

**WHY OWN OR RESTORE AN ANTIQUE CAR?**

**THE APPEAL OF ANTIQUE AUTOMOBILES**

**MEETING NEW PEOPLE**

**COMPARING A NEW CAR TO AN ANTIQUE CAR**

**THE GOOD OLD DAYS OF THE OLD CAR HOBBY**

**CHANGES & LONGING FOR THE GOOD OLD DAYS**

**TIME FLIES**

## WHY OWN OR RESTORE AN OLD CAR?

Why does a person buy an old car---own an old car---restore an old car? The answers to these questions might vary a bit, but the underlying reason, I believe, is nostalgia. Buying an antique automobile is usually a considerable expense. Restoring it may take years of work, months of research, and the outlay of more cash than anticipated, but the complaints of the owner will be few. Why is this so?

If the owner of an antique car buys a new Belchfire Six and pays the same amount he had invested in his restored "pride and joy", he expects it to run perfectly, economically, and trouble free. If the new car guzzles too much gas or needs frequent trips to the repair shop, he will tell anyone who will listen that he bought a 'real lemon.' Does he spend hours paging through a CLINTON'S REPAIR MANUAL and more hours tinkering with the engine? Absolutely not! That would be a lot of work and no fun at all. In his opinion, the dealer should make the repairs or the manufacturer should honor the warranty.

If we would go back in time about thirty, forty, or even fifty years, we might find that the original owner of our antique felt exactly the same way. He had troubles with his new automobile and he expected the dealer or manufacturer to make good on their slogan such as "the car without a worry", "built to last a lifetime", or "When better cars are built-----will build them." If we went back in time another decade or two, we would probably find that the owners of these "Brass era" cars had frequent mechanical problems with their primitive vehicles. In many cases replacement parts were not available because the manufacturer of their vehicle had gone out of business. In situations such as this, many car owners gave up and pushed the \*&^%\$#@ contraption into an empty horse stall and left it there to rust, to gather dust, and be almost forgotten. And that---my dear fellow antique cars collector, is the reason it was there waiting for US!

A good example of this type of happening would be the story of my 1906 Wayne. I do not know how the little runabout got to Staunton from Detroit, but I do have the letter from the man who first owned it to the second owner telling him how much he should get from the person who eventually purchased it as the third time in 1912. The Wayne Automobile Company went out of business in 1909, making the model H an orphan car.

After driving the Wayne over the rough, muddy roads between Sherando and Stuarts Draft for about six months, the primitive crank shaft broke and the owner took the engine and the transmission apart to see what the trouble was. I have a letter from the company that was handling replacement parts for broken down Waynes. The price for a new crankshaft was twenty-five dollars and connecting rods were ten dollars apiece. Apparently, this price was too steep for the unhappy owner who dumped the broken parts into boxes, pushed the little care into an empty cow stall and ignored it for the next thirty-eight years. It was at this point I arrived on the scene and decided that I just had to have that rusting, moldering piece of ancient machinery.

All that remained to be done was the writing of a check stating it was for a "junk car", sawing off the back of the small barn, and loading it onto an old stake truck with the help of several friends. I might mention that the truck broke down enroute to my home and I had to tow it the rest of the way with my Jeep.

The scene that followed is, I am sure, familiar to most of you who have purchased rusty, four-wheeled treasures. The dear wife remarked that she hoped I didn't pay much for that pile of rust and that it never could be made to run. The children had doubts about Daddy's sanity. The neighbors didn't even know about the car because I was a bit ashamed to tell them. At that time, my oldest son was 10 and the rest followed two year age differences down to my daughter-expected, but not quite on the scene. Because of this, I received most of my inspiration and help from Jeff Diffie and Mike Williams who displayed their mechanical genius and were mainly responsible for bringing the Wayne back to life.

The fact that this little car has been running rather well since 1951, is a tribute to their interest, help, and know-how.

Well, back to my beginning statement. The thing that makes a restoration worthwhile is nostalgia. Those of us who were born years after the early days of motoring, can experience for ourselves the sounds, the smells, and the problems of those early pioneer drivers without the dust, mud, and tire trouble that plagued them all. I rather like the smell of boiling radiators, burning brake linings, and hot oil. And for that reason, when people come up to me and ask, "Do you want to sell it?" or "You sure are lucky to find a car in such good shape," I just smile and say that the car isn't for sale---it is just my hobby. I'll bet most of you say the same thing. That is what the antique car hobby is all about.

## THE APPEAL OF ANTIQUE AUTOMOBILES

What is so appealing about an antique automobile? Is it safer to drive than the latest offerings from Detroit? Is it more comfortable to ride in? Is this object of our affections more economical to operate and keep in show-room condition? The answer to all these questions is a responding NO. Well then...why do we lavish our time, hard earned money and affection on these automotive "has-beens"? The answers are as varied as the persons who own them.

I will attempt to explain why I like antique cars; knowing that my reasons will have little in common with the younger members of our club who own and have restored the "Detroit Iron" of the later 40's and 50's. I must be frank and say that cars of that era have little appeal to me since I remember them as just necessary transportation that took me to work and back or, perhaps a trip with my growing family to visit relatives or a new vacation spot. I know that I am joined by many club members in looking with nostalgia at a car or cars that figured prominently in my childhood days, or the period in life when a person requires his very first and very own automobile. That was a real thrill and many of us have tried to recapture that feeling by finding a car just like it. That is why I have owned a 1930 Model A coupe for the past twelve years. It is almost identical to my first car which carried me back and forth from Pittsburgh to Bethany College in 1935. I also look with excitement and a bit of envy at every 1923 Model 34 Marmon touring car which I encounter at A.A.C.A National Meets. The Marmon looms largest in my memories of childhood motoring experiences.

Of course, I do recapture some sensation of the past when Libby and I take a ride in our newly-restored Jeffery. We have the cooling breezes, the flying insects, the smell of freshly cut hay, and yes, the effort to keep dry while driving in the rain.

Speaking of rain---what rhymes with rain? Why, Wayne, of course. I have driven that 1906 Wayne in more drizzles and rainstorms than any other antique car I have ever owned. I'm sure that Gene Kelly didn't get nearly as wet when he was "Singing in the Rain" as I have gotten driving the little Wayne to a meet in Gypsy Hill Park or from one side of Roanoke to another. The rain hits me in the face, runs down my neck, and gradually seeps down to the only dry spot left....the seat of my pants. I can't sing in the rain because I'm too busy working the controls and listening to hear whether the coils are still buzzing, and hoping I won't have to make any sudden stops. Yes, it would be a hair-raising experience except that my hair is much too wet to stand up. But, in spite of experiences like this, the Wayne has a mystique about it that is shared by other cars of the Early Brass era. It not only drives and rides differently, but it has an aroma that sets it apart. This aroma is a combination of different odors that come from freshly polished brass hubcaps, steering column, bulb horn, and side lamps. It is also the smell of hot oil, a near boiling radiator, old leather, and raw gasoline.

These olfactory delights are supplemented by the sounds of a pioneer Brass Era car...the rhythmic buzzing of the coils, the chugging of the tiny two-cylinder engine, and the humming of the high pressure tires. Usually there is the additional sound of an

unlocated squeak or rattle somewhere back of the driver's seat. Yes, that is what early automobiling was like except for the absence of dust, rutted road, frightened horses, and tire-biting farm dogs. The gnats and angry bumblebees are still with us, and the air blast from a passing trailer truck almost blows us off the road. In spite of these hazards, driving and early "horseless carriage" is fun....even when it rains. I feel that I must take some of the blame for the severe drought these past few months...I didn't have the Wayne out of the garage all summer!

## **MEETING NEW PEOPLE**

Putting the obvious physical difference aside, it is still quite easy to distinguish a man from a woman. Even accepting the fact that there are still many long-haired men and their flat-chested women companions who wear blue jeans with their short hair---it is still very simple to spot the male member of the species. How? Well, to begin with, he will have a wallet that bulges—not necessarily with money but with identification cards. If the male is forty or over, he will have cards that certify him as a Ruritan, a Rotarian, an Elk, a Lion, a Moose, or perhaps a Mason in good standing. In addition, one might notice a lapel pin, a tie bar, or even a ring that sets that person apart from an ordinary man. If you notice any of these insignia and comment about them, he will surely start a short oration extolling the merits of that particular club or fraternal organization, whether you wish to hear it or not.

At this point, those who read this monthly column might well ask "What has all this to do with antique cars?" I am glad that you have asked me that question. Now picture yourself at a Tri-County Meet, an Old Dominion Meet, an annual meeting in Philadelphia, or even a rain-swept muddy flea market street in Hershey.

You sit beside, are introduced to, or perhaps bump into, a man between the ages of 20 to 90. You foolishly ask him if he is an antique car "nut" or enthusiast. If you were planning a quiet half hour to yourself, you should have noticed his AACA pin, his shirt covered with antique cars, his club name tag, or even the faint traces of black grease under his fingernails. You should have only remarked, "Nice day, isn't it?" but you didn't. Now you are trapped and it will be a one-way conversation unless you are well prepared with photos from your wallet showing the front, side, back, and engine room of your favorite antique. Otherwise you are going to have to listen to a monologue on the finding of this fabulous 1926 Chevrolet, the haggling with the original owner, the five-year restoration struggle, the narrow escape from a divorce court proceeding, and the final 48 hours without sleep to make the Hershey meet deadline.

Let us be frank about this. You love every minute of the encounter and you are waiting for the exact moment when you can say, "That's really great and let me tell you about my Auburn. I had passed this old barn for about ten years and one day I decided to stop and see what might be inside. Well, I pulled open the old creaking door, brushed aside the cobwebs, and there....." Now you have the other fellow hooked. He will listen in reverence to you every word as you describe all the beautiful details of your discovery.

Yes, this is what makes the hobby interesting. It is meeting new people, swapping tall stories, showing snapshots, and reminiscing about days when automobiles and life in general was much simpler.

Perhaps, this is the appropriate spot to throw out a word of caution. When you are about to engage a fellow enthusiast in antique car conversation, take time to look at his coat lapel or his necktie. If you see logos such as Bentley Driver, Rolls-Royce Club, Bugatti Owner, or Duesenberg Owner, you might be getting in over your head. These persons

will start to tell you about their ten-year search for a genuine Silver Ghost that took them to England and across half the continent of Europe and how they finally talked Count Lottabucks out of his ancestral 1913 Rolls-Royce. The best way to make an exit out of this situation is to look at your wristwatch and say that you are late to talk with a club member who had a 1933 dual cowl Packard for sale.

Speaking for myself, I even begin to perspire under the collar when I stumble upon a conversation between Packard, Pierce-Arrow, or Cadillac owners. I am quite interested but I haven't one word to say. Now, if I find a group talking enthusiastically about Model T or Model A Fords, I might enter into the conversation. Perhaps someone might like to hear about the 1957 Glidden Tour that my son Jerry and I took from Roanoke to Williamsburg and then to Washington, DC and Hershey in our 1919 Model T.

But let's face it. How many times does someone ask a person about the 1957 Glidden Tour? Not very often. And again, how many times does someone want to know about a Wayne or a Jeffery? Well, let me tell you about both of them. It started back in 1950 when I drove out to a place near Sherando. I talked to an old man who said he had an old car in his cow shed that a lot of people looked at, but didn't give him a good offer. Well, I saw that old vehicle covered with dust and rust...a real basket case and decided then and there that I had to have it and.....then.....

## COMPARING A NEW CAR TO AN ANTIQUE CAR

A few weeks ago, I did something that an antique automobilist tries not to do, or if he does, he hopes that his friends won't know about it for quite some time....Yes, I'll confess. I bought myself a new car and with it went my plans to someday acquire a 1913-1920 Pierce-Arrow touring car from an ancient chauffeur, who inherited it from a wealthy tycoon for whom he worked over a half a century ago. I suppose that, for someone my age, this new vehicle is just what I need. It will take good care of me. It will remind me when I 'm doing something wrong, something right, and will attend to certain details in case I forget.

Ah yes, I remember driving my first car - a 1930 Model A deluxe coupe painted Elkpoint and Kewanee green, rumble seat, cowl lights etc. If it was quite cold and I had to drive back to college on a winter afternoon, I would check the thermometer outside my home and make sure I had enough denatured alcohol in the radiator and make sure that the large piece of cardboard I wired to the radiator was still in place and then check the firewall near the floor on the passenger side to make sure that the one and a half inch hole was open to bring in a certain amount of heat form the auto-lite-gadget that fitted over the exhaust manifold.

Now, all I had to do was wear my heavy mackinaw, four buckle goulashes, toboggan cap, and warm gloves. I was ready to drive through the city of Pittsburgh: across the Monongahela River; drive through half a dozen small mining towns and several rural villages, and see the lights of Bethany College, my old alma mater, shining just a mile away.

What a contrast today, to driving in those days in the middle of the Great Depression. I open the door of my Chrysler New Yorker Landau, settle down in my light blue upholstered seat, fasten my safety belt and turn on the ignition. Suddenly on the da--, I mean instrument panel, images appear and move back and forth calling my attention to oil pressure, battery power available from the fast working alternator, water temperature, and the amount of gasoline in the tank. As I back out a large number tells me how fast I am backing out of the garage—just what I've always wanted to know! Then as I move forward, I push a button on a panel next to the rear view mirror and an image formed by pale green lights tells me what day, what time, and what year it is. I push another and learn what the outdoor temperature is and the direction I am heading. I push another and learn how many miles I can go from the amount of gas in my tank and another tells me how many miles per gallon I am getting. One other button informs me that all systems monitored are O.K. I drive away with a big smile of relief on my face. But wait---if I leave my turn signal on too long, a chime begins to ring and when I brought the Christmas tree home in the partially closed trunk, a lighted message on the da—(there I go again) instrument panel informed me that either a door or the trunk was ajar. I mumbled that I was sorry to upset my monitor but it did no good and the message stayed on.



Another great feature on this vehicle goes into action whenever the car is moving more than 15 miles per hour. Suddenly there is a loud thump and all four doors lock themselves. This prevents large dogs, small fidgety children and senile adults from jumping or falling out of the car. It also makes life more challenging when returning to said vehicle with two large shopping bags. The front door must be opened after resting the bags on the hood or trunk and then an unlock button must be pressed. Then the back door can be opened, the bags retrieved and then placed on the rear seat or floor. I'm not quite sure what the value of that electronic safety device is but all in all, I like it. The radio and heater are quite an improvement over Henry's 1930 wonder machine and it is a good vehicle for senior citizens who make daily short trips and occasional long journeys in the summer to visit children or relatives. I know that one of these days, I'll start the engine and an electronic robots voice will say, "Don't touch that wheel, just sit back and relax—leave the driving to me. I'm going to take you to a place that you'll just love to see!!!

## THE GOOD OLD DAYS OF THE OLD CAR HOBBY

It is said that a person is really getting old if he or she thinks the "good old days" were a lot better than those of the "eighties" and the decade we are now entering and I will probably be viewed as an old fuddy-duddy, a cranky curmudgeon, or an old goat. Nevertheless, I am going to point out some things I think are "going in the wrong direction" and I am both annoyed and alarmed about them.

First of all, I would select the antique car "market." Now we have magazines and weekly reports on what antique cars are worth. We are bombarded with reports of recent auctions and upcoming sales. These practices have caused our beloved hobby to be almost out of sight for young people interested in an old car and we have a class of people who buy a classic for several hundred thousand dollars so they can sell it later on for a large profit. They don't want to own, to treasure, or drive that beautiful Packard. They see it as a way of making a quick buck---or several thousand bucks. What is happening to the fun side of having an old car? I'm sorry that Kruse bunch got into our hobby. Why didn't they pick our horses, yachts, or real estate?

In the same vein I must protest the way the Hershey Meet has and is still going. The Flea Market is far too large, the restroom facilities and food prices are atrocious. Unless a person knows where his friend's spaces are, the chances of meeting someone he knows are becoming more remote every year. I long for the days when they had the Chocolate Inn on the corner; the cars all gathered in the stadium or even on the old baseball field for the vendors. I didn't know how lucky I was to be a National Director and know I had a place to stay. Well, time marches on and those halcyon days are gone with the exhaust fumes of old cars and the voices of early members now stilled forever.

I'm also somewhat disgusted with television for ruining radio by causing people both young and old to forget the pleasure of listening to stories instead of watching them. There was a time when we old-timers could listen to "Lights Out" mysteries and sitting in the dark, we could really frighten ourselves so badly what we would turn on a hall light or insist on listening with a friend. Who gets frightened watching TV? They might get disgusted, bored, or prodded into a chuckle by the taped "canned laughter" on sitcoms that aren't funny but just unreal and silly. Where is that wonderful "big band" music? Where are you Fibber Magee and Molly?

All that change was inevitable but what really gets to me is what television has done to football. While in college I "attempted" to play football and had a bench-warmers view of most of the games during my first and only year on the team, but I did learn some rules or ethics that have been forgotten today. For example, when a player made a good tackle he didn't stand up and hold up both arms like a singer finishing a wonderful solo or pound the ground and fall to his knees in agony so that everyone would notice him if he dropped an interception. We would have been "benched" by our coach if we held up the ball like the torch of the Goddess of Liberty for all to see after scoring a touchdown. We touched the ball on the ground after scoring because that is what a touchdown is supposed to be, isn't it? If a player was hit on his elbow he jumped up and rubbed the

injured joint. He didn't fall to the ground , lie on his back as though he were knocked senseless, and have the coach and trainer rush out on the field, and then slowly get up and get helped over to the bench....our coach would just shout, "Rub it some more and you'll be OK."

Of course, we also played offense and defense wearing leather helmets, no face guards of any kind, and hot, woolen jerseys that itched. Well, at least we were called a "team" not a "ball club". Who ever heard of a cheer such as "C-L-U-B- club! Club! Club!" One other thing I notice is that so many hot-shot ball carriers carry the football like a loaf of French bread and they either fumble it or get it knocked out of their grasp. We were taught to cradle the ball against our chest with one hand and two hands if carrying in on a line plunge. If a player had the ball knocked out of his grasp or fumbled it, he was given an old ball to carry to class all week "so", as our coach said, "we can get used to holding it while moving around."

Yes, TV has made actors, prima donnas and cry-babies out of a lot of young athletes when they know that the game will be televised. I suppose that this generation is used to all that foolishness on the astro-turf but I'll never get used to it. So, on with the rising antique car prices, expanding flea markets and un-funny situation comedies. I'll echo the famous line of the movie magnate Sam Goldwyn, who said of things he did not like, "Include me out."

## **CHANGES & LONGING FOR THE GOOD OLD DAYS**

During my sojourn on this planet of three score years plus, I have seen many changes in all phases of the American way of life. Most, I admit, have been for the better, but there are some things I still don't know and a lot of things I still don't like and a lot of things I don't understand and I'm getting too old to waste my time worrying about them. I'll begin by admitting that I do not like or understand country rock music, computer games, designer jeans, or the MX missile. Those are the things I'll let my grandchildren ponder over, enjoy, or worry about. I'm a bit more conservative like our President and if I were an old man back in 1906, I might have stood by the country roadside and shouted "Get a horse" as a gleaming red Locomobile chugged by with its passengers swathed in white dusters on their way to the seashore or the mountains.

Now I must admit that I am glad that children these days don't have to be subjected to perilous diseases like polio, diphtheria, typhoid, or scarlet fever that took the lives of several of my classmates when I was in grade school. However, there are a number of things that I am sorry that children and young people will never know about or understand as they approach the twenty-first century.

One of the first things that comes to mind is radio. Yes, good old radio. What is radio today? It has degenerated to sports, news, and rock music. If you don't like any of those features, you turn the radio off. Gone are the days when one could hear a great comedy show, adventure stories, and then those mystery shows such as Sherlock Holmes, Inner Sanctum, or Lights Out. When those programs came on, they suggested that the listener turn his lights out and when you did your imagination could scare the daylight out of you. I must admit that as I listened to Inner Sanctum and our ghoul host called Raymond opened the notorious creaking door, I sometimes cheated and turned on the light in the hall. Yes, my friends, that was radio entertainment at its best.

One saving factor of radio today is that a few stations still play the old recordings of the great mystery programs as well as the great comedy shows featuring Fibber Magee and Molly, Jack Benny, Amos and Andy, The Life of Riley, and others. Today we see previously taped TV shows with audience laughter recorded and added to the programs. I wonder if they use laughter from the live broadcasts by the old radio shows. The only sex and violence on old time radio is what was created by the listener's imagination.

I saw a bi-plane fly over the other day and that sight took me back to the twenties and thirties when those slowly moving aircraft flew overhead carrying airmail or perhaps a student pilot. There were many occasions when we kids would jump up and down and wave and very often the pilot would see us and waggle his wings or drop the plane lower and wave to us. What a thrill that was!

Today, we look up as we hear a sound in the sky and see a trail of vapor several miles above our heads. We know that a jet plane is passing over but we don't know what kind it is and we also know that the pilot of the aircraft cannot see us and even if he could, he

would be twenty miles away before he could waggle his wings....but he probably couldn't because that is probably against regulations.

There is another sight and sound that nobody in the "eighties" will ever hear. I am thinking of the past and of being outdoors on a spring morning and hearing a deep roar in that sky that sounded like a squadron of bombing planes approaching. But we all knew that what we heard was something special and all at once there in the sky was a monstrous silver shape almost as long as two football fields...a dirigible. First it was the Shenandoah back in 1924, then the *Los Angeles*, the *Akron*, the *Macon*, the *Graf, Andes*, finally, the ill-fated *Hindenburg*. We saw them all and there will never again be a sight like that unless one of the Goodyear blimps passes over on its way to a football game somewhere.

Well, what are the young people of today going to miss in the automotive world? How could they miss anything when they have automatic transmissions, stereo radios, CB's, and air conditioning? I believe that they are missing a bit of adventure. They know that if they take a trip for two or three hundred miles, they probably will not have to stop to take a bucket to the nearest creek and get water for a steaming radiator or drive their car up on a large rock in order to change a flat tire without a jack. Then, if they run out of gas on a rainy night, will they be able to put the car in gear, keep a foot on the starter, and drive a mile to the nearest gas station? Probably not, but they will miss something that used to be part of taking a trip in an automobile.

Perhaps, that is part of the appeal of driving an antique automobile today....the unexpected can still happen - an overheated radiator, a flat tire, or a faulty ignition system. When these problems occur we always seem to have a "fellow antiquer" nearby who can help us. Problems bring us closer together and that is what antique automobiling is all about.

## TIME FLIES

A couple of thousand years ago, some wise Roman first coined the phrase, "Tempus Fugit" which we translate as "time flies" or "time flees". Even though they had only the sundial to mark the passing of the hours when the sun was shining, they noticed as they looked into their polished copper mirrors that the wrinkles were appearing along with the gray hairs and that they had only a few years left to live. The life expectancy in those days was about 35 years so those who did reach LX were indeed old and the word senator they bestowed on long-lived political leaders who derived from "senex" which meant "old man". This past Sunday, we had a guest pastor who was a student minister in our church in the summer of 1946. I met him before the service and noticed how old he looked and I'm sure that he had the same observation about me. He asked me how many of the present congregation would remember him and I listed exactly three others besides myself. That really hit me hard when I looked around to see that the church was almost full and that there were probably two dozen infants and little tots in the nursery.

It reminded me of the strange feeling I have when I see cars of the fifties and sixties referred to as antiques. Antiques? Why these were the cars everyone was showing off as the new family car when our club was founded. Then I thought of my 1906 Wayne and the fact that it is was only 44 years old and most of the un-restored but cherished vehicles that turned out to our meets were barely old enough to be classified as such, but we really had a lot of fun and excitement driving to distant places while keeping in sight of one another in case of temporary breakdowns which were frequent. I usually had the fun of awarding the "Order of the Golden Tow- Chain" at the end of the outing to someone who had engine or tire trouble en-route.

I know that my Wayne had frequent stops because of either ignition or carburetor trouble, but some of our most mechanical club members stopped to help and in all those years I never had to be towed or pushed back to my garage. Now, if I spend all day getting the Wayne, the Jeffery, or the Model A ready for our annual Fireman's Parade, I worry about whether they will make the short trip without trouble. I must face the fact that I have become an automotive coward when it comes to antiques. I guess I'll just enjoy them vicariously by writing about old cars and in trying to recapture their unique appeal with my paint brushes. If I can please others by doing this, I will feel happy about the whole thing. (Jan. 1991)