

HEMMINGS

CLASSIC CAR

AMERICA'S COLLECTOR-CAR OWNERSHIP MAGAZINE

DECEMBER 2024 #243

SINGLE-FAMILY SPORT SEDAN

1961 CHRYSLER NEWPORT



FAMILY HEIRLOOMS

- 1918 BUICK E-35 TOURING
- 1978 MERCURY GRAND MARQUIS

BARN FIND

1967 PLYMOUTH BARRACUDA

ON LOCATION

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A photograph of a red 1961 Chrysler Newport parked on a gravel surface under a large concrete bridge. The bridge has several thick, rectangular concrete pillars supporting its structure. The car is positioned in the lower left foreground, showing its rear and side profile. The background consists of a clear blue sky with some light clouds. The overall scene is captured in a cinematic style with soft lighting.

On the Cover: Photographer Scotty Lachenauer traveled to Long Island, New York, to capture this 1961 Chrysler Newport between thunderstorms. The Chrysler required a \$500 deposit when it was ordered new by the father of the current owner.

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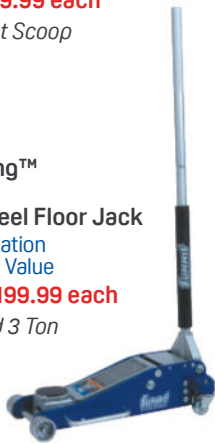


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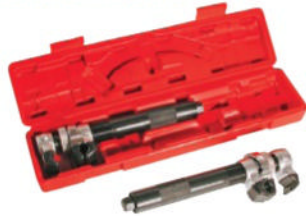
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Automotive Heirlooms

“Any time we visited him, or vice versa, we usually got a spirited ride in that ole La Salle and we would take turns ‘riding shotgun’ up front.”



IF YOU’VE NOT GUESSED by now, I grew up in a car-centric family. Every one of my parents’ vehicles, domestic and import alike, ended up with some sort of zany story permanently etched into its paint. I’ve already mentioned the Mercury Grand Marquis that was annihilated after a few thousand miles of travel, the Chevy Blazer that was mysteriously ingesting fluids at an alarming rate, and the MG Midget that my dad somehow managed to rev up far enough to attain yet another moving violation. Not to be outdone, Mom pushed a pair of turbo units to utter failure in her 1985 Nissan 200SX hatchback, admittedly while negotiating up the steep, snow-covered road to our house during back-to-back blizzards.

Even the few “company cars” Dad rarely sequestered couldn’t escape. A deer thought it would be a good idea to make an impression in a 1978 AMC Gremlin. We discovered that a 1998 Dodge Durango, while in reverse, can easily tip a Volvo station wagon onto two wheels without you feeling it happen. And the driver-side mirror on a Chrysler 300M is no match for highway missiles.

Really, there’s so many stories that I could write a book. But what’s just as interesting is that not one of the dozens upon dozens of cars that came and went among the four of us—my brother and I included—became a keep-at-all-cost treasure. When the time was right, we moved on from one ride to the next without batting an eye. That’s not to say there wasn’t a hint of seller’s remorse here and there; my brother’s 1982 Toyota 4x4 SR5 pickup and my 1983 Datsun Maxima come to mind. Old, out-of-focus Kodak photos and endearing memories are all that’s left, and given our druthers, we’d take our long-gone steeds back in a heartbeat. Nostalgia is powerful, after all.

But the notion of keeping one of those vehicles for decades, generations even, never occurred to us then. The closest example that we could arguably



My brother and his Toyota 4x4 (left), my Diesel-powered Datsun Maxima (above), and yours truly in “Uncle” Brian’s 1929 La Salle (below).



relate to was Uncle Brian’s 1929 La Salle five-passenger sedan. Though Brian wasn’t technically an uncle in the traditional sense, he certainly was to us. Any time we visited him, or vice versa, we usually got a spirited ride in that ole La Salle and we would take turns “riding shotgun” up front. The car magically manifested adventures and memories.

That sedan was a cherished car to us—sometimes we’d debate who would end up with it—but we also knew Brian wouldn’t part with it. You see, it was his uncle’s car, purchased new and used first as a commuter to the family-run filling station, and later as a snowplow at said place of business. When Brian restored the La Salle a second time, he left the plow control cutouts in the firewall, though the plow was long gone. The car’s family history was that significant to him.

It’s this, and other memories, that came flooding back to me when we planned this month’s issue, which pays as much tribute to the families who have held title to their elders’ cherished vehicles as the vehicles themselves. David Conwill and I have often said that a car is just a car; it’s a mode of transportation that caught the original owner’s eye for one reason or another. But when that flame of driving enjoyment burns strong while building years, decades, and a lifetime of memories, that car—whether it’s a Chrysler, Buick, or Mercury—becomes a family heirloom. 🚗



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A Chat with Aran La, Preteen Painter, On Automotive Art

A noteworthy young man, whose talent for painting special-interest automobiles are gaining him international attention



LUKE MUNNELL

ARAN LA'S FATHER, Vien, compares the path to success with climbing a steep hill. If you do the hard work early enough in life, he says, the rest can just be an easy downhill journey. Aran, a Londoner and presently 10 years old, is doing the hard work now. He's a seasoned automotive artist and an international traveler, and his works never fail to impress. When we sat down with him in July 2024 just ahead of the Copshaholm Concours in South Bend, Indiana, he told us he's already booked through February 2025 with client work.

"I want to make it my career," Aran says. He's even branching out. "I'm already designing my own cars." He also counts Moroccan-born Spanish-American automobile designer Frank Stephenson as a friend. Stephenson has worked for Ford, BMW, MINI, Ferrari, Maserati, Fiat, Lancia, Alfa Romeo, and McLaren, and is perhaps best known for redesigning the MINI as the MINI Hatch.

Aran started sketching at age 3. In fact, that's his advice to anyone who wants to get into automotive art. "If you want to be good, start out drawing. Be able to draw a straight line from one point to another. Once you can do that, then learn to draw from any direction."

"I was more of a fire-engine guy at first," he says, "then I moved onto diggers, then going on four and a half, I got into cars. At six, I was doing more realistic work, at seven I got into colored pencils and watercolor pencils, at eight watercolor paints, and at nine acrylics." At first, it was simply a hobby, though Aran's dad noted his unusual skill and dedication.

"Like everyone, I do a bit of art," Vien says, "but his is on a different level. When COVID hit, I started teaching him." The next year, at age 7 and increasingly versed in things like perspective,



Aran recently presented his painting of Prince's Palace of Monaco to Prince Albert II (above). The BMW, Ferrari, and Aston Martin (above middle and right) were painted by Aran when he was age 8.



"Art is your representation of life. Paintings reflect the mood of the artist at the time of creation. When I started moving into art, I realized that it's about the passion: both for photographers and painters."

as the process, sometimes love of the process improves the car. Art is your representation of life. Paintings reflect the mood of the artist at the time of creation. When I started moving into art, I realized that it's about

Aran attended the Goodwood Festival of Speed. The year after that, he had an exhibit there. It was at a similar outing to the 2023 Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance where we at *Hemmings Classic Car* first met him, producing a watercolor of the 1923 Rolls-Royce Silver Ghost that graced our March 2024 (#234) cover.

We asked Aran if he had a preferred medium, watercolors or acrylics. "I like both," he says. "Watercolor flows, acrylic allows more detail. Watercolors are more challenging." Most watercolors he paints end up being classic cars as the extensive chrome on later cars is easier to represent with acrylic paint. Each painting takes at least 3 to 4 hours and some pieces up to 80, even 100 hours. "It's all about how much detail," Aran says. For example, a recent Jaguar painting he turned out required 18 different shades of green to accurately represent the way the light hits the British Racing Green paint. His longest effort, he tells us, took 300 hours, but he says he's unlikely to attempt another project of that magnitude, although tackling fresh challenges is seemingly at least as large a part of Aran's enjoyment of painting as the cars themselves.

"It's all about the process," Aran says. "I remember every painting. I love them all. Sometimes you love the car as much

the passion: both for photographers and painters."

Aran says he's looking to get into oils next, at least in part for the challenge of varying his media. The learning process was well underway when we spoke. Aran characterizes oils as "messy and slow drying," but easier to blend and marrying "the best aspects of watercolors and acrylic." He's also looking to vary how he presents his subject matter, expanding from the plain-background, car-focused work he's currently known for into doing more "scenes to tell stories."

Of course, Aran is still a well-rounded young man with interests that go beyond his artwork. His favorite cars currently are the 1992-2000 McLaren F1 and the 1961-1974 Jaguar E-type, and his enthusiasm for armored vehicles is perhaps even greater than his passion for vintage cars. He plays football (soccer to us Yanks), video games, enjoys Transformers, and loves to hang out with his school friends. He also says his involvement with art has improved his academics.

At current, Aran's work can be viewed on his website, aran-la.com and on Instagram, @aran.artist. If you're lucky, you can catch him working at one of the big concours events in this country: otherwise, you can check out his YouTube



channel, youtube.com/@aranlaartist. Also noteworthy: Aran's 14-year-old sister, Mily, is as good with a violin as Aran is on a canvas, and their parents are currently working on an art center to encompass both their music and painting, called A&M Creative Services.

We look forward to seeing Aran around in the automotive art community for many years to come. 🚗



My Dad's 1957 Chevrolet Nomad



MY DAD ALWAYS SEEMED

to have more vehicles on the road than he needed, which undoubtedly was how I got the car bug. A dairy farmer who took over the historic 1793 family farm in Central New York when he was 16, Dad grew it into an operation that provided a source of income for a family of four. It also paid for new farm equipment, the taxes, and put two kids through college, all thanks to milk from 34 cows. That magic number was the limit of cow stanchions in the 1800 barn, as there was no room for extra cows or spare time to change them out if more were available to milk. From sunup to sundown, he worked on the farm, as well as drove a school bus for 34 years to provide health insurance and extra income for the family.

Our house had a semi-circular driveway, and it often held more registered cars than licensed drivers. That's because as we were growing up, before our rural school had many buses, several drivers used personal vehicles to pick up and deliver kids to the school. I heard Dad's tales of the 1946 Ford station wagon he purchased right after World War II ended. Many miles were rolled onto its odometer escorting kids to school and back.

Dad traded that car in for a new 1954 Chevy station wagon, complete with fend-

er skirts and exterior sun visor. It was a fancy ride for young kids. What I remember most about it, besides him removing and saving its big sun visor, was driving the Chevy to look for another station wagon because he was finally assigned a full-size school bus. I distinctly remember being 7 years old then and going to the local Chevy dealer to accompany my parents on the test drive of a 1957 two-door station wagon. My brother, Ronnie, and I sat on the back seat, at which point I noticed there were no doors either one of us could fall out of. The car was a pretty light-blue color that in my later years I learned was called Tropical Turquoise.

As I grew up, I also learned that the Chevy was no ordinary station wagon—it was a Nomad. During the Tri-Five era, Chevy produced three distinct station wagons: a two-door sedan wagon, a four-door sedan wagon, and the Nomad: a sport edition that featured slanted tailgates, sliding side windows beside the rear seat, and hardtop-style doors (no window frames). The design did affect headroom clearance while entering the vehicle. My dad loved the car and the way it drove, at least until he administered the one modification he did to all his vehicles.

Dad spent many hours on hard steel tractor seats. His self-reward was adding a

couple inches of foam to the front seat for added travel comfort. He did that to his 1946 Ford, 1954 Chevy, 1955 Plymouth Belvedere, and, later, to his 1959 Ford pickup, 1964 Chevy Impala, and others that followed. When Dad added the foam to the Nomad, it raised the front seat by about 2 inches. To hide the foam, he covered it with a new black vinyl seat cover. The problem was that dad stood 6-foot, 2-inches tall, and because of the Nomad's sporty lower profile it meant he hit his head every time he climbed into that car from then on. That became an instant disdain for him, so my mother was the principal driver of the Nomad while Dad stuck to his Plymouth and pickup trucks.

We did use it for a couple summer vacation trips. On a dairy farm, one doesn't take a vacation until the haying is done, and then it's usually a three-day adventure, as milking the cows did not take a vacation. We would drive for one day, see some sights, then drive home. My uncle would milk the cows while we were away.

After I got my license, I began driving the Nomad to high school. Forget the fact that the school was only two miles away, and that dad was my bus driver for 11 of my 13 years in the school system. I was the next to last stop on his bus route and by the time the bus got to our house, the only seat left on the bus was...right behind Dad, the driver. I figured I earned the right to drive myself to school during good weather.

I graduated from high school and went to college in northern Indiana. The Nomad's last road excursion before I became its formal owner was on salty, slushy, snow-covered roads, after which it was parked on the lawn along the side of our house. It sat there for several years while ground moisture chewed at the metal underside.

After college, I began my engineering career in Indianapolis at age 23, bought a house there, and felt there was room in the garage for my Nomad. I drove my new 1973 Cutlass Salon to the family home in Central New York with the idea of using it to tow my Nomad to its new

home. I rented a bumper-attached tow bar, hooked up the wagon and headed back to the Midwest. My path was westerly to Cleveland, southerly to Columbus, then westerly to Indianapolis. No sooner had I passed the Pennsylvania-Ohio state line, near Ashtabula, did I get pulled over by the Ohio State Highway Patrol. There wasn't a license plate on the Nomad, and I quickly learned that towed vehicles were required to be licensed in Ohio. It was a fine way to start the trip home, as the trooper looked at my Cutlass wearing Indiana plates, towing what I claimed was my car that had been in New York. Claimed, because I had no proof of ownership since the Nomad had last been registered in my dad's name, according to the expired registration in the glove box.

The situation got more interesting—I had an Indiana driver's license, yet I never turned in my New York license, so the trooper was staring at two valid driver's licenses from different states. Fortunately for me, the address on the expired registration matched the address on my New

"I saw a funnel cloud—it was a tornado in the making, but it had not touched down. Yet."



Author Ron Glasgow, then age 11, strikes a pose with his dad's Chevy in spring 1962.

York license, plus I had an old picture of the Nomad in my wallet. The trooper had a totally befuddled look; he didn't know what to do as there were now three states involved in my infraction. Finally, he said, "Keep going. You have two hours ahead of you to get out of Ohio. Good luck." No tickets were issued.

I wasn't quite in the clear yet. My next adventure on the trip occurred as I was passing Dayton, just as the sky was filled with ominous clouds. It was unlike anything I'd ever seen growing up in New York's farm country. As I looked to my left, I saw a funnel cloud—it was a tornado in the making, but it had not touched down. Yet. With some trepidation, I pressed on, and fortune remained on my side. Two hours later I was entering Indianapolis.

My career took me from Indianapolis (6 years) to Jackson, Michigan (2 years), then back home to the farm to roost. The Nomad has been a great friend all these years. It got me into collecting '57 Chevys and buying and selling old car parts to finance several restorations. 🚗



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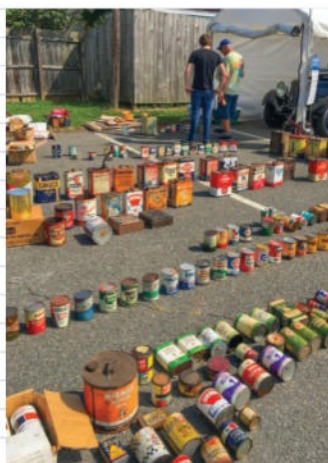
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WHILE READING THE

September 2024 issue of *Hemmings Classic Car*, I came across page 56. On the bottom of this News Reports page, I noticed Jersey Jams with a nice photo of several old oil cans and a Sunoco banner. This is a photo of all of my cans for sale at last year's Englishtown, New Jersey (Raceway Park) vendors market.

Please see the attached photo of me and my first car, a rare 1942 Dodge Deluxe four-door sedan. I still own this car, as I became the second owner in 1966 (58 years ago). At that time, I started to collect parts for this and other cars I bought over the years. This will be my 58th non-stop yearly visiting the Hershey, Pennsylvania, AACA vendors market. From that time on, I started to buy car parts, vintage oil cans, vintage

metal signs, vintage license plates and toppers, etc., going to many vendor's markets throughout the USA—I bought and bought a huge collection of items.

Over the last six years, I started to sell all of these desirable collectibles. I no longer have any cans as of this year, having sold over 1,000 cans, plus 200 small oiler cans. I also sold over 200 old metal signs (many of them were porcelain signs), leaving me none anymore. I hated to let them go, but it was time to reduce my collections. Many cans and signs dated back 100 years.

Happy trails,

—**HAROLD MERMEL**

Morganville, New Jersey

I WAS SURPRISED to see an article on the 1978 Ford Mustang II in the September issue. In 1976, I wanted something economical after owning a 340-powered 1972 Plymouth Road Runner, which got 9 mpg, no matter how I drove it. I found a used car dealer that was willing to trade the Road Runner even for a bright yellow 1975 Mustang II Ghia coupe with a four-cylinder engine and four-speed transmission. Only a couple years old with white interior and a white partial vinyl roof, the car handled great and was fun to drive, but

the best part was getting 30 mpg on the interstate driving at 70 mph. I also drove it in a big snowstorm for over two hours and never spun a tire. I learned not to lean on the fender with my elbows, because the metal was so thin that it left dimples. I never had a problem with that car, but finally got tired of a small car and traded even for a 1971 Ford pickup.

—**BUD CAREY**

Shippensburg, Pennsylvania

I ENJOYED DAVID CONWILL'S

article covering the 1954 Aston Martin DB2/4 Coupe in the September issue. The 1953 Studebaker Starliner definitely influenced this Bertone design. Raymond Loewy's elegant European DNA is seen throughout the '54 Aston Martin: The unmistakable Studebaker profile, extremely low roofline, wrap-around rear window, vertical taillamps, and beautiful thin vent windows. Aston Martin and Bertone obviously admired Studebaker's design. The 1953 Studebaker deserves recognition for influencing Bertone a year later. Both Aston Martin (Bertone) and Studebaker (Loewy) represent excellence in mid-century automotive design. Keep up this great magazine.

—**FRANK CHECCHIN**

Galena, Illinois

I READ JIM DONNELLY'S

article in the September issue about the 1978 Mustang II, and it brought back an old memory. Back in 1983, I needed a daily driver that, would also be a second vehicle. A coworker had a red '77 Mustang Mach 1 equipped with a 302-cu.in. V-8 and a four-speed manual.

The exterior was a bit faded and had some battle scars, the wheels looked rough and had cheap tires fitted, and there was a big ding in the right rear quarter that could easily be detected at 500 feet. An agreeable price was reached though, and I had another Ford to decorate my driveway.

It did well for a spell and then the engine developed a deep knock. I had a friend who was a mechanic and together we pulled the engine; the main bearings were toast. We located a 1969 model-year 302 and got carried away. We rebuilt the block and heads and made it much stronger than the 139-hp engine we removed.

Naturally, the first thing that went was the transmission clutch, pressure plate, and release bearing. The next thing that went was the entire transmission, which locked up in third gear for the remainder of eternity. I found a C4 automatic and had it rebuilt with a shift kit and used very durable parts for the rebuild. The driveshaft had to be cut and balanced after which it worked great. I'll never know how or why but the rear end held up just fine.

The Ford took whatever I threw at it. It came with front and rear sway bars, though I replaced the shocks. I then installed sonic turbo mufflers and a friend custom-made a dual exhaust system that ported out right behind each rear wheel. The mufflers tucked up great just below the rear seats in the floor pan. We had just built a wicked ride, or as we called it "a seat wrapped around a V-8."

I had a friend who owned a body shop, and he took the Ford in for paint and body work on the condition that I helped with the prep work



and buy the paint. It came out nice, but it wasn't long before the engine tossed a fan blade through the hood. My fix was a flex fan and a roll of duct tape to patch the hole from the inside. Next the body started to split apart at the welding points at the rear door jambs. I drove it for a little more than three years when a guy approached me looking for a hot rod and offered a title-for-title trade for his 1972 Chevy convertible, but that's another story.

—JOSEPH BALLENTINE

via email

I'M A LONG-TIME subscriber, going back to *Special Interest Autos*. I just opened the pages of the September issue to David Conwill's 1954 Aston Martin DB2/4 article. I was taken by the similarity of the DB2/4 A-pillar, and C-pillar slope and rear window design

to those of my '65 Barracuda. In '62, Chrysler stylists were redesigning Exner's overly artistic designs. One, Irving Ritchie, had always liked sporty fastback cars and had the idea of putting that style into the Valiant. He did some sketches and was given the okay to make full-size renderings. Ritchie's design had a three-piece rear window, with the C-pillar larger at the top and narrow at the bottom. Another designer, John Samsen, modified Ritchie's design with a single pane of glass, much like the DB2/4 rear window. American designers have always been a little behind Europeans in styling. It is a good possibility they had seen the 1954 Aston Martin DB2/4 and patterned the Barracuda after it, giving a European touch to the 1964 Barracuda.

—BOB WESTPHAL

Vancouver, Washington



AS A LIFELONG Canadian and a rabid automotive enthusiast, I was delighted that your August issue featured the vehicles of my homeland. Your cover car, Jordy Bester's 1956 Meteor Rideau Crown Victoria, reminded me of its close sibling, the very rare and three-toned 1956 Meteor Rideau Sunliner owned by Fred and Arlene Carr of Castleton, Ontario. This stunner is a fixture of our local classic car community. Not many flashy convertibles were sold in conservative and wintry Canada

in the mid-1950s. As one who learned to drive in my father's '65 six-cylinder, Powerglide Pontiac, I can attest that the 1950s and 1960s were indeed a unique time on the Canadian automotive landscape. Thank you for recognizing us, eh!

—DAN O'BRIEN

Trenton, Ontario



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



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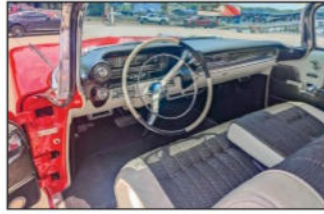
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1959 CADILLAC COUPE DE VILLE



Few cars can turn heads and spark conversation like a 1959 Cadillac Coupe de Ville. This restored example, which sold as a Make Offer listing, featured striking two-tone paint and a split leather/cloth interior. Photos and videos showed a Cadillac that seemingly remained in fine shape, with unmarked Seminole Red paint and minor chrome pitting; the interior exhibited a bit of wear in the front compartment, and a modern CD stereo was hidden in the glovebox while the original remained in the dash. A Vintage Air A/C system shared the engine bay with the rebuilt 325-hp, 390-cu.in. V-8 and four-speed Hydra-Matic. The seller added a dual-master brake cylinder for safety, perfect for hitting the road.

Reserve: \$50,000
Selling Price: \$54,705
Recent Market Range: N/A

1935 FORD V-8 MODEL 48



Ford's mid-Thirties V-8 De Luxe Roadster was a sporty and spirited car in its day, and its appeal remains strong as ever. This open-top 1935 Model 48 had an older restoration that left it in show-ready driver condition. No rust or paint damage was revealed, and the interior (including the rumble seat) looked good in photos; the fuel gauge was noted not to work. The namesake engine, factory installed, and three-speed gearbox had "very small oil leaks," and the suspension was recently serviced. Five videos showed the car being driven, and the seller answered questions. Interested parties responded favorably: it took 19 bids before this Ford found a new home for a reasonable, mid-range price.

Reserve: \$40,000
Selling Price: \$43,575
Recent Market Range: \$36,000-\$49,000

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BY DAVID CONWILL
PHOTOGRAPHY BY SCOTTY LACHENAUER

Made to Order

The idle daydream of many a car person involves having a time machine and going back to when their favorite car was new, to order it just the way they'd want it. Of course, even back then, it wasn't always easy to make one of those à la carte purchases. Take our feature 1961 Chrysler Newport. It was ordered new at Century Chrysler in Brooklyn, New York, with a Borg-Warner T-85 three-speed manual.

"The Newport and the Windsor came with the three-speed on the floor as standard equipment," says owner Peter Pellicani, recalling the day, May 24, 1961, that he and his father-then-36-year-old Frederick, who was a sheetmetal worker at the Brooklyn Navy Yard—went to order this car. A day he and his father recalled many times in subsequent years.

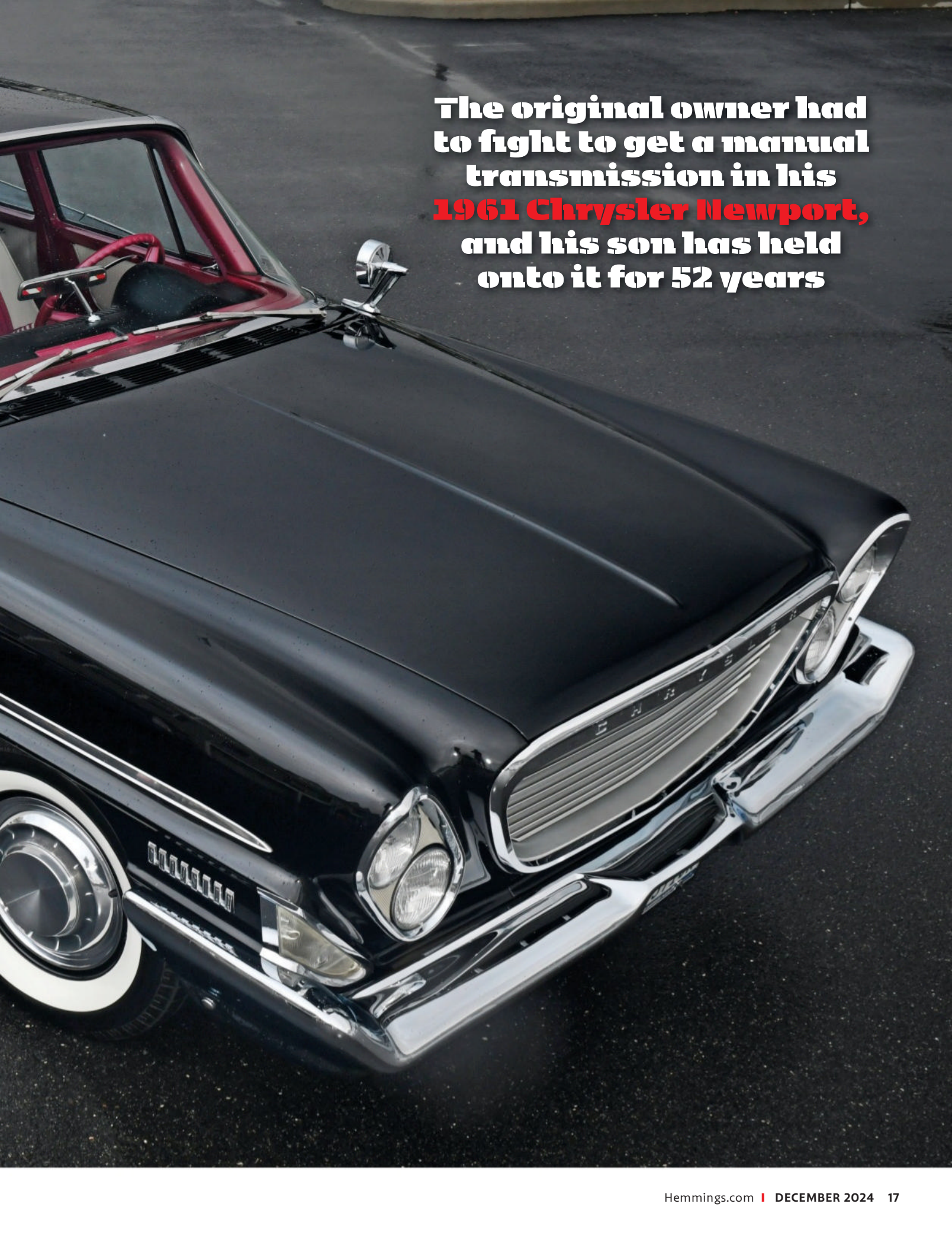
"You had to pay extra for the automatic transmission. He did not want the automatic at

all, he was interested in the stick. That was his goal."

Chrysler had introduced the Newport model (previously the name had designated the hardtop body style in the same manner Buick had employed Riviera and Pontiac had used Catalina) for the 1961 model year. In price and role, it took over for the discontinued De Soto marque. Frederick Pellicani was the ideal buyer, as he would be stepping up from a 1953 Dodge Coronet.

Although he was a car owner, Frederick took the subway to work from his home on 17th Street. His walk to and from the station took him past Century Chrysler and he liked Virgil Exner's canted-headlamp, finned styling for 1961.

"He saw the '61s and wanted one," Peter says. "In fact, I even have the article from the newspaper when they came out. It says,



**The original owner had
to fight to get a manual
transmission in his
1961 Chrysler Newport,
and his son has held
onto it for 52 years**



“Step up to a full-size Chrysler for under \$3,000.”

Of course, that “under \$3,000” price was for the stripped version, unlikely to be found in dealer stock. Although brochures touted Newport’s economy thanks in part to “a new floor-mounted manual transmission...as standard equipment,” the TorqueFlite push-button automatic transmission was such a popular option with buyers that few three-speed cars were produced on spec.

“Nobody was buying the stick shift because first gear was not synchronized, so very few cars were made with it. It ended up being a special order from the

factory because nobody stocked them,” Peter says. In fact, Century was reluctant to submit such a special order.

“My father told me afterward how he had trouble. Initially, it was a \$25 deposit for the car, but when my father insisted on the standard transmission they said ‘Listen, we’re not going to be stuck with this car.’ He said ‘See my son playing with the steering wheel there? He’s gonna get this car.’ The salesman made a joke, but I’m still driving it and I’m 69,” Peter says.

It took a \$500 deposit to change the dealer’s mind. Presumably, that’s the amount of loss they figured they would suffer on a Newport with a manual trans-



mission. On a \$3,000 car, that’s $\frac{1}{6}$ of the price—a pretty hefty insurance policy, in other words.

Luckily for that dealer, the bean counters needn’t have worried. Frederick not only took delivery of his stick-shift Chrysler on June 21, 1961, but he also refused to ever sell it or trade it in, even in 1973 when he could finally afford the car of his dreams: a Cadillac Eldorado.

Early on, the Newport led an especially pampered life and managed to impress young Peter with its styling and the mechanical intrigue imparted by a manual transmission.

“He kept it garaged. We’d get it on weekends so he could drive, and he’d clean it with an ostrich-feather duster. It was cool to me because even when I was a kid, he’d park it in a parking garage, and he’d let me steer the car up the ramp to the second floor. When I was 12 years old, I learned how to shift the car from the





middle of the bench seat up front. I was really interested in the car."

The Pellicani family moved out of Brooklyn to Long Island a short while after Frederick purchased the Newport and it served as his commuter to the Navy Yard until that facility was closed in 1965. Ultimately, it was joined by another Chrysler product in 1966, a Plymouth for Peter's mother.

Peter wound up with the Newport in 1972 and although it has since been treated to extensive restoration work, it was a nice car even back then, commuter use notwithstanding.

"My brother and I learned from our father: When you buy something, you keep it. This car was the family car until I graduated from high school in 1972, and he gave it to me as a graduation gift. I was tickled pink to have it. The car was in mint condition when I got it. He always kept everything in top-notch shape, like it was brand new."

By 1972, a finned Chrysler was well out of step with the times, but Peter loved it, nonetheless. The Newport's acceleration also surprised more than a couple contemporary muscle cars.

"It was an odd car, a four-door Chrysler, but it had a lot of power, and being a teenager, driving it all over, I had

many, many good times with Dusters and Chargers, and all the other cars because they would spin the tires and I'd be gone. They'd eventually catch up to me and say, 'What do you have in there?' The car was a true sleeper."

It's worth noting that while Peter's Chrysler has been upgraded in restoration to a cross-ram 413, Frederick ordered the standard engine with his standard transmission but optioned the \$52 Sure-Grip limited-slip differential.

"The dealership told him he should also get the big motor with the dual quads, but he wanted to burn regular gas. I was too small to tell him to get anything else!"

The Newport's standard 361-cu.in. "Firebolt" B-series V-8 was rated at 265 hp and thanks to a 9.0:1 compression ratio could burn lower octane gasoline than the larger optional engines. It also kept the sedan closer to its \$2,964 base price. Chrysler built over 34,000 1961 Newport four-door sedans, possibly because it was the only body style that kept the base price below that magical \$3,000 number. Convertibles, two- and four-door hardtops, and six- and nine-passenger station wagons were all produced in four-digit quantities.

The marketing theme of economy for the 1961 Newport came from the

entry price to the thrift of its standard engine and transmission combination. A Firebolt-equipped Newport won the 1961 Mobilgas economy run, averaging just under 20 mpg in the process. Chrysler brochures argued that you got "more miles per dollar" with the 361 because it was "designed to deliver peak performance on regular gasoline."

Philosophically, Chrysler seemed to be pitching the Newport not against the \$2,900 Oldsmobile Dynamic 88, \$3,107 Buick LeSabre, and \$2,869 Mercury Monterey, but against the trend toward compact cars in the marketplace, like the \$2,519 Oldsmobile F-85, \$2,519 Buick Special, and \$2,765 Mercury Meteor.

Ease of parking a 215.6-inch-long car aside, the argument that you're getting more car for not much more money is easy to buy. "No stripped-down, scaled-down jr. edition," brochure copy crowed. Instead, the Newport was "sized, styled and built to the same standard of excellence as every Chrysler.... It has the same AstraDome control center and shoulder-high driver's seat you'll find in every Chrysler." It also, the ad men pointed out, has five-foot-wide seats.

Beyond the AstraDome (a three-dimensional, electroluminescent instrument scheme that glows an alluring



Had he been old enough, Peter would have advocated that his father buy the cross-ram 413 in his stick-shift Newport. Since he wasn't, he had his own period-correct engine built and installed.



greenish blue at night) and the "High-Tower" driver's seat ("in one of five different cloth and vinyl combinations...color-keyed to an outside enamel"), standard equipment in the Newport included an automatic front-door lamp, map lamp, an ash tray lamp, cushioned dash, and turn indicators.

Unfortunately, one aspect of Frederick's fastidious keeping of the Newport proved counterproductive.

"My father purchased the complete plastic overlay. The whole seat was encased in plastic, and you didn't sit directly on the cloth or vinyl. If you didn't have air conditioning, which we did not, you would sweat instantly, and the sunlight was intensified, and it rotted the cloth faster."

The front seat wore out when Peter was a teenager, but he held onto it and in 2002 he obtained NOS fabric from SMS Auto Fabrics in Oregon and had it installed locally, along with a new headliner and windlace. The upholsterer at that time advised him that to keep his seats fresh, he should avoid wearing jeans while sitting on them, comparing the effect to that of sandpaper. It is advice Peter has since followed religiously.

"I sit on a blanket and the seats are still like they day they're installed."

This first phase of interior restoration naturally highlighted the accumulated deficiencies of the unrestored parts of the car. While Peter had maintained his father's fastidiousness in keeping the car, entropy happens, especially after a long career as a driver.

"I went to three proms with it. I took the car to college, two years here in New York and three years out in Colorado. I used it out there, it climbed Pikes Peak, I went in the mountains with it all the time, and I towed a U-Haul trailer on the way back to New York. When I got back, I was married, and it was the family car up to 1985. All my kids grew up in it. It was outside for about 15 years."

After 1985, the now-garaged Chrysler got a new lease on life as a special-occasion car, used just enough to keep it running and dusted off for cruise nights and car shows, weddings, and similar events.

"I put three kids through college and never had any money to spend on the car. I was wearing out the original paint from polishing so much. Finally, five years ago, I was pushed by a friend who does bodywork. I did a major restoration that took about five years to complete. Body and paint were about three and a half years. Dave Scherland in Port Jefferson Station, New York, painted it in his garage. He did a fantastic job but that's the last full

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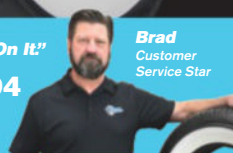
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The original 361 came out to make room for a 413, but it's being preserved.

car he's doing. It's 18 feet long and there are so many curves, it's a lot of real estate to paint.

"Once I got the body back, it took me almost a year working every day sometimes six days a week to put everything back on the car. It was only me doing it. That's how my father taught me—we do all the work ourselves as long as we're able to do it."

While Peter does all his own mechanical work as a rule, one place he turned to for help was in the precision machining of the engine he felt his father should have ordered back in the spring of 1961: The 300G's 413-cu.in. "Golden Lion" RB-series V-8 that was rated at 375 hp and because of the 10.1:1 compression required premium gas. Certainly, a fair indulgence in a car that no longer serves as commuter and weekend tourist for a family.

"The 413 cross-ram was an option in any full-size Chrysler, Dodge, or Plymouth from 1960 to 1964, except 1962. The only difference was the color of the air-filter housings: gold for Chrysler,

red for Dodge, and blue for Plymouth. I'd always wanted to do it since I was a kid, but thank God, I didn't try it at 16 to 18 years old. It was a long and expensive ordeal to find the correct parts to put in that engine.

"Jeff Carter of JC Auto Restoration in Lynwood, Washington, who handles all the '50s and '60s Letter Cars and has a wealth of knowledge, helped me throughout the engine swap and had all the 1961-correct parts I needed, so I purchased most of my items through him. So many of these parts you couldn't find."

While every effort was made to be correct to what the factory would have done in 1961 when fitting a 413 to a Newport, one concession had to be made.

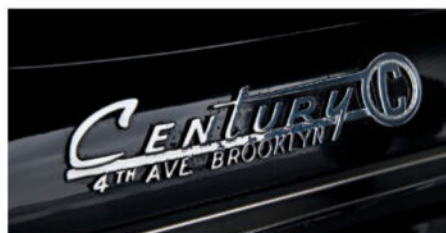
"There were very few cars built for 1961 with the standard shift. They carried it over to 1962, but Jeff Carter brought to my attention that the crankshaft was changed. The crankshaft and flywheel were matched, so the flywheel for 1961 is a one-year part. For 1962 and beyond, the flywheel was used for many years. I could not find a 1961 flywheel; no one had one

so I couldn't use a 1961 block."

With a compatible block and flywheel in hand, plus the myriad correct-for-1961 413 cross-ram parts, Peter turned to Jeff Lawrence of Lawrence Racing Engines in West Hampton Beach, New York, who Peter says doesn't normally rebuild Chryslers but agreed to do this one. The completed engine was dyno tested "to within one or two horsepower of" the stock gross rating and likewise didn't make its advertised torque rating either. Peter blamed the restrictive stock manifolds.

"You can visualize both four barrels wide open with two 30-inch intake manifolds, then all that exhaust being compressed into a single two-inch hole on either side. I put on 1961/1963-'64 high-performance cast-iron headers. I was worried about them fitting around the Z-bar for the clutch, but Jeff Carter swore they would, and they certainly did! They really woke up the engine. When I put them on, the dyno numbers went off the scale. I had





over 500 pounds of torque at 2,900 rpm and 385 horsepower."

Don't think all this prettying up has had the effect of rendering the Newport a garage queen. Peter has verified that the 413 is a genuine improvement over the 361 he used to surprise muscle cars with.

"I thought the 361 was pretty powerful," he says. "It has a lot of torque, and the car only weighs 3,059 pounds. It was pretty quick because the gear ratio is 3.58:1 for the stick cars. That's a pretty low rear for acceleration purposes. It would really move."

"With the 413 cross-ram, it's like having two engines. The original engine had 265 horsepower and now I'm just under 400. The original torque was maybe 355 lb-ft and now I'm over 500. There's no comparison between the two. It certainly can spin the tires. Back with the 361, if I left three feet of rubber, that was a lot. Now, if I punch it, it will light the tires up. It's quite a powerful car, especially for 1961. It was the most-powerful mass-production engine that year."

To show off his refinished heirloom, Peter took the Newport to the Hershey, Pennsylvania, AACA meet and entered it in Driver Participation Class. He was shocked when a judge informed him that

she thought the car was "outstanding, perfect, and should be getting judged."

Taking her advice for a couple of tune-ups to the Chrysler's appearance, he's subsequently ditched a pair of modern speaker grilles and a modern radio he'd installed in the dash. He also had the windlace re-done in 2023 by Smithtown Auto Fabric in Smithtown, New York, as he'd been unable to source the exact color shade previously. He also tapped SMS to restore his door panels, and he says, "they came out better than original."

The British antique motorcycle community has a mantra that seems apt for the history of this unusual 1961 Chrysler Newport: Ride, restore, repeat. Here is to another 63 years of service, and here's to Peter and Frederick, for caring for this uncommon and cool motorcar. 🚗



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Pat Foster

Those Metropolitan Cop Cars

“They are the very antithesis of pursuit requirements, but believe it or not, the Metropolitan police car had merit and was rather popular.”

SOME MALE drivers are obsessed with looking and acting macho. Why, I don’t know. But you see them often, driving huge pickups with loud exhausts, cruising around town without anything in the bed, just trying to look cool. I sometimes wonder how the more nefarious types would react if they were pulled over by a wimpy little police car—like a Nash Metropolitan.

Impossible, you think? Why would a police chief allow a puddle-jumper like the diminutive Metropolitan in a patrol fleet? They are the very antithesis of pursuit requirements, but believe it or not, the Met police car had merit and was rather popular. Back in the Fifties and early Sixties, several police car fleets in cities across America utilized Metropolitans. And, surprisingly enough, most police chiefs were very glad to have them.

All this came about because of the unique nature of the Metropolitan’s production. After World War II, Nash CEO George Mason hoped to expand Nash sales. He felt the big Nash cars would continue selling well but wanted to add smaller cars to attract more buyers. His engineers created the 100-inch-wheelbase Rambler for 1950, which boasted the interior room of prewar family cars, but with compact exterior dimensions. The only problem was that steel supplies were so limited Nash couldn’t build enough Ramblers to meet demand.

Meanwhile, outside stylist Bill Flajole designed a subcompact as an entry-level Nash with superior fuel economy; it became the Metropolitan. One snag was its price. If Nash built the Met in its own factories the profit margin would be razor thin. And, because materials and components were in tight supply, every Met built would mean one fewer of the more profitable Ramblers could be produced.

Mason solved both problems by signing British automaker Austin Motors build the Met under contract using locally sourced components. Every Met sold would then be plus volume for Nash. To ensure sufficient sales, the Met would be offered through Nash’s worldwide dealer network. Mason even allowed Austin to sell the car through its own



network. Naturally, a right-hand-drive version was created for the U.K., Bermuda, South Africa, Japan, and Australia markets.

By 1957 American Motors tried boosting Met sales by offering a right-hand-drive variation in the U.S. where it could be marketed as an ideal vehicle for police department parking enforcement use. AMC even produced a sales brochure touting the car’s utility and economy.

It turned out the Met made sense as a police car, mostly because of the right-hand-drive feature. A policeman could sit behind the wheel and cruise along a line of parked cars, marking a tire on each one with a chalk stick held out the win-

dow. He’d then return after an appropriate period to see which cars had remained too long, at which point tickets were issued. By driving rather than walking, a police officer could check many more cars than before, and with less wear and tear on his feet. For this reason, it’s believed that all, or nearly all, of the imported Met police cars were ordered with right-hand-drive, though no actual figures have surfaced.

One brochure quotes a police chief happily noting that the car was so easy to drive that police-women could be assigned the parking duties; “And of course,” he proudly exclaimed, “policewomen are paid less.” Thank goodness Gloria Steinem didn’t hear him.

Some police departments realized that during emergencies the Met squad cars could be used to track down criminals or maintain order, so some interiors were fitted with shotgun mounts to go along with the lights and sirens most Mets already had.

The Met cop cars were a lot less expensive than a regular cruiser and continued to save money for departments by using less gasoline. Maintenance and tire replacement costs were less, too. One nice coincidence: Met’s standard two-tone color combinations included black and white, so police departments were spared the extra expense of having the cars repainted for service.

The program ended when the Met was dropped in 1962, but AMC had further success marketing the bigger Ramblers to police departments. 🚓

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Ooh, Barracuda!

Barracuda

**A free-of-charge 1967
Plymouth fastback emerges
from long-term storage**

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY SCOTTY LACHENAUER

When Plymouth pulled the cover off its redesigned 1967 Barracuda, the automotive industry couldn't help but take notice. Chrysler Corporation's stylists had masterfully replaced the car's relatively conservative Valiant-based coachwork with flowing, curvaceous flanks, a racy split grille, and a new tail panel of bespoke exuberance. With this sleek, new look, one that—it could be argued—had a subtle Italian flair, came news that the Barracuda was no longer part of the Valiant series, but rather its own line. As such, it was offered as a two-door notchback, convertible, and slippery fastback.

There was more. While both standard engines were carried over—the 145-hp 225-cu.in. Slant Six and 180-hp, two-barrel 273-cu.in. V-8, as well as the optional four-barrel 273 rated at 235 hp—the all-new Barracuda welcomed the addition of the corporation's venerable four-barrel-carbureted 383-cu.in. V-8. Its 280 hp in the Barracuda was lower than the 325 hp this engine made in intermediate/full-size Mopars due to more restrictive exhaust manifolds, but this was still enough to turn the heads of performance enthusiasts. The continued offering of the Formula S package certainly helped too, as did the usual automatic/three-speed/four-speed transmission lineup.

Clearly, Plymouth had a broader target audience in mind, a key part of it being America's youth. That's because, despite beating Ford's Mustang to market by two weeks back in the spring of 1964, Plymouth's pony car had initially been all but obliterated in the sales race. And Plymouth knew it was only going to be a matter of time before Chevy (and soon after, Pontiac) joined the fray.

Did the redesign work?

The public responded by buying just over 62,500 examples of the aesthetically modern Barracuda. In hindsight, the total 1967 model-year output was roughly 2,000 units shy of the model's



The “Super 225” cubic-inch Slant Six, which boasted impressive economy and reliability, remained the base engine. Note the chains that were installed as a basic security system.



high-water mark set in '65; however, it was leaps and bounds beyond the 38,000 units sold during '66 (a year hit by a modest recession, mind). Yet the revamped model solidified Plymouth's pony car market position—and to a greater extent, Dodge's too—for the next half-dozen years.

Though the Barracuda was never the sales champion Chrysler Corporation had hoped it would be, it has stood the test

of time within the collector car marketplace, fueled by three generations of innovative designs (1967 and '70) and a highly dedicated network of OE-style and aftermarket parts suppliers. As a result, dedicated and casual enthusiasts of the late-Sixties pony car market know just what a Barracuda is, and because of the unit-body chassis adaptability when new, what it could be mechanically.

One such casual enthusiast is Joshua Knoblick. He's a renaissance man of sorts. When Joshua isn't fabricating one-off displays and designs for clients or creating unique art installations around the greater New York City metro area, the Newark, New Jersey, resident also dabbles in motorized transportation. He's a welder and bodyman by trade, and thus has an appreciation for all kinds of vintage cars, including our featured 1967 Plymouth Barracuda, a car that had a long hibernation courtesy of its past owner.

"I got a call from my buddy while I was working on an installation at the local airport, and he asked me if I wanted a 1969 Barracuda. I said 'Sure, how much?' He told me that he just needed it gone; there was no title, but the car was all there, and it was just on the other side of town (Newark) in his friend's grandmother's garage," Joshua explains.

The problem was that his buddy needed it gone as soon as possible. The building in which the Plymouth was located was being renovated in advance of an effort to restore several Mazda RX-7s. The Barracuda was hindering progress, and the property owner was anxious. "My friend texted me the address, I grabbed my business partner, Neil, and we headed over to the Weequahic section of Newark to check it out."

Original factory-applied graphics still adorn the Slant Six air cleaner assembly.





What Joshua discovered was a challenging situation. "We got there and found that the tires on the Barracuda were trashed, so rolling it out of the garage was not an option. The driveway was funky: there was a tree in the way, it had a narrow gate opening, and it was a small, steep incline from the street. A regular flatbed was not going to get in there, and because of the tree, using a hook-lift truck was out of the question.

"I ended up calling a friend with a vintage Ford F-350 rollback that was built with a smaller deck for just these situations. He was able to get the deck landed and had just enough cable to drag it out of

the garage and down the driveway. After 20 minutes the Plymouth was on its way to my building," Joshua says.

Although Joshua is admittedly not familiar with Barracudas, or Mopars in general, it didn't take long for him to discover that the 1969 Barracuda he recovered was in fact a '67 edition. It was of little concern because the car was free, and who's going to complain about free? What's more, the Barracuda still cradled its original "Super" 225 Slant Six powertrain that had been paired with a column-shifted TorqueFlite automatic transmission.

Further inspection revealed that the Plymouth was extremely basic otherwise,

with little or no options to be seen. A standard black vinyl interior complimented the Turbine Bronze metallic paint. The original steering wheel was present, though the original radio had been removed long ago. It seemed like all the exterior trim was there, and the car even retained three of its original hubcaps. Up front, the grille had seen some action, particularly the left assembly that sported a gouge that also afflicted the front fender. That aside, the body was in relatively good condition, without excessive rust beyond what could be seen on the lower quarters.

One add-on that some readers may





The fastback body style was still popular in 1967, having attracted more than 30,100 buyers.

remember, especially those who lived in urban environs where crime was an issue, was a homemade security system discovered under the hood of this Barracuda. "Someone installed chains, probably due to constantly getting their battery stolen. One chain locks down the hood, while the other secures the battery. It was simple back in the day to grab a battery and go,

so I figured this guy probably took it in his own hands and built his own secure engine bay," Joshua says.

One interesting anecdote about this Barracuda is that it was extracted from hiding just 2½ miles from where it had originally been sold new: Monarch Chrysler Plymouth of Elizabeth, New Jersey. After keeping the copper-toned Barracuda for a

few months, Joshua knew he couldn't put the time and effort into reviving the dusty Mopar, so he listed it for sale. Since our visit, a father/sons team from Upstate New York purchased the Barracuda and, as of this writing, are about to start the journey of turning the Plymouth into a clone of the car that the father drove while he was in high school. 🚗

This 1967 Barracuda two-door fastback was equipped with a standard interior, save for the optional front bucket seats. While some of the upholstery had seen better days, all the cabin's trim and gauges were present.





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THE MASSIVE RED CAR

BY MATTHEW LITWIN • PHOTOGRAPHY BY NATHAN DEREMER



For decades, stalwarts in the vintage vehicle community have repeatedly said that automobiles produced during the Seventies would never become “collectible,” citing reasons from ugly designs to emasculated V-8 power ratings to horrendous build quality.

So much for that notion.

While those supposed pundits continued to relentlessly beat on that tattered drum, vehicles from the “disco decade” have begun soaring in terms of collectability. Everything from subcompacts to pickups is welcoming waves of enthusiasm, some of which—like with earlier generations of Detroit

iron—is driven by nostalgia. Just ask Brunswick, Georgia, resident Dillon Mathie, whose story began at an impressionable age.

“My lifelong passion for cars is almost entirely the responsibility of my grandparents, Frank and Mary Farina. By the 1980s, Jim Beam released a series of car-shaped decanters. My grandfather was never a big drinker, but he had almost every one, and they were proudly displayed in my grandparents’ home. Time at their house when I was young was spent staring up at Duesenbergs, Corvettes, Thunderbirds, ‘Cudas, and my favorite, the 1957 Bel Air hot rod,” Dillon says.

This all-original 1978 Mercury Grand Marquis is the epitome of an automotive family heirloom



It wasn't just decanters. Lurking in the garage was something larger than life.

"It housed this massive red car that took up every inch of space. It was always immaculately clean, so you'd open the door and get hit with glints of chrome and the light shining off the paint. To a 6- or 7-year-old kid, it seemed impossibly large. I can remember sitting in the front seat between my grandparents and feeling dwarfed by the space around me. The way it was talked about and the way it was cared for—even when I was that young, I knew it had to be special. The cars on the shelves inside were cool, but this was the

real thing. My parents aren't car people, so at home vehicles were just tools, utilitarian transport. At my grandparents', it was completely different. There, cars were something to be admired and appreciated," Dillon recalls.

The big red car was the automobile featured here: a 1978 Mercury Grand Marquis, the division's top-of-the-line offering. According to Dillon, "Frank ordered it from Joe George Mercury in Bethel Park, Pennsylvania, in March of 1978. He went with the two-door version, as that was his preference for all cars, and true to form, opted for the biggest engine available, the 7.5-liter (460-cu.in.) V-8. My



Current owner Dillon confesses that his grandfather preferred wire wheel covers; however “flat” wheel covers make the use of rear fender skirts possible.



grandfather also specified a red velour interior, power antenna, air conditioning, and a couple other things. Knowing he’d be driving the car in Pittsburgh winters occasionally, Frank had the dealer apply DeRascal undercoating. The final cost for the Mercury was \$9,654.”

For the next few years, the Mercury was Frank’s daily driver; the car’s odometer read 10,000 miles in late 1979. Despite the use, he was extremely proud of the Grand Marquis. It was always garage kept and immaculately clean thanks to regular wash-and-wax care. In the early 1980s, however, Frank began to lose his vision, after which the Mercury stopped seeing regular use. By 1991, the car had been driven just a skosh over 40,000 miles, and yet the same diligent care continued. The car remained mechanically fit as well, thanks to Missionary Auto in Pittsburgh.

“My grandfather passed away in 1998, and my grandmother became the car’s custodian. She loved showing it off. She would take it to church on Sundays and car shows when



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she could. I was too young by the time he passed for him and me to really bond over a love of cars, but my grandmother had hours of stories and loved to tell them. So, in the years after my grandfather's passing, I heard all about his love for cars. From his favorite car (Auburn Boattail Speedster), the favorite car he owned (1949 Hudson Commodore affectionately named 'Black Beauty') to the time he completely disassembled and reassembled a Dodge Dart in the garage for reasons no one seems to remember.

"My grandmother lived another 20 years after Frank passed and she stayed sharp as a tack. So, I got 20 years of stories about the man, and they were all punctuated by this massive red land yacht in the garage. When I would visit her, we'd take a trip to the cemetery or to some function at her church and always drive the Mercury. She had a fantastically heavy foot. Malaise-era restrictions aside, the 460 is no slouch, and she had no reservations about putting her foot down. Those trips bombing around the narrow streets of Pittsburgh were always a little anxiety-inducing. Eventually, I came to associate the Mercury just as much with my grandmother as I had with my grandfather," Dillon says.

At the time of Mary's passing in 2019, the Mercury showed fewer than 50,000 miles. While others might have pondered its fate in the hands of a stranger, the family never really questioned to whom it should be bequeathed.

"My mom and aunt asked if I wanted the Mercury. The answer was an immediate 'Yes,'" Dillon says. "Thinking about it now, even though they 'asked' if I wanted it, I'm fairly certain there was never any question about if I would take it. The family was aware of my passion for cars and fascination with the Mercury. On several occasions, as she got older, my grandmother would tell me that the car would be mine one day. Though in my eyes it had become hers, she always thought of it as Frank's car, and as she'd say, 'Anything that was his, is yours.'"

"I had to get rid of a project car, a 1989 Honda CRX Si, to make room for the Mercury, but there was zero hesitation. The Mercury has always been a massive presence in my life, and there was zero chance that it would be sold or end up anywhere else but in my hands. The opportunity to own it was a big deal.

"Though my grandmother had offered several times to let me drive it when I would visit, the first time I drove

the car was when we used it to lead her funeral procession," Dillon says. "That was particularly fitting, as she was buried beside my grandfather. It was, however, nerve-wracking, navigating narrow streets in the car but amusing remembering my grandmother driving the same drive with her foot to the floor. I think I might have topped out at 35 mph on roads she'd regularly hit 60 on. It was a nice little send-off to bring the Mercury by one last time, though, as I knew it was coming home with me and likely wouldn't see Pittsburgh again," Dillon says.

It's here that most people would secure transport for a pristine vehicle, but not Dillon.

"On my taking possession, the car made the 760-mile drive from Bethel Park to my home in Brunswick, Georgia, without issue, though there were many stops for fuel. Along the way, it turned 50,000 miles. Between driving it to my home, and the first few weeks of looking out my window and seeing it parked in my driveway, it was hard to believe that it was mine. My grandmother was larger than life, and the car was such a big part of that. For her to be gone and the Mercury to be mine was a lot to process. I think it wasn't until I took it to a car show for the first time several





Mercury's standard engine in the Grand Marquis was a two-barrel equipped 351-cu.in. V-8, but at the top of the option list was this 460-cu.in. V-8 that the current owner reports "is no slouch" despite emission equipment.

months later that it finally sank in; it was mine, and I'm responsible for it.

"Shortly after driving the Grand Marquis home, I found a folder with years of documentation on the Mercury. Included were the original dealer invoice

(and the salesman's business card), warranty paperwork, financing paperwork, even the receipts for the money orders used to pay for the car. There were also about 20 years' worth of receipts from Missionary Auto for typical maintenance items—

brakes, plugs and such—and they oversaw the A/C conversion to R134 in 2008 and rebuilt the carburetor in 2017."

Dillon's appreciation for his grandparents' Mercury is deep enough that its diligent care and maintenance continues

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uninterrupted, even while he adds fewer than 1,000 miles to the odometer annually. Driving, after all, was the purpose of its purchase in 1978.

"Its presence is one of my favorite things. A bright red, two-door hardtop that's nearly 20 feet long, there's nothing else like it on the road today. It gets attention wherever it goes, from thumbs-up in passing to people stopping and want-

ing to talk—the amount of appreciation strangers on the street have for it, especially when they find out it's unrestored, is always fun to see.

Dillon continues: "The driving experience is another favorite quality. I've described it before as taking your living room for a spin. You sink into this deep velour bench seat, staring down an acre of hood, and it manages to just float



Luxury abounds within the cabin of Mercury's 1978 Grand Marquis, exemplified by the original owner's selection of color-keyed red velour upholstery. The cup holder was a Kmart purchase decades later.



down the highway. We still have a drive-in movie theater one town over, and I took the Mercury out there last year. It was a wonderful time. It's a car that just sort of creates experiences wherever you take it.

"There's also a sense of pride that comes with maintaining it as part of a family legacy," he says. "Outside of photos and some other assorted items, there isn't much from my grandparents. There's something about a car as a family heirloom that, for me at least, just strikes different than, say, a stack of recipes. I think part of it is how easy it is to grasp the history and pride behind it. I can sit behind the wheel, cruise around town, windows down, enjoying the day, and thinking about how many times they must have done the same.

"I've discovered so many artifacts of them when cleaning it. Handwritten directions to a friend's house, receipts, brochures, just little reminders that they lived part of their lives in this car. I've got my grandfather's parking pass for the steel mill he worked at tucked behind the St. Christopher medal on the sun visor. This was his pride and joy, and now it's mine. I have absolutely taken the Mercury to work just to show off and watch people gawk over it in the parking lot.

"The car's a link to the past and the people that influenced a lifelong passion that helped shape the course of my life," Dillon says. "I don't have children of my own but have a niece and nephew now. It's exciting to me that I'll one day get to transfer stewardship of the Mercury to them, hopeful that they'll treasure and maintain it well into the future. I've done my best to provide them both with car-themed toys and books, so I'm keeping my fingers crossed that one of them catches the bug. Even if they don't find cars as interesting as I do, as time goes on, I think the Mercury will only become more special. The older it gets, the more time it spends in my life only adds depth to the history and the connection. In the meantime, I dote over the care and maintenance, so they'll be able to receive something just as stunning as I did, albeit with a few more miles on the odometer." 🚗





Best of Show, as well as the Walter P. Chrysler Award: Most Outstanding Chrysler, was bestowed upon this magnificent 1932 Chrysler Imperial CL convertible coupe by LeBaron, owned by Kent Marburger. According to records, just 28 were built, all of which were powered by a 125-hp, 384-cu.in. straight-eight engine.

2024 Concours d'Elegance at Copshaholm

This sixth annual automotive festival was simply scintillating

BY MATTHEW LITWIN • PHOTOGRAPHY BY LUKE MUNNELL

The state of Indiana has a lot to offer vintage-vehicle enthusiasts. One can begin at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway Museum, then travel northeast to the Auburn Cord Duesenberg Automobile Museum before heading to nearby South Bend to visit the Studebaker National Museum. If you plan such an automotive adventure in mid-July, you can spend an extra day in South Bend and attend the annual Concours d'Elegance at Copshaholm.

Let's be clear. This one-day concours compares well with other events that you are likely to find on either coastline of the country. It's a true gem that attracts roughly 100 carefully curated vintage vehicles from across the country, and, as demonstrated at the sixth gathering on July 13, from half a world away. Those vehicles are displayed in 11 classes, which decorate the picturesque grounds of the Studebaker National Museum and the adjacent Oliver Mansion named Copshaholm.

The 2024 concours class structure celebrated: pre-1933 closed-body Full Classics; 1933-'48 closed-body Full Classics;

The Centennial Club (cars at least 10 years old); Chrysler's Centennial; De Sotos; pre-World War II competition cars; Studebaker's Lark; "Flathead" Fords; cars of the Disco Decade (1970-'79); the 60th anniversary of the Mustang; and MGs from Morris. Talk about diversity, and as you'll see in this report, all the vehicles invited to display had a compelling story to tell. A bonus here is that both the Studebaker Museum and Oliver Mansion are open to the public during the day.

The 2025 Concours d'Elegance at Copshaholm, which is scheduled for July 12, is shaping up as yet another not to be missed. Classes have also been announced, which include Rolls-Royce, Mercury, Open-air Full Classics, European Full Classics, four-door Studebaker sedans, "Roaring '20s" (popular-priced cars of 1920-'29), Brass cars, Microcars, vehicles styled by Carrozzeria Ghia, 1960s Compacts, and Silent Knights—Knight sleeve-valve engine vehicles.

For a complete list of 2024 concours class and special award winners, and details about the 2025 gathering—including submitting a vehicle for consideration—visit concoursatcopshaholm.org.



One of the first vehicles to arrive in the “Ultimate Luxury: Closed Body Full Classics II” class was this compelling 1935 Auburn 851 Sedan, owned by 19-year-old Graham Geiger, a volunteer at the Auburn Cord Duesenberg Museum. The Auburn, one of 6,316 in total built during the year, received a class Champion award.



Aran La, a 10-year-old automotive art and engineering prodigy, was at the concours applying his craft to canvas, the subject of which was the 1934 Packard Series 1101 Standard Eight seven-passenger Tourer seen below. Read about Aran's budding career on pages 8 and 9 of this issue.



Attendees were treated to a truly unique Full Classic, this 1934 Packard Series 1101 Standard Eight seven-passenger Tourer, which was on special display. The Packard was delivered new to the Maharaja of Nawalgarh, India, wearing a chromed hood and full wheel discs; the folding windshield was also specified. Today the car is owned by Rajiv Kehr of New Delhi, India. Look for a feature on this Packard in the February 2025 issue of this magazine.



“Class K: The Mustang at 60” was brimming with examples from the iconic model's introduction up through 1979, including this 1976 Mustang II Stallion owned by Michael and Kristine Campbell. Michael purchased the Ford new, and it was used while courting Kristine and as their honeymoon chariot. At South Bend, the Stallion was awarded Best in Class.



On display in “Class D: Chrysler Centennial” was this mesmerizing 1942 Town & Country nine-passenger station wagon, one of only 849 built. It was sold new in Allegan, Michigan, for \$1,685, or \$32,515 in today's currency. It was restored by current owners Al and Carole Scholten, and on this day the Chrysler was awarded Best in Class.



Studebakers are a fixture at this concours, and in 2024 the event celebrated the Lark with a dedicated class. One of the standouts was this all-original 1959 Deluxe owned by Jim and Elaine Hoglund. It received a class Champion award.



How rare is the 1956 Chrysler New Yorker convertible? Just 921 were built. This one was ordered new by New York radio/television personality Robert Q. Lewis. Today the Chrysler is owned by John and Lynne Cote, who are shown receiving the “Raymond Loewy Award: Exemplary Exterior Design.”



Among the cars displayed in the “Ultimate Luxury: Closed-Body Full Classics II” class was this 1937 Packard Super Eight Limousine owned by Russ Rodrigues and Mary Ellen Thielemann. According to records, the Packard was used by Joseph P. Kennedy while he served as the ambassador to Great Britain from 1938–’40. Judges awarded it Best of Class at the concours.



“Competition Classics: The Prewar Era” featured a stunning array of vintage race cars, including a 1927 Ford, 1932 Miller, and this 1932 Studebaker Special displayed by Jamie Cleary. The racer was one of five factory cars entered in the 1932 Indianapolis 500; it finished in 15th position with Peter Kreis at the helm. At the concours, the car received a class Champion award and the Junior Judges award.



Noted early electric vehicle enthusiasts Bill and Linda Lillie were in attendance with their 1911 Baker Electric Special Extension coupe, which was displayed in “Class C: The Centennial Club,” where it received Best of Class honors.



One of this year's special guests was automotive designer and author Emeline King, who was the first African American female transportation designer at Ford Motor Company.



De Sotos were celebrated at the 2024 event, the earliest of which on display was this 1935 Airflow coupe courtesy of the nearby Auburn Cord Duesenberg Automobile Museum. The De Soto was noteworthy, as it was originally owned by co-head of Chrysler Engineering, Carl Breer. It also served as a test mule and was thus periodically updated as needed. 🚗

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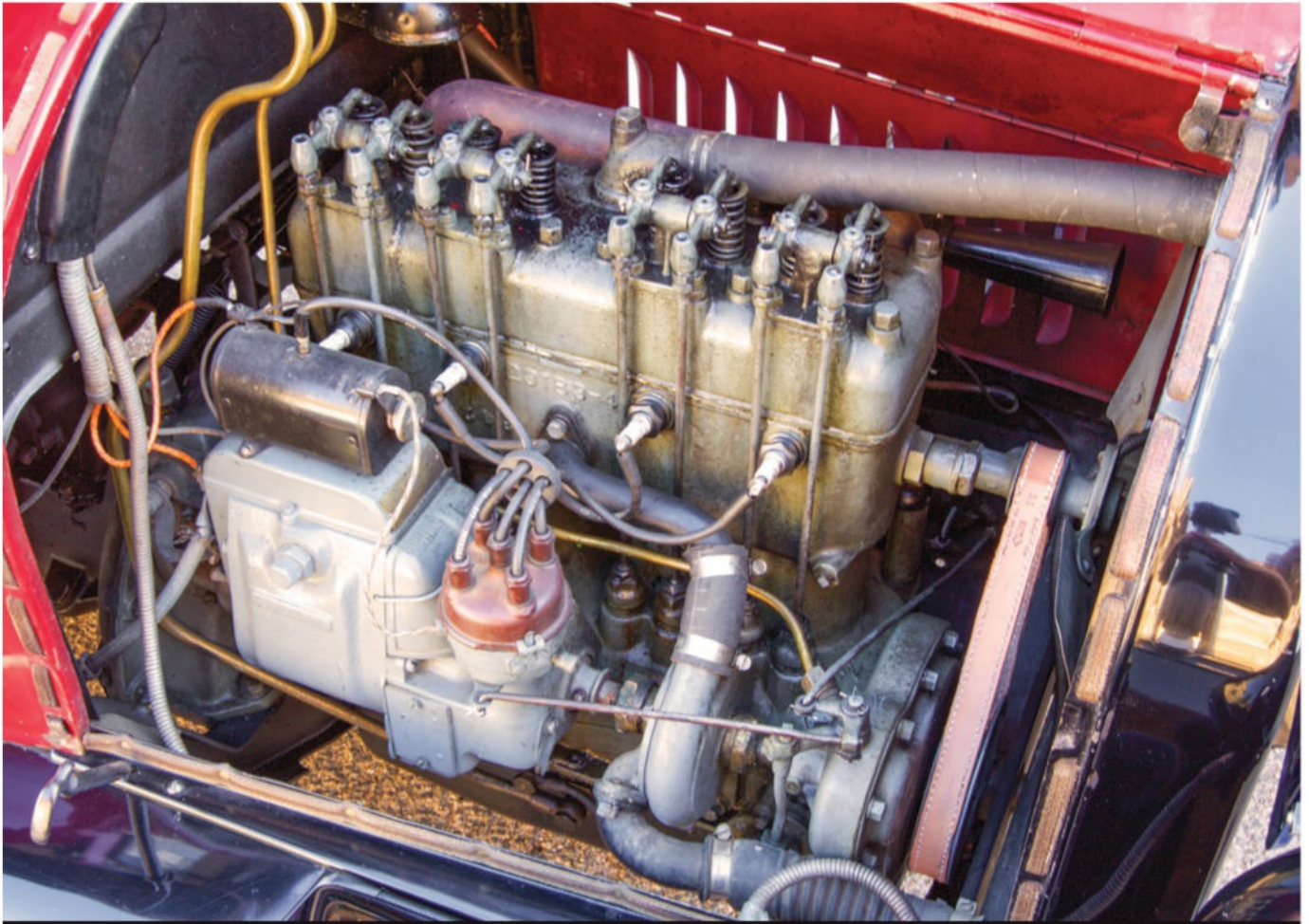
UNCLE FRANK'S FOLLY

**Why has one family held
onto this **1918 Buick E-35**
Touring since new?**

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEFF KOCH

How has this 1918 Buick managed to stay in the same family since new? Anna and Kathryn Holzer were born a year apart, in Wisconsin, in the mid-1880s. Both sisters married their childhood sweethearts: Anna wed Al Sternhagen, while Frank Fiedler married Kathryn. Together, the Holzer sisters followed a few of their siblings to Montana and settled under the Homestead Act, with the idea that having family nearby was a wise course of action. Anna and Al farmed wheat out on the prairie, while Frank and Kathryn settled in the foothills of the Little Belt Mountains, just a dozen miles away, and became ranchers.





A portion of Buick's model names were derived from the engine found under the hood. In this case, "E-35" indicates the five-passenger Touring is motivated by a 35-hp 170-cu.in. four-cylinder.

Though his dad passed when he was a boy, Frank's parents had established themselves in Wisconsin, owned vast tracts of land around Stockbridge and High Cliff for farming, and had a couple of shekels in the bank. Right around the time where cars were recognized as indispensable machines rather than a rich man's toy, Frank's mom, Rose, gave her son her four-cylinder Buick E-35 Touring as a surprise gift—shipping it via the Milwaukee Road rail line to her son in the wilds of Montana.

This sounds like an extravagance (is the gift of a car ever not extravagant?), but the choice of a Buick made some sense. From 1907-'09, Buick was America's biggest car builder behind only Ford; its sales success, in no small part due to the smoothness of the valve-in-head, horizontally opposed two-cylinder, is often credited as the impetus for the creation of General Motors. From 1910-'15, once Buick launched its four-cylinder engine, the brand was comfortably in the top five of American auto production (Ford topped the list; Buick jousted with Studebaker, Maxwell, and Willys-Overland for the remaining spots). Buick enjoyed a strong reputation, and with 43,946 cars built for 1915, the division and its four-cylinder lineup were fifth in sales.

For 1916, Billy Durant returned to run General Motors, and took special interest in Buick, as the marque had helped him to prominence a decade earlier. On the back of a new all-six-cylinder lineup, sales tripled to 124,834 for '16 and calmed down slightly to 115,267 for '17. So, Mrs. Fiedler's choice of a Buick seemed a safe one for her baby boy: it was a name she would have recognized from reading the papers or speaking with owners, and it wasn't a fly-by-night marque that could've disap-

peared in a flash.

Buick's on-again-off-again relationship with four-cylinder engines was back on again for 1918. The E-35 Touring, the car that Frank's mom gifted him, started at \$795 (or \$16,560 in 2024 money); its 170-cu.in. four generated 35 hp and featured a detachable cylinder head. (Valve-in-head action was a given; it's a Buick, after all.) Four-cylinder models' chassis received conventional rear leaf springs in lieu of the six's cantilevered springs, though otherwise the 106-inch-wheelbase platform was broadly similar to the brand's larger models. Production dipped to 77,691 for the year, though this was because Buick diverted resources to making armaments and equipment to help end World War I.

Between the brothers-in-law that married the Holzer sisters, it was Al who had a knack for mechanics and making things run; Frank was content with riding horseback and herding cattle. (In a modern world, Al would have figured out how to get today's streaming services to work seamlessly on his 55-inch plasma-screen TV, while Frank would have struggled to figure out the Wi-Fi password.) So, when Frank had to run an errand into town, four miles away, and a visiting Al goaded him into driving the Buick, well, things didn't quite go to plan.

"Al helped Frank get the car started and showed him the basics," says Carol Hein, Anna's granddaughter who now holds title to the Buick, in a tale that has long since become family lore. "Sometime later, Anna, Al and Kathryn heard a commotion out in the yard; Frank was yelling, 'How do you stop this thing?!' Al jumped onto the running board and helped Frank stop the car. He never did get what Kathryn needed in town; Frank couldn't figure



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out how to stop, so he drove past the store, around the block, and right back out to the ranch." Frank was sufficiently annoyed that he sold the Buick to Al for the princely sum of \$15 on the spot.

The Sternhagens quickly adapted their new purchase to agricultural life: the rear passenger compartment was replaced with an open pickup-style box. Whether hauling coal to keep the house warm during brutal Montana winters, or to take eggs and cream from the farm in exchange for other provisions from the shopkeeper in town, the Buick earned its keep. The Sternhagens' two daughters, Gladys and Marty, as well as son Bob, learned to drive on the E-35, in a time when Montana had no driving age; later they would use it to visit friends and go to school functions. It was used daily well into the 1930s.

This was around the time the Dust Bowl crippled the American plains; crops were borderline impossible to grow, and Al had gone to nearby Bozeman to seek work as a house painter. Gladys was already at Montana State College, based there, and Marty was gearing up to go there too. Al found success quickly and sent a telegram home: "I got a job. Park the Buick in the shed. Drain the radiator, gas tank, and oil. Pack up all and move to Bozeman." And thus, the Sternhagen family left all behind, including the Buick. But the farm wasn't abandoned: Anna's brother, Jake, lived on the property, so he continued to farm the land for decades once conditions improved. And the decades marched on: Jake retired, Anna and Al passed, and their kids continued to rent out the house and land over time. The Buick



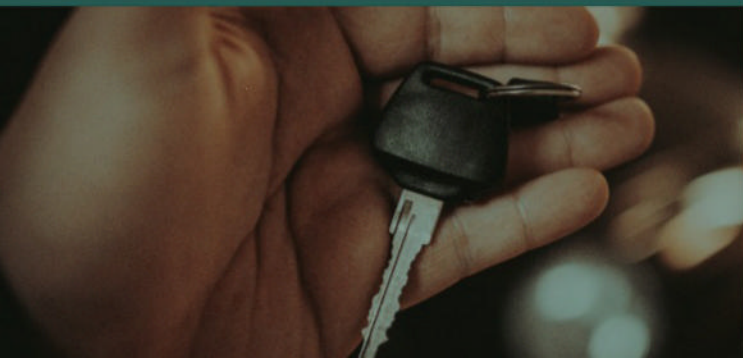


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remained in stasis—parked, silent, bereft of fluids and life, undisturbed, waiting for the next phase of its life. It would take nearly half a century.

Occasionally a Holzer family reunion was held on or near the property, and, according to Carol, “[my mom] Marty and other family members always enjoyed going over to the shed and checking out the Buick. Mom’s reaction was one of pure joy and happiness at seeing the ‘long-lost friend’ she had driven all through her high school years! All I saw was a thick layer of dust and dirt all covered with cobwebs.” With her siblings’ blessing, Marty (and her husband, Harm Uhlich) moved it into a garage near their Lewiston, Montana, home.

Harm retired in 1976 and wondered what they were going to do with their free time. Marty suggested that they restore the Buick, although they had no idea what it would entail. First, they searched the old homestead to find any parts that may have been discarded or abandoned over time; to their surprise, the back seat was found in a dry ravine, covered in rose bushes. Other parts were broken or rusted beyond use for anything beyond a pattern to make new pieces.

The second step was joining a local classic-car club: the still-extant Central Montana Traildusters. “[They] discovered a wealth of knowledge and expertise among its members. It seems everyone was excited about helping Mom and Dad get that old car fixed up and running again.” Rather than simply send it out to a shop to be made whole, Marty and Harm were shown how to do certain tasks by club experts—which they then emulated, with assistance. “Through every aspect of restoring that vehicle, there were members familiar with each task who would show what to do and how to do it correctly,” Carol recalls. “Then Mom and Dad would get to work. I’m so glad that the members let them do most of the work themselves (after they learned how to do each process) so they could take more ownership of the restoration.” Woodwork, mechanicals, leather, sheetmetal—all were tackled over several years. The engine block had cracked and was beyond repair, however, so a working replacement was sourced.

Marty and Harm enjoyed showing off the family’s Buick in parades around Montana for the rest of the 1980s and 1990s. With the blessing of her siblings, Carol (and husband Scott, living in Prescott, Arizona, at the time of photography but now residing in Phoenix) took possession in 2002. “All we have done is maintenance: adjusting the carburetor when we moved from





a higher elevation; oiling the rocker arms after any significant drive; repacking the water pump bearings; replacing the leather fan belt; oil changes and tire inflations. When we store it through the summer in Phoenix, we place a bucket of water next to each wheel and cover it all with a heavy cloth to keep the original(!) wooden spokes from drying out." They've shown the Buick around Arizona for two decades now and will drive it 15-20 miles for shows and parades.

"Scott and our son, Eric, are the only two family members who drive the car," Carol says. "I got intimidated by how special the car has been to the family and have been afraid to learn to drive it for fear I might break it if I do something wrong. I would have a hard time living with myself if that were to happen. I am a very happy passenger!" And thus, after more than a century, this 1918 Buick E-35 Touring will continue to remain in the same family that have owned it since new. 🚗



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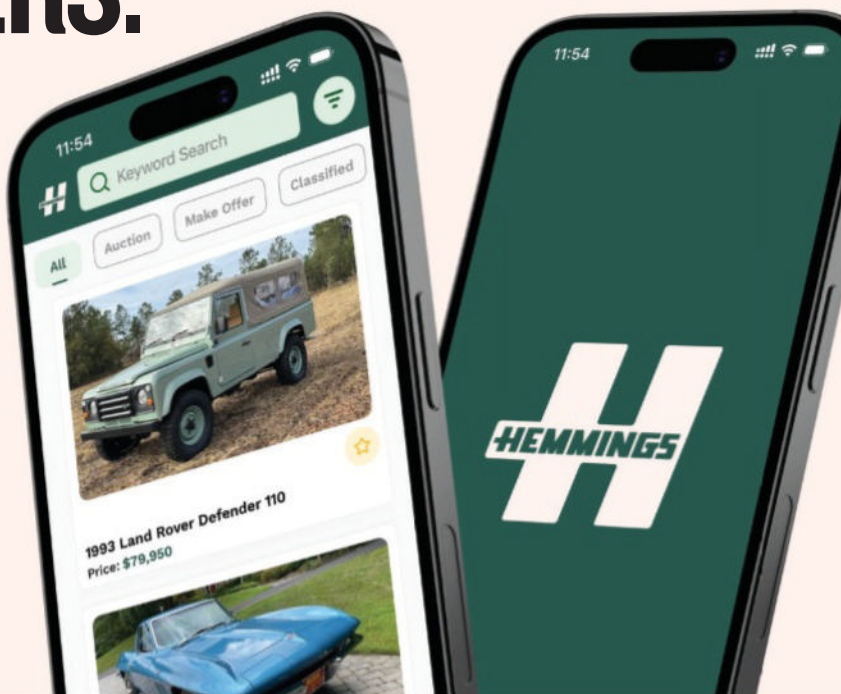
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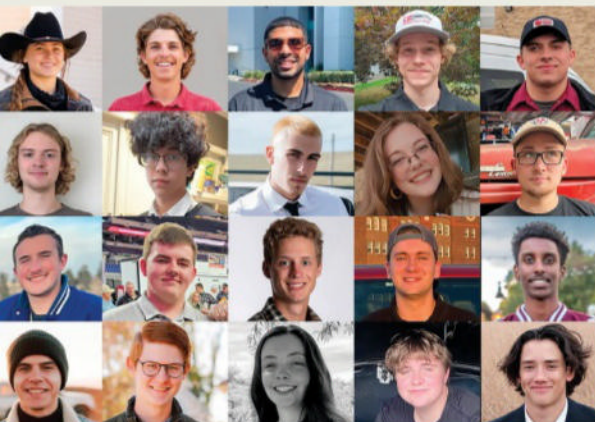


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BY TOM COMERRO

PISTON FOUNDATION AWARDS SCHOLARSHIPS FOR 2024



The Piston Foundation has announced its scholarship winners for students looking to build a career in the automotive restoration and collector-car and vintage-motorsports industries. Each scholar receives up to \$5,000 in

financial aid to help pay tuition at an automotive school of their choice.

"Each of these scholars is a bright and exciting talent with a passion for collector cars and the drive to learn the skills of automotive restoration," said Jeff Mason, president and COO of The Piston Foundation. "The Foundation, with the support of donors and partners, is eager to help these students on their journey through college and beyond. Like other Piston Scholars before them, these aspiring technicians will join the collector-car community as part of a new generation ready to preserve the past and build the future."

Mason reports that in the three years of the program's existence, 10 scholars have graduated from school and are now working within the industry. He also notes that applications continue to increase each year, which bodes well for the future of classic cars and restoration. Applications for 2025 scholarships will be available in January 2025. Visit pistonfoundation.org for more about the foundation and its 2024 scholars.

The 2024 Piston Scholars are:

Annika Ernstrom, San Luis Obispo, California (McPherson College)
Blake Swingle, Columbus, Ohio (McPherson College)
Carlos Leandry, Bayamon, Puerto Rico (McPherson College)
Cody Kuss, Bremerton, Washington (McPherson College)
Connor Hecei, Warren, Pennsylvania (Pennsylvania College of Technology)
Edwin Buiter, Ireton, Iowa (McPherson College)
Elias Vasquez, Irving, Texas (McPherson College)
John Morris, San Anselmo, California (McPherson College)
Lindzie Archer, McPherson, Kansas (McPherson College)
Marcello Dean, Placerville, California (McPherson College)
Mory Hummell, Franktown, Colorado (WyoTech)
Nicholas King, Lafayette, Indiana (McPherson College)
Philip Schieffelin, Limon, Colorado (McPherson College)
Riley Sojka, Wichita, Kansas (McPherson College)
Samson Fisher, Milford, Michigan (Ferris State University)
Samuel Povod, Palm Coast, Florida (McPherson College)
Samuel White, Topeka, Kansas (McPherson College)
Tara Feeney, Fort McDowell, Arizona (McPherson College)
Thomas Tencer, Seattle, Washington (McPherson College)
Vincent Ramirez, Afton, Minnesota (Worcester Polytechnical Institute)



AACA

FOR THE AACA EARLY BIRDS

It's never too early to start planning for the upcoming car show season and the Antique Automobile Club of America has announced its national event dates for 2025. Attendees can expect to meet like-minded enthusiasts from across the country who have gathered to display their cars, swap and sell hard-to-find parts, and tour the host region and area attractions. Organized by various AACA chapters, here are the tentative 2025 national event dates and locations. Be sure to visit the events section at aaca.org for up-to-date information.

February 6-8: Annual Convention, Charlotte, North Carolina
April 3-5: Southeastern Spring Nationals, Charlotte, North Carolina
May 1-3: Western Spring Nationals/Grand Nationals, Tucson, Arizona
June 1-7: Vintage Tour (Pre-1931), Southern/Eastern Pennsylvania
June 26-28: Eastern Spring Nationals, West Virginia
July 2-5: Central Springs Nationals, Auburn, Indiana
September 7-12: Revival AAA Glidden Tour (Pre-1943), Owensboro, Kentucky
September 18-20: Southeastern Fall Nationals, Corydon, Indiana
October 7-10: Eastern Fall Meet, Hershey, Pennsylvania
October 22-25: Central Fall Nationals, Galveston, Texas

WINTER HOLIDAY CELEBRATIONS AT GILMORE

The Gilmore Car Museum's annual Winter Wonderland returns with expanded holiday lights and displays in December. Family fun events, such as the Festival of Trees, Great Elf Hunt, and Dashing Through the Snow Vintage Rides, are among the many activities to take place on its 90-acre campus in Hickory Corners, Michigan. The event is also a great opportunity to see the museum's cars and automotive displays. Kids under 5 enter for free and Santa Claus will be in his garage with his team of elves. The Winter Wonderland holiday experience will take place every Thursday through Sunday in December, including the week after Christmas. Visit gilmorecarmuseum.org for tickets and information.



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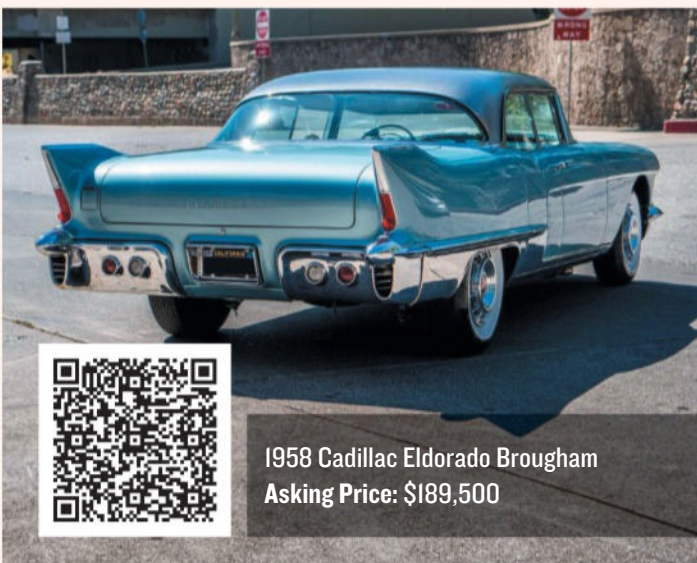
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Asking Price: \$189,500



1948 Chrysler Town & Country Conv. Woody
Asking Price: \$125,000

BY TOM COMERRO



HEMMINGS ARCHIVES

SWISS MISS?

Cadillacs are a popular choice when it comes to customization and unusual coachbuilding, and the Sbarro Function Car is proof of that. Many of you have likely seen Sbarro (not the pizza) creations in the past, as Franco Sbarro is a well-known customizer out of Switzerland who has introduced many prototypes and concepts at the Geneva Auto Show. His most popular and famous project, which pops up from time to time in *Hemmings*, includes the BMW 328 replica; more than 100 were produced in the mid-1970s.

The Function Car seen here was a converted Cadillac Eldorado built to serve as a mobile office, commissioned by the owner of TAG Heuer in the late 1970s. It was capable of fitting six people comfortably with all the technological achievements of the time. Entry was possible through the side doors as well as a rear door. The Eldorado needed a third axle to support the weight of the car and its contents. Among those contents were a television, phone system, four comfortable armchairs, a refrigerator, a small partition between driver and office, and two folding secretary desks. The car was powered by a 500-cu.in. V-8 mated to a four-speed automatic transmission.

When it was all said and done, the six-wheeled monster ignored the gas crisis. It measured 23-feet in length and weighed more than 3 tons. The car was available for 250,000 Swiss francs, which conservatively comes out to about \$600,000 when factoring in current



day exchange rates and inflation. The plan was to build 25 of these initially, but it seems this was the only one ever made.

To our knowledge, Sbarro remains active in his workshop and has released a prototype as recently as 2018 at Geneva, he had plans to release another during the COVID-canceled 2020 show. We're hoping the Function Car is a part of his collection, which was last known to reside in the Vernon Automobile Museum in Vernon, France, open by appointment only. Have you ever seen the Function Car or any of Sbarro's other prototypes? Drop us a line and let us know.



LOGGING MILES

Pete Betz sent us this interesting picture via email. It appears to be a Buick that was converted into a tractor performing some grunt work near a forest. Converting a car for purposes other than the road was a popular practice during the prewar era, and the Model T was the ultimate in versatility with kits such as the Pullford plow conversion, as well as sand or snowmobile kits to combat the nation's at-the-time unreliable infrastructure. Did you ever convert your car for uses other than the road? Send us the pictures of your transformed workhorse.



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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THE FORTIES CAR

This 1947 Pontiac Streamliner encapsulates the style and technology of World War II-era America

BY DAVID CONWILL • PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVID CONWILL AND MATTHEW LITWIN

Forties cars deserve more love. They are representative of a tumultuous period that shaped the modern world and perfectly represent the technological level of the United States at the start of World War II. High-performance piston aircraft engines and their high-octane fuel, jet planes, rocket science, and the atomic bomb were all still

in the future, but '40s cars showcase the jumping off point for all that. It makes them simultaneously accessible in a way later cars (or any tech) are not, but historically significant in a huge way. They're surprisingly inexpensive, too, probably because, as one writer put it, "the rakish, utterly impractical expressions of wealth and power that had flourished a few years earlier and



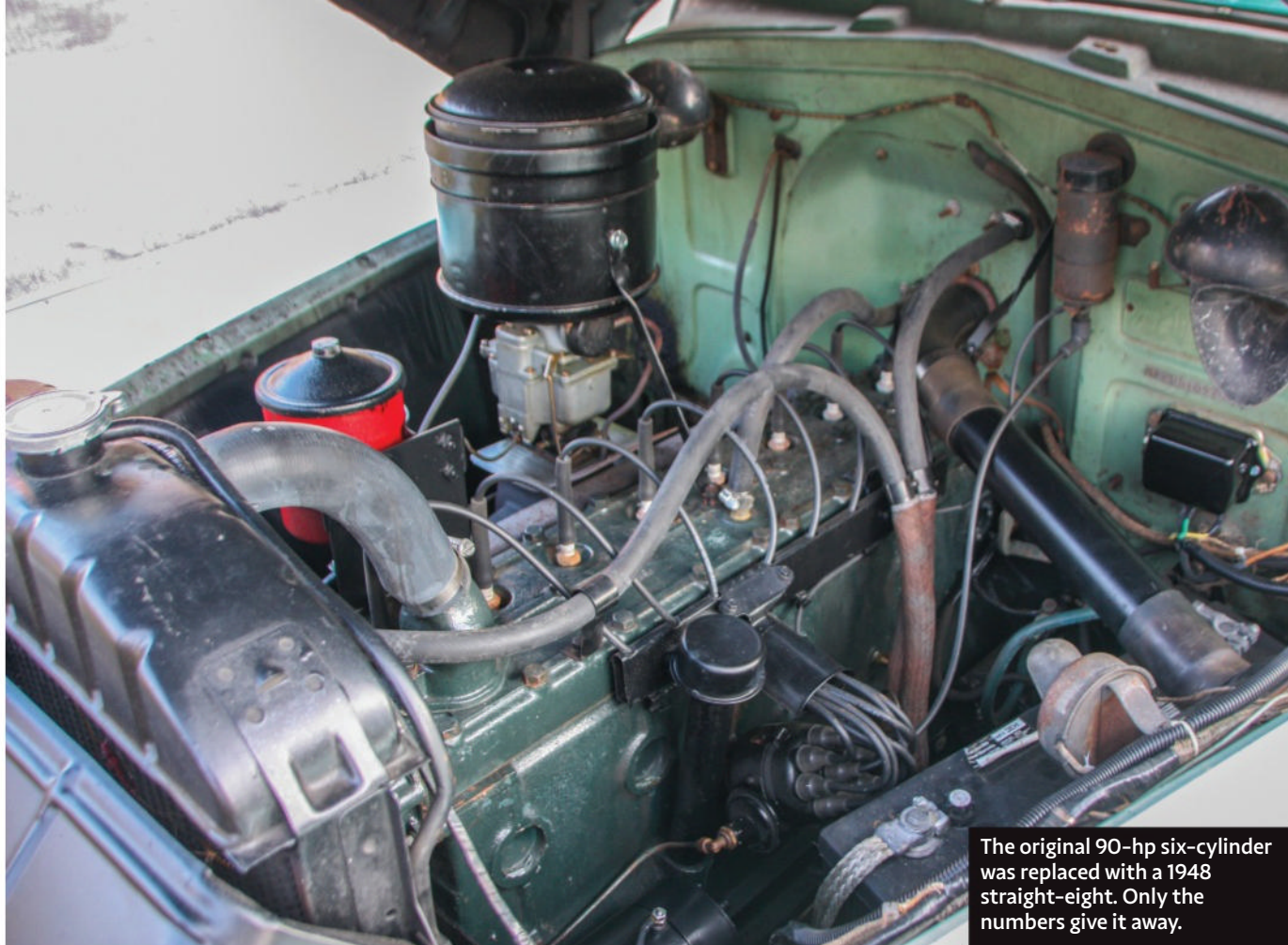
had made men's pulses race had withered in the chill of the Depression, leaving only the hardiest family cars behind."

Yet these were still incredibly stylish family cars, and their hardy design was welcomed during the wartime years when cars were out of production. They were welcomed in the DIY era that followed too, as the "nation of mechanics" that had weathered the Depression and won the war kept their can-do attitude going at home, performing their own auto maintenance and repairs, and often accessorizing thanks to myriad aftermarket suppliers eager to sell anything from steering wheel knobs to high-compression cylinder heads. The same holds true for today's enthusiast—just ask the owner of this 1947 Streamliner Six turned Streamliner Eight, Jerry Plante of Candia, New Hampshire.

The historical aspect deserves more context. It's fairly well known that the 1946-'49 period was a shift from carmakers issuing lightly restyled versions of their prewar models to entirely

new designs. Studebaker was first with a new body in 1947; Hudson, Cadillac, and the senior Oldsmobiles followed in 1948; and essentially everyone else had a new-looking car for the 1949 model year featuring far more integrated fender shapes, or even a complete envelope body where the vestigial separate fenders had been banished entirely. Chrysler marques were the last to undergo a full restyle, wearing their 1942-style bodies part-way through the 1949 model year. Pontiac was among the 1949 group that went on sale late in 1948, making our subject car emblematic of the 1942-'48 cars as a whole and a good representative of Pontiac's pre-1955 "flathead" era as well.

The retooling to make a new postwar car took a while because while America came out of World War II in better shape than most of the world, it was still a bumpy reentry to peacetime. Shifting the U.S. economy to a full wartime footing didn't happen instantaneously on the Monday morning after the Pearl Harbor



The original 90-hp six-cylinder was replaced with a 1948 straight-eight. Only the numbers give it away.

attack. It didn't wind down instantly either. In the face of massive public resistance, an overhaul of the U.S. military had begun in 1938. As in 1917, the federal government sought to retool America's automotive industry to supply a modern fighting force.

By the time the 1941 cars went on sale in the autumn of 1940, the Detroit-centered Arsenal of Democracy was already supplying British forces fighting Germany and Italy overseas. This Lend-Lease production stimulated the economy, and at the same time a growing sense that war with the Axis powers was inevitable must have made Americans anxious about potential shortages. That made 1941 a banner sales year across the industry, particularly for Pontiac, which moved 330,061 units. It was the best sales year Pontiac would see between its 1926 debut and 1950, besting the previous 244,584-car record set in 1928.

For 1942, Pontiacs used the same body as in 1941, but the fenders and grille were restyled to look more massive, with a new emphasis on horizontal lines in the front-end design. They also sported extensions of the front fenders bolted onto the doors, thematically in line with the "Airfoil" fenders of the new-for-'42 Buick. All four fenders also wore speedlines, in keeping with the Streamline Moderne tastes of the day.

Pontiac by this time was heavily involved in defense work, earning the first Army-Navy "E" award for military production. Between the start of 1942-model production in the late summer of '41 and the halt on February 10, production of Pontiac cars totaled 83,555. Those cars built after January 1, 1942, got so-called "blackout" trim where the bumpers were still chrome but other brightwork was painted. Despite the name, this had nothing to do with air raids or U-boats but was a way to save strategically critical chromium and nickel.

Interestingly, by mid-1945, it had already been decided that wartime production could begin easing back into peacetime

manufacture of consumer goods. The first postwar Pontiac (a Streamliner Sedan Coupe fastback like this one) was ready just 29 days after the Japanese surrender, on September 13. However, it took almost 9 months to achieve full production thanks in part to shortages and labor unrest. Pent-up demand meant that the 137,640 Pontiacs built for 1946 sold quickly and often for more than sticker. The attitude among many car dealers was that wait lists were so long, it didn't matter if the original buyer backed out of the sale. Similarly, deluxe models proliferated in this era because of their higher profit margins and the consumer's willingness to buy whatever was available.

It's perhaps for that reason that when Pontiac cars returned after World War II, it was the B-body Streamliner with a more-luxurious 122-inch wheelbase that entered production first. The A-body Torpedo model, with its 119-inch wheelbase, was the car that finally arrived in June. Either model could be had with a six- or an eight-cylinder engine. Both were flatheads and largely unchanged since 1941. The six-cylinder displaced 239-cu.in. and was rated at 90 hp with the standard 6.5:1-compression cylinder head. An optional head bumped that up to 7.5:1. The straight-eight made 103 hp from its 249-cu.in. with 6.5:1 compression; it too had an optional 7.5:1-compression cylinder head.

Throughout this period, Pontiacs—regardless of engine—used a column-shifted three-speed manual transmission, an open driveshaft, and a Hotchkiss-style rear end, plus GM's second-generation IFS design developed in the late 1930s. Only in 1948 did the Hydra-Matic automatic appear as an option in Pontiacs. To make up for some of the parasitic loss inherent in early automatic designs, GM re-tuned the straight-eight to make 104 hp with standard compression and 106 hp in high-compression guise.

In the big picture, the venerable Pontiac straight-eight has its origins in 1933, when GM made the bold decision to drop



the venerable split-head six that Pontiac had used since '26 and replace it with a 223-cu.in., 77-hp flathead eight. It would grow and adapt to its surrounding chassis steadily until making its final appearance for '54. Along with Packard, Pontiac would be the last American car to be offered with a straight-eight. Its lease on life was probably inadvertently extended by the untimely death of Pontiac General Manager Arnold Lenz (hmn.com/lenz) in a railroad grade-crossing accident. Supposedly the '53 Pontiac chassis was designed to accommodate the V-8 that was ultimately released in '55, ending the flathead Pontiac era entirely, as the six-cylinder—itsself a 1935 debutante—was also axed from the lineup with no replacement until the mid-1960s.



Stylistically, 1947 to 1948 marks a rather major if often-overlooked change in Pontiac. The grille and bumpers had been changed from 1942 to '46, but other than those details, the majority of the 1946 and '47 styling was still solidly in the 1942 vein. The 1948 cars used the same bodies but sloughed off most of the Streamline Moderne for trim that looked ahead to 1950s designs. The Silver Streak trim over the nose and trunk was revised and the iconic speedlines on the fenders were removed entirely, replaced with a simple chrome spear.



That makes our subject car a fitting representation of this era, showing Pontiac on the cusp of shedding the pre-war era in styling and design. It even showcases the technological evolution, as its 1948 straight-eight engine replaced a worn-out original 90-hp six-cylinder and its 104 hp even outdoes the rating of the 1947 eight. Jerry, however, wasn't working to acquire a piece of history in quite so literal a way. Mostly, he wanted a Pontiac cruiser with a bit more room and a different '47 had caught his eye.



"In early 2019, I went to a big flea market at the dragstrip near Auburn, Maine. I ran across a '47 there on a trailer, for sale. I had been looking for something like that. I have a Solstice and two GTOs, but I wanted what I call a 'big car.' I was kind of looking for a Catalina or a Bonneville. Something big. My mother had a '49 fastback. It was different from the '47, but there were a lot of similarities. Hers was all-black and a three-speed on the column. The '47 had nice styling, like an early GTO, and I thought it was cool when I saw it. I hadn't really paid attention until I saw the car at the swap meet in the first place."

Unfortunately, the time involved in getting his wife to agree to the purchase meant Jerry was the second to inquire and didn't manage to nab that '47, though he subsequently became friends with the buyer. Thankfully, fate intervened to find him another.

"I was at the directors' meeting of the car club I belong to. We were looking for a new GTO for a member and then came across this '47 at a car lot in Auburn, Maine. I gave him a deposit over the phone. My birthday was coming up on July 2, so I asked my wife if she wanted to go look at the car. She didn't know I



already had a deposit on it, but since she'd already agreed to the other car, I figured I was grandfathered in."

What they found was not perfect but promising to a mechanically handy guy like Jerry: "There were no brakes, but it started and ran, so I came back a few days later with a trailer and picked it up." Perhaps the best part? The non-working brakes were because someone had gone to the trouble of installing all new parts on the backing plates but failed to adjust them. "I took the '47 over to a guy I know here in town to look at the brakes. I figured it was a burst brake line but all he had to do was go around and tighten them up and they worked fine. I was happy with that!"

Once the car was safe, Jerry took to driving it around immediately, taking the time to replace the tires after a persistent shake cropped up around 35 mph. The engine, however, would never run to his satisfaction.

"I spent the better part of the year trying to tune it up. The timing on these cars is on the flywheel and I could never really find it or get it set properly." A trip to an expert revealed that two cylinders were simply dead and that the only fix was to rebuild the engine—the approximately \$5,000 cost of which Jerry found unpalatable, so he began to explore other possibilities. His later-model Pontiac proclivities made him consider adapting something newer into the 1947, perhaps a 1966-1969 Pontiac SOHC six-cylinder.

"I found an OHC six in Massachusetts that had just been pulled from a '68 Pontiac. It spun over nicely, and it was complete with starter, distributor, and carburetor. All it needed was a flywheel. I figured it was still a Pontiac six cylinder, but the more I looked into it, by the time you bought a hydraulic clutch, did the fabrication for the transmission and motor mounts, and built a driveshaft—it was going to be close to \$5,000. The other part of switching to the OHC six would have required that I would have to convert to a 12-volt electrical system."

Stymied, Jerry did nothing for a while, in which time a solu-

tion presented itself.

"I found a '48 two-door sedan for sale in Egg Harbor, New Jersey. The seller, then in his 80s, had been going around flea markets for 30 years buying parts for his '48. The body was stripped down, in primer, and he'd amassed a lot of NOS parts for it, and he was asking \$3,000. It occurred to me that was the smart move. I told my wife I had to go to New Jersey to buy the motor and when I got back, I said 'I'm sorry, the car came with the motor.'"

Domestic tranquility assured, Jerry set to work transferring the fresh straight-eight to the tired Streamliner Six. It was a straightforward job with all the correct parts on hand and in good shape already.

"The deal with the '47s and '48s is that everything fits," Jerry explains. "The frame is already drilled. Except for the exhaust pipe, which is a different length. And the fan shroud is too big for a six versus an eight." The work, now completed, is almost undetectable. "When you look at the data tag on the firewall, it tells you it's a P6—a six-cylinder. I don't claim it's the original engine, but that it's a year newer. Unless you're an expert or I tell you, you don't pick up on it. At the Pontiac-Oakland Club International conventions, obviously they figure it out."

Jerry has no regrets. His \$3,000 engine has proved an excellent investment, and he's got no plans to go back. "It runs fabulous now. I couldn't get over how well it ran. You're never sure with an engine you didn't rebuild, there was no paperwork, and the seller had passed away. I gave the six-cylinder away. I didn't want to look at it. I kept only the spare generator and the air cleaner."

With it running so nicely, Jerry says he drives the car constantly, and he's started to pick away at re-doing parts of the interior that have decayed past the point of preservation. It's all part of the joy of driving and maintaining one of those amazing '40s cars. 🚗

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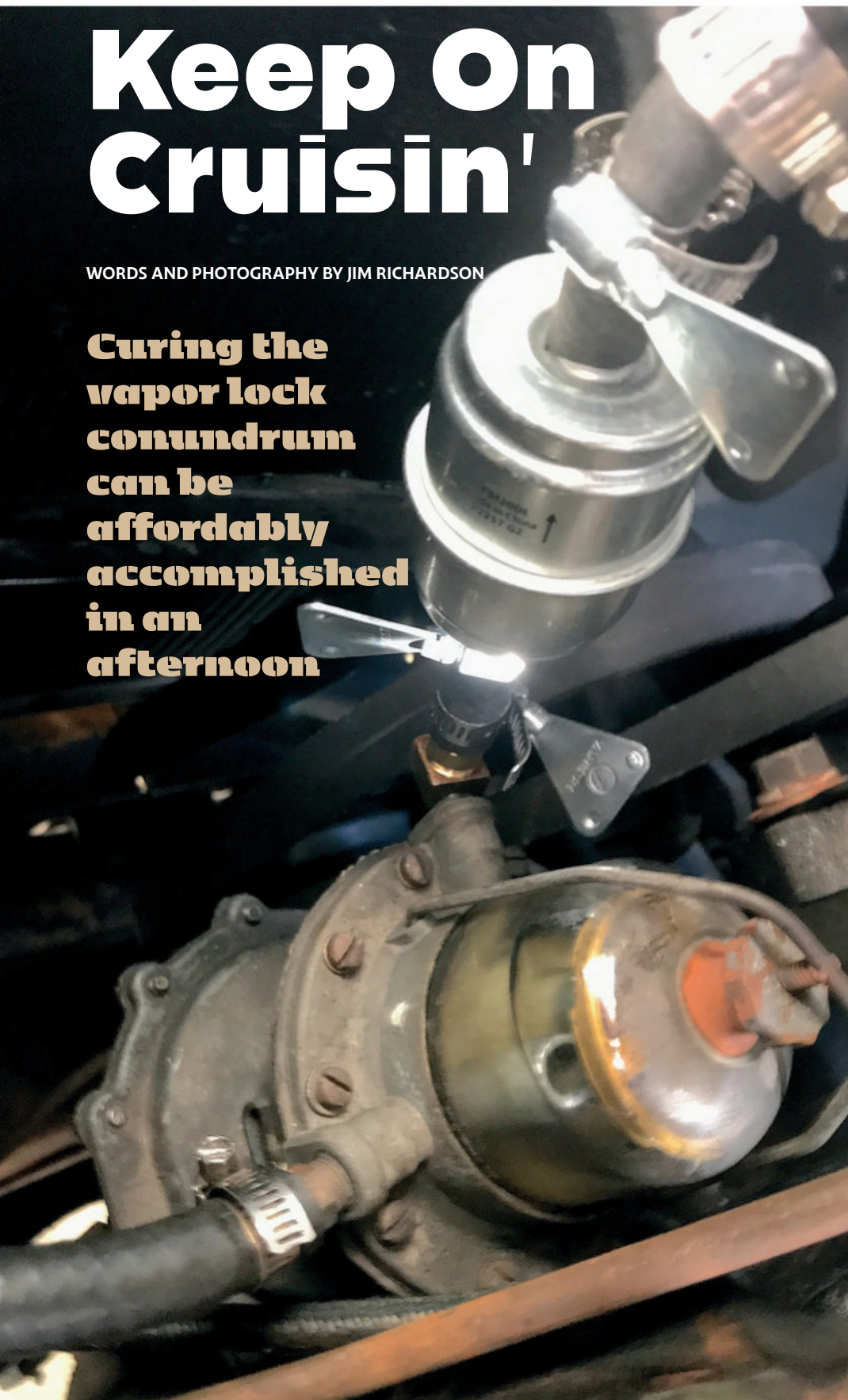
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WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY JIM RICHARDSON

Curing the vapor lock conundrum can be affordably accomplished in an afternoon



In a recent column, I addressed the problem of vapor lock in carbureted classic cars when I related the story of an annoying jaunt in my 1940 La Salle Series 52 coupe. The Cadillacs and La Salles of that era had flathead V-8s that, while powerful, produced a lot of heat in the engine compartment, to the point that sometimes on hot days gas in the fuel pump, lines, and carburetor would vaporize, thus stalling the engine. The resulting heat sink of the dead engine meant that you might have to wait an hour or more with the hood open before trying to start the car again.

Vapor lock has annoyed humankind since the invention of the internal combustion engine. It used to be an occasional problem on hot days years ago but has become more prevent with the advent of alcohol-spiked gasoline. That's because alcohol vaporizes at a lower temperature than gasoline. Cars built before high-pressure electric fuel pumps and fuel injection are particularly prone to vapor lock.

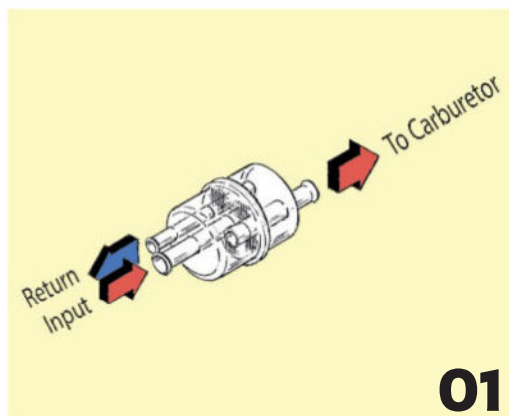
HOW DOES VAPOR LOCK OCCUR?

A carburetor works much like your home toilet tank. Carburetors have a reservoir with a float, which closes a needle valve when the reservoir is full. It also stops the flow of fuel from the pump to the carburetor. Hearin lies the problem. Because a carbureted vehicle used a continuously operating one-way, low-pressure system driven by mechanical fuel pump, the needle valve within the carburetor opens and closes intermittently. This causes gas to linger in the fuel line and absorb heat while waiting for the flow to resume.

SOLVING VAPOR LOCK - REQUIRED ITEMS

Eliminating vapor lock is relatively simple. A few inexpensive, easily acquired parts, along with some hand tools, are all that's required to do the job during an afternoon (refer to the detailed list on page 64).

First, buy a metal Duralast universal vapor-separator fuel filter designed originally for carbureted AMC products and Jeeps. They are available at AutoZone for \$7.49 (See illustration 1, image #2). Wix also makes one that looks like a typical metal fuel filter except it has three protruding tubes.



The reason for the three tubes is that the filter also works as a return line for unused fuel, thus creating a steady flow through the system while cooling the gas in the process.

Along with the fuel filter, you will need enough steel fuel line to go from your car's fuel pump to its gas tank, plus a couple of feet of neoprene fuel line to connect the filter to the fuel pump. You'll also need a half-dozen small hose clamps to secure the flexible fuel lines.

In addition, you'll need a small file, a tape measure, and an inexpensive tubing bender, and a flaring tool. The latter is necessary to configure your fuel line by double flaring metal-to-metal connections, as well as making a small, flared bead on the end of any tubing that will be inserted into a fuel hose as an added precaution. The file will be needed to remove any burrs.



1. A universal metal vapor-separator fuel filter and return system, which features three protruding tubes, is the cure for vapor lock. One tube is the input from the fuel pump, the second on the same end is for the return line, and the third on the opposite side feeds the carburetor. The filter also has a mesh screen inside that strains fuel.

2. I mounted the vapor-separator fuel filter near the mechanical fuel pump. The end with two tubes faces down toward the pump, and the end with one tube points up to the carburetor. Use a segment of neoprene fuel line to make the connection from the filter to the carburetor, and another piece to connect the filter to the fuel pump. Secure the new line connections with hose clamps.

3. A third piece of neoprene fuel line is required to connect the filter to what will be the main return line. Measure the existing line length, and match required bends by using stiff copper wire as a template.

4. I used $\frac{3}{16}$ -inch steel line that was eventually routed along the chassis parallel to the original fuel tank-to-fuel pump line. A tubing cutter is the best way to cut steel fuel line. Avoid copper line, which is softer than steel (or corrosion-resistant stainless steel) because it easily bends and cracks when subject to vibration. Also, some pump gas mixtures are corrosive to copper.

REQUIRED ITEMS

- Metal vapor-separator fuel filter (Duralast #FF871DL or Wix #33040 are two options)
- Neoprene flexible fuel line
- Steel fuel line
- Six small hose clamps
- Fuel tank and line fittings
- Tubing bender
- Tubing cutter
- Flaring tool
- Hand drill
- Fine file
- Combination wrenches

5-7. A good tubing bender is necessary to bend steel fuel line properly without kinking it. You will also need a flaring tool set. Double flaring each end is critical to a safe installation. Make sure the tool is centered before flaring.

8. A proper seal with the flare nut is critical at this end. When you are ready to assemble the new system, don't use white Teflon plumber's tape on tubing connections, as it can deteriorate and cause leaks. Snug connections until they are leak-free.



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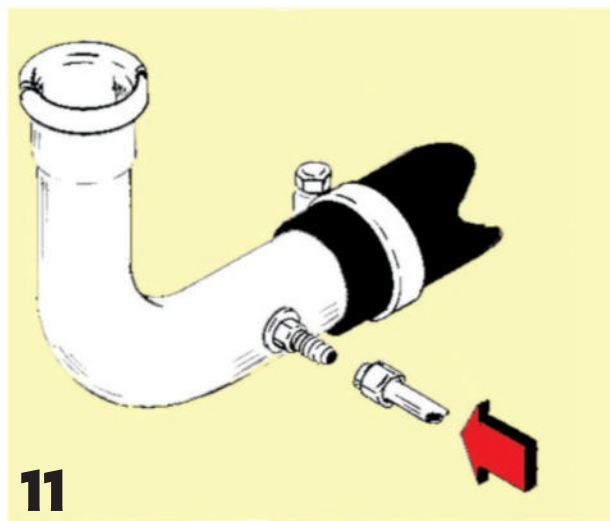
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9-10. The biggest challenge is connecting the fuel return line to your gas tank. The ideal solution is to simultaneously install a new fuel tank, whereby you can mount the fuel return line directly into the tank. Also, if there is room on the gas gauge sending unit, the latter can be removed making the return line installation easier.

11. I wanted to avoid making the connection at my existing fuel tank. This is because sparks and/or heat from welding/drilling the exiting tank may ignite fuel vapors that remain, even in an empty tank. So, I installed the return line to the fuel filler neck pipe, below where a gas nozzle extends while refueling. Another option—if there is room—would be to remove the sending unit from the tank and drill a hole in it to install the return line fitting. Either location is safer and easier than modifying an old tank.

12. The vapor-separator fuel filter and return line will keep fuel flowing continuously and should take care of all but the most stubborn vapor lock problems. But a further aid that can end fuel uptake problems forever is the installation of an auxiliary electric fuel pump. You can mount the electric pump on the chassis where even the most particular judge at a show is unlikely to spot it. Electric pumps, made for 6- and 12-volt systems, not only help alleviate vapor lock, but also prime the carburetor when the car has been sitting for a long time. That means no more cranking the engine over and over until the mechanical pump fills the carburetor float bowl. Additionally, if your mechanical pump fails, the electric pump can be used to get you home. Some enthusiasts have done away with mechanical pumps altogether; however, we recommend investigating system pressure variances before buying an electric pump—the wrong one might provide too much pressure for your car's fuel system.





13. Activating an electric fuel pump is as easy as installing an on/off toggle switch under the dash. I grant that none of these additions are proper for a concours-winning show car, but for those of us who enjoy touring, show-and-shine events on weekends, and club events on hot summer days, it can make a difference for our safety and well-being, not to mention our dignity. 🚗

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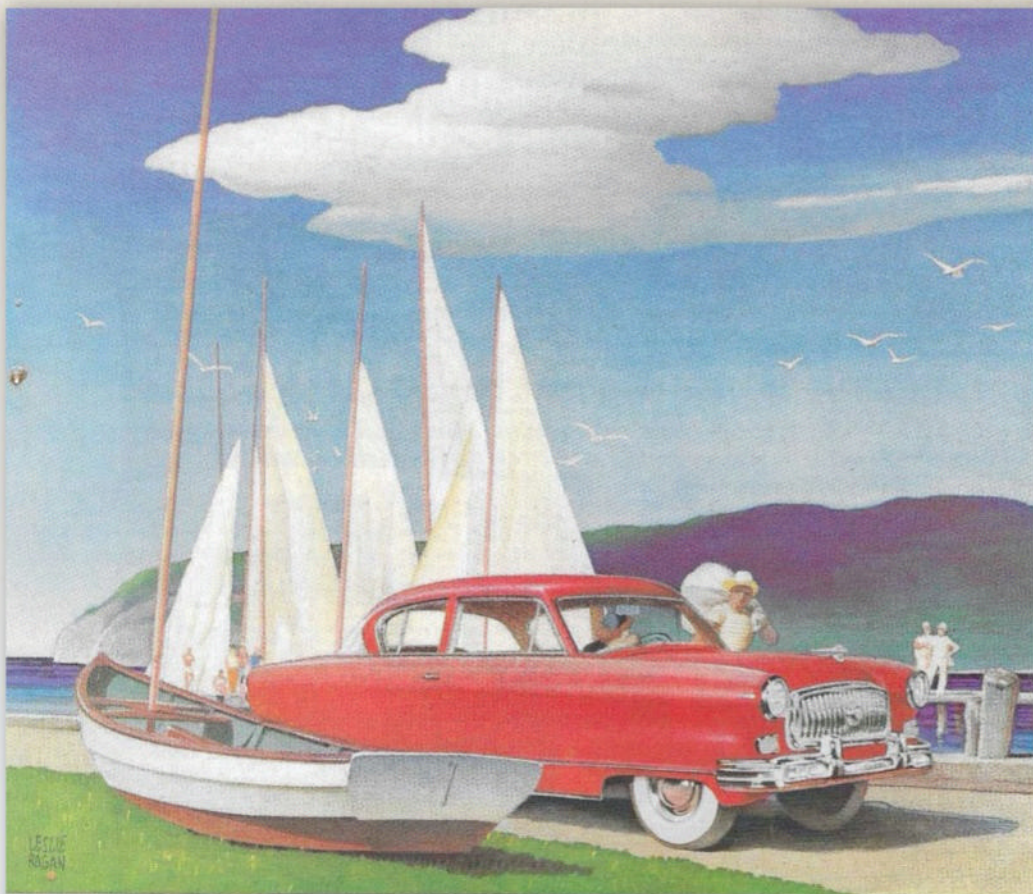
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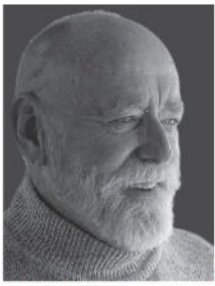
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Jim Richardson

Join The Club

"I restore cars because I love the challenge of learning the skills and solving the problems involved, and I crave the feeling of accomplishment that restoring a car myself can provide."

I RECENTLY RECEIVED

an email from a young reader who stated that his father had bequeathed him a '66 Pontiac Ventura convertible, and he wanted to restore it. His question to me was, "Where do I start?" I chuckled, remembering my first naive effort many years ago, and only then considered how best to answer his question. I opened my reply with, "You are a lucky guy. That's a beautiful car."

I then added, "Join the club."

I meant this in two ways. First, although I've been restoring cars for years, I'm still learning. Secondly, joining the Pontiac-Oakland Club International (poci.org) gains access to people who are experts on various aspects of a Ventura, and who know where to find scarce parts.

The rest of my reply was general guidance, including two musts: a shop manual, and a garage with a concrete floor. In most locales, work can be done outdoors when the weather is good, but you will want to keep a project car in a dry environment. Cleanliness is crucial too, when overhauling engines and running gear, and it is paramount when painting, whether it is components or the whole car.

As for the work, I said don't tear the car down to the frame all at once. That's fine for those with restoration experience, but as a novice, he could lose his way, become overwhelmed, and lose interest—after which he will no longer have a 1966 Pontiac. He will only have a plethora of old parts.

Instead, restore one item at a time to enjoy the car in between tasks. Also, when working, take lots of pictures with a cellphone; put fasteners in Ziploc bags, label them with a felt pen, and store the bags in an organized fashion. And if he comes to a roadblock—and he will—call experienced members of the club who may even be able to visit and assist.

As for equipment, I suggested starting with a full set of hand tools, such as screwdrivers, pliers, wrenches, and a socket set, and then buy (or rent) whatever else is needed later. I say this because very few of us, whether hobbyist or professional, have, or want to acquire all the skill tools necessary to perform every aspect of a restoration. You may



know how to tear down an engine and determine what it needs, but have never performed metal and body prep, to say nothing of paint. And let's face it, upholstery is a dark art for most of us.

As with anyone after joining a club, you will want to take inventory of your skills and decide what you already know versus what you need to learn. Local community colleges often offer classes in auto body, auto mechanics, and welding. After taking a class or two, you may choose to act as a general contractor, and have fully trained specialists perform mechanical, body, paint, and upholstery work. This alternative can get expensive, but if the challenge of restoring the car yourself doesn't excite you, or seems overwhelming after careful consideration, I suggest you take this route.

I restore cars because I love the challenge of learning the skills and solving the problems involved, and I crave the feeling of accomplishment that restoring a car myself can provide. As a hobbyist, I would not choose to restore a car myself as an investment, especially if you expect to be paid for the time it will take. However, if you love working with your hands and enjoy learning new skills, you will cherish the journey and thus be amply compensated.

There is something very special about the young man restoring his father's cherished chariot, because it is a chance to express reverence for him, and it may be a way to work through feelings of loss. Besides, driving Pop's Poncho will allow him to relive good times with the family, and will give his kids and grandkids a link with the past and the people who helped make him who he is. 🚗

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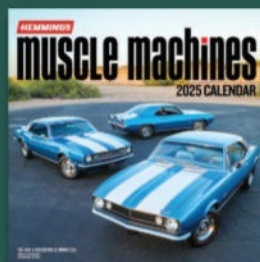
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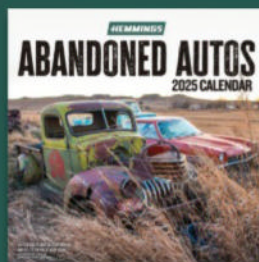
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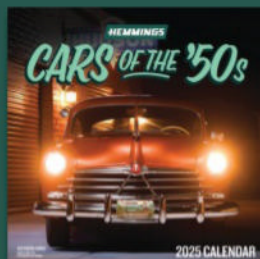
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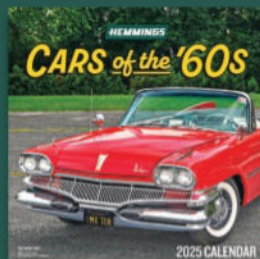
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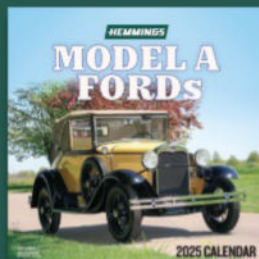
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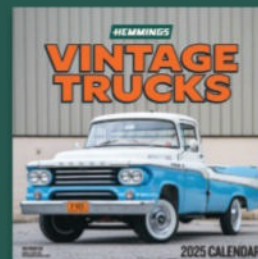
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