Doing your homework

Researching OEM procedures has become a necessary, though not uncomplicated, step.

By John Yoswick

Attend any collision repair industry event in recent years, and you’re likely to hear a repeated refrain: Shops and technicians need to review the OEM repair procedures every time, on every job.

“There’s absolutely no way you’re going to remember all this stuff.” Scott Kaboos, assistant manager for American Honda Motor Company’s collision division, has said the repair steps needed on increasingly complex vehicles. “Those days are way gone. You have to look up the procedure every time. Even in my position, where I get calls every day on our vehicles, doing your homework is paramount to getting the car fixed properly.”

“There are no two accidents that are alike,” John Eck of General Motors, concurs. “We change repair procedures often. I understand the cost and the process and the payment issues [related to looking up OEM procedures]. But we’re talking about a safe repair.”

A 2018 survey of nearly 500 shops nationally found that more than three-in-five say they research OEM repair procedure at least “most of the time,” but still, less than one-in-four say they do it every time.

“That’s scary,” Honda’s Kaboos said. “There’s a lot of shops that don’t even know they’re doing it wrong,” he said. At least one reason some shops may not be doing the needed research is that it can be time-consuming.

Working with (and around) the DC-DC converters

By Craig Van Batenburg

In previous columns on hybrid and electric vehicles, I discussed the two high-voltage battery types and the lead-acid 12-volt battery. Now it is time to learn more about how the 12-volt system survives in an environment without an alternator.

In December 1997, the Toyota Prius went on sale in Japan. When you opened the hood, you would see one belt driving the water pump and another one spinning the A/C compressor — but no alternator. Since then, the Prius has lost all its belts, one at a time, each time the car was redesigned. To provide a constant 12-volt supply (required because of idle-stop) a complex, safe and reliable step-down transformer was introduced. Note: Throughout this column I will refer to the “DC-DC converter” as a “converter” to make this more readable.

How does the converter differ from a conventional alternator? In Photo No. 1 you can see the cover removed from the converter on a Ford Escape Hybrid. In the case of Ford, the converter is a stand-alone part. Remember TDK, the Japanese company that made cassette tapes we used in our cars years ago? Well, that cassette business is largely gone, so they now make the DC-DC converters. Every hybrid, plug-in hybrid, electric car, EV with a range extender and fuel cell vehicle (I call this group “EMVs”) uses a DC-DC converter. They are usually liquid-cooled (with the older Hondas the exception with air cooling, see Photo No. 2) and will fail if they overheat. A 12-volt brushless pump is located in one of the cooling hoses leading to the converter to move liquid through the passages cast into the unit. They all have a separate cooling system from the internal combustion engine (ICE) with the exception of the old belt/alternator/starter (BAS) system that GM used in two of their Saturn vehicles and the Malibu. The BAS...
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GM CEO Barra brings the new Vette to New York City

Chevrolet Corvette Chief Engineer Tadge Juechter and General Motors Chairman and CEO Mary Barra drive in a camouflaged next generation Corvette down 7th Avenue near Times Square Thursday, April 11, 2019 in New York, New York. The next generation Corvette will be unveiled on July 18. (Photo by Jennifer Altman for Chevrolet)

Nissan unveils 50th Anniversary GT-R

The 2020 Nissan GT-R 50th Anniversary Edition takes the nameplate to a level that was unimaginable when it was first introduced 50 years ago. To celebrate the half-century of the GT-R, engineers challenged themselves to find undiscovered performance potential while still making sure the car can be enjoyed by drivers at any level.

2020 Jeep Gladiator begins shipping to U.S. Dealers

Toledo, Ohio - The all-new 2020 Jeep® Gladiator - the most capable midsize truck ever - began shipping to U.S. dealers from its home at the FCA US Toledo (Ohio) Assembly Complex on Friday, April 12, 2019. The Company invested $273 million to retool and modernize the plant for Gladiator production, and added 329 full-time positions to support the build. Revealed in November 2018, the Gladiator is built on a rich heritage of tough, dependable Jeep trucks with an unmatched combination of rugged utility, authentic Jeep design, open-air freedom, clever functionality and versatility, best-in-class towing and 4x4 payload, advanced fuel-efficient powertrains, superior on- and off-road dynamics and a host of innovative safety and advanced technology features.

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Nissan shareholders OK ouster of ex-chair Ghosn

**By Yuri Kageyama**

TOKYO — Nissan’s shareholders ousted the automaker’s former chairman Carlos Ghosn from its board on Monday, April 8 seeking to shut the door on an era capped by scandal.

More than 4,000 people gathered at a Tokyo hotel for a three-hour extraordinary shareholders’ meeting and signaled their approval for dismissing Ghosn with applause. They also approved the appointment of a French alliance partner Renault SA’s Chairman Jean-Dominique Senard to replace Ghosn. Renault owns 43 percent of Nissan.

“I will dedicate my energy to enhance the entire Japanese automotive industry,” said Senard, who was introduced to the shareholders at the meeting’s end. He promised to do his best to keep the automaker’s performance on track.

Ghosn was first arrested in November for allegedly underreporting his compensation and for breach of trust. He was released on bail in early March and then re-arrested for a fourth time early April. The latest arrest involves new allegations that $5 million from a Nissan Motor Co. subsidiary meant for an Oman dealership was turned over to a company effectively controlled by Ghosn.

Ghosn says he is innocent. He has suggested the accusations were made by some at Nissan hoping to remove him from power.

Nissan’s Chief Executive Hiroto Saikawa and other top managers bowed low in apology to shareholders.

“I deeply, deeply apologize for all the worries and troubles we have caused,” Saikawa said. “This is an unprecedented and unbelievable misconduct by a top executive.”

At the meeting, which was closed except to stockholders but livestreamed, angry shareholders demanded an explanation for how wrongdoing on an allegedly massive scale had gone unchecked for years.

One shareholder said Nissan’s entire management should resign immediately. Saikawa said he felt his responsibility lay in fixing the shoddy corporate governance at Nissan first, and continuing to lead its operations. Another shareholder asked if Nissan was prepared for a damage lawsuit from shareholders since its stock price has plunged.

Nissan shareholder Ken Miyamoto said he was disappointed.

“It is really such a pity as he was a brilliant manager,” Miyamoto said of Ghosn before heading into the meeting. “I guess he became complacent as people kept praising him too much.”

Yokohama-based Nissan, which makes the Leaf electric car, March subcompact and Infiniti luxury models, is on the brink of bankruptcy when Renault sent Ghosn to turn it around two decades ago.

The alliance, which now includes smaller Japanese automaker Mitsubishi Motors Corp., rivals auto giants Volkswagen AG of Germany and Japanese rival Toyota Motor Corp. in global sales, but like other Japanese manufacturers it has been dogged by scandals over bogus inspections and other misconduct.

The allegations of breach of trust involved having Nissan shoulder investment losses that Ghosn says caused the company no losses. He says payments to a Saudi businessman that prosecutors are questioning were for legitimate services. He says the compensation he allegedly underreported was never decided on or paid.

During the meeting, Saikawa, the CEO, outlined the findings of an internal investigation, such as 13 years’ worth of consulting fee payments to Ghosn’s sister. He told shareholders the company will stick by the alliance, fix its governance problems and make Ghosn’s ouster “a turning point.”

“We had allowed a system in which wrongdoing could be carried out without detection,” he said.

The shareholders also gave a green light to moving from the board a former executive director, Greg Kelly, who has been charged with collaborating with Ghosn in the alleged misconduct.

Ghosn’s detention following his arrest on April 4 has been approved through April 14 but could be extended. The date of his trial has not been set.

His lawyers in Japan said they planned to show a videotape of Ghosn’s comments on the following day and take questions afterward. The comments were recorded before his arrest.

Ghosn’s wife Carole Ghosn, who was with her husband in Tokyo when he was arrested this last time, appealed to French President Emmanuel Macron for help.

“I’m asking that we allow him the pre-trial examination so that we can show a videotape of Ghosn’s comments,” she said.

Transcripts and documents will be handed to France’s Justice Ministry.

Carole Ghosn, who left Japan for France on April 5, described his arrest as humiliating. Japanese investigators confiscated her Lebanese passport, but she said she used her American passport to leave the country.

“I’d never been so proud of him because he remained dignified. He held his head high and he was calm,” she said. (AP) •

EU says BMW, Daimler, VW colluded to limit emission tech

**By AP wire service**

BRUSSELS — European Union authorities said last month that German automakers BMW, Daimler and Volkswagen colluded to limit the development of emissions-cleaning technology in cars.

The finding adds to the car industry’s woes after Volkswagen in 2015 admitted to cheating on emissions tests in the U.S., which led to a worldwide reevaluation of how cars are tested and how to limit emissions to make air cleaner and fight climate change.

The EU antitrust regulator said that after an in-depth investigation, it found that BMW, Daimler and Volkswagen, including now-failed luxury unit Porsche, broke EU laws from 2006 to 2014 by illegally agreeing among themselves to limit the roll-out of the technology. The technology helps eliminate nitrogen oxides, which can be harmful to human health, from both gasoline and diesel passenger cars.

The alleged actions could have limited Europeans’ opportunities to buy less polluting cars, but would not have affected price, the EU said. It did not explain how the companies might have profited.

The probe is separate from other legal procedures against carmakers for allegedly breaching environmental laws or using illegal software in car engines.

EU authorities raided the offices of the three companies in October 2017 and opened their investigation on this case in September last year.

BMW said discussions among engineers were meant to improve exhaust gas technologies and that the whole industry was aware of these talks. It said they did not involve any secret agreements or intend to hurt customers.

Daimler said it was cooperating with the EU and does not expect to receive a fine. Volkswagen said it was also cooperating and would issue a statement once it has reviewed the EU investigation.

EU noted that its preliminary findings do not prejudge the final outcome of the investigation.

The case comes after Volkswagen admitted four years ago to using software in diesel car engines to cheat on U.S. emissions tests. It has set aside some 27.4 billion euros ($32 billion) for fines, settlements, recalls and buybacks. Former CEO Martin Winterkorn was criminally charged by U.S. authorities but cannot be extradited; Audi’s division head was jailed.

Renewed scrutiny of diesel emissions revealed that cars from other automakers also showed higher diesel emissions in everyday driving than during testing, thanks in part to evasive loopholes that let automakers turn down the emissions controls to avoid engine damage under certain conditions. The EU subsequently tightened its testing procedures.

Anti-trust fines can be steep. In 2016 and 2017 the EU Commission imposed a fine of 3.8 billion euros after it found that six truck makers had colluded on pricing, the timing of introduction of emissions technologies and the passing on of costs for emissions compliance to customers. (AP) •

Collision repair conference to be held in N.C.

**CHARLOTTE, N.C. —** The first ever Carolina’s Educational Collision Conference (CECC) will take place on May 18 and 19 at the Cabarrus Arena, located at 4551 Old Airport Rd. in Concord, N.C. This will be the largest educational event for collision repair professionals in the Carolinas, according to a press release, and will feature classes and seminars from industry-leading speakers, along with vendors, give-aways, auctions and food all around NASCAR All-Star Race weekend. Presented by the North Carolina Association of Collision & Autobody Repair (NCACAR) and South Carolina Association of Collision & Autobody Repair (SCACAR), and sponsored by PPG, Carolina Collision Equipment and Axalta, the two-day event is ideal for all collision repair industry professionals including owners, managers, painters, technicians, estimators, repair planners, and operations.

Saturday’s schedule features educational classes with John Shoemaker (BASF), Jake Rodenroth (avTech), Keith Manich (ATI) and Mike Lanza (Sherwin Williams). Saturday night is the NASCAR All-Star Race at Charlotte Motor Speedway, with special VIP All-Star Race packages available, including concert, pit passes, scanner, programs, buffet, drinks, and terrace seating.

Sunday’s schedule features breakfast and speakers Sarah Daniels (Board Chairman SCACAR), Brian Davies (Board Chairman NCACAR), Matt Crennitt (PPG), Larry Broluna (Carolina Collision Equipment), David Road (Axalta) and seminar with Mike Anderson (Collision Advice). The event also includes big-ticket giveaways, a pedal car silent auction (proceeds benefitting area high school shop body shops) vendors, and sponsors.

Special hotel accommodation available at the Country Inn & Suites by Radisson, Concord, N.C., and Comfort Inn & Suites Concord, N.C. Visit the event website at https://carolinascollisionconference.com/ for additional information, register for the event and purchase race tickets. (AP) •
Explosion damages world-famous Porsche collection

By Ben Finley & Jonathan Drew

DURHAM, N.C. — A gas explosion that killed one person and injured 25 others in North Carolina also damaged a building that houses a rarely seen but world famous collection of Porsches.

The Ingram Collection is housed next to the building in Durham that collapsed Wednesday, April 10. The structure that holds the German-made sports cars was extensively damaged. About half its roof collapsed.

Details on any damage to the collectible cars have not been released as of press time.

The Ingram Collection holds some important classics, said Rob Sass, editor-in-chief of Porsche Panorama, the official magazine of Porsche Club of America.

More than a dozen low-profile sports cars were covered in tarps in the parking lot a day later as workers moved around.

Workers occasionally pulled back the coverings, revealing at least four Porsches. Others had distinctive features peeking from under the tarps like red checkered racing design, bright red spokes, or the Porsche lettering.

Whether a classic car can be salvaged can depend on its rarity and value, said Katie Ellison, marketing manager for the National Corvette Museum in Kentucky.

That facility suffered its own disaster when a sinkhole swallowed eight cars in 2014. Three were restored and five were beyond repair, but all were put back on display.

“In our case, there was historical significance,” Ellison said. “We had the one millionth Corvette, we had a prototype Corvette. So there were ones that were not replaceable. That’s why it was important for us, whether they were restored or kept as is, to keep them on display because it tells their story before and after the sinkhole.”

For a unique model, one has to consider how far to go in restoring it.

“‘There are Porsches and then there are Porsches,’” he said. “‘If it’s a significant car in the Porsche world, chances are they have one. They really enjoy a peerless reputation.’”

For example, the collection includes a Gmund coupe, an early model that separates the casual Porsche fan from a “true believer.”

The Ingram Collection is not open to the public, Sass said. But Porsche enthusiasts such as Jerry Seinfeld, Jay Leno and others have visited, according to media reports.

The collection is owned by Robert Ingram, a general partner in a venture capital firm who previously served as the CEO of a major pharmaceutical company.

His son Rory manages the collection, according to a 2015 story on Porsche’s website. Another son, Cameron, owns Road Scholars, a company that restores vintage Porsches.

“If anybody is going to be able to resurrect (the damaged cars), it’s going to be the Ingrams,” Sass said.

Robert Ingram did not respond to requests for comment. The Ingram Collection issued a statement on the Road Scholars Facebook page that focused on the loss of life and injuries, not the cars.

“Our thoughts and prayers go out to those families impacted by this disaster, and (we) wish a speedy recovery to those who were hurt,” the statement said.

More than a dozen low-profile sports cars were covered in tarps in the parking lot a day later as workers moved around.

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“At some point you’re replacing so much of the car it’s not original anymore and the value of the car drops significantly,” she said.

Robert Ingram discussed his collection in a video posted on the website for a local dealership that has displayed his cars and offered tours of his collection.

The Porsche Southpoint website said he started his collection in 1998.

“The thrill for us in building the collection has been in the search for these cars,” he said in the video. “And we realize that with almost no exception when we acquire a particularly older, historic Porsche that we are taking responsibility to take care of that car from someone who has invested a lot of time and care in that car.”

(AP)•
Continued from page 1

ter about sharing information with us, but often it’s hard to find it,” Darrell Amber- son of LaMettry’s Collision in Minnesota said. “We’re constantly searching, con- tinuing to find more and more avenues. Our mechanical management system recently came out with a program for helping us find calibration information. So we find ourselves looking in about a half- dozen sources to find the information.”

Many shop owners say Amberison is correct. There’s not a single best source for all the information shops need. So here’s a guide on where and how to best find the repair procedures and information you need.

OEM websites are go-to source

For the most complete and current infor- mation from the automakers, a good first stop is www.OEM1Stop.com. The site was created by a coalition of automak- ers primarily as a quick way for users to connect to each car company’s informa- tion pages. Trainers like Mike Anderson of Collision Advice say those OEM pages are updated regularly, so they are the only way to know for sure you’re getting the latest information from the automaker.

(There is also a lot of other helpful infor- mation on the OEM1Stop website, such as automakers’ position statements on scan- ning, parts, clearcoat blending and more.)

But there are some downsides to rely- ing solely on the automaker websites. One can be the cost. While some of the sites offer free collision repair information, most charge a daily, monthly and annual subscription fee. Subscriptions for shops who need access to a variety of automak- ers’ information can add up to thousands of dollars each year.

Another issue: For new users in par- ticular, finding what you are looking for on the automaker websites can also be a challenge. Each automaker designs and organizes its own site, which means ter- minologies differ, and while information about a particular procedure may be filed under one category at one automaker’s site, you may need to look in a different section of another automaker’s website to find that same type of information.

Getting help with the sites

But Anderson said that the unique struc- ture of each automaker’s website becomes less of a challenge as you start to use them regularly. It’s with this in mind that he has posted free webinars on how to use some of the websites to find what you’re looking for.

“One you understand the automakers’ websites and begin using them, it becomes a much faster and easier process,” Anderson said. “Repetition is key.”

In his webinar about Toyota’s “Technical Information System (TIS),” for example, Anderson points out that the VIN-based system will indicate whether the vehicle owner subscribes to “Safety Connect,” a telematics systems that allows live interact- ion between Toyota and the owners of its vehicles.

“This is very important to you as a col- lision repairer, because if this vehicle has ‘Safety Connect,’ you may need to disable that system before you actually begin to repair the vehicle,” Anderson said. “If you do not, Toyota may be notified when you start disassembling the vehicle and think there’s a problem, and they will contact the customer.”

A subscription to TIS also gives users access to Toyota’s “Collision Repair Infor- mation Bulletins (CRIBs),” such as CRIB #57 related to installing clamps on a vehi- cle’s pinchwelds.

“Toyota very clearly states that you must ‘remove all coatings at contact locations that may build up on clamps and reduce their gripping ability,’” Anderson said dur- ing the webinar. “If you’re putting a clamp over undercoating or seam-sealer on the pinchwelds on a Toyota or Lexus, they consider that an improper repair.”

All of the Collision Advice “Learn to Research, Research to Learn” webinars, which also cover the Nissan, Subaru, Fiat Chrysler and Volkswagen websites, can be viewed at http://tinyurl.com/OEMvideo.

Third-party sources available

- The lack of consistent organization and layout of the different OEM websites gets solved to varying degrees by some of the third-party sources for OEM repair infor- mation. ALLDATA is perhaps the best known of these systems. The company acquires its information from the automak- ers, but repackages it in a way that makes finding a particular procedure more consis- tent, whether you’re conducting that proce- dure on a Honda, Toyota or Chevrolet.

The estimating system providers also are doing more to put automation infor- mation closer to shops’ fingertips at the time they are assessing what will need to be done to the vehicle. Both Toyota and Gen- eral Motors, for example, have teamed up with Mitchell International to automati- cally link OEM procedures to line items being added to estimates on those auto- makers’ vehicles.

“Their being to be delivered to you,” GM’s Eck said about the repair proce- dures Mitchell has incorporated. “You won’t have to research them anymore.”

For repair information from the other automakers, Mitchell also offers a “Tech Advisor” package, and the other estimat- ing systems offer a similar source of OEM information (CCC’s “Repair Methods” and AudaExplore’s “TechFocus”).

These third-party sources can make it easier and potentially less expensive than subscribing to and using multiple auto- maker information websites. But there’s one potential downside to this third-party way of doing things. It may take weeks or months for the systems to incorporate changes made by an automaker to a procedure.

I-CAR offers helpful portal

“Now matter which of these more com- prehensive sources of OEM repair proce- dures you use, many shops say I-CAR’s “Repairability Technical Support Portal” is one of the other key sources they rely on. In fact, 54 percent of the nearly 500 shops responding to an industry survey last year say they use the I-CAR portal to research OEM repair information; that’s about the same percentage who said they use some other technical information websites directly.

In some cases, the portal is designed more to help shops identify what they need to know and where and how to find it. There are pages and short videos, for example, on how to use each of the auto- maker’s information websites, and a guide to locating information on each automak- er’s advanced driver-assistance systems (ADAS), information which is often not included in each OEM’s body repair man- uals.

There are also helpful tools like the “OEM Calibration Requirements” search page that allows users to identify which ADAS a vehicle may have, and what reset or calibration tools, equipment and pro- cesses may be necessary. The guide is not VIN-specific, but instead shows the names and locations of all cameras and sensors that are targets on each make and model to assist shops in looking for the systems on a particular vehicle in their shop, as well as to more quickly find OEM calibration documentation.

The guide also indicates what types of events — such as glass removal or replace- ment — result in the need for recalibration, and indicates whether a scan tool, aiming targets or other special tools are needed for calibration.

“We spent thousands of hours on this calibration matrix to save the industry tens of thousands if not hundreds of thousands of hours on that research,” I-CAR’s Jason Bartanen said. “As you’re going through the damage analysis process, putting together a repair plan, you can identify, ‘Hey, we’re replacing a glass on this vehi- cle, so we’re going to have to calibrate.”

More shops getting paid for research

No matter which source or combina- tion of sources your shop uses to get the OEM repair information it needs, it likely will require a real investment of both time and money. The good news is more shops are charging — and getting paid — to con- duct this important step. A “Who Pays for What?” survey, conducted last fall by Col- lision Advice and CRASH Network, found that 17 percent of the more than 500 shops responding said they paid an adminis- trative fee for researching OEM informa- tion “always” or “most of the time” by the top eight-largest auto insurers when it is necessary and done as part of the repair. That was up from 11 percent in 2017, and just 6 percent back in 2015. The percent- age of shops that said they have never bil- lied an administrative fee for OEM research also has declined from about 76 percent in 2015 to about 61 percent in the 2018 survey.

“I’m seeing the typical amount of total sales a single estimator can handle decline, because the estimating process contin- ues to become more complex, including research of OEM repair information,” Anderson of Collision Advice said.

John Youwick, a freelance writer based in Portland, Ore., who has been writing about the automotive industry since 1988, is also the editor of the weekly CRASH Network bulletin (www.CrashNetwork. com). He can be contacted by email at john@CrashNetwork.com.
Group asking for probe into Nissan’s automatic braking

By AP wire service

DETROIT — A U.S. auto safety group wants the government to investigate automatic emergency braking on some Nissan Rogue SUVs, alleging that the safety feature makes the vehicles brake even when there’s no emergency.

The nonprofit Center for Auto Safety filed a petition with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration seeking the probe. The group says about 675,000 Rogues from the 2017 and 2018 model years should be recalled.

Nissan says it has notified all customers of a software update that improves performance of the automated braking system. But the center says the campaigns don’t acknowledge the seriousness of the safety problem and give owners little incentive to get the SUV’s fixed.

Nissan says it has notified all customers of a software update that improves performance of the automated braking system. But the center says the campaigns don’t acknowledge the seriousness of the safety problem and give owners little incentive to get the SUV’s fixed.

In a letter posted by the government, center Executive Director Jason Levine says it found 87 complaints about unintended braking in the safety administration’s database. “Many complaints indicate that braking is abrupt or forceful, endangering both the Rogue occupants as well as people in the vehicles nearby who are forced to avoid a collision with a suddenly stopped vehicle,” the letter says.

Automatic emergency braking uses cameras and radar to slow or stop vehicles when drivers don’t take action. The technology has great potential to save lives, but it also can develop glitches. Twenty automakers representing 99 percent of U.S. new-car sales signed a voluntary agreement with the government to make the feature standard on all light vehicles by Sept. 1, 2022.

In its petition, the center said that according to the complaints, the Nissan braking system can be triggered by railroad tracks, traffic lights, bridges, parking structures “and other fixed objects that do not pose a threat to the vehicle.”

In an email, Levine said a recall is needed rather than Nissan’s service campaign because false activation of the braking system is a safety hazard. He wrote that some drivers are turning off the technology because of the problem.

NHTSA said in documents that it will evaluate whether to grant or deny the center’s petition. Safety advocates and vehicle owners can petition the government to open safety investigations.

Nissan said it will continue to work with NHTSA and Canadian safety regulators on all matters of product safety. (AP)
Shop Profile

Woods Automotive

Johnson City, Tn

By Robert Bravendor

On the south side of Johnson City, Tenn., is Tipton-Haynes, a state historical site. In 1788 two opposing militias fought here to determine the fate of the fledgling State of Franklin. In what turned out to be a beta test for the new U.S. Constitution,* this so-called “Battle of Franklin” happened less than 50 yards from what is now the front door of Woods Automotive. As we’ve said, history is where you find it. Sometimes it’s right across the road.

“When I first moved here in 2002, there was a lady who used to manage Tipton-Haynes,” said owner Randy Woods. “I worked on her vehicles and learned a lot about colonial history. And I keep finding out more and more stuff about it to this day.”

Woods’ own history is an example of vigorous learning on the go. As a youth he enthusiastically engaged in motorsports, tuning his mother’s ’69 Pontiac Grand Prix in shop class.

“It was a huge car,” he recalled. “People would laugh and say, ‘Hey, you got you momma’s car running right?’ We’d race, and they’d get surprised when this big car passed them. I’ve still got the engine that came out of it.”

He began earning a paycheck in 1978, working a variety of jobs in the industry. Then in ’84 Woods made his passion a profession when he got a business license and began building high-performance engines and drivetrains on the side. This led to him becoming friends with NHRA Pro Stock racer Allen Johnson, for whom he crewed during the 1999 and 2000 seasons.

“Then in ’94 Woods made his passion a professional drag racing. He began earning a paycheck in 1978, working a variety of jobs in the industry. Then in ’84 Woods made his passion a profession when he got a business license and began building high-performance engines and drivetrains on the side. This led to him becoming friends with NHRA Pro Stock racer Allen Johnson, for whom he crewed during the 1999 and 2000 seasons.

“We were in NHRA’s Top 10 both years, one of the fastest Chrysler Pro Stocks at the time,” Woods said.

This proved to be another learning experience — just not the one he expected, as he observed the financial realities of professional drag racing.

“I had been really hungry to go racing, and I guess the Lord saw fit to show me that it couldn’t happen, at least not at that level,” Woods mused.

After he finished his stint with the NHRA, Woods finally got a stand-alone shop, but he was still clinging to performance work on drag cars and motorcycles as a primary means of support.

“The next thing I know,” he said, “I started getting more repair stuff to do.”

With this new impetus, Woods quickly outgrew the original location and bought the 5,000 sq. ft. facility he now occupies.

But much like the constitutional crisis which brought about the Battle of Franklin, he realized he needed to jettison the old plan and come up with a new one.

“My whole goal before was to go fast, and I got to thinking that if I had my own business I could sponsor myself,” said Woods. “But it kind of went in a different direction. When I opened this place here, I knew I’d have to double, maybe even triple my sales to pay the bills for this bigger building. We did it, but I never really got to invest in my racing career like I wanted to. I just had to do what I had to do.”

Like everyone else in the repair industry, he had his share of misadventures — at one point getting rid of almost the entire staff and starting over. But over the years he has found some outstanding people, and currently has five employees, a receptionist up front, and four technicians in back, including himself.

“I’m pretty pleased with all of them,” he noted. “We can do most anything: timing belts, brakes, clutches, suspension, struts, tie rod ends, ball joints, AC systems, wheels and tires. And this year has been pretty busy, we’ve done a lot of work on the cars.”

Woods also has a smoke machine for EVAP systems, two different size racks for suspension and alignments, and Snap-On diagnostic equipment.

“Like my scanners and my pass-through that I can program the car’s modular computer,” he added. “Thing about that is you have to enroll with a manufacturer like General Motors to download programs for a Chevy. Because it’s pretty expensive, you’d have to do a lot of that type of vehicle to make it worthwhile.”

Woods Automotive also sells tires, does AC work, as well as the occasional diesel.

“Diesels are kind of an animal of their own,” Woods commented. “It’s a major overhaul to do much of anything to them these days, like injectors and stuff. Most of the time I just pull the body off to pull the heads, but not too often.”

And what is the most profitable?

“It depends,” he said. “On average my labor rate is probably $20-plus lower than the other side of town, but I’m not the cheapest either. Like with brake work and tires, you don’t really make a lot of that kind of stuff, because there’s so much competition.”

“One thing he doesn’t see much competition on is hybrids. “I used to hardly see any, now I’m seeing more and more,” Woods observed. “Of course, I tell my guys that they have to be aware of the high amperage orange cables, to stay away from them. We usually have a class by one of the parts stores that I can send the techs to once a year. They also have AC classes, and I may send some of the guys to that if they want to go.”

“But most of the time I do all the in-house training myself, as we go,” Woods explained. “If we pull something new in, we’ll discuss what and how I want to do this certain job. Of course, I tell them that my way is how we’re going to do it now, but it may not be the right way; if they have a better way, we’ll discuss it and if I didn’t pay a dime, and Jasper paid me for everything. I advertise Jasper on everything we have here; I’ve got Jasper on our shirts.”

Woods Automotive is located at 2695 S Roan St, Johnson City, Tn. At left, a historical marker located across from Woods Automotive. Owner Randy Woods (below left) working at the front counter.

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Volkswagen’s Tennessee plant ups minimum wage to $16 hourly

CHATTANOOGA, Tenn. — Volkswagen is increasing the minimum wage at its eastern Tennessee plant to $16 an hour.

The company says it will offer a 30-cent base wage increase for Chattanooga production team workers. New hires will start at $16 an hour and top out at $23.50. The increases take effect July 1.

Volkswagen says production wage progression will increase by 50 cents at every level, with workers becoming eligible for $17 an hour after six months of employment and $19.70 an hour after two years.

Volkswagen’s Chattanooga facility currently employs about 3,800 people and produces the Passat and the Atlas. (AP)

Salesman charged with selling non-existent exotic cars

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. — Authorities say a former salesman at a Florida Porsche dealership scammed more than 30 customers out of about $2.2 million by selling them non-existent cars.

Records show 44-year-old Shiraza Sookralli made his initial appearance April 2 in Fort Lauderdale federal court. He faces mail fraud, wire fraud and money laundering charges.

A criminal complaint says Sookralli, who had been a salesman at Champion Porsche in Pompano Beach, created a shell corporation with a similar name in 2017. Investigators say Sookralli then made false sales orders for non-existent future exotic Porsche models and took deposits with his shell company’s bank account.

Champion Porsche, which did not authorize the transactions, contacted victims and cooperated with law enforcement after learning of the scheme. (AP)

General Motors seeks dismissal of union lawsuit on closures

LORDSTOWN, Ohio — Attorneys for General Motors have asked a federal judge to dismiss a lawsuit claiming the automaker sidestepped an agreement with union workers through its plans to idle three plants, including one in Ohio.

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Champion Porsche, which did not authorize the transactions, contacted victims and cooperated with law enforcement after learning of the scheme. (AP)

Ivanka Trump visits Kentucky Toyota plant

GEORGETOWN, Ky. — Ivanka Trump toured the Toyota Motor Manufacturing plant in central Kentucky, viewing several stages of the manufacturing process.

The White House says in a release that Ivanka Trump, an adviser to her father, President Donald Trump, has focused on workforce training.

The Georgetown plant’s CEO Jim Lentz says the company is investing in workforce training to prepare for “the highly skilled jobs of the future.”

During the visit, Toyota officials signed the administration’s “Pledge to America’s Workers,” a promise to create new opportunities for workers. After a tour, Trump participated in a workforce development roundtable discussion with Toyota officials, employees and Kentucky Gov. Matt Bevin. (AP)

Truck shop contests OSHA fines tied to explosion injuries

NORTH MANKATO, Minn. — A truck service shop in North Mankato is contesting federal fines levied after a natural gas explosion last November that injured two workers.

The explosion happened Nov. 14 at Allstate Peterbilt when natural gas that leaked from a garbage truck ignited.

A 59-year-old Ellendale man was taken by helicopter to Regions Hospital in St. Paul with first- and second-degree burns. A 41-year-old Gibbon man injured his hand and was treated at the scene.

The Mankato Free Press reports the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration fined the business $14,000 for safety violations after an investigation. The truck shop’s parent company, Allstate Sales and Leasing Corp., is contesting the penalties. (AP)

German Police: Shiny gold Porsche a danger to other drivers

BERLIN — German authorities have ordered a blinged-out golden Porsche off the road for being too shiny.

The Hamburg Morgenpost reported April 12 the 31-year-old driver was stopped in the northern city and told his Porsche Panamera, sporting a reflective gold foil finish, might blind other drivers and was a danger. He was told to remove the foil and re-register the car, but police say he continued to drive it.

The driver was stopped again Wednesday and police took his keys, papers and license plate, before the vehicle was towed to a garage. He was fined an unspecified amount and will have to remove the foil to make the car street legal again.

Morgenpost reports a Lamborghini owner nabbed at the same time with similar gold foil complies and removed it. (AP)

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... the DC-DC converters

Continued from page 1

cars used the same coolant as the ICE to remove heat from the converter. One car, the first Mercedes hybrid called the S400, had a converter and traditional alternator. There seems to always be an oddball in every group.
The converter is a solid-state device, and the output is the same as a trusty alternator, but how we get there is different.

Once the high-voltage DC enters the converter, it is fed to four switches (usually a MOSFET, a metal-oxide semiconductor field-effect transistor) that work much like a 12-volt brushless controller and constantly change polarity so that, in effect, you have single-phase alternating current (see Photo No. 3). This alternating current is still the high-voltage source used to power the converter, so it must be stepped down to a more usable 14-volts. That is done through a device with two independently wound coils (think ignition coil in reverse) that result in single-phase alternating current at about the same amplitude but a faster frequency as you would find inside a traditional alternator.

From there, the high-tech part ends, the engine control unit is no longer in control, and six diodes and an alternating current filter produce the final product, a constant source of DC power at about 14 volts (with little or no alternating current) with enough amperage output to supply any demand required. It’s simple, elegant and reliable. That is a good thing, as new DC-DC converters cost two to three times as much as their cousins, but the battery light can stay off forever as no carbon brushes are installed to wear out.

As any automotive technical writer will tell you, “Always refer to and follow the OEM procedures.” I am aware that service information is absolutely necessary, but let me give you a rule that you can apply. Use your “12-volt brain” here. In my company’s EMV classes, you will hear us refer to your “12-volt brain” and “high-voltage brain” as two parts of the same. Sometimes your 12-volt thinking will get you to do the wrong test, but here it fits well. The good news is you can test the converter using the same equipment you have now, even with an old VAT40.

Just like an alternator, the output is dependent on the 12-volt load, so by loading the system (when the “Ready to Drive” light is on) the output can then be measured just like an alternator. For those of you fortunate enough to be fixing cars in an emission state, you may know to test for alternating current volts under load at the alternator B plus terminal. Do this test for the converter, as alternating current power is made inside the converter, and any amount over 0.5 alternating current volts can cause ECUs to malfunction, and that can lead to many weird symptoms. Use your current (no pun intended) thinking. If there is no output, is there high-voltage power? Are the 12-volt inputs correct? Here is where good technical information is required.

Matt Overbeck, a great hybrid tech in Ohio, fixed a “no charge” issue on a Ford Escape Hybrid recently after two DC-DC converters were replaced at two shops. They missed the basics. The hybrid had a high-voltage cable pushed back out of its connector inside the eCVT (the source voltage it needed to operate). No parts were required and it was fixed the same day.

If you determine that the DC-DC converter has died, look for the cause. It most likely is overheating or overworked. This is not a safety article, but remember what you have learned about high-voltage safety; wear your gloves and eye protection, shut down the EMV and the high-voltage system. Remove (or turn off) the high-voltage safety switch or service plug. Test the capacitors for zero volts, and always test your CAT III meter before and after a “safe down” to be sure it works. Then, when you know you are safe, remove the converter and replace it.

Remanufactured units are coming to market. Replacing a bad converter with a salvage yard part could be a good choice (see Photo No. 4), but of course your customer may want new.

Lastly, remember that the high-voltage battery is the source of power for the converter, so if the high-voltage pack is having trouble (setting codes, out of balance, or over heating), the converter may be commanded off to keep the battery pack from suffering permanent damage.

Don’t replace the converter until you have looked for software updates. The 2006 Civic HEV has new software to keep the converter running. If a higher output is required, such as a hybrid used in a fire department, there are no drop-in replacement converters, so start reducing the power requirements to allow for the extra loads, such as lights, sirens and such. This can be done with LED lights and other more efficient electrical parts.

Good luck with your EMV work and stay safe.

Craig Van Batenburg is a former repair shop owner who is the CEO of Auto- mobile Career Development Center (www.fixhybrid.com), which offers training and consulting related to electric and hybrid vehicles; he can be reached at Craig@fixhybrid.com
Ford closes three factories in Russia in broad overhaul

MOSCOW — Ford said it will close three factories in Russia, causing heavy job losses, as it pulls out of passenger vehicle manufacturing in the country.

The U.S. carmaker said it will stop making passenger cars in Russia by the end of June, closing vehicle assembly plants in St. Petersburg and Naberezhnye Chelny, as well as an engine plant in Yelabuga.

Ford said “significant employee separations are required.” The Ford Sollers joint venture employs around 3,700 people in total in Russia, Ford said, adding that the total number of people leaving the company has yet to be determined.

The company blames a slow recovery in the Russian car market after an economic slowdown in recent years, and moves toward cheaper cars.

Ford will now focus solely on commercial Transit vans in Russia through its Ford Sollers joint venture. Russian partner Sollers will take 51 percent majority ownership of the joint venture, which was previously equally owned by both parties.

Ford didn’t comment on whether any of the plants could be sold.

Ford Sollers has repeatedly paused or scaled back production at the St. Petersburg plant in recent years, citing low customer demand.

An independent trade union operating at the St. Petersburg plant has criticized the restructuring plans and said it would try to persuade the regional government to pressure Ford to reconsider.

Russian Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Kozak told the Vedomosti business daily on that the government was in talks with Sollers about ways to support production of Transit vans at the vehicle assembly plant in Yelabuga.

According to the Association of European Businesses, a trade body for foreign companies in Russia, Ford sales of cars and light commercial vehicles such as vans grew by 6 percent in 2018 to 53,234 units. That ranked Ford the 10th highest-selling brand while Lada and the Korean sister brands Hyundai and Kia led the way. (AP)

Takata air bags claim another life in U.S.

By Tom Krisher

DETROIT — Another driver has been killed by an exploding Takata air bag inflator, bringing the worldwide death toll to at least 24.

The latest death occurred three days after a crash on June 8, 2018 in the Phoenix suburb of Buckeye, Arizona, according to a statement released in March by Honda, which made the car involved in the crash.

The driver, who was not identified, was hit by shrapnel from the air bag when a 2002 Honda Civic crashed at an intersection at 8:33 p.m., a Honda spokesman said. The death occurred at a hospital on June 11, according to the company.

More than 200 people also have been hurt by the inflators, which have caused the largest series of automotive recalls in U.S. history involving as many as 70 million inflators to be recalled by the end of next year. About 100 million inflators are to be recalled worldwide.

Takata used ammonium nitrate to create a small explosion to inflate the bags. But it can deteriorate due to high temperatures and humidity and explode too forcefully, spewing metal shrapnel. The deaths and recalls forced Takata into bankruptcy with its assets purchased by a company owned by a Chinese investment firm.

The owner of the Honda in the crash purchased the Civic used less than three months before the death. But there is no federal requirement that used car sellers have the cars repaired or inform buyers of any unrepaired recall problems. Honda said it did not know the car had been sold recently. There also is no requirement that an automaker be notified when a vehicle changes hands, Honda said in a statement.

The Civic in the crash has been under recall since December of 2014 due to a faulty driver’s front air bag inflator. Honda said it mailed 12 recall notices over three years to the previous owners. The company also said it made more than 20 phone calls in an effort to reach the owners, but Honda records show the repairs were never done.

Honda said the death was first reported to the U.S. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration on March 11 of this year. The safety agency notified Honda on March 14, and it inspected the car with Honda and determined that the inflator was blown apart in the crash. “The rupture was confirmed at this inspection, and we announced the findings the same day,” Honda spokesman Chris Martin said. (AP)

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Empty seats at Bristol expose NASCAR problem

BRISTOL, Tenn. — Appalled by so many empty seats at Bristol Motor Speedway, Clint Bowyer did some digging and learned what race fans have known for more than a decade.

Hotels along the Tennessee-Virginia line near the iconic NASCAR track have pushed one of the most popular venues on the circuit beyond the budget of the average attendee. Bowyer made a handful of calls and said he was outraged to discover lower-end lodging starting at more than $300 a night.

“I was so glad Clint brought that up,” said Marcus Smith, president and CEO of Bristol’s parent company Speedway Motorsports Inc. “It’s a crazy number some of these hotels are charging and it’s just unfortunate. We continue to work with the business bureaus at all of our speedways and it is a challenge we are trying to find solutions to while working with the local business leaders.”

Bristol was once the toughest ticket to get in NASCAR and boasted 55 consecutive sellouts from 1982 through 2010. The track only accommodated 30,000 fans when the streak began and expansions began in earnest when SMI bought the track in 1996.

Smith acknowledged the challenges in selling tickets in this current NASCAR climate. Venues doubled and tripled their seating capacity during NASCAR’s late 1990s boom and more tracks were built and added to a 10-month schedule.

Oversaturation became a problem and NASCAR and its most loyal fans were among those hit hardest by the 2008 economic collapse. The quality of racing deteriorated, too, and fans stopped coming.

Smith is adamant the easiest promotion is a strong on-track product and the Bristol event was proof that fans can still catch a good show. (AP)

Earnhardt joins NBC’s coverage at the Indy 500

INDIANAPOLIS — NBC Sports will use retired NASCAR star Dale Earnhardt Jr. in its inaugural broadcast of the Indianapolis 500 this month.

The second-year analyst will be part of a team that features 14 commentators and host Mike Tirico and analyst Danica Patrick.

Earnhardt will be a roving reporter for his first Indianapolis 500 on May 26, contributing to pre-race, in-race and post-race coverage alongside Rutledge Wood.

Earnhardt Jr., who will also be featured from Indianapolis Motor Speedway during race week, was used extensively by the network in his first year after retirement with reporting trips to last year’s Winter Olympics in South Korea and the Super Bowl.

NBC Sports motorsports host Krista Voda will also join Earnhardt at Indianapolis.

The broadcast booth will be NBC Sports’ full-time IndyCar crew of play-by-play announcer Leigh Diffey and analysts Paul Tracy and Townsend Bell.

The 14 total commentators will be the most ever for NBC Sports’ coverage of IndyCar as the network plans to treat the Indy 500 as one of its showcase events.

ABC had broadcast the “Greatest Spectacle in Racing” exclusively since 1965 in the second-longest-running partnership of its kind until NBC purchased the rights to air the entire 2019 IndyCar schedule.

Marty Snider, Kelli Stavast, Kevin Lee and Jon Beekhuis will be the pit reporters for the Indy 500, along with reporters Robin Miller and Dillon Welch. (AP)
Hyundai finds new engine problem, prompting recall

By Tom Krisher

DETROIT — Hyundai has found a new problem that can cause its car engines to fail or catch fire, issuing yet another recall to fix problems that have affected more than 6 million vehicles during the past 3 1/2 years.

The Korean automaker, under pressure from safety regulators, is recalling about 20,000 Veloster cars in the U.S. and Canada because fuel can prematurely ignite in the cylinders around the pistons. That can cause excessive pressure and damage the engine, causing vehicles to stall and in some cases catch fire, according to Hyundai documents posted by the U.S. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

It’s a different problem from what has caused the rest of the recalls since 2015 from Hyundai and its affiliated automaker Kia, which have been plagued by engine failures across the U.S.

The recall, which covers only the 2013 Veloster with 1.6-liter engines, is due to a software problem that has been found only in that model year and not in other Hyundai engines, company spokesman Michael Stewart said. Kia spokesman James Bell did not return messages seeking comment as of press time.

Jason Levine, executive director of the Center for Auto Safety, a consumer group that has petitioned the government seeking more Hyundai and Kia recalls, said the fire and engine problems keep spreading to more vehicles.

“This recall raises the question of whether we are even beyond the tip of the iceberg with these non-crash fires with both of these manufacturers,” Levine said. “How many times are we going to hear from either Hyundai or Kia that these circumstances are unique to a particular model and then have another recall or fire situation announced weeks or months later?”

Hyundai said in documents that it has been analyzing fire claims from owners and reporting the findings to NHTSA, but has not yet reported any situation to NHTSA for potentially being slow to act.

The company traced the problem to engine control software in vehicles made at the Ulsan plant in South Korea from April 25, 2012 to Oct. 16, 2013, according to documents.

While claims were higher for the 2013 model, they decreased starting in 2014, the company wrote. Software was updated on vehicles at the factory in October of 2013, the company said. Hyundai wrote that it’s not aware of any crashes or injuries.

Dealers will install updated software on the recalled cars. Owners will be notified starting May 13.

In February, Kia announced that it would recall the Soul small SUV with the same-size engine due to fire and engine failure problems, but Stewart said that was for a problem that was different from the Veloster.

The Soul recall covered nearly 379,000 vehicles from 2012 through 2016. Documents showed that high exhaust gas temperatures can damage the catalytic converters, which control pollution. That can cause abnormal combustion and damage pistons and connecting rods. A failed connecting rod can pierce the engine block and cause oil leaks that can cause fires.

So far Hyundai and Kia have recalled about 2.4 million vehicles to fix problems that can cause fires and engine failures since 2015. In addition, the automakers are doing a “product improvement campaign” covering another 3.7 million vehicles to install software that will alert drivers of possible engine failures and send the cars into a reduced-speed “limp” mode if problems are detected.

Both automakers are under investigation by NHTSA for potentially being slow to fix faulty vehicles.

The Center for Auto Safety says it has found more than 300 Hyundai-Kia fire complaints in a government database, which is high compared with similar vehicles.

Levine has said fire complaints to NHTSA have come from across the country, including a death in Ohio in April of 2017.

Ford recalls 327K pickups again to fix engine heater cables

DEARBORN, Mich. — Ford is recalling 327,000 F-Series pickup trucks in North America for a second time to fix problems with engine block heater cables that can cause fires.

In December the company recalled 874,000 trucks because water and contaminants can get into the cables and cause corrosion. That can cause electrical shorts and fires.

About 327,000 owners took trucks to dealers for the fix, but an inspection may have inadvertently damaged the cables. Now dealers will disable the cables for all recalled trucks by cutting the prongs that go into electrical outlets. All owners will get new cables when parts are available. Ford is working with parts suppliers to get the cables as soon as possible, spokeswoman Monique Brentley said, but the date for the new cables to become available is unknown.

“We are advising people not to use their engine block heater cable,” Brentley said. “We are still working on the fix.”

“Engine block heater cables are plugged in to electrical outlets or extension cords to keep oil and anti-freeze warm in extremely cold temperatures. They are used largely in the northern U.S. and Canada.”

Acura recalls 360K SUVs with tail light issue

DETROIT — Honda’s luxury brand Acura is recalling more than 360,000 SUVs worldwide because water can get into the tail lights and make them go dark.

The recall is mostly in North America and covers the MDX from the 2014 through 2019 model years.

The company says that due to a manufacturing problem, water can get into the light assemblies through some seals and cause electrical problems. That can knock out lights in the tailgate and some interior lighting. Acura says it hasn’t received any reports of crashes or injuries.

Dealers will replace the seals, and if necessary install new light assemblies and wiring.

Mazda recalls 190K cars due to failing wipers

DETROIT — Mazda is recalling nearly 190,000 Mazda 3 compact cars in the U.S. because the windshield wipers can fail.

The company says in documents posted by the U.S. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration that the recall covers cars from the 2016 through 2018 model years.

The Japanese automaker traced the problem to metal deposits that can cause a wiper relay to stick, knocking out the wipers and limiting driver visibility. The company says it has no reports of crashes or injuries due to the problem.

Dealers will replace the front wiper control module at no cost to owners starting June 3.
In 1945 Donald Healey formed the Donald Healey Motor company with Ben Bowden and chassis-builder Achille Sampietro in Warwick, England. The sole intent was to produce a high-end performance car.

In 1949, Healey was returning to England on the ocean liner Queen Elizabeth. He was coming back from Detroit, where he met with GM executives to inquire about purchasing the new OHV 331 cid Cadillac engine. Healey wanted to use the OHV 331 in his Silverstone race car. Race car driver Briggs Cunningham had done just that, and Healey wanted to buy more engines from Cadillac.

Cadillac had politely said “no.” By coincidence, George Mason, president of Nash Motors, was also on the Queen Elizabeth. Donald and George met at dinner, and by the time the ship docked in England an agreement was reached where Nash would supply Healey with the OHV Nash 234.8 cid/3.8 inline-six cylinder engine with a three-speed overdrive manual transmission.

In 1950 Donald Healey drove a 1950 Healey Silverstone in the 24 Hours of Le Mans race in France. This is where the 1953 Nash Healey got its name “Nash Healey Le Mans.” The Silverstone finished fourth. In 1950 – 1952 the Healey Silverstone finished first in its class of engines over two liters in the Mille Miglia.

Donald Healey and his team had an aluminum head made for the Nash OHV 234 cid with two side-draft carburetors that worked in conjunction with an oversided intake manifold. The seven main bearing crankshaft was 100 percent counterbalanced.

The first Nash Healey production cars of 1951 and 1952 had an aluminum alloy body designed by Healey and built by Panel Craft in England. The car made its U.S. debut at the 1951 Chicago Auto Show and was to have a list price of $3,767 in New York City.

George Mason did not like the English body style of the Donald Healey and Ben Bowden-designed 1951 and 1952 Nash Healeys, so in 1952 he commissioned the Italian designer Pininfarina to restyle the body. Mason wanted a body style more in line with the restyled Pininfarina-designed 1952 Nash Statesman and Rambler. The result was the 1953 Nash Healey Le Mans coupe and roadster. The roadster had no glass windows in the doors but plastic curtains which snapped into place for inclement weather. A car with glass windows in the door was called a convertible.

The distinctive design provided for excellent front and rear vision. The low hood was at least a car generation ahead of its time in style and design. The headlights were mounted in the simply-designed race car type air scoop grille.

The 1953 Nash Healey rode on 6.40 x 15 tires with coil springs front and rear. It was 178.75 inches long and 64 inches wide, had a wheelbase of 108 inches, was 55 inches in height, and weighed 2,970 pounds. The car had a sumptuous leather interior with AM/FM radio and heater.

By Jay Hirsch

Michael Pomerance always liked “uniquely-designed, limited-production cars that had some performance.” The Nash Healey Le Mans Coupe in dark burgundy fit that bill. Michael thought the coupe was more attractive than the roadster.

“Plastic curtains belong in a shower, not on a car,” Michael told me.

Michael bought the car from the third owner in 1998. The previous owner had the car painted and some engine work done in the ten years he owned it. Michael still owns the car and drives it on warm, dry weather days.

The 1953 Nash Healey LeMan roadster was bought by Richard Mosteller’s father in 1956 for $2,800.

“My father saw the car on the used car lot of a Chevrolet dealer in Allentown, Penn.” Mosteller said. “I had seen some pictures of the car in car magazines in 1953 and liked the look of them but not the price. His brother had a 1955 Nash Statesman and was happy with that car. So I knew a little about the Nash engine. The owner of the Nash traded it on a 1955 Corvette. The car has been in the family since. In 2005 Richard had the car painted, new leather interior and the motor rebuilt and like his father uses it from May to October on dry days.”

As for the ride, the-race inspired suspension is quite adept on country roads and can hold its own with cars of today. On the open highway, with a weight under 3,000 pounds, the OHV 234-cid engine with twin carburetors enables the Le Mans to cruise at 75 mph effortlessly. The car is from a different era, when you could see fore and aft from the drivers seat with no blind spots and with good feel of the road below.

With its high price, competition from the $1,000-lower-priced Jaguar XK 120, which was a known car, and with Nash’s financial situation, production of the luxurious Nash Healey was halted in 1954 with a total of 506 Nash Healeys built.
agree, we’ll do it their way. There’s nothing set in stone here.”

Future tech, like self-driving cars, doesn’t worry him much.

“As far as repairing the computers, we’re probably not going to be able to touch any of that stuff. We’ll just have to determine if the problem actually is the control module, which we’ll replace, or a problem with the steering mechanism; because a lot of what we’re seeing now are problems with electric steering. In later years it’s going to be that type of repair.”

Woods himself still does some race stuff when he gets the time.

“I still build a lot of differentials,” he said. “There are a lot of hot rod guys and show car guys that have a nine-inch Ford or a 12-bolt Chevy that they need rebuilt. Drag cars usually have nine-inch Ford housings that need to be reinforced. I also used to do a lot of dirt track cars at my old location.

“I don’t think retirement’s going to be in the picture. I can see myself here for another 10 years or so — or until I move up in the mountains somewhere, start a tree farm and raise Labradors on the side,” laughed Woods. “I think everybody here would say the same thing, because they’re on the same path I’m on. It’s a never-ending battle trying to keep up the building and everything that’s here, and maybe if I can get my race car back together, go racing.”

Like the pioneers who dreamed of creating a new state in the wilderness, Randy Woods thought big, working toward one goal. He carefully squired his resources of time, talent and tenacity — only to discover a completely different goal in the process. For while the State of Franklin failed that day in 1788, eight years later the State of Tennessee succeeded. •
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