

Winter's Snow Melted, The Sun Was Warm & The Streetcars Rolled



**By Jerry Gordon
Photos By Melanie Adams
& Bruce Knott**

It's quite astounding how a few weeks and the change from winter to spring erased the effects of February's twin historic snowstorms.

The Baltimore Streetcar Museum was hit hard during the storms when trees along the track right-of-way fell onto the overhead electric wire grid. A couple of wood poles were broken and several others were pulled out of alignment. Even though wires and transformers were on the ground, most of this electrical infrastructure was intact. The Museum's staff rallied with an all-hands-on-deck effort to clear the wreckage and fix the electrical system that powers the streetcars.

So when our antique cars started arriving just before noon on Sunday, April 11th, the Museum was up and running with four streetcars in service for the afternoon. There was a little bit of evidence of winter's wrath, but

spring was in the air on a beautiful April day with mid 70s sunshine. By about 1:30 PM we had 30 vehicles on the show field. There were long lines of spectators at the Museum's ticket window well into mid-afternoon. Most of the streetcar runs were crowded with our Club's members and guests, plus the spectators.

The four streetcars in service for the day were the 1902 Brill Co. unit with the open sides and reversible bench seats; #4539, an early 20th century closed-side car; the 1944 Pullman-Standard unit, one of their heavily used streetcars; and the Museum's newest restoration, the 1948 St. Louis Streetcar Co. unit that came from Philadelphia's SEPTA. Also on the tracks during the day was the Museum's work streetcar, which is not often out when the Museums is open for visitors

Show cars kept arriving during the early afternoon. At one point a spectator commented, "look, there's a Kaiser coming in". Indeed, Jerry Ross was driving through the entrance with

his 1954 Kaiser Manhattan.

Jerry has a long association with the Kaiser automobile. When he was a teenager, his family purchased a Kaiser Special sedan, their first new car. The Kaiser remained in the family for several years and Jerry even drove it on dates. In Jerry's memory, the Kaiser was a beautiful car not only for its styling, which was ahead of its time, but also because of its blue and white paint scheme and luxurious interior.

Jerry admits that he was never a car-buff, but as he went through life's changes he never forgot the Kaiser. About fourteen years ago he saw his brother-in-law's *Hemmings'* magazine and Jerry noted that Kaisers were for sale and there was a Kaiser-Frazer collector's club. Jerry joined the club and started looking for a Kaiser similar to the family car. He found his 1954 Manhattan in Eden Prairie, MN. After hiring someone to evaluate the car's condition, he bought it and had it shipped to Baltimore.

Continued on the next page >>



Shown from the left: the 1902 Brill Co. streetcar, John Horn's 1953 Hudson, Eric Hanson's 1955 Volkswagen, Tim Canova's 1967 Ford, and Hank Reus, Sr.'s 1940 Buick.

Streetcar Museum – continued

As the transporter backed all the way into his cul-de-sac, Jerry waited in great anticipation. It had been 35 years since he had seen a '54 Kaiser that looked just like his parent's car. He wasn't disappointed with the car's appearance and condition. At the time, Jerry didn't have a garage on his property, so eventually he had to construct a two-car garage, one for the Kaiser and the other for his wife Ruth's car.

The '54 Manhattan, the better optioned car compared to a Special, needed some chrome refurbishing (except bumpers), exterior plastic parts replaced, and a repaint.

The Manhattan is powered by a 140 HP Continental flat head, six cylinder engine with a McCulloch supercharger. With the Hydramatic transmission, it

can easily fit in with today's traffic conditions. And Jerry takes the car out for local drives whenever he can.

As the afternoon went by and we visited with each other and took turns riding the streetcars, the Museum staff inspected the 30 vehicles, looking for the one they liked. The Museum's John O'Neill (President and Officer of the Day) decided that the Sponsor's Choice was Bill Schmuck's 1956 Buick.

Members and guests at the first antique car driving event of 2010 were: Jeff & Henry Horrocks, 1936 Ford; Don Rhine, 1941 Buick; Phyllis & Mel Gofstein, 1972 Chevelle; Janice & Allen Pogach, 1970 Oldsmobile; Ruth Synodinos & Bill Schmuck, 1956 Buick; Tommy Thompson, 1973 Chevrolet; Isabella, Nick, Pam & Tim

Canova, 1967 Ford; Helen & Jerry Gordon, 1961 Cadillac; Ira Katz, 1971 Plymouth; Hank Reus, Sr., 1940 Buick; Shaun Glange, 1957 Chevrolet; Art Petrucci, 1964 Corvair; Buzz Diehl, 1966 Pontiac; Mary & Ed Allen, 1957 Chevrolet; Rick & John Gambo, 1961 Metropolitan; and Bud Miller & Bud Sammis, 1936 Ford.

Also at the car show were: Lynn & John Horn, 1953 Hudson; Linda & Tom Young, 1980 Plymouth; Kirby England, 1971 Javelin; Bernie Lewin, 1960 Volkswagen; Eric Hanson, 1955 Volkswagen; Pat Wenderoth, 1964 Lincoln; Wayne McDaniel, 1952 Chevrolet; Rick Neault, 1949 Ford; Bill Neault, 1927 Ford; Martin Herman, 1969 Pontiac; Bruce Knott, 1963 Falcon; Jerry Ross, 1954 Kaiser; Andy Poe, 1952 Chevrolet; & Rick Hollar.



Shown from the left: Jerry Ross'1954 Kaiser Manhattan (see the bio on this car in the article); Tommy Thompson brought these two pedal cars that he thinks are about fifty years old; and the Sponsor's Choice vehicle, Bill Schmuck's 1956 Buick.



Shown from the left: Martin Herman leaving at the end of the show in his 1969 Pontiac 400; Bill Schmuck receiving the Sponsor's Choice trophy from Museum President John O'Neill (left) and Tom Caldwell (right); and Bud Sammis' 1936 Ford.



Shown from the left; Jeff Horrocks' 1936 Ford; Mel Gofstein's 1972 Chevelle; Art Petrucci's 1964 Corvair; Ed Allen's 1957 Chevrolet; and the Museum's work streetcar in action.