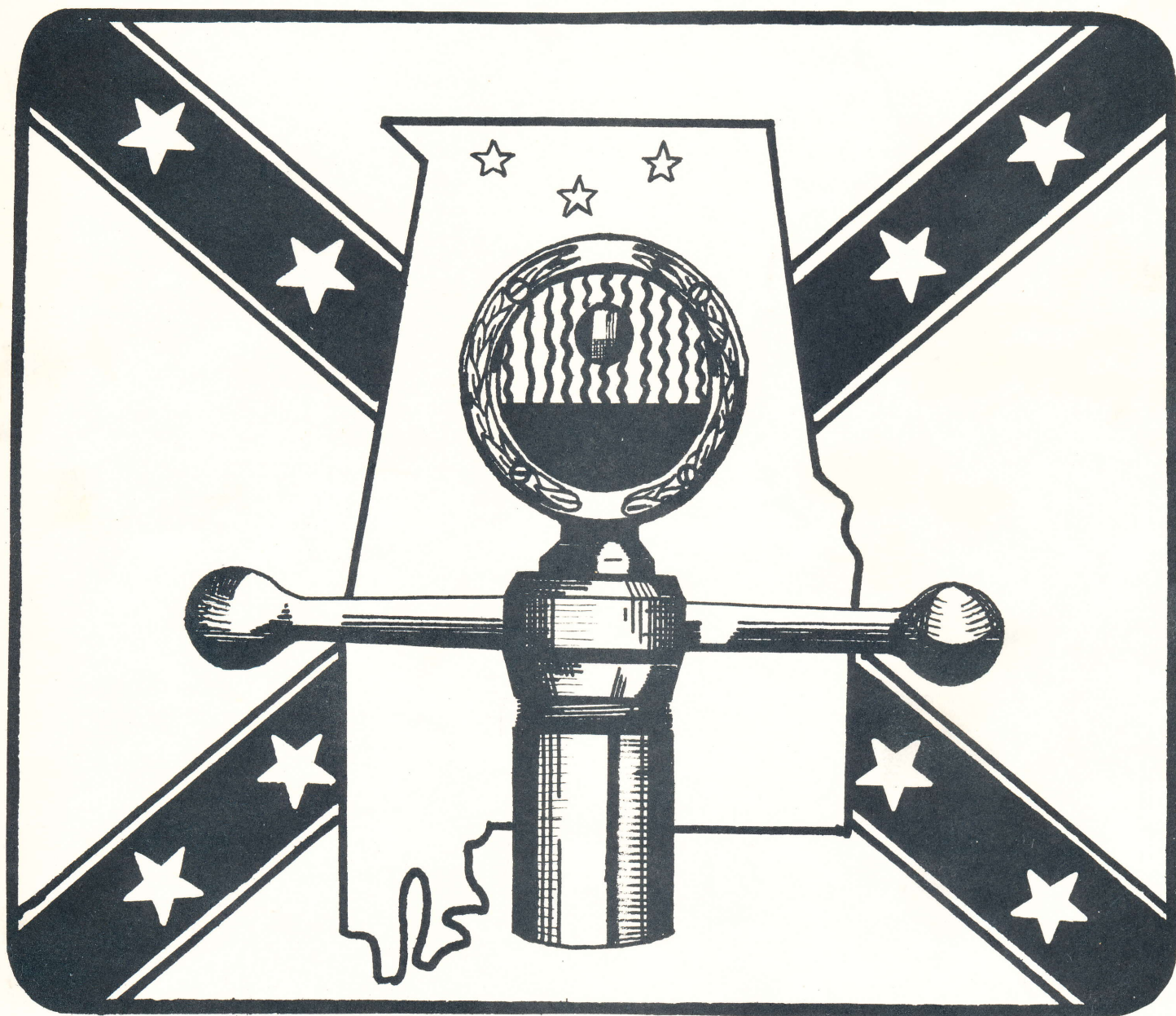


APR/MAY '69

# AUTO ANTIQUARIAN NEWS



*From the heart of Dixie*  
**NORTH ALABAMA REGION**  
**A.A.C.A.**

## A U T O A N T I Q U A R I A N N E W S

Official Publication of the North Alabama Region,  
Antique Automobile Club of America, Inc.

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Opinions expressed by contributors to  
A.A. News are their own and do not  
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this region or A.A.C.A. Please do  
not be offended if any information is  
deleted or in error.

## NEWS SECTION

Car Storage - Room is still available in the warehouse for your parts for cars, cars, boats, airplanes, covered wagons, etc. This space is primarily for storage, not heated, but protected from the elements. The area is patrolled by an armed guard 24 hours a day and overhead sprinklers are provided. Call Dennis McCann for information 852-2361.

Dues - Regional dues were to be paid by March 1. Are you late? Dues are to be paid directly to Don Pryor (2620 Buenevere Avenue, Huntsville, Alabama 35803) and are presently \$3.00.

New Faces-New Places - The North Alabama Region is invited to the Alabama Sesquicentennial being celebrated at Fort Payne, Alabama, July 25, 26, and 27, 1969. Parties, antique fashion shows, parades, antique auto displays, and a tour to Little River Canyon are planned. Lets plan to go and take our old cars. It is a beautiful part of Alabama.

Special Notice - Those North Alabama Region, desiring name badges please contact Mr. Clark Moore at the next meeting - 29 May 69. The cost of badges will be about \$1.50 each.

Stone Mountain Tour - The North Alabama Region is sponsoring a tour to the "Stone Mountain '69 Invitational Meet" at Stone Mountain, Ga. on June 20, 1969. This promises to be one of the largest meets in the South this year. This meet will probably draw over 200 cars. The facilities at Stone Mountain are excellent for an antique car meet and the Southeastern Region is a wonderful host with many additional events planned besides car judging, such as a gaslight parade on Friday night and timed trophy runs and sprint races on Sunday.

All members planning to join the tour are urged to contact Herb Fulmer, 881-2446 or Ernest Cross, 852-4051 by June 10, 1969. The Tour will form at Dunnnavants Mall parking lot on Friday, 20 June 1969 and will depart at 7:30 A.M. A registration blank is included with this issue.

SOUTHEASTERN REGION - ANTIQUE AUTOMOBILE CLUB OF AMERICA, INC.

STONE MOUNTAIN '69 INVITATIONAL MEET - JUNE 20-22, 1969

HEADQUARTERS: STONE MOUNTAIN INN (filled)

(For list of many motel accommodations and more detailed information write:  
P. O. Box 427, Stone Mountain, Ga. 30083)

R E G I S T R A T I O N      F O R M

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

MAKE OF CAR \_\_\_\_\_ BODY STYLE \_\_\_\_\_

CYLINDERS \_\_\_\_\_ 2 or 4-WHEEL BRAKES \_\_\_\_\_  
(Please list additional cars on back)

Registration Fee (\$3.00 per car)..... \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Flea Market Space (\$5.00 per 10 ft. space)..... \_\_\_\_\_

"Used" Antique Auto Lot(\$5.00 per car)..... \_\_\_\_\_

ADULT Buffet Banquet Tickets (\$5.00 each)..... \_\_\_\_\_

CHILD (11 & under) Buffet Banquet Tickets (\$3.00 each)..... \_\_\_\_\_

Number for Friday Evening Get-Acquainted Party - Free..... \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL ENCLOSED..... \$ \_\_\_\_\_

(Please make checks payable to SOUTHEASTERN REGION, A.A.C.A.)

MAIL TO: Mrs. Ann Eady, 1428 Renee Drive, Decatur, Georgia 30032

WE WOULD APPRECIATE BLACK & WHITE PHOTO OF YOUR CAR ALONG WITH COMPLETE DESCRIPTION.

VOLUNTEER JUDGE FORM - Please mail with registration

I will be glad to serve as Judge. I feel more qualified to judge \_\_\_\_\_  
(make car or years). Time and place for Judges' meeting posted in Inn Lobby.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_ CLUB \_\_\_\_\_

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

Friday	- 1:00	- Registration at Inn (closes at 7 PM) - Flea Market Opens
	7:00 - 8:15	- Informal poolside Get-Acquainted Party at Inn
	8:30	- Gaslight Parade
Saturday	- 8:00 - 11:00	- Registration - Meet area open to cars
	8:00	- Flea Market & "Used" Antique Auto Lot Open
	11:30 - 3:30	- Judging - Nearly all AACA classes (with few variations) Production cars through 1939 - 4 classes for Model A's
		- Entertainment for ladies
	7:30	- Buffet Dinner - Stone Mountain Inn Courtyard
	8:30	- Trophy Awards Program - " " "
	10:00	- Dis-cuss the Judges and Kick Tires
Sunday	9:30	- Carillon & Short Prayer Service at Amphitheater
	11:00	- Timed Mountain Trophy Run
	1:00	- Sprint Races
	3:00	- "You'all Come Back, we hope you had a good time!"

## ANTIQUE APPAREL

1910-1920

by Harriet Coble

Having ended our first article with the car owner bent over his crank, we are happy to move into the second decade of the 20th Century with some very upright suggestions for proper attire, aided to some extent by Kettering's improvements on the electric starter.

The women's clothing styles abandoned the S-shape of the turn of the century and took on a straight, loose-fitting appearance. French designer Paul Poiret freed women from attacks of "the vapors" (brought on by tightly laced dresses) by lifting waistlines and introducing the "trotteur" or hobble-skirt. Fashionable ladies of the times found it difficult, if not impossible, to board the bus, the latest means of public transportation.

While Poiret was showing styles with an Oriental influence and violent colors, the latest trends included the first newsreel of the Susa-Mount Ceniz Motor Race, and an upswing in suffragette activities. This was the era of the first 500-mile Indianapolis race and the men clung fiercely to their rights by referring to the automobile in the masculine gender.

The "lampshade" tunic over a narrow underskirt was a fashion trend of the early teens. By 1915 the underskirt was abandoned by some and the tunic lengthened to become a short skirt, usually worn with little boots. The V neckline appeared in women's apparel, but it was denounced by clergy as immoral and by doctors as dangerous to health. Automobiles were also shedding some of their cumbersome features as more than 100 firms began to manufacture cyclecars.

In an effort to sell more cars, advertisers appealed to the women by offering such helpful accessories as Metzger's Automatic Windshield (to protect auto occupants from the cold wind of winter), auto heaters, electric starters and electric lights. And the emphasis on closed cars kept milady warm and dry on the muddy roads.

The Horseless Age appeared to reflect the news of the auto world and the beginnings of car assembly were apparent soon after the Selden patent was held invalid. For less than \$500 Henry Ford would sell

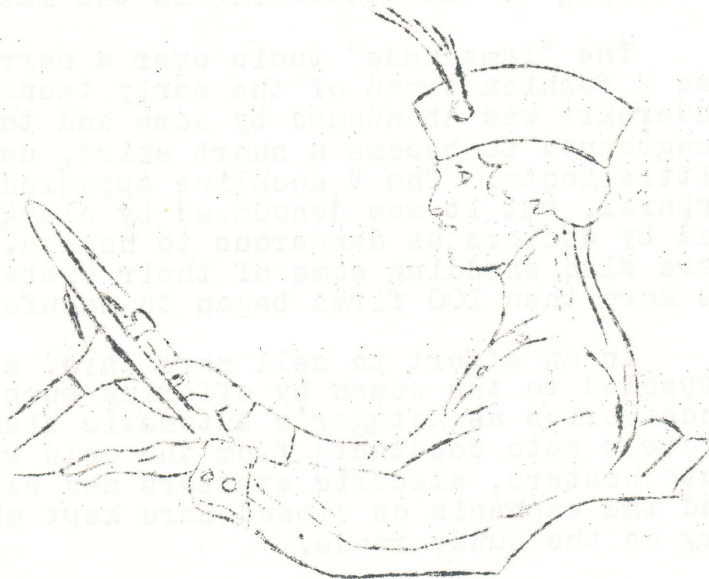
you a touring car--no wonder he was selling a quarter of a million cars a year by 1914.

Although some men and women gave considerable thought to what they would wear while riding in an auto of this period, the number of persons actually owning a car was such a small part of the population that car owners did little to influence styles.

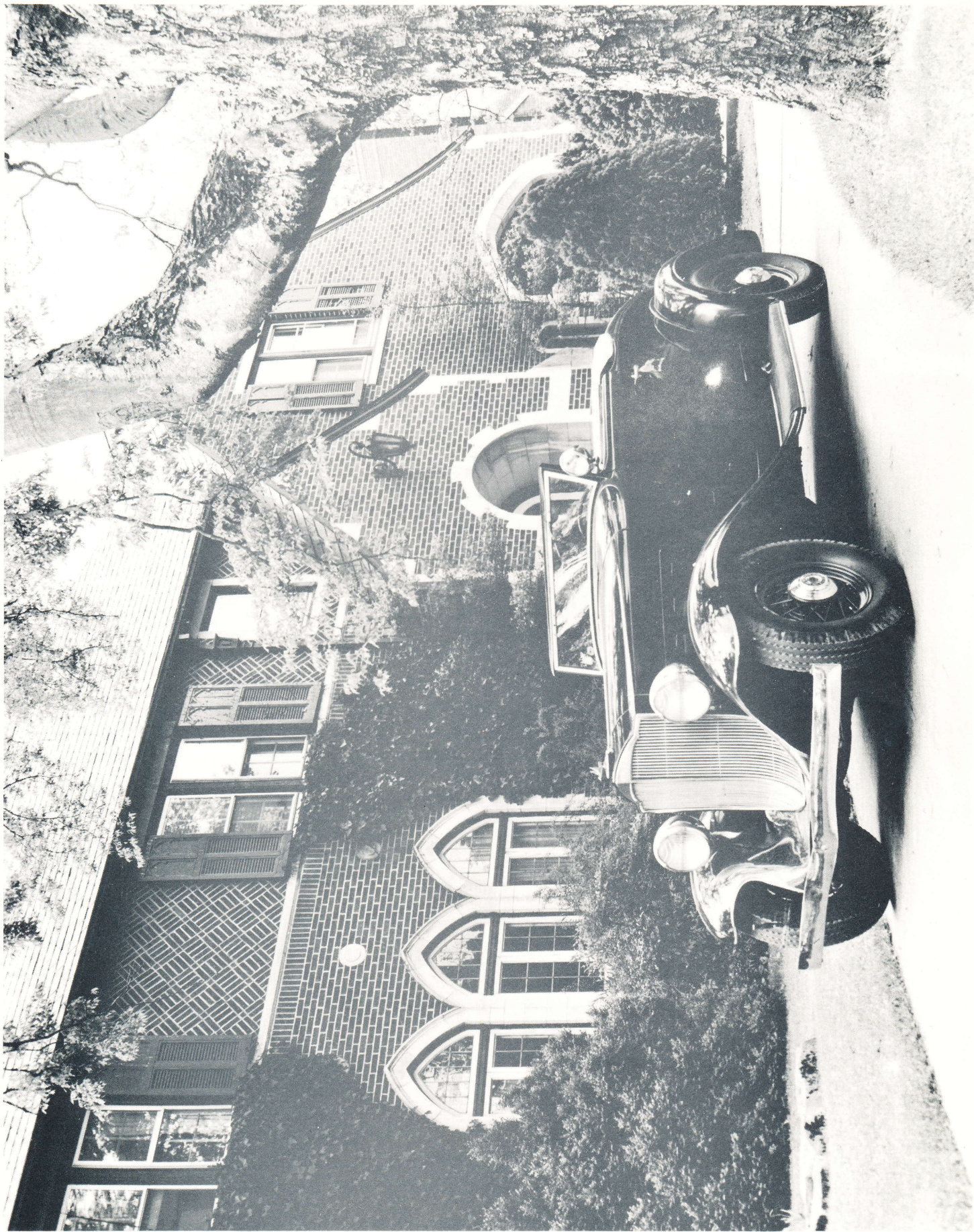
Gentlemen wore a vest, trousers, high-collared starched shirt, tie and tie pin, and gloves. The cuffless trousers were usually striped or checked. Panama hats and boaters were worn in the summer, with bowlers and wide-brimmed black felt hats for more formal occasions.

For the open car, men continued to bundle up in dustcoats, peaked caps and huge special goggles. Ladies wore long tailored suits, jaboted blouses, and dustcoats, all topped with toques and short veils.

But before the leap into the Roaring 20's, the feminine gender asserted itself. One writer described a certain car as having "the grace, the slim lines, the vivacity of a seductress; she also possesses a virtue lacked by many women--perfect obedience."



(Mrs. Coble is director of the Fashion Institute at Alverson-Draughon College in Huntsville.)



Ninth Series  
Packard, Model 900,  
Coupe Roadster

by Tom Holley

The beautiful Packard exquisitely pictured is the recent purchase of Dr. L. H. Becraft and family, 1705 Wilma Circle SE, Huntsville, Ala.

The roadster, as commonly called, sold new March 1933 in Richmond, Va., and finally to Doc in Lima, Ohio. When the car was on its way to Huntsville, it was involved in a minor accident which resulted in considerable damage to the left rear of the car. If anyone has an old Ninth Series tail light they don't need, give Doc a call. He probably has something to trade for it.

The Ninth Series, Light Eight, was produced from Jan. 9, 1932 through Jan. 5, 1933 and resulted in 6750 cars of four body styles: Coupe, coupe roadster, coupe sedan, and sedan. The total Ninth Series production was about 16,500 cars. The factory list price of the Light Eight was \$1795, except the sedan which was \$1750. All the Model 900 Packards had a 127-inch wheelbase and weighted about 4000 pound. The engine of the light eights is an 8 cylinder, 320 cubic in, 33/16 bore, 5 inch stroke, producing 110 horsepower.

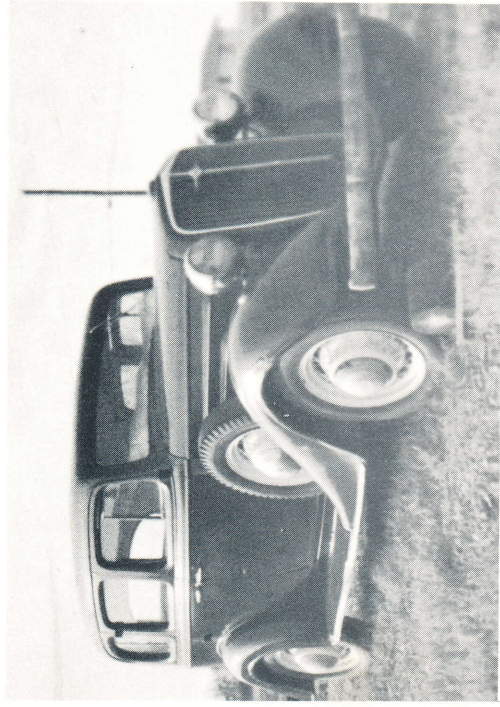
The January 1932 Automobile Show held in the many Manhattan hotel lobbies was strictly a window shopping affair for most of the motoring public. Cars were bigger and heavier. Packard, Auburn, Lincoln, and Pierce Arrows had new twelve-cylinder models. Most had been previously announced. Convertibles with disappearing tops were a new trend. Inside visors began to replace outside shades in an effort to decrease wind resistance. Buick, Cadillac, Chrysler, Desoto, Dodge, LaSalle, and Packard offered vacuum-operated clutches. Oldsmobile and Packard introduced automatic chokes. Ford was again mad at the world and was having his own private show crosstown. This was the year that Ford introduced the famous Ford V-8. This car would start the trend to inexpensive high-speed transportation. It would also spawn a new speedequipment industry.

At the official auto show, Packard presented the new Model 900 Light Eight. It was the first truly fine car ever produced to sell below \$2,000. It came in four body styles, the coupe, coupe roadster, coupe sedan, which sold for \$1795, and the sedan, which sold for \$1750. It was Packard's first attempt at invading the medium-price field. It had a Standard Eight engine, the analet rear, which first appeared in this model, two shoe brakes with a starwheel adjustment, 700x17 wheels, an electric gas gauge, and solenoid-operated starter switch. It is not considered

a classic in CCCA, but it is in AACA. With the exception of the engine, it had little in common even with the Standard Eight. Unfortunately, from a factory cost standpoint, it was a failure. It cost almost as much to build as a Standard Eight Sedan and sold for \$690 less. Since there was a \$500 markup on the manufacturer's cost to the dealer, the factory, in order to protect the dealer's markup, had to sell the cars at just about factory cost.

Since manufacturers are not in business for their health, management decided it just didn't have the know-how and the techniques of the bucket shops to accomplish low-cost volume production. The new plan was to cease production on the 900, institute an executive recruitment program to spirit away from General Motors and Ford a few brains who knew the bucket mill techniques, and have a new medium-priced car on the market in two years. It was a tall order, but Packard knew that a medium-priced car was needed to survive. The 120 which was introduced in 1935 was the medium-priced car in reference.

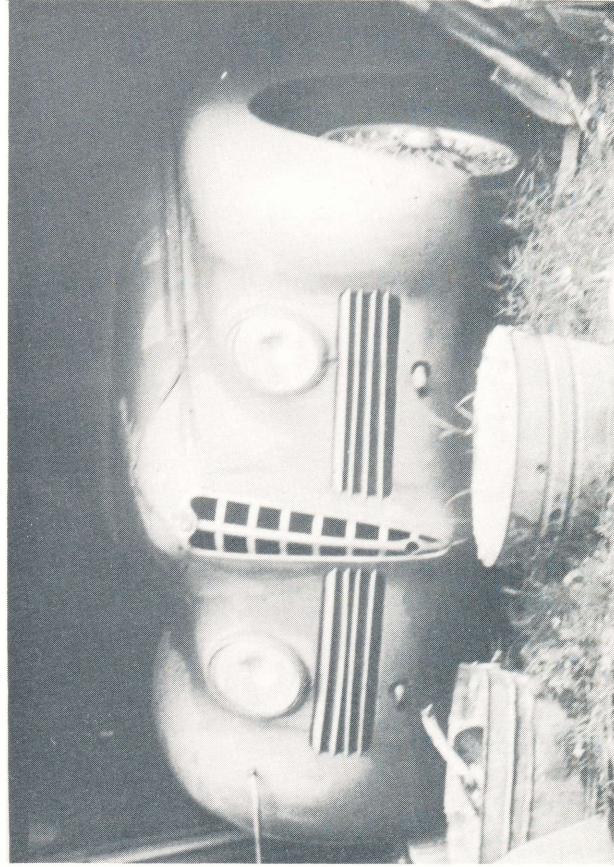
Full credit is given to Mr. Robert E. Turnquist, Author of "The Packard Story", for the information contained in this article. Anyone that has not read this truly fine book should certainly do so.



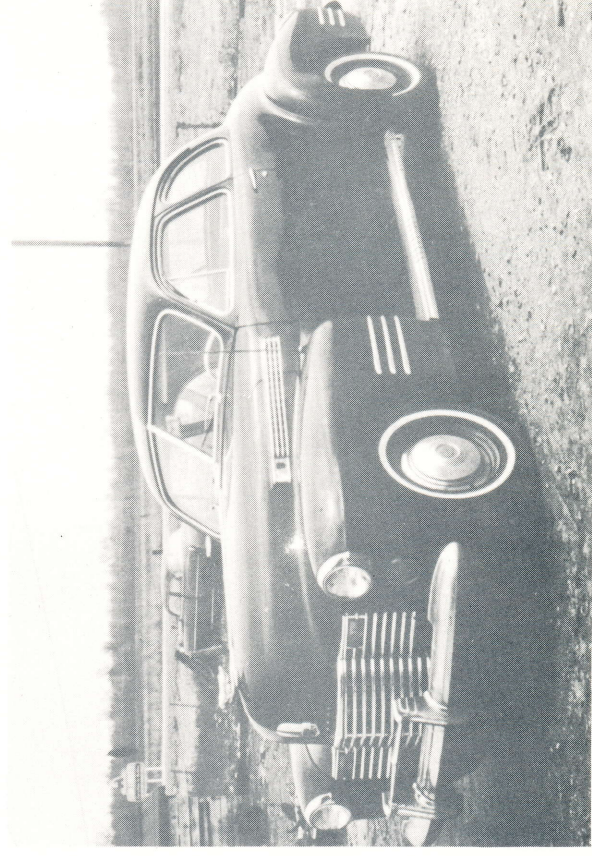
**1934 Chevrolet - Scottsboro**



**1932 Chrysler - Guntersville**



**1939 Alfa Romeo - Fayetteville**



**1941 Cadillac - Decatur**

## TO FIND A CAR

by E. W. George

The art of locating antique, classic, and special interest cars is quite a different hobby as compared to the actual restoration. Both are time consuming and require infinite patience. Of the two, I think the tracking down of cars is the most fascinating. The search for old cars can involve the entire family. Children are sometimes more observant than given credit for. Competition (who can find the most old cars) among children of the same age group can keep them occupied while traveling.

In obtaining your lead write down as much information as possible. Look up the location on the most detailed map you can obtain. County maps can be a great help. There is no need to be in a big rush to check out a lead, for if a car has been in a barn for 20 - 40 years probably be there next week. Of course there is the slim possibility you may arrive just as someone is loading it on a trailer.

Since you are spending time as well as money on checking out a lead you may as well make the most of it. Take less traveling back roads. When stopping at stores, restaurants, and especially especially service stations, never miss an opportunity to inquire.

We once had a lead on a '30 Cadillac from two separate sources. The car was located east of New Hope. It turned out to be a '55 Oldsmobile.

Another source of leads is to ask 8-14 year old boys where the oldest car they know of is located. We found a '22 Chevrolet touring this way. Don't lose faith if leads don't "pan out."

Nearly two years ago, we heard of a Stutz Bearcat near Mooresville. After driving many miles in search, we finally located the owner. At dusk we were sitting on a plantation-type house back porch talking to an elderly gentleman who had converted the car (a Winton) into a wrecker some twenty years ago.

The next question is what to do now that you have found the old buggy. I feel that if the car is not what you want to restore, one should pass the lead on to another car enthusiast as soon as possible.

Sometimes car collectors are victims of the "greener grass complex." That is a car in an advertisement or out of town always looks better than the same car in town. One may find himself thinking it's acceptable for a stranger to make a profit but not a friend.

Our club has let a lot of good cars slip through it's hands by not passing leads on to other club members through the years. A friend in Florida has a beautiful Packard he bought from a Huntsvillian a couple of years ago.

How about the '36 supercharged Cord Phaeton, '16 Packard V-12, and all the cars we never knew about that left Huntsville?

The following list is some of the cars we (family) have located in the last two years within 100 miles. These cars are either for sale by collectors, or in the possession of owners not presently planning to restore them. None of these cars are being restored by club members that I have knowledge of. I have seen and photographed most of these cars. The list would double if I went 150 miles. I'll bet there's still another 100 worthwhile cars in the area I haven't found. Sorry, I've got to go, but I've just heard of a '30 Packard roadster in Decatur.

39 Alfa Romeo roadster	\$ 2000	Fayetteville
39 BMW 328 roadster		Athens
36 Buick 4door		Scottsboro
39 Buick 4door special		Huntsville
39 Buick 4door limited		Gardendale
39 Buick hearse		Decatur
40 Buick coupe		Paint Rock
03 Cadillac		Area
20 Cadillac 4door		Huntsville
38 Cadillac 4 door "75"	\$ 500	Iuka, Miss.
41 Cadillac 4 door "75"	\$ 4500	Birmingham
41 Cadillac 4 door		Scottsboro
41 Cadillac 4 door fastback		Woodville
41 Cadillac 4 door		Normal
41 Cadillac 2 door Coupe mint	\$ 800	Decatur
46 Cadillac Coupe		Scottsboro
56 Cadillac Eldorado Coupe		Woodville
56 Cadillac Eldorado Coupe		Morgan City
57 Cadillac Eldorado Conv.		Monrovia
58 Cadillac Eldorado Conv.		Monrovia
58 Cadillac Eldorado Coupe	\$ 3500	Decatur
22 Chevrolet touring		Hollywood
27 Chevrolet truck		Gardendale
31 Chevrolet 4 door sedan		Gardendale
32 Chevrolet Coupe mint		Huntsville
34 Chevrolet 4 door sidemounts		Scottsboro
38 Chevrolet 4 door		Huntsville
36 Cord 4 door	\$ 2700	Huntsville
36 Desoto 4 door		New Hope
18 Dodge Brothers Fire Truck	\$ 6000	Huntsville
28 Dodge Brothers Sedan		Huntsville
58 Edsel 4 door	\$ 265	Huntsville
59 Edsel station	\$ 275	Fayetteville
Assorted "T" Fords (about 10)		Gardendale
26 Ford "T" roadster	\$ 1200	Decatur
26 Ford "T" Coupe	\$ 1250	Huntsville
29 Ford "A" 4 door	\$ 500	Huntsville

29-31 Ford "A"s 2 at service station	Huntsville
30 Ford "A" Coupe	Gardendale
31 Ford "A" roadster	Huntsville
32 Ford Victoria sedan	Gardendale
30-32 Ford trucks (about 4)	Gardendale
37 Ford Phaeton \$750	Guntersville
40 Ford coupe \$800	Huntsville
54 Imperial coupe \$300 Hemi.	Huntsville
55 Imperial coupe \$700 Hemi.	Huntsville
47 Jaguar MK IV	Fayetteville
48 Keller station wagon	Area
39 Ia Salle 4 door	Huntsville
38 Lincoln Zepher coupe	Richard City, Tenn.
39 Lincoln Zepher coupe	Richard City, Tenn.
47 Lincoln V-12 sedanette	Huntsville
48 Lincoln V-12 Zepher sedan	Huntsville
56 Lincoln MK II \$2700	Florence
56 Lincoln MK II	Florence
56 Lincoln MK II	Decatur
38 Mercedes roadster rough	Albertville
53 Mercedes roadster \$3500	Florence
53 Mercedes roadster	Huntsville
58 Mercedes 300 \$1200	Huntsville
30 Packard 4 door	Loretto, Tenn.
30 Packard roadster	Area
32 Packard std. 8 roadster	Gardendale
32 Packard light 8 coupe	Gardendale
32 Packard light 8 coupe	Gardendale
32 Packard std. 8 sedan	Gardendale
34 Packard su. 8 Phaeton	Birmingham
37 Packard 120 sedan	Huntsville
37 Packard 120 sedan	Belmont, Miss.
37 Packard su. 8 roadster	Area
38 Packard su. 8 club sedan	Gardendale
39 Packard 120 4 door	Birmingham
39 Packard su. 8 hearse	Winchester, Tenn.
40 Packard 160 coupe	Gardendale
41 Packard 120 sedan	Huntsville
46 Packard clipper	Gardendale
51 Packard clipper	Fayetteville
51 Packard 4 door \$150	Huntsville
27 Rolls-Royce PI \$5000	Birmingham
32 Rolls-Royce \$3000	Cullman
37 Rolls-Royce \$3000	Guntersville
37 Rolls-Royce P III \$5000	Guntersville
47 Rolls-Royce \$4700	Athens
34 Pontiac rumble seat roadster \$1000	Huntsville
34 Pontiac sedan \$1000	Albertville
35 Pontiac sedan	Huntsville
32 Studebaker 4 door \$800	Scottsboro
48 Talbot roadster	Hazel Green

## F O R S A L E

1952 Chev. truck & '30 trailer, MC engine, runs good  
\$350

1941 Mercury, 4 dr., Sedan, Rebuilt engine, brakes,  
and front end. \$550, Ernie Cross, 852-4051.

1958 Edsel \$265.

1926 Ford "T" Coupe, Call Ken Barry, 852-7375.

1941 Ford Club coupe \$800, Clyde Bennett, 534-6165.

1941 Plymouth coupe \$995

1948 Hudson 6 cyl. commodor \$495

1940 Hudson 6 cyl. 4 dr. \$495

1934 Chrysler Air-flow coupe \$895

1937 Chev. 2 dr. 36,000 miles \$995

1936 Chev. 2 dr. 295

1931 Ford 2 dr. 1 side mount \$295

1941 Plymouth 4 dr. 295

1938 Dodge truck  $\frac{1}{2}$  ton \$295

1938 Ford truck, stake \$600

1950 Plymouth 2 dr. 19,000 miles \$895

1949 Jeepster 6 cyl. \$995

1952 Jeepster 4 cyl. \$495

1932 Packard 4 dr. std. 8 \$695

1950 Dodge coupe, conv. \$295

1952 Allstate 2 dr. 4 cyl. \$395

1952 Crosley 2 dr. 4 cyl. \$295

Herman Lowery, Route 5, Harriman, Tenn.

615-882-6861

615-882-9351

1937 Ford Phaeton, running, good restorable, complete  
car, \$750

1958 Parsche speedster with parts car, \$850

1948 M. "TC" very good with some parts \$1000

1949 Alfa Romeo with custom coach works, chev engine, \$750

1947 Indian Motorcycle, Chief, \$100

George Monnie, Tanglewood Acres, Route 3, Scottsboro.

1917 Ford "T" low mileage, \$2000 or trade, Arless

Jackson, 1617 E. Clinton Ave., Huntsville, Alabama,  
phone 534-5185

### Car Trailers For Sale

Custom built, altered, closed or open, Eddie Mannaway,  
Route 5, Box 225, Huntsville, 35811, Phone 852-7784

Large Trailer, 2 axils, elect. brakes, 2 spares, sprung  
and with shocks \$400 Jack Hardin, Phone 453-5729

### Wanted

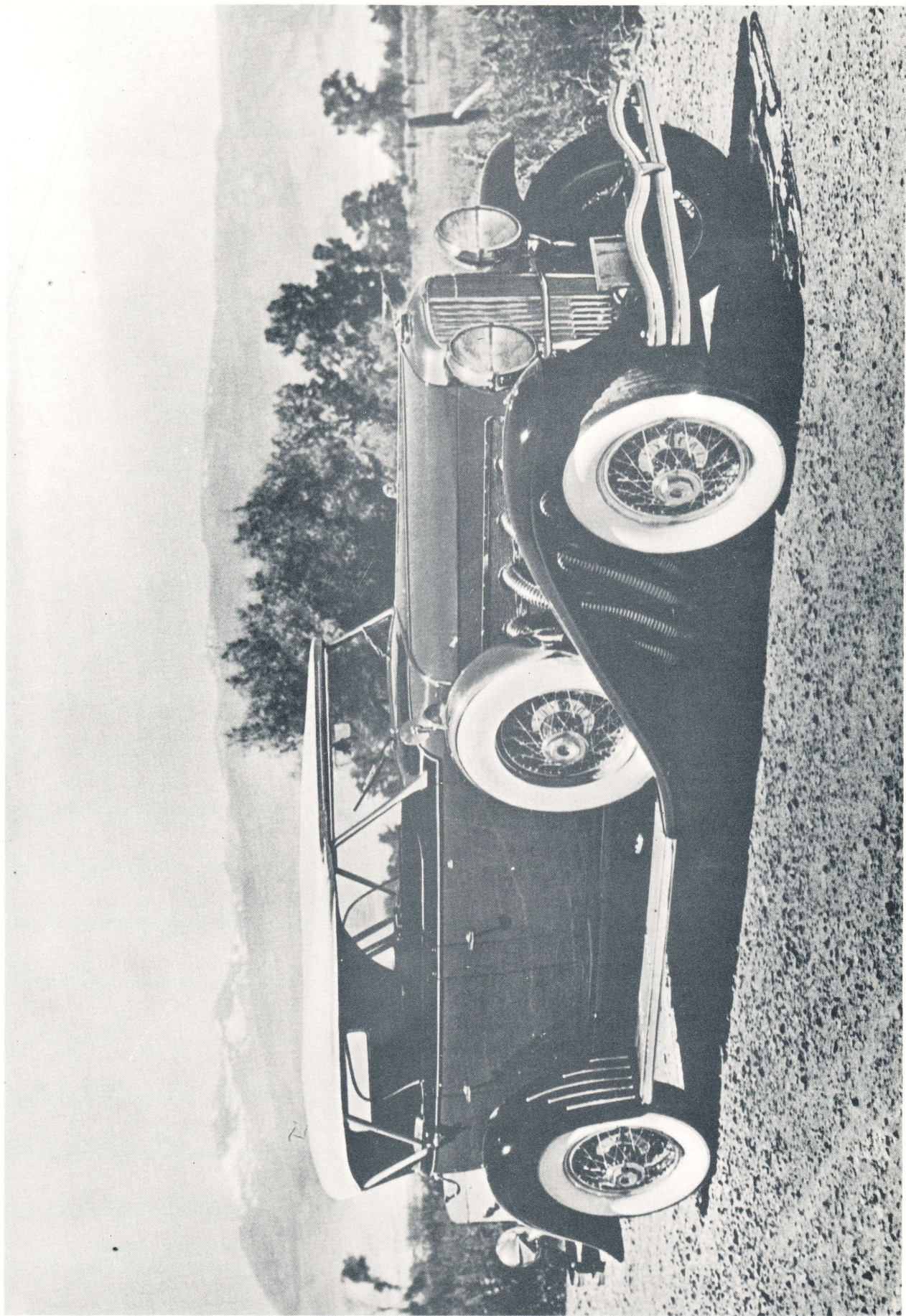
1928-48 Ford Parts Catalog, Ernie Cross either loaned  
it to someone and forgot who, or it's buried in his garage.

### Parts For Sale

All Model "A" Ford Parts  
Timing gears.005 \$2.00 each  
Front motor support kit, \$1.50  
Champion 3X spark plugs, \$5.50 set  
30-31 2 bulb headlights, \$25 pair  
Crank, flywheel, pressure plate, turned and balanced, \$60  
Four blade fans \$5.00  
Autolight heater \$18.00  
Clutch plate \$7.50  
Cylinder head \$7.50  
Used pressure plate and clutch disc \$12.00  
Rebuilt transmission \$22  
Valve Springs 25 cents  
Relined brake shoes \$8.00 exchange  
Inner tubes \$2.00 each  
Phil Ambrell, Phone 852-4424

### C A L E N D A R   O F   E V E N T S

- May 24-25--Birmingham Antique Auto Show at Fairgrounds.  
June 8--Florence, Decatur, Huntsville Tour to Bankhead Forest.  
June 12-14--Central division National AACA spring Meet Cedar Rapids, Iowa  
June 20-22--Stone Mountain '69 Invitational Meet, Stone Mountain, Ga.  
August 16,--A watermelon bust is in the planning stages with fun and games for all.  
Sept. 6-12--1969 Hidden Tour; originates Gatlinburg, Tenn.  
Oct. 9-12--Eastern Division National AACA Fall Meet, Hershey, Pa.  
June 1970--Spring National Meet, Huntsville, Ala.



## THE BIG D

by

John Bentley

On July 26, 1932, a 55-year-old automobile engineer and designer named Frederick Samuel Duesenberg died of ether pneumonia in the Memorial Hospital at Johnstown, Pennsylvania. He died from injuries sustained while driving one of his own cars between Philadelphia and Indianapolis. Duesenberg's passing rated no banner headlines in the daily press, but all car lovers knew him as a great actor in the golden age of American automobiles.

Duesenberg was probably the greatest and most versatile automobile designer this country has ever known. He thumbed his nose at established ideas about building cars and pioneered many radically new features. Maybe fate did him a kindness, since he already was fighting a losing battle with cancer. A few more years and he would have witnessed the liquidation of his company and the advent of an era when automobiles sank to a common level with refrigerators, juke boxes and radios.

In the full flush of Fred Duesenberg's career, one of the Big Three among U.S. auto manufacturers offered him \$50,000 a year to hire his genius. This was more than triple what he earned as chief engineer and vice-president of his own company, and though he refused, it is easy to see how his record inspired this offer.

Let's go back to November, 1920. That year, the new Duesenberg Model A aluminum-bodied phaeton stole the show at the New York Automobile Salon and Fred scooped the automotive industry with so many "firsts" that it's doubtful whether his visionary enterprise ever again can be equaled, much less surpassed. He was the first automobile builder in the U.S. to put into production an eight-in-line car with four-wheel brakes fitted to European cars. The first to use heat-treated molybdenum-steel chassis frames for greater strength and minimum distortion. The first with durable ground gears, instead of cast, in the transmission, with balloon tires as a standard feature, with the lightweight tubular axle of tremendous resistance (Ettore Bugatti's influence may have been responsible for this), and with high-pressure automatic chassis lubrication.

Four years later, he also was the first to offer a production supercharger for automobiles that boosted engine power by as much as 20 per cent, even though this device was not yet entirely dependable and suffered bearing troubles.

Time and again, Duesenberg came up with ideas that were labeled "crazy" by more conservative elements who later took a deep breath and swallowed their words. One learned group who thought him a little unorthodox was the Society of Automotive Engineers, of which he was a

member and to whose governing council he was elected shortly before his death. Among Fred's "crazier" ideas was that of balancing the massive crankshafts on his cars by means of liquid mercury weights. The mercury was poured into cast-iron containers with welded tops, bolted either side of the crank webs. This worked fine until centrifugal force caused the mercury to "soak" right through the pores of the cast iron and escape, throwing the crank off balance. Duesenberg's S.A.E. colleagues smiled indulgently when they heard about it, but at the next meeting Fred was back with a sly grin. "You can go crazy with me," he announced. "I've lined the containers with copper!" Thereafter, the Duesenberg crankshafts stayed balanced indefinitely.

During the years that saw the introduction of the Model A "Eight-in-a-Row" to the public, racing versions of this mechanical masterpiece competed in twenty-seven road and track races and won prize money in twenty-four of them. At one time or another during their sixteen years of manufacture, Duesenberg cars held sixty-six world records for all distances from a kilometer to a twenty-four-hour endurance run.

The Indianapolis Speedway, proving ground of many new ideas and graveyard of many more, was just another stretch along the road that brought Fred Duesenberg to world fame. Cars bearing his name or using his engines ran in twenty Memorial Day 500-Mile races between 1912 and 1935. Their speed and stamina realized one of Fred's greatest ambitions--a three-time win, achieved in 1924, 1925 and 1927. In lists of the first-ten finishers, Duesenbergs appeared twenty-nine times. His cars took seven of the first ten places in 1922, cleaning up almost \$50,000 in prize money. Joe Boyer's 1924 win at an average of 98.24 miles per hour achieved a new Speedway record; the average of 101.13 set by Peter de Paolo in 1925 stood unbeaten for seven years.

The Duesenberg was equally well known as America's finest motercar, for its long, husky build provided an ideal platform for the sumptuous coachcraft of body builders such as Brunn, Judkins, Willoughby, Dorham, Locke, Murphy, Rollston, La Grande, Le Baron, Hibbard, Darrin, and Castagna--the last two of French and Italian origin. While La Grande of Indiana could be considered Duesenberg's own coachbuilder, it was Murphy of Pasadena who fashioned the greatest number of bodies for the later Model J (at least 150 of them) before closing down. Some impressive examples of coachwork also were produced for Dusenbergs by Bohman & Schwartz, part successors to Murphy, but these jobs were custom-made to special order for movie stars and didn't come under the head of factory contracts.

Not so strangely, considering their high price, Duesenberg cars sold in inverse proportion to the fame of their designer. Though they swept the board in racing, though Fred's ideas were widely copied without a blush, and though coachbuilders rubbed their hands in glee over the superb chassis, not many more than 650 (half a day's production by modern standards) were built between 1921 and 1937 when the Cord-Auburn-Duesenberg alliance went into voluntary liquidation.

Of these, 70 were the Model A with a 90-horsepower, straight-eight, sixteen-valve engine of 260 cubic inches displacement and a 134-inch wheel base. Besides the radically new features already mentioned, this Duesenberg had a low center of gravity, perfect weight distribution and minimum unsprung weight (carried below the axles) which gave it a roadability unapproached by any other contemporary car. Too, its lightness for those days (only 3,200 pounds with a five-passenger aluminum phaeton body) allowed flashing acceleration. It weighed 400 pounds less than any other automobile with anywhere near its power.

The Model A engine was a study in itself. Fred compounded two of the original four-cylinder "Rochester-Duesenberg" engines that had made his name a byword on road and track. The cylinder blocks and crankshafts were placed end to end and redesigned as one clean, compact unit with a different valve arrangement actuated by a single overhead cam. The inlet valves were of low-percentage tungsten steel and the exhaust valves of cobalt-chrome steel--an advanced metallurgical concept for a production car of those days. The camshaft drive and housing, the crankcase, radiator shell, dash and footboards were made entirely of aluminum. A choice of cast-iron pistons was offered as an alternative to aluminum, although Duesenberg's long string of racing successes was founded on magnalite aluminum pistons, a favored feature on which he relented commercially "owing to a certain amount of prejudice and the fact that certain prominent manufacturers have recently given up their use." He was adamant, however, about fitting only two compression rings so as to save weight. Today, incidentally, well over 90 per cent of production automobiles and all racing cars use aluminum pistons.

In applying his long racing experience to the new passenger car, Fred Duesenberg paid much attention to cooling. He took care also to have the combustion chambers machined so that all eight cylinders would be of identical volume. This Model A engine, built with the precision of a chronometer and the finish of a gleaming jewel, was rated at 26.45 h.p., but actually developed 100 h.p. at 3,400 revolutions. Its flexibility was such that the car would run from 3 to 85 m.p.h. in high gear, with the kind of gas economy that nowadays is just a dim memory. Averages of 18 to 22 miles per gallon were usual for this Duesenberg.

Four-wheel brakes for the Model A were not a new idea to Fred when he put them on the market. As far back as 1914, he had them on one of his racing cars and foresaw their commercial use. The power of the Model A brakes, working on 15-inch drums with outside cooling ribs derived from racing, was such that the Duesenberg could be stopped in one-third the distance required by any other car. At a time when the more complicated and less reliable French Perrot mechanical brakes were about the only four-wheel device in production, Duesenberg set himself out in front at one jump as the world's leading designer of automobile brakes with his completely original hydraulic system actuated by "columns of oil under pressure." His brakes would later have earned a fortune for him had he taken the trouble to patent the practical working design. But he wasn't like that. He seldom

patented anything and his generosity had a way of disregarding his best interests. Anyone who could successfully pick his brains was welcome to the takings.

In 1931, for instance, it was said that he actually gave to the Stutz company, founded by his friend and competitor Harry C. Stutz, the blueprints for the thirty-two-valve, double-overhead-camshaft head that was the heart of the Model J. From these, the Stutz engineers evolved their own DV-32 model that had quite a vogue.

The cost of perfection didn't bother Fred. He was determined to build the finest automobile ever offered to the public. In his own words, "Its mission is to outrun and outlast any other automobile on the road and at the same time set a new mark in fuel and tire economy."

As a result, the Model A phaeton, lowest-priced car in the Duesenberg range of 1921, cost \$6,500. From the start, consequently, its market was narrowed to that small class of buyers who are untroubled by budgetary problems. It was followed in 1926 by a Model X, but before this heavier-framed version reached production, Fred went into receivership.

The Auburn-Cord interests, a \$28-million corporation, took him over. Only about a dozen Xs were released, for this exclusive model failed to reach a 100-m.p.h. objective set for it, and in any case Cord had other ideas about production models. But Fred was ready with another.

The next radically new Duesenberg was the larger, more powerful Model J which was offered to the public in 1929 and was supplemented in 1932 by the Model SJ—the first supercharged catalogue automobile in the United States. Some 470 J and SJ cars were turned out. Before dealing with them, let's hark back and see what started Fred Duesenberg on the road to fame and what it takes to become a world leader in automobile design.

Is it an expensive college education? Duesenberg never went to college, never even took a course in engineering. Is it a sound grasp of automotive theory? An ounce of practice was, to him, worth a ton of theory any day (or night) of the week, as his workshop staff knew only too well at the cost of their sleep. Because he was a finely integrated combination of an imaginative dreamer and a man of driving action, new ideas were liable to come into his head at any time, and when they did, he had to try them out at once. Mechanics often would toil day and night setting up an engine, only to have Fred call the whole thing off after a half hour's run on the test bench. He would look at the gauges, listen for a moment, ask a couple of questions, then shrug: "Take it down. It's no good."

Eighteen-hour workdays were routine to Fred and his associates. Closest of these was his brother August—better known as "Augie," even though he carried the title of Assistant Chief Engineer. For

twenty-five years, Augie remained Fred's "Man Friday" and most loyal collaborator, calmly weathering moments that must have been provocative. Fred had a sharp sence of humor that sometimes took a sly twist. There were times, for instance, when he would return to the factory around 11 o'clock at night after knocking off for a late supper and suddenly remark with a yawn: "Well, Augie, one of us needs some sleep. I'm going to bed."

From his prewar racing days, Fred was known for a degree of wit. In 1914, Captain—then plain "Eddie"—Rickenbacker, who started his racing career as team captain with Duesenberg, won the Sioux City 300-Mile race on the same day that Lautenschlager took the Grand Prix of France. At a dinner in honor of Rickenbacker's victory, the late Chris Sinsabaugh, dean of automotive editors, remarked:

"Fred, it's certainly a great day for you Germans. Duesenberg, Rickenbacker, Lautenschlager!"

"Ja!" Fred cracked back. "You would thind of that ---with a name like yours!"

Fred Duesenberg was, in fact, of pure German origin. Boun in Lippe on December 6, 1877, he came to this country at the age of 8 with his mother and six of his brothers. Fred's father had died soon after his birth and his second oldest brother and an uncle had migrated ahead of the others, settlin on a farm in Rockford, Iowa. Naturally, the family moved in with them, so that Fred grew up around the farm and gpt only a perfunctory schooling. When he was 17, he went to work for an implemment dealer, erecting windmills and repairing farm machinery. His mechanical bent was so keenly developed by then that it quickly outgrew this limited work. He turned to bicycles for an outlet. When he was 20, he started his own business of designing, building and repairing bicycles. But this wasn't enough. He had to race them, too.

In 1898, Fred establisged a world two-mile record of 4 minutes 24 seconds, paced by a horse. This gave him an idea. Why not use a motorcycle as a pacer? He promptly built one, pedaled furiously in its wake and set another record on a three-mile course. Then a fresh inspiration came to him. These motorcycles—they might be made to run better with a rotary-valve design. During the following year, Fred used his spare time on experiments that resulted in a pretty good rotary-valve mechanism. His efforts were not wasted. Years later, he came back to this idea and tried it successfully on marine and car engines.

Meanwhile, in 1900, the first garage in Des Moines, Iowa, opened its doors, and young Duesenberg was drawn to it like a filing to a magnet. The workings of the still crude and undeveloped internal-combustion engine onthralled him above all else and he began his mechanic's apprenticeship at once. Soon his intuitive grasp of mechanisms had enabled him to master every component in an automobile and understand its function. He dismantled, reassembled

and tuned engines without supervision and thought up a dozen tricks to make them run better. A vast horizon in a new industry opened up before him. Bicycles were forgotten. A year later, he started his own garage.

For a time in 1903, he joined forces with another pioneer enthusiast named Jed Newkirk and organized the Iowa Automobile and Supply Company, in Des Moines. Jed owned a souped-up Ford, so Fred got hold of a Marion car which he rebuilt and powered with a four-cylinder, overhead-valve, air-cooled engine of his own modification. The driving seat was a cylindrical gas tank and the car had no hood. Four open exhaust stacks faced downward, final drive was by chain and the rear of the car was an empty platform. Fred, however, was so pleased with his creation—the first "Duesenberg" ever to run—that he accepted a match race with Newkirk's Ford.

The jousting took place over a five-mile course at a midwestern fair ground and Fred crossed the finish line 50 feet ahead of his rival. His victory, though narrow, was enough to give his confidence a big boost.

It was Duesenberg's contagious enthusiasm as much as his mechanical ingenuity that sold a Des Moines attorney named Mason on the idea of financing his first venture as an automobile builder. Thus, in 1904, the Mason Automobile Company was launched and Fred named the new car in honor of his backer.

The Mason was destined to achieve enormous success in racing, but it was not until 1907 and many experiments later that Fred Duesenberg ventured one of them in a full-scale contest against established makes. He prepared a two-cylinder machine of similar design to his standard product, named it The Goat and for its first appearance chose, of all things, the tough Milwaukee twenty-four-hour race, run on September 21 of that year. The driver was, of course Fred Duesenberg, and the car embodied certain streamlining ideas that caused eyebrow-raising. Whatever Attorney Mason's misgivings, The Goat acquitted itself valiantly. It ran without trouble for seven hours before Fred hurtled through a fence and retired with a broken collarbone.

Far from being discouraged, he now knew for certain where his vocation lay. Helped by brother August, he embarked on a more ambitious four-cylinder design with an overhead cam, but abandoned it in favor of a new horizontal valve-in-head arrangement so efficient that it required little change for a decade.

In 1910, F. L. Maytag, president of the Maytag Washing Machine Company, became fascinated with Fred's ideas and persuaded Mason to sell out. The newly formed Mason-Maytag Motor Company moved to Waterloo, Iowa, in the fall of that year, but the Duesenberg brothers didn't go with it. They stayed in Des Moines where Fred joined the Sears Auto Company, selling Reo and Mitchell cars and perfecting his four-cylinder design. Already, his views commanded so much interest and respect in automobile circles that he was invited to join the Society of Automotive Engineers.

During the next four years, Duesenberg's star rose rapidly and his fame burst like a firework display over the astonished heads of engineers and designers whose names were law in the industry. Well-known drivers and outstanding beginners alike began handling Mason cars powered by 230-cubic-inch four-cylinder Duesenberg engines. Among them were Barney Oldfield, Mortimer Roberts, Eddie Rickenbacker, Willie Haupt and Henry Endicott. In 1912, Masons finished in the money at Elgin, Algonquin and Milwaukee, winning the Pabst Blue Ribbon and Wisconsin trophies. Fred drove one of his cars against a field of 450-cubic-inch machines, and his brilliant performance tossed a lot of "established" theories into the ash can.

Lee Oldfield, namesake of the famous Barney, entered a Mason in the Indianapolis 500 and failed to qualify only because of a cracked cylinder block; next year, Haupt took ninth place in the 500. Rickenbacker, during 1913 and 1914, annexed thirty-four firsts, seven seconds and fourteen thirds in seventy-three starts with Masons and Duesenbergs. Late in 1913, which incidentally was the year of Fred's marriage to Ilse Denney of Rummels, Iowa, the Duesenberg Motor Company was formed in St. Paul, Minnesota. Under A.A.A. rules, Fred was not allowed to race cars bearing his own name until after the formation of the company, but in 1914, Rickenbacker finished tenth at Indianapolis with a named Duesenberg.

The four-cylinder, eight-valve engine that made Duesenberg famous in the United States and Europe was so different from anything else at the time that it evokes a strong nostalgic appeal for the enthusiast. The overhead valves were placed horizontally instead of vertically and opened directly into the explosion chamber. They were operated by "walking beams" with the lower ends bearing on cams. These beams brought to mind a child's seesaw placed against the side of the cylinder block. When the lower end of the beam was pushed outward by the cam, the upper end leaned inward against the pressure of the valve spring and so opened the valve.

Two spark plugs fired by magnetos were provided for each cylinder and a 60-pound flywheel kept the crankshaft running smoothly on its two massive bearings. The cylinders had a bore of  $3\frac{7}{8}$  inches and a stroke of 5 inches, and the engine developed 58 h.p. at 2,300 revolutions—a low speed by modern standards. The piston ring was twice decidedly unusual. There were three of them for each piston, operating in the same groove, and the top ring was twice the width of the two below it. The car had a wheel base of 104 in. and weighed 2,000 pounds complete. The feature that singled out the Masons and early Duesenbergs at a glance was an air scoop jutting forward and downward from the radiator like the visor of a baseball cap.

When the World War broke out, Duesenberg cars had accumulated victories at Corona and Los Angeles, California, and numerous placings at the Chicago Speedway and the Cincinnati and Omaha board tracks. Fred was just completing a side-line contract to build the engine for Commodore Pugh's Disturber IV, a powerful racing boat

due to compete in England for the Harmsworth Trophy. For this attempt, he designed a special twelve-cylinder, 500-h.p. engine that enabled the craft to attain a speed of 62 m.p.h. in trials, breaking the mile-a-minute record on water. The war stopped the race and 1915 found Duesenberg still in St. Paul, designing marine engines for Lowe-Victor of Chicago and racing engines for himself. Some of the fingers of right hand had been mutilated by a machine and he walked with a limp as the result of a driving accident, so that he was qualified to stay home and harness his brilliant mind to producing for war needs.

This he did with characteristic drive and energy. After a brief amalgamation with Lowe-Victor in Chicago, Duesenberg formed another company involving the same management and moved to Elizabeth, New Jersey, where he started in earnest to build marine and aircraft engines for military needs. These ranged from small four-cylinder 130-h.p. motors for Army vehicles, through six, eight and twelve-cylinder in-line engines within the 500 h.p. category (like that of the Disturber IV), to giant V-16, 900-h.p. aircraft motors. In addition, he delivered more than 200 engines rated at 400 h.p. to the British, Italian and Russian navies. He also found time to serve on the Standards Committee for aeronautical and marine motors.

When the war ended, Duesenberg was again in financial trouble and sold out to the Willys Corporation. With fresh capital, Duesenberg Brothers was formed as a subsidiary and Fred, helped by his brother August, once more started building racing cars and engines.

The next five years probably were the most fruitful in his life. In 1919, Fred experimented with a rotary valve straight-eight that also had a rotary distributor, and followed this with a variable-compression power unit capable of adjustment while running. But his ultimate objective, conceived at the time of the Armistice, already was in view. He was getting ready to build the finest and most advanced production automobile yet offered for sale in the United States. Which is more or less where we came in, except for a number of important details.

The first eight Model As were built at the old plant at Elizabeth. In the summer of 1921, the factory was moved to a 16-acre site in Indianapolis. Meanwhile, the enormous amount of successful racing crammed by Duesenbergs into the postwar years served partly as a preparatory period aimed at mechanical perfection, and partly to improve the breed once the new car had been launched. It was during this era that Fred also established himself not only as a builder of automobiles, but as an architect of racing men. Tommy Milton, Jimmy Murphy, Harry Hartz, Peter de Paolo, and Eddie O'Donnell (Duesenberg's own mechanic) rocketed to fame at the wheel of Duesenberg cars, and as time went on the list grew longer. Fred had no equal in picking racing drivers, but the trouble was that he never could keep them. As soon as he had a top-notch driver,

his man usually was taken over at higher pay by some rival manufacturer and Duesenberg had to develop a new team. The mechanics who worked on his cars one year often drove those same cars the year after; then they were gone, lured by big checks.

The Duesenbergs driven by Milton, D'Alone and O'Donnell in the 1919 Indianapolis 500 all were forced to retire, but other successes amply made up for this. In August that year, Milton won the 300-Mile race at Elgin, Illinois, averaging 73.9 m.p.h., while Duesenberg-engined cars finished second, fourth, and fifth. Then, at Shoopshhead Bay, two Duesenbergs handled by Dave Lewis and Jimmy Murphy set up new world records for 100 and 300 miles in classes from 161 to 450 cubic inches.

In 1920, Milton and Murphy finished third and fourth at Indianapolis, then first and second at Uniontown in June, with O'Donnell and Fetterman taking third and fourth places, also in Duesenbergs. Following this, Tommy Milton scored another victory in July, this time in the 225-Mile race at Tacoma, Washington. But even that wasn't enough. On April 25 at Daytona Beach he bowled over all the world records from a half to five miles, set up by Ralph de Palma in an airplane-engined Packard. Milton, driving a sixteen-cylinder Duesenberg, covered the kilometer at 157.09 m.p.h. and the mile at 156.04 m.p.h.—speeds that remained unbeaten for the next five years. This car had two parallel straight-eight engines and two independent direct-drive shafts, each rotating one rear wheel. There was no differential or gear box and the combined engines totaled 593.8 cubic inches, which was quite a handful of machinery for the time.

Jimmy Murphy, meanwhile, took the opening 250-Mile race at Los Angeles Speedway in a Duesenberg without making a single pit stop. He averaged 103.2 m.p.h. on a one-and-a-quarter-mile track banked so steeply that it required a speed of 80 m.p.h. to keep the cars up. Murphy's performance went into history as one of the finest exhibitions of driving ever seen, and incidentally won him a \$10,000 prize.

During 1921 it was Murphy again, whose Duesenberg ran away with the French Grand Prix, followed by two other "Duesies" in fourth and sixth places.

At this time, all the official Duesenberg factory cars were powered by straight-eight engines but the good old four-cylinder Duesenberg jobs that still were being manufactured by the Rochester Motors Corporation faithfully served many independent drivers. Kurt Kitke and Roscoe Saries used them in the Roamer chassis, while Tom Alley's Bender Special also borrowed Duesenberg hydraulic four-wheel brakes. Ira Vail, another popular driver, handled a car named the Philbrin that in reality was all Duesenberg save for the ignition after which it was named. At various times, individual drivers also handled Jordan, Crawford and Ogren chassis powered by Duesenberg engines in some of the sprint events.

Only two other men in the racing business were in the same league with him as team managers. They were Harry Hartz, one of his proteges, and Harry C. Stutz. Fred was famous for his laconic pit signals that consisted of three handkerchiefs: White meant "Hold your place," Blue was for "Slow down," and red for "Beat that car!" The red handkerchief was the most active.

According to August Duesenberg, "Of all Fred's victories, the greatest in his own mind was when Joe Boyer won at Indianapolis in 1924." This was a crushing demonstration of Fred's ability to revise his team tactics at a moment's notice, to the dismay of his opponents.

Boyer was leading in one of the new supercharged straight-eight Duesenbergs conforming to the revised 122-cubic inch formula, when the supercharger quit. The car was able to continue, but lost so much speed that all chance of victory faded. Without hesitation, Duesenberg put a relief driver in the crippled machine and moved Boyer, a fine driver, into the car handled by L. L. Corum, a far less experienced man who lay fifteenth. With the race already half over, the chances looked pretty slim, yet Boyer managed to win. Nobody, of course, except Fred thought he could possibly catch the leaders.

Undoubtedly, his happiest years were spent at the Indianapolis factory when he had achieved world fame and he was planning further conquests. Though he drove everyone hard, his friendly informality made him popular with the staff. Fred was never known to lose his temper, even under extreme provocations. If he caught a mechanic botching a job, which was seldom enough, he would slowly turn red, shake his mane of graying hair and give vent to his worst profanity: "Christ, you can't do that!" With those words, having said everything, Fred would limp indignantly away, climb on the bicycle that carried him from one end of the factory to the other, and pedal away.

By a coincidence, Fred Duesenberg and Harry C. Stutz both took twelve years to realize their ambition of an Indianapolis win. Stutz began in 1911 and made it in 1923, while Duesenberg started a year later and scored his first win in 1924, repeating in '25 and '27.

When the Model J was announced, it created just as big a sensation as its predecessor. The piston displacement of the straight-eight engine was increased to 420 cubic inches and Fred designed for it a thirty-two-valve, twin-overhead camshaft head that was a superb piece of engineering. The Model J had an output of 265 h.p. with dual carburetion. The wheel base was increased considerably, offering a choice of 142  $\frac{1}{2}$  and 153  $\frac{1}{2}$  inches, much to the joy of custom coachbuilders.

The price also soared to new heights, the lowest figure quoted being \$ 8,500 for the chassis alone. All bodies were to

special order. Nevertheless, the list of celebrities who owned Duesenbergs grew steadily longer. Among them were the late Prince Serge Mdivani, Marion Davies, Mayor Jimmy Walker of New York, Elizabeth Arden, King Alfonso of Spain, Queen Marie of Yugoslavia, Paul Whiteman, Doris Duke, Tommy Manville, tap-dancer Bill Robinson, P. K. Wrigley, Kenneth Smith (then president of the Pepsodent Company), Prince Nicolas of Rumania, King Victor Emmanuel of Italy, Joe E. Brown, and many more. Gary Cooper and Clark Gable had the only two 125-inch-wheel-base Duesenbergs ever built. John Warren Watson, with whom Fred spent the last evening before his accident, also was an enthusiastic Duesenberg owner.

Finally in 1932, the year after he quit racing for good, Duesenberg climaxed his life's work with the fabulous Model SJ, first production car in the United States to be fitted with a supercharger. This was the car to end all cars--the epitome of scientific, high-precision engineering, the brain child of Fred's thirty years of unrivaled experience in building automobiles.

The SJ had basically the same piston displacement as the J, and the choice of wheel base remaining unchanged, but the supercharger made a world of difference to an already high performance. A centrifugal sixteen-blade blower was used, driven by a train of auxiliary gears halfway along the crankshaft and turning at six times engine speed, although it remained quite silent in action. At 4,000 r.p.m., the blower built up eight pounds of boost, while at the peak of 4,750 r.p.m., the power output jumped from 265 to 320 h.p. with one dual carburetor and close to 400 h.p. with two. Resultant getaway and flexibility were something to thrill the most jaded drivers.

But that wasn't all. Carrying a custom body and full road equipment, and averaging around 6,000 pounds in weight, the SJ was capable of 104 m.p.h. in second gear and from 3 to 130 m.p.h. in high. It would accelerate through the gears from a standing start to 100 m.p.h. in 17 seconds, a figure that even today is approached by very few supersports European machines.

The standard engine-turned instrument panel of the SJ Duesenberg was in itself something to make the enthusiast drool. It included not only a 5,000-r.p.m. tachometer and a 150-m.p.h. speedometer, but also a split-second stop clock, altimeter-barometer and brake-pressure gauge!

As with the Model J, each SJ body was built to the customer's special order. The cost of this was additional, of course, to the price of \$11,750 for the chassis.

The Arlington sedan, for example, with coachwork by Rollston on the 153  $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch wheel-base car, had separate armchair seats for each passenger and an interior paneled in two tones of burled walnut with silver inlays. A rear instrument panel was provided which, in addition to a speedometer, featured a built-in second stop clock. On other bodies, the upholstery ranged from imported broad-

cloth bound with patent leather to tanned goatskin. Deep pile carpets of matching or contrasting color were fitted, and of course the the painting was done entirely by hand.

The price for such luxurious surroundings? Well, anything from \$13,500 (for the Murphy roadster) to \$18,000 or more, according to the trim, body style, paint job and pet ideas specified by the owner.

Fred Duesenberg died three years too soon to see the SJ achieve the greatest triumph ever scored by a car bearing his name. In September, 1935, an SJ roadster driven by Ab Jenkins set up a new world record of 135.47 m.p.h. average for twenty-four hours round a ten-mile oval near Wendover, in Utah's Great Salt Lake Desert. Jenkins took the record from British speed king John Cobb, whose specially built 700-h.p. Napier-engined racing car had averaged 134.85 m.p.h. not long before. Fathered through its construction by "Augie" Duesenberg, the Ab Jenkins SJ model carried a modified streamlined body, but had fenders, windshield and all accessories and could normally be used along the highway. To allow time for gas and oil checks and tire changes, Jenkins ran a good part of the time at 150 m.p.h., and at one point the A.A.A. timed him doing 160 m.p.h. The aggregate mileage of the Duesenberg was 3,200 miles, greater than the distance between New York and Los Angeles.

With the liquidation of the Cord interests in 1937, the price of used Duesenbergs rose steadily as they became coveted specimens in the vintage collections of wealthy enthusiasts. But their life was by no means confined to sitting in private showplaces. Today, 240 of these superb cars still are in use with enthusiastic owners who won't trade or sell them. It's an interesting reflection that twenty-four Duesenbergs at present in use are in the hands of twenty-one original owners!

"What so-called automobile," one owner asks, "can hold a candle to the Duesenberg in speed, roadability, ruggedness, beauty, finish and longevity?" In these times of rocking-horse suspensions, crank-handle steering, optimistic speedometers, and bulbous bodies made from exquisitely thin sheet metal, that's a hard one to answer.

The first Model A Duesenberg to leave the factory was No. 1001, which went to a pineapple grower in Honolulu. The last car, J-586, was bought by the late Conkey Whitehead of Atlanta, a Coca-Cola heir, and now belongs to musician Charles Kynor of Jackson Heights, New York. These are engine numbers of production cars completed and sold before the factory was closed. They do not exclude the possibility that one or two additional uncompleted Duesenbergs may have found their way into the hands of private owners at a time subsequent to the closing of the New York branch.

Ten years later, in 1947, lovers of Duesenbergs heard some heartening news. It was announced from Indianapolis that Marshall Merkles, well-known Chicago manufacturer of brass productions, had acquired the remaining Duesenberg cars and planned to resume

building cars. Merkes revealed that he had re-signed August Duesenberg to help design the new model. A group of Chicagoans were joining Merkes in financing the experimental work which would take "ayear or so." As to specifications, Augie had this to say: "The car will have an eight-cylinder engine and probably the fuel-injection type of fuel feed in place of the carburetor principle common in most engines." The bodies, he added, would be custombuilt as in the old days. The price was the only thing that chilled the ardor of the Duesenberg brigade. "The new Duesenberg automobile can't possibly sell for less than \$25,000," said the announcement, "and will probably cost more."

At this time, whatever the state of the experimental work, the microscopic market open to a \$25,000 automobile may be causing the sponsors some serious thought. But whether this gallant attempt to revive the old order ever comes to anything, the name of Fred Duesenberg, Grand Old Man of racing and builder of the finest, most luxurious cars ever seen on the American market, will remain forever on the scroll of automotive fame.

Perhaps the most apt and sincere homage paid to Duesenberg was engraved on a bronze tablet which the Contest Board of the A.A.A. presented to him in 1927. It read:

"In appreciation of Fred S. Duesenberg. Racing is a crucible in which have been tested many of the fundamentals of automotive engineering found in present-day automobiles. The race track has been the stockroom of ideas for engineers of passenger cars, to which you have graciously surrendered the keys."

NORTH ALABAMA REGION  
ANTIQUE AUTOMOBILE CLUB OF AMERICA

MEETING NOTICE

Date: May 22, 1969

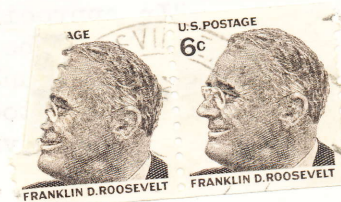
Time: 6:30 P.M.

Place: Dr. Becraft's Office (Upstairs)

Regular monthly meeting- **Ernie Azary** will speak on  
balancing rods and other engine parts. See you there.

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