

# HUDSONOTES

George Schmidt

## *Short Subjects*

WHEN THESE Hudsonotes columns began (in 1978), they were originally planned to offer mostly assorted brief items in each issue, rather than complete articles. For this 80<sup>th</sup> column, we are returning to that format, with—as the movies used to say—“selected short subjects.”

Hudson accessories have frequently been a topic of these columns in past years. The options and extras are a very important part of any historic or enthusiast vehicle (after the basic big three of body, running gear, and interior). “Of course, with too many accessories, it can look like it just rolled away from Western Auto,” as a writer observed in one issue of the International Mercury Owners publication.

However, I recently found an advertisement for one accessory item which we may be sure that even Western Auto never thought of. A single column ad in *Farm and Home* magazine for April 19, 1919, from the Lawrence Auto Power Co. of St. Paul, Minnesota, advises: “Your Automobile will furnish cheap and efficient power for grinding feed, sawing wood, filling silo, and all other work a 14 H.P. gas engine can do. Our Equipment fits Ford, Overland, Hudson, Dodge, Reo, Studebaker, Buick & Others. Simple to connect—does not harm your car. Get one NOW—hundreds in use—Satisfaction guaranteed—only \$35.00.”

The picture shows an accessory shaft with one end fitted into the car’s crank hole in front, and with a support stand and belt pulley at the other end. Considering that a Hudson Super Six of this era could easily exceed 14 H.P., we hope that this rig was substantially built. At any rate it was probably more efficient than an alternative system which used the rear wheels of a Ford to drive a saw or other equipment.

Though unlikely to be displayed on a collector car today, such devices remain a part of U.S. automotive history—as do the various gadgets and extras long marketed by Western Auto stores. In some parts of the country (including Wisconsin), the extras were more often available through Gamble Stores. Montgomery Ward stores and catalogues were another familiar source, as “Doc” Daugherty noted in the past. (See also, January/February 1987 *WTN*.) Then too, Hudson surely offered as many different authorized options as, if not more than, any other U.S. carmaker—from paint colors to transmissions.

AN INTERESTING historical publication was issued about 14 years ago by the Hudson Mohawk Chapter of HET. Copies were found of all of the monthly *White Triangle News* issues (mostly mimeographed, with typewriter lettering) from our club’s earliest years, 1959-63. Pages are full size, like today’s *WTN* (the smaller-size issues came later, 1963-79). All of the 1959-63 pages were carefully photocopied and placed in a portfolio binder by chapter editor Bob Dybas, and offered for sale to HET members as a chapter fundraiser. I’m advised that copies are still available to members interested in the history of our club. Write to Robert Dybas, 2064 Coolidge Place, Niskayuna, New York 12309 (or phone 518-393-3952) for price and details.

The appeal of these old *WTN* issues is partly nostalgic—especially for those low, low prices for cars and parts; and also for a much simpler organization of the club than that which seems to be demanded at present. Chronicled here, too, is the early growth of a “one-make” old-car club (then still comparatively unusual), along with the efforts of those folks who made it possible. Tech tips (mostly still valid) are included, as are features

about a few models which may not have been reprinted in print since then. And for longtime members who may have most or all of the subsequent early *WTN* issues (as I do, thanks mainly to a friend, Orville Voeks), this book offers an excellent way to help complete the collection.

AUTOMOTIVE BOOKS of historical interest, whether of the coffee-table or the strictly nuts-and-bolts variety (or something between) are excellent holiday gift ideas, as is also a 1-year HET Club gift membership for just the right person. Note the current Club Store book list.

Included there is John Conde's *Cars With Personalities*—not an all-Hudson volume, although the marque is represented. The title reference, however, is not to the "personalities" of the cars themselves, notwithstanding that many of the vehicles pictured had plenty of that to spare. Instead, the "personalities" are those prominent individuals—from show business, politics, sports, music, and other fields—who owned these interesting cars, or at least rode in them. Cars shown range from 1896 to 1982 models, and each picture caption features a short description of the car and of the "personality," including many movie people.

Another Conde book, *The Cars That Hudson Built*, is no longer listed by the Club Store, but is nearly-essential reading for any all-out Hudson enthusiast. With hundreds of car pictures and captions, it traces Hudson-built vehicles year by year, 1909 to 1957, also including racers, customs, foreign specials, and the like. Perhaps it is time for another printing of this volume soon.

A LETTER FROM David Shatto, Oregon, concerning the recent column series about Hudson wheels and tires, notes that the extra-wide tires highly fashionable a few years ago were sometimes not very safe or effective, especially when used with vehicles (or loads) for which they were not designed. Also noted is the importance of proper inflation for tires on everything from farm tractors to musclecars—for even traction as well as even wear.

David has used Chrysler wheels on his Hudson, although these seem to need extra care in balancing. He prefers the original Hudson (optional) wheels, 5½ inches wide, either with the original 7.60-15 bias tires, or currently with P225-75R15 radial plies. A previous set of radials, of 235-mm. size, were a bit too large and also had separation problems, he reports. He also recalls seeing a Model A Ford equipped with oversize jumbo or "doughnut" tires, so that it appeared to be "all tire" (handling qualities not reported).

He observes, too, that actual tire sizes for years have often varied with quality or price level, even within a single brand (and between brands as well). Most of us have probably seen, for example, a premium or top-grade 7.10-15 tire which appears larger than a "cheapo" 7.60-15. This can be critical when matched diameters are needed, particularly for rear-axle use.

Straightening of bent wheels, he recalls, was done during World War II when parts were scarce. It was done using a hydraulic press, and results were quite accurate.

THE Y.G.B.K. AWARD (You Gotta Be Kidding) for 1998 from this column goes to Frank Hammer, California (see the March/April "Letters" pages). Maybe I agree with Mr. Hammer that the cars being produced today are not literally "garbage"...ghastly overpriced government-approved mediocrities is closer to the truth. But—Hudsons were inferior, because they had 27 grease fittings? So, O.K.—possibly Hudson should have offered the prewar Bijur central greasing system, as did Nash and Packard. And possibly lubricant materials have improved somewhat. However, bear in mind that Hudson's rare combination of precise handling with a luxury ride was due partly to the many greased suspension joints used, in preference to modern rubber bushings.

As for his contention that Hudsons today may deserve preservation and occasional showing, but are not fit for regular use, this remains difficult to take seriously. Yes, there is an economic factor: maintaining any period vehicle, even a Hudson, for constant use can cost more than using a nondescript late model; and repairs often take more time. But Hudsons on the road today, the stepdown models especially, have an important public statement to make—about safety, about durability, and especially about the sickening collapse of our automotive standard of living in recent years. These cars can help us keep our perspective, and thus avoid finding ourselves gradually brainwashed into accepting today's underpowered runts as being real automobiles. Maybe the underpowering does contribute to long mileage (consider Pacemaker *vs.* Hornet, for instance). But if our friend genuinely prefers riding in his '96 Mazda, that is his business, although it's not the sort of business that one likes to discuss in public print. Happy claustrophobia and *mal de moteur*, Mr. Hammer, especially on long trips. And for truly superior fuel mileage, please see your Schwinn dealer.

AS IF BEING a dedicated *Hudsonophile* were not enough, this columnist is also an avid record

collector—mostly old 78's, but also many 33's and a few 45's and antique cylinders. Although they are mainly classical and symphonic (and are often listened to at rock volume), some are also chiefly of historic interest. Comedy and (in this area, of course) polka bands are represented too. These records offer a welcome background while these columns are being written, but—in combination with my Hudson parts—they also threaten eventually to crowd me out of the house.

Regarding the history of dance bands, some are probably best remembered for being sponsored by automobile manufacturers long ago on AM radio. The Jean Goldkette group for Studebaker is one example, but of more interest to us is the B. A. Rolfe band, since it was sponsored by Hudson on NBC in 1933 and possibly longer. Does anyone know whether the Rolfe orchestra ever issued records, and on what label? Please let us know (also include song titles if possible). Perhaps someone can also tell us about the orchestra of Jack Miller (a relative of our Ypsilanti friend?), featured by Hudson on CBS in December 1935, along with famed vocalist Kate Smith.

Classical-music sponsorship by Firestone Tire (and Bell Telephone) is also well-remembered. Longest-running classical sponsorship, of course, is Texaco's for the Metropolitan Opera.

Plans are already well under way for the 1999 HET National, and while "Grand Old Opry" is doubtless an important part of Americana, some of us with other tastes may perhaps wonder whether it might be possible in some future year to coordinate our National Meet with a summer classical-music festival of the Tanglewood or Ravinia sort. We have classic automobiles—now how about some classic music, such as the best from Beethoven, Mozart, Schubert, Dvořák, Rimsky, et al.?

For most HET members, it is true, the decisive factor regarding meet attendance is not music but the continuing (and probably deliberate) failure of meet sponsors to control costs. Until meets are made affordable for the typical Hudson owner, they will remain the usual irrelevant overpriced side-shows which they have become. Is this situation permanent, or will an attempt be made to correct it?

ON A HAPPIER holiday note, how about decorative Christmas lights for your car windows? They are hardly unusual these days, with the ubiquitous mini-light holiday bulbs even being available, in sets made up for 12-volt operation, complete with cord and plug to fit the cigarette-lighter socket.

Or, since most mini bulbs are designed for either 3 or 6-volts each, it is simple to take an inexpensive house-current set and make up a series/parallel network circuit which will operate correctly on 12-volts. Or to give your older collectible car a festive touch, a set can be similarly made up for 6-volt operation.

Make all wire splices carefully (tight twists are O.K. if an inch or so long, or use small crimp-on connectors or a touch of solder); and fuse your homemade set if desired, at about 1 ampere. The 6-volt bulbs from a 20 or 25-light house-current set can be wired directly in parallel (individually) for use with a 6-volt system, but the 2½ or 3-volt bulbs from a 35 or 50-light set would need to be wired in groups of two or three bulbs in series, with as many of these groups then connected in parallel as are needed for your decoration. To wrap tiny splices snugly, use low-cost (thin) plastic tape cut to ¼ to ½-inch width—or use very small plastic tubing. Sometimes, too, a 12-volt car-type series light set can be divided into halves for 6-volt use.

The mini lights can be fitted into wreaths or other trimmings (rear side windows are probably the best location), and current can be taken either from the lighter socket, or by carefully tapping the tail-light circuit under-dash or in trunk. Occasionally one also sees a small lighted wreath, etc. on the front of a vehicle, as perhaps at the center grille triangle found on some Hudsons. It is one more use for the miniature light sets (which first appeared here in the mid-1950's, mostly Italian rather than Oriental-made at the time).

Automotive Christmas lighting is not a new idea, however. Although my own holiday interest is mainly in traditional German and Czech-style ornaments (and real wax candles) for the tree, I also have a 1930's car-type Christmas wreath. About 8-inch size and made of red chenille (as many were then), it has an electric candle with one old-style series (nominally 15-volt) tree light bulb. Cord (satin) has a plug to fit standard ½-inch bayonet light socket. Though I haven't used it (the light would be quite dim on 6 volts unless bulb is changed), it is an unusual Christmas collectible. Has any reader seen a similar one?

COMING IN FUTURE: more about tires (!!), this time spare ones. Also a miscellany of tech tips and auto history. First, however, here's wishing a truly happy holiday season—and a fine '99--to our many Hudson friends. See you next year!

