



The Steering Wheel

January 2025

Newsletter of the Midwest Antique Auto Club

Not affiliated with any national club.

An independent group of collectible vehicle enthusiasts.

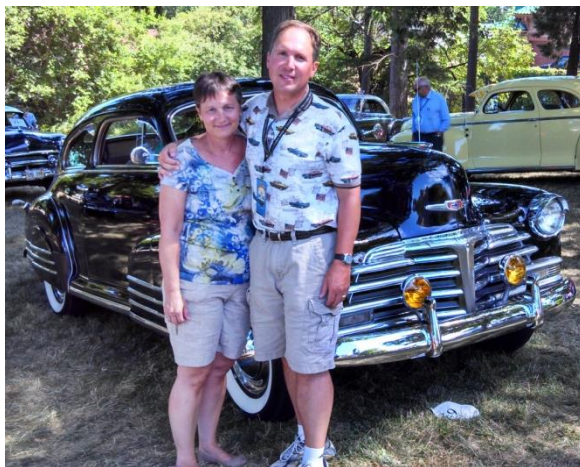
Dedicated to the preservation of the antique/collectible automobile.

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Meetings are held on the third Sunday of each month. The Board meets at 1:30 p.m. and the general meeting begins at 2:00 p.m. during the months of November, January, February and March at the **NEW CASSEL RETIREMENT CENTER at 900 N. 90th St., Omaha, NE 68114.** During the summer months of April, May, June, July, August, September and October, there are no inside meetings. In these months we have “Official Car Tours” on the third Sunday of each month. Plus whatever extra tours may please us. There is no meeting in December, that meeting is replaced by our annual Christmas banquet. All vehicles are welcome, any year, make or model, but a drivable collectible/antique vehicle is not a requirement for membership. **The latest Steering Wheel can be found at <https://midwestantiqueautoclub.org>.**

The deadline for articles for the Steering Wheel is the last Saturday of the month.

The President’s Message



Hello Everyone,

It was great seeing everyone at our end-of-year Holiday banquet at Pizza King. It was nice seeing our old time members and new members attend the dinner. A big thank you to your board members that helped put this on (the Cushmans, Kannas and Hedegaards). It takes time and effort to make sure we can enjoy the Christmas Party each year. A special thank you to my wife, Karen, for all she does to support the MAAC club and me.

We will not be having our regular meeting in January at New Cassel. Instead, we have been invited by Tom LaHood to a Chrysler Club event at Tom’s storage garage at 2115 Military Avenue on January 18th. Please see more information on the following page. I am

planning to attend and I hope you will join me in seeing Tom’s nice car collection and collaborating with other antique car collectors.

I hope you keep warm and safe in January.

John and Karen Thurber

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

January Special Event – Saturday, January 18th

We were not able to reserve our normal meeting space at New Cassel in January. However, we have been invited to the Chrysler Club 26th Annual Chili and Soup Feed on Saturday, January 18th at Tom LaHood's storage unit at 2115 Military Avenue. The meeting starts at noon with the chili and soup starting at 1:00 p.m. Please see additional the information below. You are welcome to bring a salad or dessert.

2025 MEMBERSHIPS ARE DUE -They are still \$25.00. If you didn't pay you membership dues as part of the Holiday Banquet registration form, please send payment to Jim Cushman at 1901 No. 59th Street, Omaha, NE 68104

Next Indoor Meeting – February 2025

There will not be a normal January indoor meeting at New Cassell. Our next indoor meeting will be Sunday, February 16th. More information in the February Steering Wheel.

MEMBER NEWS

December Holiday Party - We had a great time meeting on December 14th at the Pizza King. We had over 30 members attend the party. Thank you to the Cushmans, Kannas' and Hedegaards for scheduling the event. And thank you Board members for helping set up the party. I hope everyone enjoyed themselves and stayed healthy.

November 17th Indoor Meeting - We had our first indoor tour at New Cassel Retirement Center on November 19th. We had a short meeting where we discussed 2025 upcoming events. I appreciated Ed's sloppy joes for lunch and the members that attended the meeting. Again, thank you for everyone that showed up.

Memorial Service for Pam Molden - I am sorry to let you know that Pam Molden, the wife of long-time MAAC member Rich Molden, passed away on December 21st. Survived by her brothers, Douglas Nieman, Aberdeen, SD, Ronald Nieman (Mary), Bellevue, NE, Troy Nieman (Collette), Aberdeen, SD, Hagel Nieman (Elaine), Aberdeen, SD; many nieces and nephews. A celebration of life ceremony will be held at a future date. Please keep the Molden family in your thoughts and prayers.

Chuck Christensen – Chuck Christensen, long-time MAAC member, is in Methodist Hospital for a heart condition. Please keep Chuck and Lola in your thoughts and prayers.

Walter P. Chrysler Club's
26th Annual Soup and Chili Feed
Saturday, January 18th, 2025

It may be Chilly Outside
but it's warm and Chili Inside

Custom Storage
2115 Military Avenue
Omaha, Nebraska 68111

Doors open 12:00 PM
Chili 1:00 PM

If you like, bring your favorite soup/chili,
salad, dessert any other yummy thing
to share with the crowd.

Tom and Jane LaHood
Questions? 402-598-7300

Perusing the Rarity of a Jewel-Like 1942 Chrysler Royal Business Coupe

By [Jim Donnelly](#) – Hemmings Motor News



It emerges silently from the fog, all of it black, sleek and bubbling with quiet menace. The vessel brims with cruise missiles, guided torpedoes and a level of classified electronics that let it go about its mission out of sight, in virtual silence, as it roams the seas invisibly. This is the ultimate in lethality from the U.S. Navy, a Virginia-class attack submarine, all curved hull and jutting, unadorned conning tower.

This is an unforgettable image of a technology-laden platform for unseen maritime combat. So, what's it got to do with a low-production business coupe for traveling salesman, built 84 years ago in a production year that was cut short by the explosion of global warfare? To the owner of this [1942 Chrysler Royal](#) three-passenger business coupe, one of just 479 produced, it means everything. David Helmer knows what he likes aesthetically, and this car, with its perfectly proportioned little greenhouse, reminds him strongly of the Navy's silent service and its beautifully deadly boats. In fact, that's why he bought the car, a concours-level example, in the first place.

"It's about the look of the car," David explains. "I was a Pontiac dealer, and I don't think Pontiac ever made a car that looks as good as this Chrysler. I just like the elongated profile of the coupe with that conning-tower greenhouse right in the center of the car. It's like the conning tower of a submarine when you look at the car, just that one bubble where the seat is. When I started collecting cars more than 40 years ago, a fellow told me, 'If the top doesn't go down, don't buy it.' The typical two-door sedan just looks clunky to me. The coupe is very aerodynamic with this big swooping rear end. I love coupes.

David's short-coupled prize is one of the three-passenger coupes built in Chrysler's base Royal range in 1942 and was presumably aimed at the likes of a salesman with tonier wares for the trunk and rear shelving than most. It's the product of a car year that was chopped off in the months immediately following Pearl Harbor, which accounts for its low-three-digit build total. Visually distinguished by its five horizontal grille bars and excised running boards, the [1942 Royal](#) joined a Chrysler lineup that also included the Windsor, Saratoga, and New Yorker in ascending order, plus chassis units that mostly received custom Derham coachwork, 1942 being very late in the coachbuilding era.

According to the Royal's documentation, David's car was assembled just seven days after the attack on Pearl Harbor. That means that the Chrysler has its full complement of chrome trim, which was subsequently removed from the car as chromium was declared a strategic metal by the U.S. government. Later Royal business coupes, to the extent they were built, were relegated to having painted-steel trim like most cars that were actually assembled during the war. Yet this being a Chrysler, the Royal is a nicely trimmed rolling office for a businessman that might otherwise have ended up driving a stripped-out Plymouth for sales trips. Heck, this Royal even has optional fender skirts.

"The fact that it's a 1942 model makes the car a much more interesting and rarer piece," David says. "Shortly after this car was built, production stopped. The 1942 model is exactly what I wanted to get because of the rarity. Shortly after that, they stopped putting brightwork on cars, and the level of available automotive equipment started to shrink rapidly once the [industry began shifting to war production](#). The chrome trim quietly went out of production."

David's car is powered by the expanded-for-1942 L-head straight-six, which powered the base Royal range and could trace its origins to 1934. This engine family, which served both Chrysler and De Soto, is known informally as the 25-inch engine after the length of its flat cylinder head. By 1935, the 25-inch engine had gained hardened valve seats and full water jackets, essentially completing its technical evolution. The engine's displacement varied from 228 to 242 cubic inches, depending on application, until it was enlarged to a full 250-cu.in. for 1942, which saw output increase to 120 hp and 200 lb-ft of torque, fed by a [Carter](#) EE-1 carburetor.

The flathead remained a Chrysler engine choice alongside the [first-generation Hemi](#) until 1955, when it was supplanted by the new line of Polyspheric OHV V-8s. The flathead had a long and glorious run at the sign of the Pentastar, remaining on duty in beefy Dodge Power Wagon pickups through 1964. Chrysler produced four-, six- and eight-cylinder variations on the flathead. An interesting point of trivia is that the last flathead four in 1933—the engine could trace its origins to Maxwell in 1926—would be Chrysler's last domestically produced four-cylinder engine until the K platform debuted in 1981.

Another favored element of our feature car is its employment of the Chrysler Fluid Drive system, a very early interpretation of a semiautomatic transmission that continued to use a conventional clutch pedal for getting underway. As David tells it, "I find driving with it extremely easy. You shift from first to second and then from second to third using the accelerator. Once you take off, you can drive all day without using the clutch unless you want to go into reverse. It shifts exactly as it should. If this car had power steering, it would be a daily driver."

Now retired and living on Amelia Island in northeast Florida, David is a Michigan native who started out as a Pontiac enthusiast and whose first job was selling Pontiacs at Red Holman Pontiac in west Detroit, as a summer intern when he was 19 in 1963 while living in Pontiac, Michigan. David graduated from Western Michigan University in 1966 and was commissioned in the Navy—that submarine connection?—the following

year. After two tours of Vietnam, David returned to Red Holman Pontiac in 1970, first as controller and 10 years later, as general manager.

Some years later, in the early 1980s, David accepted the chance to buy a Pontiac dealership in Allentown, Pennsylvania. The store, known as Knopf Pontiac, grew to also sell Audi, Porsche, Mercedes-Benz, and Isuzu during the 40-some years that he owned it. Both of David's sons also found work with Pontiac, one of them coming to run Patriot Pontiac-Buick-GMC in Boyertown, Pennsylvania, home of the famed Boyertown Body Company. David ran Knopf until he sold the dealership in 2018.

Living now in Amelia Island, David became closely familiar with [the famed concours](#) held there and now known as The Amelia. One of David's newfound friends was Mark Becker of Jacksonville, Florida, who was a close associate of Amelia founder Bill Warner and helped to organize and run the concours. David once let drop to Mark how cool coupes were to him. In David's words, "Mark called me one day and asked me how long I'd been searching for a coupe, and I told him, about a year. And he tells me, 'I've got one. It's a done car, been shown everywhere, won everywhere.' So, I bought it. He delivered it about 35 miles from his house, which I thought was really generous. That was three years ago. When

Mark bought it, it was in excellent condition, but with the attention he paid to it, the car is now in mint condition."

Mark never displayed the Royal coupe at the concours, primarily because he was helping Warner to run it. As David recalls, "When I bought it from Mark, there was nothing left to do to it other than to maintain the car and make sure it gets driven. It's perfect." The Royal was owned by three people, all from Pennsylvania, before Mark acquired it. The third prior owner is said to have undertaken a complete restoration before selling the Chrysler to Mark.

David did indeed enter the Chrysler at The Amelia in 2024, but asked that it not be evaluated for judging, explaining that "I don't put it up for judging intentionally because I live right here in Amelia, and it costs me two dollars to get to the show. I'd rather see the award go to somebody who spent \$10,000 to have their car transported here from Iowa or California or Texas. I showed it at The Amelia in the Early Limited Production American class."

Amelia Island is a 13-mile-long barrier island that faces the Atlantic Ocean in Nassau County, Florida. Access to the community can be particularly challenging on the concours weekend. Four small communities, including Amelia Island itself, dot the four-mile-wide landscape. Most of the road network is highly localized and driven at low to moderate speeds. According to David, the highest speed the Chrysler generally attains when he exercises it is 40 mph.

"Wherever it goes, people rave about it," he said. "They're always very interested in the styling. It's something that's rarely seen, because the Royal was built as a work car and obviously was not that popular when it was built originally. It attracts a lot of attention, and nothing has to be done with it. The car is absolutely perfect."



MIDWEST ANTIQUE AUTO CLUB

AN INDEPENDENT GROUP OF COLLECTIBLE VEHICLE ENTHUSIASTS