

# The Mudflap



News and Activities from the Tidewater Region— Antique Automobile Club of America

Volume 58, Issue 1

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**FIVE YEARS OF 'PROFESSIONAL RESTORATION'**— We've all heard different horror stories about care restorations gone bad - TRAACA's Bruce Sedel gives a painful but enlightening account of what can and did go wrong, and ways to mitigate the damage. See his cautionary tale on page 3 (Photo by Bruce Sedel).

## January 18th

### Awards and Installation Banquet

Our annual Awards and Installation Banquet will be a great event this year, being held at the elegant Founder's Inn and featuring a guest appearance by AACA National President and TRAACA member Tom Cox!

Social hour starts at 5 PM, with dinner at 6 PM and the activities beginning at 7 PM. Terry Bond will be our Emcee for the evening.

Dinner will be an upscale buffet with beef brisket, roast chicken, and

battered Rockfish, a variety of vegetables, and deserts including pecan pie, red velvet cake, and hot apple cobbler. The club is subsidizing the cost of this event to bring it down to \$30 per person. It is our way of saying 'Thank You' for a great year.

The Founders Inn is located near the intersection of Indian River Road and Interstate 64, at 5641 Indian River Rd, Virginia Beach, VA 23464. The phone number is (757) 424-5511.



Check [local.aaca.org/tidewater](http://local.aaca.org/tidewater) for the latest info on upcoming events!

### January

- 7 TRAACA Board Meeting - Holiday Inn Norfolk Airport
- 18 Awards and Installation Banquet - Founders Inn, Chesapeake

### February

- 5 TRAACA Board Meeting = Holiday Inn Norfolk Airport
- 6-8 AACA National Meeting - Philadelphia PA
- 20 TRAACA Dinner Meeting - Holiday Inn Norfolk Airport

### March

- 1 TRAACA Annual Swap Meet - Hickory Ruritan Club - Chesapeake
- 4 TRAACA Board Meeting - Holiday Inn Norfolk Airport
- 8 First Annual Richmond Region Winter Swap Meet - Shriners Activity Center - Richmond
- 16 St. Patrick's Day Events - Location TBD

# From the Driver's Seat

Wes Neal  
TRAACA President



*“What the New Year brings to you will depend a great deal on what you bring to the New Year” - Vern McLellan*

Happy New Year and much success are wished on our Hobby, Club, and the care of our wonderful vehicles. With that said, we recognize those in our Club that exceeded expectations last year, and will receive their “Just Awards” on January 18th at the Founders Inn. I look forward to seeing all of you at the Installation and Awards Banquet as we honor these folks, and install new Board Members for the New Year in our Club.

From the **Communications** we have done it again, and now for the 154th year. We have been awarded an AACA 2013 Master Webmaster Award. Congratulations to Bob Stein for his hard work and experience in this outstanding Communication tool. Fifteen years and what an outstanding record - it is hard to believe the internet is that old, but what would we do without it. I use the web site each month on keeping me straight on dates, activities, and events in our Club.

From an **Activity** standpoint, our Activity Committee met in late December to plan an active 2014 year. The 61st ODMA Meet is now scheduled for Glen Allen, Virginia (Richmond area) for May 16th and 17th, so place that on our calendar. Other specifies Club events/activities and dinners will be posted on the Web site, Mud Flap and Mud Speck.

Our **Restaurant** schedule re-starts this month with the Installation Dinner at Founders Inn on Saturday January 18th. AACA President Tom Cox and his wife will join us in honoring our Award winners and installing our new Board members. Current plans are to continue our monthly meetings at the Holiday Inn – Norfolk Airport. Working with Marion we are looking at mixing it up a little this year to see other times and days in a month work to get more Club members to join in.

From the **Society** standpoint, other than the new Board members being installed, VP Jim Villers is hard at work getting all the data on the renewed and new member memberships for the Club's forthcoming new 2014 TRAACA Roster. Make it easy for Jim by getting in your 2014 membership ASAP.

Drive Safe,

*Wes Neal*

THE MUDFLAP is the newsletter for the Tidewater Region of the Antique Automobile Club of America, published monthly.

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## From the Running Board November Board Meeting Minutes

Note: These minutes have not been approved by the TRAACA Board and are subject to change.

The board meeting was called to order at 6:30 pm November 5th at The Holiday Inn on Military Highway. Directors present were Wes Neal, President, Jim Villers, Vice President, Tony Scarpelli, Secretary, Board members present were John Heimerl, Skip Patnode, and Dick Chipchack. Also present were Sam Kern, Mark and Marion McAlpine, Dot and Bob Parrish, Toni McChesney, and Frank Lagona,

There was no Secretaries Report. Jim Villers submitted the Treasurer's Report.

### COMMITTEE REPORTS

#### Communications:

Minutes have not recently been submitted to the Mud Flap, they will be reinstated. The board discussed awards to be presented at the January installation dinner. AACA President Tom Cox will be attending.

#### Activities:

Activities Committee Report - The Fall tour on 9 November will be the last club activity of the year. The committee for next year's activities needs to be identified. The Chili cook off held on 2 November was well attended. The feedback from attendees was totally positive.

#### Dinner Meetings/ Restaurants:

The logistics associated with the Silent Auction were discussed. The proposed slate of officers will be presented at the November dinner meeting. The board is monitoring the attendance at the dinner meetings and is exploring ways to increase attendance. A motion was made to subsidize the Christmas meal for attendees up to \$15 dollars per person with a meal cost not to exceed \$30. The motion was seconded and passed. The installation Banquet will be the 18th of January.

#### Society:

The board discussed current and proposed board members. The board discussed allocation of the limited free memberships. At the present time renewed membership is at 30 percent, but is expected to significantly rise shortly. The board agreed that free AACA memberships will also include free TRAACA memberships. Bob Parrish discussed his efforts to enlist younger members by coordinating with the automotive program at Tidewater Community College. A motion was made to explore forming a subchapter to our club from the student body. The motion was seconded and passed. Sunshine report – Toni McChesney reported that Vicky Peters is ill.

#### OLD BUSINESS

Sam Kern gave an overview of upcoming expenses for the 2015 meet.

#### NEW BUSINESS - None

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:45PM

Respectfully submitted,  
Anthony Scarpelli, Secretary

# Automobile Restoration **GONE BAD**

Story and photos by Bruce Sedel

## Intro

Who knows how many people out there in that crazy world of collector cars dream of owning a restored classic. As far back as I can remember I've always wanted to take some classic old car and bring it back new to the way it once was. Trouble is like many folks, my limited skills can only go so far and thus I must rely on professional services to get technical things accomplished.

That brings me to this story which concerns the "restoration" of a rare muscle car that was not quite like my dreams envisioned. It was, as things turned out, a living nightmare that lasted nearly six years before the matter would finally be resolved by the jurisdiction of a civil court. This is my account of that nightmare.

## Getting Connected to Fast Buicks

I always had this thing about Buicks, especially the powerhouse 1970 GS 455's. At the height of the muscle-car movement, some have said Buick came from out of nowhere with the GS 455 and, in one fell swoop, nearly blew the competition out of the sky. The Buick factory "Light Your Fire" advertisements promoting the GS's listed torque numbers and horsepower ratings that had never before been discussed by the engineers over in Flint.

The stage was set for Buick to take a huge performance leap. And leap they did in a big way in 1970 when the GS 455 was introduced with an advertised 370 horsepower and a whopping 510 foot pounds of torque! Bob Parrish must be trembling by now!

As a fresh high school graduate who had an opportunity to actually see one of these powerhouse 1970 GS's run at a local Buick dealership back then, I was amazed at its raw power and I vowed to some day own one. Finally, by 1984 I had enough money in my bank account to buy myself a decent car, which was a locally owned 1971 GS 455.

It wasn't any granddaddy car either. I was able to settle a few street scores with some friends the very weekend I bought it and made a few enemies while I was at it. I had a hell of a lot of fun with that car but as time passed along with some of my lead-foot aggressiveness, I let go of the GS thinking that I would raise the bar with the next one. My goal was to undertake a correct restoration of a GS

and, hopefully end up with something that I could really hang my hat on.

To date, I have bought and sold several Buick GS's, including a 1970 GSX. The best GS that I ever owned (beside the GSX) was a Diplomat Blue 55,000 original mile 1970 Buick GS Hardtop Coupe with a blue bench seat interior and a four-speed. After acquiring this nice, clean, original GS, I spent considerable time freshening it up.

When muscle car prices shot up into the stratosphere, I was approached by a gentleman who was able to clearly demonstrate that he wanted to own the car a lot more than I did. So I sold it. But lets get back to the story.

## Meeting the "Restoration Guy"

Any Buick enthusiast who has attended the GS Nationals held at Beech Bend Raceway Park in Bowling Green, Kentucky knows this to be considered the premier event for the Buick motor head. Some of the finest and fastest Buick-built muscle cars can be found at this annual event. It was here at the GS Nationals in 1984 that I was introduced to a gentleman who appeared to be one of the then premier GS experts.

As far as what I heard from many folks, there seemed to be a general consensus that he was known as one of the most knowledgeable GS restoration people out there. Some of the folks I spoke to who owned GS cars that had been restored by this guy all seemed to have been very satisfied with the level of restoration they had received.

I had decided that if I were able to locate and acquire a suitable car to restore, I would definitely want to talk to this dude about his restoration services. But first I needed to find a GS to restore and as it turned out, I would spend a number of years looking before I would finally acquire the right one.

Fast forward to the 1997 GS Nationals where I saw a car for sale that I thought would be a perfect candidate to perform a frame off restoration. It was an extremely rare 1970 GS four-speed car appearing to be original and in very nice restorable condition.

At this point, since I had already owned a few nice



Buick's, I knew that my opportunity to acquire and restore that rare GS that I had always dreamed of had finally arrived. I ended up purchasing the car and then, subsequently, in early fall of 1998, I got together with this noted "restoration expert" to evaluate a full frame-off restoration.

### The "Restoration"

The entire matter concerning the restoration was much more involved than what I have described in this story. Many restoration shops just want you to drop off your car and then they want you to start writing checks. Some people who don't want to hassle with the shop operator often think that just because the shop they selected may have a high level of integrity, everything will be fine.

One should keep in mind that, depending upon the level of restoration that may be desired, this effort can easily translate into the tens of thousands of dollars. The way I approached this process was helped along by many years of participating in this hobby where I had applied considerable thought into how I wanted to go about having a car professionally restored. I started things off by convincing the shop owner to use my contract form as it was agreed that it satisfactorily merged the understanding of the parties.

The contract involved, among quite a few specific details, a schedule of "progress payments" that would be submitted over a period of approximately two calendar years and the payments would coincide with the completion of the various stages of the restoration. The restorer and I went back and forth working out final contract details as far as the scope of the work that was to be undertaken.

Although we ultimately were able to come together on the terms that had been outlined, I couldn't get a commitment on a completion date, however, in an effort to get the deal done, I agreed to leave the completion date open and thus we were able to sign off on the contract. Although it appeared to be a small detail, as things turned out, this was the very detail that would come back to haunt me.

Anyway, with the vehicle delivered to the restoration shop and deposit check submitted, I felt I had done all I could and I left on a positive note feeling that the vehicle was in the right hands. But things would take a turn for the worse.

### The Problems Begin

When I submitted the final series of progress payments approximately two years after the contract was signed, the restoration was paid in full, save and except a few upgrades that I requested after-the-fact. Upon completion of the scheduled payments, the excitement of a full tilt restoration in progress was subsequently replaced by a series of communication problems with the restorer as to the status of the restoration.

What began in earnest as an exciting restoration project ultimately turned into a bad situation that was slated to worsen. Two years into the restoration, after the ac-



count was fully paid, my fears were heightened when I had learned through an informed source that the restorer had suffered an apparent heart attack and that all work in his restoration shop had ceased. At this point I had trouble contacting anyone at the facility. I didn't know at the time, but something was going awfully awry. Several more months went by before I finally was able to make contact with the restorer who shared a very serious-sounding story involving doctors and hospitals.

I was reassured that all health issues had been resolved and that work would immediately resume to a normal schedule. I even received quite a few progress photographs clearly seeming to indicate that much work had already been completed. It was just enough reassurance to make my uneasiness subside. I really had no choice but to accept the way things worked out and to be hopeful that the facility would complete the restoration as was agreed.

Meanwhile, with my own business requiring every ounce of my effort, time began to quietly slip away until the next thing I knew it was 2003, nearly five years since the restoration contract had been signed. At this point I was frustrated with the situation and angry for not taking action sooner when I knew I needed to. It was one of those feelings of such utter helplessness that I did not know what to do next.

For a little too much time I had clung to the faith that I might get a break that the restorer would do the right thing but that was not to be. Enough "red flags" had already been raised and the various stages of work due to be completed were not getting done. Not only was this restoration project heading south, it was heading in a direction where I would stand to lose everything I had invested. I simply had to try and make something happen.

### The Legal Battle

In fall of 2003, I contacted a local attorney and was later informed that a law firm in the restorer's local area was available to take on the case. In November of 2003, a lawsuit against the restorer was duly entered into the circuit court of the local county where the restorer resided. I feel pretty sure no one wants to hear elaborated details of

litigation processes that if anyone has ever experienced similar situations, suffice it to say, it ain't no fun.

In July of 2004, after months of continuances, deliberation and other expostulation, a civil court judge's ruling stipulated that the defendant reimburse most of the money that I had paid as well as for other damages. At the time of the judge's ruling the court records had determined that the vehicle had continued to remain in a state of substantial disassembly and that many of the miscellaneous parts and pieces that had been removed for replacement or refurbishment could not be located nor accounted for.

So, instead of trying to recover the automobile and recover all of the parts and pieces that might have been scattered all over who knows where, as part of the deal to get things settled, I agreed to relinquish the vehicle title and to give up the car. In return, the case was finally settled and after court costs, filing fees and attorney's fees were deducted I received what funds remained. Disbursement of the funds basically concluded one of the most frustrating and disappointing transaction experiences of my life. It certainly wasn't the end of the world, however, it was a financially eye-opening episode that will not likely be forgotten.

### Retrospect

When all was finally said and done, I can say in retrospect that I was fortunate to be able to obtain some measure of satisfaction by having at least a portion of a pretty substantial cash investment returned. The fact that I had in my possession a fully executed contract and the motor vehicle title in addition to lots of correspondence, cancelled checks and pictures certainly helped a great deal when it came time to file a lawsuit, not to mention that the lawsuit was litigated in far away place.

The fact that I had this substantial logging of plaintiff evidence was the key here. If I had not retained the evidence file I had, I would have been, poetically speaking, "up the creek." Some people enter into similar arrangements with nothing but verbal understandings and nothing

to communicate to their lawyer other than some, "well I was told this and he told me he was going to do that."

It would be an understatement for me to say that I was relieved when this debacle had finally ended. The retribution that I was able to achieve was overshadowed by the stressful experience not to mention the aggravating feeling of parting with my hard-earned money in exchange for a headache that would not go away. What I gained from the experience was a valuable lesson that I am able to share with anyone contemplating the restoration of a classic or collectable automobile.

My advice to all of you out there is before you part with your hard-earned dollars for "professional" restoration services, do your homework. Make sure you know with whom you are dealing and even then exercise careful due diligence. Never take a restoration shop's word or simply assume that certain work will be completed.

You and the restoration shop operator must get together to discuss thoroughly all details of work to be performed, including costs of parts, materials, shop labor as well as costs of services obtained outside of the restoration shop. Once there is a clear understanding of what details are to be included in the final agreed upon price, a properly executed formal contract documenting all of these details, including a reasonable completion date, must be absolutely mandatory.

Talk with other automobile professionals before you enter into any agreement and, by all means, consult with legal council, if necessary. It's your money and when it comes to doling it out for services you may think you're getting, just remember there will always be people out there that will be happy to take your money from you.

So when you decide to restore the car of your dreams, make sure you think about what you're doing before you do it and then plan your car restoration strategy accordingly or you may end up holding the short end of the stick, like I did.

### 2013 Member Event Participation Report: Jim Elliott

EVENT	VEHICLE	AWARD
Feb. 23 - AACA Winter Meet (FL)	1928 Auburn	Repeat Preservation
Feb. 24 - Concours d'elegance (FL)	1928 Auburn	Participant
Mar. 23 - York High School (VA)	1993 Camaro/ 1982 Corvette	Participant
Apr. 6 - AACA Charlotte (NC)	1982 Corvette	Senior
May 11- Celebration of Automobile (IN)	1966 Corvair	Participant
Jun. 1 - AACA Carlisle (PA)	1966 Corvair	Repeat Preservation
Jun. 29 - AACA Grand National (IL)	1966 Corvair	2nd Grand National
Oct. 12 - AACA Hershey (PA)	1982 Corvette	1 <sup>st</sup> Preservation
Oct. 13 - NCRS Chapter Meet (PA)	1982 Corvette	Top Flight
Nov. 2 - Hilton Head Concours (SC)	1928 Auburn	Palmetto Award

## 2013 TRAACA Annual Meet—Member Awards

NAME	VEHICLE	CLASS	AWARD
Bob & JoAnn Green	1961 AMC Metropolitan	4b	Second
Jeff Locke	1977 Demm Smiley	5d	AACA
Terry Bond	1914 Ford Model 'T'	10b	AACA
Tyler Gimbert	1924 Ford	11	Third
Bob & Sylvia Roughton	1921 Packard	17b	First
Ken Talley	1929 Buick	18b	AACA
Sam Kern	1925 Franklin	18d	AACA
Bob Woolfitt	1934 Packard	19c	AACA
Dan Ciccone	1937 Packard	19d	First
C.W. Bill Wilcox	1941 Lincoln Continental	19e	AACA
Al Becker	1930 Buick	20a	First
Bob Parrish	1931 Chevrolet	2a0	First
Neil & Marty Sugermeier	1931 Willys-Knight.	20a	First
John Heimerl	1934 Chrysler	20c	Third
Kit Lawrence	1937 Dodge Wagon	20d	AACA
Joe Burroughs	1938 Buick	20e	First
Kevin Carr	1939 Buick	20e	First
Ken Talley	1939 Mercury	20e	AACA
Thomas Wedeking	1941 Dodge Truck	22b	AACA
Susan Bond	1948 MGTC	25a	First
Dean Giacopassi	1958 Lotus	25a	First
Skip Patnode	1967 Alfa Romeo	25b	First
Jim Villers	1967 Porsche 911	25c	First
Alan A. Swenson	1975 MGB	25d	First
Robert Hyatt	1970 Mercedes	25d	AACA
Jere Avenson	1987 Porsche	25e	First
Richard & Sandy Hall	1973 MGBGT	25e	Third
Ron Pack	1947 Chrysler	26a	AACA
Dewey S. Milligan	1953 Ford	26d	Second
Wes Neal	1949 Willys - Overland	26d	Third
Jimmy Flanders	1953 Buick	26d	Third
M.Gordon Garnett Jr.	1955 Oldsmobile	27a	AACA
Anthony Scarpelli	1956 Chrysler	27b	AACA
Rad Tillet	1958 Oldsmobile	27c	First
Tom Bottoni	1959 Cadillac	27c	Second
James L. Cason Jr.	1963 Corvair	27e	First
Don & Bonita Whitlow	1963 Ford Falcon	27e	Second
Boyd Swartz	1964 Volvo	27f	Second
Pete Koch	1965 Pontiac	27f	Second
Bob Stein	1967 Mercury Cougar	27g	First
John Gancel	1968 Chevrolet	27h	First
William Treadwell	1969 Camaro	27h	AACA
Viator L. Trudeau	1974 Cadillac Eldorado	27k	First
Jack & Linda Pavlidis	1978 Cadillac	27m	First
Bob Parrish	1978 Ford	27m	AACA
Jeff Locke	1985 Cadillac	27p	First

Larry & Jane Cutright	1933 Ford	28a	First
Joe E. Burroughs	1939 Ford	28c	First
Keith Colonna	1956 Continental Mark II	29	First
Bob & Jane Ward	1964 Corvette	30b	Second
Adam Graham	1977 Corvette	30c	AACA
Jim Elliott	1978 Corvette	30c	AACA
Albert C. McVicker	1957 Chevrolet	32	Third
Charlie Dawson	1957 Chevrolet	33	First
Sandy Dawson	1957 Chevrolet	33	First
Charlie Dawson	1957 Chevrolet	33	Second
George C. Kickhofel	1965 Mustang	34a	First
Matt Doscher	1965 Mustang	34a	Second
Joe Geib	1966 Avanti 2	35a	First
Rory Bunch	1966 Buick Grand Sport	36a	First
James Cullen	1969 Pontiac Firebird	36a	AACA
Tim & Rhonda Russell	1969 Chevelle	36b	First
David Kissner	1966 Chevrolet Nova	36b	AACA
Bruce Sedel	1962 Ford Galaxie	36d	First
Mark & Marion McAlpine	1970 Chevelle	36g	AACA
Ron Hartman	1947 Chrysler	DPC	AACA
Frank L. Lagana	1950 Chevrolet	DPC	AACA
Scott Davies	1935 Chevrolet	HPOF	AACA
Mickey McChesney	1984 Oldsmobile	HPOF	AACA

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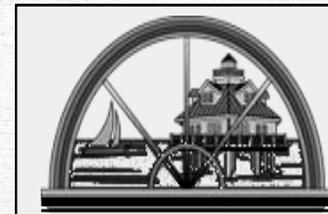
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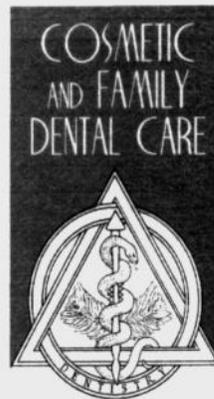
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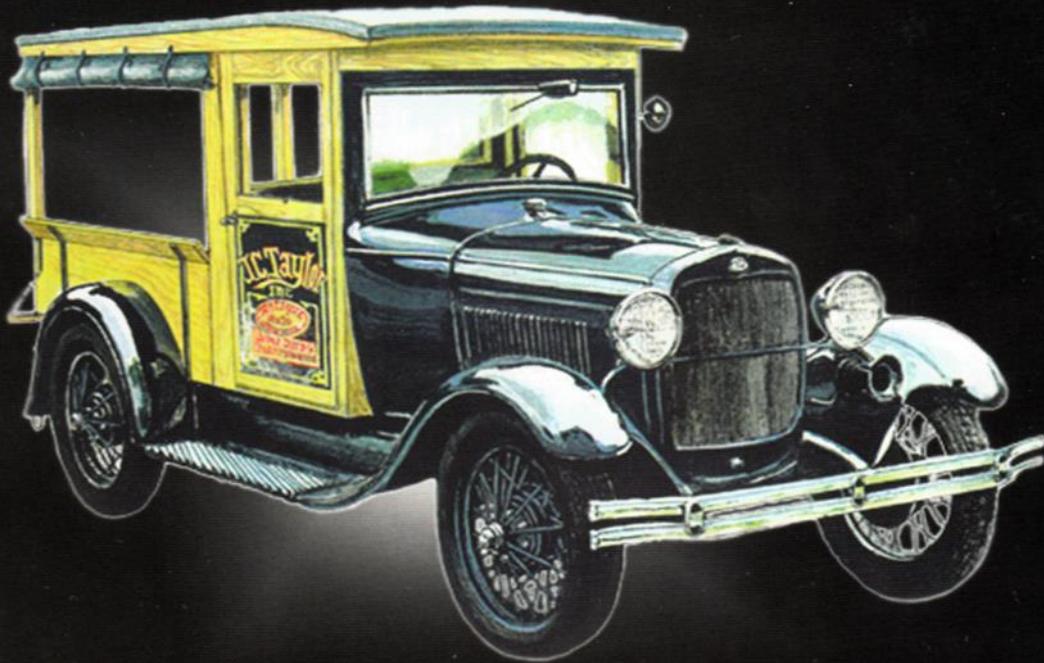
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