

-Greg McConiga, Executive Technical Editor

WANDERING FULMINATIONS ON HIGH-PERFORMANCE

IT'S FUN BECAUSE IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE FUN!

I used to head out to the track every weekend, but I'm not much for race tracks anymore. I don't go out anymore -- don't go to movies or restaurants. I buy tools and I work on dirty old cars and build dirty old car engines. When I tell my wife that I just love touching those dirty parts, she just shakes her head and laughs at me and calls me a fool. I'm not sure what that means, but it doesn't sound very nice. Perhaps she's implying that I meant something I didn't intend...

In a word, I'm old and boring. My wife, my kids, and my friends will all concur. I am both blessed and cursed because I work at what I love to do and so my work and my hobby -- my vocation and my vacation -- are inextricably intertwined. I don't like

golf because it seems like a waste of time. I don't bowl because I'm not too good at drinking beer. The Navy ruined me insofar as lakes and the ocean is concerned, and it's hard to sit through a two-hour movie when I could be building something or welding something or fixing something. For me, a car has pulse, it's not an appliance -- it's part artwork, part mechanical marvel, and it looks, feels, and smells like freedom to me. Cars are drive-ins, drag races, cruising



The Liberty Cruisers meet once a month through the summer at the Liberty Diner and as often as once a week at another local eatery, the Athenian Diner, as well as hosting other events around the area.



There have been quite a few cars with tight quarters and full engine bay aprons that required a set of fenderwell headers. Cutting into a new or nearly new car to bolt on a set of headers took a certain mindset. Had we known what these cars would eventually be worth, we might have made a different decision.

from north to south and back to north again with your high school sweetheart sitting close and making your mind wander.

It was a complete surprise to all who know me when I decided to show up for one of the



There's something for everyone. This Lingenfelter prepared Corvette boasted some impressive power. Local racer John Lingenfelter died after a racing accident some years ago, but his company soldiers on.



Car clubs are like America: full of individuals who do what they do because what they produce is a reflection of their individuality. There are some real craftsman in this group.

local car enthusiasts' gatherings at a local restaurant here in Fort Wayne. We have a lot of car guys with a lot of cool cars around here. Fort Wayne used to be home to Dana, International Harvester, Mahle, GE, Slater Steel

and other big automotive and industrial concerns, and there are remnants of those companies still around, although they're just shadows of what they once were. The Auburn Cord Duesenberg museum is just up the road and, of course, we're only about three hours from Detroit, once mighty and proud, the economic juggernaut that drove a country's economy for four or five generations. In my opinion, Sandberg got it wrong: It was Detroit that was the City of Broad Shoulders. And, of course, we're just two hours north of Indianapolis. One need say nothing about that other than it's Indy.

I'm more than a little disappointed in my country and our leaders. I think we've lost our heart and soul. Now we export our manufacturing, break our inter-generational compacts, lose our tribal knowledge --

how to do things efficiently and affordably is slowly fading -- and we forget how to take raw materials from Mother Earth and shape them into cars and ships and airplanes and gigantic things of value. Our legacy of freedom and innovation is slowly being stolen from us while we train our cultural and

economic enemies on how best to supplant us as the engine of the world's economy. But what do I know? I'm just a car guy...



Offenhauser heads and headers and chrome. It's all good....



This is the kind of thing that makes it fun. Who would've thought about building a six banger with three carbs on it? Of course, it's a lot nicer to work on than a monster V8 stuffed into that tiny engine bay.



This GTO and Chevy II were two of my favorites.



I'm not a huge AMC fan, but this AMX was a beauty. You don't see many of these around anymore.



Yes, I know it's a slant six -- but it's Plum Crazy! I just love a color that shouts "look at me!"



When you think car clubs, you don't think classic Volvos, and yet here is one sitting shoulder-to-shoulder with the muscle cars. It got an amazing amount of attention because it was so well done.



Below: Loved this guy's sign: "If you're not with us you're behind us." Mopar guys are among the most dedicated enthusiasts out there.

I digress. The Liberty Diner sits on the end of what is known as Coliseum Boulevard and the first gathering of the Hot Rods of Spring was last weekend. After considerable nagging by several of my friends, I managed to suppress my antisocial nature and went over for an hour, just to look around. What a hoot! There were round fendered cars from the fifties (an era that I'm not that familiar with...) hot rods, street cars, muscle cars, classic cars, and survivor cars. There was a little something for everybody. All the people were friendly and enthusiastic, and cheerfully shared the story of their car and how it had evolved to its current state. I heard all about how long they had it, what iterations it had been through, how it got passed along through the family and how many times it had been redone, rebuilt, and resurrected from either the steel termites or a fender bender. And then I realized this is what you do when you lock up the shop. You go find a bunch of like-minded car guys and gals and you go hang out and talk about what we all love -- dirty old cars. It's fun. It's fun because it's supposed to be fun! ■



There's no mistaking this one. This is what I love about older cars -- they're distinctive and sexy. They have hips and waists and flowing lines. I don't have to see the nameplate to know what they are.



This one is still with the original owner, and apparently he has a little time on his hands and a need for speed. I didn't see it with the hood closed, but it looks like all that hardware sticking up out of the hood might make checking traffic a challenge.