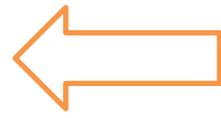


August

Mid-Month



September

Your MPOTAC Board will meet virtually this month via Zoom on Monday August 24th at 7:30 PM. Contact any Board member with your questions or suggestions.

The next MPOTAC **General Meeting** will convene via Zoom on Friday, August 28th at 7:30 PM . Public health mandates continue to prevent organizations from holding physical meetings, so your Club will hold General Meetings via Zoom until the danger of infection has lessened. Treasurer, Rob Guzzetta will again host this meeting, emailing a link to all members on Friday, August 28th, allowing us to “sign in” that same evening. NOTE: For those not familiar with the ZOOM service, Rob will offer assistance at his email address: splithead6fan@gmail.com



President Bill Bratt will entertain member questions and ideas. We ask that members observe normal courtesy; allow other members to complete their remarks without interruption. This protocol allows all members in the meeting to hear your voice. We look forward to “seeing” your face and “hearing” from you that Friday night.

Cancellations Continue

Friday August 14th – MPOTAC’s **Tour To The Coast** was cancelled due to low number of signups.

Saturday August 29th – **CRUZ 19 Car Cruz** was cancelled for public health concerns on 8/17 by sponsor, Hot San Jose Nights.

** For Your late summer reading **

A Bird In Hand

"A RECENT EXPERIENCE ACQUIRING AN OLD BIRD"

By Dr. Pete Stucker

begins on page 2

I've loved cars like some men love women, too many at one time with disastrous results. They lure you with their polished good looks only to disappoint after the initial test drive. But wasn't there a special one that you knew when you were young—that never grew old, like you? One that was still waiting for you years later, none the worse for wear—patiently biding her time, in an old barn! Well, here's my tale. It all began as most stories do on a sunny summer afternoon (or was it a dark and stormy night) while sitting by the fireplace sipping a coke or was it brandy (who cares).

Lusting for some fine literature I passed over the great masters and picked up Hemmings Motor News. The year was 1975. I was browsing in the mixed-make old cars. Mixed makes were not cars made in combination by several manufacturers, as is all too often the case now, but were instead a group of several cars each made by different manufacturers—sold in a common ad. I spotted the ad and it intrigued me. Not the dual-cowl phaetons by Chrysler, or the XK 150 Jag drop-head coupe, but the '64 Ford roadster. Did Ford make a roadster in 1964? I thought I knew a Valiant from a



1965 FACTORY PHOTO

Comet so how did I miss this product? Anyway, as I recall at \$7,500 the Ford roadster was closer to my budget than the dual-cowl phaetons. The address near Santa Barbara was another plus. No matter how intriguing the car, Cleaned & Polished, Bakersfield would never lure me, but I'd check out an old Checker cab to justify a trip to Santa Barbara. Dreams and

intrastate phone calls are cheap in California, so I made the call and talked to a "Mr. White". He was pleasant, enthusiastic, and delightfully charming. He encouraged me to check out the car and a visit was arranged.

The Visit

As the father of a young family I couldn't just take off to Santa Barbara on a whim. I had to maneuver events to include this relatively innocent stop on a trip to Disneyland, Knots Berry Farm and Universal Studios. Such a deception was devised, and I arranged just such a stop in Santa Barbara. Finding the aged estate in Montecito was not easy but well worth the effort. I was told that the estate initially consisted of 60 acres with the large stone main house (looking much like the New York City Public Library), a stone guest house, winery, and a lovely but old leaky wooden carriage house, (more about this later). There was even a long-abandoned natural hot tub which had been fed by water from a nearby mountain hot spring.

Needless to say, the family had fallen on hard times. The once glamorous estate had fallen into disrepair and was now "quite long of tooth" and in need of much TLC. The

original 60 acres was now down to 6 acres. The family had sold the main house and was living in the guest house. The collection of cars: Chryslers, Jag, and the Ford roadster were in the winery, the wine having met its fate years earlier. The Chryslers were large, elegant open cars with two strikes against them, they were unrestored but mostly they were expensive. The Jag was nice but very English and Mr. Lucas was just gaining his reputation as the "Prince of Darkness". This led me to the Ford.



I introduced myself to Mr. White, a big man 20 years and 20 pounds my senior. He cheerfully showed me the cars. The Chryslers were family owned cars of now deceased relatives. The Jag was his college toy and finally, the Ford roadster was a recent acquisition for his wife. It was an original Santa Barbara car, first owned by an engineer and one of the few factory original Thunderbird sport roasters Ford built in 1964. It's really a 1964 Thunderbird convertible with a factory

installed fiberglass tonneau; Ford didn't sell too many. Mr. White enthusiastically pointed out its magnificent Wimbledon White exterior, white vinyl interior and white top. The roadster conversion was for those few confused people who wanted to convert four-seat car into a two-seater by filling in the back seat with a fiberglass insert (and paying dearly to do so). The owner happily demonstrated how the marvelously complicated top/trunk mechanism worked with its 17 relays, motors, and switches. Everything was there and in working order. Power everything, no dents, nicks, or scratches; I was impressed and interested. I had recently bought an old car needing work, as well as an old house needing even more work, so any additional purchase would have to wait and wait it would (if only I knew how long). Time and circumstances conspired against me, for the next time I inquired about the car, a nasty divorce was in progress with a custody battle over the T-Bird. Mr. White had returned to the East to reconnect with his youth, his old Jag, and a new woman. I discovered that the true owner of the car was indeed Mrs. White and she had decided to keep the car. I was to get to know her and her eccentricities much better over the next several years.

A Tradition Is Born

The years passed and I would call Mrs. White every six months or so. Did she still have the car? Yes. Was she at all interested in selling? No. At first, she thought she would keep it for herself. It would need very little to put it back on the road. Then after that scenario failed, she would come up with another plan. This time she would give it to one of her children. More time passed. Every year or so, prior to one of the family trips south to the Los Angeles area I would call. Did she still have the car? Yes. Could I stop and renew my acquaintances with her and it? Yes. With the family enjoying the beach, I found myself navigating the winding roads of Montecito, among the lush estates,

finally arriving at the once posh estate of the Waterman Pen heirs (people had moved to ball-pens years before and any anthropologist worth his salt could have easily figured that out from the condition of the estate.) I'd stop; she'd open the shed (by now the T-Bird had been moved from the relatively secure and "dry" winery to the wet and drafty wooden carriage shed. She would lovingly remove the old drapes that she used as a car cover so I could reacquaint myself with now dirty Bird. Fortunately, she didn't try to start the car (by then it had been sitting for many years). We'd chat, I'd open the hood and look at the 390 in the engine bay with its big gold painted air cleaner atop the four-barrel carb. I'd check out the interior, visualize driving it with the top down and the wind in my face. Even the kids got to know the car and Mrs. White. Then I would ask again if she was ready to sell—no not yet; maybe one of the grandchildren would like it.

It became a running joke at our house—going south—had I called Mrs. White? On one stop, I found a business card of mine that I had left in the glovebox years earlier. I became more interested when I discovered the limited number of sports roadsters that were built that year, especially since this one was in such good condition with low mileage. When I was able to get a copy of the factory build order, I was even more delighted to discover that everything checked out. A southern California car delivered to a dealer in Santa Barbara. Now I had a list of the original factory equipment. The original owner had added a radio reverberator, sequential taillights, as well as a 4-track tape deck. What's a 4-track? I'm still trying to find that out.

Would she ever part with the car? By the appearance of her house here was a woman who hadn't parted with a newspaper in 10 years let alone a car. Persistence pays off. Finally, on one visit Mrs. White indicated that she might be interested in selling the car. I convinced her it would be easier for her to sell the car to me (no hassle with placing an ad, meeting strangers, and showing the car). I was as good a buyer as she could find (according to me). As to price, I would, pay for the appraisal if she would arrange for one. Fair enough? Not really! Six months passed, I phoned to find out about the appraisal—Had she gotten one? Yes! What was it? Couldn't tell me! Why? It was too low! Now what? Looks like time to do more waiting. I was getting good at it by now! Another year, another visit. Any interest in selling? Maybe. What's the price? She had given it some consideration; collector cars had dropped in value and the Ford was deteriorating in the wet shed. She had decided on a price that I could accept, and a deal was struck.

Fair enough; it's a deal . . . well not quite. You knew it couldn't be that easy. I would have to pick up the car and transport it over three hundred miles and that would be tough. I began to assemble my "team". When I'd called a rental firm to inquire about towing I was told that the T-Bird was too heavy for their



equipment. I found a heavy duty tow truck, an extra heavy duty trailer and had convinced an old friend who loves cars to accompany me to Santa Barbara for the retrieval. I called the seller, set up a date and we were off. But not so easy. Mrs. White, being somewhat skeptical, began a series of negotiations regarding the sale, terms, price and method of payment. A cashier's check would be fine—but submitted one week prior to "pickup" to make sure it was good. Fortunately, I was able to explain about a cashier's check to her; at least I thought so. The deal only worked because we both use the same bank, I even agreed to pay for the now two-year old appraisal. Things were still touch and go until the day prior to departure when she had trouble locating the title! But things worked out. I picked up the trailer, managed to mate the two hitch and wiring harnesses and off we went to Santa Barbara. From here on out the processes went pretty well. Arriving in Santa Barbara, we checked out the car. It had been moved through the cluttered carriage shed to the doorway. All tires were temporarily round. On the next morning we loaded the Ford on the trailer, secured it and had an uneventful ride home. Now all that awaited me was the reality of getting it into running condition. Will the dream live up to my expectations? Time will tell. Final thoughts - watch out for what you wish for; **it might / did come true!**

Courtesy of VINTAGE THUNDERBIRD CLUB INTERNATIONAL
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Take Care and Be Safe

