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From Wooded Field to Show Field

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2019 International Thunderbird Convention

cover photos by Gary Swiatowy

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1942 Studebaker Commander “Blackout”

FROM WOODED FIELD TO SHOW FIELD

by Steve Mangione  photos by Steve Mangione

In 1992, I bought a wreck of a car, a 1942 Studebaker Commander, that had been sitting in a field for a very long time. My plan was to learn and practice on this car and then to buy a better condition car as a project when I retired. I had no skills when it came to automobile restoration, and I hoped that this field car would give me something to practice on. My plan was to learn to weld, as well as to tear the engine down and look at the inner workings; then, if it all was beyond my abilities, I would tow it to a junk yard.

Little did I know that this purchase would be the start of a 32-year fascinating, and sometimes frustrating, journey.
1942 Studebaker Commander “Blackout”
FROM WOODED FIELD TO SHOW FIELD
by Steve Mangione   photos by Steve Mangione

When the car arrived at my driveway, I was handed an envelope, with information about the car's history. In this envelope was information about the car's local history, which prompted me to do research on a “national” level, on a “Studebaker” level, on a “model” level, and on a “this car” level.

On a “national” level, because of World War II, the US government told the automobile manufacturers that they would be limited in acquiring some of the materials needed in their production processes, because the materials were needed for the war effort. In January, 1942, the government issued a complete moratorium on all automobile sales, to be effective at the end of that month. This was to allow stockpiling of completed vehicles, so that police, doctors, and other critical services users would have a supply of cars when needed. I have read that 400,000 cars, by all manufacturers, were put into storage during this sales moratorium.

On a “Studebaker” level, the entire 1942 model line was redesigned, due to the government’s notice that some production materials would be necessary to be used for the war effort, rather than for car production. After making over 100 changes to use the available materials, the 1942 Studebaker models were released in January, 1942. But, that timing coincided with the government’s moratorium on car sales and with all manufacturers’ stockpiling of finished cars.

On a “model” level, the car was named a “Series 90 Custom,” because 1942 was Studebaker's 90th Anniversary. It was commonly referred to as a "Blackout" Model, because it was stripped of most of its chrome, due to war time shortages. These cars were only produced for 2 weeks before the government moratorium was in effect, with different sources saying that production was between 46 and 57 units.

On a “this car” level, it was bought in Buffalo in 1943, after the government’s sales moratorium was lifted, and it was driven for 43,000 miles before it was parked in the field I found it in.

Because of the rarity of this car, I knew that it was more than the "learn and practice" car that I had originally bought it to be. I embarked on a "physical" journey to Pennsylvania, Wyoming, Indiana, Illinois, Minnesota, and Canada to find parts. I visited the archives at the Studebaker Museum for more information about this car. I also embarked on a "virtual" journey, from eBay to a Facebook Studebaker Group, for both parts and information. The journey hasn't always been smooth, but, somehow, what needed to be accomplished got accomplished. A story that I like to tell is how I had given up hope to find a trunk nameplate; the part that I had was more patch and rust than car part; but, within minutes of mentioning this to a person on a Facebook Studebaker Group, a parts dealer who I had talked to a year earlier sent a message to me that he had found that part!

All through my journey and the car’s restoration process, I met countless people who understood the rarity and historical significance of this car and who were more than willing to be involved in its restoration. I am so very grateful to everyone, from the initial support of two fellow local Studebaker Drivers’ Club members, to the continuing help and inspiration of 100’s of local and out-of-town, out-of-state, and even out-of-US car enthusiasts, to the final paint and finishing by a Syracuse, NY, custom car builder, who saw the car in its half-finished state and offered to complete it. Through this experience, I have found a much deeper respect and admiration for car restoration, for Studebaker’s designers, and for that company’s proud legacy.
1942 Studebaker Commander “Blackout”  
FROM WOODED FIELD TO SHOW FIELD  
by Steve Mangione  photos by Steve Mangione

We restored this car as true to what Studebaker originally conceived and produced as we could. (I say “we” because of all of who provided such invaluable assistance.)
1942 Studebaker Commander “Blackout”  
FROM WOODED FIELD TO SHOW FIELD  
by Steve Mangione  photos by Steve Mangione

Thanks to all, this car made its first post-restoration public appearance at this year's Studebaker International Meet.

This car is truly a piece of automotive history, as it is widely believed that it is the only one of its kind in existence. Neither I, after 32 years of computer searches, nor anyone else I’ve talked to, has ever found another restored 1942 Studebaker Commander “Blackout” Model.
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2019 Rock & Roll
International Thunderbird Club Convention
26th Anniversary Convention
August 6 - 11, 2019

by Nancy Coots photos by Nancy & Rodney Coots

Westlake, OH

In August, my husband and I attended the 2019 International Thunderbird Club Convention at the Double Tree Hotel, in Westlake, Ohio. Over 100 T-Birds, from 1955 through 2004, participated in the concourse-judged show; adult judges were assisted by children judges, being trained through a Hagerty-sponsored judge training program. I was honored to receive a 1st place Award in the Touring Modified Class, scoring a perfect 200 points, as well as being chosen by John Cior, who manages Ford Performance’s Club Outreach Program, to receive a special T-Bird banner for my car.

In addition to the T-Birds, there were “special appearances” of an antique Ford fire truck and of the Planters’ Nutmobile.

Convention attendees had the opportunity to visit local attractions. After riding the Miller’s Ferry Boat to South Bass Island, there was a T-Bird parade on the Island, as well as time to visit Put-In-Bay and the Perry’s Victory And International Peace Memorial, home of the 3rd tallest monument in the United States. There was also a tour of Cleveland sites, including the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame and the Western Reserve Historical Society, home of the Crawford Auto-Aviation Museum, with its stainless steel T-Bird, and of the Hay-McKinney Mansion.

Every year, the Convention benefits a charity. This year, the chosen charity was Maria’s Hope, which funds childhood brain cancer research.
2019 Rock & Roll
International Thunderbird Club Convention
26th Anniversary Convention
August 6 - 11, 2019

by Nancy Coots photos by Nancy & Rodney Coots

1997 Ford Thunderbird LX
VORTECH supercharger
custom paint and graphics
custom interior
ground effects
2019 Rock & Roll
International Thunderbird Club Convention
26th Anniversary Convention
August 6 - 11, 2019

by Nancy Coots    photos by Nancy & Rodney Coots
2019 Wilson Memorial Day Cruise

BY GARY SWIATOWY
WILSON, NY

It wouldn’t be Memorial Day for me without heading out Rt. 425 to Wilson for the annual car cruise and flea market. Yes, the parking was a little tight as the weather was not cooperative early this season, but if you looked, you could find a dry spot. There was still a decent turn out, and I saw more coming in as I was leaving.

I usually get there early cause I have family coming in the afternoon. This is the best thing about cruising to Wilson for this; come and go as you please, you are not tied down for an all day event!

There is always the Wilson Car Museum to tour, as well as all the historical displays. And there is also the flea market to browse, and plenty of fair type food available. You can spend all day, or part of the day. And of all things, there are plenty of yard sales along the way!
2019 Wilson Memorial Day Cruise

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www.pinupsforacause.com (SEE PAGE 20)

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