



The Falcon News

of the WESTERN PA CHAPTER of the FALCON CLUB OF AMERICA

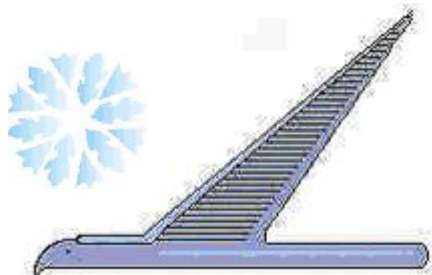


THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER

of the WESTERN PA CHAPTER of the FALCON CLUB OF AMERICA

VOLUME 2 ISSUE 1

Winter 2009



A Message from Our President ... Bob Clark

We didn't do a very good job of getting our annual report to National this year and I am determined to turn things around in 2009. We will make the necessary improvements to make our young chapter grow into an organization that will make us proud.

First of all, we will set a calendar of events and follow it accordingly. The Executive Board will be meeting next week to discuss the current calendar. A schedule of meetings will be available on our Web site.

Second, we will fill the vacant officers positions (Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer) within the next month. We have some possible volunteers of the female persuasion. Women seem to have better organizational skills.

We have put together some tentative cruises that will enable us to meet people in all regions of our area. I would like to call these

our *Compass Cruises*, since there will be one in the north, south, east and west of Pittsburgh.

These will by no means be the only cruises we attend this year and at each cruise members will be equipped with business cards, which they can pass out to potential new members. These will be available at our February meeting.

Finally, we will update our roster and put one member in charge of keeping that roster current.

I am quite sure we will have a few other improvements that will come about in 2009, but these are some of the things on our agenda along with getting as many of you as possible to attend the National Meet in Dover, Delaware July 16th - 18th.

Keep the lines of communication open and I'll see you at our next meeting, if not before!



"We will make the necessary improvements to make our young chapter grow into an organization that will make us proud." - President - Bob Clark

No other man-made device since the shields and lances of the ancient knights fulfills a man's ego like an automobile.
- Sir William



CHAPTER MEETINGS

A schedule of Chapter Meetings is to be announced and posted on the Web site. There will be a meeting at each of our *Compass Cruises* with additional meetings scheduled throughout the year.

OFFICERS

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Vehicle Spotlight

Changing Goals - Bob Keib

The old car hobby is made up of a diverse spectrum of people with interests ranging from imports to classics. Fiberglass 1932 Fords are a pleasure to look at and enjoy in the same way as a 1967 Corvette. The point is, there is plenty of room in the hobby for anything with wheels and many of us go through a number of stages before we truly find the car we appreciate the most. My interest in the hobby has taken me through a number of stages as I have grown older. My first love was a replica of a Porsche Speedster. The car was delivered to my home in a wood crate and after years of saving and countless hours in the garage, it became a national show winner. I was so proud of that car and can remember every nut and bolt. The car was great providing it never rained, it was always warm and I never needed to transport anyone but my wife. However, my family grew, and my wife started to make "unreasonable" demands such as a heater, roll up windows and a top. My toy was destined to be replaced by a civilized family car.... a 401 HP Ford Starliner. We went from kiddy car to Greyhound bus! The car was so

long that the only way it fit into the garage was if I removed the garage door handle.



This car had heat, windows and room for a small army. It nearly required a commercial drivers license and, at three miles to a gallon on premium gas, never met a gas station it did not like. Another change was in order. A Falcon seemed to be a great compromise between the two. A 1963 convertible was the goal. Our search for a Falcon took many twists and turns. We attended Ford shows in Carlisle, Pennsylvania and Columbus, Ohio with no luck. We learned that even Ford people can

30th National Convention
July 16-18, 2009
Dover, Delaware

A Chance Meeting

Bob Clark was in one of his favorite home improvement stores recently and ran into an acquaintance. They picked up a conversation and were interrupted by a guy who knew the acquaintance. It turned out that this guy had just purchased a 1964 Falcon Sprint and an immediate friendship was forged.

Trivia

(Falcon or Otherwise)

Don't ignore this just because it looks weird. Believe it or not, you can read it.

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Amzanig huh?

misrepresent the condition of a car they are selling in Hemming's. This lesson came after we traveled from Pennsylvania to Georgia, towing a flatbed trailer, to bring a "near perfect" 1963 Falcon convertible home. That trip taught us that the definition of near perfect to one person does not necessarily mean the same to everyone else. Our trust in Ford people took us next to New England where we found our "new" car. The owner was a Falcon Club member and made our purchase a positive and memorable experience. The car we purchased was a 1963 Futura

convertible equipped with a six and four speed. Cosmetically it was great. The car had gorgeous red paint and a new white top. The chrome glistened in the sunlight and the stainless was near perfect. The problem was that it was not reliable. Like everyone, it had good days and bad. Some



days it would start and run like new. Other days it would show its age. If the car was going to be enjoyed, major refurbishment would be required for the motor, brakes, steering and suspension. The goal was to breathe new life into a car that was more than forty years old. The question became how....We evaluated a number of options ranging from a complete motor, brakes, steering and suspension restoration to original specifications to a complete modernization to new technology. I had the skill and room to do all the restoration work

myself in my in my garage but I had no fabrication skills if the decision was made to completely upgrade the vehicle with new technology. I conducted hours of research and read everything I could about the construction of six and eight cylinder

Falcons. I purchased interchange manuals to determine what parts are interchangeable with others. I called salvage yards and inquired about the availability of V8 spindles and related parts to convert the car from a six to an eight. The end result is that I mentally went in

circles trying to separate "needs" versus "wants". I wanted a reliable V8 but only had the skill to rebuild what I had.

A visit to a local Ford show helped make the decision for me. I saw an early Mustang equipped with a fuel injected 302 and five speed. In addition to having a late model motor and transmission, the Mustang had been converted to Mustang II front suspension with disc brakes and rack and pinion steering. The owner said the car drove like new, was reliable and could be

serviced at any Ford dealership or independent garage. My wants overtook my needs and, to a degree, my budget.

It was immediately clear to me that I did not have the fabrication skills to modify the

Falcon to accommodate the new suspension and drive line. I contacted all the local speed and restoration shops and could not find anyone with the ability to convert the car. I subsequently expanded my search to nationally advertised Ford specialty shops and was happy to locate CJ Pony Parts in Harrisburg,

Pennsylvania. All of their magazine advertisements focused on Mustangs and the majority of their restoration experience was in that arena too. A visit to their shop sold me on their capabilities. Their store was spotless and their shop was as clean and organized as any new car dealership. They lived for Fords and were perfectionists. I talked with their sales staff, mechanics, fabricators and management. I had no question that they would deliver a quality product. I also fully understood that it would not be cheap.

In evaluating the cost, I weighed the benefits and drawbacks of everything from buying a damaged late model Mustang and stripping it for parts to buying everything new from Ford. I ultimately made the decision to buy everything new from Ford Racing ranging from a 345 horse power 302 crate motor to the electronics and fuel injection to make it run. The five-speed transmission came from a scrap yard and the new steering and front suspension came from Rod & Custom Motorsports. I ordered the nine-inch rear end from Currie. Their quality was excellent and the end result was a direct bolt in that I completed in my home garage. Knowing that a tremendous amount of shop time would be consumed in front end fabrication, I pulled the old motor, transmission and related equipment to save money. I also attempted to sell many of the old parts to generate

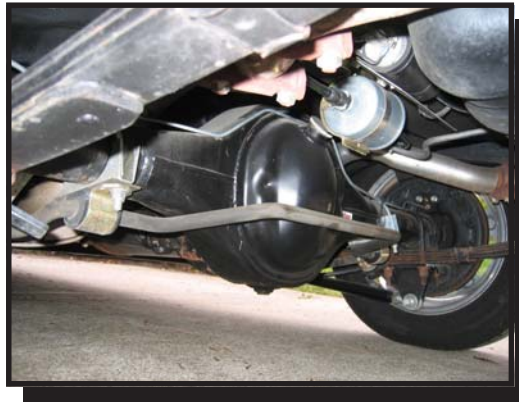


some revenue. The thought process worked well but budgets were still overdrawn. The most valuable lesson learned was to double your estimate because things are not always what they seem to be.

The end result of the modification to the Falcon was beyond my dreams. The car ran and drove like a new vehicle yet retained all the outward appearance of a stock 1963 Falcon convertible down to the wire wheels and gearshift. If you did not hear it, you would think that the car was a completely stock six cylinder. On the negative side, the car was somewhat of a challenge driving in traffic and a near nightmare driving in the rain. It had far too much power connected to an aggressive clutch even with a modest 3.50 rear end. I am a conservative driver but spent more time driving sideways from traffic lights than an old guy should. It was time to do suspension work!

Lowering a Falcon is good in theory but presents some challenges in execution. The selection I made was two-inch dropped spindles in front and reverse eye springs in the rear. The good news was that the stock tires did not rub anything so I was making progress. The progress hit a significant obstacle when it was time to select new wheels and tires. Selecting wheels and tires for the front were simple. Spacing was not an issue. Selecting wheels and tires for the rear was a completely different story. The Curry nine-inch is really big and the wheel wells are really small so choices become limited quickly. The best that I could do was fifteen inch wheels with stock back spacing. I also added sway bars front

and rear as well as adjustable traction bars. The end result is a well balanced car that is much easier to drive. My only hope is that I never get a flat tire while on travel. The spacing is so close that it requires two jacks to change a tire... one for the body and one for the axel. In addition, the traction bars must be released so that the axel can drop low enough for the tire to be removed.



Every project had lessons learned and this one was no different. I learned lessons such as:

We evaluated a number of options ranging from a complete motor, brakes, steering and suspension restoration to original specifications to a complete modernization to new technology. I had the skill and room to do all the restoration work myself in my in my garage but I had no fabrication skills if the decision was made to completely upgrade the vehicle with new technology. I conducted hours of research and read everything I could about the construction of six and eight cylinder Falcons. I purchased interchange manuals to determine what parts are interchangeable with others. I called salvage yards and inquired about the availability of V8 spindles and related parts to convert the car from a six to an eight. The end result is that I mentally went in circles trying to separate "needs" versus "wants". I wanted a reliable V8 but only had the skill to rebuild what I had.

- Any car project can get out of hand if you don't firmly identify goals then take action to meet them.
- Budgets can be easily exceeded and early estimates should be doubled to account for unforeseen items.
- Know your limitations in vehicle construction then select a reputable supplier to help you with things that are past your skills.
- Last but not least... Extreme power in a lightweight car can make the driver smile and cringe at nearly the same time.

CJ Pony Parts became an excellent supplier during their portion of the construction of my car. They have subsequently helped other Falcon owners that I have referred to them. Their quality and integrity is second to none. Dennis Carpenter, Melvin's, Summit and Currie Enterprises also go out of their way to be helpful and responsive. The end result was an enjoyable construction experience and a "new" Falcon that can be proudly driven anywhere.

If any club member is considering the same conversion, please feel free to contact me at bkeib@greggservices.com or at home in the evenings or on weekends at 412-653-6216. I would be happy to assist anyone thinking about the same conversion.

