

# Drive into SPRING



*My First Love*  
page 2B

*Spring Car  
Care Tips*  
page 7B

*Stuckenschneider*  
page 10B

*Vienna native*  
page 12B

A supplement of the  
**Unterrified  
Democrat**  
March 27, 2019

# The life and times, and untimely death of my first love

Before I met my wife Connie, there was another. Like many teenage boys my first love was my first car.

She was a 1972 Chevy Nova, bronze with black rally stripes — nothing fancy, just a small block 350 V8 with a two barrel carburetor and an automatic transmission. No power steering, power brakes or power windows. Not many cars did back then. But she did have air conditioning.

My parents had provided transportation for me. It was a 1972 Vega Kammback with an inline four-cylinder aluminum alloy engine. It was not impressive and it was not mine.

For two summers I worked at Brown Shoe Factory in Owensville making good money. It was piece work. For those of you who are not familiar with that term — we were paid by the number of shoes we worked on.

In my case I was paid for each sandal that I “lasted.” Lasting sandals consisted of gluing each sandal strap to the its sole with a hot melted plastic substance.

I took that money, \$1,600 cash, and purchased my first car in 1976 when I was 17.

Like a girlfriend, a car requires a lot of loving care... and money. One of my first additions was Pioneer speakers and an 8-track tape player. In order to impress the girls you needed a good stereo. I also installed a CB radio in that car. My handle was the Red Baron.

My next investment was air shocks and wide tires for the back.

Back in those days cars did not last as long. At just seven years old she started rusting through in the rear quarter panels.

So, in the summer of 1979, between my freshmen

and sophomore years in college I decided that the Nova needed a new paint job, after all I wanted to keep this car forever.

In school I did not have a lot of mechanical knowledge. I was more of a geek, but I could take things apart. So I removed the bumpers and all the trim from the Nova that summer and, using wet sand paper, sanded her down to metal.

I also used body putty and fixed the rusted areas. Most of the work was done in my grandparents driveway.

One of my best friends, Ricky Hollandsworth was attending school at Linn Tech (now State Tech at Linn). Ricky drove the Nova to Linn and applied the primer.

Gene Ellis at Owensville Auto Body reapplied the same bronze color to the newly primed body.

The final touch was a hood scoop. This is where purists would say I went wrong. You see I put a Mopar hood scoop on my newly painted Chevy Nova. In an unusual twist my son Jacob now has the same hood scoop style on his Dodge Challenger.

The next summer I traveled to Virginia to

continued on page 4

by DENNIS WARDEN



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# Keep tires road-worthy for safer driving

Making driving more safe can come down to ensuring that the vehicle is in good working order — starting from the ground up.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration warns that an average of 200 people die each year in tire-related crashes. In 2016, 733 people across the United States lost their lives in accidents in which tire malfunction was a contributing factor. Roughly 70 percent of single vehicle accidents are tire-related. Taking tire maintenance seriously can greatly reduce the chances of blowouts, accidents and fatalities.

## MAINTAIN THE RIGHT PRESSURE

Caring for tires not only improves safety, but also it extends the life of the tires, saving drivers money as a result. Michelin Tires says that simply checking the tires' inflation pressure can make a significant difference in how long tires last. For example, a tire that is consistently 20 percent under-inflated may see its life expectancy reduced by 20 percent.

Tires that are not properly inflated also can have a high rolling resistance. In such instance, the engine must expend more effort to move the vehicle — thus

eating up fuel.

Pressure should be checked at ambient temperature before driving, states AAA. The recommended inflation pressure can be found in the drivers manual or on the tire.

## CHECK TIRE TREAD

Tires rely on good tread depth to maintain traction and shed water during wet conditions. AAA recommends checking tread with a visual inspection and with the “quarter test.” Insert a quarter into a tread groove with the top of Washington’s head facing down. If the top of his head is not visible, the tires have at least 4/32” of tread and are acceptable for continued use. If the top of Washington’s head shows, tires need to be replaced.

## LEARN ABOUT TIRE AGING

Check the owner’s manual for specific recommendations concerning replacing the spare tire for the vehicle. Some manufacturers state after six years, while others say 10 years is the maximum service life for tires. While most tire centers will use newly manufactured tires when replacing tires, you can double check the age of any tire by looking at the sidewall

for the tire identification number (TIN), offers NHTSA. The last four digits are the week and year of manufacture.

## KEEP UP ON MAINTENANCE

Wheel alignment, tire rotation and tire balancing are all key to minimizing

wear and extending the life and safety of tires. Each vehicle has specific recommendations, and drivers should consult their manuals to find those specifics.

Tire function is an important part of maintaining vehicle safety and performance.



Taking tire maintenance seriously can greatly reduce the chances of blowouts, accidents and fatalities.



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## First Love

continued from page 2

sell books door to door. That was a great experience. I learned a lot about myself and about others.

I lived in Covington and drove to the surrounding small towns to sell. I remember coming home late at night. Covington was in a valley and I would put the Nova in neutral, shut off the engine and coast down the mountain for up to two miles. Remember I did not have power steering or power brakes, so I could control the car without the engine running.

While in Virginia I had to replace the fuel pump and the water pump. To save money I changed the oil myself.

One weekend I drove to Washington DC with a co-worker, John, for some sightseeing. We slept in the Nova in the parking lot of the Lincoln memorial.

When it came time to head back to Missouri, John and I packed up the Nova. We took turns driving. On John's shift he fell asleep and rolled the Nova into a ditch. Thankfully no one was hurt.

So the Nova never made it back home. I kept the name plate and the 350 symbol.

That summer I learned that a car is a material thing to transport us from point A to point B. Not something to love. I love God, my family and my friends.



### 1972 Nova from driveway to junk yard in one year

The summer of 1979 was spent repairing rust spots and sanding my 1972 Chevy Nova (top page 5) down to bare metal in my grandfather's driveway at 204 North Walnut. When it was finished I added a Mopar hood scoop (top photo). Two snoopy dolls are visible in the back window. The Nova came to an untimely end (bottom page 5) when a former friend rolled her in the ditch as we were coming home from Virginia the following summer. The only place on the car that was not dented was the hood scoop. — Dennis Warden.



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# Vision greatly affects driving ability

Driving is a multisensory experience that requires careful coordination and mastery of a wide array of skills. Understanding the rules of the road and having sufficient practice are only part of the equation. Being able to see the road and react to obstacles, signage and more is crucial. Drivers should not downplay the importance of visual acuity when they turn their ignition keys.

Acceptable vision is involved in all components of driving. Motor vehicle operators need to have clear vision to read gauges and operate the controls of the car. Distance vision also is essential to identifying road hazards and seeing other cars on the road. The health resource All About Vision says aging and visual changes at any age can affect a person's ability to see moving objects while one is in motion — as is the case while driving a car or truck. In addition, changes in peripheral vision can increase blind spots while driving and affect reaction time.

## AGING MOTORISTS

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration reports that 6,165 people ages 65 and older were killed in automobile accidents in 2015, representing 18 percent of all traffic crashes in the United States, and declining vision may have been a factor in many of those accidents. Older drivers can make certain changes to improve their safety on the roadways.

- Reduce driving at night. The group AAA says by age 60 eyes need three times as much light to see as they did at age 20. Over time pupils get smaller and do not dilate as much in dark conditions at night, making it harder to see. Limit driving at night as much as possible.
- Accommodate for glare. Invest in anti-glare coatings for glasses to minimize glare from the sun and oncoming headlights.
- Be especially cautious at intersections. The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety says 40 percent of the fatal collisions that occur for people age 70 and older take place at intersections. Taking more time to assess oncoming traffic and make sure intersections are clear can save lives.
- Get frequent vision checks. Annual eye exams are recommended by the American Optometric Association. This can help older drivers be aware of shortcomings in their vision.

## OTHER DRIVERS

Drivers of any age with vision issues should take heed of their limitations and make modifications as needed.

- Driving with macular degeneration. Macular degeneration affects central vision. It happens when deterioration of the central portion of the retina occurs. The American Macular Degeneration Foundation says MD is the leading cause of vision loss. As MD impacts vision, driving may need to be reduced or ceased.
- Color blindness impacts driving. Those with color blindness may need to use caution when identifying traffic signals or the brake lights of other vehicles. It may take practice and driving with someone who sees colors to become comfortable.
- Cataracts can blur vision. Those with cataracts may have blurry vision and see halos around lights that can make driving challenging. Cataracts also may make it more difficult to see pedestrians against the landscape, especially at night. Treating cataracts can improve vision significantly.

Many motor vehicle agency vision tests do not take into consideration all of the factors that can impact vision while driving. Seeking care for visual problems and changing driving habits when necessary can help people stay safe on the road.



# Reduce distractions behind the wheel

Despite the fact that automobiles are now designed with more safety features than ever before, the rate of traffic accidents and fatalities continue to rise. The National Safety Council says safety improvement like crash-avoidance technology hasn't reduced accidents, and driver error is still to blame for many crashes — with distractions behind the wheel and impaired driving leading the way.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration says distracted driving claimed 3,450 lives in 2016 alone. Distracted driving is defined as any activity that diverts drivers' attention from the road. This can include everything from talking to passengers to eating to fiddling with the car radio. However, distractions from technology have become especially alarming, particularly texting or reading phones while driving. During daylight hours, approximately 481,000 drivers typically use cell phones while driving. The NHTSA says that removing one's eyes from the road for a mere 5 seconds when traveling at 55 miles per hour is like driving the length of a football field with your eyes closed.

Reducing distractions should be a priority for all drivers. Here are some suggestions, courtesy of Geico insurance and AAA Exchange.

- Store loose gear and other items that can roll around away from the driver's seat so you are not tempted to reach for them.
- Adjust mirrors, GPS maps, climate controls, music, and more before you put the car in drive.
- Use a mobile phone only for emergency purposes and only after pulling over to the side of the road. Avoid social conversations on the phone while driving.
- Limit the number of passengers you allow inside your car. The more passengers, the more distractions. This is especially true for young drivers.
- Eat food before getting in the car. Snacking while driving makes you less attentive to the road around you.
- Secure children and pets accordingly. Both should wear harnesses and not be given free reign to roam around the car.
- Try to focus only on driving while in the car. Leave the multitasking to when you're not behind the wheel.

Geico indicates that studies have shown people are limited in the amount of information they can process at any one time. Driving requires focus and an ability to react to a host of potential circumstances. Distractions compromise drivers' ability to focus. Reducing distractions can considerably cut down on the number of motor vehicle accidents each year.

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# 6 Simple Spring Car Care Tips

All across the country, winter is winding down. With more sun and rising temperatures comes an entirely different strategy for car care. Fortunately, we're here to help. Here are six simple tips to help you care for your vehicle as winter makes way for spring.

## WASH AND WAX

A good, thorough wash and wax is the most important thing to do with your car once the winter is over. Winter driving can cause a huge amount of road grime, debris and -- worst of all -- salt to build up on your car. You want to make sure those items are long gone before spring starts. Allowing debris and grime to build up on your car can affect its paint and finish, while allowing salt to build up can lead to rust and other serious problems.

## CLEAN THE INSIDE, TOO

Nobody wants to spend time cleaning out their car during a cold winter day. That's why spring is the perfect time to clean your car's interior, so spend a day doing some spring cleaning. Remove and throw away all the interior papers, trash and other items that have accrued over the winter. Not only will you have a clean car, but your spring cleaning can be done when it's more temperate and comfortable outside -- especially important if you have to vacuum your carpets and seats.

## CHECK YOUR TIRE PRESSURES

Tire pressure is especially important in the spring. As air temperatures get cooler during the winter, tire pressures decrease, which probably caused you to fill up your tires during the winter months. But as air gets warmer again in the spring, tire pressures can increase. If the pressure increases past your manufacturer specification (because you added air during the winter), it can seriously affect your car's drivability and fuel economy. This is an important part of car care, so if you don't feel comfortable checking your car's tire pressures by yourself, take it to an auto parts store or a national shop -- such as Big O Tires, Sears Auto Center or Firestone -- which will usually perform the check for a low price or maybe even for free.

## INSPECT YOUR WIPER BLADES

As spring starts and temperatures warm up, check your wiper blades for any signs of cracking or wear. The wiper itself could wear dramatically over the winter due to ice buildup or other issues on your windshield. In most parts of the country, you'll need those wipers for spring rains, so be sure they're in good working order after winter comes and goes.

## CHECK UNDER THE HOOD

Do a thorough check under your hood to make sure your car's engine made it through the winter without problems. Specifically,

check belts and hoses to ensure the cold temperatures haven't rendered them brittle or heavily worn. Check your coolant to make sure it's not too old -- an important factor for avoiding overheating as temperatures gradually climb. If you aren't comfortable performing these checks on your own, contact a local mechanic. While you may get billed for an hour of labor, it's better than going into the spring with potential issues lurking under your hood.

## CHECK ALIGNMENT

## AND SUSPENSION

Winter is known for being harsh on roads, and that in turn can be harsh on your vehicle. If you find yourself frequently traversing roads with huge potholes or rocks that have emerged from the asphalt, it could ruin your car's alignment or damage suspension components. Our advice: If you've taken your car to a mechanic to check under the hood, ask for a quick suspension and alignment check to make sure nothing is too far outside the manufacturer's specifications.




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# What to do when your vehicle breaks down

Knowing what to do when a car breaks down can make such unfortunate situations much less stressful for drivers. Smartphones and wifi networks may make it less stressful to cope with broken down vehicles. However, wifi networks are not always accessible in remote locations, so drivers would be wise to revisit these tips for handling broken down vehicles, courtesy of Esurance, in advance of their next road trip.

- Turn on hazard lights. Hazard lights inform other drivers that something is wrong with your vehicle, and the sight of hazard lights typically compels fellow motorists to give drivers a wide berth and facilitate their moving off of the roadway.

- Attempt to get off the highway. After turning on their hazard lights, drivers who know or suspect something is wrong with their vehicles should try to get off the highway. Move into the right-hand lane as soon as possible, ultimately trying to get onto the shoulder. Avoid the left-hand shoulder if possible, as the left lane is a passing lane and motorists likely won't be expecting vehicles in this area of the highway.

- Turn the steering wheel away from the road. Broken down vehicles are unpredictable, and drivers may not have

the luxury of pulling over onto flat road surfaces. Turning the steering wheel away from the road prevents it from rolling into traffic if drivers are forced to pull over on an incline.

- Be especially careful before exiting the vehicle. Exiting a broken down vehicle can be very dangerous, especially when drivers are forced to pull over on busy highways. Drivers who have pulled over into the right shoulder should wait to exit the car until there is ample time for them to get out and safely make it to the shoulder. If necessary, crawl across the front seat and exit using the passenger-side door. All passengers should exit the vehicle on the passenger-side if the car has been pulled onto the right shoulder.

- Call for help. Only after they have safely gotten their vehicles off the highway should drivers call for help. Passengers may want to avoid calling until the car is off the road as well, as it can make for faster relief if callers wait until they know their exact location to call for help.

- Set up flares or triangles behind the vehicle. If it's safe to do so, set up flares or triangles behind the vehicle. If the flares or triangles are buried in the trunk, drivers can ask a passenger to serve as lookout and warn them if they need to get away

from the vehicle.

- Pop the hood. An opened hood is another indicator that a vehicle is broken down and can be especially valuable to drivers who do not have flares or triangles.

- Wait for help. Do not attempt to fix the vehicle on the side of the highway. Doing so leaves drivers vulnerable to oncoming motorists.



**SMARTPHONES AND** wifi networks may make it less stressful to cope with broken down vehicles. However, wifi networks are not always accessible in remote locations, so drivers would be wise to revisit these tips for handling broken down vehicles, courtesy of Esurance, in advance of their next road trip.



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# Navigate these driver assistance apps

It is never a good idea to use smartphones or other devices while behind the wheel. In fact, distracted driving is a key risk factor

for automotive accidents. However, certain smartphone applications and features can make road trips and other excursions eas-

ier, safer and more enjoyable — provided these apps are used before getting in the car, when safely pulled over, or in the hands of a passenger.

### MAKE A PITSTOP

Drivers may not know where to pull off the highway when they need a mid-trip snack or a restroom run. iExit enables you to see all upcoming exits on a particular roadway (when location services are turned on) and which amenities are accessible at each exit. The app also tells drivers which way to go if they need to find gas stations or restaurants. Icons indicating food, fuel, hospitals, and even banks/ATM machines are included to indicate what's available at the exit.

### POPULAR SIGHTS

Field Trip by Google will pull from categories you have selected and your location to indicate potential sites of interest around you. The app works off of recommendations from travel and lifestyle sources, and will provide Bluetooth-enabled alerts when you're close by.

### FILL 'ER UP

Exclusively for locating fuel stations, GasBuddy also helps drivers compare gas prices so they can save money if they so desire. When fuel costs can make or break a trip, this app will keep your tank and wallet full.

### GAIN PERFORMANCE DATA

To keep track of vehicle performance,

use Dynolicious Classic. While this app's not free, it's less expensive than a visit to a service station. Dynolicious relies on an iPhone's built-in accelerometers to gauge lateral and longitudinal acceleration and horsepower.

### GET TRUSTED REPAIRS

It is important to find a trusted mechanic who will fix a problem for a reasonable price. Repair Pal is an app that has already culled quotes and reviews from nearby mechanics to simplify comparison shopping.

### NAVIGATION MADE EASY

Smartphones already feature built-in map apps that offer navigation and directions, such as those offered by Google and Apple. But Waze is a community-driven app that provides real-time updates to traffic situations, gas prices, law enforcement sightings, and alternative routes to avoid delays.

### NO MORE LOST CARS

Finding that elusive parking spot can be challenging. When you finally grab a space in a parking garage or on city streets, you want to make sure you can find your way back there easily. Enter Honk, an app that can mark your vehicle's location with a GPS pin. You can also make text or verbal notes indicating position or how much time you have on a parking meter, as well as use the app to find businesses nearby.

Various apps can be assets to drivers, helping them to save both money and time.



Certain smartphone applications and features can make road trips and other excursions easier, safer and more enjoyable — provided these apps are used before getting in the car, when safely pulled over, or in the hands of a passenger.

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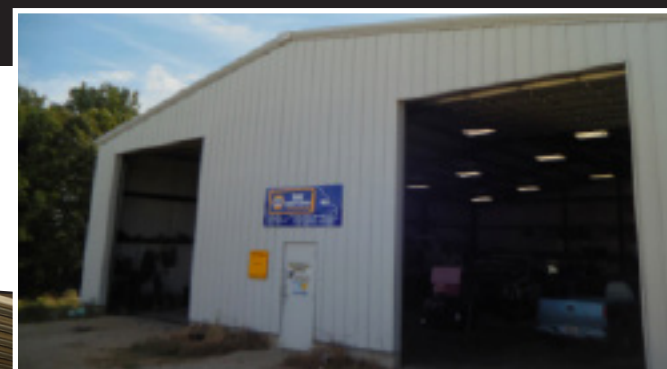
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# Stuckenschneider keeps childhood love of classic cars alive with restoration projects

BY NEAL JOHNSON  
UD STAFF WRITER  
thor65018@yahoo.com

Chris Stuckenschneider of Freeburg has enjoyed building and racing cars since he was a kid, something passed down by his father.

“He used to piddle with them down in the basement,” said Stuckenschneider. “The first project I remember dad having was a 1923 T-Bucket, and as a 10-year-old boy, I just kind of fell in love with that stuff.”

Stuckenschneider’s love of racing came from tagging along with his father, Uncle Dale and Melvin Rehagen to the drag strip, and watching them compete. “After taking in that experience from the sidelines for a few years I was all-in going forward, which resulted in me getting into the driver’s seat. After three or four years of racing a couple different street cars I got into racing competitively myself for about 10 years, driving a Rear Engine SuperComp Dragster.”

Stuckenschneider then got married and had kids, but was still able to keep a hot rod around to play with and occasionally take to the track. “A lot of great memories were made, which I kind of relate to as ‘the good ol’ days.’ My wife (girlfriend at the time), cousin Travis, good friend Mark Wilde, along with other family and friends spent a lot of time at the race track.”

Stuckenschneider said the racing gig was always very competitive and costly, but he hit the drag strip in St. Louis and other area tracks usually a couple times a month for the

drag-racing events.

His love of restoration though, remained long after his racing career faded. Over the years, Stuckenschneider has restored several cars, some for himself, and others in his sideline business, Pure Performance Racing & Restoration, LLC.

“I do a little bit of everything but it’s mostly mechanical,” said Stuckenschneider, noting that Ethan Holterman, owner of D&E Customz of Freeburg, handles body and paint work for him. “Classic car restoration is a \$10 billion a year industry and it seems to keep growing,” said Stuckenschneider. “Reports show in 2018, collector car sales that took place through auctions alone resulted in \$1.5 billion. What’s more staggering than that, is that only accounted for 5% of total sales last year. I think that’s mostly due to the so-called Baby Boomers having retired or are getting ready to retire and they want their old high school car back or one that they dreamed of having back in the day. They had to get rid of it for whatever reason, and now they’ve got some stability and want their hot rod back, and they’re willing to spend money to get it.”

The first car Stuckenschneider restored himself was a 1963 Super Sport Impala, which his mom and dad helped him buy for \$500 when he was 13.

“It sat for a while, but as I got older, I started working on it from the ground up,” said Stuckenschneider. “It turned out to be a really nice car and before I even had my driver’s license (at 15

years old) I took my first trip down the quarter mile at Mid America Raceways in Wentzville with it. It by no means was a record-setting pass or super-fast car, but it was still a blast and worthy of upsetting my mother’s stomach.”

In some cases, Stuckenschneider has built cars for his personal pleasure, be it to race or just because, and in some cases, those cars have been sold to individuals all over the country. Last fall he sold a 1966 Chevy II Nova to a gentleman in South Carolina along the East Coast, and three years before that he sold a 1968 C10 Chevy pickup to a gentleman in California along the West Coast as well.

“It’s coast to coast,” said Stuckenschneider. “There aren’t too many states around that don’t have car clubs of some kind or hotrods running up and down the streets.”

A full-time employee with the Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT), Stuckenschneider is a graduate of Fatima, and earned an Associate Degree in Automotive Technology from Linn State Technical College (now known as State Technical College of Missouri).

“I had started out pursuing baseball in college at CMSU (now UCM), but soon realized that my mind was on other things, (hotrods), so I

decided to leave that career to my brother. I then came back home and transferred to Tech to finish my schooling,” said Stuckenschneider. “I’ve always piddled around with this stuff, and it’s something I love to do.”

During high school, at the age of 16, Stuckenschneider got his first real hot rod, a 1968 Camaro, which he still has in his garage today. “I keep telling my 13-year-old boy, Easton, who claims that this ought to be his high school car, that it’s my retirement project,” said Stuckenschneider. “I’ll fix it back up with his help maybe once I retire from MoDOT or maybe sooner, but then I’m sure it will be handed down to him to enjoy.”

Stuckenschneider fixed up that old Camaro to race, so he didn’t drive it much during high school, and now it sits waiting for his restorative touch.

He also owns a 1967 ProStreet RS/SS Camaro that was built in 2010, which Stuckenschneider still finds things to modify or touch up. “It took me a couple years to get it where it is today,” said Stuckenschneider, noting he spent only nights and the occasional weekend on it as he juggled work and family needs.

continued on page 11B



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## Stuckenschneider

continued from page 10

To simply say it's been modified would be a gross understatement. The traditional standard 327 small block was replaced with a 496 big block power plant that runs on E85 (ethanol) along with two stages of computer-driven nitrous. This combination pushes the Camaro to run an 8-second quarter-mile with speeds over 150 MPH, but it's still legal to drive on public streets.

"This is probably one of the fastest, baddest street-driven cars on the road in the area," said Stuckenschneider. "It's my pride and joy. It's basically the same engine design but bigger and

with a whole lot more high-performance parts."

With the nitrous running, the vehicle can churn up dyno numbers of 1200-plus HP, but only used on the drag strip. "You set the timer and the computer releases the nitrous at different stages during the race," Stuckenschneider explained.

Finding replacement parts for the old GM cars like his Camaro is not as difficult as one might imagine.

"Back in my dad's era, every piece that could remotely be reused they used," said Stuckenschneider. "They got it back into the best shape possible, but now there are a lot of companies that make reproduction parts which

continued on page 15



Chris Stuckenschneider of Freeburg rebuilt his 1967 ProStreet RS/SS Camaro in 2010, but he still finds things to modify or touch up. To simply say it's been modified would be a gross understatement. The traditional standard 327 small block was replaced with a 496 big block power plant that runs on E85 (ethanol) along with two stages of computer-driven nitrous. This combination pushes the Camaro to run an 8-second quarter-mile with speeds over 150 MPH, but it's still legal to drive on public streets.

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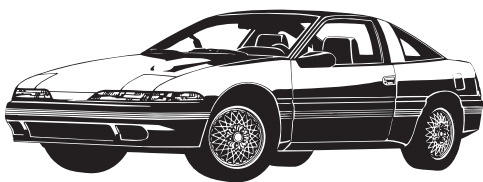
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# Vienna natives share their passion of drag racing

BY LAURA SCHIERMEIER  
UD STAFF WRITER  
lschiermeier@wardpub.com

There's a bulletin board on the wall at Todd Schoene's Midway Pro Auto Body shop full of photos, mostly cars and trucks. The people standing beside the vehicles appear proud to have their photo taken with them. They are smiling and look about the same way people do when they have their photos taken with big fish or a trophy buck. They look proud.

Eugene Rowden, who works with Todd, counts six cars pictured on that bulletin board that he sold to Todd. Eugene likes to

buy and sell.

Todd, however, prefers to buy and keep the cars. He has seven muscle cars, all of which run, and says he can't sell them. "I get attached," he said.

Eugene, on the other hand, likes to trade and swap and has bought and sold so many vehicles that he can't count them all. He does admit, however, that there are some cars he now wishes he had held on to.

Still, he has a fine collection of 45 cars in all states of repair. Some of them run, others don't, and some of them are parts cars.

Eugene is also known as "Nuclear Chewy." The nuclear part is because a guy

named Floyd called him that when he burned out in an El Camino. Mike Stratman called him Chewy because of the way he chewed up tires.

Todd and Eugene are quite a pair and they have an awful lot in common. They both work hard at Midway Pro Auto Body, located along Highway 63 north of Vienna, not too far from Freeburg. They both own drag race cars and spend some time every summer at tracks where they put their cars up against those of other car enthusiasts, hoping to get

a good start on the quarter mile race, not tear anything up, and hopefully win the race, some money and bring home the bragging rights trophy.

Todd said his dad, Don Schoene, didn't care a lick about a car so Todd came by his hobby all on his own. He and his brother, Mark, bought their first vehicle together when Todd was 15. It was a 1948 Ford pickup they bought from a man who lived on Paydown

continued on page 13



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## Drag racing

continued from page 12

Road, Mr. Leonard Schwegler.

Eugene is a motor head by tradition. His dad, Melvin Rowden, liked vehicles too, and had a 1947 Chevy Coup he raced. Eugene likes Chevy vehicles, cars and trucks. Todd said he's a Dodge man but has to keep his wallet in mind and then he's a Chevy man also.

For the past 10 years, the two Vienna natives, and VHS grads have been part of the Russellville Eliminators car club. The club members are like-minded people who love cars, enjoy racing, and have fun hanging out together at club events and drag races.

They travel extensively in the summer-time, racing that one-quarter of a mile track. Two at a time they race and the racers keep racing until they're eliminated. When they lose they're eliminated.

If they keep winning races, they can win money or a trophy. The money is usually spent and then they have nothing to remember the race by. That's why they prefer a trophy.

Todd and Eugene say they like drag racing for the thrill of it; they like to drive fast. And, when they come out as winners, that's nice, too. Their drag racing cars are hot rods and they make a lot of noise. These cars were built by them with some help from others who have expertise in automotive areas they do not.

Todd has a 1972 Chevy Nova and a 1975 Chevy Monza 2+2 Hatchback.

According to Wikipedia the Monza 2+2 debuted in 1975 as a single-model 2+2 hatchback. The Monza is 4 inches longer and weighs 180 lb (82 kg) more than the Vega from which it is derived. General Motors' John DeLorean nicknamed it the "Italian Vega", citing styling with a strong resemblance to the Ferrari 365 GTC/4.

Eugene races a 1965 Chevy Nova II, which is a car he purchased from Herb Williams who bought it new. "It's a Maries County car," he says.

Todd says for drag racing, they prefer a nostalgic car, and it has to be light weight with good weight distribution. They could use new cars for drag racing and people do this, but they like the old cars and that's mostly what they see at the drag races.

The cars vary in panels, rear ends, and engines. It all depends on what people want and what they can afford and that's what they bring to the race track.

There are different classes such as street class which has to be able to be licensed and driven on roads outside the track. A slick class which is street and drag strip, and pro and super pro. Both pro and super pro are strictly

cars for drag racing.

The drag races are governed by many rules through the NHRA. The faster the car, the more rules and regulations there are to adhere to. It's about safety rules and safety equipment and the cars have to be certified to race. The cars have to be capable of running at high speeds and stopping. The drivers even have to pass driving tests and physicals to obtain the special licenses they need to drag race.

Todd says his fastest speed was in the Nova at 149 mph which he did in the index time of 9.29. If the speed is 150 mph or higher, there are even more rules and regulations such as a parachute to stop.

Eugene's best in his Chevy with a small block is 127 mph in 11 seconds. Todd has run the Monza at 133 mph with an elapsed time (ET) of 10.40. To go these speeds, they say they hit the floor with the accelerator.

All of the tracks are different. Some are a little "shy" on stopping room, which these drivers need plenty of at the speeds they race at. Some tracks do eighth of a mile races with the very fast cars so people don't hurt plus it moves the drag race program along.

All of the races are run in the spring and summer and weather plays a big role. If it's raining and cold, they don't go. Todd uses his car to do some advertising for his business with his logo is on the car. Eugene has his car named and that name is on the car—Novocaine.

Drag racing can be expensive. Eugene says they have good equipment and hope their cars don't tear up. "It all wears out," he lamented. Entry fee is about \$35 and they start with two timed trials and then move into the races where you either win and move on, or you lose and you're done.

They spend some money on motors. In his Nova, Todd has a 540 cubic inch big block Chevy engine on alcohol and it has 814 horse power. A regular car's horse power is about 100. Back in the day, the horse power on a car such as an Impala was 220 to 300. Todd says the motors he and Eugene use are "above our knowledge" and they reach out to others when they need help with the engines.

Both men admit they are motor heads and that they like going fast. They say drag racing is a fun hobby for them, the same way other people like playing sports or golf or fishing from a \$50,000 bass boat. They like the speed, the people they hang out with at the race track, and of course, the cars and hot rod motors. Todd says they talk about it every day, sometimes a lot. They also think about quite a bit. "It's addictive and quite pricey," Todd said.

continued on page 14

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## Drag racing

continued from page 13



Eugene said he “wastes a lot of money but it’s no different from golf or fishing” from the financial perspective.

Back in 1994, they had a Vienna Hot Rod Association (VHRA), mostly with men who worked at Weidinger’s. They put it together for fun and because they wanted to have a car show at the fair. Some of the members besides themselves included Paul Reeves, Mark Haller, Shane Backues, Tom Stratman, Jeff Huffman, Vessie Sandbothe, and more.

They disbanded the VHRA in about 2011 because the members grew up, had kids and were busy with their families. Still, they all had fun together and this also included their families.

Now they belong to the Russellville Eliminators and in 2017 Todd was second in points for the car club and Eugene was third. There were only three points difference between the first place and the third place.

The drag racers considered Mid America Raceway at Wentzville their home track. Todd said they were devastated when the Wentzville track closed. It was their home track and it was depressing not to be able to go there anymore to race. They knew the place and the people who came to that track were like family to them. “It made me sick,” Eugene said.

They have traveled to many parts of the United States with their cars on trailers taking them to the drag race tracks. They take some extra parts “for small problems,” Eugene says. “If you blow a transmission, you’re done.”

He’s gotten a lot of races from his 1965 Chevy II Nova with a small block Chevy 355 engine with 525 horse power. It’s the same chassis he’s used all these years, but not the same motor.

As winter turns to spring, it’s getting close to the time for them to get out to the track. The first race is scheduled for May 4 at the Smokin’ MO-KAN Raceway. They are getting their cars ready. Eugene says a car’s motor can last one minute to several years. Mechanical parts wear out so there is a lot of maintenance, adjusting valves and changing oil. Todd changes the oil before every race.

They race at tracks in Iowa, Indiana, Wisconsin and more. In 2015 they did Hot Rod Week, which is old school drag race cars

with scavenger hunts along the way between tracks where they had to take a photo at the check points to prove they were there. They went with guys from the car club and they entered events at each race and had a lot of fun at the week that began and ended in St. Louis. There are Hot Rod Weeks each year but generally too far away.

The two men have helped their family members get hooked on the sport also.

Todd’s daughter, Tylour, has been driving his 1972 Dodge Charger he’s had since he was a teenager. Their kids and grandkids are all interested in cars. They have ride along Friday nights at the tracks to further help people “get hooked on it.” It keeps them out of trouble, the two say, and they learn to work on cars, and like Todd and Eugene, they talk about it all the time, and it’s like sports as its very addictive. At the races they want to win, but its still fun anyway if they don’t win.

There are heartaches with it, such as

tearing up a car, seeing wrecks, and the price tag that comes along with the sport of drag racing. There are a lot of safety rules because the sport is dangerous so it is highly regulated. Todd and Eugene said they saw a bad wreck last year.

Still Shone Racing and Rowden Racing/Novocaine will continue. Eugene said he hopes he can keep racing until the day he dies. They see older men racing and think they can keep on racing as long as their reaction time is there. They can still win races if they “cut a good light” at the starting line.

In closing, these motor heads wanted to give a nod of thanks to their automotive teacher who died recently, Leonard “Pee Wee” Buschmann. He helped both of them learn the ends and out of motors and cars. Todd graduated from VHS in 1979 and Eugene graduated in 1981.

About Leonard Buschmann, Todd said, “He got me started.”

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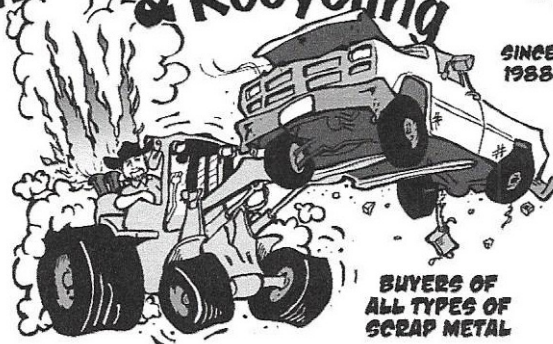
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## Stuckenschneider

continued from page 11

usually makes the process easier.”

A recent project involving a 1955 Ford T-Bird was an exception to the rule, as parts were very hard to find for it and with certain brands and models this can be the case. As a whole, Stuckenschneider said GM parts seem to be less expensive than Ford and MOPAR vehicles.

The body on the 1967 Camaro was in great shape, Stuckenschneider said, but he still got help from Holterman to finalize the paint. Along with the drive train the interior of the car is heavily modified as well, but the dash and some other pieces are still original on the inside.

Stuckenschneider doesn't get to drive it around as much, simply because life nowadays with three kids, Payton, 19, Londyn, 16, and Easton, 13, is very busy and the family has other priorities and commitments. His wife Angie's support of his passion over the last 20 years (celebrating that milestone this year) has made it possible to continue restoring old cars.

“We have ball games and other events to get to, and the Camaro is just not built to haul everyone around, nor is it a cost effective means of transportation” said Stuckenschneider with a grin, but he does get out and drive it when he can occasionally, weather permitting.

### CHOOSE WISELY

Anyone considering taking the plunge in car restoration should take a few steps before committing a big chunk of cash.

“Have someone that knows cars go with you

when shopping for a project if you're not very experienced,” said Stuckenschneider. “People can cover up a lot of stuff and sell it as if it's a better car than it really is. Know what your budget is going into it, and decide where you're going to stop. You get into the middle of one of these projects and it can get out of hand pretty quickly.”

Stuckenschneider added that buying a car that's worse than you expected can lead to a lot more of an investment.

A good solid body is a step in the right direction, since that is one of the more expensive parts involved with restoration. A car that is running and driving helps a lot as well. “You don't want one that was put together just enough to roll around, as a project like that will surprise you with all the little stuff that is missing,” said Stuckenschneider.

Storage is also an important consideration. “Have somewhere to put it, like a garage,” he said. “You don't want to put all this money into a car and then leave it under a tree or out in the elements.”

For the everyday driver, Stuckenschneider said there are ways to prolong the life of your car.

“You need to follow the manufacturer's recommended maintenance schedule,” said Stuckenschneider. “Nowadays you can go a little longer between oil changes just because there are better oils out there, and the emissions of the newer engines keep the insides cleaner, which in turn extends oil life.”

Tune-up intervals are extended as well and are usually simpler than they used to be, but still cannot be avoided, Stuckenschneider added. “Watching gauges, warning lights, and

routine maintenance will make your life a lot easier and pay dividends on a vehicle in the long run,” he said.

Stuckenschneider said developing a good relationship with your mechanic is important in the long run just to make sure your vehicle is properly maintained. “It's like the relationship you have with your doctor or dentist or anyone else that's going to help you take care of something you love,” said Stuckenschneider.

### SHOWING OFF THE GOODS

Stuckenschneider has helped secure a car show at Westphalia, which this September is scheduled for its eighth year. There were some concerns early on with participants burning rubber on city streets but Stuckenschneider said that's calmed down quite a bit and the event has been very smooth and well-received the last few years. “I've had so many of the older crowd always tell me this is how it used to be back in the day. Cars would be lined up on both sides of main street on just about every Friday and Saturday night.” The biggest draw was about 200 cars which was this past year.

“I've worked side-by-side with the mayor every year, and it's an event we really enjoy having in Westphalia,” said Stuckenschneider, noting the car show is always held the Friday after Labor Day.

Stuckenschneider is a member of the Mid-Mo Car Club and Mid-Missouri Moonshiners Hot Rods, and he enjoys attending various car shows.

### THE FUTURE OF THE INDUSTRY

“I loved doing this as a kid, and I encourage people to get youth involved as much as

possible,” said Stuckenschneider. “I think it's eventually going to die off or at least be less popular because this younger generation doesn't seem to be as into it as I was growing up or further back into my mom and dad's era. One thing about it is that for the most part it had kept me out of trouble growing up.”

He agrees there can be a negative view of mechanical trades.

“I always kind of sensed that people who used their hands and got dirty every day were not as respected,” said Stuckenschneider. “But the truth is that the industry is having a hard time finding technicians to work in their shops, possibly due to maybe the more sought-after office jobs etc., that the younger generation seek, but I think as time goes on this will take a turn and continue to get better. It has to, because someone has to do the work, and eventually these jobs will be more appealing. They are heading in the right direction and we are starting to see salaries in the neighborhood of \$40 or \$50 an hour on the high end as an experienced dealership technician in the bigger cities.”

Simple tasks like changing the oil or a headlight in many cases has become something only a technician can do, just because of the way newer cars are built.

Stuckenschneider has a 1968 RS/Z28 Camaro currently in the works and it also has big horsepower with a ZZ502 engine, but yet also it has features like air-conditioning, power disc brakes, power steering, overdrive transmission, and a nice stereo system. He said once he completes the project, he'll drive it for a little bit, and probably put it up for sale and look for

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When the outdoors beckons, road trips can be the perfect way to see the countryside, escape the routine of daily life and enjoy short vacations.

When taking to the open road, it is important to focus on safety. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration says that planning and prevention can spare road-trippers from the consequences of breakdowns, traffic accidents or other road emergencies.

- Stock emergency preparedness items. Prior to a trip, drivers should make sure their vehicles are equipped with necessary safety items. Liberty Mutual Insurance New Beginnings Report warns that nearly half of Americans do not check that proper emergency items are stored in their vehicles prior to getting on the road. Before embarking on a road trip, make sure vehicles have a first aid kit, flashlight, water bottles, phone chargers, tire-repair tools, flares, jumper cables, towels, and even an old backpack for storage.

- Schedule a service call. Regular maintenance can keep vehicles from breaking down. Drivers should take their cars in for tuneups before long road trips. Such tuneups should include an oil change, battery check, tire rotation, and any other necessary servicing.

- Plan your route. Map out the route before heading out. Be aware of potential road closures, obstacles or construction. Thanks to real-time GPS updates through mobile phones and other devices, some drivers like to rely on tech to get them through. But it's important to realize service may be spotty in rural areas. Mapping a trip out in advance can save

drivers from getting lost during mobile service interruptions.

- Join a roadside repair service. Breakdowns happen even if trips are carefully planned. Automotive clubs can help drivers when breakdowns occur. Some car manufacturers also include roadside assistance in warranty packages, so inquire about your coverage.

- Refresh defensive driving skills. A safe-driving course can remind drivers of the rules of the road. In some cases, courses also may qualify drivers for discounts on their auto insurance policies. One such class is the AARP Driver Safety course.

- Avoid distractions. Keep children and other passengers occupied so they are not a distraction to the driver. Set out with favorite music, books, video games, or even a pad and paper for doodling. Pack snacks to keep everyone feeling full in between roadside pit stops. Drivers also can load their cars up with tissues, water and music to limit distractions.

- Plan fun breaks along the way. Breaks give drivers a reason to rest and passengers an opportunity to get out and stretch their legs. The Roadside America smartphone app lists must-see stops along any route, and drivers can plan their own stops as well.

- Stay over if necessary. According to the NHTSA, driving while drowsy is a contributing factor in 100,000 accidents every year. Drive only when well-rested. Share driving duties or plan a night at a motel so everyone is well-rested.

Road trips are all about fun, but drivers must emphasize safety before and during such excursions.

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