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EDITORIAL NOTES

Up until a couple of issues ago, there were two things you could always count on reading right up front in every issue of the SPARK. In changing order, they were: The latest excuse for the newsletter's lateness; and the latest plea for contributions from members. Well, you probably got sick of the excuses, so there won't be any more. As far as pleas for contributions, they're a waste of time...and space. If you have something you'd like to write for the SPARK, send it in. But if you'd rather just read, that's okay too. (After all, the world can use all the readers it can get.)

On the other hand, if you would like to offer something and don't feel like writing, how about some art? See, the least expensive way to illustrate our newsletter is with photos or artwork that have already been printed once, because the continuous tone or line art has been screened (turned into a series of little dots) at someone else's expense. The only catch is that the artwork has to be the right size to fit our 5½" x 8½" pages. Of course, it must also be either copyright free or accompanied by the original publisher's written permission. Old ads are excellent. So is found art. There's plenty of stuff out there that copyright's lapsed on.

Why don't you take a look around. Maybe you have a hidden treasure trove of useable materials. If you're not sure whether what you have is suitable or not, send it, and I'll let you know. You will be credited for anything used.

And speaking of art. A number of members comment-

ed on the last SPARK'S illustrations, and queried where they came from. My apologies. The cover was the work of yours truly (as is this issue's). The street scene on page three is something I came upon a few years back. The winter scenes on pages five, six and nine are courtesy of the good and generous folks at the Edison Institute (Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village). Art on pages 11 and 17 were purchased from one of many clip art houses. The well-dressed biker on the back cover was found in an old Harley-Davidson marketing piece.

Chris Halla

THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

It has been almost seven years since the birth of WSAH and six years since the first issue of the SPARK made its appearance. Over the years we have engaged in some interesting and exciting activities. We are still an interested and dedicated group and there are indications that we are the most active local chapter of SAH. The positive, I believe has outweighed the negative and our chapter has and will continue to offer a significant contribution to the preservation of automotive history, with emphasis on Wisconsin's contribution.

One of the highlights of our seven years existence is affiliation with the State Historical Society which recently awarded us Perpetual Membership Status. Still to be accomplished is the establishment of a separate archive at Society's head-

quarters in Madison; a much needed repository for historical information now in the hands of our members and other historians and collectors. All I can say is let's keep trying.

Another ambitious activity which has been allowed to languish is the eventual publication of a compendium detailing Wisconsin's contribution to the development of the automobile, the history of some 275 cars built in Wisconsin and the contribution made by parts suppliers--basic components used by manufacture of automobiles in other states --and, finally, other related automotive history such as automobile racing, after-market accessories, road building, accident prevention activities, etc. etc.

For the moment, the above appears to be too formidable a task so I am suggesting an alternative; the development of a bibliography listing the sources of information, a "who, what and where" type of compilation to which we would ask all members to contribute. I would be willing to serve as coordinator of such an enterprise and would like to hear from all of you as to its feasibility. Who knows, such a bibliography might someday lead to that most desirable goal, a complete history in book form.

As noted elsewhere, our Spring meeting will be held April 26, 27 and 28 in Pecatonica, Illinois in connection with the eleventh annual APRIL IN ROCKFORD event. Look for our headquarters space. See you there.

Bill Cameron

COMMENTS ON THE HISTORY OF THE SAMSON AND
THE JANESVILLE GM ASSEMBLY PLANT

by Phil Gottschalk

as reported by Ray Scroggins*

The plant was started back in 1916, when Will Durant was president of GM. Ford was doing so well in the farm implement business that Durant decided to get into the implement business too.

Durant was the only man in the history of GM to have been fired twice as president. The first time he was fired because the Board didn't care for his eccentric nature and flamboyant, high-spending style. He then went around to several friends to raise support, and together they secretly bought out 51% of General Motors stock. The next time the Board met, he walked in and when asked what he was doing there, since he had been fired, told them "I own the company."

The second time, he was fired because of the Janesville plant. He died a near pauper, owning a bowling alley in Detroit, but he enjoyed life. His rich friends always took care of him, right up to the end.

The reason GM came to Janesville was that, in order to get into the tractor business and compete with Henry Ford, Durant bought out Samson Tractor Company in California. At the same time, he also bought the Janesville Machine Tool Equipment Company in Janesville, Wisconsin. He decided it was foolish to build tractors in California for the Midwest and soon moved Samson to Janesville.

Part of the original building is still standing. In fact, there is a wall in the truck line with a tile that has the Samson dog mascot and is dated 1918; the year production started here on Samson tractors and trucks.

It didn't work out too well, however, because the Iron Horse was a terrible failure. Samson engineers designed it like a horse. It had four wheels, a four-cylinder engine and an optical length boom that could be anywhere from six to 12 feet long, which had an extremely small buggy on the end. There were long leather reins attached to the transmission, and you steered it just like a horse as you sat back in the buggy. Also, by jerking the reins, you would put the transmission in gear and hopefully get it out of gear...which was one of the problems.

The sales and marketing staff operated out of the Janesville plant, and they would go around to county fairs to demonstrate the Samson. They could really make that tractor stand up and do tricks. I have photographs of a Samson tractor with reins a city block long and the salesman way off in the distance putting the tractor through its paces. Another photo shows a man on a bicycle, being towed by a Samson with its reins around his neck. Another shows one pulling a wagon with a gigantic stack of hay and the driver seated way above the tractor on top of the hay.

Wisconsin farmers weren't as successful with the Samson. You can imagine a farmer coming back after a hard day's work in the fields yelling "Whoa, Nellie" and pulling on the reins as the tractor didn't "whoa" and went right through the barn! This actually happened a few times.

While that was one of the reasons the Samson failed, the main one was that Henry Ford, not to be outdone by Mr. Durant, decided to practically give his tractors away. The competition put Samson under in almost no time at all. The end came in 1921, as close as I can determine. I'm told General Motors lost \$39 million right here in Janesville, which was even more money in 1921 than it is now. As a result, Mr. Durant was fired for the second time.

I don't have any records showing how many Samson tractors were built, as most of my information has been obtained first hand from old timers that worked at Samson Tractor, many of whom are still alive. As I understand it, the trucks were built on the same line as the tractors, and some of the people who worked here remember building trucks as well as tractors.

Some of the thinking behind the decision to build Samsons in Janesville was based on the idea that the Wisconsin farmers would make excellent workers. While this part of the idea was sound, the farmers were so busy farming that GM couldn't get anyone to work in the plant. Ads were placed in the Chicago, Minneapolis and Milwaukee newspapers to get people to come to Janesville and work in the plant. I understand that a whole town of quonset hut-type housing was built right across from the plant, where a parking lot now is located. The company also built other houses, which were sold to the employees that came here.

Finally, Chevrolet decided the plant would be an ideal place to put a passenger car and truck assembly plant, so they refurbished and converted it to some extent. On February 26, 1923, the

first Chevrolet passenger cars and trucks rolled off the assembly line. For a while, the bodies were shipped from Flint, until they could get the Fisher Body Division plant built.

One of our old retirees recently brought in a production run slip from 1923. The amazing thing is that, contrary to what you would think, it wasn't a slow operation back then. The line speed was the same in 1923 as it is now. Just as amazing, the cars weren't really any simpler to build then. They had a lot of wood. There were job classifications like "tack spitters" and carpenters to hang the doors. Starting pay was 25¢ an hour.

Production continued until the Depression, which shut the plant down almost instantly. The area got a shot in the arm during the mid-Thirties, when General Motors had a gigantic pavillion at the Chicago World's Fair. In it, they had a Chevrolet assembly line. During the two years the fair was open, the laid-off Janesville workers were recruited to work on the assembly line at the World's Fair. A customer could order a car in the morning, watch it being built as it moved along the line, and pick it up at the end of the day. These cars are identified by a brass plaque and are rare today.

Production began again in Janesville in about 1937 and lasted until 1941, when WWII intervened. With a change of paint color, the plant could have built staff cars and trucks for the government. Apparently this was too easy, so the Chevrolet plant became a parts depot and the Fisher Body plant was taken over by Oldsmobile to pro-

duce cannon shells. The plant was in operation 24 hours per day, seven days a week. Some 16 million 105 mm howitzer shells were built here during the war years.

Following WWII, trucks were the first to go into production, followed shortly by passenger cars, both in 1946. The next significant happening was in 1953, when a second-shift passenger car line was added. In 1963, a second-shift truck line went into production. According to some of the old timers, we had two shifts going for a while after the war to catch up with the demand, so these were not the first ever for second shift production. In 1968, the separate entities of Chevrolet and Fisher Body were merged into General Motors Assembly Division, along with many other plants around the country.

The last big change was the shutdown from October 1, 1981 until June, 1982, when the changeover was made to greater automation. When the plant reopened, only one shift was called back, and many employees were on layoff for 18 months. This has all changed, and since the start of the 1984 model year, the plant has been on two-shift, nine-hour shifts plus Saturdays.

*The above information is based on a presentation made prior to a tour of the GMAD plant by WSAH members on April 27, 1984.

THE NASH-HEALEY STORY

by Chris Halla

"The top talent of three nations has designed America's superlative sports car. In all the world you'll find no other sports car like the Nash-Healey. For here is the best of three nations in one brilliant masterpiece."

An ad for the 1953 Nash-Healey appearing in the January 28, 1953 New Yorker

The British sports car invasion had begun in earnest, promoted by a cadre of enthusiasts decked out in lace-up, leather driving gloves and porkpie hats. The custom cars of Pininfarina were attracting the curious eyes of European purists. And Nash was building big--for the most part--practical, inexpensive cars for a predominately blue collar America.

Here were bedfellows that, if anyone could have imagined them ever crawling between the sheets together, would have been considered strange indeed. Yet this curious menage et trois did occur. And a child was produced; not just another mongrel tramp, either. Although the child's life was short, it was possessed of universally admired qualities: strength, speed and beauty. The child's name, of course, was Nash-Healey.

The story begins like an episode of "The Love Boat." Well-known British driver and auto builder, Donald Healey, books passage (as the 1949 calendar becomes obsolete) aboard a ship bound

from London to New York. He is a man in need of a benefactor. Fate and coincidence aside, that benefactor happened to be aboard the same ship. The name of the man with the money was George Mason, president of Nash-Kelvinator Corporation (builders of refrigerators and "bathtubs"). The shipboard romance must have gone well, because by the time Healey and Mason reached New York, Mason had agreed to put up the green for a Nash-Healey prototype with the understanding that it would be ready to run in the 24-hour "Grand Prix d'Endurance" at LeMans, France.

Mason may have been an innocent, but Healey was a man well aware of what he was doing. Healey had what is called in a less distinguished person "street sense" and an ability to make good on his promises. Behind the doors of Healey's Warwick, England, auto shop, a 234 CID Nash six was married to a Healey Silverstone (an outstanding sports car in its own right) chassis. The Nash engine came equipped with an aluminum head and hot cam, and was coupled to a stone stock three-speed, with Borg Warner overdrive transmission. Healey added a pair of SU carburetors mounted on a log manifold and wrapped the complete package in a plain aluminum skin. The result was a sports racer with 8.1:1 compression, developing 125 horses at 4000 rpm, faster than Healey's Silverstone and totally unlike anything else the American bathtub builder had ever had anything to do with.

The car was first run competitively in the 1950 Mille Miglia, with Healey and his son Geoffrey as pilot and co-pilot. They finished ninth in their class and 177th overall. Then it was on to the 24 Hours of LeMans. What took place there has

been described by many observers as a lot of different things, but it was clearly one damn exciting tour of the town. One might add that it was more than a little surprising as well. Sharing driving duties were Duncan Hamilton and Tony Rolt. When the proverbial dust had cleared, Hamilton, Rolt and their hybrid had scored big. Fourth overall behind two Talbot (nearly) full dress race machines and an Allard JQ-X. A feat nothing short of astounding, even for a car that wasn't still in its formative stages.

While the lion's share of the American public was simply too far away to care, George Mason was, to say the least, impressed. Impressed enough to dig deep into Nash's corporate pocket book and come up with green dollars to produce a second LeMans car for the 1951 and, more importantly, to begin full production of a street version for statesiders only. Whatever made Mason think this was a logical next move is anyone's guess, because it clearly wasn't logical. We may, however, assume that both of the principals were pleased. Especially Healey, whom it is logical to consider to Nash what Carroll Shelby was to Ford a few years later. Only the Fifties were not the Sixties, and Nash-Kelvinator was certainly not Ford Motor Company.

Never the less, the first of the Nash-Healey "factory" cars debuted at the Paris Auto Show as the shutters were closing on the year 1950. America's first official look at the unlikely sportster came in February 1951, at the Chicago Auto Show.

The aluminum body shell of the 1951 Nash-Healey was of typically British design--not a great deal

unlike MGA's of 1956-62. It was pretty and, for its time, slippery from an aerodynamic point of view. Its grille, hood scoop, headlights and bumpers identified it as a member of the Nash family, as did its source of power.

An OHV Ambassador six, with a displacement of 234.8 CID and developing 125 hp at 4,000 rpm, was used in the first Nash-Healey. Bore and stroke was respectively 3.375 and 4.375. Compression ratio was 8.1:1. As you've no doubt already noticed, it was a virtual repeat of the first racer.

While the Nash-Healey's interior was decidedly stark, it did incorporate the luxuries of leather upholstery and an adjustable steering wheel. Perhaps more would have been better. Who knows? It's easy to picture, though, an American family car builder and a British sports car builder arguing over such matters long into the night.

Again, in 1951, Nash-Healey went racing, this time with a cobbled up coupe. Again they did well--sixth at LeMans--with Hamilton and Rolt repeating as pilots. At the Mille Miglia, the elder and younger Healeys drove a production bodied car to a 30th overall and a fourth in class. The American car buying public took a large collective yawn.

At an average of less than nine cars per month, a total of 104 aluminum bodied Nash-Healeys were shipped from Warwick to Kenosha. There's no question that those 104 cars attracted people into Nash showrooms, but when the crowd cleared, the \$4,063 Nash-Healey remained. The situation was not a rosy one. Some changes had to be made.

When 1952 rolled around, George Mason had chosen Pininfarina--already on the Nash payroll--as his chief-in-charge of that change. Thus was created what must be the longest production line in automotive history, running all the way from Kenosha to Warwick to Torino and back to Kenosha. What resulted from the Italian connection was a particularly good looking, all-steel roadster body, encasing an already generally terrific car.

The new look for '52 was a distinct departure from its predecessor. A new fender treatment was arrived at by adding a small reversed fin at the rear and removing the headlights at the other end. The flat, two-piece windshield was replaced by a curved one-piece model. Headlights were set into the big Nash grille, creating what may be the only tastefully questionable element in the whole design.

During the latter part of 1952, Nash revamped the engine. The Ambassador six was bored out to 252.6 CID. Compression dropped a tenth of a point to 8.0:1 and horsepower jumped to 140 at 4,000 rpm. The SU carburetors were replaced with Carters.

Healey and Healey entered two Nash-Healeys in the 1952 Mille Miglia. One was driven by father and son, one by hired help. One crashed (Donald Healey at the wheel, no injuries), the other roared to fourth in class, seventh overall. Two Nash-Healeys were also entered at LeMans. One roadster, one coupe. One broke, one, with Les Johnson and Tom Wisdom driving, finished first in class and second overall behind two Mercedes. To realize the full import of this, one must remember that also competing were Aston-Martins,

Ferraris, Jaguars, Talbots and a whole field of other factory and backyard entires, including a couple of much talked about Cunninghams. The Johnson/Wisdom car topped out at around 145 mph and was the fastest cornering machine in the whole field. For its outstanding performance during those 24 1952 hours, Nash-Healey also took second place in the Index of Performance, ironically picked up the Motor Magazine award as the first "British" car to cross the finish line, and won the Rudge-Whitworth Cup for consecutive performance. Once more, American car buyers yawned and slumped in their lawn chairs.

March, 1953, Chicago Auto Show: Nash-Healey and Pininfarina introduce the brand new steel-roofed, 1953 Nash-Healey LeMans coupe.

The new coupe was a hit with enthusiasts and the automotive press. It even picked up a first place trophy in the foreign car custom body class in the 1953 Italian International Concours d'Elegance, at Turin. But, no matter how many races it won or placed in, no matter how many awards it won, only a handful of Yanks bought Nash-Healeys. A small handful at that.

In 1953, Nash-Healey exited its last Mille Miglia with a whimper. In spite of a new, special body, a souped-up engine and the indisputable talents of driver John Fitch, the car could not complete the course. At LeMans, Donald Healey competed with himself as the Austin-Healey 100 debuted. (Healey had broken his contract with Nash to go to work for BMC, producing sports cars for a country that was ready for them.) Two Nash-Healeys were entered. One of them left the race early, disappointing its French drivers and crew. The other was pushed to a respectable 11th place

overall by the team of Les Johnson and Bert Hadley. Their 92.5 mph average speed was the fastest ever for a Nash-Healey, but somehow the competition had caught up.

When 1954 entered, Nash management went to its linen closet for a towel. In August of that same year they threw it in. After dropping the roadster from the two-model line and replacing the one-piece rear window with a three-piece wrap-around (making the LeMans coupe a LeMans hardtop) production ceased. A few leftovers were sold and titled as '55s. The adventure was over.

Anyone who was surprised by the demise of the Nash-Healey wasn't paying attention. The company doesn't exist now, and it didn't exist then, that can continue to build production cars, no matter how good they are, if nobody buys them. Blame it on a lack of heavy duty promotional efforts. Blame it on the development of fire-breathing V-8s. If you're especially naive, go ahead and blame it on Chevrolet and Ford for developing the Corvette and Thunderbird. Pick an excuse. It didn't matter then that buyers could get a \$9,000 car for \$5,000. They weren't interested!

And so, the Nash-Healey, a car it took "the top talent of three nations" to produce, passed from the American scene. We all lost.



WILL THE FARMER AGAIN DOMINATE THE TRANSPORTATION INDUSTRY?

by Bill Cameron

As most everyone knows, it was the farmer who supplied the fuel that powered the world's main sources of locomotion--the horse, the mule, the ox, the camel. These beasts of burden ran on oats, hay and grass, all planted, nurtured, harvested and distributed by the farmer. Even the byproducts of combustion were returned--in most cases--to the farmer and from him to the soil which, in its turn, contributed to the production of more fuel. The question that now confronts the nation is "will the farmer again become the czar, the absolute ruler of our energy sources and, in so doing, replace the heirs of John D. Rockefeller, the oil sheiks, the Opecers, the petroleum barons who bear little or no resemblance to farm types.

It is not too early to consider this question! It is only a matter of a few decades before the world supply of crude oil and other fossil fuels will be gone forever, run dry, totally depleted. Soon our automobiles, busses, trains and aircraft will be looking thirstily to the farmer for the kind of vegetation that can be converted into ethanol or methanol or some other, as yet to be invented, combustible fluid.

Will we see the farmer again dominating the nation's economy, dictating its policies, controlling its legislators, electing its rulers? Will the future farmers be raising sugar cane for its ethanol content rather than its sweetening properties, raising peanuts for their lubricating oil content rather than something to spread on Johnny's slice

of bread, tobacco for its chemical potential rather than its satisfying smoke? Will the national patriotic songs of the future be expanded to include "swaying fields of corn," "acres of soybeans," "forests of tall trees swaying in the breeze" in addition to the now popular "amber waves of grain?" "Ethanol, Oh ethanol, how we love thee."

There was no EPA back in the good old days of horse-drawn vehicles when the byproducts of combustion were deposited on our streets in more visual ways than the present generators of smog. There was something very pleasing to one's sense of sight (if not his olfactory apparatus) in the presence of a steaming deposit of combustion's aftermath on a cold morning. Or the sight of a White Wing disposing of the product using his stiff bristle push broom, his wide blade shovel and his wheeled circular metal repository.

In those days you could walk down the street and be reminded by the pungent odors emitting from stables and barns that the motive power for drays, express wagons, busses, hansom cabs, gigs, surreys, street cars and ice wagons that it was the farmer who dominated the nation's transportation empire.

Of course, all that was changed with the arrival of petroleum, without which the internal combustion engine could never have made it. The horse was gradually turned out to pasture and replaced by the huffing and puffing automobile moving jerkily and noisily powered by multiple explosions of something called gasoline.

The farmer, robbed of his lucrative market for hay and oats, bought a fliver and went back to producing combustibles for human consumption, the

only hint of the future being the production of grains, tubers and other vegetation that would wind up as beer, wine, whisky, gin and vodka, all containing that potential explosive substance known as alcohol.

Now comes the big question: As we gradually run out of fossil fuels and begin adding more and more alcohol to our power producing liquids, who will dominate? Who will do the converting, operate the stills, run the delivery system, do the retailing? Farmer cooperatives or the oil barons? Will the dispensing be tied in with farmer's markets, roadside stands, supermarkets or Mom and Pop grocery stores, a trend that has already begun with the advent of the self-service gasoline pump as part of a mini-mart. Will the established petroleum magnates, faced with the drying up of their present source of raw material, begin buying up great tracts of farmland, industrialize the production of farm products, convert their present crude oil distilleries over to the production of Ethanol, Methanol or similar farm byproducts? Could these wily individuals possibly be expected to sit by and wait until the final drop of crude or the last shovel of coal is extracted from the depths before waking up to their plight? Can we look for a transition period where more and more alcohol is added to gasoline in a smug switchover move, today gasohol, tomorrow Alkigas, next year Alkigo or Methellexon.

Will the government find a place in this transition, and whose side will it take? The voice of farmers now predominate in the non-industrial states heard with authority in Washington. But remember the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines and the U.S. Coast Guard all run on gasoline and could rightfully be expected to side with industry rather than

the farmer (whose only contribution to their operations are boys and girls from Iowa and other farm states). OSHA, of course, will point out the dangers of handling ethanol and related products as alcohol derivatives burn without any visible evidence, greatly increasing the possibility of severe burns, injury and death. (Witness what happened to a member of an Indianapolis pit crew several years ago.)

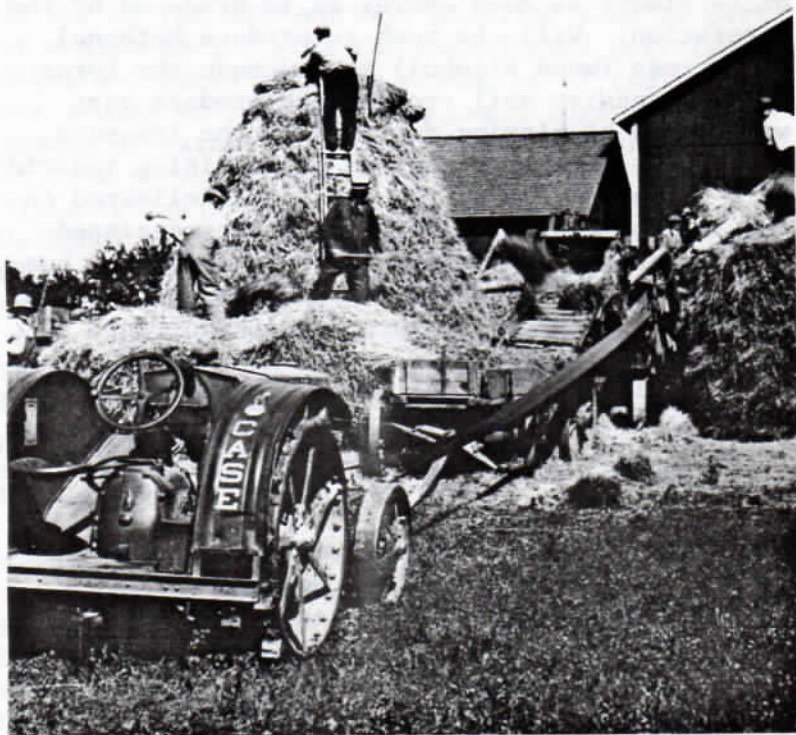
The Commerce Department, not to be outdone, will point out that forced production of plant life quickly depletes the soil and that the chemicals and fertilizers needed for rejuvenation will require almost as much energy as is produced by the vegetation. Will the rush to produce Methanol from trees (wood alcohol) soon denude the forests, cause extensive soil erosion and produce vast wastelands of blowing dust? Will the Treasury Department get in the act as enterprising individuals begin converting the substance delivered to the fuel pump into exciting beverages designed for personal consumption? A new underground business will supply artificial flavors and chemical additives purported to turn raw ethanol into ersatz, whisky, gin, rum, vodka and brandy. This in turn will deprive the Treasury Department of substantial taxes now derived from the sale of intoxicating liquors and you can be sure they won't stand for that!

The National Safety Council will have long since dropped its slogan "Gasoline and Alcohol don't mix" and drunk driving will become a great deal more prevalent when it is only necessary to insert a long straw into the "gas" tank.

Of course there is a third alternative; a coopera-

tive endeavor between the farm block and the industrial-military complex. Each to its own specialty, farmers raising vast crops of alcohol producing vegetation and trucking it, not to conventional markets but to refineries and distilleries operated by the heirs of the former petroleum producers--one big happy family. Nice to think about but quite unlikely.

So, our basic question still remains: "Who will dominate the transportation system in the 21st century, the farmer or the heirs of John D. Rockefeller?" Your guess is as good as mine.



THE CHICAGO AUTO SHOW

by Tony Hossain

Every February, America's biggest and best new car show is held in Chicago. This show dates to the turn of the century and it has historically ushered in the spring selling season for Detroit's winter weary car makers. Every year there are dozens of mid-season entries making their national debut at Chicago.

As always, the 1985 Chicago show was an excellent place to pick up sales catalogs and to examine the new offerings from every major domestic and foreign manufacturer. For the first time in several years there was no display of old vehicles, but there were enough new products to keep this enthusiast busy for two days straight. Let's go on a guided tour of the noteworthy and potentially collectible cars that were in Chicago, make by make.

CHEVROLET: The long rumored joint venture vehicle (General Motors and Toyota) is finally reality and it made its national debut at the Chicago show. Called Nova, this small four-door is built in Fremont, California and will be available in June. It is a history-making venture, but there were other Chevys on display that were of far more interest to the collector. They included the Corvette, the IROC-Z28 Camaro, the Monte Carlo SS, the Cavalier Z24 and convertible, and specially-styled non-production versions of the Camaro and Celebrity Eurosport. Chevy also had a splashy display for its new Astro, GM's weapon in the red-hot van wars.

PONTIAC: Attention here was focused on the new V6 powered Fiero GT, a more aggressive looking Trans Am, the new Grand Am, and the fine STE sedan. There was a snazzy Sunbird convertible for top-down buffs and an elegant Parisienne sedan for traditionalists.

OLDSMOBILE: Not too much of interest here except for the 4-4-2 (this was the Hurst Olds last year) and possibly the V6 Firenza GT.

BUICK: The Buick Grand National is a mean-looking low production vehicle that commanded attention. Otherwise, there wasn't too much here for the car buff. This was the last opportunity to check out a big LeSabre or Olds Delta 88 at a Chicago show, as these models will be downsized for '86. Other biggies making a final appearance included the Toronado/Riviera/Eldorado/Seville family. The Riviera convertible was conspicuous by its absence but a coupe with CRT instrumentation attracted video buffs.

CADILLAC: Lots of conspicuous luxury here, in small (Cimarron), medium (DeVille), and large (Fleetwood Brougham) packages.

FORD: The biggest news this year was the public unveiling of the 1986 Ford Taurus and Mercury Sable family-sized cars, which will go on sale this fall. These radically-styled machines are aerodynamic in the Audi 5000 sense and are slated to replace the boxy LTD and Marquis. Ford had 1985 and 1985½ Escorts on display as well as the '85½ version of the slow-selling Mustang SVO. Other interesting Fords included the Mustang convertible, the Thunderbird Turbo Coupe, and the unusual Merkur. Speaking of unusual, the Aerostar mini-van was also

on display.

CHRYSLER CORPORATION: There was a lot to like here for the Mopar buff. Potentially collectible vehicles included a t-top version (finally!) of the Chrysler Laser, the good-looking Town and Country convertible, and those popular mini-vans.

AMC/RENAULT: America's lowest priced convertible is the Wisconsin-built Alliance, and a handsome example generated considerable interest at this exhibit.

There were several interesting foreign machines on display, including Maserati, Rolls-Royce, Mercedes, BMW, Porsche, and Jaguar. Unfortunately, these prestige makers keep their machines locked and behind ropes. They're either ashamed of their quality level or their prices. I'd bet it's both. Most of these importers didn't even hand out literature, although Mercedes did have a nice full-line brochure available.

There were a number of hot Japanese offerings, including the Mazda RX7-GSL-SE, the heated-up version of a sports car that's been around since 1978 but doesn't look it, the new Toyota Celica convertible, the sleek Isuzu Impulse, and the '85 version of the popular Honda CRX.

We went home tired but glad to have been part of the '85 show of shows. We have a sack full of literature to remember Auto Show 1985 by, along with a head full of memories. See you next year at the Chicago Auto Show.

WSAH SPRING MEETING OF MEMBERS

The Wisconsin Chapter of the Society of Automotive Historians will hold its Spring meeting of members, prospective members, and guests on Saturday, April 27 in connection with the 11th annual APRIL IN ROCKFORD Classic Car Auction and Swap Meet. This three day event, April 26-28, will take place at the Winnebago Exposition Complex in the Rockford suburb of Pecatonica, Illinois, north of the super highway, Route 20, between Rockford and Freeport.

The Wisconsin Chapter has arranged for headquarters space in the outdoor swap area for the entire three days and all members, prospective members and guests are urged to stop by and meet friends old and new.

DIRECTOR-AT-LARGE GOES LARGE

Tony Hossain, late of Old Cars, Car Exchange and Collectible Automobile, has taken a copywriter position with Campbell-Ewald in Warren, Michigan. WSAH members who know Tony are aware of his love affair with Chevrolet automobiles and can easily imagine what an outstanding career move this is for our D-A-L and Editorial Board Member. When last heard from, he was hard at work on the new Corvette catalog.

Anyone wishing to reach Tony may write him at either of the following addresses. Home: 2925

Olden Oak Lane, Apt. 202, Auburn Hills, MI 48057-1349. Work: Campbell-Ewald Company, 30400 Van Dyke Avenue, Warren, MI 48093. We are pleased to report that Tony plans to remain active in WSAH and continue in his current offices.



WSAH SPRING GATHERING
APRIL 26-28, 1985
ROCKFORD, ILLINOIS

Members, prospective members, former members, friends, guests and the generally curious: Please set aside at least a portion of the April 26-28 weekend to attend the annual WSAH Spring Meeting. This year's meeting will be held in conjunction with the APRIL IN ROCKFORD Collector Car Auction & Show & The Autoparts-O-Rama Swap-meet. The event is located at the Winnebago Exposition Complex in the Rockford suburb of Pecatonica, Illinois (on Route 20) between Rockford and Freeport.

WSAH headquarters will be located in the outdoor swap area. (Check at the gate for space number.) The space will be manned by members and include the display of Gene Wendt's and Ron Kneelbone's restored 1929 Nash Cabriolet.

BE THERE

