



# OLDE NEWS



ANCIENT CITY REGION  
ANTIQUÉ AUTOMOBILE CLUB OF AMERICA FOUNDED 1935  
ANCIENT CITY AUTO CLUB FOUNDED 1983  
SAINT AUGUSTINE, FLORIDA FOUNDED 1565

Olde News, September, 2013

Lessons in  
Bringing a  
1954 DeSoto  
Back to Life

Brian & Carolyn Wirz



Man what a job. We really had no idea what we were getting into when Carolyn and I bought John Guarnieri's partially restored DeSoto.

Lynda approached me at last year's car show and said that several club members had indicated that I was looking for a project. I told her I was and made an appointment to see the car. Carolyn instantly fell I love with the car and insisted that we buy it. It wasn't a hard sell. The car was freshly painted. The chrome had all been done and there was the car sitting there on the lift looking virtually complete except for a little assembly.

We picked up the car and trailered it home with the help of friends. After doing an inventory of what we had, it was clear that we needed a lot more parts and pieces. Several more trips ensued. With Linda's help we found much of what we needed including the door locks which Lynda found under a tangle of cobwebs on a garage windowsill.



It was about this time that I got my first lesson in restoration. Don't try to put a car together that you didn't take apart. We had a lot of parts. Now we had to figure out where they went. There were hundreds of unknowns. What clip to use for this molding. What rubber gasket goes here? Where does this wire run to? Why was this piece of work left partially complete? All of these questions would be a lot easier to answer if I had been the one to take the car apart.

The next lesson was it's real hard to find pieces for a DeSoto. I've spent countless hours on the internet looking for parts. I've talked to a multitude of vendors that specialize in old Mo Par components. They ranged from very nice and helpful to certifiably insane. Eventually we found reasonable people we could work with but it was a struggle.



I'm a member of a group of hot rodders who dedicate Tuesday evenings to working on cars. ACAC members, Carl Brilliant, Bobby Guice, Max Miller, Dick Sherrod and Charlie Williams, are part of this group. Other members are Tony Costellano, Phil Lyon, and Gary Steinberger. They all agreed to work on the project. Each of these guys has years of car experience and brought a myriad of talents to the job. With their help we were able to make significant progress. So, that was the third lesson. It takes a village to build a car. Don't try to do it all. Enlist help and learn from others who know what they're doing.

The fourth lesson was that even with a lot of experience there are still times when you need the help of a specialist, someone that has worked on the very car you're working on. For this help we went to the National DeSoto club. They have a technical expert identified for each year car. Paul Beyer is that person for our car. His assistance was invaluable. He sent pictures of parts and their location, recommended vendors, gave us part numbers and generally assisted us in any way he could. Without his help we wouldn't be where we are today.

Finally, you have to know when to get professional help. An example of this was the car's front and rear windshield. We installed the side glass but were hesitant to take on the windshields. So we went looking for a "professional" installer...After two big disappointments and a several month delay, we finally found Robert, with Busy Bee Glass Service. He came to the house and surveyed the job. He was unfamiliar with the car, so he did some research and called us back. Then he came out and did the work. The gaskets we had were the only ones available but they weren't perfect. He made them work. Once the glass was in, he installed the stainless trim, a real jigsaw puzzle. He used his experience and work ethic to give us a great job. So the last lesson is know when you need a professional and know the definition of what it means to be a professional. A professional is someone who knows his trade and does what he says he is going to do when he says he is going to do it.

The accompanying photographs will give you an idea what the car will look like when it's complete. We are in the process of wringing out the wiring and doing an initial start. Once that's done, we'll install the front sheet metal and bring back Byron Woods, another real professional, to install the interior.

We're looking forward to bringing the car to the club events in the near future.



*See photos from our Cruise-in  
and Cruiser's Cruise-in  
and Eating Out at Hilton  
coming up!*



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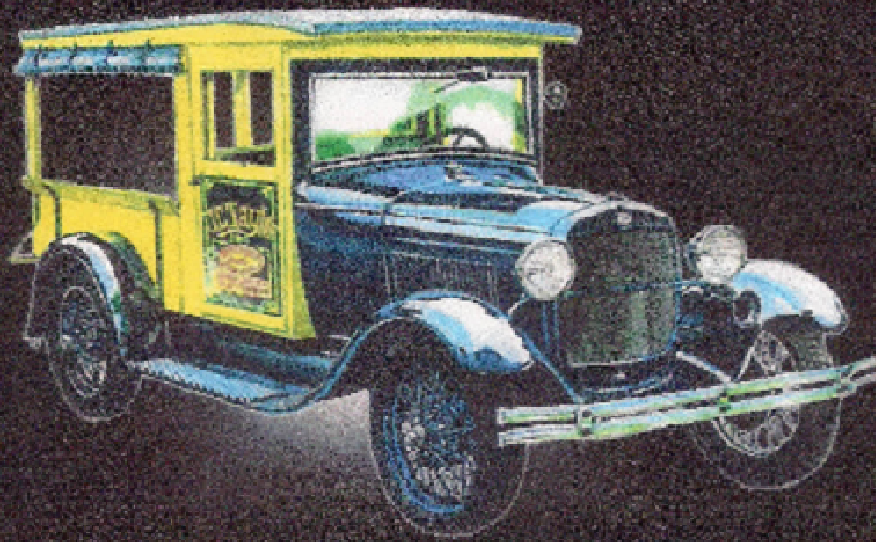
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## ***It all began in 1983...***

By Tuni Weiss

On Sundays we used to rent a movie or 2 and relax from a hard week's work (we lived in NJ at the time). One Sunday we watched a movie called the "The Great Race", starring Natalie Wood, Jack Lemon, Tony Curtis and Peter Falk. If you haven't seen the movie, I'll just tell you that, Natalie Wood and Tony Curtis were the "Good Guys" and Peter Falk and Jack Lemmon were the "Bad Guys"...I won't tell you any more so rent the old movie if you can find it, it was a lot of fun.

I Have a knack for opening my big mouth which can get me into a predicament when I say things like..."Doesn't it look like fun" or "someday we should do something like that", Jim always remembers, me saying those kinds of things. .

Well, not too long after watching that movie, Jim was helping out a friend put a new heating system into a vacation home in Vermont. There was an old barn on the property, Jim being the inquisitive guy that he is, (I call it nosey) wandered out into a barn on the property after completing the job. He discovered a real "barn find" There was, as he called it a "slew" of old car

parts and an old car. He called (all excited) to tell me all about the stuff he found, and spoke about the old car. He didn't know what it was or if it was for sale or any of the crazy details, but once again, I opened my big mouth, and asked him if he thought it was something that would do the "Great Race". He said he thought it would. Little did I know that he was going to actually pursue this thought. He called again and told me that he made arrangements to trade off some of his work in exchange for the car, I said ok. When he got home I expected that he would be driving the "old car" back from Vermont. He told me that it needed some work to be able to drive it. The next weekend he borrowed a Jeep and open trailer and took off for Vermont to retrieve the car. When he arrived back home, I was floored, it looked nothing like something driven in the movie, it was all rusty, no roof, no back seat, the hood missing, oh yeah that was what was in the back where the seat was supposed to be, there were shells from acorns and nuts and of course droppings from some sort of animals, it didn't "RUN" of course, there was no rubber where tires were supposed to be. I think most of you get the picture.

After work each day, while I was preparing dinner, Jim would disappear down to the garage (we

only had a 1 car garage on the lower level of the house; my Cadillac's inside spot had been replaced by this rusty old thing). One evening there was a horrible sound from the garage, Jim had the darned thing running and he was able to "drive" it in and out of the garage door on the metal rims. Mind you, we still didn't know what kind of car it was but while working on it found hub caps with a WK on



them. He started doing some research (we didn't have a computer nor did we have anything like the WWW) he knew of the magazine Hemmings Motor News, and found that there was a club called the Willys Overland Knight Registry. He contacted them and soaked up all of the information he could about the car. We met this fellow by the name of Bob Rowe, who was a wealth of information, who had several WK cars one of which was a Great Six Willys Knight Varsity Roadster. Jim found out that the car we had was a 1926 Willys Knight model 70 deluxe sedan.



It took 5 years, to find all of the missing parts, (or have the parts made) but he and I finished the restoration ourselves, we named her "Big Blue". I forgot to mention...one Christmas, after he got this car, I got a brand new sewing machine and 24 yards of upholstery fabric.(Hahaha) What a coincidence! Oh, yeah and a book on upholstery and convertible roof designs.

We entered Big Blue in the AACA and over a few years received its Junior, Senior and Preservation awards. We drove that car all over the place, but Jim's dream car was to someday own a "Varsity Roadster" he voiced his dream to members in the WOKR and let them know that if one ever became available he'd like to get one. We got a call one day about one for sale and Jim went to look at it, he called me to tell me that it was a "basket case" once again I opened my big mouth, and said just buy the thing, you've wanted one for a long time and there's so few out there get it. We went the next weekend with our car trailer to Pottsville, Pa. I thought "Big Blue" was bad when he brought it home but this thing was literally in baskets (metal milk crates). Apparently, each of the former owners had taken different sections apart, but for whatever reason, never attempted to put them back together again. The chassis was not together, the engine was all apart, the wood frames had to be made, and the metal looked like lace. Need I say more? It took us several hours to load up all of the pieces into the trailer to bring it home and then we had to unload the same. OIY!

Jim started working on this basket case; he first sandblasted the chassis and painted it, he found some old truck tires and mounted them on the chassis so we could move that around in the garage. Next he started to reassemble the engine, a real big project but, yes, he got it running! With half the battle won, we now had a running chassis.





Fortunately we were able to get copies of the full size blueprints of the car; next he would start the wood framework and supports. (The blueprints showed the shape of each piece of wood right down to the location of every screw, nut and bolt.)

One day the unbelievable happened, we received a call from Bob Rowe, the owner of the “dream car” Varsity Roadster. He was selling his cars and wanted to know if Jim was interested in buying the car. Jim couldn’t wait to meet with Bob to complete the transaction.

We would now own this 1927 Willys Knight Great 6 Varsity Roadster, “The Ultimate Sports Car of the Roaring 20’s”. We loaded it into our car trailer and brought it home. Work on the “basket case” was put on the back burner.

The history of the ownership of the car as we know it is; this 1927 Willys Knight Varsity Roadster was shown at the 1927 Philadelphia Auto Show and sold to the President of the Philadelphia Thermometer Company who lived in Haddonfield, New Jersey in September of that year.. Bob and Ruth Rowe purchased the car from him in 1962 and restored the car to pristine condition. This wonderful driving vehicle has won over 50 First Place Awards to include being the first Willys Knight Varsity Roadster to be accepted to the Classic Car Club of America and proudly wears the “Senior winner tag #1210”. To the best of our knowledge we are the third owners of this car.



Our roadster is a 70 horse power sleeve-valve engine, (the bore and stroke is 3 3/8 X 4 3/4) with a 3 speed transmission on a 126 inch wheelbase.

It has been featured in books publications, motion pictures and calendars; among those; *Roadside America*; *The Automobile and the American Dream* by Lucinda Lewis, *The Classic Era* by Beverly Rae Kimes, *Automobile Quarterly*, volume 17, the *Willys Knight Overland Starter Magazine*, December 1973, the *Road Map*, Antique Automobile Region Publication, *Automobile Quarterly* Calendar, *Celanese Corporation* Calendar, *United States Golf Association* Calendar, *Route 66 Car Culture* Calendar. This vehicle was also featured in the 1966 film, “*The Group*”, starring Candice Bergen and Joan Hackett.

John North Willys introduced the Model 66 Willys Knight Varsity Roadster in a price range of \$3,500-\$4,500. American men and women of distinguished social, artistic, high professional and business positions drove the Willys Knight Great Six in preference to all other luxury automobiles.

We enjoy driving this car very often as it steers very easily, instead of power steering by Armstrong it is truly a very gentle car to steer. The car has the original mechanical brakes but when properly adjusted can stop on a dime. We have been known to do day trips of driving all day with only a few fuel stops and of course lunch breaks. We have completed many tours with the Willys Overland Knight Registry national club throughout the country and will continue to drive this vehicle regularly.



# Ancient City Auto Club

## Board Meeting

Minutes: August Board Meeting

Date/ Time: Thursday, August 15<sup>th</sup> 2013 @ 7:00PM

Location: Wirz Residence

Attendees: Jim Weiss-President  
Carley King- Vice President

Dewey Porter

Tuni Weiss-Treasurer  
Bob Quackenbush

Brian Wirz –Secretary

### Minutes:

President Jim Weiss called the meeting to order at 7:13 PM.  
The following issues were covered:

1. The Club is now listed on Social Club Hub.
2. **The October General Meeting will be held at Jim and Tuni's home.** Jim will notify the Wildfire Café of this decision.
3. Jim and Tuni met with Karen Erwin on the car show.  
The following issues were covered:

- a. In general, all preparations are going well.
- b. **During the October meeting, Karen and Tobi will be signing up members for work at the car show.**
- c. There was a proposal to have an "Elvis" impersonator perform at the car show. The Board voted this down due to the expense, \$600.
- d. Tuni Weiss will be heading up registration.
- e. It was originally planned to ask members for donations of door prizes; however, via telephone meeting, it was decided to purchase the prizes using club funds. Karen will coordinate this with Cliff Williams, the club's contact with Harbor Freight.

f. It is a club tradition that the image of the Car Show Chairperson's car is used on the show trophies and dash plaques. Karen's Model A will be photographed for this honor.

4. Jim Weiss indicated that the club now has 55 members.
5. Tuni Weiss provided the Treasurer's report. It indicated that the club's financial status is in good shape.
6. Jim Weiss announced that the club will be providing cars for display at the EMMA show. There will be a photo shoot in approximately two weeks. Jim will coordinate when and where with the participants.
7. Carley King has been contacted by a photographer who wants to take shots of the cars at our car show. His name is Emit Wakefield. There would be no cost to the club. He will sell prints and Cd's to participants. The Board had no objection to this. Carley will coordinate with Karen Erwin.
8. There was no 50/50 at the last club meeting. Jim Weiss will ensure that the 50/50 ticket tin is at the next meeting.
9. Bob Quackenbush proposed that the Club's 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration be combined with the progressive dinner that is currently being planned. This proposal was accepted by the Board and a date of November 16<sup>th</sup> was selected. Mark and Kathy Young and Bob and Jinny Quackenbush are hosting the Hor's d Oeuvre's and desert courses of this event. The main course still has to be planned. Jinny will be work with Tuni and Jim to finalize planning.
10. The coming month's activity sheet was reviewed and is ready for issue. Pertinent information was reviewed and will be issued to the membership.
11. It's time to start working on a slate of officers for next year. Dewey Porter will head up the nominating committee. A notice asking interested parties to contact Dewey will be placed in the September newsletter.

### Action Items:

17. Dewey Porter will issue an activities sheet monthly. **Ongoing**
21. Bob Quackenbush to head a committee to plan and stage the club's 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary party. **Ongoing**
23. Jinny Quackenbush to organize a trip to the Blackwater Inn. . **On Hold**
25. Dewey Porter to update the club roster and reissue it. **Ongoing**
26. Brian Wirz to submit Club and Board Meeting minutes to Jinny Quackenbush for inclusion in the newsletter. **Ongoing**
27. Jim Weiss to work on the possibility of a national speaker attending a Club or Board meeting. Completed
28. Dewey Porter to update and issue a car roster for the Club. **Ongoing**
31. Jim Weiss to coordinate club participation in the EMMA show.
32. Carley King to coordinate with Karen Erwin on Emit Wakefield's participation in the car show.
33. Jim, Tuni, and Jinny to coordinate the main course for the Club Anniversary.
34. Dewey Porter to develop a slate of candidates for next year's Board.

Minutes  
prepared August  
23<sup>r</sup>, 2013 by

Brian M. Wirz,  
Secretary

## **RECENT CAR AUCTION ACTION**

By Dewey Porter

After reviewing the recent Mecum Auction in Monterey, CA there is no bad economy in the collector car market. The final tabulations from the August 15 – 17 auction are not in yet but these are some eye openers.

VW multi window buses from the 60's are going for crazy prices, all the old hippies must want to relive the flower power era and now they have the money power to do it. Look at this!

64 21 window bid is at \$110,000 and the seller is not yet willing to sell

60 23 window bid is at \$117,500 and the seller is not yet willing to sell

62 23 window bid is at \$115,000 and the seller is not yet willing to sell

64 21 window bid is at \$95,000 and the seller is not yet willing to sell.

Another one that makes you wish you had bought one back in the 60's : a 67 Yenko Camaro super 450 sold for \$350,000.

At the other end of the spectrum, there were some bargains the first day of the 3 day auction. A fully restored 1963 Buick Rivera 401/360 HP just completed in July of 2013 with all new everything went for a bargain price of \$9,500. That's probably less than the cost of the new leather interior.

It is also apparent that auction prices on the West Coast are the highest. I like to think we have better judgment on the East Coast but then maybe they just have more money out there.

You can view the Mecum auctions live on the Velocity Channel. The next one will be in Dallas, TX Sept 4 – 7.

## **VERY IMPORTANT MESSAGE!!!**

**OFFICERS FOR THE COMING YEAR WILL SOON BE CHOSEN FROM OUR MEMBERSHIP. IF YOU ARE WILLING TO SERVE AND ENJOY THE FUN OF PLANNING AND SHARING THE LEADERSHIP OF ACAC, PLEASE CONTACT DEWEY PORTER AS SOON AS POSSIBLE—CALL 797-7732 or email [ddpnamp@aol.com](mailto:ddpnamp@aol.com)**



## ACTIVITIES

Sept 5 ACAC Monthly Meeting Wildflower Café 6 PM

Sept 13 John's Old Guys Breakfast Steak & Shake 9 AM, Ladies Breakfast at Wildflower Cafe 9 AM

Sept 14 ACAC Monthly Cruise Night Steak & Shake 5-7 PM

Sept 15 Ponte Vedra 2013 Auto Show at TPC Sawgrass \$35 entry fee and must be pre registered by Sept 13 with a limit of 160 entrants. 26 Awards in 23 Categories 10 AM to 4 PM with awards starting at 3 PM.. Complete listing of categories and to register visit [www.pvautoshow.com](http://www.pvautoshow.com)

Sept 21 Emma 2013 Season Opening Gala would like 6 cars to display at 5 PM .*NOTE 20'S CARS PREFERRED BUT 30'S CAR WILL BE CONSIDERED IF NOT ENOUGH 20'S* . Vehicle owners will be given 2 tickets for the concert Paul Whiteman's 1924 "The Birth of Rhapsody in Blue" Let Jim Weiss know if you would like to display (note, nothing newer than 30's cars)

Sept 21 Deland ,FL Vintage IMPORTED CAR SHOW. all makes & models free registration Preregister by Sept 19 and receive a dash plaque and reserved parking. Register online at <http://mainstreetdeland.org/carsoftheworld>

Sept 19 – 21 AACA Southwestern Fall Meet Cleveland TN (deadline to register 8/21)

Oct 5 Cruisin Mopars of Jax and AACA N.E. FL. Region 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Car Show for info [www.cmoj.org](http://www.cmoj.org) click on Downloads and click on show flyer 2013 or check with Dewey Porter for flyer.

Oct 6 AACA Venice Region 26<sup>th</sup> Car Show info [gfelker10@verizon.net.com](mailto:gfelker10@verizon.net.com)

Oct 9 – 12 AACA Eastern Fall Meet Hershey, PA (deadline Aug 15)

October 19th (Saturday): Orange Park, FL- 6th Annual Back to the 50's" car show hosted by the Clay County Cruzers. This fundraiser car show will be held at Fleming Island Presbyterian Church at 1743 County Road 220 (32003), from 10am to 2pm. Open to all vehicles (hot rods, antiques, classics, imports, trucks). Sponsor trophies and Participant voting trophies. Dash plates and goodie bags for all registered vehicles, show T-shirts to the first 50 registered. Door Prizes, 50/50 raffles, and DJ Cadillac Bob spinning 50's, 60's and 70's music. Cash award for Club Participation (minimum of 12). Pre-registration \$20 by October 1st, day of show \$25. Active duty military with ID will receive one free registration. For more info call Norb Logsdon at 904-707-7056, E-Mail [admin@claycountycruzers.com](mailto:admin@claycountycruzers.com), or visit [www.claycountycruzers.com](http://www.claycountycruzers.com)

Homeport Christian Church October Sunday, October 27 the time will be from 5 to 8 and there will be music, food, games, and much more. If any of your members are willing to come and they could email us with the year and the model of car they will be bringing, our band is going to try and match up songs that might go with the cars that will be there. [mbfrenier@bellsouth.net](mailto:mbfrenier@bellsouth.net) or 904 669 5903

Nov 2 AACA Ancient City Region 29<sup>th</sup> Annual Car Show St. Augustine, FL held at the Florida School for the Deaf & Blind Campus. Toby Erwin 904 794 1941. Download a Flyer and Registration at [local.aaca.org/ancientcity](http://local.aaca.org/ancientcity)



**Editor's Comments:** Thanks to our contributors—Wirzes and Weisses—Note: I cannot find the photos of last month's ACAC cruise-in at Steak 'n' Shake, but I think there are sufficient photos herein. We had good food at the Hilton and a good time, too.

These guys are so excited about Cliff Williams' "new" car—hopefully we'll have all the details in next month's "Olde News"—Happy Motoring! Jinny

People with names starting with letters other than "W" are welcome to contribute also! —P.S. I did a whole page on the Cruiser's cruise in, but the computer decided to eliminate it. Will include it next month. J



I have 15 minutes to get this together for you—

## St. Augustine Cruiser's Monthly Cruise Night August 17, 2013

After being rained out in July, the Cruisers had a perfect rainless night although by 7 PM clouds were threatening, but no one got wet if they left before 7:30 PM. About 30 cars showed up to enjoy tire kicking and the DJ music. Several Ancient City members who have dual membership in both clubs showed their cars. Cliff Williams came by to check the cars out. He is still waiting for the 36 Ford he bought to arrive via car hauler. It was certainly a treat that Bob Quackenbush was able to not only attend but he was the driver of his 50 Chevrolet woody wagon. In no time he will be back pulling on wrenches in his garage.







Good place to find cute guys!



and nice people.



Bill Soman fixes his gas problem.



--Good Shot!

and Porsches-DP