

Seattle Post-Intelligencer

WHEELS

SECTION F

WARRANTY

Chrysler may extend coverage: The Chrysler Group may extend its warranty coverage on new vehicles to better compete with 100,000-mile offers by rivals Hyundai Motor Co. and General Motors Corp. Chrysler spokesman Jason Vines confirmed the company is considering an increase. Studies are being done "to see if there is a level that makes sense," he said. In 2002, Chrysler offered a seven-year/70,000-mile warranty for all Chrysler, Dodge and Jeep models after a seven-year/100,000-mile limited offer helped sales. But the "7/70" deal ended in 2005.

QUALITY RATINGS

Ford's spirits lifted: Ford Motor Co. wasted no time touting its strong showing in the J.D. Power quality rankings. It has run a full-page Lincoln-Mercury ad in USA Today with the headline "There's nothing like that new trophy smell" and photos of the Milan, MKZ and Mark LT. Television and radio spots are incorporating the same theme through June. Fortunately for Ford management, the new quality data provided a jolt of positive news as hundreds of beleaguered dealers descended on Detroit and Dearborn earlier this month for meetings.

INSIDE THIS SECTION

Willie or WaMu? Those are two great choices for some fireworks-filled fun on this Fourth of July.



Why is my horn tooting itself?

TOM AND RAY MAGLIOZZI

CAR TALK



Dear Tom and Ray: Every once in a while, I will come to a stop in my 2001 Chevy Venture, and just as I complete the stop, the horn will honk. It scares the heck out of me, because I think some idiot is honking at me before I realize it is my own car.

At first, I thought it might be caused by those signal activators that firetrucks have to keep a light green or change a signal, because the first two times it happened, a firetruck with sirens blazing was close.

But today, it happened at a stop sign with no emergency vehicles nearby. What could cause this? — Shannon

Ray: There are a couple of metal contacts underneath the padding in the middle of your steering wheel. When you push on the padding, you push these two contacts together. That completes an electrical circuit and blows the horn.

Tom: So, one possibility is that these contacts have gotten too close together through the years from lots of horn use.

Ray: The other possibility is that the horn circuit is closing somewhere else down the line. The next thing I'd suspect is a bad horn ring in your multifunction switch.

Tom: Start by having your mechanic check the horn contacts in the steering-wheel pad. That's very easy to do, and it's easy to fix. Just tell him you'll be waiting outside in case he sets off the air bag by accident.

Ray: If the problem isn't right there under the pad, you'll have to decide if you want your mechanic to start digging deeper. Or you can practice looking annoyed in the rearview mirror when the horn blows, as if it's the impatient guy behind you who's honking.

Dear Tom and Ray: I have a 1991 Toyota Corolla wagon with about 69,000 miles. I have had all the major scheduled maintenance done by my Toyota dealer and have had the oil changed every 3,000 miles. Until last fall, it would get 28 to 30 miles per gallon, mostly in city driving. Then the mileage dropped to the low 20s before the onset of cold weather, when it dropped even lower.

I recently had a tuneup done by my trustworthy mechanic, but that has not improved the mileage. Could this engine simply be nearing the end of its useful life? — Alan

Ray: I doubt it's nearing the end of its useful life, Alan. 69,000 miles is considered middle age for this particular Toyota engine. It's much more likely that all you need is a new thermostat.

Tom: After a while — say, 69,000 miles or so — it's not uncommon for the thermostat to break in the open position. That means the coolant is always circulating through the radiator and cooling the engine.

Ray: But the engine shouldn't be cooled all the time. An engine that's always running too cool will run less efficiently, pollute more and — get this, Alan — get lousy gas mileage.

Tom: So have your trustworthy mechanic slap a thermostat in this baby, and I bet it'll run like a frightened sardine. Whatever that is. Good luck, Alan.

Write to Car Talk, c/o the Seattle P-I, P.O. Box 1909, Seattle, 98111. "Car Talk" is heard at 9 a.m. Saturdays on KUOW radio, 94.9 FM, and at 11 a.m. Saturdays on KPLU radio, 88.5 FM. The "Car Talk" Web site is cartalk.com.

A legend races into town

Parnelli Jones here for vintage car power show

BY EVAN McMULLEN
Special to the P-I

Racing legend Parnelli Jones is the headline celebrity attraction for this year's 19th annual Pacific Northwest Vintage Historic Races.

More than 250 vintage collector cars will compete in this year's races, which are themed around the Chevrolet Camaro, which celebrates its 40th birthday this year, and the Trans-Am racing series.

Jones offers audiences at the traditionally well-attended races a particularly apropos bit of walking, talking history that's certain to rev the event into high gear.

His fierce racing style made him a pivotal figure in the golden age of Trans-Am racing. His 1970 race-winning Boss 302 Mustang is one of the most widely recognized and reproduced models in history.

In his long career, Jones distinguished himself in a wide variety of vehicles and racing environments, including Formula 1, stock cars, sports cars, midget cars, sprint cars and off-road vehicles.

Most famous for his 1963 Indy 500 win, Jones is arguably one of the most innovative, versatile and broadly experienced veterans in the sport's history.

Born Rufus Parnell Jones in 1933 in Texarkana, Ark., the man whose nickname was to become an international brand began his career in a jolopy at Carrol Speedway in Gardena, Calif., at age 17.

On the heels of a Midwest Sprint crown win in 1960, he burst into the high-performance spotlight as Indianapolis 500 Rookie of the Year in 1961.

The next year, Jones became the first racer in Indy history to qualify for the event at a speed of more than 150 mph, capturing the pole position at a record-setting 150.37 mph.

In 1963, he once again took the pole, this time riding to victory despite a horizontal oil reservoir crack that threat-



It's a weekend to evoke the heyday of Trans-Am racing, with cars such as the AMC Javelin, front, and perennial rival Mustangs and Camaros.

ened him with black-flag disqualification through the last 40 laps.

Jones muscled the car to the checkered flag, holding on for the win as his oil level plummeted to the level of the crack.

The same year, Jones won the Pikes Peak International Hill Climb in a Mercury Marauder USAC stock car built by famed fabricator Bill Stroppe, shattering the stock-car speed record in the process.

Jones went on to take the USAC stock car world by storm, capturing its crown in 1964 with seven wins (and one tie for first), winning the Turkey Night Grand Prix midget car event.

Among other things, Jones is credited with introducing the Pratt & Whitney turbine to Indy in a landmark near-win for owner Andy Granatelli that seemed a shoo-in until a bearing failure crippled the car in its last laps.

Subsequent rule changes rendered the turbine obsolete for Indy racing.

Before he retired from Indy racing in 1968, Jones amassed six Indy wins as a driver and owner.

Jones broke from Indy driving in 1968 to pursue a new ca-



Superstar Parnelli Jones, shown here with the 2007 Saleen/Parnelli Jones Limited Edition Mustang, headlines this weekend's races.

rear in off-road racing at the same time he devoted increasing attention to his Firestone businesses.

Northwest fans may recall Jones' subsequent off-road adventures. After a few hard-charging, car-crunching efforts, Jones ultimately won the Mexican 1,000 (now known as the Baja 1,000) in a specially built Stroppe car he dubbed "Big Oly" for its Tumwater-based sponsor, Olympia Beer.

By the end of 1973, Jones

had captured his second Mexican 1,000 victory as well as Baja 500 and Mint 500 titles. Following a serious crash the next year, he abandoned off-road racing to concentrate on his business and competition as an owner.

Jones' driving career ended with six Indy Car wins, four NASCAR wins (out of 34 starts), 25 sprint car wins and 25 midget car wins. The Motorsports Hall of Fame lauds him as perhaps the most versatile and influential competitor in the history of the

sport.

Detailed, colorful accounts and exploits can be found inventoried at length in any credible history book or online. For more information on Jones' record-setting career, visit the Motorsports Hall of Fame sites at www.mshf.com and www.motorsportshalloffame.com.

Do yourself a favor: trade your recliner for a vintage bucket seat this weekend. See Jones at the Society of 19th Annual PNW Historic Vintage Races at Pacific Raceway (formerly Seattle International Raceway) at state Route 18 in Kent.

The event runs from Friday to Sunday. For admission and an event calendar, visit www.northwesthistorics.com.

The weekend-long event is presented by Society of Vintage Racing Enthusiasts, SOVREN Guild of Children's Hospital and select sponsors.

All proceeds benefit uncompensated care at Children's Hospital and Regional Medical Center in Seattle, which has raised more than \$5 million over the past 19 years.

Evan McMullen is proprietor of Cosmopolitan Motors in Seattle.

Show revives the Mustang vs. Camaro rivalry

BY EVAN McMULLEN
Special to the P-I

Which was faster: Mustang or Camaro?

That is a question for the ages — and certainly one that has precipitated its share of arguments and burned rubber.

The focus on Trans-Am marquee and models at this weekend's PNW Historic Races at Pacific Raceway rekindles that longstanding rivalry between two of the category's strongest contenders.

The Trans-Am series was first introduced by the Sports Car Club of America (SCCA) as the Trans-American Sedan Championship in 1966, comprising two classes — under 2 liters, and over — and encompassing a broad range of muscle cars such as the Camaro, Mustang, Plymouth Barracuda, AMC Javelin, Dodge Dart and Challenger, along with a host of European contend-

ers. Inaugurated at Sebring in the same year, the series' first winners were the Alfa Romeo (under 2 liters) and, in second place, Dodge Dart (first in the over 2-liter category).

Although the "Trans Am" (no hyphen) brand today is commonly associated with the Pontiac marquee because of its wide production and marketing, the golden age of Trans-Am competition was epitomized by the fierce battle between the Camaro and Mustang, between Chevrolet and Ford — for racing titles, image and mainstream marketing position for what was to become generations of line-production rollouts. For four years that many still consider the high point of the series' short-lived golden age, the Chaparral Camaro and Boss 302 Mustang monopolized the winner's circle to achieve an effective draw.

Jerry Titus first took Ford to the winner's circle in 1967; in 1968 and 1969 Mark Donohue and the Chaparral

Camaro Z28 team captured successive firsts. In 1970, Parnelli Jones brought Ford back the championship in the Boss 302 Mustang.

The subject of four design generations, the Chevrolet Camaro is and was a North American "pony car" and was first introduced in 1966 to compete with the Ford Mustang. Today, the car has survived four successive generations of design revision and production and is expected to re-enter the market in model year 2009.

The Mustang, originally based on Ford's Falcon, sold more than a million units in its debut year of 1964.

Also the subject of several generations, in 2007 Ford unveiled its new Saleen/Parnelli Jones Limited Edition Mustang, complete with promised 370 horsepower and strengthened suspension.

Evan McMullen is proprietor of Cosmopolitan Motors in Seattle.

AUTO BIOGRAPHY

OWNER'S NAME: Tucker Stevens

OCCUPATION: Retired school administrator

CAR'S YEAR, MAKE AND MODEL: 1997 Jeep Grand Cherokee

CAR'S NAME: Old Red

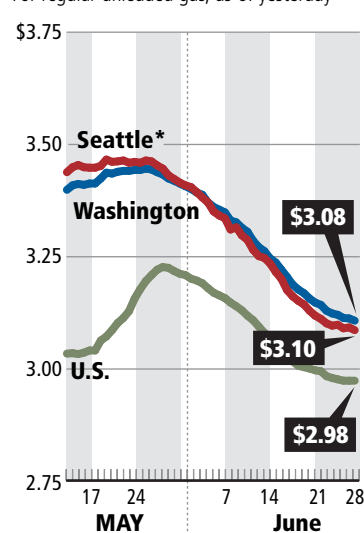
"I LOVE MY CAR BECAUSE . . . it allows me to enjoy my new sport of canoeing on my new digs on Whidbey Island. There are three great lakes on South Whidbey just minutes from my house. This summer I plan to paddle to Camino Island and back. Since I live on Whidbey Island, my Jeep gets a refill every two weeks."

CONTACT US: E-mail a photo of you and your car (172-dpi, about 5 by 7 inches) plus all the basic information included above, to mycar@seattlepi.com. One lucky car owner will receive a nifty insulated P-I mug.



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