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# MUSCLE CAR REVIEW

- > **BARN FINDS & HIDDEN GEMS OF MCACN**
- > **ULTRARARE ACADIAN BEAUMONT**
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# BURIED TREASURES

**RARE FIND:**  
427-POWERED 1968 COUGAR GTE



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**ON THE COVER:** Rick Nelson photographed this Garnet Red 1969 Yenko Chevelle as it was pulled from the original owner's garage for the first time since 1970. Steve Temple tells the story starting on page 16.

## Now's the Time

**W**henever we do a barn find issue like this one, invariably I will hear a comment about the magazine to the effect of, "Wow! You'd think all those cars would have been found by now."

Nope. Far from it. We didn't have room in this issue to run all the found-muscle stories that came our way over the past few months. And that's just in this magazine. Coincidentally, we are also producing a barn find issue of my other magazine, *Hot Rod Deluxe*. That niche of the hobby is still finding historic old hot rods too, like the 1932 roadster that will be on the cover. Yep, much like the Yenke Chevelle on this cover, that issue will feature the Holy Grail of hot rodding, a Deuce roadster that had been moldering in a Northern California barn (yes, a literal barn find) since 1955.

Why does this trend show no signs of slowing? A few things are at work here.

First is the obvious allure of buried treasure, the idea that anyone who's observant and alert (and lucky) enough will stumble across a neglected piece of automotive history just waiting for a new lease on life.

Second is a certain amount of push from the other side of the equation. With all the magazine stories, books, and TV shows devoted to "pickins" of all kinds, just about anyone with an attic, garage, or storage unit full of old stuff believes he or she may be sitting on a small fortune. A version of that very thing happened to me. While cleaning out some closets, I came across a box of WWII memorabilia that had been collecting dust for years—medals, a couple helmets, small stuff. A quick internet search turned



RICK NELSON PHOTO

■ **Despite its condition, this wasn't some lost or forgotten car. The opposite was true. It was so beloved by its owner that he refused to sell it.**

up an outfit that would sell these things online for me. Even after paying their commission, I wound up with nearly \$1,000. So now you can believe I'm taking a closer look around the house to see what other "junk" might be worth something to the right buyer.

Correlated to the "this may be worth something" notion is a broadening of what we consider barn finds. The literal term still applies (see *Hot Rod Deluxe's* July 2018 issue), but it has also grown to include those cars hibernating anywhere else you could park one. A lot of what we're seeing these days are cars that aren't real finds but just subjects of long-term storage, typically in someone's garage. They're still dusty, musty time capsules, but not necessarily forgotten.

In fact, as is the case with the Yenke Chevelle on our cover and the 427-powered Cougar GT-E that Jerry Heasley writes about in this month's Rare Finds, these cars aren't forgotten at all. They're beloved by their owners but have, for various reasons, sat neglected for years, if not decades.

This is the kind of "find" we're seeing more and more these days, and it will be the kind that fuels our passion for hidden gems for years to come. Why? Because time marches on. Because those fortunate enough to have lived through the heyday of classic muscle are in their 60s, 70s, maybe even 80s now, and the "someday" they were waiting for to fix up the car in the garage is proving elusive.

Burnice Robie, who with her husband Turner bought the Rare Finds Cougar when it was new in 1968, put it this way: "I'm 80 and he's 85. What are we gonna do with it?"

What they did was find someone who will love and appreciate the car as much as they did. This scenario will repeat itself over and over as these muscle car owners come to the hard realization that they aren't getting any younger and the car in the garage isn't, either. If their kids, or some other family member, doesn't want it, they'll have to find a good home for it.

So now's the time, folks. Be alert to possibilities. Talk to friends, friends of friends, your parents' friends. Ask about that car under the cover in the garage, or whatever happened to your grandpa's old fill-in-the-blank.

Do it gently, respectfully, without violating their privacy or seeming like you want to take advantage. Because that's not what this is about. You read this magazine because you love these cars, and that makes you the most qualified to provide them with that good home, the new lease on life. Not some flipper out for the quick buck.

When you make the find, we'd love to hear about it.

**"They'll have to find a good home for it"**

Drew Hardin  
mcreview@sbcglobal.net

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## WE'RE SORRY

After reading your coverage of the 2017 Pure Stock Drags ["Fast Times at Mid-Michigan Motorplex," Feb. 2018], I was disappointed not to have been included in your list of quickest competitors. I am a regular participant with my 1969 L78 Camaro, and ran a best of 12.616 at 113.16. And yes, there was a third round, as I did win the shootout over Adrian Beltrame.

**Bob Telep**

*We apologize for the oversight. Congrats on winning your shootout!*



## FOND MEMORIES

When I saw Eric English's story about Bruce Mercer's 1967 Camaro SS350 ["Second Coming," Feb. 2018], it brought back a lot of fond memories of when I was working at the Van Nuys assembly plant. I had a chance to build my very own SS Camaro, but not the sweet little 350, oh no. It had to be the mean and nasty L78 375hp 396 bad boy. And it wasn't a four-speed, nope. I made sure it was the (new for 1967) Turbo Hydro M40.

Although I received a lot of ribbing at first for going with three speeds, not four, it didn't take long at our local dragstrip (San Fernando Raceway) before all of the stick-shift boys were impressed with what a set of 4.10 gears, a B&M shift kit for the tranny, and some Lakewood traction bars to help the rear end from hopping could do. Once hooked up, that solid-lifter big-block was an absolute terror.

Kept that Camaro until I went into the Navy, making two Vietnam tours. I sold the Camaro knowing that I wouldn't have the pleasure of using it for four years. And besides, I could always make myself another Camaro when my service days were over.

## OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS DEJA VU

In response to Marc Conigliari's article on his Buick GS Stage 1 ragtop ["Opportunity Knocks Once," Feb. 2018] I had to wonder if he is my soul brother. I, too, had this same experience when contemplating future plans for my 1968 Firebird 400 convertible.

Like Marc's old Skylark, my 'Bird was at a crossroads: Should I dump \$25,000 into it, or sell it and wait for my dream car to appear for sale somewhere? I chose to sell (a very hard decision after owning it for 13 years) and told myself I will seek to find what I really wanted, if it takes me six months or six years.

After three months I came across a numbers-matching, one-family-owned, all-



original-sheetmetal, beautiful Firebird 400 convertible. It was everything I had wanted in a Firebird 400.

Long story short, it was the best decision I made. Could not have lived with myself had I passed on this golden opportunity. Probably paid \$2,000 too much for it, but it didn't matter, it was my dream car. Moral of the story: If you wish it and it is available, go for it! Life is too short.

**Ron Mancini**

I returned to doing what I enjoyed doing, building cars. I retired from GM after 38 years when the plant closed down in 1992.

The picture is from a few months after I picked up the car, with my "day two" equipment: wheels, tires, exhaust, gears, underhood goodies. Note all the Chevys parked at my parent's house back in 1967. We were and still are today a lifelong GM family!

**Rich LaGrasta**



*In this follow-up message, LaGrasta told us about another of his special Chevys:*

Working for GM gave me so many memories and stories, not to mention a clandestine factory project car that made the pages of *Super Chevy* and twice won its class at two *Super Chevy* events. It was quite the sleeper. That innocent 1975 Chevy Nova SS350 is sporting not only an F-41 suspension but also a total Police 9C-1 package. To that, add one Corvette L82 350 engine, a TH400 transmission, and a 12-bolt rear sporting 3.73 gears with a Posi. Later I added a tach and underdash gauges and a dual exhaust system sporting dual cats.

This car was a hoot to drive and surprised

many an unsuspecting "junior muscle car" (small-block) owner not only at a stop light "test-and-tune" but through an occasional canyon carving Sunday Drive here in Southern California. It was great fun but eventually sold to an individual who "just had to have it."


**Rich LaGrasta**



## OFF-BALANCE

Regarding your story on Dan McGladery's Hemi GTX ["Well-Traveled Hemi," Feb. 2018], the crankshaft would benefit more from balancing than the block would.

**George Adelsperger**

*You're referring to a line in the story where we said that "the numbers-matching block was line-honed and balanced." Always appreciate readers like you helping to keep our language precise.* 

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By Drew Hardin

## THE LAST DODGE MADE AT HAMTRAMCK GETS A NEW HOME

After 37 years with its original owner, the last car ever produced at the historic Dodge Main assembly plant—the famed Hamtramck facility where countless Mopar muscle cars were born—has a new steward.

Jeff Cross of Indiana purchased the TA3 Silver Metallic 1980 Aspen R/T at the end of 2017 from Michigan's Bob Nellis. He plans to gift it to his father, David.

The plant opened in 1911, when Dodge brothers John and Horace supplied Model T subassemblies to Henry Ford. It grew to employ more than 20,000 in the 1920s and up to 35,000 during the war years.

Employment began to slide in the 1950s as manufacturers headed beyond the city to build sprawling single-story plants. The Dodge Main facility became obsolete, and the end was announced in 1979.

When he heard of the impending closure, Bob Nellis, who worked at Chrysler as an electrical apprentice, made it his mission to purchase the last car off the line. The Aspen R/T

■ **The last vehicle to roll out of Chrysler's Hamtramck plant, this 1980 Dodge Aspen R/T is one of 285 built. Aspen R/T equipment was scaled back in the final year, with the rear spoiler, R/T graphics, and wheels the only unique features.**

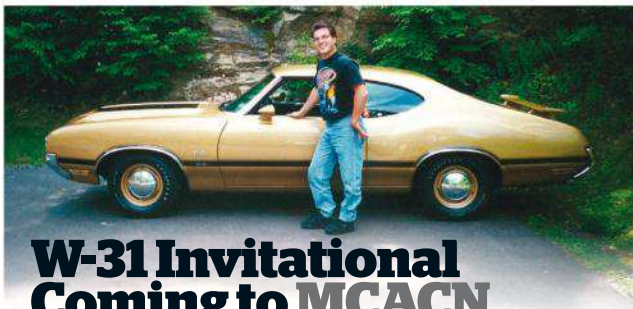
■ **Power came from a 318 V-8 rated at 155 hp and 240 lb-ft of torque.**

■ **Bob and Frieda Nellis took delivery of the Aspen R/T at Colonial Dodge in January 1980, which was only a few miles from the plant.**

did just that in January 1980, the 13,943,221st vehicle built at Dodge Main after 70 years of production. Nellis used the car strictly as a show vehicle for the next 3½ decades, displaying it with historical information about the Dodge Main plant. When the time came to sell the car, the odometer showed less than 19,000 original miles.

By gifting the car to his father, Jeff says it will continue to serve as an educational tool about Dodge's early days.

—Barry Kluczyk

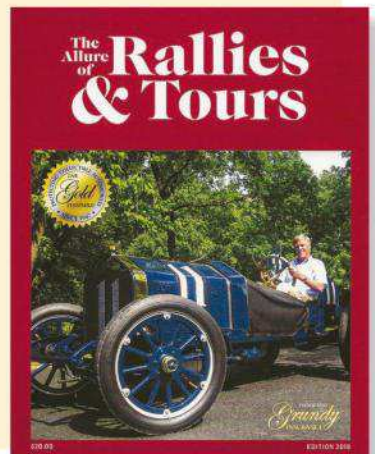


## W-31 Invitational Coming to MCACN

While 4-4-2s tend to soak up all the Oldsmobile-related glory, a very special display of Ram Rods and W-31 models will be at the Muscle Car and Corvette Nationals in November. Coordinated by Dan Vasic, the display will include more than a dozen restored and original cars, plus race cars and at least one car with its original owner. Olds guru Stephen Minore, shown here in a 1999 photo with the W-31 that began his love affair with the make, is also planning something very special that we can tell you about in another issue or so. MCACN takes place November 17-18 near Chicago; visit [mcan.com](http://mcan.com) for more info.

## Grundy Guide to Rallies & Tours

Grundy Insurance wants to encourage all auto hobbyists to get out and enjoy their cars, and to that end it has published *The Allure of Rallies & Tours*, a detailed look inside the most popular road-going events in the country. The guide explains the difference between a rally and a tour and offers advice on how to prepare for, and even host, one of these events. You can get your copy at [grundy.com](http://grundy.com).





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Owners of the new Shelby Cobra roadsters and Daytonas will also receive driver

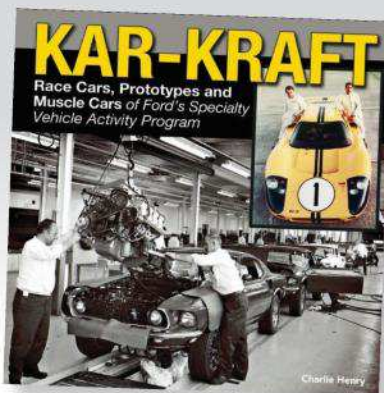
training at Bondurant's racing school in Phoenix. Learn more at [shelby.com](http://shelby.com).

## Muscle Car Bookshelf

### **Kar-Kraft: Race Cars, Prototypes and Muscle Cars of Ford's Specialty Vehicle Activity Program**

by Charlie Henry, 192 pages, hardbound; CarTech Books, [cartech.com](http://cartech.com)

Best known as Ford's skunkworks for projects like the GT40 and Boss Mustangs, Kar-Kraft built all sorts of high-performance and high-concept cars for FoMoCo. Henry digs deep to unearth wild projects like a Boss 429 Maverick, a Cou-



gar with a rumble seat, and the Specialty Bronco concept that appears in this issue on page 28. The informative text is complemented by period photography of cars under construction and in use, design sketches, and even reproductions of original Ford memos and handwritten engineering notes. The book will certainly appeal to Ford fans, but you don't have to bleed blue to appreciate this comprehensively researched and fascinating book.

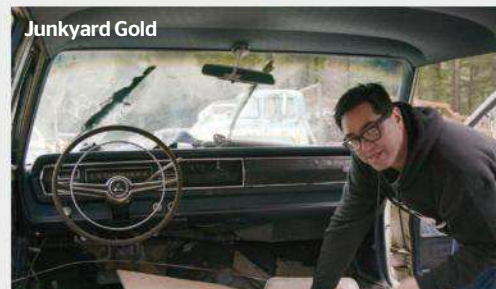
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Junkyard Gold



Roadkill

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- June 6 Head 2 Head, ep. 102
- June 11 Roadkill, ep. 84

Programming subject to change.

By Jerry Heasley

**F**inding a 1968 Cougar GT-E with its original 427 is "almost unheard of," Royce Peterson said. The GT-E production run, which began midway through the 1968 model year, was a mere 393, of which 356 were 427s and the remaining 37 were 428 Cobra Jets. Apparently, Cougar muscle cars were popular targets for engine harvesting, with 427s going into kit car Cobras back in the 1970s and 1980s.

That's why we were so excited to go along on this expedition to the home of the original owners, Turner and Burnice Robie of Ardmore, Oklahoma. Their 1968 GT-E was complete, down to the numbers-matching big-block.

"Somehow there's a part of that car that's human," Burnice said as she stood with Turner and his nephew, Phillip Sones, in the driveway of their home.

Peterson had pulled his enclosed trailer 110 miles north from Dallas to pick up what he believes is the "best unrestored GT-E that anybody has ever seen" for his friend Jim Pinkerton, who lives in Seattle and runs the online Cougar GT-E Registry ([gte.mercury-cougarregistry.com](http://gte.mercury-cougarregistry.com)). Pinkerton had known about this muscle Mercury since 2005, when he first corresponded in a Cougar forum with Sones. At that time, the Merc was not for sale. Pinkerton kept the car's location secret, per Sones' wishes.

Then, in late 2017, Sones called Pinkerton with the news that his aunt and uncle were ready to sell their GT-E.

Pinkerton and Peterson are close friends. Peterson runs the Cougar XR7-G Registry



up beside us—this was in Mountain View [California]—and revving his engine, and my aunt telling us to put our seatbelts on. She just smoked him, left him sitting at the light. When we got up to the next light, he said, 'Geez, lady, what have you got in that thing?' And she smoked him again, left him sitting there again. He was all kinds of upset."

Burnice said, "It's too bad Michelle couldn't be here. Our oldest daughter raced

everybody." An Ardmore High School student automobile registration windshield sticker dated 1973-74 confirmed Michelle's connection to the 427-powered Mercury.

"Yeah, they built a Highway Patrol office right there on the road, so they'd stop racing it," said Turner. He and his wife exchanged fond memories and chuckled.

"We left California in 1972. I drove the Cougar with the two dogs and the two girls.

## "She just smoked him, left him sitting at the light"

([xr7g.mercury Cougar registry.com](http://xr7g.mercury Cougar registry.com)) and documented the GT-E for his friend so he could make a deal over the phone with the Robies.

Burnice said, "It's going to bother me when I get up tomorrow morning and it's not there." But she admitted it was "time to sell... because it's sitting there rotting. I'm 80 and he's 85. What are we gonna do with it?"

The inspection sticker on the windshield revealed 1975 as the last time the Cougar had been registered. The family had so many memories and so much love for this car!

Sones said, "I can remember going to the grocery store and some guy pulling



■ The 1968 Cougar GT-E, red on red, had been pulled from the garage and parked in the driveway when we arrived. Jim Pinkerton has entered 288 GT-E Cougars in his Registry, and about a half-dozen have had their original drivetrains.



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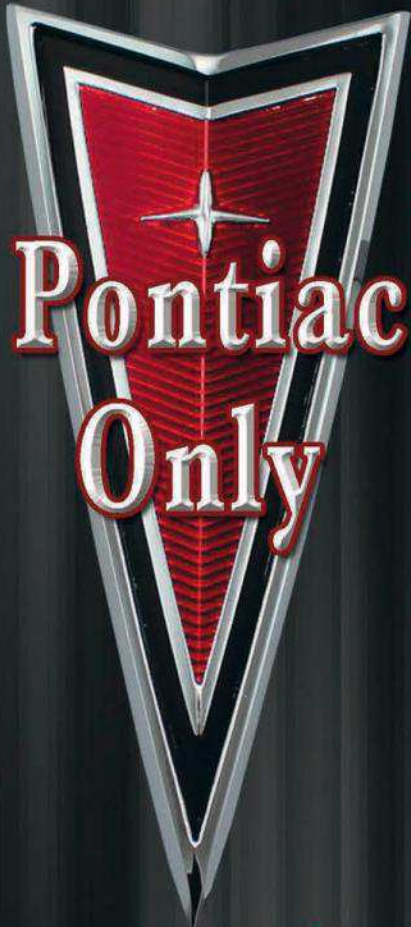


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## RARE FINDS

**"ALMOST UNHEARD  
OF" COUGAR GT-E**

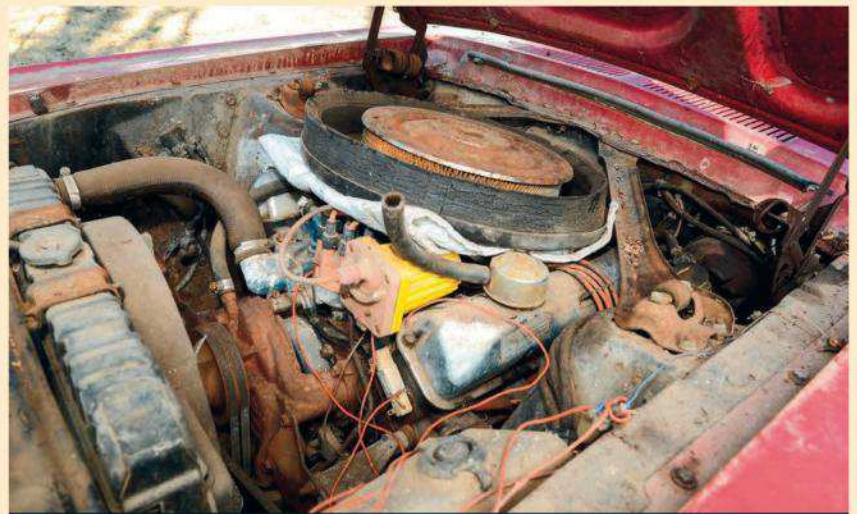
He was driving truck. We broke down in Albuquerque. We were going up that big mountain and one of the rods 'went' and shook the car!"

Burnice bought a new pickup and towed the Cougar the rest of the way. Instead of rebuilding the 427, Turner—who "started from a boy at 14" as a California hot rodder—hired a shop in Oklahoma City to build a "NASCAR" 427 with a "good block and crankshaft." Luckily, he kept the original 427.

Turner recalled the day he purchased the GT-E from the Ford dealer in California. There were three new Cougars parked side by side. And his was "the only one with the bump," referring to the Power-dome with simulated air intakes that he modified for



■ Fortunately, Turner kept the GT-E's original 427, including the original heads, which went with the deal.




■ When the original 427 threw a rod, Turner Robie installed a 427 medium-riser with the original intake, brackets, fan shroud, air cleaner assembly, and even the original carburetor linkage from the stock 427. Missing is the smog system and the original carburetor.



■ All 1968 Cougar GT-Es came with a C6 automatic transmission. The odometer read 63,311.

ram air. No doubt, Turner knew he had a special performance Cougar, but he isn't a numbers-matching collector.

Burnice thanked Peterson for being a "real person" and helping document the car to facilitate the sale to Jim Pinkerton. Sones believed other potential buyers wanted to flip the rare Mercury. In contrast, Pinkerton is a serious collector who will fully restore the GT-E to high standards, which makes Burnice and Turner feel good about letting their beloved Cougar go to a new home. 



■ The W in the VIN's fifth spot is the elusive code for the 427, a limited-production racing engine. Many people still believe Ford installed W-code 427s in the 1968 Mustang, but none have ever been found.



■ Phillip Sones helped his uncle Turner sell the Cougar GT-E and load the Mercury onto Royce Peterson's enclosed trailer.



■ Royce Peterson (far left) facilitated this sale for Turner and Burnice Robie. Several books and manuals went with the deal.

Do you have a **RARE FIND** story to share? Contact Jerry Heasley at [jerry@jerryheasley.com](mailto:jerry@jerryheasley.com).

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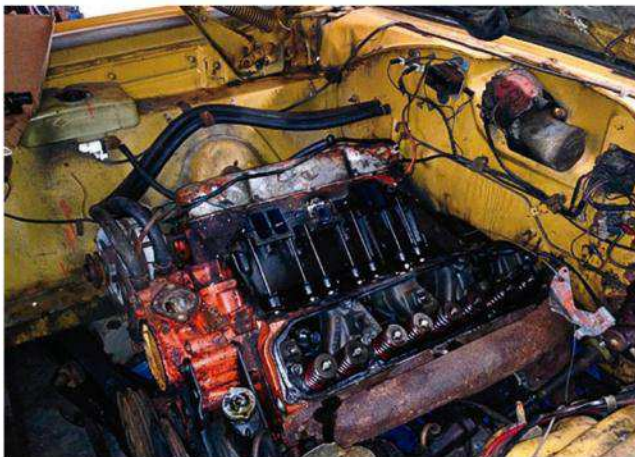
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## Jeremy Sanchez 1969 Road Runner



**I AM 15 YEARS OLD**, my passion is cars, and I am a Mopar fanatic. I know how to do everything on a car except for the interior. My dad taught me everything I know about bodywork, paint, rebuilding engines, even making my own tools. A couple years ago I turned my go-kart into the General Lee from *The Dukes of Hazzard*. I painted all of the graphics, and even put the Dixie horn on it.

My favorite TV show is *The Dukes of Hazzard*, and that started my love for Mopars, since the General Lee is a 1969 Charger. I was hunting for a Mopar and just couldn't find one I could afford or one that wasn't absolute junk. I was beginning to think I was never going to find the Mopar I really wanted, but in May 2017 I found my 1969 Plymouth Road Runner.



It was put into a garage in 1981, with only 21,000 miles on it. It has its original Bahama Yellow paint, original black interior, matching-numbers engine, four-speed manual transmission, and rearend.


My dad, a friend, and I drove three hours in my dad's truck with our friend's trailer to buy the Road Runner. As soon as we brought it home, we realized what a special car it is. We pulled out the back seat and found the

original build sheet/broadcast sheet in perfect condition. I decoded the entire thing, and found that this car has many rare options.

It's equipped with the Rallye suspension, N96 Air Grabber package, 3.55 Sure-Grip rearend, black bucket-seat interior, black vinyl top, and power steering, and even has original chalk markings on the trunk lid and valve covers. The only things not original to the car are the

carburetor and intake manifold, exhaust, and wheels and tires. (Even though the wheels and tires are correct for the car, this particular Road Runner was not equipped with them.)

Our goal is to put the car back to as original as possible. The engine was seized from sitting for 36 years, and we ripped the entire thing apart. My dad showed me how to do things like the valves, and I did the rest of them on my own, as I am doing lots of things by myself. We are currently putting the engine back together, and I cannot wait to start the car. It should be running in a few weeks.

Over the years of research on cars and Mopars, I have learned so much, and it is a type of skill and knowledge that I am truly proud to have. 

**We want your readers' rides!** Share the story of your muscle car. What did it look like when you got it? Have you done any restoration work? Email your stories and high-resolution digital photos to [mcreview@sbcglobal.net](mailto:mcreview@sbcglobal.net), or mail them to *Muscle Car Review*, Readers' Rides, 831 S. Douglas St., El Segundo, CA 90245. We reserve the right to edit your stories, and photos cannot be returned.

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# Yenko

## RESCUE

### Digging Out a Buried 1969 Chevelle

By Steve Temple and Rick Nelson  
Photos: Rick Nelson

**T**he Beatles are famous for singing, "All You Need Is Love." Yeah, but it doesn't hurt to throw a really rare Chevelle into the mix as well.

Just ask Rick Nelson and his fiancée, Annie Hartweg. They were blessed this year with an early wedding present after communicating with the family of a long-lost 1969 Yenko SC 427 Chevelle that was still on the original owner's property.

That owner, a man named Joe, had passed away only weeks before. Shannon, a family relative, was either going to restore this old car or sell it. After much discussion and research among members of the family, they decided to sell the car.

Rick, whom some readers might recall from previous *MCR* features on Chevelles, is the owner of MuscleCar Restoration and Design in Pleasant Plains, Illinois. Shannon had contacted him about finding a buyer, and Rick said he might know of somebody. But it didn't even cross his mind that it would be him. That is, until he related his conversation about the Yenko Chevelle to Annie over dinner.

Aghast, Annie threw her fork at him and exclaimed, "What the hell is wrong with you? Go buy the damn car!" (She has worked side-by-side with Rick for many years and has owned many muscle cars herself.)

As soon as a deal was sealed on the car, Rick and his shop's restoration tech, Jim Saathoff, headed to Louisville, Kentucky, where the Chevelle had lived its entire life. But it had a troubled past.

#### A Bit Muddy

The story is a bit muddy, like the car. Joe bought the Chevelle at Louisville's V.V. Cooke Chevrolet dealership, and apparently drove the hell out of it from the get-go. According to Shannon, when the Chevelle was nearly brand new, Joe motored over to the Smyrna Inn, a little bar down the road from where he lived, to drink beer and shoot pool. When he left after several hours, he discovered that the car was missing. He reported it stolen, and two weeks later the police found the car with some severe front-end damage. He had it brought back to his place, where he tore it apart. (At least that's how the story goes. Shannon hinted that there's probably more to it.)

The truth of what really happened went to the grave with Joe. The Chevelle was still in the same garage where he had parked it in 1970 after the accident. Rick got the impression that Joe was so embarrassed about the accident that he put the car in hiding, where it remained for another 47 years. And with only 19,000 miles on it!

Numerous Yenko treasure seekers tracked down the owner and inquired about the car's whereabouts over the years, but all were turned away—until Rick entered the picture. He has a solid reputation for his expertise with Chevelles, which facilitated the transaction.

Upon arriving at the address that Rick was given, he and Jim were barely able to get the garage door open, as it started to fall apart in their hands. Then, through all the gloom and grime, the guys laid eyes on the car. Well, sort of.

■ The Chevelle is pulled into the daylight for the first time in four decades. The next-door neighbor (standing on his porch in the background) recognized what it was and told Rick that he thought the car was long gone. He'd lived here all his life and had not seen the car in 47 years.



**“Numerous Yenko treasure seekers inquired about the car’s whereabouts over the years “**





**“Rick was both amazed and shocked by the car’s decrepit condition”**

Not much of it could be seen, basically just the right rear-three-quarter view. There was so much debris in the garage that it took nearly a day and a half of cleaning before they could even see and walk around it. And that was with Rick, Jim, Shannon, his wife Lisa, and son Zack working almost full time.

Even after the area around the car was cleaned up, the family would not let them move it out until they had shored up the roof trusses, which had started to cave in. Once that was done and a path was cleared, they were able to pull the car out into the daylight for the first time in almost 50 years. Not wanting to alert anyone to what was now in the driveway, Rick quickly threw a tarp over it.

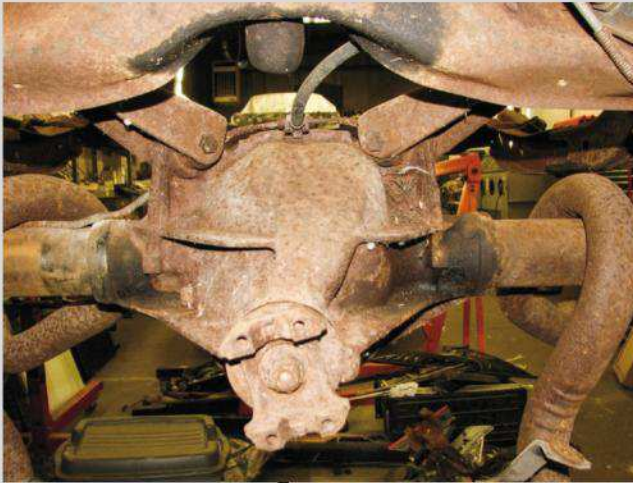
Rick was both amazed and shocked by the car’s decrepit condition. Raccoon droppings “inches deep” covered the cowl, the entire interior, and inside the trunk. The roof and trunk had been spared only because of all the junk that was piled on it. He decided to leave the majority of the rodent excrement in place until such time when they could safely dispose of it.



- Once the Chevelle was out, the garage was searched for any remaining original parts. Parts of the smog pump, shifter, bellhousing, clutch, and various other items were found on the table in the garage.
- Upon spotting this number, Rick’s heart started to beat a little faster, as it matches the VIN of the missing Chevelle from V.V. Cooke he came across on the Yenko Registry. He knew he had found his dream.
- Also found in the garage were the Chevelle’s original engine block, 840 cylinder heads, 163 intake, pistons, and rods. Buried

- deep inside was the original alternator complete with fan, pulley, and wiring harness.
- The rollback driver could not understand Rick’s insistence on a tarp to make the “only 30-mile trek” to its temporary holding spot. Rick told him it would otherwise be a rolling billboard and he didn’t want that.
- After removing the carpet and sound deadener, Rick and Annie were thrilled to find that they had absolutely no rust to contend with. It was a welcome surprise considering what could have been after all the years of storage with rodent activity in a muddy garage.





## More Pleasant Finds

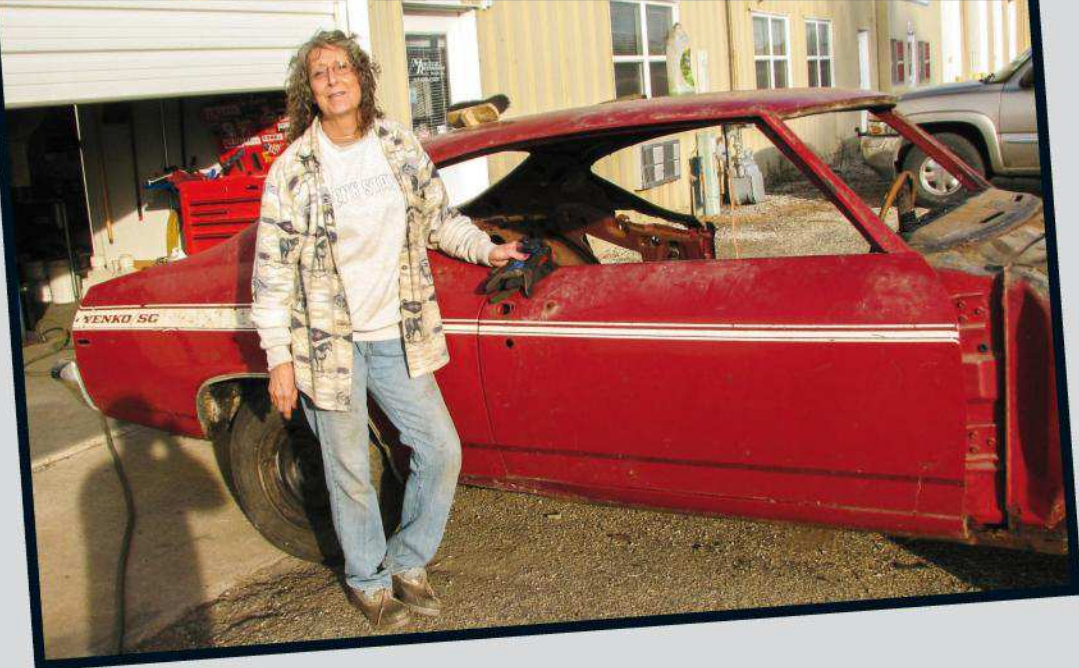
While looking through the garage and car they made more pleasant finds. These included both of the V.V. Cooke license plate frames, one in the trunk and the other hanging on the wall behind some head gaskets. The car's paperwork still eluded them, but the family knows it is on the property somewhere. All of the "born with" drivetrain was still in the garage, except for the four-speed transmission. Leads on its whereabouts are being followed up. Many of the front-end pieces were evidently disposed of after the accident, though Rick did get the original fenders and other miscellaneous underhood items.

Once the car was unloaded back at the shop, Rick and Jim donned safety suits with respirators and proceeded to disinfect the car. Annie pitched in as well, but admits to some doubts.

"Calling it rough was probably an understatement. Maybe I shouldn't have sent him over there," she mused. Then she asked Rick, "You really want me to get all the raccoon crap out of there?"

Many more small items belonging to the car were found inside it during the cleaning. Rick's biggest concern was that the floors would be trashed due to the feces and urine being in the car for so many years. Much to his surprise, after he pulled out the original seats, carpeting, and sound deadener, not a speck of rust was found anywhere. The only bodywork that will be needed is to repair the damage from the accident, which for the most part can be done with bolt-on parts.

After all the garbage and raccoon re-



■ **The Chevelle still carried its original KQ-code 4.10 diff. Unique to the COPO, these are nearly impossible to find and expensive if you do run across one.**


■ **All COPOS were delivered with the F41 suspension and two-piece front brake rotors. All of the suspension pieces on this car were assembly-line original, including the brake hoses, brake pads, rotors, ball joints, and decals.**

■ **Work clothes and gloves in hand, Annie Hartweg stands proud in front of her latest muscle car purchase and is just as proud to partake in the restoration of such a rare car.**

**"Not a speck of rust was found anywhere"**

mains were removed, Annie was called back to the shop so she and Rick could do a final disassembly and cleaning. As Annie points out, "She doesn't look pretty now, but she will. I just get a little upset that she gets new shoes before I do."

Annie knows from experience all the work that will be involved in restoring the car, as she's no stranger to these rare breeds. She has owned no less than four Fred Gibb COPO Novas, a 1969 ZL1 Camaro, a 2002 GMMG ZL1 Phase III Camaro, and 1970 LS5 and LS6 Chevelles. Annie helps in Rick's shop whenever needed, and she runs the office, so she will play a large role in the body-off restoration of this particular car, which will use as many N.O.S. parts as possible.

Once done, it will be even more special, not only because of the car's rarity, but also because it belongs to both her and Rick. After all, they know that the family that restores muscle cars together, stays together. 

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE YENKO CHEVELLE

Don Yenko knew from firsthand experience that the corporate COPO system, which he'd been using since 1967 for Camaros, would work just as well for the 1969 Chevelle. He felt that a COPO 427 Chevelle would be a winner.

Powered by the L72 427, these Chevilles were blessed with a Yenko Super Tune that raised the output from 425 to 450 horses. Most Yenko Chevilles (this one included) were fitted with close-ratio M21 four-speeds, but some received TH400 automatics. Other upgrades included front disc brakes and the F41 heavy-duty suspension. Inside the 12-bolt rearend were 4.10 gears.

Of the 99 units prepared and sold, a dozen Yenko COPO 9562 Chevilles were in Garnet red, like the one shown here.



Today, this ultrarare edition is considered a museum piece and well worth the investment to restore—even one neglected for many decades.



■ This paper line tag was found in both of the bucket seats. While not particularly significant, it does add another piece of the history. It calls out the body style, interior color (A51 for bucket seats), and the best one, 78046, which is the Fisher body number that matches the cowl tag. This item proves that the seats were original to the car.

■ The welded area at the headpipe/muffler joint proves this to be the original exhaust system that the car was delivered with.

■ Because the car was totally original, this area shows how the factory masked off the package tray during painting for the black trim color application. Note the overspray of the body color.

■ The body has now been removed at the beginning of a long restoration process.



■ The interior was in fairly poor shape, having been the home of many critters over the past 47 years. But, says Rick, "at least it was all there and complete, including the Yenko-added pedestal tach."

## SOURCES

MuscleCar Restoration and Design

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[musclecarrestorationanddesign.com](http://musclecarrestorationanddesign.com)



# PROJECT HACKSAW

**“Found”  
Street/Strip  
GTX Will  
Live Again**

By Arvid Svendsen

**S**ometime in the late 1970s at a gas station in the little town of Warren, Arkansas, longtime Mopar enthusiast Wayne Johnson saw a 1970 Challenger that piqued his interest. He went over to the owner, complimented him on the car, and began to swap Mopar stories. The owner eventually bemoaned the fact that his girlfriend had concluded that he liked the car more than he liked her. For that reason he wanted to get rid of a 440 motor that had just received about \$2,800 worth of race parts and quality machine work. The troubled suitor was so desperate to please his beau that he told Wayne he would give him the RB engine for free.

When Wayne arrived at the Challenger owner's home later that day, the 440 was



■ While Joel Nystrom owned this car, it was tucked away in one of his buildings. The previous owner stored the car for 13 years; prior to that it had been stored for about 20 years. In other words, it's not a barn find. It's a car that was stored for a long time.



**“It might have even participated in a street race or two”**



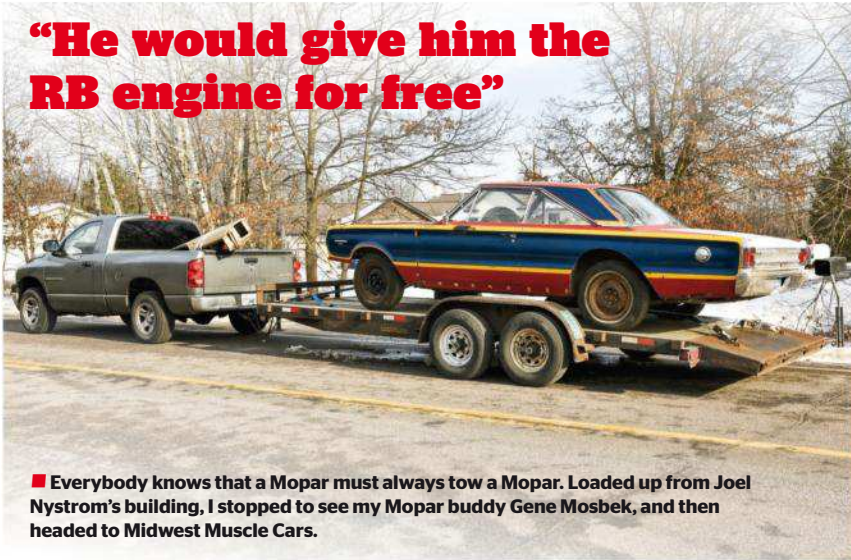
■ Production for the 1967 Plymouth Belvedere GTX came in at 12,010 units. A total of 8,791 two-door hardtops were built with the 440 Super Commando engine and TorqueFlite transmission. (Figures courtesy of plymouthgtx.net).

there, but it was sitting in a 1967 Plymouth Belvedere GTX. Desperate to please his girlfriend, the Challenger owner told Wayne to just take the car and motor out of his yard. Wayne obliged and towed the car back to his home. Love is a many-splendored thing.

The motor in the newly acquired GTX was inspected and found to have high-compression pistons and a big cam. Wayne thought that the 440 might have been original to the car, but since it was so heavily modified, he determined that his freebie GTX would be the jumpstart for building a very fast Mopar that could be used at both the dragstrip and on the street. Wayne installed 4.56 gears in the 8 $\frac{3}{4}$  Sure Grip rear, perfected all the car's mechanicals, and mounted big tires for the rear.

The rear wheelwell openings on 1966-1967 Mopar B-Bodies were ridiculously restrictive, so back then the common practice was to cut the quarter-panels and radius the wheelwell lips to make room for bigger tires. Employing a bit of hyperbole, let's just say that Wayne broke out his hacksaw and redesigned the rear quarter-

# “He would give him the RB engine for free”



■ Everybody knows that a Mopar must always tow a Mopar. Loaded up from Joel Nystrom's building, I stopped to see my Mopar buddy Gene Mosbek, and then headed to Midwest Muscle Cars.



■ The VIN authenticates the car as a real GTX. “R” stands for Plymouth, “S” for Special, “23” for the two-door hardtop, “L” for the Super Commando 440/375hp engine, “7” for the model year, and the second “7” because it was built at the St. Louis plant. The last six numbers identify this particular car.

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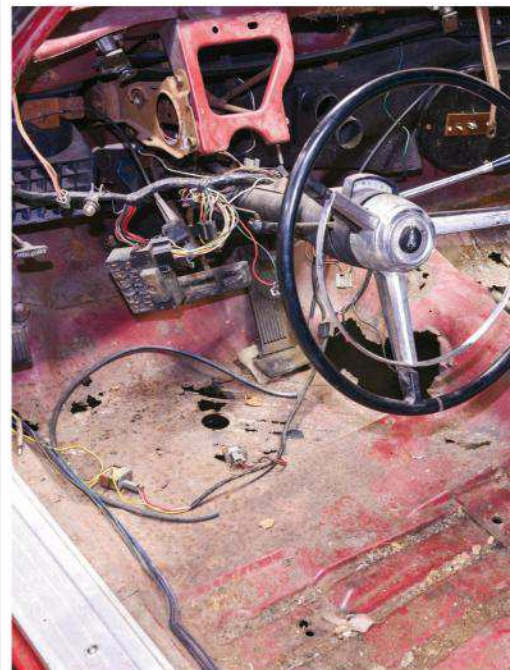


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■ For 1967, Plymouth offered two engines for the Belvedere GTX. The aforementioned 440 Super Commando was standard, while the 426/425hp Hemi engine was optional. The original 440 is long gone, but a code-correct 440hp short-block and correct 915 cylinder heads were included with the car. The block and heads might be the basis for a future restoration motor.



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panels. He never had a tire clearance problem after that.

## Drag Car Persona

The car was occasionally drag raced at Prescott Raceway in Prescott, Arkansas, for a few seasons. It might have even participated in a street race or two—who knows? During those days, Wayne removed the front bumper, cut the bottom leading edges of the fenders, and poked a bunch of holes in the original GTX hood. Wanting to take on the 1980s drag car per-

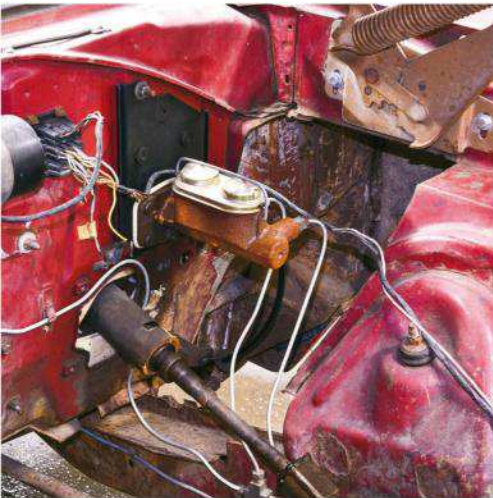
sona, he had one of his buddies paint the car in striking red, blue, and yellow.

Sometime in the mid-1980s, Wayne parked the GTX. It sat in his building until 2003. At that point the car was sold as a roller, sans motor and transmission, to Mopar guru Paul Slater. Soon, Slater sold the car to Mark Pallas, who placed the GTX in storage for what would become 13 years, awaiting the time that he could restore it to its former glory.

In 2017, 1966-1967 B-Body hero Joel Nystrom heard about this real deal GTX

roller with an interesting history, which was now available for purchase. With visions of a nostalgia drag car in his head, he hitched up his trailer and readied himself to evaluate this potential project. The "RS23L" in the VIN verified that it was a real GTX, originally equipped with the Super Commando 440-inch, 375hp engine, with a TorqueFlite 727 three-speed automatic transmission with column shift. (Yes, the console and floor shifter were optional equipment on the 1967 GTX.)

Even though the fender tag was miss-



■ The brakes have already been rebuilt, a big plus for getting this car roadworthy. When Wayne Johnson built the car to race, he used fenderwell headers. That is why the inner fenderwell panels have been cut on both sides. Options include fixing the metal or installing fenderwell headers.



■ A 1967 GTX with automatic transmission came standard with a column shift. The console and floor shifter were optional. The legendary Jimmy Addison 1967 Silver Bullet Plymouth GTX was originally equipped with a column shift and 440 Super Commando engine. Chrysler supplied Addison with a stroker 426 Hemi engine for street/strip dominance. Might history kind of repeat itself?

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■ The passenger floorboard rust probably looks familiar to a few Mopar guys. Nobody likes to see rust, but it's not the end of the world. It will get new metal.



■ The driver-side door seems to be original to the car, while the passenger door is a tossup. The door is solid, even in the seams.



■ Best guess is that moisture sat at the bottom of the spare tire well and created this apparition. Squint just a bit and you see the Chicago skyline. A rust-free OE spare tire well came with the car, so this area will be patched.

■ I had these 15x4 Cragars with Stahl front runners in my parts collection and could not resist putting them on the car. When Wayne Johnson raced it, he used Mopar Rally wheels all around. Later he installed Cragar Super Tricks up front. Though I'm not settled yet on wheel choice, Keystone Kustomags would look Sox-and-Martin-right on this car.



■ Wayne remembers running 28.5x10.5x15 tires in the rear. I just happened to have a pair of M&H Race-masters in that size, conveniently mounted on 15x8 Cragars. Size is not bad, but there is room for some slightly bigger day-two meats.



■ The gray primer panels need to go away. Top relic paint guys will be approached to make this situation right. Getting this angle to look right with the rest of the paint will be a major challenge.

ing, Joel could see it was clearly originally a red car with black interior. Though weathered and worn, the interior floor pans and engine bay retained the factory PP1 Bright Red paint. The hacked-up quarters and wild paint scheme only added to the car's charm. Joel struck a deal with Mark Pallas and brought it home to his shop in suburban Minneapolis.


While he was enamored with his newest GTX and its bad-boy persona, Joel was forced to weigh it against the priorities of other projects already in his shop. His decision was to find a good home for the GTX. Long story short: That home became the slot that had once been occupied by our Project MaliBeater at Midwest Muscle Cars in Lake Zurich, Illinois ([mwmcars.com](http://mwmcars.com)). Readers, meet Project Hacksaw.

## Speculation

Once the GTX arrived at Midwest Muscle Cars, pictures from back in the day were examined. Until we get the proper information from Chrysler Historical Services, we can only speculate as to how this GTX was equipped when it rolled off the assembly line. The earliest pictures supplied by Wayne Johnson show that the car is wearing the optional black sport stripes, which appear to be factory. One bucket seat was included in the deal, and it has the optional headrest. Whether headrests were original to the car is yet to be determined. The column-shift car came with manual

## “The hacked-up quarters and wild paint only added to the car’s charm”

steering and manual drum brakes. There is no evidence of any major collision damage. Maybe someday it will be restored to bone-stock original condition, but the missing engine and transmission make it less appealing as a rotisserie restoration candidate.

For the time being, we plan to leave the exterior of the car alone. Some of you probably hate the look of the butchered quarters, but we choose to embrace them. For that reason, the radiused wheelwell lips are staying, but the floor, trunk, and bottoms of the quarters will be fixed. A bulletproof drivetrain and functional interior will be installed. Project Hacksaw will be a continual celebration of day-two and street machine components that typified muscle cars prowling the streets and dragstrips in the early 1970s. Stay tuned. 

## PROJECT HACKSAW, THE BACKSTORY

For many car collectors, part of the enjoyment of having an old car is assembling its history. We will attempt to assemble the entire owner history of this GTX, though that might not be possible. What happened from about 1979 to the present is already known. I'm going to try to find the guy who gave Wayne Johnson the GTX.

A later article will describe the process of going through FCA Historical Services to obtain information from its database (based on IBM cards that have been made available) on the as-born status of the car. For now, check out the pictures from Wayne Johnson that were taken between 1979 and the mid 1980s.



■ Back in the day, future Project Hacksaw is wearing black sport stripes, and they appear to be the original, optioned ones. I am hoping that the car was originally optioned with that awesome signature look for the 1967 GTX.



■ Wayne Johnson occasionally drag raced his 1967 GTX in the early 1980s at Prescott Raceway in Prescott, Arkansas. The car still has the front bumper, sport stripes, and Mopar Rally wheels. The rear wheelwell lips have already been cut.



■ The GTX racing again at Prescott Raceway, sometime around 1980. Cutting the quarters for radiused wheelwell lips was common practice on drag cars. Vintage decals in the quarter-windows were mandatory for a tough race car image. The door-edge guards suggest that the car is wearing original paint.



■ This photo would seem to indicate the car was resprayed. The emblems and door-edge guards are gone. Most notably, the front bumper has been removed and the front leading edges of the fenders have been cut. Weight reduction and tall front tire clearance might have been the incentives.



■ At some point the car received this wild paint job from one of Wayne's friends. The snorkel scoop was homemade and big. The design was later patented by McDonald's and installed on all exterior drive-through trash receptacles.



PHOTO: CARTECH BOOKS



■ The black-and-white photo shows the Boss Bronco parked outside Ford Styling in 1969, while the color photo illustrates how it looked prior to Colin Comer's purchase. The Bronco had been repainted and restriped at some point in its past; note the subtle difference in the stripe (and the loss of the Boss Bronco lettering) in the later photo.

By Jerry Heasley  
Photos: Colin Comer & Jerry Heasley

**W**es Eisenschenk could hardly believe his eyes when he plugged the serial number into Google in 2016 and found a long missing 1969 Ford prototype. "There it was, the missing 1969 Ford Boss Bronco prototype, in an expired eBay listing."

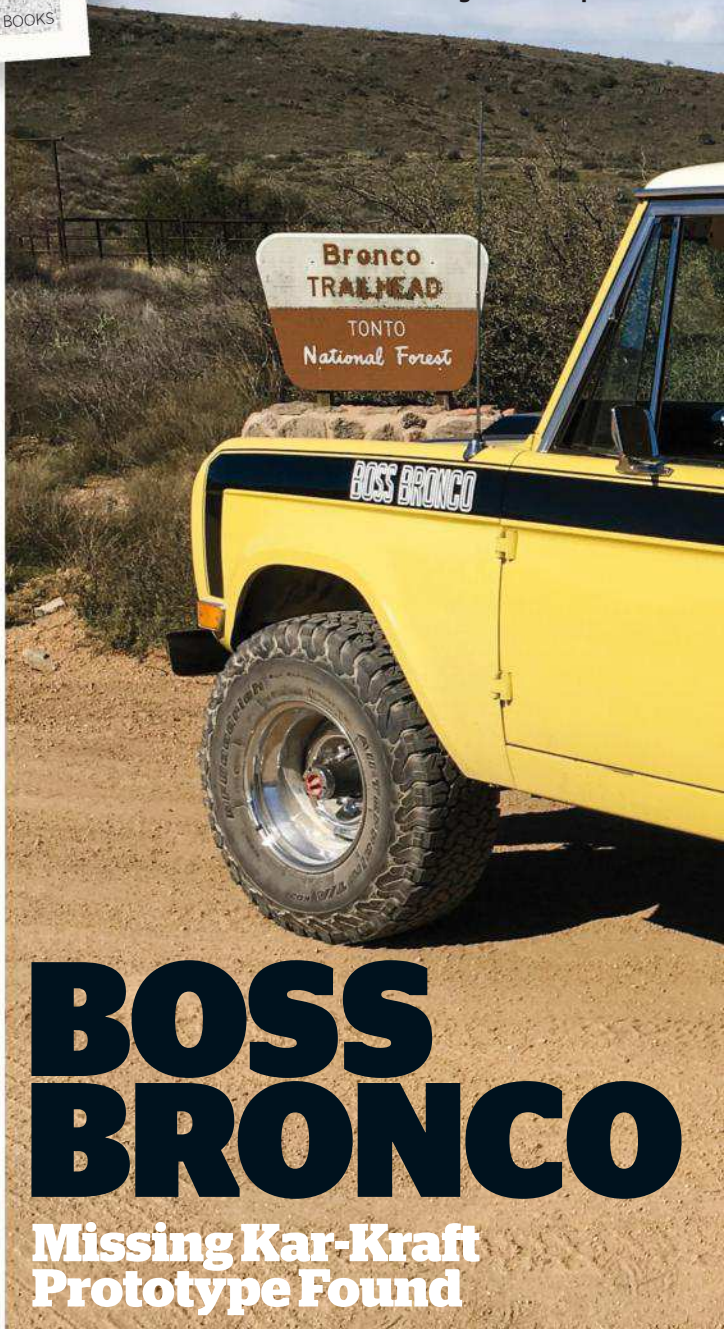
A Boss Bronco? Yes, Ford did build a prototype high-performance Boss Bronco at its legendary clandestine enterprise Kar-Kraft in 1969. It featured a blueprinted 1969 GT 350 Shelby engine, a Hi-Po C4 automatic, and 4.11 limited slip gears front and rear among other truly muscular details. And it somehow survived under the radar for more than 40 years in fantastic original condition.

Wes is an editor at CarTech, the publisher that recently produced the new book *Kar-Kraft: Race Cars, Prototypes and Muscle Cars of Ford's Special Vehicles Activity Program* by Charlie Henry. Research for this book dredged up the VIN for the Boss Bronco prototype, which was built to prove the concept of a production high-performance Bronco for then Ford President Bunkie Knudsen, who with his cohort from GM, Larry Shinoda, is largely responsible for Ford's original Boss Mustang program of 1969-1971.

The team at Kar-Kraft started with a specially equipped 1969 Bronco Sport sent to them directly from the Ford assembly line. It had a 302 V-8 and 4.11 gears with limited slip, and—likely no coincidence—was finished in the rare Empire paint, a shade of yellow that matched what was known to be Knudsen's favorite color. After all, nothing is sacred when looking to have a prototype approved by the Boss!

To make sure this project, originally referred to as simply the Special Bronco in internal documents, would be everything a high-performance Bronco should be, Kar-Kraft also called in Bill Stroppe to oversee the build effort for this special truck. Stroppe, who was running Ford's off-road racing team, certainly had enough experience to know what it would take to build a righteous Bronco, having fielded a team of them to victories for Ford.

Among the modifications chosen by the Kar-Kraft team and Stroppe for the Special Bronco, which was soon renamed the Boss Bronco, ostensibly to tie in to Ford's existing line of Boss cars beyond just the obvious homage to Knudsen, was adding more power. This was accomplished by swapping in a 1969 GT 350 210-S-code 351 four-barrel Windsor motor, although the one provided for the Boss Bronco by Ford was also balanced and blueprinted, much as the "bone stock" engines used for magazine road test cars were



# BOSS BRONCO

## Missing Kar-Kraft Prototype Found

back in the day. It exhaled through a true dual exhaust with glass-pack mufflers. Backing up this warmed over 351W was an adapter custom fabricated by Kar-Kraft that allowed a Hi-Po C4 automatic transmission to be fitted as well, the first automatic transmission installed in a Bronco by Ford.

Stroppe dual shocks were installed at all four corners to help keep the big 15x10 chrome wheels and 10-15LT Gates Commando tires on the ground when the going got rough.

Inside, a Stroppe padded steering wheel, a Stroppe roll bar, and a Mustang shifter for the C4 were installed, along with custom upholstered panels and aluminum trim to finish the inside of the rear quarter-panels and tailgate for a more upscale look. On the outside the rear wheelwells were cut and Stroppe fender flares installed for the needed tire clearance, a Cougar Eliminator hood scoop was bolted on, and finally the black hockey-stick stripes with "Boss Bronco" lettering were applied.

The finished package was quite impressive. It not only looked the part but performed as well as they hoped their special high-performance Bronco would.

Yet, as good as it was, Lee Iacocca famously fired Knudsen

before a production Boss Bronco could get off the ground. Afterwards, inventory sheets show Kar-Kraft was supposed to crush the one and only prototype. But somehow it escaped. Exactly how is still unknown, but experts suspect it was simply sold to an employee when Kar-Kraft was liquidated in late 1970.

No matter how it made it into the wild, Wes was the extremely lucky soul who found the Boss Bronco many decades later. The muscle truck had sold outside of eBay, so Wes searched and found the ultimate buyer, a man in Washington State, who agreed to sell the Bronco for a nice profit. Wes then posted a picture of the rare prototype on an Internet forum looking for more info on it. And that's when Colin Comer saw it.

Colin owns Colin's Classic Automobiles located in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He is also a diehard Ford and Shelby authority and collector and has authored numerous books on the subject. He and Wes had worked together at another publishing company, which is how they became friends.

"As soon as I saw Wes's post on the Boss Bronco, I immediately emailed him and said I had to have it," Colin says. "Being a huge Ford muscle guy, as well as a longtime early Bronco owner, how could




I not? I had no idea the Boss Bronco had survived. To me it's one of the ultimate early Broncos. Plus, the Kar-Kraft and Stroppe connection is just so cool. I didn't get much sleep until I convinced my buddy Wes to sell it to me! Once we arrived at a deal, I had to sell my Holman-Moody-built 1969 Bronco to help fund the Boss, but I have no regrets."

Colin was clearly ecstatic to find himself the owner of a significant Ford prototype built at Kar-Kraft. He says, "The truck was painted once but otherwise untouched. There is zero rust anywhere, which is very rare for an early Bronco. It still has all of its original finishes underneath. It has the original Kar-Kraft-installed Mustang shifter for the C4 automatic and the fabricated transmission adaptor they made, and still had the original engine with its original 210-S tag. Everything down to the original carburetor and original prototype dual exhaust is still on the truck. It shows 60,000 miles and 47 years of use, but it is amazingly all there. And that's what matters."

Colin compared original Ford photos of the truck from Kar-Kraft to find the original hockey-stick stripe dimensions had been changed slightly during the repaint, and the Boss Bronco decals were long gone. Most probably Kar-Kraft pulled those off before selling the truck to disguise its prototype status.

Colin calculated the original stripe dimensions using the 1969 factory photos and by finding remnants of the originals in the doorjamb, then he resprayed the stripes correctly. He had a new set of Boss Bronco decals made to return the truck to its original prototype appearance.

The Boss Bronco, now out of hiding, sees frequent use by Colin, who has already added a few thousand miles to the odometer. He believes it's a shame the Boss Bronco never made it to production, as it "would have been a big hit" in 1969, "much like the Ford Raptor is today." 



■ In production trim, the Bronco's largest engine in 1969 was a 302. Kar-Kraft installed a warmed-over 351 Windsor. It wasn't a full Boss V-8 but rather a performance motor from the 1969 Shelby GT 350.



■ The interior was found in good condition, but Colin tracked down N.O.S. seat material to reupholster the splitting front seats.



■ Kar-Kraft converted the manual transmission to a C4, making this the first Bronco known to receive an automatic at Ford. (The lever in front of the C4 shifter is for the Bronco's transfer case.) Bill Stroppe was running Ford's off-road racing team in 1969 and flew into Detroit to spend nine days helping engineer the Boss Bronco build.

## AT A GLANCE

### 1969 BOSS BRONCO

**Owned by:** Colin Comer

**Restored by:** Unrestored

**Engine:** 351ci/290hp 210-S Windsor V-8

**Transmission:** C4 3-speed automatic

**Axles:** Dana 30 front, Ford 9-inch rear with 4.11 gears and limited slip

**Interior:** White vinyl bucket seat

**Wheels:** 15x10 custom

**Tires:** 32x11.50R15LT BFGoodrich All-Terrain T/A KO2

**Special parts:** Shelby GT 350 210-S engine; C4 transmission with Mustang shifter; special paint, stripes, and decals; Stroppe roll bar, dual shocks and fender flares; Cougar Eliminator hood scoop; custom wheels

■ Kar-Kraft used an off-the-shelf Cougar Eliminator hood scoop on the Boss Bronco prototype. This Ford may be a 4x4 Bronco, but it's a muscle Bronco. Imagine a Shelby GT 350 engine spinning 4.11 gears front and rear!





■ Incredibly, the original engine tag was still on the 351 Windsor. The "210-S" decodes as an M-code 351 Windsor four-barrel engine for a GT 350 with a four-speed manual transmission. The other data on the tag: "A6" for January 6, "351" for engine size, "E69-E" for Windsor plant, "69" for 1969, and "3" for change level, signifying a midyear change to the engine.



■ A Stroppe roll bar was part of the Boss Bronco prototype build. Kar-Kraft used Premier brand aircraft-spec bolts, just as it did on the GT-40 program.



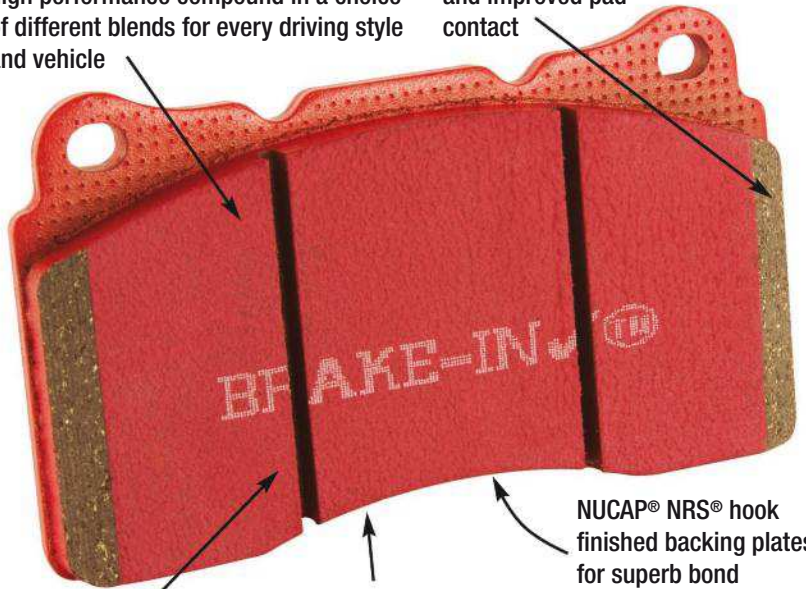
■ Colin brought the Boss Bronco to the Muscle Car and Corvette Nationals in 2017 to be part of the special Kars of Kar-Kraft display.

**“It survived under the radar for more than 40 years”**

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Any muscle microcosm these days has to include the ever-popular barn finds. The Barn Finds & Hidden Gems display at MCACN never ceases to amaze. Automotive

# Lost and Found

## Barn Finds & Hidden Gems at MCACN

By Drew Hardin

Archaeologist Ryan Brutt carefully curates this corner of the show, bringing out treasures he has learned about—and often documented on his various social media platforms—during his regular travels across the

country. As can happen these days, some of the cars stretch the definition of *barn find* a bit. There are cars that were never really lost per se but have been in storage for decades in a state of benign neglect.

But Brutt also manages to dig up (and out) cars from actual barns, some still decorated with the detritus left behind by various species of vermin. Weirdly enough, this is one portion of one car show where an occasional petrified mouse just adds to the charm.

Here are some of the highlights from the Barn Finds & Hidden Gems display at MCACN 2017. Want more? The next Muscle Car and Corvette Nationals takes place November 17-18, 2018, at the Donald E. Stephens Convention Center in Rosemont, Illinois, right next door to Chicago's O'Hare Airport. Visit [mcacn.com](http://mcacn.com) for more show info.

To keep up with Ryan Brutt, visit his social media links: Facebook (TheAutoArchaeologist), Instagram (@theautoarchaeologist), and YouTube (@AutoArcheology).



Doug Perry helped his friend Jason Ball find his dream Fathom Green COPO Camaro several years ago, so Ball returned the favor by telling Perry about this Yenko Camaro. It took almost a whole year for Perry to reach the owner, and he finally bought it just 2½ weeks before bringing it to MCACN. Perry is the car's fifth owner; the previous owner bought it in 1999 and had kept it with other cars in a pole barn. With 23,000 original miles, the Camaro "was more played with on the street than raced," says Perry. "It was always pampered, never outside. The paint is almost all original except on the hood and the quarters where the flares were added." At some point the motor was decked, so no numbers are visible for Perry to determine whether it's original to the car; he does know the M21 transmission is not. The Camaro sports a Ram Rod shifter, Lakewood traction bars, Ansen Sprint wheels, and Drag Radials "that are hard as a rock," says Perry. He plans to sort it out to race it at this year's Super Car Reunion.







■ Galen Govier calls this the “Holy Grail of Dodge Darts.” Back in 1969, *Car Craft* magazine covered the buildup of this car over several issues and then offered it as a sweepstakes prize. Keith Black built the 340, Funny Car driver Charlie Allen did the suspension, and none other than George Barris painted it. Bill Shrewsbury raced the car before the giveaway and set an AHRA record in it. A 16-year-old kid won the car, but he never took possession, opting instead to exchange his winnings for—of all things—a Polara wagon. Tom Ellie, the car’s seventh owner, bought it at the Robert Gabeline auction in Iowa last June, after Gabeline had owned it for 26 years.

## “A 16-year-old kid won the car”



■ Ric Vanlerberghe (of Ric’s Restorations near Detroit) has a long history with this real-deal L78 Camaro, as it was owned by a high school friend back in the late 1970s. He crossed paths with the car again some 15 years ago, when he was asked to check out an old Camaro in a barn. “It was up against a wall, and I couldn’t get a real good view, but when I opened the hood and saw the big-block engine, I about had a heart attack right there.” Vanlerberghe worked for years to buy the car, even started collecting N.O.S. parts for a restoration, but the owner wouldn’t budge. Never did, in fact. His stepson brokered the deal with him last summer after the owner passed away. Prior to its storage the car had achieved some infamy as a local street racer; the son of a previous owner put the dent in the front fender when he hit a telephone pole trying to get away from the police. Under the Mickey Thompson valve covers and aftermarket carb is the Camaro’s born-with 375hp 396; behind it is the original M21 four-speed and rearend, although it now houses 5.13 gears. Vanlerberghe wants to restore the Camaro but may add some day two parts in a nod to its past.





■ “Old Deadeye” was lettered on the side of this 1969 COPO Camaro RS when it was raced in the late 1960s. According to current owner Mike Spray, it was purchased new by a Maryland construction company and raced by the son of the company’s owner. Spray said it was “the winningest Camaro in the area,” but the son, who was a “19 or 20-year-old kid, partied a lot, so the dad took it away and sold it.” The car sat for decades in North Carolina. “It was a big fish, but nobody had the tackle.” Nobody, that is, until Mike Kaiser of Arizona Muscle Cars came along. Spray bought it from him about a year ago. The engine is not original but is built around a date-code correct block, which is perfect for Spray, as he’s driving the car. A restoration is not planned.



**“The son was a 19- or 20-year-old kid who partied a lot, so the dad took it away and sold it.”**

■ Ryan Degenhardt is just the third owner of this 1968 Hemi Super Bee, which was a street racer in the St. Louis area before it was stolen in 1971. It was eventually recovered—without its Hemi driveline—but after the original owner had been paid for the loss. So a local repair shop bought it, put a 318 in it, and drove it. “They never relicensed it,” says Degenhardt, “probably drove it on dealer tags, and when they were done they just shoved it in the back of their shop.” A friend bought it in 1996 and had it until Degenhardt bought it in 2015. Degenhardt plans a driver-quality resto on the car, which wears a set of Spyder wheels. “They’re sort of a Recall wheel knockoff made by Motor Wheel,” says Degenhardt, who owns eight sets of the rare aftermarket rims.

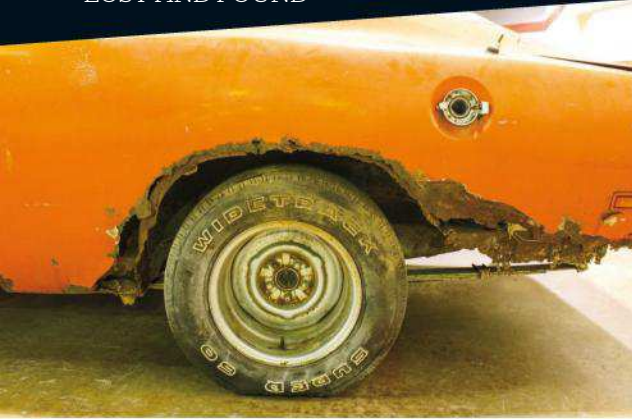




■ Katie Boerschinger's parents were the second owners of this 360-powered 1974 'Cuda, which brought both her and her brother home from the hospital after they were born. Katie's parents parked the car in 1984 after buying a more family-friendly Fury; when the couple divorced, her mom got the 'Cuda, which went into storage for another four years. As Katie neared driving age, she had her eyes on a Mustang, but her mom offered her the 'Cuda, and she has been in love ever since. "I'm learning about it," Katie says. "I want to make it pretty and shiny and fast." It's already a runner, as Katie drove it to Chicago from Delafield, Wisconsin—a rarity for any car in Ryan's display.

■ Little Joe was a very-early-build 1970 Buick GS that was delivered to race team owner Tom Rose in September 1969. It was part of Rose's stable until the team disbanded in 1974, when Mark Busher bought it "and gave it a second life," says current owner Larry Aldrich. Busher raced it into the early 1980s then parked it, and Aldrich bought it in 2003. That's when Little Joe started its third racing life, running until 2008 when Aldrich "went in a different direction with my cars" and parked it. It has been in his barn ever since. The fiberglass front end, one of just three sets made, replaced the stock front fenders and hood in the early 1970s. Aldrich says the car was a test mule for Buick engineers at the time and had a "real badass" Stage 2 race motor with early Stage 2 head castings. Those heads are still in the car, now sitting atop a 464ci Electra block and helping it make about 710 hp, he estimates. The odometer shows just 1,636 miles, clocked (let's all say it together) "a quarter-mile at a time."





Ever heard of a Savage GT? Neither had we until we talked to Jim Rhinehart at MCACN, who brought the car to the show for owner Bill Sefton. A Milwaukee company called Auto Craft prototyped the Savage GT in 1967, with plans to turn a Barracuda into a real road handler. It modified the suspension, sat the car on fat Dunlop radials, installed a roll bar, and changed the look of the car with a new front end, fiberglass hood, and glass decklid with a spoiler. It was to be offered with Mopar V-8s ranging from a 340 to a 440 (this was a 340 model). The cost was "a couple thousand more than a stock Barracuda," says Rhinehart. But production didn't begin until 1969, so close to the E-Body's introduction that the cars immediately looked dated. Just 13 were made, and six are known to exist, Rhinehart says; this one was pulled out of a Wisconsin field in 2006.



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■ Bill Sefton had two rare Mopars in the Barn Finds display. The second was this 1972 Demon, with a Mr. Norm's supercharger mounted to its 340. Jim Rhinehart told us he first heard about the car back in 1991 when a friend called on a Sunday morning and told him the car was listed for sale in the *Chicago Tribune*. That friend bought the car and took it back to Colorado, where he sold it for a Lil Red Express pickup truck. Rhinehart found it and had it shipped back, "but I didn't realize how bad it was," he admits. It had been hit in the right rear and has new rear sheet-metal now. Sefton at one time owned five of these Mr. Norm's Demons, and he still has two N.O.S Mr. Norm's supercharger kits.

■ Hard to picture now, but Mike Fitzgerald's Superbird was originally Petty Blue and powered by a 440 Six-Barrel mill mated to a 727 TorqueFlite. We look forward to seeing it after its rejuvenation by Magnum Auto Restoration.



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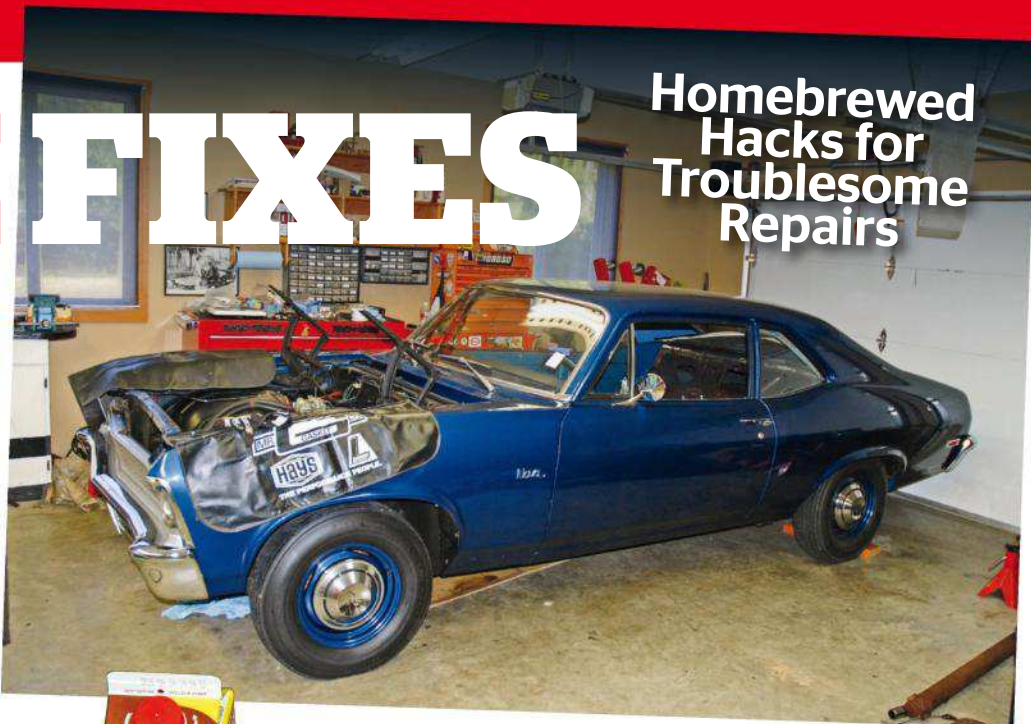
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# E-Z FIXES

## Homebrewed Hacks for Troublesome Repairs

By Wayne Scraba

**B**uilding and working on muscle cars is supposed to be fun. It often is (it's a hobby after all), but there are a few times when drudgery can set in. You just encounter things, big and small, that prove troublesome and can stop your build progress cold. Some tasks, if not performed correctly, can damage either the parts you're working on or the car itself. In other instances, the only apparent solution is to take the component to an expert or specialist



### REMOVE RUST WITH MOLASSES

With molasses? We're kidding, right? That's what we thought too, but we pressed forward with a little test based upon hearsay. For our purposes we used good old-fashioned Family Brand Cooking Molasses. Various molasses mixes can be found on the shelf of your local grocery store. If you need it in bulk, check out a livestock feed store, as molasses is sometimes used as a supplement for animal feed. It's inexpensive and available in 5-gallon pails (for less than \$30 if you shop around).

Just like (much) more expensive commercial products, Molasses is environmentally friendly, biodegradable, and nontoxic (obviously, since you can eat it). But does it work?

For our mix we poured a pint of molasses into a plastic ice cream bucket. We added a pint of hot water to the mix and stirred it. We tossed in a corroded motor mount with a bunch of heavily corroded bolts and fasteners. We let the stuff work overnight, but there was no appreciable change. Then we tried a week. Same thing. At that point

**1** What's the magic rust removal elixir? Molasses that anyone can buy from a grocery store. We mixed it with hot water in a plastic ice cream bucket.



**2** Our sample part was this rusty motor mount. As a side investigation, we also wanted to see if the molasses had any effect upon the rubber.

we figured the molasses just wasn't working, but we left the parts soaking for a month just to

and have him perform the necessary work. That can be expensive. Been there, done that. What follows is a short list of problems

and the solutions we've come up with that can make life a bit easier in the shop. Bottom line? You can do this stuff!



**3** After allowing the molasses to work for several weeks, we think the result is rather remarkable. As you can see, the rubber section of the mount wasn't affected by the molasses.



**4** This comparison shows molasses rust removal on the left, commercial rust remover on the right. The molasses was actually superior to the commercial stuff.

see if we missed something.

Take a look at the accompanying photos for the results.

We also compared it to a name-brand rust remover. You might be surprised; we were.

## MEASURING & SETTING SHEETMETAL GAPS WITH DRILL BITS

Establishing and then setting sheetmetal gaps on hoods, decklids, fenders, and doors can be a real pain. If the car has nice gaps before you tear it down, it's a good idea to check them all first. There are a couple of different methods to do that, but the easy method we prefer is to check the respective dimensions with numbered drill bits.

To get there, first apply a strip of masking tape to each side of the gap (for example, a line of masking tape along the door edge and another along the facing fender edge). Then pick several spots, top to bottom of the gap, and insert a numbered drill bit. Use a go/no-go methodology. You will find that the gap



**1** The trailing edge of the fenders and the leading edge of the doors were taped (heavily) on this Nova prior to removal and before reassembly. Automotive painter's tape works perfectly.

actually varies quite a bit top to bottom. At each point where it changes, mark the drill bit dimension on the tape. Then photograph it. This way, you'll have a permanent record of the gap



**2** Drill bits make a handy tool to measure panel gap. Simply insert the respective bits using a go/no-go system.

before you tear down the car.

When the time comes for reassembly, tape the sheetmetal again, refer to your photos, and, using drill bits, move, nudge and shim everything back to



**3** Check the gap on several areas of the fender, and mark the dimension right on the tape. This way you can photograph it and you'll have a perfect reference when reinstalling the fenders.

where it was before it came apart. A tip: Most seasoned restorers advise setting the gap between the door and rear quarter-panel first and work outward from there.

## REWORKING A STEERING COLUMN FOR A DISABLED SHIFTER INTERLOCK

For many post-1969 GM muscle cars with headers, it's necessary to remove the steering interlock (also called the back drive) to allow for clearance. The back drive was a major part of the antitheft steering column system introduced in all 1969 GM passenger cars. With the back drive, the car had to be in Park (automatic transmissions) or Reverse (manual) to get the column to lock and allow you to remove the key. The lockout mechanism on manual transmissions also performed the backup light activation at the same time by rotating the column sleeve that the switch was hooked to. It's possible (with lots of effort) to modify a back drive to work, but it all depends upon the application and the headers in question. In order to get the backup lights working, Hurst Shifters offers a bolt-in switch kit (PN 2480003).

Removing the back drive and installing the switch is easy



**1** In order to stop the steering column interlock from rotating (with the back drive removed), we cut away most of the mechanism linkage on the engine compartment side of the column (our car was originally a column shift example) and left just enough to mount a safety-drilled AN bolt/locknut combination (the bolt is drilled on the threaded end).

**4** One of the best parts of the fix is the fact that a column-mounted tach can't flop around with the back drive disconnected. Plus, it allows you to remove the key easily.

enough, but then you have another issue to deal with. You have to stop the column from ro-



**2** To find a spot to anchor the mechanism, we simply drilled a small hole into the column and fished in a section of safety wire.



tating. We came up with a clean fix that's illustrated in the photos. As a result, the key was easy



**3** The mod is very unobtrusive. At first glance in this empty engine compartment it's difficult to spot.

to remove, and as a bonus, something like a column-mounted tach remains in one spot.

### REPLACE HEADREST COVERS AT HOME

Removing and installing headrest covers seems simple enough, until you get into the project. We had a low-mileage Nova with a very nice interior, but one of the headrest covers was brittle and cracked. One of our biggest fears with replacement upholstery was getting a perfect color match. As it turns out, the headrest covers from PUI Interiors are right on when it comes color. Equally important, the fit was good too.

Stripping the headrest is relatively easy. Two screws at the base have to come out, then you are faced with a number of little staples that hold it all together tightly. Truth? They're evil. Removing the staples usually translates into pain and bleeding. The solution? Cut off the old cover. It's the easiest way to strip it—and least painful too!

Next you slip the new headrest cover into place. We were a bit concerned about this part of the install, as we had heard all sorts of horror stories. Some



**1** This is common on many muscle cars with original interiors. The headrest split because the vinyl upholstery became brittle.



**2** To gain access, two screws are removed from the base of the headrest. The plastic base slides down the shaft and you're met with ...

guys wrap the foam with kitchen plastic wrap, which supposedly makes it easier to pull the vinyl over the foam. Luckily our install didn't need any help. It could be because the original headrest foam was in perfect



**3** ... this view of the headrest without the trim piece. Note the little staples. They are a pain to remove. Just cut the old material away and don't bother with the original staples.



**4** Once the headrest cover is slipped over the foam, stretch it tightly and staple in place with a staple gun. It's not that difficult to get it stretched cleanly, especially if the cover is warm.

shape aside from the split in the vinyl. With a bit of tugging, stretching, and shoving, the headrest cover slid over the foam neatly. By the way, this all goes better if the vinyl headrest cover is warm.



**5** Once the material is stapled, you can reinstall the plastic trim piece.



**6** Here's the finished job. It came out great and really didn't take much time. Additionally, the color match of the PUI material was perfect.



### "MACHINING" BRAKE DRUMS FOR LARGER WHEEL STUDS

Most aftermarket axles are drilled for wheel studs with a minimum diameter of 1/2 inch. That can be an issue if you have a GM small or intermediate car. They were factory fitted with 7/16-inch studs. That means the brake drums won't slide over the bigger studs. Drilling out the hole with a standard 1/2-inch drill bit won't work. If you've ever tried to enlarge holes one size over with a regular drill bit, you know what happens next: You end up with an oval-shaped hole. The solution is a step drill.

Step drill bits are nothing new, but honestly, quality is all over the map. We didn't have one we could trust, so we spent an hour or two checking them out. Believe it or not, Home Depot had what we were looking for. On a tip from a retired electrician, we



**1** On a day-two car with aftermarket axles, you'll find that wheel stud diameters start at 1/2 inch. That means a Chevy small car brake drum (which is machined for 7/16-inch studs) won't fit. Simply redrilling with a 1/2-inch bit won't work because it will oval the hole.

bought a USA-made Klein step drill bit. They are quite a bit more money than most of the others, but wow! You can knock out the stud holes in the drums in less than a minute (honestly). Equally important, there's quite a bit of distance between the steps on the drill bit. That gives you accurate control when you're drilling one or two sizes over.



**2** The solution is to use a high-quality step drill to enlarge the hole. This one is manufactured by a company called Klein, and we purchased it at Home Depot.



**3** After redrilling, the brake drum slides right over the larger studs. Good tools make this job simple, and you don't have to take the parts to a machine shop.





**1** Installing or removing dog dish hubcaps can prove frustrating. It's easy to dent the caps or scratch the wheel. For installation, the trick is to use a dab of white grease on the hubcap nubs on each wheel prior to snapping on the caps.



**2** This small Mac Tools pry bar works fabulously for pulling off a dog dish cap. If you're concerned about marring the wheel, simply slip a piece of foam (or even paper) between the pry bar and the wheel.

**“The staples are truly evil, and they translate into pain and bleeding”**

#### SOURCES


**Hurst Shifters**  
707/544-4761  
hurst-shifters.com

**Mac Tools**  
mactools.com

**PUI Interiors**  
800/342-0610  
puiinteriors.com

## REMOVING & INSTALLING DOG DISH HUBCAPS

Dog dish hubcaps can be a pain to install and remove. They regularly get dented during installation, and it's easy to mar the wheel when removing them. The solution is pretty simple. Always place a dab of grease (white lithium works great) over the wheel “nubs” that the hubcaps lock into. Pull the hubcap over a couple of the nubs, and then

it's easy to tap it into place with the palm of a hand. To get the hubcaps off, it's possible to work them off by finding the nub and pulling them off by hand, but there's an easier method. Mac Tools has a small pry bar with a hook on one end that works perfectly. If you're worried about scratching the wheel when using the bar, simply place something soft (tape) where you pry on the wheel. 

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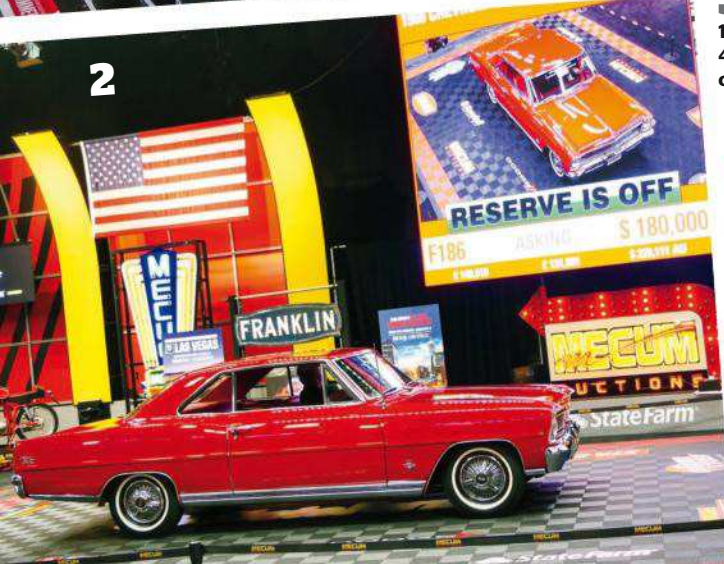


PHOTO COURTESY OF MECUM AUCTIONS



**1** This beautiful restoration on Dick Brannan's long-sought 1963 Galaxie drag car was bid up to more than \$200,000, but owner Kayo Erwin decided to keep it. The car was one of many quality vintage race cars at the 2018 event.

went to a new home for \$44,000, and the preserved Hurst Mopar changed hands for \$66,000.



**2** Meanwhile, Erwin's low-mileage Chevrolets, some off the market for longer than two decades, soared to solid prices. This 6,600-mile 1966 L79 Nova SS barnstormed to a \$187,000 purchase price. As the sign shows, the reserve is off!

**4** The \$68,200 price for this stunning, one-of-168 1971 Dodge Challenger R/T convertible with 383 Magnum power is a sign of market adjustments in the collector car market.

**3** Seen in staging on Thursday were two big muscle machines from 1970, the Pontiac Gran Prix SJ with 455 power and a Chrysler 300H special edition. The restored blue bomber

**5** Put up as the 1969 ZL1 Offering, these two 1969 aluminum-engined Camaros were on offer as a single lot. Their \$1,210,000 sales price was the third-highest of the entire event. This pair featured good history, originality, and provenance. They were a highlight for many attend-



**3**

**T**he hammer falls, the auctioneer yells, "SOLD! SOLD! SOLD!" and everybody is happy. This year Mecum's Kissimmee auction featured more than 3,000 vehicles, with more than 2,200 of them sold over a 10-day window that started January 5, 2018. The event in Osceola Heritage Park on the outskirts of this Florida town has become an annual destination for both serious car collectors and general enthusiasts. This year's sales totaled \$96.6 million and counting, as some sales are still being finalized in the process that Mecum calls The Bid Goes On. Those are big numbers, although it appears there's some ongoing market correction at the moment.

This is one of the largest collector car auctions on the planet. The Mecum format puts between 275 and 300 cars on the auction block on a full day, with the event running from a 9

## 2018 Mecum Kissimmee Collector Car Auction Sees \$96.6 Million in Sales

By Geoff Stunkard

a.m. opening time to sometime in the evening. The crew puts in a long stretch, with auctioneers rotating out often and all workers getting a break every hour. The idea is to display enthusiasm, and the Mecum people spend what it takes to offer an experience as trouble-free as possible for buyers, sellers, and attendees. So even if you don't have a spare million to bid on big-ticket iron, you can come in on a general admission ticket to see a "car show" with some place above a potential \$100 million in value, enjoy a thrill ride in a new Dodge, watch special activities, check out the midway and sponsor displays, and witness the flurry of action from the stadium-level seats as

the cars cross the block.

How is muscle faring in 2018? Let's take a look.

### Money Talks

There were some big sales in 2018, led by a pair of ZL1 Camaros that found a new home on Friday with final selling price of \$1,210,000. This was an interesting offering featuring two of the mere 69 aluminum-engined COPO machines as a single lot. Considering what a single example has done in the past, this was a pretty solid sale. Both retained their original engines, amazing when you consider that most of them were damaged in rpm-related incidents. Both now restored, one was from the small group

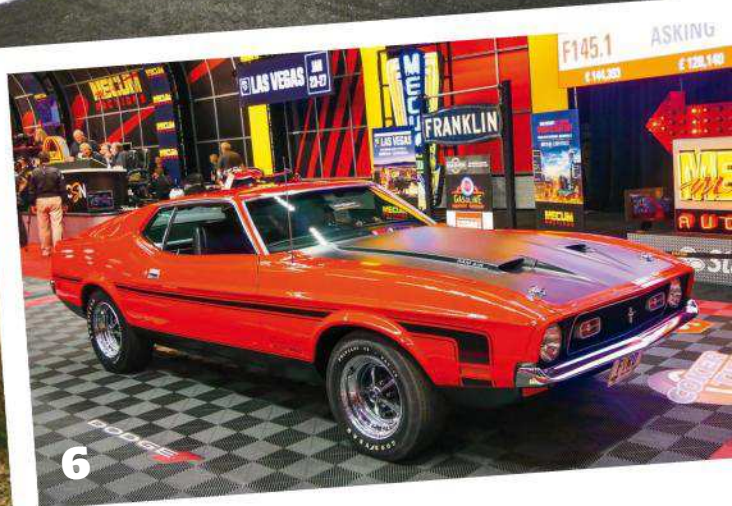
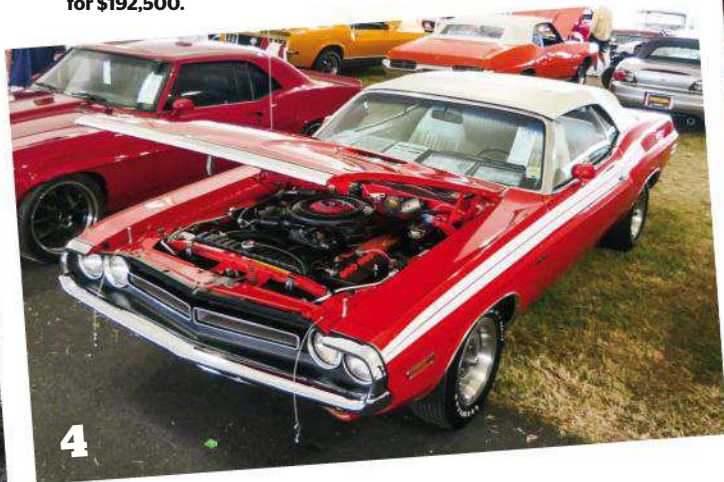
of 13 that dealer Fred Gibb sold himself (most of Gibb's 50-car order was reassigned by Chevrolet), and the other came from a Virginia dealer and showed only 361 miles. It would be the highlight of American muscle this year and the third highest value lot of 2018 behind two Ferraris.

Top-selling Ford was the 1965 Gas Ronda A/FX Ford Mustang from the Nick Smith collection. Again, a factory-associated car with a rare motor (the SOHC 427), this car was built by Holman-Moody as the car show display vehicle, but Ronda got it early in the year after wrecking his first example in pre-season testing. The car sold for \$324,500. Fords were among the healthiest sellers this year. Mercury sales were led off by an unrestored Boss 302 Cougar Eliminator from the Wayne Schmeckle collection, which hammered out at \$121,000.

Aero cars would be the

ees. A pair of early-construction 1970 Six Pack Mopar convertibles was also offered and bid to more than \$800,000 without a sale.

**6** For collector Wayne Schmeckle, who sold a significant group of cars here a couple of years ago, the chart-topper was this unreal MCA Thoroughbred Gold-winning Boss 351 Mustang. A solid representative of the last true Boss package of the muscle era, the car had been used as a dealer demo before being parked for preservation by the dealership. It has accumulated just 823 miles since new and sold for \$192,500.



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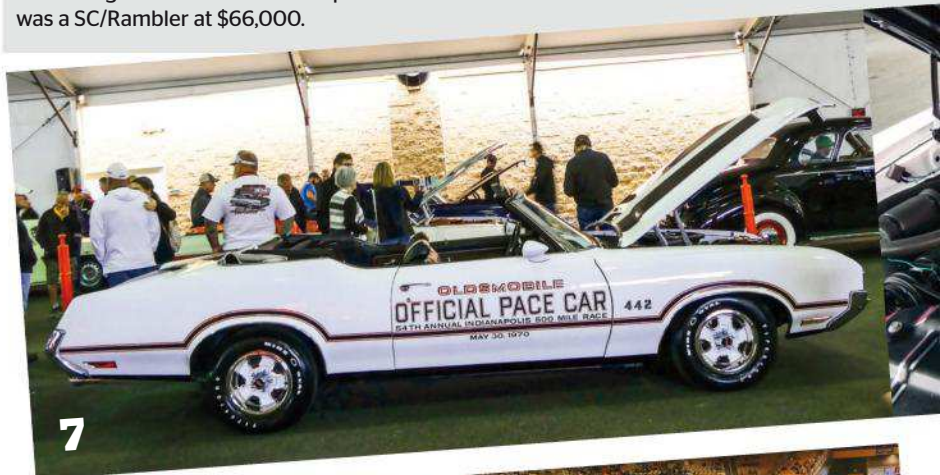
chart-toppers for the Mopars, with a Hemi Superbird selling for \$275,000 and a 440ci Daytona finishing at \$253,000 for Plymouth and Dodge, respectively. There was a solid selection of Chryslers at this year's event, though a number of owners decided to wait another day when the cars did not reach reserve. Top car in The Bid Goes On category was the 1965 Dick Landy Dodge, also from the Nick Smith Collection. This car was heavily promoted (as was the whole collection), but a \$500,000 final call was not enough to find new ownership.

Top of the GM charts after the Chevrolets was \$242,000 for a beautiful 1962 Super Duty Pontiac Catalina, which was not a vintage race car. A 1971 Olds 4-4-2 W-30 convertible took home a winning total of \$134,750, and top muscle Buick was the very rare (one of two) 1970 GS455 Stage 2 race car, whose \$115,500 tally was behind two 1950s-era Buicks that brought a bit more. AMC's top seller was a SC/Rambler at \$66,000.

## What Market?

Frankly, the stock market. There was some price market correction this year, but with the stock market at record highs and the overall economy soaring, the "big money" was not flowing freely. History bears out that collectors who have a balanced portfolio are presently investing their money in the stock market, in real estate, and, in anticipation of the upcoming tax benefits, in business.

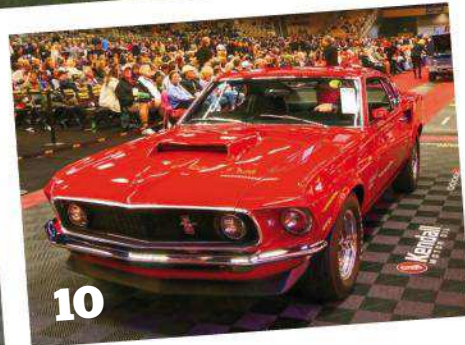
For example, let's look at the Hemi Mopar market. The two Superbirds that sold were both Hemi models, both column-shift automatics, and both under \$300,000. Several Hemi E-Bodies were on hand, none topping the \$300,000 margin at auction, with a very original 1970 model in orange at \$225,500 as top seller. The \$143,000 purchase price on a one-of-one Plum Crazy four-speed Super Track Pack 1970 Coronet R/T hardtop was also stunning. Although the car was available



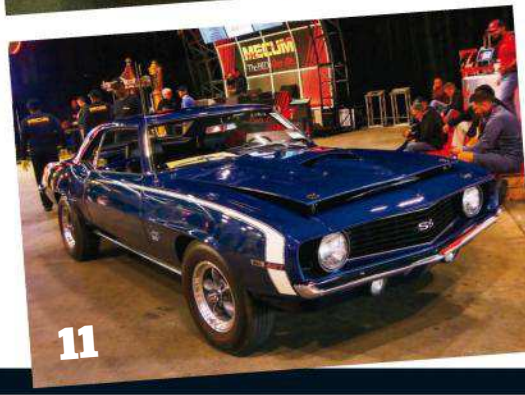
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7 Most of us know about the 1972 Hurst/Olds pace cars but have not seen the 1970 model. With just 268 built under code Y74, this is a 455-powered cruiser with a Y25 Ram Air hood, bench seat with center fold-down, power convertible top, and factory air. The winning bid was \$66,000, for a car whose restoration was just finished last year.

for the first time ever and promoted at both MCACN and in event advertising, no high-rollers pushed the car into the stratosphere. With the Hemi market at its hottest in recent years, this adjustment is likely temporary, but it seems to be a real-world change for now. Nonetheless, solid restored B-Body midsize Hemi models sold all week long in the \$70,000-\$100,000 range or better, so for people looking to sell, there were buyers.

Prices realized on other brands followed suit, with the traditional postwar classics (such as Mustang and Corvette) faring solidly. Fords in general were strong this year, including an R-code Galaxie 500XL convertible, the one-off New York World's Fair display car, which topped \$200,000. Low-mileage un-restored or lightly touched models of any brand continue to be in demand.

A fair number of higher-valued cars



8

**8** The fact that less than \$70,000 put a new owner into the real 455-inch thunder of the pace car is a sign of good opportunities right now.

**9** This fine-looking Shelby convertible was on its way to the block on Saturday morning, when spirited bidding brought a final sale price of \$189,750. The 428 machine with air conditioning garnered the fourth-highest selling price for the Shelby Mustang contingent.

**10** Mustangs and Corvettes continue to be popular cars. This was the highest-selling of the street Mustangs here, hammering home a final total of \$275,000 to equal one of the Shelby versions. Nick Smith's two Gas Ronda drag cars were higher, the 1965 SOHC a sale at \$324,500 and the 1966 long-nose funny car closing at \$425,000 without meeting the reserve.

**11** Seen rolling off the block in front of The Bid Goes On booth, this documented Phase III Motion Camaro, the only one ever built with an automatic transmission, was rolled away without meeting reserve on Saturday. A final bid of \$230,000 was also one of the highest for Camaros that weekend.

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ended up in Mecum's The Bid Goes On program this year when prices did not materialize to the seller's desired level. That said, from the auctioneer's platform would come an announcement like, "We just sold the Corvette" (or Mustang or GTO or whatever), showing that buyers were quickly making successful offers at the Bid Goes On office to buy cars they wanted even if a second bidder had not been interested in pushing the price forward on the block. In the end, prices overall seemed to be reflecting that people were buying but were not "investing" in the way they have in recent years. In our opinion, that money is likely on Wall Street right now.

### Collections Sell Well (But Some Get Dragged Home)

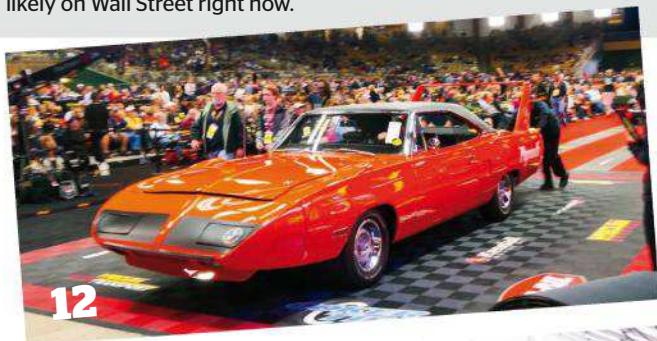
This event is noted for groups of cars from single collections being offered on specific days, and three muscle collections in particular were highlights. Wayne Schmeackle of Colorado had a wonderful group of low-mileage Fords and Mopars, and Kayo Erwin from Chattanooga likewise had several low-mileage muscle Chevrolets in his mix. Nick Smith's Factory Lightweight Collection showcased some of drag racing's most historic cars. All three owners sold cars for excellent prices, though all took a few home as well.

Schmeackle's amazing 823-mile 1971 Boss 351 topped his sales at \$192,500, but his two Bill Stroppe-prepped Broncos also impressed when they both topped \$100,000 each. For Erwin, a Z-16 Chevelle was top-seller at \$280,000, but his incredible 1966 L79 Nova SS with less than 7,000 documented miles powered up to \$187,000, and then \$172,500 allowed a new owner to take home his 7,900-mile 1963 409 Impala SS.

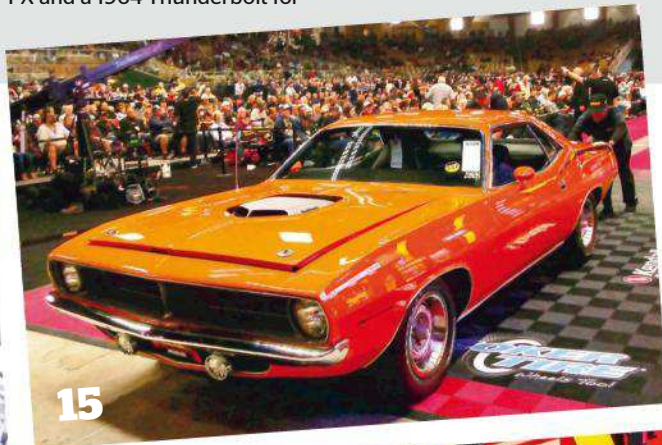
However, Erwin took home a good portion of his vintage drag cars, and Smith sold just a handful of his, with the aforementioned Gas Ronda 1965 A/ FX and a 1964 Thunderbolt for

\$302,500 being the top sellers. The upper-end vintage drag car market seems to have cooled, perhaps partly because of the older age of their true enthusiasts. Also, they're not practical drivers and require some maintenance to keep in top tune; it's not a place for everybody. Smith's cars were among the most famous in drag racing history; several, had they sold at the final bids tendered, would have easily made the Top 25 of all sales for the event. As it is, he decided to wait for another day.

To Mecum's credit, the racing collections were well adver-



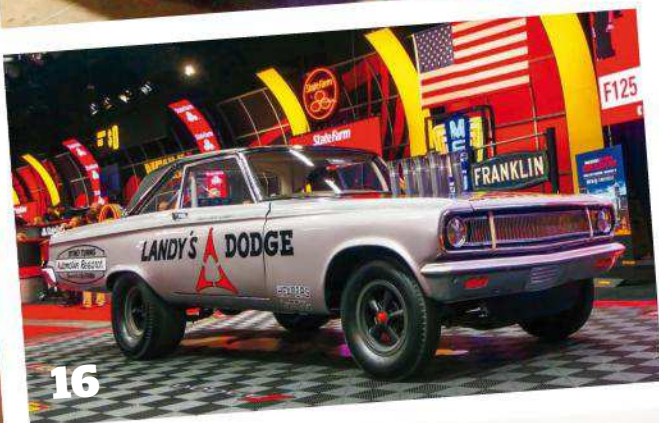
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tised and beautifully presented to the public, but they simply were not what buyers wanted this time around. Whether there's a more permanent correction to this sector of the market remains to be seen; it wasn't for a lack of trying.

An interesting approach Mecum had this year was to offer an assorted group of cars each morning in a Special No Reserve collection. Far from discount window goods, these were Shelby Mustangs, big-block convertibles, some nice modifieds, even a 1966 Hemi Charger. The top seller was a yellow G.T. 500KR at a reasonable \$137,500, with most selling in the \$30,000-\$70,000 range.

These groups brought buyers to the show and were a popular display on the midway.

One additional note is in order. Modified muscle cars, vehicles with show-level prep and remoting to modern engine designs or larger-displacement legendary engines, showed big spark in 2018. Several topped the \$100,000 mark, perhaps a harbinger that some new owners are looking for fun rather than chasing after OE authenticity.


## Finish Line

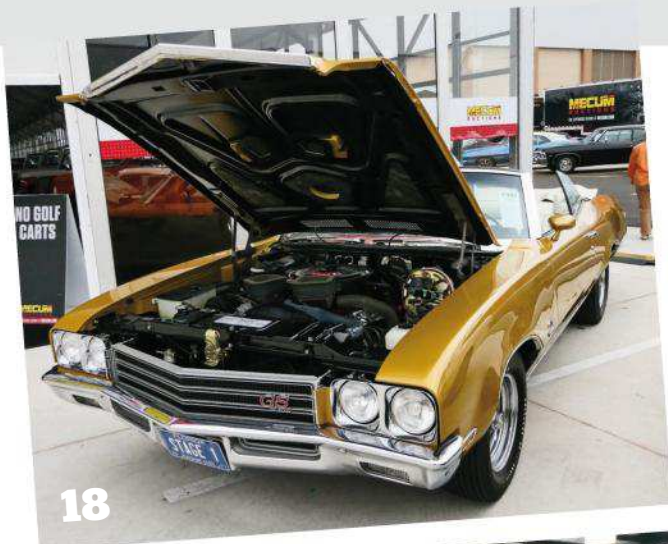
We normally showcase the higher-valued sales, but many deals at midweek sold for less

than \$30,000. Should you buy now? Well, if a seller is planning to cash out, there are some real possibilities to be found. While not at giveaway prices, there may currently be the opportunity to get the car you want. The stock market never rallies forever, and collectability will remain for these icons of performance going forward. Honestly, the collector's marketplace seems to do better when confidence is lacking in more traditional investments. That said, there are established bottom lines on many noted muscle models. Most will not fall below those margins, as the sale of the Special No Reserve collection showed.

Conversely, should you sell

now? That's a relative question. Those same buyers who are looking for cars will be in attendance at events like this, and the auction format remains one of the best ways to get true market value for your car. The corrections are usually more exponential at the top of the marketplace, and cars in the \$20,000-\$60,000 range did not seem to see any huge shift. Mecum's reserve format protects you, allowing you to decide if it is time to sell. Good cars can usually find good homes regardless, and at prices that satisfy both buyer and seller.

For full Kissimmee results and info on upcoming Mecum auctions, visit [mecum.com](http://mecum.com). 



**12** Seen being removed from the block after selling for \$275,000, this Hemi Superbird was likely a solid purchase. If there's a present market change, cars like this will remain among the top echelon of performance collector cars.

**13** This barn find was also likely a good buy even at \$35,200. Real LS6 Chevelles can be hard to document, and this four-speed with paperwork was the real deal, complete with enough cool patina that it might be worth keeping as found. However, the price also gives the new owner room to restore it.

**14** Featuring a 351, a Deluxe Marti Report, and a frame-off restoration, this 1971 Torino convertible was sold for charity on Friday morning and took a final sale price of \$42,900. Again, well bought at this price in our opinion.

**15** At \$225,500, this was the highest-selling 'Cuda of the week. A beautiful car, this one featured great originality and its born-with driveline. We'd have bought it.

**16** Top of the charts for bidding on the race cars was Dick Landy's legendary 1965 Dodge Coronet, whose half-million-dollar final bid was not enough to send it to a new home. Mecum's efforts to promote the racing collections were extensive, but the market for even the best-known

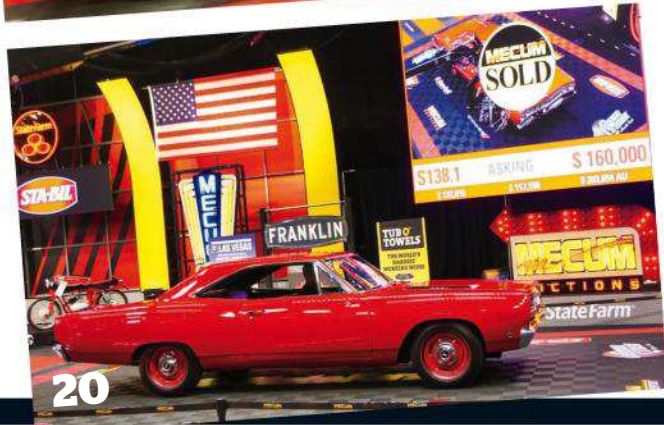
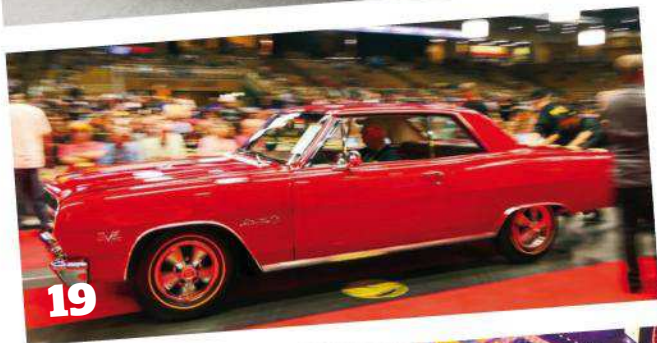
cars seems to have softened, and many did not change hands during the event.

**17** This 1971 'Cuda with factory Shaker and 340ci LA-series power was part of the Special No Reserve collection offered first thing each morning during the auction's final days. The early birds were out, and the billboard E-Body, documented on a broadcast sheet, hammered to an impressive \$86,900 closing price.

**18** This very nice 1971 Buick convertible was more than meets the eye, having been built as a zone demonstrator, one of 11 known to exist. Completely optioned, the Cortez Gold Stage I car went over the block Friday and sold for \$84,700 before the event concluded.

**19** In front of a large crowd of bidders and onlookers, Kayo Erwin's low-mileage restored 1965 Chevelle featuring the RPO Z-16 package moves off the main block and towards a purchase price of \$280,000. The market for better low-mileage cars remains strong ...

**20** ... and cars like this 1968 Hemi Road Runner continue to be popular as well. A premium example getting a big \$165,000 purchase price, the beeper was awarded Top Eliminator honors by Mopar itself in 2014 and is the only 1968 Hemi hardtop known in PPI Matador Red. That big sold sign is part of the action. Oh, yeah, you already saw this car in our Feb. 2015 issue, "Road to Stardom."





**T**he Grand National Roadster Show (GNRS) has a nearly seven-decade legacy as *the* pioneering hot rod and custom car show on the West Coast. Known in its early years as the Oakland Roadster Show for its location in the city on the east side of San Francisco Bay, the show's trademark is the 9-foot-tall perpetual trophy it awards each year to "America's Most Beautiful Roadster."

This award aside, the show has gone through quite a few changes over the years. It moved south to the Fairplex in Pomona (adjacent to the NHRA's dragstrip) in the early 2000s, and has expanded its invitation list beyond hot rods and customs to keep the show fresh and attract a wider audience. Muscle cars have taken part in previous years, but the few on hand were, for the most part, highly modified and customized.

This year was different. The Fairplex's Building 9 was filled with 106 significant muscle cars, all of them original, restored to original, or fitted with period-correct and day-two upgrades. Our kinds of cars, in other words.

The display was curated by Alex "Axle" Idzardi, well known in the SoCal car hobby

# ONE-TIME DEAL

## Muscle Cars Crash the Grand National Roadster Show

By Drew Hardin

for his role in renewing interest in traditional hot rods back at the confluence of rodding and rockabilly music 20 or so years ago. He's still active in the culture as a DJ and car show promoter. Among his gigs is gathering the cars that make up the Suede Palace, a hall at GNRS named for the primed rods and customs shown there.

It turns out that, before he was into hot rods, Idzardi was a muscle car guy. He told us he and his parents founded the Inland Empire GTO Club back in the mid 1980s. In

those days he tooled around in a Tri-power 1966 GTO he bought for \$300. He has long wanted to put together a muscle car display at GNRS, and finally convinced the show's organizers that a room full of factory-correct 1960s and 1970s cars would be a good idea.

Idzardi spent much of 2017 traveling the country seeking out cars, many of them award winners at Good Guys shows. His cross-country efforts were reflected in the far-flung states listed in the car's window cards: Minnesota, Georgia, Tennessee, Texas, Oklahoma, Colorado, and Washington, to name a few.

"It's a dream come true for me," Idzardi said, surveying a room that he wanted to feel "like a 1960's dealership." That would be some dealership. No fewer than six Mopar wing cars, four Boss 429s, and several LS6 Chevelles were on display.

Sadly, though, it was a one-time deal. "It'll never happen again," he admitted. Next year Building 9 will be full of Model A Fords, marking the popular car's 90th anniversary. So here's a look at one of the best multi-make indoor muscle car shows we have seen in California, and will ever see at GNRS.





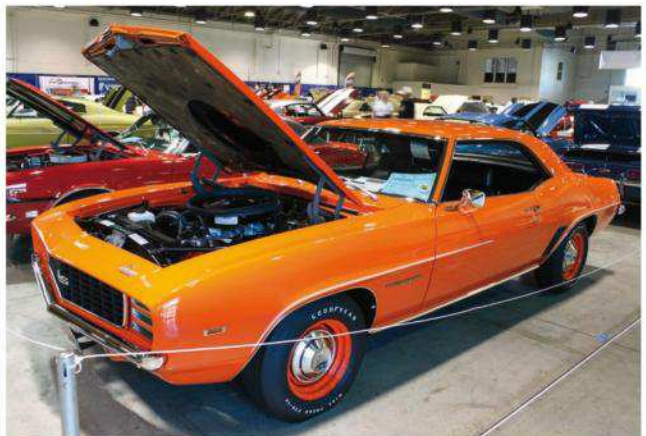
■ Paul Kilker is one of Arvid Svendsen's favorite Minnesotans, and he has had several cars in our magazine. He brought a rare one to GNRS: a 1965 GTO convertible documented as one of 55 drop-tops built that year with a Tri-power engine and four-speed, and one of just two painted in the delicate Iris Mist Metallic color.



■ The story behind Bob and Cecilia Satterfield's LS6 Chevelle was displayed in a large binder with the car. Bob bought it in 1974 at age 17 from professional wrestler Bullet Bob Armstrong. The teenager's driving habits in the 450hp Chevelle earned him so many tickets (all included in the binder) that the State of Georgia wanted to take his license away. A private detective (whose canceled check is also in the binder) worked with the state to keep Bob licensed, but he decided it would be prudent to park the fast car. It sat from 1976 to 2015, when the couple decided to put it back on the road. The car retains its original LS6/M22/4.10 powertrain combo, and the Good Guys made it a Muscle Car of the Year finalist in 2017.



■ Another rare Pontiac was actor Steve Moriarty's 1973 Trans Am painted in Brewster Green. He is the car's second owner, and according to him the color was available in 1973 only and accounted for about 5 percent of production. He bought it in 2014 and drives it regularly, saying "it's no trailer queen." Moriarty's first experience with a Brewster Green Trans Am was back in 1973, when he and John Wayne (yes, that John Wayne) horsed around in one of the movie cars while they were working on the film *McQ*.



■ Roger Kennedy, who helps Phil and Sita Mitchell wrangle their car collection, told us they bought this 1969 COPO Camaro, a rare RS model, at about the same time as the Yenko. It came out of Texas, where it sat in a grass field for some 40 years after "a guy was hot rodding it, spun a bearing, and then parked it," Kennedy said. Level One Restoration also brought this Camaro back for the Mitchells. Unlike the Yenko, this car still had its original drivetrain.



■ Phil and Sita Mitchell brought two notable Camaros from their collection in Washington State. Their 1968 Yenko has quite a history, having been exported to England in the late 1960s, drag (and street) raced there, and then put in storage from the early 1970s until it was brought back to the States a little more than 10 years ago. After it changed hands several times, Phil bought it and sent it to Level One Restoration in Colorado for a complete restoration. Don Yenko's 427 and the car's original transmission were gone, but Level One replaced them with a correct 427 and M21 four-speed. Remarkably, the original interior was in good enough shape to be cleaned and reused. The car was shown at the Muscle Car and Corvette Nationals in 2016, and in 2017 was voted the Good Guys Muscle Car of the Year.



■ This 1969 Daytona Charger was "a putrid red mess" when Janice Sutherland bought it in Reno in 2013. A color change and an engine swap—from a 440 to a Hemi that came out of a race boat—made it the eye-grabber it is today. Dan Loughlin Customs in Anderson, California, works on Janice's cars.



■ Of the six winged warriors on display in Building 9, two were owned by Janice Sutherland. They turned out to be just part of a larger collection of desirable Mopars she owns, including a couple of Hemi cars she and her ex-husband (who worked at a Chrysler dealership in the day) bought new. The yellow Superbird was originally owned by a man in Alameda, California, whose father “locked it up” for 20 years after his son was killed. He sold it to Janice “because he knew I’d love it.” The matching-numbers ‘Bird has a 440 and a four-speed.



■ A hand-lettered sign on the windshield of Jim Goss’s Boss 429 said it all: “Yes I drove this car from Colorado Springs. It took me 17 hours, \$207 in premium fuel, 1,145 miles and it got 16.1 mpg going approximately 80 mph (no cruise control). I got the mileage from my 2.73:1 gears. 80 mph at 2,800 rpm. Just don’t ask to race me from a stop-light.” Watch for a story on his return trip to Colorado in a future issue.



■ Pete Zacharzuk owned a 1967 Mustang GT when he was younger and spent 4½ years finding just the right one, an S-code 390/four-speed, to relive his youth. This car was owned at one time by hot rodder George Poteet, who was going to make a *Bullitt* Mustang clone out of it but decided it was “too nice” to modify, Zacharzuk says.



■ Mike McCabe’s 1964 Polara, born a 426 street wedge/four-speed/radio- and heater-delete car, was drag raced in the Memphis area until the motor blew and the car was parked for years. When McCabe bought it 20 years ago the “change to a Max Wedge look was already well along—engine, hood scoop, and so on. I just tried to improve on everything, especially as parts came along.” He says it would “take a real expert to tell it from a real Maxie, the only real difference being the VIN.” Well, that and the front disc brakes he added because he drives the car to shows in the Tulsa area (he’s from Broken Arrow, Oklahoma). He also lowered the engine’s compression to 10:1 to make it more street friendly.



## “The State of Georgia wanted to take his license away”



■ A 1968 Z/28 Camaro belonging to Kevin Shannon was on the cover of our “Homegrown Heroes” issue in May 2010, and he has since restored this very rare 1969 AMX 500 Special. He tells us just 32 were made for Southern California, Arizona, and Nevada dealers. He bought the car because of its Big Bad Green color and didn’t learn about its rarity until later. The car had been sitting for more than 20 years and needed a fair amount of work—which he did himself, natch—including putting in a new 390 V-8; replacing the front fenders, hood, and passenger door; and installing the Legendary reproduction upholstery.



■ This 1963 Galaxie was a 60th birthday present that Lohn Storms gave himself 11 years ago. At the time it was a 390/tri-power car, but what he really wanted was a 427 under the hood. A friend told him about a neighbor who claimed to have a NASCAR 427 engine for sale. Storms bought it and asked Bob Graham, who had raced lightweight Fords in the 1960s, to check it out. The engine turned out to be the real thing, with LeMans rods, forged pistons, "and a forged-steel crank with the dollar sign on it," a telltale sign of a NASCAR motor, says Storms. The car is a driver, with a Tremec TKO five-speed backing the big-block and a Speedway Specialties rearend with 35-spline axles and a Detroit Locker.




■ Dan Bishop had two 1970 Chevelle SS models at GNRS, his blue LS5 that we saw at the San Marino Concours d'Elegance last year and this triple-black LS6. Also a San Marino veteran, the LS6 went to MCACN in 2016, where it scored 981 out of 1,000 points. The 30,000-mile LS6 is nearly all original, except for a repaint and a set of Coker Wide Oval Radial tires, which Bishop says "makes a world of difference" when he drives the car. Yes, he drives his 30,000-mile original LS6. "I like driving it. It's a beast without power steering, but fine in a straight line."



■ When William Benson bought his 1970 Challenger 34 years ago, it was "basically a rolling sheetmetal shell," he recalls. "But I knew what it was. I was looking for one." The engine, transmission, and interior were gone, but the car still had its original Dana 60 with 4.10s, and the fender tags were intact, so he knew it was a 440 Six-Pack/four-speed car. Initially he put it together "with junkyard parts. I didn't care if it was straight. I just liked the big motor and beat the hell out of it." About 10 years ago, Benson realized these E-Bodies "were finally getting the money to justify a restoration," so he mounted what became an 8½-year rejuvenation. The engine and trans are date-code correct, much of the sheetmetal is fresh, but the interior "is still the junkyard interior." He drives the car; in fact, bringing it from his Colorado home to Los Angeles for the show was the first time he put it on a trailer.



■ The original owner of Paul Campbell's 1972 Buick GS ordered the car to race, and race it he did, for years in Wyoming. When he bought it in 1996 it was in "fair shape," he says. "I got it before they wrecked it." Campbell drove it for a while, then parked it while deciding if he wanted to sell it or rebuild it. The rebuild plan won. There wasn't much left of the original Stage 1 motor except for the block, so Campbell had TA Performance in Scottsdale, Arizona, rebuild it to Stage 2 specs, approximating the performance package sent to Buick race teams back in the day. The 455 is now 462 inches; sports aluminum heads and intake, a bigger cam, and a 3-inch dual exhaust; and puts out 550 hp and 550 lb-ft of torque. The first owner had swapped a GM 12-bolt for the factory 10-bolt, and its 3.83 gears contribute to the 8-10 mpg Campbell gets while driving the car between his Arizona home and shows in California. 



**"It sat in a grass field for some 40 years"**

**“When he parked it he covered it so that no one would know what he had”**

## The First Trans Am Off the Assembly Line

By Scotty Lachenauer

**B**eing the first gives you prominence. It makes you a trailblazer, going where no others have gone before. In life's big picture it provides you with a distinction that no one can ever challenge.

As far as inanimate objects go, being the first of your design creates value that identically built successors cannot claim. And thus, owning that initial offering, especially to collectors in this automotive hobby,

could be a very good thing.

The initial offering we refer to is the Trans Am you see here. When Pontiac decided to offer the Trans Am package for the successful Firebird in 1969, these rowdy ponycars with the WS4 (Trans Am Convenience and Sports Package) option were born out of the Van Nuys, California, and Norwood, Ohio, assembly plants. A total of 697 Firebird TAs (including eight convertibles) were built and sold that year, an

inauspicious start for what would become one of the most popular and enduring muscle cars in history.

Several factors contributed to that low initial production run. It was a midyear release, and the price tag for the WS4 option was high, about \$1,100 to \$1,200. Plus, word had leaked to the buying public that a redesigned F-Body would be available for 1970, so it's likely that buyers held off for the new model.

# FORGED FROM FIRE



Today the first-gen Trans Am's popularity, combined with the low number of them produced, has made them collectibles of the highest degree. So imagine being a dyed-in-the-wool Pontiac enthusiast who not only had the opportunity to own a TA from the first year of production but actually the first one off the assembly line! That did happen for a pair of supreme Pontiac enthusiasts, and this is how it all went down.

## Poncho Pride

Kevin Beal is a guy living the dream. His particular dream world involves the collector car hobby and 1960s and 1970s muscle cars—Pontiacs, to be specific. He's fortunate to go to work and live the life he always desired, owning Ames Performance Engineering out of Spofford, New Hampshire. Ames is the largest Pontiac-only restoration supply company in the world. Kevin is surrounded by the GM brand, and

that puts a smile on his face every day of the week.

Kevin grew up a passionate Poncho connoisseur who took his first ride in a Pontiac as a toddler. That ride was in his parents' brand new 1967 GTO. It's a car that has always inhabited a special place in his heart, and one that he was lucky enough to buy 28 years later for his very own. Today he enjoys the car, along with several other top Pontiacs in his collection, with his "auto



■ Working with PHS Automotive Services, Kevin Beal and Don Emery discovered that this particular Trans Am was the first to roll off either of the two GM assembly lines producing them.

**“It all started with an ad that is featured in every Ames catalog”**

enthusiast in training” son Kyler.

How did Kevin and his business partner (and cousin) Don Emery score this very special Trans Am? It all started with an ad that is featured in every Ames catalog and on its website: “Wanted: Low Mileage Low Production Cars.” One day Kevin received a call from a Don Larsen of Victorville, California. Don mentioned that he had a car that Ames might be interested in and said it was possibly the first production 1969 Trans Am ever built. “Don was thinking retirement and figured it was time to sell the TA,” says Kevin.

That’s a pretty bold claim to make, but Don had the necessary paperwork to back it up. The documents showed that it

## AT A GLANCE

### 1969 FIREBIRD TRANS AM

**Owned by:** Kevin Beal and Don Emery

**Restored by:** Unrestored

**Engine:** 400ci/335hp L74 Ram Air III V-8

**Transmission:** Muncie M20 wide-ratio 4-speed manual

**Rearend:** GM B.O.P. 10-bolt with 3.55 gears and Safe-T-Track

**Interior:** Gray vinyl bucket seat

**Wheels:** 14x7 Rally II

**Tires:** F70-14 Coker Firestone Wide Oval

**Special parts:** Formula steering wheel, dual horns, pushbutton radio, pedal trim



■ Kevin Beal took his passion and turned it into a career, co-owning Ames Performance Engineering with his cousin, Don Emery. They found this historic Trans Am through a want ad on their company’s website.

was the first TA produced at the Van Nuys plant, but Kevin wanted to see if it was actually the first Trans Am produced overall. Knowing that Norwood also produced 1969 TAs, it became a matter of finding out which plant built theirs first. He was still

very interested in purchasing the car, as long as it was the first TA produced overall by Pontiac.

Kevin had his work cut out for him. He had to find the Norwood facility records and see when they pushed out their first TA. “I worked with Jim Mattison of PHS Automotive Services. Having the VIN number for the first Norwood car, we pulled the invoice, and sure enough, the first Norwood TA was built one month after the first Van Nuys TA.”

With that bit of knowledge, Kevin and Don made a deal on the Trans Am, and then Kevin headed west to claim his prize. “We pushed the TA onto the transporter. With it sitting that long—since 1987—I didn’t want to start it without draining all the fluids and putting Mystery Oil in the cylinders.”

## Past Life

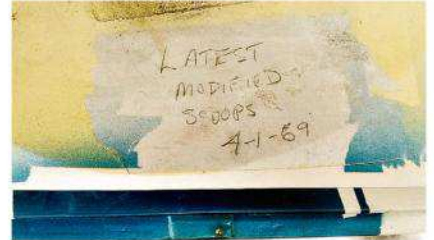
Much of this car’s history has been lost, though Kevin found out enough to put together a partial timeline. This TA was first shipped to Pontiac headquarters for company use. This was most likely for road tests, advertising, and auto show displays. Once that tour of duty was complete, the car was passed on to a dealership.

Kevin says, “Unfortunately, I don’t have information between the time it was reinvoyced and sold to the public on July 20, 1970, to the point when Don bought it in 1987.”

■ The L74 400ci Ram Air III engine is built around a correct service replacement block. Everything else on the engine is original to the car. The 335hp engine sports 10.75:1 compression and gets fed by a four-barrel Quadrajets. A Ram Air IV engine was also available, though only 55 cars were sold with the pricey option.



■ Little has changed on this Trans Am since it left the Van Nuys assembly line. The new owners did have to change out the carpet and seat covers, the latter because a previous owner had swapped in cloth inserts on the seats. Over the years, someone changed the original wood wheel for this Formula model (a TA option later in the year). It has since been changed back to stock.



What is known is that 18 years after it left the Van Nuys plant, Don answered an ad in the Orange County *Auto Trader* for the car. Once he purchased it, he drove it for three months and parked it. That was the last time the TA ran under his possession.

When he parked it in his garage, he covered it with blankets, boxes, and other objects so that no one would know what he had. The car then quickly faded into ob-

scure. "Victorville is off the beaten path, out in the Mojave Desert, so there were few prying eyes to deal with," Kevin says.

After Kevin and Don bought the car, they checked out the pertinent parts. It has a little more than 75,000 miles on the odometer. It had undergone a repaint 35 years ago, and at some point the Formula steering wheel was added. The wheel was an option on the 1969 TA, but due to manu-

■ Like all 1969 TAs, the hood on this car is steel with added fiberglass hood scoops. Kevin found writing on the underside of the scoop indicating it was the "latest modified" scoop and a "4-1-69" date. PHS data indicate the car was assembled on April 29, 1969.

■ Rally II wheels were a Firebird option in 1969 but were standard on the Trans Am. This car also came from the factory with the optional F70-14 whitewall tires, rendered here by Coker.

PONTIAC MOTOR DIVISION		GENERAL MOTORS CORPORATION		PONTIAC, MICHIGAN 48053 #04/29	
VEHICLE NO.	223375L118850	CC	10	<00	01926
VEHICLE DESCRIPTION	4SPD TRANS	AMOUNT	195.36	354	148.00
	RADIO-F/B	AMOUNT	61.09	382	44.08
	GAUGE-TAC/CL	AMOUNT	84.26	444	60.80
	STRG WHL-C/S	AMOUNT	50.55	462	36.48
	GLASS-R-AL	AMOUNT	32.65	531	23.56
	MATS-FL-FRT	AMOUNT	6.85	631	4.94
	FIREBIRD HT CPE	AMOUNT	2759.00	2039.78	192.00
	SAFE-T-TR-HD	AMOUNT	63.19	361	45.60
	HORNS-DUAL	AMOUNT	4.21	414	3.04
	WHL-S-RALLY Z	AMOUNT	84.26	454	60.80
	TRIM-BRK-PDL	AMOUNT	5.27	514	3.80
	CUSTOM TRIM	AMOUNT	78.99	554	57.00
	F70X14 WW FG	AMOUNT	26.33	THR	19.00
AMOUNT PAID	4478.10	AMOUNT PAID	00	AMOUNT PAID	2085.40
DATE OF SALE	04/29/69	DATE OF SALE	04/29/69	DATE OF SALE	07-20-70
DEALER NAME AND ADDRESS		DEALER CODE		INTEREST FROM	
FRONT PONTIAC SALES, INC.		307-267		05-09-70	
125 E. INDIANA AVE					
PERRYSBURG, OHIO 43551					
SALE PRICE		SALE PRICE		SALE PRICE	
2944.88		187.51		2734.39	
DATE OF SALE		DATE OF SALE		DATE OF SALE	
04/29/69		04/29/69		PLV685631	
DEALER NAME AND ADDRESS		FACTORY CODE		SALE PRICE	
PONTIAC MOTOR DIV. FACTORY CO. CAR		335 997		35 997	
FACT DEL-ATT J.T. WILSON					
35 997 PONTIAC, MICH.		48053			

■ The TA's initial invoice indicated it was to be shipped from the Van Nuys plant to Pontiac's Michigan headquarters, attention J.T. Wilson. Wilson was Pontiac's manager of car distribution, and he likely sent the car out for promotional purposes, like advertising photography and auto show displays. The second invoice shows that in July 1970, after the car's promotional duties were done, it was sent to Front Pontiac in Perrysburg, Ohio, for sale to the public. That's when the car's timeline is interrupted until it was purchased as a used car in 1987.

facturing problems it wasn't available until later in production. (Since we took these photos, Kevin has replaced the steering wheel with the factory wood wheel that's listed on the original invoice.)

The Trans Am doesn't have its original engine, but instead has a correct replacement 400 block that was reassembled with the original engine parts. The interior had some small changes, which required Kevin and Don to install new seat skins and carpet. All the important OE TA parts are there, and the car looks pretty much the way it did when it left the assembly line.

So now Kevin and Don will be the keepers of an important part of Pontiac history. These new owners, along with their company, aim to keep the brand alive for future generations to enjoy. And this "first" for Pontiac will be kept safe and out of harm's way, while still making it out and about for future automotive enthusiasts to appreciate.

# NOT a Chevelle

**L79-Powered  
Acadian Beaumont  
Sport Deluxe  
Is 1 of 23**



By Barry Kluczyk

**W**ith all the political talk about trade pacts and free-trade agreements among countries around the globe, it's worth remembering a time when tariffs weighed heavily in the cross-border commerce between the United States and Canada, particularly when it came to automobiles. With roughly a tenth of the population of the United States, Canada was understandably protective of its manufacturing industry in the early decades of vehicle production. Chevrolet car production in 1955 is a great example. In the States, it totaled more than 1.77 million vehicles, while in Canada it was a little less than 63,000, only about 3 percent of the U.S. output.

To protect its home industry, Canada levied taxes on imports, making it impractical to ship cars from the U.S. So Detroit's automakers set up subsidiary companies and built vehicles for Canada in Canadian assembly plants. Those subsidiaries differentiated their lineups and offered a number of unique models, from Mer-

cury trucks to the Pontiac Pathfinder. The Big Three even established distinct vehicle lines in Canada, including Fargo (Dodge) trucks, Meteor (Ford) cars, and General Motors' contribution to Canadian car building: Acadian.

Launched in 1962 as its own brand, Acadian was mostly aligned with Pontiac and Buick dealers. Canadian Pontiac models already blended some Chevrolet hardware, and the first Acadian models upped the ante with Chevy II-based platforms fitted with unique grilles and other trim, as well as Chevrolet engines. That series started with the entry-level Acadian Invader and topped out with the Beaumont.

It got a little confusing when, in 1964, a Chevelle-based Acadian Beaumont joined the lineup. That made the Acadian Canso the top of the Chevy II-based series, but in 1966 Beaumont became its own brand, just like Acadian.

Regardless of the model, Acadians and Beaumonts were not built in large numbers. Production exceeded 20,000 units for a





■ Chevelle front sheetmetal was complemented with Pontiac-style wheel covers, minus the Pontiac script around the spinner-style center caps.

couple of years, but it was typically less than that. They were rare when new and even more so half a century later.

Detroit-area enthusiast Joe Lizon didn't know a Beaumont from a hockey puck when he attended a car show in Grand Bend, Ontario, more than 15 years ago. But he was schooled in their distinctions by a soon-to-be good friend who urged him to ditch his dime-a-dozen Nova SS for a rare piece of Canadian A-Body history. Shortly thereafter, Joe's garage harbored a pair of 1965 Acadian Sport Deluxe hardtops, both factory equipped with the ultrarare L79 327/350hp engine.

"I was really intrigued by the Acadians and had my friend Chris in Canada help me search for one," says Joe. "Pretty quickly he located a Regal Red Beaumont that happened to be L79-powered."

Excellent records kept by GM Canada show that of the 8,910 Acadian Beaumont models built in 1965, only 1,134 were V-8-powered, top-trim Sport Deluxe models (coupes and convertibles). Of them, only 23 were sent out the door at the Oshawa, Ontario, plant

with the L79 engine. South of the border, more than 6,000 Chevelles were built with it.

"The car was still with the original owner, who had parked it years earlier after blowing up the Muncie four-speed and 12-bolt axle," says Joe. "I drove to Ontario to inspect it, left him a deposit, and returned the next day with a trailer."

About a month later, that same friend called with a lead on another 1965 Sport Deluxe, also in Ontario. It was advertised as an L78 car (the code for a 396 engine used in larger cars and the Corvette) but was actually another original L79 car. Joe wasted no time grabbing it. He then had two of the 23 L79 coupes, both Regal Red, one with a red interior and the other with a black cabin. Only six of the 23 are known to exist, and Joe's cars are the only ones known to reside in the U.S.

Joe had both of the cars restored, which required purchasing several donor vehicles for sheetmetal and trim. The second car he bought (seen here) was originally sold in Alberta and suffered



■ The Canadian Acadian Beaumont is a fascinating amalgamation of Pontiac, Chevrolet, and Acadian styling elements. At the rear, unique taillamps and trim panel distinguish the Beaumont from a Chevelle. Note the lack of backup lamps. They were optional, and this car doesn't have them.

**“What kind of crazy Chevelle is that?”**

rear-end damage that was repaired with Chevelle quarters. The problem was the Acadian Beaumont taillamps didn't quite fit the smaller Chevelle taillamp nacelles, so re-creating the quarters with original Beaumont sheetmetal was required.

The restoration brought other challenges, including virtually unobtainable trim components such as the “Acadian” letters for the tail panel. Joe ended up making molds and casting them himself. He even made several extra sets, which he sold to help offset the investment. It also took literally years to track down authentic rocker moldings and wheel covers, which look like Pontiac caps, but without “Pontiac Motor Division” written around the edges of the center caps.

The grille is the most obvious difference

between the Chevelle and the Beaumont, while the rear panel on the trunk lid is also unique. Chrome-accented “gills” on the quarter-panels, ahead of the rear wheels, were specific to the high-end Sport Deluxe trim. The wear and tear on those parts, not to mention the generally low quality of the pot metal used to cast many trim items, makes finding suitable used replacements all the tougher.

Inside, the Acadian Beaumont essentially used a 1965 Pontiac LeMans/GTO interior, including the dashboard, steering wheel, and seats, but with a Chevelle center console and Acadian-branded trim on the steering wheel, radio, door panels, and more. The upholstery pattern is also from the Pontiac models, except for a significant detail: There was no embossed arrowhead

insignia in the seatbacks. The Poncho upholstery is readily available. The Acadian version is not, so Joe had NOS Reproductions in Komoka, Ontario, produce a set.

The car's original 327 engine was long gone, but the original four-speed transmission and 12-bolt Posi axle were still in place. Joe sourced an L79 with the correct EC-code engine block from California and had it assembled.

The 350-horse L79 was a sweetheart of a small-block, driven by the “151” hydraulic camshaft, so named for its 3863151 part number. It was designed for the high-winding capability of the comparatively short-stroke 327. The 0.447/0.447-inch lift specs weren't huge, but with the engine's rpm capability, it made terrific power at the upper end of the tachometer. A lot of over-

## AT A GLANCE

### 1965 ACADIAN BEAUMONT SPORT DELUXE

**Owned by:** Joe Lizon

**Restored by:** Owner

**Engine:** 327ci/350hp L79 V-8

**Transmission:** Muncie M20 4-speed manual

**Rear end:** 12-bolt with 3.73 gears

**Interior:** Black vinyl bucket seats and console

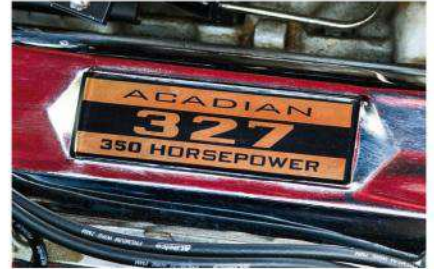
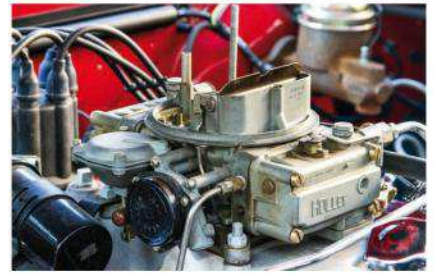
**Wheels:** 14x7 steel with wheel covers

**Tires:** 7.35-14.4 Coker/BF Goodrich Silvertown

**Special parts:** Heavy-duty suspension, tachometer, AM radio, and engine-block heater



■ The unique grille is the car's most prominent identifier. A closer look reveals a large “A” for Acadian between the grille halves, along with a trio of Canadian maple leaves below it.



■ The venerable L79 327 small-block is a high-rpm powerhouse dressed in chrome. A hydraulic camshaft with its fair share of overlap helped make big power at the top end, allowing the smaller-displacement engine to punch in a heavier weight class.

■ Corporate parts bin raiding included a Tempest/Le Mans-sourced dashboard and seats, along with a Chevelle-based center console.

■ A 600-cfm Holley four-barrel fed the L79. Lower-ranking 327 performance engines featured Carter AFB carbs.

■ Acadian-specific valve cover labels were the only differentiator between it and the Chevy version.

■ A Pontiac-based steering wheel is distinguished with an Acadian-specific center emblem.

■ Beaumont Sport Deluxe trim included bolt-on louvers on the lower rear quarters.

■ The factory Beaumont wheel covers and center caps matched Pontiac's, but the caps were manufactured without the "Pontiac Motor Division" script. Finding Acadian-specific caps is next to impossible.


lap also gave it an authoritative idle quality. No pesky lash adjustments like those solid-lifter-cam engines, either.

Interestingly, the Acadian and Beaumont lines were just hitting their respective strides when Canada and the United States signed the Automotive Product Trade Agreement, also known as Autopact, in 1965. The economies of scale in the U.S. were just too great to ignore,

while the costs for comparable vehicles in Canada were too high to sustain. The pact eliminated the majority of cross-border tariffs, opening the door to the trade model we have today.

As a result of Autopact, the uniquely Canadian Acadian and Beaumont lines lasted only about a decade. The Chevelle-based Acadian Beaumont ended with the 1969 model year, while the Acadian name

lived on for another couple of years on a rebadged Nova, which was, ironically, built in the United States. Later, a Pontiac Acadian was offered from the mid-1970s through 1987. It was a rebadged Chevette, just like the U.S.-market Pontiac T1000.

Joe doesn't hail from the Great White North, but he shares the legacy of these Canadian A-Bodies whenever someone asks, "What kind of crazy Chevelle is that?" 



# NEW PRODUCTS

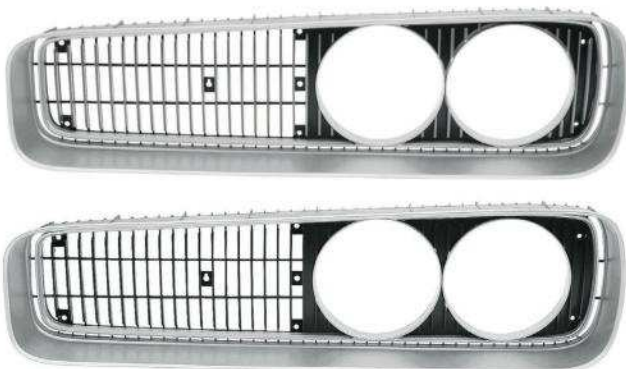
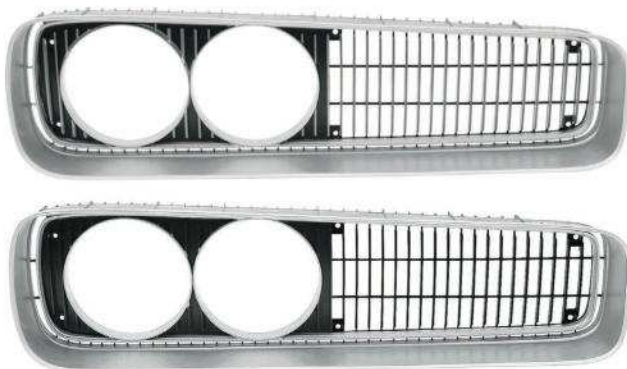
## ■ Easy-Order Custom Covers

Summit Racing Equipment has simplified the process of ordering a custom-fit Covercraft car cover tailored to your muscle car. Just choose a cover based on your storage needs; indicate the year, make, and model of your car using a drop-down menu; and add any custom options you want. There are 40 different Covercraft covers to choose from at Summit, ranging from soft flannel covers to use inside your garage, to moisture-resistant Block-It 380 Deluxe covers that sandwich a barrier film between layers of woven fabric that keeps water and dust out while allowing heat and moisture to ventilate. Information: Summit Racing Equipment, 800/230-3030, [summitracing.com](http://summitracing.com).



## ■ Mopar Big-Block Bellhousing

American Powertrain now has a new, heavy-duty bellhousing that's compatible with all B, RB, and Hemi applications fitted to 23- and 18-spline A833 manual transmissions as well as the Ford version of the Tremec TKO five-speed. The housings are cast from thick-wall, high-titanium-content aluminum alloy for strength and are CNC machined for precise fit. The housings are made with dual starter positions and will work with OE dust covers and mechanical clutch linkage. Information: American Powertrain, [americanpowertrain.com](http://americanpowertrain.com).



## ■ Coronet Grilles

Classic Industries now offers reproductions of the distinctive front grilles for 1970 Dodge Coronets. Manufactured by OER to the correct factory specs using injection-molded materials and OE finishes, these grilles are licensed Mopar Authentic Restoration Products. The grilles with silver vertical fins are for base and 440 models, while the grilles with black vertical fins are correct for Deluxe, R/T, 500, and Super Bee models. Grilles are sold in pairs. Information: Classic Industries, 855/357-2787, [classicindustries.com](http://classicindustries.com).

## ■ Script Valve Covers

Holley has partnered with GM to produce these valve covers with the "Chevrolet" script logo and wraparound fin design. Part of Holley's Vintage Series of die-cast aluminum engine dress-up items, these covers will fit all 1958-1986 Chevrolet small-block V-8s with the perimeter bolt pattern. They have a solid body for non-emissions applications (or custom ventilation setups) and are available in natural cast aluminum or polished finishes, as well as satin black or factory orange with machined fins and logo. Information: Holley, [holley.com](http://holley.com).





### ■ Power Brake Conversion Kit

If you own a second-gen F-Body (Camaro, Firebird) and are looking to upgrade the manual brakes, check out this power brake conversion kit from Jegs. The kit includes the master cylinder, power brake booster, and all required mounting hardware to make the conversion. The booster has a gold finish, while the cast-iron master cylinder retains its natural finish. Information: Jegs, [jegas.com](http://jegas.com).



### ■ Paint Correction System

The three-step Paint Correction System from Jay Leno's Garage utilizes a progressive series of compound and polishes to remove scratches, swirl marks, and haze from vehicle paint. All three products—the Compound for deep scratches and swirls, the Polish to remove the scratches left behind by compounding, and the Finishing Polish to remove the smaller scratches and haze—are designed for application with a dual-action machine polisher and microfiber pads. Information: Jay Leno's Garage, [lenosgarage.com](http://lenosgarage.com).



### ■ Digital Battery Analyzer

You won't need to guess the condition of your car's battery or charging system with this digital battery analyzer from OEM Tools. It's designed with an easy-to-understand menu for testing batteries as well as the starting and charging systems. The supported testing standards include SAE, DIN, EN, IEC, and CA. The analyzer checks voltage, cold cranking amps (CCA), resistance, and overall battery, alternator, and starter conditions. The information is displayed on a large, easy-to-read, backlit LCD screen. Information: OEM Tools, 800/457-0600, [oem-tools.com](http://oem-tools.com).



### ■ Upper Radiator Hoses

OER is now reproducing upper radiator hoses for a variety of muscle cars equipped with small-block Chevy V-8s. One hose, with the part number ending in "2626," fits the (non-A/C) V-8 in 1967 Camaros, while the other fits 1968 Camaros, 1968 Novas, and 1968-1970 Chevelles. Each hose is precision molded from premium-grade rubber to match OE configurations, and each features the correct GM markings. OER is a manufacturer and doesn't sell direct, but you can find OER products at a number of reproduction parts retailers, including Classic Industries. Information: OER, 800/955-1511, [oerparts.com](http://oerparts.com).

## Jim Wangers Retiring From Public Eye at 91

**T**he following message recently appeared in my Facebook feed for Jim Wangers and the GeeTO Tiger.

*Jim was diagnosed with dementia, possibly Alzheimer's disease, four years ago. Up until this past fall, he seemed to be getting along pretty well. Unfortunately, this horrible disease takes no prisoners, and that is no longer the case.*

*Jim is currently living in an assisted living facility... He is getting wonderful care, his overall health is good (he still walks unassisted), and appears content.*

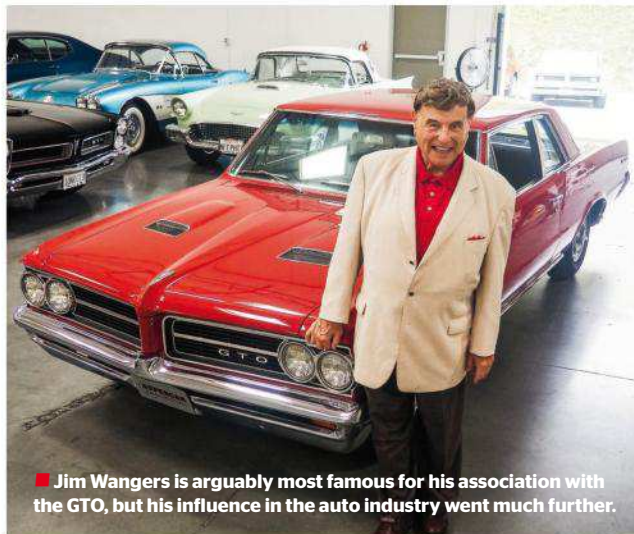
*I have had the honor to work for Jim for almost 20 years, and it is hard to see this hideous disease take such a toll on this great mind. Please keep him in your thoughts and prayers.*

Jeanne Weiss

Of course, his fame comes from being the Godfather of the GTO, but there's so much more to the man who devoted almost 60 years to the auto industry, car hobby, and philanthropy. A common misconception is that he was a designer or engineer at Pontiac; rather, his heyday was in the advertising industry. No matter what your brand allegiance, it's likely you owe a debt of gratitude to Jim Wangers.

### Chevrolet

Wangers joined Campbell-Ewald as a copywriter right when General Motors' low-priced brand was planning its 1955 campaign. Convincing his superiors that NASCAR's Speed Week would be a good opportunity to mine positive press for the new 180-horse Power Pack fell on deaf ears. Wangers was told that "Chevrolet is not into racing." Nonetheless, he went to Daytona on his own dime and documented the success



■ Jim Wangers is arguably most famous for his association with the GTO, but his influence in the auto industry went much further.

of independent Chevy racers. Reaction to his report was underwhelming, as his bosses continued to feel it was some outlaw racing thing.

Media spread the word about Daytona, yet enthusiasts discovered that dealerships were unprepared to cater to them. Through the chain of managers and zones, word got back to the central office, so Campbell-Ewald was forced to capitalize on this marketing opportunity. This time Wangers' report received proper consideration, and by February 1955 Chevrolet had become the Hot One.

### Pontiac

Wangers moved to MacManus, John & Adams in 1958 as an assistant account executive. The following year he was given permission to develop and test a traveling seminar for training dealerships in the world of high performance. Royal Pontiac in suburban Detroit became the guinea pig for knowing its way around an order form, stocking the right parts, and running a dealer-sponsored car at the drags—and so much more.

But with GM doubling down on a racing ban in 1963, it

seemed Pontiac's investment in racing had all been for naught.

Thus the 1964 GTO. "Truth was we were taking Pontiac performance off the race track, like the Corporation wanted, and putting it on the street, like the Corporation didn't want," wrote Wangers in his book *Glory Days*. The story has been told many times, but Wangers enjoyed a unique role as the unofficial spokesman for Pontiac, a man with one hand on the pulse of the street, another on the pulse of Pontiac courtesy of Chief Engineer John DeLorean.

### Oldsmobile

As told in *Hurst Equipped* by Mark Fletcher and Richard Truesdell, Hurst commissioned MJ&A (with Wangers, of course) to sell Pontiac on a big-inch supercar based on the 1968 Firebird. GM's general manager claimed Firebird sales didn't need help, so it was suggested to pay Oldsmobile a visit, as the Lansing company was bitter it didn't receive an F-Body cousin. The result was the 1968 Hurst/Olds. Two years later, Wangers (now consulting for Hurst) proposed a brightly colored small-block H/O as competitor to the

Plymouth Road Runner. Olds stole the idea and produced the Rallye 350.

### AMC

Wangers and Hurst's Dave Landrith presented AMC with an idea of bringing the 1964 GTO concept up to 1969 standards, which evolved into the 1969 SC/Rambler. Now at Hurst, Wangers followed it up in 1970 with the Rebel Machine.

### Mopar

The 1970 Chrysler 300H was another Hurst creation that received Wangers' magic touch. Several years later, while running Motortown with Landrith, they approached Chrysler with the 1976 Volaré Road Runner and Aspen R/T. Wangers brought Mopar more success with the 1981 Charger 2.2.

### Ford

Yes, even the Mustang received the Wangers' touch when Motortown developed the 1976 Cobra II.


### Other Notable Contributions

Wangers helped form the creation of Detroit Dragway in 1959 and brought the NHRA to town to host the Nationals.

He won the 1960 NHRA Top Stock Eliminator title driving a Royal-prepped Catalina.

Pontiac offered Hurst shifters as an over-the-counter option for 1961 on Wangers' urging. Other manufacturers followed suit.

But the Jim Wangers legend as we know it was dwarfed by the founding of Automotive Marketing Consultants Inc. in 1981, which filled a latent need for certified USAC testing/comparisons for advertisers.

Even when it seemed there was none, Wangers never forgot that horsepower and passion ruled Detroit. 

# LS ENGINE INSTALL KITS



1967-74 Camaro shown

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Shown with POLYPLUS parts. starting at **\$99/kit**

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- Specially Designed Conical Springs
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- Works with Stock or CPP Totally Tubular™ Control Arms

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- Modern Corvette-Style Hubs with Sealed Bearings
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1967 Camaro Stage IV shown

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1962-67 Nova shown

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