

HEMMINGS

CLASSIC CAR

AMERICA'S COLLECTOR-CAR OWNERSHIP MAGAZINE

JANUARY 2024 #232

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1950s ESTATE ICONS

- BARN FIND: 1959 RAMBLER SUPER CROSS COUNTRY
- FACTORY FLYER: 1957 OLDSMOBILE ROCKET 88 FIESTA

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On the Cover: Pacific Northwest contributor Eric English spent an adventurous afternoon capturing this exquisitely restored and uber-rare 1958 Mercury Voyager.

DEAR DRIVER,

Here we are, 70 years since Ernest Hemmings first published a four-page pamphlet in Quincy, Illinois and mailed it to 100 fellow automotive enthusiasts. As the original, collector-car community, it has been our passion to grow with, and serve, this generations-old fellowship.

It's the daily interactions we have with you that remind us, "The Driver," is the most important part of this industry. It's why we do business the way we do – with transparency, friendliness, and a warm welcome for all who are interested.

Our promise to you has never wavered. We remain steadfastly committed to uplifting and growing the collector car community, now more than ever. We will continue to share what we know, listen to what you've learned, and provide trusted services for buyers, sellers, and beyond to elevate what we all love: Driving.

I look forward to sharing an incredible 2024 with you, including celebrating our 70th Anniversary along with the expansion of Muscledalooza events in several new regions of the country.

We are Driven By Drivers, We are Driven By You.

-JONATHAN "JONO" SHAW
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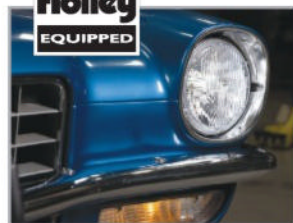
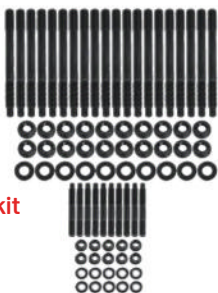
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Matthew Litwin

Time to Celebrate



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

“Known

surviving

Voyagers

– as you’ll

read – can

be counted

on a single

hand as

of this

writing.”

BACK IN THE

summer of 2018, I purchased a station wagon and proudly posted it on my social media page. It was a roller in desperate need of a new home, devoid of an engine, transmission, and interior. Heck, it didn’t even

come with windows or floorpans. That was hardly a concern to me, since it was a 1954 Buick Century Estate Wagon that wore the remains of factory green paint—even on the trim and bumpers. In the post, I joked that it “ran when parked.” In truth, the price was right (only \$5), and the Tootsie Toy was small enough to carry around in my hand.

Today, the shelf-worn Century of unknown mileage is sitting in a display case, accompanied by a wide array of 1:43-scale Buicks that have been safely stowed for posterity. When it comes to wagons, I’m hardly exclusive to the nameplate from Flint, for nearby are a 1:64-scale 1970 Oldsmobile Vista Cruiser, 1970 Chevy Chevelle SS wagon, circa 1981 Nissan Cedric (sold in the U.S. first as the Datsun 810 before adopting Maxima emblems), and the first station wagon gifted to me when I was a single-digit age: a Matchbox Superfast likeness of Mercury’s 1968 Commuter. It was my demolition derby “battle wagon” in makeshift living room floor arenas while growing up, yet it somehow managed to escape simulated crash damage via my dad’s Stanley hammer.

Little did I know then that the Commuter I was in awe of as a wee lad had already ceased to exist as a life-size model. The name was nixed after the 1968 model year and replaced by the Monterey and Monterey Custom wagons. Nor was I aware that the Commuter nameplate dated to 1957, when it was introduced to domestic buyers as both an entry-level two- and four-door hardtop wagon, alongside the top-of-the-line Colony Park and mid-range two-door Voyager.

Of the three, the 1957 Voyager was already a rarity when new, more so for ’58 when model output numbered fewer than 600 units. Factor in the consequences of time, elements, and demand for nefarious metal-crunching entertainment, and known surviving 1958 Voyagers—as you’ll read—can be counted on a single hand as of this writing;



fewer still when restored to the award-winning level exhibited by our cover feature. Fitting, then, that the two-owner rarity leads our celebration of Fifties station wagons in this, the first issue of 2024.

Speaking of celebrations, 2024 marks two

anniversaries here at Hemmings. The first is the 70th anniversary of our parent publication, *Hemmings Motor News*. It seems just like yesterday when our Bennington, Vermont, based company celebrated its 60th consecutive year with a special issue dedicated, in part, to everything from its humble origins to the century-old edifice that houses a significant portion of our organization. Like the ceaseless energy and progression of the hobby, *Hemmings Motors News* continues to evolve.

The other occasion is the 20th anniversary of *Hemmings Classic Car* magazine, which will happen with the arrival of the October issue. Our celebration will go beyond a single issue, however, with the introduction of new theme features that will rotate throughout this year, and the years ahead. It begins, though, with the reintroduction of Comparison Reports, the first of which is the surprise pairing of a 1961 Chrysler 300G and a 1961 Mercedes-Benz 300 SL found on pages 34-41 of this issue.

First among the new theme features is next month’s Long-Term Ownership tale in which a Michigan resident has spent decades behind the wheel of what is now a vintage vehicle. The month of March will deliver a jaw-dropping All Original feature from the Pacific Northwest, while the April issue will place the spotlight on an Original Owner feature from southern New Jersey sure to amaze you, as well as a scintillating Service Car story from the West Coast. Two other rotating themes will begin to appear in forthcoming issues: Tales of High Mileage vehicles (think six-figure-and-up-odometer readings) still on the road, and owners who still possess their First Vehicle. We hope you’ll enjoy these new additions.

In the meantime, I need to continue my search for a 1969 Plymouth Satellite station wagon to add to my collection. You know...since we’re celebrating. 🚗

1920s Style for a 1920s Price

It was a warm summer afternoon and my wife and I were mingling with the best of them. The occasion was a 1920s-themed party, and everyone was dressed to the nines. Parked on the manse's circular driveway was a beautiful classic convertible. It was here that I got the idea for our new 1920s Retrograde Watch.

Never ones to miss an opportunity, we carefully steadied our glasses of bubbly and climbed into the car's long front seat. Among the many opulent features on display was a series of dashboard dials that accentuated the car's lavish aura. One of those dials inspired our 1920s Retrograde Watch, a genuinely unique timepiece that marries timeless style with modern technology.

With its remarkable retrograde hour and minute indicators, sunburst guilloché face and precision movement, this design is truly one of a kind. What does retrograde mean? Instead of displaying the hands rotating on an axis like most watches, the hands sweep in a semicircle, then return to their starting point and begin all over again.

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Hot Rodding, circa 1931

This 1925 Ford Model T roadster is a period-perfect blend of Model A and Tin Lizzie

YOU WOULDN'T THINK

screwing together a primitive Model T gow job ("hot rod" from before the term was coined—let alone considered non-pejorative, see *HCC* #223, April 2023, for details [<https://www.hemmings.com/stories/gow-jobs-revealed/>]) like David Mazza's wouldn't be such an unusual thing. Yet he recently took an informal inventory of cars that exist at least on the internet and even encompassing ones that have been in a perpetual state of construction for a decade, unrestored survivors not yet revived from barn-find status, and those that only exist very quietly in quasi-private collections, there just aren't many black-radiator Ford Model T's that exist in a period-modified form.

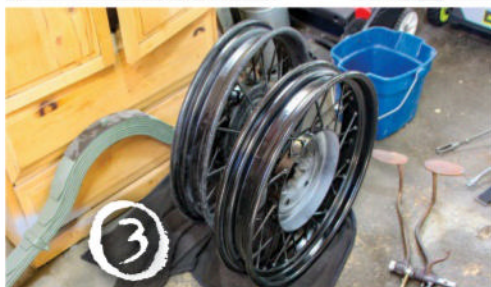
There are, however, a lot of 1920s and early '30s Ford castoffs that can be assembled into one. David's project, slowly but determinedly coming together in a one-car garage in North Adams, Massachusetts, is such an assemblage. It actually started as a brass-era Model T speedster project. He quickly determined that the same amount of effort, applied through the lens of a slightly later period, would garner him an equally satisfying car at a fraction of the cost. None of this, even accounting for inflation from 1933 or thereabouts, is as cheap as it was when a used Model T cost \$5, but if—like Dave—you're a fan of the big brass stuff, it's comparative peanuts.

The plan is deceptively simple, but

the effort has been in the details. Dave selected stock Model A power as the basis for his Model T. That's double the horsepower and the effortless torque of 200.5 cubic inches versus 177, plus the durability of a crankshaft that nobody has compared with a bent paperclip. The latter an often-uttered comment among drivers of stocker flivvers.

The trade off is that the Model T frame was never designed to accommodate the Model A engine. Dave's short list of the modifications required thus far include custom rear motor mounts to go from the A clutch housing to the T frame rails, a front motor mount utilizing part of a Model T pan and permitting continued use of the hand crank for starting, the

“Best guess:
There are
about 25
1917 to ‘25
T roadster
gows spread
across the
globe.”



What's Inside:

1. A stock, 40-hp Model A engine is double the horsepower of a Model T. Ultimately, a bump in compression and a slightly hotter camshaft may push power levels as high as 55-60 horsepower, which is plenty to make a fenderless Model T roadster on its original frame move with alacrity.
2. The ride height of a stock Model T is quite high. One of the earliest tricks for lowering the rear involves re-mounting the rear crossmember on brackets, raising it up and dropping the rest of the car in relation to the spring.
3. The finished car will roll on 21-inch Model A wire wheels, for the tall-and-skinny look favored by builders of early style gow jobs. That's also a set of Model A pedals, modified for easier lubrication on the pivot and to actuate Model T accessory rear brakes.
4. While this looks at a glance like a stock Model T torque tube and rear axle, note the step in the torque tube. The forward portion is from a Model A, spliced in. The driveshaft itself was also spliced and sleeved, which required considerable heat straightening to get right.
5. The front end of the car is also lowered. Dave used a dropped Model A axle on an early, tapered-leaf Model T spring with a fabricated wishbone and a dropped, reproduction Model T steering link. The reproduction steering link was relatively easy to drop, as it is solid rather than a piece of tube like the original Ford piece.

substitution of a Model T accessory water pump for the Model A piece, and the elimination of the generator and charging system. That last change saves room but means the use of a total-loss electrical system. Dave says he intends to limit his night-time driving and use of the self-starter to compensate.

Other big challenges of combining the best of Model A and Model T attributes include splicing together the forward part of a Model A torque tube and driveshaft in order to retain the Model T rear axle and engineering the linkages to control a set of Model T “Rocky Mountain” external-contracting accessory brakes from the stock Model A brake pedal. Simultaneously, Dave has

also retained the Model T hand-brake lever, which is connected to the Model T emergency brakes, an internal-expanding system working on the same drums as the Rocky Mountain brakes. Although he has hung a Model A axle from his T front spring, he has omitted the complication of front brakes from the formula and has crafted his own wishbone in the Model T style, but from heavier metal for durability.

Still ahead of Dave are the details of the body and interior. The 1925 roadster body in these pictures are the castoffs from someone's long-forgotten hot rod project. Dave's going to join a combination of reproduction Model T wood framing and custom square tube in with the existing old wood. He's gone to a lot of trouble fettling the cockpit for driving—getting the pedals and column right for himself. This is no take-it-to-the-races-once-a-year garage queen. It's intended to be a bit like a motorcycle, touring the Berkshire hills and Green Mountains to the north at respectable-but-not-blistering speeds. 🏍️

My \$520 1973 Chevrolet Nova



"I admired my Chevy the most when it needed repairs because it was generally easy to fix."

turn onto campus one day when I smelled burning rubber as the generator warning lamp illuminated. I opened the hood and noticed the alternator had seized, causing the fan belt to burn completely off. I dislike having a vehicle that's inoperable, so I drove the car very slowly to an auto parts store one mile from campus. It never overheated. I bought a rebuilt alternator and a new fan belt for less than \$50 and replaced the parts with borrowed tools in the parking lot – in less than one hour.

Later that summer, a six-week job in New Orleans required a congested 80-mile commute in 95-degree heat; I never missed one day of work. In July, I also drove the Nova to Pensacola, Florida, and back – about 500 miles – for a one-day vacation.

A year later, I landed my first professional internship at Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory in Batavia, Illinois. I drove my 14-year-old Nova roughly 950 miles nonstop to Chicagoland in May. About 50 miles from Chicago, I ran into a horrendous monsoon that night. Along with the darkness and the pounding rain, I could barely see the hood. It took me over an hour to find a hotel to end that 15-hour drive. Awakening the next morning, I was relieved to see the Nova had survived that epic journey unscathed. During that summer, I visited college friends and the many tourist attractions of Chicago. Ten weeks later, I drove back to Louisiana nonstop without issues.

I landed a mechanical engineering internship at Eveready Battery Company in Westlake, Ohio, in 1988. That's when the Nova received a new exhaust system and four new tires. I also gave it a thorough tune-up, oil and filter change, and a transmission fluid change in my parents' driveway. Then on Sunday, May 15, I drove the Chevy 1,100 miles nonstop and arrived in Westlake around 6 a.m. on Monday. After sleeping for only one hour, I checked out of the hotel and drove to Eveready for my first day of work. That summer, I dated a young lady who lived 30 miles away.

I GREW UP IN A working-class town near New Orleans, Louisiana. As an adolescent, I could count on one hand how many families I knew who could afford to buy their children a car. Mine wasn't one of them; however, it didn't quell my teenage fantasy of buying my own.

A few months after I turned 16, I got a job at a fast-food restaurant earning minimum wage (\$3.35 per hour). Eight months later, a high-school classmate said his parents were allowing him to sell the car that he drove to school: A two-tone 1973 Chevrolet Nova with faded gold paint and even more faded white paint on the roof. It had some minor rust issues, but it was all original, mechanically sound, and had 44,000 miles on the odometer. The price was right for a shoestring-budget teenager—\$520.

After paying cash on March 18, 1983, and the required fees and taxes at the department of motor vehicles, I had \$3 left in my savings account. Although I was elated when I took my first drive in the Nova, I wondered if I had made the right decision. If my car turned out to be a lemon, I would have thrown my hard-earned money away.

That fear went unfounded. It turned

out to be the best financial decision I ever made in my life. My Nova had Chevrolet's 307-cu.in. small-block V-8 and GM's Turbo Hydra-Matic 350 automatic transmission. It was a cheap-to-own, reliable, and indestructible powertrain combination. Even in below freezing weather, the Nova only needed one pump of the accelerator to set the choke and start instantly. Once running, it never stalled. The engine ran smoothly on leaded or unleaded gasoline, though typically I used low lead since it was cheaper (about \$1.05/gallon in 1983). My car never leaked nor burned a drop of oil, and the transmission always shifted nearly imperceptibly.

I performed all the maintenance and nearly all the repairs since the Nova was a simple car. Every four months, I changed the oil and filter, and added five quarts of Quaker State 10W-30. These items cost less than \$10. Annually, I would change the spark plugs, ignition points, condenser, and air filter at the cost of less than \$20. Every two years I changed the transmission fluid. That's basically all it took to keep the Chevy running flawlessly, though not without a few adventures.

In the spring of 1986, I was about to

I would see her nearly every day and on weekends, adding nearly 10,000 miles on the Nova; it was as reliable as any new car.

In September, I drove about 500 miles from Ohio to New York City to finish my senior year of college at Columbia University in mechanical engineering. Through no fault of its own, the city and the Nova were not a match. My car was broken into twice, and its battery and license plate were stolen. I hated moving it frequently for Alternate Side Parking, though I was relieved when the semester ended so I could relocate.

By December, I had owned the Nova for almost six years and had rolled nearly 80,000 miles on the odometer. Rust had eaten large chunks of its rear fenders and rainwater would leak onto the back seat, but mechanically, it still ran perfectly.

A day or two after Christmas, I left the city for the 1,300-mile drive to Louisiana. The Nova was already showing more than 120,000 miles then. When I was about 100 miles from my parents' house, I heard an extremely loud bang. None of the car's warning lamps were illuminated, so I was perplexed. I pulled off the highway in the

Gulfport/Biloxi area of Mississippi and discovered the right-front wheel bearing had seized onto the spindle. The whole assembly needed to be replaced and it was not something normally stocked at auto parts stores.

Luck was on my side, though. I had pulled over at a truck repair business by coincidence. A mechanic at the shop offered to patch the spindle assembly just enough for the front tire to roll reasonably well, but warned it wouldn't last long. I drove the last leg at 45 mph on the highway with the hazard lamps on. Nearly 24 hours after leaving New York, I arrived at my parents' house with a wobbly front wheel. At over 15-years old, the Nova had yet to leave me stranded on the side of the road.



I admired my Chevy the most when it needed repairs because it was generally easy to fix. I've read critics' reports proclaiming that the Chevy 307 small-block engine was a grocery-getter engine, and that it wasn't as durable—or revered—like its various displacement cousins, but in my opinion, nothing could be further from the truth. The 307 wasn't powerful, but it was one of the most bulletproof engines ever made.

Eight years after I bought it, I sold the Nova for \$150, or 29 percent of my original purchase price. The new owner pulled the 307 and installed it into a late-model Chevrolet sedan, affirming my belief.

I have owned many cars since then—all of them in nicer condition—but I have always had the greatest emotional attachment to the Nova. I bought it with my own money and kept it running strong with my mechanical skills. It was the perfect car for a student with very limited funds. I never named any of my cars, but in hindsight I would have to call it "Trusty" due to its reliability and rust. 🚗



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I TRULY ENJOYED THE ARTICLE

"Behind the Barn Finds" by Scotty Lachenauer in the October issue. The photo on page 39 showing the Ford F-600 stock car hauler is my old truck that I drove on Long Island, and in Stephentown, New York, where Tim ultimately purchased it. He did not use the Ford in the late '90s, as I still owned it then; Tim purchased it in 2007.

Let me describe the Ford. The front bumper was from a Mack truck, the front axle came from a Ford F-800, and the engine was a 361-cu.in. Ford that was bored .030 over and had a 20/20 crankshaft. Behind the engine was a Clark five-speed transmission, and a two-speed rear axle. The clutch actuator rod was brazed together by me and can be seen in the cab.

I often took the F-600 on the Port Jefferson Ferry, while hauling cars to and from the New Haven Auto Auction to my business, Montauk Auto Parts. I kept the Ford and used it to junk cars for the year after I sold the business to D & D Used Truck Parts in February 2000.

That Ford was an engineering marvel; it weighed 10,000 pounds empty, and I often had a Chevrolet Suburban on the bed while towing a full-size Bronco at the same time. The Ford could stop perfectly with a load like that. I installed power steering when the engine was being rebuilt.

What great memories that photo has brought to an old gearhead. When I sold the F-600 to Tim, the exhaust was totally shot, and I had embarked on my second career... in real estate.

—JOSEPH CHAMPION
via email

JIM RICHARDSON'S SUPERB

column, "Deco Daze," in the October issue especially resonated with me. I've been an admirer of designs from the Art Deco/Streamline Moderne era as long as I can remember, whether the designs were automobiles, architecture, trains, ships, and so on.

Frank Lloyd Wright's mentor, Louis Sullivan, said "form follows function." But Wright said, "form and function are one." Wright's multiple architectural styles were certainly not Art Deco, but I think that the oneness he espoused is expressed in the most successful of the Art Deco era automobile designs.

I'm 75 and have had ownership/love affairs in the past with numerous 1960s and '70s Detroit muscle cars, a Porsche, and a couple of vintage Ferraris from the '60s. But what really captures this gearhead's heart are the cars I could never own from the 1930s, my favorites being various models by Cord, Auburn, Duesenberg, Bugatti, and Delahaye.

This fall I'm going to cross a line item off my bucket list when I get to spend some time at the Auburn Cord Duesenberg Automobile Museum in Auburn, Indiana, viewing my favorite, beautiful Art Deco era automobiles in a beautiful Art Deco inspired building. Thank you, Jim Richardson, for ratcheting up even more my anticipation of that coming experience!

—BILL BLISSETT
Oro Valley, Arizona

I JUST VORACIOUSLY READ

the October issue. As usual it hits on all cylinders. I particularly want to say I agree with the fact that new cars are not fun or really interesting. I find driving my 1955 Ford Thunderbird on the country roads and 1930-vintage highways a lot more fun. I will purposely go out of my way to drive on older

routes, as mentioned in the article about the 1940 Buick.

The mention of the foot-operated starter button brought back memories of my 1936 Plymouth and a 1953 Dodge service truck. That secondhand Dodge had been a gas company's service truck, but we used it for road calls to our gas station and it was a strong workhorse. Besides the starter button, both the choke and the accelerator were cable operated. I believe the Plymouth may have had them also, but that went to the great boneyard in the sky after it was crashed into a 1960 Oldsmobile 88.

Keep up the good work. I enjoy reading about cars that I remember and many that I worked on for most of my adult life.

—EVERETT PHILLA
Acushnet, Massachusetts

I HAD CONTEMPORARY

experience with 1940 Buicks at the tender age of 15. My future brother-in-law, Glenn Miller, had a 1940 Buick Special four-door sedan, finished in two-tone light brown, which he acquired around 1943. It didn't get particularly good gas mileage for World War II gas rationing but was considered a sexy car. It is interesting to compare the problems he had with that car to your problems with the 1940 Century.

The biggest problem was overheating. I remember it boiling over on a trip from Canton, to Columbus, Ohio, in June 1948. Buicks of that period were known for overheating. It was a particular problem on the then-new Pennsylvania Turnpike, where you could cruise at 60-plus mph. I think he needed to replace a plugged-up radiator core. I was glad to see you addressed the radiator on the Century.

To my knowledge Glenn never had a transmission

problem. This was in the early synchro days when the drivers were abandoning double clutching. Our family car was a 60-hp 1937 Ford, which had the reputation of having an inadequate synchro transmission. My father would clash the gears. My mother criticized him about it, but he would say that the transmission had good Ford steel in it and could take it. After replacing some gears a couple times, the Ford dealer swapped in a transmission designed for the same-year 85-hp engine, and we didn't have any more stripped gear problems. Perhaps the owner of the Century relied on Buick steel over doing the equivalent of double clutching in low gear.

—DON RYMAN
Buchanan, Michigan

I ENJOYED READING RICK

MacCornack's "Value of the Old Car Hobby" in the Reminiscing column of your October issue for several reasons. I grew up in Orange, New Jersey, where my brother, Bayley, restored a 1929 Ford Model A woody during the mid to late '60s. Inspired by my brother's work, in the late '60s I undertook the restoration of a 1931 Ford Model A Victoria.

My brother was meticulous in the woody's restoration, replacing every piece of wood with the many varieties of timber used by Ford in the late '20s. Like Mr. MacCornack, the only pieces he did not fabricate were the tongue-and-groove pieces around the rear wheel fenders.

While the Victoria was a basket case, it was mostly complete, except for the rain gutters, which also served to cover the nails for the "leatherback" roof. The rain gutters were probably the most difficult parts to find, as they only fit a Victoria.

While stationed at Fort Devens in Massachusetts, I

drove my wife, Eileen, and 1-year old son, Mike, up to Haverhill, New Hampshire, to visit Page's Model A with the hopes of finding a set of original rain gutters.

Fred Page led us around to various barns and sheds in the quaint town of Haverhill to show us all his Model A's. As I recall, his pride and joy was a Ford A-400, which appeared to be all original. He couldn't have been more gracious with his time.

Fred told me he thought he had a set of gutters for a Victoria stashed away somewhere and that he would send them to me when he found them. Some days later I received a large mailing tube containing the set of gutters. Inside the tube was a bill. Who extends that kind of trust anymore?

As for the Victoria, I had it professionally restored in the '80s and finally sold it on Hemmings Auctions in late

2020. Vicky created a lot of memories for me in the 52 years I owned her, from taking my three sons for ice cream in the summers to taking their kids for similar rides. The grandkids had never seen a car with wind-up windows, that had to be shifted, or for which hand signals substituted for turn signals.

I enjoy your magazine; keep up the good work.

—BERNARD DAVIS
via email

RARELY HAVE I SEEN A better juxtaposition of automobiles showing the "Elegant perfection in a magnificent European-type road car..." than the pictures of the 1963 Studebaker Gran Turismo Hawk (page 30 of your October 2023 issue) and the 1959 Alfa Romeo 2000 Spider (page 17 of that issue). Two beautiful examples, from opposite sides of the Atlantic, of the finest era

of automotive styling!

P.S. I have a 1961 Alfa Romeo Giulietta Spider.

—RICHARD KENNEDY
Sandy, Utah

UPON RECEIVING THE JULY issue (#226) I was surprised to see the picture of the 1967 Camaro taillamp on page 48.

I started a tool and die apprenticeship in 1965 in Grand Rapids, Michigan. While at Paragon Die and Engineering, I built my first diecast mold as a die leader in 1966: a four-cavity mold, two left-hand and two right-hand parts in each shot. It doesn't appear the one pictured is severely pitted as many diecast parts get when subjected to the elements.

In the '60s the car industry switched to casting more parts in plastic to save weight and deter corrosion and the diecast parts faded out. I worked 37 years building molds for many different

vehicles, including grilles, taillamps, and fascias. I also built the sub dash for the Chrysler K-car that all the components fit into. There was a lot of pressure from Chrysler as it was one of the last parts they needed to start running production. I also built molds for the front and rear fascias for the Pontiac Aztek, which I thought was about the ugliest car I ever saw, but I guess some people loved them. To each his own.

Before I finish this comment, I noticed you did it again. On page 36 in the October issue (#229), there's a picture of a 1968 Camaro with taillamp bezels on the dash; fond memories!

—DARRYL NORQUIST
Comstock Park, Michigan



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



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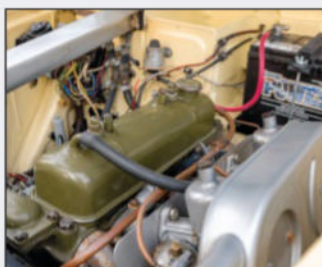
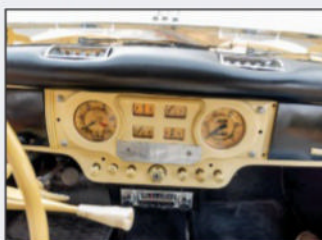
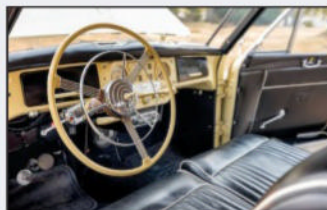
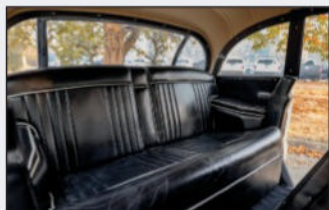
1940 BUICK CENTURY 61-C



This rare (one of 194 built) four-door convertible spent 36 years in our vehicle collection before becoming the subject of numerous articles in this magazine, starring in three Hemmings Garage programs on our YouTube channel, and completing a long road trip. The Century's 320-cu.in. inline-eight was thoroughly recommissioned and mated to a three-speed manual 1941 transmission, while its braking system was rebuilt, and new Coker bias-ply tires were installed. Its black paint was in good shape, the tan canvas top like new, and the red leather upholstery intact and inviting. It took 30 bids, including six time extensions, for the Hemmings 1940 Buick Century Sport Phaeton to get a happy new owner.

Reserve: None
Selling Price: \$38,850
Recent Market Range:
\$19,000-\$29,000

1951 AUSTIN A90 ATLANTIC



Whether it was the stunning presentation of this A90 Atlantic Coupe that fascinated bidders, or the car itself, the little Austin managed to rocket past its recent market range. What caused the fuss? The reportedly never-rusted Canadian-market two-door came out of single-family ownership and enjoyed an extensive, expensive restoration circa-2000 that left it looking and running great. Minor noteworthy niggles included a bit of paint touch-up, some creasing in the leather seats, and cracks in the plastic steering wheel. A stack of documentation included maintenance records and restoration receipts. Bidders recognized what a special story this rare car represented and acted accordingly.

Reserve: \$17,000
Selling Price: \$26,250
Recent Market Range:
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To Gone and Back

A rare '58 two-door Mercury Voyager nears the brink of death, and then is brought back to unexpected glory



WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY ERIC ENGLISH

Most enthusiasts understand the idea that some cars are easier to restore than others, but Dave Long is seemingly a glutton for punishment when it comes to the concept. Dave got a taste for unusual cars when he restored his 1975 AMC Pacer, but apparently that wasn't a big enough challenge. Enter the 1958 Mercury Voyager two-door station wagon seen here, which emphasized the issues associated with oddball restorations—a distinct lack of reproduction parts, rarely seen NOS parts, and very little in the way of a

parts-car pipeline. But before diving into how Dave got the project done, let's explain how he acquired one of the rarest classic station wagons you're apt to see.

"I had plugged 'unusual cars,' or something to that effect, in a search engine one night in 2012, and it turned up the Mercury," Dave says. "It was an original family-owned car, which I was immediately drawn to. I did some quick internet research and found references to a similar fully restored Voyager two-door that mentioned it was the only one in existence. Whether that was



This undated picture was taken along California Highway 1, in the Big Sur area. Note that the wagon is now wearing the classic black California plates that debuted in 1963.



This family picture shows how car camping was done in 1962. We're told by Janet Jarmann that this picture was taken at Mt. Rainier National Park in Washington State, on the way to the 1962 World's Fair in Seattle. That's a young Janet in the picture.



The Mercury did its fair share of pulling the Jarmanns' small travel trailer through the years, as this scene near the Great Salt Lake in Utah attests.



Mercury wagons of the era came with either single, two-tone, or tri-tone paint from the factory. Dave Long's car was originally a single color (Oxford Gray), but he opted for the attractive two-tone scheme as part of the restoration. The colors feature a somewhat livelier gray than stock, combined with a factory-available Marble White.

true or not, I realized that this '58 was something I'd be unlikely to see again. I made a deal with the guy who was brokering the car for the family based solely from pictures, and then began the waiting game to see exactly what I'd bought."

Fortunately, with a single owning family, the entire history of the Voyager was known. It was purchased new at Nemith Motors in upstate New York, by Adolf Jarmann, thought to be in late 1958. Jarmann drove the car to California in the spring of '59 in advance of moving his family to Santa Clara a short time later.

For the next 22 years, the wagon was your typical family hauler driven mostly by Mrs. Jarmann, making runs to the grocery store and carting kids around. The Jarmanns' son James explained that the family made many trips in the Voyager to Yosemite National Park, and also to Yellowstone and Crater Lake. Several other trips were made over the years to New York and back to visit family—in other words, the '58 was well used. By 1980 it was plain "used-up," and parked at the family home in Los Gatos, California, where it would sit for 30-plus years.



Here is the 1958 Voyager as it was delivered to Dave in 2012. Pictures sent by the seller aligned nicely with Dave's expectations, so everyone was happy. At this point, the task ahead was a big one.



This Jarman family photo from 2010 shows how the Voyager became covered in leaves during 30 years of outside storage, which resulted in significant roof rot. The entire roof skin was replaced with a donor piece from a four-door wagon discovered in Idaho, a critical find.



Images of the disassembled wagon reveal the rust damage in the roof and passenger front floorpan.



The engine compartment as delivered was a bit crusty, but not bad all things considered. The original MEL 383-cu.in. V-8 was still between the fenders.



For a few months early in the project, this was the scene in Dave's two-car home garage once the body was taken off the frame.



Interior restoration was a major challenge, as the original was pretty much wiped out. Dave tells us the stench of rodent urine was overpowering.



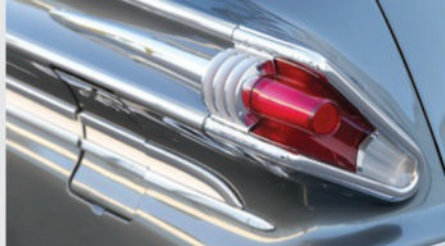
A memento from a years-ago trip to Yosemite National Park was found under the seats during disassembly.



The frame was a bit crusty, but in sound condition. It was sandblasted and powdercoated before the restored suspension and brakes were installed.

This picture was taken as the body was being loaded up after media blasting. Dave told the stripping company not to bother with the roof, as it was destined for complete replacement.





Dave was able to find NOS taillamp lenses, chrome surrounds, and the three-disc "ray gun" trim for the restoration.



The fact that the original door jamb tag has survived in such good shape is amazing.



At least two of the hubcaps are original to '58, while the other two are better originals from parts sources. Dave was thrilled with the Coker Tire American Classic wide white-wall radials, which replicate the original bias-ply rubber quite nicely.

It's not completely known why the Jarmanns purchased a two-door wagon versus the more common and versatile four-door. No doubt that aesthetics was what a two-door had going for it over a four-door, as the hardtop body style is arguably more attractive. And yet the visuals may not have played much into the decision. According to James, it may have been motivated by economics, stating that, "1959 was at the end of the Eisenhower recession and my dad was always value conscious, so it was likely on the dealer lot at a good price."

Dave pieced together other elements of the story after his purchase, immersing himself in late '50s Mercury history. Within the brand's two-door wagon lineup, the Voyager received top billing even though it was the mid-line trim level among wagons, where the four-door-only

Colony Park was top dog. In both two- and four-door wagons, the Commuter was the base model, and was built in far greater quantities than the Voyager. Production data indicates that the total output of the Voyager two-door wagon was just 568 units.

Dave's car received the new-for-1958 383-cu.in. MEL series engine, the acronym meaning Mercury-Edsel-Lincoln. While we're used to seeing a near complete overlap between Ford and Mercury powertrains, the MEL was never installed in a Ford-branded passenger car other than the Thunderbird. The 383 was the smallest of the MELs that included a 410, 430, and later a 462. The 383 was a Mercury-only offering, which in 1958 four-barrel form, was advertised at 330 hp and 425 lb-ft of torque. Backing the MEL was a three-speed Merc-O-Matic

automatic transmission with a novel pushbutton shift selector that was no doubt inspired by similar Chrysler offerings. At the rear, the venerable 9-inch differential was in its second year of production, containing a freeway-friendly 2.91:1 gear ratio.

When the Mercury arrived at Dave's Tacoma, Washington, home, a thorough assessment revealed a car that was original and complete in almost all respects, with significant rust in the roof and passenger front floorpan. The frame and underside components were in decent shape for their age, as only a few months of East Coast exposure occurred before the Jarman family moved to a more favorable California climate. However, the interior

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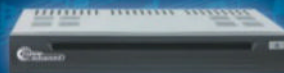
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The New York license plates indicate this picture was taken shortly after the Jarmanns purchased their 1958 two-door wagon. Note that the luggage rack seen in some early photos hasn't yet been installed. Also note how the M of the rear Mercury script was slightly tilted even when new.

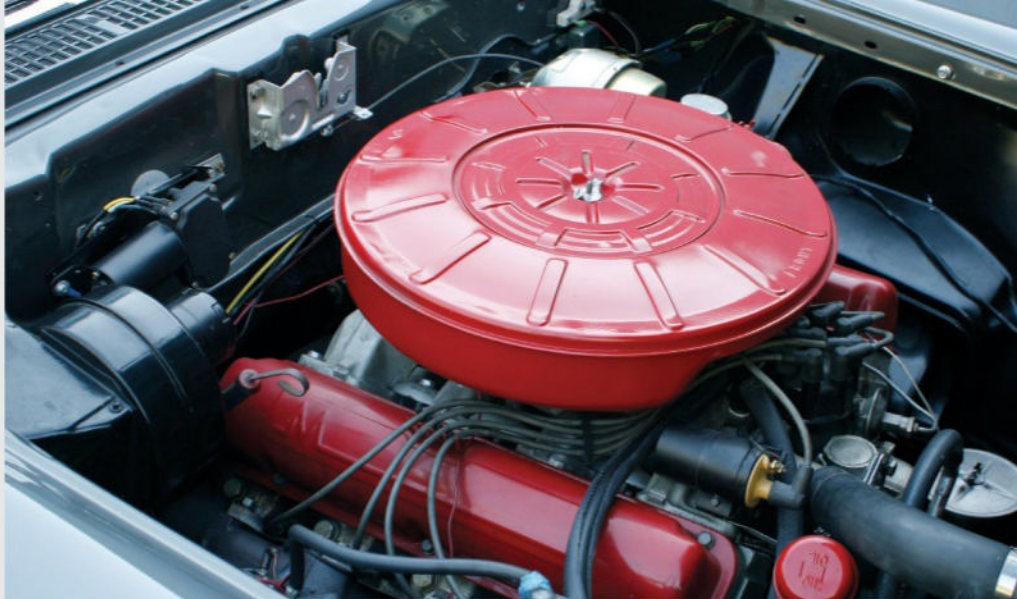
was very much the worse for wear—and age. Virtually none of the soft trim was salvageable, and the chrome and stainless bits needed complete refinishing.

Dave wasted little time disassembling the wagon and started making inquiries about the parts and services he'd need to restore the car. Early on, he made contact with John Dales, former owner of the known existing restored '58 Voyager two-door that Dave had seen pictures of. Even though he'd sold the car after its restoration, John was extremely helpful with his experiences, parts connections, and more. John's very car was later purchased by the late actor Paul Walker for his eclectic collection and was said to be one of Walker's favorites.

Similarly, Mercury wagon guru Ben Scovil proved a big help with advice and parts hookups and was a valuable sounding board throughout what would prove to be a seven-year restoration of Dave's wagon. Dave also sought out a couple of parts cars that would prove critical, which while not being '58 two-door wagons, shared enough pieces. One was a '58 four-door wagon from Idaho, the other was a similar wagon from Big M Automotive in California. The Idaho wagon donated its roof for the cause, which Dave says was the same as the two-door version, while the California car donated the right front floorpan.



Nemith Motors was formed in upstate New York in 1937, and continued to sell Lincolns and Mercurys into the 2000s.



The rebuilt 383 MEL and engine compartment are plenty presentable, but not the focal point of a car like this. In fact, Dave usually shows the car with the hood closed, partly because the forward-pivoting hood distracts from the bodylines of the unique and attractive sheetmetal.



The Voyager was originally equipped with power steering and power brakes, but Dave opted to replace the brake booster with a more modern version from Scott Drake.

Once the body and frame were separated, Dave had the frame sandblasted and powdercoated, and then began fitting restored suspension and brake components. A key find in keeping everything stock were the NOS rubber bushings that Michael Hinsch supplied for the front eye of the rear leaf springs. Mercury marketed the setup as "Air Ride," as the bushings have a hollow chamber that offers a semblance of an air cushion that softens the ride.

The body was also blasted to bare metal, whereupon Kyle Saxton at Graham Auto Craft performed necessary repairs and bodywork. The previously mentioned donor roof was installed, the right front floorpan was replaced with the Big M piece, and a patch panel was used behind the right rear wheelwell. Dave also turned to Diversified Custom Cars for spray welding in several locations, a process that beefs up areas that may have been weakened by pinhole rust-through. Such was the case in several areas of Dave's Voyager, an example being the outside lower corners of the windshield opening. After blasting the area free of rust, the spray welding eliminated the need to cut out and replace sections of metal.

Access to the rear seat is far better here than say, a pony car, but still more difficult than a four-door wagon. On the other hand, there'd be no concern about young kids accidentally opening a rear door.



The Mercury's complicated trim and body contours gave Dave plenty of issues to decide on visually. Originally this car was a single color, while two-tones and tri-tones were factory options. Dave credits his wife, Amy, for the idea of adopting the two-tone scheme, with the new gray being a livelier version of the original Oxford Gray, and the Marble White being applied in the same manner as the factory two-tone. Joe Cairns expertly sprayed the sheetmetal using PPG Glasurit two-stage, including a half-dozen or so coats of clear.

Compared to the rest of the car, rebuilding the drivetrain components was probably the easiest part of the whole project. Dave turned to a friend who is a retired engine machinist for the rebuild on the seldom seen and numbers-matching MEL. Unsurprisingly, it was rebuilt to stock specifications other than using hardened exhaust seats, as this car isn't about big horsepower. Nevertheless, Dave reports

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With the frame being put together as its own subassembly, the body was mounted to a rotisserie for repairs.



Other than the unique leaf spring bushings, refurbishing the rear axle and suspension was a typical restoration effort.

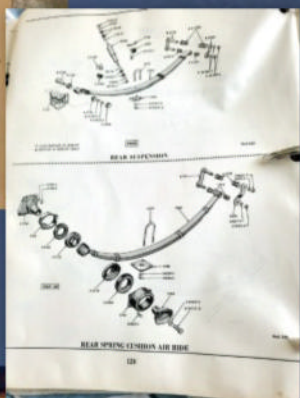


Front suspension for the '58 is a typical upper and lower A-arm arrangement and was the subject of normal restoration efforts—blasting, painting, bushing replacement, and ball joints. Dave also installed new coil springs with a two-inch drop.



Once repairs were completed on the passenger front floorpan, the entire floor was coated with a spray-on bedliner product, followed by Dynamat.

Here's a schematic of the 1958 Mercury "Air Ride" rear suspension from a period Mercury parts manual.



The interesting front spring eye arrangement on the leaf springs was called "Air Ride" by Mercury in 1958. The optional setup used hollow rubber bushings that nominally acted as an air cushion, resulting in a softer ride. Dave got a set of long obsolete NOS bushings from Michael Hinsch and fitted them to original-style springs from Eaton Detroit Spring.



These are not the California plates that went on the Mercury when the Jarman family moved from New York in 1960, as the state didn't go to the iconic black with gold letters until 1963. However, family pictures do show these very plates on the car by the mid-Sixties.

It was a milestone day when Dave gathered several buddies together to move the repaired body back onto the restored frame. After this, it was off to the paint booth.





Close attention was paid to panel gaps throughout, certainly resulting in better alignment than the Mercury had when new.



The unique padded dash pieces were replicated by Glen Brown and are an important part of the impressively restored interior.

Left: Typical of many restorations, restored components for the Mercury wagon ended up getting stored in a variety of places in Dave's house. These interior trim pieces have been stripped and powdercoated, and awaiting the rest of the project to catch up.

that the 383 offers decent acceleration when called on. Backing the engine is the original Merc-O-Matic three speed automatic, rebuilt by ABC Transmission in Tacoma, Washington, along with the original 9-inch rear end that was simply cleaned up, detailed, and resealed.

While the exterior offers a definite "gone and back" sensation when seeing before and after pictures, the interior transformation inspires equal amazement. Curtis Upholstery is responsible for the spot-on replication of the original seat upholstery, while Jason Peters of Mid-Century Motors and Restorations crafted the door panels, headliner, and carpet. That left Glen Brown to fabricate the padded dash pieces, but they're no less of a contribution to the cause. In fact, these brief descriptions are a gross oversimplification for all these fine craftsmen, as each interior piece is a custom work of art and critical to the overall outcome. Much of the interior chrome was replated, including

the transmission controller and main instrument cluster bezel, the result being the crowning touch to a fantastic—and vast—cabin.

It's difficult to identify all the components and people that are involved in a project of this scope, but we'll give it a good try by crediting Victory Auto Glass for replacement of all the glass, Pat Walsh Restorations for the necessary window seals and gaskets, and Narragansett Reproductions for the replacement wiring harnesses. Adding to that list, Dave is grateful to Lloyd and Wilson Auto Service, T&T Tire Point S, and Turco's Automotive for their expertise in sorting out some of the more difficult mechanical issues that were necessary to make the Mercury a reliable driver.

To date, Dave figures he's put 1,000 miles on the odometer since the restoration was completed in June of 2020, mostly traveling to shows in western Washington where the rare Mercury always garners attention. In fact, just

as we were completing this story, we encountered Dave and his wagon at a 500-car show in Edmonds, Washington, where it won Best of Show.

"I'm really surprised and honored," Dave says, adding, "I thought people would like the wagon, but they really seem to love it."

Such results are a pleasing outcome for everyone with a connection to this rare Mercury. For Dave and those involved in the restoration, show awards and appreciative spectator comments are the ultimate acknowledgement of a job well done. For the Jarmann family who spent their formative years traveling the country in the Mercury, it's both "surprising and satisfying," and "a welcome invitation to reminisce about childhood and simpler times." There's no doubt that even in the Jarmann parents' wildest dreams, they couldn't have imagined the road their old Mercury would've traveled. To gone and back indeed! 🚗





Pat Foster

The Gremlin We Should Have Got

“American Motors’ designers were real car enthusiasts, and they wanted the company to offer a special Gremlin model for enthusiasts circa 1970, something they dubbed the Gremlin GT.”

WHEN DICK TEAGUE sketched out—on the back of an air-sickness bag, no less—his idea for an American subcompact car, he was making both history and legend. The small car that grew from that sketch became the American Motors Gremlin.

Launched on April Fool’s Day in 1970, the Gremlin surprised the automotive press. How was tiny AMC, which in 1967 was close to going out of business, able to rebound and beat the Big Three to market with the first American subcompact car designed to compete with a new wave of imports? Chevy and Ford wouldn’t field their entries for another six months, and Chrysler wouldn’t offer its own subcompact until the 1978 model year.

Teague was able to work this magic by cutting 12 inches out of the wheelbase of AMC’s Hornet compact sedan, and then creating a shorter rear section that incorporated a hatchback design, which was unique among American cars at the time. Being based on the Hornet meant the Gremlin received a 199-cu.in. six-cylinder engine as standard equipment, and by 1972 even a 304-cu.in. V-8 was optional. Sure, the Gremlin wasn’t as light and economical as other small cars, but its gas mileage was surprisingly good and interior comfort was superior, in the front seat anyway. The back seat was cramped but so were the rear seats in Pintos and Vegas.

But here’s the rub: American Motors’ designers were real car enthusiasts, and they wanted the company to offer a special Gremlin model for enthusiasts circa 1970, something they dubbed the Gremlin GT. They produced an illustration to show what it could look like and now, having located a copy, I sure wish AMC had approved it. Ralph Nader probably would have gotten apoplectic over it, but it was a really exciting concept.

As illustrated, the Gremlin GT wore white body paint with two black racing stripes running down the hood. The Gremlin’s stock hood bulge was fronted by a blacked-out metal casting to make the bulge appear to be a functional scoop. Inset on the scoop plate was the number “360.” The grille surround was painted body color, rather than the argent silver seen on standard models, and the grille insert was black and sported an offset “GT” emblem. Headlamp buckets were flat black except the outer edges, which were bright metal. Body sides were adorned with AMC’s standard painted pinstripe, along with a GT emblem placed on the rear quarter, and a 360 emblem on the front



fenders. Five-spoke wheels and AMX-like rocker-panel moldings completed the aggressive look.

Those 360 badges reveal the big story behind the Gremlin GT. It wasn’t a simple “stripes & wheels” sport package like so many other cars got in the ’70s (including the Gremlin “X” that debuted in 1971). The Gremlin GT was slated to be equipped with AMC’s potent 360-cu.in. V-8 topped with either a two-barrel or four-barrel carburetor. Equipped with a three- or four-speed manual transmission and a Twin-Traction differential, the Gremlin GT would have offered amazing performance at an attractive price.

The last generation AMC V-8 engines all used essentially the same block, so the 360 would easily have fit the Gremlin—it was, after all, offered in the Hornet. Certainly, the brakes and suspension would have needed beefing up, just as the Hornet required. The Gremlin probably could have used the same parts. But as far as engineering goes, the Gremlin GT wouldn’t have needed much effort to get it into production.

Although the car wasn’t built, we can speculate with some accuracy as to its performance. In *Car Craft* tests, a stock 1971 Hornet SC/360 did the quarter mile in 14.5 seconds with a speed of 99.1 mph. After adjusting its timing, a run of 13.9 seconds and 101.9 mph was logged. That was better than a 454-powered Chevelle tested previously. Since the Gremlin weighed less than the Hornet, one can figure the Gremlin GT would have produced slightly better results, if they kept wheelspin under control.

AMC eventually built a Gremlin GT for 1978, but it was vastly different from the proposed design described above. In my humble opinion, the proposed Gremlin GT would have been a minor hit for AMC, selling in fairly small numbers but greatly enhancing the company’s performance image. It’s too bad it never got the chance. 🚗

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Dream Catcher

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY JIM BLACK



The J-2 Rocket turned any Oldsmobile into a factory hot rod in 1957, even this Golden 88 Fiesta station wagon

For a quarter century, station wagons were an icon of American motoring. In the postwar era, when suburbia was a budding mecca of country living, growing families discovered the dual-purpose benefits of owning such a vehicle. Wagons could haul project lumber or the neighborhood little league team with equal ease, to say nothing about daily commuter service, weekly shopping excursions, and long cross-country family vacations. Add a tow package, and wagons could pull boats and campers with nary a whimper.

The station wagon's can-do dynamics, however, were only stymied by stunted evolution. Sliding panels, sky-view roofs, and magic tailgates that came and went over time did little to stem

This Golden 88 Fiesta was originally painted Rose Mist Metallic and Victorian White, but the previous owner/restorer selected a subjective combination of Sapphire Mist and Platinum Mist. Both colors were on Olds's 1957 color palette.



the appeal of Eighties spacious minivans, or the Nineties surge of full-size SUVs brimming with creature comforts, easy-loading ergonomics, and available four-wheel drive. Wagons fell from grace, and by the new millennium were largely absent from domestic new car announcements.

Over two decades later though, a growing sect of collector car enthusiasts revitalized vintage wagons. While once a staple of county-fair demolition derbies, station wagons are now enjoying third or fourth lives as collector cars. Owners with restored and survivor wagons of all types, from all eras, have been making these cars' presence known, using any excuse to get them out, whether it be a throw-back road trip or a visit to the local,

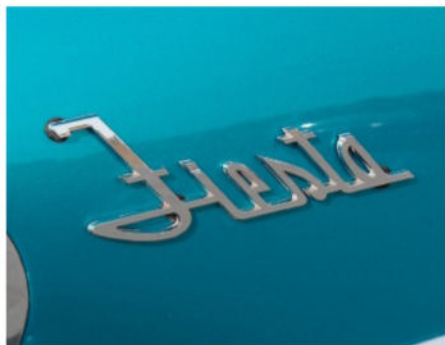
regional, or national car show. All wagons are generally looked upon with fondness these days, if only because they spur memories of long-ago road trips. Some, however, wow crowds with their styling, rare options, or both, as found in our featured 1957 Oldsmobile Golden Rocket 88 Fiesta.

The Fiesta was groundbreaking when new, but to understand why, it should first be remembered that—unlike its corporate siblings or crosstown rivals—Oldsmobile's presence in the postwar station wagon market was hardly strong. By the conclusion of the 1950 model year, the GM division from Lansing captured a paltry 1.7 percent of the wagon market by selling a scant 2,750 units (in comparison, Chevrolet produced 166,995 wagons the same



year; Ford built just over 29,000). The cost of building and maintaining wood-bodied station wagons likely didn't help things. And even though an industry-wide change to all-steel construction was already in the works, Lansing stopped offering station-wagons until 1957.

During those six years, Olds wisely cemented its image with impeccable styling, cabin comfort, and (briefly) race-proven power on NASCAR's stock car circuit, all at an attractive price point. The first two of those key sales elements were ramped up for 1957, led by a striking styling revision—akin to other GM makes—that made Oldsmobiles seem all-new from the ground-up. It was the perfect opportunity to dive back into the station wagon market.



To do so, Oldsmobile turned to the Mitchell-Bentley Corporation in Ionia, Michigan. Mitchell-Bentley already had a well-established reputation as a custom coachbuilder—including projects for Ford Motor Company, Chrysler Corporation, Nash, Packard, and even Studebaker—while honing its station wagon skills with Chevrolet, Pontiac, and, most notably, Buick. Buick's all-steel wagon body proved a natural fit for the Oldsmobile chassis and that division would even receive its own Fiesta-like hardtop wagon, called Caballero.

Mitchell-Bentley built the new Fiesta in two body styles sprinkled into two trim levels (with limitations). The first was a traditional, four-door, fully pillared design—dubbed the Fiesta Sedan in sales literature—offered only in the entry-series Golden Rocket 88, (the name “Golden” was added to honor General Motors' 50th anniversary). Had the 5,052 Fiesta Sedans been the only wagons Mitchell-Bentley built for Lansing, they might have been met with a hint of trepidation, but they weren't.

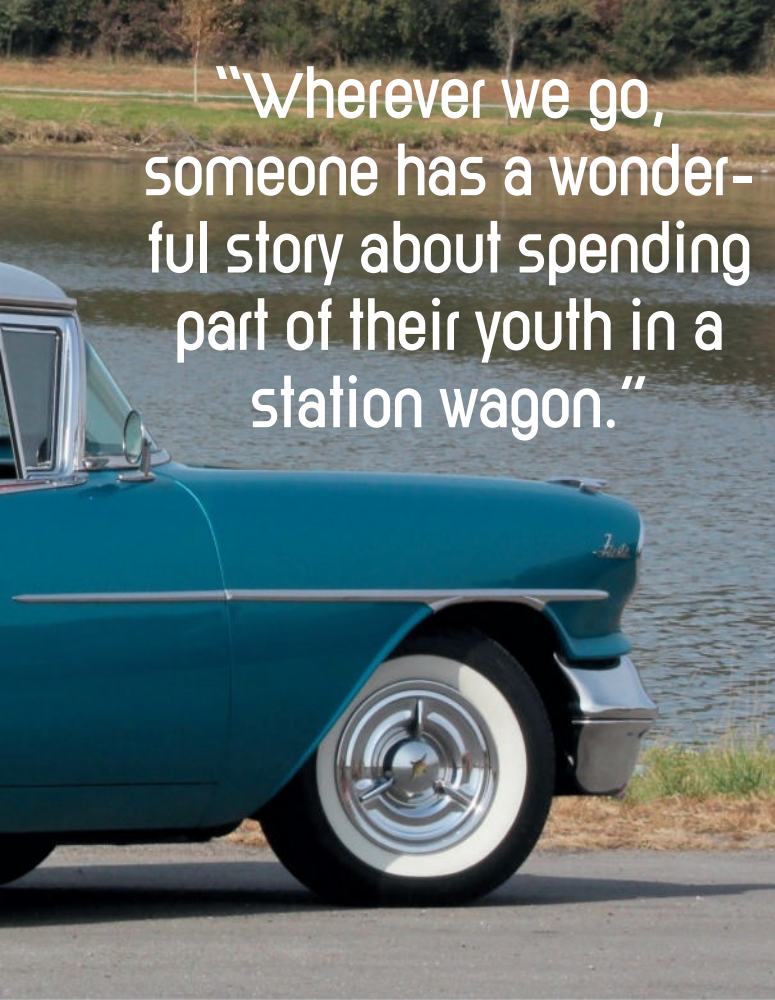
Mass production of the airy hardtop design spearheaded by Buick nearly a decade earlier now had deep roots and extended beyond sedans and coupes. Apart from the Fiesta Sedan, the Fiesta

championed the four-door hardtop station wagon design for Olds in glowing fashion, capturing 5,767 buyers in the Golden Rocket 88 trim level, and another 8,981 who preferred the added midrange luxury of the Super 88 series. That's a grand total of 19,800 wagons in a single season, which more than doubled the division's entire 1946-'50 postwar wagon output of 9,957 units.

Playing a helping hand was the Fiesta's equally new standard engine: the 371-cu.in. Rocket T-400 V-8. Boasting 9.5:1 compression ratio and a Quadra-Jet four-barrel carburetor, the engine's advertised 277 hp and 400 lb-ft of torque earned newfound respect among discerning buyers. Further, the Fiesta's sturdy X-frame chassis and redesigned suspension could manage more power, like that of the J-2 Rocket.

Announced later in 1957, the \$83, W-code, J-2 engine is best described as a race-inspired version of the 371. A bump in compression (10:1) and a trio of two-barrel Rochester carburetors helped vault the Rocket name back towards the summit of performance discussions thanks to its advertised 300 hp and 415 lb-ft of torque. A dual exhaust system was required, and it was recommended that 97 octane (or better) was burned for

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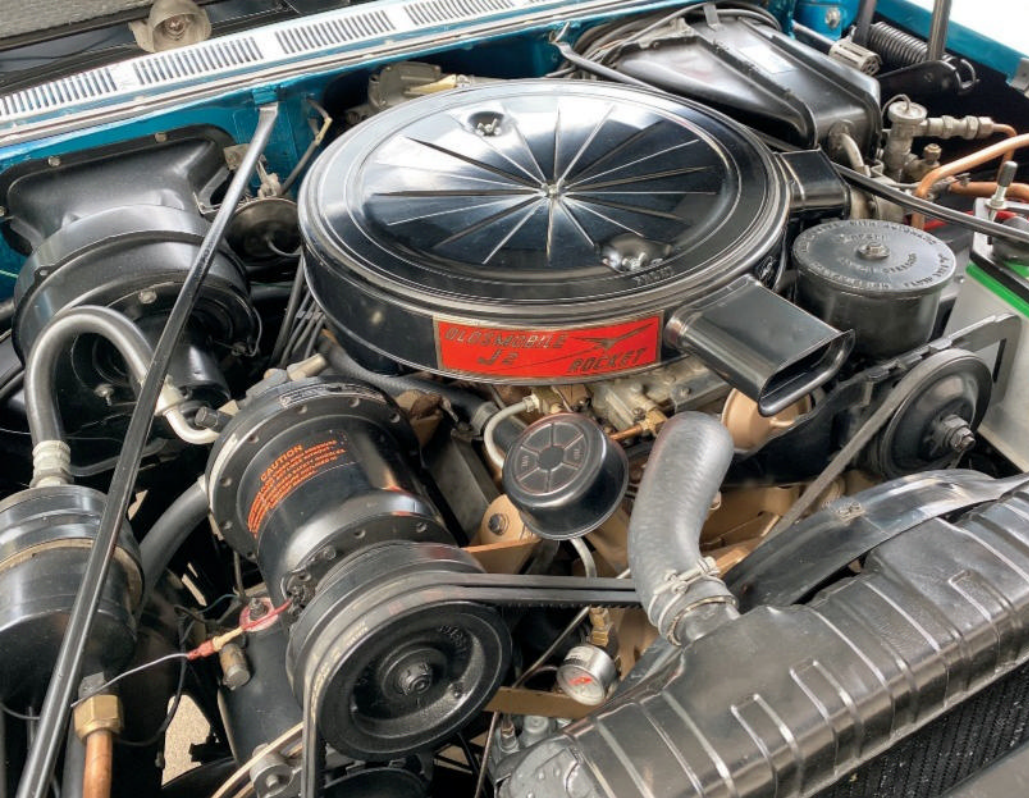


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Oldsmobile's optional J-2 Rocket was based on a standard 371-cu.in. engine, though a trio of two-barrel carburetors and a 10:1 compression ratio helped the V-8 develop 300 hp at 4,600 rpm and 415 lb-ft of torque at 3,000 rpm. The \$83 cost in 1957 equals \$907 today.

optimum operation (race-prepped J-2s cranked out even more power).

Better still, the J-2 wasn't limited to top-of-the-line coupes. Which meant any big, stylish Olds could be capable of sub-9-second sprints to 60 mph. The J-2 was improved a year later and boasted 315 hp. Despite this, in the scant two years of availability the best estimates for cars fitted with the J-2 vary between 2,000 and 2,500 units—rare territory for today's numbers-oriented enthusiasts—which makes our featured Golden Rocket 88 Fiesta even more compelling. It was factory-equipped with the J-2 option, paired with an also-optional Jetaway automatic transmission.

Omaha, Nebraska, resident Gus Frics has a strong preference for GM's Fifties and Sixties offerings, as demonstrated by the 1957 Cadillac Eldorado Brougham, '58 Pontiac Bonneville, and '65 Buick Riviera in his collection. An Oldsmobile was missing until fate smiled during a trip in 2010.

"I was visiting my mother in Chagrin Falls, Ohio, during the fall when I got a call from Tom Reno, a friend in Colorado Springs, Colorado. He asked if I was still looking to buy another classic car and I told him yes, but if I had my druthers, I'd prefer it to be an Olds Fiesta wagon; it was at the top of my wish list," Gus explains.

"As luck would have it, Tom knew a guy in his town who just completed a two-year restoration of a 1957 Fiesta, and

it was for sale. It also had the J-2 engine. The owner's name was Bob Petri, so I gave him a call and quickly arranged a trip to see it," says Gus.

Two weeks later, Gus and his wife, Mary, traveled west to see the car in person. In between the call and trip, Gus had received fresh-out-of-restoration pictures to provide a sense of what the couple would see.

"The Fiesta looked even better in person, and I was amazed what a great job Bob had done considering he painted it in his garage. Although it wasn't the factory applied color combination—Bob changed the two-tone scheme from Rose Mist Metallic and Victorian White to Sapphire Mist and Platinum Mist during the restoration—they were available on the 1957 Olds color palette. I also learned that he

The J-2 Rocket engine's three Rochester carburetors operated with progressive linkage. The Oldsmobile would cruise using the center carburetor, but for passing power the outer two units would open on demand.

had purchased the Olds from the original owner; that was the bonus. Aside from the engine and transmission, it was ordered with power steering, power brakes, power windows, air conditioning, Wonder Bar radio, electric clock, and traffic light reflector. I still can't believe how easily we came to terms on the final sale price."

Don't let its presentation on these pages fool you into thinking the Fiesta is a trailer queen, witnessing only the best summer weather conditions.

"From the day we made the 600-mile drive home, this 1957 Olds Fiesta wagon has never let us down. Everywhere we take the car, we drive it with the air conditioning on during the hot days and wipers on when it rains. Wherever we go, someone





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The interior features two-tone vinyl seats and door panels with a padded dash and column-shifted four-speed Hydra-Matic transmission. A few aftermarket gauges and an audio deck were added under the dash.

has a wonderful story about spending part of their youth in a station wagon. After we left the 2019 Oldsmobile Nationals in Wichita, Kansas, for instance, we stopped for gas and a woman came over to talk to us about the car with tears in her eyes, overcome with emotion and the memories the wagon apparently brought back to her," Gus says.

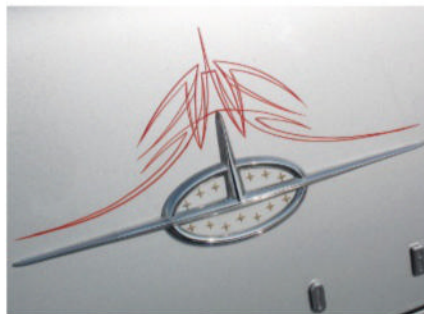
The Fiesta has been a consistent award winner at many events, bestowed with everything from Mayor's Choice and People's Choice to Best in Class. It also earned First Place honors at the 2012 Oldsmobile Nationals and a specialty award at the 2022 Des Moines Concours d'Elegance.

Since purchasing the Fiesta, Gus hasn't had to do much in terms of maintenance. "I did rebuild the front suspension using new polyurethane components and changed out all the shocks with modern KYB gas-charged units," Gus says. "I also replaced the tires with a set of P225/75R14 whitewall Coker Classic radials. The relatively simple upgrades improved the long-distance driveability of the Olds.

"When we were kids, station wagons were ubiquitous, and people took them for granted," Gus says. "Now that they have all but disappeared from the mainstream American landscape, when one drives by, it always seems to evoke a fond memory of family, friends, and better times. Few things are finer than a big American station wagon on the open highway and the thumbs up you get from people along the way. Ownership of this Fiesta wagon has been a dream come true." 🚗



A unusual feature of this car was the fuel filler hidden underneath the left taillamp.



The previous owner/restorer also added pinstriping as a personal touch.



Is it real? Is it factory?
Is it original? What is it?

These are questions that come up when people notice the Oldsmobile Rocket Circle Award on the dash of this 1957 Oldsmobile Golden Rocket 88 Fiesta.



Similar to but predating Cadillac's Heritage of Ownership award, the Oldsmobile Rocket Circle Award could be given by dealers to buyers of new Oldsmobiles. It was a dash-mounted plaque engraved with the owner's initials and the total number of Oldsmobiles purchased to that point. In this case, this Oldsmobile Rocket Circle award was purchased as a Christmas present at the 2019 National Oldsmobile Convention held in Wichita, Kansas.

According to Gus, "It was a NOS piece in the original box. It was a blank – there were no initials or numbers – so we went through a tray of NOS letters and numbers to find my dad's initials (AZF) and the number of Oldsmobiles he had owned up to that point (five). Interestingly, each tiny letter and numeral had its own General Motors part number."

Rarely found today, the Oldsmobile Rocket Circle Award still stands on dashes as a testament of loyalty to an American brand. Believed to be discontinued in the 1960s, programs like this rewarded the new car owner with a small but important token of appreciation that's largely missing today.

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By the Numbers



Modern machines in repose at a Mid-Century Modern home—America's and (arguably) Europe's top performance cars in front of some period architecture. Both look entirely at home in this Palm Springs location.

A pair of '61 models named 300

(Chrysler's G and Mercedes-Benz's SL)

may secretly be more alike
than they first seem

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEFF KOCH

Numbers are the foundation of all things," opined Greek philosopher Plato. He swiped this catchy slogan from Pythagoras, who believed that our world is an imitation of an eternal mathematical realm. As numbers go on our own earthly plane, 300 holds some historical and cultural weight. Three hundred is the sum of a pair of twin primes (a prime number two more or less than another)—in this case, 149 and 151. At the Battle of Thermopylae, fought long before Plato's passing, just 300 Spartans fought Xerxes I and the Persian army in their legendary last stand. Following ten frames and two bonus rolls, 300 is a perfect score in the noble and ancient game of bowling.

These machines with 300s in their name depicted on these pages—Mercedes-Benz 300 SL and Chrysler 300G—are inarguable classics and, by happenstance, both were built in 1961. But if these models' names are (more or less) shared, the execution is not. One is a fuel-injected six-cylinder, two-seat convertible from across the Atlantic; the other a twin-carbureted V-8, four-seat hardtop (or convertible) built Stateside. Yet we suggest that they've got more in common than a cursory reading of the specifications would reveal. To wit:

Engineers championed the creation of each car, whose names are derived from aspects of their engines. Chrysler's chief engineer Robert MacGregor Rodger, who helped engineer the original Chrysler hemi V-8, saw that the thunderous powerplant and Chrysler's frumpy image didn't tally. He had wrung a then-unheard-of 300 hp from a stock 331-cubic-inch Chrysler hemi, complements of dual four-barrel carburetors, 8.5:1 compres-

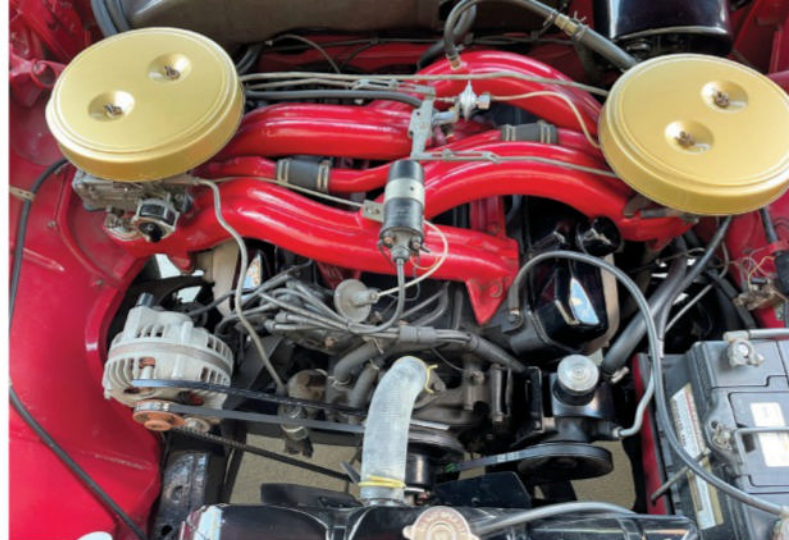
sion ratio, and a Briggs Cunningham-fettled solid-lifter cam. The original Chrysler C-300 launched in the fall of 1954.

Meanwhile, in Germany, Rudolf Uhlenhaut (the architect of Mercedes' pre-war Grand Prix racing dominance) ran Mercedes' postwar passenger car engineering; he was behind the imposing 1951 six-cylinder "Adenauer" W186-chassis 300 S luxury sedan. But as the company prepared to venture back into Formula One for 1954, it entered sports car racing for 1952 as a stopgap and called upon Uhlenhaut's experience. The racer's engine was based on the 300 S' 2,996cc SOHC inline-six. Its near-183-cubic-inch displacement rounded to 3,000 cc—a figure that, in Mercedes tradition, would dictate its name.

EVOLVED ENGINES

Mopar's accountants put the original hemi to rest at the end of 1958, but the 300 name continued, using the 413-cu.in. "Golden Lion" B-block V-8 developed for the rest of Mother Mopar's divisions; the 300E retained a 380-hp rating for 1959. New-for-1960 Ram Induction introduced in the 300F consisted of two separate intake manifolds, each a compilation of four 30-inch-long intake runners, straddling Chrysler's big "Wedge" engine. Each bank of runners located the carburetors over the front wheels. The long runners force-fed the fuel-air mixture toward the cylinders, even when the intake valve was shut, forcing a denser air-fuel charge into the combustion chamber once opened. The result: Five horsepower less than the previous year's (375 horses) but lots more torque, from 450 lb-ft at 3,600 rpm to 495 lb-ft at a low 2,800 rpm. This engine carried over into the 1961 300G.

The SL started with the Adenauer saloon's all-iron 150-hp OHC six, tilted at



Four hundred and thirteen cubic inches, 375 horsepower, 495 lb-ft or torque: by 1961, Chrysler's 300 had outgrown its name but its reputation remained.

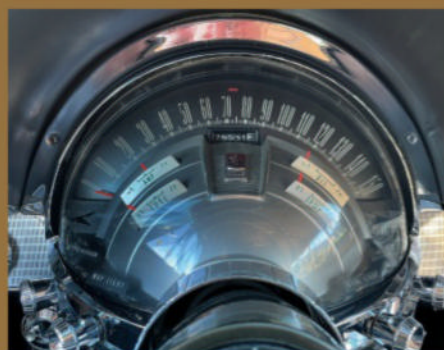
a 45-degree angle to clear the low hood, and positioned behind the front axle to improve chassis balance. A new aluminum intake, allowing for larger valves, was developed. While race versions (more anon) used Solex carburetors, production models used a Bosch direct-port mechanical fuel-injection system. Injectors mounted where a standard 300 sedan's spark plugs would be; these were relocated to the side of the cylinder head. A compression boost to 8.55:1 allowed a 215-horsepower rating, well over the one-horsepower-per-cube mark. (When the heavier roadster started production in 1957, Mercedes made the 300 SL coupe's optional competition cam standard—and power jumped to 240 hp.)

ADVANCED CHASSIS'

Chrysler arguably had Detroit's most advanced underpinnings in its day, making for the best-handling American car this side of a Corvette. Torsion-bar front suspension—standard-issue launched in 1957—combine tauter handling with improved ride comfort. Unit-body construction, which arrived for the 1960 models, was intended to improve solidity, handling, road noise, and interior room. The 300G sported a 165 lb/in ride rate at the front wheels thanks to 1.08-inch-thick torsion bars, with a 190 lb/in rate at the rears and ran 15-inch tires for the first time.

In Germany, Herr Uhlenhaut and construction engineer Joseph Muller developed a frame strong enough to ac-

commodate the big six but light enough to work in a race car; the welded aluminum tube-frame chassis weighed just 154 pounds for a car measuring 166 inches long. Its rigidity-at-all-costs approach meant there was initially no room for conventional doors in the solid-roof car, so roof-hinged doors that swung up rather than out left high sills that would accommodate the stiff frame. (The coupe's "gullwing" name came organically.) Recirculating-ball steering and four-wheel-independent suspension (wishbones in front, swing arms jointed at the differential in back) were attached. Rear suspension was located only by the coil springs and a trio of rubber mounts, with the differential triangulated in the chassis,





Tilted 45 degrees in the engine bay for clearance, the fuel-injected 240-horse inline Six allowed straight-line performance equal with the big Chrysler (see spec box).

allowing relative comfort and higher performance. When customers later groused about wide sills, lousy headroom, no room for suitcases, and poor ventilation, Mercedes re-engineered the W198-chassis SL as a drop-top that arrived in 1957. Axing the roof and adding horizontally opening/conventional doors forced 200 pounds of extra structural reinforcement; new low pivot-point rear control arms and a central compensating spring improved handling, and the spare tire and fuel tank were relocated to allow more trunk space.

RACING PEDIGREE

Early iterations of the Chrysler and Mercedes-Benz cars would rack up racing

victories that would burnish their parent marques' reputations—as well as the cars that were built in their wake.

The W194-chassis 300 SLs debuted at the 1952 Mille Miglia, where they placed second and fourth; this was followed by sweeping the podium of the Grand Prix of Berne. At Le Mans, a pair of 300 SLs finished 1-2 overall ... and then drove back to the factory. The Eifelrennen sports car race at the Nurburgring also saw an SL on top. A victory in the grueling Carrera Panamericana capped its legend. In the space of a year, Mercedes launched a car, won nearly everything it competed in, and drove away as resources were diverted toward F1.

In 1955, Mercury Outboard founder

Carl Kiekhaefer campaigned a team of C-300s led by the Flock brothers—and used NASCAR's ovals as their personal playground. Eventual series champ Tim Flock won 18 of 39 races and finished in the top five 32 times; brother Fonty won three more events. Fast-forward half a decade: prepped 300G racers topped the charts on what would be the Daytona Flying Mile's swan-song season.

STAYING POWER

And so, with those original versions racing and selling in the mid-Fifties, neither car seen here was, strictly speaking, new or groundbreaking in 1961. By that time, Chrysler's big four-seater had evolved beyond its name, although its mission





remained clear and went largely unchallenged. The Mercedes' basics had been in place for half a decade, but the roadster was sufficiently ahead of its time that few, if any, other sports cars had caught up. Despite this, both models remained at the top of their respective marques'—and their nations'—automotive food chains. They were state-of-the-art machines that, even years after their respective debuts, no other automobile manufacturer was approaching.

In a Mercedes catalog full of solid-yet-stolid saloons, the sporting 300 SL was a high-tech marvel. In Germany, what came near a 300 SL? Opel, VW, Porsche, Borgward, NSU... only BMW's 507 could come close to the SL, and it went away in 1959. In a Chrysler showroom littered

with softly suspended sedans, the 300G series not only offered power, but handling that belied its size. The few American cars that matched or approached the Chrysler's power were largely designed for the quarter mile, with chassis tuned for a very different mission.

As is often the case with machines possessing such lofty abilities, the cost of entry was high (\$5,413 for the 300G, \$10,950 for the 300 SL), and production was commensurately low. Mercedes' W198-chassis roadster saw 1,858 built over the course of seven model years, with 256 built for 1961. Chrysler's 300G production numbered 1,280 coupes and 337 convertibles; that's 1,617 for the year. (A total of 16,857 300 letter cars were built from 1955-'65.)

PRIDE OF OWNERSHIP

Bill Scheffler, of New York City, has owned this 1961 300 SL for fifteen years. Though he and his family have owned other Mercedes over time, this is his first W198; it is original beyond paint, mechanical fettling, and maintenance, and is regularly driven on road rallies around the country. Factory options include a Becker radio and fitted luggage.

The 300G is owned by Scott King and Sandy Edelstein of Palm Springs, California; painted Mardi Gras Red, it features the optional Golden Tone radio with power antenna, tinted glass, and rear-window defogger. A 300G has been a bucket-list car for them for many years, and so they jumped when this example became available in 2022.



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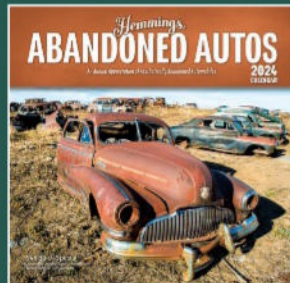
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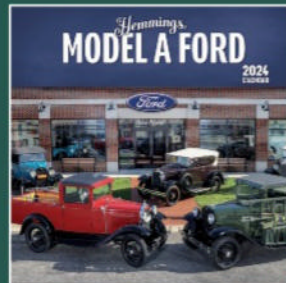
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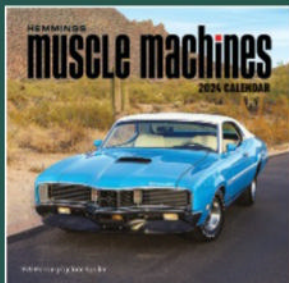
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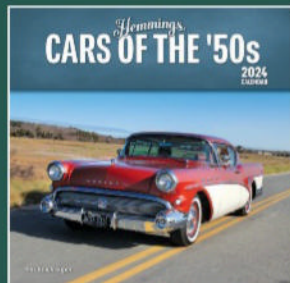
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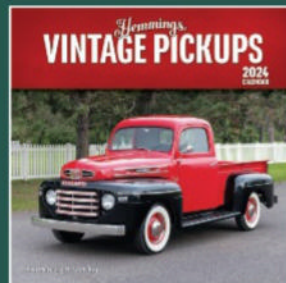
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The Mercedes feels all-of-a-piece; its solidity is reassuring and goads a driver on ever faster. One drive and you discover why people are paying seven figures for these machines.



It would be foolish to claim that these feel the same while driving them (the parallels have to end somewhere, folks) but there are broad similarities. While bopping around town is not an issue—ample off-idle torque in the G; fuel injection preventing loading up in the SL—this pair clearly yearns for the open road. Each feels so far beyond its contemporaries—in tactility, in ability—that you begin to understand their reputations.

At idle, the G sounds deep, resonant, and confident, with a throaty rumble. Press a button to select drive and feel the engine strain against the 12-inch drums. Get going and Super Stock-type noises fill the cabin; the TorqueFlite tears through first gear like it's not even there and practically sprints into third so it can eat up highway miles. And if you have an impression of what ride quality is from a car of this era, forget it: no waft, no wander, no slop, just reassuring communication that you are indeed on the road and not floating above it—although the steering could stand to be quicker. It leans during even moderate cornering, a fact of life with tall rubber and a torsion-bar-sprung front suspension, but it is still degrees flatter than other contemporaries we have driven. Today, beyond its footprint, this 300G is a car you can pilot and not feel like you must compensate or adjust for anything because it's an old car. The 300G is a tight, taut, evolved, optimized version of the American sedan. That no one else even tried to compete is beyond belief.

AGING GRACEFULLY

The 300 SL, meanwhile, practically redefined its genre. Consider the typical

SPECIFICATIONS

1961 Mercedes-Benz 300SL

Engine type:	OHC inline-ix, iron block and aluminum head
Displacement:	183 cubic inches (2,996cc)
Horsepower:	240 @ 6,100 rpm
Torque:	217 @ 4,800 rpm
Transmission:	Four-speed manual, all synchromesh
Differential:	3.64:1
Chassis:	Tubular space frame, all-independent suspension
Wheelbase:	94.5 inches

1961 Chrysler 300G

Engine type:	OHV V-8, iron block and heads
Displacement:	413 cubic inches (6,771cc)
Horsepower:	375 @ 5,000 rpm
Torque:	490 @ 2,800 rpm
Transmission:	Three-speed Chrysler TorqueFlite
Differential:	3.23:1
Chassis:	Unit-body; torsion-bar independent front suspension; leaf-sprung rear axle
Wheelbase:	126 inches

PERFORMANCE

0-60 mph:	* 8.2 seconds
1/4-mile:	* 16.0 seconds @ 89 mph

0-60 mph:	** 8.2 seconds
1/4-mile:	** 16.2 seconds @ 86 mph

* From *Road & Track's* test of a 1961 300 SL coupe (with the optional performance cam) printed October 1968.

** From *Motor Life's* test of a 1961 Chrysler 300G, printed April 1961.

sports cars of the mid-Fifties: compact, frail, sparsely appointed, small-engined and low-powered, working hard at around-town speeds despite its low weight—a minimalist street car that could also be enjoyed on track. There's nothing minimalist about the Mercedes: it's larger than many other sports cars of the era, robustly assembled, filled with high-end trimmings, with a big high-tech six and a curb weight well north of a ton and a half. Instead of a trackable street car, this full-blown championship-winning open-road race machine had been tamed, slightly, for road use. (Indeed, the 240-horse roadster bettered the 175-horse race models that cemented the legend.) It expanded the possibilities of what a sports car could be, in virtually every direction.

Today, it has this in common with the Chrysler: there is no need to compensate for its age. It feels plenty modern, somehow. The bucket seats are a little low but wrap around your torso. Idle is a steady, staccato, sewing-machine purr, audible

but smooth. Acceleration is smooth and linear. Think about where you want to put it and the steering practically reads your intentions. And the ride is the best compromise: the road makes it into the cabin via wheel and seat to tell you what's happening, but it's not constantly tugging at your sleeve and demanding you do something. Yeah, the steering wheel is unfashionably big. Otherwise, what's here is remarkably solid—so much so you can't quite believe that it was engineered in the Fifties. It feels as if it were carved from an ingot of billet—very much all-of-a-piece.

Seat time in either of these helps you understand why they're valued by enthusiasts; they were among the most awe-inspiring automobiles of their era, classics in their own time whose reputations have not diminished over decades. They also add to the already-considerable cultural weight of the number 300. Because, as you might have heard, numbers are the foundation of all things. Even driving pleasure. 🚗



Effortless torque defines the Chrysler's movement; you'd expect a car this big to wallow and roll, but it's the sharpest-cornering American '61 this side of a Corvette.

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Still Earning its Keep

**This 1959 Rambler Super Cross
Country station wagon is still
making itself useful in the world**



BY DAVID CONWILL • PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVID
CONWILL AND MATTHEW LITWIN

The recent craze for restoring trucks and SUV's is cool, but in some ways kind of sad. After all, once returned to perfection, can they accomplish the tasks for which they were originally built? Who will pick up a load of gravel with a perfectly restored '49 GMC dump truck? Who will go explore two-track offroad trails at the wheel of that glisteningly immaculate '69 Bronco with the knobby, but shined-for-show, tires?

Thank goodness, then, that there are still oldies doing their original job. Take Richard Douglass's 1959 Rambler Super Cross Country station wagon, shown on these pages. It's a survivor, sure, but one heavily enough scarred from the journey it won't be entering any of the Antique Automobile Club of America's Historic Preservation of Original Features (HPOF) classes. No, instead it's displayed in a far more public way—as Richard's fair-weather driver and work truck—putting to use both its economical operation and 80 cubic feet of cargo space.

Richard has a penchant for these types of “oily rag” survivors. His 1965 Rambler Marlin was in the January 2020 issue (#184) and his 1960 Imperial graced HCC's April 2020 issue (#187). He takes his cars as he finds them, gets them mechanically sound and cosmetically stabilized, and drives them everywhere and anywhere. The Marlin is a regular long hauler on *Hot Rod Magazine's* Power Tour cross-country drives and the overdrive-equipped Cross Country is slated to take up those duties once fully sorted out.

The summer of 2023 was the start of that shakedown, and it was a long time coming. When Richard first found his car it had last run in 1978. The seller had installed new brakes, new tires, and working lights, but Richard opted to trailer it from the Pacific Northwest, where he found it, to his home in Messina, New York, on the Saint Lawrence Seaway.



Owner Richard Douglass is unafraid of repairing anything manmade. “You’ve gotta drive ‘em!” he often says.

Richard, a home-inspector by trade and an extremely handy fellow in virtually every respect, is equally at home renovating an early 19th century farmhouse or rebuilding an engine. It took him about 50 hours to get the Rambler to a state where he was comfortable taking it on what he termed “the great shakedown:” a 5.5-hour drive to one of Hemmings' summer Cruise-Ins in 2023.

As with Richard's Marlin and Imperial, the Rambler is proof you can have a lot of fun with





The 196.5-cu.in. straight-six is an outgrowth of a pre-WWII Nash flathead design. It's reliable, though tired and now headed for a rebuild.

old cars, without having to take out a second mortgage. Of course, it helps to be unafraid to tackle mechanical repairs, and if you're dealing with oddball cars, occasionally it takes some patience to track down the right pieces. Sometimes, it even means putting up with non-original parts, so long as they do the job and are unobtrusive about their outsider status.

You may notice in the photos that the Rambler sports a new aluminum radiator. That's a change that will keep Richard from showing the car in something like the AACA HPOF classes, but it was budget friendly and means that the residents of Messina, at least, get to see the Rambler out and about doing what it was designed

for: taking its owner to work, getting building supplies from the home store, and generally doing the same things people do with modern, far less interesting cars every day. That's a great way to hook newcomers on the potential imperfect old cars have.

Still, there are further back-to-original tasks to come. The overdrive transmission, originally controlled via column shifter, currently works through an aftermarket floor shifter, but Richard is on the cusp of gathering everything he needs to put it back on the column.

When new, Rambler described Super wagons like this—available with either a 190-hp, 250-cu.in. Rebel V-8 or, the

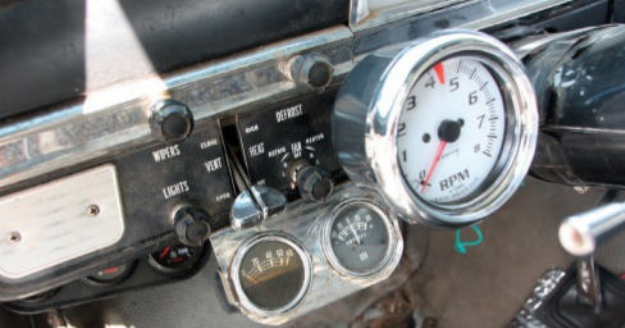
tried-and-true 120-hp, 196.5-cu.in. OHV straight-six found in our feature car—as “trim as a yacht...practical, too.” We'd have to say, that's demonstrably still the case.

American Motors' use of the Rambler name hadn't yet fully settled down in 1959. Cars like this one would later be known as the Classic line, but in '59 they were simply Rambler Sixes or Rambler Rebels, depending on engine choice. Bigger, more ornate cars (virtually the same from the cowl back) were known as Ambassadors, a carryover from AMC-predecessor Nash. Smaller Ramblers, based on the Nash Ramblers of 1950-'55, were known as Rambler Americans. The middle-sized cars were AMC's bread-and-butter during this era, and helped define the kind of stylish practicality that would remain Rambler's image through the mid-1960s, before newer management would attempt head-on competition with the Big Three and ultimately drop the Rambler name entirely.

While we were photographing this car, Richard was kind enough to take us for a ride. It's a surprisingly smooth vehicle, although Richard says it's overdue for a shock absorber replacement. The overdrive works, though it needs some further adjustment in order to shift in and out reliably. Ideally, the self-shifting nature of a Borg-Warner overdrive, along with its freewheeling clutch, should make the Rambler not only good on the highway, thanks to reduced rpm with the overdrive

Pending its fresh engine and replacement shocks, the Rambler seems ready and eager to resume its Cross Country duties.





Some expedient extra gauges and a temporary floor shifter have joined the mid-century OEM details inside.

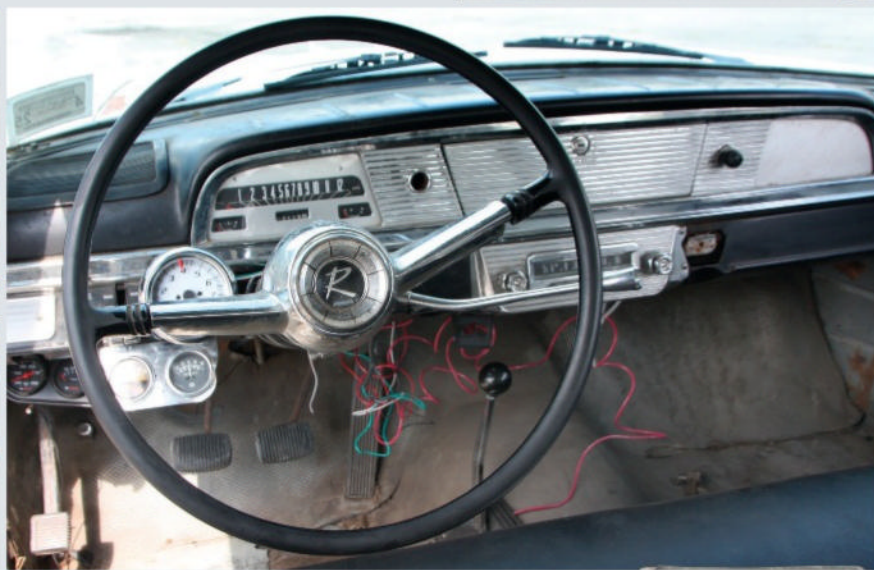




engaged, but also should mean that in-town driving requires a minimum of gear changes by the driver, who can simply leave the gear selector in second, allowing the overdrive to do all the shifting and depressing the clutch only when coming to a complete stop.

At this point, there's really only one big project remaining, and that's an engine

rebuild. Richard says he plans to remove the 196 this winter and have the machine work done. He'll do the reassembly himself and we have no doubt that we'll see him again at next summer's Hemmings Cruise-Ins. That's the beauty of a car like this. There's no need to sweat blood over it, keeping it perfect—you just have to keep it going and enjoy the drive. 🚗





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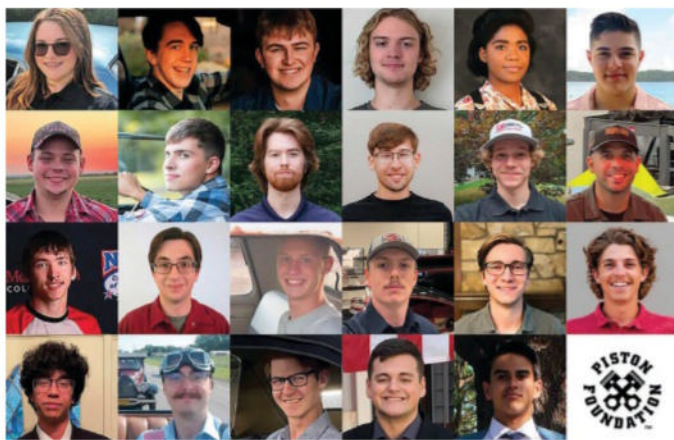
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BY TOM COMERRO



T TIME IN SAN DIEGO

The back roads, deserts, mountain views, and cool coastal air of the San Diego area will serve as the backdrop for the Model T Ford Club of America's 2024 National Tour. Hosted by the San Diego chapter, founded in 1983, this five-day event will include a meet-and-greet ice cream social, a tour to Mission Trails Regional Park, and a trek to Lakeside, California, the site of Barney Oldfield's 1907 automotive speed record. Also scheduled will be a drive through the Otay Lakes Preserve to the San Diego National Wildlife Refuge, plus a drive through the Cuyamaca Mountains to visit the 1870s gold-rush-era town of Julian, home of Eagle Mining Company established in 1870 and famous for apple pie. The tour will be centered around the Sycuan Resort and Casino in El Cajon, and it will take place June 16-20. Registration begins January 2 and participants will be limited to the first 100 registrants. Visit mtfcsd.org for more details.



PISTON FOUNDATION AWARDS 23 SCHOLARSHIPS

The Piston Foundation has awarded scholarships to 23 students who are aspiring to make their way into the automotive restoration field and collector-car industry. Each scholar received between \$3,750-\$5,000 scholarships to help cover tuition at the automotive school of their choice. This year saw a jump in applications and six repeat scholars from last year's inaugural 10 scholarships.

"It's not true that young people aren't interested in working in collector-car restoration. Our 2023 Piston Scholars are proof," says Piston founder Robert Minnick. "Each of our scholarship recipients is knowledgeable and passionate about classic cars. Our mission is to help them, and other future technicians, get the education and training they need to build their careers."



AACA 2024 NATIONAL SCHEDULE

The Antique Automobile Club of America has begun releasing

its calendar for the 2024 show season, which will include events in most major regions of the country, as well as a return of the Special Winter National in Puerto Rico. As always, the club will kick things off with its annual convention, which will take place in Chantilly, Virginia. The convention features a trade show, seminars, and judging school. After the convention, there will be many touring events and shows running into the fall—most including car corrals and swap meet fields—with the vaunted Hershey Meet among the highlights. It's a great opportunity to rub elbows with tens of thousands of collector car enthusiasts. Although other local and regional AACA events have yet to be announced, here is what is on tap for 2024 thus far:

- February 8-10: **AACA Annual Convention** - Chantilly, Virginia
- March 3: **Hamburg Swap Meet & Car Corral** - Hamburg, Ohio
- March 17-23: **AACA Founders Tour (vehicles 1932-'99)** - Louisiana Region AACA; Acadiana Area
- March 21-24: **Special Winter Nationals** - Guaynabo, Puerto Rico
- April 4-6: **Southeastern Spring Nationals and AACA Grand National** - Concord, North Carolina
- June 20-22: **Eastern Spring Nationals** - Saratoga Springs, New York
- October 8-11: **Eastern Fall Meet** - Hershey, Pennsylvania
- October 23-26: **Southeastern Fall Nationals** - Huntsville, Alabama

Make your plans now and take advantage of early-bird entries, registration, and admissions. For more information about the AACA and its 2024 calendar, visit aaca.org.

The 2023 scholars are:

Lindzie Archer, McPherson, Kan. (McPherson College)
 Nigel Bannister, Seattle, Wash. (University of Northwestern Ohio)
 Lucas Beasley, Canton, Kan. (McPherson College)
 Edwin Buiter, Ireton, Iowa (McPherson College)
 Zoe Carmichael, Raleigh, N.C. (McPherson College)
 Joe Estevez, West Palm Beach, Fla. (North Palm Beach State College)
 Jasper Fedders, Sioux Center, Iowa (McPherson College)
 Connor Hecei, Warren, Pa. (Pennsylvania College of Technology)
 Ethan Heck, Murfreesboro, Tenn. (Lanier Technical College)
 Adam Hughes, Newman Lake, Wash. (McPherson College)
 Cody Kuss, Bremerton, Wash. (McPherson College)
 Carlos Leandry, McPherson, Kan. (McPherson College)
 Dryden Powell, Council Grove, Kan. (McPherson College)
 Alexander Riddle, Kingston, Mass. (Pennsylvania College of Technology)
 Philip Schieffelin, Limon, Colo. (McPherson College)
 Robert Schonberger, Omaha, Neb. (McPherson College)
 Riley Sojka, Wichita, Kan. (McPherson College)
 Blake Swingle, Columbus, Ohio (McPherson College)
 Elias Vasquez, Irving, Texas (McPherson College)
 Sean Whetstone, Fort Collins, Colo. (McPherson College)
 Samuel White, Topeka, Kan. (McPherson College)
 Zachary Wiernusz, Mountain Top, Pa. (Pennsylvania College of Technology)
 Jace Willard, Palm City, Fla. (Indian River State College)

Applications for 2024 scholarships will be available this January. Visit pistonfoundation.org for more about the foundation and the 2023 scholars.

BY TOM COMERRO

(UN)TRIUMPHANT RETURN

Todd Bohon of Jonesborough, Tennessee, sent us a letter about an old car that turned up out of nowhere, more than a decade after parting with it. Todd and his wife eyed a 1976 Triumph TR6 convertible at a used car lot in the early 1980s and it just so happened they were in the market for a car. They took it for a test ride and his wife gave the nod while vigorously zipping around area backroads. It became her car and served them well; it managed 500-mile trips to Atlanta and back.



The family would soon grow by one though, and it was time to acquire something larger and more suitable for a little one. They traded in the Mimosa Yellow TR6 at the local Volvo dealership for a DL with a baby seat, thinking they'd never see the Triumph again. However, fate brought it back to Todd and his family, albeit just for a moment, as he recalls.

"Our yellow TR6 became a distant memory as life, job moves, relocation, and family growth took root. Ten years passed and with a career change, we moved back to our previous town and purchased a new home. Then one day, completely out of the blue, I received a phone call from a man asking me if I ever owned a yellow TR6. The gentleman was calling from a nearby town and told me he was restoring a '76 TR6 that had been slightly wrecked and stored for the past 10 years. Ironically, I was the last registered owner and my name had been found on an old insurance card that was discovered under the passenger seat.

"The story goes that, upon purchasing the car from the Volvo dealer, the Triumph's owner promptly ran the car up a phone pole guy wire [wrecking it], parked it at a repair shop, and never registered the car. The gentleman who called me completed the repairs and needed my signature to get the car properly titled. Our family has shared many a laugh over the cute TR6 that left us, but in a mystic way found us, and rolls on for others."

Have you ever had a lost car randomly boomerang back into your life? If so, let us know about it.

BELLINGHAM'S HUDSON

There's still no word on the bizarre mystery car in Bellingham, Massachusetts, that we covered in L&F (issue #230): the two-headed Hudson that was displayed at Bellingham Auto Sales for many decades. Recall that David Zimmerman, from nearby Mansfield, sent us these photos. In 2009, he and his son were running errands in their 1940 Dodge D14 four-door sedan on Route 140 when they saw the Hudson and stopped for a closer look. It was severely deteriorating at the dealership for



many years, but he also sent us a picture of the Hudson from earlier and happier times, wondering what year and make it might have been. As for the dealership, Bellingham was the last surviving Hudson dealership in the world—we've written about it: [https://www.hemmings.com/stories/2021/11/11/the-fu-](https://www.hemmings.com/stories/2021/11/11/the-future-of-sir-vival-a-safety-minded-custom-hudson-is-uncertain-as-bellingham-auto-sales-closes-its-doors—and-David-recalls-there-was-a-perpendicular-“Hudson”-dealer-sign-mounted-to-the-front-of-the-building-and-it-was-always-worth-a-stop-to-see-what-kind-of-cars-were-in-the-building)

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Recently discovered a unique or noteworthy classic car or vehicle? 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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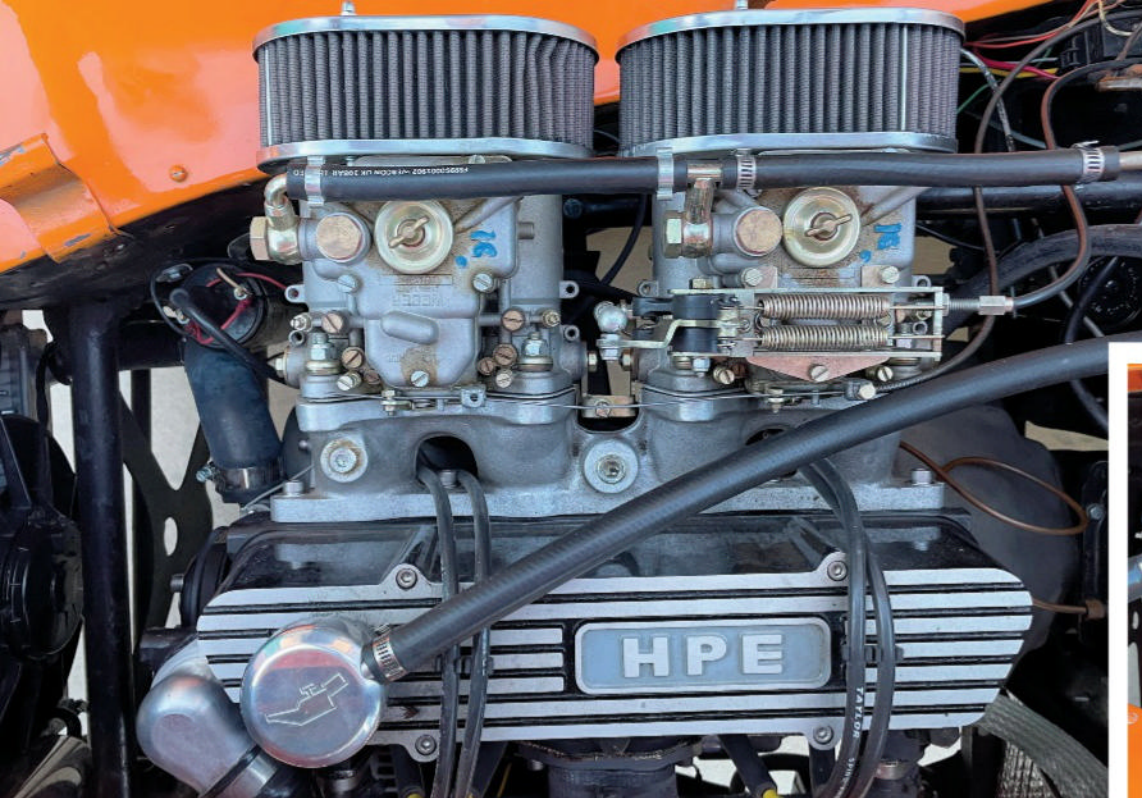
BY JIM DONNELLY
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEFF KOCH
AND MATTHEW LITWIN

RULE, BRITANNIA

**Driving and loving
an iconoclastic,
ultra-traditionalist
1969 Morgan 4/4**







Due to hectic Arizona traffic, the original engine made way for a larger 1,690-cc inline-four fitted with dual twin-choke carburetors. This engine makes 139 cruising-friendly horsepower.



MOG member Michael Sandrock and the four-seater he collected from the Malvern Works.

The Morgan's original owner Michael Sandrock. Photo Courtesy: Bill Ward collection.



The visitor took a self-guided tour of the sports car factory and came away amazed. He learned that some British sports cars—some even today—are built by craftsmen. Their attention to detail and methodical precision of small-batch production moved his soul. It was like magically being transported to a time in the distant past, when cars that still used crank starters were built this way. Thrilled, the visitor decided he had to have one.

British motoring history is dotted with specialty firms that still do things using old-skill expertise and methodology, starting regally with Rolls-Royce. But this factory visitor wanted a sporting car that represented a level of hand fitting, constructing, and finishing that's otherwise largely unknown today. The parameters that he laid down led to exactly one place: Malvern Links, England, and to the warren of brick industrial buildings where Morgan sports cars are still hand-assembled using the craft method, as it's called. Put it this way: Morgan dates to 1910, but it was already behind the curve in terms of production modernity since Ransom Eli Olds began rope-pulling his Curved Dash cars down a rudimentary line in 1901.

For the uninitiated, a Morgan sports car has always been produced by tacking hand-formed steel or aluminum sheet onto a body framework hand-hewn from British ash, mating the assembly to a simple ladder frame and powering it by various

off-the-shelf powertrain combinations sourced from British builders. The 1969 Morgan 4/4 featured here is actually the second Morgan owned by Bill Ward of Gold Canyon, Arizona, who took that factory trip before acquiring his first example in 1998. That was a Morgan Plus 4, a two-seat sports car, a step up from earlier Morgans thanks to its sheet-aluminum bodywork.

Bill moved to the Phoenix area from Washington state and in doing so, gave a home to two large dogs that he and his wife, Cassandra, enjoy taking on long trips. So, a two-seat Morgan didn't work. Bill began trawling for an alternative, and arrived at this 1969 Morgan 4/4, an uncommonly rare car for reasons we'll explain in a moment. It's a well-traveled example. The Morgan has traveled from England to South Africa to British Columbia, Canada before Bill brought it to the United States. He then undertook a series of modifications sourced across two continents to modernize the car, at least in the sense of being able to handle today's traffic in the Arizona heat.

"My dad used to take me to gymkhanas, local things, I think in a Kmart parking lot," Bill remembers. "I fell in love with sports cars of all kinds, especially the Morgan. What appealed to me was the classic look of the car, and the fact that at around 2,000 pounds, it was pretty whippy. I bought the Plus 4 but decided we needed a four-seater, and I wanted to keep the four-seater, so I sold the Plus 4 in 2018."



Bill learned a lot about Morgans over the past 25 years, starting with his pair of self-guided factory tours. He began reading the Morgan club's magazine, which was where he spotted, in 2018, an ad for this car, unique for its four-place body.

How unique? Let's talk Morgan history. Founder Henry Frederick Stanley Morgan started out in 1911 building his instantly recognizable three-wheeled sports cars with V-twin motorcycle engines hanging from the front, a layout that was compliant with British tax laws at the time, since they were classified as motorcycles. Morgan's first great leap forward, relatively speaking, came in 1936 when it introduced the 4/4 as its first four-wheeled conveyance, the model name standing for four wheels and four cylinders, though built with the same antediluvian assembly practices that started with Job One. The 4/4 remained in continuous production, other than the war years, through 2018.

According to Bill's research, an average of 250 copies of the 4/4 were built annually at Malvern Links from 1968 through 1982, most powered by the 1,598-cc Ford Kent crossflow OHV four-cylinder engine, mated to a four-speed Ford manual transmission, that powered British Fords including the Cortina, Capri, and early U.S. Pintos. About 18 such cars, including his, received four-place bodywork each year. Bill's car was delivered new to developer M.J. Sandrock, who brought it home to Johannesburg, South Africa. Engineer Ron Wilson bought it from Sandrock in 1972, before moving



Two of the four seats are often occupied by pets during tours, hence the need for a rear luggage rack.





Owner's View

"I was in love with the Austin-Healey 3000 before I was old enough to drive. But it was the older, classic traditional look of the Morgan, with the motorcycle fenders, that really got me. Morgan essentially used modern engines with more horsepower than a Healey, so that was what I wanted. I'm kind of a traditionalist, but it still took years before I ordered one. I own modern autos—my wife and I just got a Tesla—but I love the concept of people who can do things with their hands and make stuff. A friend and I ran the Peking-to-Paris Rally in 2019 with a 1931 Model A. This Morgan was comparable until I had the engine, brakes, and such upgraded. I was impressed, and the car is now a hoot to drive."

—Bill Ward



it with his family to British Columbia in 1994. The 4/4 had amassed more than 90,000 miles before Bill found it advertised, traveled to Canada, met extensively with Wilson, and convinced him to sell him the car in 2016.

As delivered, the Ford Kent engine was rated at 95 horsepower, perhaps adequate for English country lanes but hurting seriously when the Morgan tried to cope with Phoenix freeway traffic that routinely cruises at 85 mph. So, while leaving the car largely unchanged aesthetically, Bill gathered his troops and began transforming the 4/4 into something that was both safer and more pleasant to operate. Bill had taken the Morgan to about 103,000 miles before accepting that significant changes would be smart.

The first was undertaken by Brooklands British of Tacoma, Washington, which installed a larger-capacity aluminum radiator with integral electric fan. The next stop was in England, where Harris Performance Engines of Kent built a crossflow Kent inline-four that displaced 1,690 cubic-centimeters, fed by two twin-choke carburetors.

According to Bill's dyno sheet, the new engine produced 139 horsepower, with 136 lb-ft of torque. It's mated to a five-speed overdrive Ford gearbox modified by BGH Gearbox Specialists, another English firm.

With new powertrain arrived in crates, Bill took the acquisitions to his local shop, Sports & Collector Car Center of Tempe, Arizona, which was already at work toughening the 4/4. The car uses a galvanized steel ladder frame not dissimilar from a Ford Model A's. SCC welded in triangular gussets where the crossmembers met the main frame rails, while also reinforcing the crossmember under the new transmission. The 4/4 uses a sliding-pillar front end, where the spindles slide vertically when deflected, a system that Lancia later adapted for its groundbreaking Lambda of the 1920s. The 4/4 was originally built with lever-action shock absorbers; SCC installed new Spax adjustable tube-type shocks. The Morgan uses front coil springs and rear semi-elliptical leaf springs, the latter re-arched by SCC. Bill kept the stock disc/drum brake setup intact.





The right-hand drive Morgan's instrument panel is tidy, sporting only what's necessary for touring.

In the usual sense of the word, this is not a restored car, and is believed to have never been repainted. Wilson kept meticulous logbooks documenting every episode of maintenance and parts purchase. Bill spot-painted some locations on the 4/4 that had to be touched up, and buffed out areas that appear to have spots of incipient rust. Bill says the body is rust free and that the undercarriage "looks great." He had the rear bench seat—it's perched above the rear axle, the occupants overlooking the cockpit—redone with vinyl upholstery by SCC, using most of the original horsehair stuffing.

Plainly put, Bill loves his Morgan. "The changes have made it a lot more driveable," he explained. "It was tough to keep up with modern traffic. The

previous engine was almost dangerous on the freeways. Harris is known to do good work, and makes its engines for the long haul. When it was done, I took the Morgan to Albuquerque on the freeway for the balloon festival, then looped around on back roads coming to Arizona. It's got a folding top and I drive most of the time with the top up. It just gets so bloody hot here in the summer. Then I

drive it in the morning two or three times a month. In the wintertime, we'll take it up to the old mining towns like Globe, Superior, and Miami.

"It runs great, if a little noisy," he says. "Once in a while, somebody comes up to me and says, 'Nice Morgan.' Others assume it's some kind of MG or Triumph, which makes sense, given that the steering wheel is on the right." 🏎️



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David Schultz

Are There Affordable "Classics" Out There?

"Most of the Classics I've seen offered for sale are running, driving cars."

REFERRING TO

a vintage car as a "classic" is rather commonplace today, a title usually cast upon anything older than 25 years. More succinct, it has become a generic term, like Kleenex to any- or no-name facial tissue.

However, many years ago one car club used the word "classic" when identifying the automobiles in its organization: the Classic Car Club of America. The CCCA, founded in the early 1950s, is a multi-marque club that recognizes specific marques, or models within a marque, as having "Classic status." (The club had hoped to copyright the term "classic" as applied to cars, but when it couldn't, the founders settled for the term Full Classic. This magazine differentiates CCCA recognized cars from others as capitalized "Classic/Classics.")

When established, the CCCA's criteria was and remains quite straightforward: "... fine or unusual foreign and domestic motor cars built between 1915 and 1948 and distinguished for their fine design, high engineering standards, and superior workmanship...."

I provided this background because as a long-time Classic car enthusiast I occasionally hear someone say, "I'd like to own one of those [Classics] but they're all just too expensive."

That broad statement is simply not true.

Yes, there are many Classics that sell for six figures and beyond. We read about them changing hands at high-end auctions in this and other Hemmings publications. I suspect many, if not most, of those Classics sell into seldom-seen collections. For many of those buyers, the cars have become investments; they are rarely driven.

Conversely, what casual enthusiasts aren't aware of are the Classics that sell far more affordably, usually among veteran enthusiasts who like to drive and enjoy their automobiles. In 60-plus years in this hobby, I have never owned a vintage or Classic car that was not driven, most of them extensively. Like anything, however, one must consider the question, "What price range do you consider to be 'affordable?'" For our purposes, let's say it's the \$35,000 - \$40,000 range.

Off the top of my head, I know I've seen Classics such as Cadillac, Packard, Lincoln, and Pierce-Arrow offered for sale in the Classic Car Club of America's club publication in that price range. I've



also spotted offerings in that price range in the publications of the Lincoln Owners Club, Pierce-Arrow Society, Auburn-Cord-Duesenberg Club, and H. H. Franklin Club. And that's just a start. Keep in mind that during the late Twenties and early Thirties, several medium-price manufacturers such as Nash, Studebaker, Graham, and Hupmobile went upmarket and produced models that are now recognized as Classics.

Perhaps just as intriguing, most of the Classics I've seen offered for sale in that price range are running, driving cars—not project cars as a few enthusiasts would suspect. Some Classics have simply languished for too long in owners' garages, requiring little more than fresh fluids, a tune-up, and exercise.

Club publications are hardly exclusive to available Classics. At the time of this writing, I checked Hemmings' website for examples in the \$20,000 to \$50,000 range and found several interesting models offered for sale, including – but not limited to – the following: a 1948 Lincoln Continental for \$24,000; 1939 Cadillac Series 60 sedan for \$24,750; 1941 Buick Roadmaster convertible sedan for \$25,000; 1930 Packard 733 sedan for \$26,900; 1940 La Salle Series 52 sedan for \$33,000; and a 1925 Pierce-Arrow Series 80 coupe for \$37,600.

I know what you're thinking: That many of these Classics currently available in this price range are sedans, in both five- and seven-passenger versions, rather than more alluring touring and phaeton body styles. What's interesting is that sedans have been finding new favor among a broader range of enthusiasts, particularly those of us who drive our Classics. Sedans offer greater room and long-distance comfort in variable weather conditions. As an example, last year, I drove my Lincoln sport phaeton nearly 300 miles one day during a touring event and would have much preferred my Town Sedan!

So, if you're seeking an affordable CCCA-recognized Full Classic, they're out there. 🚗



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Record Attendance at the 2023 Carlisle Chrysler Nationals



BY BRYAN McTAGGART • PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOHN MACHAQUEIRO,
BRYAN McTAGGART, MATTHEW LITWIN AND DAVID CONWILL

Talk about a turnout. We've known for some time that several of Carlisle Events' summer car shows attract stellar crowds, but 3,156 vehicles registered for the show field at the 2023 Carlisle Chrysler Nationals was eye-opening. That's a new record for the event—for the third year in a row, mind you—and a look around the Carlisle Fairgrounds on July 14-16 would back that figure up. Even in the heat and humidity, even with the threat of thunderstorms on the horizon, the Mopar faithful turned out in droves to show their rides, meet up with friends, and to peruse the swap meet in the hopes of finding a good deal. Chryslers, Plymouths, Dodges, De Sotos, AMCs, Ram Trucks and more filled the 82 acres of area within the fairgrounds as owners, friends, and showgoers got their fill on all things Mopar, from early hot rods to the latest in modern muscle.

In addition to being grouped by era or body platform, 36 individual clubs were represented on-site, encompassing everything from allegiances to specific models, to regional clubs, to online forum get-togethers. In addition, this year there were several featured displays. Show goers stopped at the Mopar Collectible Display, where one could find dealership literature, Volaré and Van go-karts, even little statues of Sherriff, J.W. Higgins, the Dodge Safety Sheriff. Others stopped by the autograph tent and collected signatures and pictures with Linda Vaughn (of Hurst fame), Claudia "Miss Direct Connection" Abel, Dave Rea (from *Graveyard Carz*), and racers like Butch Leal, Paul Rossi, the Golden Commandos,

and The Ramchargers. Then there was the "Class of 1973" collection and the "High School Rides" collection in Building T, as well as a selection of amazing 1970s and 1980s Mopars in the Malaise Era Display in Building Y.

Speaking of Malaise Era rides, that particular group was overflowing their space with excellent examples of Late-B body coupes, some rare R-body New Yorkers, and even a low-mile, one-owner, and loved Plymouth Reliant. On Saturday, they paraded their Magnums, Miradas, Cordobas, and more around the fairgrounds for everyone to enjoy.

Of course, there was much more to do than just looking at the cars. The swap meet at the Carlisle Chrysler Nationals occupied over a third of the fairground's space and had treasure hunters lost for hours as they picked through everything from project cars that needed a new home to the tiniest little details that could finish a restoration project. Other vehicles for sale could be found in the car corral, in case one walked into the show and wanted to drive back out. In the northern end of the property, Dodge's Thrill Rides were giving fans a shot of adrenaline as drivers wheeled Hellcat-powered Chargers and Challengers around the course. And the Manufacturer's Midway was a great place to check out what the aftermarket could do to make your ride just that much better.

Missed out? The 2024 event will be held July 12-14, 2024. Details can be found at carlisleevents.com. If you truly are a "Mopar or No Car" type of enthusiast, you won't want to miss this event.

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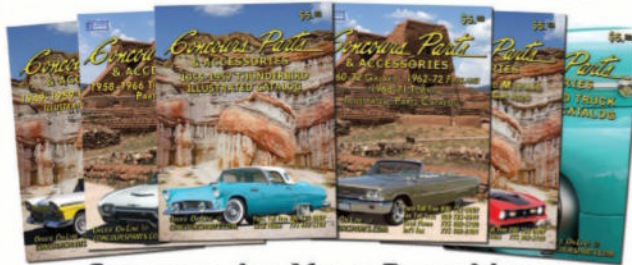


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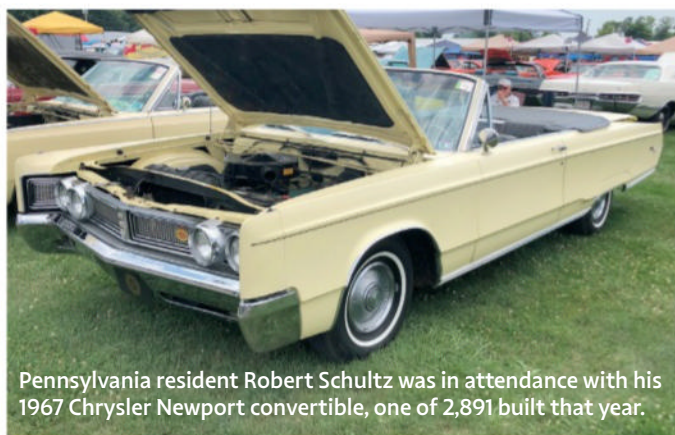
A Public Service of Hemmings Classic Car



Surrounded by Super Coupes and showroom-fresh bits of 1970s and 1980s machines was the 1980 Dodge Mirada Magnum, a show-circuit car that only recently came out of hiding. Owned by Kyle Karp and David Cohen, the Mirada Magnum is unrestored, down to the original tires.



Saturday's entertaining costume party drew a dozen contestants dressed in attire originating from the Sixties to the Eighties.



Pennsylvania resident Robert Schultz was in attendance with his 1967 Chrysler Newport convertible, one of 2,891 built that year.

Although the swap meet section of the event is smaller than Carlisle's Spring and Fall festivities at the facility, it was still brimming with factory NOS, used, and aftermarket parts.





This 1971 Dodge Challenger Pace Car is one of fifty from the tragic 1971 Indianapolis 500. At that race, the actual Challenger pace car, driven by local Dodge dealer Eldon Palmer, crashed into a stand of photographers and journalists.



The "Survivor Tent" is still a compelling attraction, and the 2023 gathering was no exception. It included this 1977 Chrysler Cordoba special ordered and still owned by Robert Hogarth.



There was a smattering of service cars, and among our favorites was this 1964 Plymouth Savoy owned by Connecticut's Mark Wilson.



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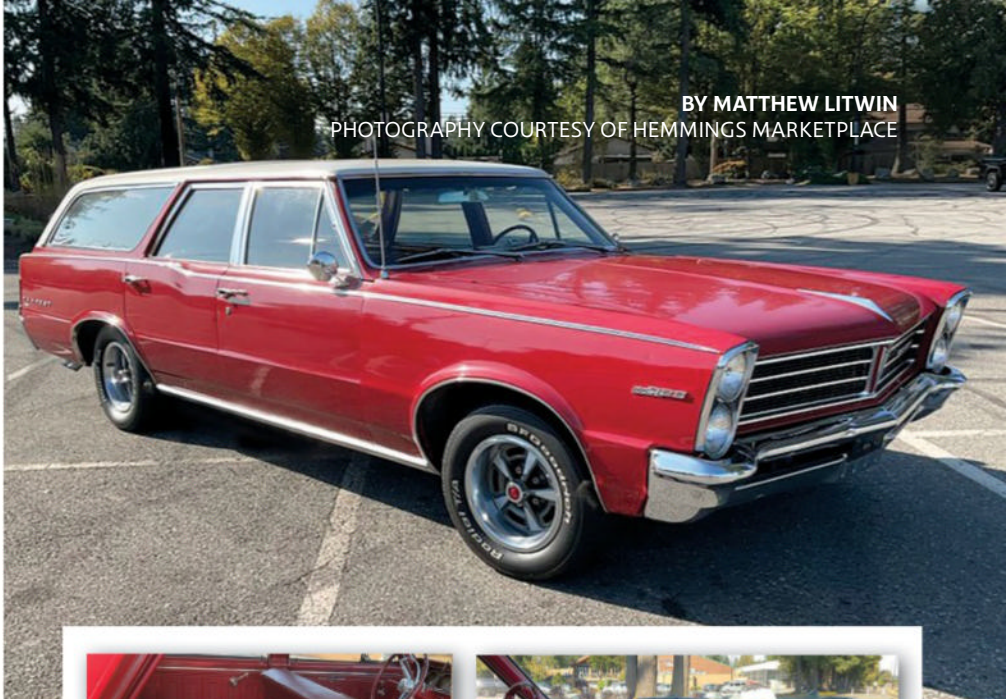
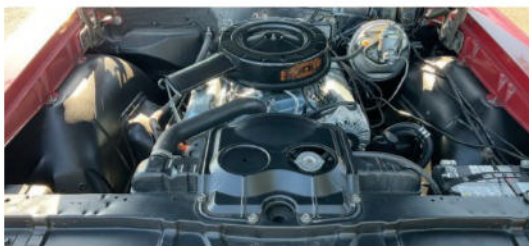
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BY MATTHEW LITWIN

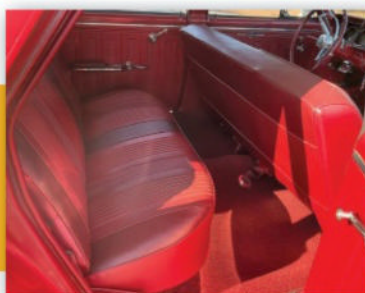
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Adventure potential in this 1965 Pontiac Tempest Custom Safari

WE'RE FAST APPROACHING the time of year when outdoor vintage vehicle events are well on their way to winding down, at least here in the northern climate. At the time this is going to press, much of the foliage has faded from lush green to a multi-colored extravaganza, which means it's mere days away from becoming lawn litter. The change of season gives us just enough time to hunker in for a long winter, hardly an acceptable scenario if you've been hunting for a new road trip ride to pilot on the byways of America. Fear not, though. Shopping is only a couch away, courtesy of Hemmings Marketplace (hemmings.com), where we spotted this 1965 Pontiac Tempest Custom Safari station wagon for sale.

Although the GTO was garnering much of the automotive road test journalists' attention in 1965, the Tempest name seems more fitting for the aggressive design Pontiac stylists sculpted for the model year. Tempest's very definition is a violent windstorm. Stacked quad headlamps flanking a racy vee-shaped recessed grille on a forward-canted front fascia oozed nothing but power in swift motion, even when at rest in the family driveway. Options such as Rally wheels only added to the forceful vibe, despite the fact that the Safari (Pontiac's common name for all its station wagons) offered ample seating for six and a skosh over 86 cubic feet of cargo space.

Priced at \$2,633 without options (or \$25,664 in today's currency), and dressed in upscale trim, the plush, short-step-above-entry-level wagon witnessed a production run of 10,792

units during 1965, making it the third-best Safari seller behind the mid-priced Catalina's six- and nine-passenger family haulers. (Bonneville Safari production numbered 6,460 units; baseline Tempest Safari output was 5,622 units, rounding out the quintet.)

There was a lot to like about this two-tone example beyond its chiseled bodywork and spacious cabin. Let's start with the seller's description that stated the durable, color-keyed Morrokide interior was all original; this in a car that boasted 93,000 miles. The same was said of the exterior paint and trim—both done at the factory. Even better for some, the dealership—or original owner—had the forethought to bypass Pontiac's economical six-cylinder engine in favor of a slightly more sinister 326-cu.in. V-8; likely the two-barrel 250-hp version versus the 326 H.O. that boasted 285 hp. Paired with an automatic transmission, the combination was said to be “numbers-matching;” usually a big bonus for performance car enthusiasts, though a fact here that further supports survivor claims. We found it interesting, however, that a four-barrel induction system could be seen at-the-ready in the cargo area—perhaps a swap had been made to an H.O.-style four-barrel carburetor and intake.

Regardless if there was a fuel system swap, detailed interior and undercarriage images offered that the Poncho was rust free and ready for your “Road Trip 2024” adventure. Perhaps the most compelling aspect of this Tempest was its price, which nearly matched what someone paid nearly six decades ago (factoring in inflation). 🚗

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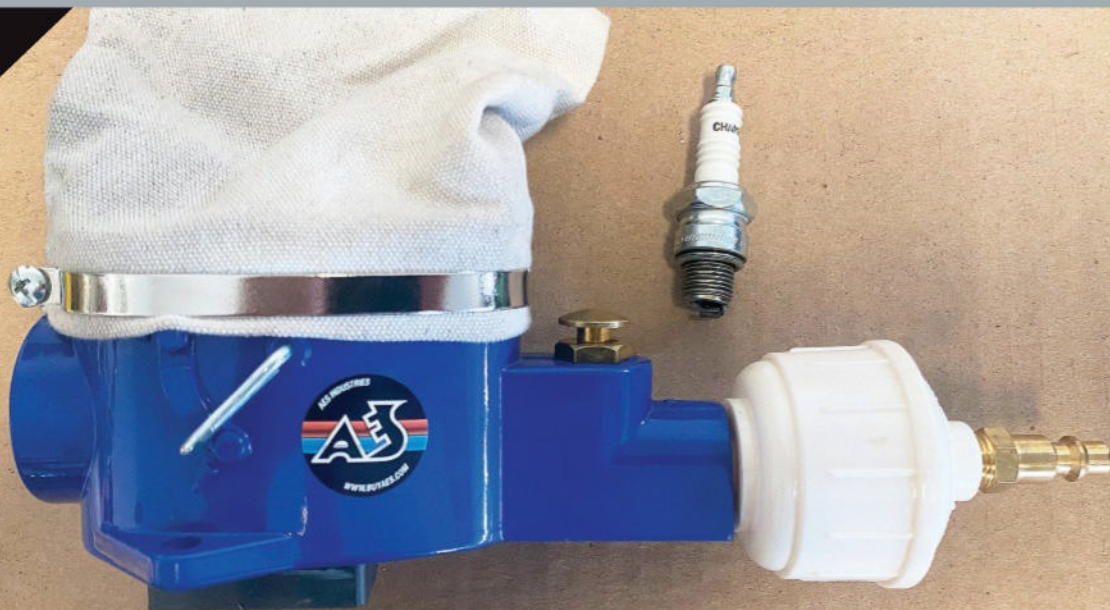
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Asking Price: \$57,500



MY STEP-BY-STEP

procedure for “servicing” spark plugs has always been:

1) Remove; 2) Toss in the garbage can; 3) Install new.

But we’ve all seen those air/abrasive spark plug cleaners that have been around for eons. One day, when I was about to throw away a nearly new Champion L78C pulled from one of my two-stroke motorcycles, I wondered: Do those plug cleaners really work?

After a visit to TP Tools & Equipment (tptools.com) I would soon find out. What arrived was an AES Industries Spark Plug Cleaner (\$33 plus tax and shipping) and a package of moisture filters (\$7.95) to keep the air going into the plug cleaner dry.

Did it work? It did, and quite well. Here’s how...

CLEAN SPARK PLUGS INSTEAD OF TOSSING THEM WITH THIS AES CLEANER



My new AES Spark Plug Cleaner is pictured with a bag of abrasive and the air fitting (both included) as well as a package of moisture filters that I purchased.



There are mounting holes in the body of the plug cleaner, but I glued a couple of strong magnets to the bottom with construction adhesive instead. That way I can stick it to the side of my toolbox, my workbench, or any metal surface, and store it when I’m not using it.



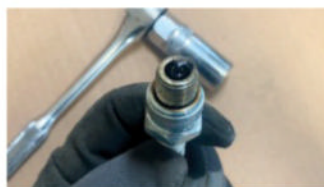
The abrasive goes in the lower chamber near the air inlet.



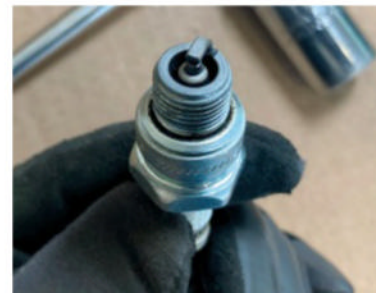
After attaching the bag to the top of the cleaner, I screwed in the filter and fitting.



I stuck the cleaner to the side of my toolbox, hooked up the air, moved the lever on the side to the blast position (down), and inserted the plug. I blasted the plug for a couple minutes, while rotating it just to make sure the entire area got hit with abrasive.



Here’s the plug I was going to clean, it’s out of one of my two-stroke motorcycles. It’s nasty looking, but not that old.



Here’s the plug right out of the cleaner. For peace of mind, I gave it several shots of carb cleaner and wiped it out to make sure there was no abrasive hiding in the hollow shell or on the sides of the insulator.

AES INDUSTRIES SPARK PLUG CLEANER

Product / Price:	Spark Plug Cleaner; \$33 Air filters; \$7.95
Where to get it:	TP Tools & Equipment
What we liked:	Well made, effective, easy to use.
What could be better:	n/a
Overall rating:	★★★★★

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



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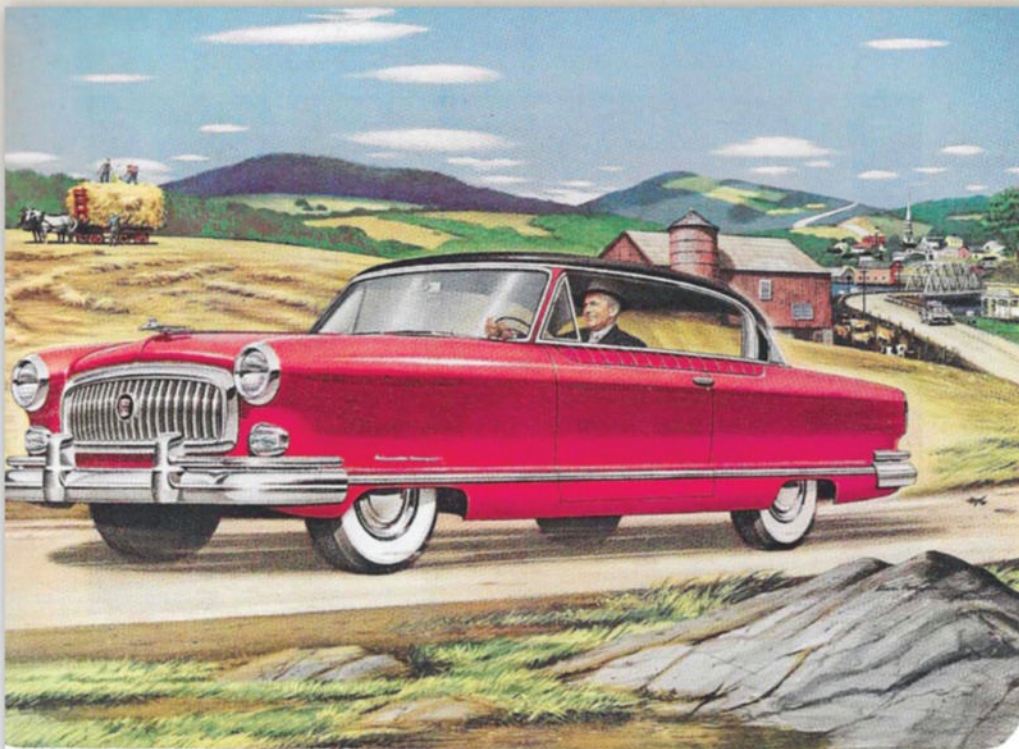
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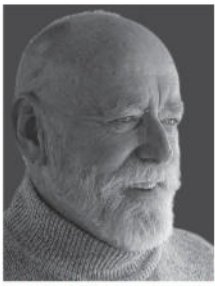
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Jim Richardson

Hot Summer Blues

"The repair was something I should have done a long time ago, considering I was driving the La Salle on hot days."

VAPOR LOCK WAS

not an uncommon curse for those with carbureted classics on hot days. That is until electronic fuel injection eventually became popular, helping reduce the problem. In fact, as a youth I remember seeing cars stranded beside the road with their hoods open, while sweaty, frustrated drivers put wet rags on the fuel pump, fuel line, and carburetor to cool those components, all to try and get going again. My father used to attach wooden clothespins along the fuel line of his old Pontiac to mitigate the heat. It must have worked because we didn't have to begin life anew in some place like Gila Bend, Arizona, during the Fifties.

Unfortunately, vapor lock is still with us. For those of us who like to tour in our carbureted classics, it is a problem looming larger with the advent of spiked gasoline. I found this out the hard way when I recently took a prospective buyer for a spin in my 1940 La Salle Series 52 coupe on an unusually hot day. The old girl disgraced me at the worst possible moment.

The La Salles of 1940 were powered by Cadillac's big flathead V-8 that put out a lot of heat. Mine is no different. As a result, the modern funny fuel started boiling in the fuel pump and vaporized in the line to the carburetor, which killed the engine. We tried to start it shortly after, but heat soak due to the inert cooling system made the situation impossible. After several futile efforts to get the engine started, I resorted to the tactic of throwing my hat on the ground and stomping on it, followed by cursing the car forever and sulking, but that didn't help either.

We finally had to tow the La Salle to my home. The tow truck driver said he was only allowed to take the car to the nearest place that could effect a repair, at which point I demanded that we go to a La Salle dealership. It took a second, but he got the picture. Luckily, I knew how to fix the vapor lock issue once the car was in my garage.

To start, I went to AutoZone and purchased a metal, Duralast universal vapor separator fuel filter – originally used on the likes of carbureted AMC products and Jeeps – for \$7.49. I installed the filter in the fuel line between the fuel pump and the carburetor. That required a foot or so of flexible



fuel hose and a couple of hose clamps, but it was no big deal.

I then ran a short length of fuel hose from the third nipple on the filter and connected it to a steel return line that I flared and bent to fit, along the chassis, which was then connected to the gas tank vent pipe. Alternatively, you could hook up this return line to a fitting in a hole drilled directly into the top of the tank. This return line allows the fuel to be circulated through the system in a loop rather than going just one way and getting stopped by a vapor bubble.

Installing a vapor separator fuel filter requires an afternoon of effort, but only involves a few hand tools such as a tubing bender, flaring tool, utility knife, and a screwdriver, plus about \$30 worth of parts from your local parts store. And just to be doubly covered I added an auxiliary electric fuel pump in my original fuel line back near the tank, activated by a toggle switch I mounted under the dash. It will set you back another \$20 but will help prime the carburetor when the car has been sitting a long time.

The repair was something I should have done a long time ago, considering I was driving the La Salle on hot days. It was a little light surgery, and the result slightly sullied the classic's originality under the hood, but it made it driveable in West Texas in midsummer. Not just my car, but anyone's, assuming the cooling system is in good shape, the ignition timing is correct, and the carburetor is adjusted properly.

From now on I plan to wear a belt and suspenders. Adding a vapor separator fuel filter, return line, and an auxiliary inline fuel pump is good insurance against having to cool your heels on a hot day in the breakdown lane. Obviously, this is a fix for classic cars we want to drive and enjoy, even though judges at shows would have to deduct points. But for those of us who regard our classics as kinetic sculpture rather than stationary art objects, it is a must. 🚗

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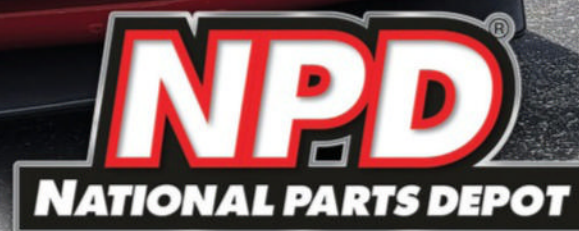



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