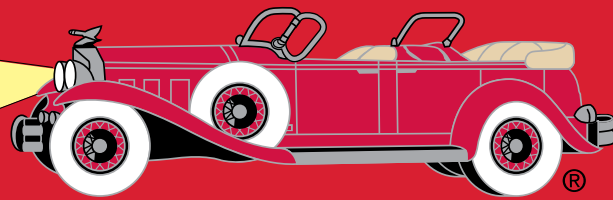


Northern Lights

The Ohio Region
Classic Car Club of America



Spring 2023

Buick to the Rescue!



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- Rebuilding a Classic V12
- Lincoln Museum's 1931 Lincoln Sport Phaeton

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Director's Message

By Margus Sweigard

As I write this, the snow is still falling, but soon it will be time to wake up our cars and have fun with them.

I know that this year has gotten off to a slow start, but this is about to change. We have some very good events coming up soon.

We will start in April 29 with a trip to the open house at Lakeside Sand and Gravel. This is a working quarry that has a very large collection of all kinds of machinery and trucks. It is very interesting to see the equipment actually running.

On May 21, we have a unique tour and picnic. We have been extended a rare invitation to visit the Rowdy Meadow estate in Hunting Valley to see the estate and art filled grounds. I have lived on the east side for my whole life, and never knew that a place like this existed. This will be followed by a picnic in the North Chagrin Reservation where a pavilion has been reserved just for us.

June will bring our Father's Day Car Show at Stan Hywet. This is our main event of the year. Many years have gone into making this the best show in Ohio. Please register your Classic so our club can be represented as it needs to be. We should have 50 Classics, last year we only had 16. Lets show our cars, people like to see them.

July has parades and local shows. The Indiana Region is hosting a tri-region Grand Classic in Columbus, Indiana. The Ohio Region should support this show as it will be our turn in 2024 to host a Grand Classic. Again, let's get our cars out and show them. It will be good for our region and good for the club in general.

Our club exists because we have a very dedicated group of members. New suggestions and ideas are welcome anytime along with people willing to help with them. Please contact me anytime. 🚗



Upcoming Event Calendar

- April 29** Lakeside Sand & Gravel tour
- May 20** Stan Hywet Judging Seminar (Harwood Motors)
- May 21** Rowdy Meadow mini-tour (Frank Beard)
- June 18** Stan Hywet Car Show
- July 21-23** Indiana Region Grand Classic
- July 20-22** Arthritis Foundation Car Show



National Dues are \$80, payable to Classic Car Club of America, 3501 Algonquin Rd., Suite 300, Rolling Meadows, IL 60008. Regional dues are \$25 single or \$30 including spouse. One must be a national member to be a regional member and all payments are managed by the CCCA National Headquarters in Illinois. Visit www.ClassicCarClub.org for more information or contact the Ohio Region Membership Chairperson.

EDITOR'S LETTER

Matt Harwood, *Editor-In-Chief*

I call it "mission creep."

It goes by other names that maybe you've heard: "might as well oughta" and "as long as we're in there" and "unintentional restoration." It's the unavoidable fact that when working on an old car, there will be unexpected projects immediately adjacent to the one you're working on. Mission creep can be frustrating or it can be an opportunity, it's all in how you look at it.

Case in point? I was replacing the carpets in an old car recently and figured it would be easy (famous last words, right?). It should have gone like this: Step 1, remove old carpets. Step 2, cut new carpets. Step 3, install new carpets. In reality, however, we discovered a nice hole burned in the wooden floorboards in the back seat area. Yes, something *BURNED* a hole right through the floor! The weird thing is that the original carpets were not charred or burned, just a little crispy on the back side. I was at a complete loss to explain just what had happened back there, especially since the exhaust isn't particularly close to the floor in that spot. So while I don't have a good explanation for what happened, I do have a much more significant project to tackle that's well beyond three easy steps. It'll likely involve removing the rear seat, cutting out some wooden floor pieces, and making new ones, all of which needs to be done before the upholstery shop is done with the carpets. *Yikes!*

I guess it's the nature of old cars to be unpredictable. After all, they've lived long, full lives and who knows what kinds of adventures they've had along the way? They've been serviced and maintained by people with varying skill levels, and for a good chunk of their lives they weren't particularly valuable or desirable, so doing jobs perfectly probably wasn't high on anyone's priority list. A previous owner clearly found the hole in the floor, as he laid a piece of aluminum sheet over it, but that was the extent of his desire to make the repair. He wasn't interested in dealing with mission creep.

On page 10 of this issue, you'll find the first installment of a multi-part journal I kept while rebuilding the engine in my 1935 Lincoln. It is the very definition of mission creep, starting with a running, driving car, progressing to removing the engine for a significant repair, and ultimately suffering a catastrophic failure during testing on an engine stand.

The process was eye-watering, both from a time and financial standpoint, and never could I have imagined where I would end up when I signed on the dotted line to purchase the car. If only I had known what was in store before mission creep took over the whole project.

The good thing about mission creep, however, is that bad work gets erased and good work gets done. I've mentioned many times in this column that any repairs on your old car should be a point of pride and that craftsmanship really matters. These cars deserve better than a make-do fix to keep them limping along for another few thousand miles. Mission creep is one mechanism that makes cars better, albeit in an often frustrating way. I will have new carpets, but I'll also have a new floor that's safe. I now have a newly rebuilt V12 that should outlast me and my children and provide years of happy motoring (fingers crossed!). Yes, there's usually a bigger investment in terms of time and money than we originally anticipated, but is that ever a surprise when dealing with old cars?

The key to making mission creep work for you rather than against you is to set parameters whenever possible. I don't need to replace all the floor boards, although now would be an ideal time to do so. And as long as I'm doing that, why not detail the chassis while it's accessible? *No thanks.* Keeping the project compartmentalized (and hoping that your mission creep doesn't have its own mission creep) is critical. Define the limits, do the job well, and get back to enjoying your car.

And oh, yeah, remember to finish that first job that led to all this! 🚗



BACK SEAT DRIVER

Riley Harwood, *Editor-At-Large*

Adventures at Hershey

First, thank you for all the great feedback on my earlier articles, the response has been surprisingly strong. Thank you for reading!

Thousands of people come to Hershey each year, many of them for the car show but often for other things as well. There's Chocolate World, downtown Hershey, Hershey Park, and several museums. But if you are there for the car show in October, here are some of the things I like to do. I always enjoy walking the car corral and you really need to do that at least once. There are always plenty of interesting cars to see and lots of people with a common interest.

If you're restoring a project car there are always plenty of parts to browse from the various vendors. Some of the things my dad and I have searched for are horns for our 1935 Lincoln and fog lights for our 1941 Buick. For my mom's 1956 Chrysler we needed headlight bezels and a horn ring for the steering wheel. We don't always find what



we are looking for but it's always fun to look. There are also things other than car parts. Personally, I collect pocket watches and I've found interesting examples at Hershey. Even if you're not into cars, exactly, there are always other things to find at Hershey. If you're trying to complete a collection for your car and are looking for artifacts from that time, there are plenty of choices such as perfume bottles, brushes, makeup cases, jewelry, mirrors, and antique clothing.

On Wednesday and Thursday night we like to go to the auction at the Hershey Lodge. The auctions offer more than cars, including memorabilia, signs, and other car-related things. My favorite cars that I've seen at the auction include a Marmon Sixteen coupe, a vintage fire truck, and a Yellowstone tour bus. We've

actually sold cars at the auction which can be stressful for my parents but it always turned out fine. You don't have to go into the auction because the cars are parked outside so you can see them without going inside.

There are also plenty of dining options at Hershey, both in the Lodge and around town. After the auction we usually go to the restaurant upstairs at the Lodge called Revelry but one year we had to go to Fire and Grain because Revelry was being remodeled. They have plenty of dining options but your wallet might be tight.

If you are planning on joining me at Hershey, I suggest you bring good walking shoes, sunscreen and sunglasses, a rain coat/umbrella, and if you're lucky some shorts. And don't forget to book your hotel now or else you might not have a place to stay!

Thank you for reading and I hope to see you in October! 🚗



SILENCE IS GOLDEN

Making your Full Classic quieter and more comfortable

By Matt Harwood

Full Classics are typically considered quiet, comfortable cars, but can they be better? I'd argue yes, they can. Even though the cars were designed to be silent and smooth, improvements thanks to modern materials and technology can make your favorite tour car a lot more comfortable out on the road, both in terms of ambient sound and temperature in the cabin. Closed cars in particular can benefit from insulation designed to dampen sound, block ambient noise, and reflect heat.

I was looking for a way to improve comfort levels in my 1941 Buick Limited limousine, which we drive *a lot*. It's already a pretty quiet car, but I felt that it could be better. Using a variety of techniques, I was able to significantly reduce both sound levels and temperatures inside the cabin. After a summer of touring, I can say that these upgrades conclusively made the car a lot easier to live with on long, hot days.

To start, there are several ways that noise gets into your car. The first is simply vibrations—old cars vibrate, and those vibrations turn into noise that you can hear. Sometimes it manifests as a rattle or buzz, but other times it can simply be white noise that's hard to pinpoint. The second is external noise, be it wind noise or tire rumble or even the sound of machinery doing its thing on the other side of the firewall. These are very distinct issues and addressing one may not deliver satisfactory results without addressing both.

Sound dampening in a vehicle is most effective using a system of materials, although some applications may only need one or the other. All installations should start



Multiple layers of sound deadening is the most effective way to control noise and heat

with a foundation of vibration-attenuating insulation. That is, stopping the metal parts of your car—specifically the sheetmetal—from vibrating and creating noise that you can hear in the cabin. The second layer is usually a closed-cell foam whose sole purpose is to act as a “de-coupler” to prevent low-frequency sounds from vibrating the third layer and creating new noises. That third layer is a sound-blocking layer made of a mass-loaded vinyl (referred to as MLV), which physically blocks exterior noise (road noise, tire noise, air noise). It does this simply by being heavy and dense—it doesn't vibrate and therefore sound waves can't get through it. Together, this system of three layers addresses the most common sources of noise in a vehicle.



Remove the carpets and any pre-existing insulation so you have clean metal as a base.

This seems like a lot to digest, and it can be intimidating at first. Fortunately, there are companies that specialize in sound control in vehicles and they've developed systems that work together to deliver satisfactory results. I always hesitate to make specific product recommendations, but after doing extensive research, I think I've found a combination that works well yet isn't insanely expensive, something easier said than done. Let's begin.

Start by disassembling your interior as much as possible. Obviously you'll remove carpets and floor mats to expose the bare floors. Some cars have factory-

installed sound deadening in the form of tar paper glued to the floors, or maybe some kind of jute insulation on the floor and firewall. You'll have to remove all of this so you have clean surfaces to work with. My Buick had a few squares of tar paper in recesses in the floor, as well as a layer of home improvement store insulation under the carpets. I removed the front seat cushion to give me access to the floor under the seat but in hindsight, I probably should have removed the entire seat assembly. I also removed the door panels, but the doors can be considered optional—I really wanted my car quiet and the doors to close with that solid **kerCHUNK** sound. With everything removed, I wiped the floors down with acetone to clean the surface for the adhesives.



First layer of butyl attenuator mat installed. Note how it hugs the contours of the floor. I probably should have removed the seat.

The first layer is a butyl-based attenuator mat that you simply peel and stick to the various metal parts of your car, most notably the floor and doors. It works by turning the minute vibrations in the metal into heat (a tiny amount, don't worry) and thereby cancelling the sound waves. The butyl is typically rated in terms of thickness and pounds-per-square-foot so you can compare various brands. Most are 50-80 mils thick and .5-.7 pounds per square foot. Thicker and heavier are usually more effective, but you do have to balance that with the added weight in your vehicle (negligible in a Full Classic but certainly a factor in a modern compact) and the thickness of materials that can be adequately hidden under carpets and behind door panels. Most attenuator mats are self-adhesive and come with a built-in foil face to help manage heat, a nice bonus. It's also easy to cut with scissors or a razor knife. Dyna-Mat is a well-known product, but you do pay for the brand name, as all attenuator mats are the same if they're the same thickness and weight. There's no special formulation that makes one better than the other. Shop

weight and thickness, not brand.

Installation is easy: cut to fit, peel, stick, and then use a wood, plastic, or metal roller to make sure the mats adhere to the metal. An improperly installed sheet does nothing, so it really needs to be stuck on there securely, hugging all the contours of the surface. This is why I like the Kilmat attenuator mats, which have an embossed pattern in the foil which vanishes as you roll it out so you know when it's done. Yes, it's exhausting work, but the results are worth it, I promise. Consult the manufacturer's literature to see how much coverage is required for the butyl mats to be effective. 100% coverage isn't required, as this layer simply dampens vibrations, so 60-80% coverage is usually sufficient.

I should probably mention that this is where many amateur installers will stop, thinking that they've addressed the noise situation (and some attenuator mat companies will imply that their “special formula” is all the insulation you need). Yes, there will be some improvement, but you're really only addressing half the noise. This is such a big job that it really doesn't make sense to do it halfway.



Closed cell foam mats over the attenuator mat.

The second layer is simply a thin closed-cell foam that physically de-couples the vibrating floor from the interior of the car. It prevents any remaining vibrations from being transmitted to the mass-loaded vinyl (MLV) that forms your top layer. The closed-cell material also acts as an insulator that works with the foil on the attenuator



Roller ensures the mats are fully adhered to the floor.

Silence (continued)



Three pieces of MLV cover front seat area. Note the pie-cuts to help the MLV conform to the transmission tunnel.

mats to control heat in the cabin. Fortunately, the closed-cell foam mats are cheap and easy to install, cutting easily with scissors and with self-adhesive backing. This layer, however, needs to have as close to 100% coverage as you can manage, as any gaps can be a place for vibrations to transfer to the MLV. Make sure your gaps are tight or even overlap the mats if necessary.

The top layer is the mass-loaded vinyl (MLV). The MLV is purely a barrier that blocks lower-frequency sounds like tire noise and exhaust rumble. The MLV is HEAVY, considerably heavier than the attenuator mats, and it's not particularly flexible so it takes some creativity to install. It is also not self-adhesive, but in some cases you can simply lay it in place and let gravity do the rest. For the front seat of my car, I made three pieces: one for each footwell and a bridge for the transmission tunnel.



Finished interior looks exactly the same as it did before, it's just a lot quieter and cooler.

I just laid the mats into place and used a vinyl adhesive to glue the three pieces together, which pretty much locked them in position. It required some creative “pie cutting” along the edges to make it fit the contours of the transmission tunnel, but it was not particularly difficult.

Once you've got all the layers secured and contoured to fit the floor, you can reinstall your carpet and seats and anything else you removed for soundproofing. Things might be a little tight around the pedals and under the seat, but all told the various layers of sound deadening shouldn't add up to more than about 5/16-inch. You may need to glue your carpet in place, as the MLV is a little slippery. I used some industrial velcro to make the carpets easy to remove in the future.



I added some attenuator mat to the kick panels and cowl to help reduce noise in these areas.

Other Areas

Soundproofing isn't limited to just floors, although the floors and firewall are by far the most effective places to apply proper sound deadening materials. While you have your interior apart, it makes sense to look around and see where else you might apply some of these techniques. For instance, in my Buick, the cowl area was a good place to apply some attenuator mat. From the factory, it was stuffed with some kind of rock wool that had crumbled and fallen to the bottom of the cavity. I removed the rock wool and installed some attenuator mat to the inner surfaces of the cowl as well as to the support brackets—basically anywhere there was a flat piece of metal that might vibrate.

I also removed all four door panels, both to soundproof the doors and to install new weather seals (which I'll show you in a future article). The doors are probably the second best place for soundproofing and if you want that solid sound, some attenuator mats on the inner surfaces of the door can make a significant difference. Adding the closed-cell foam and MLV can certainly help, but to a far



Adding some attenuator mat to the inside of your doors can make a big difference. Note that 100% coverage isn't required.

lesser degree, so it's your call whether you want to pursue those last few percentage points of sound control.

Other areas worth attacking are the trunk, particularly the passenger compartment bulkhead, and if you have the interior gutted, insulating the roof can really make a difference. There really is no wrong way to do this job, it's just a matter of thinking creatively about how noise makes its way into the car. Three layers aren't always necessary, although it can only help on areas like the floor and trunk. Obviously wood-framed cars and earlier Full Classics with wooden floors won't benefit from these techniques as much as steel cars, but the thermal insulation benefits are undeniable (many manufacturers offer attenuation mats with additional layers specifically designed to control heat in addition to vibrations).

Results? My Buick is notably quieter and more “solid” feeling going down the road. Many of the previous squeaks and rattles are gone, either damped by the

soundproofing or blocked by it, and the doors close with a pleasing THUNK. Better still, it's much cooler in the driver's seat—where we used to see as much as a 15-degree difference between front and back seat, it's now negligible, making long days behind the wheel far more comfortable. I plan to insulate the back seat area, but given that it's pretty far from the working parts of the car, it's already quiet back there so the benefits might be less noticeable.

I ultimately spent two long weekends and about \$600 on this sound deadening project and I'd call it time and money well spent. An old car will never be as quiet and solid as a modern car, but the improvement was notable and 100% positive with no downsides that I can see. I'd call this project a win! 🚗



Useful Stuff:

Kilmat 80 mil butyl mats
Sold in 34-sheet boxes
1 mat is 15.7 x 9.8 inches
Available from Amazon.com

Noico closed-cell foam mats
Sold in 34-sheet boxes
1 mat is 15.7 x 9.8 inches
Available from Amazon.com

Mass loaded vinyl (MLV)
Sold in 3 foot x 3 foot sheets
Available from
www.secondskinaudio.com

HH-66 Vinyl Cement
Sold in 4 oz. or 32 oz. cans
Available from Amazon.com

3M Spray Trim Adhesive
Sold in 16.8 oz. spray can
Available from Amazon.com
or any auto parts store

FCHO Roller Installation Tools
3-pack
Available from Amazon.com

TECH: REBUILDING A FULL CLASSIC ENGINE PART 1

ENGINE BUILDER'S JOURNAL

Find out what's involved with rebuilding a Lincoln K V12

By Matt Harwood

Sooner or later, all engines need to be rebuilt. If you're lucky, the powerplant in your Full Classic is healthy and someone else has already done the heavy lifting for you. But if you're like me and mostly unlucky, well, maybe you're the guy standing without a chair when the music stops. That was the case with my 1935 Lincoln K club sedan, which I bought in 2018 as a second tour car. In fact, the dealer from whom I bought it told me it was, "Just a set of tires away from being ready to tour!" Well, that turned out not to be the case.

What we discovered was that while the car was ostensibly running and driving, there was a rather substantial hole in the engine block which some unscrupulous fellow had tried—*unsuccessfully*—to patch with JBWeld epoxy. From there, things got pretty serious, pretty fast, with our apparent solution being to stitch the block, which is a legitimate repair process. After some fairly contentious negotiations, the dealer who sold us the car agreed to pay for the stitching and to transport the engine to New England to have the work done. That started us on a long journey of hope, frustration, money, and maximum effort.

This journal—and the ones that will follow—will give you some idea of what's involved with rebuilding the engine in a Full Classic from top to bottom. It is not for the faint of heart (or wallet) but if you're like me and you drive your cars, then mechanical excellence is the only goal. This story picks up with the return of the engine from the stitcher, when we still hoped that the engine could be saved and used as-is. That turned out to not be possible, as the bearings were starting to deteriorate, but we didn't learn that until much later. Ultimately, I spent about two years fixing, detailing, and testing that original engine only to come to a hard stop when it had a catastrophic failure on the test stand. That, of course, necessitated a full rebuild. Here's part one of the story of how we got there and how we tackled the problem:

January 27, 2020

Tom returned the engine last week and the stitching job is quite well done. Although I wish we didn't have to remove the engine, I think it's better because we have the chance to detail the engine bay while it's out. With that in mind, I mounted the engine on a stand I made.



I devised a pump system to circulate Evapo-Rust through the cooling passages. With everything clean inside, this sucker should never overheat again. I'll let it run for a week or two so it's really clean inside.

January 30, 2020

Take radiator to radiator shop to be re-cored.

February 2, 2020

Take various engine components to powdercoater to have them refinished, plus a few parts to the chrome shop. I spent most of my weekend sandblasting Lincoln parts in preparation.



February 16, 2020

Remove the Evapo-Rust pump and flush the block with water. Nice and clean inside, but I was able to blow out lots of extra trash with the air gun. Shouldn't be a problem but I'll add some "Grimy" filters on the water necks when it's time to fire it up.

February 20, 2020

Pick up radiator. \$1800 worth of cooling system.

February 23, 2020

Spent the afternoon cleaning up the exhaust manifolds. I plan to paint them with some Rustoleum hi-temp satin black paint. Will it hold up? I don't know. But I can't afford (and do not want) to porcelainize the manifolds as original, it's just too fragile. The paint is rated to 1600 degrees, maybe it will survive. Disappointed to discover a broken ear on the exhaust collector that had been



poorly repaired in the past. It isn't usable, I'll have to find a replacement.

March 3, 2020

Found a replacement collector in good shape on eBay. Not cheap, but what choice do I have? Experimented with the paint and the manifolds turned

out pretty well overall. Nice gloss. We will see if it can withstand the heat.

April 18, 2020

Parts are back from powdercoat and the chrome shop. Beautiful! I've been cleaning the exterior of the block to get it ready for refinishing. Unfortunately, someone in the past decided to paint the raw aluminum crankcase with



some kind of tar-like sealer. I managed to remove most of it with a Scotch-Brite wheel on my die grinder, but it was tedious work. It left a pattern in the aluminum, so I need to figure out how it should be refinished. A friend with a similar Lincoln recommended a type of paint, but I'm not sure I want to paint the aluminum—seems kind of counter-productive, no?



April 3, 2021

I spent the past few months removing broken head studs. Of the 58 studs, I managed to remove 29 of them intact. The rest needed to be drilled out and threads repaired with Time-Serts (for details on removing broken bolts, see the Fall 2019 issue of *Northern Lights*).

The plan is to get the V12 fit, clean, detailed, and back in the car as quickly as possible, then focus on wiring, plumbing, reassembly, and sorting. Goal is to take it to the Lincoln Homecoming in August.

Resuming work on the Lincoln, I removed the oil pan and cleaned it out. Bottom end of the motor looks clean. I use a wire wheel to clean the outside of the oil pan (can't risk sandblasting it) and then painted it gloss black.

April 5, 2021

More busywork with degreasing the engine block and crankcase, cleaning the tops of the pistons, and oiling the cylinders so they stay limber in preparation for use. I rolled the engine outside so I could really get after the grunge all over it. Soak it with degreaser, hose it off gently, then repeat. Blast it with the air gun to get all the water out of the nooks and crannies, then hose it down liberally with brake cleaner to get any oil that may be left and displace any water still clinging to it. Let it sit in the sun to really dry out.

I used some brake cleaner and a small bristle brush to clean the carbon off the pistons, then filled them with about a teaspoon of MMO (which I continue to believe is just ATF or hydraulic oil). I cycled the engine by turning it using a couple of studs in the crank and a long chunk of aluminum. Then I realized I should probably clean up the deck surfaces, so I sopped up the excess MMO, cleaned the deck and valves with a Scotch-Brite pad, then used a rag soaked in MMO to wipe down the cylinder walls.

No scoring, no ridges, no signs of distress. All the pistons are marked .030, so obviously the pistons and rings are newer and the cylinders have been bored and honed. I believe this engine does not have many miles since the rebuild but perhaps a lot of time given the slurry that I found in the oil pan. The pistons and cylinders are in very good condition, the engine turns over easily, and the MMO did not seep past the rings so they seem to have a good seal. I am very optimistic that it will be healthy when it goes back together.



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April 8, 2021

Ordered a new engine and headlight wiring harness from Rhode Island wiring. Holy cow that was expensive!

Journal (continued)

April 10, 2021

Engineered a modification to my engine stand that would allow me to remove the front cover and access the timing chain. Removed 22 nuts holding the front cover in place and set it aside to be sandblasted and powdercoated.

Inside, the timing system is a work of art. Like everything on the bottom end of this engine, it's ridiculously over-built. Check out that massive three-row chain, the little oil galleys for each of the pulleys, the auto-tensioner on the idler, and the safety wire on the cam gear.

I was concerned that the timing chain would need to be replaced but now that I've seen it, I don't think so. There's about 1/2-inch of play in the chain but once there's oil pressure, the idler should take up the slack. Looking closely at the chain and the cam gear, there's virtually zero wear, lending more credence to the idea that the engine was rebuilt a while ago but doesn't have a lot of miles on it. I'm glad I looked but I'm equally glad that I don't have to spend the \$400-700 for a new timing chain.



April 11, 2021

More disassembly in preparation for masking and paint. I note the gasket kit has TWO gaskets for the generator drive, and looking closely at that area, yep, there's a plate there. I removed the mounting screw and the bolt holding the oiler in place and removed the mounting plate. I'm surprised that it's just a bushing on the drive pulley, but it is fed oil directly from the oil manifold and I see no scoring or other signs of distress, so it must work.

I wiped the whole engine with lacquer thinner, blew out all the nooks and crannies, and then wiped it down again. Satisfied that it was as clean as I could make it, I started masking. And masking. And trimming. Two hours later,

it was ready for primer. I shot it with two coats of epoxy primer, which should have no problem clinging to the various materials on the engine: iron, aluminum, brass, whatever. I was careful not to go too thick but also to ensure that areas like the mounting nuts for the blocks were adequately covered. There's a 48-hour window for top-coating the epoxy without scuffing, so tomorrow after work I'll shoot the blocks gloss black, mask them off, and shoot the crankcase the next day using the silver paint that my Lincoln friend Lynn James recommended.

I should have parts back from the powdercoater shortly and then I can start reassembling the engine in anticipation of putting it on the test stand.

April 12, 2021

A few hours this evening and more work got done. As long as you keep taking steps, eventually you'll finish the marathon. I was on a ticking clock to get finish coats of paint on the engine before the primer cured completely, so the first thing I did was shoot the blocks in gloss black. I'm using a high-heat enamel, which may or may not make a difference--is the primer high-heat also? Meh. It should withstand the 250 degrees or so that the engine block sees (note: foreshadowing). It went on nicely and three coats left a nice shine that's ready to go. It does need to cure with heat, so it won't be fully dry until I can fire the engine and run it for a while, but it's as good as I can make it.

April 13, 2021

I painted the crankcase tonight and it turned out pretty well. I spent a lot of time masking off the blocks, starting with some 1/4-inch fine line tape around the base. It's critical that the line be crisp and in exactly the right spot so that it doesn't look like the engine was painted after it was assembled.

I gave it another wipe-down with lacquer thinner and sprayed it with Plasti-Kote cast aluminum paint. It looks and feels exactly like a surface that was sandblasted. It has a nice even silver color, a little metallic, and a slightly rough texture. I sprayed three coats to get it as even as possible and it looks great. Good coverage and it's thin enough that none of the critical details are hidden.



The paint cures incredibly quickly and was dry to the touch after only about 10 minutes, but I was afraid that if I left it too long, the tape would peel off the paint. Better to pull it when the paint is still sort of soft. The masking came off easily and all that time spent getting the lines in exactly the right place paid off. It sure looks like the blocks and crankcase were painted separately and then assembled. Nice!



April 19, 2021

After some frustration with the timing chain generator pulley not going back into place, I discovered a note in the service bulletins about how to release the chain tensioner. It only took three days and some choice swear words, but hey, it's fixed.

The powdercoater called and said my parts were done so I ran over and picked them up. More beautiful work! Just to see how it fit and how it would look, I installed the front cover. A few holes were a little tight, but some dressing with a round file cleaned them up and it slid into place easily. I'm not going to install it permanently until I figure out the front engine mounts.



April 20, 2021

Today was a quiet day at the shop so I took the cylinder heads over to the machine shop. They're going to give them a soak in their tank to clean out the cooling passages (remember the Evapo-Rust soak I did has no effect on aluminum) and then deck them just enough to make them flat.

I found replacement bushings for the front engine mounts at Steele Rubber--they're track bar bushings for some '60s car. They're about the same length, have a 5/8" steel insert, and are only about 3/16" larger in diameter than the originals. Close enough. I ordered a set, which were insanely expensive (\$67/pair).

April 26, 2021

I received the bushings from Steele Rubber. To get them to fit into my engine mounts, I chucked one into my drill press and used a cut-off wheel to grind it down as it spun. It made a lot of fine black dust and some smoke, but it shaved the bushing down pretty evenly. I got it close to the 1.625" diameter of the originals, leaving it a little large (I assume they will shrink over time). Then I had to figure out how to get it into the engine mounts.

I removed the original bushings with a C-clamp and a socket, but that didn't have the muscle to push this new one in. Instead, I used my hydraulic press and pushed it into place. I lubricated the bushing and inside of the engine mount with liquid dish soap, which is slippery but will evaporate and won't hurt the rubber. I got the bushing about halfway in but then it started bulging outwards instead of going into the mount. Some more creative press work with a piece of exhaust tubing around the bushing to keep it from bulging, and eventually I got it into place.



Next issue, we'll get the engine mounted on the test stand and fire it up! 🚗

BUICK

1940



WHEN BETTER AUTOMOBILES ARE BUILT, BUICK WILL BUILD THEM

FEATURE: 1940 BUICK ROADMASTER FIRE CHIEF'S TRUCK **FACTORY FUNCTIONAL**

This one-of-four Buick pickup is a Full Classic with custom bodywork from the factory

By Matt Harwood

Photos by Nate Seybold and Matt Harwood

What do you do when you're the third biggest name in the auto industry and need a truck to get work done around the factory, yet you don't make any trucks? Well, you build your own!

As the story goes, Buick Engineering built four 1940 Roadmaster pickup trucks, three in black and one—this one—in red to act as the sprawling Flint factory's fire chief's car. Starting with a Roadmaster Model 76S business coupe, body style 4727C, the roof and rear quarters were extensively modified to accommodate a traditional pickup truck bed, complete with a wood floor. The four trucks were sequentially numbered with Fisher body numbers 620, 621, 622, and 623, with the chief's car being #621. There's no evidence that Buick ever intended for these trucks to be prototypes or production proposals, but rather simply tools that were needed in the course of business in Flint.

There is some debate as to who, exactly, built the trucks and whether it was handled by an outside contractor, but that seems unlikely. With the resources of the world's largest auto maker at your disposal,



Fire chief's car at the ORCCCA clambake, October 2022.

building something like this fantastic truck shouldn't be a challenge. Nevertheless, the full history of these trucks, and the fire chief's car in particular, remains largely shrouded in mystery.

Traditionally, special vehicles like this are scrapped once their useful lives are over. That may have been the case with two of the trucks, but two survived, 620 and 621—one black and one red. It seems fitting that we'd still have one of each from such a remarkable run of vehicles. How these two managed to survive is a matter of some speculation, including being rescued by a GM executive and hidden somewhere in Michigan until the 1970s, but for the most part, the truck's early years are unknown.

What we do know is that owner and noted Buick restorer Doug Seybold was able to acquire the fire chief's car some years ago and continued to keep it out of sight until the restoration was finished in early 2022. It shouldn't be a surprise that this rare Buick found its



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Email us: NorthernLights@ORCCCA.com



1940 Buick Roadmaster Fire Chief's Truck
Owner: Doug Seybold, Westlake, Ohio

Functional (continued)

way into Doug's shop, as he's the world's leading expert on 1940 Buicks. He seems to have a knack for sniffing out interesting and previously unknown specimens, including a one-of-one 1940 Buick Roadmaster Model 79 estate wagon that was built expressly for Harlow Curtice (there were no Roadmaster estate wagons built in 1940, only the smaller Supers, Model 59). Doug had known of the chief's car for many years and leaped at the opportunity to own it when the chance presented itself. Doug and his crew spent several years restoring the chief's car to better-than-new condition. It made its debut at the 2022 AACA Eastern Nationals at Hershey, where it was obviously very popular.



Chief's car uses Buick's biggest and most powerful engine, a 320 cubic inch straight-8

Like all Roadmasters, the chief's car is powered by Buick's famous "Dynaflash" straight-8 engine. Displacing 320 cubic inches and making 141 horsepower, it was among the most powerful engines you could buy in 1940. Only Packard's 356 cubic inch straight-8 was more powerful, and only just. Buicks have always featured overhead valves, which adds to their proven performance and reliability, and it shouldn't be a surprise that Buick chose their fastest car for the fire chief's use.

The front sheetmetal, including the doors, is stock Model 76S, and it appears that even the standard rear fenders were used in the conversion. The roof, particularly the B-pillar, is unique to the Buick trucks and you can clearly see where the pickup bed was neatly grafted into the coupe's quarter panels. Two tailgates,

one for the pickup bed and a lower compartment for the spare tire, are simple flat panels, but the builders were careful to include Buick's signature trunk emblem and unique taillights. The coupe's original rear bumper also appears to have survived the conversion intact. The custom paint is bright fire engine red, which is appropriate but it's not on the 1940 Buick color chart.

A finishing touch is a Buick emblem on each door, surrounded by the words "Buick Motor Div. Fire Chief" in gold leaf.



Special Trippe lights appropriately say 'FIRE'

The bed itself is finished in northern ash with multiple coats of glossy polyurethane for a brilliant shine. A few fire accessories such as the vintage fire extinguishers and a unique set of Trippe lights up front clearly marked "FIRE." There is some speculation that the chief's car also included a hose reel in the bed, but if it was ever there, it's long gone now. Oh, and there's a siren under the hood, of course.

And make no mistake, this is a big car—the Roadmaster sits on a 126-inch wheelbase, and with the annexation of the rear seat area, the bed is almost seven feet long. The original springs probably had no difficulty with the added weight of the bed and Doug reports that it drives like any other Roadmaster, a testament to the quality of its construction.

The interior remains Roadmaster luxurious and from behind the wheel you'd never have any clue as to the utility bed behind you. Buick's beautiful woodgrained dashboard is highlighted by a stunning engine-turned instrument panel and glove box lid, another Seybold specialty. All the gauges were



The fire chief's car is big enough to be practical, yet maneuverable

restored and the plastic steering wheel and control knobs were all re-cast in their original medium yellow color, which matches the gauge faces. Striped wool broadcloth upholstery is suitably upscale for the expensive Roadmaster, and thick carpets add to the plush feel. There's a bit of storage behind the seat, and the chief's car includes options like under-seat heaters, a defroster, and a Sonomatic AM radio.

Like any Seybold restoration, there's a sense that the car was restored down to the molecular level. The body was removed from the chassis and reinforced while the bodywork was done. The engine and transmission were rebuilt and detailed, as was the rest of the chassis, which was finished to factory specs. A little automotive archaeology revealed the original red paint, which was duplicated once the bodywork was back in shape. All the chrome and stainless trim was carefully restored, including the difficult-to-restore pot metal Buick grille. The vents on the side



of the hood double as the hood latch which reads ROADMASTER and there's a brass emblem on the tailgate that reads 'BUICK' that was cut on a water jet to match the original. Even the piano hinges for the tailgate and spare tire compartment were chrome plated to add to the highly detailed look. The finishing touch is an accessory Buick tailpipe deflector tucked just under the rear bumper.

Refinishing the bed brought its own series of challenges, not the least of which was deciding what kind of wood to use. Ultimately northern ash was chosen both for its beauty and light color and for its hard durability, which is ideal for a pickup truck bed designed to work for a living.



Beautiful restored interior is pure Roadmaster luxury

On the road, the Roadmaster is powerful, composed, and confident. There's fantastic low-end torque from the big straight-8 engine and combined with the 3.90 gears in back, it's able to cruise at 65 MPH with ease. Buick's brakes are powerful and the center-link steering of the 1940 models is especially light. The engine is a distant hum with a muscular burble from the stainless exhaust system out back, entirely appropriate for a mid-priced luxury coupe. 7.00-15 bias-ply wide whites are likely what it wore when it was first built and give the truck an appropriate stance.



Custom body removed from the frame

All this brings us to the big question: *is the fire chief's truck a CCA Full Classic?* I would argue that yes, it is. The 1940 Buick Roadmaster Series 70 was

Functional (continued)

recently added to the list of Full Classics, joining the Series 80 and 90 Limiteds which have been on *The List* for years. No it isn't technically a production body, but it *is* a factory-built custom and such vehicles have been admitted to the club for many years. Its appearance in this magazine demonstrates my opinion on the matter: this is unquestionably a Full Classic for all the



Truck bed being rebuilt with northern ash

right reasons. There are others who will argue that a truck shouldn't be admitted or that since the truck was never sold to a private owner when it was new, that it should not qualify. Those are reasonable points, and should there be any question as to the truck's status, I would encourage Doug to apply to the classification committee for a final ruling. In the meantime, it's a fantastic addition to any show field.

Regardless of its status within the club, there's no question that this is an interesting and insanely



Completed chassis receiving finishing touches



Bodywork complete, body in primer

beautiful utility vehicle with a spectacular restoration that is already collecting awards at the very top of the hobby. It was invited to the 2023 Amelia Island Concours d'Elegance, an honor for any hobbyist and indicative of the car's significance. And it's just plain cool. It shouldn't exist for a variety of reasons, yet here it is, beautifully restored and fully functional.

In an industry full of whimsical show cars that are never intended to see the light of day, the fire chief's Buick stands in distinct contrast—a practical custom built for a purpose, completely functional yet no less beautiful for it. Maybe someday Doug will be able to uncover the full story behind it. 🚚

SPECIFICATIONS

Year:	1940
Make:	Buick
Model:	Roadmaster Pickup Truck
Original Price:	NA

Engine:	320 cubic inch straight-8
Horsepower:	141
Torque:	269 lb.-ft.
Transmission:	3-speed manual
Final Drive:	3.90

Wheelbase:	126 inches
Curb Weight:	4470 pounds
Brakes:	Hydraulic 4-wheel drum
Wheels:	15-inch steel wheels
Tires:	7.00-15 whitewall

Charles A. Chayne **Buick's quiet engineer**

Charles A. Chayne might just be the most influential auto personality you've never heard of. He spent a majority of his career with General Motors, eventually becoming head of GM Engineering. But he was also a hobbyist in the truest sense, helping to shape the hobby in significant ways during its early years. Always fascinated by machinery, he was the rare individual who could simultaneously love the cars he was creating and still be an effective manager. In a business that's often focused on anything but passion, he was a unique personality.

Chayne's early career is marked by often being in the right place at the right time. In 1926, he joined the Lycoming company, most notably known for the production of Auburn, Cord, and Duesenberg engines. In 1927 he moved to Marmon and was involved in developing the magnificent Marmon Sixteen and was quickly promoted to Assistant Chief Engineer of Product Design. But it appears that Chayne was restless, because he joined General Motors in 1930.

By 1933, he had been promoted to Assistant Chief Engineer under Ferdinand "Dutch" Bower, Buick's gruff and demanding Chief Engineer. Unfortunately, Bower and Buick chief Harlow Curtice rarely saw eye-to-eye and by 1936, Bower was transferred to Opel and Chayne became Buick's Chief Engineer. Again, he was in the right place at the right time and brought the talent to back it up.

Under Chayne (and Curtice, of course), Buick's resurgence was fueled by mechanical innovation and advanced styling. There are suggestions that Chayne was to engineering what Harley Earl was to styling—pushing boundaries in production cars. During his tenure, Chayne's innovations included rear coil springs and a radius rods to improve ride and handling, turbolator pistons that enabled higher compression, improved piston rings, compound carburetion, foot-applied parking brakes, replaceable bearing inserts for connecting rods, and even Buick's noteworthy "Oil-Cushion Finish" which was a polishing function that enabled oil to better cling to metal engine parts. In 1939, he drove the Buick Roadmaster pace car at the Indianapolis 500.

In 1951, Chayne was promoted to Vice President of Engineering where he supervised more than 2700 engineers covering the vastness of the General Motors product line. Along the way he had more successes than failures (he was responsible for the 1939 Buicks and their shortened frames that turned out to be problematic for Buick, but also warned that the Corvair's rear suspension was not fully developed) and always put the product first.

Charles Chayne the antique auto hobbyist is equally noteworthy. For example, the photo above shows Chayne with his 1932 Bugatti Royale, chassis 41-121, the 'Weinberger Cabriolet,' which Chayne rescued from a junk yard in New York during the World War II scrap drives. Rumor has it that he paid scrap value for it (the Bugatti cost \$43,000 just a decade earlier) and spent the next four years restoring the car to almost new condition. Eventually he would donate the Royale to the Henry Ford Museum where it remains on display today.

Following his retirement from General Motors in 1963, he moved to California where he was a trusted advisor to the creators of the Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance and often served as a judge. The Hispano-Suiza J-12 Chayne restored received the Most Elegant Car Award in 1978—although he was in ill health, Chayne was able to walk onto the reviewing stand and reunite with the car he spent so many hours restoring. He passed away a few months later at the age of 80.

If you own a vintage Buick, thank Charles Chayne for its quality, its innovative features, and its superlative driving qualities. Those were all priorities for him and the cars are so much the better for it.

-Matt Harwood

THE GENIUS

By Matt Harwood

Editor's note: This is a short story I wrote decades ago in college, recreated largely from memory. It was fun to write and the other students in my fiction workshop liked it, so I thought I would update it and share it with you. Enjoy!

Yes, that's a Homer Johnson model. A 1936 Cadillac with a sixteen cylinder engine. Sorry, it's not for sale. It's the last one he ever made. No, I don't know if he's still making them. I don't know where he is now. Yes, it really is beautiful.

I remember the first time I met Homer Johnson. It was a hot day in July and the store was busier than usual with a bunch of kids looking at the airplane kits and a father-and-son pair checking out the Lionel display. I was selling the father-and-son a Union Pacific diesel engine when Homer walked in. I didn't really pay much attention him at first, he just kind of glided in on some cheap white sneakers and wearing a dirty gray sweatshirt with the sleeves cut off and a pair of army fatigue pants. Oh, and his hair—a thin shock of blonde hair on top of his head that made him look older than he was. But once I wrapped up the Lionel locomotive and put it in a bag, he tentatively came up to me at the counter carrying a shoebox under his arm.

"You," he said, "You buy models, right? Like model cars?"

I'd heard this a hundred times before from guys who thought they had something special. Most of the time it was just a nice amateur job on a commercial kit that wasn't worth anything. "Well, yes," I said. "But only special models. No plastic."

"No, no plastic," he said and placed the shoebox on the counter. He lifted the lid and gently removed the newspaper crumpled up around whatever was inside. I saw a flash of blue paint and some chrome and then he was gingerly extracting a model car about a foot long, setting it on the counter where I could see it.

I looked it over for a moment or two and had two thoughts. One, it was a perfectly ordinary 1980s Chevrolet Caprice 4-door sedan. And two, it sure wasn't a kit.

I hunkered down a bit to get a closer look. It was pretty well done, although it took me a while to get past my usual skepticism. The proportions were very good and there was no doubt what it was. The interior was matching blue vinyl and I don't know how he managed to duplicate the patterns Chevrolet was using, but he did. There were tiny gauges behind a miniature steering wheel, a little AM radio in the

center of the dash, and seat belts tucked between the seat cushions. I gently pressed down on the front fender and the car rocked on tiny coil springs.

"Nice, right?" he asked, eager for my approval.

"Yes, very," I said.

"Here, let me open the hood," he said, prodding the front of the car and pulling the hood up, a piece of sheetmetal no bigger than an index card. Underneath there was a perfectly scaled replica of a small block Chevy V8. Not a clean one, mind you, but a scruffy one with a lot of miles on it. There was a tiny 2-barrel carburetor on top, eight individual spark plug wires on a distributor the size of a push pin, and exhaust manifolds that looked like rusty cast iron.

Now I've seen some really good work. The Tamiyas and Pochers are beautiful. There are some limited production models from Italy and Asia that are extremely well detailed and exact. I've seen a fellow in Denmark who hand built a 1956 Continental Mark II from scratch in brass using tiny machine tools. There are those guys on the internet who build tiny replica engines that actually run. There's some serious talent out there making really impressive stuff.

And this guy with his Caprice in a shoebox blew them all away. I mean, there were rust bubbles behind the rear wheel arches, for crissakes!

"This is pretty good," I said. I pressed the center of the steering wheel and a tiny bleat came from under the hood.

"You wanna hear it run?"

"Excuse me?"

"Yeah. It runs. I'll show you." He pulled a pair of tweezers and a long needle out of his pocket and opened the passenger's door (all four doors opened and had windows that would wind up and down). Ever so carefully, he manipulated the accelerator pedal and turned the ignition key. A little ch-ch-ch sound came from underneath and suddenly that tiny Chevy V8 was running, a cough of bluish smoke coming from the single tailpipe. It even sounded like a V8 and under the hood, the fan and alternator were spinning. This guy was probably the greatest model builder in the universe and he'd just wandered into my shop.

"Watch this," he said and carefully lifted the idling Caprice by its roof and set it on the floor. By this time the kids who were looking at airplanes had stopped to see what was going on and kind of peered over Homer's shoulder as he set the car on the floor. Using the tweezers again, he moved the gear lever into Drive and sure enough, the little blue car started to idle across the floor. He let it cover about 10 feet before jogging over to pick it up. He shut it off with the tweezers.

"So what do you think? You interested?" Again, he seemed eager but also a little nervous. Here was the greatest model builder in the universe and he didn't seem to have a clue what he had.

I tried to stay calm. "Yes, I'm interested. Do you have a price in mind?"

He kind of shrugged. "I don't know. Maybe \$500?" Hopeful, not confident.

I didn't even haggle. We shook hands and I paid him. Cash. He insisted.

"If you do any more of these, I'd certainly be interested," I said.

"Yeah, sure. Maybe a few months. I'll do another one." Then he glided out the door without even giving me his name—not that time, at least.

I put the Caprice on eBay calling it "The world's most perfectly detailed model car." It sold in two days for \$2000. When I picked it up from where it was sitting on my desk, there was a little puddle of transmission fluid underneath.

By the time summer was over I had started to forget about Homer and the Caprice. Business was slowing down as the kids went back to school so I had a lot of free time. I hadn't had any visitors the day Homer came back in early October but I felt a twinge of excitement when I spotted that bright yellow hair. He had a bigger box with him this time, carrying it with two hands.

"Hey, got some more for you," he said. "You still interested in buying them?"

"Sure, let's see what you've got."

The first one was a neat little red Volkswagen Beetle. Nothing special, mind you, other than the fact that it existed at all. It was also covered with minor bumps and bruises ("For realism, you know?" Homer said) and just as exact as the blue Caprice. He'd even managed to somehow duplicate the spare tire pressure windshield washer system and when he started it up, it made that familiar whistling sound from the exhaust.

The other one was a late-model Mustang, a lot cleaner and straighter than the others with no rust or other "realism." The dark blue paint was shiny, the plastic ground effects had just the right amount of flexibility, and the leather seats inside had tiny creases where the driver would sit.

We agreed on \$2000 for those two. Cash again. He finally introduced himself as Homer Johnson, but didn't really want to talk much about his techniques when I asked him how he did it. "Special paints that I mix up myself, some sanding tricks, you know, stuff like that," is all he said. We shook hands and he promised more cars in the future.

The VW sold for \$4500 and the Mustang brought \$6000. A few people E-mailed asking to be notified when I had more of these models. I kept their contact information.

We went on that way through the winter and into the following spring. Every few months, Homer would be back with a model or two, every bit as wondrously detailed as the first one. He kept on with the ordinary cars with plenty of "realism." When I asked him, he said, "These are the cars I

see every day. They're more real. The cars I grew up with. All the Ferraris are shiny and perfect but even the real ones don't look real, you know?"

I guess.

In July, almost a year after we'd first met, he came in and dropped off a Ford F150 pickup and an older Chevy Blazer. They were beautifully accurate, like all the others. We'd sold nearly a dozen models at this point and it was turning into a bigger business for me than selling slot cars and RC airplanes. I paid him with a wire transfer—I was working on commission by this point. Homer was getting smarter.

"You know, Homer, I've been getting requests from people who want specific models. You know, special cars. Can you do that?"

He flashed a little anger, but kept it in check. "You know what I said. I'm not interested. As soon as you start making stuff for other people it's not real anymore. Then they start complaining because it's not perfect. I don't need the pressure."

"OK, OK, I understand. But if you want the work, it's here."

The models always sold but they seemed to top out at about \$7500. People certainly appreciated the detail and

quality, but the garden-variety cars just didn't generate any real excitement. I decided to push him a little harder next time I saw him.

It turns out it would only be two weeks before he was back with another ordinary yet perfectly detailed model car, an older Ford Pinto hatchback in really first-rate condition.

"Here you go, Boss!" he said.

"I tried to do something a little nicer this time." I don't know why he was calling me Boss. As I was entering the information to pay him for the F150 and the Blazer, he said, "How come these aren't bringing more money? They're good models, aren't they? I've seen models that don't even run bring more than mine."

Sensing this was my opportunity, I said, "You need to do some special cars, Homer. No more of this nickel-and-dime stuff. I respect your desire to make them as real as possible, but there aren't a lot of guys with big money dying to own a miniature Ford F150."

He crunched up his face for a moment, then relaxed. "Fine. What do you need me to do?"

I gave him a short list of cars that I'd had requests for. An MG TC, an Auburn boattail speedster, a split window Corvette, and a Mustang fastback.

"Jeez, I don't know if I've ever seen one of these," he said, pointing at the Auburn on the list. "You know what I said, too hard to blueprint. I'm going to have to find one to look at somewhere so I can get the measurements and stuff."

"If you need help with that, let me know. I might be able to find people who can help you."

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Genius (continued)

“OK, Boss. I’ll see what I can do.” He left but he wasn’t skimming along like he usually did, like there was suddenly a lot of weight on his shoulders.

I didn’t see him for several months and started to worry that I wouldn’t see him ever again. Maybe I’d asked for too much. I’d heard that geniuses could be difficult.

Then one cold rainy day the door chimed and Homer glided in, now wearing some nicer clothes and more expensive shoes. We’d been doing pretty well, after all. He had another shoebox with him and my spirits lifted. He set it on the counter and unpacked a beautiful dark green MG TC. The wires in the lovely spoke wheels were like tiny silver threads, the canvas top folded behind the seat, and there were even miniature side curtains stowed in back. We shook hands and he said he’d be back in a few weeks with one of the other cars on the list.

This was when our business relationship finally shifted into second gear.

A week later, the guy who had wanted the MG was in my shop looking at it on the counter, using a magnifying glass to examine all the details, flicking the shifter back and forth with his fingertip. I fired it up for him and he grinned as the tiny 4-cylinder engine made a triumphant blat. “It’s the most beautiful thing,” he said. I said twenty thousand dollars.

After I had carefully wrapped the MG up in a more substantial box (you can’t just put a \$20,000 model in a shoe box, now can you?), the guy said, “You know, the president of our MG club had a car that looked just like this. Maybe your man used it for a guide.”

“Maybe,” I said, ignoring the very faint warning bell in my head.

A few days later, Homer came in to collect his money on the MG. “Pretty good sale, eh, Boss?” He had apparently forgotten how he had initially refused the job, but a five-figure payday seems to have a way of changing a person’s mind.

He also had another car. A bigger box, too big for a shoe box, so I was excited. He pulled it out, a long white arrow of a car. The Auburn 852 Boattail Speedster. One of the most dramatic shapes of the 1930s, instantly recognizable and iconic in every way. It was white, which wasn’t really the right color for such a thing, but I wasn’t going to argue. The guy who wanted the Auburn model had already promised \$50,000.

Homer set the Auburn on the counter. It didn’t quite look right to my eye, like it was sitting too low. The tires weren’t quite right, either—too fat—but then again, who was I to argue? Then I grabbed my magnifying glass and looked a little closer. The cockpit was wonderfully detailed, but there was an automatic transmission shifter on the side of the steering

column, a modern radio in the dash, and only two pedals on the floor. I had Homer open the hood, which revealed a modern Ford V8, not the supercharged Lycoming straight-8 I expected.

My heart sank like a stone. “Homer, what is this?”

“What? It’s an Auburn, just like you wanted.”

“Look at this,” I said, pointing at the engine. “It’s a replica! You made a model of a replica!”

“A... a replica?”

“Yes, A modern car that only looks like an old car.”

“Jeez, Boss, how was I supposed to know? You didn’t say anything about replicas.”

I sighed. “No, I guess not.”

Homer and I parted that day both of us feeling lousy. I managed to salvage the Auburn debacle by selling it to the company that made the replicas, but it was a big loss.

The next two cars arrived by mail, packed in boxes from the post office. A late-model Dodge Challenger with a nifty blacked-out hood and a Nissan Z-car—at least they were *interesting* ordinary cars. I was arranging them in the display case when the door chimed and a young woman in business attire walked in.

“Are you the agent for the Johnson models?” she asked.

“Yes, yes I am.”

“Good. I am the personal assistant to Harold Greenlee,” she said, handing me a business card. I recognized the name. A very wealthy man who’d made his fortune in the aircraft industry. “Mr. Greenlee would like to commission a specific model of one of his personal cars. A 1938 Delahaye. Would that be possible?”

I affirmed that it was. I also

hinted that it would be very expensive.

“Cost is not an issue. We can supply detailed photographs and blueprints of the car from when it was restored two years ago. Can your man work from that?”

I assured her that he could.

She wrote me a sizeable deposit check and promised that the blueprints and photos would be delivered within a week so that Homer could get started. Then she thanked me and left, all very perfunctory and proper.

I still didn’t know how to reach Homer, so I couldn’t tell him about the new commission or talk to him about what it would involve—could he even work from blueprints or did he actually need to see a car, like with the MG? It didn’t sound like Mr. Greenlee was interested in having us crawl all over his award-winning Delahaye.

The blueprints and photos arrived as promised, and a few weeks later Homer showed up with the split-window Corvette (sold for \$35,000, thank you very much). He was dismayed when I told him about the Greenlee commission, even with all the blueprints.

“I don’t work like that. I don’t even know what a Delahaye

is, I’ve never seen one. How can I make it work right? What is it, Italian or something?”

“French,” I said.

“Whatever. I can’t do it. No way.”

Then I told him how much Greenlee had agreed to pay for the model.

Homer paused and scrunched up his face again. I knew it was his frustrated face. “That’s a lot of money,” he said quietly.

“Yes, it is.”

Another pause. “Fine. I’ll give it a try.” I gave him the box of blueprints and notes on the Delahaye.

And that’s when our relationship entered its final phase.

Homer was gone long enough this time that I really started to get worried. *Months*. Was the Delahaye really too much for him? Maybe he couldn’t work without the real thing right there in front of him—blueprints were just not “real” enough.

But sure enough, Homer did deliver. He came into the shop through the back door, which he’d never done before, and showed me the Delahaye in my office. It was simply stunning, with sweeping fenders and black paint that was as deep and glossy as an oil slick. No more misplaced “realism” or rust bubbles, just perfection in every single surface. And true to his game, the tiny car was fully operational in every way that mattered.

The next day I called Greenlee’s assistant and told her that the model was ready. She was in my shop within an hour. She watched me carefully package it (we were making our own special boxes by then) and wrote me a check for the balance.

“Hopefully this will cheer Mr. Greenlee up,” she said. “Someone broke into his garage a couple of weeks ago and stole two of his cars, including the Delahaye. It won Pebble Beach, you know.”

I said I didn’t know and that I was sorry.

“At any rate, thank you. You have no idea how challenging it has been. Perhaps this will help.” She smiled a wan smile and walked out, cradling the box like an infant.

It seemed no sooner had the door chime faded behind her than it rang again and Harold Greenlee himself was standing at my counter demanding to see Homer Johnson, his face red and eyes flashing with anger. His assistant came in behind him and tried to get his attention, but he ignored her. In his hand, he held the 16-inch-long Delahaye, gripping it hard enough to buckle the sheetmetal roof. “*What have you done to my Delahaye?*” he demanded. “My Delahaye, *you stole it!*”

“What? I’m sorry, I don’t understand.”

Then I noticed something small in his other hand; he started to wave it in my face. “Two weeks ago I took the Delahaye for a drive. It got hot so I took off my jacket and put it in the trunk. Now, in the trunk of this model car is my jacket! *This jacket!*” He threw the tiny piece of cloth on the counter, a stylish and undoubtedly expensive jacket for a man five inches tall. “Again I ask, what have you done to my Delahaye?”

The assistant and I were eventually able to calm him down and convince him that we hadn’t somehow transformed his prized show car into a toy. On his way out the door, he threatened to go to the police, but he seemed to realize that

his version of this story would be pretty hard to believe. The assistant, who turned out to be a really nice lady, helped him outside to his car and they drove away. I tossed the tiny jacket in the trash.

Yes, I know, *I know*, I should have seen the signs a long time ago. But I looked at the vacant aisles of my dying hobby shop and the way Homer was single-handedly keeping the lights on and maybe I didn’t want to see what was right there in front of me. Can you really blame me?

I did an internet search for the Greenlee robbery and came up with an article describing the break-in and subsequent theft of two collector automobiles, one of which was a 1938 Delahaye valued at nearly six million dollars. The other one was a Windsor Gray 1936 Cadillac V16 convertible coupe. And the most remarkable thing was, only a single window in the warehouse was broken and nobody had seen the two unusual cars driving out of the garage. Speculation was that they were already in containers headed overseas where they’d never be seen again.

That was enough.

A few days later, Homer came in whistling and gliding again—he knew there was a very big payday waiting for him. He had a box with him, which he put on the counter. “One more for you, Boss. Bet we can get some big money for this one!”

I put my hand on top of the box. “Don’t open it, Homer. I don’t even need to see it. It’s a gray convertible, right?”

His face sank.

“That’s what I thought. Look, I don’t know what you’re doing or how you’re doing it, but it’s starting to catch up to you. You’re lucky nobody’s really gotten hurt yet. You need to get out of here, right now, and find someplace else to be. I can’t do this anymore.” He opened his mouth as if to say something but without a word he hustled out the door.

I never saw him again.

I opened the box and looked at the Cadillac; it really was exquisite. I could almost hear all sixteen cylinders humming and I knew that if I wanted to, I could start it. Then I packed it up again and put it in the storage room.

A few weeks later, things were returning to normal. The summertime kids were back in the store looking at model airplanes and kites, and I was starting to think it was time to sell the store and maybe do something else. That’s when two guys in military police uniforms came into the shop and started asking me about someone they called Roger Murray. They showed me a photo of a younger, thinner Homer Johnson with a military brush cut and fatigues, but it was definitely the same person I knew. They asked whether he had purchased any dry cell batteries from me or if I’d seen him with a large backpack, but I told them—*honestly*—no. I answered their questions but ultimately they realized I didn’t know anything useful and went away. I don’t know what happened after that.

So no, that Cadillac model isn’t for sale. It’s the very last Homer Johnson model and I don’t think there will ever be any more. 🚗

HOBBY: SPARE PARTS

ODE TO THE PARTS CAR

Need parts that are unobtainable? A parts car may be the answer!

By Matt Harwood

Full Classics are, by definition, pretty rare cars. Some are rarer than others, but if you're in this club, you've undoubtedly spent some time searching for hard-to-find and potentially expensive parts. If you're lucky, your Classic might share some parts with a more common model, but if there are no economies of scale to leverage and the part(s) you need are proving difficult or impossible to find individually, what options do you have?

Parts car!

This isn't a new idea, but if you have the space for it the parts car represents a veritable gold mine. It's like your own personal junk yard where you can simply unbolt the part you need whenever you need it. From unique fasteners and molding clips to parts like exhaust manifolds and brake drums, having spares can lend tremendous peace of mind to owning and driving a rare old car.

The key to a successful parts car is *completeness*, not necessarily condition. You don't need a running, driving, rust-free car if you're going to cannibalize it, you just need it to have the parts you might need in the future. Sheetmetal isn't critical since it can technically always be repaired, so rust and rot don't matter—that really works in your favor by driving the price of the parts car down. In fact, the less viable it is as a car, the more useful it can be for parts.

Another great thing about a parts car is that it's shaped like a car. Elbows-deep in a restoration and you don't remember how the coil was attached to the firewall? Maybe the parts car can show you. And a complete car, large as it may seem, is still a lot more compact than all its individual pieces in a disassembled state. No matter how organized you may be, no matter how many shelves you have, there's no system of storage that's more compact than an assembled car. Better still, you know *exactly* where every piece is. Nice, right?

I recently acquired a second 1941 Buick Limited 90L limousine parts car. They only made 604 of these cars and while the engine, grille, dashboard, and taillights are interchangeable with lesser Buicks, big things like brake drums, wheels, torque tube, rear end, and interior fittings are 100% unique to the 90 Series. So when the opportunity to acquire a virtually identical car for a few hundred bucks presented itself, I didn't hesitate. In fact, shipping the parts car home from Michigan cost more than its purchase. Inside, I found a treasure trove of parts that I have been seeking for a decade: a dome light lens (it actually had two good ones, so



now I have a spare), plastic escutcheon plates (I needed two and now I have six spares), and in a really fortuitous turn, the parts car is equipped with an ultra-rare intercom system for communicating with the driver—a system I plan to restore and install in my car. And if I ever need those unobtainium brake drums or rear gears, well, I've got them.

If, for some reason, you feel the need to monetize your parts car, it's often easy to sell a few rare parts to recoup your costs. For instance, the intake and exhaust manifolds on a 1941 Buick 320 cubic inch straight-8 are quite rare and when you do find a set, they're insanely expensive. Well, now I've got a spare set, complete from air cleaner to Y-pipe, and I could quickly and easily turn it into a pile of money three or four times bigger than the parts car's price tag. In this way, the parts car is almost completely immune to the usual economic arguments against old cars.

Some might regard me as something akin to the grim reaper, taking a rare car and stripping it for parts, but the truth is, this car is probably too far gone to be restored. I'm the guy who hopes all old cars get saved, but once I saw the missing rockers, rotted floors, moldy interior, and pitted chrome, I knew nobody was going to spend \$200,000 to turn this back into a \$50,000 car. I think I'm in the clear to take what I need without guilt.

Alternatively, if you're not equipped to store a parts car in perpetuity, simply take the parts you need most and sell the rest to a guy looking for his own parts car. Take whatever you can get; the parts car has already paid for itself in terms of spares. It's not about money, it's about *convenience*.

This is an easy argument to make. If you have the space, a parts car can be a lifesaver for a restoration or future maintenance. I smile every time I see that hulk of a car sitting next to my finished Limited, knowing that there's nothing that can go wrong for which I won't have replacement parts. That's incredibly liberating. *Think about it!* 🚗

EVENT: SWEIGARD BONFIRE

BIG FIRE, BIG FUN

Food, friends, and fire have been a winter tradition since the dawn of time.

By Margus Sweigard

It wasn't a cold and stormy night on January 21st when a dozen or so club members showed up chasing the winter cold away with giant streaks of flame reaching into the night sky. It was a lovely site as the bonfire started and slowly burned down to a pile of glowing embers that lasted through the night.

There was no carved bear to sacrifice this year but a couple of former Christmas trees did a fine job.

There was plenty of good food to eat by the fire and a large black dog to make sure that nothing hit the ground. Some things never change, but Buddy has been on a diet and is now down to a good looking 126 pounds.

The bonfire worked in reverse as the ground was covered in six inches of snow the next day.

Next year, please join us and bring your kids and grandkids. There is plenty of bonfire and fun to go around. It's lots of work to set up as the logs get heavier every year, so we might as well all enjoy it. 🚗



PROJECT: LINCOLN RESTORATION

MUSEUM BOUND

Dave Heinrichs completes 1931 Lincoln Sport Phaeton for Lincoln Motor Car Heritage Museum

By David Schultz

Photos by David Schultz and Rich Fink

Among the many Classic automobiles in Dave Heinrichs' shop this past year was a 1931 Lincoln type 202-B sport phaeton belonging to the Lincoln Motor Car Heritage Museum in Hickory Corners, Michigan. The car was donated to the museum in 2020 by David G. Rehor of Michigan, a retired Ford Motor Company executive. Unlike many cars in Dave Heinrichs' shop that come in for minor repairs, this one was there for awhile.

A Cleveland native, Mr. Rehor was in the process of restoring the Lincoln when he decided to donate it to the Lincoln Motor Car Foundation (LMCF) on the condition that it be finished by a qualified individual. Much of the car has been restored—

mechanical, paint and plating—but a complete re-assembly was necessary as well as a new interior. LMCF Chairman David Schultz believed Dave Heinrichs was

the best candidate for the task since Heinrichs has worked on three of Schultz's Lincolns—a 1930 and two 1931s as well as other owners' Classic Lincolns.

David Rehor developed a passion for early Ford V-8 products, particularly the 1932 Ford V-8. He produced a two-volume book, "The 1932 Ford Book: A



Production Chronicle and Restoration Guide," which is considered a "bible" by Ford enthusiasts. Since 1976 he has served as an advisor to the Early Ford V-8 Club. He personally restored a number of award-winning Fords from the 1930s.

Professionally, Dave Rehor spent his business career with the Ford Motor Company, initially in the treasurer's and controller's offices in Dearborn, Michigan. He spent half of his career outside the United States, handling international finance duties in Brazil and Canada.

In 2021 the Lincoln was transported from Mr. Rehor's garage to Dave Heinrichs' shop. Two trips were made to Michigan to pick up the disassembled Lincoln. The painted body was on the frame and wheels—but that was it. The rest was in pieces. Fellow ORCCCA member Al Truelson assisted Dave with the loading and transportation.

Once the Lincoln was in Dave's shop he took careful inventory to determine if he had everything needed

for reassembly. (Many of us have heard a car owner state "it's all there" when acquiring a disassembled car.) David Rehor has a good reputation as a restorer; Dave Heinrichs was hoping it truly was "all there" but, not surprisingly, a few parts were missing. They were located with help from David Schultz and members of the Lincoln Owners Club.



The 1931 Lincoln is built on a massive 145-inch wheelbase chassis powered by Lincoln's venerable "fork and blade" V8 engine that remained in production from 1920 through 1932. For 1931, Lincoln adopted a longer wheelbase and increased the car's horsepower. Like many automobiles of the Classic Era, the Lincoln is overbuilt. For 1931, Lincoln produced 3,540 automobiles spread over 26 different body styles, including this type 202-B sport phaeton of which 60 were built.

Dave Heinrichs' target date for completing the Lincoln was contingent on having all of the parts



necessary to restore the car. One of the most problematic was a wiring harness, which had a delivery date of 12 weeks. When his work was completed the car went to Jay Johnson's trim shop in Hartville, Ohio, where a new interior and top were installed. Then, the car came back to Dave Heinrichs' shop for final details.

Heinrichs made steady progress on the Lincoln while taking care of his regular customers, most of whose work was less involved than the Lincoln's. He completed work on the car in time for the 2022 Lincoln Homecoming, which was held at the Lincoln Motor Car Heritage Museum in Hickory Corners, Michigan, on the campus of the Gilmore Car Museum. David Rehor was there to examine the finished car.

A major "tool" in the restoration of the Lincoln was an original 1931 Lincoln Illustrated Body and Chassis Parts manual. Heinrichs obtained that from Schultz, who owns two 1931 Lincolns. "Prior to having the manual I was operating on prior knowledge and intuition," said Heinrichs. "Obviously, having that manual has made re-assembly much easier."

Would Dave do it again? "Sure," was the reply. "But reassembling a car that I didn't take apart is a real challenge." 🚗

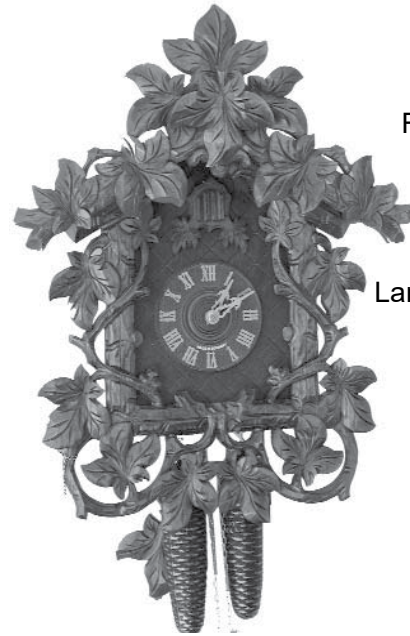


About the Lincoln Motor Car Foundation: The LMCF raised funds for the Lincoln Motor Car Heritage Museum, oversaw construction and opened it to public in August 2014. Since then, an annual Homecoming is held every August. The Foundation is comprised of individuals from the four major Lincoln clubs—Lincoln Owners Club, Lincoln-Zephyr Owners Club, Road Race Lincoln Register and Lincoln and Continental Owners Club.

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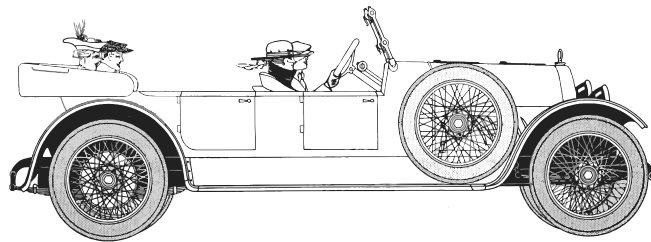
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