



*Wisconsin Society of
Automotive Historians
WSAH*

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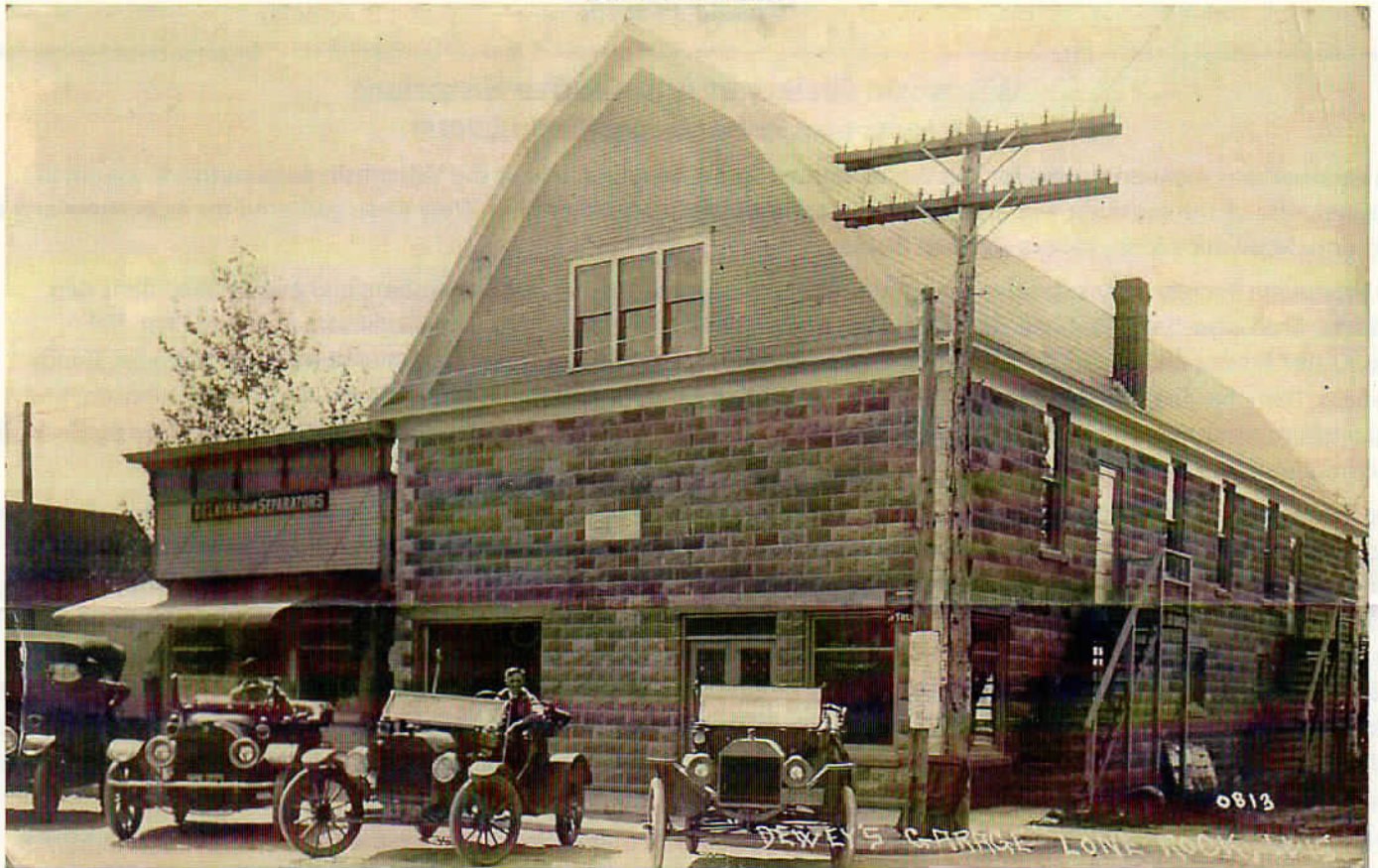
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Carhart Chronicle

Summer 2019



Dewey's Garage [Lone Rock, Wisconsin] – 1916

A Few Words from the President

First things first... You are reading this Carhart Chronicle because David Gilbert Tesch has agreed to publish one more issue: The critical pre-lola Car Show issue. Dave said he would do it as a favor to a friend (me), but of course I owe him big-time. I suppose I could offer my first-born, but since my first-born will be 51 years old shortly after lola, that doesn't seem like a good idea. At any rate, that provides a slight reprieve so we can continue our search for a replacement Editor/Publisher. Thanks Dave!

As for the lola Car Show (July 11, 12, 13, 2019) - and some of this is a repeat of what I sent out to those on our email list - there are major changes again this year, meaning we will have to adapt and, as usual, have a plan but remain flexible. We will no longer have our large tent, rather we will set up our WSAH tables inside the former Krause Publications building.

In addition to the area on the south side where we placed 25 vehicles inside last year, we will have another large area in the building on the north side for 25 or so vehicles. This means we might have quite a challenge to get vehicles in place, so we will likely need several volunteers on Wednesday and Thursday to help out. Please contact me at (920) 655-2740 or email knimocks@netnet.net if you think you can help and want some more information. If you have never been involved, you might be apprehensive about being an "outsider" – fear not, we are a friendly and helpful bunch and one or more of the seasoned veterans will mentor you. The biggest concern at this point is getting 50 or more vehicles situated inside by early Thursday. Also, for the "Calling All Car Clubs" Special Exhibit, there will be 10 or so small tents, along with vehicles, set up on the asphalt area on the south side of the building. Details are in progress for this, but we are obviously going to need help there.

I encourage everyone to go to automobilechronicles.com the excellent website of one of our newest members, Ralph Kalal from Middleton (west side of Madison). Jessica has added a link to Ralph's site on our WSAH site, wisconsin-auto-historians.org as well. Our member William Chartrand is instrumental in organizing the 48th M&M (Marinette and Menominee) car show, August 10, 2019, as well as being an officer of the club and its newsletter editor. Check out <http://clubs.hemmings.com/mmaac/> for the M&M website.

Elsewhere in this issue you will find the details for our next meeting (2:00 p.m. Friday, July 12) and a brief article about the donation to WSAH of a complete collection of Automobile Quarterly. Finally, a comment about the "PFL" (or Pfl) that sometimes appears after my name or initials. I was recently searching for something in my files and found that I started in this position in 1989. That's 30 years, folks – good reason for the "President for Life" moniker. The optimist in me says I must be doing a great job. The realist in me says nobody else wants the job! Term limits anyone?

Ken (PFL*) Nimocks

*President For Life

Wisconsin Society of Automotive Historians

Minutes from Spring Meeting (April 13, 2019)

The weather was most enjoyable for the WSAH Annual Spring Meeting held at the Wisconsin Automotive Museum in Hartford. Also at the museum was a Wisconsin Chapter of the Studebaker Club. They were gathered for a car show and a luncheon. Many nice Studebakers were on display.

The Wisconsin Society of Automotive Historians meeting included the following members and guests: President Ken Nimocks, Treasurer Gary Koehnke, Secretary Dan Manola, Directors Jim Morris, Don Gullikson, and Don Chandler, Webmaster Jessica Zdanowicz, Wisconsin Historical Society Liaison George Tesar, and members Terry Nimocks, Randy Nimocks, Dan Sharpee, William Chartrand, Wally Heil, Ralph Kalal, Greg Vanark, Gene Steinfeldt, Reuben Johnson, and Wisconsin Automotive Museum Curator/Director Dawn Mueller. Member Dan Sharpee brought a guest, Alan Budleski. A round table of introductions and places of residency followed.

New Business-Treasurer Gary Koehnke read the Treasurer's report and a motion was made by Dan Manola to accept the report and seconded by Dan Sharpee. New member Ralph Kalal introduced his task of maintaining a website named AutomobileChronicles.com and explained the content of the site. Our annual donation to the Wisconsin Automotive Museum of \$1000.00 was brought forth as an introduction and a motion by Randy Nimocks and seconded by Don Chandler. The donation will be used for various needed tasks that the museum sees fit to accomplish. A vote was taken and the motion was carried by the members. A good deal of discussion focused on our need to fill the Newsletter/Editor position which will be vacated by member Dave Tesch. Any member who feels they would like to try their hand at the duty of the position can voice their desire to Ken. An annual salary of \$0.00, but knowing what great admiration would be felt, could be an incentive to step forward.

Old Business-The usual pre Iola Car Show meeting as of yet has not taken place, but members Ken Nimocks, Jim Morris, Dave Tesch, and Don Gullikson are scheduled to go to that meeting. The normal setting consisting of a tent with vehicles parked under is probably going to be eliminated and the adjacent building, which we believe can house 50 cars, will be utilized. The meeting is scheduled for April 17, 2019 in Iola. President Ken Nimocks mentioned the possible acquisition of a set of Automobile Quarterly books which he may house and loan out for viewing or research to our members. More information to follow. Meeting was adjourned at 3:45 with a motion by Dan Sharpee and seconded by Jim Morris. Some members gathered at the nearby Hank's Eatery after the meeting.

Respectfully Submitted, Secretary Dan Manola

WISCONSIN SOCIETY OF AUTOMOTIVE HISTORIANS SPRING MEETING 2019



With a 'Gathering of Minds' the Wisconsin Society of Automotive Historians meeting began in earnest



Creating an atmosphere of Lightheartedness



Evolving into an environment of Seriousness

WSAH Website: <http://wisconsin-auto-historians.org>



Bringing Membership into Indescribable 'Uncontrolled Enthusiasm'



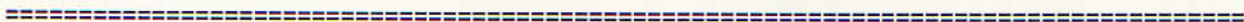
Culminating & Evolving into a Celebratory Feasting Frenzy of the Finest Dining at Hank's Restaurant & Drinkery

(photography courtesy of Jim {Paparazzi} Morris)

AUTOMOBILE QUARTERLY DONATION

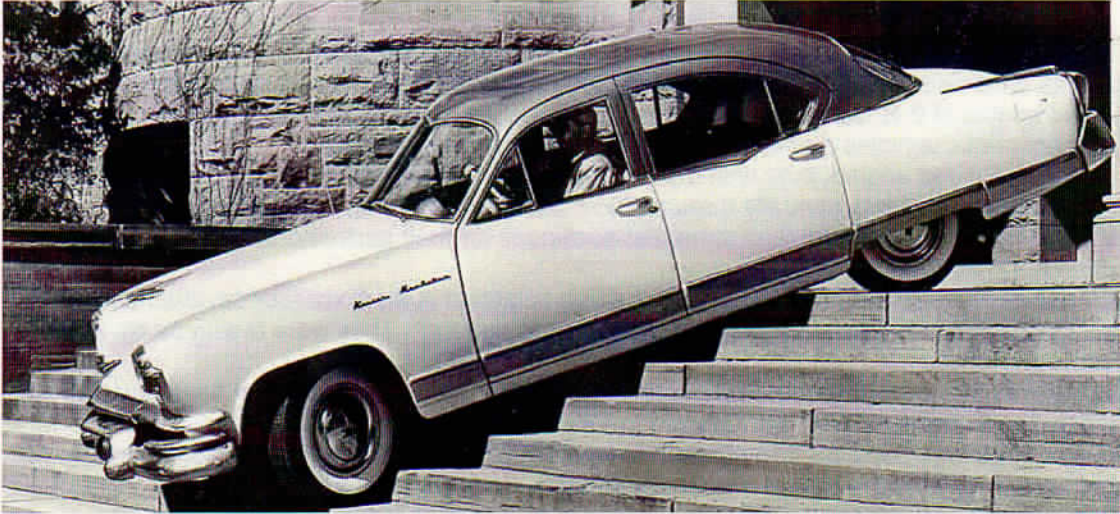
A few days prior to our Annual Spring Meeting in Hartford, I received an offer of a donation of a complete collection of Automobile Quarterly. If you are not aware, AQ was considered the premier automotive publication, hardbound, with the top automotive writers, photographers and artists (see one of the feature articles in automobilechronicles.com) and a subscription was very costly. Ann Roubal had contacted me to say that she has the collection of her late father, Richard L. Roubal, and had debated trying to sell it but decided instead to donate it to a worthy organization – and she chose WSAH! This treasure is now in my possession, delivered by Ann and her husband Bill, all neatly boxed and organized with a few notes included (and Bill did all the lifting, too). My heartfelt gratitude goes out to them, and it was a delight to hear Ann say that her father would have been very pleased knowing that his collection was going to our organization.

Now, although the collection is in my bookcase, it is not mine – it is to be shared with our membership and we will need to work out the logistics so that any member who so wishes can borrow the AQ's. The initial plan is to have a check-out policy like this: A member makes a request for individual issues or volumes (four issues) which I would bring to the next meeting. Whatever is borrowed must then be returned at the following meeting, in perfect condition of course. Simple enough in concept, but maybe not feasible – guess we will have to try it and see. As soon as someone can't make the return on time, or any other problem arises, we will have to consider another plan. I will not do any shipping and I do not want to be constantly policing the system (other than doling out severe punishment for infractions). K.E.N./PFL



Strange But True

Concepts/Ingenuity/Design/Creativity/Inventiveness in the Automotive Field



Kaiser's method for demonstrating the ease of its "full control" power steering was sending one of its 1953 Manhattans bouncing down the steps of a building. What message was intended isn't exactly clear, as granite steps aren't the natural driving habitat for Kaisers or any other car. What would have been really interesting was to see the car backing up the steps to prepare for the photo.

(from 1953 Popular Mechanics)

WSAH BROOKS STEVENS INTRO

The following article about Brooks Stevens by Val V. "Doc" Quandt appears in our WSAH publication, The Spark, Number 40 from October 1994. For those who never knew him, Doc was responsible for getting our Wisconsin Cars and Trucks book published and served as our Secretary and Associate Editor. He was a retired family physician in Hartford and volunteered much of his time at the Wisconsin Automotive Museum.

An internet search for Brooks Stevens will produce hours of reading and photos, especially if you expand your search to include, for example, his biography or his connections to Studebaker or his many designs unrelated to cars. A few interesting items that are not mentioned in Doc's article include Stevens' designs and sometimes fabrication work on such diverse products as home furnishings and appliances including a vacuum cleaner and a toaster, the Harley Davidson design that is still used, the Oscar Meyer Wienermobile, the Miller beer logo, the Studebaker Wagonaire, with its sliding roof over the cargo area, and many, many more.

Brooks Stevens was born in Milwaukee in 1911 and died in 1995, the year after Doc's article was published. Upon his death The New York Times called Stevens "a major force in industrial design." He was stricken with polio when he was young and encouraged by his father to draw. (Ken's comments here: I was present at Steven's museum in Mequon when we held a WSAH meeting there in conjunction with Matt Joseph's radio show "About Cars" and I remember a few things that made quite an impression. Stevens told that when his father would bring business associates and clients to their house, he would have Brooks draw for them – he was ambidextrous and could draw the wheels of a locomotive using both hands at the same time. I asked how Studebaker was able to get away with the design for the 1956* Hawk, and later the Lark and Gran Turismo Hawk, using what seemed to be a direct copy of the Mercedes grille. He explained that Studebaker was the original importer for Mercedes, then said, "Why don't you ask me that again when we are on the air." *The Spark article says 1966 which is an apparent typo.)

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BROOKS STEVENS' AUTOMOTIVE CONTRIBUTIONS

by

Val V. Quandt

The Writer had the privilege of interviewing Mr. Brooks Stevens at his auto museum in Mequon, Wisconsin in August of 1993. The content of this account is the result of this interview and written materials furnished by Brooks Stevens.

Stevens credits his father, William C. Stevens, executive vice-president and director of design and development with the Cutler Hammer Company in Milwaukee, with interesting him in the automobile. The senior Stevens was the inventor of the preselective steering wheel gear shift in 1916.

In the late 1930's Stevens designed land yachts which functioned as mobile homes and sales offices for William Plankinton, the Western Printing company of Racine, Wisconsin, and the Johnson Wax Company of Racine.

The Volume One, Issue One of the Automobile Quarterly in the spring of 1962 had a two page spread of a sketch by Brooks Stevens of a huge and luxurious land cruiser, a motor home called the "Gondola Terra. It advertised 101 built-in features for the comfort and convenience of the sportsman and executive. It was intended to be a futuristic and "tomorrow" vehicle.

In 1946 Stevens designed the Jeep station wagon and the Jeepster phaeton for Willys Motors. Between 1948 and 1955 he collaborated with Kaiser and Frazer with their line of passenger automobiles.

In 1951 Stevens designed a race car using a Henry J chassis and a Willy f-head engine. These cars were raced for several years on the tracks at Road America at Elkhart Lake, Wisconsin, at Janesville, Wisconsin, at Sebring, Florida, and throughout the United States.

Stevens saw the need for a new kind of racing car against the only the only racing car existing in America at that time, the Cunningham car, which was an expensive one. The first two of these Stevens designed cars were called Excalibur J, with one having a Henry J, L-head engine of 2 ½ liter displacement and the other being a Willys F-head engine. These cars raced in competition against more exotic vehicles and competed well in races across America.

In 1952 through 1954, using the F-head engine, they won thirteen first place trophies, nine second place, and seven third place trophies. There were further racing events annually through 1957 with yearly Sebring race participation.

Brooks Stevens and his Excalibur J cars received their strongest accolades for their performance in the Sebring twelve hour endurance race on March 7, 1954.

As Stevens noted, the demise of the Kaiser automobile ended their participation in the Excalibur development. But these cars reappeared on the racing circuits in 1983 as vintage racing became "de rigueur." They were driven by his son David, grandson Tony, and friend Robert Shaw.

Between 1953 and 1956 Stevens designed a succession of cars which had a limited production of some three to six vehicles of each design. These were the Valkyrie in 1953, the Gaylord in 1956, and Scimitar in 1956.

Stevens traced his interest in Mercedes Benz SS 180 phaeton to when he acquired one from the estate of singer Al Jolson. He was then an engineering consultant to the Kaiser-Frazer Corporation. In 1966*, while a consultant to Studebaker, he used the Mercedes radiator appearance for his redesign of the Studebaker Hawk.

In the late 1950's and early 1960's Stevens designed for Willys, including some vehicles for the Brazilian market, and from 1963 to 1967 for Studebaker. For 1969 and 1970 Stevens contributed designs for American Motors Corporation for their Hornet, Gremlin, AMX Javelin Landau, and Ambassador.

Stevens and his sons, David Brooks and William C. (known as Steve) developed the Excalibur I in 1964. This was based on a 4/5 scale of the Mercedes Benz 1927/1930 SS doorless roadster. The SS Automobile Company was born in August of 1964 for the manufacture of these cars. It became the sixth largest manufacturer of automobiles in America at that time. By 1966 some one-hundred Excaliburs had been built. Stevens was searching for some variation of the word "sword" and came up with the Arthurian legend sword, the "Excalibur." The vehicle used a Chevrolet Corvette engine and a Studebaker Daytona chassis. By 1970, approximately one-thousand vehicles had been manufactured. The models prior to 1970 were the Excalibur I cars together with the original Excalibur racing cars.

In its first two years the Excalibur was offered only in the two passenger roadster. Then, starting the third year, both a roadster and a four passenger phaeton were offered. Series II existed from 1969 through 1974 and the series III was built from 1975 through 1979. Then there was a change with the series IV which came out in 1980 and was styled after the larger 1937 / 1938 Mercedes 500/ 540K and ran through 1984. The series V ran from 1985 to 1988 and was offered in a four door sedan. The total produced from 1965 through 1988 was 3, 608 automobiles.

In mid-1986 the company filed chapter eleven bankruptcy. Later that year Henry A. Warner became president of the acquisition company that purchased the assets. The company management has gone through several German interests since that time.

The Stevens brothers also were responsible for the development of the Excalibur Jr. all-aluminum go-cart put out by the Gilson Manufacturing Company from 1960 to 1968.

Briggs and Stratton in Milwaukee, Wisconsin in the early 1980's devised an experimental car utilizing gasoline and electric battery power. This was called the Briggs and Stratton Gasoline/ Electric Hybrid as an energy saving design concept. It was developed with the assistance of the automotive craftsmen of Brooks Stevens Design Associates. In a descriptive and pictorial leaf let it shows a handsome vehicle which could seat two adults, two children, and some luggage. An additional two wheels in the vehicle rear supported the added weight of the twelve batteries.

Briggs and Stratton clearly stated that they were not intending with this to get into the manufacture of automobiles but rather to demonstrate an alternative to the standard gasoline driven automobile.

The gasoline engine in this vehicle was an 18 horsepower model 42 of the Briggs and Stratton line. It was small for the job but adequate when amplified with the battery power for low speed travel and low to intermediate distances of travel.

Stevens also did the design work for AMC with their 1980 XJ100 Wagoneer, and the Cherokee station wagons.

The foregoing is a compendium of the activities of Brooks Stevens and his sons in the automotive field. For the former, this spans more than 40 years.

The design work of Mr. Stevens goes much beyond the automotive field. His fertile mind designed Steam-O-Matic irons, the Petipoint iron, the Hamilton clothes dryer, outboard motors including Outboard Marine, lawn and garden equipment including Lawn-Boy rotary mowers, for the Milwaukee Road the Hiawatha and Olympian trains for 1941 to 1946, Allis Chalmers farm tractors in 1934, machine tools, furniture, office buildings, sales and show rooms, and a myriad of other designs for industry including the medical fields.

Mr. Stevens lists having had 585 clients during his career. The examples of his work outside of the automotive field give a measure of the design influence of Brooks Stevens through a long career.

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