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EVENTS 2011

Sunday October 2nd, 12.30Pub Meet
"The Bulls Head",
Meriden, nr Coventry

October 30th AGM
Saxon Mill, Warwick

November 11/12/13Classic Motor Show
NEC, Birmingham.
CLUB STAND!

The above list will be added to as more events are announced.

TORQUE BACK

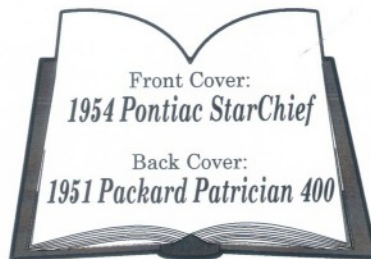
Although sadly the show season is now at an end, you may well be thinking what to do with all that spare time during the winter months. Well why not try your hand at a simple restoration job, one with a difference that doesn't require any major mechanical time consuming items, such as the engine, transmission, axle, suspension, brakes etc. **Now that would make life a hell of a lot easier wouldn't it?** With less to do and believe me the finished vehicle could look stunning and very practical during the summer time, *what am I talking about, see page 14.*

I'm delighted to announce that after renegotiating with our very supportive printer **Hughes Print Ltd**, they have agreed to increase the number of coloured pages substantially without any on-cost to the club, now that's what I call a **win win** situation and hopefully it will brighten up your winter blues, starting with this month's edition of Multicylinder.

In this issue my thanks go to Luke Arnott who submitted the impressive article on the 1939 Pontiac Show Car, nicked named the Ghost Car for obvious reasons. Gavin Garrow never fails to produce his excellent annual report on the **BIGGEST** American Car show in Europe, namely the **Power Meet at Vesteras, Sweden**. There's plenty of variety and a vast amount of Chrysler Corp cars too and who can blame them! (*note your Editor is a great Chrysler fan*). Not forgetting our regular contributor Chris Sanders who provided an update on the Ford V8 Pilot and last but not least the photos on page 14 that Isidoor sent in, very inspirational.

Finally does anyone have any idea what make of delivery van is in the period photo below, you're very welcome to phone a friend or go for 50/50!

John



OBITUARY JOHN WILLETT



It is with regret I have to report the passing of long-time Club member John Willett, from Northampton, who died early in September.

John and his wife Pearl, were frequent visitors to most American car shows over many years, with their 1941 Cadillac sedan, and latterly the 1951 Cadillac coupe, both cars winning many awards, and rightly so.

Always approachable John was a stalwart of the hobby and we will all miss him.

Luke Arnott
Hon. Secretary





One of a kind: The 1939 motor is a Pontiac Deluxe Six which has been covered in Plexiglas, developed just a few years earlier in 1933

Ghost Car A BRIEF HISTORY

ON THE PIONEERING PLEXIGLAS PONTIAC

The collaboration between GM and Rohm & Haas was made for the 1930-1940 World's Fair in San Francisco

At a cost of \$25,000, it was the first transparent full-sized car to be made in America

Two Ghost Cars were made but the 1939-1940 Pontiac Deluxe Six is the only one known to survive

It toured the nation's dealerships and went on display at the Smithsonian until 1947, and was subsequently owned by a series of Pennsylvania Pontiac dealers

This model has a three-speed transmission, a six-cylinder engine, coil spring independent front suspension, live rear axle with semi-elliptic leaf springs and four-wheel hydraulic drum brakes

Billed as a vision of the future, it was made for the 1939-40 New York World's Fair, where it became a sensation at General Motors' 'Highways and Horizons' pavilion; and it continues to cause a stir today.

Just two were ever made and this model, which has a three-speed manual transmission, and is thought to be the last of its kind.

It has clocked up just 86 miles in its lifetime; and now its set to go on sale for the first time since the early 1980s. It last sold for an undisclosed amount.

American auctioneers RM expect it to sell for between \$275,000 and \$475,000 when it goes under the hammer on July 30.

A spokesman for RM Auctions said: 'The car is in a remarkable state of preservation.

'It's a testament to the longevity of Plexiglas in an era when automotive plastics tended to self-destruct within a few years.

'Although it has acquired a few chips and cracks, it is structurally sound and cosmetically clear, showing off the Ghost Car's innards as it did in 1939.

'This motor still turns heads as much as it ever did. It is not, obviously, suited for touring but as a unique artefact from automotive and cultural history.'

The car has been the result of a collaboration between General Motors and Rohm & Haas, who developed the ground-breaking material Plexiglas in 1933.

The material went on to be used in military planes during World

War II and then expanded in to signs, lighting, fixtures, trains and other cars.

Rohm & Haas used drawings for the Pontiac four-door Touring Sedan to create an exact replica body out of the transparent acrylic.

It was completed with structural metal underneath, which was given a copper wash, and chrome-plated hardware.

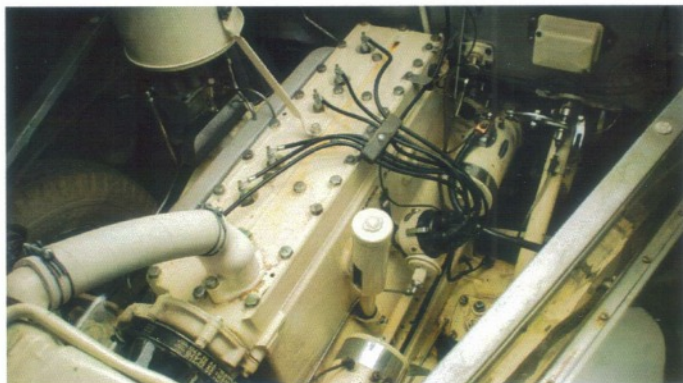
Rubber moldings were made in white, as were the car's tires. The only recent mechanical work has been replacement of the fuel lines.

The model also boasts an L-head six-cylinder engine, coil spring independent front suspension, live rear axle with semi-elliptic leaf springs, and four-wheel hydraulic drum brakes.

According to the GM Heritage Center, a second car, on a Torpedo Eight chassis, was hurriedly constructed for the 1940 Golden Gate Exposition on Treasure Island, a man-made island in San Francisco Bay.

Once their respective showcases had closed, both 'Plexiglas Pontiacs,' or 'Ghost Cars' as they were sometimes known, toured the nation's dealerships. The 1939-40 Deluxe Six is the only one known to survive.

Following the dealership tour, it went on display at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. and was reportedly there until 1947.



Mechanics: The model has an L-head six-cylinder engine, coil spring independent front suspension, live rear axle with semi-elliptic leaf springs, and four-wheel hydraulic drum brakes

Innovative: General Motors and chemical company Rohm and Haas built the vehicle for \$25,000 - an astronomical price during the 1930s



Artefact: The car has clocked up just 86 miles in its lifetime; and will go on sale for the first time since the early 1980s

Vintage: The Transparent Car, on display at General Motors' 'Highways and Horizons' pavilion in 1939, has continued to cause a stir since its debut

Sensation: Billed as a vision of the future, the car was made for the 1939-40 New York World's Fair in San Francisco, pictured here

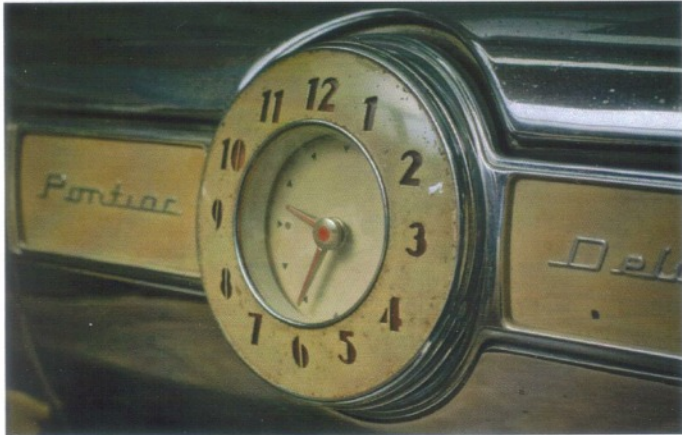




Transparent: Wires and a spare wheel can be seen through the trunk of the car



Not for touring: The collectible is unlikely to be seen on the road



Turning back the clock: The dial on the 1939 car shows the wear of its 72 years



At the wheel: The steering wheel features rings of chrome-plated hardware, and Pontiac's insignia in red

It was later owned by a succession of Pennsylvania Pontiac dealers. It appeared at the first annual meet of the new Pontiac-Oakland Club International in 1973 and was purchased by Don Barlup of New Cumberland, Pennsylvania. Barlup commissioned a partial restoration from S&H Pontiac of Harrisburg and sold it to collector Leo Gephart in 1979.

The current owner's father purchased it from Gephart in the

early 1980s, and it has remained in the same family ever since.

Not surprisingly, it has no conventional vehicle identification number; even the machined boss for the engine number is blank.

A collection of period photos and other memorabilia accompanies the car, which still turns heads as much as it ever did.



Seventy-two years of wear: The Plexiglas does have some chips and cracks but is mostly in good condition, according to auction notes

POWER MEET - VASTERAS - SWEDEN

JULY 7TH 8TH & 9TH 2011 (THE BIGGEST MEET EVER)



town!! It was great to see this Swedish example and the crowd loved it as did those folks some 60 years ago!!

We were lucky with the weather again this year, as it was warm and sunny over the four days! We arrived in Vasteras mid-day on Wednesday fresh from our flight from Stanstead. We collected our cruising rental Renault Clio, not to stand out in the crowd! The Scandic Hotel was as welcoming as ever and later that evening we met up with friends for some cruising in the evening sunshine. This year we were designated drivers in a coral and white 1957 Chrysler 300C convertibles! We headed out for some Wednesday evening fun in these two beautiful brutes of automobiles! Cruise traffic was light on this particular evening so one was able to drive at a "normal speed". These 300's drove very well for 54 year olds! Performance is very brisk when one demands! The handling is tight and precise and the car gives you 'confidence in all aspects of general use and driving pleasure. One small issue on the '57's is the park/starter button on the push

This year the 34th Power Meet in Vasteras, Sweden was a true winner with just under 20,000 American cars present over the 3 days! Even 50 American cars came from Russia! Great weather, great people and 5 k's of swap meet to spend, spend, spend! Just a great fun event!

The star of the 34th Power Meet was undoubtedly a GM Futurliner Parade Tour Bus! This survivor is one of the 12 examples built in 1939 and updated in 1953 for the Parade of Progress travelling GM road shows. The mark 1 Futurliner had a bubble top which looked very futuristic, not unlike a WW2 light bomber canopy. Unfortunately this feature made the driver very uncomfortable in warmer climates. It was like a sweltering sweathouse with no tinted glass or air conditioning to offset the greenhouse effect! The 1953 restyle created a more conventional cab and included tinted glass and air-conditioning. The example at the Power Meet was mostly complete with a restoration "in progress". The steps leading up the cab, 10 feet above the road, were not too easy, but once seated in the central driving position one certainly had a commanding view! This stylish bus had dual front and rear wheels! Power steering was fitted!, but the pumps were weak and failed often! The transmission was by Hydra-matic and the engine power came from a GMC 6 cylinder OHV with 145 BHP and 302 cubic inches (comp 7.3:1) -Torque was 262 ft-lbs @ 1400 RPM. The bus was 33 foot long, 8 feet wide and height was 11 foot 7 inches, so performance was very slow! The max speed was around 40

MPH and unfortunately the brakes were weak too!! An accident where two tour buses ran into each other, which resulted in the drivers being requested to stay at least 300 feet behind the vehicle in front! 1956 was the last year for the city to city Futurarama Tour and the buses were put into retirement. The Swedish example is one of the 9 known survivors. This is the 2nd example I have seen as I was present at the BJ auction when the \$4,000,000 plus example was sold. These Futurliners are something else and were seen as a very important advertising tool in the days before mass TV and they certainly looked impressive coming into





1951 Chevrolet



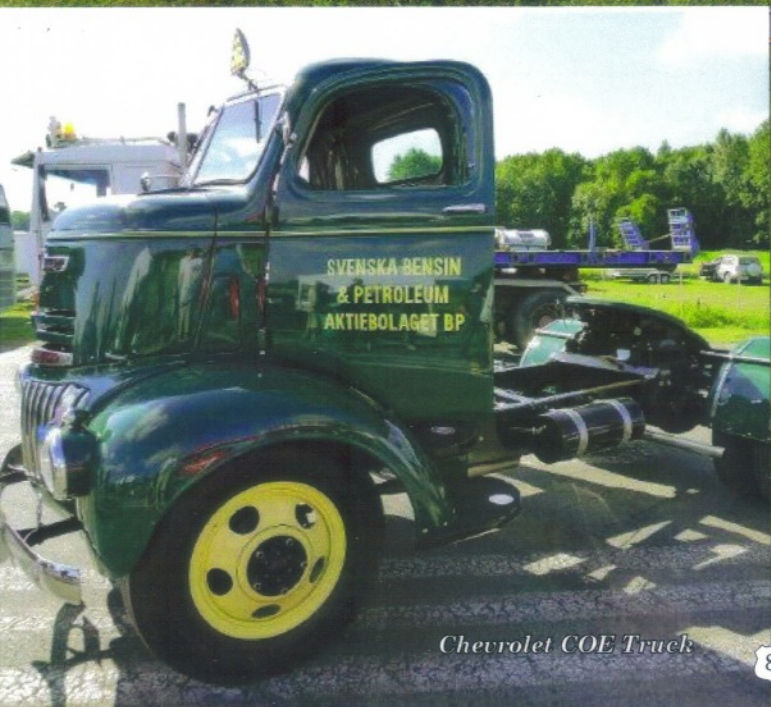
1960 DeSoto



1956 DeSoto



1959 Dodge Custom Sierra



Chevrolet COE Truck



1956 Ford Thunderbird

34th An

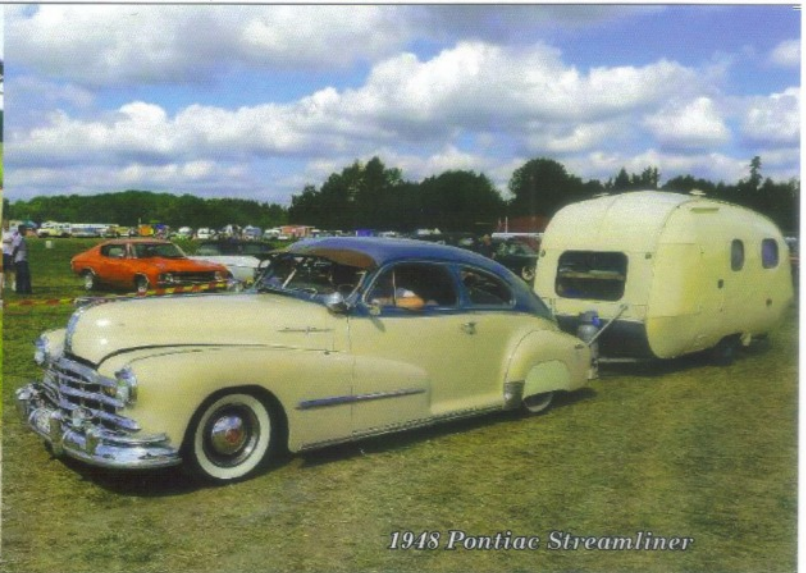
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2011

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1949 Dodge Coronet



1948 Pontiac Streamliner

Annual **BIGMEET.COM**



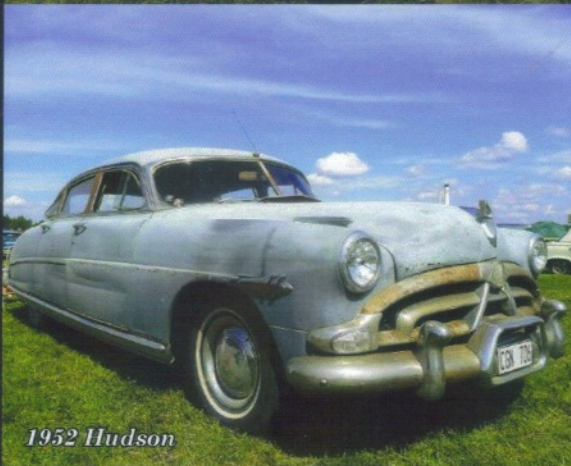
**VÄSTERÅS
CRAZY HORSE
FROM THE
OF US CARS**



1940 Plymouth P10



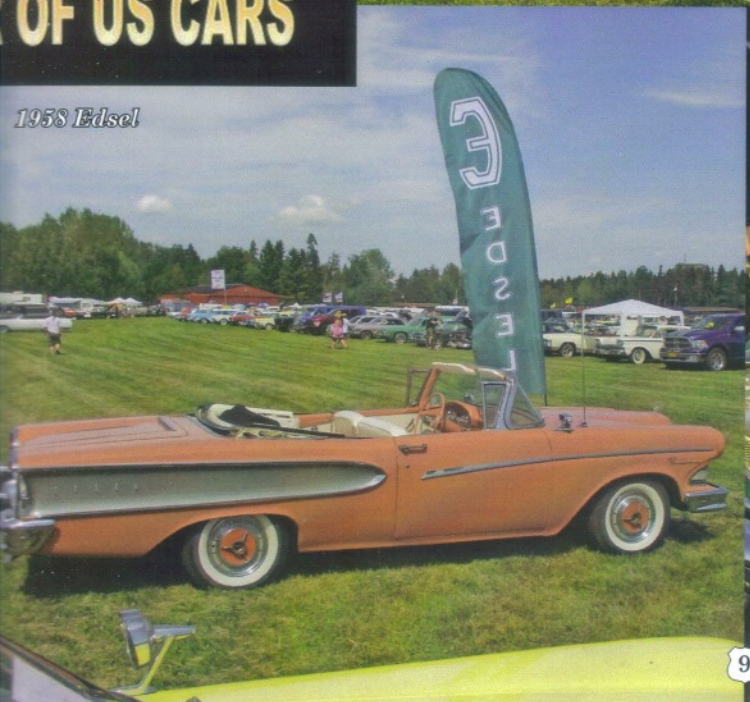
1955 Chrysler New Yorker



1952 Hudson



1953 Buick

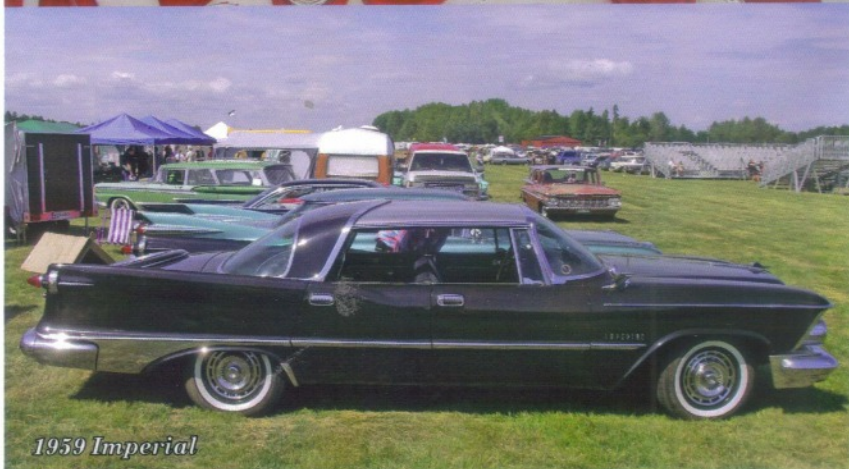


1958 Edsel

button controls for the transmission. It is all too easy to activate the starter when going into park with the engine running! Not good a good idea! The driving position is good if one is "tall in the saddle" and the controls are well thought out for general ease of use. Dash is clear with almost full instrumentation (no tach) and is well lit at night! Gas and brake pedals are of good design too and the pull out hand-brake is very user friendly. Interiors are very comfortable with standard leather and even with six aboard comfort is good all round! The boot is also very large and can handle vast quantities of cruising essentials for everyone but the driver! With the top up or down these cars look good. Very few convertibles can achieve this beauty.

In the early hours we drove down to the main Power Meet field with many cars and airstream vans silhouetted against the early morning light! We had a number of late night/early morning chats with friends. One Swedish Gentleman started to show us his very nice 1961 Buick Invicta Convertible in a nice shade of gold at 2am as one does!! Driving the 300's back to the main road through long grass on this dusty road was more like a scene from "Daktari" than a classic car show! A good blast along the E18 back towards Vasteras in the 300's and another late night stop-over! This time an all night gas station that was filled to the brim with people and Detroit Iron! One Sixties Buick convertible was full of blonde young ladies in matching "French Maids" uniforms as one does in the "wee hours"! This is all part of the rich canvas of the Power Meet. Cars, girls, cruising, a real passion for American cars and one long party into the Swedish night, this has been the successful recipe over the last 34 years for this very Swedish car show.

The Power Meet always has some interesting cars for sale (till Salu). A 1967 Chevrolet Camaro RS convertible requiring a full restoration was a good example! A 327 cu in V8 and a four speed added to the interest! A complete car with some typical rust issues for the model. Another bargain was a 1951 Oldsmobile 88 4 door sedan, a recent stateside import, in green which was available for SEK95,000 . Another beauty was a pale yellow '57 Ford Thunderbird with a white interior, 312 cu ins, and auto-trans car with power seats and windows. A nice car but condition reflected price! A regular dealer at the show had an interesting array of cars for sale. He everything from Hot Rods to a super clean '56 Ford Fairlane 2 door hardtop, resplendent in red and white. A 312 with auto trans car and very correct looking for SEK259000. A beautiful "Hiboy" '32 Ford in a deep blue was super nice too!! At the entry level was a solid running '57 Dodge Coronet 2 door hardtop for around SEK70 K. A '59 Ford Skyliner in black with a working top for around the same money and a '62 Ford Sunliner convertible in burgundy needing paint and cosmetics. There were many other cars for sale at the end of the runway, which were mostly GM models, too many to list. Due to the poor exchange rate, there were no real bargains to be seen. However parts are always ready and available here. There is just about anything one can carry!! Rare lenses, chrome bumpers, interior trim, suspension parts, body panels, the list goes on, rare manuals/handbooks/dealer



1959 Imperial



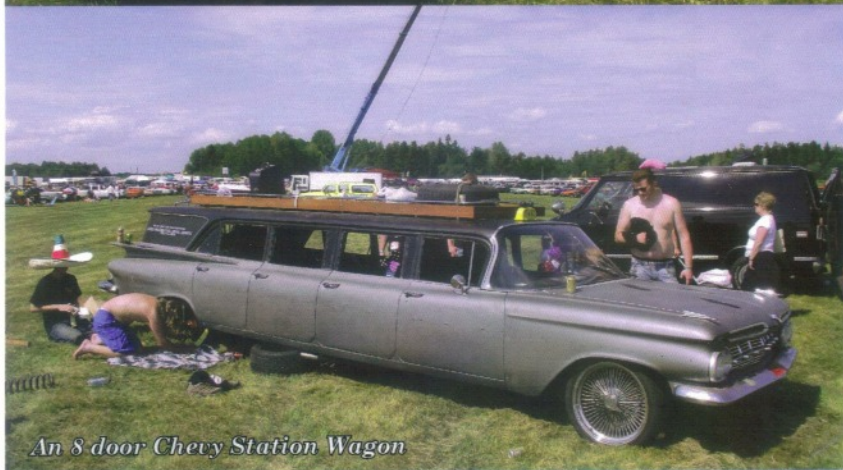
1958 Edsel



A pair of Caddy's, 1960 & 1959



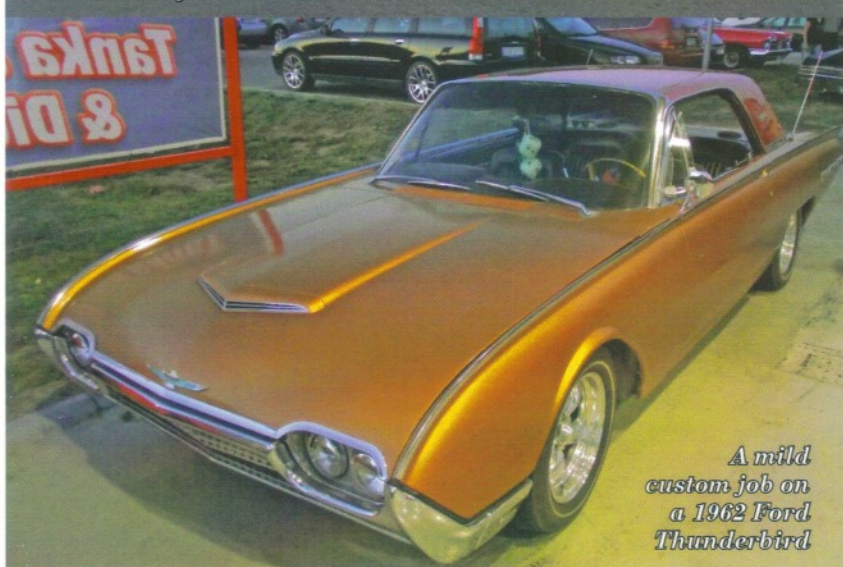
1957 DeSoto



An 8 door Chevy Station Wagon



1959 Mercury Park Lane



A mild custom job on a 1962 Ford Thunderbird

sales stuff etc... Mopar, GM, Ford, Mustang are all very well catered for on the swap meet avenue.

Entry into the show field was taken care of with four lanes and same is an interesting vantage point to see a lot of cars quickly. Great for photo opportunities is the four lane entry gate onto the show field! Here one can view thousands of cars and a great vantage point. It is an amazing sight watching the sun glistening on the chrome as they all come through. On the Saturday the official count was 10,000 cars on the show field!! A good pair of walking shoes is a must for the Power Meet! The spectrum of cars and styles was vast, "Rat Rod's", Hot Rod's", Dream Boat Convertibles, Custom Cars, Station Wagons, Some "Euro Classics" "Pre War" Classics" just about everything. Not forgetting the "Ragga Mobiles" a very Scandinavian thing and have to be seen to be believed!! The '58 green Cadillac 4 door hardtop was seen this year. I thought this car had gone to "Caddy Heaven", as this original '58 Cad has been attending the show for at least 20 years. She is a very, very tired example, rusty, dented but all original and ex Miami many years ago!! But she is street legal and drives and she just adds to the visual fun of this crazy Swedish car show!

The Wednesday evening was the quiet cruise, Thursday was busy and Friday/Saturday nights being the main event! Some of the highlights include impromptu parties at the side of the road, burger bars, gas stations and just about everywhere else! Another common sight is line-ups of cars with their hoods up, when one's chrome encrusted cutie has said "that's enough". Rivers of anti-freeze and spent beer are the calling cards left to greet the early morning light. Another fun area is the Halla Shopping car park. With petrol, Pizza Bars and MacDonald's this is a very popular stop-over after many a cruising kilometre. A lot of hi-po muscle cars and 55-57 Chevys flex their muscles here to the delight of the crowd. Whole families are camped out at the best vantage points for fun in the evening sun!! This is a very social event the whole town turns out to see either here or many deep around the cruise route, on all nights too! This event is something else! Very different to other American Swedish classic car shows, is the Classic Car Week at Ratvik in late August, which is a lot more sombre and relaxed. Top notch cars and none of the Ragga "Fun Mobile's"! The great variety of shows on offer, either for fun or the serious collector, is what is so good in Sweden. We enjoyed our 34th "Power Meet" and look forward to next year, those memories of cruising in the 300's, the evening wind blowing in your hair, the crystal clear light, the fun and laughter that these cars bring to one and all. It is just simply an essential show, which any like minded person should attend. See you in 2012. I'm sure they will have finished the Futurliner by then! The Best of Show winner went to a 1961 Imperial Convertible that took 14 years to renovate just a super car.

Tack sa mycket (Thank you very much)

Gavin Garrow



1950s Chrysler Concept Cars

It's a pity 1950s Chrysler concept cars -- such as the sleek Chrysler K-310, the lovely DeSoto Adventurer, and the burly Chrysler Falcon -- didn't make it onto America's roads. It's easy to imagine how pleasing they would have been.

History must forever record the unfortunate 1989-1990 TC by Maserati as Chrysler's first production "sports car." Which is a real shame considering the hot Dodge Viper that followed it -- or, for that matter, the many sports and GT concept cars Chrysler cooked up in the 1950s.

Virgil Exner headed Chrysler styling in those days. He's perhaps best remembered as instigator of the 1955 and 1957 "Forward Look" cars that turned the company's red ink to black by bringing real excitement to its products for the first time in decades.

But his influence was apparent much earlier. Teaming up with Italy's renowned Carrozzeria Ghia, Exner created a series of glamorous "idea cars," as Chrysler called them, starting with the four-door Plymouth XX-500 of 1950. Though not often appreciated, some of his sportier concepts came close to reaching dealerships.

Whatever their ultimate fate, 1950s Chrysler, Dodge, DeSoto, and Plymouth concept cars remain among the best examples of Exner's inimitable legacy. As a designer he was as unique as any of his creations and the time in which he flourished -- a younger, more innocent age we'll never see again.

This article will explore development of these 1950s concept cars, including what made them special and why they never made it into production. Let's begin with the K-310 and C-200 concept cars of 1951 and 1952.

1951 and 1952 Chrysler K-310 and C-200 Concept Cars

The 1951 and 1952 Chrysler K-310 and C-200 concept cars were among the first Mopar dream cars to receive the design "magic touch" of Virgil Exner.

Like most of Exner's Ghia-built specials, the dashing five-passenger K-310 coupe was designed in Detroit under Ex's eye. In this case, Ghia received a 3/8-scale clay plaster to guide construction of a full-size running prototype.

The "K" stood for then-company president K. T. Keller; the "310" for the alleged horsepower of the 331-cubic-inch hemi-head V-8 beneath the hood, though the then-new stock version produced only 180 horsepower.

No matter. The K-310 was stunning. "Elements of Continental styling" were featured, according to Chrysler, but also several "classic" touches -- like the dummy "toilet seat" spare tire outline -- that would typify future Exner designs.

Bulging integral rear fenders avoided period slab-sidedness, while prominently crowned front fenders emphasized a classic front with prow-style hood and headlamps recessed in scalloped nacelles astride a low, rounded, roughly triangular eggcrate grille.

Full cutouts emphasized the wheels, which Ex seldom covered on any of his designs. Subtle two-toning delineated upper from lower body. The roof and deck were proportioned to accent the hood, which wasn't easy given the contemporary Chrysler Saratoga chassis with 125.5-inch wheelbase.

The K-310's warm reception prompted construction of a soft-top companion called the Chrysler C-200, unveiled in 1952. Also built on a stock Chrysler Saratoga chassis, the C-200 shared the distinctive "gunsight" taillamps that would transfer virtually without change to the 1955-1956 Imperial.



The 1951 K-310 was the second of the Ghia-built Chrysler concept cars designed under the watchful eye of company styling director Virgil Exner.



The 1951 Chrysler K-310 concept car had a dummy spare tire outline on the trunk. Dubbed the "toilet seat," it would show up on later Exner production designs.



The 1952 Chrysler C-200 concept car was a convertible companion to the K-310 coupe.



The C-200 was built on a production Chrysler Saratoga chassis and featured "gunsight" taillamps.



The 1955 Chrysler Falcon concept car was as close as Chrysler got to a production two-seat sports car until the 1991 Dodge Viper.

Both the K-310 and C-200 were strongly considered for showroom sale. As Exner later recalled, K.T. Keller liked the K-310: "He thought it was something they should promote. . . . Of course, it was also something into which they could put their Hemi engine. It was a perfect combination."

But the K-310 would be a never-was for the most basic of reasons: lack of money. Chrysler sales began to free-fall after 1949, and within three years the firm was outproduced by Ford for the first time since the Depression.

Although plans for a limited run of "street" K-310s were shelved, Exner continued campaigning for a Chrysler-based sportster the public could buy.

1955 Chrysler Falcon Concept Car

The two-seat 1955 Chrysler Falcon concept car was the closest Chrysler came to a classic sports car until it unleashed the 1992 Dodge Viper. Many still think the 1955 Chrysler Falcon concept car was the one Exner special that should have been built for sale.

After all, by the time it appeared, Ford had introduced the 1955 Thunderbird, and Highland Park sales were fast recovering, so a Mopar reply to both the Corvette and the "personal" Ford would have been quite timely.

Chrysler must have thought so, too, for three Falcons were built by Chrysler's Advanced Styling Studio. Though they differed somewhat in details, all rode a 105-inch wheelbase, comparable to the 102-inch T-Bird and Corvette. Styling details differed among them, and only one is known to have survived.

The ruggedly handsome styling was mainly the work of Maury Baldwin and still looks good today, especially the big heart-shaped eggcrate grille and rakish side exhausts. Even the trendy 1950s fins and wrapped windshield don't seem particularly dated.

The Falcon's most noteworthy feature lay beneath the car's skin: unit construction with an integral cellular platform frame. Although the Falcon had the look of a posh boulevardier, it was envisioned as a potent performer, as well.

Road manners were reportedly impeccable; performance at least adequate. The Falcon carried a 170-horsepower DeSoto

Hemi, like Adventurer I, but bypassed its old "fluid-torque" semi-automatic transmission for fully automatic PowerFlite, which was controlled -- none too positively -- by a wispy floor-mounted wand.

In a brief road test of the only known survivor some years back, a contributor to this article clocked 0-60 mph in 10 seconds flat, about 115 mph all out, and a standing quarter-mile of 17.5 seconds at 82.0 mph -- all more than adequate for 1955. Mileage? About 15 mpg.

Unitized steel construction hinted at things to come from Chrysler, though it pushed curb weight to a portly 3,300 pounds. The convertible top was operated manually and could be stowed beneath a folding lid located behind the seat.

Despite its heft, the Falcon had beautifully balanced handling and easy yet precise steering of the sort virtually unknown in period Detroiters, especially Chryslers. Its one real drawback was lack of top-up headroom due to its very low windshield, though that would have been fixed for production.

Which, of course, didn't happen. Though the Falcon would have been a strong competitor for Corvette and Thunderbird, with arguably superior refinement and performance, it was doomed by the minuscule sports-car market of the time. Also, Chrysler likely felt it really didn't need such a car so long as overall sales were good -- which they weren't after 1957.



Three Falcon concept cars were built by Chrysler's Advanced Styling Studio, each with a 105-inch wheelbase and 170-horsepower DeSoto Hemi V-8.

FORD V8 PILOT WMF 611 THE SEQUEL

A few months ago I wrote 'The Life of a 1951 Ford V8 Pilot WMF 611' I mentioned towards the end of the article that the car passed into the hands of Mick Webber in 1974. His name was in the Buff Log Book. After I wrote the article I went to The Rally of the Giants 2010 and met with Mick's brother Graham Webber who is a Pontiac man. I told Graham about the Pilot and Mick's name in the Log Book. He said Mick now lived in Spain but he would let him know about his old car. Another year has passed and I went to the Rally of the Giants 2011. I was sitting in my car and suddenly two familiar faces appeared. It was Graham with brother Mick who was over from Spain for a visit! I had a good chat with Mick who I had not seen since his Ford Model 'B' days. Mick then produced an envelope with a picture of his old Pilot plus another Pilot he owned at the time. Also some tax discs for WMF 611 and petrol coupons which were issued in the seventies. Mick then proceeded to tell me that WMF 611 was the best Pilot he



had owned and gave no trouble at all. It seems our original owner Harold Godfrey as can be seen from the bills was intent on keeping his V8 Pilot in perfect condition. It is a shame that this particular Pilot after all this did not survive.

One good thing though, was seeing Mick Webber again and finding out he is enjoying life in Spain these days. Another Jig saw puzzle completed.

Chris Sanders



BBQ
in the
USA



1961 HAWK

A Mr Williams in Worcestershire,

Tel. 01684 578151,

has a 1961 Hawk that he has owned since 1975. He intended to restore it but he has never taken it out on the road. It has been barn stored since 1975 and he now wants to sell it if he can, or scrap it if he can't find a buyer. It has an overhead valve six engine with a manual transmission and he said there is a V8 and an automatic transmission in the boot. The bonnet has been damaged and the front windscreen has been replaced by a sheet of Perspex. He speculates that the bonnet flew back to the windscreen while the previous owner was driving it. Knowing the weight of the Hawk bonnet that seems unlikely and if it had done so it would not be attached to the car as the hinge system would have been destroyed and probably the corners of the bonnet bent back.

If it were saved by someone with storage facilities for probably little cash there are many useful parts that could be sold.



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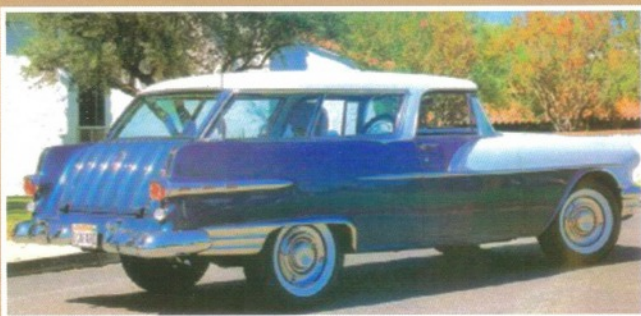
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1955-1957 Pontiac Star Chief Safari



The 1956 Pontiac Safari was longer, more lavishly trimmed, and more expensive than the Chevrolet Nomad.

Safari -- the word has a lovely ring to it. The mind conjures up an expedition with the hunting party dressed in khaki suits topped off in pith helmets. An African setting; large animals, large guns, fine cameras. A couple of Land Rovers, steamy heat, a trace of an English accent.

Wrong! For General Motors' Pontiac Division in 1955 "Safari" represented the fanciest and sportiest of all station wagons ever manufactured, the Star Chief Custom Safari -- an expedition into the unknown, marketing-wise. The car was to be low in production, high in cost, striking inside and out, and it would enjoy a life span of only three years (though the Safari name would carry on at Pontiac and/or GMC).

Paul Gillan, who directed the Pontiac Styling Studio in the 1950s, came up with that wonderful name. The Pontiac Star Chief Safari's closest relative at General Motors was its near twin, the Bel Air Nomad, over at Chevrolet Division -- which is where the whole idea started. A great many people felt then, and still do, that these were two of the prettiest station wagons designed in the post World War II era.

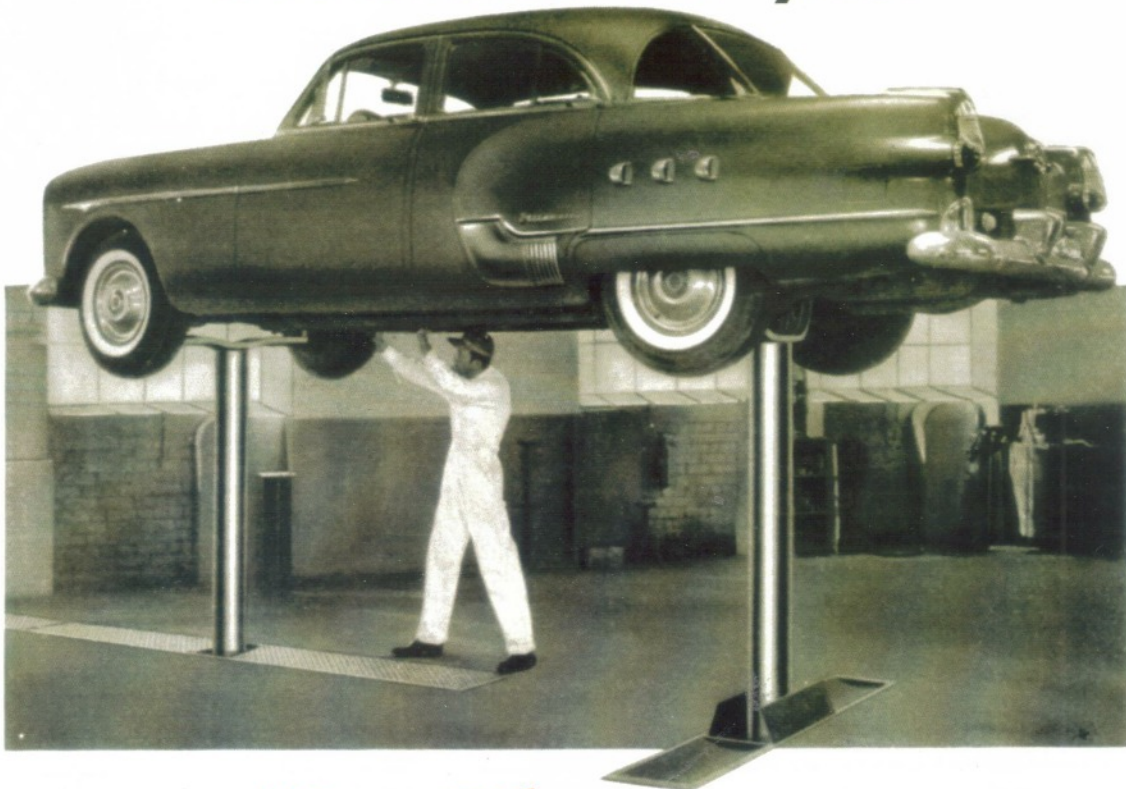
Station wagons. Their heritage was an interesting one, dating back to early Cantrell-bodied "depot hacks" and 1923 Star wagons. Originally, these were meant to be high-volume haulers that really transported people to depots and stations to meet trains.

It was not happenstance that Pontiac's Safari wagon was such a remarkably striking design. Consider Safari's lineage as a General Motors Motorama show car. Remember seeing or hearing about those styling extravaganzas produced in the 1950s, which traveled major U.S. cities showing off flashy and elaborate automotive designs of tomorrow? Dream cars! Well, this styling dream came true in the form of 9,094 Pontiac Star Chief Safaris and 22,375 Chevrolet Nomads.

Several thousand people went down to their local Pontiac and Chevrolet dealerships from 1955-1957 and purchased those handsome station wagons. Little did they know that later both cars would later be awarded "Milestone" car status by The Milestone Car Society.

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