

SAH Journal



The Society of Automotive Historians, Inc.

Issue 246 Electronic Edition

July-August 2010



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Fast Ladies: Female Racing Drivers 1888-1970

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Date Reminders

September 30, 2010

SAH Banquet Reservations Due
Patrick Bisson
patrickdbisson@yahoo.com

October 8, 2010

SAH Banquet
Hershey Country Club, Hershey, PA



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Bradley Award, research institution

Brigham Award, magazine

Cugnot Award, English language book

Cugnot Award, Non-English book

Friend of Automotive History

Ingersoll Award, non-print media

Scharchburg Award, student paper

SAH Journal

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SAH Journal (ISSN 1057-1973)

is published six times a year by the Society of Automotive Historians, Inc.

Subscription is by membership in the Society.

Membership dues are \$40 per year.

Send dues, membership inquiries and changes of address to

Society of Automotive Historians, Inc.

178 Crescent Road

Fairport, NY 14450 USA

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Find the Society of Automotive Historians on the web at www.autohistory.org.

**Copy Deadline for Journal 247
September 1, 2010**

President's Message

Estate Settlement and Auctions

This July 9, the Stanley Museum, my 'alma mater' if you will, had its 7th Consignment Auction. There were more than 420 lots, including five Stanleys, most of them in running condition. Rather than being an estate sale, individuals had consigned parts and cars. While being a great fundraiser, these consignment auctions also circulate parts in the hobby. This started as both service and fundraiser almost by accident back in 1995.

Devastated by her husband's accidental death in a plane crash, the widow of a major Stanley collector had held onto her deceased husband's collection for years. She deflected inquiries about selling the material for years. The final straw came when her husband's best friend offered to take care of everything for a modest share.

Her situation exposed a sad reality of the car collecting world. The collector may know value in the market place, but that doesn't transfer magically to the spouse, who may in fact have given up much to allow her husband's continued "investment" in his collection, whether in a new acquisition or an important repair or restoration. The spouse rarely has the same depth of knowledge regarding her husband's passion or its actual value. This sets her up as a potential victim of someone else's passion. And it is always a Passion for both the deceased and remaining friends. This translates to most collections.

After running five of these auctions before changing jobs in 2006, I've broken this down into several parts:

- Spouses and families are at a disadvantage determining the value of the car/railroad/ephemera collection of their deceased spouse;
- Collectors themselves can overvalue, or undervalue, their collection when they are not active players in the market, sometimes translating to poor preparation for their spouse's or family's disposition of these collections;
- Spouses or families sometimes place values far higher than market;

- Families rarely continue a deceased family member's collecting passion;
- Collectors often make few arrangements, or none, for the disposition of their collection because of their passion: they rarely face their own mortality. And indeed, such passion often adds years to their lives;
- Among collections of high market value, "friends" as well as complete strangers often approach a widowed spouse with fair and/or unfair offers, sometimes even before the funeral has taken place, an enormously distressing experience.

Recently, I heard of an unusually good outcome. When a model railroader learned he had terminal cancer, he set about pricing every piece of his O-scale railroad layout. He completed the project before he died, enabling his family to sell the collection with little problem. Note the situation: Cancer forced this collector to face his mortality.

In cases where such planning does not happen and the value is high, the best solution is usually an appraiser, who can often save the estate money in the long run. Appraisers at larger auction houses are salaried, not working on commission, so one can expect objective advice from people not only passionate about the objects but also knowledgeable about the market. Proper appraisals can protect the family from undervaluing or overvaluing the collection.

The use of a museum experienced with consignment auctions as a regular fundraiser is a good way to dispose of a collection, putting all the work onto the institution and connecting to the audience most interested in the specific objects. The Stanley Museum consignment auction has become such a popular way of refreshing a tired steam car parts inventory that it is used by many of the same players every time it occurs.

If a car, railroad or literature collection is of exceptional size and value, there are small, large, local or international auction houses that will handle a collection's disposition. Choosing the

right one needs research and masterful, professional management, often entailing an impressive bidding process.

Automotive history collections are of great intellectual value but usually little monetary value. Here the question is more of finding a home that can make the collection accessible to the researching public rather than having it go on the dump or into paper recycling. Last year we lost *Z. Taylor Vinson*, a guiding star of automotive history. He willed his impressive collection of catalogs from 1891 to 2009 to the Hagley Museum and Library in Wilmington, Delaware.

As with everything Taylor did, this was well thought through and arranged well ahead of his departure. As with the model railroader, this is an ideal. Perhaps by talking and writing about this, we can encourage collectors to think about their own collections and plan for this final transition. Far better to preserve the value of a lifetime of collecting passion than to see it simply slip into oblivion, along with its passionate collector. —*Susan Davis*

SAH News



SAH Fundraising Appeal

The Society received additional contributions from the following donors since publication of the list in the previous issue of the *Journal*.

We wish to thank,
Bernard A. Siegal, Member #1439,
Michael C. McGowan, Member #2559,
Sandra Kasky Button, Member #2626
 for the Pebble Beach Concours Foundation.

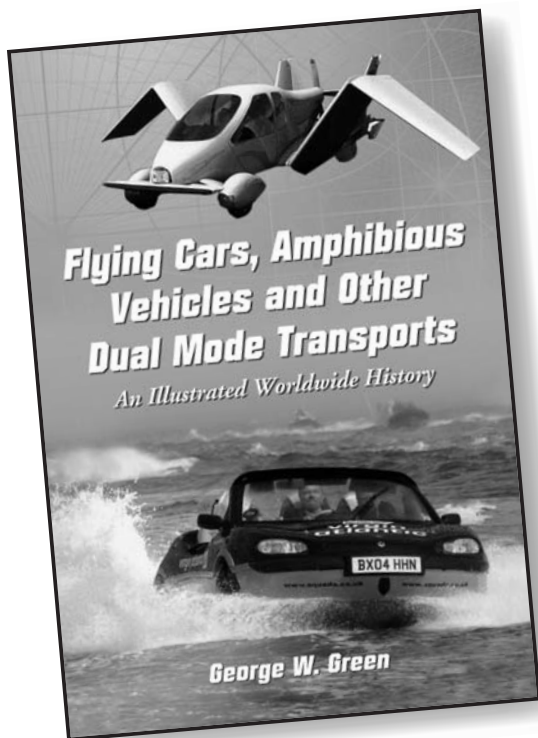
—*Patrick Bisson*

Friend of Automotive History Winners Roll

Here is the updated list for the Friend of Automotive History Award.

- 1983 *Henry Austin Clark, Jr.*
- 1984 *Charles L. Betts, Jr.*
- 1985 *Richard and Grace Brigham*
- 1986 *Beverly Rae Kimes*
- 1987 *Peter Helck*
- 1988 *Keith Marvin*
- 1989 *Ralph Dunwoodie*
- 1990 *Michael Lamm*
- 1991 *David L. Lewis*
- 1992 *John A. Conde*
- 1993 *Frederick D. Roe*
- 1994 *Walter A. MacIlvain*
- 1995 *Chester L. Krause*
- 1996 *L. Scott Bailey*
- 1997 *Lord Montague of Beaulieu*
- 1998 *Michael Worthington-Williams*
- 1999 *David Brownell*
- 2000 *Paul Berliet & Thomas E. Warth*
- 2001 *John Martin Smith*
- 2002 *Richard Langworth & Karl Ludvigsen*
- 2003 *Z. Taylor Vinson*
- 2004 *Maurice D. Hendry*
- 2005 *Leroy D. Cole*
- 2006 *Bobbie'dine Rodda*
- 2007 *Malcolm Jeal*
- 2008 *Thomas Brownell*
- 2009 *G. Marshall Naul*

—*Darwyn Lumley*




For more than a century, designers have created vehicles able to travel both on land and in water or air, for both civil and military applications. Sometimes converted from standard vehicles, sometimes beginning as clean-sheet designs, these machines have addressed the engineering and economic challenges of dual-mode travel with varying degrees of success. This book describes an array of these vehicles from the United States and abroad.

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 bibliography, index
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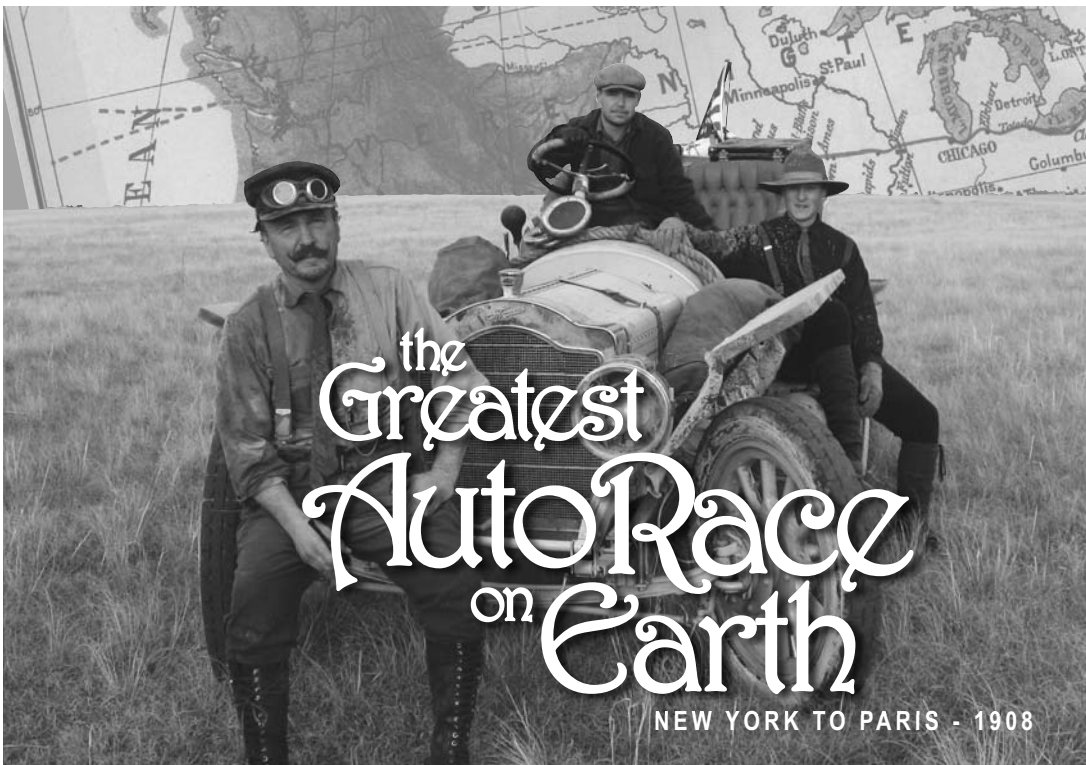


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What Is It?



Tatra T600 with coachwork by Sodomka. The car was built for Communist Party rulers. More information on this car and the Sodomka firm will appear in the next issue of the *Journal*. The car featured the expected air-cooled engine cantilevered behind the rear axle. Images from editor's collection.



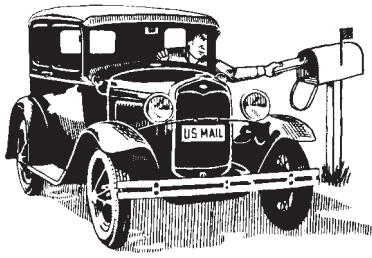
Eight years in the making, **The Greatest Auto Race on Earth** is now available on DVD, telling the story of the 1908 New York to Paris auto race.

Through never before seen photos and exact running replicas of the Thomas Flyer, German Protos, and Züst, the story of these brave men and their machines is told as they travelled 22,000 miles in 169 days.

With stunning cinematography and cutting edge computer graphics, we look at the hardships and accomplishments of such heroes as George Schuster, Lt. Hans Koeppen, and the popular Italian, Antonio Scarfoglio. Mastered to HD, this 95 minute program has already garnered numerous awards.

Use PayPal and order online at www.thegreatestautorace.com or send your name and address with a cheque or Money Order for \$35.44 (\$29.99 + \$5.45 S/H) to **The 1908 Great Auto Race Film Company Ltd.**, #202, 10816A-82 Ave., Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. T6E 2B3

Letters



The Tractor Trucks of China

Allan Meyer's article on three-wheel cargo vehicles, *When Three is Enough*, in Issue 245 refreshes our memories of the innovative inexpensive commercial vehicles of the postwar period as well as others that are not so familiar. The automotive world would have been a smaller place without these curious noisy machines, many based on motorcycle or motor scooter technology. Fortunately there is one region where economic conditions and primitive roads have created the need for durable transport to serve rural districts in developing countries.

China's tractor trucks were introduced many years ago as a hauling system of low cost, go-anywhere capability and easy maintenance. Powered by large-displacement single cylinder motors, front wheel mounted, they originally made do without weather protection or self starters, using manual starting in some cases by rope to spin the flywheel like a primitive outboard motor.

As time elapsed, enclosed bodies and flat-twin motors were adopted but the semi-muffled machines still emit a loud tractor-like chug, not the angry snarl of a Vespa Ape in the Sicilian countryside, and their speeds rarely exceed that of a trotting horse.

Visual evidence implies these sturdy tractor trucks last almost forever and they are still in production. The photographs were taken in southern Yunnan province. Can any of our members tell us more about these fascinating dinosaurs?

—Arthur Jones



Letters

More on Three-Wheelers

I enjoyed the piece on three-wheelers in the *SAH Journal* #245, and would like to add three pieces of information.

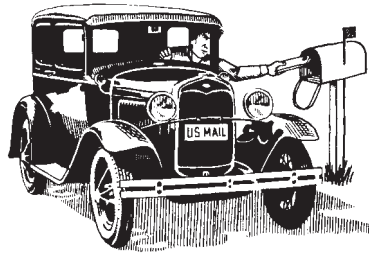
Cugnot. You say it was intended to be a materiel carrier; there was space for a load, but I always understood that its main purpose was as a tractor to pull heavy artillery. It was demonstrated to the French Army with this in mind.

Reliant 10cwt van. The 747cc 4-cylinder engine was an Austin Seven unit, initially supplied by Austin, but from 1939 built under license by Reliant. These were made up to 1955, when they were replaced by a new design with engine under a conventional hood. In 1963 a new 600cc overhead valve diecast alloy engine was adopted.

Electric milk float in Knightsbridge. This is a Wales & Edwards, a well-known British maker of three-wheelers, as well as a few fours. Starting in 1945 the vehicles were made into the 21st century, but I think they are no longer in business. Just after World War Two Britain had about a dozen makers of electric vehicles, but nearly all have gone.

There is much less demand for domestic milk delivery as people buy it cheaper from the supermarkets. I imagine it is the same in the US. Having said that, we do have our milk delivered to our house here in Guernsey, but it is by a small Daihatsu gasoline-powered van.

—Nick Georgano



Book Review Comments

Regarding the review of my new book, *Storied Independent Automakers* in the recent issue of the *SAH Journal*. Since the book appeared, there have been at least a half-dozen reviews in various magazines and journals and all have uniformly praised the book.

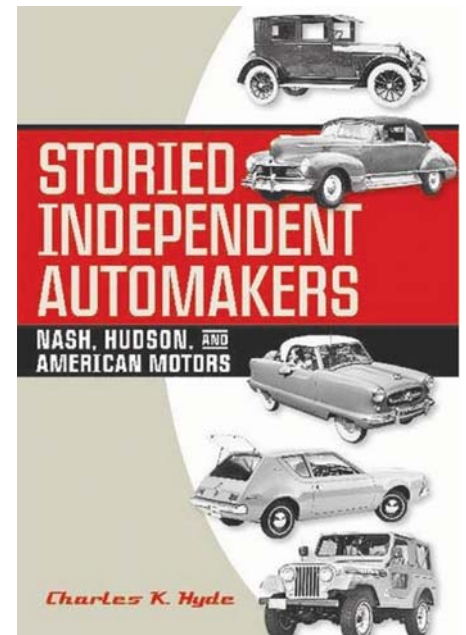
The book covers Nash, Hudson, and AMC, but the reviewer spends one paragraph on Nash and says nothing about AMC. He then describes the book as my “mea culpa” book. I wrote two other (well-received) books before writing this book, but I have never stated or felt any guilt about this. Because I reduced the manuscript before publication, the reviewer claims the book is a “choppy read.” He then says, “Ostensibly, it is a business history interwoven with biographies...” That *is* exactly what the book *is*. Later in the text, the reviewer criticizes the book for too-short coverage of the Thomas-Detroit and Chalmers-Detroit companies, but then concedes that the coverage is “accurate.”

The reviewer also criticizes me for not discussing A.E. Barit’s source of power within Hudson and suggests that the Webber family, which

owned stock, preferred that Hudson lose money. In fact, Hudson made profits during most of Barit’s tenure, other than during some of the Depression years. I make a very clear case in the book for my conclusion that Hudson’s war production efforts were mismanaged by Barit.


The reviewer takes me to task for not mentioning that Hudson lost experienced, skilled workers during the war, but that of course was true for all the auto companies. Hudson had major contracts canceled by the military, a clear indication of its failure to deliver.

—Charles K. Hyde




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Book Reviews

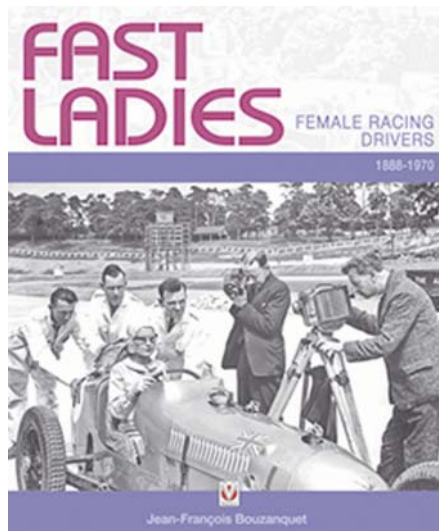
Fast Ladies – Female Racing Drivers 1888-1970

by Jean-François Bouzanquet
Hardcover, 11.75ins x 9.75ins, 175 pages, 400 photos, bibliography and index. ISBN 978-1-84584-225-3. 2009. Veloce Publishing Ltd, Dorchester, England, DT1 1TT. www.veloce.co.uk

The subject of female racing drivers has been covered in two previous books, *Atalanta*, which was compiled many years ago by the late Sammy Davis, the other, *Fast Women*, by John Bullock in 2002. The question is whether there is room for another book on the subject.

Just a glance at this tome is enough to know that this is a solid work of research both in textual and photographic content. That it is so is because the author comes from a dedicated motoring family, and his own experience racing historic racing cars as well as being a serious collector of motoring ephemera has given him the resources to produce this welcome volume. This is a book that will appeal, not only because of the plethora of remarkable pictures, but because the author brings much, and new, information in which he relives the age when a certain type of woman defied living at home being subservient to husband and family. It is all the more glorious for it being politically incorrect.

In scholarly style, Jean-François Bouzanquet begins his saga in the closing years of the 19th Century when women proved just as adept



at handling motor cars as were their male counterparts. They are shown to be driving some pretty enormous machines, inflating tires and competing at the newly opened Brooklands track. Illustrated is Bertha Benz, who in 1888 drove 180km from Mannheim to Pforzheim while her husband slept in his bed to become the first woman to drive a motor vehicle solo. Easing us into the formative years of the 20th Century we are teased with stories and snapshots of women test drivers at the Unic factory and at Montlhéry in the early days of the circuit.

Taking us into the 1920s the writer gives us more than a glimpse of the lifestyle and career of a new generation of female motorists who had served as taxi, ambulance and lorry drivers during WW1. A number of them were determined to enter motor sport, including Violette Morris whose exploits as a driver serving on the Somme during the conflict are legendary. Known to smoke 60 cigarettes a day, and with a physique of a weightlifter, Morris hit the headlines when she underwent a

double mastectomy so that she would not be obstructed by her breasts when driving super-fast cars. Morris, often seen wearing men's clothing, was known as the "hyena of the Gestapo" and she died in 1944 following a commando raid on her ordered by the Normandy Resistance.

Hellé Nice, the "Bugatti Queen", along with Jill Scott and Victoria Worsley depict a much more feminine side to racing. Mildred Bruce (who took the name The Honourable Mrs. Victor Bruce), the beautiful, petite redhead who never wore racing overalls, choosing instead to be attired in a jacket, pleated skirt and a pearl necklace, drove an AC to victory in the 1927 Monte Carlo Rally. She drove a massive Blower Bentley, and grabbing a bottle filled with petrol and gulping it, mistaking it for Vichy water, she might have got more than 89.4 mph from the car. Bruce was as adroit at the controls of an airplane as she was at the wheel of a car and was looping the loop at the age of 80 some fourteen years before her peaceful death.

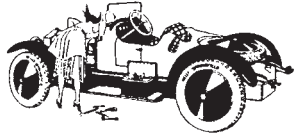
Elisabeth Junek, Gwenda Stewart-Hawkes, Renée Friedrich, Amy Johnson, Fay Taylour, Kay Petre, Elsie 'Bill' Wisdom, Pat Moss, Rosemary Smith and Sheila Van Damm all have their place within Bouzanquet's pages. Roberta Cowell, who, as Bob Cowell, was the first English transsexual to undergo a sex change operation and be allowed legally to change his sex, is there too. There are many more names, including those of Colette Trautmann, Catherine Piot, Colette Perrier and Lucette Pointet.

What is good from the historian's point of view is that the author sectionalizes his research into decade. He provides in-depth profiles and covers the successes of the lady racers in question. In this way he keeps in tune with technology, fashion and lifestyle. Within the sections devoted to each decade the author cleverly provides cameos dedicated to differing aspects of motor racing, and some lesser known female drivers. He makes some interesting contrasts too, an example

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Book Reviews

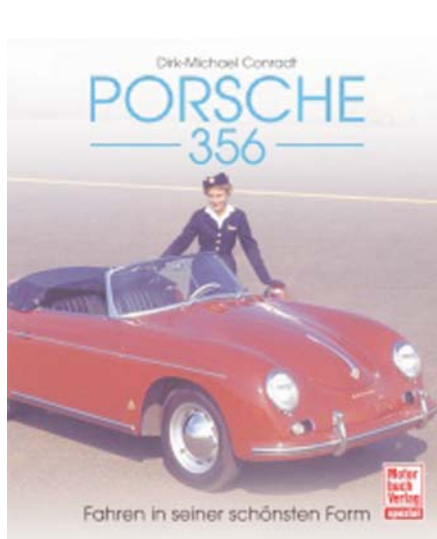
being a bold photograph of the already mentioned and extraordinarily masculine Violette Morris, and on the facing page the romantic image and utterly feminine charms of an unknown beauty ensconced on the front wing of her three-liter Alfa-Romeo RL Super Sport recorded at the Bois de Boulogne.

The 1930s and the famous Yacco endurance trials are covered in detail, including the fabulous Paris-Saint Raphael Féminin rallies where the high society of Paris and London would do battle on French roads in the depths of February. Wonderful scenes of extravaganza – as well as hard driving - are portrayed as participants rally and party in this and the equally exotic Monte.

From the '30s, Bouzanquet sails into the 1950s and an era with which many readers will be more familiar. This is the age of the Lyon-Charbonnières, the Rallye International du Maroc, the Soleil Cannes, Liège-Rome-Liège and the Rallye des Alpes, the latter made famous by Pat Appleyard and her Jaguar XK120. The swinging sixties were no less exciting with such cars as the big Healeys, Simcas, Renault and Renault Alpines, the technically advanced and futuristic looking Citroën DS and ID19s and, of course, the Mini.

The huge collection of illustrations depict a fabulous wealth of cars, from Alfas to Talbots, Bugattis to Rosengarts, and in between Fiats, Austins, Lancias, MGs, Peugeots, Hotchkiss and Napiers among others. To end the book there is a comprehensive alphabetical list of female racing drivers from 1900 to the 1970s and a record of their achievements.

This is a superb work which, as well as being entertaining, is a major source of reference which should be indulged and not be missed. —*Malcolm Bobbitt*



Porsche 356

by Dirk-Michael Conradt.
Text in German. Illustrated with 320 B&W and color photographs, 263 pages, softbound, 9 x 10.5 inches. ISBN 978-3-613-02938-5. Published by Motorbuch Verlag, Stuttgart. Special edition 2008. Price approx. \$26 plus shipping.

This is a new edition of the original book published in 1989. There was also an English version in 1993: *Porsche 356 – Driving in its purest form*) long out of print.

The author Dirk-Michael Conradt is a most renowned automotive editor and competent expert of the Porsche marque. Right away in the first chapter it is clear that he was and is devoted with heart and soul to the 356.

The special edition was published to celebrate the 80th birthday of Dr. h.c. Ferry Porsche, the son of the company founder Ferdinand Porsche. The book contains a very thoroughly researched and comprehensive history of the development of the 356 with all its types, specials and experimental models, racing and sports versions.

The precise chronological display contains information of all kinds and

therefore is a most appreciated aid when restoring such a car. The early tests and prototypes are of special interest. The book contains exact data and key figures of the step-by-step development of the range, and the racing entries of the small sports car on road and track.

Many of the fabulous photographs were made by Julius Weitmann, the man who was the father of modern car and racing photography in Europe.

For any Porsche enthusiast who does not yet have the original edition on his shelf, this is an opportunity to fill the gap. Many hours of interesting and surprising reading are guaranteed.

Printed on glossy paper and nicely presented *Porsche 356* is a steal at less than 30 dollars. Highly recommended. —*Ferdinand Hediger*

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

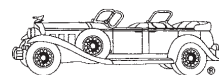
founded in 1952 to promote the preservation and restoration of distinctive motorcars built between 1925 and 1948.

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

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Weller Brothers of Memphis

By Walter M. P. McCall, with Roger D. White, MD. 128 pages, softbound, 132 B&W images, 10.25" x 8.5"
ISBN: 158388257X / 9781583882573
Published by: Iconografix, Hudson, WI. 2010, \$34.95

This book is part of the Iconografix "Photo Archive" series, and as such covers a highly specialized area of automotive history. The benefit of this series of books is to preserve and disseminate collections of factory product documentation. Of 129 factory-produced images in the book, nearly all are reproduced close to full size. This is highly informative for anyone requiring detailed views for restoration of a professional car, for example.

General readers may wonder if it is worth paying \$34.95 for pictures of ambulances and funeral cars. Consider that the cover price of \$34.95 averages out to approximately \$0.25 per image which is perhaps less than a stack of old 8x10 glossies at a swap meet. Furthermore, each image has a paragraph of descriptive text, information which is not always present on the reverse side of as-found photos. The photos come from the collection of Dr. Roger P. White, a Mayo Clinic anesthesiologist who discovered them in the former Weller Brothers facility in Memphis in the early 1980s.

HORSELESS CARRIAGE GAZETTE

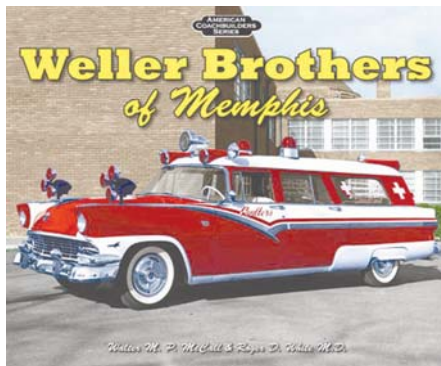
As you might expect from a club publication, the *Horseless Carriage Gazette* is chock full of exciting four-color photographs showing brass-era automobiles in action. First-generation cars don't get out often but, when they do, it is a real privilege to be along for the ride.

History buffs will enjoy a feature or two in each *Horseless Carriage Gazette* about marques both popular and obscure. In addition, more than 240 black & white images from the pre-1916 era were used as illustrations in the six 2007 issues.

Membership is \$45 (\$55 outside of the USA).

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George and Harold Weller began business in 1922 repairing and repainting car bodies. Eventually by 1936 Weller Brothers branched out to conversion work transforming cars into ambulances and hearses. At one time Memphis, Tennessee, was home to five other coachbuilding enterprises in addition to Weller Brothers.

The Wellers converted at least a dozen brands of vehicles into professional cars including Buick, Chevrolet, Oldsmobile, Pontiac, Ford, Mercury, Lincoln, Packard, Chrysler, Dodge, DeSoto and Plymouth. Some conversions comprised merely a high roof, special rear loading door and interior refit on a standard wheelbase. The most involved conversions featured a wheelbase stretch and original design and fabrication work on the entire top and rear section of the vehicle including the fenders.

Among the ambulances and hearses are the novel "combination" models which would function as both, presumably not on the same trip. A few conversions were advertised as four-function units, comprising Emergency Ambulance, Child Hearse, Flower Car, and Utility Unit. The Wellers also offered what they termed "IFITS." "If it's an ambulance... first-call car... flower car... second hearse or personal car you need,... you have it in the IFITS. Send us your car —any kind— we'll convert it." This would also explain the wide variety of car brands which served as base vehicles.

Professional car body accessories such as lights and sirens are noted and named by make and model.

Some vehicles carried one discreet roof-mounted warning light, while at least two conversions carried no less than thirteen lights spread over the entire vehicle. These well-illuminated vehicles must have made quite an appearance after dark or in dense fog. Another sign of the times was script reading "Air Conditioned" on the outside of several ambulances.

Weller Brothers completed their last ambulance conversions on 1969 model Pontiac and Mercury standard wheelbase station wagons. These vehicles had the expected raised roof, apparently executed in molded fiberglass. The Wellers had continued their collision repair business alongside conversion work for the preceding 33 years. The author Walter M.P. McCall enlisted Thomas A. McPherson to track down the original owners of several vehicles shown in the book. An epilog shows three snapshots of a few surviving examples of Weller-built vehicles.

This type of book demonstrates its value when restoring commercial vehicles. Professional cars and transit vehicles are subject to equipment retrofits and change of livery during their service lives. It is helpful to verify original equipment and trim to explain random holes in the bodywork or dangling wires. Obviously color schemes are lost for the purposes of this black-and-white archive, but paint patterns and lettering can be verified.

There are a few unavoidable flaws with the images, some were clearly photographer's errors such as out-of-focus or framing issues. Other factors are the photo prints themselves, they may show marks or evidence of age. These are few and far between, the majority of images are as crisp and detailed as can be expected using the half-tone printing process on paper. The best aspect of the book is that it documents the very existence of Weller Brothers, a firm which might otherwise have been forgotten outside the Memphis area. —A. Meyer

Editorial

Brinksmanship

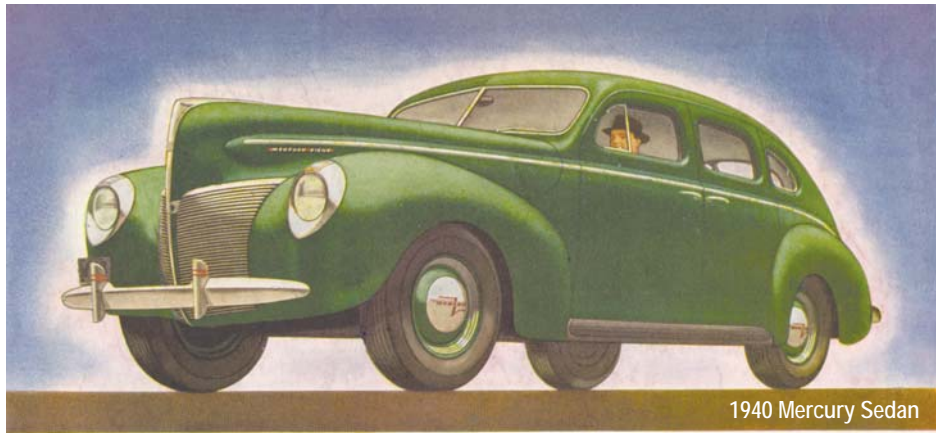
In this column on December 31, 2009, I prognosticated the demise of SAAB. We all know that history is under no obligation to meet our expectations.

February 24, 2010 Mike Colleran, the President and CEO of SAAB Cars North America sent a letter to customers announcing that SAAB Automobile AB had in fact been purchased by Spyker N.V. SAAB press releases stated that SAAB had left liquidation and that their management were back in control. Transfer of ownership had taken place, with both SAAB and Spyker to operate under a parent company called Spyker Cars N.V. Trollhättan. Spyker Cars CEO Victor Muller expressed his confidence that SAAB's future was secure, and that every effort would be put into transforming SAAB into a sustainable, bold company again.

Personally, I hope to see fewer blatant examples of chimeric SAAB-branded products in the future. The SAAB 9-2x was the handsomest version of the Subaru Impreza, to be fair. The 9-7x was pointless and apparently consumers agreed. SAAB has displayed several interesting concept cars in the last few years, but these models rarely see production.



Above and below: SAAB 9-X Air Biopower concept, one of two versions. Seen at the 2008 Los Angeles Auto Show. All images from editor's collection.



1940 Mercury Sedan

The repercussions of the so-called Great Recession have not played out fully. By early August, 2010, the last orders for new Mercury-branded vehicles will be accepted. Mercury vehicle sales are meant to continue from inventory until stock runs out, presumably at the end of 2010. Service, parts and warrantee work are to be handled through Ford and Lincoln dealers. Ford has mentioned that although Mercury was originally created to be a "premium" version of comparable Ford models, buyers have been migrating from Mercury to Ford in the last several years.

Ford stated that the majority of Mercury sales are to fleet buyers, and through employee, retiree and "friends and family" discounts. Ford has a 16 percent share of the U.S. domestic market while the Mercury brand accounts for 0.8 percent, which has been declining in the past several years. Apparently,

there are no current stand-alone Mercury dealers. In short, Ford is discontinuing Mercury because it is slowly fading away in any case.

I do recall the trajectory of the Mercury Capri series of cars. They started out as a German Ford captive import which managed to survive the federalization process in the early 1970s including unattractive battering-ram bumpers. The Capri II looked very much like the first, but featured a hatchback. A 2.6 liter V-6 engine was offered from late 1972, in contrast to the 2.4 liter SOHC inline-six in the Datsun 240 Z which in any case was a two-seat coupe or small 2+2 while the Capri always had four seats. By 1974 the shrunken Pinto-based Ford Mustang II had been introduced which sold almost 386,000 cars in the first year in the Capri's market segment. Towards the end of the German import Capri model run,



Above: 1958 Mercury Turnpike Cruiser with retractable rear glass. Below: 1956 Mercury Montclair Sun Valley showing the tinted Plexiglass roof panel, from the Freewheelers Westcoast Meet, San Luis Obispo, CA.



Mercury claimed to have sold nearly 500,000 units in North America.

In 1979, the Capri model range turned into a Mercury version of the handsome Fox-platform Ford Mustang. In a game of automotive musical chairs, the previous Mercury iteration of the Mustang, the Cougar, had already moved upmarket to become a version of the Ford Thunderbird. At the auto show it was clear that the Capri had an appealing, aggressive appearance compared to the slightly fleet-car look of the base model Mustangs. The new Capri range had a choice of engines from four-cylinder, V-6 to V-8. Once again the Capri featured a hatchback, and evolved into several special editions including the Black-and-Gold "Black Magic" version. Several other color variations were available. After 1986 the Capri name was discontinued.

By 1991, the Capri nameplate returned to North America on the Australian-built Ford Capri from 1989. The Capri was now a front-drive four-cylinder Mazda-powered convertible. At the time it seemed that a Mercury version of the Ford Probe would have made a more suitable Capri, but the Mazda-based AutoAlliance platform was not available as a convertible. Several friends and I wondered who Ford thought they were fooling with the new Capri. Nevertheless, one friend was considering buying the new Capri with the available

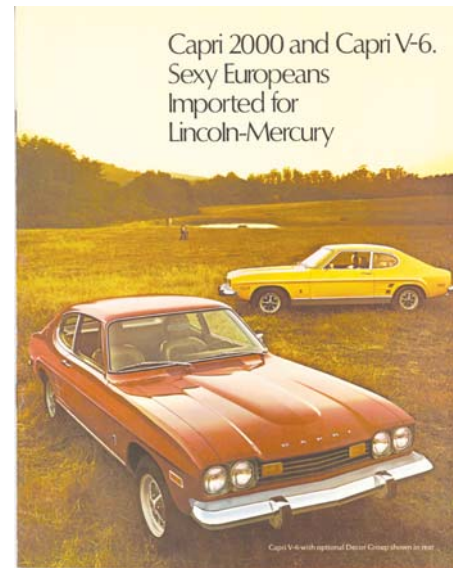


removable hardtop, which made the car into a quirky, wedge-shaped sporty car.

Clearly, there is more to the history of the Mercury brand which has offered many interesting models throughout its run. The on-again, off-again Capri and the gyrations of the Cougar model line are examples of how badge engineering can be taken too far for too long. Yet, the Mercury Grand Marquis on the Panther platform has been a stalwart of limousine fleets and municipalities.

Mercury seemed to be staking a small claim to hybrid and alternative powerplants with the Mariner Hybrid and potentially other models. It is a shame to see the division fade away.

—A. Meyer



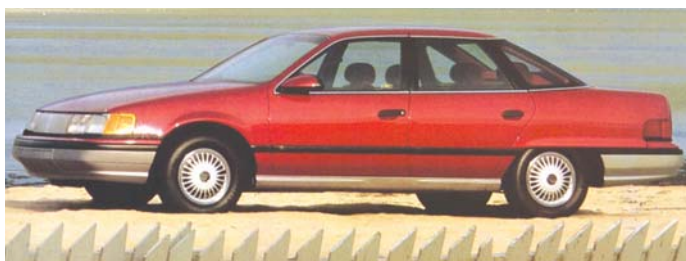
Above: 1973 Mercury Capri from Ford-Köln in Germany.



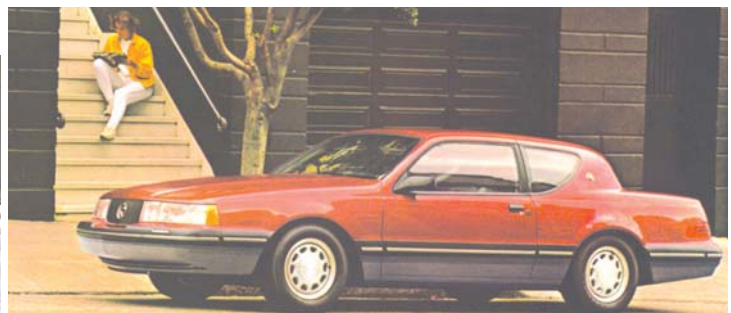
Above: 1980 Mercury Capri on US-built Fox platform.



Above: 1991 Mercury Capri from Ford Australia. Below: 1963 Monterey with retractable "breezeway" rear window. Bottom: 1987 Cougar.



Above: 1986 Mercury Sable. The front panel between the headlights was illuminated. Below: 2009 Grand Marquis, this style body dates to 1992, Panther platform to 1979.





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Mercury Bobcat, above. This version of the Ford Pinto featured a formal grille and larger rear reflectors disguised as taillights. Note the professional models in the picture, one bears an “uncanny” resemblance to actor Tom Selleck.