

THE CHESAPEAKE BULLETIN

Volume 47 - Number 10

October 2007

Visit our website: www.aaca.org/chesapeake

Published monthly by the
Chesapeake Region of the Antique Automobile Club of America



Those Orphan Cars In The Chesapeake Region

Many Chesapeake Region members have orphan cars – those car marques that are no longer made because the manufacturer is not in business anymore. The mid-Atlantic area of the antique car hobby is unique because it supports the annual Orphan Car Tour, which has a scenic and historic one-day route in Maryland and/or Virginia each year in early June. And now our Club is a sponsor of the Orphan Car Show, which has been held for years in Carroll County during July.

There are a lot of opinions about what qualifies a car make as an orphan. Some purists think that the automobile manufacturer had to cease making cars – like Nash, Packard, Hudson, or Studebaker. Others think that a car make can also be an orphan if the automobile maker closed a division – like DeSoto, Plymouth, or Oldsmobile. And there are some automotive historians who believe that the number of mergers and buyouts among American automakers has clouded the issue of which carmakers went out of business – like the Hudson/Nash and Willys Jeep to AMC to Chrysler Corp. series of transactions starting in 1954 and ending in 1987.

To further confuse the definition about which cars are orphans, consider that Chevrolet dropped Corvair back in the '60s and Ford dropped Thunderbird a

second time in 2005. Are these brands just dropped car models of Chevrolet and Ford, or orphans?

Possibly the best definitions of what constitutes an orphan car is from Jon Battle (Bull Run Region, AACA), who is one of the organizers of the Orphan

(they somewhat stretch the defunct division criterion a wee bit).” To learn more about the Orphan Car Tour click on: www.orphancartour.org.

Because AACA membership covers all makes of antique vehicles, our Club has a diverse representation of orphan

makes owned – AMC, Cord, Edsel, Crosley, DeSoto, Graham, Hudson, Hupmobile, Kaiser, MG, Packard, Willys, Studebaker, Metropolitan, several brass era cars; plus the Plymouths and Oldsmobiles.

Owning and restoring some of these orphan cars presents a challenge in obtaining NOS, used, and repro parts and information. While there are active single make national car clubs to help provide support, it's

somewhat tougher to own an orphan car; but maybe that's what adds to the fun of owning an antique car.

The Studebakers

Among the orphan car makes in the Chesapeake Region, there are several Studebakers that are owned by six members, and a couple of other members have owned them in the recent past. Current members that we've identified with Studebakers are Bob Johannessen – 1963 Avanti, Pat Wenderoth – 1928 sedan, John Raffensparger – 1963 GT Hawk, Donald Reisberg – has several from the late 1920s to 1960, Ed Dashiell – 1941

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Shown above are four orphan car examples clockwise from the top left: Allen Weinstein, 1941 Hupmobile; Jerry Ross, 1954 Kaiser; Art Rutledge, 1932 DeSoto; and Jim Synodinos, 1947 Packard.

Car Tour – “We define an Orphan as any vehicle (car or truck) manufactured by a company or company division which is no longer engaged in the manufacture of vehicles. We seem to slightly tweak this each year! In fact, we have a “big tent” outlook and don't make a big deal about it if we get a Corvair, Imperial, Zephyr, or LaSalle

Orphan Cars - continued

pickup truck, and Ted Schneider – 1964 Cruiser.



John Raffensparger's 1963 GT Hawk is unusual because he is the only owner. John bought the car out of the dealer's showroom back in 1963 when he was just picking up a part for the 1958 Studebaker he owned. Instead of buying the part he traded the car.

This was his first new car, but it was lightly used because he always had another car as his daily driver. Several years later it was retired, but John kept it until he restored it recently.



Pat Wenderoth's 1928 Studebaker President is well known to most Club members because he likes to drive it to many events. This was the top-of-the-line Studebaker with a powerful straight eight engine and the size, finish, and appointments to qualify it as a luxury car in its time.

Pat acquired this fine Studebaker in the early 1960s. It easily keeps up with modern traffic and has excellent mechanical brakes that stop this heavy car. It's also great for parades because you can comfortably get seven people in it.

Bob Johannessen's 1963 Studebaker Avanti (see the picture on page 5) was bought about 20 years ago from Jones

Motors in Edgewood, MD, the original selling dealer. The original buyer traded it back in 1972 and the dealer stored it for about ten years to give to his son when he grew up. But when the son came of age he was into Camaros

The car was in decent shape with only 79K miles and needed some cosmetics like outside chrome redone and some interior work. The Avanti is an AACA Senior car, but is also a driver.



Ed Dashiell's 1941 Studebaker M5 pickup truck will look like this when the restoration is finished. About ten years ago Ed began looking for a 1947 pickup to restore. After a long search, a suitable '46 was found in central Virginia. Before buying it he checked the serial number (M5 281) and found that the truck was actually an early '41, not a '46, and therefore very rare. Ed bought the truck because he liked its looks and rarity. The total production of M5s was only 4,685.

Ed's truck came from the factory with only one accessory – the cab dome light. It didn't even have a rear bumper, which was also an accessory. Ed hopes to have it restored for the 2008 SDC International Meet in Lancaster, PA.



Ted Schneider's 1964 Studebaker Cruiser was purchased on e-Bay and is a Georgia car that had red clay dirt in the trunk to prove it. Based on sketchy

records, it's quite possible that this car was never sold and instead kept by the 1960s Atlanta area distributor.

The body number and serial number indicate it was made in the first month or so of '64 production in 1963. Larks were considered compact cars, but by today's standards it's huge – 113 inch wheelbase, 3,300 pounds, 289 CI V-8.

Donald Reisberg has what's known in Studebaker circles as "a flock", but only one is a "bird" car – his 1960 Lark. The rest of the collection includes: 1927 EU Sport Coupe, 1932 SC2 1-1/2 ton truck, 1947 M15A delivery truck, and 1947 4 dr. sedan. All of these vehicles are restored.

Ford Motor Company's Edsel

Another Orphan brand, which is only owned by a couple of members, is Ford's famous failure – the Edsel.



Jim Popp's 1960 Edsel convertible is a good example of the several dozen Edsels that he has in a storage facility that has a sign above the door "Shrine of the Holy Grill" – a statement about what many believe was an ugly car.

Jim has been collecting Edsels since 1959 and stuck with them when even as antiques they were shunned by many. Today, Edsels are somewhat pricey and sought after.

The other Edsel is owned by **Frank Ruehl III**, who has a 1959 convertible.

So for all our Club members who get hung-up on whether or not they have a Chevy, or a Ford, or a Mopar – or a so-called prestige car like Cadillac, or a big dollar muscle car – remember that there are a whole bunch of antique cars out there with unfamiliar names that need some lovin' too!