

SWANKS NEWS

Swanks Car Club

Established 1956

Swanks Newsletter

January-February 2024

Swanks Display at Toppers Car Show



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Swanks member Tim Holt shared another picture from 1962. This picture is from the Toppers Car Show at the Fargo Civic Center.

Tim Holt: "Here's a picture of the Club Display in 1962 at Toppers Show. It has Emery's Rancho, Quam's Deuce, Club Roadster that Steve got when the club fell apart, and Hanna's T Gasser. Fun times for all the old guys."

Swanks Elect Officers for 2024

The Swanks held their December membership meeting on 12/12/23 at Lisa and Jon Baumler's shop in Chaffee ND. The Swanks membership voted to keep their existing officers in place for another year. Mark Kieffer will once again serve as Swanks President; Mike Thiel will resume his position as Swanks Vice-President; Joan Thiel will serve as treasurer and Jon Baumler will continue his work as Secretary; Ron Dahley continues as newsletter editor.

Issue Dates: Jan. 25th, March 25th, May 25th, July 25th, September 25th, November 25th

Going to a car show? Bring your camera and send in the photos for the next newsletter.

Got a project or a new car? Take a few photos and submit them to the newsletter.

Got something to sell? Put it into the newsletter—
rondahley@gmail.com

Ted Talk with Ted Bryans

We had two big losses in auto racing this past December. On December 20th we lost Don Schumacher a day later “The fastest Woman on Wheels” Paula Murphy.

Paula Murphy was the first woman to be licensed to race a Funny Car. Her drag racing and land speed records enabled all who came after her

In the sport. Paula was also known as Miss STP for her sponsorship with Andy Granatelli and his STP Company. Murphy was the only woman allowed to drive an Indy car at speed at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. She excelled on racetracks, on closed roads competition and the salt flats. In 1971 Paula was asked to drive Fred Lorenzen’s STP Dodge stock car, she broke NASCAR’S women’s closed course record at 171.499 mph at Talladega Superspeedway. Paula also drove a hydrogen peroxide-powered Pollution Packer rocket dragster to 258 mph pass at the NHRA Winter Nationals. In 1974 she was racing the rocket car when it did not shut down at 258 mph, she deployed the chutes, but they ripped off the car sending her off the course and flipping end over end She suffered a broken neck which only temporarily slowed her down. Paula set a record for a around the world drive before returning to drag racing. Paula also set many speed records including A Mexico-to-Canada Route and a New York-to-Los Angeles route. Paula was inducted into the International Drag Racing Hall of Fame in 1992, The Motor Sports Hall of Fame in 2017 and she was feted by the Women in Motorsports North America group at the Peterson Museum in Los Angeles. Paula Murphy was 95 years old.

Don Schumacher, NHRA drag racer, Team Owner and businessman passed away at the age of 79. Don very successfully raced funny cars in the 60’s and 70’s before leaving to build Schumacher Electric, a global company building battery chargers and many other electrical equipment.

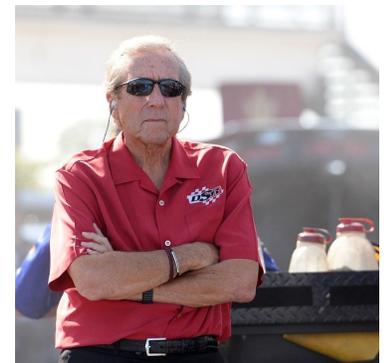
In the late 80’s he returned to drag racing to build one of the most successful drag racing teams ever with his son Tony Schumacher. They built an amazing program. Don Schumacher drag racing has won 367 Wally Trophies and 19 National Championships. Schumacher has introduced many safety features to the sport of drag racing including a roof mounted escape hatch so drivers could quickly escape in case of a fire, he also created a lever on the brake handles to activate a fire suppression system letting the driver to keep one hand on the wheel, he also developed a protective enclosed canopy for top fuel cars.

In more recent years, Schumacher turned his focus to growing Don Schumacher Motorsports, more commonly known as DSM Precision Manufacturing and DSR Performance. DSR Performance is considered one of the sport’s leading race engineering and aftermarket parts brands. DSM Precision Manufacturing is a successful precision manufacturing supplier for the motorsports, defense, and aerospace industries. These entities will continue to honor the business legacy of Schumacher.

Schumacher earned many accolades in recognition of his career and his contributions to motorsports, including the International Drag Racing Hall of Fame, the International Motorsports Hall of Fame and the Motorsports Hall of Fame of America. In 2022, Schumacher was honored by the NHRA with the sport’s Lifetime Achievement Award.



Resources: NHRA, CBS Sports, Washington Examiner, and Auto Week



Dickinson Car Show

Photos: Ted Bryans



Vintage Photos



Some beautiful new Deuces rolling down the assembly line



A Message from Gerald Quam

Ron; RE: Sondre; "Kustorama" been in touch with him for a few years; mentioned some stuff about the "Swanks" hooked him up with Lanny Erickson "Swank" who had Gene Winfield build his rolled over 56 Chev into a chopped; radical custom called "the violet Fantasy" Genes first fade paint job; Lanny moved to Fargo a few years after the car was built; already in primer; crude chassis by todays standard; Gary Hoffsommer "Swank" pres and I took Gene to M S R A for a Minnesota Vo tech work shop; the St Paul Vo tech people stiffed us; we paid Gene out of pocket; I took my 34 Ford original rat Rod (not a remade one) built in the 50s; McLulloch blow flat head; to T R O G (the race of gentlemen) in Santa Barbara where I lived from 1972 until 2013; went to the "Kustoms by the Sea" that Sondre was involved in' hooked Sondre up with Lanny Erickson via phone a week before Lanny died (2 years back) kept in touch with Lanny ever since leaving Fargo; Sondre got a lot of info about the 56; which has been restored; but think Gene said it was the first "Fade" paint job; I would see Gene on his birthday; and phone Lanny; so they could talk. Sending a pic of the "Tijuana Taxi 2" (didn't run it; but had fun putting it around1 Fun stuff! Jerry Quam.



For readers who are not familiar with Kustomrama and Sondre Kvipt, Sondre along with his brother, Kjetil are the founders of the Kustomrama Newsletter which works hard to keep the hot rod and Custom car history alive and well. Sondre is from Oslo Norway and is a walking encyclopedia of hot rod and custom car history. If you look closely at the Feature Car last issue of Swanks News it came from Kustomrama issue 188. Kustomrama offers a wealth of information on hot rods, customs and drag racing every month. Just Google Kustomrama to become more acquainted with Sondre and I will guarantee that you will learn something.

International Women's Day March 8, 2024

Trailblazing Designer Helene Rother

Words:: Chrissy Doll

Helene Rother is listed as Detroit's first female automotive designer". Helene was born in Leipzig, Germany, she attended arts schools and started her career by illustrating books. A few years later she moved to France to start a family and designed her own fashion jewelry, in 1941 she had to flee Nazi-occupied France and landed in Casablanca, North Africa then to New York City where she worked as an illustrator for Marvel Comics.



While working in New York she spotted an ad for an interior designer at General Motors. She applied and Harley Earl hired her. She went to work for General Motors becoming one of the first female automotive designers. While at General Motors she helped to update the interiors for the Buick, Chevrolet, Cadillac, Oldsmobile, and Pontiac divisions using her keen eye to create sleeker and more innovative designs. Helene worked for General Motors for four years (from 1943-1947) before starting her own studio, Rother Design Styling Studios. One of her first and biggest clients

was Nash Automobiles who appreciated her European stylings. Her designs changed the look of Nash Automobiles and made them some of the most stylish vehicles on the market in the 50's. She worked with Nash until 1957 when they were acquired by American Motors.

After Nash Helene continued to do contract work, branching out beyond automotive designs and creating stained glass windows and furniture. Although Helene passed away in 1999, she was inducted into the Automotive Hall of Fame for her contributions to the automotive industry. She was an ambitious and talented designer and her influence on the design and styling of vehicle interiors is still seen in cars today.

Jamestown Car Show

Ted Bryans

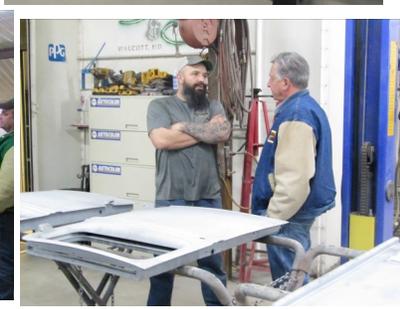
It turned out to be a cool rainy day, but it did not discourage the car folks from getting together for a car show. Ted Bryans manned the NDSRA Booth and welcomed all the car guys and gals for this cool event.



The Abercrombie gathering

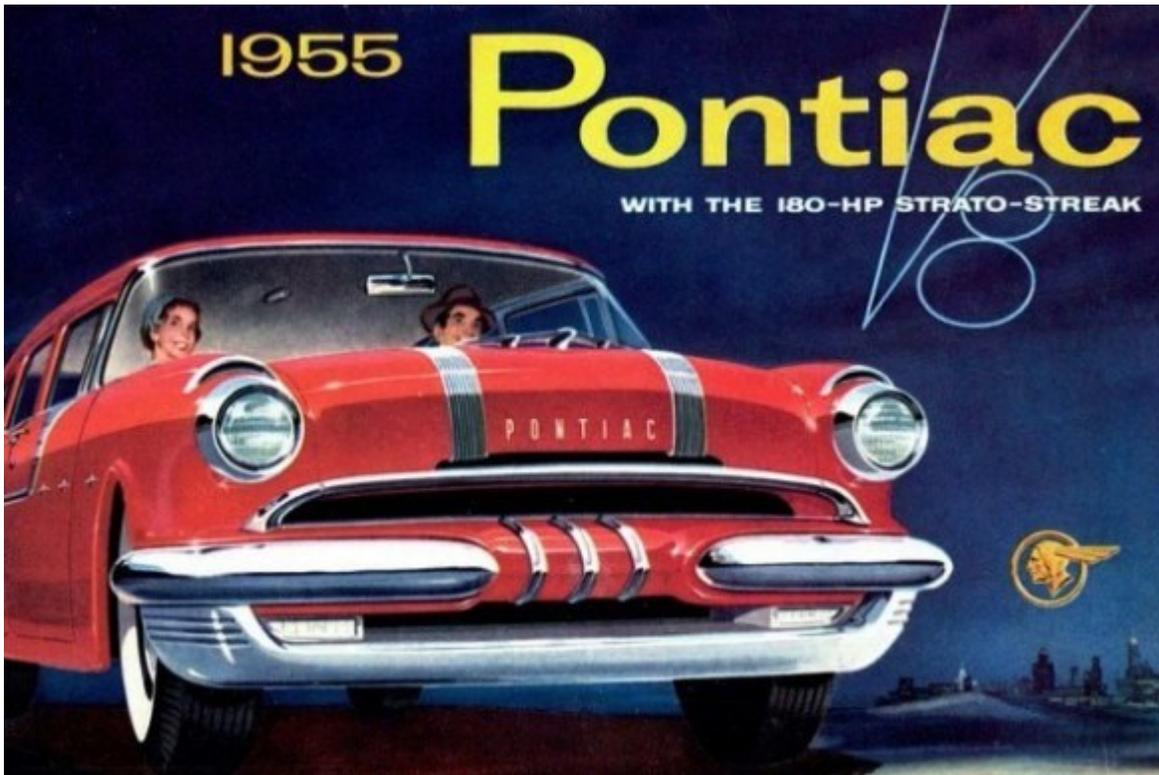
Photos: Ron Dahley

This Newsletter has mentioned the Abercrombie gathering that occurs every other Wednesday at the Fort Saloon in Abercrombie ND. Car guys show up at about 10am and bench race until about 1 or 2pm. I'm told that January and February may bring out as few as 5 or so car guys in stormy weather and up to 40 in better weather conditions. This year some hard-core guys are still driving a hot rod to the Fort Saloon, even in December with the uncommon weather conditions. Once in a while Jim Jacobson or one of the other guys will arrange a garage tour so after lunch at the Fort Saloon, they will caravan to someone's garage for a tour. Jim Jacobson arranged two garage tours recently, one in November at Dave Boardman's shop in Mooretown ND and in December we visited Bruce and Chase Frueh's shop near Walcott ND. Our hosts could not have been more welcoming, and everyone had a good time. Thanks to Jim Jacobson, Dave Boardman and Bruce and Chase Frueh for hosting us. The top 3 rows of pictures are from the November meeting and Dave Boardman's shop the two bottom rows are the December meeting at Frueh's shop.



What's the Diff? The 1955 and 1956 Pontiacs

Mac's Motor City Garage



Pontiac was an all-new car for 1955, with a redesigned A-body platform shared with GM stablemate Chevrolet, and a fresh, modern 287 CID V8, the division's first bent eight since 1932. While the new Strato-Streak V8 shared some engineering features with the Chevy V8, also new in 1955, the two engines shared no internal components.

The nose sported a distinctive split bumper with an elaborate sheet-metal surround, browed headlamps, and trademark twin Silver Streak hood bands. The Silver Streak trim was originally devised back in 1936 to disguise the Pontiac's Chevy-derived body panels and build brand identity.

The '55's clean hockey-stick side trim was a favorite with period customizers, who adapted the pieces to their '49-'51 Fords and Mercury's. Except for its two-tone paint and whitewall tires, this Chieftain two-door post sedan is quite basic—note the ashtray hubcaps and plain upholstery. In car salesmen's lingo, stripped-down models were derisively known as "heaters and keys."



Trim levels for 1955 included the Chieftain 860, Chieftain 870, and the top-of-the-line Star Chief. With the all-new design and modern V8 engine, 1955 was a banner year for Pontiac. Over 550,000 units were sold, probably saving the division. Earlier, there was serious talk on the 14th floor at General Motors of killing the brand

What's the Diff? Continued...



With its minor facelift, the '56 is similar to the previous year, but note that the front bumpers have a 30-degree crook toward the center, while the '55 bumpers are straight. That's one easy tell to distinguish the two model years. Also, all the metalwork in the grille opening is bright rather than painted.

Here's the great Cotton Owens with his '56 Pontiac on the sand at Daytona Beach. Note the redesigned side trim, and just to Cotton's right you can make out the revised tail lamp trim. For 1956, the Pontiac V8 was enlarged from 287 to 316.6 CID and offered in both 205 hp and 227 hp tune. Three-speed manual and four-speed Hydramatic transmissions were offered.



four-door Catalina hardtop was introduced in 1956, sharing its distinctive roofline with the Chevrolet Sport Sedan. (In Pontiac naming convention, pillarless hardtops bore the Catalina name, though that would change.) The bright metal taillamp spear identifies this as a Star Chief, but Pontiac offered the four-door hardtop in all three trim levels: 860, 870, and Star Chief. The four-door hardtop was the Motor City's hot styling trend in 1956.

United Auto Car Show

Ted Bryans



Valley City Car Show

Ted Bryans



Feature Car The Muntz Jet

CarScoops

Earl "Madman" Muntz, the entrepreneur behind the incredibly rare Muntz Jet of the early 1950s.

Muntz made his name, and a small fortune, running a California Kaiser-Fraser dealership in the late 1940s, before going off on a complete tangent, and making another fortune selling basic, inexpensive television sets of his own design just as the technology was taking off. And he cultivated his own crazy persona, using jokes and stunts to advertise his products.

But the Muntz Jet was no joke. It was a luxurious sporting convertible designed with the help of legendary race car designer Frank Kurtis, fitted with a removable fiberglass hardtop and powered by a Cadillac V8. It also featured luxuries like an automatic transmission, power-assisted steering and a safety-conscious padded dashboard before some of those features became standard on most cars.

Built between 1949 and 1954, initially in Glendale, California, and later in Evanston, Illinois, the Muntz Jet was developed from Frank Kurtis's KSC two-seat aluminum sports car, but with the wheelbase extended to make room for two additional seats. Relentless self-promoter Muntz claimed that the \$5,500 V8 machines could reach 150 mph (240 km/h), though it appears he might have been exaggerating by a good 30 mph (50 km/h) or more.

And they weren't the only numbers he messed up. The cars cost around \$5,500 to buy in the early 1950s, but \$6,500 to make, and those losses eventually forced Muntz to shutter the operation after fewer than 200 cars had been completed. He carried on with his electronics business, pioneering in-car music systems, and selling those gigantic rear-projection TVs rich people had in the 1980s that were so dim you might as well have been watching a radio.

The 1952 car pictured here is up for auction with Worldwide this Saturday (April 23), and being one of the later Muntz Jets is fitted with a Lincoln flathead V8 developing 150 hp (152 PS). Discovered as an abandoned restoration in 2009, it was rescued, rebuilt, and repainted in the correct Colorado red, and based on previous sale prices, is likely to change hands for close to \$200,000.

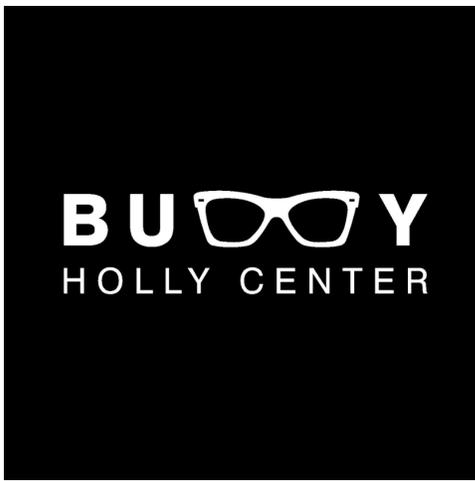
In the November-December Issue of Swanks News Gerald Quam mentioned that he was building a Muntz Jet years ago and I did not know what he was talking about so I had to do a little research. Were any readers familiar with this rare automobile? Let me know if you were aware of this sports car.



Ellingson's Collectible Cars in Rogers MN currently has a red 1953 Muntz Jet for sale. Asking price is \$139,995



In the November/December 22 issue of Swanks News we shared a story about the Kurtis Sports Car designed by Frank Kurtis. Frank made 18 to 36 cars in 1949-50 but because of high production costs he sold the designs and tooling to Earl "madman" Muntz who changed the name and built the Muntz Jet from 51-54. Kurtis Cars used Ford flat heads; Muntz used Lincoln and Cadillac engines.



The Buddy Holly Center Lubbock Texas

Photos/Words: Facebook

February 3rd is the anniversary of the day Buddy Holly tragically lost his life in a plane crash in Clear Lake, Iowa. As such, there is no better place to honor his memory than the Buddy Holly Museum.

The Buddy Holly Center gives an excellent summary of what you will find when you explore this unique tribute to the life and music of Buddy Holly.

"The Buddy Holly Center, a historical site, has dual missions; preserving, collecting and promoting the legacy of Buddy Holly and the music of Lubbock and West Texas, as well as providing exhibits on Contemporary Visual Arts and music, for the purpose of educating and entertaining the public. The vision of the Buddy Holly Center is to discover art through music by celebrating legacy, culture, and community.

Buddy's most iconic piece of paraphernalia is arguably his glasses. While they are now on display at the Buddy Holly Center, for years after the crash, they sat in the evidence room in Clear Lake, Iowa, before being returned to the family. They now highlight the collection of this Rock and Roll Star.

The 65th anniversary of "The Day the Music Died" is on February 3rd, 2024. The Buddy Holly Center is a great place to commemorate the tragic plane crash that claimed the lives of Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens, J P "The Big Bopper" Richardson, and pilot Roger Peterson." See more by googling WWW.buddyholly.org

Swanks Cooking Corner



"I think youngsters need to start thinking about what kind of world



they are going to leave for me and Keith Richards!" — Willie Nelson

Bench Rodding with Mel Boomgarden

Photos: Ron Dahley

On July 29, 2023 I attended the Becker County Fair in Detroit Lakes MN for the first time. It was a small fair, didn't take long to walk the midway then, I found a steel building with antique automobiles on display. I entered the building and observed several men in various parts of the building. I walked up to the closest gentleman and started to ask questions. He responded with "you better talk to Mel Boomgarden and pointed at a fellow so I approached Mel and he was a very cordial gentleman who was pleased to talk with me and share information about the 412 Antique Car Club. Mel explained that the 412 Antique Car Club is a chapter of the Antique Automobile Club of America founded in 1935. The club is interested in preserving antique automobiles. You won't find any hot rods in this groups car collection but will find some very nice original cars. Mel explained that the display at the Becker Co. Fair is just one of the activities they do in the summer. They also participate in several parades, tours, and attend various car shows throughout the lakes country. I found that the club was made up of good, friendly people who enjoy having a good time but are very serious about their automobiles.



Racing News

After Ted Bryans submitted his article for this publication, I have received more bad news regarding highly esteemed racers who have passed on. December has not been a good month for the racing community.

The Hawaiian Roland Leong a Hawaiian drag racing great died on December 29th. Known as the Hawaiian and the Flying Hawaiian he is a legendary NHRA Funny Car and Top Fuel team owner and engine tuner. Leong was 79 years old.

Gil De Ferran, retired Indy Car Driver, and the winner of the 2003 Indianapolis 500 passed away only hours after the Hawaiian. De Ferran was also the 2000 and 2001 Champ Car Champion driving for Team Penske. Gil was 56 years old.

Cale Yarborough, who won three consecutive NASCAR Championships and 83 victories making him 6th on the all-time winners list passed away on December 31st. He won the Daytona 500 four times and his fist fight with Bobby Allison at the first nationally televised race put NASCAR on the nationwide map. Cale was 84 years old.

Leah Pruett has announced that she is stepping out of her top fuel dragster to concentrate on starting a family with her husband and team owner Tony Stewart. Tony will step into the cockpit of Leah's dragster for the 2024 season.

Swanks Car Show Challenge 2023

The first Swanks Car Show Challenge ended in November. The idea was taken from the Valley Vintage Car Club where club members track how many car shows they attend in a year and the members with the highest number of car shows is awarded a traveling trophy. Swanks members were asked to turn in their numbers of car shows at the November club meeting. We tallied up the number of car shows attended and they varied from 1 to 54 with most of the reported shows attended to be about 7 to 18. Ron Dahley had volunteered to head up the contest and sponsor the awards for 2023. After tallying up the numbers it was decided that the top 5 would receive an award for their accomplishments. In November members were asked if they were interested in continuing the contest into 2024, the majority of responses indicated that we should with a couple of members not voting. We will discuss this again during the February meeting to make a final decision. The awards will be distributed at the Swanks Christmas Party January 12.

SWANKS PLEASE DRIVE CAREFUL



RON'S HELPFUL HOT ROD TIPS



Up Coming Events

Please check to ensure the events dates and times have not changed.

Jan 3, 17 and 31 Lunch Cruise Abercrombie ND 10-1

Jan 4 Cruise to the Corner Lidgerwood ND 5-9

Jan. 27-28 Hot Rod Junkies Show Valley City ND

Feb. 14 and 28 Lunch Cruise Abercrombie ND 10-1

Mar 2-3 El Zagal Dusters Show 9-6 Bismarck ND

Mar. 8-10 World of Wheels Omaha NE

Mar. 13 and 27 Lunch Cruise Abercrombie ND 10-1

Mar. 23-24 Motorhead Madness Duluth MN

Mar 22-24 World of Wheels Winnipeg MB

April 6 & 7 Toppers Car Show 2024 West Fargo ND

April 6&7 Gopher State Timing Assoc. car show St. Paul MN

April 13&14 Prime Steel Car Show Grand Forks ND

April 10 and 24 Lunch Cruise Abercrombie ND 10-1

June 21-23 Back to the 50's St Paul MN

July 25 Cruise to Casselton Swanks Car Show 5-9

Aug 10 Run To The Rapids Car Show Park Rapids MN

Aug. 15-18 Lucas NHRA Nationals Brainerd MN



Installed a new crate engine in my car

