your name, your time, your values — the people in your life know they can depend on you for practically anything. In exchange for imparting all of this energy and experience, you expect nothing in return.

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MatthewLitwin

Sympathetic Restoration



Write to our Editor at mlitwin@hemmings.com and follow him on Instagram @[matt.litwin.hemmings](https://www.instagram.com/matt.litwin.hemmings).

“As with most car owners who invest in an expensive paint job—the new finish should be mesmerizing”

VETERAN READERS

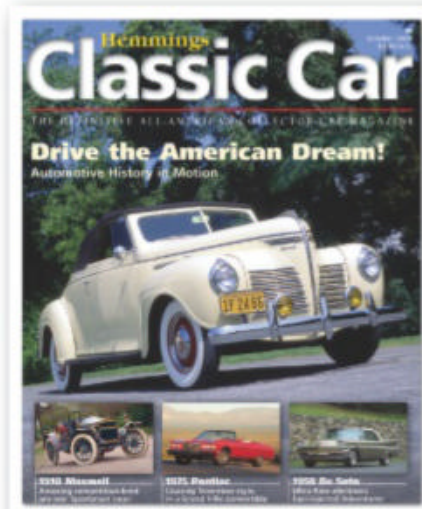
will recall that we’ve often discussed the overwhelming enjoyment of driving a vintage car daily, an old reliable ride that still presents well at the local cruise-in, or outside the pastry shop while we commiserate over morning coffee with like-minded enthusiasts. The automotive equivalent of your favorite pair of loafers that shine, despite the accumulation of miles on the heels.

Therein lies the flip side of daily driving Old Reliable: miles. Tires, brakes, and plug wires notwithstanding, the slow and steady accumulation of nicks and scrapes on the body eventually defy attempts to hide the age of the finish. Brightwork dulls. Perhaps the upholstery becomes a little less taught. And while the engine still runs flawlessly, and the ride is as smooth as ever, maybe a little crust under the hood and a touch of suspension sag are further signs that Old Reliable may be calling for a little more than another wash-n-wax. It might be time to consider a restoration.

But to what extent? If the vehicle is mechanically sound, is it worth the time and expense to completely disassemble it, examine, clean, and re-finish every piece, and then reassemble the mass of parts? Doing so eliminates all the little nuances that you’re familiar with, the things that make it your ride. Logic suggests that it would make better sense to give the engine a simple tune-up and invest in the car’s visual needs instead. Replated trim, a fresh coat of paint, and new upholstery go a long way in providing a zesty vibe to a mechanically perfect ride, helping it stand out in the crowd, just like it did over a decade ago.

Some call the latter tack a “sympathetic” restoration, others a “refurbishment,” but no matter the preference, any restoration path can be a conundrum. How perfect do you make Old Reliable when the end game is to continue doing what you’ve always wanted to do with it? Drive it daily. Enjoy it. Create ever-lasting memories with friends and family. Pass it on to the next steward who truly understands both the physical and emotional value of Old Reliable’s legacy on the road.

The most important word here is “legacy.” Other cars may have swiftly passed through the family garage, but Old Reliable has been the pillar of unbridled consistency. It’s earned respect and



deserves careful consideration, and just like that, the right solution emerges: a sympathetic restoration is indeed the best approach.

In a way, the same situation confronts revered magazines such as this one. When our tightknit team of writers and graphic designers was tasked with examining the condition of our own Old Reliable, legacy was at the forefront of everyone’s mind—just as it had been 10 years and 10 months ago, when

its last sympathetic restoration slipped into your mailbox. We know—impossible, right? How could a decade pass so quickly?

As was the case then, *Hemmings Classic Car* remained mechanically sound, faithfully driven by diverse, well-written stories you’ve come to expect since day one. Those compelling tales have long been bolstered by quality images—the comfortable cabin, so to speak. And visually, the exterior looked good, but among the mass of options on the proverbial dealer lot, it had aged a bit and required a little more than a wash-n-wax.

Therefore, our team felt—as with most car owners who invest in an expensive paint job—the new finish should be mesmerizing. We’ve done just that with one striking image. Clean, well-polished and uncluttered by bolt-on extras. It makes a statement, but to further that, we left a tasteful amount of trim to articulate what’s going on outside, and what one will find inside. But refinishing the exterior wasn’t the only thing we’ve done.

The same style of captivating imagery outside has been extended to the cabin, dramatically introducing you to each feature, some familiar, some new. Among the latter are Barn Finds, Garage Time—bolstered by Rear View Ads and Swap Meet Scores—and more tech features by pros designed to help keep your vintage ride on the road. Hemmings Auctions has been buffed into a fit, new finish, and a simple tune-up was administered to Drive Reports, Buyer’s Guides, and other vehicle features that will better outline what it’s like to own, drive, and maintain each.

Most important, none of *Hemmings Classic Car*’s comfortable nuances have been trimmed. They’re still here waiting to be explored, just as they have been since 2004. We hope you continue enjoy them as much as we do. 🚗



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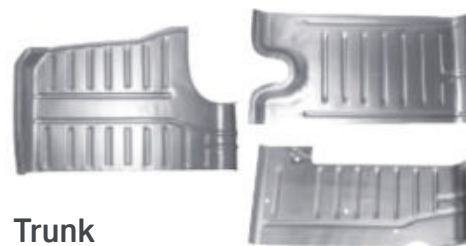
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Waking the Century in The Sibley

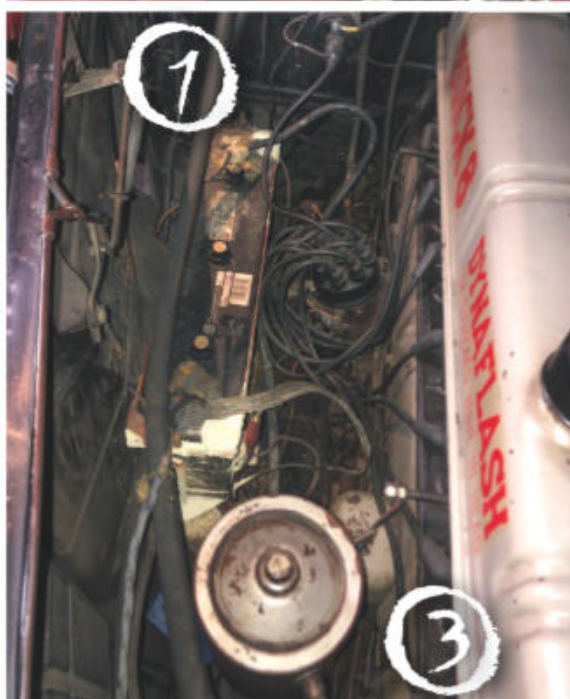
**WORDS AND
PHOTOGRAPHY
BY MATTHEW LITWIN**

PRIOR TO THE COVID-19 pandemic, regular visitors to our Bennington, Vermont, headquarters became familiar with Hemmings' antique vehicle collection held within "the Sibley Shop," casually known as the Hemmings Museum. Each vehicle holds some level of significance, whether due to rarity, rally service, or—in the case of our 1940 Buick Century four-door convertible phaeton, one of just 194 built—a combination thereof.

According to the Fisher Body tag on our example, it left the assembly line painted black and trimmed in a red leather interior, the same

combination present when the Buick was purchased in 1987. Further confirmation comes from period color photos found within a history file created upon the Buick's Vermont arrival.

The same meticulous file offered that although it was a running, driving car, mechanical refurbishment was performed, some exterior trim was replated, and the top was replaced, after which the Century was used in parades and wedding ceremonies. Further, the Buick also saw pace car duty in The Great American Race in 1998 (now officially called Great Race).



What's Inside:

1. The Buick's six-volt battery was never disconnected, which has led to an excessive buildup of corrosion. An entire electrical system check is required.
2. Never trust nearly 20-year-old hydraulic brakes. An entire system replacement was on the list, but it went straight to the top when the brake pedal hit the floorboards with zero resistance.
3. If the brake system is bad, it's likely the fuel system is as well. Though we have yet to confirm as of this writing, we're hoping the fuel tank was drained prior to its long-term storage.
4. Neither David Conwill nor I have ever seen the top in the "up" position, which left us wondering if it was now too brittle to unfold. Fortunately, such was not the case when we carefully put the top up for its inspection; it's pliable and looks brand new.
5. Of equal importance are the tires. They are likely over 20 years old and will be replaced. The question, though, is do we mount wide whitewalls, or opt for blackwalls?

The activity came at a cost, however. Highlights within the file include a minor low-speed collision that required bumper repairs; several unspecified bearings were replaced; the forward top bow was damaged and subsequently replaced; a sealer was sought to prevent the leather's red dye from transferring to clothing; and the three-speed manual transmission's gear cluster failed at least twice, probably due to the growing lack of "double-clutch" knowledge the unsynchronized (first gear) unit required. Its last outing occurred in May 2005. The Century has been stored in a static

state since, but that's about to change.

During the early months of 2023, our team will be embarking on a long overdue quest to revive the slumbering Buick and return it to the road, which will be later chronicled in multiple installments within this title and in a video series. To help expedite the process, a preliminary analysis of its condition and needs has been completed by associate editor David Conwill and myself. Aside from the short list provided here, what else will we uncover when the real work begins? Stay tuned. 🚗



Scott Huntington

Driver/Maris Transport

Oakville, Ontario, Canada, 1988 – '89

“Getting fired was not easy but getting laid off was a risk in a trucking job that was largely dependent on the auto industry; then as now, it was feast or famine.”

I RETIRED during 2021 after working 33 years in the trucking industry. My first trucking job was driving car carriers for Maris Transport, a long-defunct company that was based in Oakville, Ontario. It was only a stone's throw from Ford of Canada's Oakville Assembly Plant and Ontario Truck Plant.

It began when I earned my Class-A license at the age of 25 on April 20, 1988, after which I started working for Maris on June 20. At the time, there were 177 drivers working for the company, and even though two others began work on the same day, I was number 177 on the seniority list during my first month or so. The job required six weeks of training that paid \$8.00 an hour. After successfully completing the training, we would be admitted into the union: Teamsters Local 938.

The first two weeks of training occurred in the Oakville storage yard, where we learned how to load and unload various types of car-hauling equipment, beginning with combos, on which the entire load, except for one car above the cab, was on the trailer. Another was stingers, on which there were three or four cars on the tractor section, depending on the design of the equipment, and the rest of the load was on the trailer, which was attached to the tractor at a point behind the drive axles only inches above the ground. During weeks three and four, we worked at the releasing yard at Ford, helping other drivers load their trucks, and for weeks five and six, we went out on the road with other drivers to learn the rest of the job.

Once training was finished, we were on the road solo. Maris dispatchers would start calling the senior drivers at about midnight to offer loads, and they would get to the bottom of the list between five and six in the morning. Sometimes we were offered non-driving work, such as manning the fuel

pumps at the terminal, or working as a yard man at one of the nearby assembly plants. This was hourly work that paid \$15.61 an hour, which was raised to \$16.61 after a brief strike in the late winter of 1989.

When driving, we were paid \$2.50 per car for dock loading, which was done at a releasing yard where there were yard personnel to bring the cars to our trucks, in the order we wanted, backed or driven in as specified. The pay was \$5.00 per car for ground loading at a storage yard where the driver had to wander the yard and get the cars that were being loaded; \$0.36 per mile loaded (even one car left on the truck was considered loaded miles); \$0.31 per mile empty, and \$5.00 per delivery stop. If one of the vehicles on the load was a full-size supercab pickup, or another vehicle that took the space of two cars, a premium of \$5.00 was paid for loading.

When we were loading at Oakville, we were taking on non-clearcoat Ford Tempos and Mercury Topazes built at the Oakville Assembly Plant (clearcoat cars were built in Kansas City, Missouri, and brought in by rail). F-Series trucks were built next door at the Ontario Truck Plant, as well as U.S.-built vehicles, such as Aerostars and Rangers brought in from the States by rail.

We also hauled Jeep YJs out of Brampton, which I was told at the time was the only plant in the world building that body style, for all world markets. That plant was closed and torn down in the early '90s. We hauled Eagle Premiers out of the brand-new plant in nearby Bramalea, which had been recently acquired with Chrysler's purchase of AMC; the plant now builds Dodge Challengers and Chargers, as well as Chrysler 300s. And we hauled imports, mainly Hyundai Excels and Nissan 240SXs at a receiving yard in Mississauga.

Since all these plants also built vehicles for the U.S. market, we took loads of those vehicles to

terminals in Buffalo, Fort Erie, Ontario, and a couple of terminals in the greater Detroit area. We would deliver our loads to those terminals and load up with vehicles built in the U.S. and Mexico for the Canadian market.

The longer runs required staying out overnight, in which case a dispatcher would book a hotel room at the driver's request. Maris had accounts at hotels in Ottawa, Windsor, etc., and they were nice hotels. Most of today's car haulers have sleeper cabs, eliminating the expense of hotels.

Our truck fleet at Oakville consisted of about 200 trucks, with an almost an even split between Ford L9000s (also known as Louisvilles, for the plant in which they were built) and GMC Brigadiers, with a couple of Chevy Bruins in the mix, and there were nine Mack Econodynes.

Transit damage was considered a part of the job, and no driver could say they never created any damage. They ranged from minor scratches to complete destruction of a vehicle—usually from hitting an overpass—and everything in between. There was one driver at the company who had built a dubious reputation for damaging cars, including the aforementioned overpass-type incident, all of which earned him the nickname "Cap'n Crunch." Needless to say, it was not an easy task to get fired from that job.

The money I made when I was busy was such that I only needed to work one week each month



to cover my living expenses; my car was paid for, and the rent on my apartment at the time was \$444 a month, including utilities and underground parking. There were lean times, too, during which I had to work at a driver's overload service to make up the difference. Also, most of the assembly plants would shut down for a couple of weeks in August to tool up for the new model year.

Getting fired was not easy but getting laid off was a risk in a trucking job that was largely dependent on the auto industry; then as now, it was feast or famine. With the onset of a recession in 1989, I received my layoff notice, and my last day as a Maris car hauler was September 30, 1989. It was a Saturday, and I picked up a load of Jeep YJs at Brampton, delivered the whole load in Windsor, and drove back to Oakville empty. My gross pay that week, in which I only worked three days, was about \$500. I miss that job to this day! 🚚



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AS THE OWNER OF A 1958

Edsel Citation convertible, I always enjoy seeing these orphans in your magazine. The 1960 Edsel that graced the cover of the November 2022 issue, and was commented on in the January issue, shows that this Edsel was based on the '60 Ford body. The placing of the '59 Pontiac grille in the '60 Edsel was not just a result of designers being influenced by other manufacturers' designs, but a direct order by the CEO of Ford, Ernest Breech. The Edsel was on the way out and Ford needed to make the '60 Edsel as cheaply as possible.

Robin Jones was the designer just under Roy Brown, the stylist in charge of the Edsel. In the June 1999 issue of *Collectible Automobile*, Jones explains that the original design for the '60 Edsel had a vertical bar coming out of the front bumper and the hood was molded up and around this bar. They thought this design was the final product. One evening, just before the official okay for this design, Ernest Breech stopped by the studio and looked at the product. He told Jones to change it by getting rid of the vertical bar and to replace it with a piece like the one in the center of the grille of the '59 Pontiac. He said he was flying out of the country the next morning and would be stopping by before he left to see and approve the new design. Jones says that the whole crew stayed up all night to address the change. At 8 a.m. Breech showed up, looked at the model and said "OK." The Edsel had a side sweep of chrome that was just like the '59 Pontiac. That was not part of Breech's order, but part of the ongoing design. It was hard to tell any Pontiac fan that it wasn't stolen, too.

I understand how one stylist's design will influence



designers that come after but, according to Robin Jones, this was a direct order from "on high."

—DAN COUGHLIN

Manchester, Missouri

THE CAPTION ON PAGE 49

of the December 2022 issue ("Upwardly Mobile: America's Low-Priced Three Enter High Society") states that Chevrolet's Caprice started as a "two-door hardtop" and four-door versions were added later. I think it was just the opposite. The first Caprice was in the 1965 model year

and was only available as a four-door hardtop. The two-door version was added in 1966 with its unique Chevy-only roofline.

—DON MAURIZIO

Nipomo, California

Don, you're correct. We missed the error within the caption. As stated in the story, the Caprice was introduced in 1965 as the four-door Custom Sedan (RPO Z18) within the Impala series. The following year, the Caprice became its own series, at which time a two-door coupe and station wagon were added.

JUST A QUICK NOTE TO

compliment Terry, Matthew, and Pat on their regular columns in *Hemmings Classic Car*. I enjoy them immensely... and at times believe y'all have a secret camera in my garage when writing about the mistakes we make while wrenching! I make the same mistakes that you write about. My latest toy is a 1995 Mercedes E300 Diesel—not the fastest car on the road, but it is lots of fun. It is a solid California car (with only 133,000 miles) and all I need to work on are the easier cosmetics, etc.

—ED SOFIANEK

Carrollton, Virginia

WHEN I RETRIEVED THE

January 2023 issue (#220) from my mailbox, the first story I read was "Return of the Broughams." In 1977, I was in the service and had been stationed in New Mexico. The first new Thunderbird I saw was on I-40 just outside of Albuquerque. It was a beautiful dove grey with a burgundy vinyl top. I fell in love with the car but on an enlisted man's pay there was no way I could have afforded the entry price.





In 1978 I separated from active duty and went back home in my Chevrolet Vega, which was falling apart; by the time I got it home it was beyond help. I traded it in for a brand-new 1978 Ford Fairmont Futura sport coupe. The car wore Polar White paint with tan pinstripes, and the whole thing

was two-toned thanks to the rocker area being finished in a burgundy-brownish color. Up top was a tan two-piece vinyl top and a sunroof, and the interior was tan, too. Under the hood was an inline six-cylinder and an automatic transmission. It was a really good-looking car; I drove it for eight years until it suffered the indignity of a massive hailstorm, which caused it to be a total loss. Knowing what I know now, it was as close as I could ever get to owning anything that resembled the 1977 Thunderbird that I fell in love with. It's been decades now, but I still wish I had this car back. *HCC* is a great magazine; keep up the great work.

—**JOE BALLENTINE**
South Carolina

TERRY'S COMMENTS IN

his column "Restoration Education" (January 2023) sounded familiar. When I was a kid in the suburbs, I had a

rather ragged collection of hand-me-down tools, a couple of old bumper jacks, some boards and bricks for jack stands, and a 26-year-old Chevy—a 1941 that needed a replacement steering box to get through New Jersey motor vehicle inspection. I found a good one in a 1940 Chevy at Mike's Auto Parts, but I had to literally dig a hole underneath the car to get it out, as Mike was not going to move a bunch of other cars to lift it up. I got it out.

That and several cans of STP to stop the engine from smoking rendered the '41 Chevy legal and rolling. A blown head gasket finally did her in a year later. That started 55 years of tinkering and rebuilding, along with lots of re-doing things that didn't work the first time.

I have a number of projects going on, but at my age—and just having received a new hip—I will have to choose my battles. I think it will be

my 1973 Pontiac GTO, a rough derelict but mostly all there. It needs a lot of work, but even if I don't finish it, it will be the process that keeps me going.

—**WES CIAMPO**
Fly Creek, New York

I ENJOYED MATTHEW LITWIN'S

commentary on Big Wheels in the December issue. It was a nice divergence from the big wheels we all enjoy today, and it reminded me of my oldest son (now 42), who wore out two of those Big Wheels going up and down the driveway and around the neighborhood. I also notice how few kids I see outside enjoying this kind of activity these days. Thanks for providing the memories!

—**DOUG HARTMANN**
Fremont, Nebraska



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1948 ALLARD M1



You know you have a special vehicle when it inspires a flurry of comments and no fewer than 14 time extensions. That's what this exceedingly rare Allard M1 drophead coupe represented, being one of an estimated 60 known to remain worldwide. No dates were given as to the British sports car's restoration, but it presented well with no rust, minimal cosmetic issues, and a tidy interior and properly sealing folding roof. Some electrical faults were noted in the form of unspecified nonfunctional exterior lighting and a similarly recalcitrant gauge. The claimed-original Ford flathead V-8 was rebuilt, and it and the four-speed gearbox didn't leak. This car nearly quadrupled its reserve.

Reserve: \$15,500
Selling Price: \$58,802
Recent Market Range:
\$32,150-\$47,340



1960 CHEVROLET IMPALA



Perhaps the most unusual Chevrolet to cross Hemmings' virtual auction block in recent memory was this 1960 Impala sedan, which was spec'd in a very sporty manner and claimed to retain all its original finishes, including the Tasco Turquoise/Ermine White body paint. Only minor chips were reported, with good glass and chrome outside and intact houndstooth upholstery inside. It was the four-speed stick on the floor, and the 250-hp 348-cu.in. V-8 and 4.11-geared Positraction rear axle, that really got enthusiasts salivating. Minor fluid leaks, a bit of steering play, and suspension components of unknown age were noted demerits. Numerous clock resets and 22 bids showed why this car beat the average.

Reserve: \$21,000
Selling Price: \$32,025
Recent Market Range:
\$18,020-\$28,440

This correctly restored half-ton truck may be familiar to longtime *Hemmings Motor News* readers, having been a feature vehicle. It represented the final year of original Plymouth pickup production and was one of a handful of known survivors. The AACA Senior Grand National award-winning truck appeared to be in excellent condition, with no cosmetic flaws outside or in, and only a bit of surface rust showing on the exhaust system. Just 237 miles were added to the 201-cu.in. flathead inline-six and three-speed manual transmission after the photo-documented 2007 restoration, and the driveline promised full functionality with no leaks. The hammer price might be considered a good deal for the winning bidder.

Reserve: \$31,900
Selling Price: \$34,125
Recent Market Range:
\$28,200-\$40,950



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In Search of Period Perfection

Zach Suhr is a humble guy with a passion for the artifacts of an earlier era.

"You probably know more about this car than I do," he tells me. Not true. Or, if it is, it's only because of him and a handful of other guys that I learned what I know about hot rodding's protoplasmic era between the World Wars (see "Gow Jobs Revealed" in this issue). Among that group of teachers is the late Bruce Lancaster, a New Jersey-based librarian and hot-rod historian of the first rank who became a mentor to Zach, a resident of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, and owner of both the gorgeous barn and the 1925 Ford Model T Runabout in these photos. Zach is among the next generation of enthusiasts who are keeping alive the memory of how young folks in the early '30s had fun and went fast with old cars.

Bruce shared his knowledge frequently on the HAMB forum on the Jalopy Journal website, which is where I first crossed paths with Zach. We're both millennials, and 20-plus years ago we'd both come to Ryan Cochran's pillar of traditional hot rodding (alongside places like the Ford

BY DAVID CONWILL
PHOTOGRAPHY BY DREW WIEDEMANN

**A 41-year-old is writing
a new chapter for a
98-year-old car**







Barn, Model T Ford Club of America, Model T Ford Club International, Model A Ford Club of America, and Model A Restorers Club forums) to learn about the vintage cars that fascinated us. Information on how the factory did it was easy to find, but only by seeking out certain folks could you learn how the owners enjoyed their Fords on Day 2, in Year Five, Year Ten, and Year Twenty.

Zach's been at the history bit a long time now, and he's a super-handly guy—equally at home wrenching, sign painting, working on historical structures, or picking up whatever other skill he might find handy to pursue his interests. A devoted husband and father of two 2-year-olds (one of whom has already laid claim to

this car), he's also short of time. It helps that everyone in the household shares his enthusiasm for old stuff, centered on the collection of mostly early Fords that are modified in various vintage ways to go faster. Zach is a retrophile whose tastes go beyond speed parts—his enthusiasm is as focused on the aesthetic potential of the era's machinery as on the history.

Don't let the extent of his collection versus his youth confuse you. Zach's a working stiff like the rest of us, just one who is so obviously devoted to a particular period and style that people ultimately seek him out as a custodian of cool vintage stuff. For many sellers, top dollar doesn't matter when you know your treasure is going to a good home.

It also helps that Zach doesn't mind fixing or sensitively remodeling something if it's not perfect when he obtains it. Before we shot the photographs for this article, he pointed out to me where he'd artfully disguised changes he'd had to make to the barn floor. He's a details man—keenly aware of how everything you see here can be improved just a bit, through judicious substitution of period detail for modern-day expedience. It's a refinement that this torch-bearing Model T deserves given its role in keeping alive the once-ubiquitous Tin Lizzie. In the pre-internet era, it was seemingly remembered only by a small enclave in Southern California and, once, in our predecessor magazine, *Special Interest Autos*



(<https://hmn.com/siaestes>). Those embers of history were particularly hot in the Long Beach Model T Club.

In fairness to Zach's opening comment, I interviewed the Ford's previous owner Joe Brun, of Long Beach, California, back in 2017 in order to profile this car in *Hemmings Motor News* shortly after it ran (shorn of fenders) at The Race of Gentlemen in its October 2016 Pismo Beach appearance (<https://hmn.com/garrisonroadster>). That's where Vernon "Gabby" Garrison's story is more fully told. Further, a lot of what Zach and I know about the car comes via Rich "Flyin-T" Turner, a veteran of the Long Beach Model T scene and an acquaintance of Gabby's. Gabby built

this car back in the 1970s in homage to similar Ts he'd owned as a teenager in the early 1930s. Rich also has frequently posted his recollections of Gabby and about Gabby's cars on the HAMB.

Zach knows those stories, and many more. He was preparing to build a car like this, from scratch, before this one became available. He'd been studying this car, Gabby's two earlier cars, and their contemporaries from guys with names like Roy "Multi" Aldrich, Robert Hodge, Bob Estes, the Downey Brothers, Hi Halfhill, Phil Weiland, Roy Richter, and Lee Chapel. Back circa 1932-'37, they and others constructed cars in this vein. A few of those gow jobs yet survive, in various states of preservation and originality.



“I want something serious like a street-
or dry-lakes-racing Model T.”





"The first car I bought was in the basement of a train station, which I thought was pretty cool. I only paid \$500 for it, complete and with a title. So, then I bought a RAJO BBR head, Stutz ignition, Warford transmission, and all the fancy stuff I thought I was going to use to build something like Hi Halfhill's or Gabby's car."

Halfhill's car was an all-competition job with no fenders and a Model A engine and frame rails from a Star; Gabby's full-fendered car, with its distinctive hinged-and-chopped windshield, is all-T and pretty mild. It's less so at present.

"It's more hopped up now, from Joe Brun," Zach says, "than when Gabby had it. It was pretty much all stock."

Now, thanks to Joe, the roadster is set up for "touring"—eating up the desert highway miles at 50 mph, preferably at night, thanks to the lack of a top. That's something that would have greatly amused Gabby, as his originals (the very first was destroyed when his high school collapsed on it in the 1933 Long Beach earthquake) weren't terribly reliable. A 26-mile round trip was about tops back then, but Ts have come a long way since.

For this car, Gabby's engine recipe started with a Sherman counterbalanced crankshaft in a Model T Ford block wearing a stock iron head, with domed pistons providing a boost in compression from the factory 4:1. Mid-1920s gasoline was notoriously bad, bordering on kerosene, so everything is high-test to a Model T by comparison. Compression is free power, up to a point.

Joe went through the engine after he acquired the car from Gabby's family. He started by fitting a camshaft with .310-inch lift and installing a 1970s Ford tractor carburetor in place of Gabby's period-correct Winfield carburetor. Joe was not a fan of the Winfield's street manners, but Zach, who is more concerned with period details, made sure to acquire the Winfield along with the car—though it remains to be seen just how far he may wish to go with his previously acquired Model T speed goodies. After all, Zach has lots of old Fords to drive, and he came into the Model T because of a particular vision: "I wanted something serious like a street- or dry-lakes-racing Model T."

Zach's a mild-mannered guy—he laughed when he saw our cover and said "tough guy"—but hooligan street racing in the 1930s looks pretty benign compared to today. The roads were a lot emptier then, especially in Southern California, and terminal velocities weren't much in excess of 60 mph. Really high-speed work (say 90 to 100 mph) required a longer run up, something only available on occasion



at places like Muroc Dry Lake or Daytona Beach. The real use of most gow jobs (aside from transportation—these weren't second cars back then) was what we'd now call drag racing: a (supposed) reference to "dragging second gear" to wring every bit of acceleration from a car with a three-speed transmission.

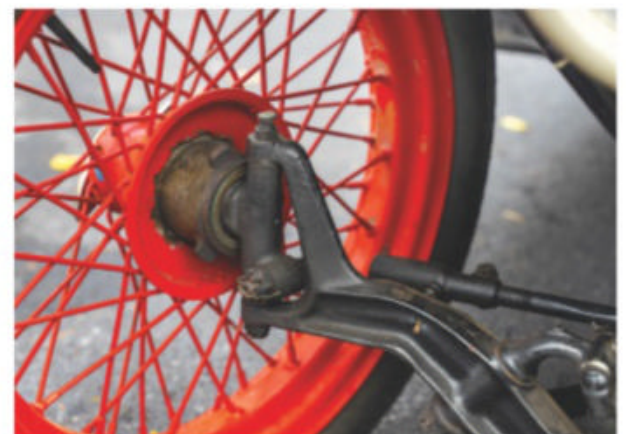
Gabby's car, as it sits, has four speeds. During his ownership, Joe fitted a Ruckstell two-speed differential, something it has in common with a lot of milder-looking touring builds. Controlled by a lever, the Ruckstell permits the 3:1 ring-and-pinion to also act as a 4.5:1 when needed. Although many gowwed-up Ts sport additional

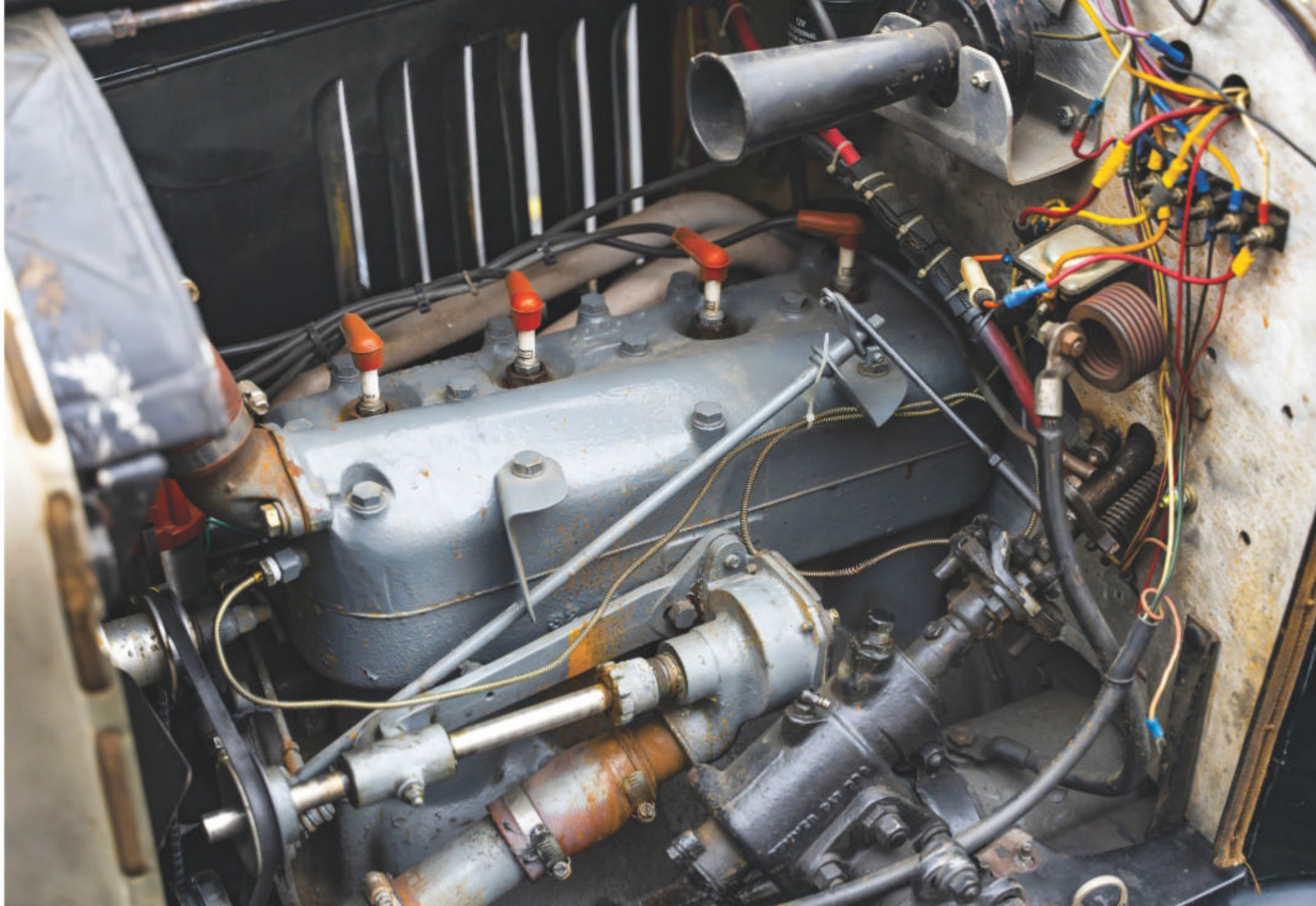
transmissions, like the aforementioned Warford in Zach's stash, at present, this car retains its Ford two-speed planetary transmission otherwise unaided. It also sports what they used to call a "foot-feed throttle," better known as a conventional accelerator pedal—the Model T factory arrangement controlled the carburetor via a lever on the steering wheel.

After he'd positioned the car for one of the photos, I asked Zach if the foot feed was as tricky to drive as some people claimed. He told me he'd never driven any other Model T, so he didn't know. Even to early Ford guys, the Model T remains a bit exotic thanks to the pedal-and-lever-operated transmission. Zach

makes it look like driving a lawn tractor around. It's a good reminder that a century ago, driving a Ford wasn't considered a special skill. Instead, it was the crash-box transmissions and grabby clutches in non-Ford cars that intimidated most people.

The only truly unsatisfactory element of a purely stock Model T is the braking system. For 1925, when Ford produced this one, service braking (that is, slowing and stopping the car in ordinary driving) was handled by a band acting on a drum in the transmission to stop the driveshaft





The engine sports multiple touring-oriented modifications including pressurized oiling to the main bearings and oil spray on the connecting rods, which may form a basis for additional speed parts like a RAJO BBR overhead-valve conversion.

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and, by extension, the rear wheels. In emergencies, the parking-brake system, which was an unlined, internally expanding drum brake on each rear wheel, actuated by a hand lever, could be used to supplement. It wasn't very effective for anything other than keeping a parked car from rolling away. Wise owners invested in some kind of accessory braking system and no self-respecting gow owner would be without one. Gabby included Stronghold external brakes in this build, which apply shoes to the outside of the parking-brake drum.

At speed, Zach looks at ease behind the wheel. The T is likely surer footed

than most, thanks to Gabby's inclusion of an Essex steering box, the lowered suspension, and the 19-inch wheels and tires. The lowered suspension comes via a dropped axle in front and a raised, adjustable crossmember in the rear. The 19-inch wheels are based on vintage Buffalo hubs laced to new rims. Zach has a fresh set of 4.50 x 19 tires on the way to get a more-1930s-authentic look in place of the current big-and-little combination.

Other plans Zach has for getting the little gow job closer to its 1930s roots include vintage instruments in an engine-turned panel, period-style electrical wiring, and a low-slung spare. To

better accommodate the latter, Zach has already removed the muffler and fitted a long, brass drainpipe extension. The bass burble is heavenly. Other touches will come as the parts present themselves.

"There was a steering wheel, '29 Packard or something, I didn't buy at Hershey. Now I regret it. It was cast aluminum and inset into the wood—it would look good reversed like I have the T wheel now."

Spiritually, Zach says, the car should end up "sort of a cross between Bob Estes' car and Gabby's," with a technological target date of 1932. When he's finished, it will be something to see. 🚗





The current instrument panel may become a wall hanger in lieu of a machine-turned piece with vintage gauges.



Pat Foster

The Kaiser Small Car

“Even though labor was a significant part of a car’s cost, the Kaiser engineers had to resort to de-contenting the car to reduce costs.”

I THINK WE

sometimes forget that Henry J. Kaiser’s original intention when entering the automobile business after World War II was to build a small family car of high quality at a price nearly anyone could afford. Kaiser talked about building a modern Model A, a great car at a low price. Before he teamed up with Joseph Frazer to form Kaiser-Frazer Corporation, Mr. Kaiser had his West Coast-based engineers working on several small-car design projects. They weren’t automotive engineers, so some of the prototypes were strange little two-passenger jobs that looked like something you’d see at a circus or a bumper-car ring. Others were more conventional, though much smaller than a standard-size car. Kaiser’s engineers were talented, though, and they tried a variety of innovative approaches to lowering the cost of building a car. However, in the end they came to realize what the Big Three automakers already knew: When you try to take cost out of a car, its content and product appeal go down a lot faster than expenses.

So, Kaiser-Frazer ended up building medium- and high-priced cars instead, which they did successfully—at first. But the dream of building a “modern Model A” persisted, and by 1949 K-F engineers were back at it. They decided to base the new car on a prototype built by auto supplier AMP Corp. It was a stark, unappealing two-door sedan on a 100-inch wheelbase. Designer Dutch Darrin altered some of its lines to give the design more flair, though in the end writer Tom McCahill said it looked like a Cadillac that started smoking at a young age.

Back then, it was considered crucial that the new small car was priced low, because car prices had been traditionally determined by size; the bigger the car, the more expensive it was. A little car was supposed to carry a small price tag, period. It may have been of good quality, provided a smoother ride, and offered better cornering stability; regardless, if it was small it had to be cheap. Nash got around this “rule” by loading its Rambler with \$300 worth of custom accessories at no charge while simultaneously offering the car in the most expensive body styles. Only later would it bring out a low-priced two-door sedan simply because



it was necessary to first produce the sales volume the Rambler needed to survive.

Part of the cost-reduction problem is the difficulty of decreasing labor costs. See, installing a fender or door takes

about the same time whether it’s on a Kaiser Manhattan or a Henry J. So, even though labor was a significant part of a car’s cost, the Kaiser engineers had to resort to de-contenting the car to reduce costs. On a 1950’s base car there was not much one could eliminate without hurting product appeal—remember that even heaters and AM radios were optional.

One thing the engineers did with the Henry J was eliminate the trunk lid, forcing people to access the space via the folding rear seat. That went over like liverwurst casserole on your birthday. In fact, a big cause of the Henry J’s failure was that it was cheapened too far. Missing were things most people considered essential, like the trunk lid, glovebox (buyers got little pouches on the passenger side instead), fresh-air ventilation, and gauges for amps and oil that were replaced by warning lamps. For all that, the basic Henry J was only about \$50 cheaper than a full-size Chevy, which had a functional trunk lid and a proper glovebox. Additionally, the Henry J’s fastback styling soon fell out of date.

Sadly, Kaiser-Frazer stylists had mocked up a variety of Henry J proposals using the same basic body, though tweaked to provide a better appearance. There was a hardtop with a conventional trunk and Nash-style reverse slope C-pillars; a fastback sedan with a “Traveler-style” hatchback door; a neat convertible built by a dealer; and my favorite, a two-door sedan with a conventional roofline and rear trunk—it was the size of a Nash Rambler sedan, but much more handsome.

In the end, Henry Kaiser didn’t create a “modern Model A” as he’d hoped. By being forced to focus almost exclusively on cutting the price of the small car as far as they could, the small sedan was stripped of so many basic features that it was perceived as a car for poor people. And as history has shown, no car with that reputation can succeed for long. Remember the Yugo? 🚗



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Larry bought his new Elan Sprint just two weeks after his first date with Jeanne, who'd become his wife in 1976 and encourage the car's eventual restoration.



First Love,

After sitting dormant 40 years, an original-owner 1973 Lotus Elan Sprint is reborn, better than new

When Laurence “Larry” Carbonetti bought his Lotus Elan Sprint off the showroom floor, he couldn’t envision that the little British convertible would be in his life for the next half-century. A few years after its arrival, and not long after it received a fresh performance-tuned engine and paint color change, the fiberglass-bodied two-seater would be parked since it wasn’t practical to drive while he and his wife, Jeanne were stick-building a new home. The couple constructed a special ground-floor room to hold the Elan, and that’s where it sat in suspended animation for decades.

“Time passed, and life went on,” Larry tells us. “Occasionally someone would ask what I planned to do with this car sitting in my basement. I didn’t know. I walked past it so many times through the years. Jeanne tried to encourage me by asking, ‘What are you thinking about doing with that car? You’d probably have fun if you drove it again!’ I did know that, as time passed, the work to return it to the road would grow.” The Chester, Vermont, resident had retired from his careers in education and consulting by late 2019, and the following spring’s COVID-19 lockdown gave Larry the opportunity to finally turn his focus back to the Lotus. He recalls, “In May 2020, I finally asked myself, ‘If not now, when?’”

Second Chance



WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARK J. McCOURT
RESTORATION IMAGES COURTESY OF LAURENCE CARBONETTI





Having pulled the Elan out of 40-year storage in his basement, Larry disassembled the car's components to gauge the extent of the restoration work it would need. He found corrosion had formed on the backbone frame, as well as on the suspension and brake parts. The car's silver over black repaint wouldn't stay.



The first task for Heads Up Motorsports was to ensure the Weber-carbureted 1.6-liter twin-cam four ran. That settled, the mechanics lifted the fiberglass body off the rolling chassis and set it on sawhorses. Each part would be evaluated and replaced if needed.



The new, U.K.-sourced chassis was stiffer and offered more protection than the original. It was fitted with Spydercars adjustable suspension components along with upgraded rear axles. The body's 16 mounting points had to be carefully drilled and shimmed.



Federal-spec Elan Sprints were built with emissions-compliant twin Stromberg carburetors, while European-spec versions used a different aluminum head with integral intake manifolds supporting two 40 DCOE Webers; this was the car's factory Stromberg-manifold head.



The original four-speed manual transmission had fewer than 21,000 miles on it, so it was simply cleaned, fitted with new seals, and reinstalled with a fresh single-plate clutch. Larry is considering changing the rear axle ratio to improve high-speed comfort.



After being sanded down to bare fiberglass, cracks repaired, and ensuring the panel curves and edges provided precise body fit, the doors, hood, trunk lid, and headlamp covers were sprayed with filler, high-build primer, and Sikkens base and clear coat paints.



While the old folding top was too brittle to reuse, the black vinyl door panels and seats were perfectly intact and serviceable. An accomplished woodworker, Larry finished a new wood-veneer dash for the interior, which was installed along with new carpeting.



The Elan gets a heart transplant: its original unit was rebuilt with a new aluminum head with twin-Weber intakes. The mix of a .040-inch over-bore, .025-inch decking, forged internals, and the side-draft carbs means it makes more than the factory-rated 126 hp.

As it sat, the 20,630-mile car wore silver paint over its original black vinyl interior. The factory-installed convertible top was brittle, and crazing marred the finish of the wood-veneer dash fascia. The engine was one Larry had purpose-built in 1975 using a stress-relieved block, balanced internal components, and a special head with a European-type twin Weber carburetor intake that supplanted the U.S.-spec dual Strombergs. Under the body, a front upright portion of the Lotus's Y-shaped backbone chassis remained bent after the car had struck fallen rocks on the road; while damaged suspension parts

were replaced at the time and attempts were made to straighten the upright, proper suspension geometry proved unachievable. Sorting that frame and going through the engine and driveline would be Larry's top priorities.

"I aired up the tires, rolled the car into the garage, and got it up on jackstands. There was corrosion on the frame, so I began soaking all the nuts and bolts with WD-40 to permit the initial disassembly and evaluation," he explains. "As I'd entertained this project over the years, I'd assumed I would do whatever needed to be done. I've

always enjoyed that kind of work, but I came to realize that what it needed was beyond my skills, which had significantly eroded over 45 years away from regular automotive work. I thought, 'I'm in decent shape, but I'm 71 and not getting any younger. I want to drive this thing and I can't have it being a five-, ten-, or fifteen-year project.'"

He contacted local specialist firm Heads Up Motorsports, and then-proprietor Kelly Arrison assured Larry he and mechanics Matt King and Rye Greineder were familiar with Weber carburetors and had experience working





Owner's View

"Graduating college in 1971 and starting my career as a high school English teacher in 1972 brought me to purchase my first car: a 1971 MGB. I also started a side business that year—Carbo's Car Care—working evenings and weekends on other people's cars. While the MGB was a lot of fun and carried me on two cross-country trips visiting some 40 states, I began yearning for something a little more special and performance oriented. A simple list of desires



emerged: two-seat sports car, four-wheel disc brakes, independent rear suspension, affordable for me. I had been choosing between an Alfa Romeo 'Duetto,' an XK-E, a Porsche 911, and a Lotus. After much agonizing and numerous great test drives, the Elan grew on me as a choice. Tom's Pit Stop, a nearby dealer in Scotch Plains, New Jersey, had one on the floor, adjacent to a Europa and a TVR. After many repeat visits to this dealer, I made my purchase." —Laurence "Larry" Carbonetti



on Elans. It was agreed that the car would be entrusted to them over the winter, and Larry started sourcing the many new parts it needed to return to the road.

The damaged chassis would be discarded because he ordered a brand-new, improved replacement from Lotus specialty firm Spydercars in England. This spaceframe unit was stiffer than the original, and Larry purchased add-on parts that included sill and foot-box members and a triangulated roll bar that brought measures of crash protection with minimal weight penalty. Also from Spydercars came new front and rear suspension components featuring adjustability for camber (front) and toe (front and rear).

The mechanics first ensured that the 1,588-cc (96.9-cu.in.) DOHC four-cylinder would run again. "PROOF OF LIFE" was the subject line of an email he soon received that contained a video attachment showing Matt starting the Elan and driving it out of the garage. The next steps would be lifting the body off the old chassis and assembling the new one with a mix of reconditioned and fresh suspension parts and new brakes, plus the re-sealed engine, four-speed gearbox, and differential.

"I did all the parts procurement, literally every single part that went into the car," Larry recalls. "A lot of things came from England, particularly from Tony Thompson Racing. As I made more connections with Lotus folks around the U.S., I learned about R.D. Enterprises, a Lotus parts supplier in Quakertown, Pennsylvania. Ray [Psulkowski] has his own Elan and there wasn't a question I could ask that he didn't have an answer for."

While the team at Heads Up worked on the Elan, Larry stained and finished a replacement dashboard at home, affixing the gauges and switchgear so it was ready for installation when needed. He chose to make some electrical parts substitutions that, while taking the Lotus away from as-built accuracy, would improve its functional reliability. "The

electrical system was basically in fine shape, but I tell people I 'de-Lucased' it," Larry says with a laugh. "I went with a high-torque starter and replaced the generator with an alternator. Vacuum cylinders were originally used to raise the headlamps, but they were notoriously problematic; Spydercars sells an electric headlamp-lift conversion kit that I ordered, and Rye spent umpteen hours adjusting all the turnbuckles to make them work."

"It was April 2021 when Matt called and said, 'Do you want to come over and drive your car?' They'd done a few drives at shake-down speeds, then I drove it a few times and it was just fabulous," he remembers. Larry took delivery of his Elan Sprint in early May and drove it that summer and fall.

But persistent smoking from the engine, theorized to be due to worn valve-stem seals or a seized piston ring, told him not all was well with his built twin-cam. Rather than go through that one again, Larry pulled the original Stromberg-topped four-cylinder out of storage and had River City Machine up in White River Junction confirm the block's health via Magnafluxing, before boring the cylinders .040-inches. Matt rebuilt it using the original connecting rods on a steel crankshaft swinging forged pistons, plus a new cast-aluminum head with the correct Weber intake manifold, from the U.K. firm QED Motorsport. The project wasn't complete, though, since "Phase Two"—restoring the body—was forthcoming.

"From the start, I wanted to return it to its original Regency Red over Cirrus White and gold colors," Larry continues. "I heard about Jasmin Auto Body in White River Junction. Owner Josh Jasmin was a Corvette aficionado and was very experienced working with fiberglass bodies. I took the car up there that summer and met with him. Josh was clearly familiar with Elans by the questions he asked;

Because the performance-built engine that had powered the car from near-new developed a smoking problem, the Elan's original 1.6-liter twin-cam was pulled from storage and rebuilt with a new head and U.K.-spec twin-Weber manifold.



I mentioned this, and he said they'd done a couple, which I took as a good sign. They agreed to take on the project, and I would leave the car with them when I stopped driving it in late October so they could have it through the winter to work on as they saw fit."

Josh remembers this commission fondly, explaining, "The car was in presentable driver condition but was really starting to show its age. We agreed on the level of rework he was looking for: the scope of restoration would correct the body blemishes, strip back to the fiberglass, correct fitment issues with the doors and headlamp buckets that had been there since it left the showroom floor, and repaint it to its original three-color scheme with base coat/clear coat from Sikkens."

After removing the trim, doors, hood, trunk lid, and headlamp covers, the Jasmin Auto Body team sanded the body down to bare fiberglass. They repaired any cracks they'd uncovered and adjusted the fit and gaps of all the panels. Josh says, "We next coated the body with a spray poly filler and hand-blocked it to a smooth-finished surface. A high-build primer was sprayed, and after adequate curing time, it was hand-blocked to smooth the body and true its lines. The car was reassembled to test-fit all final gaps, and was re-primed

and re-blocked while assembled to ensure panel fit was as good as possible."

Larry got a surprise during one memorable shop visit: "Josh offered to introduce me to the man who would be painting my car. The guy stepped out of the paint booth, took off his mask, and said, 'Mr. Carbonetti?' It was John Boyle, who'd been my student in high school more than 20 years ago!" The familiarity between client and specialist made the work meaningful for both.

Josh continues, "John had a full day in one of our GFS Ultra downdraft booths laying out three colors on the body and applying the final clearcoat application. We used Sikkens Autobase Plus solvent paint and Sikkens Autoclear HS+ for the clearcoat, and after an extended bake cycle, the car rolled out of the booth

looking amazing. The following days were spent wet sanding the final paint to a flawless finish and reassembling the exterior trim." Finishing touches included respraying the black wheels and applying the Elan Sprint's gold beltline decals.

"I ended up with, in essence, a new automobile, and I've driven it 10,000 miles in the two summers and two autumns it has been with me. A lot of people have asked if I regret all those years it sat there, and I say, 'To be honest, no. For instance, I if I had done this 25 years ago and had driven it regularly, what would have happened? I might have let it go 15 years ago,'" Larry muses. "For it to come back to me at this point in my life, especially with the people I've met and the friends I've made—it's been terrific. These two-plus years have given me vast quantities of joy." 🚗





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Gow Jobs

BY DAVID CONWILL

PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVID AND PENNY CONWILL

What's a gow job? Quite simply, "gow job" is a handy term for differentiating the kinds of home-built performance cars constructed before World War II from those that came after. The phrase itself is old-time California-speak. Its origins, and even pronunciation, are hotly debated—those who were there, like centenarian camshaft grinder Ed "Isky" Iskenderian, pronounce "gow" to rhyme with "cow." We suspect the true etymology is simply the word "go" spoken by the Southern-accented immigrants from dust-bowl Arkansas and Oklahoma who were flowing into California in the '20s and '30s. Blame *Hot Rod* magazine for the term falling out of favor: that periodical's 1948 debut got the rest of the country calling any car modified for speed or acceleration a hot rod instead.

Still, the nomenclature change is useful. Gows evolved out of existence after the war, but as our cover car demonstrates, their revival has been under way since the 1970s and has only picked up steam since. The new participants were all born after the hot rod took over—many were born after the '70s—suggesting there's a lot more at play here than mere nostalgia. Style, simplicity, and fun are the big reasons people are putting these cars together—the time-travel aspect is there, but one gets the sense that the big appeal is the same as it was when they were done the first time. They're great looking cars that are easy to build and a blast to drive.

If the gow job is defined at the near end of its existence by its evolution into the hot rod, it must similarly be compared with the speedster at the time of its origins. A huge aftermarket grew up in the 1920s catering to Ford Model T owners (with add-on mechanical braking systems to supplement Ford's transmission brake being perhaps the single most sought-after accessory) and the extremely affordable, even disposable, nature of used Fords made them the perfect basis for a homebuilt motorized machine of any type. Making a Model T go faster was mostly a matter of discarding the body and fenders, rigging up some seats and a fuel tank, and going for a spin. Lowering, custom bodywork, and other refinements soon followed.

It wasn't long before aftermarket pieces and the speedster ethos found their way into stock-bodied cars. Some outfits, like Los Angeles' Sterling Garage, took to offering new or nearly new Fords already lowered, fitted with wire wheels, and tuned up using speed parts from vendors like Rajo, Roof, Laurel, and Frontenac. They were the Yenko Camaros and Shelby Mustangs of their day and inspired emulators for the next 15 years.

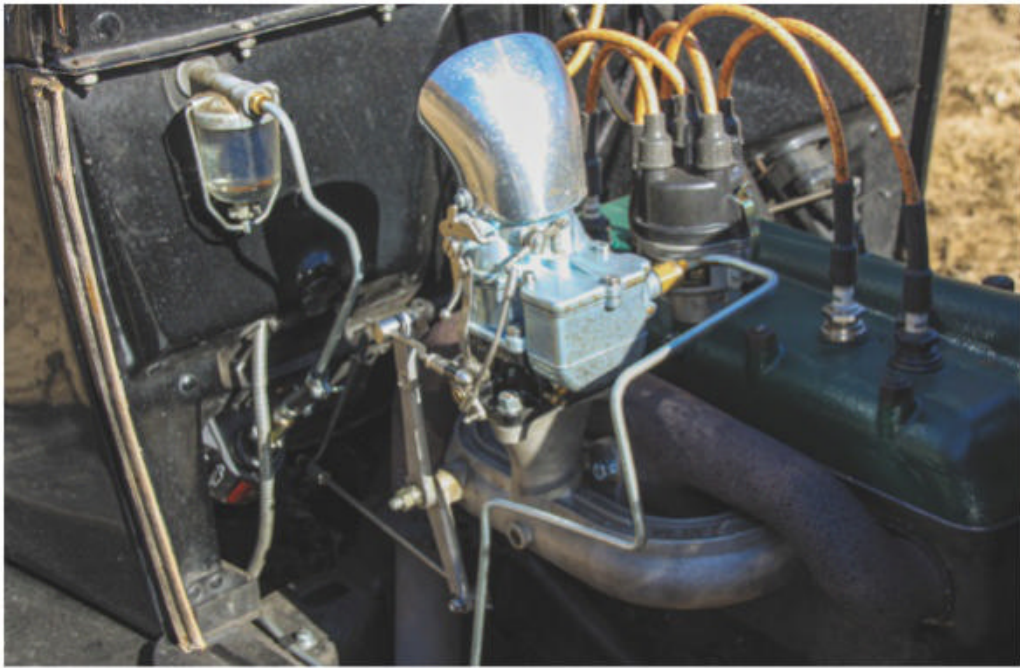
For historical as well as practical reasons, most gow jobs begin with a Ford Model T or Model A, though any marque is fair game. The wood-heavy construction of other brands means there aren't as many surviving bodies, however; plus, Ford has long held an insurmountable edge in the speed-parts area. It's also worth noting that while most of the original gow jobs were roadsters or touring cars, coupe and sedan bodies have become more popular with time. Although they're heavier, the comfort can't be

What is the enduring appeal of the earliest style traditional hot rods?



Revealed





A Burns intake manifold adapts a Stromberg 81 two-barrel carburetor to the original engine in Gabby Goodwin's 1929 Ford Model A roadster. The 81 was a small-venturi version of the Stromberg EE created for the 60-hp, 136-cu.in. Ford V-8 engines of 1937-'40. Gabby's engine also boasts the high-compression head Ford supplied to the law-enforcement market, which has earned it the name "police head."



The earlier the car, the more jobs are left under the operator's control. On pre-1932 Fords, that includes ignition advance. Gabby Goodwin's '29 automates that operation and attains hotter spark via a modern after-market distributor from FSI that retains a period look.

discounted, and there's no denying they look wonderful when done correctly. The weight penalty isn't much and most of these cars aren't being created primarily for competition anyway.

ENGINES AND DRIVELINE

When it comes to govt job engines, it's all about the flatheads. Certainly, F-heads, overheads, and overhead-cam engines all existed before WWII, but the clear favorites, then and now, are the Ford flathead engines of 1909-1953, even if they've been retrofit with one of the multiple aftermarket cylinder heads

that were created for converting a Ford. In stock form, the Ford flatheads were simple, they were robust, and they were produced in huge numbers, making them straightforward and relatively inexpensive to obtain even today. Ford even did the future govt jobber a big favor by keeping the Model T and Model A four-cylinder engines in production for replacement and industrial use through 1941, long after both cars had been supplanted.

The 20-hp Model T engine, designed as it was during the brass-era, is clearly the most primitive of the bunch. Its ignition was a low-tension magneto built

into the flywheel, most used thermosiphon cooling rather than a water pump, and its crankshaft is often described as resembling a bent paperclip. That said, it also had the most highly developed aftermarket of its era and is still the most affordable powerplant. Full-race engines have a noble competition history, including multiple appearances in the Indianapolis 500 in the '20s and early '30s (one placed fifth in 1923, and another qualified at 108.395 mph in '31). On the ragged edge, the little 177-cu. in. units will produce 100 hp, and a 60-hp unit is mild enough to give reliable



Bill's roadster uses the 1937 transmission that came along with the engine. It's essentially the same unit as the vaunted '39 gearbox, though the latter is said to have a better shifter and improved synchronizers. The V-8 transmission is also a potential upgrade behind the Model A engine, though experienced Model A drivers will debate the real merits of synchronized shifting.

Rarely seen in modern hot rods, the 21-stud, 1937-'38 Ford flathead V-8 engines had their heyday immediately after World War II, when a lot of well-used prewar Fords were finally retired. In the prewar era, the late-model V-8 would have been quite the coup. Bill Neergaard's 1930 Ford A/V-8 roadster is essentially a stock Model A with 1940 wheels and the 1937 engine and transmission. Were this 1940-'41, that alone would have really wowed 'em at the drive-in, to say nothing of the dual Strombergs.





With its wide-five wheels, F-1 pickup steering box, and a 1949 Mercury crankshaft in the stroked-to-255-cu.in. 1941 Ford V-8, Brian Lundgren says his car probably most accurately dates to circa 1951, but a lot of prewar elements are there. The '41 engine is of a design that came out for 1939, the aluminum heads (made by Weiand) look like Ford pieces, and the Edelbrock "slingshot" dual-carburetor manifold was that company's first product, circa 1938.

power to a Model T gow job, which in turn is plenty light enough to be a spirited performer with such a mill.

The 40-hp Model A engine of 1928-'31 and its 50-hp Model B successor of 1932-'34—though they're also flathead inline fours—share little with the Model T powerplant. They're physically larger, though not so enormous they can't be stuffed into a T frame. More than one car currently in the gow job scene is making use of a carefully restored (and thus anvil reliable) Model A engine to double the horsepower of a flyweight Model T. In its original home, the A/B four-banger is easily hopped up using vintage and modern aftermarket pieces.

Best known to the younger generation, of course, are the Ford flathead V-8 engines that came out for 1932 and lasted in domestic production through 1953 (Canadian cars kept them a year longer and the French military was still procuring them into the 1960s). The most gow-jobby of the group are the

original-style mills of 1932-'36. They're recognizable because the water pumps are in the cylinder heads rather than on the block, as with 1937-up engines. The downsides are that they are small (221-cu.in. versus 239 to 255 for later cars), they weren't as powerful in stock form (65-85 hp), and they were only produced during the Great Depression, when the aftermarket was at its nadir, so speed parts for them are hard to come by and pricey. Many folks fudge slightly and go to the later engines.

There's no disguising the center-outlet heads of a '37-up engine, but that's okay. An early 21-head-stud V-8 looks like a period upgrade, and a '39-'48 24-stud engine is close to indistinguishable. Squint your eyes, and the '49-'53 engine (with coolant outlets at the front of the heads) does an okay job standing in for a '32-'36 unit, even if the water pumps are in the wrong spot. The real trick to keeping a period feeling with an anachronistic V-8 seems to be avoiding

Not only is the graceful, swan-necked shifter used on the 1939 Ford transmission—shown here in Brian Lundgren's 1930 Ford Model A/V-8 coupe—a classic piece of industrial design, the gearbox itself is an extremely straightforward piece of engineering that is easily rebuilt at home. Fun ownership must encompass the maintenance as well as the driving.





The cheeky comment about trading second gear for first place aside, early Ford components are robust when not hammered with 1960s levels of horsepower. Brian Lundgren's 1930 Ford Model A/V-8 coupe runs its flathead V-8 and 1939 Ford gearbox against an original, 4.11:1-geared Model A rear axle.

obviously postwar speed parts, like finned-aluminum cylinder heads.

Of course, like hot rodding, gow jobbery has never been a strictly Ford thing. The 1916-'28 Chevrolet four-cylinder has a popular and successful history as a performance engine, especially when equipped with the three-exhaust-port cylinder head from a 1923 Oldsmobile. Dodge, Plymouth, and even Studebaker or Buick engines are all fair game if simply owning a period-modified prewar car isn't quite enough individualism for you.

Backing up the Ford engines, one

finds almost exclusively a floor-shifted three-speed manual transmission connected to a matching Ford rear axle via a driveshaft enclosed in a torque tube. The Model A transmission and its accompanying heavy flywheel aren't quite as easy to drive as the '32-'39 unit, which includes synchronizers on second and third gear. Parts exist to adapt the '32-'39 gearbox to a Model A block, and engines fitted with counterweighted crankshafts can dispense with the heavy flywheel for faster revving, but owners of street-driven cars rarely report issue with the A transmission once

they've gotten comfortable with shifting it.

The Model T, of course, has its own two-speed, pedal-controlled planetary transmission—though once again, the aftermarket of the 1920s furnished a lot of parts to attempt to improve on that. Auxiliary transmissions from the likes of Warford, Chicago, and General offered under-, over-, and direct-drive gearing behind the Ford transmission. The two-speed Ruckstell rear end was so universally popular that Ford blessed it as an authorized accessory for dealers to install.

While the Ford "banjo" (named for its shape) rear axle, like the early Ford transmission, has a reputation for weakness among modern-day street rodders, that's mainly an artifact of postwar experience with extremely high power. Remember that high-test, leaded gasoline in 1940 was only about 87 octane, so it was quite rare for a Ford rear axle to be pounded with high power levels. Moreover, the tall-and-skinny tires of the day tend to promote wheelspin over traction, relieving the strain on the axle's innards.

That's the original 1930 rear axle, designed for 40 hp, now doing duty behind a V-8 making over 85. "I hammer-dropped that car at probably 3,000 rpm at the Pine Tree Jamboree," Bill reports, "and made 14 or 15 hot passes. I had no issues with the Model A rear."





Brian Lundgren's 1930 Ford Model A/V-8 coupe eschews a heat-dropped axle for alternate methods of lowering. That's a 1932 Ford front axle with a reverse-eye spring. Tubular shock absorbers weren't offered on Ford passenger cars until after WWII, but other makes had "airplane shocks" in the mid-1930s; the same is true for Brian's 1939 Ford front brakes, which are of a general design that Chrysler had been using since the 1920s.



CHASSIS

Rigid box tubing is the order of the day with modern street rods, but in the early days, the flexing of the frame was a part of the suspension. It's a system that works just fine, as do the solid axles and leaf springs found on the typical gow-job chassis. Most are Ford bodied, so most cars are based on an early Ford frame with transverse leaf springs to match.

The Model T frame, as you might expect, is the lightest and most flexible unit of those commonly encountered under a gow. It's a fine platform when retaining the Model T engine, and those who want the best power-to-weight ratio will retain it when using a Model A/B engine or even a V-8, though fitting the larger engine along with later steering, exhaust, hydraulic brake hardware, pedals and the like can be a real challenge.

Stouter by a fair margin is the Model A frame. Simply plopping a Model T body on a stock, running Model A chassis is an extremely popular quick route to getting a running/driving gow job. Consider it the Depression Era equivalent of the kid in the '20s who put bucket seats on a discarded T chassis. Bob Berggren's T, shown in the accompanying photography, is an excellent example of the latter type; Kevin Carlson's T/A hybrid (for more details, see <https://hmn.com/carlsonhybrid>), is like the former, but considerably evolved from its humble origins.

A Ford Model A frame can be further reinforced, short of boxing, by the installation of the crossmember from a V-8 Ford. The K-shaped center crossmember used in 1932 is popular and its installation is detailed in multiple resources available in print and online. The X-shaped units from 1933-'48 cars have also been adapted, and for those who aren't concerned with 100-percent period correctness the 1948-'52 Ford F-1 crossmember is an excellent way of adding strength plus transmission

and pedal mounts for a later drivetrain. There are even newly engineered, bolt-in units being marketed for traditional builds for those who don't fancy sourcing and tweaking vintage parts.

Finally, there is the 1932 Ford frame. Because '32s were only about a decade old when the gow job era wound down, not too many of them had been parted out yet, and it would be a while before they became the classic of hot rodding they are today. That said, the earliest (known) Deuce-framed A/V-8 was put together by Isky's late friend Jon Athan starting in 1936, meaning that they're far from an impossible combination of parts. Prewar, it paid to hang around the junkyard to see when a late model came in for salvage.

These days, the way to get connected to parts and know-how is community. Brian Lundgren, owner of the fenderless 1930 Ford Model A/V-8 coupe on these pages, emphasizes the role plugging into the New England traditional hot-rod scene had in getting his car to a streetable state.

"What came down to getting it on the road was getting friends involved and meeting people who had been there before. I think what's most remarkable about the hobby is that the community's terrific. Most people that I run into just want to see more of them on the road, only maybe 20 percent are in it to make a buck," Brian says.

Affordability is, in fact, a common refrain among these enthusiasts. Screwing together a simple machine from mostly stock parts can be done for around \$10,000, and a fully finished car can be had for around \$40,000. In a world of \$150,000 builds, that looks downright attainable. So too is the fact that anyone can be trained to manage a car of this vintage—after all, most of our grandparents or great-grandparents were capable, regardless of their level of automotive enthusiasm.

WHEELS, TIRES AND BRAKES

If there's a clear signal that an owner sees their car as of the gow job-type, it's the presence of tall-and-skinny wire wheels shod in bias-ply tires. The U.S. automobile industry nearly standardized the 16-inch wheel size just before WWII. That means wheels of 17 or more inches of diameter (like those found on pre-1935 Fords) automatically evoke the mid-1930s, especially when they're on a car that didn't come with them to begin with.

Pre-1926 Fords came with wood-spoke wheels that were and are rarely retained on a gow job, even while some speedsters retain them. The first Ford steel spokes arrived with the Model T's final restyling in 1926. Those 5 on 5-inch bolt-pattern wheels had a 21-inch rim and are a popular fitment on earlier Fords for a sporty look. A few Model Ts have also used 1926-'27 wire-wheel hubs to mount wheels from other cars, such as 19-inch 1929-'31 Plymouth wire wheels.

The 21-inch size was retained for the 1928-'29 Model A, but with the bolt pattern reworked to 5 on 5.5 inches. Wheel diameters decreased regularly: 19 inches for 1930-'31; 18 inches for 1932; 17 inches for 1933-'34; and then 16 inches from 1935 to 1948. Ford passenger cars kept the 5 on 5.5-inch pattern through 1935 and then reintroduced it for 1940-'48, meaning there's a lot of interchange possible. The two-piece, artillery-style steel wheels of 1936-'39 have their own set of devotees, as they have a great Streamline Moderne look as well as a special place in oval-track racing history. Because of their 5 on 10.5-inch bolt pattern, the 1936-'39 wheels are popularly known as "wide fives."

Although today, and since the 1950s, the first quest of many pre-1939 Ford owners has been to rid the car of its mechanical brakes, the gow job scene



1928 FORD MODEL A SPEEDSTER – SHAINA DUCHESNE

isn't quite so hostile to the old setup. If you're willing to deal with old tech, you're willing to deal with old tech, even if it's the somewhat daunting task of adjusting a lot of mechanical linkages to get even and effective stopping. Braking, after all, is as much a matter of the tire's contact patch as it is the system from pedal to drum. Like the Lockheed-style hydraulics that replaced them in Fords, mechanical brakes don't do anything to amplify braking force beyond the driver's own pedal pressure. Unless accompanied by an upgrade to

self-actuating style like the Bendix-type units used on 1939-'48 Lincolns, changing to hydraulic brakes does far more to ease lowering the car than it does to improve actual braking performance.

Though Ford waited until 1939 to offer them, "juice" brakes aren't even an anachronism on a gow job. The Lockheed system was developed at Chrysler in the 1920s and was standard equipment on Mopars throughout the 1930s. Today, it's easier to use 1940s Ford pieces, but spiritually there's no difference between a set

The 21-inch Model A wheels on Shaina Duchesne's speedster keep the visuals firmly in the late 1920s. Shaina's car uses Model A axles and engine with Model T frame rails and widened crossmembers. Commercial adapters also exist to put Model A wheels on Ford Model T wood-wheel hubs, so the 21-inchers are a familiar sight on Ts.

of '40 Ford brakes on a Model A and the Plymouth pieces used by Ed Iskenderian in 1939.

Mechanical brakes aren't a burden to those in the gow-job scene, neither in the maintenance nor in the driving. These are sports cars in comparison to their contemporaries as stock cars in the 1929-'42 period. They accelerate faster, stop quicker, and handle far more nimbly than a stock Model A or even a stock '40s Ford—but they're still vintage machines to be driven knowledgeably and within their limits. They're capable on all but the most intense modern roadways, and are driven regularly by enthusiasts for business and pleasure. Take Gabby Goodwin, owner of the black, fully fendered 1929 Ford roadster in the accompanying photos, whose build (pictured below), was inspired by Gabby's exposure to Lisa English's fenderless car in the late 2010s, and facilitated by Gabby's partner, John Spence.

"I've got the bug," she says. "I drive it as much as possible when it's not snowing. In the summer, I commute 30 miles in it, go on cruises, or just go to the garden shop and load up the rumble seat with flowers.

"The early tech just works. It is by far my most reliable vehicle and I drive the heck out of it. In 90-degree weather, we took it on a 1,200-mile cruise. I use it as much as possible because cars are meant to be driven, and if something breaks, we just fix it."

Shaina Duchesne likewise emphasized her love of simply driving her 1928 Ford speedster, assembled by Steve Pugner from Model A pieces and featuring the exotic measure of mechanical brakes actuated via side lever. It's comparable to, we think, the foot clutch and hand shift on Alan Raymond and Alaina Sweeney's 1942 Harley-Davidson WLA bobber. The controls, the single seat, and the lack of cargo space also evoke motorcycling—a comparison we've heard from some owners of stripped-down Model Ts as well.

Gabby Goodwin's '29 retains its original brakes but, like many Model A's in the late '30s and into the 1940s, it wears 16-inch wire wheels to take advantage of the greater choice in tires. The A uses 6.50-16 tires on the front and 7.50-16 on the back.





Just as a Mazda Miata can't supply what a gow job provides, a modern Sportster will never replicate the minimalism of something like Alan Raymond's bobbed '42 Harley. Like the four-wheeled gow job, a bobber brazenly bares its flathead V-twin, chain drive, and magneto. The raw, mechanical nature of these creations works only because they showcase that strain of industrial design that existed at the time the parts were made.

FIT, FINISH, AND ACCESSORIES

"Bobber" is a modern term, retroactively applied, for the motorcycles that preceded choppers in the same way gows set the stage for hot rods. As a 45-cu.in. flathead, Alan's WWII-surplus Harley, cut down and fitted with a minimalist sprung seat and a pillion pad, can stand in for myriad cut-down middleweight Harley 45s (not to mention many Indian Scouts) done in the 1920s-'40s.

Bobbed motorcycles are a natural complement to the gow job scene, which is as much a part of a larger vintage (material) ethos as it is the general American hot-rod culture. It's based more on an appreciation of how things were made and maintained than nostalgia for an idealized early-to-mid 20th century. The history is acknowledged, but it's clearly secondary to a purer appreciation for the simple and straightforward nature of machines from the Machine Age, along with the pride of artisanship passed down from that earlier generation and reflected in that era's industrial design. The gow job and the bobber, stripped as they often are to their essence, display the mechanical workings alongside the vestigial streamlining of their stock bodywork. It's part of the appeal.

"I'm not super closely linked to the history of it," Brian Lundgren says, "but I like the aesthetic of the machines. For the same reason the guys that enjoyed them back then, I enjoy them. I'm interested in old junk, and it really doesn't matter what



This isn't reenactment, more like revival, so patinated parts like the original 1932 Ford V-8 radiator and shell on the Neergaard roadster are prized for the story they tell of a part that has been somewhere and had experiences it will never reveal.

it is: I play guitars and play antique cars; I'm sitting next to a '30s Gretsch and books from earlier periods. I feel like it was made with more care and more attention to detail."

Gabby independently echoed the sentiment that consumer goods of an earlier era seem to be designed differently and have an appeal independent of nostalgia. "I really just like the car. I enjoy the history piece of them, but for me, I like the look of the car. I do enjoy vintage, antiques, and I'm a big collector of '20s and '30s watches and styles of clothing. I do enjoy history, but I try to enjoy history not by its values, but by its class and character; it reflects a time with a lot of new industry, inventions, growth, and progression. That's what I'm drawn to."



Nothing is 100-percent serious, and whimsical accessories like this can be just as coveted as an original Edelbrock slingshot intake manifold. Both have a place on Brian Lundgren's '30 A/V-8 coupe.



THE DRIVING AND THE MAINTENANCE

Of equal importance to their good looks, at least to the traditional hot-rodding scene, seems to be the drivability of these cars. Maintenance is an accepted part of the driving and even looked forward to, in the sense of how one maintains a garden regardless of the quotidian weeding, fertilizing, and watering that go hand in hand with the glamor of planting and harvest.

In addition to the aforementioned utility on public roads, opportunities abound to drive these old machines hard. The Pine Tree Jamboree, run by Eli English, proprietor of Traditional Speed and Custom (traditionalspeedandcustom.net) and friends, in Winterport, Maine, is a rising favorite. Although drag-racing's origins are in prewar street racing (where "bangers," as the four-cylinder Fords are fondly known, really excelled), the Jamboree is no reenactment or fancy-dress party. The emphasis is on racing and wrenching. Trap speeds are far from contemporary NHRA records.

"It's slow drag racing," Eli points out. "The cars are doing only 40-50 mph, but they're all doing 40-50 mph, so it's a real race. You go until you break things, but it's no big deal."

Eli's wife, Lisa, drives the fenderless, patinated '29 roadster with a distinctive 1935 Ford truck grille seen on these pages. It's built, essentially, out of a 1929 body and frame fitted out with the entirety of the drivetrain and suspension of a 1948

Ford, including flathead V-8, column-shift transmission, steering, brakes, and rear axle. The 17-inch wheels give it an earlier flavor, and at a glance it could be a survivor that was state-of-the-art in 1942. The ubiquity and interchangeability of 1928-'48 Ford parts meant that when she blew a transmission at the Pine Tree Jamboree, parts to repair the damage were sourced and installed on-site.

Most of the photos on these pages were taken at the Jalopy Hill Climb in Campton, New Hampshire, (see more at <https://hmn.com/jalopyhillclimb>), which saw a variety of vintage cars brave a winding dirt logging road to a scenic overlook in the White Mountains. Though it was manageable even by some pretty extreme cars, it was clear that the high-and-mighty early-style cars were most at home on the primitive surface. There are a lot of unimproved tracks out there yet to explore, and, for the bold, a '30s-tech car offers a nice combination of highway potential and rustic-byway capability.

"I think part of it is in the way that some folks choose to ride motorcycles,"

Brian says. "They can become relaxed and engaged with the machine out on the open road. A period vehicle gives the same experience. A period hot rod is fun because it's more capable."

Finally, one cannot discuss any aspect of the traditional hot rod scene without considering The Race of Gentlemen. A fixture of the Atlantic coast since 2012 and potentially now a denizen of friendlier sands, "TROG" combined bobbys and a very specific cross-section of four-wheeled cars into a spectacular beach-racing exhibition. The longtime rule demanding 1934-or-earlier cars with 1953-or-earlier engines led to a proliferation of gow-like vehicles produced and displayed to a wowed public.

The TROG format has shifted now to a greater emphasis on 1950s-style rail dragsters and early OHV V-8s, leaving the future popularity of gow jobbery uncertain, but the devotees who are here now are fans for a reason and they'll continue to be. For them, it's an affordable, fun way to appreciate the competent, owner-friendly technology of the pre-war car. 🚗



1929 FORD MODEL A ROADSTER - GABBY GOODWIN

Gabby Goodwin uses her '29 roadster as a fair-weather daily driver and insists it's the most trustworthy vehicle she owns. Machines perform best when well maintained, and the simplicity of a Model A makes maintenance straightforward, even fun.





**1930 FORD MODEL A/V-8 ROADSTER
- BILL, LEAH, AND AXEL NEERGAARD**



1924 FORD MODEL T SPEEDSTER - BOB BERGGREN

**1942 HARLEY-DAVIDSON WLA - ALAN
RAYMOND AND ALAINA SWEENEY**



1930 FORD MODEL A/V-8 COUPE - BRIAN LUNDGREN



**1929 FORD MODEL A ROADSTER
- LISA ENGLISH**



**1931 FORD MODEL T/A LAKES MODIFIED
- KEVIN CARLSON**



BY TOM COMERRO

DUESYS TO REIGN AT LA JOLLA CONCOURS

The 17th edition of the La Jolla Concours d'Elegance has announced that this year's featured marque will be Duesenberg. Viewed by many as one of the most recognizable and stylish cars of all time, Duesenberg was also ahead of its time regarding performance, quality, and road racing. Luxurious examples of all types of the short-lived marque have been invited and the official cover art for this year's event will feature the 1933 Duesenberg Model SJ Arlington Torpedo Sedan "Twenty Grand" that will adorn posters, programs, banners, and more. In addition to Duesenbergs, more than 150 cars will be judged among more than a dozen categories at the La Jolla Cove along the Pacific Coast. The three-day event is scheduled to take place April 21-23, with the Concours slated for the 23rd at the Ellen Browning Scripps Park. Visit lajollaconcours.com for more information.



SIMEONE MUSEUM DEMO DAYS

Demo Days are here again as the 2023 schedule has been finalized by the Simeone Museum. The driving events typically take place twice a month on Saturdays from 11AM through 2PM at the famed Philadelphia venue, with the activities taking place indoors in case of poor weather. This is a great opportunity to see some historic and rare vehicles up close and in action.

Two events are scheduled for April, with the first being the "Crank 'Em Up... Brass Cars and Board Tracks" event. Among the

cars that will be accessible are a 1911 Mercer 35J Raceabout, a 1912 National Model 40, and a 1916 Stutz Bearcat. "Crank 'Em Up" will take place April 8. The other event will be "The Car Detective: The Stewardship of Historically Important Automobiles," which will include a 1934 MG K3 Magnette, a 1937 BMW 328, and a 1937 Delahaye 135M. These cars will be at the Simeone on April 22.

For a look at the entire year's schedule and a listing of cars to be shown, visit simeonemuseum.org.

NEW STUDEBAKER EXHIBIT AND THE "BONNIE DOON'S SPECIAL"

The Studebaker National Museum has opened a new exhibit, "Built to Last," that pays homage to the automaker's facilities in both the past and the present. The exhibit showcases the famous independent's production facilities, sales outlets, showrooms, and dealerships that were fixtures



in cities all over the globe. Despite many of these buildings meeting their demise or having been repurposed, the exhibit features historical photographs of those structures, along with items and objects to showcase the range of Studebaker's business during its heyday.

Also coming to the South Bend, Indiana, museum is the "Bonnie Doon's Special" Midget race car. The Studebaker-powered racer was built by W.C. "Barney" Barnum in 1948 and was sponsored by the Bonnie Doon Ice Cream Company. It was a fixture in the AAA Midget racing series and its best campaign was a third-place finish during the 1953 season with Rex Easton piloting the car.

The museum is currently



fully operational, with the "Built to Last" exhibit slated to run through May 29, while the "Bonnie Doon's" racer will be

on display for a limited time. For more about the Studebaker National Museum, visit studebakermuseum.org.

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EXECUTIVE DECISION?

Larry Holmes from California sent us photos of his mother's 1976 Monte Carlo "Silverado," which was allegedly built by General Motors for one of the company's executives. She was the second owner of this well-kept car that showed only 30,000 miles on the odometer, and the title did indeed list the Monte as a Silverado in the model field. Adorned with a Packard-like swan on the hood, it features a stainless aluminum strip across the roof as well as a strip above the square grille. Another point of interest is the flush-mounted Continental-style decklid, which didn't appear to be an option in the 1976 brochure. Let us know if you can shed some light on this, or if you know of some other factory cars that may have had a customized touch for its upper levels of management.



WHAT WOOD HENRY SAY?

Charles Harrison spotted this wooden creation at a car and truck cruise-in about a decade ago in Kentucky. The 1930 Model A's body was apparently completely constructed from wood, and it likely took years to fabricate. He was unable to converse with the owner and it got us wondering if it has made the rounds anywhere else. Charles has heard that the builder had two main concerns: providing enough soap on the wooden hinges to keep them from squeaking and finding an insurer. He points out that termites could also be a legitimate concern. If you've seen this Model A out there and know anything about it, let us know.



CARIBBEAN CARRIER

George L. Schimpf sent us a picture of what appears to be one of the earliest buses to be used in Cuba. His wife received this photo at her 40th college reunion in Bogota, Colombia, and the coachbuilder was the Washington, Walton and Company Incorporated. George's guess is it was built on a mid-1930s Ford chassis with the reliable and powerful flathead V-8 hauling passengers along the 550-mile route from Cuba's capital to Santiago. Each bus had red, white, and blue badging of a hare on the front, bottom, and sides. Our research didn't reveal much about the actual buses, but it seems that the word "guagua" used by many in the Caribbean to mean bus, was derived from "Wa Wa," referring to Washington and Walton. At any rate, this one is likely long gone, but let us know if you've heard about this Havana hauler and the Wa Wa Company.



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 tcomerro@hemmings.com.

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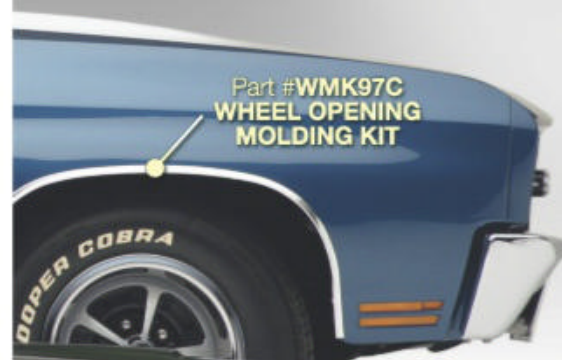
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Second Time's A CHARM

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY JIM BLACK



The restyled 1961 Chevy Impala eliminated the remnants of the flamboyant tailfins of the late Fifties. Body lines were cleaner and ready to usher in a new era.



**Bought in
2020 and then
sold,
this 1961
Chevy
Impala was
eventually
repurchased
with no
intention to
sell again**

There are many people within the classic car hobby who have a story to reveal about the car they let get away, only to regret it later. It's a phenomenon commonly known as "seller's remorse," and those who have been afflicted will tell you that it can hit within days, weeks, or even years after the sale of a cherished vehicle. This level of collector car withdrawal can often consume us, leading many to desperately search for the same ride—or a reasonable facsimile of it—and buy it back. One enthusiast who can attest to the conditions wrought by "seller's remorse" is Jose Castillo of Lincoln, Nebraska.

"In 2020, we purchased a 1961 Chevy Impala convertible from a guy in Kentucky who was responsible for its beautiful restoration. We had it shipped to Nebraska and drove the car for about a year. It was amazing, a very comfortable and smooth cruiser. We were really enjoying it, but one day we got an unsolicited offer for the Chevy that was almost too good to be true and chose to sell. It went to California," Jose says.

True to form, regret over the decision to sell the Impala took root within three short months; it had left an indelible impression that—as had often happened when the 1961 models were unveiled—was too strong to ignore.

Targeted to "customers who like sports car flair, teamed with big car elegance" when new, Jose's Impala was one of 64,624 convertibles Chevrolet produced (across all full-size passenger car lines) during 1961, a year marked by a dramatic redesign of the Chevrolet B-body platform. The new styling was trimmer and slightly less boxy than the previous incarnation, and it included a tapered relief—in addition to a sharp beltline—



Within the trunk are four-piece floor mats and a shelf-mounted spare.



The Impala script and crossed flag emblems have been Chevy's sporty icons since the late Fifties.

that extended downward from the headlamps to the rear bumper. Within the top-of-the-line Impala series, the swooping feature was accentuated by brightwork, the back half of which was split by a white painted insert decorated with Impala script and crossed flags emblems.

Its front fascia appeared to be a horizontally split grille, the upper third of which contained integrated park lamps above each pair of headlamps. At the opposite end, the rear decklid edge dove into a deeply pronounced "V" in the center, which was flanked by a bank of three individual round taillamps—the middle bezel containing a reverse lamp—on each side.

Offered in five body styles in addition to six- and nine-passenger station wagons, the Impala's newly minted 209.3-inch-long body rode atop a 119-inch wheel-base X-frame chassis that was supported by the division's tried and true coil-sprung front and rear suspension systems. Factory literature boasted of no fewer than "725 insulating and cushioning points" designed to isolate occupants from road noise and surface imperfections.

Tipping the scales at roughly 3,600 pounds, Impalas were available with the highly economical, 135-hp "Hi-Thrift 6" that was accompanied by a three-speed manual in base six-cylinder form; it started at \$2,847. A base V-8 counterpart also

touted value and economy: a two-barrel equipped 283-cu.in. engine that was rated for 170 hp for just \$107 more.

If neither base engine seemed sufficient to potential buyers, Chevrolet provided a sizable list of options—24 power team combinations, according to some factory literature—that began with a four-barrel Super Turbo-Fire 283 rated for 230 hp. No fewer than five variations of the 348-cu.in. V-8 could have been obtained. Depending upon compression ratio, number of total carburetor venturis, and components such as an aluminum intake and racy profile camshafts, power output ranged from 250 hp all the way to 350 hp. The *crème de la crème* engine option was the 360-hp 409. Engine selection determined transmission availability beyond the base gearbox: a three-speed manual with overdrive, a four-speed manual, or the two-speed Powerglide automatic.

Muscle car enthusiasts will recall that Chevy introduced the Super Sport option in a December 17, 1960, press release. Although the "SS" option was to eventually become an appearance package, in its first year on the market it was a true performance package that mandated suspension and engine upgrades, in addition to unique trim. Only 453 Super Sports were built in 1961.

“This is my dream car that I have always wanted. I love the Seafoam Green paint and convertible body styling.”





The two-barrel carbureted 283-cu.in. V-8 had an 8.5:1 compression ratio, helping it produce 170 hp. Note the stock single-chamber master brake cylinder and booster, and stock generator.

As to the Impala Jose briefly owned, the convertible had been painted Seafoam Green that was complemented by a white vinyl top. In addition to the attractive color combination, it had also been equipped with power steering, power brakes, power top, dual side mirrors, AM radio, electric clock, Autronic Eye dimmer, tinted glass, front and rear floor mats, two-tone interior upholstery with front and rear seat belts, and 8.00x14 wide whitewall tires with deluxe wheel covers.

His Impala had also been an economical one, thanks to the 283/Powerglide power team secured to the chassis. The 283-cu.in. V-8 was the base two-barrel carbureted version equipped with hydraulic valve lifters. With a compression ratio of 8.5:1, it could make a comfortable 170 hp and 275 lb-ft of torque.

The smooth and powerful-yet-efficient combination, coupled with its good looks and nice appointments, beckoned. Considering how little time had passed since the

sale, Jose took a gamble and reached out to the Californian with the hopes of being able to reacquire the Impala.

According to Jose, "I really didn't know how he would react to me asking to buy the car back so quickly, but it was worth a shot to me. After he thought about it for a few weeks, he called back and said he would sell. Even better, he decided to sell me the Chevy for the same price he had paid. I was completely amazed. This 'understanding' owner knew full well how

Rear bumper guards, located on each side of the reverse lamps, offer some protection from damage.





New old stock fender skirts were recently purchased and installed to add a classy element.



Radial wide whitewall tires in P205/75R14 are mounted to stock 14 x 5-inch body-colored steel wheels sporting deluxe "turbine-style" wheel covers.

ownership of a car, particularly one that you can grow fond of and have a connection with, can mean so much to an enthusiast and their family."

"Once I got the car back, we hit the ground running and purchased several NOS accessories in an effort to option and accessorize our Impala the best we could," Jose says. "A few of the items I found included a four-way flasher, portable handheld spotlight, tissue dispenser,

gas pedal trim, locking gas cap, dash compass, vacuum-operated trunk release, power windshield washer, fender skirts, front and rear bumper guards, and exterior dress-up items, such as the door handle and gas door guards. I'm still on the hunt for the more difficult-to-find items."

Beyond adding genuine dealer accessories, Jose does the one thing he missed the most while separated from his Impala: he drives the convertible

weekly during the summer months and enjoys family outings with it. "I've shown it several times during the past two years and earned many best-of-show and first in class awards," Jose says. "We're continuously asked if we are interested in selling it—and admittedly some offers have been incredible—but I have no intention to go down that road again! I'm just blessed enough that we had the opportunity to get it back."

"This is my dream car that I have always wanted. I love the Seafoam Green paint and convertible body styling. It's just a great car that always gets a thumbs up every time I take it out for a ride." 🚗



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WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY MATTHEW LITWIN

After nearly six
decades of storage,
this **1948 Crosley**
station wagon is on
the road again.





After decades of slumber in a hangar, the 1948 Crosley sees light of day.

Legend suggests most barn find stories begin when a pair of well-weathered doors are carefully pried open for the first time in half a century, allowing a beam of sunlight to pierce the dusty, stale air within, and illuminate a long-forgotten yet highly coveted rarity from days of yore. Typically, this kind of story starts with Joe McSmitherson, from Anywhere, USA, venturing out on his acreage to cut firewood, only to happen upon an old barn he didn't even know existed.

In truth, barn finds start long before the automotive discovery: Who owned it, how was it used, and just how the heck did it end up in a dilapidated structure to begin with? Lucky are those who can easily put the puzzle pieces together, like John Kunkel, who owns what is arguably one of the more diminutive—yet no less compelling—barn finds recorded in his native state of Pennsylvania: this 1948 Crosley station wagon.

"My wife, Sharon, and I go to church with a lady named Darleen Smith; we have done so for years and years. When you know people that long, you get to know each other's hobbies, and she knew that I like to play with old cars. One day she asked me if I'd be interested in her mother's old Crosley. I had no idea the family even had one; she had never mentioned the car once. Well, my father had a Crosley when he was a young man, so I'm a little familiar with them, and I thought I might as well see Darleen's car. That was in 2012," John says.

The Boiling Springs, Pennsylvania, resident made the relatively quick trip to Carlisle to see Darleen's Crosley, but rather than being directed to a well-kept garage or an old barn, John was sent to what had been an old airplane hangar constructed of cinder blocks and a rudimentary wood beam roof. Lifting the wide door wasn't much of a struggle.





According to Darleen, her father had played around with airplanes for years. He had purchased land about a mile from the present-day Carlisle Fairgrounds and built a small airstrip along with the hangar where he and his friends would store their planes, more or less right in their backyard. It was during this period that Darleen's father purchased the Crosley for his wife.

"I'm thinking that happened in 1952. Darleen's father had every oil change documented on that car; it starts in '52 and goes to '58. The mileage and date are all recorded on a register that was

glued to the driver's side door post," John says. "Darleen was a young girl then, and she and her sister still have a lot of fond memories of riding around in the Crosley with their mother, who I'm told was a petite person. She must have stopped driving it in '58—beyond the last recorded oil change, the car was wearing a '58 license plate and inspection sticker, and the last insurance card in the car was from '58, too. Around the time he quit flying airplanes, Darleen's parents parked the Crosley in the hangar to store it and keep it out of the weather," John says.

Darleen admitted to John that over the years the family had received several purchase offers, but she and her sister turned each one down for a variety of reasons. Eventually the offers stopped, and most of the locals began to ignore the old hangar. Over time, Darleen witnessed the diligence and care that John showed his own collection of vintage vehicles, and she felt he was the right person to preserve a part of her family's legacy. Negotiations were swift, and soon John was tasked with relocating the long-dormant compact; by then, the aging structure was surrounded





by a sprawling residential development and town park. There was one thing John needed to do before he brought the Crosley home to Boiling Springs.

"It was obvious the car was all original and mostly intact... but when you opened one of the doors, the smell was overwhelming. The mouse droppings were rancid. I took out three five-gallon buckets of it from the inside of the car. It was awful until I got it cleaned up—I didn't want that

thing sitting in my garage in that state. It took a couple days just to get the seats and the rest of the interior cleaned up the best that I could—it was just a mess for a while. The Crosley was complete otherwise, though in the back of the wagon were a lot of tires, engine parts, and other detritus," John recalls.

While most of what had been stowed in the station wagon was unusable or unwanted, John retained a factory "CoBra"

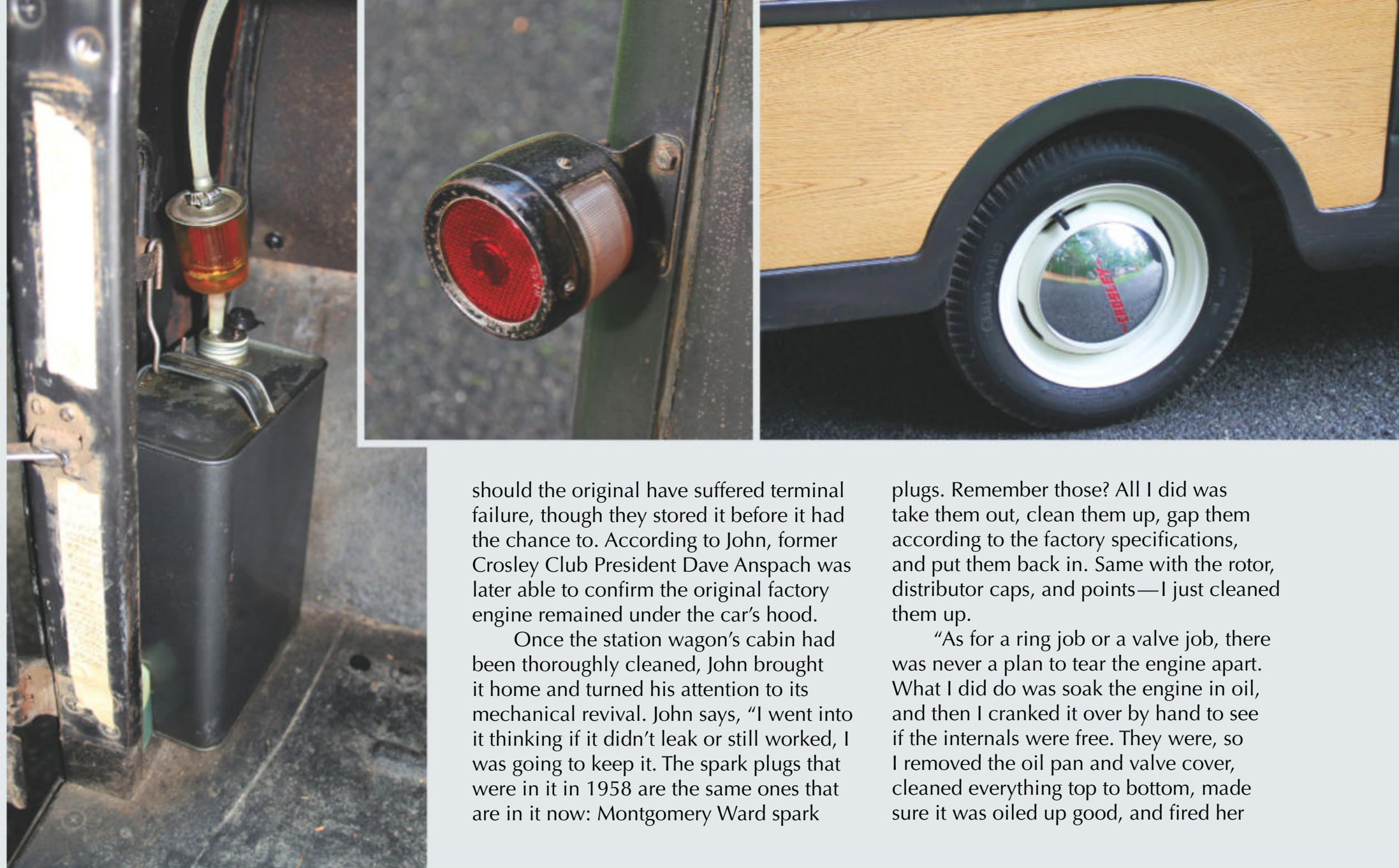
engine that he found in the pile. Also known as "The Mighty Tin," CoBra was an acronym for the Copper-Brazed design of the 53-pound stamped-steel engine block issued in Crosleys through 1949. When properly maintained, the little four-cylinder was reportedly good for more than 60,000 miles of travel. It was eventually replaced by a cast-iron design. It appears the Smiths were proactive in securing a replacement CoBra engine





The original “CoBra” engine still functions (above); the original fuel tank was discretely bypassed (right).





should the original have suffered terminal failure, though they stored it before it had the chance to. According to John, former Crosley Club President Dave Anspach was later able to confirm the original factory engine remained under the car's hood.

Once the station wagon's cabin had been thoroughly cleaned, John brought it home and turned his attention to its mechanical revival. John says, "I went into it thinking if it didn't leak or still worked, I was going to keep it. The spark plugs that were in it in 1958 are the same ones that are in it now: Montgomery Ward spark

plugs. Remember those? All I did was take them out, clean them up, gap them according to the factory specifications, and put them back in. Same with the rotor, distributor caps, and points—I just cleaned them up.

"As for a ring job or a valve job, there was never a plan to tear the engine apart. What I did do was soak the engine in oil, and then I cranked it over by hand to see if the internals were free. They were, so I removed the oil pan and valve cover, cleaned everything top to bottom, made sure it was oiled up good, and fired her

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off. I never changed any of the wires. She smokes a little bit, but I guess there's no shame for it."

Once the 25-hp, 44-cu.in. engine was functional, John opted to fix just a few remaining concerns, starting with the wheels and tires. "I wanted the car to be as close to original as possible, but the wheels were rusty, and the tires were shot. I had to clean and repaint the wheels; I tried to match the color as best as possible before I put new tires on. I left the original Firestone spare. It's cracked and has a lot of dry rot, but amazingly it still holds air. I also put new front brake shoes on and replaced the radiator hose. A final touch was the installation of new faux-woodgrain inserts.

"My feeling was that there were

a few safety things that needed to be done because I intended to use it here and there and take it to a few shows. To clarify, by 'use it' I don't mean take it out on a main road or a highway. It only has a 25-hp engine—when you're going down the road, a bicycle can pass you, okay? I'm not going to beat the living crap out of the engine just to try to keep up with the speed of modern traffic," John chuckles. "I use it on the back roads for fun but trailer it to shows, such as the AACA Hershey Meet. I have it entered in the HPOF (Historical Preservation of Original Features) Class."

While John is honest about driving concerns in today's travel conditions, he smiles at the leisurely pace the Crosley excels at and the response it receives.

"If it wasn't for Darleen I wouldn't have it, and Lord knows what would have happened to it. The Crosley is a fun little car and it runs pretty well considering that I've hardly done a thing to it. We've had a great time with it. We've been very blessed many times over, and Darleen enjoys going to events with us. She's still very much part of the Crosley today, sharing the stories of driving around this part of Pennsylvania with her mom and sister. It's neat for me, too, and I get a lot out of displaying the spare engine alongside the car. A lot of people appreciate seeing something different or unusual at a car show; they don't expect to see a spare engine propped next to the car. They ask questions or lift it up to see how light it is. It's all good fun." 🚗



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Dazzlebird

Better than stock, this 1959 Ford Thunderbird is loaded with NASCAR-bred power

BY JIM DONNELLY • PHOTOGRAPHY BY MATTHEW LITWIN



When redesigned for 1958, Ford's Thunderbird was a sleek and elegant ride for four passengers. Few remember that when properly optioned in 1959, it was also racy—it nearly won the first Daytona 500.



There's nothing square about it. After all, the four-place Thunderbirds that debuted in 1958 were loaded with innovation, starting with their newly expanded passenger capacity and unitized construction. The latter advance gave the new Thunderbirds a markedly dropped center of gravity compared to their Ford siblings, accentuating the dramatic, flat-profile Joe Oros styling, whose bullet-themed side sweeps hinted at the "beaked" redesign that was coming for 1961. Pushed strongly in the corporate suite by rising Ford Motor Company executive Lee Iacocca, who innately grasped what sold cars, the wider, larger Thunderbird was an immediate hit. Consider this: During its three-year-run, the bigger 'Bird outsold its two-seat predecessors by a stunning four-to-one margin. A two-seat Thunderbird wouldn't rejoin the Ford lineup until the 2002 model year.

Production totaled 198,000 units over the second-generation Thunderbird's lifespan. Some Thunderbirds from this era, including this extravagantly restored 1959 Ford Thunderbird convertible, are still decidedly low production. Here's why: Ford produced 57,195 copies of the Thunderbird hardtop in 1959, but only 10,281 convertibles, against more than 464,000 cars built in the eight-cylinder Galaxie line, just for instance. Among the convertibles, most estimates agree that just 1,168 were manufactured with the new 430-cu.in. J-code V-8 that year.

What's that? Ultimately, in this case, the J-code was a way to give Ford a leg up in the booming world of NASCAR, which was about to transition from the historic beach-road circuit of yore to Big Bill France's newly constructed Daytona International Speedway in 1959. But the story goes back slightly farther. Ford was planning to introduce a redesigned Lincoln for 1958 (including canted headlamps), whose girth pushed the Lincolns' curb weight past 5,000 pounds for some models.



A relatively rare option found within this 1959 Ford Thunderbird is the 350-hp MEL 430-cu.in. V-8. It's been dressed with extra chrome.

To compensate, Ford introduced the biggest-displacement V-8 in the American automotive catalog, dubbed the MEL 430, with MEL standing for Mercury, Edsel, and Lincoln. The engine bore distinct design similarities with Ford's Super Duty line of truck engines. A deck offset of 10 percent meant that the MEL 430's combustion chambers could be located completely inside the cylinders. Besides urging the massive Lincolns along more assiduously, the 430 gained a true performance application when it was dropped inside the new Mercury Turnpike Cruiser for 1958. With its compression ratio bumped to 10.5:1, the Turnpike Cruiser V-8 produced 360 horsepower at 4,600 RPM, fed by a four-barrel Holley carburetor. The Edsel, for its part, got a 410-cu.in. version of the same engine.

As we'll see, the development of the 430 provided Ford with a brief, shining moment of near-glory when the inaugural Daytona 500 was run in 1959. By then, Ford had extended a slightly detuned version of the 430 to the Thunderbird, the only Ford-badged vehicle that received the engine. With its compression ratio backed down to 10.0:1, the Thunderbird 430 Special, as the J-code engine was officially known, produced 350 horsepower at 4,400 rpm with a single Holley four-barrel again handling the fueling. At the time, Ford's next-most-muscular engine was the 352-cu.in. Thunderbird Special V-8, which was rated at 300 horsepower. Remember





those numbers. The three-speed Cruise-O-Matic automatic transmission was a mandatory option for J-code Thunderbirds; the engine option retailed at a lofty \$447.

This spectacularly restored J-code Thunderbird convertible, with a marked measure of brilliant flash added during its restoration by a previous owner, is now in the collection of Middle Haddam, Connecticut, enthusiast James Royster. It's an extensively optioned example, with factory air conditioning leading the way, along

with power steering, power brakes, power top, power windows, and a power front seat. Smaller extras include an AM radio, front seat belts, windshield washers, and the Ford-supplied side mirror with integral spotlight. James calculated the Thunderbird's retail price at \$5,330, or more than \$54,000 today.

The car's early history is largely unknown, but James has picked up its background from the time the Thunderbird was owned, and restored,

by a California collector named Edward Moberg. "Restoration" is a relative term here because it's immediately apparent that Moberg went for broke when it came to rotisserie-restoring the Thunderbird in 2008. He didn't stop at factory stock, either mechanically or cosmetically. Speaking of the latter, the Thunderbird is now finished in Blizzard Pearl, which James describes as a Lexus factory color from 2009. There's more: A chromed engine dress-up kit—originally limited





Owner's View

My mother had a 1959 Thunderbird standard hardtop, and I learned to drive on that car. They were uniquely low for their day, and it was an early Ford foray into unibody construction, which enabled them to get a lower overall height. Getting into it, it's lower than any modern car. They had to use a center console because the body was mounted so low over the drivetrain, and it's got a really low center of gravity. The 1959 Ford, for example, was still a body-on-frame car. More than anything else, I like the styling. Remember that the advertising slogan was, 'the car everybody would love to own.' I liked the way my mother's car looked and I like this, too."

—James Royster

to the 352 engine—brings blazing glitter to the engine bay. Not only that, every exposed bracket, hinge, and bolt in both the underhood and trunk areas was chromed at Moberg's behest—including the trunk hinges—with the body work handled at House of Customs Auto Body and Paint of Lancaster, California. The engine bay has been upgraded to include an electric fuel pump and a custom radiator by U.S. Radiator Corporation,



because the stock 430 was known to run hot. A 16-inch Spal cooling fan has been installed.

The chassis also received considerable upgrading. Moberg specified a power front disc brake conversion from ABS Power Brake Inc., an oversize front anti-sway bar and Ridetech adjustable shock absorbers at each wheel. Mercifully, the sundial-slow vacuum wipers were jettisoned, and an electric wiper motor installed. The final assembly was handled by Ken's Klassics, a vintage Thunderbird specialist in Spring Valley, California.

"I call it a restomod, because that's sort of what it is," James explains. "He had every single bracket and bolt that's visible in the trunk and under the hood chromed. He put in more bling than the car had originally. The paint is a very subtle metallic, and I think it's a fabulous choice. 'Better than stock' is a good way to put it. He even painted the engine red, instead of black or blue, to more-or-less complement the interior."

Since acquiring the car through a classified ad in *Hemmings Motor News*, James has immersed himself in also acquiring lore as it applies to the J-code Thunderbird and its history, particularly in NASCAR competition, back when

the race cars were still persuadably production-based. This brings us back to the performance numbers for 1959 and their competition relevance. Under normal circumstances, Ford would have been forced to campaign its blocky 1959 Galaxie hardtop with the best-in-class 300-horsepower, 352-cu.in. FE-block V-8, which was the biggest engine offered in that model. As James sees it, Ford extended availability of the MEL 430 to the Thunderbird to homologate it as a NASCAR weapon.

Holman-Moody, the great NASCAR factory-backed Ford racing team based in Charlotte, ultimately showed up at the inaugural Daytona 500 in 1959 with a brace of six factory J-code Thunderbird hardtops. One of them very nearly immortalized itself in NASCAR history. The first Daytona marathon ended when Lee Petty's Oldsmobile edged the Holman-Moody Thunderbird of unheralded Johnny Beauchamp in a photo finish for the landmark victory. That's the official story, at least. Holman-Moody still exists today and Lee Holman, the son of co-founder John Holman, was a youngster trying to peer over the sand berm around the infield lake during the first Daytona 500, and still vividly recalls the finish.





One look at the Thunderbird's exterior is enough to understand why Ford billed it as a luxurious sports car.

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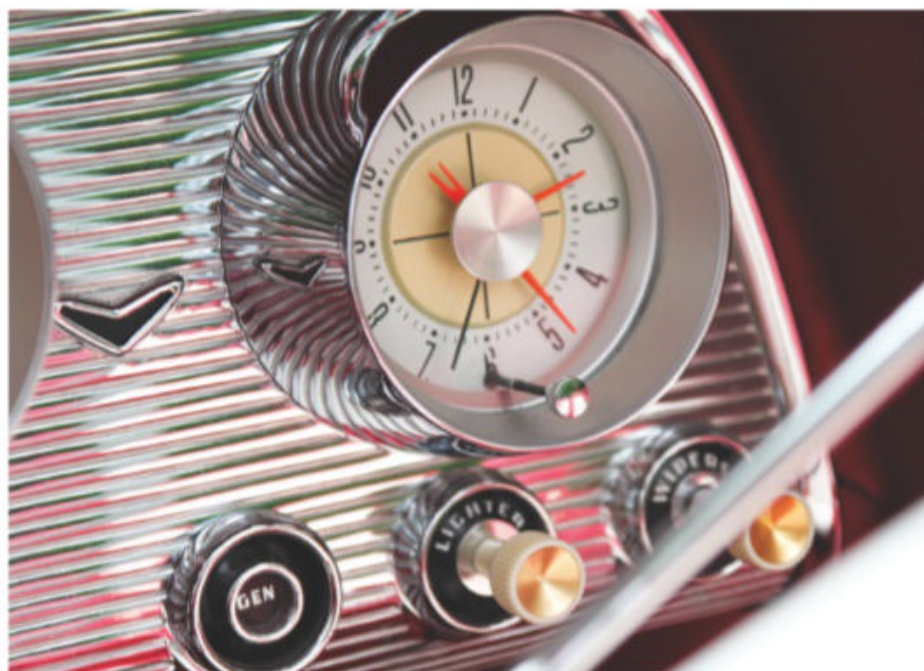
"I don't know if it was Ford's idea or our idea to run the cars, because not only did it have the bigger engine, but it also was a lower car, with a lower center of gravity, and it also had a smaller frontal area," Lee recalls. "Aerodynamically, it went through the air a lot better than the Galaxie that they were running that year. I was told that my dad sort of came up with the idea once he got one look at the Galaxie."

The 1959 Daytona 500 finish came down to the wire, literally, with what Lee describes today as some enduring, baked-in uncertainty about what ultimately happened. "The only trouble was, we

were a lap ahead of Lee Petty. We were very confident and very knowledgeable, because we were scoring their car as well as our cars. Unfortunately, Johnny Beauchamp was a Midwest, unknown driver. And politically, it didn't make any sense for NASCAR to have its new superspeedway won by an interloper out of Iowa, I think it was. It was so much easier for them to just say, 'Oh boy, Lee Petty, our former champion driver, just won the first race.'"

Chuckling, Lee notes, "it took them three or four days to come up with a fiendish plan to say that. That's what happened."

As for our featured Thunderbird, it has been in James's custody since early 2021. He marvels at the driving environment, including the center console, one of the first installed in any American car, necessitated by the transmission's intrusion into the low-set unibody. He's installed a simple, concealed on-off switch to activate the air conditioning, which is now fully functional. On the road, he says, "It's pretty damn fast, actually. It's supposed to be capable of 137 mph but I've never even floored it through the gears. With 430 cubic inches, it's got a lot of torque and responds instantly to the throttle." 🚗





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A piece of aftermarket performance past conjures visions of a 1929 Ford Model A roadster gow job project

HARRY MILLER WAS AN ARTIST. His preferred medium was race cars—complete race cars built from the wheels up. They cost upwards of \$15,000 (almost a quarter-million dollars, adjusted for inflation) and spent most of the 1920s dominating America's tracks. Unlike such contemporaries as the Chevrolet Brothers, Miller largely kept out of the speed-parts business. He briefly produced a cylinder head for the Ford Model T, but didn't pursue that market further, supposedly saying, "I'm not going to make any more of those heads for the Ford. Those Ford guys don't have any money anyway!"

In 1929, though, Miller sold his business and retired mere weeks before the beginning of the Great Depression. Unable to stay away, he came back in 1930. Thanks to the terrible economy, however, he had to produce products far less exclusive than his famous racers of the previous decade. One of the things he marketed in conjunction with financial partner George Schofield was an overhead-valve conversion for the Ford Model A. The cylinder head had been sketched up by longtime Miller collaborator Leo Goossen in 1928, shortly after Ford began Model A production.

An overhead-valve (or valve-in-head, as they were often called at the time) design, the Miller head moved both intake and exhaust valves out of the engine block and into the head where the air flow would be freer and more direct to the combustion chambers. The port arrangement was identical to the original Ford, which allowed the stock intake and exhaust manifolds to be used if the buyer desired. The distributor hole was in the same spot as well.

Miller only produced this head very briefly, although Cragar (yes, that Cragar) took over the design and continued it for several more years. Original Miller-Schofield heads like this are a

rare find and they still add a lot of pep to a Model A.

All of that is perhaps a long way of saying that a head this special deserves a build to suit. Unfortunately, that's less common than you'd think. A lot of Model A and T "speedsters" are really just some seats strapped to a stock frame; it seems like when you see OHV conversions for these engines, they're often on stock-looking closed-cab pickups. All of that is fine and dandy, but it's not for me.

Instead, I want a full-fledged gow job (that's what they called hot rods in the 1930s). Give me a roadster body painted and upholstered like factory—and possibly overpainted with advertising graphics. I've seen that done for both the Roof



George Riley went beyond Roof in creating an attractive advertising scheme for his OHV conversion. Imagine a fenderless gow with a similarly Art Deco graphical treatment.

Cyclone and the Riley Two-Port. I'd probably chop it a bit and rake the windshield, too.

As for the chassis, I say forget the fenders, step the frame with brackets instead of welds, plus maybe cut the frame horns off and kick the front axle out ahead of the crossmember (the modern solution is a dropped axle). I'd leave the roadster on its factory 19- or 21-inch wheels (in my head it's a '28 or '29, but you could do a '30-'31), and upgrade the brakes with cast-iron drums and floaters.

The engine ought to be built for durability and streetability rather than power to the nth degree. I'd start with a Model A block, as they're easier to come by than the 50-hp Model B and with the upgrades I'd want, the advantages of the newer engine design are partially negated. Those upgrades start with having the block machined for insert bearings, which will live longer under higher compression ratios.

Into the A block, I'd fit an aftermarket counterbalanced crankshaft drilled for full-pressure oiling. Like the main bearings, I'd go for insert bearings in the connecting rods too. Aluminum pistons would round out the stout bottom end. In the interest of crankshaft life and quicker revving, I might also be tempted to have the massive stock flywheel turned down and machined to accept a V-8 clutch.

In addition to the Miller OHV conversion, I'd want to run one of Charlie Yapp's distinctive "Split-Y" cast-iron header sets—not truly a period part, but they look it—and a pair of Holley NH side-draft carburetors as used on the Model T. I arrive at the carburetor solution by splitting the difference



IMAGE VIA THE HAMB

So lucrative had been the Model T speed-equipment market, makers like Robert Roof jumped into building Model A parts immediately.

between a massively expensive period-correct Winfield carb and the undeniable simplicity of a single Stromberg 97.

Many good ignition solutions exist for building a Model A engine. The original distributor, with its hand-operated spark advance, is okay, and the "automatic" Model B unit is better yet. The aftermarket has had many solutions, from magnetos to hidden electronics, but I'd probably seek out one of the old Mallory units that gained such a good reputation over the years.

Beyond that? I think you're done. I'd hate to depart too much from the already good Model A chassis until extensive use had shown me the way. I think you'd have a cool, highly distinctive car when you were done, one that you'd have a hard time leaving in the garage under any circumstances.

Have you ever encountered a vintage part that inspired you to a whole build? 🚗

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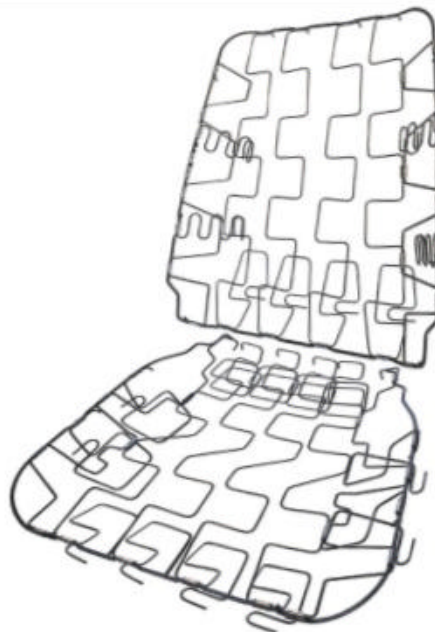
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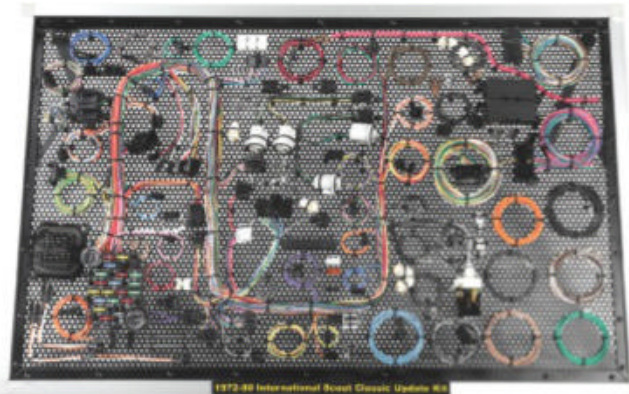




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4



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Channellock's 8-inch Convertible Retaining Ring Pliers make installing and removing snap rings a snap



IF YOU'RE INTO AUTOMOBILES, it's only a matter of time before you encounter the ubiquitous snap ring. Steering boxes, rear-axle assemblies, and transmissions all utilize snap rings as a method for retaining items that need to rotate but shouldn't be allowed any lateral movement.

Snap ring pliers are one of those things it would seem easy to live without. After all, most inside clips can be finagled out with a pair of needle-nose pliers. Most external clips can be removed with a flathead screwdriver—as long as you keep a sharp eye out for where it lands once you pry it off.

If you deal with enough snap rings, you will quickly conclude a specialized tool is worthwhile. Probably even a specialized tool from a reputable manufacturer. That's a decision Digital Editor Daniel Strohl recently made, replacing some generic parts-store snap-ring pliers with this set from Channellock.

The model 927, called "Retaining Ring Pliers" by Channellock, has an eight-inch overall length, blue rubber grips for comfort, and five interchangeable tips for various sizes of hole. Channellock includes .039-, .047-, and .074-inch straight tips along with 90-degree angled tips in the .039- and .047-inch sizes. They can be changed easily by backing out the set screws with the included Allen key, and if you should drop and lose one of the set screws, there are a pair of replacements included as well.

While we are often somewhat skeptical of tools that purport to take the place of multiple other tools, the "convertible" part of the name on these is no joke. Simply flip the red switch and the action of the jaws changes from spreading to compressing, allowing the same set of pliers to be used on both internal and external clips.

We tested out these Chanellocks by installing and removing the heavy-duty internal snap rings on an old Volkswagen differential. It was no issue whatsoever to squeeze the clip, slip it into place, and release it. There's plenty of leverage to keep the clip squeezed (or expanded) and the pliers aren't bulky, so you don't give up any finesse when working in confined spaces.

If we had one complaint, it was a small one: The blue rubber grips, while comfortable, became quite slippery in the presence of the gear lube. We didn't lose control of the pliers, but some kind of pebbled finish would have given us just a bit more confidence.

Snap rings are a fact of life in the automobile world. You may not encounter them frequently, but when you do, you'll be happier if you have a decent set of pliers on hand to deal with them. We wouldn't hesitate to recommend Chanellock's 927s for your tool box. 🚗



Swapping out tips is a simple matter of backing out the set screws and exchanging them for a different size or configuration included with the set.



Although the Channellock pliers seem diminutive, they can easily manage big tasks. The heavy-duty snap rings in our Volkswagen differential were easy to remove and reinstall.

Tested

CHANNELLOCK 927 8-INCH CONVERTIBLE RETAINING RING PLIERS

PRICE:	About \$30
WHERE TO GET IT:	channellock.com/product/927
WHAT WE LIKED:	Handled even heavy-duty clips with ease.
WHAT COULD BE BETTER:	The rubber grips got slick pretty quickly when working in lubricant.
OVERALL RATING:	★★★★☆

[Editor's note: Hemmings occasionally receives products from manufacturers for the purpose of product reviews. In this case we bought this item at the store with our own money.]

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BARRETT-JACKSON	27
BIRD NEST	69
BOB'S SPEEDOMETER	15
CARLISLE EVENTS	11
CLASS-TECH	55
COKER TIRE	1
CUSTOM AUTOSOUND MFG.	23
THE GREAT RACE	INSIDE BACK COVER
GULLWING MOTOR CARS INC.	
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HILL'S CLASSIC CARS	15
HYDRO-E-LECTRIC	71
JC TAYLOR INSURANCE	13
KEYSTONE REGION CHAPTER	55
NATIONAL PARTS DEPOT	BACK COVER
ORIGINAL PARTS GROUP	49
RM AUCTIONS	35
ROBERTS MOTOR PARTS	71
RPM FOUNDATION	79
SMS AUTO FABRICS	15
STAUER	5
STEELE RUBBER PRODUCTS	69
SUMMIT RACING EQUIPMENT	7
UNIVERSAL VINTAGE TIRE	4
V8S FOR VOCATIONS	55
WALDRON'S EXHAUST	69

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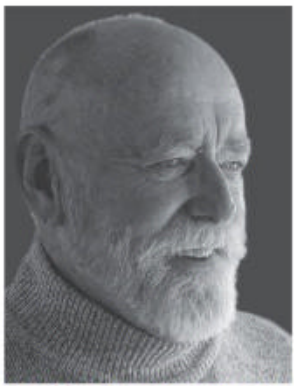


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MY WIFE AND I

were recently waiting to board a plane to our vacation destination. As I looked around the departure lounge, I noticed a group of high schoolers in cheerleader uniforms sitting together on the floor, but none of them were talking to one another. Instead, they were staring at their cell phones. Some seemed to be playing video games judging from their twitching hand movements, and others were watching videos or gossiping with friends remotely. They were physically present, but none of them were there.

It seems that being immersed in reality these days is something to be dreaded. For some, it's boring or scary. They think it is better to watch a movie about a gruesome murder, or eavesdrop on a fictional couple squabbling endlessly to sort out a neurotic relationship, than to be confined to an unscripted, unchoreographed world, even though it is the only one that actually exists.

We are almost all guilty of it these days—even when we are driving to work or visit friends and relatives in our hermetically sealed cocoons. The auto manufacturers have added a plethora of cheap electronic distractions to new cars, which has reduced driving to looking out the windshield now and then to make sure we are on the right road and not too close to the car in front of us. We can blast along an eight-lane freeway at 80 miles per hour with very little idea of what the external reality might be.

Elon Musk and his team of electro-wizards at Tesla are even trying to come up with self-driving cars, though they seem to have a few bugs to iron out yet. At this point you might ask, “What will that get us?” Well . . . just this: You won't have to tear yourself away from your favorite electronic addiction to go shopping or visit your mother-in-law. You can just send your Tesla. Until then, you will still have to kiss grandma hello before turning on her TV to watch *Jeopardy*.

Gone are the days when my dad, in his ancient 1947 Chevrolet Fleetline, would take us for a nice sunny Sunday drive, going nowhere in particular but having a memorable adventure nonetheless. The old Chevy had no air conditioning, so we rolled down the windows and we could smell



the ocean and the pepper and eucalyptus trees—maybe even reach out and pull off a few leaves, too.

Yes, there was an AM radio that took several minutes to warm up. It was used mostly to listen to the news

now and then. We didn't have GPS either, but we picked up very user-friendly free maps at gas stations. They required no electrical power, and once unfolded, were instantly readable.

Driving slowly and taking in the scenery was pleasant, and it was easy to pull off a two-lane highway to get an ice cream or hot dog. In Southern California, there was even a roadside alligator farm where you could behold those fearsome creatures, and if you were crazy enough, buy them as pets.

My father's old Fleetline was part of the family. Of course, it needed regular attention, such as oil changes every 1,000 miles and tune-ups every 10,000 miles, but those chores were easy enough, and doing them gave you a feeling of self-reliance and security. And because the car was a family member, when you got rid of it, it was a sad day, even if you replaced it with a newer one. Though in that case, you made a special day out of it by taking pictures next to it and taking everybody for a ride around the block to celebrate.

What does all of this have to do with the old-car hobby, you ask? Just this: Many of us cherish restoring and collecting old cars because they help center us in reality, and make us look at the world as it really is and remember how it really was. Someday it may all be gone; in the meantime, we want to savor it.

So, if you will excuse me, it's Sunday and I am going to take my wife, Bette, for a cruise along the ocean, and maybe we will stop at an ice cream shop or taco stand, grab a snack, and listen to the surf roll in. I often miss reality and want to get away from carefully crafted illusions on my iPhone, computer, or TV that intend to sell me superfluous products or ideas.

A wise individual once said: “Life is a gift. Don't leave it unopened.” So why not grab your spouse and go for a cruise next Sunday? And if you see a black 1940 La Salle Series 52 coupe heading your way at a sedate speed, be sure to wave. We might just connect in a way we never imagined. 🚗



**#1
VINTAGE RALLY!**

2023 GREAT RACE ROUTE

**June 24-
July 2, 2023**

**St. Augustine, FL to
Colorado Springs, CO**

SATURDAY, JUNE 24

START: Francis Field,
St. Augustine, FL – 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.
OVERNIGHT: Main Street,
Tifton, GA – 5:30 p.m.

SUNDAY, JUNE 25

LUNCH: Toomer's Corner,
Auburn, AL – 12:15 p.m.
OVERNIGHT: Uptown at Protective
Stadium, Birmingham, AL – 5 p.m.

MONDAY, JUNE 26

LUNCH: Courthouse Square,
Tupelo, MS – noon
OVERNIGHT: Guesthouse at
Graceland, Memphis, TN – 5 p.m.

TUESDAY, JUNE 27

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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