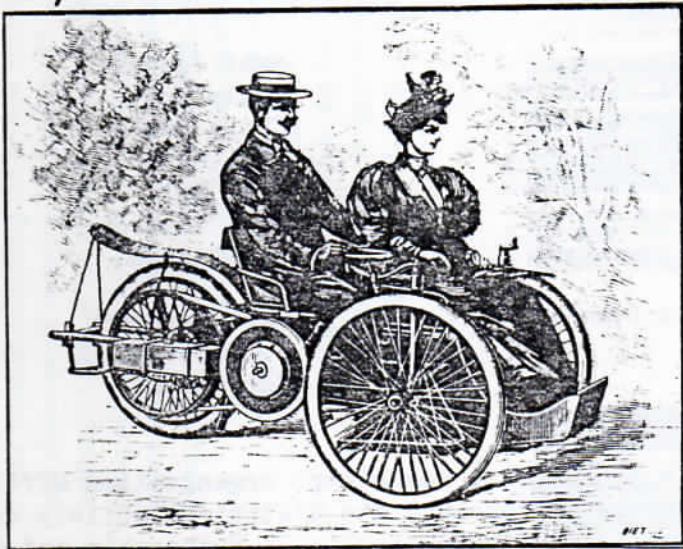


Spark



11

Published bi-monthly (usually) by the Wisconsin SAH

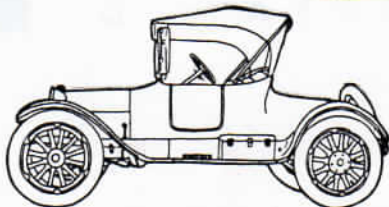
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A Letter from the Editor

You wouldn't believe it if I told you. Suffice it to say that Spark number 11, some two months late, even though it was ready to go on time, is proof positive that even a bunch of bumlbers like your editors (mostly me) can survive the king hell confusion screw up that just occurred right here in River City. At any rate, here's the September/October issue that really should have been July/August. It isn't ever going to happen again (at least not this bad) as long as my name's on the masthead. Sorry. Here goes.

The term "renegade" has come up twice lately in an effort to describe some of my varied twists on approaching the field of automotive history. Well, now, some might take that as an insult, but I rather enjoy it. As an undergraduate at the university, I spent some four years minoring in history (as well as journalism and art) before taking a degree in English lit/creative writing with no recognized minor field. That doesn't mean I lost interest in history, just that I wanted to take a more personal approach. For several years I could have best been described as a closet historian. Then one day I went to work for "Uncle Chester" Krause at Old Cars newspaper, and just a little bit later discovered this unique little group called the Society of Automotive Historians. Among its members were a handful of professional writers, a few academic (professional) historians, a lot of car and automotive literature collectors, and lo and behold one other renegade known to those who have shared the adventure of knowing him, as "Wild Bill." This was clearly a good place for me to come out of the closet.

I joined the SAH in late 1977. Since then I've made a few friends within the group, gotten some much needed help on a couple of little projects and gained some new insights into the area of automotive history. I've also given the group a lot of plugs, sat on a couple of committees and done a bit of criticizing. Some of my criticisms were perhaps too strong--the Cugnot Awards come to mind. Others were justified, but have since be-

come mute points. And still others continue, such as bylaws that strike me as being unfair to the chapter and, of course, the dues increase, which still seems unjustified.

What the whole thing boils down to is that the SAH is not a bad organization. On the contrary, it is a very good one that happens to suffer from a few problems. After our annual Iola meeting, I came home to Madison feeling that perhaps these problems would be solved. Happenings since Iola have left me, if not unhappy, at least confused. It's probably not important what these happenings were. What is important though is that we all take a long hard look at our organization.

Are you happy with SAH? If you are, then let your directors know it. And if you aren't happy, then let that be known too. Maybe I'm overreacting, but it looks to me like the SAH is entering a very critical period. It's time for the memberships and the chapters to find their voice and to use it. Lend your support in whatever way you are able, and if you have criticism, don't "tell it to Sweeney," tell it to the Board! Let's keep a good organization alive, healthy and communicating.

Chris Halla

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DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

"In the beginning," which in this case was basically in the 1950s with some roots into the 1930s, car collecting was the great American hobby. For participants it was a supreme exercise in the expression of individuality and it was accessible to almost everyone. A simple application of the law of supply and demand indicated that the supply of cars thought to be "desirable" far outstripped the demand for such iron. The result was that almost anyone who really wanted a desirable car could have one with a minimum of economic discomfort. The thought of speculating or in-

vesting in cars was as unlikely to the average person as the thought of making money on gold--the price of the latter was rigidly controlled by the government on the domestic market and controlled reasonably effectively internationally by iron-bottom agreements.

In this, the "golden age" of car collecting, when individualism could be expressed by a democratic cross-section of the American population, there arose an aristocracy. Like the aristocracy that Thomas Jefferson had envisioned for the country, this aristocracy was defined by talent and enthusiasm--not wealth. In this period an awards banquet of a major national club would include some very wealthy individuals with large collections, and, just as likely, the fellow who owned a small gas station, or a fellow who worked at one. There were very few "celebrities" and very little of the gross pretention and pin-striped promotion that afflict car collecting today. No one babbled ceaselessly about "investment potential."

I remember people who were earnestly interested in engineering, styling, company history and the like who were respected on that basis alone without inquiry into the nature of what they owned or how many points they could eke out of judges for it. I remember that these people were accepted on the basis of what they knew and that the worth or value of the machinery--which wasn't very much, anyway--was rarely discussed seriously.

There are still places where car collecting is of this nature but they are becoming fewer and farther between.

Car judging, which had been proposed originally to stop the butchering of cars and provide an incentive for authentic restoration, became a monster with a life unto itself. Like horse racing associations which historically were chartered to "improve the breed," but which quickly became simple devices to promote gambling on many levels, car judging became, for many, a device to more accurately fix market values of the cars judged.

While some of the real collectors persisted, the hobby rapidly became a business and, in many cases, not

a very nice one. Few could resist the temptation to speculate in valuable cars and a whole industry grew to service this speculation. While some might argue that this change provided a better climate for preserving cars, I would counter that the large scale commercialization of the hobby generally provided for less real enjoyment by collectors. The advent of national auctions, for example, has been bad for the cars, bad for collectors and potential collectors and have taken enormous amounts of money out of the hobby. The auctions, and other instrumentalities for commercializing the hobby, have not fostered sound investment in good automobiles with good results for preservation. They have produced a carnival atmosphere where greed runs naked through the aisles, and is invited over for a drink by almost everyone.

And, of course, the aristocracy of talent has given way to the aristocracy of wealth and commerce in its worse sense. This is not to say that there are not large or well-known collectors and merchants who don't love cars and know a lot about them. The point is that there is an increasing number of big scale operators who don't know about cars, don't want to know about cars, and have contempt for people who do. It's sad and I can't imagine that it will change soon.

Which brings us to automotive history. It has the potential for being the arena for the aristocracy of talent in the old car interest. It remains the place where individuals are appreciated for their enthusiasm, knowledge and genuine interest in the automobile and not for the capital assets that they have accumulated. It reminds me of car collecting "in the beginning."

Your WSAH Board has taken its mission, to encourage participation in automotive history on all levels, very seriously. That is why we felt strongly about the SAH dues increase. We felt that it didn't make economic sense and worse, it separated SAH and WSAH from our most important resource--our members. We were strongly criticized for taking that stand and then, irrationally, we were strongly criticized for letting it be known that we had been criticized. I expect that we are about to be strongly criticized again for all the above. That should not deter us.

We believe that automotive history is vitally important, intrinsically interesting and a great deal of fun. It is fun because of the topic and because of the people involved in it. We believe that it should be served by organizations that see it in this perspective. I hope that SAH and WSAH never lose sight of this perspective. Of course both organizations are constantly in the process of "becoming" and never quite "are." That situation is both good and bad, but on balance it is probably more good than bad. We hope that as WSAH evolves we will be known for our openness and for our accomplishments and contributions in automotive history. We hope that SAH will evolve into a more broadly based organization and one which more fully appreciates the strength that it has in its Chapters. There was a time when the Chapters were regarded as something of misbegotten stepchildren. Happily that has passed. We have passed through adolescence and we want to take our place as full and equal adults.

Our commitment is to involve as many people as possible in our mutual interest at whatever level they can make a meaningful contribution. We think that is a good membership philosophy and we'll keep working on it--forever.

Matt Joseph

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HISTORY PROJECT STILL GO/SEPTEMBER MEETING OFF

I want to get right to the point, but would like to say first that the Wisconsin Auto History Project goes on as scheduled, and it seems in good shape. But, the work meeting we had tentatively scheduled for September, in the north country, had to be called off. The bottom line was that the letters went out and the cards came back (in small numbers) indicating that a work meeting anyplace, at the scheduled time, would not be productive. The good news is that a few more assignments have been made, and for the most part things are proceeding on schedule. We will have to schedule a work

meeting at some point not too far away, but the way things look now, it will be "strictly for work."

At the end of these notes is the assignment list with the most recent additions. Again, please, if you don't already have an assignment, compare the following list with your list of Wisconsin-built vehicles and volunteer for something. Can't we make the biggest project we've got going a 100% participation event? Take a look at the last Spark for guidelines. Let me know if you don't have it and I'll send you a copy. Deadline for rough drafts is November 15. Let's get going!

ASSIGNMENT LIST WSAH/AHP

THE GREAT RACE	Wally Wray
ROADS IN WISCONSIN	Gary Busha
AUTO'S IMPACT ON WIS. SOCIETY	Matt Joseph
AUTO RACING IN WISCONSIN	Phil Hall
KISSEL	Ray Scroggins/ Wally Wray
KLONDIKE	Larry Gudenschwager
OSHKOSH TRUCK	Ray Scroggins
WISCONSIN (Milw. 1899-1914)	Ray Scroggins
EXCALIBUR	Gary Busha
HARLEY-DAVIDSON	Chris Halla
RUXTON (KISSEL)	Ray Scroggins/ Wally Wray
DUESENBERG II	Bob Lichty
FWD	Don Luebke
GRASS PREMIER	John Kress
ONEIDA	Bob Lichty
PIERCE	Bob Lichty
PIRSCH	Bob Lichty
SAMSON	John Kress
STOUGHTON	John Kress
TITAN	John Kress
SMITH	Bill Milbarth, Jr.
SMITH-MILWAUKEE	Bill Milbarth, Jr.
SMITH FLYER	Wally Wray
SPARK	Wally Wray
BRIGGS & STRATTON	Wally Wray
SCHLOEMER	Wally Wray
JEFFERY	Tim Tilton/W. Wray
EUREKA	Wally Wray

AMERICAN MOTORS

CASE
CHEVROLET (JANESVILLE)
COLT
HUDSON (KENOSHA)

NASH
OSHKOSH STEAMER
RAMBLER
STERLING
APPLETON MOTOR TRUCK

HARRIS
BRILL
DOMAN
RADFORD
TERMAAT-MONAHAN
ZIEBEL
MITCHELL
MILWAUKEE STEAMER

Larry Mitchell/
L. Daum
Tim Tilton
Tony Hossain
Matt Joseph
Larry Mitchell/
L. Daum
L. Mitchell
Wally Wray
L. Mitchell
Bob Gary
Bill Cameron
Bill Cameron
Bill Cameron
Bill Cameron
Bill Cameron
Bill Cameron
Michael Herbach
Wally Wray

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CHAPTER/MEMBER NEWS

Iola '81 is over! (Has been for some time now actually.) Turn out for the car show was spectacular as usual. Turn out for a rather important WSAH meeting was dismal. Some 13 out of over 40 members showed up. (Editor's note: Believe it or not, folks, attendance at meetings is a benefit of membership.)

Here's what happened briefly. Chris Halla reported on the progress of the Wisconsin Auto History Project. (See elsewhere in this issue for details of what's happening there.) The flag of the still-forming Oral History Committee was picked up by Bill Cameron and Wally Wray. If you want to be on that committee when it becomes a reality, drop Chris Halla a line. The Education Committee has solidified to include Matt Joseph (Chair), John Barth and Gary Busha. Together these three have a strong background in Education, publishing and automotive history. Please help them to carry on their duties (look for details soon.)

One of the more important matters of the day was the state of our treasury. A limited amount of concern has been expressed about the situation and we can now happily report that it looks like, thanks to Phil Hall, everything is in order. By the time you read this, the treasury will be firmly back on track. Now it's time to pay your dues again. (They should have been collected in July, but we wanted to get everything straight first.) As has been our tradition in the past, anyone who has paid their dues since December 31, 1980, will be exempt until next time around. Dues should be received by our Acting Treasurer no later than November 10, 1981. Expired members will be dropped as of November 21, 1981. With dues remaining at \$5 (individual), \$3 (senior citizen), and \$25 (corporate), we're hoping for 100% renewals and growth equal to that we have experienced already. And remember, we are no longer collecting dues for the national. They will notify you on their own.

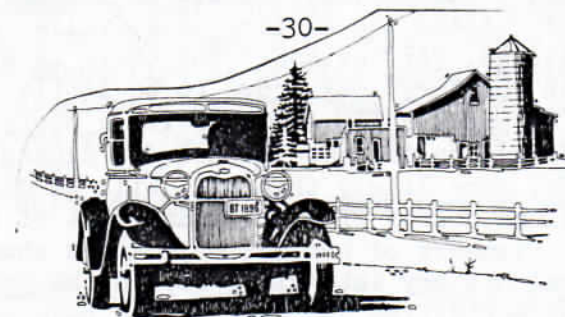
The only office up for election this year was that of Director-at-large (three year term). The election was won by Phil Hall. Ray Scroggins and Dan Hampton, also on the ballot, proved popular candidates. Next July we will be electing a new Director, Associate Director, Secretary and Treasurer, as well as one Director-at-large.

Mid-Winter WSAH meeting dates were confirmed as February 26 and 27 in Madison. Put those dates on your calendar now! It would be hard to top what Ray Scroggins and Phil Hall did for us in Milwaukee this year, but we're going to come as close as we can. We've even got a couple of surprises lined up already.

The highlight of our Iola meeting was provided by guest John Conde, who came to discuss national SAH with us. John's presentation was a positive one, and it left all of us with a good feeling about future relations between SAH and WSAH. A great deal was discussed here, but one comment that stood out especially was that chapters should be invited to send representatives to national board meetings. Response to John's comments were naturally enthusiastic. John also brought greetings from then SAH President Dave Brownell. John also commented on SAH finances, publications, by-laws,

nominations and awards.

We would like to express our thanks to John Conde for visiting with us. He did a lot of good toward soothing some ruffled feathers.



SOUND SUGGESTIONS: A COLUMN ON ORAL HISTORY METHODS

Continuing a series of columns by Dale Treleven, Oral History Coordinator at the State Historical Society. Reprinted from Exchange, a WSHS newsletter.

On Project Objectives and Research

It is important to acquire skills and knowledge in taping techniques and interviewing methodology, selecting recording equipment and supplies, and administering a legal agreement form. Before the first tape-recording is made for an oral history project, it is also essential to define the objective(s), to analyze source materials that pertain to those objectives, to prepare an outline of general subject areas of interrogation that look promising for adding new information, and to draft a preliminary list of specific questions.

While the objectives for an oral history project may range widely between specific and general, there must be a focus. One historical society may decide, for instance, to collect taped interviews to help determine the characteristics of the central business district in the 1920's; another society may desire to build a collection of family stories that have been passed on for many generations. Or, to look at several more examples, an historical society may choose to concentrate on change and continuity in its community's substantial Polish-American population since the turn of the cen-

tury; another society may decide to focus on the history of local churches, or concentrate on taping long-time employees of a key business enterprise.

At the same time, objectives which are so broad as to be virtually unachievable should be avoided. A broad objective of "taping the history of Doeville" may be well-intentioned, for instance, but there is great risk because such "history" may prove to be little more than tapes full of practically every Doeville story, fact or fable, passed on and embellished for generations. Such results, more likely than not, will be disappointing as well as costly from the standpoint of both time and money. Planners of project objectives should remember that oral history interviews record the personal remembrance of activities and events that have occurred during the lives of the respondents.

Once the objectives have been determined, the success of the project, that is the richness and depth of information obtained from interviewees, will depend much upon the interviewer's background and knowledge of the general areas to be discussed. Much of that background and knowledge must be acquired by doing pre-interview research in source materials that bear upon project objectives and/or individual interview prospects.

Much oral history pre-interview research involves identifying, examining, and taking research notes from the same sources used to prepare for drafting a paper on some period of a community's history or an aspect of community life. Thus, it makes a good deal of sense to refer to Thomas E. Felt's Researching, Writing, and Publishing Local History as a guide to materials and procedures. Also, it is sensible to consult a general text on the state's history. Reading selected portions of Robert E. Nesbit's Wisconsin: A History will aid the interviewer in conceptualizing a framework in which to examine the community's past. And keep in mind while planning a research strategy that oral history's contribution to learning more about the past is restricted, by and large, to the twentieth century since the number of people who have personal recollections about events and activities before the turn of the century is very small.

The well-designed oral history project will include pre-interview research in such sources as newspapers, scrapbooks, photographs, letters and diaries, pamphlets, organizational records (i.e., minute books, house organs, employee newsletters, financial ledgers, etc.), records of key community institutions (schools, churches), common council proceedings, plat maps, county or city directories, manuscript or printed census statistics, tax records, assessor's reports, and other public documents. Such sources will indicate not only what information is available but, equally important, the information that is not available and is to be sought through personal interviews.

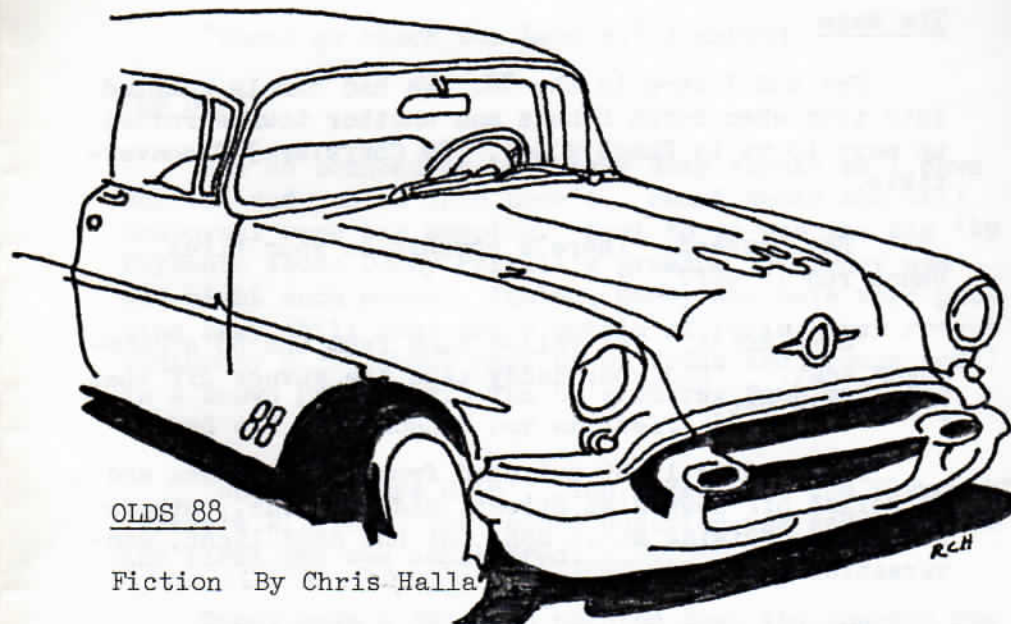
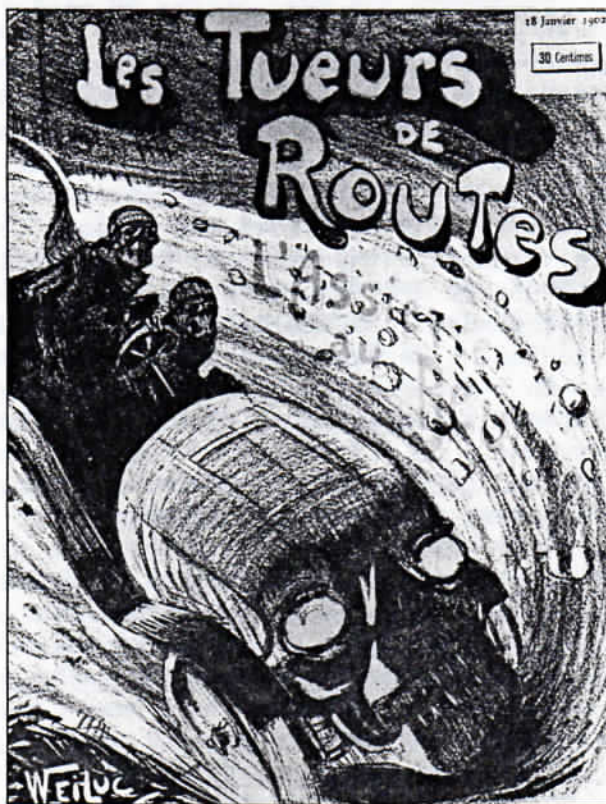
Pre-interview research also involves a preliminary, unrecorded discussion with each of the prospective interviewees that your society's project committee has tentatively selected to tape. There are many reasons for the preliminary meeting. It provides an opportunity to verify the suitability of the person for taping, to establish rapport, emphasize the kinds of information the project wants to gather and why, to explain the necessity for a legal agreement form, selecting possible dates and times for the taping session, and so on. The preliminary session also is a time to find out if the taping prospect has other materials (scrapbooks, photograph albums, personal papers, etc.) to aid the interviewer in pre-interview research and to help the interviewee recall past events, activities, opinions, and feelings.

The final reason for scheduling a preliminary meeting is to have the interview prospect fill out a short, standardized questionnaire. While such a procedure is optional, a completed questionnaire will be helpful to the interviewer since it provides such basic information as full name, date and place of birth, siblings, parents' names, their dates and places of birth, family ethnic background, interviewee's educational and occupational background, organizational memberships, etc.

If the above pre-interview research tasks seem to offer little more than "taking the fun out of doing oral history," remember that lack of planning and inadequate preparation are the most frequently cited reasons for disappointment or failure in individual interviews and

taping projects. Good research technique is essential. And remember that starting with the State Historical Society's staff, there is a cadre of knowledgeable, skilled, and helpful historians who are eager to assist state citizens in conceptualizing and conducting community research projects.

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OLDS 88

Fiction By Chris Halla

It was just transportation all week long. Then, on Friday night, the black and white 1956 Olds 88 hard-top became a rake and rumblin' Main Street machine, built for draggin' the townies, pickin' up girls and avoiding John Law. Everybody has a V8, but the 88's V8 was something else again. That thing would do stop-light to 60 quicker than you could say, "Get on it!" To the long haired girls that hung around the Rec dances, it was a ticket to the car pits or Hickory Lane with the Paris River boys; something to tell the other Sawdust City girls in school on Monday morning.

Ted, Denny, Willis, Dave and I were the Paris River boys. In the 88, Ted's '57 Chevy and sometimes Denny's grandpa's '49 Plymouth sedan, we would roll into Sawdust City on weekends during the school year and nightly all summer long. We had a few friends among the City boys, but mostly, we were known as "the assholes from that little burg to the west, who were always messing around with their girls and making their cars look bad with that damn 88." With the City girls, we enjoyed a popularity that never was explained completely, though it was entirely welcome.

The Race

Ted and I were in the 88. We had barely rumbled into town when Butch Schulz and another townie rolled up next to us in Butch's new, '59 Chrysler 300 convertible.

"Hey hayseed. There's cowshit on your tires. Wanna run it off?"

"Sure Butch," Ted yelled back from the 88's passenger seat. "Did your daddy take the guvnor off that pimpmobile yet?"

The traffic light switched from red to green and we rolled off down High Street, side by side, both in low gear, cruising at 15 mph. At the next light, conversation resumed.

"Wha'd'ya say boys? Think that big old pig can compete?" Butch knew I would race him, but he was one of those wimps who feel they have to goad you into a fight when you already feel like punchin' 'em.

"Okay Butch," I said. "Two out o' three?"

Butch nodded his head yes and kicked his foot hard to the floor as the green traffic light reflected off the hoods of both cars. The Chrysler's engine whined; its big tires dug in. He had the jump on me and the race. I hung in, though, until we got to the next light.

Up ahead, in a line of parked cars, I spotted something I hoped Butch hadn't. I shifted to neutral, then gunned my engine hard, sending up a roar that echoed down the block ahead. Because noise is important to teenage boys, Butch tried to make his Mopar the decible champ. When the light turned green, I floored it, then backed off quickly. Butch kept it full tilt just long enough to realize what had happened, as the flashing red lights pulled up behind him.

We moved slowly past Butch's parked car. I smiled and waved. Red beams bounced across the silent Chrysler. Ted, in the seat beside me, doubled up laughing.

"Wanna go check out Leon's," I asked?

The Girls

The 88 bounced on its heavy duty shocks as I down shifted and pulled into Leon's. Shari Weber and Gail Grabowski were car hopping. Next to us was the big '49 Plymouth sedan Denny Perelli's grandpa let Denny use one night each month. Inside, Denny and Dave were putting away chili dogs and a bottle of Paris River rotgut (Saturday night punch made up of Vodka and orange soda) in a brown paper bag. The 88's Cherry Bomb mufflers backed off to announce our arrival.

"What you guys doin'," Ted asked into the Plymouth? "Where's Willis?" The second question was asked before the first one was considered.

Denny made a face and pointed down the rounded row of cars. There sat a beautiful, bright red, XK 140 Jag. Inside was Willis, putting the moves on the Jag's blond driver. It looked like he was doing okay, so Willis was out for the night.

"Hey Ted, look over there," I said, pointing to the Ford wagon parked a car over from us. "It's the Patterson twins."

"Well what are we waitin' for?" The words jumped from Ted's mouth as he leaped out of the car. He was leaning in the passenger window of the wagon before I had a chance to get out of the car. It didn't take me long, though, to station myself on the driver's side of the Pattersonmobile.

Ted and I thought a lot alike in those days. He had already asked June and Julie Patterson if they wanted to go cruisin' for a while. "What about our car," Julie was asking while staring up at me with the most beautiful big green bedroom eyes you ever saw.

"Don't worry about it," I joined the conversation, "you can leave it here and we'll drop you off." The Patterson girls never did play hard to get. So we went cruisin', straight out to Hickory Lane. At 10 o'clock,

the narrow old county trunk was already lined with cars. A sentence or two of small talk and we got down to the business at-and-of hand.

Ted and I had traded back and forth with the Patterson girls on more than one occasion. Tonight Ted was in the back seat of the 88 with June, who we agreed was a lot more to talk about on Saturday morning, but Julie was the better looking of the two. Between the four of us, the sounds in the car created a strange chorus. "No, don't. I don't want you to. Aw, come on, you've done it before with them in the car." The sound of the tops of four beer cans being punctured. "Here. Thanks. Hey, turn around!" Clothes rustling and June's beautiful heavy breathing. "But Julie, I really do like you better than anybody else." The sound of memories being made. "What are you guys doing? Will you turn around?"

"June, it's 11:30. We better get home or Dad'll kill us." That was the cue to let the steam out of the 88 and fire up the power plant. We dropped the Patterson twins off at their car, just in time to catch Shari and Marlene getting ready to walk home.

"You guys want a ride?" The question fell simultaneously out of both our mouths.

"Sure. Got any beer?"

"Natch," Ted said, then jumped over the seat and held it forward for Marlene to crawl in beside him. Back to Hickory Lane. More of the same. When we dropped Marlene and Shari off, it was almost three in the morning.

"See you guys tomorrow, okay?"

"Natch."

The girls were gone. The beer was gone. The night was gone. WPOP played rock and roll on the radio. The 88 was alone on the highway. All the windows were down, letting in the damp, early morning air at 75 mph.

"You tired," I asked Tom?

"No. You?"

"Un, unh."

"Bonnie Farmer's sleeping in the tent with her cousin. Wanna go see if they're sleeping alone?"

The wheels locked. The car slammed to a stop. Then the rumble of the Cherry Bombs and the screech of rubber exploded in the still air. The 88 burned a black half circle into the pavement. Disappearing taillights blended into the early morning shadows.

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COMING UP IN SPARKS 12 AND 13

Mainstreaming Automotive History: A professional historian and educator takes the broad view. Tunnel vision is faulty vision.

Some Comments on Oral History: A few things we may have overlooked.

Preparing an Article for Publication: An experienced writer and editor takes a look at the basics. If you don't get started right, you're finished.

Copyright Primer: It's all been said before, but maybe we should do a little reviewing.

Classifieds: Got something you want to sell or trade, or maybe there's something you need? Have you got a service to offer? Try a Spark classified. They're free to WSAH members.

Where We've Been/Where We're Going: A WSAH founder looks at how this got started, what's happened since and where

the future might lead.

AND THERE'S MORE: But you won't see it unless you re-
new your membership now. Spark 12 will be in the mail
around mid-November.

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