

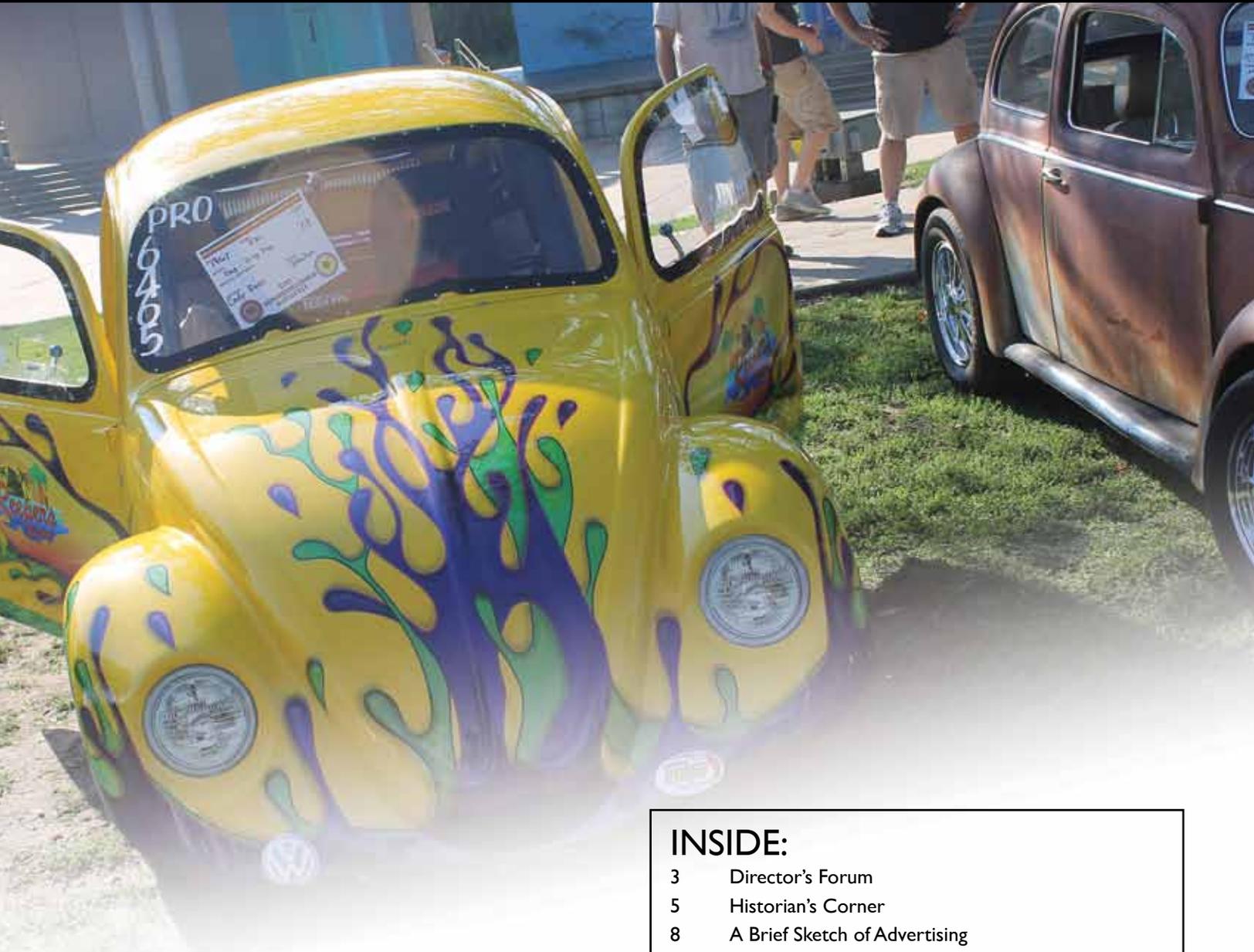


VintageVoice

January/February 2015

Volume 40 • Number 1

The Vintage Volkswagen Club of America Newsletter • Established 1976



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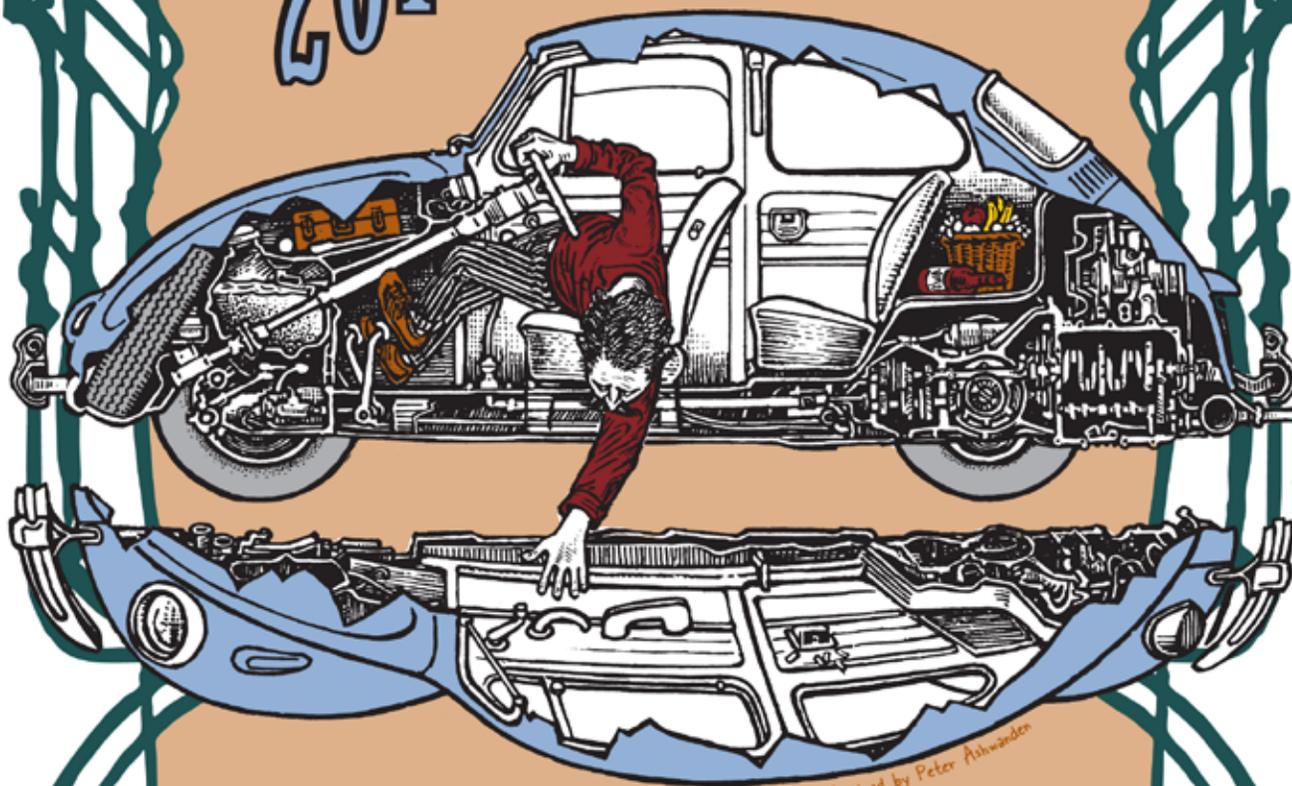
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Director's FORUM

by howard query

Burtonwood@vwwca.com

Yes, we're late. The printing schedule of our newsletter is much later than we had ever anticipated. We could give you 1000 explanations, however the one that matters the most is that one of our board members has been fighting a very serious illness and has been in and out of the hospital now since early last October. At that time, the diagnosis was somewhat gloomy. Yet, we're all pleased to report that therapy ... coupled with the appropriate medication has seemed to have taken a turn for the better. With this issue, we are now back on track and back to our regular schedule.

So then the question becomes; how we will make any adjustments for those who have hung in there and have been our most faithful members? It has been decided by our board that we will extend all new and old memberships by two publishing periods. We know it might seem a bit confusing, but the expiration date of your membership is printed above your name that appears on our imprinted mailing label. No changes will be made with this mailing, but will appear on the March/April edition. We apologize for the delay, but can assure you that the VVWCA is still in a viable VW Organization with our member's interest at heart. Check out the imprinted mailed mailing label ...

We're often emailed from our members who are curious as to when their subscription to our newsletter expires. In case you too are wondering, check the front

page of newsletter where we imprint your mailing address. You will find you member number and the date subscription to the newsletter expires.

Once a member always a member

Unlike other Volkswagen Clubs, once you become a member of the VVWCA; you've become a member for life. So then, why do we have a membership fee? The fee we charge pays for the printing, handling and mailing of the *Vintage Voice*. Our board is comprised of a group of dedicated individuals who volunteer their time and energy to make sure this club continues to grow.

Send us your favorite ride

In the next few months, we're going to modernize our website and would like to include a photo of your favorite ride. This idea was suggested to us by Bob Cropsey and is a great way for all of us to show off our favorite VWs. Please, email us a high definition photo with a brief description of your four-tired friend. We could love to show it off on our website or in our newsletter. Mail to: burtonwood.vvwca@q.com

Rarest of the Rare

We've all got something stashed underneath our bedframe or pillow cases. Regardless of the location, take a photo and email us. We're sure everyone would love to see what you're lurks in the darkness of your treasure trove. Mail to: burtonwood.vvwca@q.com

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determine the type of article
you will submit. Letter to
the editor: 500-699 words.
Monthly column: 700-999
words. Pictures (2-3) may be
included in a 700-800 word
column. Feature story: 1000-
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The Ivan Hirst– Heinrich Nordhoff Relationship

Recently our newsletter, the *Vintage Voice*, published a very interesting article by the English author of many books about the VW history and its cars, Richard Copping.

Copping covered in his story a meeting some American VW fans and VVWCA members had with Major Ivan Hirst in June of 1999. By the way, Richard Copping, the author of that article is one of, if not the best, VW historian whose many books I have long admired and enjoyed because of their accuracy.

I wish I could have been present at that above mentioned meeting and be able to ask Major Ivan Hirst a few questions. Especially one that would have interested me most was his relationship with Heinrich Nordhoff, a relationship that, as it seems, was unfortunately not very close. Despite all I have read about these two men I was not able to figure out what was the real reason behind their acrimony of each other. Maybe it was because Nordhoff felt snubbed by Hirst during his very first visit to Wolfsburg. Instead of Hirst himself showing him around and to introduce him to the factory and its managers, he had his underling the PR man, Frank Novotny, do it. Maybe it was Nordhoff's desire not to share the limelight of a resurrected VW with anybody else. Anyway, their working together was very short. Hirst was transferred by the British to an insignificant position in Hamburg, kind of kicked out, only six months after Nordhoff's arrival at Wolfsburg.

A book published in 1992 "Speeches and Essays, Witness to an Era," (Reden und Aufsätze, Zeugnisse einer Ära), ISBN 3-430-17156-3, lists 59 speeches by Heinrich Nordhoff given during his 20 years at VW. In not one of these speeches and essays does he mention Major Ivan Hirst and in only two does he mention the British at all. This is what he said: "The British were the first ones to make some feeble attempts to build some Volkswagens."



During the Nordhoff era, Hirst did not exist as far as Volkswagen was concerned. Only once Nordhoff's successor, Kurt Lotz, was put in charge did that situation change. Kurt Lotz, as he later stated, realized only after reading some material about the early after war days at Volkswagen, the important contributions the British made, and especially Major Ivan Hirst. After that Lotz made sure that Hirst became a frequent invited guest at Volkswagen.

Furthermore, Volkswagen in 2003 published a biography in English and one in German about Major Ivan Hirst "Ivan Hirst, British Officer and Manager of Volkswagen's Postwar Recovery." ISBN 3 935112-13-0. The book is mainly based on interviews given in September of 1997 by Hirst and by in-depth research by the author, Ralf Richter. It is very complimentary to Hirst and sets the record straight. Too bad Hirst died in 2000 before the book was published. The book makes it clear that Nordhoff did not want to share any credit with anyone for the success of Volkswagen. In his speeches he overstated his accomplishments by exaggerating the bad conditions as they supposedly existed at his arrival in Wolfsburg. The situation was bleak all right, but on the other hand there were a lot of signs of life. The export business had started, a dealer network established, as well as quality control implemented and an emphasis on aftermarket service. The availability of spare parts was of prime importance to the British before Nordhoff arrived. But the Nordhoff Legend created by his very able public relations man, Frank Novotny, attributed all the accomplishments by the British-German management team between 1945 and 1948 to Nordhoff.

Here is what Nordhoff had to say years later about the situation at the time of his arrival at Wolfsburg. "On January 1st 1948, six months before the currency reform, I took on the management of the Volkswagen Works. I was faced with a desolate heap of rubble, a horde of desperate people, and the torso of a desperate town – an amorphous mass which never had any organizing principle, no factory organization in a real sense, without a program or any rational work organization. So something new had to be created because there was nothing there and had never been anything to build on at all." These were remarks made by Nordhoff at the opening of a car show

in Switzerland in 1954 statements often repeated by him on many other occasions, he was not shy in praising his accomplishments in that respect. As an aside: At the same speech the car did not come out any better, that was time he remarked that the Volkswagen had more shortcomings than a dog had flies.

It must have hurt Hirst to hear all this selfaggrandizements by Nordhoff. After leaving Volkswagen Hirst was desperate to find a job and his attempts to find one with Volkswagen were rebuffed. Nordhoff would not even answer Hirst's mail. Hirst, always the English gentleman, for a long time never admitted that he had interest in a job at Volkswagen and was always very complimentary of Nordhoff. Eventually, many years after Nordhoff's death in 1968, he opened up during the interview with the above mentioned author Ralf Richter in 1997.

This is what he had to say after being asked in 1997 how Nordhoff had managed to turn Volkswagen into the motor of the "German Economic Miracle": "Yes that is how it is seen by the world perhaps. I think you could have put anybody in there; even a monkey and it would have had success. There was a huge factory, a labor force, a good management already in place, a car that would sell in huge numbers and demand existed all over the world for light cars, it could not fail even if you put the biggest fool you could find in charge, it would have still worked. When I say anybody, I mean anybody with reasonable management skills and an entrepreneurial sense"

There it is, I thought this to be very interesting information and a not a very well known. □

The Struggle to Replace the Beetle (8)

Porsche project 1966. Putting the Engine under the Rear Seat.

Like the TV personality Dr. Phil would say: "What were they thinking?" That is what someone should have asked Volkswagen's management to find out the reason they would on February 15 1969 give the OK to Porsche to develop a Beetle replacement with its water cooled engine and transaxle placed under the rear seat. According to Kurt Lotz, Nordhoff's successor, Carl Hahn who was in charge of VW sales and Ferry Porsche assumed that any Beetle replacement had to be unique because they believed that the reason VW was successful in the US was because of its uniqueness. Especially as far as its engine location was concerned and it also had to be a hatchback since the Beetle was a hatchback.

Before the above decision, Porsche had as early as July 2 1967 actually started to work on a project #1866, a prototype Beetle replacement. That one had a water



cooled engine in front and a transaxle at the rear. Apparently not unique enough because on June 6 1969 that one was cancelled and work proceeded on project 1966 with, the as mentioned, engine under the seat.

Regarding putting the engine in front, driving the front wheels, a layout becoming more and more popular, Ferry Porsche had convinced Volkswagen's management that this layout would create serious drivability problems because its torque would adversely affect the steering



and should not even be considered. Also this layout would result in a poor weight distribution. Strange arguments, since other manufacturers were already successfully using front wheel drive layouts, including Volkswagen's own Audi and NSU divisions.

At Porsche, Ferdinand Porsche's grandson, Ferdinand Piëch, the one who by many is considered the real Porsche among old Ferdinand's grandsons, 35 years old at the time, was head of RD and put in charge of designing the engine under seat Beetle replacement. The Porsche design progressed fast. It appeared that the 1972 intended introduction date could easily be managed. Production tools were ordered and suppliers lined up. 200 preproduction prototypes were built and tested.

However, during the testing a great number of problems became apparent. One was its drivability, having most of its weight too far back turned out to be too much to handle for the average driver. At the same time the front end, as it was designed, was too fragile and would not meet US safety regulations. The fuel tank was located at the front, not an ideal save location, a fact that already had been criticized about the Beetle. The noise created by the engine practically sitting inside the car was never completely overcome despite of almost completely encapsulating the engine. Another problem was the rear seat height. Sitting on top of the engine, rear passengers did not have enough headroom. It also was realized that it would be nearly impossible to eventually build a four door or a station wagon version, considered necessary for a modern car. It became obvious that servicing the engine would be a

nightmare too, having the engine completely encased. The oil level measuring stick alone was over 3 feet long. On top of all of this was the high manufacturing cost of such a complicated car. It was estimated that the car would have to be sold for 10,000 German Marks to make any money at all. The Super Beetle was selling for DM 6,000 at the time and losing money doing so.

All of this happened under Kurt Lotz the successor to Nordhoff, who soon realized that this car could not be the future for Volkswagen but did not want to stop the project because they needed a new car badly. It was decided to introduce it just as an interim higher priced car until something better and less costly would come along. Looking into the future he decided VW had to go to all front wheel drive, using Audi technology and bodies designed by the Italian designer Giorgio Giugiaro of Italdesign.

The engine under the seat car was cancelled by Lotz's successor Leiding, and instruction were given to destroy all prototypes. However at least two survived. One is at the VW Museum in Wolfsburg another one at the Porsche Museum in Stuttgart.

In a book published by Porsche, covering all Porsche VW prototypes; the Porsche people claimed that all effort to develop project #1966 was not wasted. "It just happened that this car was just at least 10 years ahead of its time and were going to save some prototypes until the day in the future when it will become relevant again." So they claimed.

That was 32 years ago, I am still waiting! ■

A Brief Sketch of Advertising

by Nick Swallow, 1984

Remember that ad back in about 1958-60, it was a picture of a Beetle and under it was one word, "Lemon!" What a great way to get your attention, what car company would call their car a lemon? The text goes on to say; This Volkswagen missed the boat. The chrome strip on the glove compartment is blemished and must be replaced. Chances are you wouldn't have noticed but Kurt Kroner did.

That's the kind of fun VW had with their ads back in those days, and that's what made it so big besides that fact that they made a great car.

Advertising is paid. It's a non-personal communication thorough various media by, business firms, nonprofit organizations, and individuals who are in some way identified in the advertising message. It is to inform or persuade members of a particular audience. It's function, communication of thought, of opinion, of ideas to other people.. to accelerate movement of goods and services from producer to consumer.

There are generally two types: Corporate Image, and Product.

The case for Corporate Image Adv. Have their cake and eat it too, while selling their product and achieving Image Objective.

Sometimes called "Corporate Breast Beating." *Vanity Press.*

Good image advertising has: Audience target aimed at people who count, people you want to do business with. Your clearly defined objectives tells what kind of company you are, and what it will mean to them. What are your buyer's looking for, technical excellence, advanced research & development, and progressive management.

Direct Action on problem areas; in problem area is defined ads can be aimed at the problem i.e.. Our



Lemon.

This Volkswagen missed the boat. The chrome strip on the glove compartment is blemished and must be replaced. Chances are you wouldn't have noticed it; Inspector Kurt Kroner did. There are 3,389 men at our Wolfsburg factory with only one job to inspect Volkswagens at each stage of production. 10,000 Volkswagens are produced daily; there are more inspectors than cars!

Every shock absorber is tested (spot checking won't do), every windshield is scanned. VW's have been rejected for surface scratches barely visible to the eye. Final inspection is really something! VW inspectors run each car off the line onto the Funktionsprüfstand (car test stand), tote up 189 check points, gun ahead to the automatic

break stand, and say "no" to one VW out of fifty. This preoccupation with detail means the VW lasts longer and requires less maintenance, by and large, than other cars. It also means a used VW depreciates less than any other car. We pluck the lemons; you get the plums.



The oldest reason in the world for buying a new one.

Meet Jim Frein, age 25. And his automobile, age 23. Now there's nothing unusual about a nice human being being 25. But you have to admit it's a bit unusual when a car is still running around at the ripe old age of 23. But then again, the car is a VW.

You see, in this age of "New, Now, Wow" automobiles, we spend very little time making our little car look better. (Obviously.) But we do spend a great deal of time making it work better. Each and every one of the 5,115 parts in the Volkswagen has been im-

proved and improved again since Jim's bug made its first journey back in '62. We, of course, mentioned this to him and suggested that maybe after 23 years, it was time he traded his old one in for a new one. "Don't call me, I'll call you," he said.



delivery situation is improved and our quality control in now excellent.

A case for product advertising. Corporate image not only simply proclaiming your superiority in a mass medium depends on: product does what it is supposed to, depends on whether sales does what they say they will, depends on whether the service department services the product as it says it will do. There is no substitute for performance! Sum total of product, sales, service, etc., will give the corporate image the company need where they need it.

Doyle, Dane & Bernbach decided to represent an “Honest Car.” Quality of materials, precautions to make mistakes, costly system of inspection and craftsmanship.

Softest of the soft sells, Never told you that you could not live without one, determinedly suggested you could live a bit more economically with one, hardly used adjectives like, linger, lower, wider, chick, beautiful, and best, but used those verboten like ugly, lemon and ugh!

Ads purpose: attract attention of those most likely to act on proposition being offered. Move readers emotionally and physically, consider guying and new funny looking car, discover where they are sold, and visit a show room.

Ads presentation: Rectangular Logo’s- produced well, centered headline – either, benefit – “One of the Nice Things About Owning it is Selling It.” Humorous – “38 Years Later, He Got The Bug.” Straight forward copy – more startling and believable, easy to read. Corporate signature – small logo; more friendly and avoid the hard sell.

Major segments of an advertisement. 1) Illustration: Contributor to an effective advertising in: Communicate relevant idea quickly and effectively. Attract attention of desired audience. Interest audience in headline copy. Communicate an idea that might be impossible or even offensive to say in words, & help make the ad more believable. Abandoned fanciful illustrations in favor of photo’s, almost all simple black/white pictures, usually without people, simplest backgrounds or none at all and no admiring females. 2) Headline: Function is to gain immediate attention, sometimes does job alone,

more often works hand in hand with the illustration or usual elements. Volkswagen ads make effective use of understatement in a headline. The headline and illustration work together. Without illustration the headline would have little meaning, without the headline, the picture merely portrays a Volkswagen. Opens the door to put reader in a receptive mood for what copy has to say. Always a headline beneath photo to convey, single there of message. Line always had a plain period behind it to suggest a simple, factual statement. 3) Copy: Amplification of the headline theme or the visualization. Whisk the reader along toward the advertisements ultimate goal by: arousing interest in proposition, providing believable information, impelling reader to see or try out the product or accept the image the write has presented. Straight forward, simple sentences subject, verb, object, person to person tone–writer talking to friend of equal intelligence and friendly straight forwardness and disarming truthfulness.

Theme was a natural simplicity—in; Layout, Illustration, copy, & type style. A car in itself!



AIR COOLED EXPRESS

Mike Carroll
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402-578-8100

aircooledexpress@gmail.com

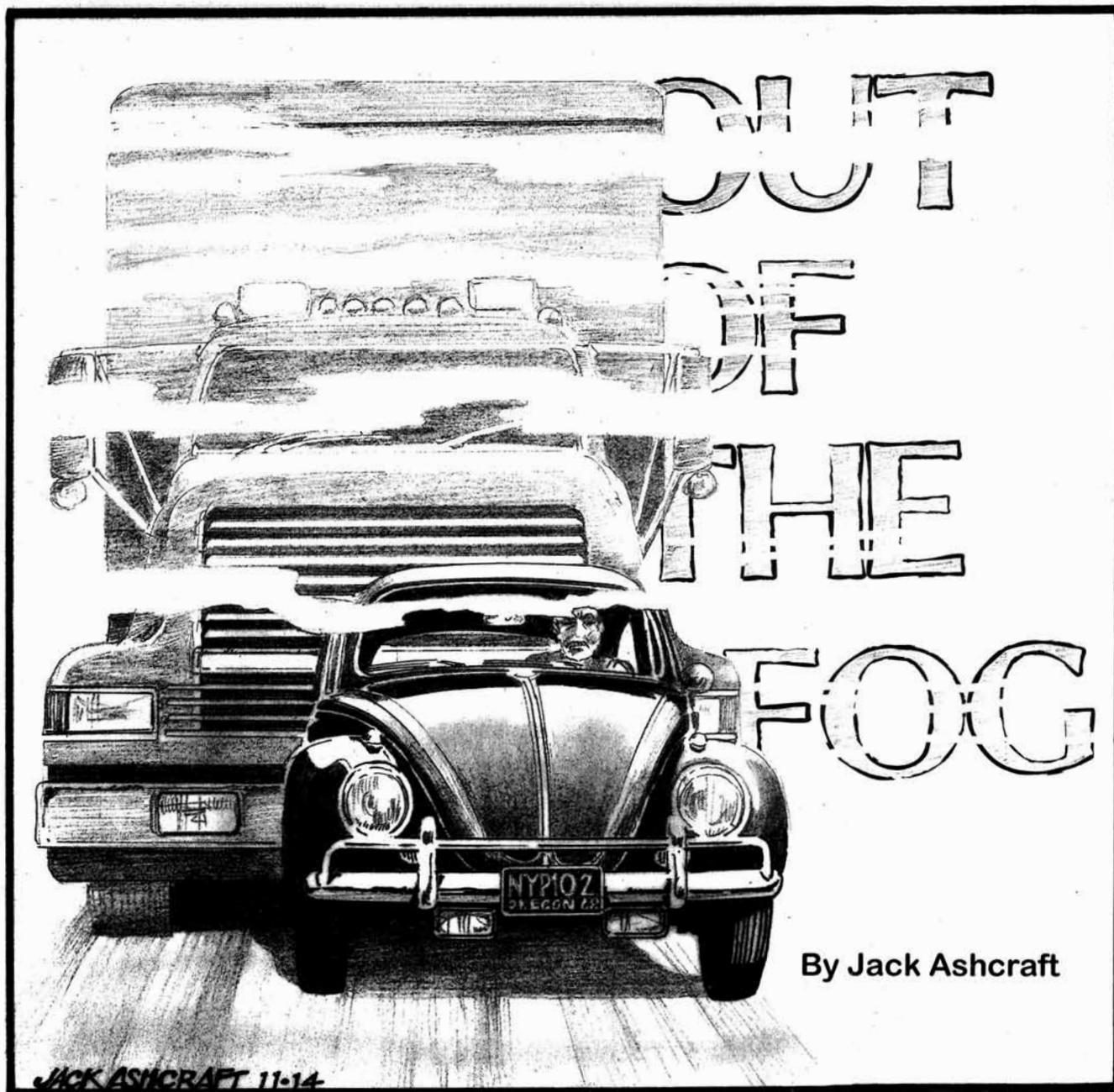
Personalized Care for your Air-Cooled Volkswagen



COMMON GEAR ANTIQUE VOLKSWAGEN SOCIETY

A VVCA AFFILIATE

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By Jack Ashcraft

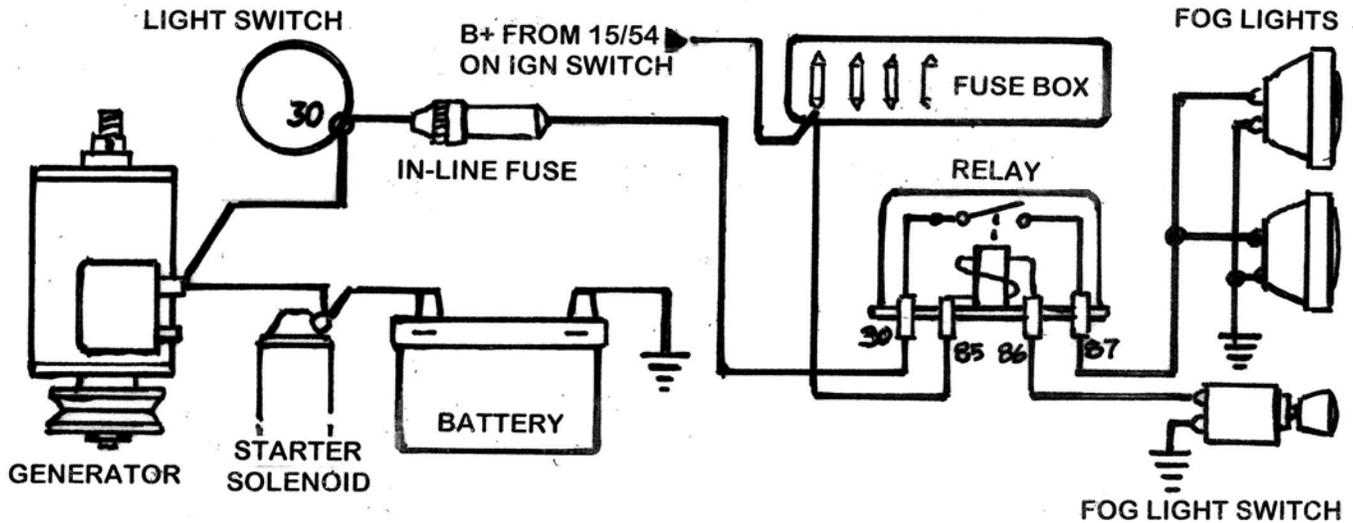
I have owned rather a large number of cars, most of them imported, even half a dozen or more Volkswagens. One thing nearly all of them had in common was FOG LIGHTS. A number of them, like my '60 Jaguar 3.8 Mk II, and several SAAB Rally cars also had high performance, high speed driving lights, but that's another story. I added fog lights to almost all of my VW's and that's the subject of this article.

I really didn't want to punch holes in the bumpers of these Wolfsburg Wonders, so I devised the mounting system shown. The fog lights need to be mounted low to have any affect in actual fog, so they need to go UNDER the bumper. I used two pieces cut from 2.5"

x 3/16" thick angle steel, plus two matching pieces of 3/16" thick strap. I clamped the angle and the strap together, drilled then primed and painted them, and simply bolted the mounts around the bumper braces. It was a simple matter to mount the fog light "upside down" in the mount. Fog lights produce a flat beam so they don't really care if they are right side up or not.

Wiring the lights correctly is fairly straightforward. The diagram shows the "hot" lead coming off Terminal 30 of the light switch. I always use a separate, in-line fuse, as shown. This prevents having to use a larger fuse in the fuse box to handle the load of the fog lights as well as the regular circuit. I figure

FOG LIGHT WIRING



if the fog light circuit pops its fuse for some reason, it won't affect any other user circuits.

I DO pull the RELAY CLOSING CURRENT from either Terminal 15/54 of the ignition switch or from the "hot" side of the first fuse in the fuse box, as shown. The voltage at this point is only available when the ignition switch is turned ON, so you can't forget and leave your fog lights on when you park the car, even if the fog light switch is left ON. The current necessary to close the relay is so miniscule it will have no affect on anything else in the car.

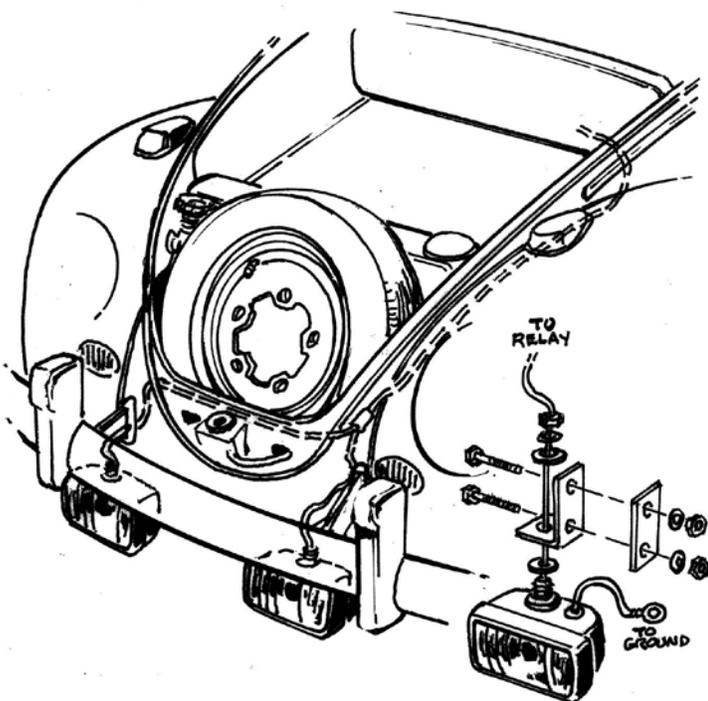
The relay shown in the diagram is just a typical four connector unit capable of carrying at least 30 amps. The connector numbers are shown in raised letters next to the connectors on underside of the relay. I use No 12 wires for the whole job. Your choice of wire colors.

I used a common VW Beetle style on-off switch and I mounted it between the light switch and the wiper switch on the instrument panel.

A note on GROUND for the fog lights: Since the fog light mounts and the bumper braces are PRIMED and PAINTED, they won't pass electrical current. I ran the ground wire for each fog light to a grounding screw inside the spare tire well on each side.

Aiming the fog lights is pretty simple. Park the car about 30 feet away from a flat, vertical surface--your garage door will work, assuming your driveway is level. Measure from the ground to the center of the fog light. Adjust the light so the center of the beam on the vertical surface measures the same. The proof of the pudding is out on the road, as always. Set the lights where they work best for you.

I've found, over the years, that fog lights are very good to have, and use, even in suburban driving because they light the SIDES of the road. On a dark, rainy night it is easy to miss a kid on a bike, an animal or even a pedestrian in dark clothing. Personally, I dislike the idea of hitting any of these critters. Fog lights can go a long way toward preventing such a sad event. ■





Revisiting Our Favorite Volkswagen: Herbie The Love Bug

Contributed by: Michael Epstein

“HERBIE GOES BANANAS”

Ten years after racing his way to stardom in “The Love Bug,” the highest grossing film of 1969, Herbie the free-wheeling Volkswagen bug returns to the big screen in his most a-peeling adventure, Walt Disney Productions’ “Herbie Goes Bananas.” Set against exotic central American locations, the internationally renowned car-star further demonstrates his special brand of car-isma and high-octane humor in this action-packed, stunt-filled comedy outing.

Joining Herbie in his fourth film are Cloris Leachman, Harvey Korman, Charles Martin Smith, John Vernon, Elyssa Davalos, Stephan Burns and Joaquin Garay III. Richard Jaeckel, Alex Rocco, Fritz Feld and Vito Scotti head up an impressive list of supporting characters

who provide additional laughter every turn of the way. To date, the three love bug comedies — “The Love Bug” (1969), “Herbie Rides Again” (1974) and “Herbie Goes to Monte Carlo” (1977) — have grossed in excess of \$200 million in worldwide box office figures, thus qualifying the series as one of the most successful in the history of motion pictures. In addition, the films have established Herbie as an international celebrity.

To ensure an authentic Latin American flavor, much of the action in “Herbie Goes Bananas” was shot on location in the beautiful Mexican resort cities of Puerto Vallarta and Guadalajara. Second unit cameras and a fleet of 26 specially equipped Volkswagen bugs traveled to Tijuana, Mexico, and the Panama Canal Zone to record some of the film’s complex stunt work.

In his latest adventure, Herbie gets into some outlandish new predicaments when he sets sail for Rio's Grande Premio racing competition with his two new owners. En route they get sidetracked by a smuggling syndicate, pestered by a pint-sized Mexican pickpocket and bullied by a raging bull. But, in his inimitable fashion, Herbie rises to the occasion.

In color by Technicolor, "Herbie Goes Bananas" was directed by Vincent McEveety for producer Ron Miller. Don Tait, who also wrote the original screenplay, served as co-producer along with Kevin Corcoran. Buena Vista distributes this fast-paced comedy.

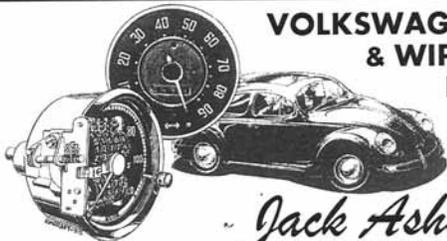
SPECIAL EFFECTS

In "Herbie Goes Bananas," the love bug is up to his old tricks --and some new ones as well. For example, in one scene, Herbie finds himself in the middle of a bullring confronted by a raging bull. The car shifts for itself and immediately assumes the role of the matador by rearing up on his back wheels, pirouetting and allowing the bull to pass. In another scene, Herbie attacks a taxiing plane -- dogfight fashion -- as it moves down the runway.

For every mechanical maneuver Herbie makes on the screen, Disney expert team of special effects technicians must labor weeks or month in advance, meticulously storyboarding each move. Oscar-winner Danny Lee heads up the studio's mechanical effects department and he is the one entrusted with the task of making the screenwriter's visions spring to life in a believable manner. In addition to supervising effects on all four of the "Love Bug" films, Lee's long list of credits includes "It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World," "Bonnie & Clyde," "The Great Race," "Mary Poppins" and "Bedknobs and Broomsticks."

"In our business, there's no such thing as impossible," Lee explains. "There's nothing we can't do given the proper time and budget."

That doesn't mean that there aren't a lot of headaches in Lee's line of work. No sooner did he finish building a detailed army of robots and miniature spacecraft for Disney's deep-space adventure, "The Black Hole," than he received orders to begin reconditioning 2 beat up VW Bugs and three Cessna Centurian airplanes for "Herbie Goes Bananas."



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For Lee, “Herbie Goes Bananas” was the most difficult of the “Love Bug” films to work on. The quantity and complexity of the stunts called for in the script, made this particular assignment the equivalent of three.

THE HERBIE STORY—AN AUTO-BIOGRAPHY

From the very beginning, Herbie was no ordinary car. Aside from a physical resemblance to his assembly line counterparts, this 1963 sunroof model Volkswagen bug with the red, white and blue racing stripes and the number 53 (Dodger’s veteran Don Drysdale was his number-sake) painted on his side was clearly one car in a million.

It wasn’t until he arrived in the states and met pro driver Jim Douglas (DEAN JONES) and his meditating mechanic Tennessee Steinmetz (BUDDY HACKET) in 1969, that things really began to happen for Herbie. The little car knew a good master when he saw one and followed Jim home. From that point on, Herbie’s pistons began to throb with every human emotion. It was also at this time that Herbie deservedly earned the title “Love Bug” when he became the main thrust behind Jim’s romance with Carole Bennett (MICHELE LEE). As a team, Herbie and Jim were unbeatable and

the car racked up its first racing victory in a highly competitive cross-country race.

Tennessee’s grandmother (HELEN HAYES) became Herbie’s next owner in 1974. The little car joined forces with the feisty old woman to prevent building magnate Alonzo Hawk (KEENAN WYNN) from tearing down her funky San Francisco firehouse and putting up the world’s tallest office building. Herbie and a fleet of driverless VWs took on Hawk’s bulldozers and steam shovels to save the day. The love bug also managed to bring together another happy couple—Grandma Steinmetz’s boarder (STEPHANIE POWERS) and Alonzo’s nephew (KEN BERRY).

In 1977, Herbie was reunited with former owner Jim Douglas to compete in the prestigious Monte Carlo Grand Prix. On his way to winning first prize, Herbie fell hood over wheels in love with a lovely Lancia named Giselle, engineered a new romance between Jim and Giselle’s owner (JULIE SOMMARS), and foiled an international jewel-smuggling ring.

That same year, Herbie became the first automobile to place his tracks in cement in front of Hollywood’s famed Chinese Theatre.

In “Herbie Goes Bananas,” possession of Herbie passes to Jim’s nephew, Pete Stancheck (STEPHAN BURNS) and his partner Davie Johns (CHARLES MARTIN SMITH).

The popular car-star resides in Burbank when he is not on location, where he enjoys such leisure time activities as attending drive-in movies. His favorite restaurant is the automat. ■

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How close are you to your VW?

By: Peter and Terri Triandafillou trian@myfairpoint.net

That may sound like a loaded question, but it's worth some thought. Those of us that own and love old VWs are the keepers of an ever aging fleet of vehicles, and there are fewer of them out there every year. Indeed, in the salt laden roads of northern New England where I live, old VWs are rare. You would not believe the number of people who cannot identify my '72 Ghia.

All cars need repair and maintenance, and as these beloved VWs age, they need special attention. How much of the work should we do ourselves? This is obviously an individual and personal decision, and the amount of work we do is the product of many considerations, including competence, time, budget and enjoyment.

There are VW owners with a high level of competence who love working on their cars. For many of them, having any work done at a professional shop is a shameful admission of defeat. At the other end of the spectrum, there are owners who love to drive their cars, but who have no interest in ever picking up a wrench. There's nothing wrong with either approach, but I would argue that it's a very good idea for all of us to get our hands a bit greasy with some basic maintenance.

When I was a starving student, I did just about every job on my VWs, from oil changes to rebuilding engines. I like working with my hands, but the primary reason I did so much mechanical work was that I didn't have enough money left over after buying fuel for the VW and groceries and beer for me to pay someone to fix my car.

Fortunately, my financial situation is more flexible today, and I don't have to do every job on my Ghia. When I took it out of storage last spring, I found that the master cylinder was leaking. I've replaced one before, but it was a knuckle busting job under the car that required bleeding the entire system, one wheel at a

time. Unless you have a special setup, it also requires a volunteer to pump the brake pedal. I opted to have job done at a shop.

However, doing basic maintenance accomplishes three very important things: it keeps the car running properly, it gives you a chance to look for potential problems, and it makes you much more aware of how your beloved VW is feeling than simply driving it. I still change my oil, adjust the valves and do tune ups. I agree with the late, great John Muir, who wrote, "No one has enough money anywhere ... to not set their own valves on their own Volkswagen!" Often praised, and sometimes mocked and criticized, *How To Keep Your Volkswagen Alive* has taken many, including me, from wrench neophyte to competent mechanic. If you don't have a copy, get one, and read all of it. You will learn useful things, and get more than a few chuckles out of it.

When you adjust valves, take the time to look around the rocker arm assembly. Does anything look odd, or odder than those slanted levers look already? Look all around the bottom of the engine and transmission. Are there any mysterious or worrisome drips? Odds are the car drips some oil, but it shouldn't be a flood. How do the push rod tubes look? You don't want to see dents or cracks. For "newer," i.e. post mid-60s, VWs, shine a light at the rubber boots on each end of the rear axles.

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A cut or crack will let in dirt and moisture, which will quickly destroy a constant velocity joint. Spot this in time and you can have a shop replace the boot for a lot less money and trouble than a new axle.

When you change the oil, look in the screen for chunks of metal – this is obviously cause for alarm, and you might catch something before your engine throws itself to pieces. Does the waste oil smell and look the same as the last time you did the job?

When you make tune up adjustments, look all around the engine compartment. Are all the wires tidy and properly connected? Wires that are frayed or have broken insulation are an invitation for trouble. Start the car when it's dark and carefully look at it running. I did that years ago and found sparks flying off the spark plug wires to the car's body. Not only was that a huge fire risk, it certainly wasn't helping the car's performance. Amazingly, I couldn't tell anything was amiss while driving. Take some time to learn your VW's

wiring system. It's pretty simple, but minor problems can disable the car. If you've made yourself familiar with the fuse panel and the basic circuits, you're a step ahead if your vehicle quits on a lonely road.

Unless your car is your primary vehicle, you probably need to do this work only once or twice a year. It will take a few hours, but it will yield a lot of benefit. You'll be better prepared when trouble strikes, and, more importantly, all your senses will be more in tune with your VW. You'll more likely notice a change in sound, feeling or smell that will alert you to possible trouble before it happens – like before you're halfway to a VW show a couple of states away.

Not all of us are destined to be master mechanics, but most of us can do basic maintenance. Getting a little greasy can be a great source of pride, and you'll be closer and more in touch with your VW. Isn't that part of the reason we own and love them? ■

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VVWCA Newsletters from 76–81 and 84–87 so I can make a comprehensive history of the VVWCA for our website. Would be willing to pay all shipping costs. Contact me at vwvca@att.net or 913-831-6225. My address is also listed under the Chapter Reps for the state of Kansas on our website. Thank you, Mike Epstein.

Looking for a 1957 Speedometer or repair shop? I can be reached at: Rodney Sweet, 259 Godfrey Road, Mystic, CT 06355. rodcsweet@att.net

As I was doing some organizing of my VW library, I have found I am missing some back issues of the Vintage Voice to include: Mar./Apr., Sept./Oct., and Nov./Dec. for the year 2011. If you have these issues and would care to part with them, I would be more than willing to offer reimbursement for shipping. Thank you, Steve Briscoe, 1111 South Coast Dr, Unit E-102, Costa Mesa, Calif. 92626.

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A LESSON LEARNED....

Just got the bill to repair this engine!

A Vintage STOCK Volkswagen ENGINE— TO MODIFY OR NOT!

by Larry Kabrick

This story focuses on the age old question, “Do I take a pristine, problem-free, stock Volkswagen engine and “modify it” (even slightly) to produce the desired outcome of a bit more power?” I’m going to save you the trouble of reading thru to the end of this article. THE ANSWER IS NO! In case you didn’t get it, please allow me to repeat—do NOT EVER take a stock engine (VW or otherwise) that adds to the vehicle’s overall “prominence” and “soup it up” unless either the engine has existing issues, is blown, or you just don’t give a darn about your vintage Volkswagen’s true market collectibility. I would guess that, for most of us, the last statement is not the case. We all want our classic cruiser to be as desirable as possible and would not want to do anything that would decrease the overall value and future worth.

Be that as it may, let me tell you my story. I purchased my 1979 Volkswagen Beetle convertible back in 1991, sight unseen, based on a stack of Polaroid pictures. The point is, this was the one VW I had always wanted..... the last of the German-made Beetles and moreover a convertible which I had passionately desired for a long time. What I would discover, after purchasing this wonderful little car was that it had only about 30,000 miles on it. The owner had purchased it from his daughter who bought it new in Texas. He had driven it very little which was the motivation for him to part with it. For the first couple of years, I enjoyed the Beetle driving it all around and having a great time, knowing that eventually, I wanted to do a restoration, mainly due to the desire to do the body and interior over as a result of spending its prior ownership in the deep, hot, southern states (Texas and Florida).

Fast forward to early 1993 when I decided I would give the vehicle a full restoration. What that entailed was taking the engine out, completing stripping out the interior and having the body redone. For what it’s

worth, there wasn’t a patch of rust anywhere on this car. I strictly had the desire to restore this car to the pristine condition it was in after rolling off the factory assembly line back in 1979, AND A LITTLE EXTRA!

I’m going to focus on the engine only in this story, during the time I had begun the restoration and made the decision that I wanted to rebuild the engine, I connected up with a small engine rebuilder, Tom LeDuc. Tom came very highly recommended to me from a follow club member (mistake #1—should have asked this particular member exactly what level of work that Mr. LeDuc had completed for him. I would have discovered that it was very little). Tom had a full time job and did engine rework jobs in his free time out of his own garage. In the end, I “allowed” Tom to talk me into not only rebuilding my stock 1600 cc Volkswagen (fuel injected) but also “modifying it” by beefing it up to the “next” size up which would be 1776 cc. He explained that it would give me a nice balance of increased power and performance that I would feel instantly. Unfortunately, due to my lack of experience and having never rebuilt any engine in my life, I bought into all of this without so much as questioning anything. I put my full trust into this gentleman based on nothing more than one referral and my “feeling” that I liked this guy. He was a big Volkswagen fan, but was more focused into VW powered “sand rails” and buggies versus true “vintage” restorations. THIS, in and of itself should have been a HUGE red flag for me but it was not. Furthermore, the fact that he admittedly knew NOTHING about the Volkswagen fuel injection system, with which I was adamant in maintaining in order to preserve the “stock” feel of this car when strongly suggested converting to carburetion SHOULD have raised yet ANOTHER HUGE red flag to me.....but again, it did not. And finally, the fact that he did NOT suggest to me, based on the fact that there was absolutely NOTHING mechanically

wrong with this engine and my desire to keep this car predominately stock, that I do NOT attempt any modifications and simply kept the original stock engine in tact should have been the FINAL RED flag that SHOULD have sent me looking elsewhere (like the source I wound up taking it to last year to correct all my mistakes!).HOWEVER, I was blinded to all of these clear indicators that I chose to ignore as I was so “GEEKED” about having this totally “COOL” engine that would make my little Volkswagen stand out from all the others. SO, I gave him the ok to proceed and I stepped back as he went “shopping” at my expense to perform all of the key modifications highlighted below.

As an aside, please take note of one VERY important detail that I’m going to include in this article that very few do—I always find it humorous how “guarded” that many folks seem to be with respect to telling you how MUCH \$\$\$\$ they’ve spent on their classic cars (or any hobby of this nature for that matter). They’re always the first to tell you when they’ve SAVED a buck but never to tell you how much they’ve spent in that restoration project. How can anyone ever learn if you don’t see the WHOLE picture? I don’t consider these numbers to be “taboo,” quite the contrary. I’m going to let you know how much has been spent as this is all part of my learning from my mistakes as well as YOU ALL gaining a better understanding, so here goes.

Here is the listing of the modifications done to my original STOCK Volkswagen 1600 cc engine by Tom Leduc (of Westland, MI—during the spring/summer of 1993):

- Tumble block (for cleaning and application of clearcoat paint)
- Align Bore Block
- Bore Block for 90.5 mm cylinders and qualify deck
- Cut Lifter Bores for cam clearance
- Full Flow Block and Pump ADDED (w/ fittings)
- 8-Pin crank and flywheel (w/ Pins)
- Reface Flywheel
- Recondition Rods
- Polish Crank
- Dual Trust Cam Bearings
- Rod Bearings
- Main Bearings
- Piston and Cylinder Kit (90.5 mm forged CIMAS)
- .040 HEADS (Opened for 90.5 mm, new head springs; Chrome Moly Retainers; Hardened Locks & TRW Valves.)

- NEW CAM- ENGLE 110 CAM (Valve Lift—430; Running Duration—284; Cold Valve Lash---004)— add’tl info –Intake opens 19 BTDC; Intake Closes 48 after BDC; Exhaust opens @ 55 before BDC; Exhaust Closes @ 12 after TDC.
- Cam Gear with bolts
- OEM German lifters
- Swivel feet Rocker Adjusters
- Solid Rocker Shaft Kit
- High Volume Oil Pump (30 mm)
- Oil Pressure Boost Kit
- (8) Push Rod Tubes
- Oil Pump Cover
- Oil Screen
- Oil Screen cover with drain plug
- Silicone Flywheel seal
- Gaskets
- .009 Distributor
- Solid Power Pulley with seal and chrome bolt
- Chrome Alternator pulley and nut
- Chrome Alternator Back Splash
- Chrome Valve Covers (SCAT)
- New belt
- DAIKEN Woven Clutch Disc
- Kennedy 1700 lb Pressure Plate
- Ignition wire set (8 mm silicone)
- Paint accessories & misc. (primer, thinner, hardener)
- Labor—disassembly, clean, prep, measure, paint, detail, pickup and delivery

TOTAL OF ALL ENGINE WORK ABOVE (parts AND labor): \$1,700.00

Keep in mind that all of this was done to an engine that had absolutely NO issues at all AND the original fuel injection system was to be retained—BIG mistake! On top of that, the HUGE error I made in this engine project was to NOT have put a major clause in the agreement that if this new engine did not start and run flawlessly that there would be NO payments made. THIS ALONE WAS ONE OF THE KEY AGREEMENTS THAT I CAN’T BELIEVE I DIDN’T SECURE!

Be that as it may, by the time I was done with the ENTIRE restoration on a Convertible Beetle that I had PAID \$5,000 for plus \$400 shipping from Florida, I had amassed a total additional outlay of \$8,100. Note that this restoration included the engine work above, body and interior restoration. Nothing was done with the undercarriage/suspension. THUS, the total “invested” into my little Beetle was now \$13,500.

I must also note that from the time we re-installed the engine and attempted to start my “cool” modified engine, it NEVER ran right. I just couldn’t get it to run correctly and eventually wound up taking it a “magician” of sorts known as “Chet the Jet” who kept it for a week and “modified” the fuel curve within the fuel injection system to get it to actually run. Little did I realize then that I should NEVER have touched this engine with all the modifications above and in fact since I had gone the depth I had, the fuel injection should also have been removed and stored. You see, I had wound up doing what I was against from the start----taking a beautiful stock engine and modifying it to the point that this was no longer the “pure stock” vehicle I had wanted. Ultimately, I have absolutely no one to blame by the guy in mirror!

Going forward, although I would say that my Beetle was used “sparingly” each season, I continued spending MORE and MORE on my “new” modified engine with NEVER ran correctly. I never felt confident enough to take it on a 5 hour trip without being concerned that it would leave me stranded out in the middle of nowhere.

More specifically, from 1992 thru 2011, I continued taking it back for engine issues, thus adding a total of \$3,100, most of it attributed to “investments” made at Steve’s European Automotive in Waterford to my bottom line. But don’t misunderstand me, my engine problems were not the fault of Steve and his crew. They merely tried to help me resolve the symptoms that had occurred as the result of an engine restoration gone wrong. Unfortunately, none of us really knew how much was going on “inside” my modified engine. I had known of Steve’s for a long time thru my involvement with Volkswagens and have always valued the shop’s expertise so they were the first ones I usually selected to help with my latest “challenges.”

SO now, here we are to 2012 and our 25th Annual Michigan Vintage Volkswagen Festival in May 2012. I took my little Beetle out of hibernation and joined in the 3 hour cruise from Ypsilanti out to Hell, MI and back on the Saturday before our big show. Had a wonderful time but when I returned home that evening, I couldn’t help but hear an extremely loud “rattling” noise that sounded like an exhaust leak to me. Of course I wasn’t about to let this keep me from returning the next day for the big Festival but following that, I brought it to my local VW

mechanic to check out my concern. What completely BAFFLED me (and was the final straw with this individual) was that he verified it was, in fact, not an exhaust leak but an INTERNAL rattling. He suggested (and was correct) that the camshaft was coming loose. The engine HAD to be disassembled which was the LAST thing I wanted to hear. What STUNNED me was that despite, this diagnosis, a mechanic I thought I trusted STILL had the audacity to change the engine oil, perform a valve adjustment and CHARGE me \$140 for services that would turn out to be a complete waste of time and money as this engine had to be opened up!

Needless to say, I decided NOT to wait for him to squeeze me into his schedule and with the truly limited amount of folks remaining to work on these cars, I made the decision to bring it back to Steve’s European for a 2nd opinion.

As I did not want to take any further chances, I had my Beetle flatbedded from my home in Farmington Hills to Steve’s in Waterford. My exact words on the diagnosis were “There is a noise coming out of the engine. My mechanic thinks that it’s the camshaft.” For information purposes, it was late Sept, early October 2012 when I finally brought the car in for service.

Next are the technician’s input confirming the engine problems:

“Would not start outside (perhaps cold start valve system?)-battery started to get low. Pushed into shop, connected to charger, after a few minutes, engine fired right up. Engine was running on fast idle (auxiliary air regulator), then went to lower speed and started to make noise. Shut off. Restarted and found at above idle, cannot hear noise, like with lower speed/lower oil pressure, noise will occur. Sounds like lower end noise. Removed spark plugs and used borescope in cylinders—did not see any problems (#1 plug was loose). Rocked crankshaft back and forth, could not detect any play in rods/pistons. Removed oil strainer—inspected for metal particles—has sludge type material on strainer plate but oil looks new (YES, indeed it was new, remember I stated that my little mechanic has changed it and adjusted my valves AND charged me \$140 for the service. Seems that he must have been just TOO busy to take some extra care and do the little things like clean out the strainer!!!!?) It’s difficult to say if strainer was cleaned at last

oil change or sludge is from a part that is wearing prematurely. Looking into crankcase between case and strainer, can see back side of camshaft thrust, appears there is no thrust edge left on cam bearing.”

AND now, let me add to the items stated above that were discovered upon removal and disassembly of my engine:

- Disassembled engine and discovered that some fuel hoses are not actual fuel hose—appear to be vacuum hose.
- Oil relief plug at flywheel end has damaged threads. Ran tap into the threads in both relief holes and the threads appear to be ok.
- Oil pump had tapered bolts instead of studs. Lower right hole is damaged, ran tap in hole, will have to install studs and one insert.
- Oil pump housing is scored very badly—some metal has gone through gears—will need new pump. (Note—has add-on remote oil filter)
- Removed aftermarket crank pulley—has aftermarket bolt for pulley—had Loctite on bolt and on crankshaft surface for pulley—had aftermarket seal installed for pulley. This seal required a piece to be installed into case/sleeve for seal to be pressed into—something happened that caused seal and sleeve to spin with pulley, enlarging the hole for the sleeve. Will have to research to determine if case can be repaired or will have to be replaced. Either way, recommend stock type crank pulley.
- Crankshaft drive gear for camshaft is blue colored—appears to have been VERY hot.
- Camshaft gear and crank gear have some nicks in gear teeth—appears that some metallic material has gone through the gears.
- Has aftermarket cam and gear—gear is bolted to cam—gear is moving on shaft—will need new gear.
- Checked ring end gap on #1 cylinder, end gap on upper ring is 1.56 mm, spec is 0.90 mm. Will need to replace pistons and cylinders.
- With the material going through the oil pump and cam/crank gears, recommend replacing rod, main, and cam bearings.

HOW’S THAT FOR A SHOPPING LIST? Can you say Larry made a HUGE mistake in trusting a man named Tom LeDuc who promised the world and delivered an engine that destroyed itself? Again, I have ONLY myself to blame but these are the lessons YOU, the reader, would be wise to take to heart as well!

SO, now let me tell you how things turned out (there is a happy ending, but not without a price tag!) I must commend Steve Fowler and his team as they really did do everything in their power to present me with every conceivable option. To that end, the options below were presented to me (along with the CONS) of each, and again, I do this for YOUR benefit, I’ve learned my lessons after this!

Option #1 Repair existing engine and keep the fuel injection system installed. Total Cost: \$4,247
Con: we cannot guarantee that the engine will run exactly the same way that a completely stock engine would. (Steve made multiple calls to VW aficionados out west and NO ONE had ever heard of modifying a fuel-injected engine AND keeping the fuel injection system designed by Volkswagen).

Option #2 Repair the existing engine and convert to carburetor . Total Cost: \$5,007
Con: I would still have my original engine but no fuel injection which could detract from the overall value—but then again, given the current condition of my engine, the value was already damaged. Increased fuel consumption and decreased gas mileage most likely would result. Carbureted engine would be more “finicky” versus precisely metered fuel.

Option #3 INSTALL Remanufactured STOCK Fuel-Injected Long Block, using OEM vintage block from Steve Fowler’s private inventory (becoming more and more extinct with the passage of time). Total Cost: \$4,812

ALL PROS—Absolutely NO CONS—I would ultimately be BACK to the original engine that was designed for this Beetle (with the exception that it would not be MY original powerplant). It would still be from a late 1970s Beetle like my own. Since my old block would be in demand, there would be an ADDED \$350 core charge (included in the \$4,812 quoted above) if I chose to keep my OEM block. There would be no question as to how this engine would perform and it would be fully supported by Steve and his crew.

Well, my friends, the END of this story is that I made the decision (as painful as ALL 3 of these options were to choose from) to proceed with Option #3 from the perspective that I wanted my 1979 Beetle back the way it SHOULD have been from Volkswagen

originally. I also decided that it was worth the \$350 to have my entire original power plant with my goal being to eventually rebuild this one to the TRUE modified engine it should have been originally, carburetor and all! Whatever I wind up doing with this car, both of these engines will be included as a package. I honestly do not expect to EVER have any engine issues like those described above again with this Beetle and consider the financial “bloodletting” of this engine to be behind me.

Although, in no way, shape or form, did I have the funds to cover this “unexpected” expense and I could easily have made the choice to sell my Beetle rather than throw more \$ into it, I’ve resigned to the fact that there is too much good memories tied up in this one to not correct my mistakes once and for all moving forward to bigger and better things!

I now have a vintage Volkswagen that I would have 100% confidence in driving to the Mackinaw Island Bridge or California! That piece of mind alone is worth it all.

More importantly, I can honestly say that I have learned my lesson here. The moral of this story is first of all, DO AS I SAY AND NOT AS I DID! If you have an original stock engine with out problems, you would be wise to keep it that way. Should you have the “bug” to desire a modified engine, do the right thing and BUY A DONOR ENGINE TO PLAY WITH!

So, let’s do the math: after this experience, I now have almost \$20,000 into my little pride and joy, which I justify by stating that it’s still SIGNIFICANTLY less than the esteemed gentleman who walked away from the 2013 Barrett-Jackson Scottsdale, AZ auction paying \$4.6 Million (plus 10% commission—or \$460,000) for the ONLY original 1960s Batmobile!

LEARN from my experience! ■

“Former” President-Michigan Vintage Volkswagen Club, Larry Kabrick, info@mvmvc.net

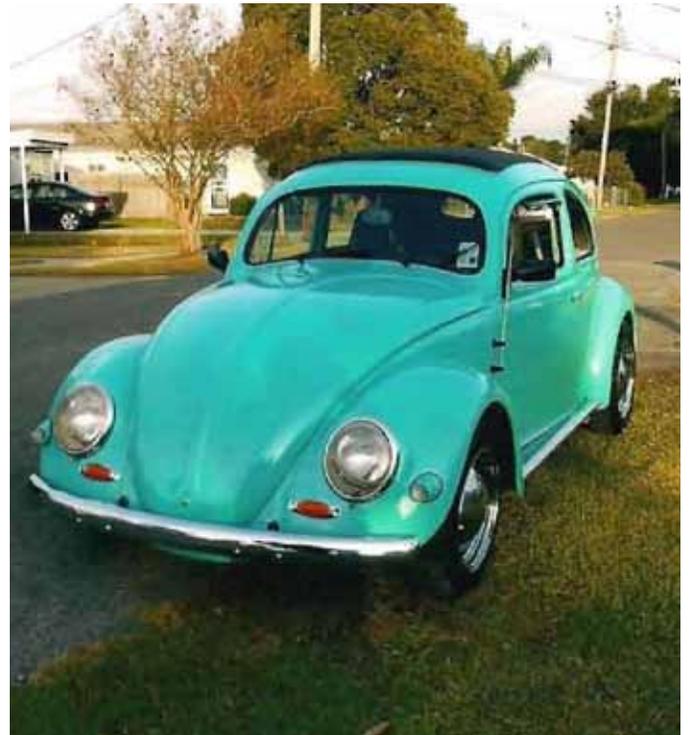
Letters

Hi Howard,

Here are recent pictures of my ‘55 sunroof Bug which I have owned since 1969. I got this bug when I was dating my wife and have racked up 460,000 miles on the body. Basically this was my main vehicle for 40 years; I have been to car shows all over the south from Florida to Texas. Also I commuted 50 miles a day to my teaching job for 30 years in this car. It only broke down once—on a VW cruise—because of a Chinese fuel pump.

I am not allowed to bring home any more trophies—the ‘NO DUST ‘ rule is in full force. The interior is real black naugahyde in diamond tuck. The taillights are from a ‘53 Zwitter and have the original heart lenses. This bug was a Baja which had a Porsche engine in it in the ‘70s. But I restored it as a Cal look vehicle back in the ‘80s. I am on a brand new 1600 cc Super Beetle engine (the fourth engine) and the third transmission. The car was repainted by me last month (I do all my own work). No plans to ever sell this one. ■

Barry Z from Metairie



My Life with Beetles

by Milford Brown

The green Crosley station wagon in the first picture might seem an improbable introduction to a life of VW Beetle ownership. It was acquired in 1952 for \$200 when my parents bought a new house too far from the University of Delaware campus to be reached on foot or bicycle as had been my habit. It shared a major old Beetle problem—its floors were so badly rusted that my dad and I had to replace them with new ones made to his patterns by a local sheet metal shop. At some point, problems with its somewhat unique 750 cc engine meant that it, along with the transmission, had to be removed for major renovation.

Among other things, I discovered that its distributor was so dirty that it was incapable of the intended advance and retard movements. We never managed a cure for the rather inadequate latching of the rear doors that allowed them to rattle with every bump. Despite those complications, surviving with it as my daily driver to campus for the next two years, at the time when almost all US auto makers were going to bigger, chromium, more powerful cars showed me that an alternative to all of those automotive trends of the day could be not only acceptable, but also fun.



My current Beetle in its original color, bringing home a Christmas tree.



My current Beetle as it is now, and no, the house across the street isn't leaning, the street goes up at a 10% slope.



The Crosley station wagon, my introduction to small cars.

The purchase of my first Beetle was quite unlike the experience of most VW owners, however. I had been given a ride in the only Beetle in our large housing development, and found it was not only unique, but very well made, and provided a much better ride than my Crosley. A short time later, a neighbor who worked for Dupont Company in Wilmington, Del. told me about being offered a

Beetle to drive for the day on company business, and he also mentioned that it would probably be for sale at the imported car shop owned by some of the younger members of the Dupont family. With encouragement from my mother, who never considered the Crosley a very satisfactory vehicle (apologies to those who are still keeping Crosleys running); we made the short trip to Wilmington and bought that unique vehicle - a year-old 1953 Zwitter (the version still with the 2-piece rear window, but new dash, etc.). As I drove it back to Newark (Del.), I felt like I had graduated to a limousine, so much better and quieter was the ride. It had cost me the Crosley as a \$100 trade-in, plus \$900, which was half of my pay for the year as a new graduate student teaching assistant. Fortunately I was still living at my parents' home with free room and board, and my mother was much happier about my new transportation.

Two years later I continued my education at Penn State University, which was said to be in the exact geographic center of the state of Pennsylvania, equally inaccessible from all points (so as not to distract students with "city life" at 3 of the 4 corners of the state). The several-hour drive to and from home for holidays and vacations was a much more pleasant one than the Crosley would have provided. For the next four years, while my "home" was a rented room in the home of a faculty widow, the Beetle was fortunate to have a garage in the basement of a neighbor's house, sharing that space with the bicycle that provided my daily transport to classes, because the university provided only very distant parking for students' cars. The Beetle usually got out only on weekends and an occasional weekday evening for various local travels. In the winter, I never had chains, but did carry a shovel on a very few occasions. It proved its ability to cope with snow on several occasions, one of which involved stopping by steering the right side into the snow piled there by an earlier plowing when I suddenly came upon a section of the street coated with ice. Fortunately I remembered that it was necessary to take my foot off the brake pedal first so that the front wheels would roll, because sliding tires don't steer, as many people have found out during this winter.

At some point, I became concerned that the driver of a following car might not see the little "heart-shape" brake lights, so made new sheet metal taillight assemblies with an oval of clear plastic in which I glued two red truck marker light lenses - one as the



One of the window openings (glass out) with a long row of little binder-clips holding the new interior fabric while its glue dried.

taillight and the other the brake light, somewhat the horizontal equivalent of the vertical lights of some US car (Buick?) of the time (did any reader ever encounter those?).

During my years there (second half of the 1950s), State College, Pa. had only one repair shop for all of the relatively few imported cars in town. After seeing my D-I-Y lights with the pair of conical lenses, the shop owner frequently commented on my "sexy taillights." Being a sub-poverty-level student, when the original fiber timing gear of the 25 hp engine began to deteriorate, I decided that, having earlier successfully "dissected" the engine of the Crosley that preceded it, I could undertake the timing gear replacement myself. With some help from that shop to remove the engine, and from a friend who provided transport for it in the trunk of his late-1930s Mercury coupe back to my garage, I followed the instructions in my copy of Floyd Clymer's book. Because of VW's disapproval of "untrained" mechanics working on their products, the introduction of the book began with the cautionary note that it was to acquaint the reader with how complex your new car is, so be sure to have any work done by a properly-trained mechanic. Obviously the Germans did not appreciate the capabilities of U.S. amateur automotive tinkerers. All went well, and after graduation, it took me and another friend to New Mexico, where my parents had moved while I was a "temporary Pennsylvanian." Oddly enough, the motor vehicle office in Alamogordo had given me New Mexico license plates for it during one of my holiday visits by airline, in spite of never seeing the car! That Beetle had a number of features that might not have passed Pennsylvania's vehicle requirements of the day when my Delaware plates expired, although one of my professors had an even earlier model. However, I had no interest in dealing with the possible complications of my temporary home state.

My next destination was in California, and to go there from New Mexico, my dad traded me his '56 Beetle (which became my #2) for my '53, on the excuse that by 1960, the '53 must be getting a bit old. I wonder what he would think about a 52-year-old one as my daily-driver now? I think he actually wanted mine as his commute car so he could use its age as an excuse to buy a new Beetle for himself and my mother to use for their other travels. After a year in California, I had saved enough from my increased income to buy a new Beetle (#3) from the Sacramento dealer - one from the first boatload of 1962s - and shortly thereafter, returned the '56 Beetle to New Mexico. My dad then sold the '53 to a coworker, and I never heard any more about it. My new '62 lasted through a move to a permanent job in the San Francisco Bay Area (Berkeley and vicinity), its acquisition of my new wife as its second driver, moves to several new homes, the chores of bringing home such things as a radial-arm saw, and a drive back to New Mexico with our infant son in a home-made removable bed that replaced the rear seat. For a few years it was joined by a 1970 Bus, and eventually was replaced by a Rabbit, followed by several other vehicles, including an Omni, which I occasionally referred to as a "Dodge Rabbit," so similar were the two except for its slightly larger size. Actually, it and its twin, the Plymouth Horizon, were first sold with the Rabbit power assembly until the later Chrysler 2.2 liter engine was developed.

After being "Beetle-less" for a decade, when a 1963 Beetle became available after living its first 25 years at 2 houses across the street, I decided my past experience, much of it D-I-Y prior to the later extensive dealer sales and repair network, would make it possible for me to bring it back to good working condition. Additionally, except for the single large rear window, it still resembled #1 in a number of respects. The most important first steps were replacing the rusted-out brake line that goes through the body, and tightening the four very loose engine-mounting bolts.

The next problem was finding only 4.5 volts at the headlights, which I cured by soldering each of the push-on wiring connectors to the wire it was crimped onto, eliminating the resistance of corrosion at all of those points from many years of exposure to all sorts of weather. Another weather-related problem was the entry of rain water that rusted some holes in the front passenger's floor. That took much longer to diagnose and cure - ultimately with a new windshield seal. At

some time early in its life (the original owner never gave me details), it was repainted, apparently with the older auto paint that dried by solvent evaporation rather than by catalyzed polymerization, Presumably the solvent caused deterioration of the windshield seal, so that the top of it separated from the body and allowed water to enter, run around it to the lower corner, and then through the two little weep-holes that were intended to release any accidental moisture there, not for a continuous flow of rain water. Neither of the earlier two owners noticed the water problem, because 1963 was the first year of the insulating pads that were glued to the floor, trapping water in the channels pressed in the sheet metal below them. With the source cured, rather than replace the metal floor, I repaired it with a layer of heavy fiberglass cloth and much epoxy resin from the local TAP Plastics store. That has held up quite well.

At various times, I added a convertible's locking hood release knob, some D-I-Y locksmithing to make both door locks and the rear lock compatible with the ignition key, and a headlight dimmer switch in the turn signal arm. Because I could not find the required relay for a 6-volt car, I put together an assortment of relays and other parts to accomplish the switching. I fed the lights with a direct wire (fused) from the battery and used the dash switch only to energize the relays. This relieved the many original wiring connections and switches from the need to carry the current for the headlights (don't ask for details; I have no idea where to get the equivalent parts now). Most recently I did the parking brake upgrade shown in one of the photos,



Possibly of use to some readers, here's the later parking brake handle with the little equalizer bar on top (both from Ebay). Note that because I left the bolt pieces a bit too long, there is an extra nut on each. Additionally, to spare my hands (and those of a possible passenger) while searching for the seat belt before I install the new boot (different from the original because of the equalizer bar), I topped each with an acorn nut.



The soldered connection of a wire to its push-on connector.

adding the tension-balancing bar on top of the brake handle along with cable-extenders consisting of long coupling nuts and the threaded parts of two metric bolts. It has greatly simplified getting both rear brakes to hold equally.

Failure of the float valve of the Brosol carb to always close completely when parked on the hill shown in one of the photos required the “cure” of the earlier reserve gas valve added to the bottom of the gas tank, along with an extension handle to turn it off easily after parking there. That made it unnecessary to occasionally remove the #2 spark plug and crank out the accumulated liquid gasoline that kept the engine from turning over when trying to start it. Additional work on this problem is in progress.

Eventually I decided I didn’t like driving a car that was the color of the road (photo with Christmas tree on top), so I had it repainted, after removing all of the glass except the windshield with its new WCM seal, the metal trim, lights, etc. With new paint, it was time for new interior fabric - headliner, rear pieces, etc. Unfortunately although those pieces were from TMI, that company was unable to tell me what adhesive I should use for the installation, so I had to settle for the best of what was available at local stores - the professional spray products aren’t available for DIYers. My solution was to hold the pieces in place with a lot of little binder clips while the glue dried (another photo).

When the engine did a “Big Bang” in 2001, I trusted a local Beetle specialty shop to select the best parts for a new one based on their experience. It’s a 1600 single-port, because parts for those were then, and should continue to be, more available than ones for a 1200 engine. It’s still my daily driver, and just as my year-old 1953 #1 Beetle was a conversation piece because it was so new, this one (#4) has acquired that status because it is so old., Many who comment turn out to be former Beetle owners, but almost none still have one to drive, although some wish they did. My #4 and I have a good time doing local shopping, traveling to a Saturday-only job, and occasionally taking my wife and me to a local restaurant for dinner, while she mumbles some questions about how we survived with just #3 Beetles for a number of years. I enjoy knowing almost all of how this vehicle works, while I haven’t the slightest about the fairly new, computerized, “family car” (usually her car). ■

“And The Skies Were Not Cloudy All Day”

by Bill Pierson, Photos by Chip Beck

The last refrain of the Kansas State Song could not have been more fitting, as Sonnenblumen Autofest (Sunflower Car Show) 2014 was graced with a most delightful Saturday. The 7th annual German car show, hosted by the German Car Club of Kansas, welcomed over 90 entries to Oakdale Park in downtown Salina.

As usual, nearly two-thirds of those displayed were VW-based vehicles, ranging from early to late model and stock to radical, including a Type 3 Ghia, a slammed Thing, a drag Bug and a pristine Single Cab. But this year also offered show visitors a glimpse of a healthy cross-section of BMW and Mercedes Benz models, as the promise of great weather apparently lured a sizeable contingent of each marque to venture north from Wichita for our event. Word has it that owners of these two noble German brands occasionally offer less-than-courteous evaluations of their rival’s products. So it was a touching tribute to the spirit of conciliation which our club tries to engender at these shows when a number of BMW drivers eagerly offered to push a fabulous ’71 MB 280SE Cabriolet, which had stalled on the show field after completing its first 100 miles following a full concours restoration. However, I suspect the broad smiles on the faces of the BMW “pit crew” members were not just expressions of admiration for the beautiful convertible, nor satisfaction for having done their good deed for the day. There might have been just the slightest hint of superiority in their demeanor.

At nearly every GCKK event, we strive to provide activities for the whole family. Not only is this the “right thing to do,” but we are mindful of our own mortality and want to pass on to succeeding generations the enthusiasm for our vehicles, so that the “faith will be kept.” In addition to a nearby street fair and parade, in which more than a dozen show entries participated this year, we offered valve cover racing. Kids could also decorate cardboard boxes like Buses or Bugs and then run a foot race with them. Check out the intent faces of the box racers as a “VW Santa” hands out model car prizes to every participant.

Other distractions at our show were a BBQ contest sponsored by local firefighters and EMTs, a display by



the Kansas Auto Modelers Society, and a demonstration of techniques and equipment by the Salina Brewers Guild. After viewing these and then sampling some of our food vendors' fare, show goers could quench their thirst with a range of choices at the AMBUCS beer garden.

The awards for "best of" categories were created by local enthusiasts, with the Best of Show trophy once again being a cast aluminum Beetle fashioned by the art department of Fort Hays State University. Handing out these prizes after a day of greeting entrants and posing for photos with cars (and their owners!) were our three enthusiastic "St. Pauli Girls." Entrants from at least five states took home a total of 50 awards, and probably made some new friends at our show. Not only was the weather as perfect as "Home on the Range" describes it, but "a discouraging word was seldom (if ever) heard." If that sounds inviting to you, watch for GCK's Sonnenblumen Autofest 2015 next September! ■



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