



## Three-Pedal Press





## Wisc Capital Model T Ford Club officers

*Wisconsin Capital Model T Ford Club, a region of the Model T Ford Club of America, is a not-for-profit group, dedicated to the preservation and enjoyment of all Ford Model Ts. Three-Pedal Press is the official publication, and is printed quarterly. Dues are \$15 per year, and are due Oct 1.*

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*Mark Stuart*

### **National club info:**

*Membership in the Model T Ford Club of America is strongly encouraged. Annual dues are \$35; contact MTFCA, Box 126, Centerville, IN 47330-0126 715 855-5248*

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*Cover photo:*  
**Ron Stock**, with his Model T, at the Hill and Valley show. Ron also owns a 1930 Dodge six.

*Right: 38 attended our Oct 2012 meeting, held at **Larry Lichte's** warehouses. It's really more of a museum, with all kinds of antiques, some dating to the Civil War. Entertainment was provided by **Don Berryman**, who played his saw. (photo by **Mark Stuart**)*



## From the president...

Our January 2013 meeting was well attended, with 21 people. Several of our members invited guests to hear feature speaker **David Raemisch**. Due to technical difficulties, the DVD wouldn't work, so we invited him to return for the Feb meeting. A newly appointed sub-committee was activated at our January meeting to promote the club, organize some events, inform us of upcoming events in the area, and other activities they feel will benefit the club. **Phil Leavenworth** is the Chairman, with **Dennis Gorder** and **Kurt Kniess** as the other two members. Feel free to contact them should you have input to benefit our club. We still need more volunteers to bring treats at future meetings, so please let me know so that we can plan. We also need donations for our auction, which is a big slice of our budget. Those unused items you can part with may be useful to someone else, and bring the club extra money needed to operate our budget. See you at our next monthly meeting, Mar 26!

-Larry Lichte

## From the editor...

**2013 dues are overdue!** Please send your check to **Dan Atkins** (see pg 2), to keep your *Three-pedal Press* coming!

*Celebrity birthdays:* Gloria Swanson, 27 Mar (1897). The year was 1925, high summer of the silents, and according to Miss Swanson, "I was... the most popular female personality in the world, with the possible exception of my friend Mary Pickford." In 1926 Paramount offered to renew Swanson's contract at a fabulous \$18,000 a week (over \$170,000 in today's dollars), but the star wanted to produce her own pictures and, funded by her then-lover Joseph Kennedy (father of JFK), she went to United Artists at \$20,000 a week. She produced *Sadie Thompson* in 1928, and nearly won an Oscar. It was a big commercial success, as was *The Trespasser* (1929), her first talkie. *What a Widow* (1930) followed, but only 4 years and 4 films later she was shuffled off into a reluctant retirement. There had been quarrels at United Artists, but the principal reason was her association, in the Depression years, with a fast-receding era of reckless extravagance. In 1950 she earned an Oscar nomination for *Sunset Boulevard*, but it proved to be an impossible act to follow.

Only 13 days 'til spring! Is your Model T ready for the road?

-K. Henry





# Car repair

by Mike Lamm, from Dec 1987 SIA, courtesy HMN

## Resurrecting old cars in the early fifties

About 10 years ago, it suddenly dawned on me that one of my hobbies is car repair. That realization didn't come easily, because car repair, unlike golf and stamp collecting, isn't a recognized hobby. Nobody answers "car repair" when someone asks, "What do you do for fun? What are your hobbies?" It's just not an activity most people think of as a hobby.

But to me, "car repair" describes it better than "tinkering" because, in my case, the intensity has gone from tinkering to something beyond. Tinkering implies a fairly light form of car repair—gapping sparkplugs and spraying Berryman's down carburetor throats. I do those things, too, but I prefer to go further.

I'm not a pro by any means, and I'm painfully aware of my limitations, but I like to tackle as heavy and challenging a job as my confidence allows. Recently I've gotten into such exotica as fuel injection and cruise control which, I'm afraid, is far as I'll ever go. As cars become more electronic, their abstruseness leaves me locked into older models.

Car repair, like motorcycle maintenance and Zen, has all sorts of psychological overlays. What makes car repair fun? Why do I do it? I've asked myself those questions, and the answers I come up with fall into three categories.

First, as I've mentioned, there's the challenge. In one way, it's man versus machine. If I fix the machine, I win. If I don't, the machine wins. Winning gives me a feeling of pleasure and accomplishment. To win elegantly, with a correct diagnosis and a smooth repair, is like playing an error-free game of tennis or doing a strategically correct surgical procedure. Even in its commonly frustrating, blue-collar form, the car repair victory has those same elements. It's the reduction of something complicated to a do-able, workable undertaking and then finishing it with some degree of skill. Which, I suppose, is what makes any hobby fun.

Then, in addition to self-satisfaction, there's the feeling of self-sufficiency. I like being able to cope

with roadside emergencies, both my own and those of other motorists. I carry a small toolkit in each of my cars, and so far — knock on wood — I've never been stranded. I also enjoy not having to take my cars to real mechanics (very often). Hospitals and repair shops are two places I'd rather stay out of.

But there's a third reason, and this one's by far the most compelling. No human has the power to bring back the dead, but a reasonably proficient mechanic *can* resurrect a dead car. He can restart and revitalize an engine that hasn't run for 20 years. He can overhaul that engine and make it useful. He can perform scores of minor mechanical miracles that give new life to a car that no one else deems saveable.

Actually, that's what got me started in this hobby when I was a kid in south Texas. I'd drag home the saddest, most bedraggled, hopeless of automobiles, and my parents would say, "Well, what in the world do you see in *that* piece of junk?", and I couldn't come up with an answer. No one "collected" cars in the early fifties; there was no such concept. I couldn't verbalize it, but somehow I'd see a spark, some touch of iron-and-steel beauty in those lost souls, and it made me want to *do* something for them.

These were always well used and often used-up cars born in the late twenties and early thirties. They were usually dirt cheap, and I'd lovingly clean them, take them apart, see how they were supposed to work, see why they ran to a certain point and why they didn't run now, and it became a challenge to put them back together in a way that made them do what they'd been designed for.

I found it a great thrill and something of a mission. I, the old-car zealot, the motor missionary, "saved" a lot of cars that way. They were always just this side of the boneyard anyway and, in at least two cases, I actually pulled them back from the gates of wrecking yards.

*(continued next page)*

I bought, sold, and traded about two dozen cars while I was in high school, aged 14 to 18. The most expensive one — a non-running 1932 Cadillac V-16 — cost me \$90, but most averaged around \$30, besides which I'd do a lot of trading.

Often I'd buy a car that didn't run. Once I got it running, I'd most likely find out it had a bad rod or main bearing. Shot bearings were more expensive to fix than the car was worth, so I'd trade it for something else, usually another derelict that didn't run. I remember, for example, getting a 1935 Pontiac coach that turned out to have very rattly rods, so I traded it plus \$10 cash for a 1935 Plymouth coupe that didn't run. The Plymouth also had a bad rod knock, so I traded the Plymouth plus \$10 for a non-running 1929 Model A roadster that *also* had an engine knock.

I drove the Model A for a while and then traded it toward a 1938 Packard Super Eight three-window coupe that *didn't* have a noisy bottom end. But in driving the Packard I used drain oil, which flattened the crankshaft, so it all came to the same thing. (By the way, years later I happened across my old Model A again, same owner, and the engine knocked exactly the way it had when I traded it; no better, no worse.) About the dozenth car I got was a 1934 Buick sedan, and I came by it in an interesting way.

I had this buddy in high school, James Dunn, who owned a 1923 Ford Model T. James' father, J.C. Dunn, amounted to the Snopes of La Feria, the little rural farming community in south Texas where I grew up. J.C. Dunn owned about half the town, his half consisting of the other side of the tracks. Old Man Dunn had made his fortune, so everyone said, after the big hurricane of 1933 when he went around gathering up the corrugated tin that had blown off other people's roofs. J.C. built himself a fruit-packing shed from that tin and, by 1950, he'd parlayed his scavenged tin into the town's principal business. His fairly

impressive industrial complex at that time included a block-square brick parking shed, a cannery, a railroad siding with loading docks, and several warehouses.

J.C. Dunn was a tall, crusty old gent, six-foot-five at least, with prematurely graying hair that he wore in a severe crew cut — very flat on top. Everyone in town either loved or hated him; no one felt neutral about J.C. He had a reputation for being a skinflint. He'd always walk: never drive or ride. Folks gossiped about him a lot, and he had, among the traits some considered self-indulgent, the habit of never throwing anything away. Now, of course, I find him eminently sensible.

On the several acres behind his big packing shed, Mr. Dunn kept a virtual outdoor museum of mechanical marvels that he'd piled up through the years. These included, I recall, three or four old GMC and Nash Quad trucks from the first World War. They had cast aluminum engines and frames: very unusual. He also stored his worn-out old diesel stationary powerplants back there, a couple of them 15 feet tall, with pistons big as pickle barrels. James and I spent many an afternoon playing in that backlot and also poking into some of the outbuildings around James' father's packing sheds. *(cont'd next page)*



*The knock-kneed '34 Buick that Mike got for nothing — with some strings attached!*

## Car repair, continued

Inside one of those dark, cool buildings, I discovered and immediately fell in love with Mr. Dunn's 1934 Buick sedan. It sat there under a quarter inch of dust which, when wiped away, showed the car's original forest green. Under the hood, the big straight eight looked like a huge lump of black butter: it was totally encased in a preserving mantle of grease and lint. The Buick rested on four flat, bald tires and carried 1944 Texas license plates. This was in 1952.

Well, it seemed only reasonable to want that car, and I could already visualize it shined up. Never mind that it looked pretty doggy in that dusty gloom. In the light of my imagination, I saw it glistening like new. I asked James whether he thought his father would sell it to me, and James said, "Let's go see."

I soon found myself alongside James in Mr. Dunn's mahogany-paneled office. I asked him straight out whether he'd sell me the Buick. Mr. Dunn looked a little surprised at first, then he stared at James for what seemed like a very long time, then at me, but he finally gave us both a cryptic grin and said. "If you can make that car run, you can have it for nothing."

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### *The Buick's front wheels splayed out like the legs of a milking stool...*

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I couldn't believe it! "For nothing?" I asked. "You mean for free?"

"For free; that's right," he answered, the smile still on his face. Maybe he was trying to undo his skinflint image, but then again, maybe we'd all misjudged him.

As it turned out, the job of making the Buick run took James and me about two months. We'd work weekends and after school, often late into the night. Despite the frustration, James and I couldn't wait to get back at it. Most evenings we'd come home reeking of sweat and grease, looking like coal miners. My mother was anything but pleased, but by then she'd gotten used to me smelling like an oil field, and she'd yell at me not to *touch* anything.

Actually, it turned out that all the Buick really needed was a new timing chain. This was one instance (among many) where I surely didn't make a quick diagnosis, didn't effect an elegant repair, and thus took eight weeks to do a three-hour job. But I was still learning.

Once finished, I felt tremendously pleased with myself, as did James, and all those weeks of wailing, of gnashed teeth and not knowing how to make the engine start contributed to the final, sweet, victorious euphoria when the Buick finally came alive. And mine!

The car still had a lot of major problems, though, not the least being long-gone kingpins and bushings. This was the first year of GM's wishbone front suspension, and the Buick's front wheels splayed out like the legs of a milking stool. I didn't have the money to fix anything that expensive, so four days after [I got it running], I sold the Buick for \$30. That car turned out to be the only one I made money on in all my pre-college auto dealings.

It's now 35 years later. I still bring home orphans, some of which don't run, and my wife — who's grown much more tolerant in recent years — no longer asks me, "But why?" It's still true that she doesn't understand, and she's given up trying. Two of my kids, though, do understand, and I'm pleased to say that they've become good mechanics in their own right.

Car repair, as a hobby, is actually big business in America, only no one realizes it. I go to Pep Boys or Kragen or Grand Auto and I see that about half the people there are like me. They can afford to have someone else work on their cars, or maybe their cars don't even need repairs, but they work on them themselves anyway. Because it's fun.

Some people hand-build furniture, others throw pots or do carpentry or garden or watch baseball. All those pastimes are *recognized* hobbies. Car repair still isn't. But I'm not sure that's at all bad. \*



## Members and their cars

*Top photo:* John Rowley having fun at the Hill & Valley show with his yellow 1921 Model T speedster.

*Lower:* Here's **Adam Doleshal's** 1924 Model T touring, in the South Dakota Badlands. He also owns a 1925 TT dump truck, and a 1920 T stationary engine, manufactured by Theiman Harvester Co. (IA) in the 1920s and '30s.



Tires were thin

# Gus and the Model Garage

*from Mar 1926 Popular Science*

## When your Ignition goes bad

"Here is the most remarkable spark plug in the world!" asserted the salesman, as he swung his sample case upon the corner of Joe Clark's desk and opened the cover with a flourish. "Can't foul - gives the hottest kind of a spark - never breaks down - lasts forever - and you can sell it at a good profit." He shoved a couple of shiny plugs into Joe's hand.

"They look good," observed Joe, as he examined them. "Are they guaranteed not to foul?"

"Absolutely!" stated the salesman with much emphasis. "They're positively self-cleaning. See the peculiar shape of the recess back of the points? That shoots the burning gas across the points and sweeps away any and all carbon." Ordinarily, Joe consulted with Gus Wilson, his partner in the Model Garage, about any additions to their mechanical stock, but as Gus was out and so was the stock of spark plugs, he decided to take a chance.

"All right," he said after his inspection was completed, "I'll take two dozen."

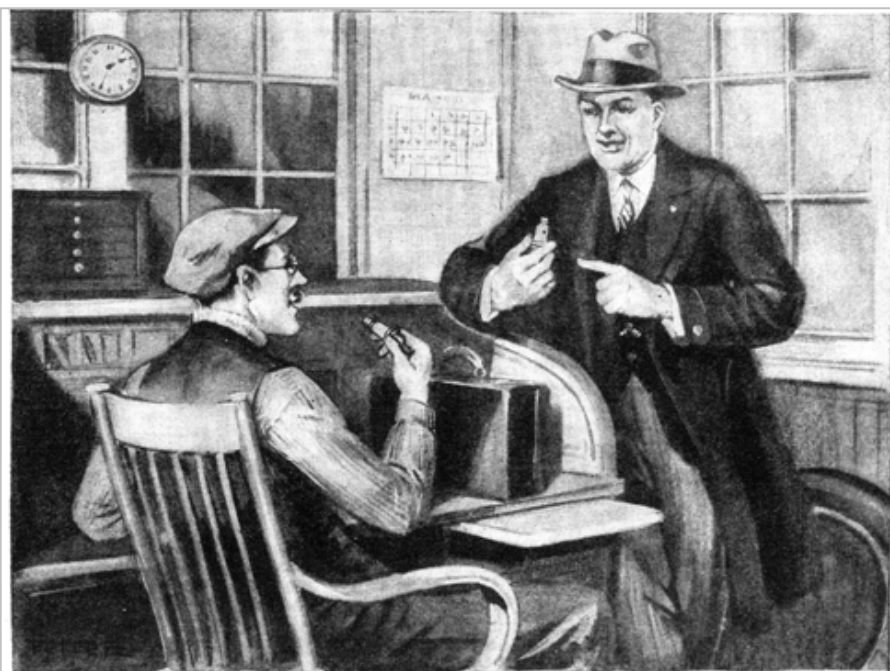
A half hour later, Gus drove into the garage with the car he had gone out to test. The engine was missing badly, and blue smoke puffed out of the exhaust in great clouds. "Hey, Joe! Bring out a

handful of spark plugs!" he sang out, as he turned off the ignition, and the engine died with a final spurt of smoke that rolled slowly across the floor in the form of a huge ring.

"Here you are," said Joe, as he popped out of his little office with some of the new spark plugs in his hand. "These will cure the trouble. I just bought 'em, and the salesman guaranteed them, not to foul."

"Guaranteed 'em, did he?" Gus growled. "Well, here's where you have a chance to collect, I'll bet. This engine is a regular oil gusher."

As soon as Gus had the new plugs screwed up tight, he started the motor and it proceeded to run perfectly without a skip. "They're the real thing all right, aren't they?" exclaimed Joe, with a satisfied smile. "Humph!" Gus grunted as though he had not heard. "That proves it's not valves sticking. It was running so rotten, I thought maybe the valves were on the blink. The trouble is the piston rings are passing oil, all right. Just wait a minute and watch what happens to your wonderful guaranteed plugs."



The salesman told Joe that his "self - cleaning spark plugs were guaranteed not to foul, - an extravagant claim which Gus soon proved to be "bunk" when he placed them in an engine in which the cylinder rings were passing oil and found they fouled like others.

The partners stood there watching, as the motor continued to purr smoothly. Even the smoking became less and Joe's satisfied grin broadened. Then suddenly the motor skipped a beat. The skip became more frequent and at last two cylinders cut out completely, so Gus snapped off the ignition.

*(continued next page)*



"Now try to get your money back from that salesman!" said Gus, as he shoved the two badly fouled plugs into Joe's hand. "Don't let any high pressure hot air artist tell you there is such a thing as a real non-fouling plug. There ain't no such animal. So long as the piston rings are letting too much oil get by, and the burning gases are cooking the extra oil into tarry soot and baking it into hard carbon, you can bet your last dollar that any plug in the world is going to lay down and quit on the job.

"Any good plug is a non-fouling plug if it's screwed into a cylinder that is performing properly. All that stuff about special chambers that shoot the soot off the points is pure bunk, because the soot that gets on the points is not what puts the plug on the bum. It's the coating of carbon that forms on the insulator around the center point." Joe's face registered extreme disgust as he retreated to his office without saying a word.

Gus started to work on the car again but he had only succeeded in arranging the tool kit to his satisfaction when the roar of a motor sounded outside the door, followed by a vigorous thumping that rattled that sturdy piece of woodwork on its hinges.

Gus flung the door open and found old man Morrison with his foot swung back, just ready to deliver another hearty kick. Morrison, who was reputed to have a purse long as his temper was, obviously short, dropped his foot to the ground and turned to shut off the ignition of his five-thousand-dollar gas buggy.

"The gosh-danged, dad-blamed, confounded piece of junk!" he snorted apoplectically. "The blankety-blank thing stopped every time I let it slow down and twice I had to get out and crank it to make it go again. Look her over and see what in blazes is the matter!" "You say you had to crank it a couple of times, Mr. Morrison?"

"That's what I said!" Morrison answered testily. "And once was right in the middle of Main Street - the traffic was all balled up before I got it started."

"Well - let's see," Gus began thinking out loud, as he raised the hood. "Can't be a dead battery because you would never have got it started again once it stopped on you. And it couldn't be dirt in the carburetor because that wouldn't have prevented you from starting with the starter. I wonder what the contact points look like?" he went on, as he snapped the spring hooks of the distributor head and lifted it up.

"Look here, Mr. Morrison," he said. "Here's the clue to the trouble. These points are badly burned. Much more so than they should be from almost any amount of use when everything is all right. I'll bet we find the trouble in the condenser."

"Condenser!" echoed Morrison sneeringly. "Say! What are you trying to put over on me? I wasn't born yesterday. Condensers are those funny things with a lot of plates that move in and out when you turn the dials of a radio set. They don't belong in automobiles."

"That kind don't," said Gus, "but there is a condenser in every auto on the road today. Here is yours. It's just a number of layers of tinfoil separated by waxed paper. It is connected across the contact points in the timer; when they are pushed apart by the little cam there, the juice runs into the condenser instead of making a spark across the points."

Gus proceeded to remove the coil, and then he took the two parts to a corner of the workbench where he had a battery fitted with snap terminals, a switch made out of breaker contacts and a pair of wires sticking up in the air about 3/8 of an inch apart. He connected everything up so that when he pressed the contact points together and released them, the spark from the coil should have jumped across between the two upper wires.

"Watch, now," directed Gus, as he placed his thumb on the contacts and closed and opened them several times.

*(continued next page)*

## Gus, continued

"Seems all right to me," exclaimed Morrison, as a feeble spark jumped across the gap at the third break of the contact points. "What do you expect - a regular flame?" "Sure it sparks some!" growled Gus. "It's a darn skinny spark, though, and if you will keep your eye on the contacts here, you will notice that there is a fine, healthy spark between them every time I let go so they can separate. There oughtn't to be hardly any spark at the contacts, and the only reason there is, because the condenser is on the bum.

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***"Any good plug is a non-fouling plug  
if it's screwed into a cylinder  
that is performing properly."***

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"You know a spark coil makes a spark at the plug because of the sudden stopping of the current flowing through the primary coil by way of the contacts, and if the condenser allows a sort of a miniature arc to take place at the contacts, it lets the current slow down gradually, and you get poor ignition. It worked when you cranked it because the battery voltage was higher when you kept your foot off the self-starter."

"All right, put in a new one," snapped Morrison. "I'll take your word for it, so don't let's waste any more time palavering about it. I'm in a hurry!"

Joe, who had been listening, ducked into the stock room and reappeared with the proper instrument. Gus fitted it in place, and Morrison, after paying the bill, stepped on the starter and drove out without even a "thank-you" to Gus.

"What's the use of being nice to a guy like that?" exclaimed Joe. "All that fine talk about coils and condensers went in one ear and out the other. I'll bet the next time the condenser lets go, he will be stuck again without knowing what the trouble is."

"Never mind," replied Gus. "The old grouch will be around for a complete overhaul job pretty soon if

he doesn't take better care of that bus. It's getting awful noisy already."

"By the way, Gus," said Joe. "I knew most of that dope you gave him about condensers, but isn't there some way you can tell when a condenser is getting too old and should be replaced?"

"Not that I know of," Gus answered thoughtfully. "That's one of the funny things about condensers. One might last for twenty years, or it might break down completely the day after it was put on the car. Morrison was lucky. His condenser only partly broke down. Most times when a condenser lets go at all, it goes dead completely. You may be running along with everything working as fine as silk and then without any warning, the motor just stops and if you haven't a spare condenser in the tool kit, the nearest garage is going to make some money towing your car in.

"Yet lots of fellows think they are prepared for anything in the way of ignition trouble if they have a couple of spare spark plugs tucked away somewhere, and the funny part of it is that you almost never have more than one spark plug go bad at a time and you can always limp to the next garage on the remaining cylinders.

"Any time I am going on a long trip," continued Gus, "you can be sure there is a spare condenser in the tool kit as well as a couple of spark plugs and a spare coil, besides a new breaker arm spring and contact points. I never got stuck yet so I couldn't get home." "Well, condensers are one thing I don't have to worry about on my car anyway," laughed Joe, "It doesn't have any!"

"Where do you get that stuff?" snorted Gus. "Your confounded puddle-jumper has four of them - one in each of the spark coils. But I noticed a spare spark coil in your tool kit and that will take care of coil trouble and bring you home even if you are too dumb to know how it happened. "Now suppose you put the rest of those guaranteed spark plugs in your tool kit - you ought to be able to get home from most anywhere with all those fine plugs to pick from!" Gus concluded sarcastically. \*

## Upcoming events

Mar 22-24: MTFCA Annual Meeting, Dallas, TX. See the *Vintage Ford* for more info.

Mar 26: Capital Model T Club monthly meeting, 7pm, American Legion Hall, Cross Plains, WI.

Apr 30: Capital Model T Club monthly meeting, 7pm, American Legion Hall, Cross Plains, WI.

May 18: Wonewoc (WI) Old Fashioned Day: Car show, parade, tractors, stationary engines and great food.  
Contact **Dennis Gorder**: 608 356-5403.

## Classifieds

For sale: <b>1930 Model A</b> 4dr, Briggs body. Original interior, excellent exterior. \$12,000. <b>Tim Correll</b> , 608 255-0247.	For sale: <b>1927 Model T coupe</b> , burgundy w/ black fenders; runs on magneto or battery, drives well. Newer tires, \$6500, <b>Jim Marshall</b> , 608 831-5742.
For sale: <b>1927 Model T Coupe</b> . Made Apr 1927; near original condition, original engine, electric start, \$11,900 obo. 608 833-0460, Justin Cole.	For sale: <b>1926-27 Model T coupe body</b> , and early-style windshield frame. Best offer on both, Bob South, 920 296-0990.
For sale: <b>1947 Lincoln 4dr</b> : OD, rebuilt V-12, all new wiring, original (black) paint & interior. 30,600 mi. Asking \$15,000. Al Anding, WI. 608 770-3854.	For sale: <b>1923 Model T coupe</b> . Forced to sell due to health issues. Asking \$8000. Helen Schwarz, Pardeeville, WI. 608 429-2823.

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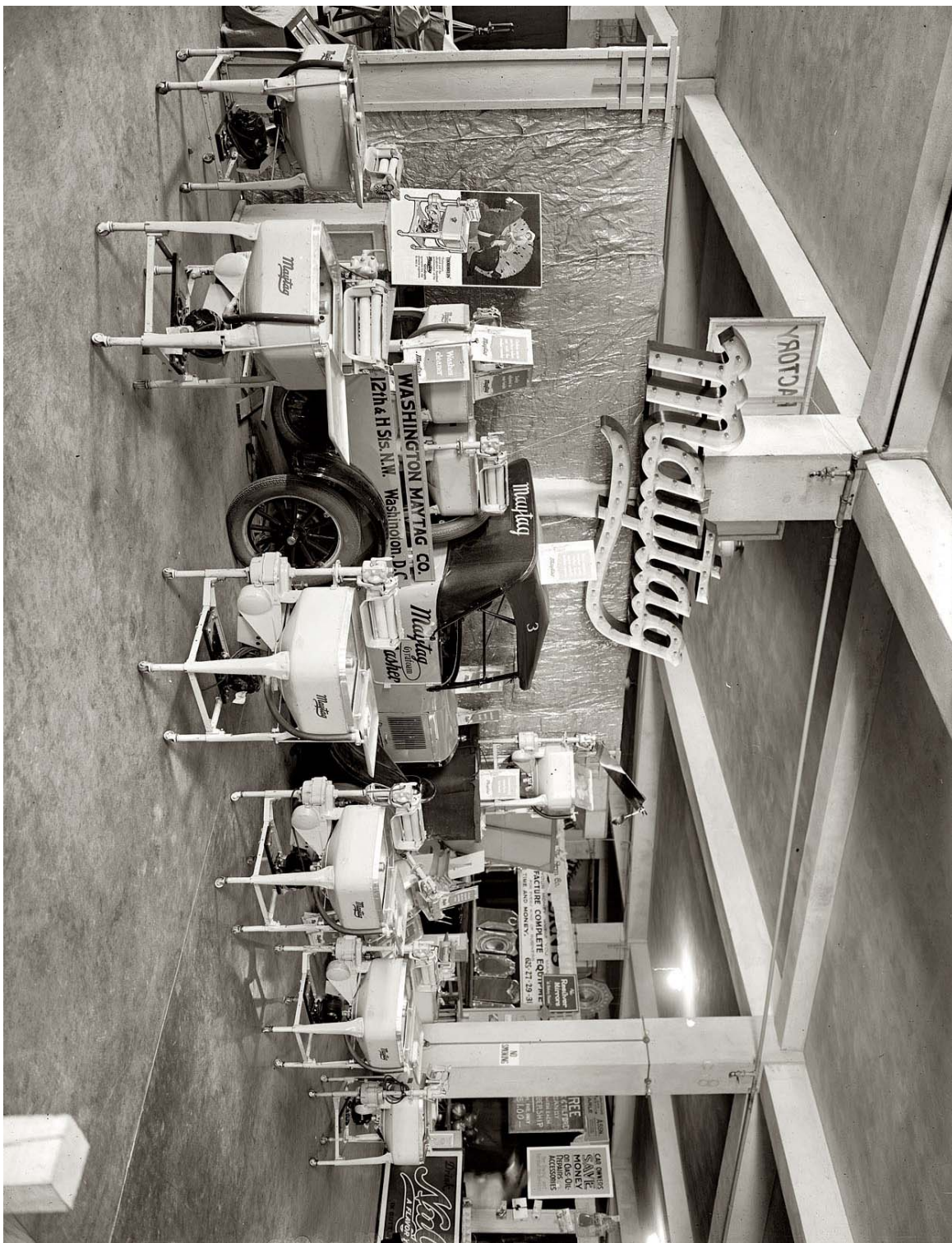
## In this issue:

Upcoming events

Gus and the Model Garage: When your Ignition goes bad

Members and their cars

Car repair in the fifties



*Washington (DC) Maytag's showroom, 1926. The door of the Model T pickup reads: "Maytag Gyrofoam Washer". Maytag ads for the Gyrofoam proclaimed: "No cylinder- all aluminum. So light a child can move it. Takes but 5 minutes to run- then the clothes are snow white." It looks like they had at least 3 of these cute roadster pickups. (from National Photo Co)*