

# Classy Chassis



**Photo 1: Incorrect wheel on the Orient**

An Orient in Connecticut (part 2),

by George King III

After I got the Orient home in August, I began taking it apart. This was a half a job because the car was half way disassembled to start with. Under the car were several boxes of parts and several pieces of rods, tubing, and even the engine.

As I worked with each of the newly acquired parts, I began to figure out how it worked, what needed repair, and what was missing. I wanted to learn about each of the parts and especially the French-made engine. (photo 1, the wheel is wrong)

On September 2, my work and studies came to an abrupt stop. This is when I fell off the ladder and I needed the assistance of car friends. One of my problems was that I was not allowed to drive. FSMTA member Greg Canova brought me to Lang's and another member Mark Sheppard took me to Hershey, PA to conduct research at the AACA library. It sure was nice when I got to a point when I was allowed to drive which was in November.

Many of you will remember Charlie Gallo who was my lead man when I had the shop open. In fact, Charlie was with me for nine years. He is an antique motorcycle rider and very much an asset when working on the engine used by a bicycle and motorcycle builder 119 years ago.

Charlie and Mark came over often because they live the closest. Charlie has a good size lathe and is a very skilled machinist. This in addition to his knowledge on motorcycles was most helpful when we built wheels for the car.

The first big research project on the Orient was to figure out where we could get wheels. There were two cars made in 1901 so finding originals was impossible. It soon became obvious that we would need to make some. The front wheel spindles on the car were .795 in diameter. I found out that Harley-Davidson old-world front wheel hubs were .750 bearings. I purchased four hubs and Charlie turned them down on his lathe to make them look more like original Orient hubs. He also turned down the spindles to make them the correct size.



**Photo 2: Construction of steel core to fit rear hubs**

The rear hubs were a bigger problem. We had to make a steel core to fit into the aluminum hub. The hub fits over the core and is held in place with hardened steel pins. Another car friend, Frank Bernstein, has a wonderful milling machine and fit the pins to hold the cores to the rear hubs. On the outboard end of the core we needed a square receiver to fit over the axel. The square on the end of the axel transfers the rotation from the differential to the wheel for traction. To do this, I purchased two hardened 8 point half inch drive sockets. Charlie machined them to fit the cores and I had them welded into the cores so they can be used to drive the rear wheels. (photo 2)

The next wheel problem was to figure out what to use for rims. The original 1901 Orient had 29.5 inch wheels. Those rims and tires are never available. I decided to use the Model T front wheel rim which is 30 inches. I figured that I could get away with a ½ “ larger tire. I bought four rims from Lang’s. Greg drove me up there to get them as I still could not drive at the time.



I shipped the hubs and rims to Buchanan Wheels in California. They are a well-known constructor of wire wheels for motorcycles and now for Orient runabouts. They did a wonderful job of fitting each rim with 40 dimples, about the size of your thumb, to hold the 40 new spokes between the rim and the hub. (photo 3)

They shipped them back to me and I sent the hubs and rims to the paint shop to get them filled with Metal All and primer and final paint them with the same paint that we are using on the chassis.



**Photo 4: Polished spokes.**

Each of the wire spokes has a letter “B” on the head of the parts sticking through the hub. Since the Orient did not have these, I ground each of the letters off each of 160 spokes and then smoothed and polished them. (see photo 4 to left):

The last step in getting the wheels made will be to bring them to a professional wire wheel shop Massachusetts where they will be assembled and balanced and have the tubes and tires installed.

I wanted to use white wheels on this car since this is what they used on them originally. The bad news is that there are no 30x3 white clincher tires being made anywhere in the world and no projected replacements are scheduled. The Orient will have black tires until the whites become available. (photo 5)

The cost of having these wheels made is greater than the cost of the car.

I am glad it is almost over.



**Photo 5: New 30 x 30 black tires**

## Ken's Buick Update

by Ken Carr

I have been doing a little more work on my 1941 Buick. You would have to look real hard to notice, though. So, here is my update.

The installation of a new engine and instruments wiring harness is completed. I was able to get it done without too many roadblocks. I decided that it was time to update the wiring when some under hood wires began to smolder while on the way home from the Brooklyn car show a couple years ago. I got all the new wires installed with none left over. The car now has complete and working instrumentation with the exception of the clock and trip odometer. There are also two new battery cables, both 00 gauge. The starting sequence is returned to factory original. I removed the non-stock starter button and wired in the vacuum start switch that is part of the carburetor. Starting is now as simple as turning the key to on and then depressing the accelerator half way.

None of my interior courtesy lights were working. I figured out where wires were missing or hanging loose and installed new door jamb switches. After additional repairs to the circuit I can now turn the dome light on and off and front or back courtesy lights come on when any of three doors are opened. The driver's side back door does not operate a light since people of the 1940's were smart enough to never enter a car from the street side at night (so the story goes). I also repaired the plastic horn trim ring and painted and installed it. Next up is the steering wheel. It is in such bad shape that I can't possibly make it worse. That should be fun.



While upgrading the wiring I had to remove the radio so I did a complete electrical restoration of the Buick Sonomatic. It should receive well for many years to come.

## Correspondence:

**Charlie Nash** sent in a wonderful photo of a bud vase that now graces the interior of his 1932 Chevrolet Confederate. According to Charlie:

“Meanwhile, my ’32 Chevy now has flower power. I finally installed a beautiful bud vase with bracket. I know.... it’s not a big Caddy or Packard, but when does one get to ride in a vehicle with flowers except in a hearse, that final ride to the ultimate car show in the sky :)”

**Gerry Lynn** directs our attention to an article by the American Automobile Association (AAA). Gerry says to check it out:

“These are all imports. I would add the Model T Ford Mustang and the minivan to this list.

[The Most Popular Cars of All Time - Your AAA Network](#)

**Charles Roessler** sends along a link to a really cool YouTube video. It depicts a woman changing the landing gear wheel to an airplane while in the air. Do not try this at home! The title is “[Air Crash Averted](#)”. Even the 78 rpm musical score is great. Don’t miss it.

**Gerry Lynn** also advises us to check out “[30 Cars That Never Should Have Been Built](#)”. Warning: this is one of those sites that make you click through 30 different screens of advertisements.

**Gerry Lynn** has a commentary on the times: “[Audrain](#) sent out an email announcing a cars& coffee next Sun. 8/16 at the Newport Polo grounds in Portsmouth RI. The email went out at noon. I tried to register at 1:30 and it was already full!!. I asked "How come?" and they replied that the 250 spots filled up in less than 10 min. ! I'm on the waiting list. Shows you how desperate people are to show their cars.



## Memories of Moone Motors

by Merrill Moone

My father, Eugene B. Moone, “Ben”, started selling used cars from my grandfather’s front lawn on Main Street in Washington Village, Coventry, sometime in the 1930s. Hanging on my garage wall is one of his first dealer plates dated 1933, numbered 236 C. By 1940 he had married my mother and they had a house on Knotty Oak Road in Coventry. Next to it was a large, wood frame, building in which he opened a Studebaker dealership. The photos below show the building in 1942 just before he left for service as a Jeep driver in the army.



**Studebaker Dealership, 1942. Note ration sticker & Ben Moone in uniform.**

After the war there was a big demand for new cars and Studebakers were available. Accordingly,

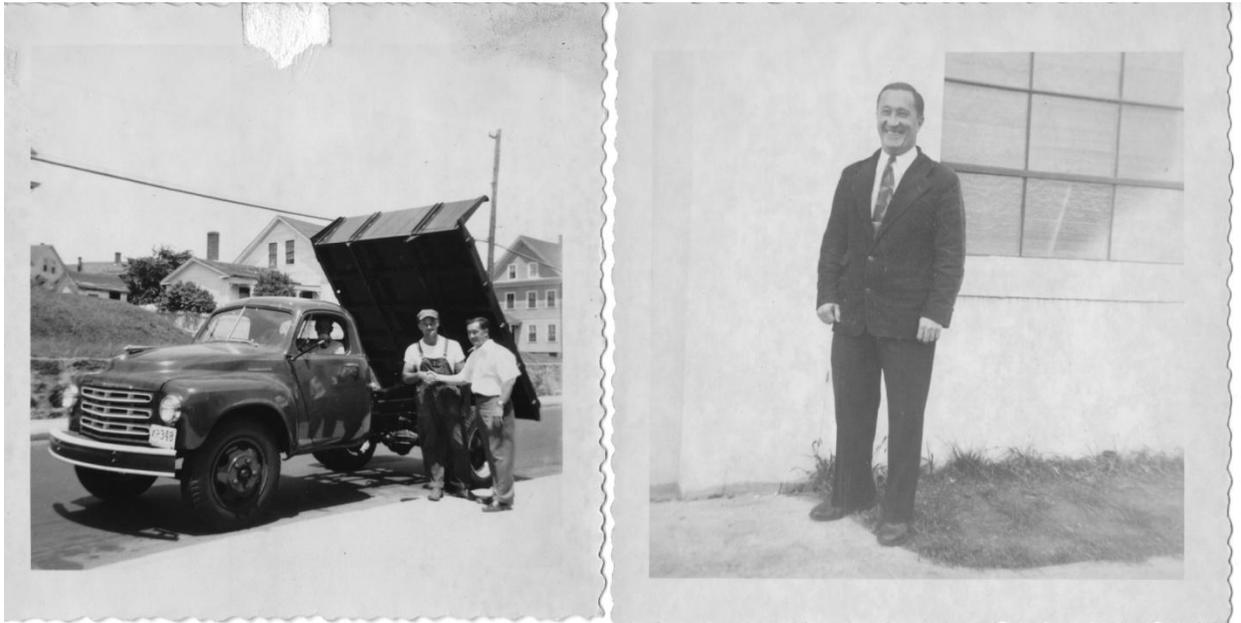


a big new building was built at 123 Washington Street in West Warwick. It had a showroom in front for 4 or 5 cars with a large service area behind with the entrance on the side. It was built into the side of a hill and had a basement where heavy mechanical work and body work was done. On the second floor was an office and another 3 or 4 large rooms, one of which was rented and the others used for storage and an office.

**New Building on Washington St. in West Warwick**



New West Warwick Studebaker Dealership





A full lot of new Studebakers



Notice the two boys playing outside the dealership. Is one Merrill?

I was born in 1946. I don't remember cars being sold at Knotty Oak Road, even though we lived next door. I do remember going to the West Warwick garage by the time I was about 3. The '50

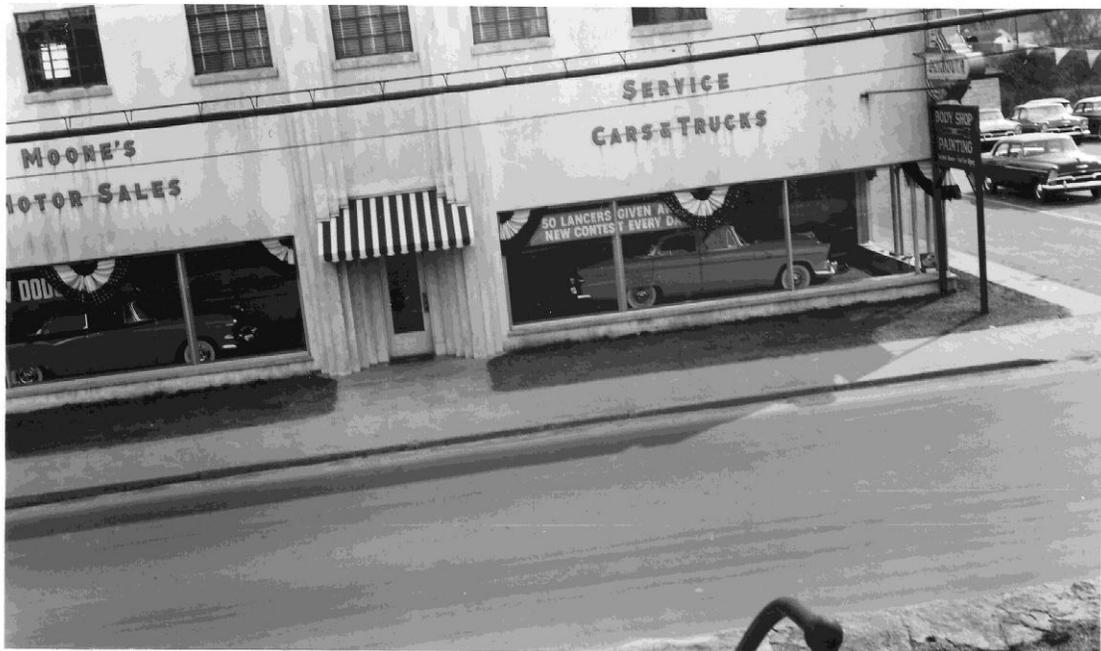
Studes had the aircraft style grilles. In the showroom there were promo models on display and I acquired two of them, one blue-green Starlight and a maroon sedan. Later, after some pestering, came a grey one which came to an early end when I rolled it across the floor and into the service area where it got run over. The model and I were both crushed. I still suffer from post-traumatic stress. The other two eventually wore out in the sandbox.

Another memory from the Studebaker days was going down to the railway depot in Arctic, the area of West Warwick where the garage and most businesses were located. Back then the cars arrived in boxcars. As I recall some were on the floor and some suspended from the roof.

By late '49 dad switched franchises from Studebaker to Dodge-Plymouth. In 1951 dad bought a '22 Dodge touring car from Foothills Motor Corp. in Beacon, N.Y. I wasn't along for the ride but he said he drove it home from Beacon. He had it repainted in our body shop, but otherwise it remained original. Some round signs were made for the front wheels, which read "The Dodge Lasts Forever". It was a great treat to ride in it when it used in parades. It wasn't used much though as the coil would get hot from the slow pace and cause the car to stall. After a year or two it ended up languishing in a shed behind the Knotty Oak Road garage

The Dodge agency lasted a few years. There was even a period of time when the business partnered in a soda distribution business. Dodge box vans were maintained for use delivering Cott soda to grocery stores. Apparently that wasn't profitable as it didn't continue. During those years I used to go down to the garage on Saturdays. It was fun to wander around and sit in the various used cars, pretending to drive them. I quickly learned about all the different makes and models. Upstairs was dad's private office in which there was a slide projector / phonograph for showing sales and technical training films. That was always fun to play with. My mother always had a new car and one I particularly remember was a pea green Plymouth Suburban which my mother had for a little while when I was 6 and liked to ride in the back. In those days kids could ride in the back of wagons and pick-ups without some crime being committed. There was also a ride with my father one Sunday in a new '53 Dodge Hemi V-8 up Nooseneck Hill Road racing an XK-120. For some reason I was told not to say anything to my mother about it. I also remember riding into East Greenwich one morning in a brand new '55 Dodge just before introduction. Dodge styling changed radically that year and the car attracted a lot of attention. Dodge also had promo models and my '55 and '56 Custom Royal Lancers have survived.

By the mid '50s I began to overhear grumblings about the Dodge franchise. Rumor was that the Plymouth franchises would be taken away from Dodge dealers and transferred to DeSoto agencies. This did not set well as Plymouth was a better seller than Dodge and obtaining Plymouths often involved having an unwanted Dodge truck included on the trailer. As a result a Buick franchise was obtained for '56.



I think the '56 Buicks sold fairly well. I remember my mom having a blue and white Super 4dr. Riviera to drive around in. I can remember the '57s on the showroom floor and all the details of the various models from the relatively basic Specials to the fancier Centurys, Supers and Roadmasters which had more chrome and plusher interiors. The top of the line was the Roadmaster 75. I remember getting to ride to church one time in a black one with blue broadcloth interior. It was the lap of luxury. I usually didn't like going to church but that time was different. By that time I was about 10 years old and was very interested in cars. Much time was wasted in school doodling pictures of the '57s. 1957 started out ok but as the year wore on a recession developed and Buick began to do poorly. It was a time when imported cars began to make an appearance and AMC's Rambler became popular. People needed to economize and Buicks didn't have much to offer in that line.

I remember one evening dad came home with one of those brochures made by reprinting a magazine article from a motoring magazine and he said he had just signed up to sell a new line of cars. The first thing I saw on the front page was some sort of race car so I was very enthused, but on the next page was some old fashioned looking sedan called a Volvo. Dad had been at a Buick dealer meeting and was approached by a fellow who represented himself as the Volvo distributor for New England and, as a result, ordered a trailer load of cars. These were PV-444s, to be sold as 1957 models although they had originally been produced as '56s. As I remember there were two blue ones, one medium and one dark, a white one, a grey one with red vinyl upholstery, and a maroon one with two tone maroon and grey wool inside. Dad took the grey one to use as a demonstrator. The maroon one was the first to be sold. Before they were all sold dad came in contact with an employee of Volvo Distributing in New Jersey, the factory subsidiary, and was offered a direct franchise.

The Volvos sold pretty well. Dad really liked them and was honestly enthusiastic when talking about them with customers, pointing out how heavy the sheet metal was, how well they performed, how they got 28 - 32 m.p.g. and how easy they were to repair. Dad used to tell customers that any mechanic who could work on a 1928 Chevrolet could work on a Volvo. In fact they were pretty rugged. The overhead valve four was practically indestructible and had a lot of pep, more than most other imported sedans, and rust holes didn't appear after the second winter as in most other cars of the '50s.

After acquiring Volvo we also began selling Simcas. Simca started out well. They were a bit smaller and cheaper than Volvo but were decent little cars. They only lasted a couple of years before becoming a "captive import" of Chrysler Corporation, which took away the independent franchises and gave them to domestic Chrysler Corp. dealers. That brilliant business decision resulted in sales in the U.S. being discontinued altogether after a year.

1958 was a milestone year for Moone Motors. The recession had sunk in and the Buicks were a disaster. The overhead of the big building in West Warwick couldn't be maintained and something had to be done. My father had acquired a one room annex showroom at 5601 Post Road in East Greenwich and decided to give up Buick and move Volvo and Simca to E.G. The West Warwick showroom was leased to a furniture store. Because the E.G. building had no service facilities the basement in West Warwick continued for a few more years.

The move to E.G. was a success. Quonset Naval Air Station was still hosting carriers so there was plenty of business in used cars to sailors and new cars to officers and E.G. residents, E.G. being more prosperous than West Warwick as it still is today. Soon a concrete block addition much larger than the original showroom was added for parts, car storage, and light servicing. In a couple of more years, by 1962 at the latest, a second, even larger, addition was constructed to house a full service and parts department, at which point West Warwick operations ceased.



**New East Greenwich Volvo dealership. Notice building expansion shown below.**



We were never a volume dealership. After moving to E.G. the selling was done, for the most part, only by my father and a salaried bookkeeper/manager. Very rarely was a commissioned salesman employed. Usually 4 or 5 people were employed in the service department, all of them paid on an hourly basis, not flat rate. Profit was to be made selling cars, not on parts and service. The purpose of the service department was to recondition used cars and provide service to customers who bought cars from us, and our customers always did get good and honest service; but, those who bought cars from competing dealers around the state were generally not welcome. If they could travel to Providence to save fifty bucks on their new car they could go there to get it serviced. My opinion was that profit was more easily made on parts and service but that didn't count.

In the days before the West Warwick garage was discontinued altogether it was our only service facility so cars had to be driven or towed back and forth to be worked on. We didn't have a wrecker, it being my father's belief that having one would mean unnecessary expense and being called upon to use it at inconvenient times. Therefore, unless it was possible to take one car to West Warwick, leave it, and bring another back to East Greenwich, it needed two people to transport vehicles. That was when I became of use, to my delight. I must have been 13 or 14 at the time and capable of driving, but not licensed to do so. Dad reasoned that steering a car being towed on a chain was not operating a motor vehicle so I sometimes got to do so. Rarely was the car being towed unable to operate on its own power so it would probably have been safer for me to just drive the thing as piloting the towed car took a bit of skill. The car to be towed is attached to the puller by a chain about 20 feet long. Before starting, the slack has to be taken up so that neither the chain nor one of the cars gets damaged. During the journey the slack needs to be kept out. That means that if it is necessary to slow down or stop the brakes on the towed car need to do the work. This required coordination and keeping an eye on the chain. I'm happy to report we never had a problem.

I turned 16 in July, 1962, by which time I was spending a lot of time at the garage. There were always trade-ins to be cleaned up as well as the new Volvos which came in covered in "cosmoline", a chemical coating which was put on in Sweden to protect them on their overseas journey. I had to soak the cars in solvent, and then wipe them down with a solvent soaked rag. This had to be repeated until the car could be washed clean with soap and water. Sometimes the haze wouldn't come out and the paint had to be buffed. By the mid '60s they started using a different coating which would come off with normal washing. I also used to clean up trade-ins and learned to do service and repair work. Working in the shop was my summer job and avocation until I graduated from law school.

The East Greenwich garage survived and prospered because of Volvo. Circa 1960 we sold Triumphs but without much success. Then we had 2 stroke Saabs but they didn't compare well with the Volvo 544 for not much less money. In 1965 dad was offered the franchise for MG and Austin-Healy. I thought that was a wonderful idea. Then Chrysler came back and wanted us to sell Simca again, along with Sunbeam. For a year or so we had Volvo, MG, Austin-Healy, Simca and Sunbeam all under one roof. Unfortunately the only person who had much enthusiasm for the sports cars was me and I wasn't a salesman. Wish I still had the red MGB and the BRG Healy 3000 that I used to drive when I commuted to URI.

The British cars just weren't selling well so they were given up. The little Simca 1000s started to do alright but Chrysler wouldn't supply any parts for either Simca or Sunbeam so we just couldn't keep them. Sunbeams didn't sell at all. Even the 260 V8 Tiger drew no interest on the showroom floor. I guess its \$3700.00 price tag was too high.

Another little enterprise was Studebaker. Dad and I were chatting with the local Dodge dealer one evening. He had a new '66 Studebaker in the showroom and dad made a comment about it being a nice little car. The Dodge dealer replied that he would relinquish the franchise if we wanted it. They were cheaper than Volvos and Dad was worried about Volvo's rising prices. 122s were up to \$2895.00 and the 544 was going out of production. Therefore, we probably became the last dealership Studebaker ever signed up. We sold the Dodge dealer's stock, took another 3 or 4 from the factory and were ready to order some more when the factory rep came by and told us that production had stopped. We had the option of returning the 4 or 5 cars we had or keeping them and receiving \$1000.00 rebates, which was about half what we had paid for them. We kept them. There was no trouble selling them with the deals we could then make.

1967 saw the introduction of the 144S. The 544 was gone. The new model sold for \$3295.00. To replace the 544 we took the Saab franchise again. Saab now had the 96 V4 to replace the oil in the gas two-stroke. This was a good car. It ran and handled well and was like a mountain goat in the snow. For a couple of years these sold well. In 1968 government safety and emissions as well as monetary inflation caused prices to rise. Volvo coped well with this situation and the more prices rose, the better they seemed to sell. Not so with Saab at the time so we went back to being exclusively Volvo. Volvo became a luxury brand. In the beginning it was hard work to convince the customer to spend a couple hundred more to have Volvo quality instead of a Ford Falcon. By the time the 240 and 260 Series Volvos came out in the '70s Volvo was in a different league. Automatic transmissions had been introduced in 1964 and air conditioning became an option. People who might previously have bought a Buick were now looking at Volvo or the German imports.

In 1968 the government put safety and emissions laws into effect. Detroit's response to this seemed to be to cut the engineering budget and increase the legal and lobbying budgets. To reduce the "parts per million" in tailpipe emissions the American manufacturers increased engine displacement and installed air pumps. Power and performance was curtailed and fuel economy decreased. I'm not a scientist or engineer but I have a suspicion that this solution increased the millions but did nothing to decrease the parts. Volvo never used air pumps. They did use some exhaust gas recirculation which caused some minor drivability issues in the '68 144s, but this went away in the '69s with a slightly larger engine. Fuel injection was introduced in '71 and became standard in '73.

While lawyers and lobbyists for the Big Three were fighting the safety regulations Volvo engineers were working on passenger safety. Volvo had shoulder harnesses as an option in the late '50s and they became standard in the early '60s. While the unitized bodies of the 544s and 122s were strong, the bodies for the 140 series were engineered with crumple zones fore and aft to cushion collision impact while the passenger compartment was a reinforced cage. Volvo made a big issue of safety in the early '70s, even painting many of the cars bright yellow or orange for visibility.

In 1973 came the Arab oil embargo with gas lines. Volvo, as well as other European and Japanese manufacturers were producing fuel efficient cars with reasonable comfort, safety and performance. Detroit was producing nice cars which got 12 mpg and cheap compacts which weren't all that nice. Volvo sales remained strong into the '70s.

I graduated from U.R.I. in 1968. Dad had lost enthusiasm for the automobile business and wanted me to do something better. Law school seemed like a wonderful idea. Dad felt that having a dealership was a constant battle, if not with customers, then with the manufacturers or government. By the '70s Volvo and the other manufacturers wanted facilities costing millions of dollars selling more cars in a month than we sold in a year. By 1977 I was practicing law and dad was 68 and ready to retire. The owner of Majestic Motors in West Warwick wanted the franchise and a deal was made. Although Volvo wouldn't approve a sale of their franchise they had no problem with inventories of parts, tools, and used cars being substantially overvalued. Timing was good because not long thereafter, during the Carter administration, interest rates went through the roof and it was better to have money in the bank than in a business.

I often wonder what it would have been like had I become the owner of the garage instead of a lawyer. Being an only child I could have had it. I loved being around the cars and doing the administration but never seemed to have a talent for selling. Anyway, I still have the old Dodge, some of the tools, the mechanic's skills I learned, and, that 1st Volvo dad sold. It's down in my garage at home, along with a '66 1800s which I saw come off the trailer and we took back in trade a few years later.

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## Recent Event Notices:

**Monthly Meetings:** Regular meetings can be considered as "by notice only" for the duration of the COVID19 pandemic. You will get an email notice prior to any meeting that we hold.

[DJ Car-Guy](#) Cancels all 2020 Events: There will be no more car shows or cruises sponsored by the DJ Car-Guy for the remainder of 2020. He does intend to return in 2021. This means that the Oak Harbor Mall Cruise in Exeter, RI is over for this year. (I went there last Monday and there were only 8 cars and no officials; we didn't get the memo in time.)

[North Stonington Baptist Church Fish Fry:](#) We have been invited to bring our cars to the North Stonington Fair Grounds on **Saturday, September 19**. The event usually features professional entertainment. This event will be held at North Stonington Fair Grounds. This is a family picnic so bring your blanket and chairs. They have tables available for handicapped and elderly. They usually serve fried fish, clam fritters, fried pickles, salads and chips fried Oreos. Admission and food are free to club members who bring their old cars. Click the title for directions to the Fair Grounds. **(Time to be announced) This is a club event.**

[Calabrese Picnic:](#) The Calabrese Picnic, hosted by Pat and Dave Calabrese, will be on **Saturday, September 26, at 11:45 AM**. Please note this date change. Come on over to the home of Pat and Dave Calabrese (address in members' section of website or click blue link). Annual picnic for WPRAACA. **Arrive by 11:45 AM**. Bring your old car and park on Dave and Pat's lawn. All members welcome and bring your classic car or your regular car is OK too. Hot Dogs, Hamburger, and Chicken, corn, and possibly pork loin will be provided with soft drinks. Members invited to bring pot luck sides, salads, and deserts. **This is a club event.**

[Klingberg Fall Show:](#) Gerry brought our attention to this. It is the same day as the Calabrese Picnic so hopefully nobody goes to this show. But, they have an interesting pandemic response.

[The Yankee Yesteryear](#) fall show in Brooklyn, CT is **cancelled**. Please click on the blue link for additional information.

[The New England Wireless and Steam Museum Steam-Up:](#) This event was slated to occur on Saturday, **October 3, 2020**. It will happen but at this point the museum does not know if it will be open to all or just be online and open to a limited number of participants. Our participation as a car club is still up in the air. Check the museum website for updates.

## AACA Forums

Check out these conversations. Can you guess or provide a solution? The forums are open to all AACA members. Of course you can also post your own questions.

[Testing a 95-year old coil](#) on a 1946 tester; really cool video from Technical Forum.

[Cars For Sale](#) – Exactly what it says. These are mostly cars owned by AACA members.

[Pre-WWII Photos](#) – All original photos of cars from this era. No new stuff. Amazing!

[Old Car Videos](#) – Expect the unexpected here.

[Technique for Draining Brake Lines](#) – Controversy erupts; what is your opinion?

## Hints Department

I frequently need to replace hardware of all kinds on my Buick. Part of the replacement problem is determining the exact size I need. Sometimes I ask folks on the AACA forum. I also have a handy digital micrometer and a tap and die set, both of which are great aids in figuring out the details about fasteners.

I do not like going through the same process more than once for any particular part. That is why I always buy at least double what I need. Recently I have begun putting all my identified Buick fasteners in one spot and labeling them. I use a compartmentalized plastic tray of the sort that can be found in any crafts store.

You might want to give this a try. *(I suspect most folks in this club already have a system ... it would be great if everyone shared some of their hints here in our newsletter ... hint, hint.)*



Brought to you by:

## Club Officers

President: Merrill Moone  
Vice President: Charlie Nash  
Secretary: Ken Carr  
Treasurer: Dave Calabrese

## Volunteers

Newsletter: Ken Carr & Gerry Lynn  
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