

The Automobiles of Western Maryland and Surrounding Area

Chuck Berry summed up the romance of the automobile in these immortal words from "No Particular Place to Go."

*Riding along in my automobile
My baby beside me at the wheel
I stole a kiss at the turn of a mile
My curiosity runnin' wild
Crusin' and playin' the radio
With no particular place to go...*

"It's all about having fun with cars!"

Larry Humbertson's enthusiasm about membership in the Western Maryland Street Rod Association is shared by thousands of car buffs around the country and easily explains why automobile clubs remain a popular form of enjoyment. Americans have been taking pleasure in motorized vehicles since they began rolling off the assembly lines in the early 20th century. Car buffs from the Tri-State area have expressed their enthusiasm by forming clubs where members have fun while helping the local community.

Car clubs are as eclectic as the individuals who create them and are commonly organized around manufacturer or model, classic or street rod, or activities like off road adventures. Members also hold public events called meets where expertise and stories are easily exchanged between knowledgeable "motor-heads" and anyone else who shows an interest in the vehicles. Meets are highlights of the calendar year and may be part of an annual vacation where members socialize and even participate in activities not related to motor vehicles.

The digital age created opportunities to expand memberships. Traditional clubs began to maintain websites, while new online communities continue to attract thousands of members who Instant Message, participate in seminars, and share photographs of vehicles. The online forums may also organize traditional meets, thereby blending established routines with new ones.



**1957 Thunderbird
owned by Wade Phillips.**

Written by: **Dan Whetzel**
Photography by: **Lance C. Bell**

The Tri-State area's senior car club is appropriately focused on collecting the oldest cars. The Queen City Region of the Antique Automobile Club of America (AACA) stipulates vehicles must be 25 years or older from the date of manufacture for inclusion in formal registers. Originally part of a Winchester Virginia AACA group, the local club received its own charter in 1963 through the efforts of Allegany County enthusiast Mac Wilson.

As the name suggests, AACA members prize originality. No "chopping the top" or bright paint colors are permitted or appreciated on the vintage cars. Ken Northcraft, club member, states that when the AACA evaluates cars, "Judges want to see the car as it was produced at the factory. If the owner installed a chrome air cleaner, points will be deducted. If there is an accessory included that wasn't originally on the car, points will be deducted. Everything is focused on originality." The standards pose both a challenge and quest because parts for many prewar cars have become increasingly scarce. A vehicle's advanced age and originality, however, does not prevent club members from enjoying "rides and rendezvous, (club terms for touring and dining) even when

motoring in a Model “A” Ford. A great place to appreciate the antique cars is at the club’s prewar event held on the Cumberland, Maryland, Downtown Mall during Heritage Days (June 10-11).

The Western Maryland Street Rod Association started in 1972 and received a charter from the National Street Rod Association in 1973. According to Larry Humbertson, president, members customize vehicles made before 1972. “Each person customizes to his own tastes and there is no wrong way to do it. But members may request their car be submitted to a 100 point NSRA inspection that is more stringent than the state one, so safety is a common factor when building.”

Members are encouraged to use their imaginations when modifying a vehicle, including state-of-the-art technology. And customized paint work may depict cartoon characters or items of personal interest to the owner—as Larry Humberston stated, there is no wrong way when it comes to building a street rod.

Street rodders frequently participate in “roundups,” where owners blend a show-like atmosphere with cruising local roads, competitive events, and campsite comradery.

One of the largest car roundups in the region is held at the Allegany County Fairgrounds and sponsored by the Western Maryland Street Rod Association during the week of Labor Day. The club is already planning for more than 700 vehicle entries and 4,000 visitors that are expected to participate in the 45th roundup.

Enthusiasts who enjoy cruise-ins and related events belong to the Classy Chassis Car Club. Formed in 1991 by a small group from Mount Savage, the club receives praise for its annual Cruisin’ Main Street event in Frostburg, Maryland, where more than 500 car owners register. A 2.8 mile loop for drivers and curb-side seating for hundreds of

spectators make Cruisin’ a major community event on the town calendar.

What cars do the 140 Classy Chassis members favor? “Muscle cars, older cars, street rods, all kinds of cars. In fact, you don’t even need to own a car to join the club—just have an interest in cars and you are welcome,” states David Pyles, member. “We have a real comradery and an extensive pool of knowledge to draw from if anyone needs assistance with their car. Members also enjoy the social aspects. We meet and bring a covered dish for dinner. It is great to be with people who share a similar interest.”

The Tri-State Cruzers also favor a stand-alone club status and variety of vehicles within their group. “If you have an interest in cars, the manufacturer, model, or style doesn’t matter to us. We are car enthusiasts and enjoy sharing the fun with club members and the public,” states George Minnick, trustee. Formed

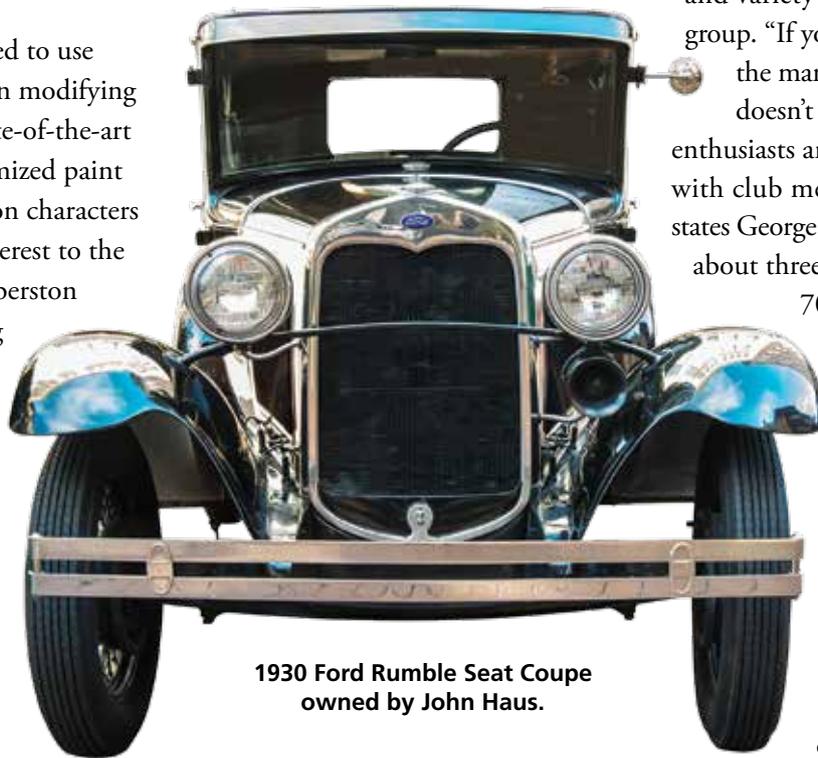
about three years ago, the more than 70 club members maintain the busiest schedule of events. “We will have over 20 cruises planned for this summer and maintain a busy schedule twelve months a year.”

Garrett County car buffs enjoy the Mountain Top Cruisers Car Club, an organization based in the county seat of Oakland and

dedicated to driving mountain roads and enjoying cruise-ins and shows around the area. According to Bob Gnegy, member, the club is a stand-alone organization that began with a few meets in nearby Terra Alta, West Virginia, but for many years has headquartered in Oakland. “Most of our members have an interest in antique and classic cars, although a member doesn’t have to be a car owner to participate.”

The club coordinates events throughout the year with the local museums, fairs, and service organizations but the largest happening occurs during the Autumn Glory Festival held every October (this year October 11-15). The festival has

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**1930 Ford Rumble Seat Coupe
owned by John Haus.**

Western Maryland Street Rod Round-Up



One of the oldest and largest “roundups” in the region has been held at the Allegany County Fairgrounds each Labor Day holiday continually since 1972 and is sponsored by the Western Maryland Street Rod Association. Shown here are some of the hundreds of participants.



Western Maryland Street Rod Association



Above: 1959 Chevrolet Impala owned by Bill Wilson, Cumberland, MD.



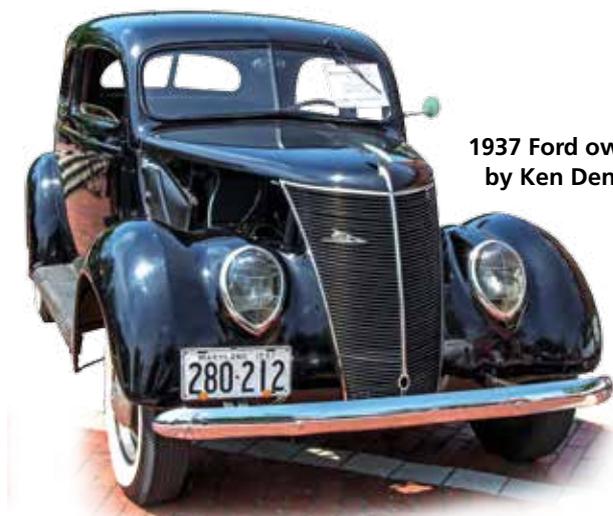
Right: 1955 Chevrolet owned by Larry Humbertson, Cresaptown, MD.



Right: 1937 GMC Panel Truck owned by Andy Abernathy, Cumberland, MD.



Left: 1972 Chevrolet Nova owned by Patrick Leedy.



1937 Ford owned by Ken Deneen.

Tri-State Cruzers Ridgeley, WV



Above: 1954 Chevrolet owned by Ken Deneen.



Left: 1932 Ford "Deuce Coupe" owned by Rocky Stafford.



Left: 1975 Chevrolet Nova owned by Joe Gaither.



Right: 1966 Ford Ranchero owned by George Minnick.

Editors Note: Seven regional clubs and shows (Western Maryland Street Rod Association, Queen City Antique Automobile Club of America, Classy Chassis Car Club, Tri-State Cruzers, Mountain Top Cruisers Car Club, Classic Car Wash Super Cruise, and the Ford Model T & Model A Show) have been asked to choose 3 or 4 member's cars from their clubs and events to represent them in this story. With all of the car clubs and shows in this area, this was a daunting task. All of the groups and members have first class cars, trucks, and customs of every description.

It has been a pleasure to photograph all of these cars and meet everyone involved. I photographed hundreds of cars of every description, but some cars shown on these pages are not affiliated with any clubs or groups that we could find.

Thanks everyone for your cooperation and help.

– Lance Bell
Mountain Discoveries Magazine



been recognized as one of the premier fall events in the United States and draws thousands of visitors. The Mountain Top Cruisers Car Club is an integral part of the festival and attracts more than 300 entries to its car show. “It draws a nice group of people to talk with. We all share a common interest in cars,” states Bob Gnegy.

A local club that has been around for well over two decades stresses inclusiveness. Club member Allen Haines summarizes, “Fire and Ice Rods and Customs is a bit different from the norm, where ‘clubs’ would be described. We have no meetings, rules, membership fees, or official charter. All events are open to one and all.”

Fire and Ice members are skilled and extend their assistance to out-of-the-area events. “A few, as Maryland Safety Inspectors, contribute their time at various events locally and as far away as York, PA, and Louisville, KY, inspecting street rods closely, pointing out safety issues,” notes Haines.

Among the group members is a representative to the West Virginia House of Delegates, a Keyser resident, who also serves as national chairman of the State Automotive Enthusiast Leadership Caucus, a group of non-partisan state legislators headquartered in Washington DC, representing each of the 50 states. Fire and Ice also extends its reach to a national audience through the publication written by a “Fire and Icer” for nearly a quarter of a century. Circulated world-wide, modified car and truck owners are introduced to the area as a result.

One major car event is unaffiliated with a particular club and the result of two local residents who had the vision to expand an established cruise-in at Classic Car Wash, located along Industrial Boulevard in South Cumberland. Leroy Nixon, Classic Car Wash owner, hosted several cruise-ins that Gary Bartik attended and enjoyed. While

attending an event, Bartik noted there were several businesses located in close proximity along the boulevard. “I approached Leroy about the idea of having a larger event that would involve additional businesses. He thought that it was a good idea, so it became larger and based on a California style cruise-in. We had Industrial Boulevard where owners could safely cruise and the public enjoy the cars.”

Super Cruise, held on Memorial Day and the Saturday of Labor Day weekend, attracts owners who drive Model “A” Fords, muscle cars, pickup trucks for chickens, tractors,

and anything in between. There is no entrance fee and the emphasis is on having fun. “We see grandparents and grandchildren reminiscing at the events. There is no stress about winning trophies—Super Cruise is about having fun,” stated Bartik. The formula has paid off because Super Cruise is now one of the

three largest car events held during Labor Day week.

Super Cruise also produces a significant economic benefit to businesses in South Cumberland and the surrounding area. According to Bartik, “Super Cruise is the biggest sales day of the year for Industrial Boulevard businesses. We estimate the immediate economic impact to be \$40,000 to \$50,000.”

The nonprofit car clubs also have a significant positive economic impact on the local economy. Ken Northcraft remembers the Glidden Tour hosted by the AACA several years ago at Rocky Gap Lodge that resulted in full occupancy by club members for three consecutive nights. Another AACA event created such a positive impression of western Maryland that 50 out-of-state guests later returned for a week’s stay at a local hotel. “It is mind boggling to realize the amount of money that is spent at local businesses during an event,” states Northcraft.



1929 Ford pick-up owned by Jim Martin.

An innovative and inspiring program supported by the Tri-State Cruzers has made a positive impact on local families. The Superhero Adventure Challenge began in 2015 as a way to support Family Junction and local children. The event brings together families with the club, local law enforcement agencies and fire departments, the National Guard, nurses, teachers, and financial institutions on the grounds of Allegany College



Original unrestored 1956 Chevrolet BelAir owned by Dan and Annie Whetzel, Cumberland, MD.

of Maryland. An obstacle course in costume for kids is the highlight of the activities for families. Another feature of the Superhero event is the appearance of an elaborate Cinderella's carriage built by Rocky Stafford, club vice-president. Rocky Stafford has also established a working relationship with Children's National Medical Center in Washington, DC, for the purpose of assisting needy children and their families, thereby extending the club's influence to another level.

Mountain Top Cruisers benefit the community in a number of ways. "At first we weren't able to provide a lot of funding to local organizations, but over the years the amount of money we are able to donate has increased," stated Bob Gnegy. It is not just monetary rewards that demonstrate the club's value—good deeds count too. According to Gnegy, "We visit the nursing home and are able to have the residents interact with club members while the cars are on the parking lot. The old cars really bring back memories and create good feelings for everyone."

Classy Chassis contributions continued to grow in 2016 when more than \$8,000 was provided to local service and charitable organizations. In addition to directly funding programs, club members rally during Christmas time to wrap gifts for the "Toys for Happiness" event at the local mall.

Fire and Ice actively supports a number of area programs including the Toys for Happiness campaign where T-shirts are printed featuring the names of business organizations that contributed. The shirts are then awarded to the "Toys" contributors during the scheduled wrapping shifts at the

Country Club Mall. Assisting at auto displays on the downtown mall, helping with the Halloween Parade, and encouraging other enthusiasts to bring and decorate their vehicles for parade watchers are annual events supported by Fire and Ice members.

A major sponsor of the League—A Children's Place and other service organizations, The Western Maryland Street Rod Association continues to be a service oriented group. The Western Maryland Street Rod Roundup draws major sponsors and enables the club to not only finance the event but also to fund a series of charitable organizations. Larry Humbertson credits Galliker's Dairy for its assistance, "Galliker's has done a lot for us and has been a partner from the beginning. They donate milk and refrigerating equipment during the roundup. Because of our sponsors, we can support Make-A-Wish, Boy Scouts, Mountain Ridge football, Fort Hill cheerleading parents, Relay For Life, and scholarships at Allegany College of Maryland. And for events, we make purchases from local vendors, so the money directly benefits the community."

There is no doubt that over the decades local car clubs have promoted and preserved the great American automobile tradition. There is also no doubt that clubs are a great place to network on vehicle restoration projects and performance. But there is more to car clubs than motors, chrome, and upholstery. Perhaps having fun while being a community partner is one of the best reasons of all!

Mountain Top Cruisers Car Club

Oakland, MD



Mountain Top Cruisers chosen by club president, Doug Bittinger to represent their club.

Top: 1955 Chevrolet pick-up owned by Kenny Easton.

Above left: 1957 Chevrolet Wagon owned by Leslie Behne.

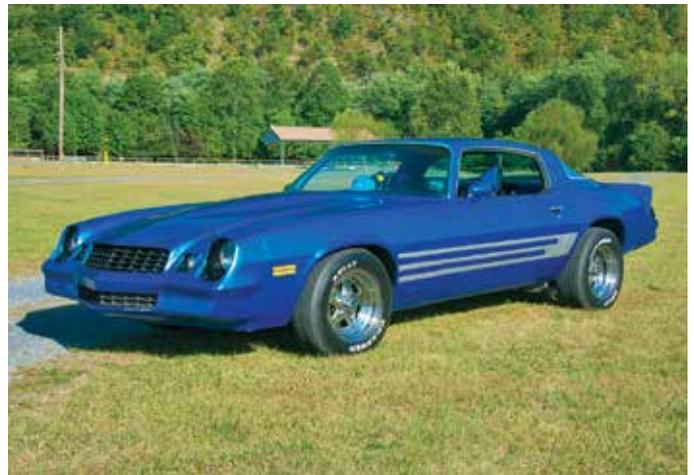
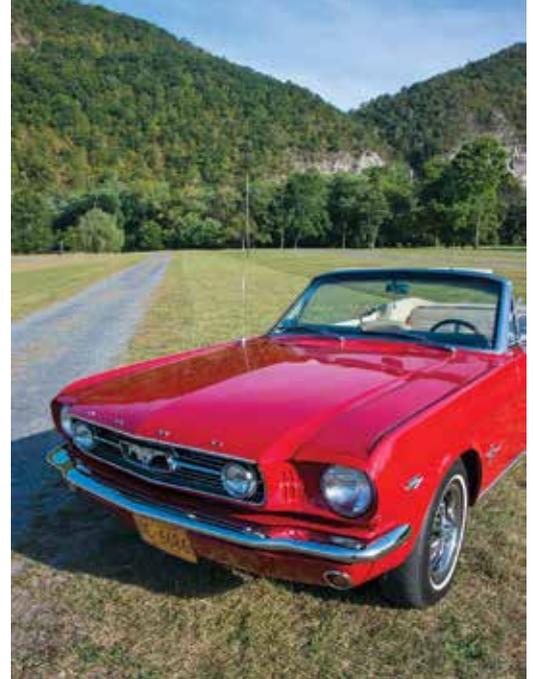
Above right: 1951 Chevrolet pick-up owned by Jerry Wilson.

Right: 1967 Ford Mustang owned by Rick Cropp.



Classy Chassis Car Club

Mt. Savage, MD



Classy Chassis cars chosen by club president, Dave Pyles to represent their club.

Top left: 1957 Chevrolet owned by Dave Pyles.

Top right: 1966 Ford Mustang owned by Margie Phillips.

Above left: 1963 Chevrolet Impala convertible owned by Norm Snyder.

Above right: 1981 Camaro owned by Mike Pyles.

Right: 1957 Thunderbird owned by Wade Phillips.



Annual Ford Model T & Model A Antique Car & Truck Show

Sponsored by the Allegany Museum and the Queen City Region AACA in its 17th year on the Downtown Cumberland, Maryland, Mall. This year's show is September 16, 10 am – 4 pm.

Model T's and Model A's from 1908 -1931



Early Fords gather on the Downtown Cumberland Mall in mid-September each year for the Model T & Model A show.

The cars lined up in the top photos are from the Greater Baltimore Model A Club. They *drive* from Baltimore to Cumberland—no cars are trailered. This is quite an accomplishment when you consider the age of these cars.

At right is an all original 1915 Ford Model T Touring car. All original paint and other features; the owner drove it to Cumberland from Martinsburg, WV.



Queen City Antique Automobile Club of America - AACA

Cumberland, MD



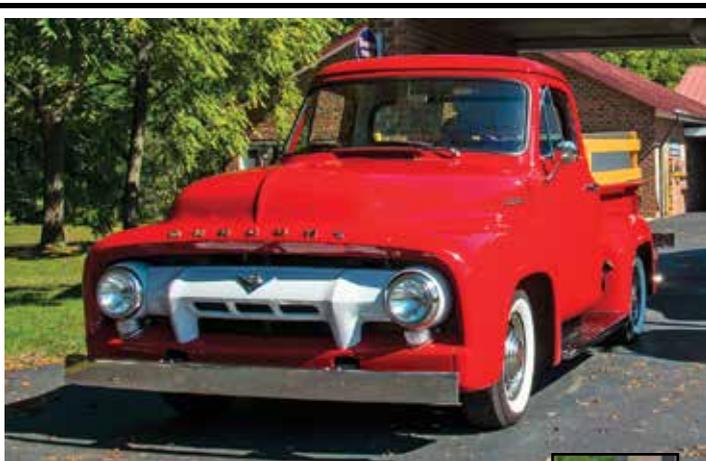
1 – 1937 GMC Pick-Up Truck
AACA Senior National; *Earl Eaton* – Flintstone, MD

2 – 1923 Hupmobile
AACA Senior National
Neil and Andi Furlow – Cumberland, MD

3 – 1933 International Pick-Up Truck D1
AACA Senior National Hershey, PA
Fred and Debbie Perrin – Flintstone, MD

4 – 1939 Chevrolet Woody Station Wagon
Chevrolet National Winner
Mike and Lea McCagh – Cumberland, MD

5 – 1927 Packard Roadster
Original car; *Phil Mills* – Cumberland, MD



1954 Mercury Pick-Up Truck owned by
Harry Hartman – Ridgeley, WV.

Harry “Buddy” C. Hartman, Jr.
April 7, 1950 – January 22, 2017
Member Queen City AACA



FEATURE CARS OF THE
Classic Car Wash "Super Cruise"
Cumberland, MD



Top: 1956 Ford Pick-up Truck F-100 Pro Street
460 cubic inch Ford modified engine
Eddie and Vicki Thomas – Frostburg, MD

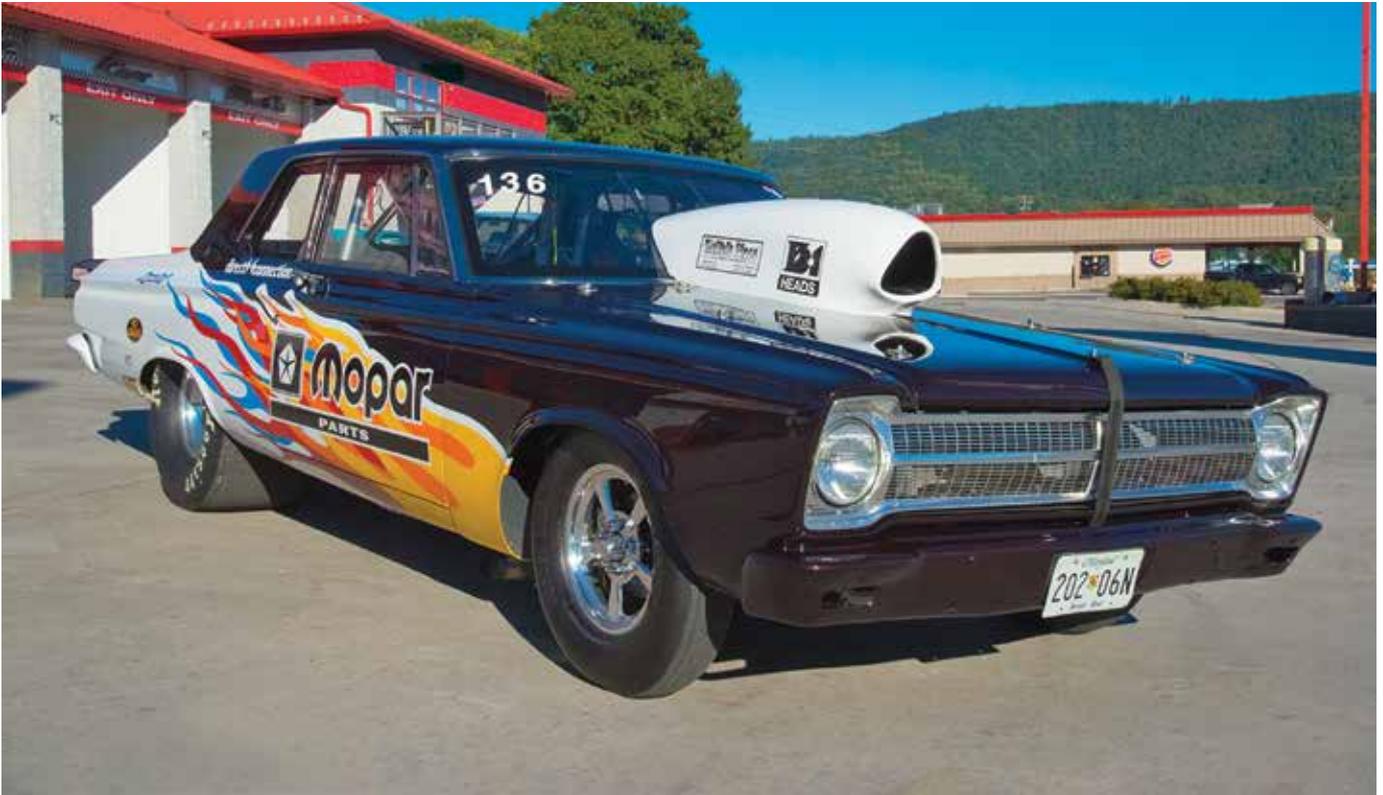
Bottom: 1955 Chevrolet Two door Sedan
383 Chevrolet stroker engine
425 Horsepower
700 R4 TCI Transmission
9" Ford rear, 373 gears
Randall Amtower – Keyser, WV



**Top: 1948 Austin Pro Street
Chevrolet 350 modified engine
LeRoy Nixon – Oldtown, MD**



**Bottom: 1982 Ford Mustang Pro Street
545 cubic inch (Ford Block, Big Al's Toy Box Speed Shop, Conn.)
9" Ford Rear
1,000 Horsepower
C6 Automatic Transmission, 430 Rear-end
Trans brake Auto Reverse shift pattern
Tim Moorehead – Keyser, WV**



Top: 1965 Plymouth Two Door Sedan Belvedere
Indy Aluminum Block, B1 heads
Roller
1300 Horsepower
604 cubic inch
4:10 gears
Quick Sixteen
¼ mile E.T., 7.73 seconds
174 miles per hour
Gary Donahue – Cumberland, MD

Bottom: 1967 Chevrolet Camaro
Pro Street
496 cubic inch big Chevrolet
850 Horsepower
Dana rear
488 gears
Joe King – Keyser, WV