

# VintageVoice

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# Director's FORUM

by howard query

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If my wife and I are really lucky, we'll average one or two visits per year from our daughter, her husband and the three grandchildren who live in Rockwood, Tennessee. I have to admit that it's always a great time for us when we make the trip back to Iowa for a family visit. And as they get older, those visits are becoming more and more precious.

The twins; Graycen and Landen have just turned 2 years of age while their elder brother Reece is just turning the corner on becoming a four year old. Naturally, at their age the twin's vocabulary is very limited while the eldest is at that stage of his life where he throws questions at you faster than you can answer them. And regardless of their ages, they've suddenly found interest in grandpa's glass VW showcase. No need for concern yet because this display case is kept under lock and key. Nonetheless, there is always an attempt by any one of them to try and figure out a way of gaining entry to the treasures within.

Thanks to DVD technology and Walt Disney, all three boys refer to my models as "Herby" or the "The Love Bug". On occasion you'll hear one of them utter the word "Beetle" as they point at one of the models in fascination. And all because they'd love to play with them verses admiring them for what they stand for.

On the last evening of their stay, I decided it was time for our grandson to experience a ride around the block in a real Volkswagen. His head was filled with curiosity as I slowly raised the garage door to reveal our 1958 Ragtop Beetle. His eyes became the size of coffee cup saucers as he slowly approached the car. I opened the passenger door and set him up in the seat. While fastening his seat belt he carefully surveyed every inch, every detail of the car. Walking to the other side of the car, I slowly opened the driver's door and slipped in behind the wheel. He giggled with excitement as I touched down on the horn button, letting it echo its infamous "beep, beep" throughout the garage. Reaching over towards the dash, I slowly turned the key and started the engine. He could feel the car

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vibrate as I placed it in gear and backed out of the garage. “Where shall we go”, I asked. With a big smile on his face he simply replied with a chuckle “everywhere.” As we headed down the street he asked how old the car was. “Around 54 years old”, I responded. A huge smile broke out across his face as he said, “geez grandpa, that’s older than my mommy.” Yes, that was very true.

He was filled with questions as we drove across town. “What’s that thing you keep moving?” “It’s a gear shift” I responded. “It helps me drive the car faster or slower.” “What are those two things by the radio grandpa?” “Well, one turns on the headlights and the other is for the windshield wiper.” My answers seemed to quiet him for a moment, but nonetheless ... I could see the wheels turning in his mind as he continued to survey the car.

We drove around for another 20 or thirty minutes before returning to the house. He was filled with wonder as I’d shift from one gear to another and he’d giggle every time I’d hit a bump in the road. He was fascinated when I turned on the lights and was in awe with the single speed of the windshield wiper. As rain drops hit the car with greater force, he turned to me and said “it sounds like someone is throwing rocks at us grandpa.” Yes, it certainly did ... I’d thought to myself.

As we approached the house, I felt a smile break out across my face. I’d exposed our grandson to a piece of history that he may not have ever experienced. He’s growing up in an era of automotive wonder where windows are control electronically and where you can immerse yourself in the rich tones of one’s Bose stereo system. Seats are luxurious and the instrument panel sometimes resembles a working computer system in progress. But today, I was able to treat him to a special piece of my world. I was reminded today that it is for this reason alone that I cherish, embrace and work to preserve this hobby. As our grandson grows older, I pray that he too will fall in love with his own Volkswagen Beetle. That he too will develop too will grow as fond of his Beetle as I have mine.

As we turned into the driveway and entered the garage, I turned to him and asked ... “so, what how was the ride?” A big smile broke across his face as he said, “I’ve loved it grandpa.”

My day was complete. As we opened the doors and began to slide out of the seats, he turned and pointed to the glove compartment. “What’s in there” he’d asked. To satisfy his curiosity, I reached forward and opened the door. He sat there for a moment and quietly asked, “Where does the dvd go?”

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# Volks Woman

by Lois Grace  
vlkswmn@sbcglobal.net



## Living in the Past

**M**y 50th article for AllAirCooled started out being a discussion of which are better: old cars or new cars? I've been told - more than once - that I live in the past. This comment is really hilarious to a vintage car lover, because what would we admire if we didn't live in the past? I used to think this was some sort of subtle insult or something. Not any more! To me, it's nearly a compliment. Let me explain: The latest episode of this came not too long ago, when I was griping to a friend that my cassette tape deck in my Beetle, Bogie, had quit working. My stereo is not an expensive unit - you have to make major modifications to a Bug dash in order to get the really good stuff to fit in there - but it worked for a long while very well, and sounded really nice. Until the CD craze hit.

The CD craze meant that my cassette player was now obsolete, according to my friend. I asked (semi-jokingly) if there was a "multiple cassette player" I could install in the trunk (provided that the installers could actually locate my trunk in this car) of my Bug, some device that would hold 10 cassettes and play them in order, like the remotely mounted CD players do. My pal laughed and snorted "2011 calling Lois! 2011 calling Lois" He contemptuously informed me that there was no such animal and I might as well submit to the inevitable. The inevitable WHAT? Following each and every new technological wonder like some yuppie lemming?? No thanks. I wanna know WHY there isn't such an animal. I bet I could make a lot of money developing something like that, but I won't now because some quick-thinking, VW Club of America entrepreneur will read this and do it instead.

My poor stereo has now seen much better days - the tuner works but the indicator does not so you never know what station you're on. The little groovy green light that illuminated the face burned out quite a while ago. The AM/FM works fine but in addition to never knowing what station you're on, you can't see the numbers on the face at night because of that burned-out light, a fact that doesn't bother me much because the aforementioned indicator doesn't move. The cassette player quit last summer. The only thing that keeps it going are the two speakers in back and the graphic

equalizer I have installed in the glove box. So, do I buy a new one or not? My friend made it plain that he thinks I'm "stuck" in the past because I actually ENJOY my cassettes. Another asked where I stashed all my "8-tracks and player". HAHAHHA, see me laugh.

I have always thought that new stuff was fun. But that doesn't necessarily mean it's any good. That also doesn't mean it's any better than the old stuff I have already. CD players skip when you go over bumps. I do know that CD's have much better quality sound than cassettes - but one ride in Bogie (or any air-cooled VW, in my not-so-humble opinion) and you'll see why the glories of CD sound would be totally wasted. Who can hear John Lennon blowing his nose in the background during Paul McCartney's solo above the whirr and whine of a mighty 1600cc, air-cooled engine?? And who wants to? I mean, get REAL. If you turn it up loud enough you can hear anything, you say?? Yeah, probably, but bleeding eardrums get pretty annoying when you're trying to drive. If CD's are so great, why would I have to turn it way up to appreciate it? See, it makes no sense.

I ran into this "Newer is Better" phenomenon a while ago when a friend of mine (not the same CD-crazed friend but still a lover of New Things) bought a new BMW. She raced over to our house in the early morning to show it off, and insisted on taking me (still in my bathrobe) for a spin. "Isn't this GREAT?" she crowed. "Don't you just LOVE it?" she asked. Yes, her new car WAS nice, but where was that familiar older-car, VW smell? Her new car's interior was beige leather and smelled deliciously of brand new shoes, but the odd, "VW-only" horsehair-vinyl-and-dusty floor mat smell was missing. That VW smell is comforting. My Beetle is like a comfy old shoe - I can put it on, it smells the same, it drives the same, and it does the same things it did 200,000 miles ago, only I like it more now. Sure, my Beetle behaves like a comfy old shoe, but it doesn't smell like a new shoe. Her car smells like the new shoe, but it sure doesn't behave like a familiar, comforting presence.

Maybe it's me. Maybe I just expect too much and tend to be disappointed when things don't deliver the way I think they

should. New cars have a lot to live up to - they are supposed to be better in every way than the model that came before them. If they are a totally new model, they must create the image that future models will live up to. One exception to this is the New Beetle, who had the extraordinary task of trying to follow in the footsteps of the most popular car of all time. The New Beetle has successfully carved out its own niche in the Cute Car Category and seems to be doing well in spite of the fact that all of us Real Beetle owners first scoffed at it when the Concept One idea was suggested. I have no deep longing for a New Beetle (or a new, New Beetle) of my own, a fact that my "New Is Better" friends find puzzling. I'm sure they can't understand the reasons why I'd choose to drive a Real Beetle when I could afford a New Beetle. I will grant them one fact: New Beetles do offer things that Real Beetles can't match. Airbags, anti-lock brakes and a cutting-edge techno look are just a few. But preferring to drive a 30-year-old car is not what I would call "living in the past". I call it being content and satisfied with what I have, happy in the knowledge that I know that car inside and out and would drive it anywhere. That kind of familiarity only comes with time, and the New Is Better crowd doesn't keep anything long enough to get to that point.

If you own any car older than a year or two, you'll probably understand what I'm talking about here. There are distinct differences between new and old cars, and I don't mean just style, price, and warranty information. I'm talking PERCEPTION. For instance, when our Saab got old enough to need age-related work, Rob growled "I'm not spending another DIME on that thing. I'm done. YOU pay for it". That's the way he thinks when it comes to "old" cars - and how OUR Saab became MY Saab. But me? I don't care. To me the older a car gets, the more interesting it becomes. But another peculiar phenomenon takes place: when a car gets old, it needs more TLC, more understanding. And that usually translates into more money. When my oldies break, I cluck and fuss over them, thinking "OH DEAR! YOU POOR OLD THING! Don't you worry, well have you fixed up good as new before you can say OIL CHANGE!" When new cars break, it's nothing but a headache: "How can the alternator be shot?? This thing is only 2 years old!!!"

When older cars break, Rob rolls his eyes and moans "AGAIN? I just fixed that 400,000 miles ago. Cheap garbage....." When his new cars have broken down, he'd shrug, look perplexed, and then phone our mechanic. Even if the necessary repair could cost him big bucks, he doesn't begrudge the new vehicle the repair! What is wrong with this picture? It seems a case of clouded reason to me. If he reasoned like I do (the right way) he'd see that cars aren't just rolling statuary: they are machines (forgive me) with moving parts that wear and conk out. It all makes perfect sense to me, but to Rob any breakdown is an annoyance, especially if it happens 100,000 miles and 10 years after the last one. He doesn't give the poor thing any credit at all for all those reliable miles traveled. MEN. Go figure.

Old cars have personality and odd quirks. I personally find the quirks part of their charm, but others might not be so

amused. Nearly all my vintage VWs have the extremely rare (but for some odd reason, familiar) Magic Key Feature. After a while (say maybe 20 years or so) all my VWs developed the ability to release the ignition key while the engine was running. I found this out quite by accident, when I pulled up in the driveway, pulled the key out of the ignition and got out. I was halfway to the front door before I realized I hadn't turned the ignition OFF, before removing the key! The shop says its worn cylinders or tumblers in the switch, I say it's the Wolfsburg Edition Magic Key option. Newer cars don't have to deal with things such as hidden features like this, because they haven't been on the road long enough to develop any.

Right after I bought my GTi, I fell into this Faulty Logic Thinking and began blaming the car when my Golf started needing a few things repaired. I blame this on living with a new car fanatic for many years. As always, my own logic is again flawless, but more on that in a bit. After buying my "new" GTi, it began doing strange things. AGE-related things. Things that only happen to older cars presently in (as a friend told me) a "wear cycle" of repairs. I was assured that my GTi would drive happily out the other end of this "wear cycle", my wallet a bit lighter but neither of us the worse for wear. But, using my strictly Vintage-Only thinking, all I could think of was how could this be happening to my "new" GTi? The car was only a few years old! How can things like MAF sensors and radiators and air conditioning and expansion tanks need replacing now? The car's nearly new! What I hadn't taken into account were the 79,000 miles BEHIND this car I'd just adopted, miles that I hadn't driven with it so therefore had no knowledge of. My poor little GTi was CRYING OUT for my attention and understanding (not having had the benefit of my tender loving care prior to this) and here I was blaming HIM for the breakdown! I hang my head in shame, and stand corrected.

Part of the reason I bought this car was the fact that everyone I consulted for advice assured me that these cars were "practically bulletproof." Others told me tales of having 150,000 miles on their Golf or Jetta, and never having had the head off for anything. Sounded good to me! But, just as one head does not a human make, one head is not the sum total of a GTi. In fact, I am finding that this car has more moving (and non-moving but necessary) parts than the Space Shuttle. Describing all of them I've had the dubious privilege to meet personally would fill another column. But dealing with the various little annoyances that have surfaced since I bought him has taught me a valuable lesson: cars don't stay new forever, and nine years, while not old, is definitely not new. In the end it all boils down to whether or not you feel your older pal is worth fixing. If "New Is Better" is your thing, then you most likely will move on to another new car rather than spend a lot to fix the old one. That's just fine with us Old Car People because it greatly enhances the Old Car Pool from which we love to buy our NEXT baby!

# Volkswagen Beetle in 1993

**Beetle Sales Reached its Highest Volume Ever in Mexico.  
Beetle Production Starts Up Again in Brazil**

by Heinz Schneider [s.heinzo@verizon.net](mailto:s.heinzo@verizon.net)

The Beetle in Mexico. 1993 model Beetles were produced from October 1992 to September 1993. After producing Volkswagen Beetles in México for the last 29 year, 1993 became the best year ever for Beetle sales in Mexico with 98 236 sold. That was on top of producing and selling an astonishing 86,613 Beetles the year before in 1992. Average output reached 460 cars a day. New wider bumpers with a larger black center tape were introduced making the car more attractive. While early 1992 models engines still used carburetors, eventually to control emissions, the digifant fuel injection system in combination with a catalytic converter and Lambda sensor were introduced during the 1992 model year. All of these changes continued in 1993 and were made necessary because of the more stringent pollution requirements in Mexico. It gave VWM another chance to call its car a new model and it sported a 1600i on its rear lid. The number 1600 stood for the size of the engine and the “i” for injection. Also the 20 slot Brazilian chrome wheels were still available as an option.

## The Beetle in Brazil.

Seven years after Beetle production had ceased in 1986, on the insistence of the president of Brazil and the offer of his government to subsidize the reintroduction of the Beetle with approximately 30 million dollars, Brazilian production of the Beetle started up again in August of 1993. It was political decision just as it had been two years before in Mexico. The Volkswagen Beetle was part of the market basket that measured the Brazilians inflation rate. A low priced Beetle did lower the official inflation rate. Volkswagen do Brazil, by now being part of Autolatina, after the merger with Ford of Brazil, reinstalled a small assembly line with some of the same workers who originally worked on building the Beetle years before. After building 29 490 Beetles, production of the Beetle ceased again and this time for the last time on December 17. To build these Beetles, they had to use some imported Mexican produced sheet metal parts, since Brazil had discarded most of its original stamping dies. However the smaller windows for the doors and rear quarters, typical and distinctive for all Brazilian Beetles were still used. For engines they did not have to go far, because by now Brazil was the only producer of air cooled engines that were exported to Mexico for their production of Beetles. Mexico had no capacity to built air cooled engines after they had been selected to produce all the water cooled engines for the Golf and Jetta used world wide. All Brazilian Beetles used the 1600 cc engine; however most of them modified to burn alcohol made from sugar cane. A few cars were built during October of 1993 for use with regular gasoline.



The government had insisted on using alcohol for fuel. Unfortunately for that purpose portions of the Amazon rainforest were cut down to grow sugar cane all in the name of protecting the environment and to become independent of foreign oil.

A few changes were made to these 1993 Brazilian Beetles which differentiated them from the last ones built 7 years before. Now they all had bumpers painted the body color, colored glass and wider tires. The gasoline powered cars were forced to use a catalytic converter. The installation of the converter behind the engine created a space problem and the exhaust muffler had to be placed under the left rear fender. A very interesting installation; unfortunately no picture to show it is available.

### Other Volkswagen News in 1993

After the Volkswagen Corporation had gotten into financial trouble and was losing money during the last few years, mainly because of high production costs and confusing model policy, Ferdinand Piech; Ferdinand Porsche's grandson, was appointed CEO of Volkswagen January 1st 1993 To get VW out of its mess. - On the same day Volkswagen assumed the

distribution rights for its cars in Great Britain, which before were handled by an independent distributor. Volkswagen had previously taken over the distribution of its cars in France, Italy and Spain. – The previous year Volkswagen sales in the US had drastically declined to its lowest point mainly because of the lack of cars to sell. VOA had counted on selling Golfs and Jettas produced in Mexico to sell in the US. These cars however did not measure up to the minimum standards thought necessary. This delayed the arrival of Mexican Volkswagen into the US. Finally, in 1993 some Mexican build Golf and Jetta started to trickle in and sales improved. – A tightening of the dealer network took place in the US, as Volkswagen put it. What actually happened is that many dealers jumped the ship or they added other brands of cars for sale in their dealership just to survive. – Total Volkswagen group sales in 1993 declined from the previous year by 48,102 units to 3,018 650.

# My Favorite Ten

By Phil Weiner

The other day I was day dreaming and asking myself, how many ways do I love my VW. Who in the world asks himself or course himself such? Well I do. Of course VW people only, know exactly what I'm talking about first. First: thing I said ... VW is the only car in the world in that when you die ... it will still be running. Second: Its' shape drives you crazy. Third: in the old one's my favorite. Just turn the lever and you've got another thirty to go. Fourth: Inside driving even in the cold you feel comfortable & cozy. Fifth: The dash is just simple. No big anything ... just smart. Sixth: Keep 30 pounds of air in all the times & 32 pounds in the space. With normal maintenance they will last forever. Seventh: Six volt is not a problem as long as you back it up with a little maintenance. Eight: A little tip for those without a right side mirror. Rather than looking cool with a same mirror on the right side, do yourself a favor and stay safe with an extended arm on the right side mirror. Trust me, I've been there. Ninth: In your heart you just learn to love your VW more and more. I know I do. Tenth: Tomorrow is another day (to love your VW).



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# Bill's Bugs

By Bill Saitta  
wsaitta@earthlink.net



I bought my first Bug new in 1965. (\$1695.00?) I was in graduate school and there was a late 1950s Porsche convertible for about the same price at the dealers. Beautiful!!!! Heck. I needed reliable wheels. My 1958 English Ford Anglia was getting 50 miles to a quart of oil. Blackwalls please. The dealer called saying he had only white ones and it would be extra money. I said-I will be back for the Ford. He found Blackwalls.

Many miles later, we pulled a huge trailer to my job in Texas. Bam. Engine kaput. We were in the middle of Mississippi. No credit card. Little cash. "Where do you work?" says the garage owner? Texas A&M. An Aggie says he! He took our check.

April 1st 1969. I go out to get in my Bug for work. "Very funny. April fool. WHERE IS MY CAR! !?" The police found it months later.

Florida is next. Sand and rot. Replaced the floorboard with aluminum many times. We could not put our feet on the floor. By then I had several more air cooled German cars. One was an oval window Bug with rotten floor pans. My addiction was alive and well. I bought a 1964 Porsche 356 and a 1966 Porsche 912.

Michigan was next. We had just started across the humongous Mackinaw Bridge when a tire blew. It started to come off the rim. My Higher Power was with me. A lane was dosed at the very top. Jack and a spare. The ocean going ships were TINY.

Virgin Islands next. The locals loved VWs and it was stolen two times. Got it back once. The Bug had about 250,000 miles on her. My baby was gone for good.



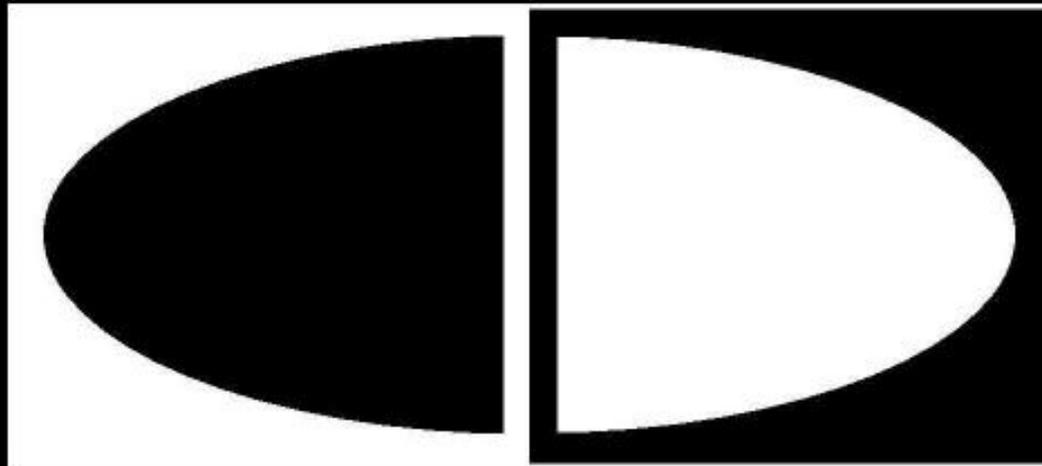
Florida again. I had always wanted a split-window. I do not remember seeing one even in 1965 when I got my first Bug. Darrell had one. "Is it for sale?" "Hell NO!!!" This went on for several years. He finally said-yes. It was a mess!!!! Happiness.

Today I have a 20 HP 1923 Model T Touring, a 20 HP 1927 Model T Pickup, my 25 HP Splitwindow, and my wife's tired Toyota. My Porsche 911 has just been sold and is on its way back to Germany. A man does not need five cars. Only four. We drive one of the antiques almost every day. Judy has a new Honda.

The "4" on the 1953 Florida license plate should be "4D" as the "4" was for Pinellas County and the "D" was for light cars.



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## Making History: Circumnavigating the Globe

By Janet and Ed Howle

### Part 1: Crossing the U.S.

On April 12, Ed backed our 1967 VW Beetle out of the garage for the first leg of World Race 2011 that would take us more than 14,500 miles across three continents. We were headed for New York City and the beginning of a driving adventure of a lifetime. Our itinerary and preparations were described in a previous article (Meet Us on the Road to Paris, *Vintage Voice*, Jan/Feb 2011). But now our trip is over and we can describe what actually happened.

This event began as a road rally with three components. We were assigned a time to cover a particular distance at the start of each day. But since there was no penalty for early arrival, most cars drove as fast as speed limits allowed so that if road construction, weather or car problems interfered, the team had time to spare. This turned out to be a test of the reliability of the cars at high speeds more than anything else. The second part was a list of questions that had to be answered each day. We were allowed to use whatever resources we had and since most everyone had fancy cell phones and laptops it became a question of finding a source for information. We had our own reliable “secret source” and completed these easily. The third component was a “hide-and-seek-the-globe” at the end of the rally day, which made drawing an early start time an advantage. By the end of each day, most of us were so tired—or had car maintenance or repairs to attend to—that this became a competition among the few young guys in the group. These competitive parts elements were dropped once we left the US. Just imagine rummaging through a hotel lobby in China or Russia looking for a hidden object! In the end, everyone agreed with the slogan, “To finish is to win” and in keeping with this, the final scores for the US part were never announced.

#### Leg 1: United States

We departed NY City along with eight other cars on April 14, 2011 in “Stewball”, our stock VW Beetle, the only VW in this event and what would turn out to be the most reliable car. It is



impossible to describe all the things that we saw and experienced in a short article but if this piques your interest, you can read details posted each day on our blog: [www.thelongroadtoparis.wordpress.com](http://www.thelongroadtoparis.wordpress.com).

We know some of you followed our adventure because you commented on the blog or we met you on the road. In that Jan/Feb, 2011 article we asked: "Looking for an activity for your VW club this spring? We'd like to invite you to meet us at any of our stops across the U.S."—and you did. The out-pouring of support we received from many of you added a very personal layer to our trip. We met members, and their cars, from Central and Western NY, Michigan, Indiana, Colorado, Nevada, and California. There are too many people to mention everyone by name but their faces, interest and enthusiasm is remembered in our blog and in our photos. We will not forget any one of you.



There is one person that I must mention, Gary Bergman, mechanic extraordinaire, from Frisco, Colorado. Gary met us in Denver, adjusted our valves, rotated our tires, lubricated the car, changed the oil, advanced the spark timing and leaned the fuel mixture (we would climb to 11,000 feet the next day). This was all in the parking lot of our hotel and then he treated us to dinner with other VW enthusiasts from the area. Dinner, at least, should have been on us, but he would not hear of it. He even offered to put snow tires on the car and take them back off after we crossed Vail Pass to Grand Junction. Had we known about the blizzard we would encounter there, we certainly would have taken him up on his offer. But this is the kind of reception we got at so many of our stops.

We have jackets from Michigan—which, by the way, we wore for much of this cold, wet trip—club burgees, mugs, duffle bags and other souvenirs, but most importantly we received an out-reach of friendship. In addition to all the support we received from clubs and individual Vintage VW aficionados, when Mike Yeager, of Mid America Motorworks found out about our trip, he hosted a luncheon for the entire rally group as we passed through Effingham, Illinois.

Many of you read on the blog that I put a fresh flower in my bud vase each day and you greeted me with your State flower or one from your area of the country. A living souvenir of our meeting. I want you to know, I continued this practice all across Asia and Europe, but I had to find my own flower each morning, until the other racers took up the quest. The photo of a new flower in my bud vase was posted on the blog each day.

While there are many stories to tell about our US crossing, many of them are weather related. We had high winds across much of the 3,000 miles, a tornado took the roof off the airport in St. Louis Missouri the morning we left. A spring snow storm blanketed South-east Michigan the morning we departed Dearborn. We slogged through rain, fog, sleet, hail and finally got caught in a snowstorm in the Vail Pass, but we also were treated to breath-taking waterfalls and dramatic scenery, especially in the west.

One particular memory that stands out was our visit to the National Automotive Museum in Reno, home to the 1907 Thomas Flyer that was driven by George Schuster who won the World Race in 1908. The museum took the car out of its exalted place and it led us in a parade through Reno. Since our rally was in celebration of that famous 1908 race and Jeff Mahl, the great-grandson of George Schuster was part of our group; there was hardly a dry eye when we heard that old engine fire up.

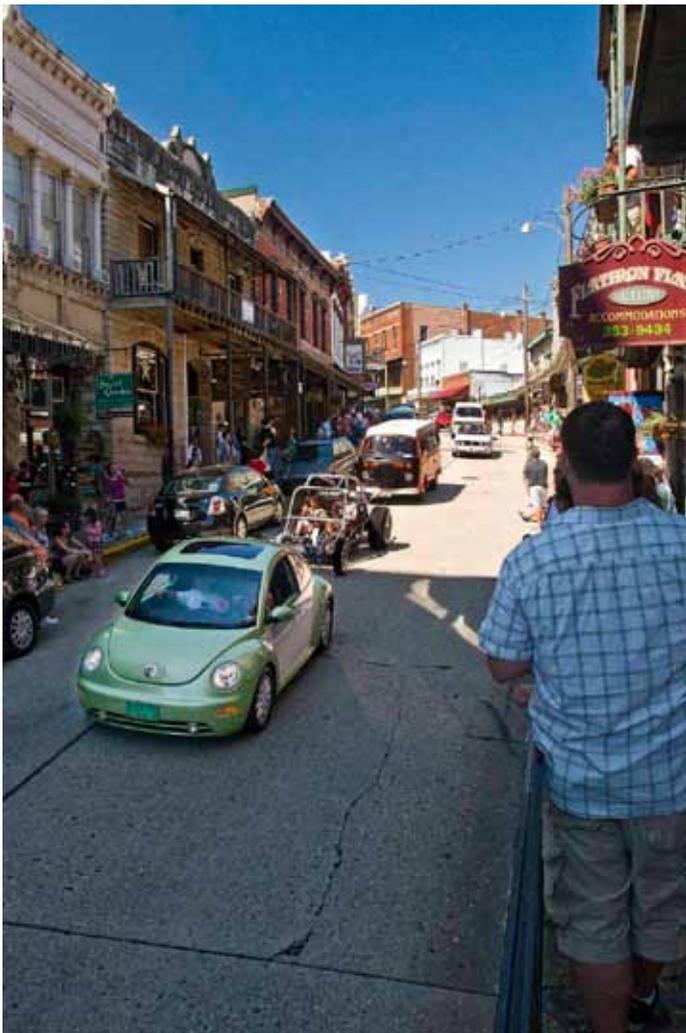
Of course there were other impressive memories too. Like the evening the waitress spilled a shrimp cocktail down my back in Indianapolis, the day the horse parade led us through Dodge City, the morning Ed lost his key and just two minutes before our start time found it on the running board. (Remember the U.S. part of the rally was a timed event). Then there was the day our GPS took us out of Warsaw, Indiana the wrong way, and road construction that held us up twenty minutes outside of Topeka, Kansas and, of course, various car breakdowns.

The 1916 Studebaker was everyone's favorite car, partly because of the difficulty Dennis and Howard had driving this open car in the terrible weather we faced. But it's steering failed and then the starter. Finally a failure of the modified lubrication system left the crankshaft bearings high and dry, and took the 1916 Studebaker out of the race before Reno. Jack had to change the engine in his 1929 A Model three times and Clay's 1932 Ford V8 rode on a trailer when the rear axle broke after leaving Gateway, Colorado. Stewball's problems were minor by comparison. We did replace the distributor and front wheel bearings in Oakland. All in all, breakdowns are part of long distance rallying and everyone took them in stride, but we hadn't yet hit the rough roads in Asia.

All the cars that left New York City made it to San Francisco. Even the Studebaker was there for the end of leg 1, albeit on a trailer. Everyone who would go to China was happy to have the chance to make last minute repairs before loading and shipping to Beijing.









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## Having Fun Building Volkswagen Models and Restoring VW Die Cast Cars

by Mike Epstein email: [vdubs@kc.rr.com](mailto:vdubs@kc.rr.com)

I love building models, it keeps off the streets and out of trouble. Though a lot of fun, it can be expensive depending on how far you want to go with it. You will need a certain amount of supplies to get started. Paints, brushes, cutters/exacto knife, sanding sticks, glue, putty, and then the list can get really long and complicated and detailed. I must have no less than 100+ individual items for model building each with its own purpose.

Some good books to read would be the Osprey Masterclass Armour Modeling series, Military Miniatures, Modeler's Special Edition Guide to the Kubelwagen, Fine Scale Modeler Magazine and their Modeler's Guide to Painting & Finishing, and if you're doing Kubelwagen and Schwimmwagen models both WWP Kubelwagen in Detail and Schwimmwagen in Detail No19 and No35 are great reference books. Just remember to take your time and have fun!



These are both 1/16<sup>th</sup> scale kits. The Kubelwagen is a Tamiya and the Schwimmwagen is the Eduard kit. Both have some weathering done to them Tamiya rub on weathering color and pastels that I ground up and then misted the model then blew the powder on to the model, then when dry, I gave it a light coat of matte acrylic spray.

These next three models are 1/35<sup>th</sup> scale by CMK of Poland. Nicely detailed for the simple models they are. They are all the same basic kit. The left one comes with a solid top, the right one with a sunroof cutout and the middle one with the box that goes on the back and the top is cut accordingly, all other parts are the same. The left one could have been done the same as the right side one as it came with both Japanese Counsel decals and Africa Corps decals, The sunroof model only came with Africa Corps decals and the Red Cross one also came with Reichspost decals but would have been painted a Panzer grey color. I love using and learning how to use the airbrush so I chose the Red Cross for more practice.



This next one is the grand daddy of all kits, it's the 1/9<sup>th</sup> scale Kubelwagen kit from Revell with over 500 parts. I had a little fun with this one by making my own spark wire tube and spare wires as well as gas lines from the firewall to the fuel pump and from the fuel pump to the carb for extra detail, what a chore. The door opens as does the deck lid, the wheels turn with the steering wheel and the shocks actually work with spring loaded shocks. I'm quite proud at making the wood slats look like wood even though this kit did NOT come with the slats at all, what a crime, I made out of styrene plastic by looking at one of my reference books and figuring out how long they were and thick etc. Turned out really good too.





This next model is another Tamiya 1/16<sup>th</sup> scale Kubelwagen but I made this one with the windows and the top up, I also give it a winter camouflage which I found in one of the modeling books then gave it a lot of mud. It uses the decals for the Winter of 1943 in Russia. The white wash was basically white pastel ground up then watered down and dry brushed on the model, then the mud was made the same way but added in clumps around the wheel wells and other spots it would have built up. Then once again matte spray to hold it all in place. Another trick I did on most of the models is to use a circle cutter and some shelf paper to make a mask for the windshield wiper areas before I put down the dirt and matte spray to give it the wiped look.



working on the engine and made it a diorama complete with sand and rocks made of latex from molds. Lots of weathering and in fact a little too much on Rommel and his officer.



This next kit is by Dragon and is 1/35<sup>th</sup> scale and contains a Kubelwagen and 2 officers, one is supposed to be Erwin Rommel. I combined this kit with the Tamiya Engine Maintenance Kit which includes a German soldier working on the engine a spare engine and lots of goodies, workbench, spare tire etc. I built the model with the deck lid up so the soldier could be

Next is a 1/35<sup>th</sup> scale inexpensive windup Kubelwagen kit with very few parts but made to look great with weathering and one soldier and a 1/72<sup>nd</sup> scale kit of a Kubelwagen and two officers looking a map which was also really fun to do. Can't remember the manufacturer of either kits though.

The rest of the photos are the die cast toys of 1/43<sup>rd</sup> scale by Dinky and Corgi, both English toys made 1956-1967. On all of these, I removed the bottoms of the oval window Dinky's by removing the rivets. Then I removed the paint on the body and chassis and repainted them. Some I tried to use original colors, others I had fun with. I even did a two tone job on one and on three of them I manufactured my own split window out of them. One I did on Olive Drab for the occupation forces after WWII. One of them I bent the chassis just so then added oversized tires to the rear to give it a hot rod effect and a cool color.



others I had fun with. I even did a two tone job on one and on three of them I manufactured my own split window out of them. One I did on Olive Drab for the occupation forces after WWII. One of them I bent the chassis just so then added oversized tires to the rear to give it a hot rod effect and a cool color.



On the Dinky Karmann Ghias, Type I and Type III, I even polished the plastic insert that is the windows to a nice clear shine like new with optical polish I use in my business. The Corgi busses I did the same thing to utilizing the VW



Toberlone Chocolate Bus mostly because it has the Trans-O-Lite headlights. I painted some Dove Blue and others two tone. I even took the Single Cab and painted it Dove Blue and

Painted the red canvas cover Grey. There is one later Corgi Bus with lowered wheels and flame decals.

I hope I've inspired you to take your model kits out of the closet and dress up those old Corgis and Dinkys you've got hanging around, its lots of fun and something to do on a rainy or snowy day.

Mike



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1968 Beetle. White with black interior. Needs nothing. Comes w/ detachable tow bar. 207-460-3375. (Me.) Kenneth Taplin. ktaplin@gwi.net. \$5000.00. (July-August 2011)

# Notes To The Corner Office

Hi Howard,

I read your Bus electrical story in the latest VV - "out of sight, out of mind?" However, after all of your wiring polishing operations, there's one thing you didn't mention that might improve things even more. If you have access to the VV "Archives" back 20 years or so, July and November 1991 to be exact, you will find something I wrote as a consequence of measuring only 4.5 of the 6 volts my '63 Beetle should have had at its headlights when I acquired it. If you don't have the old issues, the basic point was that all of the little push-on connectors only maintain a perfect connection to the wire they are crimped on for some time, but then corrosion sets in there also. My solution was to solder each one to its wire, using a liquid flux that will flow into the crimp, and that doesn't leave its own corrosive residue - Sta-Clean was my choice (it's a great solder flux for all sorts of other things also).

If you measure headlight voltage to see if this might still be needed after your other work, don't overlook the fact that a resistance only causes a voltage drop when current is flowing, so the measurement at the headlight has to be made with the light on. It's basic electricity, but not everyone has had the opportunity to learn it. If you pull the connector off the headlight so there is no current flowing, your voltmeter will probably read the same as it would by measuring the voltage directly at the battery terminals.

I never looked into the wiring of the bus we used to have (ours was a '70), but in the Beetle it's quite accessible. I can't remember if the Buses of your age have a way of opening the dash so you don't have to work on the floor and looking up - good way to drop hot solder in your eye! A small soldering iron with a chisel tip will fit very nicely at the end of the wire and also heat the connector for a good solder joint. Just be sure to pull the connector off its terminal first so you don't join them permanently.

Milford Brown

## Director's Note:

*Great input! Thanks. In fact, I'm going to look up this column and will probably reprint it in an upcoming issue very soon. Here's a side note concerning my '58 Beetle. I'd driven it a lot over the past couple month and have enjoyed it thoroughly, but one evening lost all electrical power.*

*My headlights and windshield wipers stopped dead in their tracks. My headlights shut off. I had no power whatsoever. So, what's a man to do when he's stranded? He calls his wife for help. She came to get to get so that I could return with tow bar and tool in hand. Once I got it home, I worked on this car for day and couldn't figure out the problem. Pulled the battery to find out it was more than 12 years old. So, I bought a new one. I'd installed it and it still handed fixed the problem. NO POWER.*

*My friends at Way Out Salvage in Kingston, AR. Have always told me to start tracking back the problem from the most common root of what could be the issue. So, I started at the battery and traced the connection to the starter. Everything appears OK. I work from there to the generator and find I've got a good connection. I've now decided to track the electrical connection from the generator to the fuse box. Here's where I begin to become a bit disturbed because I can't find a live circuit. I'm stumped. So, I call Danny Hostells at Way Out Salvage. As I'm explaining the situation, he casually asks me whether I'd checked the headlight switch?*

*Headlight switch? What the (\*&^% does the headlight switch have to do with this? Here's what I'd found. It seems that VW felt it necessary to run the primary power lead from the engine to the headlight switch first. All power is disbursed to the fuse panel and elsewhere from there. So, I bought a new headlight switch from our supporters. I installed it along with new connectors and ... my '58 started perfectly.*

Greetings!

I renewed my membership today and that reminded me that I had some photos to share with you. The VW toy pictures were taken this summer while visiting my relatives in England. We went up to the Bressingham Gardens and Steam Museum. They had quite an impressive collection of steam engines, rail cars and even WW2 pieces. I was quite surprised to see an extensive toy display and very





excited when I spotted these vintage VW's and vintage Thunderbirds model which was a show I loved as a kid. Nothing quite like a museum full of toys to bring the memories rushing back eh?

The Karman Ghia pics were taken near where I live in Port Angeles Washington (state). I always keep an eye out for interesting VW's and spotted this nice one at a 2nd hand shop I frequent.

I also am writing up an article to send you about my '57 beetle project. I need to get a few nice photos of it but will send that to you soon.

Thank you for all your work with the club and your letters in the vintage voice. I feel bad for not sending in very many submissions and hope to make up for that this winter.

Cheers!  
Curt White  
ctx26531@centurytel.net  
Forks WA

**Director's Note:**

*Thanks for sharing. I've been to Bressingham Gardens myself ... many years ago. We would love to see photos of your '57 project. Please share as soon as you can. Howard.*



## The Volkswagen Brasilia

During the sixties the Volkswagen research and development department in Germany worked on a number of different prototypes to replace the Beetle, all under the development order number EA 97. One of these, after it became too heavy to be considered a Beetle replacement, received a 1500cc engine and was introduced in 1961 as the 1500 in Europe and two years later as the Fastback and Squareback in the US. Besides the 1500, also known as the Type 3, another car had been developed as a Beetle replacement. This was advanced enough to be actually ready for production. 200 pre-production cars had been built. Again it turned out that this car was also too heavy to replace the Beetle. In order to save their investments, all manufacturing tools were sent to Brazil. There, after a few cosmetic changes it was introduced in 1968 as a four door Type 3. This car is mentioned here because over the years many have confused this particular car with the Brasilia, a car that was introduced in 1973 and is the subject of this article.

The Brasilia was the brain child of Rudolf Leiding; the head of VW do Brazil since 1971. He would later become CEO of Volkswagen in Germany. While in charge of Volkswagen do Brazil in 1971, Leiding decided that Brazil needed a larger car as the Beetle and a better looking one too. The Brasilia was introduced as a mini-van in Brazil because by Brazilian law such vehicles were taxed at a lower rate.

In my opinion the Brasilia, as it was introduced in 1973 in Brazil, should have been put in production and sold everywhere else as a parallel car to the Beetle. It had more modern lines and more luggage space and unlike the Type 3 used more regular Beetle parts. It did not have the complicated front axle of the Type 3. Neither did it have the pancake engine. The engine used was a regular upright one with the fan shroud squared off to reduce its height. The rear of the Brasilia had the old swing axle with a factory installed camper compensating spring, like the one that was introduced in 1967 for the Beetle. Except for a few four door models, used for taxi service in Rio de Janeiro and for export to Nigeria, all Brasilia's were three door hatch backs. The hatchback models had the advantage that they could be loaded from the rear. It used a low compression 1600cc engine. The Brasilia was an instant success in Brazil with its best year being 1975 when over 126 000 were sold.



Eventually total sales reached over one million by 1982. Starting in 1978 it was also available with a dual carburetor engine using alcohol. The great success of this car clearly showed that Volkswagen buyers were willing to buy other cars than just the Beetle if such a car was available.

In 1974 Volkswagen de Mexico and Volkswagen do Brazil signed an agreement to exchange parts for its cars and as a result CKD kits of Brasilia bodies were sent to Mexico and whole cars assembled there using 100% Mexican Beetle mechanical parts including suspension components. I am very familiar with the Mexican Brasilia because I worked for VWM during that time. Between 1974 and 1982, 72 377 Brasilias were assembled there. The introduction of the water cooled cars in Mexico and in Brazil, like the Passat

and the Golf, spelled the end for the Brasilia.

As a go between the factory and the VW dealers, I was involved with the many problems this car had especially with water entering the passenger compartment. Designed in Brazil, while it looked pretty good, the body had many shortcomings caused mainly by the way the individual body panels were overlapped, making it difficult to seal all the seams properly. Not many of these cars survive in Brazil or in Mexico because of their inherent extensive corrosion problems. The Brasilia is hardly known in the rest of the world even though a total of over one million were built. Occasionally one shows up at car shows here in the US. I have often wondered and never figured out how these cars were legalized here in this country.

---

## Volkswagen Do Brazil

Desperate to earn foreign currency, especially dollars, Heinz Nordhoff head of VW since January of 1948, in April of 1949 took his first trip to the US after WW2 in an attempt to sell Volkswagens to Americans. A first attempt by the Dutchman Ben Pon earlier in January of the same year, bringing in the first officially imported Volkswagen to the US, ended in a complete failure. Nordhoff came with the second officially imported Volkswagen to the US. The car was to be exhibited in a New York German Industry trade fair sponsored by the US government. The idea behind the fair was to encourage German exports in order for that country to become self sufficient. At the time Germany was heavily dependent for its survival on food subsidized by the victorious Allies. This second attempt by Nordhoff ended like the first one by Pon, nobody showed any interest.

The trip by Nordhoff to the US was however not a complete waste. While going to Detroit and trying to interest Chrysler into selling Volkswagen in the US, a Chrysler executive named Jose Thompson, a Brazilian, was looking for cars to sell in Brazil. Nordhoff wasted no time and went to Brazil. After discussing a deal with Nordhoff, Thompson became convinced that the VW was the ideal car for Brazil. Brazil was a big country with few good roads and most of the existing roads were not paved, mostly gravel, perfect conditions for Volkswagen. To bring Volkswagens to Brazil a Brazilian company was formed owned 80% by VW and 20% by a local entrepreneur.

As is the case in many third world countries, because of



politics, there were many obstacles to overcome and it took until March 23 of 1953 to assemble the first Beetle in a small shed outside the city of Sao Paulo from 100% German parts. For the next 4 years 200 workers assembled 2 820 cars using German parts. This was not enough for the Brazilian Government and its president financially supported the building of new Volkswagen factory. In return Volkswagen promised to use more Brazilian made parts. The first VW was finished in the newly built factory by September 1957 was a Transporter. It already had 50% Brazilian made parts. Full Beetle production started at the new factory in 1961. By that time local content had reached 95%. Demand for Volkswagens was huge and by 1976, 2 million Beetles had been built and sold.

Not much is known about the Brazilian Volkswagen story outside of Brazil. The main media completely ignored what was happening in Brazil. It may surprise many that Brazil was for many years the most successful Volkswagen assembly plant outside of Germany and the largest private manufacturer in South America. In the sixties and

seventies Volkswagen do Brazil reached a 75% market share in Brazil. By the time Beetle production ended in 1972, after 27 years, 9 months, and 28 days an astonishing 3 331 339 were built there. VW do Brazil also exported complete cars as well as many CKD kits to about 50 mostly South American and African countries, while transmissions and chrome wheels were exported to Germany and Mexico.

Such an impressive success allowed VW do Brazil the liberty to even develop its own models using the original corporate air cooled engine and transaxles at the rear. Indeed, while Beetles sold in Brazil were not always updated to the latest Wolfsburg versions, a great number of other Volkswagen variations were introduced in Brazil. At times 1 500 engineers were working on developing new cars. Here are just three of these air-cooled ones mentioned, the Brasilia, the Gol and the SP2 sports car. The Brazilians even built a distinct looking version of its popular sporty Karman Ghia, the TC. The Transporter also played a major role right from the beginning and is another interesting story. At first the original 1950 model was built but it was later upgraded by using the newer front end with the larger windshield of the T2, by many in the US called the bay window version. While using the larger windshield and front doors the rest of the T2 like the body and mechanics were left alone until December 22nd 2005. The Brazilian made Transporter had the distinction of having been the last Volkswagen product to use an air-cooled engine. Because of pollution regulations an inline water cooled engine from the Golf/Passat model were installed from that year on. VW do Brazil was able to install this water cooled engine into the T2, bay window Transporter and sold it as such also in Mexico and other countries for many years.

Of all of these Brazilian models the early Gol is perhaps the most interesting one. Because at first it started out with the air-cooled Beetle engine mounted in front, driving the front wheels. Later it received an 1800 cc water-cooled Audi engine, installed lengthwise. In this version it was even sold in the US from 1987 to 1993 as an entry level car under the name Fox. Unfortunately this car did not increase the image of Volkswagen as a builder of quality cars. The Gol is still being built today even though it is now much different from its earlier days it is the most popular car sold in Brazil today. In its different versions it has by now even outsold



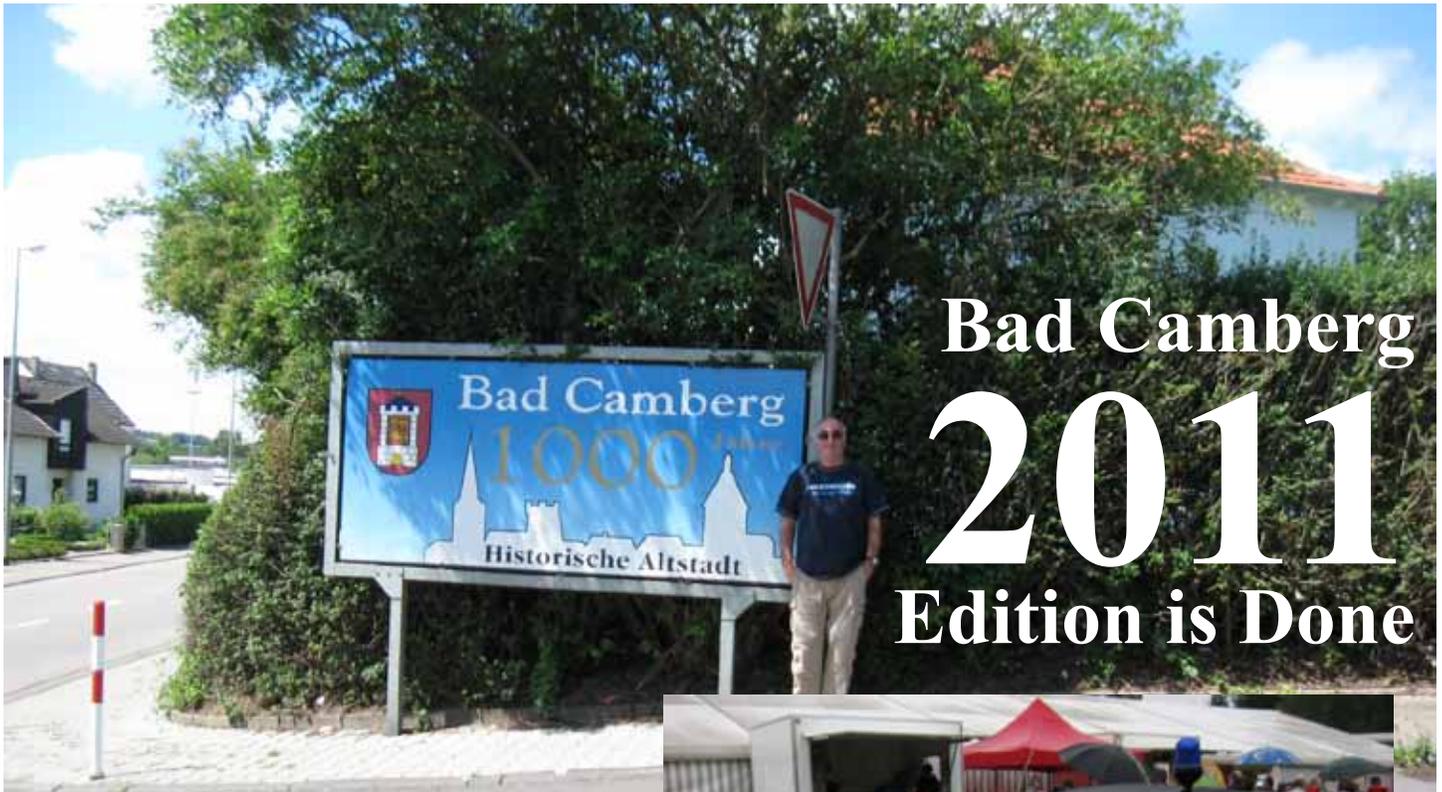
**Brazilian Karmann-Ghia**

the original Volkswagen Beetle in Brazil with over 5.7 million sold. Anybody who has visited Mexico may have seen it where it was sold under the Pointer name. It was also sold at times in Russia and Iran. Another car from Brazil was the Brasilia. This is a car I am very familiar with because it was sold in Mexico for many years and was fairly successful. Unfortunately there were also many problems associated with it, which will be covered in a separate article. The Brazilian built SP2 sports car, covered some time ago in the Vintage Voice, the VVWCA newsletter, was very attractive. It was the wrong car at the wrong time. It was introduced at a time Volkswagen started to switch all of its engines from air-cooled to water-cooled ones.

For many years Volkswagen de Brazil used the standard Volkswagen air-cooled engines in its many well-known variations, like the well known 1200cc / 1300cc / 1500cc / 1600cc ones. These were used interchangeably for all models and mimicked the displacements used everywhere else in the world. Some engines had two carburetors and some did run on pure alcohol. Some engines had completely different cylinder heads with angled valves. And as I have mentioned the first Gol model had its air cooled engine in front driving the front wheels.

The political situation in Brazil, the frequent changing governments and its presidents, the ever changing policies and the extreme fluctuation of the Brazilian currency over the years made it very difficult to do any kind of planning, which also affected Volkswagen in a major way.

One interesting episode came about as a result of the Government practically forcing Volkswagen to invest some of its profits in a 350 000 acre cattle farm. After cutting down big swaths of rain forest, Volkswagen hired a very capable Swiss agronomist and built the most advanced slaughter house in Brazil. As such projects go; Volkswagen lost hundred of millions and finally had to get rid of this folly.



This is done, the Bad Camberg 2011 edition is gone. First time I was there. I left Canada on June 14 to spend some time visiting the old castles called burgs before the event. There are many of them and at different stages of their life: this is really something to see. Also in the area of Gemund Schleiden there is the fortress Hitler used to train his army for sports, education and everything else : very impressive, very tall and what a view from the top of the tower at 50 meters above ground and 172 steps to get there.(www.vogelsang.ip)



Bad Camberg holds its 1000 years in 2011, small town but how clean. Nobody wants credit card as payment! Only cash and it is real for all towns we visited, all visits, all bars, restaurants etc... a lot different from America. As tourism offer is not developed yet you have to speak German in most small towns but English can be used in major towns especially with younger people, but sadly not a lot of French speaking people even though they are near from Belgium and France.

The VW car exhibit and the flea market were really something to see. What time spent there only VW stuff and many old parts, the city I come from does not hold event like that, I usually am the only one with an oval window beetle, sometimes we have a gentleman with a split beetle. I never saw so much oval cars and split beetles there, all years, all conditions. And what about special body cars as Papper, Heb Coupe, cars we thought never seeing. There were a lot of samba busses and some rare ones.

The 1938 beetle was something to see after reading all about in on thesamba, but you should have seen the 1942 Beetle bought in 1955 by a german man, he still owns it. 700,000 km on the clock and 400,000 for the redone engine. He was

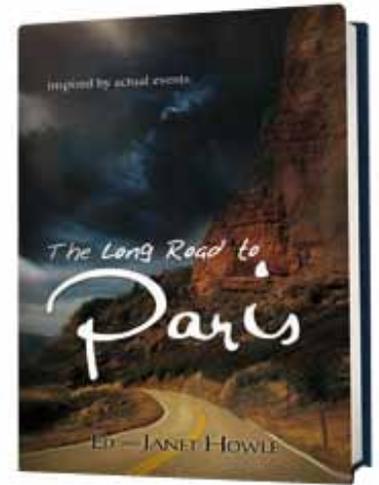
selling a book about his car life and him and his wife. Sadly it was in German, next time may be if I learn to speak.

As we left Canada soon I did not know there was a meeting in the tent to meet other Samba enthusiasts, but I have spoken with a Phoenix VW enthusiast exchanging few words about the nice weather: Saturday it rained cats and dogs but Sunday was better but people left for the ride to an old burg (castle) or going back home, people came from everywhere, Italy, Mexico, England and many other countries.

Don't forget you will have to get used to drinking beer at breakfast, they do. I understand them they have good beers and a lot of brands. Guys try to get to Heissich Oldendorf in 2013 I heard it is something different but unique: cars are parked in streets and they own the place for the event.

Yves Voyer from Canada  
57 original oval beetle and KGhia 71 Convert  
yvoyer@hotmail.com

# The Volkswagen Library



## **The Long Road to Paris**

*Inspired by Actual Events*

by Ed and Janet Howle

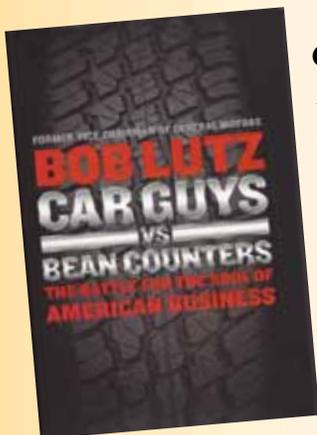
Xlibris (332pg), ISBN: hardback: 978-1-4568-1859-3, Paperback: 978-1-4568-1858-6  
E-book: 978-1-4568-1860-9, [www.thelongroadtoparis.com](http://www.thelongroadtoparis.com), Kirkus Media Reviews  
“Best in 2011”

Looking for a great gift for a VW aficionado or anyone who simply loves suspenseful thrillers and is on your holiday shopping list? Half international intrigue, half love story, *The Long Road to Paris*, with its many twists and turns, is a fast-paced read that features a 1967 VW Beetle in an around-the-world race.

Kirkus Media Reviews lists *The Long Road to Paris* in their “Best for 2011” and has written the following review of this debut novel by club members, Ed and Janet Howle.

“Driving a Volkswagen Beetle with an alternative engine-technology, an engineer races from New York to Paris and tries to outwit those bent on stealing the car.

Ed Talbot, engineer and owner of a fledgling alternative testing company, has just been offered an intriguing opportunity. German scientist Dietrich Otto has developed a revolutionary engine-technology that could severely impact the world’s oil dependency. To gauge its effectiveness, Dietrich puts the invention into a 1967 VW Beetle and contracts with Ed to drive it in a car rally from New York to Paris. Ed agrees, though he’s uneasy about Dietrich’s almost pathological secrecy. Unease turns to full-fledged dread when Ed’s business partner is murdered and the FBI starts getting nosy. Someone has a huge interest in Dietrich’s invention, but who is it? Ed wants to back out, but breach of contract carries a heavy price, so he takes the wheel. He’s paired with expert navigator Marie-Claire Levieux, a gorgeous, mysterious Frenchwoman who carries a potentially devastating secret. Soon, Ed feelings for Marie-Claire aren’t in keeping with a married man, but once they’re on the great Trans-Siberian highway in Russia, romance is the last thing on his mind. Another murder, a nearly fatal attack and sabotage make the rally a race to survive. More than one country wants Dietrich’s technology either to develop or destroy, and Ed is smack in the middle with only Marie-Claire to trust. The Howles, themselves experienced rallyists, have done a remarkable job recreating the day-to-day challenges of an around-the-world race, and their intriguing, behind-the-scenes details add a rich, delightful layer to the story. In a time of record-high gasoline prices, the plot raises intriguing questions about the world’s love affair with oil, but, thankfully, the message isn’t heavy-handed. It’s Ed and Marie-Claire’s witty banter, quick thinking and dedication to the race—and each other—that make this read so enjoyable. Though some plot resolutions are too convenient, it doesn’t detract from the fun-filled ride. Fast cars, fast women and fast thinking comprise this solid, utterly entertaining thriller.”



## **Car Guys Vs. Bean Counters**

*The Battle for the Soul of American Business*

By Bob Lutz. Published in 2011 by the Penguin Group USA Inc. Hardcover, 241 pages and 20 mostly color pictures. ISBN 978-1-59184-400-6

The 79 year old Robert Lutz has been places. Born in Switzerland he came to the US as a seven year old. Returned with his family to Switzerland but came back after ten years. Attended UC Berkeley and joined the Marine Corps and became a fighter pilot. Joined General Motors in Europe and later went to BMW in Germany. After BMW he took a top position at Ford in Germany, at Ford Europe

in London and from there he went on to Ford International in Detroit. From Ford he went to Chrysler for 14 years, where he and Lee Iacocca with the help of a generous government loan, rescued this company from going out of business. After Chrysler he went back again to General Motors for 9 years helping to straighten out their atrocious model mix. General Motors was building the most uninspired cars at the time and only stayed afloat because of their successful truck sales. He used Audi and Lexus cars as an example in an attempt to inspire GM personal to improve the appearance and quality of their cars. Having spent 47 years in the Automotive Industry, Lutz retired from GM in 2010 but was rehired in 2011 as a consultant.

Very handsome and speaking three languages fluently, French, German, English, four, if you count Swiss German as a language. Besides that, it is said that he can communicate in Italian. With all of these credentials and his good looks he obviously had no problems with women and with moving at the highest echelons of corporations. He is a man who has a lot to say and he says a lot in the two books he has written. Besides the one reviewed here, he also wrote "GUTS", ISBN 0-471-46322-1, where he explains his 8 laws that should guide a successful business based on his experiences at Chrysler. I have read that book too but think this one reviewed here maybe of more interest to our Vintage Voice readers. I had to read it after reading some excerpts in the Wallstreet Journal and in Automotive News, where he was quoted calling Ferdinand Piëch of Volkswagen fame, a highly skilled autocrat and how he is running Volkswagen with an iron fist.

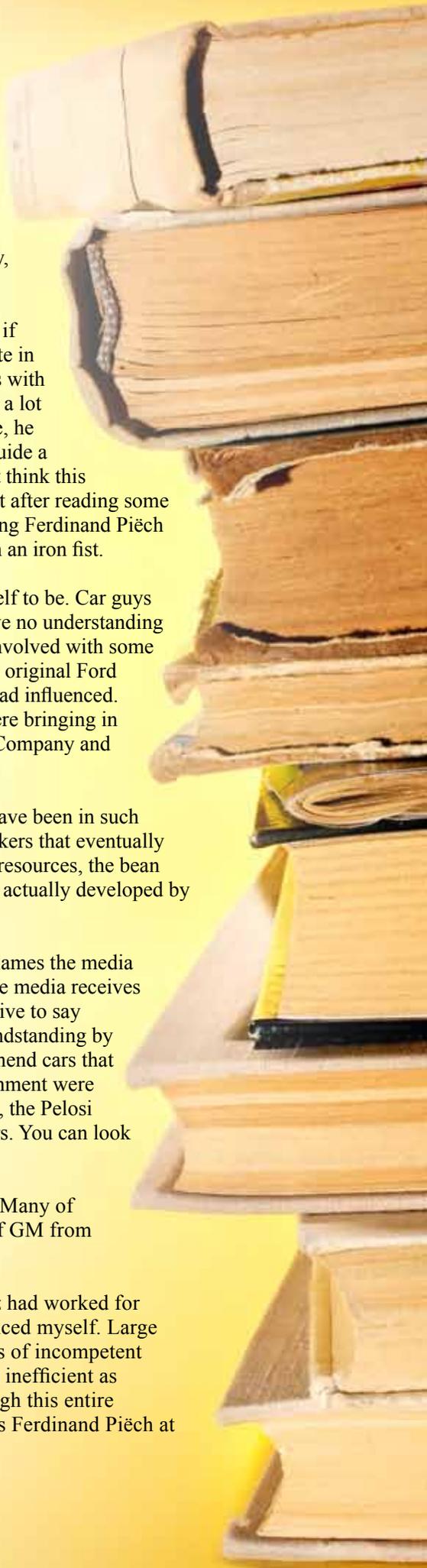
Obviously he thinks Ferdinand Piëch to be a tough car guy just as he considered himself to be. Car guys are the ones who constantly struggle with bean counters, who, according to Lutz have no understanding what it takes to build a successful car. Lutz takes pride in having over the years been involved with some very successful cars. The Ford Sierra in Europe, a car that inspired the very successful original Ford Taurus here. Also the Ford Explorer, the Chrysler minivan and Viper are cars that he had influenced. If I remember correctly the Ford Explorer and Chrysler minivans, in their heydays, were bringing in about \$10,000 profit per unit to their respective companies. A profit only the Porsche Company and Mercedes-Benz were able to achieve in their best days.

Lutz tries to explain the reasons why for so many years the entire US car companies have been in such a mess. One was the financial commitments they had made over the years to their workers that eventually became due and put these companies in a financial bind. Having not enough financial resources, the bean counters did not allow for enough money to develop new products. The cars that were actually developed by incompetent people were uninspired and outclassed by Japanese made products.

Lutz found more culprits to blame as the cause for the car companies sufferings. He blames the media and the government as partially responsible for their miserable situation. Especially the media receives a lot of criticism. He points out that the snobs of the media had for years nothing positive to say about American built cars. At the same time many politicians tried to gain profile, grandstanding by constantly attacking the auto industry without suggesting any solutions except recommend cars that the people would never buy. The constant implementations of restriction by the government were and are of no help. Lutz mentions a car industry insider's talk about the Pelosi Special, the Pelosi GTix SS/RT Sports Edition, developed by Congressional Motors for 100 billion dollars. You can look it up on the internet.

At General Motors Lutz was the responsible to develop cars that the public wanted. Many of these cars are coming on line now and he is credited for being vital for the revival of GM from bankruptcy. The electric car Chevrolet "Volt" is one of his creations there.

This book mainly deals with General Motors but also with the other companies Lutz had worked for and about the poor state American business is in. It confirms a lot of what I experienced myself. Large companies in most cases became complacent after initial successes. The many layers of incompetent managers and officials at these companies caused them to become just as bad and as inefficient as government. It is individuals with strong personalities and guts who can break through this entire mambo jumbo to bring a car company back to success. Lutz is proof of that and so is Ferdinand Piëch at Volkswagen.





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