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VOLUME 3: ISSUE 3 | FALL 2008

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BLAIR BUNTING

## Racing into the Past

VINTAGE RACING IS a visceral experience. Seeing, hearing and smelling decades of automotive history played out on great tracks like Lime Rock and Road America is definitely worth the price of admission. The actual racing is just a bonus.

I've been to my share of these events. Most of my experiences have been attending races domestically at places like Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca near Monterey, California. But I finally attended the Goodwood Revival in England last year and developed a new appreciation for how these great cars can be driven.

The mixed fields now seem mismatched, but that serves to highlight the uniqueness of each entrant. The actual current race-day competition is less important to me than imagining what it must have been like seeing oil-spewing Bentleys in their day or hearing a hand-built Ferrari V-12 on song.

The growing popularity of the sport can be attributed in part to organizers like Steve Earle at Monterey and Lime Rock, Brian Redman at Road America and David George at Pittsburgh. These men have provided not only exciting venues for racing, but also a strong measure of safety for the cars, owners and spectators.

We love vintage racing here at Hagerty. But it's important to note that while we insure vintage racers, we do so for showing, transporting and collecting — everything but actual racing (see related sidebar on page 16 for details).

Elsewhere in the issue you'll find a retrospective by Richard Bak on drive-in movie theaters in this, the 75th anniversary of this American institution. Many of us can remember our own war stories from those seemingly innocent days. The surviving drive-ins today are popular venues for collector car owners, and we talk to a club that frequents a local drive-in for summer cruise-ins.

Finally, you'll find a profile on Rich Atwell of San Antonio, written by Jonathan A. Stein. Atwell, one of our first clients, has a dazzling collection of sports, classic and postwar American cars. He's a great friend, the consummate car guy and one of the many reasons this business is so much fun.

*McKeel Hagerty*

McKeel Hagerty



In period MGAs and Alfa Romeo Giuliettas were fierce competitors. They continue to go head to head in vintage racing.

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# FEATURES

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Everything you need to know to get started in a hobby where "the car is the star," some of the most beautiful cars ever built are on the tracks and camaraderie is key.

## 20 Movies Under the Stars

Nostalgia rules when people talk about going to the drive-in. The good news is that there are still about 400 drive-ins operating around the country.

## 26 The Legacy

Texas collector Rich Atwell inherited his love of cars from his dad. Today the Atwell collection numbers more than 150 strong and Rich is sharing his passion with his son.

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**Q** I'm planning to sell my vehicle. How can I determine its worth?

**A** To determine your car's value, consult several different collector car price guides, like Cars That Matter or Old Cars Price Guide. You may consider using a professional appraiser. It's worth the few hundred dollars to get peace of mind. Auto Appraisal Group (autoappraisal.com or 800-848-2886) has a nationwide network of certified professionals who can help.

**Q** Can I run unleaded gas safely in my car? I've been using leaded fuel, as I just returned from the United Kingdom. I'm now in Texas.

**A** If your car was originally built to run on leaded gasoline, adding a lead substitute (available at most auto parts stores) to your gas is probably a good idea. When you have the head rebuilt, you might want to consider having hardened valve seats installed so that you don't need to use any additives.

**Q** How do I go about finding a 1952 or 1953 Sears Allstate car?

**A** This will be challenging because fewer than 1,600 were built. (It's essentially a Kaiser Henry J built for Sears.) Watch Hemmings Motor News (hemmings.com) and ebaymotors.com, but these are long shots. It might help to join the Kaiser Frazer Owners Club (kfclub.com) and network with other members. It wouldn't hurt to place a want ad in Hemmings or Old Cars Weekly (oldcarsweekly.com).

**Q** I'm building a new climate-controlled garage. What should the ideal humidity be?

**A** Humidity can kill collector cars. At minimum, keep levels below 60 percent. Hygrometers — devices that measure humidity — can be purchased at a hardware or electronic store. There are needle and digital types, some more accurate than others. Get one that measures the relative humidity (i.e., humidity relative to the temperature), and beware of the really cheap models.



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# Classic Cars, Classic Venue

Popular Barrington Concours d'Elegance moves to Arlington Park



**A**rlington Park is the place to be this fall, as the 2008 Barrington Concours d'Elegance, Legends & Legacies, takes place October 3–5. The show was moved to the famed horse-racing facility about 40 miles northwest of Chicago to accommodate the large number of visitors expected to attend. More than 3,000 people attended last year's premier event at Makray Memorial Golf Club in Barrington.

The juried exhibition will be limited to 100 of the world's most rare classic, historic and sports cars, and will include newly added Concours Couture (period dress)

and motorcycle classes.

Festivities begin on Friday with a "Celebration of Speed" in Joliet, Illinois, followed on Saturday by a road rally winding through the picturesque Barrington countryside. The highlight of the weekend however, will be Sunday's car show.

The Collectors Foundation, a Barrington Concours d'Elegance education partner, is bringing a team of McPherson College Automotive Restoration students to assemble a Model T — and have it up and running in under one hour. The students will also be bringing a replica of the 1885/86 Benz Motorwagen — the

**This 1937 Delahaye 135 M Cabriolet, owned by Malcolm Pray, of Greenwich, Connecticut, won the European Style Best in Class award at the 2007 Barrington Concours d' Elegance.**

first commercial automobile, powered by a four-stroke gasoline engine — and give demonstrations of its performance.

Hagerty will again be sponsoring its youth judging program in which young judges are led by an adult guide through a car show field and allowed to judge selected cars and talk to the owners.

For more about the Barrington Concours d'Elegance, including ticket information, visit [barringtonconcours.org](http://barringtonconcours.org).

**COLLECTORS FOUNDATION**

**SHARING THEIR SUCCESS** The Collectors Foundation has given out more than 2,000 scholarships and grants over the years, and now several recipients are sharing their success stories. Look for a new story each month on [hagerty.com](http://hagerty.com) in the Latest News section of the Hobby Information Center.



## In Memoriam

**HAGERTY'S CONTRIBUTOR AND** leading automotive historian Beverly Rae Kimes passed away in May. Kimes, 69, editor for the Classic Car Club of America (CCCA) for the past 27 years and author of a wide range of books, was also a past president and board member of the Society of Automobile Historians and served as committee chair for awards. In 1963, Kimes joined *Automobile Quarterly* as editorial assistant. By the time she moved on in 1981, she'd established herself as one of the truly great writers of automotive history and was the recipient of many awards. For those who would like to

read more of Kimes' characteristic blend of elegant prose and superior research, the CCCA has a limited number of copies of *The Classic Era*, which Kimes wrote and edited in 2001. The book, available in both regular (\$99 plus shipping) and signed, limited-edition (\$149 plus shipping) versions, can be ordered through the CCCA by calling 847-390-0443 or online at [classiccarrclub.org](http://classiccarrclub.org).

SHOW FIELD: SHANNON RAMSDALE, DELAHAYE: MICHAEL FURMAN PHOTOGRAPHY, BEVERLY RAE KIMES: AUTOMOBILE QUARTERLY



## '61 SPYDER SETS WORLD RECORD

**A 1961 FERRARI 250 GT SWB California Spyder** formerly owned by actor James Coburn stole the show at RM Auctions' second annual Ferrari Leggenda e Passione event in Maranello, Italy, in May, selling for an impressive \$10.89 million — the most ever paid for a vintage car at auction.

## Commemorative Car Stamps

The U.S. Postal Service will pay tribute to America's love affair with the automobile this October when it issues the *America on the Move: '50s Fins and Chrome* stamps. The collection features a 1957 Chrysler 300C, 1959 Cadillac Eldorado, 1957 Studebaker Golden Hawk, 1957 Lincoln Premiere, and a 1957 Pontiac Safari.



## TOP MODEL BUILDERS

**THE TOP FIVE** youth model builders for the national Hagerty Plus Model-Building Contest were announced July 1 after the online judging closed.

In March, Hagerty provided 350 plastic "skill level 2" models to car clubs nationwide to be distributed to young people in their area. The clubs then selected the best-constructed model from among their participants.

The talented five traveled with a legal guardian to Monterey, California, in August for final judging. We'll announce the winner in the next issue of *Hagerty's*.

### THE FINALISTS ARE:

-  • **1932 Ford Woody** built by Tyler, 9, Magic City Mustangs, Miami, Florida.
-  • **1968 Shelby Cobra** built by Justyn, 13, Gulf Shore Mustangs, Ft. Myers, Florida.
-  • **1953 Chevrolet Corvette** built by Willow, 10, Suncoast British Car Club, Sarasota, Florida.
-  • **1958 Chevrolet Impala** built by Christopher, 8, Greater Omaha WPC Club, Omaha, Nebraska.
-  • **1958 Chevrolet Corvette** built by Rachal, 12, Corvettes of Tyler, Lindale, Texas.

## NEW HAGERTY CAR GAL



Turns out the next Hagerty "Car Guy" just happens to be a "Car Gal."

Meet Valerie Stabenow, owner of three collector cars. She restores them for fun and also writes a tech column for *Classic MG Magazine*.

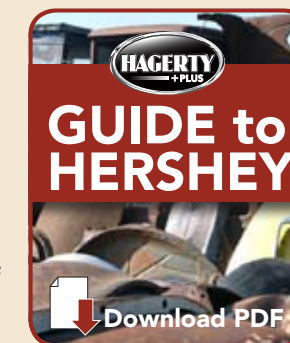
Car Gal is the latest in a series of Hagerty ads featuring real-life collector car owners. The ads were originally inspired by the idea of sharing clients' stories with a bigger audience. The first two "Car Guy" ads featured clients Bruce Weiner and Chic Kleptz. But in the midst of searching for a third client ad star, Hagerty noticed an interesting trend: Clients were beginning to send their own "Car Guy" stories in without any prompting. That's how we found Valerie.

Our thanks to everyone who sent us their Car Guy (or Gal) stories.

## Collector Cars & Chocolate Bars

*what more could you ask for?*

Heading to Pennsylvania in early October for the Antique Automobile Club of America's Regional Fall Meet in Hershey? Download a copy of our insider's guide to the best places to visit, stay and eat while in the Hershey area. Go to [hagerty.com/NewsStand/freebies.aspx](http://hagerty.com/NewsStand/freebies.aspx) and click on "Guide to Hershey."



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# Shared PASSIONS

FOR MANY COLLECTORS, FINDING A CLASSIC IN NEED OF REPAIR IS PRICELESS. THE FOLLOWING ARE "BEFORE AND AFTER" LOOKS AT RESTORATION PROJECTS SUBMITTED BY HAGERTY'S READERS.

## 1949 Simca Berline

Two trips to France were necessary to find parts for Bob Baker's Simca Berline. Baker, whose attraction to French cars stemmed from having lived there in his youth, found the Simca in Colorado. The Berline rides on a Triumph TR3 frame and drivetrain. "I drive the car all over the West to shows where it is appreciated by the general public," Baker says. His collection includes two Renaults, two Citroëns and a Peugeot.



## 1968 Plymouth Satellite

Mike LaSorsa Sr. went to check out a '68 Barracuda when he discovered this Satellite of the same year parked next to it. The owner also had a 440 engine and compatible transmission as spares, so LaSorsa purchased the package, and he and his son began their first restoration. Three and a half years and \$22,000 later, the finished project emerged. "I get all kinds of reactions whether at a show or waiting for a light," LaSorsa beams. "Even kids on bicycles give me the thumbs up."



## 1948 Indian Chief Motorcycle

If you need a motorcycle restored, Dave Langlois is your man. He's done about 35 of them over the last 20 years. Langlois acquired this Indian Chief in early 1996. Twenty months of the nearly three-year project were spent on the engine. After an all-night drive to retrieve the bike from the engine rebuilder, Langlois's Chief won best pre-1950 motorcycle at the 1998 Steamboat Springs Concours d'Elegance. Langlois enjoys what he restores and says, "Since then I've ridden it about 2,000 miles on the back roads of western Colorado."



## 1964 Ford Mustang Convertible

Gail Wise and her father took delivery of this Mustang convertible on April 17, 1964, the official first day of Mustang sales. Chicago-area winters took their toll on the original pony car until it was garaged in 1979. "I planned on this being a retirement project," explains Gail's husband Tom, who spent a year on the restoration. "It always starts, runs well and has the original AM radio."



## 1980 Chevrolet Citation X-11

Restoring this 1980 Chevy Citation X-11 was therapeutic for Erik Feldmanis. The car has been in the family since it was new and was used daily until 2005. Feldmanis did most of the work himself and says obtaining quality body parts was the biggest challenge. He ended up making new window seals that casual observers often mistake for factory pieces. "What made it all worthwhile was the look on my father's face when he saw the finished product," Feldmanis says. "It was absolutely priceless."

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# Tool Time

The special tools you'll really like having

••• By Ken Gross

**MY DAD ALWAYS** said that if you don't have the right tools for the job, don't even start. So if you're just beginning to experience the joys of old car ownership, there are scores of special tools that can simplify your task and make it easier to reach that hidden nut or remove that corroded battery terminal without the wrench slipping until your knuckles are bloody.

We'll assume you have decent screwdrivers (both flat-slotted and Phillips head), pliers and adjustable wrenches. In addition to regular wrenches, I recommend GearWrench (gearwrench.com) combination-type open-end and box wrenches with built-in ratchets. They're easy to use, very efficient and available at Sears (sears.com) or Ace Hardware stores (acehardware.com). A torque wrench with a scale is nice to have, but not essential in the beginning. You also can't do much without a complete set of top-quality ratchets and sockets, with 1/2-inch, 3/8-inch and 1/4-inch drive, along with a few extensions. For such things, Craftsman (craftsman.com) tools have served me well, and the hand tools are guaranteed for life.

A great twist on the ubiquitous socket wrench is Griot's Garage's (griotsgarage.com) mini gearless ratchet that allows you to work in confined areas and require just one degree of travel before they reengage.

Another tool that makes a ratchet drive more versatile is a universal joint that goes between the drive or extension and the socket, allowing the socket to swivel when you're working in a tight spot. Craftsman and others make

a line of metric and SAE sockets with built-in universal joints. These swiveling sockets are shorter than sockets with a separate universal joint fitted.

One particularly frustrating job is removing the retaining spring washers that hold brake shoes to the backing plate. With a brake shoe retaining spring washer removal tool, simply

The easiest way is with a battery terminal puller, which is essentially a gear puller. Back off the screw, spread the jaws and put the lips of the tool under the battery terminal end. Then tighten the screw until the terminal end pulls free of the post. KD and a variety of other manufacturers make battery terminal pullers, which are available at most auto parts stores.

**THE EASIEST WAY TO DISCONNECT A BATTERY IS WITH A BATTERY TERMINAL PULLER, ESSENTIALLY A GEAR PULLER.**

position it over the retaining spring washer and push and turn it to release or secure the spring. Sears or any good auto parts store should have one.

If you've done any hydraulic work, you've probably wrestled with a standard open-end wrench slipping off the flare nut on the end of a brake or clutch line. With a flare nut wrench, you can still slide the tool over the brake line, but the jaws are more encompassing and less likely to slip. They're readily available in a variety of sizes wherever good tools are sold.

When diving into virtually any job, you should always disconnect the battery.



JOE VAUGHN

# GRIOT'S



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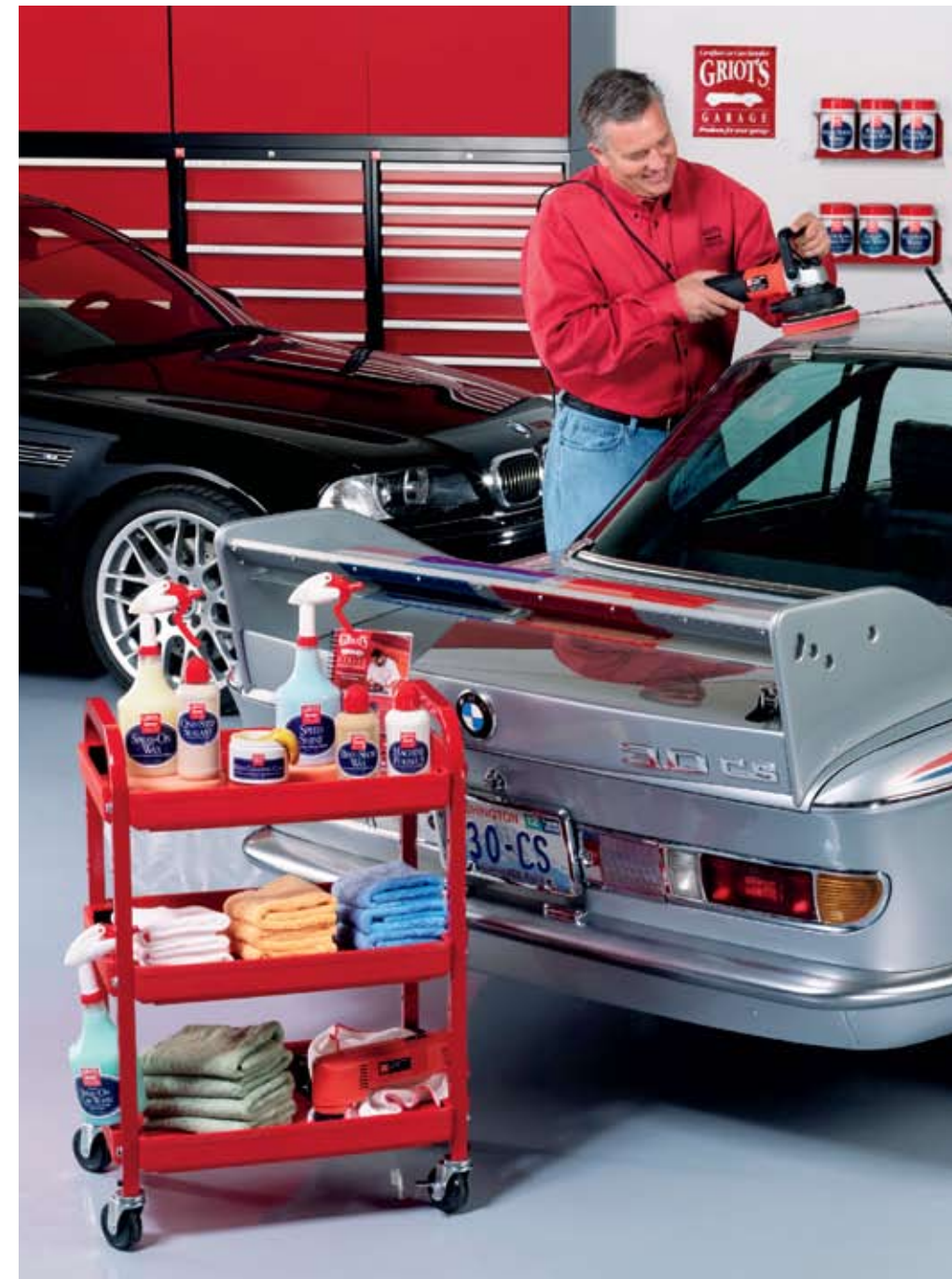
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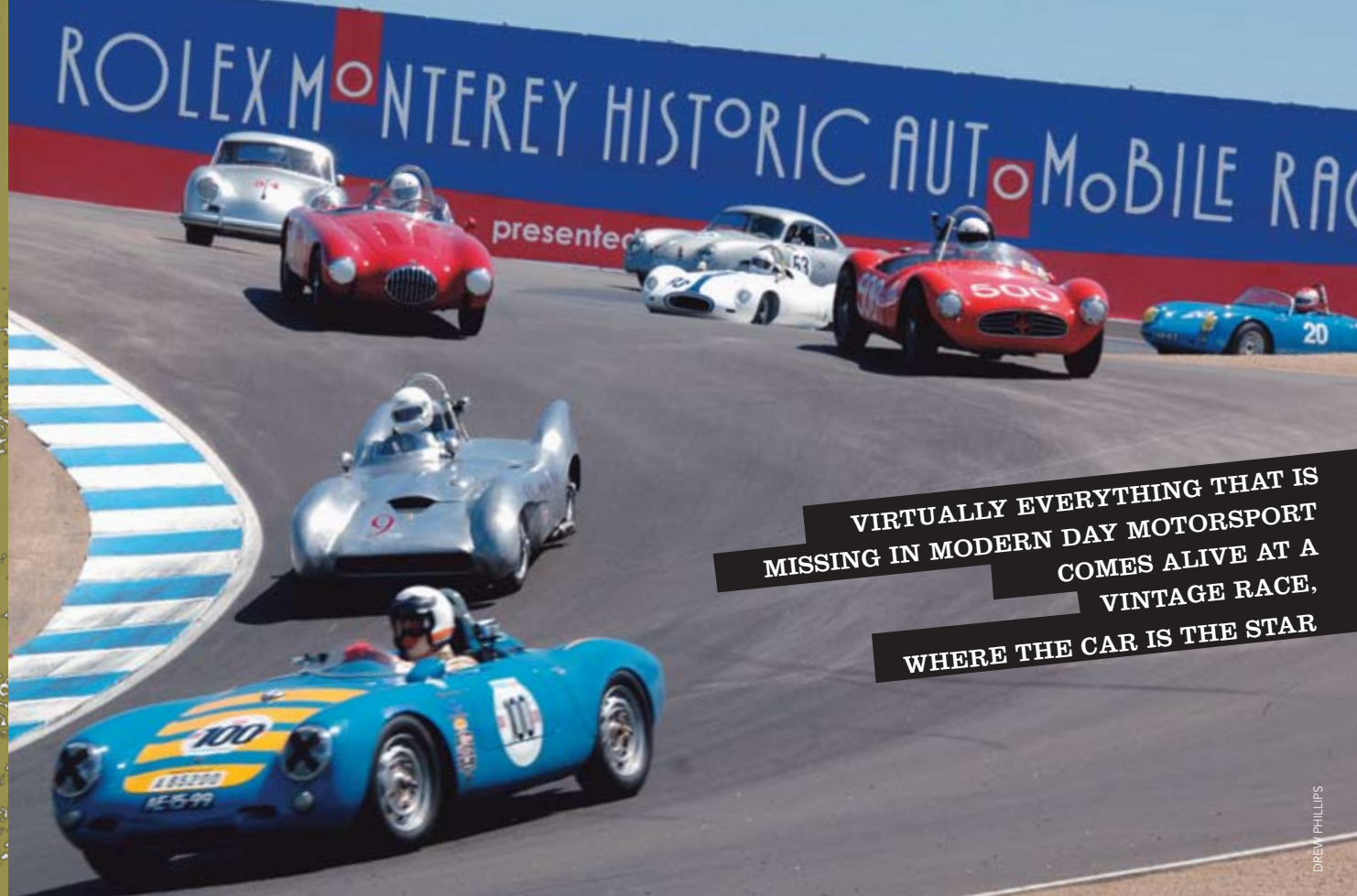
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# *Vintage* **WHINE**



A PRIMER  
ON THE GROWING  
SPECTACLE  
OF VINTAGE  
ROAD RACING.

••• by D. Randy Riggs



**VIRTUALLY EVERYTHING THAT IS MISSING IN MODERN DAY MOTORSPORT COMES ALIVE AT A VINTAGE RACE, WHERE THE CAR IS THE STAR**

DREW PHILLIPS

Whether it's admiring the sublime curves of a Lola T70 coupe or hearing the wry cry of a Cooper Climax at redline, the cars that fired our passions then do so even more now as vintage racers.

preserved as they were designed to race in that other time, friendly competition and camaraderie second to none.

Its history in the United States can be traced to the late 1950s, although vintage racing remained a little-known hobby of a few stalwarts until car collector Steve Earle founded the now world-famous Rolex Monterey Historic Automobile Races (monterey-historic.com) in 1974. Not only were there old cars, such as Elvas, Porsches, Ferraris and Allards, but famous retired drivers came, too.

Unlike the cookie-cutter, look-alike spec racers that permeate most forms of motorsport today, sports and racing cars of the past were created by a designer's or builder's eye rather than the dictums of a

wind tunnel. The results were some of the most beautiful automobiles ever created.

David George, vintage race car restorer and race chairman for the Pittsburgh Vintage Grand Prix Association, traces his love of vintage racing to the history of the car and the pressure-free environment of this type of racing.

"I get to sit in the same seat and hold the same steering wheel that a famous, talented driver of the past did — and that's a blessing," George says. "Every race weekend is also a great social event because you make special friends — the people you race with. The camaraderie in vintage racing is amazing."

### GETTING STARTED

If vintage racing sounds enticing, the best way to begin is to pick up a magazine, like *Vintage Motorsport*, and read up on the sport's latest happenings. Consult the event calendar or groups page, look for a convenient event to attend, and follow up by going to different races. Talk to the organizers, racers and mechanics, who will be more than eager to answer all your questions about getting involved.

The 2007 Monterey Historic: (top) 1962 production sports cars head down the cork-screw at Laguna Seca; (left) Joseph S. Freeman pulls out in his Thorne-Sparks Little Six.

BLAIR BUNTING

The next step is to go to school, as attaining a vintage racing license is required. There are numerous racing schools across the country, including the Bob Bondurant School of High Performance Driving (bondurant.com) in Phoenix and Skip Barber Driving School (skipbarber.com), held at more than 20 of the most prestigious racetracks in North America. The schools provide the gear, such as a helmet and driving suit, so you don't have a big investment before knowing if racing is for you.

### SANCTIONING BODIES

Let's assume racing school fired your passions and you've decided to actually go vintage racing, now you just have to find one to run in. Luckily, sanctioning bodies across much of the country, particularly along the East and West Coasts, offer full vintage race schedules.

The Northeast's Vintage Sports Car Club of America (vscca.org), for example, allows only cars of their choosing up to ones built by December 31, 1959. The sanctioning body also helps organize

the Pittsburgh Vintage Grand Prix (pittsburghvintagegrandprix.com) — the best-attended vintage race in the United States — which is run on the streets of Schenley Park. An estimated 211,000 spectators watched the 25th running of the race in 2007.

Historic Sports Car Racing (hsr-race.com), based in Georgia and producing races in several states, has a place for racers who own newer Champ Cars, along with a wide variety of older cars. The Mitty, held at Road Atlanta in Braselton, Georgia, is the

(Top) J.R. Mitchell gives some advice to Simon Winston-Taylor. (Right) A 1962 Lotus 22 F-Jr. 1100cc, driven by David Cooper.



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DREW PHILLIPS

**A RACE CAR IS A BOTTOMLESS PIT WHERE MONEY IS CONCERNED, BUT THE INCREASING VALUE OF OLD RACE CARS OFTEN OFFSETS THESE COSTS**

group's most important event.

Another popular group is the Sportscar Vintage Racing Association (svra.com), which organizes two of vintage racing's largest events — the Kohler International Challenge at Road America in Elkhart Lake, Wisconsin, and the U.S. Vintage Grand Prix at Watkins Glen International in Watkins Glen, New York.

In total, there are more than 30 U.S. groups to choose from, with 26 being member clubs of the Vintage Motorsports Council (v-m-c.org), which offers a race organizer insurance program, a national licensing procedure, an education program for driv-

ing instructors and a mechanical failures bulletin, along with other safety initiatives.

### CLASSES AND CARS

Vintage race organizations vary in philosophies, goals and criteria for car eligibility. As such, cars in vintage races can span from the early 1900s to race cars only a few years old, including GP cars, Champ/Indy cars, Formula cars, GT cars, stock cars, sedans, sports cars and sports racing cars.

Fancy an early Porsche? Perhaps an open-wheeled Formula car? Whether you have \$10,000 or \$4 million to spend, there will be a car right

for you. Initial purchase price can range from \$5,000 for a basic '70s-era Formula Ford to \$5 million for a prewar Alfa Romeo with provenance.

But before settling on a car, set a budget — how much money to spend on what is essentially a very expensive hobby. On top of the car purchase, you'll have to invest at least \$2,000 in a helmet, a driving suit, Nomex underwear and socks, a balaclava and driving shoes. Plus, entry fees typically run from \$300 to \$500 — and you haven't even climbed into the car yet.

A race car is a bottomless pit as far as money is concerned, but the increasing values of old race



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(Opposite) A 1969 Ferrari 312 at the 2004 Coronado Speed festival. (Above) Tom Brown's 1968 Datsun 510 leads a pair of Porsche 356s.

cars often offset these costs. Buying the car is the big leap, but maintaining a car that is highly stressed every time it goes on the racetrack, hauling it to the races and replacing parts broken or used up is a never-ending part of racing.

Yet, no matter what car you purchase and decide to race, if your competition aspirations are to earn the next open seat at the racetrack, then you best look to other forms of motorsport because over-aggressive driving is not tolerated.

Most vintage racing sanctioning bodies operate under a 13/13 rule, meaning that, should you have an on-track incident that does damage to your car, another car, yourself or another driver, and it is determined to be an "at-fault" accident, there is a 13-month suspension followed by a 13-month probation period. Repeat offenders are not invited back.

Yes, many vintage racing drivers run hard and fast, but always with the thought that there is nothing to be won, that you might want to go to dinner later with the driver you are currently fender to fender with heading for a corner, and that the car you are racing might not be replaceable. Not to mention that old race cars are not as safe as new ones, even if you've installed rolls bars, fuel cells and a few other safety devices to up your chances should the worst occur. You aren't replaceable either, are you?

So get out there, get the revs up and have a ball. Be the most passionate amateur you can be. Bring it all across the finish line in one piece and that cool one you'll share with a racing pal after the engines are quiet will be the best one you've ever tasted.

## INSURING YOUR VINTAGE RACER

Race cars are a bit different when it comes to collector car insurance policies. Given the hard and risky use they are put to when run in competition, race cars receive no coverage for on-track activities. However, at all other times — during transport, in the paddock, in the garage and even at shows — you can get coverage.

Hagerty protects such cars with a Trailer and Paddock policy. There is "no technical collision [coverage] under its own power on public roadways."

Full-coverage policies are available for cars used in vintage road rallies at legal speeds on open public highways if they are

licensed for street use, but should the road be a closed course for speed runs, coverage would be excluded. What is most important is that you have coverage with a company that understands the value of these cars, both from their collectability standpoint and from the inherent value that comes from the provenance or history of the car.



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# FIVE Sleepers

Affordable classics you may have missed.

**IN SPITE OF** a looming recession and a tough real estate market, most areas of the collector car market remain strong. In fact, it's getting tough to find the "sleepers"—

the cars that everyone else seems to have forgotten, but still provide some cheap fun. There are a few of them still out there waiting to be rediscovered. Some you may

remember, some you may not, but the five we have selected are all interesting, reasonably cheap to maintain and have a potential upside.



## 1 ●●● 1972-76 JENSEN INTERCEPTOR III

The Jensen Interceptor followed the well-worn path of mating European coachwork with reliable, easily serviced American power. The Interceptor was a classic gentleman's hot rod — Italian styling by

Vignale, a big Chrysler 440 V-8 and a British interior that featured leather, lamb's wool and polished walnut. Unlike a lot of low-production cars, it all worked very well. The only downside to an Interceptor

is rampant body rust, trim and small parts that are a bit hard to source, and single-digit gas mileage. \$13,000-\$16,000.

## 2 ●●● 1972-77 TVR 2500M

Like the Jensen, TVRs don't exactly grow on trees, but they're out there. At least two or three seem to pop up on eBay every month or so. In a 2500M, you get a nice-looking small coupe (generally with a sunroof), a light but strong tube chassis and a husky Triumph TR6-sourced straight six. They're fiberglass and the bodies don't rust (although the chassis can and do rust). Handling is astonishing and the 2.5-liter six provides decent straight-line urge. While the Triumph parts are easy to source, some of the other items are a bit obscure, but there's an active club to help you find almost anything you need. \$8,000-\$12,000.



## 3 ●●● 1969-72 PONTIAC GRAND PRIX

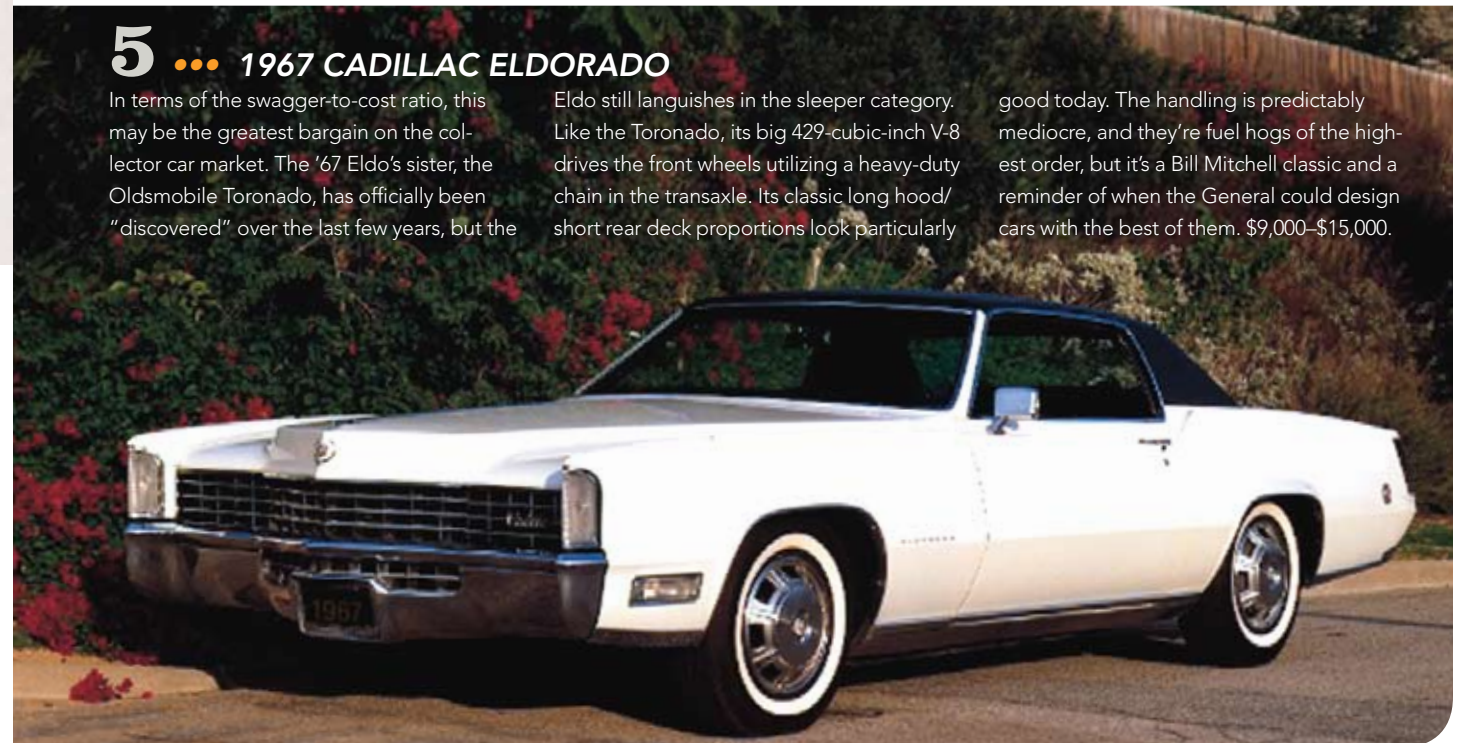
It's a mystery why the muscle car crowd has largely overlooked the 1969-72 Grand Prix. The '69 GP was a John DeLorean project with handsome styling, decent interior appointments, some serious high horse engine options and an available manual transmission. The base 400-cubic-inch V-8 put out a respectable 265 hp, but it was the 428 HO that was the pavement ripper. With 370 hp, the 428 HO Grand Prix was capable of 14.1 quarter-mile times. Not particularly easy to find with the 428 HO or a manual transmission, the Grand Prix is a flat out steal at \$15,000-\$20,000 for a decent example.

## 5 ●●● 1967 CADILLAC ELDORADO

In terms of the swagger-to-cost ratio, this may be the greatest bargain on the collector car market. The '67 Eldo's sister, the Oldsmobile Toronado, has officially been "discovered" over the last few years, but the

Eldo still languishes in the sleeper category. Like the Toronado, its big 429-cubic-inch V-8 drives the front wheels utilizing a heavy-duty chain in the transaxle. Its classic long hood/short rear deck proportions look particularly

good today. The handling is predictably mediocre, and they're fuel hogs of the highest order, but it's a Bill Mitchell classic and a reminder of when the General could design cars with the best of them. \$9,000-\$15,000.



●●● By Keith Martin and the staff of Sports Car Market



## 4 ●●● 1967-85 AVANTI II

The Avanti was the car that just wouldn't die. After Studebaker went under, a pair of South Bend Studebaker dealers, Nate Altman and Leo Newman, bought the rights and an old plant and went back into production with the car, substituting a Chevy V-8 for the old Stude 289. Essentially handmade and built to order, they can be wonderful collector cars if you can deal with the polarizing styling. According to Dave Kinney of *Cars That Matter*, the cars built by subsequent company owner Steven Blake from 1983 to 1985 are quite good, too. Kinney ought to know: He's owned more than 20 of them, including one of the three convertibles. \$12,000-\$17,000.

JENSEN: BOB ADAMS. TVR: JONATHAN A. STEIN. PONTIAC GRAND PRIX AND CADILLAC ELDORADO: AUTOMOBILE QUARTERLY. AVANTI II: JOHN AND BARB ANDRAS.

# Movies under the Stars



.....  
If you remember drive-ins, you're smiling already. And the best news is they are not all gone and definitely not forgotten.  
.....

••• by Richard Bak



(Top) The El Monte Drive-in in El Monte, California, could fit nearly 800 cars. It was demolished in late 1999. (Above) Remember hooking the speaker to the car window?



**H**aving watched movies at drive-ins all over the United States in the course of researching a book about the subject, Susan Sanders has seen her share of cinematic monsters. Malevolent aliens looking to conquer earth. Skulking swamp creatures preying upon unsuspecting picnickers. Giant wasps battling the military.

But the creepiest beast she ever encountered at a drive-in was many years ago when, as a small-town girl from Temple, Texas, she went out on a date with a boy she remembers today as simply “The Octopus.”

“He wanted to do everything but watch the movie,” Sanders says. “It was like he had eight arms. He drove a late-’50s Dodge with bench seats, and by the end of the evening, I was pressed against the passenger door just to escape his reach.”

Sanders’ happy-hands experience is one of those varied memories that bind generations of mobile moviegoers to that once-great American pastime known as going to the drive-in. It’s on the same list as the night you were busted trying to sneak in while squirreled away in the trunk of your friend’s 1958 Chevy Impala, or that time your dad ripped the speaker out of its post as he absentmindedly pulled away without checking his window.

Nosy ushers, pesky bugs, starry nights, noisy heaters, sudden rainstorms, washed-out screens at sunset, dancing chili dogs and talking boxes of popcorn — for the last 75 years, they’ve all been part of our collective drive-in experience.

#### Open-air cinema

The first drive-in theater, which opened June 6, 1933, in Camden, New Jersey, was the brainchild of Richard Hollingshead Jr., who sought to emulate the success of the drive-in restaurant in

LEFT: DRIVEINTEATRE.ORG, TOP: © 1993 CAR CULTURE ALL RIGHTS RESERVED



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Although the heyday of the drive-in has passed, there are still about 400 operating in the U.S.

Honor, Michigan, which opened in 1953 and is still going strong. Club member Vicki Sager says the meets bring back memories of being in high school. “The guy I dated at the time had a ’56 Pontiac and my good friend dated a guy with a ’61 Buick — one of those big, old boats,” she says. “We’d always go on ‘Buck Night,’ when it was only a dollar per car — no matter how many people were crammed in the car.”

Encouragingly, more than 20 of the operating drive-ins have actually added screens since 1990. Like the aforementioned meal of hot dogs and beans, they offer a cheap, but filling, night out, with varying expenditures of gas.

Carl and Ruth Stewart operated the Starlite Drive-In (starlitebloomington.com) in Bloomington, Indiana, for nearly a half-century. “The formula for a successful drive-in really hasn’t changed,” says Carl, who sold the business six years ago. “Back when we started in 1955, our bread and butter were young families with small children. It’s still true today.” As proof, the single-screen Starlite continues to thrive under new ownership, offering family fare at reasonable prices.

Many drive-ins that closed have been torn down. Part of the reason is that, from an architectural perspective, the typical drive-ins built in the later decades were not terribly interesting or attractive or thought to be historically significant. There are exceptions, however.

One must-see theater is the completely restored 66 Drive-In (66drivein.com), located on old Route 66 in Carthage, Missouri, which retains its original neon sign and glass-block ticket booth. Another is Hull’s Drive-In Theatre (hullsdrivein.com) in Lexington, Virginia, which is the only nonprofit, community-owned outdoor theater in the country. As they have been doing ever since the place opened in 1950, customers still flock to the neatly trimmed grassy slope that gives everyone a wonderful view of that night’s feature.

According to Sanders, Becky’s Drive-In Theatre (beckysdi.com) in Berlinsville, Pennsylvania, is “possibly America’s best drive-in experience.” The second generation of the Beck family operates the drive-in, which is one of the oldest family run outdoor theaters in the country at 62 years and counting. The laid-back family atmosphere includes lawn seating and pony rides for the kiddies.

Wherever its location, whatever movies it may be showing, it’s clear that a principal driving force in any successful drive-in is nostalgia. They’re a piece of the past that we long for, took for granted and now strive to recreate.

“I think the owners and customers are all yearning for a happier time,” Sanders says. “That mix of nostalgia and affordable entertainment will probably always keep drive-ins part of our cultural landscape.”



The Cherry Bowl Drive-in in Honor, Michigan, hosts the Cherry Bowl Cruisers every summer.



(From top) The Over-the-Hill Gang at San Diego’s South Bay drive-in; refreshment stand snacks were showcased on the screen before each movie; taking it easy at the Mission Tiki drive-in in Montclair, California.



America’s increasingly mobile society.

According to an article posted on Drive-ins.com, which features an online searchable database of almost 5,000 drive-ins, Hollingshead’s motive was to sell more automotive products. After all, that is what he did for a living back in the 1930s. The article theorized the best way to accomplish this was to establish a place where people could park their cars, enjoy a meal and watch a movie outdoors.

Outdoor movie theaters remained a novelty through World War II, with only about 100 in operation. An entertainment magazine referred to them — and their customers — as “ozoners,” a slang term used to describe an outdoor movie theater in which the patrons view a film from their automobile. But the postwar baby boom and cheap land prices fueled a surge in drive-ins, with the industry reaching its peak of nearly 5,000 facilities in 1958. By then the ozoners were being called “passion pits,” a testament to the ubiquitous steamed windows parents and preachers loved to warn about in their sermons.

Going to the drive-in at Wamesit, Massachusetts, in the 1950s was a wondrous thing, Norbert Pestona recalls in a memoir for a local historical society. He writes that, in addition to an evening of entertainment, such excursions also produced

“a culinary adventure because my dad thought it would be neat to give my mom the night off from preparing a meal by filling a Thermos with beans and wrapping a few hot dogs in tin foil and putting them on the manifold of the engine to cook them.”

Unfortunately, it was a short trip and the hot dogs were only lukewarm.

Reliving the heyday

Drive-ins suffered a dramatic decline in the 1970s and 1980s, as the sudden convergence of several challenges overwhelmed many operators.

Urban sprawl caused real estate prices to explode, and the introduction of daylight saving time took away a precious hour of darkness. Rental fees for first-run films soared, while the advent of the VCR allowed many former customers to watch a new release in the comfort and convenience of their living room.

Although the heyday of the drive-in has passed, there are still about 400 operating in the United States (and at least another 121 elsewhere around the world), fueled in part by a resurgence of car clubs holding cruise nights with their vintage vehicles.

The Cherry Bowl Cruisers, for example, meet two or three times each summer at the Cherry Bowl Drive-In (cherrybowldrivein.com) in

COLORED PHOTOS ON THIS PAGE: DEANZA DRIVE-IN THEATRES; POPCORN: DRIVE-IN THEATRE.ORG; CHERRY BOWL: JEFF LAMB

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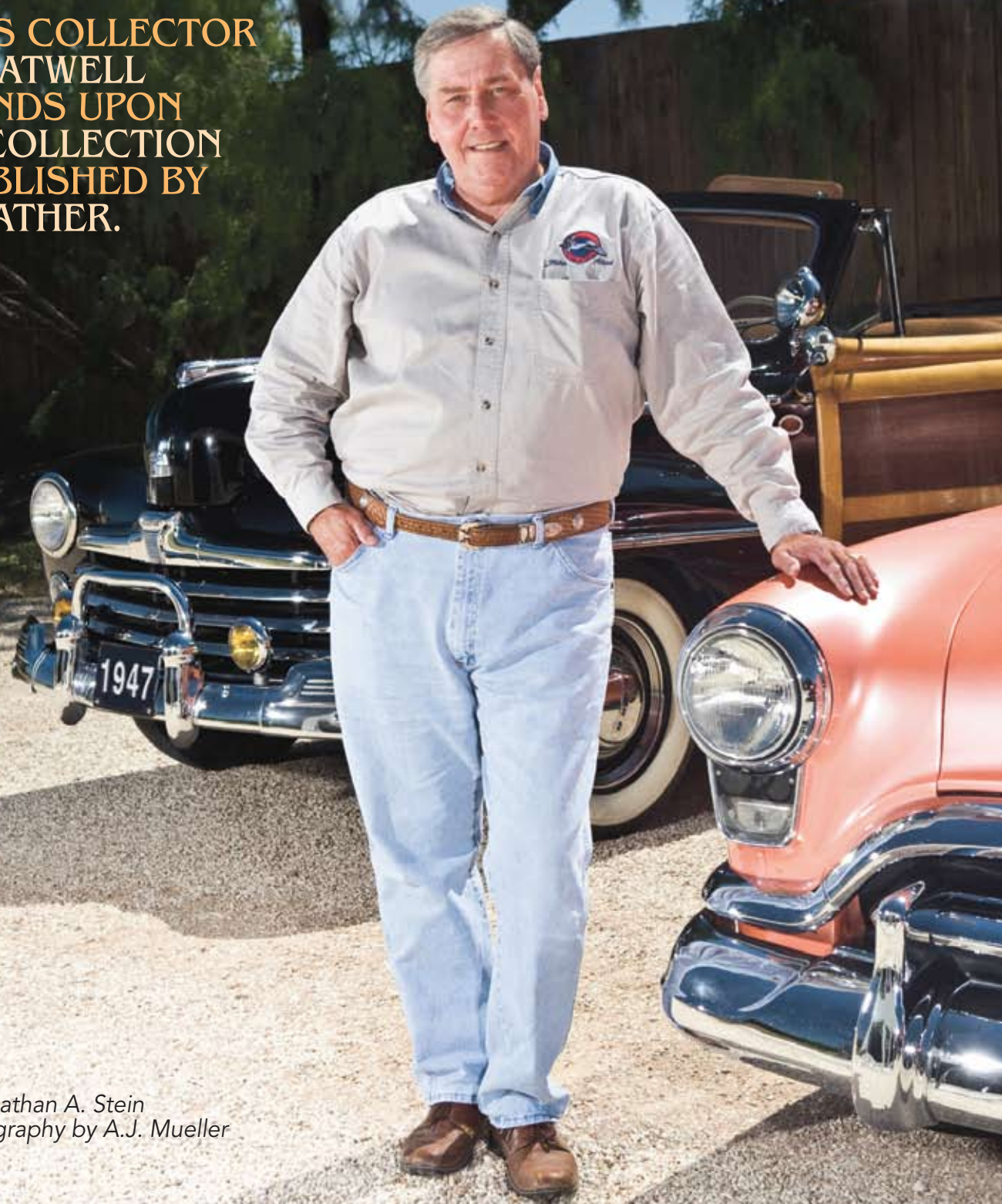
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# THE LEGACY

TEXAS COLLECTOR RICH ATWELL EXPANDS UPON THE COLLECTION ESTABLISHED BY HIS FATHER.



••• by Jonathan A. Stein  
••• photography by A.J. Mueller

**Y**ou never have too many cars," says Texas collector Rich Atwell, "you just don't have a big enough garage." An authority on too little garage space, Atwell has more than 150 cars scattered among four locations. He even lives in what is essentially a garage with an adjoining apartment. As his books and automobilia attest, Atwell collects more than cars. Hunting trophies adorn the walls, as do concours posters and photos of his cars. He's also a collector of fine shotguns, while his 24-year-old musician son Blake prefers fine guitars, which share vault space with the guns.

## LIKE FATHER, LIKE SON

Rich Atwell inherited his love of cars from his dad, who left seventh grade during the Great Depression to work at a drug store lunch counter. As Rich recounts, "A lady would come by in a Duesenberg, park out front and send her chauffeur in because my dad made great ice cream sodas. Dad would take one out to the car and she'd tip him a dollar." That car made such an impression on Robert Atwell, he vowed that someday he'd have a Duesenberg.

When Rich was nine years old, he and his older brother learned to drive a Jeep on a friend's ranch. A few years later, the first collector car joined the family — a Cord 812 Beverly that Bob Atwell found in Cleveland. Unfortunately, the Cord had to go when the family moved to Corpus Christi for the elder Atwell's newly acquired fuel transport business — Coastal Transport Co. However, old cars were never far from the Atwells' thoughts.

**Rich Atwell (left) with his 1952 Oldsmobile 88 coupe and 1947 Ford Sportsman convertible. The Atwell warehouse (below) is packed with postwar cars of nearly every nameplate.**

In 1960, 15-year-old Rich Atwell bought his first car — a Model A. He and his father collected the old Ford, loaded it and took it home, where Atwell proceeded to restore it. He drove it to school, eventually selling it to a man who had pressed him for it even though the car wasn't for sale. Rich finally suggested \$12,000 for the \$5,500 car. When his outrageous price was accepted, he was reluctant to

let it go until his father reminded him "your word is your bond." Next came a 1934 Aston Martin, which Rich drove while he attended the University of Houston. After working at Coastal full-time for a year, he joined the Marines in 1966.

Bob Atwell also returned to the old-car world in 1960 with several Model A's, including the one he had when he went on his honeymoon. Before long, a Pierce-Arrow coupe came along, and, finally, in 1964 his Duesenberg dream was fulfilled with a 1932 Model J Rollston-Window Victoria Coupe. Virtually every car an Atwell bought involved father and son — from the chase through the restoration process.

Rich Atwell still follows his father's restoration model: He and several employees tear down a vehicle and rebuild the chassis and mechanical components. Then the car goes out for metal work, paint, upholstery and final assembly because: "The chassis, suspension and engine are our thing. Final assembly is better with someone else."

## WORK AND FUN

From an early age, the Atwell boys worked at Coastal Transport. They swept floors, repaired trucks, learned dispatching, earned CDL licenses and took to the road. When they weren't putting in "100 hours a week" at Coastal Transport, father and son were working together on cars. Remembering his father, who died in 1991, Atwell reminisces: "He wanted to have fun but he didn't know how. The cars were 24/7, just like work. But then, Dad thought work was fun."

Years of rising at 4 a.m. and working alongside his father taught Atwell the meaning of hard work. But he also knows how to have fun. According to close friend John Groendyke, "We go to a lot of car auctions. We take his Motorhome to Arizona for the Gooding, RM and Barrett-Jackson. He loves the shows, too, and every year we go to Amelia Island, Meadow Brook and Pebble Beach." Atwell admits to loving the shows and cars, but says he values "the friendships and relationships" the most.



## EVERYTHING FROM A to Z

As longtime friend Jay Kaufman says in reference to Rich Atwell's taste: "Talk about an eclectic collection!" A private museum replete with backdrops and wax figures houses the "heavy iron" that was Bob Atwell's passion and is thick with Rolls-Royce Phantoms and Marmon V-16s. It also includes cars from Bentley, Delahaye, Delage, Duesenberg, Franklin, Isotta-Fraschini, Lagonda, Minerva and Talbot Lago, along with a Chrysler Newport parade car and Rich Atwell's trusty Aston Martin.

A building a few miles from Atwell's home is packed with an eclectic array of vehicles from Amphicar to Lincoln Zephyr, including an ex-McArthur Packard that Kaufman once battled Atwell for at a Scottsdale Auction. There are plenty of 1950s American cars, but unlike many, Atwell enjoys coupes and sedans. There are also Buick and Chrysler woodies, a fuel truck from the 1930s, a Pierce-Arrow Travel Lodge trailer, Jaguars and Mercedes and the MG TFs favored by his late brother. Most are stock, but there's a slightly modified Studebaker Lark that son Blake drove to school, along with Blake's modified '53 Cadillac and a compact show truck.

Another building holds cars in various states of undress, while Atwell's home garage houses four cars, which he rotates with others "when I can get them out." On one day, they were a tube-chassis 1963 Corvette with an LS6 engine, a resto-mod straight-eight 1935 Auburn built by friend Dee Howard, a mild custom 1952 Olds and a 1947 Ford Sportsman with 12-volt electrics. These four cars clearly show Atwell's interest in machines that can be driven and parked anywhere.

Cars that can be used regularly appeal to Atwell, although he's not lost sight of the cars he and his father shared. Every year, he shows cars at Pebble Beach. During the summer of 2008, he and his team were preparing to return for his 30th consecutive year, this time with a Lagonda V-12 James Young Sedan Coupe judged the most elegant car nearly 30 years ago and a 1904 Northern.

Cars have played a huge part in Atwell's life for decades, but he also spent years working to build up Coastal Transport. Along the way, he served with a variety of trucking industry trade organizations and is proud of a program that provides children of Coastal employees with four years of tuition at a trade school, state college or university.

These days, Atwell no longer goes into Coastal daily. He's busy with his many cars and restorations, as well as a project to build a 48,000-square-foot car building on his property in the Texas



(Left) A 1939 Talbot-Lago by Figoni & Falaschi and a 1937 Cord 812. (Below) Atwell's 1947 Ford Sportsman, 1952 Olds 88 mild custom and a slightly modified 1935 Auburn coupe.



Hill country. He insists that he'll limit his collection so that any car can be pulled out at any time. Meanwhile, he plans to enjoy the cars he already has, follow his son's budding music career and share his love of cars with both Blake and the many friends he's collected over 40 years.

## Cleaning up AT Pebble Beach

THE ATWELLS HAVE WON TIME AND AGAIN AT THE PEBBLE BEACH CONCOURS D'ELEGANCE:

1979 1ST IN CLASS GWENN GRAHAM TROPHY FOR MOST ELEGANT	1930 ROLLS-ROYCE WINDBLOWN COUPÉ 1938 LAGONDA V-12 JAMES YOUNG SEDANCA COUPÉ
1980 2ND IN CLASS 2ND IN CLASS	1932 ISOTTA FRASCHINI CASTAGNA CABRIOLET 1937 TALBOT-LAGO T-150C FIGONI & FALASCHI TEARDROP COUPÉ
1981 2ND IN CLASS	1930 DELAGE D8S CHAPRON COUPÉ
1982 2ND IN CLASS 1ST IN CLASS	1932 DELAGE D8SS 100 FERNANDEZ & DARRIN CABRIOLET 1933 ROLLS-ROYCE PII BREWSTER CONVERTIBLE SEDAN
1984 1ST IN CLASS 3RD IN CLASS	1930 MINERVA AM MURPHY CONVERTIBLE SEDAN 1937 TALBOT-LAGO T-150C FIGONI & FALASCHI TEARDROP COUPÉ
1986 1ST IN CLASS 1ST IN CLASS	1930 ROLLS-ROYCE PI BREWSTER ASCOT TOURER 1931 ROLLS-ROYCE PI BREWSTER CONVERTIBLE COUPÉ
1987 1ST IN CLASS	1930 ROLLS-ROYCE PI BREWSTER YORK TYPE
1988 3RD IN CLASS	1931 MARMON 16 LIMOUSINE
1989 2ND IN CLASS 3RD IN CLASS	1938 LAGONDA V-12 JAMES YOUNG SEDANCA COUPÉ 1938 ROLLS-ROYCE PIII BARKER SEDANCA DeVILLE
1990 LUCIUS BEEBE AWARD	1933 ROLLS-ROYCE PII CASTAGNA LANDAULET
1992 2ND IN CLASS	1933 MARMON V-12 DE SAKHNOFFSKY COUPÉ RECREATION
1995 PEBBLE BEACH TOUR RIBBON	1935 FORD KELLNER PANEL BROUGHAM
1996 3RD IN CLASS & TOUR RIBBON	1931 ROLLS-ROYCE BREWSTER SPECIAL DOVER SEDAN
1997 2ND IN CLASS & TOUR RIBBON	1933 MARMON V-12 DE SAKHNOFFSKY COUPÉ RECREATION
1998 2ND IN CLASS & TOUR RIBBON	1930 MINERVA AM MURPHY CONVERTIBLE SEDAN
1999 1ST IN CLASS & TOUR RIBBON 1ST IN CLASS	1930 BENTLEY SPEED SIX TOURER 1938 PACKARD BARKER SEDANCA DeVILLE
2001 2ND IN CLASS & TOUR RIBBON	1939 DELAHAYE 135MS CHAPRON ROADSTER
2002 ELEGANCE IN MOTION TROPHY 2ND IN CLASS & TOUR RIBBON	1933 DUESENBERG SJ BRUNN RIVIERA PHAETON 1933 DUESENBERG SJ BRUNN RIVIERA PHAETON
2003 3RD IN CLASS & TOUR RIBBON	1931 MARMON 16 COUPÉ
2005 PEBBLE BEACH TOUR RIBBON	1930 ROLLS-ROYCE PI CONTINENTAL COUPÉ
2007 PEBBLE BEACH TOUR RIBBON	1933 ROLLS ROYCE PII BREWSTER CONVERTIBLE SEDAN



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The antique enameled face and Bruguet hands are true to the original. But the real beauty of this watch is on the inside. We replicated an extremely complicated automatic movement with 27 jewels and seven hands. There are over 210 individual parts that are

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27 jewels and 210 hand-assembled parts drive this classic masterpiece.

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The face of the original 1930s Graves timepiece from the Museum of Time.

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## MORE THAN AN OIL CHANGE

••• By Jonathan A. Stein

*Formula modifications could mean it's time to reexamine the oil you use in your collector car.*

**MOST CAR ENTHUSIASTS** can probably rattle off the automotive products that they've relied on for years. But when it comes to oil, recent composition changes driven by environmental concerns could mean your preferred brand of oil may not work so well in your collector car today.

Many older vehicles use overhead valve engines with flat tappets that contact the camshaft lobe on one end and the rocker arm assembly on the other. The rocker arm assembly is relatively heavy and generally has a big valve with a heavy spring, resulting in a lot of pressure on the tappet and camshaft.

Years ago, oil companies and automakers discovered that zinc dialkyldithiophosphate (ZDDP) was effective in reducing cam and lifter wear, as the compound interacts with the iron

of the cam lobe and creates a sacrificial barrier. As of 1988, the ZDDP concentration in oils certified by the American Petroleum Institute (API) standardized at up to 1200 PPM (parts per million) phosphorous.

However, phosphorous levels were brought down to the 800 PPM level by 2004 because high phosphorus concentrations shorten catalytic converter life in modern cars, and modern roller cam engines don't require ZDDP's protection.

Soon, rebuilders of flat-tappet engines — particularly those from the 1950s to the 1970s — were noting increased cam failure on newly assembled engines. Many engine builders have tied the failures to the reformulated oils, although API spokesman Dennis Bachelder asserts that API-ranked oils are compatible with older vehicles and the ZDDP levels in current SM-rated oils are sufficient to protect flat-tappet engines.

If you're in doubt about using the current gen-

eration 800 PPM SM-rated oils, try these options:

- Oils rated for both diesel and gasoline engines (up to 1000 PPM) are available from Shell ([shell.us/views/consumers.html](http://shell.us/views/consumers.html)) and Chevron ([chevron.com/products/extramile/](http://chevron.com/products/extramile/)).

- Classic Car Motor Oil ([classiccarmotoroil.com](http://classiccarmotoroil.com)) from the Indiana Region of the Classic Car Club of America manufactured and bottled by D-A Lubricant Company, Inc. ([dalube@dalube.com](mailto:dalube@dalube.com)) contains 1500-1600 PPM.

### YEARS AGO, OIL COMPANIES AND AUTOMAKERS DISCOVERED THAT ZDDP REDUCED CAM AND LIFTER WEAR.

- Valvoline's VR1 Racing Motor Oil ([valvoline.com/racing](http://valvoline.com/racing)) has up to 1300 PPM of ZDDP.
- Castrol's SYNTEC 20W/50 full synthetic product ([castrol.com](http://castrol.com)) has 1200 PPM of ZDDP (check that the rear label says Recommended for Classic Cars), and Red Line Motor Oils ([redlineoil.com](http://redlineoil.com)) — also synthetic — have about 1300 PPM zinc and 1200 PPM phosphorous, although synthetics aren't suited for the break-in period.
- BRAD PENN Penn Grade 1 Racing Oil ([bradpenracing.com](http://bradpenracing.com)) is a mineral-oil alternative with nearly 1500 PPM of ZDDP.

- Use a ZDDP additive such as ZDDPLUS ([zddplus.com](http://zddplus.com)) or Cam-Shield ([camshield.com](http://camshield.com)) with every oil change.
  - Additional protection, essential during the start-up phase for any fresh engine, can be provided by generous use of an assembly lube with a large dose of ZDDP like GM E.O.S. Assembly Lube (PN 1052367) ([newgmpartsusa.com](http://newgmpartsusa.com)).
- With these options, there's no need to worry about your camshaft. But it's always a good idea to line up supplies along your route before you take to the road.

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## PETROLIANA II

Vintage gas pumps are a fitting complement to your vintage car.

••• By Carl Bomstead

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** This is the second installment of a two-part series about petroliana.

**RESTORED VINTAGE GAS PUMPS**, which cost as much as \$20,000, can rival the quality of a concours-winning show car. Their evolution also parallels the development of the automobile. The first commercial kerosene/gasoline pump that could be used outdoors was developed in 1905; however, refueling an automobile in the early years was still a primitive process.

As the popularity of the automobile increased, the number of "service stations" followed suit, as did the refinement of gas pumps. The visible pump, which had a five- or 10-gallon glass cylinder on top, first appeared in 1915. They were in common use until the early '30s when Wayne developed electric gas pumps. The architectural style of the day was reflected in these modern art deco pumps. They were being phased out in the early '50s by industrialized square pumps that look similar to those in use today.

Collectors favor the earlier pre-'50s pumps and often restore them to a standard that was unheard of in the era. As a station changed brands the pumps were often repainted with

a brush in the new livery. Finding an unrestored pump with several coats of old paint is not unusual.

From the early 1910s to the '50s there were literally thousands of different oil companies, and they promoted their brands with colorful glass globes on top of the pumps. The early globes were one piece with the artwork

**AS A WORD OF CAUTION, REPRODUCTIONS, WHICH OFFER NO APPRECIATION POTENTIAL, ARE PLENTIFUL.**

etched or painted on the glass surface. The more desirable, such as MUSCO and Indian Gasoline, are priced in the low five figures when infrequently offered.

Later globes consisted of two lenses that were attached to the globe body. Prices range from a few hundred dollars for the

plain and mundane to close to \$10,000 for the rare globes with colorful graphics. As a word of caution, reproductions, which offer no appreciation potential, are plentiful. It's best to insure your early pumps and globes at their current market values, as prices continue to escalate.

Gas and oil swap meets are called "gas

bashes," and there are numerous local events that are excellent resources for pumps and globes. Iowa Gas (iowagas.com) and the annual International Petroliana Collectors' Convention hosted by *Check the Oil* magazine (checktheoilmagazine.com) are two of the major national events and always offer a wide selection of petroliana.

A gas pump with a colorful globe, restored in the colors of your favorite brand, makes a striking addition to your garage. But be aware, it may just attract as much attention as your award-winning show car.



DEE GOLDEN

## COLLECTOR ESSENTIALS

Looking for products to help you maintain and enjoy your collector car? Let the Hagerty's Gear Guide help. Here are a few items you might find useful:



### FIRST AID KIT

CPR-Pro.com (cpr-pro.com/garage.html, 1-866-208-5324), distributor of CPR and first-aid supplies, has put together a first aid kit ideal for the garage and/or workshop. The 43-piece kit, which can be mounted on the wall, comes packaged in a durable water-resistant plastic container with carrying handle and contains everything from ear plugs to an emergency thermal blanket. It is available for \$28.99 including shipping to anywhere in North America.



### DO-IT-ALL GLOVES

The down-and-dirty-do-everything Original™ Glove from Mechanix Wear (mechanix.com, 1-800-222-4296) handles everything from the pits to the shop to the home without skipping a beat. Offered in a variety of colors, the super strong Original Glove with a two-way Spandex top for superior fit is available for \$24.99.



### SAFETY FIRST

Elvex (elvex.com, 203-743-2488), manufacturer of high-performance ACER™ safety glasses, now offers OVR-Safety Spectacles (SG-27C), designed to be worn over prescription glasses, available for \$7.99 plus shipping. The latest generation of ACER safety glasses also includes the SG-12 I/O, for use both indoors and outdoors, available for \$6.49 plus shipping. The glasses can be ordered from Utility Safeguard (utilitysafeguard.com, 1-877-899-7233).

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Larry Webster and the 1955 Ford Country Squire wagon his dad drove and loved.

## It's Good to be Home

This 1955 Ford Country Squire wagon makes its way back to its original owners ••• By Larry Webster

**WHEN MY FATHER PASSED** in 2002, he didn't leave behind much. Financial hardships had forced him to "trim the fat," so to speak. That meant selling the only thing I ever saw him covet: a 1955 Ford Country Squire wagon.

The wagon was originally purchased in 1956 by my great uncle and passed to my dad in 1970, my birth year. Well-worn, it was our family's RV and kid jungle gym. We loved it. However, when we moved to another New Jersey town in 1980, the Ford, which had been replaced by a used Suburban, was parked.

When I was 16, I tried coaxing my dad into a joint restoration by presenting junkyard parts as gifts. But he had bigger fish to fry — one kid in college and two on their way. So the Ford rotted on its deflated tires.

I never asked why he kept it. I think there were too many good memories to let it go. It must have been a sad day in 1993 when, in need of money, he sold it.

The first of my two kids arrived three weeks after my dad died. It's hectic with kids, and I don't think I ever had a chance to mourn my

father. Maybe that's why I suddenly thought of the Ford in early 2006.

It took almost a year to find the owners, J.J. and Mike Triebold, a Colorado couple who owns a commercial fossil collections and preparations company. When I called and introduced myself, Mike joked that he "restores bones and old cars." The Ford wasn't for sale.

**IT'S BEEN BOTH FREAKY AND SATISFYING TO OCCUPY THE PERCH THAT MY DAD ONCE DID, HAULING AROUND MY FAMILY IN THE FORD AS MY FATHER DID HIS.**

I laid on the sob story to no effect and hung up deflated. However, a week later, Mike called to say they wanted me to have the car.

The \$18,000 price was very fair. Jim O'Brien, the guy who bought the car from my dad, is a professional restoration man with Pebble Beach entrants on his résumé. He had restored the car to its original condition. Perfect, but \$18,000 is still serious coin. I thought about an

inspection trip, but scuttled the idea. What I wanted had little to do with shiny chrome.

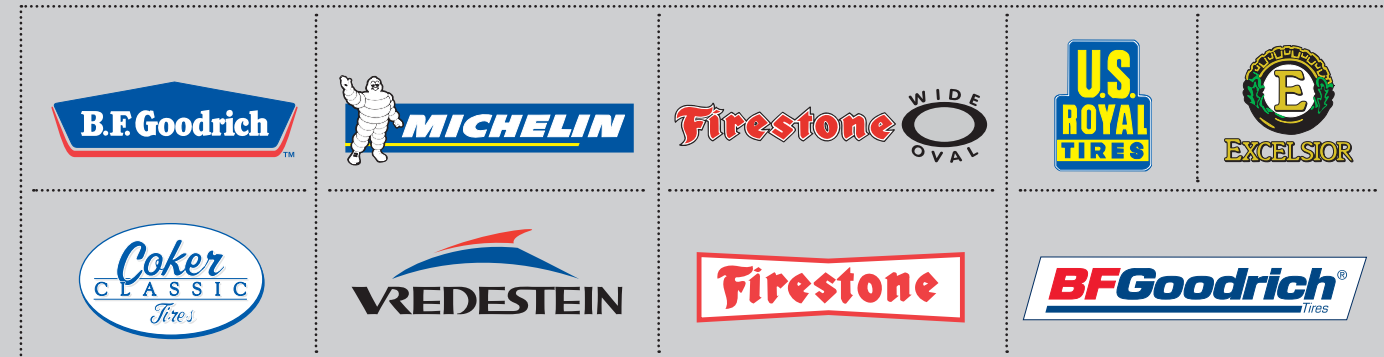
In May 2007, an enclosed hauler arrived. As the rear door opened, I got a peek of a glistening rear bumper. Could that be the old Ford? New Pinetree Green paint and refinished chrome looked better than new. The time-machine moment came when I

sucked a houseful of the aroma that hadn't changed in 20 years.

It's been both freaky and satisfying to occupy the perch that my dad once did, hauling around my family in the Ford as he did his. This car is a more powerful link to him than anything else I can imagine. And while my uncommon connection to cars still mystifies me, I'm grateful for it all the same.

A.J. MUELLER

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