

Winging It

Around noon, the thunder heading my way was the Detroit kind, as 20 Superbirds and Daytonas filled my parking lot



Each wing car has its own story

To quote John Lennon: Imagine... if there was a club for valuable cars, whose long-term owners didn't care about what the cars are worth. Cars worth perhaps 5,000% more than they paid for them, and for whom selling is the furthest thing from their minds. Is it possible? Is there a group of enthusiasts that still appreciates the history more than the money, the driving more than showing off NOS muffler bearings on a car that never gets driven to the next salivating concours judge or hopeful auction buyer in line? Believe it or not, there is such a group—the Daytona-Superbird Auto Club (www.superbirdclub.com).

The DSAC had its 2007 National meet in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in conjunction with the Masterpiece Style and Speed Showcase (www.milwaukee-masterpiece.com). Prior to the event, DSAC President Doug Schellinger asked if I would host lunch for the club at my showroom. Since I own two wing cars, I was happy to invite the club over. Doug told me to expect roughly 30 people, and maybe a handful of actual wing cars. The lunch was set for Thursday, August 23, part of a week filled with activities for the club preceding the show on Saturday.

As Thursday rolled around, the weather in Milwaukee took a turn for the worse, with heavy thunderstorms and record rainfall. So bad, in fact, the show venue at the lakefront was flooded and shut down by the groundskeepers! Needless to say, I wasn't expecting a great turnout

for lunch. The club was doing a tour of Milwaukee, and the stop before mine was a tour of the Harley-Davidson factory, which is located in a not-so-inviting section of town. This, combined with the weather, led me to believe a bunch of rental cars and a few die-hard club members would be joining us. Boy was I wrong.

Make that Detroit thunder

Around noon, the thunder heading my way was the Detroit kind as a caravan of 20 wing cars filled my parking lot. Rain, bad roads, and dangerous neighborhoods be damned, these people were DRIVING their cars. It was an awesome sight. All told, about 60 people showed up for lunch. The best part was that every one of them was passionate about his car, the history of it, and the hobby. Not one spoke of looking for the elusive valve stem cap with 18 serrations rather than the more common one with 19, or where to get 1970 air for their tires, or the best method to remove dust from exhaust tips on the show field.

Not one owner asked about "the market" or what his car was worth. Nobody seemed to care. Most of the cars had a wonderful and honest patina, the kind you can only get by driving. Some were sporting various "Day 2" modifications—i.e., things a guy would do the second day he had his new muscle car home—like air shocks, mag wheels, underhood chrome, pinstriping, glass pack mufflers... you get the idea. Basically, the cars looked like they would have when people used to drive them and modify them for that purpose, or simply to look better, without concern for how many points they'd get docked in a show.

Of the cars that drove in, here are some of the stories that stick in my mind:

1. Mike Borkowski bought his Superbird new. Today it has 26,000 miles on it, and still sports its original paint with owner-added pinstripes, American Racing mags, and the Edelbrock 6-pack intake setup a local speed shop installed for him over 40 years ago. Originally purchased as a daily driver, after a couple of years Mike bought another daily driver, but couldn't part with his 'Bird. It is as much a part of his family

as his oldest daughter, who came home from the hospital in it in 1971.

2. JoAnne Nabor rolled up in her silver Daytona, a car she traded for her Superbird years ago. How does she like driving her Daytona? I assume quite a lot, as JoAnne has run the entire Hot Rod Power Tour three times, which is around 5,000 miles alone. JoAnne says she can make a 70-point car out of a 90-point car, no problem. I don't doubt it.

3. Tony Guida bought his Superbird when he was fresh out of high school in 1979. The seller was getting rid of it and two Shelby Mustangs to pay for his new house. According to the seller, Tony's purchase of the 'Bird paid for all the carpet in the house. Tony kept in touch with the previous owner, who told him a decade later "when I see your car, I think of my carpet."

One family, two winged owners

4. Doug Schellinger has two winged wonders. His Superbird was purchased by his father in 1972, with 8,000 miles on the clock, for \$1,620 after reading an article by Michael Lamm predicting cars like the Superbird would be the Duesenbergs of the future. This has to be one of the earliest buys of a wing car based purely on future collectibility. Although driven regularly, it still sports its original paint and is guaranteed to be at every club event. I have to hand it to Doug for tolerating the ribbing we used to give him in the late 1980s when he would show up at the Alfa Romeo Owner's Club time trials at Road America in his 'Bird and pay the \$40 to put it on the track.

Doug's Daytona, the "Joe Dirt Special," has a vintage '70s custom paint job most conversion van owners would have killed for. The good news is that the trailer hitch that used to tow the previous owner's matching boat gives Doug a nice place to stand when he needs to wash the wing. This one has been in the family since 1979, when Doug's father purchased it for \$3,500 in Washington and drove it home, losing a muffler in Montana along the way. A restoration is simply out of the question.

After lunch, and a brief break from the showers just long enough to snap some pictures, the skies turned dark and the rain returned. Not a group to be threatened by such an occurrence, the owners headed out for a tour of Milwaukee's lakefront,



Daytonas and Superbirds

on their way to the local cruise night. On Saturday, the show venue moved off the lawn and on to a sea wall along Lake Michigan, the sun appeared, and about 50 wing cars rolled in for the show. No judging, no awards, just a lot of fidgety owners. After all, they wanted to get back in their cars and drive. Isn't that what it is all about? ♦

Colin Comer is founder and president of Colin's Classic Automobiles and a longtime vintage racer.

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