

# SAH Journal

The Society of Automotive Historians, Inc.  
Issue 235 July–August 2008



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Registration for Annual Banquet  
at Hershey—**Deadline for  
Reservations is September 30th**

## Flxible and Buick

By Albert Mroz

**H**ugo H. Young opened a Harley-Davidson agency in 1910 after starting as a graphic artist and engraver. In 1912 he invented a flexible connection for attaching a sidecar to a motorcycle and the Flxible Sidecar Company was incorporated in 1914 for \$25,000. The "e" in "flexible" was dropped so the name could be copyrighted and trademarked. Hugo Young's partner was Carl F. Dudte.

At first the sidecars were assembled in Mansfield, Ohio; later in Loudonville, Ohio. In 1916 Young was granted patent number 1,204,924 for a sidecar wheel design that allowed it to stay adhered to the ground as the motorcycle tilted when going around turns. This was a time of rapid expansion for Flxible when numerous motorcycle companies barely kept up with demand—companies such as Excelsior, Harley-Davidson, Henderson, Indian and Reading-Standard, among others. A native of Loudonville, Charles Kettering, famous for inventing the electric starter, became a vital influence in the success of the Flxible Company. Kettering had founded the Dayton Engineering Laboratories Company (Delco) which was sold to GM in 1916 for \$2.5 million, giving Kettering enough cash to support the fledgling Flxible enterprise.

After WWI the demand for motorcycles dropped as cheap cars became widely available, among them the Ford Model T. In 1920 Harley-Davidson built just over 18,000 units while Indian about 19,600, but two years later those numbers fell by one third for Harley and by two thirds for Indian. Also, due to many deadly accidents, sidecar racing was banned in the U.S. after 1925 (until resumption more recently). Buick gained fame for setting a record of 103 mph at Muroc Lake that year.

Wild fluctuations in the motorcycle market led Hugo Young and Charles Kettering to go into the professional car and motorbus business by 1924. The first Flxible bus was a 12-passenger sedan built on a Studebaker chassis. However, in 1925 Flxible chose a Buick chassis for its motorbuses of which 31 were built that year. Between 1925 and 1928 Flxible built a few buses on Cadillac, Reo and Studebaker chassis, but most were built on Buick chassis.

Also in 1925 Flxible began building ambulances and funeral cars. Eleven were built that year and production doubled in 1926. Buick's longest chassis in 1925 was 128 inches, so the first professional car and bus chassis were stretched by forty inches. Buick's largest motor used in professional cars was the 255 cid six-cylinder that produced 70 bhp. That year Buick abandoned hand operated windshield wipers, introducing vacuum operated wipers, and also adopted balloon tires. The following year the combination starter/generator was superseded by separate units which were more efficient and reliable.

After Walter P. Chrysler left Buick in 1920, Harry H. Basset became president but died of pneumonia in October 1926. Edward Thomas Strong took over in 1927. That year total Buick production was 235,000 for the model year. Also that year the 2 millionth Buick was built.

*continued on page 7*



**Thomas S. Jakups, Editor**

I want to thank *Kit Foster* for writing *Beverly Rae Kimes's* obituary which appears on page 4. Bev was a truly larger-than-life figure inside SAH and the field of automotive history, and it was so fitting that someone of Kit's stature within the Society write of Bev's career and accomplishments.

Many of you, like Kit, knew Bev for many years and worked with her on books, articles, research and SAH matters. A few members' recollections are included in this issue. They will, no doubt, spark many more memories.

## In Celebration of a Good Life

I knew Bev only a comparatively short time, meeting her at my first Hershey almost ten years ago. Those memories are vivid: her holding court in the SAH tent and then manning the registration table the night of the Awards Banquet. For some reason she made me think of Carol Channing. Maybe it was the outsize glasses; more probably it was her huge, sparkling presence in a room. Theresa Helburn, an American theatrical producer, once wrote, "One's lifework grows with the working and the living. Do it as if your life depended on it, and first thing you know, you'll have made a life out of it. A good life, too." Bev was in on this little secret and her love of life radiated from her being.

As editor of the *Journal* I was the appreciative recipient of her book reviews and little notes of encouragement, often signed off with her signature "Heigh Ho." Once on the drive down to Hershey, I stopped in Mata-

moras, Pennsylvania, to check out Bev's and *Jim Cox's* new antiques store. There Bev introduced me to the four-legged Henry and the four-tired Ralph. All the while she laughed and shared stories with me as she would some old friend of many years. I left her feeling privileged to be a member of this fraternity of automotive historians.

Somewhere, the self-effacing Bev is saying, "Enough about me, what about the rest of this issue?" *Darwyn Lumley* raises more interesting questions in his President's Column. The News section includes reports on the donation of an automotive history collection and an exhibit of Fisher Body Craftsmen Guild winning models.

You will also find candidate biographies and a ballot for this year's election of directors to the SAH Board and a reservation form for the Annual Banquet at Hershey. Yes, time is racing by. Enjoy your allotment to the fullest.

—Tom Jakups

# SAH Journal

The Society of Automotive Historians, Inc.  
Issue 235 July–August 2008



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118–157 Jan./Feb. 1989–July/Aug. 1995  
**Samuel V. Fiorani**  
158–194 Sept./Oct. 1995–Sept./Oct. 2001

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**Copy Deadline for Journal 236**  
**August 31st**



**Darwyn H. Lumley, President**

Since the unfortunate passing of *Beverly Rae Kimes*, I have read the memorials appearing in *The New York Times* and various other publications, such as the August issue of *Road & Track* and a recent issue of *AutoWeek*. No doubt other automotive publications had similar articles. It is quite likely we all read the compliments and the acknowledgements of her personality, skills and successes with mixed feelings. It is great to see well-deserved praise in print but, of course, the occasion for the accolades is quite sobering.

Some members have suggested that some commemoration, or award, be named in honor of Bev. That is certainly worth consideration, and your thoughts on the subject are welcomed. Emulation of a respected person is also another way of memorializing that individual. I hope we can read the tributes to Beverly Rae Kimes and honor her through our subsequent actions both as individuals and in our roles as automotive historians. She will be missed both personally and professionally. There is much to be said about Beverly Rae, even if the comments are limited to her service and involvement in our Society. Certainly there is much more to her life, which is aptly reported by *Kit Foster*; on page 4.

A number of members have responded to questions and comments I have made in past issues of the *Journal*. In answer to a question

## My Role as Provocateur

I posed earlier, *Bob Ewing* believes that an overlooked aspect of automotive history is the rise, decline and fall of organized labor in the auto industry. He points out that the once powerful United Auto Workers Union has had a drop of 84,000 members in two years. At the same time, the non-union employment at firms like Toyota, Nissan and Honda remains steady or is possibly growing. Bob believes that the trend in labor relations is worth studying.

Much has been written about labor unions and, fittingly enough, Wayne State University in Detroit is a leader in this field. Just how differently an automotive historian would address the issue, as opposed to a labor historian, is an interesting question. Anyone with some thoughts on this subject is invited to respond. For members who find the labor union history interesting, <http://www.reuther.wayne.edu/use/autoworker.html> is a good beginning source.

Two books might also be of interest. One is *The Most Dangerous Man in Detroit, Walter Reuther and the Fate of American Labor*, by Nelson Lichtenstein. Someplace I read that it was George Romney who came up with that statement about Reuther. Perhaps one of our members has some knowledge of this connection.

Another reference is *American Vanguard, The United Auto Workers during the Reuther Years, 1935-1970*, by John Barnard. No doubt there are more recent studies of the auto union issue, specifically about the recent trends noted above by Bob Ewing.

Like many of you, I have been reading the recent articles about the travails of what we used to call "The Big Three." I doubt if there is an issue of the *Wall Street Journal* that fails to report on GM, Ford or Chrysler. One of the continuing stories concerns how differing marques might be

dropped. The Mercury brand is one that is constantly rumored for extinction, while Ford has sold off both Land Rover and Jaguar. Volvo may be next, according to some other stories. GM is thought to be shopping Hummer, while Buick sells more cars in China than it does in this country. One article I recall suggested that eventually GM would have only Cadillac and Chevrolet remaining. There are even questions about the viability of Jeep, Dodge and Chrysler as distinct makes.

Recently, the trend of decreasing individual marque names came together, in my mind, with the previous subject of automotive labor unions. I had just read about Walter Reuther, of the United Auto Workers, and his desire to create a new middle class comprised of well-paid workers. Might it be that the success of the union movement changed social class dynamics, specifically in regard to marketing concepts? Wasn't the Alfred Sloan product differentiation of a car for "every purse and purpose" based on the social class distinctions of the 1920s?

In decrying the lack of product differentiation between Ford and Mercury brands, or Chevrolet and Pontiac, as examples, it just might be the problem has not been identified correctly. If this idea has any merit, then I am certain others have put it forth. In my role as provocateur of some auto history ideas, I await your responses.

As you will find, what I am calling the "MG-TC returning soldier theory" has stimulated a number of comments. Please see page 12 for responses from some interested members.

It is not too early to begin planning to attend the annual SAH Awards Banquet. When you are at the Hershey meet, stop by the SAH tent. I hope to see you there.

—Darwyn Lumley

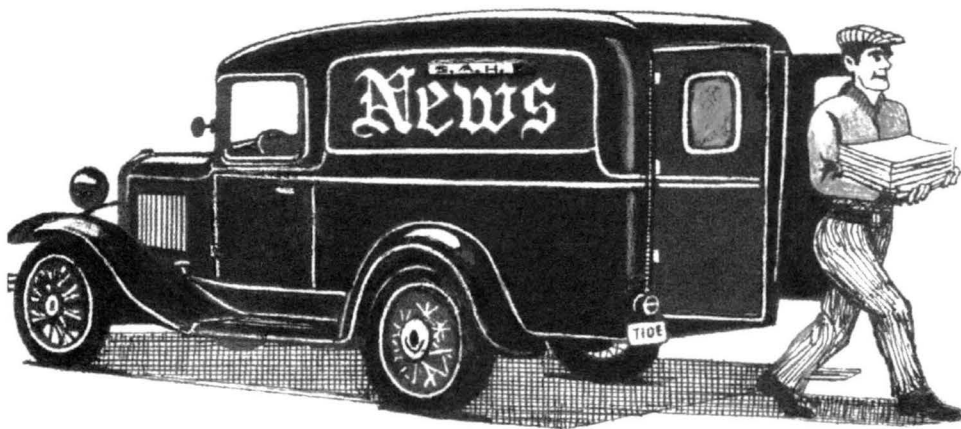


photo: Bobbie'dine Rodda

## Obituary Beverly Rae Kimes (1939-2008)

Beverly Rae Kimes, former Society President, Friend of Automotive History and world class historian and writer, passed away May 12, 2008 after a lingering illness. For decades the First Lady of Automotive History, she was the author of more than 20 books and hundreds of articles on motoring topics, and the recipient of countless awards and honors.

Born in West Chicago, Illinois, on August 17, 1939, she was the daughter of Raymond and Grace Perrin Kimes. Her father was a railroad man, her mother a comptometer operator for Sears, Roebuck in Chicago until leaving to become a full-time homemaker after her marriage. Bev grew up in Wheaton, Illinois, not far from the Chicago & North Western

tracks where all the trains whistled as they passed to salute "Ray Kimes's daughter." She was a graduate of the University of Illinois at Urbana, with degrees in History and Journalism.

In 1963, she received a Master of Arts degree in Journalism from Pennsylvania State University, then went to New York City hoping to write for theater publications. Instead, she found a job with a fledgling automobile magazine, *Scott Bailey's Automobile Quarterly*. Hired as a secretary, she soon found her name on the masthead as Editorial Assistant, shortly Assistant Editor. Within two years she had risen to Associate Editor and was subsequently Managing Editor. She was promoted to Editor in 1975, a post she held until leaving to go freelance in 1981.

After leaving *AQ* she became Executive Editor at the Classic Car Club of America, producing their magazine *The Classic Car* and newsletter *Classic Car Bulletin* until her final illness. *The Classic Car* received SAH's Richard and Grace Brigham Award in 1995. She authored two books for CCCA, *The Classic Car*, published in 1990 and *The Classic Era*, which received the Nicholas-Joseph Cugnot Award as the best book of 2001 in the field of automotive history.

Over the years she received six Cugnot Awards, more than any other author. The first was for *Packard: A History of the Motor Car and the Company* (1978), an anthology of Packard history published by Automobile Quarterly Books in 1978, and

her last was *Pioneers, Engineers and Scoundrels: The Dawn of the Automobile in America* (2005), published by SAE International. In between were *My Two Lives: Racing Driver to Restaurateur* (1983), jointly written with René Dreyfus and published by Aztex Corporation; *The Star and the Laurel* (1986), a centennial history of Mercedes-Benz; and her magnum opus, the *Standard Catalog of American Cars 1805-1942*, published by Krause in three editions from 1985 to 1996. While recognized as the standard reference for prewar cars built in the United States, the *Standard Catalog* is much more, including narrative entries for all marques, no matter how obscure, even those ventures that never produced a car. If anyone thought about building an automobile, Beverly described it in the *Catalog*.

A full Kimes bibliography is difficult to compile because she had a profound influence on far more volumes than ever carried her name on their spines. Similarly, the complete list of her articles, which must number in the hundreds, is inestimable, partly because, for publisher's policy or personal effacement, she sometimes wrote under noms de plume. *Automobile Quarterly* would not permit its staffers more than one byline per issue, and thus was born "Cullen Thomas," a composite of family names. To lessen her footprint in *The Classic Car* she published articles by "Ralph Cox," the name of the 1930 Auburn in which she and her husband *Jim Cox*, toured extensively. Her articles on Ken Purdy, Henry Austin Clark, Jr., and Walter Dorwin Teague, Jr.'s design of the Marmon HCM V-12, all earned her Carl Benz Awards from SAH.

Beyond that were the articles she ghost-wrote or re-wrote for others. Skilled at repairing fractured prose without corrupting the author's voice, she occasionally met her match. One particularly difficult contributor, she told me, led her through re-write after re-write before pulling the article back. "It just doesn't sound

like me,” he complained, and as Bev related, “it didn’t. That was the point of re-writing it, after all. But that didn’t stop him from having the revision published in another magazine.”

Bev was late in coming to SAH, partly because of AQ policy that kept staffers at arms-length from all automotive organizations. Enrolled as member 808 in November 1980, she was soon appointed to chair the Publications Committee, of which she’s been a member, except for brief sabbaticals, ever since. She organized events such as our first automotive literature silent auction, and for many years produced the biennial membership directories, including the mammoth task of indexing members’ interests. She was elected a Friend of Automotive History, our highest award, in 1986. Her selection might have come sooner, but from the outset she had insisted on being part of the Committee. Losing an election for President by one vote because she had modestly cast hers for her opponent, she was persuaded to stand again and was successful, heading the Society from 1987 to 1989.

Her accolades stretch far beyond SAH. Her work also earned several Moto Awards from the International Automotive Media Awards and the Thomas McKean Memorial Cup from the Antique Automobile Club of America. Beverly received a Distinguished Service Citation from the Automotive Hall of Fame in 1993, and was recognized with a Lifetime Achievement Award by the IAMA in 2005. For 17 years she served as the voice of the Concours d’Elegance of the Eastern United States in Pennsylvania, and was also an Honorary Judge at Pebble Beach.

In addition to SAH and CCCA, Beverly was a member of AACA and the Auburn Cord Duesenberg Club. She and Jim did upwards of 50,000 miles of touring in “Ralph” the Auburn. Ralph was recently donated to the ACD Museum in Auburn, Indiana.

Bev’s interests included much more than journalism and automobiles. She loved New York City, and served as president of the block association in her Upper East Side neighborhood. She was also an officer in the University of Illinois Alumni Club of Greater New York.

Mentor to many and an inspiration to all, she never let her advancing illness get in the way of deadlines. With Jim assisting as archivist, research assistant and co-author, she completed one last book, *Walter L. Marr: Buick’s Amazing Engineer*. Published by Race-maker Press, it appeared just before her death. Few would quarrel with calling her the First Lady of Automotive History. Some of us might presumptuously nominate ourselves for the equivalent masculine title, but in comparison we are but drones.

Beverly is survived by her husband of 24 years, Jim Cox, a sister, Sharon Sauer of Star Lake, Wisconsin, step-children James Cox, Jr., Lori Ann Cox Reeve and Cheryl Lynn Cox Redding, six grandchildren, a niece and a nephew and their families. Funeral arrangements were private. Contributions in her memory may be made to the National Kidney Foundation 30 East 33rd Street, New York, NY 10016 or online at [www.kidney.org](http://www.kidney.org).

—Kit Foster

## **Beverly Moments**

Bev’s talent, warmth and influence reached far and wide. Here are a few memories received recently from members.

Beverly could bring the great personalities of auto history to life far better than any writer I have ever read. I can almost see Billy Durant hustling past after Beverly wrote about him! The loss of her wit and knowledge can never be replaced. I count it a great privilege to have known her and worked with her on a few things (and driven her around St. Paul in my 1935 Lincoln).

—Byron Olsen

I remember meeting her when we were all at Hershey for the SAH banquet at the country club. Although we only spoke briefly, I will always remember her encouraging us “young people” to keep up the good work and keep digging for the historical truth of automotive history mysteries.

—Jim Cypher

Anyone can be nice to people above them, but it takes real character to be nice to people a bit down the ladder. On those few occasions when I would call Beverly Kimes for information or advice, she was as pleasant and as helpful as she could be and, of course, always very supportive of any effort to report automotive history.

—Carl Goodwin

While searching through a pile of photos in one collection or another I came across a picture I couldn’t resist copying: it was of two fairly hefty ladies dressed to the nines in a circa 1915 little Saxon two-seat runabout, completely overpowering the car with their full dresses and ridiculous fancy feather millinery. On the side of this machine was a large banner proclaiming “VOTES FOR WOMEN!” I couldn’t resist sending it on to her with a giggle about the social impact of the automobile. She immediately called laughing and said it would hang forever in her office. It goes without saying that one of her most endearing qualities was Bev’s great sense of numerous acutely humorous aspects of automotive history.

—Joe Freeman

The few times I talked with Bev face-to-face she never gave me a hint that she even knew anyone else. We should thank her parents for imparting her with the principle that everyone she was ever to deal with deserved her full eye-to-eye attention. Each Hershey, just inside the doorway to our SAH Annual Banquet, greeting SAHers mighty and small, she did

more than confirm that each of us had paid for our dinner. Her quick-but-certain dark-eyed grin was SAH.  
—Rick Shnitzler

I struck up a friendship with Bev in just the last few years as I began in-depth research for my book *Made in Iowa—Iowa's Automobiles*. I was sheepish at first about contacting her simply because she was so well known and probably would not have time for my inquiries. However, I am certainly glad that I finally did. I found her to be completely approachable, affable and, of course, a veritable fountain of information. Her enthusiasm for my project was immediate and her cooperation and patience in the face of my incessant questions was saintly. Our correspondence evolved into a friendship as we got to know each other better. She even consented to reviewing pieces of my manuscript. I am so glad that I came to know Bev, but I have one big regret: I never got to meet her face to face. I feel now that I should have made the effort. However, I thought I would have the opportunity later. One thing I did right and am very happy about is that I made the decision to dedicate my book to her.

—Bill Jepsen

I remember the time I first saw Bev. One Friday evening Jud Holcombe invited me as a guest to the Hershey Annual Meeting. The first thing I saw was Bev sitting at a card table checking attendance. Knowing what a celebrity she was, I was astonished to see her helping with this mundane task and will not soon forget it.

—Arthur Jones

Almost as much as her knowledge, it was her writing style that endeared her to her admirers, and particularly her perceptive choice of quotes plus, of course, the ability to extract them in the first place.

—Michael Bowler

excerpted from *The Automobile* (UK)

## SAH Board Nominations

This is the first year since I was given this task that I did not have the input of *Bev Kimes*. How we miss her insight as well as her fellowship. Bev was so involved in SAH that there is no part of it that has not felt her presence. It was all done so quietly that now the sound of her absence is deafening.

*Michael Bromley* and *Joe Malaney* have both chosen not to run this term and a hearty thank you goes out to them for their service. Both of these Board Members were initially recommended by Beverly Rae Kimes.

The three-candidate ballot needs an explanation and perhaps an illustration is in order. "A fresh seminary grad invites his professor to visit his fast growing church. When he arrives for the service only a handful of people are present, and the prof says, 'I thought you said you were running 500.' 'We are, but we're only catching about 50,' explains the novice." Well, we were running six candidates, but only caught three. The other prospects' decisions not to run were not a negative reflection on SAH, but the reality of either health, time or travel constraints. All are still on the short list.

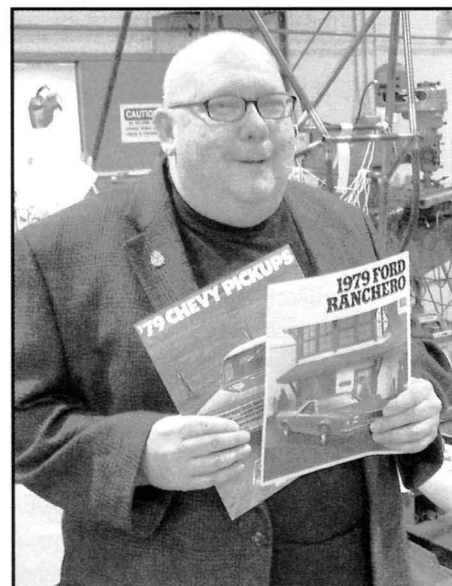
Each of the three candidates has spent a lifetime preparing for our Board of Directors and I anticipate that their form and function will help to lead us as we enter our 40th Anniversary Year (1969–2009).

—Leroy Cole

*Nominating Committee Chair*

## Important Automotive History Collection Given to the University of Windsor

Canadian automotive history will continue to inspire future auto enthusiasts thanks to the generosity of internationally acclaimed automotive historian James C. Mays. Mays donated his extensive collection of automotive sales brochures, original factory photos, taped interviews, production figures, books and other rare material about the Canadian auto industry to the University of Windsor.



**Automotive historian James Mays holds two of the rare brochures which he recently donated to the University of Windsor's Leddy Library.**

"I'm pleased my collection will be preserved for the use of future generations," he said. "I never imagined I'd ever accumulate so much. It started with a Rambler brochure when I was twelve and grew from there."

Over the years, people have given him many rare items. When documenting American Motors Canadian activities for example, he learned that employees took home material rather than allow it to be destroyed in 1979 when Renault acquired AMC. He interviewed more than thirty of those employees, some of whose work histories stretched back to the Nash and Hudson era. Many of the documents they had saved from destruction were entrusted to Mays. As time went by, the amount of material simply mushroomed until it filled closets and rooms.

For more than a decade, Mays has researched and written hundreds of articles that have appeared in a dozen automotive publications. His columns and bylines are well known to collectors and historians alike in Canada, France, Britain and the United States. His eight books have been meticulously researched, each providing new insight into the inner work

*continued on page 14*

## ***Flxible continued from page 1***

In 1927 Flxible built 119 motor-buses and 40 professional cars. In 1928 those numbers went up to 159 and 124 respectively, and for 1929 the numbers were 112 and 264. Sales totaled \$528,796 for 1929, which also included sidecars and auto bodies, a very small fraction of the business by then.

Buick increased the size of its six-cylinder engine to 331 cid and 99 bhp for 1930. In 1931 the company switched to a new straight eight engine which had a cid of 344 and produced 104 bhp. It featured an oil temperature regulator that either cooled or heated the engine oil depending on conditions. The Shafer Buick 8 qualified for the Indy 500 at 105 mph that year. Buick's longest chassis for 1931 was the Series 90, which was 132 inches but still had to be stretched for bus and professional car applications.

As the Great Depression ensued, business plummeted for Flxible. Bus production dropped from 81 in 1930 to 77 in 1931, 11 in 1932, 10 in 1933 and only 6 in 1934. However, people continued to be hospitalized and die, so the ambulance and hearse business sustained the company. Combined ambulance and funeral car production was as follows: 213 for 1930, 182 for 1931, 171 for 1932, 222 for 1933 and 156 for 1934. Flxible's CPA recommended scrapping the remaining sidecar inventory in 1933.

Business at Buick also fell dramatically. For 1933 Buick model year production was only 43,247. That year Harlow Curtice took over as president of Buick and remained there into WWII. The year 1933 was also the year Buick finally adopted hydraulic brakes as standard equipment. Buick's overhead-valve straight eight motor's displacement remained the same but horse-power was increased to 116 for 1934, the year Buick shipped 7,367 stripped chassis for export and professional cars. That number dropped to 4,993 for the next year.

Due to financial woes Flxible began offering a cheaper bus, called the Airway Coach, which was based on a less expensive Chevrolet truck chassis. The Airway Coach, which was first introduced in 1932, was distinguished by its round back. The body was built on a wooden frame.

By 1935 Flxible was in the black again with sales reaching over half a million dollars, although profits were only \$10,300. The Airway Coaches sold well, but professional car sales lagged, with 174 for 1935 and 206 for 1936. In 1937 Flxible introduced a cab-over-engine bus, again based on a Chevrolet truck chassis having a wooden frame. This was the 25-passenger streamlined Clipper. That year professional car production also jumped to 306, and overall, sales increased to over \$1.1 million.

For 1936 Buick's excellent motor now produced 120 bhp, the year the 3 millionth Buick was produced. Cowl mounted wipers were introduced for 1937. By 1938 horsepower was up to 130 and Buick shipped 12,692 stripped chassis.

In 1938 Flxible repaid all of its loans to Charles Kettering, who had helped the company stay afloat during the lean years. Kettering was director at both GM and Flxible for 31 years before the United States Department of Justice Antitrust Division filed a complaint in 1956. The legal wrangling dragged on for nine years during which time Charles Kettering died in 1958.

In 1938 Flxible built 373 Buick-based professional cars. The number dropped to 275 for 1939, but bus production rose from 148 to 282 that year over 1938. A new bus production factory was built in 1940. The successful Clipper buses were available with either Chevy six-cylinder engines or Buick FB 320 straight-eights, which now produced 141 bhp.

Professional car production rose again to 542 in 1940 and 503 for 1941, the last year of production before

complete conversion to the war effort. Buick changed its body design entirely and introduced the two-way hood, which could be opened from either side or removed completely. The design was only clever if at least one side remained latched. It was possible to leave both sides unlatched, in which case Buick's hoods flew off at high speed sometimes causing extensive damage and injury, in which case an ambulance would have to be summoned, perhaps a Buick/Flxible

Other cars such as Packard later used the same design and when it was called into question the companies shrugged it off leaving it to the responsibility of the vehicle operators, and the same design continued after the war. Flxible continued to use Buick chassis for its professional cars after WWII, although not exclusively. As a company Flxible lasted until 1996 when it filed for bankruptcy. ■

### **SAH members are invited to join the Classic Car Club of America (CCCA)**

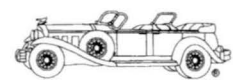
founded in 1952 to promote  
the preservation and restoration  
of distinctive motorcars  
built between 1925 and 1948.

The club publishes its *Bulletin*  
eight times a year  
and the quarterly  
*Classic Car* magazine.

The club maintains a museum  
and research library  
on the grounds  
of the Gilmore Car Museum  
in Hickory Corners, Michigan.

For membership details  
contact the club  
at either of the addresses below.

CLASSIC CAR CLUB OF AMERICA



1645 Des Plaines River Road, Suite 7  
Des Plaines, IL 60018-2206  
(847) 390-0443  
[www.ClassicCarClub.org](http://www.ClassicCarClub.org)

# Peco Buckaroo: The Cleveland Cowboy?

By Kit Foster

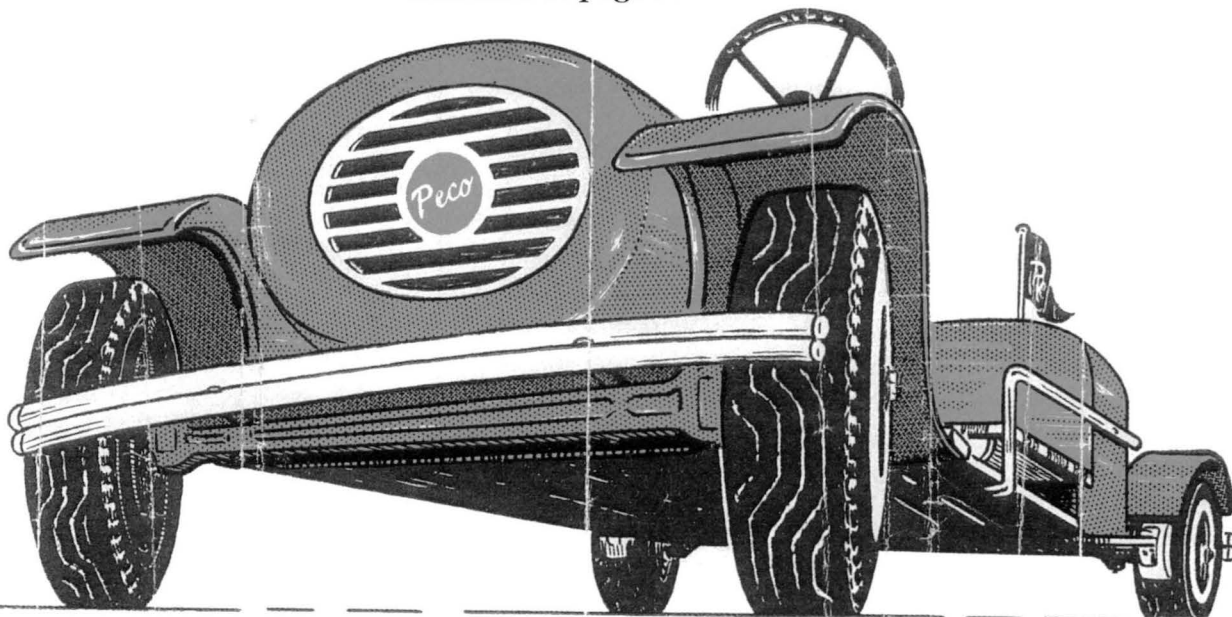
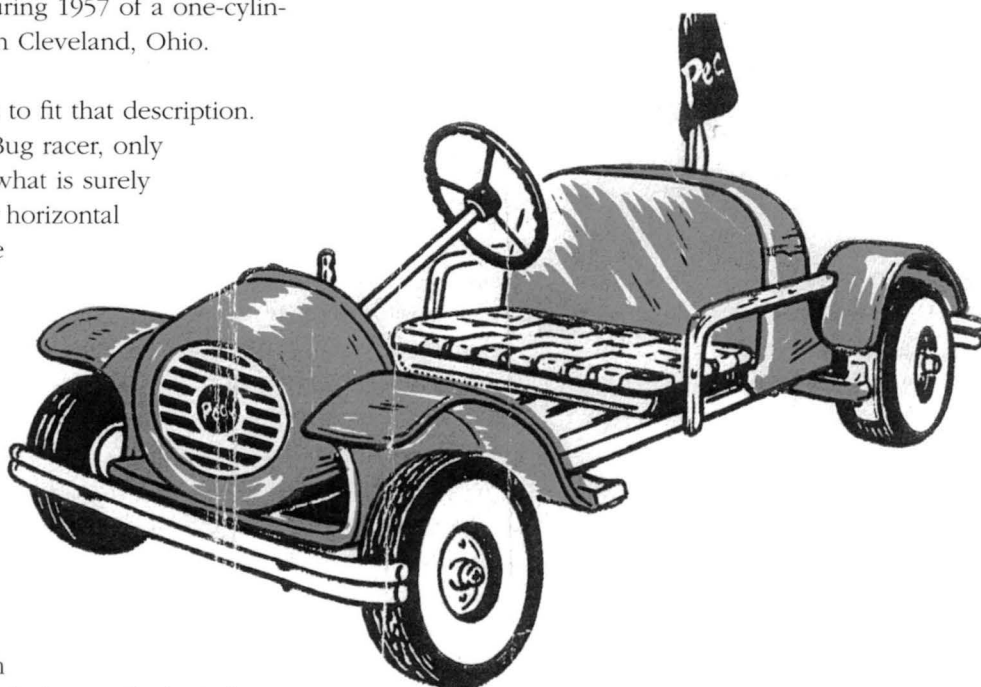
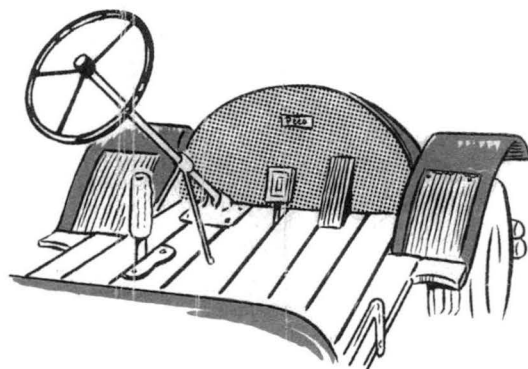
**M**ike Worthington-Williams has a predilection for all types of cycle-cars, minicars and microcars, so it was not a surprise to have him ask, "What can you tell me about the Peco Buckaroo?" It seems he had scored a brochure for such a vehicle in Peter Moore's Motor Book Postal Auction. None of our encyclopedias lists "Peco" as a make, but I found two cryptic entries for a "Buckaroo," in the *Standard Catalog of American Cars 1946-1975* (Krause) and the *Encyclopedia of American Cars 1946-1959* (Moloney and Dammann, Crestline Publishing).

Both sources consider it something of a mystery, saying there was brief mention in the press during 1957 of a one-cylinder \$400 car by that name to be built in Cleveland, Ohio. Neither book has an illustration.

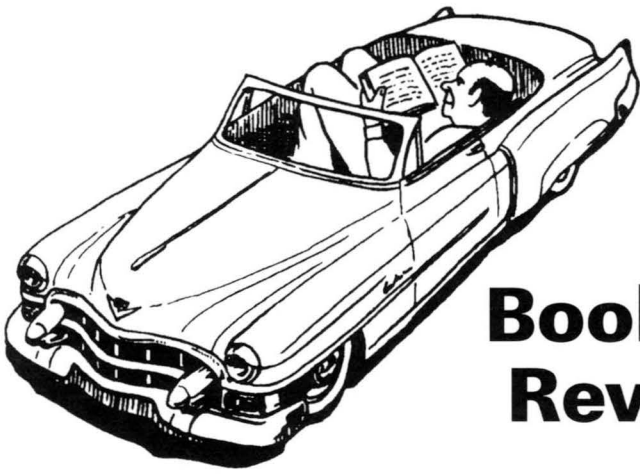
The car in Mike's brochure seems to fit that description. It's something like a modern day Red Bug racer, only instead of a Smith Motor Wheel it has what is surely a Briggs and Stratton three-horsepower horizontal shaft engine ("10,000 authorized service dealers throughout the nation for quick and easy service"). Wheelbase is quoted as 57-3/8 inches, tread is 31-3/8 inches and a speed of 18 miles per hour is claimed. "[It] can be carried in any station wagon, yet it is large enough with its adjustable seat to accommodate both Dad and Junior."

Illustrations show a sturdy beam front axle, two-pedal control and a pennant flying from the rear with "Peco" in script. "We have made the basic frame of selected,

*continued on page 10*







## Book Reviews

**Of Firebirds & Moonmen**, by Norman J. James 2007. ISBN 978-1-4257-7659-6 (hardbound), 978-1-4257-7653-4 (softbound) 217 pages, 67 photographs, 43 illustrations. Xlibris Corporation, 1-888-795-4374, [www.Xlibris.com](http://www.Xlibris.com), also [www.Amazon.com](http://www.Amazon.com) and [www.BarnesandNoble.com](http://www.BarnesandNoble.com). Hardbound (\$28.79) and softbound (\$18.69).

General Motors Styling from 1953 to 1961 is the subject of this interesting book by Norman James who worked there and had a major role in styling the Firebird III show car that debuted in the 1959 New York Auto show. This was the era of Harley Earl, when styling was king. Later in his GM career, James worked on the Lunar Rover when GM contracted with Boeing and NASA. All of this is described in a writing style that is friendly and without pretense.

The culture of Detroit in the '50s is described in detail by a young designer making notes that would become his own autobiography. It starts in James-town, New York, and leaps to Pratt Institute in New York City, on a scholarship, with the help of his older brother, Herb, an advertising art director.

The industrial design curriculum at Pratt is guided by a cadre of eccentric geniuses. Alexander Kostellow is the department head. Rowena Reed, Robert Kolli and Ivan Rigby are instructors. We meet these people through James's words and know their personalities. The 2-D course, the 3-D course, the color lectures—we attend

them all. We learn what the industrial designer learns. Then James hears the words that every student wants to hear: "James. . . You're going to Detroit. . . Get your portfolio and take it to Kostellow's office." There, for the first time, he meets Harley Earl's right-hand man, Bill Mitchell.

Life as it revolved around West Grand Boulevard and the GM Building is revealed sentence after sentence and, with current developments in the Motor City, we realize it will never be like this again. So here is a snapshot of the past. He meets a young MIT graduate, Chuck Jordan, then the cartoonist Stan Mott. He's at the test track in 1954 and the 1955 Chevy comes whistling by, with the unmistakable sound of the powerful new V-8. We are taken from drawings to clay to working prototypes. Opportunities, lucky breaks and setbacks materialize before our eyes in this book.

Development of the Firebird III is covered in detail, with its jet-fighter design influences. We are taken from the design work to the mockup. Then Harley Earl goes to Europe and the design committee visits the project, instructing the design team to remove the dramatic three rear fins. We learn the extent of Earl's power when he returns and says, "Now why don't you all take the car back and put it back the way it was when I left." One of the more interesting pictures in the book is of four GM engineers riding on the Firebird chassis before it

got its fiberglass body.

Shortly after the successful 1959 debut of the Firebird III, our character has a run-in with the design committee and questions his future in Styling. He sees an opportunity to segue into a GM collaboration with RCA on a NASA proposal for the Surveyor Lunar Soft Lander, and it's off to another adventure, only this one's in California. Interspersed in this book is a thread describing the writer's interest in astronomy and telescopes and it offers a novel sidebar to the story about GM. Anyone who wants to know what it was like to work in the Harley Earl styling department in Detroit in the '50s will enjoy reading this book.

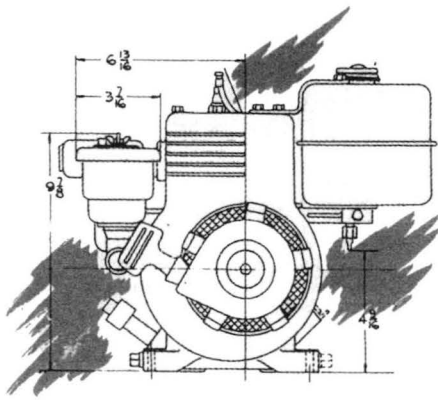
—Carl Goodwin

**Crossing the Sands—The Sahara Desert Track to Timbuctu**, by Ariane Audouin-Dubreuil, translated into English by Ingrid MacGillis, 2006, ISBN 13-978-1-85443-222-3. Hardbound, 193 pages, app. 230 illustrations, many in sepia tone. Dalton Watson Fine Books, 1730 Christopher Drive, Deerfield, IL 60015, (847-945-0568. [www.daltonwatson.com](http://www.daltonwatson.com) \$65..

Several generations of French schoolchildren have been brought up hearing of the three expeditions (1922–32) of Georges-Marie Haardt and Louis Audouin-Dubreuil exploring Africa and Central Asia: the first motorized expedition across the Sahara to Timbuctu (basically north to south), the subsequent traversing of the continent from west to east (known as "La Croisière Noire") and the crossing of Central Asia from Beirut to Peking ("La Croisière Jaune"). The expeditions were sponsored by André Citroën.

France's colonies in the northern half of Africa were largely desert and were well nigh inaccessible except by sea. Audouin, a soldier, was transferred to Tunisia in 1917 where the Germans and Turks had raised mischief by inciting tribal chiefs to rebel

*continued on page 10*



seasoned white ash” (shades of the Red Bug), “the fenders of 24-gauge steel, the cowlings of molded fiber glass, the front axle and steering assembly of high test, tempered aircraft aluminum, the front and rear bumpers of tubular aluminum and the seat of tubular aluminum with heavy Saran webbing” (in other words, lawn furniture). “Styled in the modern manner, The Buckaroo has the smart ‘continental’ look—sweeping fenders, bright colors, white wall tires and an accessory rear mounted spare tire.” The brakes appear to have concave shoes that rub against the tread of the rear tires.

There is no manufacturer’s name or address on the brochure, and googling “Peco Buckaroo” has proven unsatisfying. Do any Clevelandites in the Society remember the Buckaroo, or know about a company called “Peco” that was in business in 1957? ■

**Reviews continued from page 9**

against the French. Ordered to become a pilot, his experience had demonstrated that the aircraft of the day were too fragile to establish a reliable connection by air between the colonies. But there was a growing feeling that the automobile could provide the needed link

With the war’s end, he participated in a preliminary effort to cross the Sahara in 1919, covering 1,250 miles of territory “that had never been explored by car or airplane.” But the army abandoned its plan to create a motorized connection between North Africa and the Sudan.

Enter André Citroën. Audouin was summoned to Paris to discuss “the first crossing of the Sahara by car,” and formulated plans for the expedition to Timbuctu. Haardt, director of the auto factory and responsible for dealer relations, was to command the group with Audouin second in charge. Audouin took immediately to the warm and extroverted André but it took a while to warm up to the fastidious, remote Haardt. André sought the help of Adolphe Kégresse who had invented, in essence, the half-track, or caterpillar-like rear treads. This had enabled the Czar to drive on the snow, and it was to prove equally valuable on the sand. Five production 10-horsepower Citroëns were modified accordingly.

Audouin resigned from the army. On December 17, 1922, the men and machines got under way at Touggourt, the end of the rail line from Algiers. Citroën had ordered that the 2,000 mile journey to Timbuctu be completed in 21 days, and so it was, on January 7, 1923, but not without a great deal of drama. André was so delighted with the result that he and his wife “crossed a third of the Sahara” to meet with his team.

Haardt and Audouin collaborated on an account of their first journey, *La Première Traversée du Sahara en Automobile* (Paris, Librairie Plon, 1923), but *Crossing the Sands* is really Audouin’s story of this first crossing and covers a broader range. His daughter, Ariane Audouin-Dubreuil, has taken his diaries and other unpublished materials and woven them into a first-person narrative that begins with the preliminary efforts to penetrate the Sahara by plane and car between 1910 and 1921, and then leads to the expedition of 1922–23. Audouin lived on until 1960, but Haardt died in 1932 shortly after reaching Peking.

A very entertaining story indeed, but is it history? A pitfall of contemporary writing is assigning thoughts and words where there is no evidence that such existed. In this instance, having heard these stories from her father and drawing upon his writings, Ariane Audouin-Dubreuil seems to as faithfully represent his feelings and opinions as is possible. If there is one criticism of the book, it is inherent to the subject matter: after a few photos of desert rocks, half-tracks from afar and local tribesmen, they all tend to look the same, albeit handsomely presented for the most part in sepia tone and large format size,

It is enterprising and admirable of Dalton Watson Fine Books in this age of the bottom line to sponsor the translation into English of what is after all a rather specialized subject. Vive Dalton Watson!

—Taylor Vinson

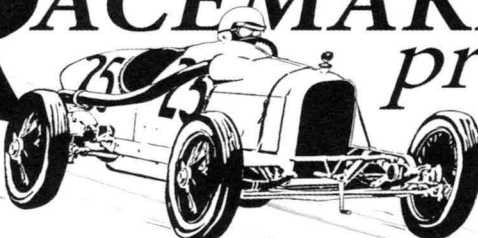


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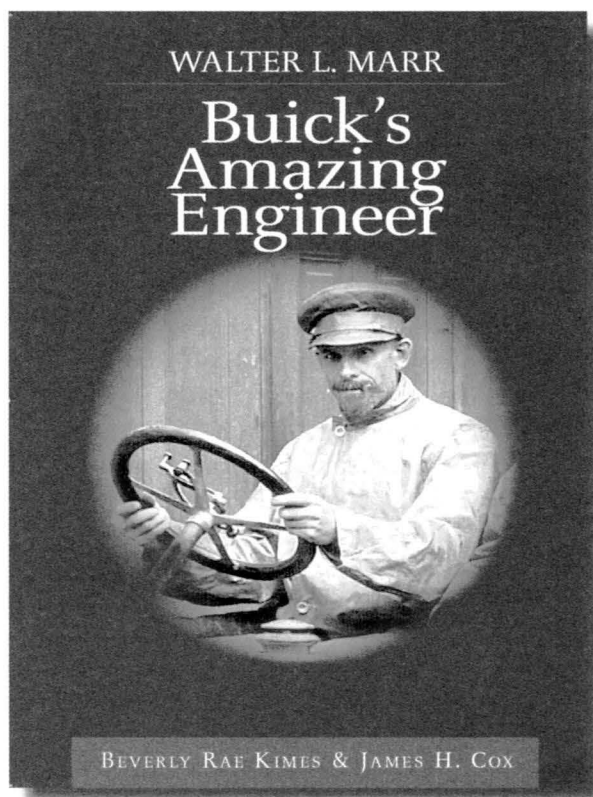
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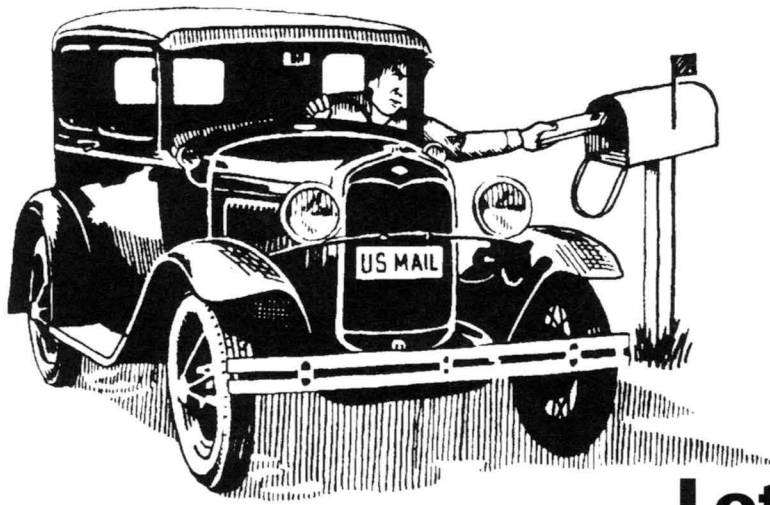
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## Letters

### Posing an Answer to a Posed Question

In *Journal 233* President *Darwyn Lumley* asked for a discussion on the rise of the imported car in the U.S., noting that he failed “to comprehend how a small number of MG-TC’s introduced in 1946–48 led to Americans spurning domestic cars to begin driving Volkswagens.”

That is indeed what happened, and if he wants to understand it he simply needs to read every issue of *Road & Track* up to 1960 or so. Or let me (as another American who lived through these years but sees them from the imported car perspective) flesh out the matter just a bit.

The number of TC’s imported was a bit more than 3,000. Most were sold in California, New York and New England. Aside from novelty snob appeal they had these advantages: they went where you pointed them quickly (before their steering boxes became worn); they held the road in corners in a way no American car could at the time; they stopped when you wanted them to and quickly; and they out-accelerated most American sedans up to 50 with a gearbox that was a joy to use.

Of course they could not match Detroit products for long-distance comfort, but it appears that there were far more drivers interested in having fun driving than in just getting somewhere than MG could satisfy. By

1955 another 20,000 MG’s were sold here followed by some 50,000 more MGA’s by 1960. By this time these figures were equaled by Triumph and Austin Healy, et al.

The importance of sports car racing played a major role. An average number of entries in a mid-50s road race in California was 300 plus, and spectators numbered in the tens of thousands at each event. Half of those entered were racing their daily drivers.

Volkswagens were actually raced in these events. But though they got their start in the sports car movement (the first distributor was sports car racer John Van Neumann who started racing an MG in 1950, then moved to Porsches), clearly their eventual sales phenomenon was due to other factors, notably economy and the counter-culture of the ‘60s.

As for the *Road & Track* reading, there you will learn the attitude of the average enthusiast toward driving and toward Detroit iron. Sports car drivers were filled with camaraderie for each other and always waved at passing strangers in other sports cars. At the same time, we were often discriminated against by drivers of Detroit iron, law enforcement and service facilities anywhere outside of the locales mentioned above. Throughout the ‘50s and ‘60s Detroit dropped the ball, never admitting publicly that they had anything to learn from the foreign car movement, though inevitably changes

occurred that could easily be traced to it. I expect that a majority of our members are fans of 1950s American cars and believe any well-restored example to be a classic. However, nothing becomes a classic with age or survival. It must have been the “best of its kind” when it was made.

—*Michael A. Jacobsen*

### Marshall Plan Key to Foreign Invasion

In his editorial in *Journal 233* President *Darwyn Lumley* questioned the acceptance of the tired explanation oft quoted by every automotive writer for the last 60 years for the following question: How did imported cars become so popular in the U.S.? The correct doctrinal answer is Because of imported cars being introduced to the U.S. by GI’s returning from Europe.

I have never been comfortable with that simplistic answer. Yes, servicemen did return with cars, but in relatively small numbers. Only officers or non-commissioned officers with enough time in grade would qualify for free shipping. However, most of the cars imported by this group were new or used sports cars. The bulk of the American population could not even relate to such a car. This category of car no longer existed in the American lexicon. U.S. companies had not offered a true sports car for over 15 years. The ten years of the Great Depression and five years of WWII spelled fini to the gentlemen’s sport of organized road racing in the U.S.

Foreign cars were not a new phenomenon in the U.S. In the early part of the 20th century several European car companies established plants here. They were encouraged by sales of their cars to wealthy American tourists. These Americans were willing to pay top dollar for a high-end, stylish and reliable car. Among these companies were American Mercedes, American Napier and American F.I.A.T.

The most successful were the French. Many early American horse-

less carriages were powered by one- and two-cylinder De Dion or Leon Bollee engines. They had established a good reputation. Among the French plants were American Mors, Berliet, De Dion, and Charron. The output of all of these factories primarily consisted of opulent formal cars and competition machines for the track. Their impact was minimal as a percentage of national sales.

With the onset of WWI in 1914 these foreign companies were gone. However, their impact on the American psyche was more lasting. The fact that these few cars were bought by captains of industry, movie stars and heroes of the race track imprinted them on the American public more than their numbers would warrant.

Just a casual perusal of American automotive ad and brochure copy after the Great War, and continuing throughout the '20s, '30s, and '40s will show a regular drumbeat of reference to things European, i.e., the latest European colors, the newest European fabrics, up-to-date styling from the latest Paris, Geneva or London auto shows. It was not just French art deco styling; it was mechanical features as well.

There was a third factor in continuing interest in European cars and that was the advent of the enthusiasts' motoring press. These were car magazines that cost from 15 to 25 cents, well within the range of an elementary school student such as me. They had such titles as *Mechanix Illustrated*, *Road & Track*, *Motor Trend* and *Car and Driver*. They opened up a whole new world of automobiles to Americans. More importantly, they widened the opportunities for car buyers of all ages. I could not believe these wonderful periodicals. Here were adult men interested in the same thing as I was as opposed to my father who looked at a car as a necessary appliance to be replaced annually. These motoring magazines were on the newsstands when the first wave of strange interlopers arrived from

Europe. I believe these periodicals helped educate and legitimize these cars to the American buyer. Never underestimate the power of the press.

As important as these three factors were in establishing foreign cars on the American landscape, I believe it was their roles to be important facilitators, not the main reason for the emergence of these cars. I think what Darwyn Lumley and I were both looking for was a major historical international event; one that would explain the successful foreign car invasion.

I think that event was the Marshall Plan, the intent of which was to make the western European nations strong enough to be the first line of defense against further encroachment by the USSR. As post WWII production began in earnest, what all European countries found they really needed were American dollars. They needed a big ticket item that could be sold in large numbers.

President Truman needed to know whether the U.S. auto companies or the unions would oppose such a program. A meeting was held at a Washington hotel in March 1946. George Marshall was elated to see Detroit, by sending middle-level executives, was handling this as a low level meeting. He shrewdly played it down by sending two deputies and four staffers. Detroit, flush with profits from war contracts

and looking forward to a seller's market for the next three to four years, simply rubber stamped the proposal. These funny little cars were not considered a threat.

Great Britain, bankrupt and bled white by the recent hostilities, issued a proclamation to her lethargic motor car industry: export or die. The Europeans exported everything that would roll and looked vaguely like a car. Americans found they could buy these strange objects without either a waiting list or the need to bribe a salesman. Everything from Daimlers to DAF's found their way to these shores. These cars found a niche market in the U.S. The sports cars developed almost a cult following. In 1947 imports accounted for less than one percent of U.S. car sales. During the calendar year 2007 import sales edged over the 50 percent mark. Where will it end? Who knows? I know I do expect to see cars in U.S. showrooms from Borneo built by former headhunters from Sarawak before I die.

—Fred Summers

## Focus on the Product

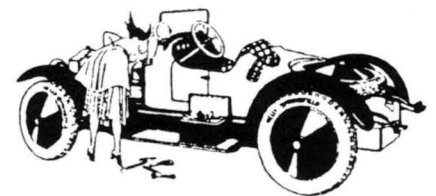
*Darwyn Lumley* posed a question as to the factors influencing the fall of the domestic industry (*Journal* 234). Here are some thoughts. My frame of reference stems from research for a book I am writing on the history of GM's foreign operations.

This research has taught me that

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there is a vast difference between the cars GM provides North Americans, and the Opels, Holdens, etc. offered elsewhere in the world. It would be easy to say that GMNA has become complacent as a market leader whereas in most foreign markets, GM entities have not been the market leader and as such have a more competitive spirit and a greater respect for the customer. Because automobiles constitute a far higher relative cost outside North America, foreign consumers demand greater refinement and quality. Chinese Buick owners have far higher standards than their U.S. counterparts and therefore get a wider and more luxurious range. The small cars in Europe are not simple little econoboxes.

Initial releases of every small car by GM in North America, with the possible exception of Saturn, have been poorly executed. Take your pick among the Corvair, Vega, Chevette and J-car. Maybe they are seen as necessary loss leaders, attracting a buyer who it is assumed cannot afford anything larger. The lack of respect for this category of consumer has prevented the Chevette owner from developing the brand loyalty earned by Civics and Corollas. The Opel Kadett, on which the Chevette was based, was a far more appealing package and a great ambassador for Opel.

Nearly every foreign-designed automobile has global aspirations, necessitating a totally different mindset. U.S. makes tend to be insular and designed only for a domestic market. Cadillac is trying to establish an international presence and has even created the BLS range based on a Saab, but this is the exception rather than the rule.

Foreign markets have traditionally imposed heavy restrictions on automobiles in the form of high taxes, significant annual licensing fees based on engine capacity and expensive fuel. This has dictated small fuel-efficient engines. License fees and fuel costs in North America have

been a fraction of what they are in most foreign countries. Outside of North America, manufacturers have learned how to design their cars for multiple government-imposed rules and restrictions, not only for their own countries but internationally.

America, up until the 1960s, had no such restrictions. But then Detroit was hit from all sides. Ralph Nader demanded safety features. The insurance industry imposed battering rams to reduce minor claims. Environmental concerns brought unleaded fuel while CAFE standards tried to make cars more fuel efficient. At the same time the OPEC nations tried to turn the tap off. This was more than the consumer or Big Three could digest at once.

North American automotive engineers ceased focusing on consumer wants and started designing cars to meet specifications set by regulations. Large cars became gutless wonders, relying on tall gearing instead of an additional overdrive gear. Soon consumers realized that trucks were not subjected to as many rules and promptly did an end run round the CAFE goals by buying more thirsty trucks. These trucks still had some performance left, not being saddled with all the CAFE or emission rules.

Chasing the truck gravy train led to SUVs, prompting domestic manufacturers to take their eyes off the ball, made up of passenger car buyers. So this buyer turned to the imports, which proved to be highly reliable and rewarding. Because the foreign manufacturers were used to multiple regulations around the world, their mindset was more attuned to addressing the requirements imposed by the U.S. It was not the threat that the American engineers faced, it was more a case of business as usual but with another hurdle. Mercedes-Benz thought outside the box and switched to diesel engines, Honda developed their stratified charge engine and most other Japanese cars headed for four-valve heads for emissions and better breathing.

There are many other additional factors that have contributed to the demise of North American cars. Instead of product development, GM tried to reorganize itself too many times. Instead of strong-willed competing divisional executives like John DeLorean, it turned to product managers more attuned to flogging household consumables. The marketing of Crest toothpaste may be a success, but the same formula does not work for a major capital outlay that confers all sorts of emotional aspects such as prestige and identity issues.

The only way out of this mess is to focus on the product. It will be a long road, but make sure the driver is an engineer rather than GM's typical financial types. Thank heaven for Bob Lutz.

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### ***News continued from page 6***

ings of Ford, Nash and AMC as well as the Canadian industry in general.

In 2001 Mays was introduced to Brian Owens, the Archivist at the University of Windsor's Leddy Library. After discussions, it was mutually agreed that the institution—one that emphasizes automotive excellence—would become home to this unique and rare collection. The collection was physically transferred to the Leddy Library in the summer of 2007 after being appraised. The legal paperwork to transfer ownership was completed early in 2008.

Mays moved to Windsor from Montreal in 2004. He continues to research and write about automotive history and is committed to adding more to the collection as he continues to acquire items of interest.

The James C. Mays collection enriches the wealth of automotive information currently in the Leddy archives previously donated by Ford of Canada and others. Archivist Brian Owens says it will take up to ten years to catalog this most recent gift and further notes that the collection is now well protected following extensive recent renovations in the archive room.

Everyone is welcome to view and use the collection in the Leddy Library Monday through Friday from 1:30PM to 4:00PM or by appointment. For more information you can visit [www.uwindsor.ca/leddy](http://www.uwindsor.ca/leddy) and [www.theoilspoteh.ca](http://www.theoilspoteh.ca)

## 1950s & 1960s "Dream Car" Model-rama

The Museum of Fine Arts in Boston will be the site for a Fisher Body Craftsman's Guild (1930–1968) Retrospective on August 9–10.

The 1/12 scale, Model "Dream Car" Retrospective is representative of the Harley J. Earl auto design era, with 21 top national scholarship winners' models, 11 styling scholarship winners' models, 16 regional winners' models (including one stunning 1947 Regional Miniature Model Napoleonic Coach; like those made for the FBCG model design competition 1930 to 1947) and 15 state winners' models—for some 64 models total. Meet the winning Guildsmen and see their models. Participate in a public information and education program and join the discussions about the Fisher-Guild and automotive design.

It is a two-day look at the results of General Motors' '50s and '60s industrial arts program, called on the street the Fisher Body Design Contest. The model-rama is being held in honor of GM's 100th birthday (9/16/08) and also to remember Harley J. Earl, Vice President GM Styling (1940–1958), and his cadre of aspiring student auto designers, many of whom became GM's and the auto industry's second generation auto designers, auto design directors, executives and consultants.

For more information about the exhibit call the General Info Phone at 617-267-9300 or go to [www.mfa.org](http://www.mfa.org) or [www.fisherguild.com](http://www.fisherguild.com).

—John L. Jacobus

## Nash Exposed

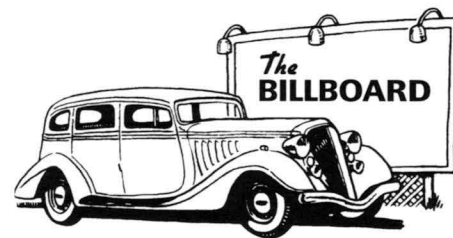
The back cover photo in *Journal 234* was not much of a mystery with sev-

eral members quick to identify M. Le Blanc's car as a 1930 Nash 494 limousine.

Georg Magnusson, of Sweden, noted that the base price of \$2,085 meant that the Nash was a model 494 with a twin ignition, valves in the head, straight eight engine. This was the second most expensive Nash in 1930. The price of the most expensive Nash in 1930 was \$2,360 and the main difference, Magnusson thinks, was a division between front and rear seats. He has one in his family and knows of others in Sweden and New Zealand. Thanks to all who wrote and e-mailed in.

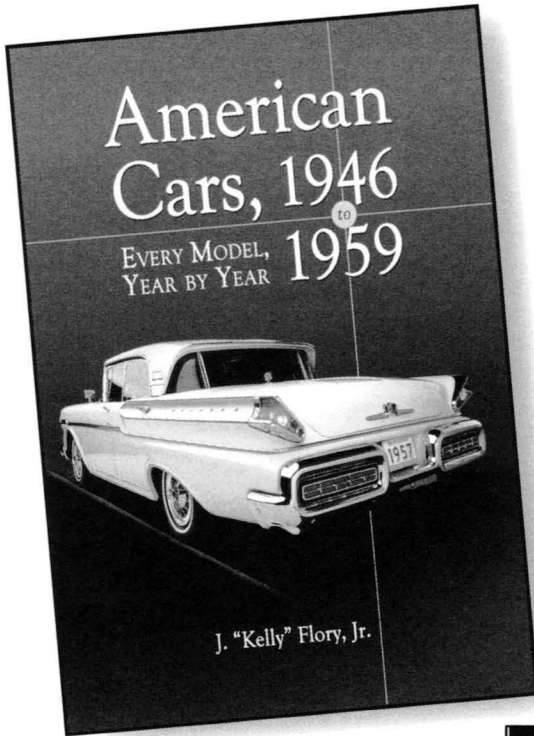
## Reviewers Needed

Reviewers are needed for *The Age of Hot Rods*, by Albert Drake, which is a compilation of essays on rods, custom cars and their drivers from the '50s to today, and *Studebaker, The Complete History*, by Patrick Foster. Reviews should be 400 to 600 words and follow *Journal* style.



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**Information Wanted** I am currently doing research on the Gabriel automobile built in Cleveland, Ohio, circa 1910–1912. Anything related to the Gabriel i.e. literature, memorabilia, photos, ads, etc. would be greatly appreciated. **Bernie Golias, 7271 Lonesome Pine Tr., Medina, OH 44256 (330) 483-4110, berniegolias@aol.com**




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**CHICO GOES FOR A SWIM**—The Chico, a “cross country-mutipurpose-utility-vehicle,” was built in Buncrana, Ireland, in the 1980s by ATW Auto—Montan—Werke Ltd. Apparently a Messerschmitt design, it was powered by a rear-mounted two-cylinder Deutz diesel. The chassis was jointed behind the cab for agility on uneven terrain. Has anyone ever seen one? *Kit Foster collection.*