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FEBRUARY 2024 #233

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CONTENTS

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On the Cover: Photographer Luke Munnell spent an afternoon with Alan Travis and his incredibly rare 1913 Bugatti Type 22 in the Arizona desert.

PERSPECTIVE

FEATURES

MARKETPLACE

TECH

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HEMMINGS CLASSIC CAR
ISSN# 1550-8730 • www.hemmings.com
Published monthly by Hemmings • 222 Main St., Bennington, VT 05201

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Subscription rates in the US and Possessions; 12 issues for $19.95. Canada $30.95; (CDN price includes surface mail and GST tax). All other countries $32.95 in US funds.

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POSTMASTER:
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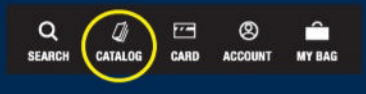

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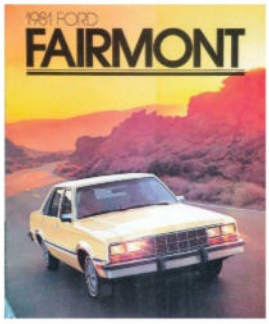
MatthewLitwin

Garage Woes and Racing Dreams

Write to our Editor at mlitwin@hemmings.com and follow him on Instagram @matt.litwin.hemmings.

"...an '82 Fairmont sedan we could obtain for $20. The whole car. Which meant a two-car team."

IT'S FUNNY HOW history repeats itself. A recent example of that was when I caught up with an old friend between trips. The phone conversation started like any other: Talk of family, vacations, mutual friends, and work, and how our favorite stick-and-ball sports teams have had lackluster seasons. Eventually the topic of automotive work and home garages arose.



Enduro action circa 1989 begged our band of gearheads to turn a battered 1981 Ford Fairmont into a track warrior.

My friend explained how his son conjured the notion he could service the aging daily driver that shuttled him to and from his junior year of high school. Although the young man had no experience, online videos—like reality automotive restoration shows—made it look easy. He had already purchased oil and a correct filter, so how could my friend quell such money-saving motivation? After pointing out the correct tools, ramps, and jacking points on the car, he was sure his son would succeed.

"The constant banging I heard told my gut something was amiss, and I didn't listen to myself because I was helping my daughter with math homework," my friend explained. "Two hours later, my oil-covered son waltzed into the house and announced the job was done. Then he disappeared like he always does. I didn't think anything of it until the next morning. The bent, oily screwdriver lying on the floor was the first clue it didn't go well.

"I picked up the screwdriver and reached for the nearest rag on my workbench, except it was covered in oil, too. I took four steps to my cabinet to fetch a clean one and I nearly slipped in the puddle of oil on the floor. Catching my balance, the other foot knocked over the open pail of spent oil I didn't see, and out rolled the twisted remains of a hole-riddled oil filter. There I am, slipping and sliding all over like Inspector Clouseau. That's when I spotted the mangled oil-filter wrench," he said.

I didn't have to be told that his son had difficulty with the oil wrench. Or that his next option was a hammer and screwdriver. I had seen that movie when I was in high school. A classmate attacked the oil-filter wrench on my 1983 Datsun Maxima with the same any-tool-will-work tenacity oozed by all-knowing 17-year-old boys. I was right under the car with him, and we got the job done, too.

This was when another classmate was driving a thoroughly used-up 1981 Ford Fairmont Futura. He stood 6-foot-5 and tipped the scales at 275 pounds, so it didn't take long for the rear section of the driver's seat track to fall through the floorboard. That alone should have raised a red flag about the car's condition, but meager teenage incomes dictated another bout of "this-will-do" ingenuity in the form of a scrap of 2x4 lumber found on the side of the road.

That timber was still under the front seat when the alternator failed shortly after the Ford's minor tussle with a stone wall. Rather than swap parts, he scoured local classifieds for an equally tarnished replacement car. New wheels seemed logical to both him and the rest of our little clan of gearheads, all of whom were weekly regulars at the local short track. It didn't take long for us to consider turning the forlorn Fairmont into an enduro racer.

The Fairmont was subject to modest safety requirements under the enduro rules then in place, virtually none of which existed when the 1913 Bugatti Type 22, gracing this month's cover, first competed. Gut the interior; weld the doors shut; install a roll cage; relocate the gas tank. And fix the alternator, courtesy of an '82 Fairmont sedan we could obtain for $20. The whole car. Which meant a two-car team. One of us had a trailer, another had access to a welder. All that was left were fire suits, helmets, and a place to wrench. My childhood home in the countryside was perfect. Dad felt different when I broached the topic over dinner, and just like that, the whole sketchy high-school race team scheme vaporized.

In hindsight, my dad saved us from ourselves, words I uttered as soon as my friend added, "And now he wants to build a race car, just like we wanted to back in high school."

A Time of Porpoise

A memorable beach moment: You're basking in the warm sun, toes in the sand, letting the gentle turn of the foam-capped waves lull you into a state of complete relaxation. As your eyes scan the endless horizon of blue on blue, you're rewarded with a pod of dolphins making their way across the sea.

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BY MATTHEW LITWIN
PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF STAN SIPKO

Pleasant Interruption

Completing a restoration is delayed by the arrival of a rare 1950 Dodge Coronet

AS DIVERSE as the collector car populace is, it seems everyone knows someone who has an incredible knack for finding vintage vehicles. Common or rare; domestic or import; car or truck; restored or project–the finds keep coming at a rate that would make the late Bill Harrah blush with envy. And then there are guys like Scranton, Pennsylvania's Stan Sipko—the kind of guy who doesn't purposefully seek out old rides, but rather is found by them.

If his name sounds familiar, we recently featured his 1948 Plymouth Deluxe Business Coupe on these pages (see the July 2023 issue). Readers may recall that the Plymouth was initially supposed to receive a repaint, but that plan morphed into a complete nut-and-bolt restoration intended to be completed by late summer '23. That restoration is still progressing to an anticipated conclusion, the delay caused–in part–by pleasant interruptions, such as the unexpected offer to purchase a 1927 REO Flying Cloud sedan that had been stowed for 50 years. It didn't run, but Stan rectified that issue within days of taking ownership. And then there's this recently acquired rarity pictured here: a 1950 Dodge Coronet convertible.

Like much of Stan's collection, the Dodge's history was known to him when it was offered. "A longtime family friend owned this car for 37 years and, being a purist, he didn't want to alter it. Like a lot of car guys, he had been collecting parts since he purchased the Dodge with the intent of restoring it someday. He would take it out every now and then and go for a ride with his wife, which kept everything lubricated. Well, we know 'someday' can be an optimistic word.

He turned 89-years-old this summer and wasn't sure that he would be able to get to the car, and he offered it to me at a very reasonable price. So, I took it," says Stan.

Though the Coronet was introduced as Dodge's top-of-the-line series in 1949, just 1,800 convertibles were built in 1950, a fact not lost on Stan. That, and its current condition. "My long-range plan is to make the car presentable and drive it and enjoy it with the top down as much as I can. What can I say? I love old Mopars, and this one doesn't need much more than some TLC."

What's Inside:

ACCORDING TO STAN:

1. So far I have been cleaning the chrome and stainless, as I guess back in the day it was customary to put polish on the trim and not wipe it off to save the plating.

2. My winter plans are to first change some of the pitted chrome with the NOS pieces that the seller gave me.

3. When the seller told me he had a few NOS parts, I thought it would be a small amount. That small amount turned into a few truckloads of NOS fenders (front and rear), all types of chrome and emblems, and gravel guards—four sets of them

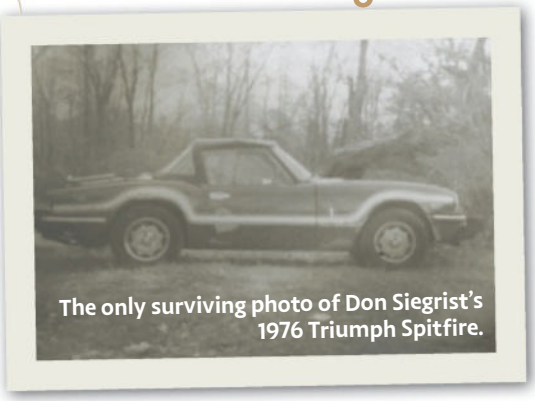
4. I'm also removing the duct tape that was put on the tops of the doors and quarters. It was used to block moisture from entering the holes where the trim clips went in to hold the brightwork in place.

5. My 'OCD' kicked in and I had to paint the trim clips so they would not rust; I also painted the inside of the molding after it had been rechromed years ago but not put on the car.

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY DON SIEGRIST

My Second Car

A British car and an American misadventure looking for a place to happen



The only surviving photo of Don Siegrist's 1976 Triumph Spitfire.

I OWNED MY FIRST CAR for only a few months. It was a 10-year-old 1965 Ford Galaxie four-door with nothing overly exciting under the hood. But I was 17 and the car was all mine. Until one day when I invited the McVetty sisters to share the front bench seat. Being interested in one of them, Nancy, I let her take a turn behind the wheel. She was 15 and—not having previous driving experience—proceeded to steer it over a curb, rough terrain, and onto someone's front lawn. The excursion mangled the front suspension and, without money for repairs, I sadly waved goodbye to the Ford as it was towed away.

The incident left me without a car until my senior year of college, when my dad suggested I use some of my student loan money to buy a car. Was that even legal? Well, if my law-abiding dad said it was okay, who was I to argue? So, off we went to various dealer lots, only to find an assortment of dull, practical cars. Then we stumbled upon a 1976 Triumph Spitfire.

I was a fan of British cars and always thought of the Spitfire as an affordable option. Although it was a supremely impractical car to buy, my dad registered no objections. He was always very good about letting me make my own decisions–no matter how misguided—and let me find my own way in life. We purchased the Triumph that night and I returned the next morning to pick it up.

There was one minor problem: I had never driven a stick shift! Blessed with a young man's misplaced confidence, I simply drove it off the lot, bucking and stalling, and spent the rest of the day driving around town while I figured it out. The Spitfire turned out to be both the best and worst car I ever owned. It was great top-down driving excitement, had a compact turning radius, and an engine that positively snarled. On the other hand, it had the classic British Leyland reliability problems. In short, it was a piece of junk.

At only four years old, the Spitfire was already rusting. The car would often just die while I was driving it, and Dad would rescue me by tying a rope to the bumper and towing it home behind his Chevy station wagon. One night the entire exhaust system just fell off, leaving flames shooting directly out of the manifold and, on another evening, the Triumph left me high and dry in a bad section of Philadelphia–I do not know how I made it home safely that night.

This went on for almost a year and my mechanic was unable to determine the cause. One day the car died on the interstate. While standing next to it, once again fuming, I absentmindedly flipped open the gas cap and heard a whooshing sound. Aha! Apparently, a vacuum had been forming as the gas level dropped, essentially starving the engine of fuel. A hole drilled into the gas cap provided an elegant solution.

The discovery came just as I was about to relocate from New Jersey to California. I had graduated from West Virginia University six months prior but, unlike most of my college peers–who worked with the university placement center to arrange corporate job interviews–I took a different path. I was out for adventure and wanted to get on the road. Having worked those six months on a loading dock, I was armed with a $1,000 bankroll and ready to reunite with a high-school friend who had already ventured west.

I left on a clear, cold, November day in 1980 with the plan to first visit cousins in Richmond, Virginia, but within a few hours I noticed a strange sound coming from the rear axle. When I arrived in Richmond, I discovered a friendly, family-owned repair shop. What was supposed to be an overnight stop stretched to a week while the shop struggled to identify the problem and repair it. My aunt and uncle were accommodating, but I am sure they were glad when I was on my way again.

Next was a planned, hours-long detour to New Haven, West Virginia, on the Ohio River. My ancestors farmed there from the late 1700s to the late 1800s and I wanted to check it out. I arrived on an overcast day in what turned out to be an uninspiring little town; everything was colorless, empty, and forlorn. I had just pulled into a gas station when I was suddenly gripped with an overwhelming urge to flee. This made no sense, but I drove off and had gotten just a few miles out of town when I lost control of the car and skidded to a stop. When I got out to survey the situation, I found that an axle had cracked in half and the right-rear wheel had fallen off. The Grateful Dead's *American Beauty* playing on the cassette deck provided the soundtrack as I stood on a lonely mountain road in a cold rain pondering my next move. I am skeptical of this sort of thing, but I've always harbored a suspicion my ancestors' spirits were trying to prevent me from leaving.

This being 1980 in rural West Virginia, the tow truck driver was unfamiliar with my British sports car, but he got me to Parkersburg for another week of repairs while I stayed with a fraternity brother. Fortunately, the mechanic was a kind soul who took pity, and not only repaired my car but talked the prior mechanic into wiring me a partial refund. Even with that I had less than $500 left and had not even crossed the Ohio River yet!

To avoid the humiliation of returning home, I continued west. As I crossed the Ohio River it began to snow, and it occurred to me that the Spitfire was probably the dumbest car to drive cross-country in winter. Rear-wheel drive and no real weight equated to no traction. The ramshackle convertible top let cold air infiltrate, and without power steering the car always required two hands on the wheel. If that were not enough, my now-limited funds meant I had to drive over 10 hours a day. It left me with a sore back at night even though I tried to alleviate the pain by sitting on my down jacket while driving.

During that first stretch through uncharted territory (I had never been west of Pittsburgh) my goal was to reach Kansas City, as that sounded sufficiently "out west" to me. Unfortunately, I spent that first night in a cheap motel outside of St Louis, Missouri, listening to the big rigs drive by on the interstate.

The next day was Kansas; what a revelation. A windswept, treeless, terrain that looked like the bottom of the ocean. A day later I was in Colorado where I was met by my friend Lee, who had driven out from San Jose, California, so

we could spend Thanksgiving with a mutual high-school friend who was now living in Boulder. It was poignant to find the three of us, pals from a boring suburb in New Jersey, breaking bread together out west.

Afterwards Lee and I headed north to Laramie, Wyoming, to traverse I-80 to California. Laramie was my first exposure to cowboy culture. Big guys in sheepskin coats and cowboy hats, driving pickups across the frozen barbed-wire-laced prairies. It was a far cry from my suburban origins.

It was white-knuckle driving on twisting mounting roads through the Rockies as I tried not to think about my supposedly repaired rear axle; guardrails were often limited. I continually envisioned the Spitfire–with me in it–tumbling into a rocky ravine.

I was glad to have Lee along in his trusty Volkswagen Beetle, which unlike my Spitfire, was a reliable workhorse. With its rear engine, it was also excellent in the snow. This came in handy when we encountered nighttime blizzard conditions in Nevada. We were the only ones on the road and we each took turns as the lead dog. Our headlamps did little to penetrate the snowy nothingness, making it difficult to differentiate the road from adjacent fields. We spent that night in Winnemucca, slipping and sliding up the icy exterior stairs to our motel room.

We woke up to a bright, sunny day with the knowledge that we'd be in San Jose by nightfall. At the state line we encountered a California Agricultural Inspection Station. I now know that these are located along the state line to guard against invasive plants and animals, but at that time it looked to me like an ominous Cold War border checkpoint in Berlin. I was caught off-guard when the inspector asked if I had any fruit or vegetables in the car and I could only think to blurt out "I'm from New Jersey!" Apparently, this was an acceptable answer and he waved me through.

After days of driving through the seemingly barren high plains, California was a revelation. The beautiful Sierra Nevada mountains were covered in pine trees with waterfalls cascading through. It looked like Shangri-la. We wound our way through Sacramento, then the flat Central Valley, pulling into San Jose in the early evening.

Lee's rental was a non-descript, charmless, one-story tract house in a sprawling bedroom community. Introduced to my two new roommates, we sat on the floor with our backs against the wall in the front hallway; there wasn't a stick of furniture in the place. It was December 1, 1980. I was 22 years old, 3,000 miles from home, with no job and about $20 to my name.

Although the Spitfire had gotten me across the country (albeit with plenty of angst), I no longer had any confidence in it and sold it in exchange for $1,000 and an old, beat-up Chevy van that burned oil, spewed exhaust fumes, and lacked a driver's door window. I don't know if that was a step up or a step down, but the $1,000 sure came in handy as I discovered what this life would be all about.

REMINISCING relates your personal stories and rememberences enjoying or owning a car. To submit your stories, email us at editorial@hemmings.com or write to us at Reminiscing, c/o *Hemmings Classic Car*, 222 Main Street, Bennington, Vermont 05201.

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I WAS SURPRISED and delighted to see David Conwill's article on the 1915 Scripps-Booth Vitesse speedster in the October issue. I knew that I had seen the car before when I had a chance to visit Frank Kleptz's wonderful collection with the Indiana region of the Classic Car Club of America quite a few years ago. The car was under restoration when I saw it. It is very rewarding to see that it is finished and being enjoyed by its current owner.

–JAY S. KOLB
Columbia, Maryland

THANK YOU TO THE TEAM for your hard work in putting out a superb publication. I have every issue, from number one to current, saved in sleeves. The November article on the 1964 W200 Crew Cab caught my eye, as this is very similar to the vehicle I drove on active duty as a USAF military dog handler LEO at Langley AFB in Virginia. While the truck I drove was likely a little newer, there weren't many changes. Equipped with the ubiquitous 225 Slant Six and automatic, the truck could reach a top speed of somewhere around 65 mph as I recall, and the rattles at that speed would almost drown out any radio traffic. The back seat was converted to a flat rubberized platform for my K9 "Jack," a most protective partner. As basic as that truck was it served Jack and me well during our service there. Despite the tough handling by young airmen, it never let us down. Mitch, the owner of the featured Dodge, is fortunate. I'd love to have one in my driveway now.

–RICHARD WANAMAKER
via email

I AM JUST NOW READING the November issue, and the cover vehicle brings back a fond memory. Early in my working life I was a construction electrician. Around 1975 the contractor I worked for got a contract to support enlarging the hangar at the local Air National Guard base. It was an interesting job, as we got to observe the day-to-day operation, essentially maintaining an in-air refueling jet.

The airmen there had a flightline truck: a mid-Sixties Dodge W200 four-wheel-drive Crew Cab just like the truck in the article. The Dodge was in immaculate condition, having spent a pampered life of short trips around the airstrip, and enjoying exclusive indoor storage. Additionally, the truck was painted what I guess was a beautiful shade of Air Force blue. I was never a big fan of that body style, but the W200 was already a "vintage" vehicle and, best of all, in perfect condition. Four-door trucks, at the time, were still quite rare. In short, I loved it.

I've wondered whatever became of that truck. Is it possible the Air Guard still uses it?

–WILLIAM CRISP
Halls Crossroads, Tennessee

JIM DONNELLY'S GREAT article on the unique coach-built Brewster Ford in the November issue led me to wonder if the company evolved into the World War II Brewster aircraft manufacturing also headquartered in Long Island City, New York. Brewster built Navy planes and the Corsair under license from Vought. Unfortunately, the company experienced many scheduling, labor, and quality issues, and was shut down by the U.S. Navy in 1944.

–CHARLES SELTMAN
Colorado Springs, Colorado

My understanding is that the Brewster Aeronautical Company was started by carriage builder Brewster & Company and occupied the same campus but was at least nominally a different company from the body manufacturer. As such, it's not really correct to say the one evolved into the other, but there is absolutely a connection. –Dave Conwill

WITH REGARD TO the November issue, I previously owned two Datsun NL320s, one painted red that was a nice driver-level unit—not finished out like Mr. Thompson's pretty truckette—and another 1965 example in very rare factory black. A couple of aspects not mentioned in Jeff Koch's article are: the four-speed on the tree (copied after the Mercedes-Benz prototype) was an absolute pain to shift with aplomb, even for a once-dextrous guy like me familiar with Road-Rangers and main-auxiliary-Brownie two-speed rear-end trucks. It was just awkward and a big worry because of the rarity and cost of replacement parts. Also, the British-inspired 'banger E-12 engine. It was very risky to take above 60 mph for the same reason: rare parts at astronomically high prices.

Other than that, they are one of the cutest little pickups ever built, and a guarantee of instant acclaim at shows, and even at the gas pump. I was going to restomod my black example (it was a non-runner and had a lot of rust in the floorpans), but I gave it up because of the extreme narrowness of the chassis that made it hard to upgrade. Even the Pinto/Mustang II front suspension is conspicuously wide for the little Datsun, as well as the Ford 8-inch differential.

Jeff mentions the Ford series that had a nice unit-body design but calls it "the Econoline pickup." Though not always perfect, it's my recollection that that trademark was only applied to the Falcon-based van line. Would it have been more appropriate if he referenced the Ranchero-style pickup (definitely unit-body) along with the El Camino, perhaps?

I got my California driver's license in 1961 and was car-fascinated for ten years before that. My first car was a modified 1955 Chevy Delray, what we now call a "post" car, with a hot 265-cu.in. engine, a Corvette shifter and floor plate (complete with ashtray), Lake exhaust pipes, and a 2-inch drop front and rear. I wish I could afford it now.

–WICK HUMBLE
via email

SEEING YOUR ARTICLE in the October issue (Swap Meet Finds) about car racing board games reminded me of the Speed Circuit game my brother Bill has. It was released in 1971 by 3M. The game depicts tracks from Monza, Monaco, and Watkins Glen. There are two tracks on one side and the third is on the other. It included six cars and specification cards you would pick from. For example, the specification card would note your car would be faster on the straights but might not have good brakes. Or it might corner better than others. You could draft with a faster car, pass on a tight corner, or misjudge and go into a corner too fast and crash.

Most of the time, it was me and my brothers, Bill and Gary, who played it. We started playing it in the '70s and had a running series. Since there were three of us, each would have two cars and the starting lineup for each successive race was reverse of the finishing order from the previous; we even kept track of points. Even after we all got married and I went into the USAF, whenever we got together, we would break out the game and have another round or two. Sometimes it was years between games, but we always picked up where we left off. This went on for decades.

Bill still has the game. During one of the early games, we were at Bill's house and his wife, Jackie, came back from shopping and gave each of us a little box of animal crackers for a snack. As we continued, we each were enjoying our animal crackers. After a bit, I went to eat an animal cracker, but it tasted strange. Apparently, while one brother distracted me, the other dropped a cat treat in my box. It is one of many years of memories playing that game. Attached are some pictures of Bill's copy of the game.

–KEN ALARIE
Papillion, Nebraska

SADLY, I WAS BEGINNING

to lose interest in *Hemmings Classic Car*. A lot of American metal. Then I opened the November issue and behold: a story about an Austin-Healey 100 BN2. Over the years I have owned various Healeys, including a rare 100M that I sold for $44,000. A few years later it was sold at auction for over $200,000. I still have nightmares over that. I continued to turn the pages and was rewarded by the restoration profile of a 1966 Ferrari 330 GTC. That was pure heaven and a marque that has been my dream since my teens. Thank you for surprising me with the coverage of my two all-time faves. I will now stick with the publication awaiting new surprises. Thank you.

–HERBERT A. SATZMAN
New York, New York

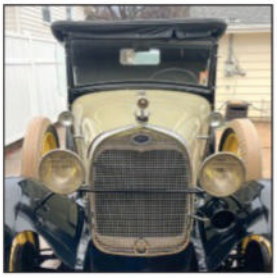
We're happy to hear of your jubilation and decision to continue reading the magazine. The 2023 car show season proved to be fruitful to our team, and as a result we are going to be featuring several compelling imports in the months ahead. We hope you enjoy them as much as the Austin-Healey and Ferrari.
–Matthew Litwin

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

BY MARK J. McCOURT
IMAGES COURTESY OF HEMMINGSAUCTIONS.COM

1929 FORD MODEL A






The market for Ford's Model A is perennial, with nicely presented examples still bringing solid money nearly a century after they were built. This rumble-seat-equipped 1929 roadster appeared very nice, with seller-submitted photos showing shiny paint, crisp accent striping, a taut top, and a welcoming "artificial leather" upholstered interior. The car wore numerous accessories including a radiator stone guard, wind wings, and a luggage rack. Its 40-hp engine showed age and use but was said to run "perfectly," and the undercarriage looked correct despite minor surface corrosion. No side curtains were present. It took an impressive 38 bids with nine time extensions to secure its new home.

Reserve: $6,000
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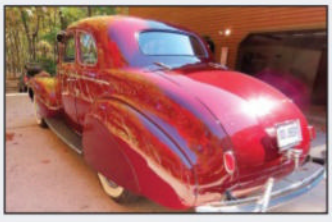
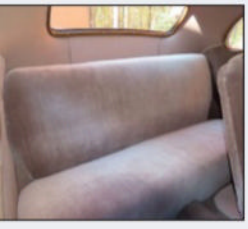
Recent Market Range: $9,400-$16,700

1940 CHEVROLET SPECIAL DELUXE



There are some naysayers in the old-car hobby who fear prewar cars are losing their popularity and value, as enthusiasts who knew those cars when new are aging out of the marketplace. The 22 bids it took to send this Special Deluxe coupe to an appreciative new home say quite the opposite. This handsome Chevy enjoyed a restoration in its not-too-distant past, as evidenced by its attractive paint, properly painted trim accents, and unworn interior. Indeed, an added aftermarket horn button was one of a small handful of modifications from factory specifications. The 85-hp inline-six and manual gearbox worked well, and the suspension showed minor corrosion. This car sold in the heart of its value range.

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In the Footsteps of the Artist

BY DAVID CONWILL
PHOTOGRAPHY BY LUKE MUNNELL

The car you see on these pages is the mechanical equivalent of the score of *The Rite of Spring*, hand annotated by Igor Stravinsky himself; the working sketches for Marcel Duchamp's *Nude Descending a Staircase*; or perhaps a preserved print of *The Battle of Gettysburg*, recovered from the possessions director of Thomas Ince. This is a piece of art, first and foremost, and one intimately and physically connected with the artist himself, Ettore Bugatti.

Just ask Alan Travis, who spent 3,500 hours (that's 437½ eight-hour workdays) resurrecting his 1913 Bugatti Type 22 from a 90-year slumber. Alan says, "It's like working on a sculpture after Michaelangelo."

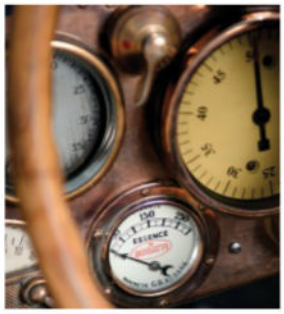
Indeed, the artist himself signed and initialed the castings throughout the powertrain. The Type 22 also represents the debut of the trademark horseshoe radiator, still seen on modern Volkswagen-built Bugattis. Earlier creations by "Le Patron" looked like remarkably generic brass-era cars. You wouldn't know they were Bugattis unless someone told you.

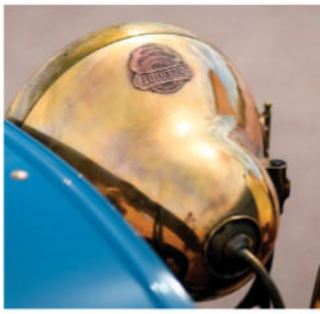
"People say that Mr. Bugatti was making automobiles from 1898 on, but it wasn't until 1912-ish that he started making his own car with his own name on it. That's why he did the

What is it like to revive and drive a 1913 Bugatti Type 22?


BUGATTI
1913

Owner/restorer Alan Travis wears period-style driving gear.





signature on my car and a few others in 1913—he signed the cylinder head himself." There's a note of awe in Alan's voice when he continues. "Nobody in the world did that that 110 years ago. Nobody knew he was going to be what he was. It's the earliest expression of the most iconic race car of its time."

Alan, who you've seen mentioned in this magazine before (see his 1915 Scripps-Booth Vitesse speedster in *HCC* #229, October 2023), is passionate for the hand-built era of automobiles, circa 1897 to 1915, before mass production and unskilled labor became the hallmarks of the automobile industry. "When," Alan says, "the inventors themselves still had a giant hand in making what they were making."

Even Bugatti automobiles, watch-like in their construction right through the 1930s, became comparatively bland in the name of efficiency shortly after this car was built. The Type 22 line continued after World War I and became the famed Brescia, but the postwar cars lack the bronze, brass, and copper seen on this car. Those venerable but overweight materials gave way to engine-turned aluminum. Bugatti enthusiasts call Alan's Type 22 the "Jules Verne car" as a nod to its Edwardian-style metallurgy. Modern kids on the street might call it "steampunk," except it's a real-deal artifact.

Sadly, its earliest history is unknown. Whatever it is, it's likely to have been dramatic. Bugatti the man had been employed by German firms before 1914 and his factory at Molsheim was located in territory contested between Germany and France. In 1913, when this car was built, it was German. In 1918, when the guns fell silent, it would become French—as it had been before 1871.

Bugatti fled the region for his birthplace in Milan, Italy, supposedly burying some cars (Type 22s like this one, and/or the Model 13 race cars) at the factory site to preserve them and taking a few others with him across a lake into Switzerland. It's a good story, anyway.

The truth of this one is that it's probably a combination of Type 22s put together in the 1930s by a well-known salvager of Bugattis for the secondhand market. Romantic potential history or not, at the time the idea was to create one 20-year-old sports car where previously three or so parts cars had existed. It seems

Bugatti enthusiasts refer to this early Type 22 as "the Jules Verne car" for its copious use of Edwardian-era metals like copper, brass, and bronze.

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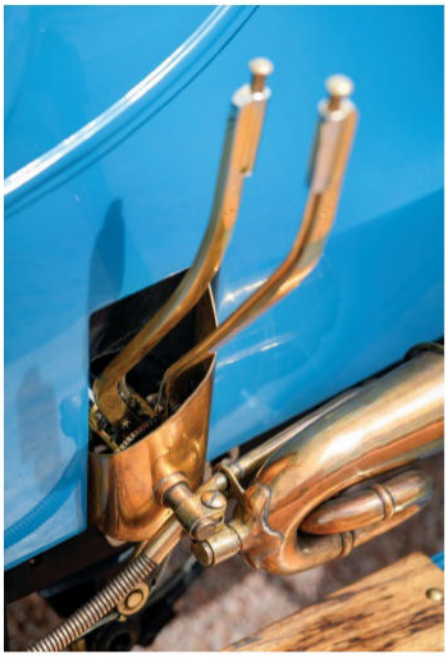

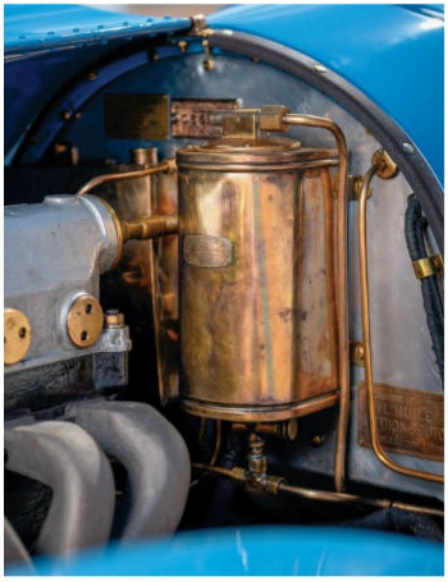

The oil- and fuel-resevoirs, spare spark plugs, and cast nickel-steel exhaust header are a reminder that functional parts can be beautiful too.

"There's probably a mixture of original parts, but they are all exact Bugatti pieces, and they are all of that era."

only about 30 Type 22s were constructed in 1913 and without any type of aftermarket, cannibalism or fabrication were the only ways to keep older cars on the road.

"The person who had it before the 1950s was someone who would go and try to find as many Bugattis as he could and make as many as he could. There's probably a mixture of original parts, but they are all exact Bugatti pieces, and they are all of that era."

Every one of these pieces has some fascinating history. Just some of these pieces had their histories in different locations until joining up long ago, enough to be of historical interest regardless. The history from then until Alan acquired it is more mundane: It was part of a large collection in Sweden and was driven infrequently, if at all.

Alan bought it almost on a whim. Perhaps on an impulse, as one might do when faced with the opportunity to own such a masterpiece.

"I bought it at two in the morning," he says, "and for more than I paid for our last house. I did not tell my wife what I paid." All of which must have led to a sinking feeling when the car was delivered from overseas. "When I got it, the engine wouldn't turn over. I didn't know what might be broken inside and I didn't even tell anyone for 63 days that I'd spent all this money and might never even be able to get the engine apart, let alone drive it."

Again, watch-like is the byword with Bugatti construction. What is appropriate and practical with larger, more-rugged, and less-irreplaceable parts does not apply to the thoroughbred creations of Molsheim. Especially not to pre-WWI Mosheim.

"I didn't want to pull the car with a truck because I knew it was delicate inside, but it has no oil pan, and you can't get the castings apart or even look inside until you can rotate the crankshaft." Reckoning that patience would achieve more than force, Alan sent the engine to the spa, figuratively speaking.

"I removed all the accessories from it and as it still would not move, I got a fish heater, a rotisserie, and a vat from a farm supply store." To this unexpected amalgamation of supplies, he added a healthy volume of Kroil penetrating oil, heated to 110 degrees Fahrenheit. It's worth noting here that this isn't Alan's first restoration effort, and you shouldn't necessarily emulate his methods unless you understand the appropriate safety precautions.

"I would continually inject the Kroil into every orifice I could find so I could work it apart and see what I had." This was a process that continued for over two months, with Alan bathing the stuck engine in hot penetrating oil and gently attempting to rock the rotating assembly free with a wrench. At all times, in the back of his mind was one thought.

"The bad thing about owning this car is that I don't own it, the world owns it. So that was in my mind the whole time: If I broke it, that was my fault.

"Finally, on the 63rd day I grabbed my wrench, and it moved a little bit." This

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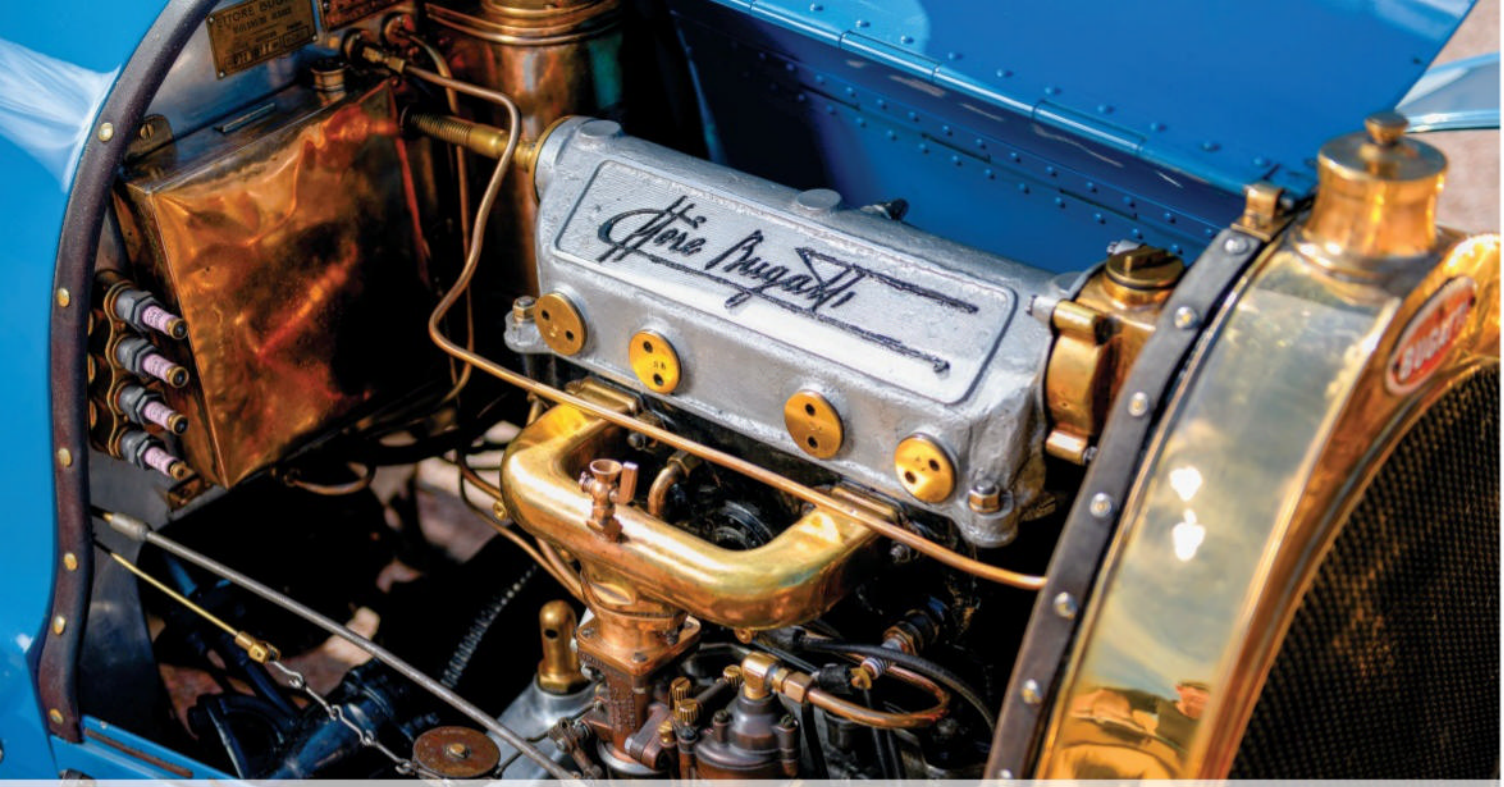
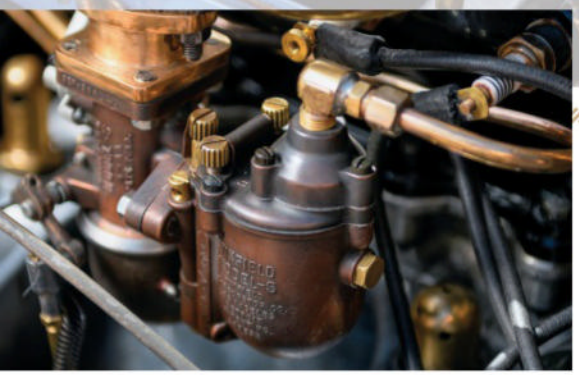
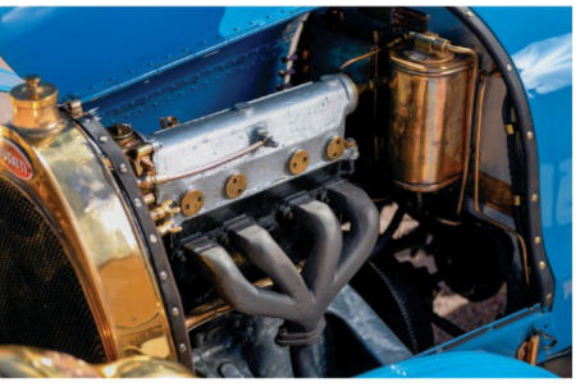
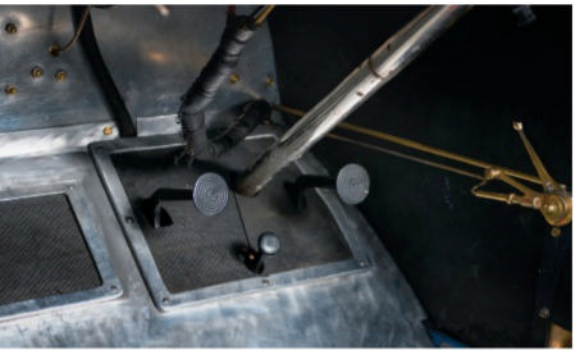


Bugatti was a fledgling brand in 1913, but the founder was so certain of future success that he had his signature and initials cast into various parts of the early Type 22s.







was a critical moment, though. Haste at this point might yet destroy whatever potentially salvageable pieces remained of Le Patron's handiwork.

"After a couple of hours, I was able to move it half a rotation, so I knew it was okay inside. Two months of stinky garage and finally I was able to move the rotating assembly all the way around."

Disassembly revealed that Alan's patience was amply rewarded, preserving the investment he'd made. "I discovered that everything was fine, but the clearances were so tight the oil left inside had glued it tight."

The engine Alan had saved is of the "large two-valve," single overhead cam, four-cylinder type, also known as the eight-valve engine. It's a predecessor to the better-known Brescia engine, which sports four valves per cylinder and is thus known as the 16-valve engine.

"The late 1913 engines are all 8-valve," Alan explains, "and 1914-on was the 16 series. The eight valves are really handmade engines and they made very few compared with 16 valves; those are more of a mass-production type unit, whereas the early ones are nickel steel castings and were different."

Don't think for a moment that the eight-valve engine makes this an inferior experience. It's still a 75-mph car, which is something when you consider its 94.5-inch wheelbase and near-cycle-car exterior dimensions. Alan has done those speeds in locations as diverse as Watkins Glen International and the roads near his home in Scottsdale, Arizona. In fact, when we called him up to speak with him for this story, he was about to drive the Type 22 to his pickleball game.

"I stopped going to Costco because I just can't put enough stuff in the car." But anytime there's an excuse, and sometimes even when there isn't, Alan is in the Bugatti and underway. Having revived it, he's utterly unafraid of it and keeps the car full of non-ethanol fuel and ready to drive at a moment's notice.

With magneto ignition and a hand crank to start, the car isn't reliant on having a battery aboard, but Alan has installed "a tiny little lithium battery" so as not to rely on the mag for lighting. Virtually everything else is the as-designed experience of 1913 and the extra ritual

associated with operating cars from an era before virtually anything had been standardized; it's a major part of the appeal.

"To start it, you have to prime your oil because it's an overhead-cam engine—you pump your pump and make sure you get enough oil in the head. Then, you pump gasoline into your gravity bronze tank on the cowl." Once fuel and oil are in their proper starting positions, hand cranking is quite easy, Alan reports. Bugatti was justly earning that brilliant reputation when this car was built.

"You let it warm up. There's no fan. It's so efficiently designed it never heats up, even in Arizona, and even though we've increased the piston height a little bit and added a bit of compression. It's got an original radiator and all that stuff. After 2-3 minutes you take off. It's got a disc clutch."

Along with everything else, clutch friction materials were far from agreed upon in this era. The Bugatti benefits from utilizing what ultimately became the predominant faction. Alternatives in this era often included cone clutches, the leather surfaces of which were notoriously grabby. Alan has taken advantage of the commonality between the Bugatti's multi-disc dry clutch and modern clutches to fit thicker material—helping to prevent warping when it gets hot.

"It's nice and smooth. It's a gated shifter like a Bentley or a Rolls-Royce and it's opposite of most cars—the H-pattern

is away from you rather than to you. The pattern is also super tight—as tight as a modern sports car. The gears are really small so you make sure you are in the gear—you might even look down to make sure—you must make sure you're really practiced at getting it in the gates, as it's got a reverse lock-out, but the rest do not. I usually rev it to 3,000 rpm, which is my normal rpm range if I'm just driving. Because the engine is only 1,500 ccs, you need to use first gear, you don't want to lug it. You shift through all the gears every time and it's so enjoyable to do that."

Once underway, the transmission offers a sonic interlude; an important part of experiencing the drive in a car like this.

"It's got straight-cut gears. In the first three gears you have the whine from the transmission—but it's a pretty whine, a whine that you want to have. It's got stock cast nickel-steel headers on the engine and they're just beautiful."

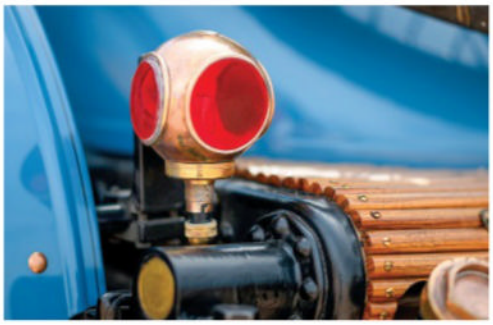
Actual driving manners are as beautiful as the sound, to say nothing of the view from the driver's seat. "The steering is so light you can steer it with literally a couple of ounces of input. When you look out over the cowl, you see the beautiful silhouette of the radiator, the big brass lamps, and your own exposed tires."

Brake controls, along with the shifter, are on the outside of the bodywork—as was the style at the time. Remember that, despite its almost 1920s styling, this car is contemporary with the more-familiar Stutz Bearcat and Mercer Raceabout.

"They're all long, brass levers, but they're really precise. It's got four-wheel brakes and when you grab the handle you slightly pull onto it. It's got a bronze trunnion at the center of the car that has a cable on it. There's one cable for both sides of the brakes and it goes to the center of the car. That equalizes the pressure and is useful if you're coming in hot. You can stop perfectly level and even if you're doing it right.

"It's never had doors or a windshield and when you drive it around it's like you're in the 1911-'15 Indy 500 or at Le Mans. You've got this beautiful racing car, and you know that it is real. It's the essence of a Porsche 356 or an MG but it is better in most ways. It's slow compared to a '50s MG. On paper every Honda in the world is faster than it, but just like a '50s MG it's an unbelievably fun car to drive. There's hardly any smoke or smells, but it's pure adrenaline. And you are driving it. I cannot imagine anything more fun than this."

Can you?



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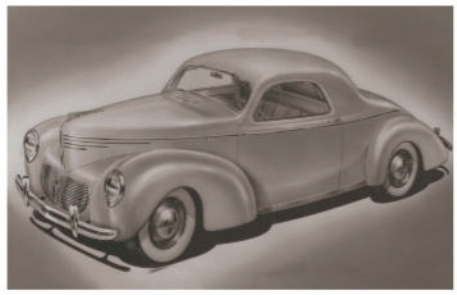
PatFoster

Save the Willys



RECENTLY I WAS perusing old-car classified ads online, thinking of possibly buying a Ford Model A, when I suddenly realized that on some websites, hot-rod Model A's outnumbered stock examples to a depressingly large degree. It occurred to me that at the rate hot rodders are mutilating Model A's, there may come a time when bone-stock examples become extinct. While I realize there are still thousands of unmodified A's out there, the possibility does exist that it might happen at some point in the future. That thought makes me sad.

It made me think of another car that faces the same bleak future: the 1937-'42 Willys, especially the coupes. Unfortunately, these vehicles have already been hot rodded to near extinction, and I fear that the day when they no longer exist in stock form is getting closer. It could happen in my lifetime and believe me, I'm no teenager. On one dealer website there were ten Willys cars for sale; nine of them were hot rods.

Sadly, today there are likely to be generations of kids who think every Willys automobile came equipped with another manufacturer's small-block V-8 and a blower intake sticking out of the hood. They likely have no idea of the original purpose of the cars. So, I thought I'd show everyone an illustration of a 1940 Willys coupe as it came from the factory, depicting what it looked like. Show it to your kids and grandkids and maybe they will appreciate how pure the styling was in its original form. After all, they may never get to see a stock example.

I realize that some readers–perhaps a great many–will object to my use of the term "mutilating Model A's." I understand that for some enthusiasts a hot rod is more desirable than an original vehicle. In the 25 years since I purchased my 1967 Rambler convertible, I've had several people suggest I stuff a small-block in it, to replace the trusty original AMC 232-cu.in. six-cylinder engine. I never will, even if someone gives me an engine for free and offers to install it as well. For one thing, I don't want another manufacturer's engine under the hood of my Rambler; for another, the 232 six has more than enough power for me. Back in my youth, I spent too many hours sitting in holding cells at the various police stations waiting for my parents to bail me out. I lost my driver's license twice and was arrested at gunpoint once; my days of fast driving are done.

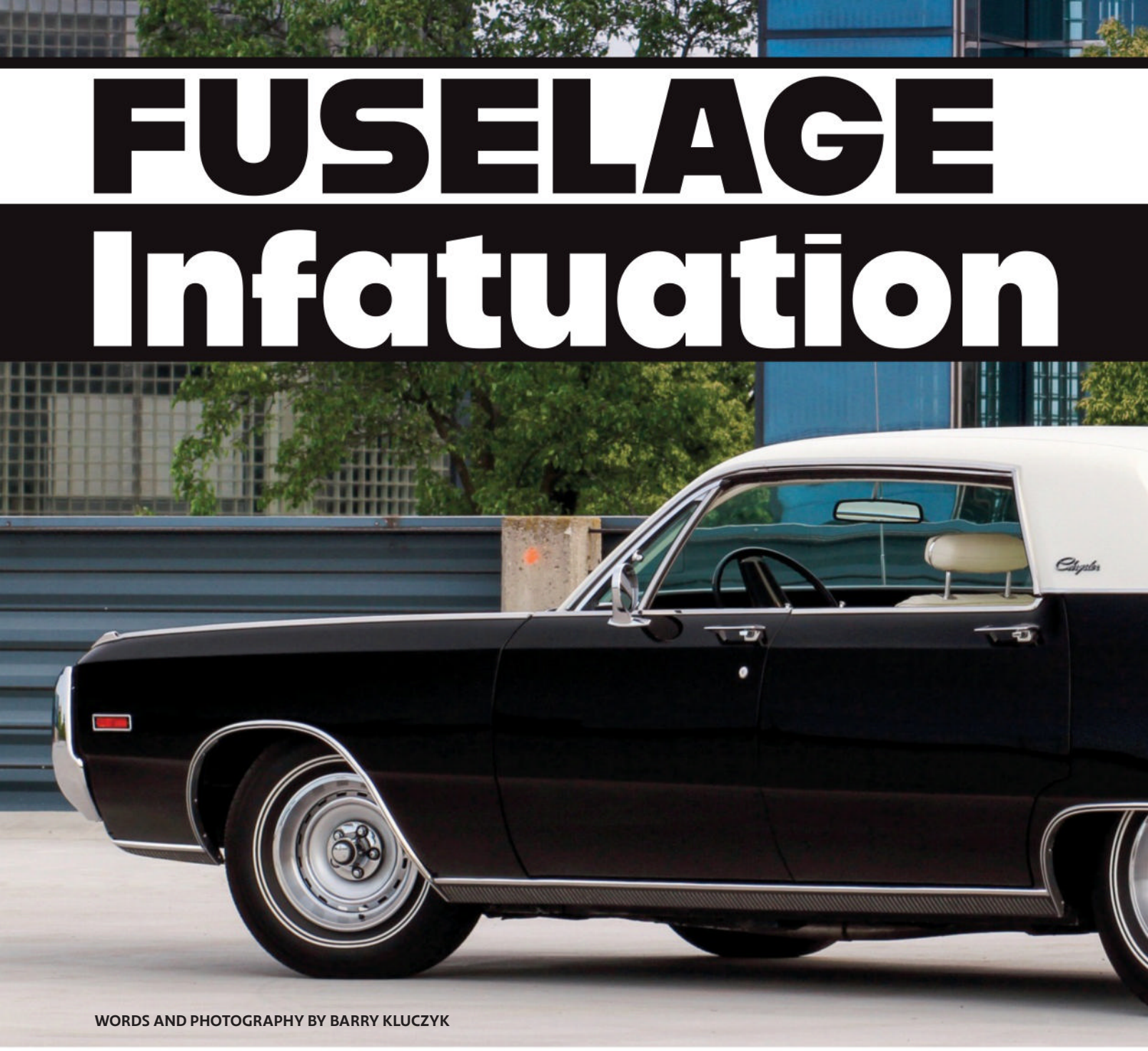
To get to the heart of the matter, I just believe hot-rodders are altering too many old cars. We need to preserve our industrial history and a lot of that involves cars—especially independent brands, which are rare enough to begin with. What also disturbs me is that hot-rodders are so desperate to own a Willys they are now hot-rodding Aero Willys cars, Jeepsters, and station wagons. One enthusiast even modified an FC pickup. Prices of nice, original Willys coupes can run over $100,000, and I believe that's because people like to buy mint originals and then rod them. The old story of, "Rodders are saving old Willys cars that otherwise wouldn't ever be restored," doesn't hold water to me; they look for the nicest original car they can find and then chop it.

The 1937-'42 Willys cars were alternative vehicles. In an era when foreign cars were almost never seen in the U.S., the Willys cars were smaller and lighter than conventional American cars (hence their popularity with hot-rodders and drag racers) motivated by modest four-cylinder engines that provided adequate power and superior fuel economy. The Willys cars were less expensive and more economical than other U.S. cars. Being smaller and less powerful, they appealed to the type of buyer who could appreciate those qualities. And often those people had to put up with smart-aleck remarks from neighbors and kids who considered Willys owners cheapskates and weirdos. It took a special person to own a Willys.

All of that is lost on people today because all they see is a loud, aggressive-looking racer that snarls and spews exhaust. The whole meaning of the car is destroyed. So, if you simply must have a Willys, buy one of the replica kits that are available. Save the remaining original cars for posterity.

"...buy one of the replica kits... Save the remaining original cars for posterity."

FUSELAGE Infatuation



WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY BARRY KLUCZYK

Elwood Engel had a knack for full-size proportions. Before he joined Chrysler in 1961 to replace the ailing Virgil Exner as the head of design, he'd already had a successful stint in Ford's studio, with the iconic 1961 Lincoln Continental at the top of his resumé.

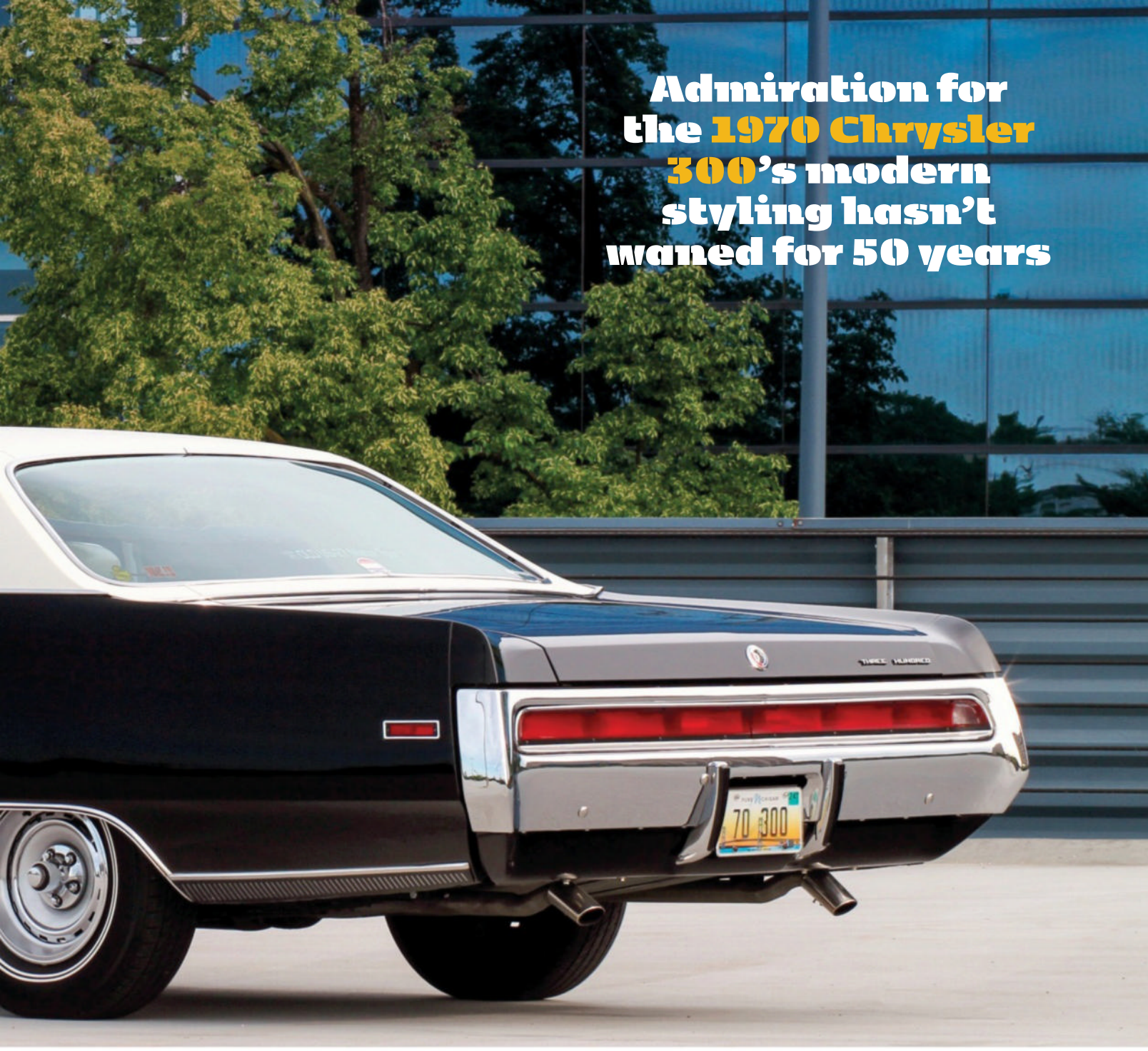
At Chrysler, he co-styled the landmark Turbine car, of which 50 prototypes were built. It had a distinct Jet Age aesthetic that influenced other production models and evolved into the "fuselage" design language that was seen in models like the 1968 Dodge Charger, and was realized fully in the 1969 Chrysler 300.

Chrysler touted the fuselage look as a "sweeping new design" that, like the jet airliners that symbolized modern transportation of the day, was sleek and trim-appearing. There were no protruding bumpers or other appendages, while the grille and hidden headlamps were sunken into a single opening within the chrome-ringed front bumper. There was also a sleek, slim, horizontal taillamp panel integrated in a similarly styled rear bumper.

It was long, low, and very modern, particularly compared to its more formal-looking predecessors and the neoclassical designs that would dominate the industry's visual direction only a few years later. And for a full-size car the 1970 Chrysler 300 incorporated some sportier touches, including available bucket seats and a console with a floor-mounted shifter for the TorqueFlite automatic transmission.

That's the combination that attracted a young Tom Haberek in 1974. He'd just spent a year in community college, after graduating from high school in 1973, and had taken a letter-carrier job with the U.S. Postal Service—a job that required his own transportation for mail delivery.

"I stopped at Dick Green Chrysler on Gratiot Avenue [in suburban Detroit] and on the front row was a black 1970 Chrysler 300 four-door hardtop with an



Admiration for the 1970 Chrysler 300's modern styling hasn't waned for 50 years

asking price of $1,995," Tom says. "It had everything — power windows, AM/FM/8-Track, air conditioning, cruise control, a tilt-and-telescoping wheel, and more— but what really set it off for me was the console and floor shift in a big car like that. It seemed very exotic and classy."

Tom took the car on a four-hour test drive and showed all his friends. He took it out for another four hours the next day, hoping to keep the 300 wrapped up long enough to dissuade anyone else from purchasing it. On the third day, he went to the dealership with his mother, who ended up buying it for him, paying $1,700 in cash.

"She said it was a late graduation present, because I never had a graduation party," Tom explains. "I was thrilled and very grateful."

Personalization of the car soon followed and rather than Cragar S/S wheels, spring shackles, and side pipes other enthusiasts were bolting to Camaros and Mustangs, Tom opted for Appliance chrome wire wheels wrapped with wide whitewalls to give it "the look." They were replaced later with Kelsey-Hayes spoked wheels, also with the wide whites, to maintain the desired appearance. A quartet of aftermarket speakers was also installed in the doors.

"In total, there were eight speakers in the car," he says. "It was awesome!"

The 300 would become Tom's primary driver, ferrying him and his friends to concerts, drive-in theaters and more, but the car wasn't perfect.

"The original owner must have been in a slight accident, because the hood, and left-front fender had been repainted, and not well," Tom says. "There were some scratches on those panels, and I used some 'color black' on them. It looked better, but not perfect."

On top of that, the big 440 engine was off its game.

"From the day I bought the car, there

Motivating the sporty-looking Chrysler 300 was a corporate 440-cu.in. V-8 that boasted 350 hp. Owner Tom has rebuilt it twice, once because of a shattered nylon camshaft gear cover.

was a significant hesitation," Tom says. "I took the engine out in my mom's garage and tore it down for a rebuild. That's when I discovered the camshaft's gear had a shattered nylon cover on it and I could almost take off the timing chain without removing the timing gears. It ran for years like that, but it was a good thing I discovered the problem."

It was during that rebuild that a young woman from the neighborhood kept stopping by to hang out while Tom was in the garage. Her name was Jan.

"I knew she had a crush on me," he says. "I'd always ask if she wanted to go for a ride. She always said yes, and we've been together now for nearly 50 years."

Other cars came and went in the following years, including a brand-new 1978 Dodge Magnum, but the 300 was Tom's keeper—even though keeping it was often a challenge. After wearing out its welcome in his mother's garage, it found other temporary homes, but the car's 18.5-foot length made things difficult.

"The 300 was just too long for most older garages," says Tom. "We finally found a place with a large-enough bay that was also heated."

Time passed and in his travels with the 300, things happened. A patch of ice sent the car pirouetting into a snowbank, damaging the grille. On another occasion, the rear bumper was damaged by a pill-popping driver who shouldn't have been behind the wheel. There were more minor incidents over the years and the car received several repairs and partial restorations as a result.

In addition to a partial repaint, the front seats had been repaired, the carpet was replaced, and more work was done. In the winter of 2009, Tom once again removed the engine, along with the transmission and front suspension, which were restored.

"Cleaning off all the old Ziebart undercoating installed when the car was new was a hassle," he tells us. "After removing the wiring harness, I had to scrape off each individual wire, but the rustproofing worked. The body was still in good shape."

In 2013, at a car show in Illinois, Tom purchased a convertible parts car to help with his rolling restoration.

"It had a better grille and rear bumper than my car, along with other good parts I needed," he says. "I also needed to get a correct air cleaner and correct 1970 valve covers, which were specific to the model year because of the way the plug wires were routed."

Garage tragedy struck in 2019, when a pair of canopy poles fell on the car's trunk, causing an estimated $3,000 in damage. After discussing the options with friends, the decision was made to strip down the body and give the car its first proper respray.

"It would be no more hodge-podge with the paintwork," Tom says. "It was the more expensive option, but absolutely the right one in the long run."

The white vinyl top was also replaced. In fact, it's been replaced three times over the years. The first time was a fantastic job by a professional trim shop,

"The 300 was just too long for most older garages."

while the second time was an admittedly inferior job performed by an acquaintance, after an old fender hanging on the garage wall fell and ripped the top. The third time was the charm, with another professional installation.

"It was all completed in about eight months—just in time for the pandemic shutdown," says Tom. "The paint shop had to finish up quickly as things were closing and they couldn't do a proper cut-and-polish. But my friend Dave McCain, who was the one who really urged me to take off the trim and get the total repaint, was able to take care of it and he did a great job."

There were other details to take care of too, like replacing the bumpers and exterior trim. That included repainting and reinstalling the super-long rocker panel trim.

"Each piece is 7 feet long and has 139 individual fins to tape off before painting," says Tom. "Fortunately, with the shutdown, I had plenty of time to work on them."

Tom also installed a set of Chrysler Road Wheels, which were paired with a set of custom-made dual-line whitewalls that matched the images in Chrysler's original brochure for the full-size lineup.

"It was the finishing touch that, to me, really made the car," Tom says. "It looked perfect."

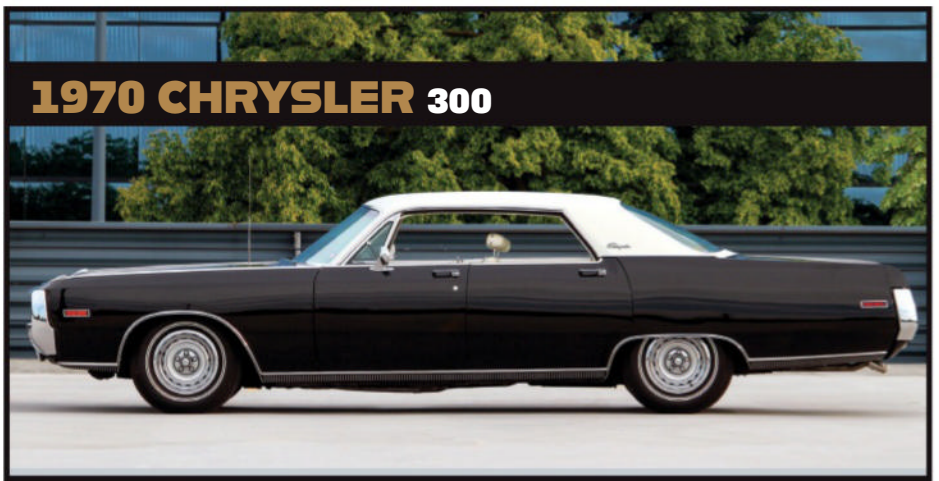
After all the time and effort to get the car just right, another quandary popped up: There was no place to show it.

"Everything was still pretty much shut down," says Tom. "No cruises. No car shows. It was like having a brand-new suit and nowhere to go in it."

Owner's View

"In 1982, we used the 300 in our wedding. There was a dent that we covered with flowers taped to the car. Five years later, after the car had been parked for a while, we opened the trunk and found the "Just Married" sign and a whole bunch of rice. That really summed up how much the car has been part of our lives—right from the very start!"
—Tom and Jan Haberek

1970 CHRYSLER 300



SPECIFICATIONS

BASE PRICE
New: $5,195
($41,108 in 2023 currency)

ENGINE
Chrysler 440-cu.in. RB-series OHV V-8
Output: 350 hp @ 4600 rpm; 480 lb-ft. of torque @ 3200 rpm

TRANSMISSION:
Type: Chrysler TorqueFlite three-speed automatic

DIFFERENTIAL:
Type: Chrysler 8.75-inch with Sure-Grip limited-slip; 2.76:1 ratio

STEERING:
Type: Recirculating ball, power-assisted

BRAKES:
Type: Hydraulic, power assisted
Front: Disc
Rear: Drum

CONSTRUCTION:
Type: Unitized steel body and chassis

WHEELS:
Type: Chrysler stamped steel
Size: 15 x 7 inches

TIRES:
Type: Bias-ply (original); radial (current)
Front: H-70 x 15 (original); P225/65R15 (current)
Rear: H-70 x 15 (original); P225/65R15 (current)

Car life eventually returned, of course, and Tom and Jan began taking the restored fuselage Chrysler to events again. The car was even photographed in front of a mid-century home to help illustrate a book on modern design, and it was one of the standout stock-condition cars at the 2023 Detroit Autorama, which is where we found it.

It's been 50 years since Tom Haberek spotted this 300 on a dealer lot and made it a permanent part of his life. It has never looked better, and Elwood Engel's distinctive fuselage design language still looks modern.

"I still think it's a great-looking car," he says. "Just like my wife, it still makes my head turn."

A Chat with Vivian LaVine

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY DAVID CONWILL

The co-founder of LaVine Restorations on 40 years of success

For a small business, long-term success—multi-generational success for family businesses—requires at least two elements: talent and business savvy. Pure talent is often broke for lack of organization. Pure business acumen too often turns out a mediocre, passionless product. Marry the two, however, then stir in healthy doses of blood, sweat, and tears, and success should follow.

LaVine Restorations, Inc., in Nappanee, Indiana, has been in operation for over 40 years now, doing concours-level restorations; building hot rods, street rods, and customs; and performing service, maintenance, and repair on collector cars. Vivian LaVine, who co-founded the business with her husband Eric, is a respected elder in the restoration community who also sits on the board of the Studebaker Museum and serves

as treasurer of the Auburn-Cord-Duesenberg Club. Hers is a remarkable story, especially for its era and location, but she is a remarkable individual. Vivian LaVine embodies the talent-business combination.

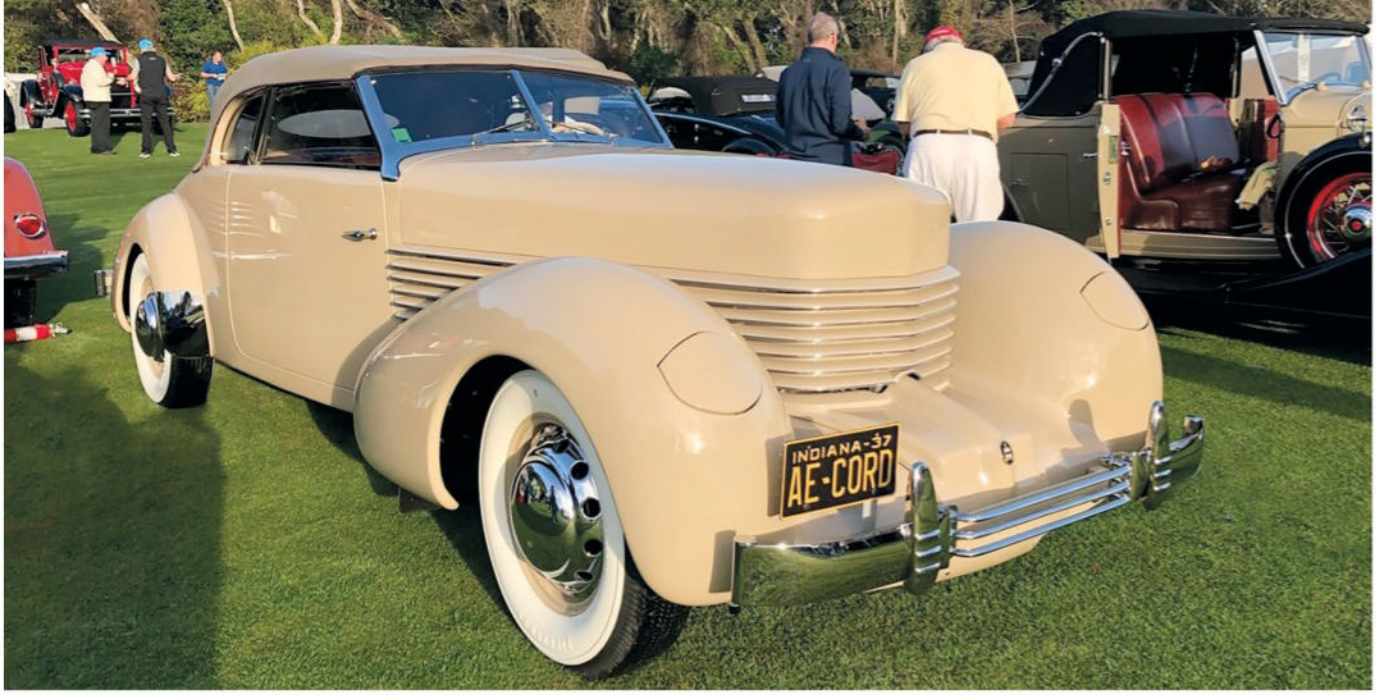
The tale begins some 8,300 miles away on another continent.

"My mom was the car person," she says. "My mother's father was a chauffeur for the Prime Minister of New Zealand back in the 1930s."

Vivian's father, a United States Marine, met Vivian's mother and brought her back home to Indiana, where Vivian was born. She grew up studying the internal-combustion machinery of midcentury America at her mother's elbow.

"She included me in all of her small engine repairs and she maintained all of the family cars, and I worked with her a lot." High-school shop class followed on, as did an Oldsmobile Cutlass of Vivian's own.

Being a "car girl" in the 1970s was noteworthy, but oddly it wasn't that which led to meeting husband Eric. Instead, they connected over a shared love of downhill skiing. Eric, who is six years older than Vivian, was a college student managing a ski



Two of LaVine Restorations most recently completed projects are in the JBS Collection. Collector Jack Boyd Smith, Jr., likes the rarest cars he can find, which includes Amelia Earhart's 1937 Cord 812 (above) and a one-of-under-20-remaining 1933 Chrysler Imperial CL (below). Both the Cord and the Imperial debuted at the Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance, in 2021 and '22 respectively, where both earned 2nd Place in Class C: American Classic.

lodge at the time. Again—business savvy. A shared appreciation for wrenching just tightened the bond.

"He drove several different cars and we always worked on those and the Cutlass together. Once we got married, I encouraged him to pursue the hobby and we started restoring a TR250."

The 1968 Triumph TR250 was a rough roadside find. The newlyweds put it in their single-car garage and restored it meticulously. Again—talent.

The LaVines started driving the restored Triumph, which caught the attention of Harold Fairchild, a local collector in Nappanee, who recognized the car from the roadside.

"He saw us driving it after we got it all finished. He couldn't believe it because he said he knew where the car had come from." Soon, Fairchild was sending the LaVines cars to restore for his own collection and in turn recommending them to collector friends, notably S. Ray Miller and Tom Lester, founder of Lester Tire. Lester had a car he hoped to enter into the Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance.

"We had done some cars for S. Ray that Tom ended up buying, so he came to us with a Minerva and said he wanted to take it to Pebble Beach. He'd never been out there, neither had we." The LaVines restored the Belgian-built luxury car in their characteristic manner: complete to the nth detail, but without really knowing what they were getting themselves into.

"We did a complete restoration starting in late '85 and we took it out, very naive of the circumstances of that show. It won first in class, and they put you in a group with the first-class winners and we were getting ready to leave and the group leader said, 'Don't go anywhere!' We thought we'd upset him, but the reality was we'd won Best of Show, and he couldn't tell us."

Talent again. That, plus a trail of satisfied clients, not to mention a level of organization, precision, and can-do attitude not seen in many places, led to still more clients and to the long-term success that eludes so many.

"We've been out there pretty much every year since then. We've won lots of first and second and lots of special awards."

We were curious, of course, what the reaction had been to Vivian being so heavily involved in what was primarily a male hobby—both as a teen and then as an adult businesswoman. Happily, it seems the average man was pretty enthused by the garage becoming more co-ed.

"I used to get a lot of comments. Mainly it was 'I wish my wife would do what you do: have an interest in the cars.'"

Of course, today Vivian and Eric are nearing retirement age. The "graying" of the hobby is a great concern to everyone, but LaVine Restorations is a bright point. Vivian and Eric's son, Travis, takes closely after his talented and savvy parents. While Vivian couldn't make the Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance in 2023, due to health concerns, Travis shepherded a LaVine-restored 1923 Rolls-Royce (next issue's cover car) to a second-place finish

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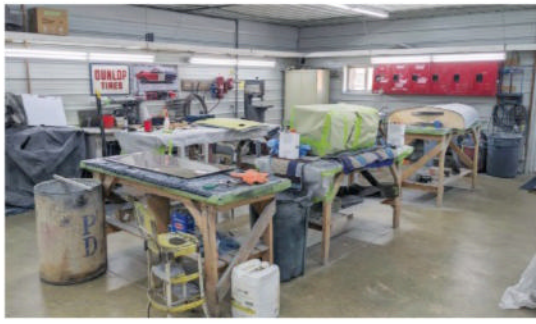
The facilities at LaVine Restorations have grown steadily over the years, but there is nothing haphazard or slapdash about the operation inside. All details have been carefully seen to in order to provide a comprehensive, correct, and well-documented restoration on each car that comes through.



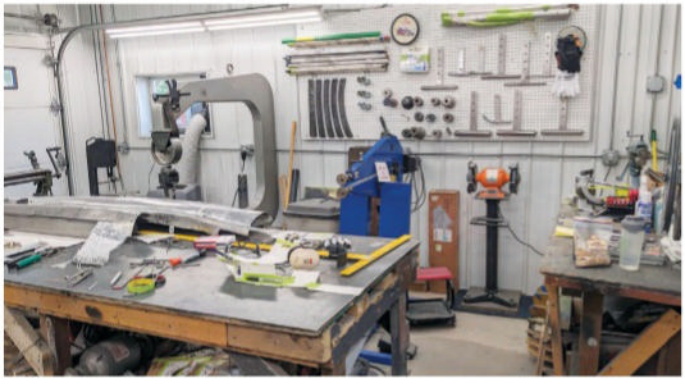
in its class and the Ansel Adams Award, which goes to the most desirable touring car in its era and is named for the famed photographer who often served as an honorary judge at Pebble Beach.

None of this was a foregone conclusion, however, says Vivian. She and Eric never wanted to force the family business on Travis and encouraged him to find his own path in life.

"Travis always worked with us when he was younger. We've got pictures of him when he was three years old, sweeping the shop and such, but we never wanted to encourage him to be in the business unless he really wanted to."

Travis, in turn, went to law school and was practicing in Washington, D.C., when he decided that he'd rather be restoring cars after all. Thankfully, it turns out the skills of researching the law and presenting a case, marshalling evidence, and the sheer attention to detail required in law cross right over to high-level restorations and showing them at events like Pebble Beach, plus a slew of U.S. and international shows on a similar level.

"We were thrilled, it's been great having him back." Vivian says, and he's built solidly atop the foundations his



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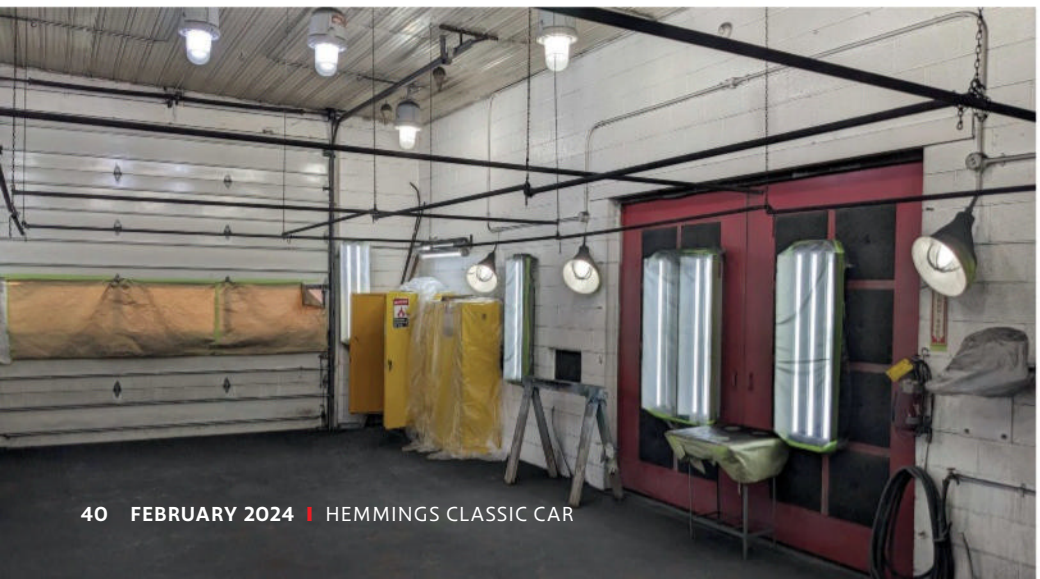

parents put in place over four decades. "We've always been real sticklers about getting pictures and documentation, but he's a real go getter and has really changed the way we record things."

Travis is also helping dispel the notion that the car world is graying out by building relationships with the next generations of restorers and owners. That's critical, Vivian thinks, to the long-term survival not only of the family business, but the entire old-car scene.

"I can't imagine this industry going away, but I see it's changing enormously because of the age group. We lose people every day in this business because of age, so it's great to see him interacting with the younger people to keep these industries involved and excited."

Do not expect Vivian to ever retire fully. She still has the passion required and that will never let a person rest. To restore these cars, she says, "is still something that brings me joy, to know that we've done that and it's a piece of art. I love seeing our guys going through the process and seeing the process once it's completed. They still come to me for advice and it's very exciting."

Two Auburns, a roadster and a speedster, occupied the reassembly room at LaVine during our August 2023 visit.

Replacing the decayed original plastics on prewar luxury cars has become a lot easier since LaVine has invested heavily in 3D-printing technology. It complements existing reproduction product lines like cloisonne badges and data plates.

CONTACT:
LaVine Restorations
(574) 773-7561 • lavinerestorations.com

Rattling the Sabre

A best-selling full-size Buick emerges from 40 years of slumber

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY
BY SCOTTY LACHENAUER

We've all seen it happen. That melancholy moment when the family workhorse gets put out to pasture, officially retired from daily duty. From there, the vehicle's first few months in storage quickly turn into years, and years turn into decades, as the once prominent transport of family and life gets buried in layers of dust and dirt—sometimes becoming convenient horizontal storage for other cast-aside items of daily life.

Our featured 1964 Buick LeSabre convertible was one such vehicle, unceremoniously retired after years of committed service, and banished to the back of a family's storage space for half a lifetime. Though this seems to be a brief, bleak recap of this LeSabre's history, there is an upside to the near tragic tale. Luckily, by a twist of fate, this drop-top cruiser's metal had been preserved, and the Buick arose from its years of hibernation for a second chance at life.

That day recently came when its then-owners decided it was time to let go of the LeSabre. Once pulled from storage, it was sent to a public auction. It was there that New Jersey barn-find guru Carl "CJ" Manfra saw the dusty Buick as it went across the auction block. "I'm not really into going to auctions to find cars, but I just happened to be at the sale and saw this one roll in. The Buick looked like it was just dragged out of a long sleep. It was soiled, but it was a relatively solid looking car, so I took a chance bidding on it, and won it for a good price," CJ says.

What CJ eventually brought home was an interesting Buick to say the least. His acquisition proved to be a very complete and original mid-Sixties convertible. "I took a stab at it basically because, first, it's a convertible. Second, it's a pretty straight car still wearing its original paint. Lastly, it's basically all there and hasn't been messed with. That's a great combination that's hard to find these days. You just don't get to buy many Sixties vehicles in this barn-fresh condition anymore."

The LeSabre became an integral part of Buick's catalog when it was introduced. The LeSabre name replaced Special on Buick's entry-level model at the same time the GM B-body platform was restyled. Both changes debuted for 1959. LeSabre became one of Buick's best-selling full-size cars in the ensuing decades. The formula for sales success was virtually unchanged. Bolstered by attractive pricing, the LeSabre offered buyers sufficient power, luxurious cabin comfort, and sleek exterior styling.

Rust had eaten away the bottom of the Buick's muffler, but not the fuel tank.

This LeSabre left the factory with a standard two-barrel equipped 300-cu.in. V-8 engine rated for 210 hp; however, someone swapped the air cleaner lid for that of a 1971 Chevy "Turbo Jet."

The model's design satisfied consumer desire for two-door sedans, hardtops, and convertibles as well as four-door sedans, hardtops, and station wagons throughout much of its lifespan.

In its initial year, the LeSabre was powered by Buick's "Wildcat" 364-cu.in. V-8 engine that, fitted with a two-barrel carburetor, was rated at 210 hp when paired with a standard manual transmission, or 250 hp when paired with a Twin or Triple Turbine Dynaflow. The ensemble was supported by a new box-section K-frame that featured a 123-inch wheelbase and a full coil-sprung suspension system.

Improvements were modest for 1960 examples, most notably minor styling upgrades and tweaks to the power team, but by '61 the B- (and larger C-body) platforms witnessed dramatic visual and further modest engineering changes. Conspicuously absent were "Delta Wings," Buick's name for the angled tailfins of 1959-'60. Together with crisp flanks and new front-end styling, the second-generation LeSabres ushered in a new era of sophisticated performance.

As it happened, 1964 was the last year for the second-generation LeSabre. Over the course of the previous three years, the model had received minor trim and sheetmetal refinements but retained its overall styling. The main change for 1964, though, was under the hood. Sedans, coupes and convertibles welcomed the new 300-cu.in. "Wildcat 310" V-8. Based on the architecture of the all-aluminum 215 V-6, the new block was cast-iron but saved weight with the use of cast-aluminum cylinder heads. In standard, two-barrel form, the 300 boasted 210 hp. The only step up in power for most cars came via a four-barrel equipped, 250-hp 300 dubbed the "Wildcat 355." Station

Not a single piece of the LeSabre's exterior trim was missing when the car was was pulled from its long slumber.

wagons were the lone exception to this in the LeSabre line, as they came equipped only with the older-design, 325-hp, 401-cu.in. V-8.

Under the hood of this LeSabre, the engine appears to be factory-original; in this case it's believed to be the base 300-cu.in. Wildcat 310. Around it, the engine bay has barely been touched, with the exception of common wear items such as hoses and wires that clearly were replaced. One glaring exception is the fact that for some unknown reason, the engine is wearing an air cleaner lid from a 1971 Chevrolet "Turbo Jet" 400 engine. According to CJ, "Everything else seems to be there. I haven't tried to get this car started yet, nor have I cleaned it. I'm going to let the next owner do that."

CJ is not completely certain as to which transmission is installed. "It could be the two-speed Super Turbine 300 or the three-speed Super Turbine 400. I'm thinking it's the former." (*Editor's note: The ST-300 was the default automatic in combination with the Wildcat 310, while the ST-400 was paired with the Wildcat 355 and available as a heavy-duty option with the Wildcat 310.*) Regardless, the transmission sends engine output to what CJ believes to be the factory differential containing the assembly-line standard (and highway-friendly) 3.07:1 gearset. Buick's hallmark 12-inch brake drums remain at each corner: finned aluminum up front, finned cast-iron out back.

This LeSabre's apparent mechanical completeness was complemented by a body that seemed to be in equally great shape for its age. That the convertible had been off the road and in hiding for over 40 years was confirmed by a 1982 Pennsylvania registration sticker. CJ deems the exterior rust to be minimal and relegated to the bottom of some of the lower body panels and portions of the tail panel. For a car hailing from the Northeast, that counts as impressive.

From the heavy paint burn on top of the rear panels and trunk lid, it's obvious that the LeSabre spent some time outside. A big plus was that the car still wore all its trim that remained in excellent shape. Even the grill and front bumper were relatively clean, a rarity for a near 60-year-old car.

"Having the trim means there's no need to search for those hard-to-find parts. And without a doubt, the paint condition makes this Buick a perfect candidate for a Driveable Dream-type ride," CJ says.

Despite the exterior's reasonable condition, the interior has seen better days, though much of it is still intact. While the dash is in excellent shape,

Factory paint, lack of damage, and a convertible top were attributes of this LeSabre that appealed to its current owner.

with the original radio surviving years of fair-weather cruising, the two-spoke steering wheel shows use, even on the aftermarket wrap that provided a driver a little extra grip and thickness. Amazingly, though covered in six decades of storage dust and grime, the bench seats remain apparently untorn. "The vinyl could possibly be cleaned and saved," CJ says. The door panels are not so lucky, and worse still is what remains of the convertible top. Despite this LeSabre's apparent 'base-model' status, one plus here are the optional power windows.

As for the remaining exterior attributes, the original wheel covers are in excellent shape and show little or no road rash or dings. Unfortunately, the back bumper displays some heavy rot and will need to be replaced. The chassis too, shows rust and surface corrosion from its early years in the Northeast, but none of the metal maladies are as bad as they could have been. As an example, the floors seem to be solid front-to-back. It's understandable that the exhaust has slowly disintegrated with time.

Overall, CJ is quite pleased with his bargain buy. "I'm really not much of a Buick guy, but I was drawn to it. For now, it's going to stick around, and I'll eventually pass it on. My plan is to let someone else get this one back on the road, someone who can revive it properly and enjoy it. This LeSabre deserves another shot at life on the road."

Look past the decades of dirt and grime and one can see the original seat upholstery is intact.

BY TOM COMERRO

AACA

The 1929 Ford Model A Town Car of Stanley and Mary Sorrels, 2023 AACA Zenith Award runner-up.

AACA ANNUAL CONVENTION IN THE D.C. AREA

The 2024 AACA (Antique Automobile Club of America) Annual Convention will take place near the nation's capital as it prepares for a busy year. The Westfields Marriott Washington Dulles, located in Chantilly, Virginia, will serve as the host hotel for the event that serves as a launching point for the club's upcoming season. There will be seminars to help attendees make the most out of shows and touring events, a trade show, judging schools, banquets, and the highly anticipated national awards that honor AACA members' best vehicles displayed during 2023 in various categories. There will also be a trip to the Air & Space Museum among the tourist attractions in and around the Washington, D.C. area. The convention will be held from February 8–10. Visit aaca.org for booking, discounts, and more.

1964 Corvair Monza sedan; photo by Jim Donnelly.

CORVAIR DREAMING

The 39th Annual Corvair Lovers Holiday and Car Show will take place at the Cottages on the Greens, Perdido Bay Golf Course in Pensacola, Florida, this winter. The two-day event encourages Corvairs from all points to make their way to the Sunshine State. The itinerary will include banquets, a car show, tech sessions, valve cover races, prizes and more. Awards will be given to Corvair owners in various categories, including longest distance traveled, People's Choice, hard luck, and best of show, among others. The show, which will be hosted by the West Florida chapter of the Corvair Society of America, will take place February 16 and 17. Email wfcc@mediacombb.net for more details.

PETERSEN'S "SPLENDOR AND SPEED"

The Petersen Automotive Museum in Los Angeles, California, pulled together some of the rarest cars and artifacts in the museum's collection for its "Splendor and Speed: Treasures of the Petersen Collection" exhibit. Located in the Bruce Meyer Family Gallery at the facility, the exhibit features a mix of Brass Era to modern day vehicles with emphasis on style, design, performance, and rarity.

"The display is a fitting reflection of the exceptional assortment of vehicles we have in our collection," said the Petersen's director, Terry L. Karges. "We are delighted to have visitors view the museum's most cherished vehicles and artifacts."

Some of the highlights of the display include a 1925 Rolls-Royce Phantom I Aerodynamic Coupe by Jonckheere that features unusual styling cues, including circular doors and dual sunroofs; Steve McQueen's 1956 Jaguar XKSS; a 1953 Cadillac Series 62 by Ghia; and the 1932 "Ray Brown Roadster," among many others. In addition, there are nearly 100 mid-20th century design models and concept artworks, plus film footage and artifacts representing the Petersen non-vehicular archives.

There's plenty of time to check out the "Splendor and Speed" display, which will remain available for viewing until June 2. Visit petersen.org for tickets and more information.

PETERSEN AUTOMOTIVE MUSEUM

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Make/Model: 1956 Chevrolet Bel Air Hardtop
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Make/Model: 1971 Plymouth Hemi Road Runner
Asking Price: $300,000

BY TOM COMERRO

KING REMNANT

Harley Goff, of Mankato, Minnesota, sent us a note about an interesting find he made in an old creek bed while excavating his property. Among the many Minnesota license plates dating back to the World War I era, he dug up this partially nickel-plated emblem. Harley initially thought it was from an early residential furnace, but his further research revealed it was a radiator emblem from an old King 8 automobile. Touted as "The Car of No Regrets," King automobiles had decent production runs for about a dozen years. About 3,000 were produced at the height of the company's popularity, at which time King cars were exported as far away as Russia and South America.

Charles Brady King is recognized as one of the earliest pioneers of automobiles in America and is credited as the first person to drive a car in Detroit—on Woodward Avenue in 1896. Before founding King Motor Car Company, he provided inspiration and parts to Henry Ford (Ford saw King's drive on Woodward) before participating in the Spanish-American War. When King returned to the U.S., he teamed up with Ransom Olds, and later Jonathan Maxwell, at the Northern Car Company. Though King never had the success of Ford, Olds, or Maxwell, in terms of automobile production, he was an important character in the early emergence of the industry. King cars had rare features that would become standard, such as left-hand drive, monobloc engines, center controls, and more. King was also a founding member of The Automobile Old Timers in 1939, which became The Automotive Hall of Fame.

Harley says that it's somewhat surprising King has been overlooked and we wholeheartedly agree. Unfortunately, we've never featured a King in *Hemmings Classic Car*, but we suspect a few may still exist. Harley hopes to find an owner of a King 8 in need of a radiator emblem so that he can present it as a gift.

HUDSON HAULER

Ryan Mifflin spotted this rare step van made by Hudson. This C-10 all-purpose vehicle (APV) was a part of the company's commercial and business car line built for the 1941 model year. It's outfitted with a Checker Motors body, and it's believed to be one of eight made—it may be the only one extant. Boasting some Divco-esque styling cues, a 92- or 98-hp engine housed inside the body of the vehicle, and a 116-inch wheelbase chassis, it was a large step up from the company's panel truck. Built specifically for stand-up and sit-down driving to aid in deliveries and utility, this example can be seen at the Yam hill County Heritage Center in McMinnville, Oregon. What rare commercial cars and trucks have you seen out in the wild? Let us know.

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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MUSEUM OF AMERICAN SPEED

A MODEL T AT THE FIRST 24 HOURS OF LE MANS

And how did it manage a 14th place finish?

BY DANIEL STROHL

PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN SPEED, CHRIS MARTIN COLLECTION, AND BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE DE FRANCE

Among the Bugattis, the Bentley, the Chenard-Walckers, the Excelsiors, and many other continental Europe racing standbys of the interwar era that had lined up for the inaugural 24 Hours of Le Mans sat a lone Ford Model T. It wasn't described as such on the entry list, and it sported a number of modifications that almost made it unrecognizable as a Model T, but a Ford it was nevertheless, making it the first one to race at Le Mans, long before the GT40s that ran in the Sixties and the Mustang that Ford wants to enter there for the 92nd installment in June 2024. So how did a Model T get there?

Charles Montier is hardly a household name these days, particularly here in the United States, but in a way, the Frenchman was an analogue to Carroll Shelby, Colin Chapman, or Sydney Allard, all of them adept at transforming common cars or their components into sports cars that could compete in the marketplace as well as on the racetrack. While Henri Depasse had staked a claim as the first Ford agent in France and leveraged his success to build a factory for assembling Fords at Bordeaux, Montier took on Ford's second French franchise around 1911 not necessarily to sell to the masses but to sell to the sporting set.

Charles Montier

CHRIS MARTIN

WHO WAS CHARLES MONTIER?

As Chris Martin wrote in his book, *Charles Montier: and his French racing Fords*, which chronicled Montier's exploits, Montier was a gifted mechanic who built a steam car with his father before the turn of the century and who "acquired the nickname of 'Le Sorcier' ('The Sorcerer') long before that name was revived later for the better known Amédée Gordini, for his similar ability to extract performance from equally ordinary Renaults."

First based in Tours then later in Paris, Montier appeared to take great inspiration from the catalogs full of American speed parts for the Model T, Martin suggested. "The *Fordia* magazine circulated to all Ford agents published a list of accessories that APCO Manufacturing Company located in Kansas could supply: Ruckstell axles, Ricardo or Diablo pistons, special camshafts, high-compression Milwaukee cylinder heads, and above all, modifications to lower the chassis and front axle," Martin wrote.

Rather than buy the parts from APCO, however, Montier decided to engineer and manufacture his own, starting with a complete system for lowering the front and rear of a Model T by 6 to 7 inches. The system, which consisted of a spring-behind-axle conversion in front and Z'd frame rails in the rear, even earned him a patent in 1921, about a decade and a half before Ford did something similar by moving the axle behind the spring rather than underneath it. Another modification he made–a taller radiator for increased cooling capacity–also made its way into production Model T's not long after he introduced it.

Around the same time, Montier decided to prove his modifications by entering cars equipped with them in hillclimbs and other competition events. He won the first race he entered, at Boulogne-sur-Mer, in June 1921, with an average speed of about 80 mph. By the next year, he'd developed a model specifically for conforming to the Touring Car class and its requirement for four seats, which he called the Gaillon. Not just lower, it also produced more power thanks to an overhead-valve head similar to Louis Chevrolet's Frontenac heads, larger valves, aluminum pistons, a sidedraft carburetor, and a tubular exhaust manifold. Montier even swapped out the Ford planetary transmission and Ford axle for a Sinpar three-speed gearbox and Ruckstell. He upgraded the brakes, first with larger rear drums then later with drums at all four corners.

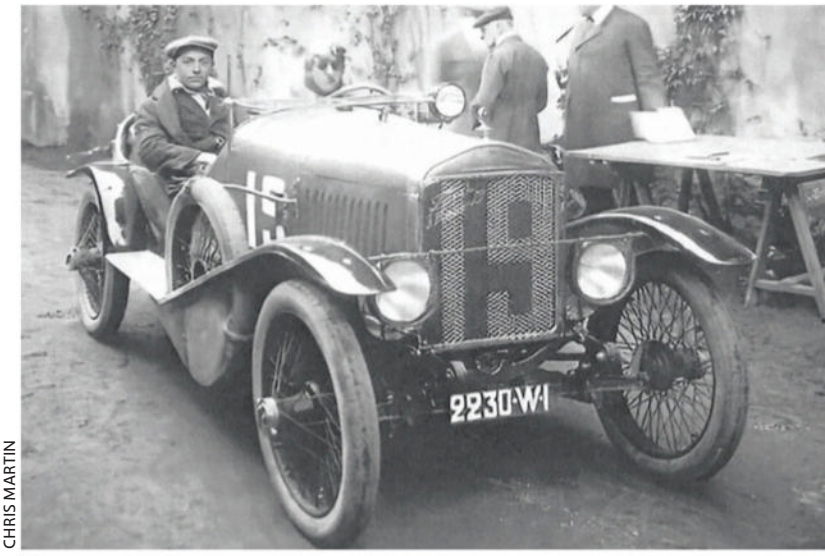
THE FIRST 24 HOURS OF LE MANS

Officially called the Grand Prix d'Endurance de 24 Heures, the first 24 Hours of Le Mans was conceived by the Automobile Club de l'Ouest not to test cars' maximum speeds, but rather their reliability at speed. As a result, scoring considered not just the absolute distance that each car covered in the race's 24 hours but also the ratio of distance covered versus target distance, the latter calculated based on the engine displacement of each individual entry. And that's the simplified version; scoring also took into account each entrant's progress throughout the event. Race sponsor Rudge-Whitworth had stipulated that the 1923 contest would be just the first of a series that would decide an ultimate winner based on cumulative results over three consecutive years.

The race would take place at Circuit de la Sarthe, a well-established course running from the city of Le Mans to the village of Mulsanne and back, along many of the same roads and around many of the same corners where the race takes place today. Rather than the middle of the summer, however, that first race occurred in late May.

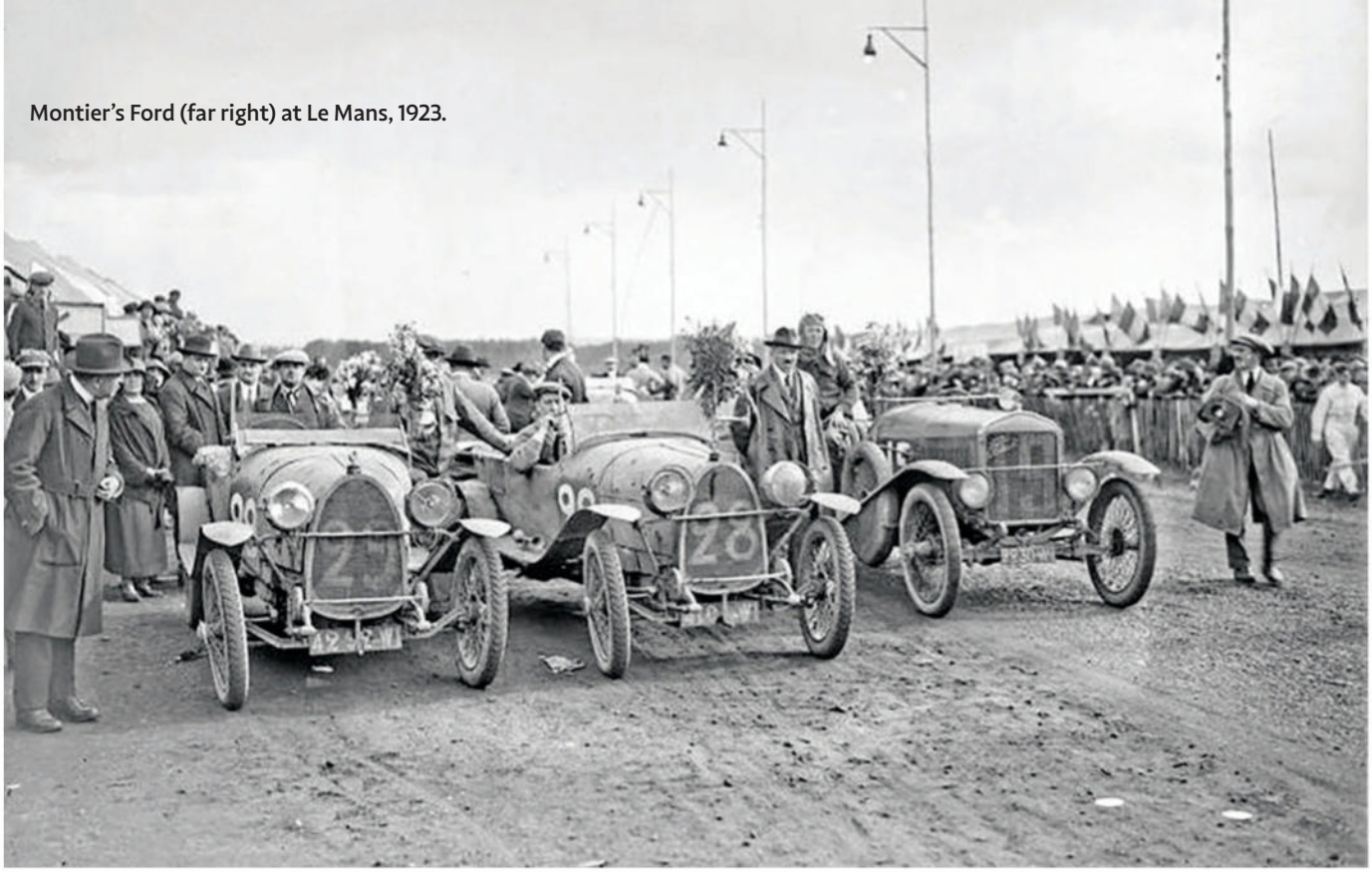
The rules called for the cars to demonstrate roadworthiness with folding tops, headlamps, full fenders and running boards, and a horn. Convertibles had to run a portion of the race with their tops up. No racing mechanics were allowed, though one relief driver was allowed. Only the drivers could refuel their cars.

"To ensure a pretense at least that these were production cars there was also a stipulation that thirty similar models had been built," Martin wrote. "Although we know by 1923 half the cars in the world were Model T Fords, it is unclear exactly how many of his 'specials' Montier had built. Of course, although most cars at that time wore bodywork supplied by independent coach builders, the chassis and mechanical components were supposed to be the same as the production cars available to the



CHRIS MARTIN

Montier and Ouriou at Le Mans, 1923.



Montier's Ford (far right) at Le Mans, 1923.

BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE DE FRANCE

public. Presumably the ACO officials did not notice or chose to ignore Montier's modifications to the Ford chassis."

While Montier sometimes chose his son Ferdinand as his riding mechanic, he decided to race at Le Mans with his brother-in-law Albert Ouriou as relief driver. Montier entered one of his four-seater Gaillon Fords in the under-3-liter class under the banner of Établissements Charles Montier et Cie and started with race number 19.

MONTIER'S RESPECTABLE SHOWING

For a race that would become infamous for danger, death, and destruction in later decades, the 1923 24 Hours of Le Mans was rather sedate, especially considering the rainy conditions throughout the race. Of the 33 cars that started, all but three finished, and off-track excursions were limited to just a couple of incidents.

Many accounts of the event focus on the Bentley's travails and the curious results in which there was technically no declared winner; a pair of Chenard-Walckers finished first and second in absolute distance covered, and a 1.1-liter Salmson took the lead in the Rudge-Whitworth Cup competition by exceeding its target distance by 46 laps.

Even Martin's account of the race boils down to less than a paragraph. Montier and Ouriou completed 97 laps, managing a top speed of about 75 mph and an average speed of about 45 mph, to take 14th place in distance covered, seventh in their class. Official race tabulation doesn't help much either, only showing that Montier and Ouriou steadily worked their way up

Restored Montier Ford.

MUSEUM OF AMERICAN SPEED

from 23rd place a quarter of the way through the race to 14th by the three-quarter mark. It's uncertain how many target laps they were required to cover and thus how many laps in excess of that number they notched up, but they finished somewhere out of the top 10 in the Rudge-Whitworth Cup standings.

Montier did return to Le Mans again with his modified Fords in 1924 and '25, though with far less success. In 1924, he DNF'd with a broken piston, then in '25 officials disqualified him for failing to complete a minimum distance partway through the race.

AFTER LE MANS

Montier continued to compete for the next decade or so in hill-climb and Grand Prix racing, switching to Model A's with similar modifications to his Model T's. In the early Thirties, he even built a straight-eight using two Model A four-cylinders mounted inline to each other and raced it until Ford's new V-8 became available in France in late 1933.

"The last Montier-Fords achieved better results, but funds were running low and realistically by the fast-improving standards of the 1930s technology, the Fords were getting left behind, no match for the Alfa Romeos, Bugattis and Mercedes-Benz opposition with or without Charles Montier's 'sorcery,'" Martin wrote.

The Ford-based race cars and coachbuilt specials that Montier sold continued until roughly the same time, when Ford merged with Mathis to create Matford in 1934 and elected not to renew Montier's agency. According to Martin, he later ran a taxi business and a mechanics school before dying in 1952 at the age of 72.

By Martin's count, nine Montier Fords remain in existence, including the one now at the Museum of American Speed in Lincoln, Nebraska. According to museum historian Bob Mays, the car in the museum was the one that Montier and Ouriou drove in the 1923 24 Hours of Le Mans. However, Martin notes only that it uses the same Gaillon-type body used in that race and is "certainly the closest to an original car" of those in existence. When discovered, it had a Model T engine that had been sleeved down to 2.0 liters to meet the reduced taxation class requirements in 1920s France, as well as a Montier-modified chassis.

The car subsequently went to Jean-Pierre Hombert, an expert in French Model T's, who restored it sometime ahead of the 2008 Le Mans Classic, where the Montier Ford was able to run the circuit wearing the number 19 and French blue paint. It ran the event again in 2010 then sold at auction in '15 for €30,000 to the museum.

Not until 1937 would another Ford compete at Le Mans, this one a privately entered British Ford-based CX Special. Curiously, it, too, placed 14th.

Long Hauler

This ’70 GMC pickup was built to carry nearly anything

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY ERIC ENGLISH

Dave Plummer is hardly the first enthusiast who went looking for one model of vehicle, only to shift gears and end up with something else, but his story is an interesting evolution, nonetheless. “I had been searching for years for a ½-ton 1967-’72 big-block short bed GMC Sierra Grande—a ‘muscle truck’ of sorts—but never found one. In the meantime, I stumbled onto this one-owner ¾-ton Longhorn, and for about half a second contemplated shortening it,” Dave explained. However, the heavy-duty, distinctive nature of the long GMC quickly reeled Dave in, and a return to original condition ensued.

Much of the motivation for a stock restoration hinged on the GMC’s well-preserved condition. Credit for that goes to original owners Fred and Jessie Klotthor, and a life spent in California. The Klotthors rolled up slightly over 100,000 miles on the truck through the years, and family photos revealed that a small camper was often used during summertime vacations to various destinations across the U.S. Dave has connected with some of

Original owners Fred and Jessie Klotthor pose with their 1970 GMC 2500 in this undated photo.

Here is the truck as it arrived at Muscle Car Restorations in Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin, for paint and body repair.

the Klotthors' extended family, and grandkids fondly recall riding and sleeping in the camper on the GMC. We're told there was even an intercom fitted between the camper and the truck cab, and while that doesn't sound high-tech today, some would have considered it cutting-edge in the day.

The truck was a great rust-free example of GMC's ultimate carrying and camping platform. For starters, there's an unusual bed configuration that in Chevrolet-speak was called a Longhorn. Available only on ¾- and 1-ton two-wheel drive pickups, the Longhorn stretched the standard bed and wheelbase from 8 feet (127 inches) to 8.5 feet (133 inches). While Chevrolet even saw fit to install Longhorn emblems on such trucks, GMC did not. In fact, GMC doesn't seem to have used any terminology beyond "133-inch" in its literature, though the hobby tends to generically call all GM 133-inch wheelbase pickups, Longhorns.

Beyond the extended wheelbase and bed, the ¾-ton Longhorn frame is the same as the 1-ton, and in this case is fitted with the L47 402-cu.in. big-block Chevy V-8. The 402 was a new displacement for Chevrolet/GMC cars and trucks in 1970 and was essentially the 396 from earlier years with a .030-inch larger bore. Oddly, the 402 was never accurately identified on fender badges. For example, most cars continued with their 396 emblems, while trucks like Dave's displayed "400" callouts. We're left to guess that the minimal bump in displacement just didn't warrant recognition in the eyes of GM advertising execs and bean-counters. When new, the rest of the drivetrain in this truck consisted of a Turbo 400 automatic transmission and a Dana 60 rear differential containing a 3.54:1 gearset.

Other options on the original spec sheet include GMC's top trim package, the Sierra Grande. That trim level consisted of a more deluxe interior, chrome front bumper, interior and exterior brightwork, and several other small items. What weren't standard on any of the trim packages was the bucket seats and console that are original here, though interestingly, buckets were promoted in 1970 GMC literature as a luxury item. Today, most enthusiasts view buckets as more sport oriented, but they're a rare and desirable option in a truck no matter your view.

Dave brought the GMC to his Seattle-area home garage in 2011 and proceeded to completely disassemble it. The extra-long frame was stripped and powdercoated, suspension rebuilt and detailed, and front disc brakes from a '72 model were added for better performance and safety. The original "Invader V-8" engine was rebuilt by Rick, a former NASCAR engine builder, who worked at the now-shuttered Preston Automotive. It's close to stock, down to the original carburetor and exhaust manifolds, but with a .030-inch overbore and hardened exhaust seats. The original Turbo 400 has been shelved in favor of an overdrive-equipped 4L80E unit, along with a 4.56:1 gearset and a helical locker in the Dana 60. As Dave puts it, the combination has "a lot of grunt," and ends up with a significantly steeper first gear than stock, along with lower rpm over the highway.

The factory-specified interior is a great look with the two-tone exterior, and the factory buckets really make the combination. All seemed good when Dave turned the seats and reproduction upholstery from LMC over to an unnamed upholstery shop,

Teardown of the GMC started soon after it arrived at Dave's home garage. He recalls that his sandblaster was subjected to a major workout over the next few months.

Once the frame was stripped down, it was inspected and determined to be in terrific condition. Sandblasting and powdercoating came next. Recall our discussion in the main text that all Longhorn/133-inch wheelbase frames were 1-ton spec.

The rebuilt 402 awaits its sequence in the reassembly. The original Quadrajet four-barrel was present and accounted for, and was restored by The Carb Connection in Kirkland, Washington. Dave says it was rated at 780 cfm.

The rebuilt engine is now reunited with the refurbished chassis. Note that the front disc brake setup from a '72 ¾-ton has displaced the original drums. Having the bare chassis on a lift made reassembly significantly less painful than if Dave had done the work on the floor.

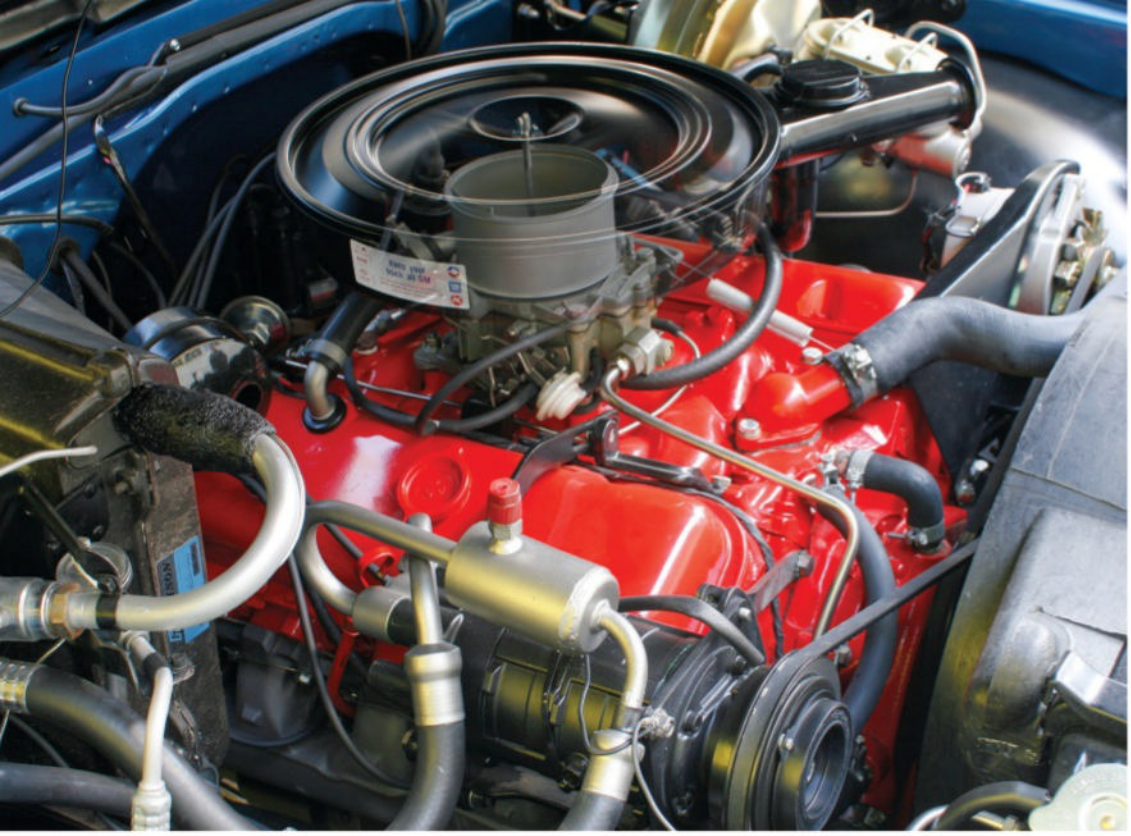
The original "West Coast Senior" mirrors came painted white from the factory. They've been completely disassembled before getting a bath in chrome.

The experts at Muscle Car Restorations are at work here to make all signs of the bed extension seam and fuel doors go away.

The visible vertical seam in the bed is how the factory finished the Longhorn/133-inch wheelbase bed extension, while the auxiliary fuel tank door on each side was added at the dealer, or later. Dave wanted these items to disappear during the body/paint work.

Here is the old switch that controlled the fuel supply from two auxiliary tanks.

The cab and body were separated from the chassis and sent off for media blasting, the result of which you see here.



As this "X-ray" view through the air cleaner shows, the original L47 402-cu.in., four-barrel carburetor. The engine was rated for 310 horsepower at 4,800 rpm, and 400 lb-ft of torque at 3,200 rpm. It was rebuilt to stock specifications.

The GM compass was a dealer available item that was an NOS find installed during the restoration.

These are the factory callouts for the engine in Dave's 1970 GMC, no matter that the V-8 actually displaces 402-cu.in.

This disc brake sticker wouldn't appear until 1972, but since Dave installed a '72 front disc setup, it seemed appropriate.

but things didn't go so hot. When he picked the seats up, he found the factory contours and bolstering were gone, resulting in something akin to "van seats." Dave proceeded to pull the assemblies back apart, only to find that the shop had discarded the wires and springs that gave the seats their shape. He wound up recreating much of the support structure, and in the end reinstalled the seat covers with the desired results. While the truck was originally equipped with full instrumentation, Dave did choose to add an optional speed-warning speedometer during the restoration.

Dave is clearly a hands-on guy who enjoys wrenching on his own cars and projects, and thus performed the bulk of the previously mentioned efforts in his well-equipped garage. However, he left the paint and bodywork to the professionals. "Once I had the chassis done, I set the cab and bed back on the frame and shipped it as a unit to Muscle Car Restorations in Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin." While he no doubt could have had similar work performed closer to home, Dave has a relationship with the crew at Muscle Car Restorations due to previous projects. Trust in the outcome was critical, and for Dave, it was worth the effort and cost to send the truck most of the way across the country.

At MCR, the truck was stripped to metal and repaired in just a few necessary spots. All evidence of two fuel doors from the auxiliary fuel tanks that had once been installed is gone. Likewise, Dave chose to have a seam eliminated on the exterior front of the bed, where GM added an extension that stretched the bed length to 8 ½-feet. The factory finish in this area was utterly utilitarian, while Dave had higher standards for his GMC.

Once the truck came back to his home wearing its new two-stage finish in original colors, the remaining work could commence. Evidently all Longhorn beds were built using a wood floor, whereas standard beds could be had with either wood or steel. Dave says the factory simply painted the wood in body color, but like many who traveled the road before him,

Plenty of priming and block sanding occurred to get the bed to look like this.

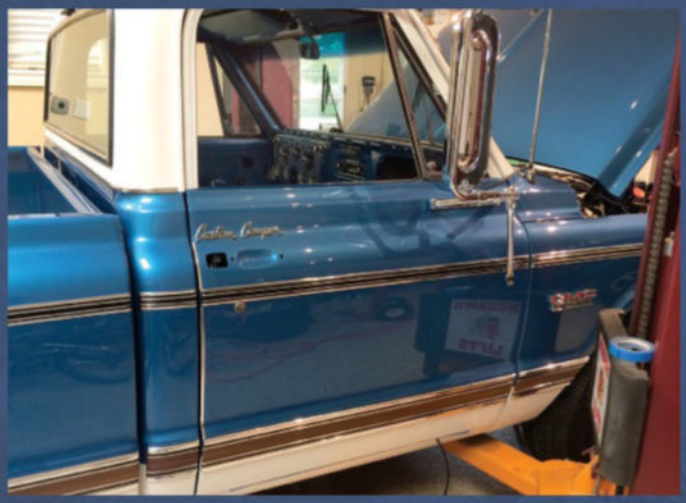
With the truck back in his garage, Dave went to work on the floor of the cargo bed. "I spent a couple of weeks staining, sanding, and finishing the wood. The factory would have just painted the wood blue, but this is such a common deviation from stock that I followed the crowd on this one," Dave says.

Dave wasn't satisfied with the upholstery shop that originally did the seats, as they ruined the factory bolstering. He remedied the situation himself.

This image shows the interior nearing completion, with little besides the dashpad to still install. Later on, Dave swapped the factory speedometer for an optional speed-warning unit.

The cab likewise went through several stages of prep before final painting, including interior paint.

With the cab already reunited with the frame, the bed is lifted into place.



Dave has just reinstalled the factory mirrors after they were chromed. Compared to their earlier painted and tired condition, the difference is like night and day.

Custom Camper status dictated a 1-ton frame for ¾-ton GMC pickups, whether standard 8-foot bed, or Longhorn 8½-footers. That said, all Longhorn/133-inch wheelbase frames were 1-ton spec.

Sierra Grande was the top trim option for 1970 GMC pickups, but compared to today's pickups, it's somewhat spartan. This one was also optioned with air conditioning and bucket seats/console, so it's pretty sweet no matter your frame of reference.

If you think the hubcaps look nice, you'd be right. They're new old stock.

he decided to make it look nicer with a combination of stained planks and chromed hardware.

Myriad other reassembly tasks ensued. The list included a thorough cleaning of the original fuel tank and lines, rebuilding the original air-conditioning system to include a new aluminum compressor, refinishing and replacement of worn interior components, powder coating the factory 16.5-inch wheels, and much more. The new aluminized dual exhausts feature quiet Dynomax mufflers, which seem close to the original tone, according to Dave.

"This truck isn't exactly what I started out looking for, but I sure consider myself fortunate to have found it. It starts, runs, and drives just like a new 1970 truck would have. It turned out as good as I could've hoped for, and I've become a big fan of these heavy-duty workhorses. There were plenty of them built in the day, but you sure don't see many anymore," he says. Thanks to Dave Plummer, we're getting a rare look at one that exceeds the factory's best!

Dave did a bang-up job on the wood floor of the factory extended cargo bed, and while it's way nicer than the original painted wood, we couldn't help but notice how it's a nice play on the woodgrain GMC applique on the tailgate. Or is it the other way around?

Swap Meet Scores!

BY MATTHEW LITWIN

1957 MERCURY TURNPIKE CRUISER FOUR-DOOR HARDTOP

ASKING PRICE: $28,900
FOUND AT: 2022 AACA EASTERN FALL MEET (HERSHEY, PENNSYLVANIA)
WEBSITE: HERSHEY.AACA.COM

A Bargain Breezeway for the Highway

Six decades on, this 1957 Mercury Turnpike Cruiser was ready to live up to its name

GOOD, BAD, OR INDIFFERENT, Pennsylvania is known for a lot of things. It offers culinary delight in scrapple, cheesesteaks, and pretzels from Philly, just for starters. It's home to the Liberty Bell, the Steel City, eight professional teams in five major leagues, and a little place called Three Mile Island.

Dubbed "sideways Indiana" by professional east-west travelers, the state is also known for its 360.1-mile-long turnpike. When opened to the public on October 1, 1940, the then-marvel of modern transportation became the benchmark for future superhighway design and construction. Fitting, then, that we spotted this 1957 Mercury Turnpike Cruiser at another Pennsylvania staple, the AACA Eastern Fall Meet held each October in Hershey.

Arguably, the Turnpike Cruiser was Mercury's halo car when unveiled for 1957. Factory literature boasted it was the "most dramatic expression of Dream-Car Design," available "with exclusive features no other car offers." Among them were its Skylight Dual-Curve windshield that provided extra ambient light and greater forward vision. At the top of each A-pillar were "roof level air intakes" linked to individual driver and front passenger controls mounted above the dash. And aside from dramatic new styling, there were canted C-pillars and a three-piece rear window: the "exclusive Breezeway Ventilation–the newest advance in draft-free, fresh air comfort" made possible by lowering the wide center pane into the bodywork behind the rear seat. It was power-operated, of course, as were the side windows; these were a few of the standard-equipment items that made the Turnpike Cruiser one of the most gadget laden mid-market cars offered that year, aptly named for the luxury travel it provided.

Automotive journalists drove test mules just as production launched, most of whom looked upon the space-age styled Mercury with favor. In its March 1957 issue, *Motor Trend* reported fine handling, thanks to the Air-Cushion suspension system, and a 0-60 time of 9.9 seconds; that, along with ample passing acceleration, was attributed to the also-standard 290-hp 368-cu.in. V-8 that lurked below the hood.

Available as a two-door hardtop, convertible (which was selected to pace the Indianapolis 500), and our featured four-door hardtop sedan, and costing an average of $576 more than equivalent, base-equipped Montclairs, the Turnpike Cruiser was expected to sell well. Unfortunately, 1957 was met by a recession. Turnpike Cruiser production numbered 16,861 units in total, including 8,305 four-door hardtops, the line's best seller.

Costing $3,849 without options when new (or $42,160 in 2023 currency), this sedan benefitted from what appeared to be an excellent restoration, finished in a typical late-Fifties two-tone motif (tri-tone was also available). Though the "highway hugging profile" was decorated with morning dew, it was easy to see the shine the exterior trim offered; even the bumpers were devoid of scuffs or nicks from turnpike cruising. Similarly, the inviting two-tone, all-vinyl interior had potentially benefitted from careful maintenance or minimal use. Sadly, deal-making details were lacking, yet it was clear the captivating cruiser was there to sell, its $28,900 asking price on par with condition #2 value guides. And at nearly 70-percent of the original cost (factoring inflation), it doubled as a bargain buy.

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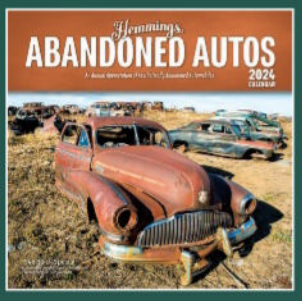

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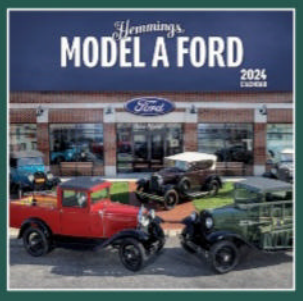

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BY TOM COMERRO

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HEMMINGS

REVIEW BY DAVID CONWILL

LASTING PLASTIC

REPLACING THE DISINTEGRATED URETHANE ON MY 1983 CADILLAC SEDAN DE VILLE

Replacing the damaged rear plastics was easy after removing the bumper and taillamps.

Although they look nearly identical, it turns out the replacement pieces aren't exact replicas of the 1983 fillers.

The paint doesn't match perfectly, but the replacement fillers make it far less embarrassing to drive the Cadillac than the obviously damaged urethane bits.

PLASTICS ARE A MIXED BAG for the classic-auto enthusiast. On the one hand, they can be formed into complex shapes at low cost, they're lightweight, and they're pretty durable (at least when new). On the other hand, they don't age well, especially when repeatedly heat cycled or bombarded with ultraviolet light. As newer cars age, keeping them around is going to involve repairing or replacing all that aged plastic. My wife's 1983 Cadillac Sedan de Ville is a prime example.

If you hadn't followed the saga of the Big Brown Cadillac on the Hemmings website, the important things to know are that it was built at Detroit's Clark Street assembly plant in late 1982 and purchased toward the end of the 1983 model year by my wife's grandfather, Bob. Bob bought the car (a) because it was a good deal (nobody wanted a brown Cadillac, apparently) and (b) to celebrate the birth of my wife, his first grandchild. Bob kept the Cadillac in immaculate condition, drove it with great care, and put only around 20,000 miles on it before he died in 2014. We acquired the Cadillac two years ago and have been driving it daily while attempting to treat it with Bob-level care. As we go to print, the odometer reads just over 50,000 miles.

Well before reaching 30,000 miles, the Cadillac already showed its age. The panels were all straight, and there wasn't a speck of rust anywhere, but the clearcoat had faded through and much of the paint on the hood and decklid had lost its sheen. Worse yet, most of the urethane plastic that GM used to insulate the bumpers from the bodywork had broken apart.

I'm not looking to replace the original paint on the Cadillac. Instead, I'm keeping it protected with wax. The exterior plastics, on the other hand, went from unsightly to downright embarrassing. What little plastic it had before the summer of 2021 had disintegrated and fallen out after 6,000 miles. Thankfully, Agus, Inc./Caddy-Parts.com reproduces the old urethane parts in acrylonitrile butadiene styrene (ABS) plastic—that's the same stuff Lego bricks are made from. We bought the complete set for around $800 and installed most of it, setting aside those pieces that corresponded with uncompromised plastic for the time being.

Using ABS, it turns out, is somewhat controversial. For one thing, it's not what GM used on the Cadillac or other C-body cars. That's because the original urethane was meant to be flexible, so that if you hit something at low speed, the 5-mph bumper could deflect the force on its shock-absorbing mounts without cracking the plastic filler pieces. ABS is shock resistant but not really flexible, so it will almost certainly crack if you drive into something hard enough.

To install the flat license filler, I elected to detach the bumper. I set it on a chair so that the taillamp wires could remain connected. It's the easiest way to do the job.

Why did the urethane fare so badly with age? There doesn't appear to be an official explanation. GM used it on this body style from 1977 to 1992, though, so it must have held for a decent amount of time. UV light seems to be a factor, as our car, which was habitually parked nose-in to the garage, suffered far worse deterioration of the rear pieces than those at the front. Exposure to water may be partially to blame, too, especially once the paint was compromised. My guess is that the shock loading was hard on the fender extensions—did you ever sit in the far back of the school bus as a kid? The farther behind the rear axle you are, the more you get bounced around. The faux tailfins would have received quite a bit of jolting.

The repair wasn't too difficult. Online instructions suggest loosening one side of the bumper and removing the other. That's fine for the tailfin extensions, but I'd recommend detaching the bumper entirely. It makes installing the pieces near the license plate far easier. You don't even have to disconnect the wiring if you have something fairly tall to set the bumper on while it's off the car. Watch out for the fiber-optic lines, though, as they're a bit shorter than everything else and will pull out. Another recommendation is to save the portion of the metal framing inside the fender extensions. The rest of the metal pieces can be discarded, but the bracket helps spread the load.

While the job wasn't complicated, the big question was how well would the replacement parts perform? Two years later, I can say that I definitely could have installed one of the fender extensions better (some of the paint has scraped off due to motion of the taillamp housing) but their construction and function thus far have been flawless. Faded paint and mismatched brown spray paint notwithstanding, we regularly get compliments on having such a clean, well-kept old car. I credit that mostly to the intact plastic.

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Tested

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Where to get it:	Agus, Inc. • caddy-parts.com
What we liked:	Easy to work with; good fit.
What could be better:	Instructions; website experience.
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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BY MATTHEW LITWIN
IMAGE FROM THE AUTHOR'S COLLECTION

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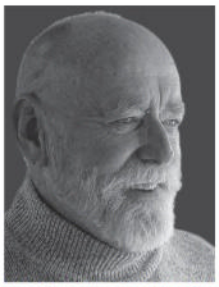

JimRichardson

An Expensive Education

"I realized what I needed was not AI, but ACS– Artificial Common Sense."

FOR YEARS we've been using OBD II scanners to help us diagnose what's wrong with an engine, drivetrain, and other complex systems built into our modern vehicles. It's an amazing tool that we can then decode using laptops, but then it needs to be. My 1955 Chevrolet Bel Air station wagon requires something different, though.

The Chevy's engine had been idling a bit rough, and I couldn't figure it out using the computer behind my forehead with which I was blessed. I did the usual thing: Twiddled with the carburetor and adjusted the idle a half turn, which helped it a little. I then checked the timing, cleaned and gapped the spark plugs, and adjusted the points, but to no avail.

Later, I was at a neighborhood barbecue and met a woman who claimed to be clairvoyant and a witch, and I–being the smart-ass I am–said, "Well then, maybe you can tell me what's wrong with my old car." She said "Sure," so we went out to the street, I opened the hood, and then started the car. She listened for a minute, reached over and blipped the throttle, and offered, "Sticky exhaust valve."

I was jolted with surprise. I said, "Hey, you may be right," to which she replied, "I know I'm right. My father is Chet, from Chet's Auto Parts nearby. You know, the grumpy old guy who sits at the end of the counter? I grew up around this stuff. Oh, by the way, a tall, good-looking young woman will come into your life soon." This concerned me a bit because my wife and I had just celebrated our fiftieth wedding anniversary, but she was right. Our granddaughter came the next weekend for a visit.

Soon after the clairvoyant's diagnosis, a friend told me about AI, or artificial intelligence. Everyone is talking about it, so I found a new app that challenged me to try it for free. I thought perhaps a great way of testing it would be to inquire as to how to check for sticky valves in a 1955 Chevrolet equipped with a 265-cu.in. V-8. The app proceeded to make up some story about cruising in the Fifties, how much fun it was, and how we hung fuzzy dice on our rear-view mirrors.

It was then I realized what I needed was not AI, but ACS, Artificial Common Sense. However, there are no apps for that yet, so I decided to fall back on tricks an old mechanic taught me years ago. One was to pull the spark plug wires one by one to see what effect it had on an engine's idle. If the engine ran worse, a cylinder was okay, but if it kept running the same, that would indicate where the problem was. This test proved inconclusive on my V-8, though.

Next, I selected my biggest screwdriver, started the engine, and put the tool against the block at each cylinder and listened with my ear close to the handle. And I found it. The number five cylinder was making a faint tick. I went to the exhaust outlet and listened some more. There was a faint but regular 'chuff' coming from the driver's side pipe.

So, what did I do? I went to Chet's Auto Parts and purchased a new oil filter, five quarts of Delo motor oil for diesel engines (because it has a lot of detergent in it), and a can of Marvel Mystery Oil, another tactic from the automotive Jurassic period. Sure enough, after a spirited drive down the coast highway the engine smoothed right out.

The story doesn't end there. Just last weekend I ran into the clairvoyant at a block party. I told her she was correct about the valves, as well as the visit from the beautiful young woman. I then asked her what she thought I would be doing five years in the future. She pondered it for a few seconds and said, "The same thing you are doing right now. Fiddling with old cars and hanging with other old silverbacks. And that will be $80. I don't make predictions for nothing."

I learned two things from the encounter: First, if you aren't sure what is wrong with your classic, ask an expert. And second, there is no such thing as Artificial Common Sense. I'm also sure my clairvoyant neighbor is right, because I have been hanging out with car guys since I was a kid; that is most likely what I'll be doing five years from now, too.

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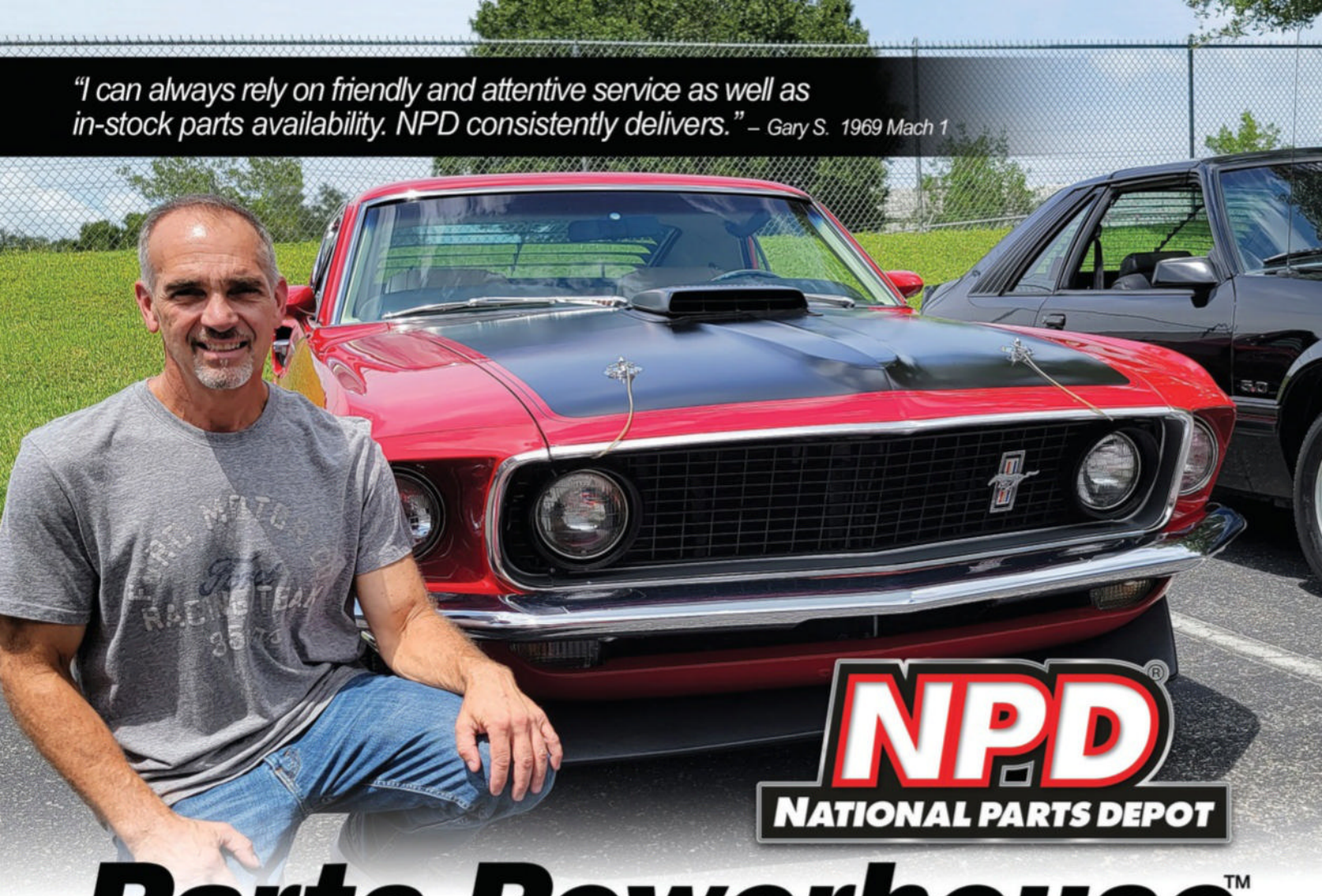

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