

# *Spring* **CAR CARE**



March 13, 2024  
A SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT

OSAGE COUNTY  
**Unterrified Democrat**

## 1957 Ford Fairlane rises from the dead to drive again

BY ELISE BROCHU  
SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
ebrochu@wardpub.com

When 19-year-old Delmar Mitchem paid \$300 for a 1957 Ford Fairlane 500 Convertible in May of 1969, he had no idea that car was going to change his life.

Fifteen-year-old Rhonda Nichols, who had recently moved back to Chamois, was standing in her yard with a friend from St. Charles, when Delmar drove by in the then bright blue Fairlane. "And she says, 'Oh, who's that,'" Rhonda remembered, "And I said 'I don't know, but I intend to find out.'"

Before she did, Delmar blew out the Fairlane's engine hot-rodding, and his dad parked the car behind their house.

When they finally met, Delmar made the first move, albeit in another car. "My grandmother and my dad had the café here in town, Kat's Café," Rhonda explained, "and one day I was walking home from there. I'd been working down there. And he pulls up alongside me and he says 'Hey, do you want a ride home?' And I said 'My parents always told me not to get in the car with strangers.' Well, it ended up it was only like a block from where I lived." So, she let him drive her home.

The couple dated briefly, but Rhonda's parents felt she was too young to be in a serious relationship. When Delmar was drafted to Vietnam in September of 1969, the couple broke up.

When he came home in 1971, it took less than a day for them to get back together. "I was walking home from school, and I saw him go by in a car. Not



**THREE GENERATIONS** of Mitchems, Ryan, Delmar, and Tanner, have enjoyed the restoration process on the 1957 Ford Fairlane.


PHOTOS COURTESY OF RHONDA MITCHEM

this one," she said, referring to the Fairlane, "And I said, 'Oh my gosh, he's home.' I ran home, threw down my books, and started walking down the street. So, who pulls up asked me if I wanted a ride? And the rest is history."

The Fairlane, however, sat for close to 45 years.

"Naturally, it went down to rust," Delmar said, "And we just let it sit and sit and sit, because it was going to be a big money project, and, at the time, starting out, we didn't have the money for it. And

See **MITCHEM** on Page 3




**Poettgen Bros.  
Auto Center**

**573-744-5242**  
Freeburg, MO

*Service, tires, exhaust,  
batteries and brakes -  
We do it all!*

**WE DO UPHOLSTERY**

- AUTO UPHOLSTERY
- CONVERTIBLE TOPS
- FURNITURE
- OFFICE FURNITURE
- BOAT COVERS & SEATS



Hours:  
Monday - Friday  
8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

**ColeCounty**  
upholstery

auto | home | marine | office

720 Wicker Lane • Jefferson City **573-634-7415**

## Mitchem • from page 2

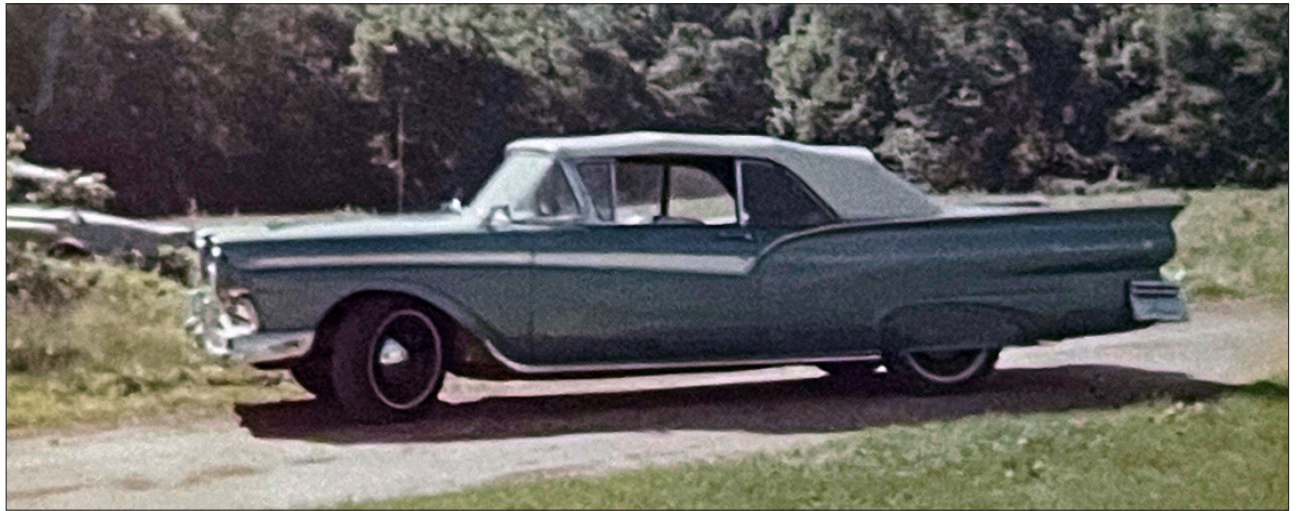
along came a couple of kids, and we definitely didn't have money for it then. So finally, (Rhonda) said, 'Well, if we're going to get it fixed and all before you retire, we'll just borrow the money and do it.' So that's what we did."

Rhonda joked that even though Delmar was driving the Fairlane the first time she saw him, it took almost 50 years for her to be able to ride in it. "He blew (the engine), and then he went into the service," she said, "So the only time I really got to ride in it was when we were towing it from one storage location to another storage location. Until we had it restored. Then I finally got the ride in it."

When they were finally ready, the couple took the Fairlane to Davey and Jim Schollmeyer, who, with the help of Tim Troesser, fully restored it. The work took several years, as the couple had the work done as they could afford it. "It was a lot of money," Rhonda said, "A lot of money, because there wasn't an inch of it that Schollmeyer's didn't have to touch. I mean, not an inch."

"The frame had a little bitty dent in it," Delmar elaborated, "And they took that out, because they said, 'You know, if you want to sell it, or something like that, people would look at it.' And the dent in the frame was about like that (smaller than a nickel). I thought, 'I would have never even thought of it or done it.' But they did an excellent job on it."

Delmar had planned to paint the car metallic blue or something similar, but one day their kids were out and found a toy 1957 Ford convertible that looked like Delmar's, and it was painted a mellow green. "We were discussing the color and Rhonda said, 'Well, why don't you go with that color?' So I thought about



it for a while, and then I said 'Well, she's right. It's a pretty color.' And I've had all kinds of different people talk about how pretty it is on account of the color, so she come out a winner on that one."

"Old car enthusiasts have either got to have a passion or a lot of money," Rhonda added.

Delmar said the Fairlane is basically all original, except for a 302 motor and a transmission with overdrive out of a 1988 Crown Victoria. He said he's had other cars with bigger engines that heated up more, but he and Rhonda just wanted something that would cruise, so they went with the 302. They have also added power steering and air conditioning, and hope to add power brakes in the future.

The parts, Rhonda said, were sourced from all

See **MITCHEM** on Page 4



**Need New Tires?**



**MILLER**  
FARM & TIRE

**Our Tire Shop**

TIRES AVAILABLE FOR WHEEL BARROWS TO SEMI TRUCKS

**ON FARM TIRE SERVICE**

HOURS: 7AM – 4:30PM, MON. – FRI. • 7 – NOON, SAT.

INSPECTIONS, ROTATION AND OIL CHANGES.  
HARDWARE AND A LITTLE BIT OF EVERYTHING.

**Jct. 50 & 63 • 573-455-9666**



**Spring**  
**TUNE-UP**  
**Time**

**FENNEWALD**  
**AUTO CENTER**

295 South 5th Street  
Linn, MO

**573-897-2225**

Curtis Fennewald, owner



## Mitchem • from page 3

over the country, but the labor was all Osage County, including restoration of the top and interior.

The Fairlane is Bright White over Mill Valley Green, with Coker tires and an Acacia Green interior.

The Mitchems have taken the Fairlane to three car shows, winning one first place, one runner up, and one best interior. Delmar also enjoys taking it to local Moonshiner's car shows at Thriftway in Linn, and to the Blue Oval shows in Hermann. Delmar said winning the people's choice award at a Blue Oval show meant a lot to him. "That's everybody who looked at it, walked past it. That's the important one," he said.

Rhonda also said they don't see many other '57 Ford convertibles. "You see '57 Ford retractable," she said, "where it's the hard top that goes down into the trunk. And you see '57 hard tops, but the '57 Ford's just not as popular as that same era in Chevies. So anyway, you just don't see many of them. And it seems like people are really, I mean, they love it when they see it."

"They do have quite a few Chevy convertibles," Delmar added, "but not many soft tops like that. Like she said, the retractable is a popular one that everybody likes, and this is the one that

See **MITCHEM** on Page 5





Offering Paintless Dent Repair,  
Full Collision Repair,  
Towing and Recovery

**125 Hwy CC • Linn**

**573-263-7219**



**CSH TRAILERS & AUTOMOTIVE SERVICES**

**TRAILERS MADE FOR WORK & PLAY.**

**AVAILABLE AT CSH.**

CSHtrailers.com | Westphalia, Mo. | 573-455-2998

## Mitchem • from page 4

there's not a lot of."

"I watch a lot of car shows on TV," Delmar continued, "And I look for them, and you very seldom see them. You'll see some '57s, you know, four door hardtop, like she said, a retractable, but very seldom do you see a convertible with the soft top."

The couple said the Fairlane belongs to both of them and has been a family affair. Their son Ryan passed on Nov. 1, 2016, but the couple said he was ex-

tremely proud of the car. Their grandson, Tanner, took it to prom, and their younger grandson, Landon, may as well. "I got to teach him how to drive it," Delmar said, "He's never drove it yet."

The Mitchems hope to someday take the Fairlane on a trip down historic Route 66, which begins in Chicago and ends in Los Angeles. "It's on the bucket list," Rhonda said.

"It gets about 15 - 18 miles a gallon on gas," Delmar added, "That's gonna

make a difference, right?"

When not being driven, the Fairlane is garaged, and the convertible top is treated regularly. Delmar also tries to avoid driving it in bad weather, or when the roads have been treated for snow. "I don't put 100 miles a year on it," Delmar said.

"It's his baby," Rhonda added, "He would probably choose it over me."

"It would be a hard decision," Delmar joked.



Chip Repair & Replacement Home & Auto

**Double Check Glass Service, LLC**

"We check it twice, to make sure it's right"

**Mobile: 573-694-1524**  
 Fax: 573-493-2592  
 Email: dcheck.shane@aol.com  
 Vienna, Missouri

**Shane Hoecker, Owner/Technician**

we insure your car.  
because accidents happen.  
simple human sense.

**MUENKS INSURANCE AGENCY**  
 105 W MAIN ST  
 LINN, MO 65051  
 573-897-9900

**Auto-Owners**  
INSURANCE  
LIFE • HOME • CAR • BUSINESS

## Osage Auto Center

**1757 Hwy 89S**  
 3.7 miles from Brecktime  
**573-897-4164**  
 7 a.m. to 5 p.m.  
 Mon - Thurs.  
 Closed - Friday

Freeburg,  
Westphalia,  
Taos,  
Auxvasse

Laren & Donna Hilke

## 1947 Bentley finds central Missouri home

BY COLIN WILLARD  
ADVOCATE STAFF WRITER  
cwillard@wardpub.com

ST. JAMES — Some owners treat their old cars like any other antique. Perhaps they display the cars in a garage and only get them out for special occasions.

“It’s a driver for me,” Steven Duchscherer, who lives near St. James said about his white 1947 Bentley Mark VI. “It’s a driver. The inside is original 1947 interior and it shows.”

Although Duchscherer’s antique Bentley sees weekly drives into town, he is still mindful of the car’s condition. During a bumpy ride in the car last week, he avoided dirt roads to keep the vehicle as clean as possible.

The Bentley has made at least one cross-country trip to settle in Missouri. Duchscherer said he bought the car from a dealer in Texas about seven years ago when he lived in Oregon. Although he does not know much about the car’s journey before it came into his possession, the vehicle identification number indicates it was manufactured in 1948 despite being a 1947 model.

“It’s a beautiful car,” Duchscherer said. “I just like the look of the car.”

Duchscherer compared the look of the car to that of Rolls-Royce models from the same era. The history of Rolls-Royce and Bentley is closely intertwined with the two companies eventually falling under the same ownership. One of the



details that sets the brands apart for Duchscherer is the logo adorning the grill.

“The flying ‘B’ is a little more subtle,” he said when comparing it to Rolls-Royce’s flying lady ornament.

A few years ago, Duchscherer decided to leave Oregon and move to the Midwest to be closer to his son’s family in St. Charles. He spent his youth traveling the country while his father managed hotels. In 2013, he retired from the film industry after a lengthy career as a gun specialist and set decorator whose work includes Steven Spielberg’s “War of the Worlds,” the first two “Tremors” movies and all nine seasons of “The Office.” When it came time to pack up and move, the Bentley had to make the trip with him.

See **BENTLEY** on Page 7



*Wash & Wax  
Your Vehicle to Protect its Finish*

**SPOTLESS  
CAR WASHES**

*Linn Car Washes*

2 Automatics on 1013 E. Main St.

Corner of 6th and Jefferson

*Spotless 89 Car Wash • Belle*



Bill & Laura Voss



**OWENS  
TOWING**

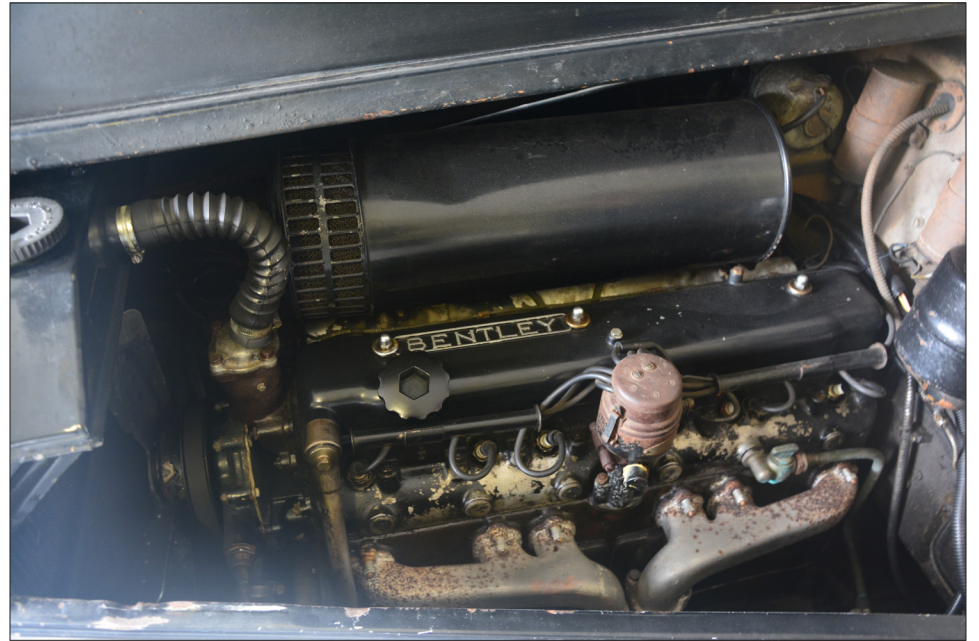
- 24 HOUR SERVICE -

Steve Brown - Owner

**We offer tire service, auto repair,  
oil changes, lock outs**

**573-859-3912**

**Belle and Linn locations**



## Bentley • from page 6

Bentley models are notable in the United States because they are British import cars. The Mark VI was in production between 1946 and 1952 as the first luxury car produced by the manufacturer following World War II. Between the car's luxury status and a postwar steel shortage in Europe, only about 5,200 were produced during the model's seven-year run. According to a 1971 article by the British magazine Autocar, market analysis showed that in 1951, a three-year-old Mark VI that had driven more than 10,000 miles was worth £5,335 when it cost £4,038 new because of both the model's popularity and the shortage of cars created by the lack of steel.

"I always liked British cars for some reason, even though they're a pain in the butt," Duchscherer said. "They always had problems with Smiths Instruments and things like that."

The Bentley Mark VI models had many features, some of which present a stark contrast with today's cars. Although saloon-style vehicles (the British terminology for "sedan") are still popular today, the Mark VI had a different take on the four-door look. The front doors are rear-hinged coach doors, as the manufacturer describes it, or "suicide doors," as slang describes them. The nickname originated because of the tendency of rear-hinged doors to pop open from aerodynamic drag while driving. Seatbelts were uncommon during coach doors' height in popularity. The

Mark VI did not feature seat belts though it did include a sliding sunroof, a windscreen with hidden electric defrosters and demisters and provisions for a radio. Other interior features included footrests and collapsible writing desks in the backseat.

"They'd be laptop desks today," Duchscherer said while unfolding one of his Mark VI's writing desks.

The 1947 model Duchscherer owns is the third Mark VI he's had over the years. He also had 1948 and 1952 models at other points in his life.

"I saw it online," Duchscherer said about the car he owns now. "I hadn't had one in a while... I probably paid a little too much for it."

Although cars have always been more of a hobby for Duchscherer, he said he can fix most issues with the car through tinkering. If the engine needs work, he handles it. He said in the future, he may decide to restore the original interior, which has become worn after more than 75 years.

Regardless of what's in the interior, Duchscherer said the people he encounters while driving the Bentley usually have something to say about it when they see it.

"Most people, when they see it, they smile," he said. "They wave, or if I'm stopped at a light, somebody next to me will say 'beautiful car' or 'nice car.' I like it."



## American Auto Supp

Car - Truck - Tractor - Paint - Welding Suppl

Hours: Monday thru Friday - 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.  
Saturday - 8 a.m. to noon

602 E. Main Street • Linn, MO

**573-897-3655**

## Schollmeyer Garage

Specializing  
in used  
American  
car parts



8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Mon. thru Fri. Chamois, MO • (573)-763-5352

## Four signs it's time to replace your tires

Inflation has been a hot topic for several years, as the cost of everything from groceries to gas to housing has increased considerably since 2019. Cars are no exception to that phenomenon, and anyone who has purchased a new car over the last half decade likely experienced some sticker shock when they started their search for a new vehicle. Data from Kelley Blue Book indicates the average cost of a new car was \$37,590 in 2019. By 2023, the average cost had risen to \$47,899. That marks an increase of more than 27 percent in a four-year period.

Cars are indeed a significant investment, which underscores the importance of vehicle maintenance. Maintenance is more than just tending to what's under the hood. Tires also require drivers' attention, as aging, damaged tires pose a safety risk that also compromise vehicle performance. Tires are easily overlooked, but the following are four signs tires need to be replaced.

1. Worn tread: The automotive experts at AutoZone® note that

tread depth is the most prevalent indicator that a tire needs to be replaced. AutoZone® notes that tread depth should always be at least 2/32 of an inch throughout the tire. Depth should be measured across the tread and around the circumference. If the tread is at or below 2/32 of an inch, the tire should be replaced.

2. Bulges, gouges or cracks: Geico® notes that a deflated tire bulges at the sides, and that can compromise the safety of everyone in the vehicle. AutoZone® says bulges occur when air gets between the inner liner and outer rubber layers, which can happen after hitting a curb or driving over a sizable pothole. A gouge or cut that is deeper than the outer layer of the tire also necessitates replacement.

3. Poor grip: Drivers may be able to feel certain tire problems, including poor grip, while driving. In such instances, tires may feel as though they are slipping. The tire experts at Firestone note that low tread can reduce tire traction and cause wheels to slip, which may be more noticeable when acceler-



ating from a stop or driving on wet roads. Drivers who feel their tires are slipping can test the tread and replace tires that are low.

4. Vibration: Vibration is another issue drivers may feel rather than see. And identifying the cause requires noting where the vibrations are felt. Geico®

notes that a feeling of vibration or thumping that feels like it's coming from under the seats may indicate the tires are not balanced. A suspension issue could be to blame if the steering wheel feels like it's vibrating. Either feeling should be brought to the attention of a mechanic immediately.

Tire issues affect vehicle performance and compromise the safety of drivers, their passengers and fellow motorists. When vehicles are not performing at peak capacity, drivers should not overlook various tire issues as a potential cause of such troubles.



**Specializing in Jeep Customization and Car Maintenance**



Offering Mickey Thompson, Cooper & Master Craft Tires up to 40's Teraflex and Mickey Thompson Certified Dealer

**B&R Automotive**

**AUTOMOTIVE REPAIR SPECIALIST LLC**  
**573-897-2626**

**54 Margaret Lane • Linn, Mo**

Follow us on Facebook: BANDRAUTOMOTIVERS



Restoring the classics – Specializing in frame-off restoration



**WE ARE HERE FOR ALL OF YOUR CLASSIC RIDE RESTORATION NEEDS**



**SERVING YOUR CLASSIC VEHICLE NEEDS PAINT, CUSTOM UPDATES, AND TOTAL FRAME-OFF RESTORATION!**

**Bernie and Michele Kolb**  
**ClassicRidesLLC@gmail.com**

**573-690-7168**