



Seattle Post-Intelligencer

WHEELS

SECTION F

Whodunit? Was it the driver, the car or the bumps?

TOM AND RAY MAGLIOZZI

CAR TALK



Dear Tom and Ray: A late-'90s special-edition Porsche was driven down a ramp. At the end of the ramp are two speed bumps, 2 feet apart. The first bump is made of concrete and the second one is hard rubber. Neither is more than 2.5 inches high at the center. The concrete bump is about 8 inches wide, and the rubber one is about 12 inches wide. After the bumps is the sidewalk, then the street. The owner of the car is claiming that the valet parkers drove his Porsche too fast over the speed bumps, causing \$10,000 in damage to his engine. He claims the bottom of the Porsche hit the bumps, causing the oil pan to separate or loosen from the engine, which led to an oil leak. Please tell me if this is possible, and if the cost of repair is reasonable. — Hade

Ray: Yes, Hade, it is possible to drive a Porsche down a circular garage ramp at 60 mph and then scrape the oil pan on a couple of speed bumps. But it bet it was fun, wasn't it?

Tom: Actually, it can happen at a lot less than 60 mph. The Porsche has such low ground clearance that the problem might have been the angle of descent, and the fact that there were two speed bumps.

Ray: When it hit the first, it bounced up, and the springs compressed. But then it came down just as you were driving over the second bump, and that's when the oil pan took a hit.

Tom: If you drove it over the bumps at a reasonable speed — say, less than 5 mph — and damage was still done, I'd say it's not your fault. Then it would be the fault of the manufacturer, who made a car that can't be driven in normal public facilities. Or it would be the fault of the guy who bought it, who should've warned you that it couldn't be driven over bumps.

Ray: And is it a reasonable price for the repairs? Well, let's see. An oil pan for a normal car costs about \$400. So . . . \$10,000 for a Porsche sounds about right!

Tom: Actually, my guess is that the guy is claiming that he drove away with the oil leaking and then ran out of oil, croaking the whole engine.

Ray: We should add that although it's possible the engine was ruined by the method you describe, it's by no means the only explanation. It's possible that the owner of the car is a sleazeball and scraped up the bottom of the car himself in a drunken stupor, or was showing off to one of his ex-wives, only to try to blame it on you guys. Or that no one's at fault, and the pan failed over time, and he's looking for someone to blame.

Tom: But if you know that you, or one of your guys, drove it too fast, felt an impact and heard a think or a scraping sound when you hit the speed bumps, you guys probably toasted it.

Ray: So call your insurance company, Hade. They're better equipped to investigate the alleged accident and determine if you guys are responsible or not. Of course, they'll cancel your policy after that, but we're talking about 10 grand here, so I don't think you have much choice but to let them fight it out with the guy. Good luck.

Write to Car Talk, c/o the Seattle Post-Intelligencer, P.O. Box 1909, Seattle, 98111. "Car Talk" is heard at 9 a.m. Saturdays on KUOW radio, 94.9 FM, and at 10 a.m. Saturdays and 2 p.m. Sundays on KPLU radio, 88.5 FM. The "Car Talk" Web site is www.cartalk.com.

ACURA LINEUP

Honda to kill off aging NSX: After 15 years fielding the car seen as the pinnacle of Japanese automaking, Honda said recently that it will drop its \$90,000, 175-mph Acura NSX late this year. The aluminum-body, midengine two-seater can't meet 2006 emissions and safety regulations without prohibitively costly overhauling. Honda has sold about 9,000 NSXs in the United States since the car was introduced in 1990 and has sold about 18,000 worldwide. In the United States, the car is as beloved for its easygoing nature as for its race-car capabilities.

NEW PORSCHE

Carmaker to call it the Panamera: Porsche AG said recently that it plans to spend \$1.2 billion to develop a new four-seat, four-door sports car called the Panamera that will go on sale in 2009. The German automaker expects to sell 20,000 of the cars annually. The Panamera will be the third new model introduced by Chief Executive Wendelin Wiedeking since he took over at Porsche 12 years ago. He aims to boost Porsche annual sales by 30 percent to 100,000 vehicles by 2008. Later this year, the carmaker will roll out the Cayman, based on the Boxster.

INSIDE THIS SECTION

The White Stripes rev up their tour at The Gorge. What's Happening previews tomorrow's show.



RICK MAYNARD PHOTOS

An original road-going 1966 Ford GT 40 Mark II (one of 30 produced) at the recent All British Field Meet in Bellevue. The road car differed only slightly from the track version, originally designed in Dearborn, Mich., but refined and produced in southern England. It is easy to see where Ford got the inspiration for its new GT.

British marques know how to draw a crowd

BY EVAN McMULLEN
Special to the P-I

Scores of historic British cars filled the grounds of Bellevue Community College July 22-24 for the 17th annual All British Field Meet.

Organized by the Pacific Northwest British Automotive Society and largely executed by Bellevue's Arnold and Sue Taub, this year's event showcased Aston Martin and was co-sponsored by Aston Martin of Tacoma and Park Place Ltd. of Bellevue. Well-known marques such as Jaguar, Triumph, MG, Rolls-Royce, Bentley and Land Rover were proudly displayed by their owners or representatives. Lesser-known marques such as Austin, Jensen, Humber, Morgan, A.C. and even Ginetta were also on display.

One of the most fascinating and probably the most valuable car at the event was the 1957 Aston Martin DBR2 belonging to Greg Whitten. This famous car equaled the sports-car lap record at Silverstone in England. The 3.7-liter, six-cylinder DBR2 sported a revised chassis from its predecessor and was later fitted with a 3.9 and finally a 4.2. The twin-cam rival to the Jaguar D-Type was named "Best of Show." Other award recipients included 63 individual class winners as well as awards for Best Preserved Car (a 1954 MGTf belonging to Bill Olson), the Car Driven the Furthest to the Event Award (a 1968 Triumph TR 250 driven from Wyoming by David Gustafson) and the Young Restorers Award (by Aaron Skirvan in his 1974 MG BGT). Skirvan, a 16-year-old, actually bought the car the year before in the "for sale" area of the event. Needing a total restoration, the car reappeared this year completely refurbished. The Directors Award was awarded to Bill Hart for his 1968 Triumph TR 250K Prototype Race Car.

Next year's event is scheduled for July 22, again at Bellevue Community College. For information: www.abfm.com or 425-644-7874.

A stampede of Italian horsepower

For the sixth year in a row, Ferraris littered the streets of Capitol Hill recent-



This 1957 Aston Martin DBR2, owned by Greg Whitten, earned "Best of Show" at the field meet. The successfully campaigned twin-cam car is eye-catching in design and performance. In its day, it was the car to beat on the track and is still highly coveted today.

ly as 150 Ferraris flooded 12th Avenue in an opulent display of craftsmanship, style and performance. The darling of Ferrari-Maserati of Seattle, the event involves a display next to the Seattle Police Department's East Precinct and later a massive exodus to Marymoor Park for lunch, hosted by Ferrari of Seattle. Entrants are requested to donate to Children's Hospital and Regional Medical Center. This year, about \$7,500 was raised.

Older '60s cars such as a 330 GTC, 275 GTB/4, 250SWB and a 275 GTS mingled with 550 Maranellos, 360 Modenas, 355 Spyders, 456 GTs, F40s and an Enzo. Roberto Pasquale of Ferrari-Maserati of Seattle led the pack in the first of the newest of the Ferrari models, the 430. The event grows each year and is open to the public. For information: 206-329-7070.

Real Romeos in Bellevue

Alfa Romeo is one of the most celebrated automotive marques in the world. The Milan, Italy-based company held an unrivaled early racing history. From Alfa's triumphs in the 1920s and '30s was born the world-renowned Scuderia Ferrari. The leg-

endary Enzo Ferrari led Alfa to world records in his youth and later created his own company, Ferrari, perhaps the greatest sports car of all time.

American Alfa enthusiasm endures today, even though the marque has been absent from North America for more 15 years. This year, the national Alfa Romeo Owners Club meeting was Sunday at Bellevue Community College. Alfisti (as the Alfa enthusiasts are affectionately called) convened from all over the world. The event is sponsored by the enthusiastic Northwest Alfa Romeo Owners Club, which has been in existence for 40 years. Among the hundreds of Alfas was a formidable early race car, a 1932 P-3 Monoposto. The car is worth several million dollars and is one of the most coveted automobiles in the world.

For information about future Alfa events: Northwest AROC, 312 211th Place S.E., Sammamish, WA, 98074; Fred Wright, 425-369-0699; or www.nwalfaclub.com.

Evan McMullen is proprietor of Cosmopolitan Motors in Seattle.

CAR EVENTS

► Aug. 27: LE MAY MUSEUM OPEN HOUSE, Tacoma.

"America's Car Museum" will be hosting its 28th annual open house. The museum, amassed by local garbage magnate Harold E. Le May and now administrated by his widow, Nancy Le May, is considered the world's largest collection of cars. It is being distilled down to a top-notch museum. Proceeds from the open-house benefit the museum in its permanent home, which is expected to be built in the near future.

► Sept. 4: THE ITALIAN CONCOURS D'ELEGANCE, South Lake Union Park, Seattle.

The show, in its 13th year, will be back in Seattle this year after being one of the first to fall victim to the decaying Pier 62/63 on Seattle's waterfront. This year's honored marque will be Maserati, and as always, there will be a diverse group of other Italian marques such as Ferrari, Lamborghini, Alfa Romeo, Fiat and the lesser-known varieties frequently referred to as Etceterinni. Also on display will be an array of Italian sport bikes such as Ducati, Moto Guzzi, M.V. Augusta and more. There will be Italian food vendors and Italian musicians as well. For information: 206-235-4711 or www.italianconcours.com.

► Sept. 10, KIRKLAND CONCOURS D'ELEGANCE, Carillon Point, Kirkland.

The third annual Concours will be at the Woodmark Hotel. In the past two years, the event has become world-class, and for its relatively small size, it is one of the best opportunities to view some of the most distinctive automobiles in the world. Featured classes this year include cars of the '50s, Classics, Antiques, Rolls-Royce and Woodies. Also on display will be a select group of cars from the celebrated Blackhawk collection. Title sponsor is Phil Smart Mercedes-Benz, and the presenting sponsor is RM Auctions. The event benefits Kirkland's Evergreen Hospital Medical Center and Children's Hospital. For information: Kirkland Chamber of Commerce, 425-822-7066.

AUTO BIOGRAPHY

OWNER'S NAME: Betty Klineburger

OCCUPATION: Retired from Klineburger Brothers Big Game and Taxidermy

CAR'S YEAR, MAKE AND MODEL: 1972 Mercedes-Benz

"I LOVE MY CAR BECAUSE . . . it fits me well and has carried me comfortably and safely for hundreds of miles. I have owned the car for so long, I could almost think it understands me."

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. Send it all to mycar@seattlepi.com, and we'll pick one to publish every Friday. That lucky car owner will receive a nifty insulated P-I mug.



COMING UP

GETTING THERE

Want to know where the likely congestion will be on your commute next week?

The Transportation Trouble Spots map in Getting There tips commuters to road work throughout the region. And P-I writers Jane Hadley and Larry Lange find the answers to reader questions about traffic and transportation.

You'll find it all every Monday in the P-I's Seattle and the Northwest section.