

***"Thinking is the hardest work there is, which is probably the reason why so few engage in it."***

*(Henry Ford)*

## BEST TOP-DOWN RIDE?

Not too long ago, I was asked "What is the best top-down summer ride?" which of course began a lengthy debate. The choices are many and varied, and what is "best" is naturally in the eye of the beholder (or be-driver as the case may be). What vehicles should be considered (money no object, of course), and what parameters encompass the concept of "Best"?

After careful consideration, I came up with these: Creature Comfort; Investment Quality; Roadability; Distinction and Fun Factor. Creature comfort encompasses things like 'Tunes, A/C, PS, PB, etc. Investment quality – will it be worth more or less at the end of the summer? Roadability assesses whether you could drive this cross country and the odds you might stranded once or twice. And Distinction – will anyone notice you? Fun factor is of course, just that.

So here are the contenders (in no particular order):

**Mustang** – first generation, Red

**Corvette** – '62, Red, what else?

**Mercedes** – AMG, Black

**Model T** – '26 or 27, Maroon

**Caddy** – '41, Maroon w/ tan leather interior

**Corvette** – '63-67, Ermine White

**Lexus SC430** – Red

**Duesenberg SSJ** – Red & silver w/ Maroon interior



Here's how I called it (which may cause fireworks among our readers, but hey, I say "light 'em up"!)

I give the **Mustang** high marks for roadability and creature comforts but so many sport painted over rust that their investment quality is questionable unless you know who's been into it. Very recognizable and good fun factor. (Even though we're not considering practicality, it can seat 4 and fit golf clubs.) The **'62 Corvette** gets great marks for investment quality, distinction and fun factor, and can be reliably driven – although not necessarily in comfort. But WHO CARES, it's a '62 Corvette! Now, the **AMG** can couch you in luxurious quietness for mile after mile, is distinctive among the Mercedes set, but as a late model car, its investment value may take longer to develop. Now some might find a **Model T** as an odd choice for this list, but take a lazy Sunday afternoon drive in one, and you'll get it. It has zero creature comforts but that's part of its charm! Sure, it could break down but most anything can be fixed with a paperclip and some duct tape. This ride has major fun factor going for it and you will definitely be noticed. Then we consider the **'41 Caddy** – it is the "choice" of CCCA folks for lengthy tours for a reason. Spacious, comfortable, reliable, distinctive as only Cadillac can be. Take it to dinner in town, or in the next State and unlike most of the cars on this list, you can enjoy the ride with 5 other friends. Next, another **Corvette** (can you tell I'm biased?). The mid-year convertible is as beautiful as the Jaguar E-Type that inspired it – without the maintenance hassles. "Modern" suspension and creature comforts like A/C, power steering and disc brakes (starting in '65) make it easy to drive, and we consider mid-years excellent investment quality. A **Lexus**? Well, they're beautiful and so "safe" looking the way the driver sits low behind those slab sides. A great ride to be sure, but its just not that distinctive ... like, well, like a **Duesenberg SSJ**. Breathtakingly beautiful, appreciating by the minute, and only two ever produced, it definitely makes the grade. Our friend Al can confirm that the SSJ has shown excellent roadability on numerous cross country jaunts and although its creature comforts are few, **who would argue with Clark Gable on his selection for top-down summer fun?**



*Rare shot of Chuck & Karen's '62 Corvette with the top down*



*Jack & Chuck up-ended in '54 Corvette for windshield installation.*

**WHAT'S NEW IN YOUR GARAGE?**

Do you have something new in your garage that you'd like to share? Send us a picture and short bio on your new wheels along with the important stuff - Why you wanted THIS car and What you had to go thru to get it.

*This newsletter is available via email or regular mail. If you would like to receive it in a different manner, please let us know.*

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**GOOD BYE, GOOD FRIEND**

Last month, our friend Gary Larson lost his battle with cancer after a year-long fight. Gary handled numerous construction/electrical projects for us over the years and was not only a trusted supplier, but a good friend. Gary loved our black Mustang, and we'll think of him whenever we drive it - we know he's watching us and smiling. Gary showed incredible strength and grace in the face of adversity and we will never forget the lessons he lived.

**HUBCAPS LOOKING A LITTLE DULL?**

CK Auto has recently started a hubcap restoration/exchange program. We will restore or exchange your '56-'63 Corvette hubcaps to like new condition (new spinners additional cost). Restoration of your hubcaps runs about 8-10 weeks; exchange about 2 weeks. Call for information about restoration of hubcaps for other years/makes.

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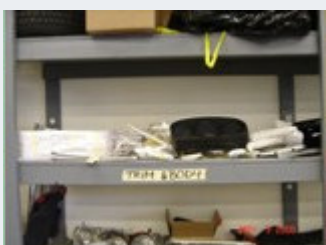
**In the Shop:**



Ed & Jack fit the rear quarter on the '68 Mustang.



Rear axles get a guide coat.

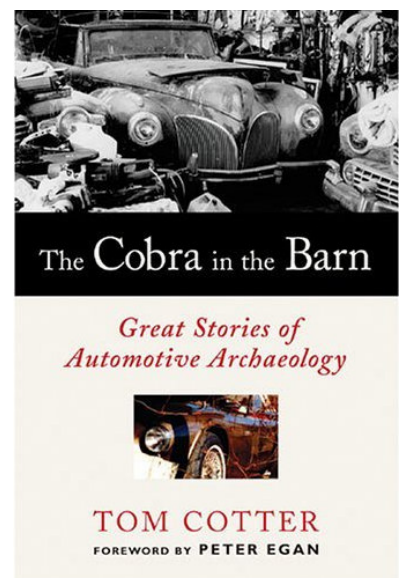


Mercedes parts all "bagged and tagged".

**BOOK REVIEW**

**The Cobra in the Barn: Great Stories of Automotive Archaeology by Tom Cotter**

I picked this one up on a recent business trip and ended up reading it in one sitting. This is a very entertaining collection of stories about car guys who have searched out, stumbled upon, been lead to, or otherwise "discovered" great cars in unlikely places. It surprised me that most of the stories are recent "finds" - at a time when collector cars have never had more attention! Anyone who thinks "they've all been found" should think again. Although I expected stories that involved the widow finally selling the car after her husband passed away, I found more interesting the ones in which the prospective buyer "negotiated" for the car over a period of many, many years. It hit me that these deals were not about money (on either side) - the seller was more concerned about the character of the prospective caretaker - was this buyer worthy of this special car? And the buyer was captivated at the prospect of owning a vehicle that had appeared in books or old black & white photos but was thought to be lost. (Many buyers bought the cars sight-unseen just from knowing the car's provenance.) The stories also showed just how powerful the dream of restoring a special vehicle can be - over and over were tales of cars that had been disassembled for 20 or 30 years and yet the owner still held to his intention of getting it back on the road "someday". I was also taken by how many of the cars were able to be started and run after decades, and today remain un-restored and regularly driven. If you worry that the hobby has become "all about the money", read this and discover the passion for old cars that still abounds.



**Do you have a "found in a barn" story? Let's start our own collection!**

