

NETHERCUTT TOUR

SATURDAY, APRIL 9, 2022

BY RON VERSCHOOR



The Nethercutt Museum



A pair of 1932
Austro-Daimlers

"I think of myself as a historian. I feel a certain dedication to the preservation of fine automobiles."

—J.B. NETHERCUTT

It is difficult to measure the impact J.B. Nethercutt had on the CCCA, our region and the overall collector car hobby. He was instrumental in the development of Classic Car Club of America and the Southern California Region during the 1950s, and tales of cars from the Collection being driven cross country to Buck Hills Falls, Pennsylvania in the middle of winter for the CCCA Annual Meeting are legendary. As are those occasions when a fleet of Nethercutt Classics was dispatched to each Grand Classic across the country on that traditional second Saturday in July. The Fall 1963 issue of *The Classic Car* included coverage of three Grand Classics that summer and the section reporting about the Southern California event included this hard-to-believe passage:

"This year we all noted the absence of Jack Nethercutt, who achieved a spectacular "first" for the national club, by exhibiting a 1933 Bugatti Grand Prix at Redondo Beach, driving a 1931 Bugatti Royale to Indianapolis, and showing a 1932 Marmon (also driven from Los Angeles) at Morristown, New Jersey."

The restoration of one car in particular forever changed the way collector cars would be restored and evaluated. That car is the 1930 duPont Model G Town Car by Merrimac which made its debut in 1958 earning a first-place award at the Morristown, New Jersey Grand Classic in July, followed by Best of Show honors at the Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance in November of that year. (Driven from Los Angeles to the Monterey Peninsula, by the way.)

The Nethercutt Collection has six Pebble Beach Best of Show wins to its credit, more than any other entrant in its 70-year history. In 1995, the Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance recognized J.B. and Dorothy with a separate class of cars from the Collection. "Class R: The Nethercutt Collection Special Exhibit" featured 15 cars ranging from a 1909 Gobron Brillé Touring to a 1967 Ferrari 365 GT California Spyder. The 13 in between were all Full Classics®. Entered for competition that same year in a regularly judged class was the 1932 Maybach Zeppelin DS8 Sport Cabriolet by Spohn that, not surprisingly, won its class.

On the local front, J.B. Nethercutt won four Paul Cerf Awards from our region and certainly more first-place CCCA wins than anyone else—most of those at the perfect 100-point level.

And the Collection (housed in what is known as San Sylmar, aka The Tower of Beauty) was a much-anticipated destination for CCCA Annual Meeting participants on five occasions: in 1981, 1986, 1994, 2007 and 2013. The last four of those events took place in Southern California but it was the 1981 event that warrants a special mention. The 1981 Annual Meeting took place in San Francisco and normally the event winds down on Sunday. That year, however, "For the 300 plus participants, the frosting on the cake was yet to come. Early Monday morning, buses took about 100 of the group to the airport for an hour flight to Sylmar (Southern California). Boarding buses again to the museum of J.B. Nethercutt for a personally guided tour of the grandiose collection."

Memories of these grand events and automobiles come to mind whenever someone mentions J.B. Nethercutt or the Nethercutt Collection. So it was only fitting that Regional Director Paul Whitney suggested it was time our region visit the Collection, once again. ➤



Photos clockwise from top far left: 1930 duPont Model G Town Car by Merrimac; A small portion of the mascot collection; CCCA license plate on the 1932 Chrysler Imperial; A 12-cylinder 1933 Franklin 17A Club Brougham;

A group of 50 members and guests arrived in Sylmar on Saturday morning, April 9, assembling at the Museum for a casual stroll through row after row of all manner of collector cars. Upon entering the Museum, we were greeted by a pair of 1932 Austro-Daimlers, an ADR8 Alpine Sedan and an ADR8 Limousine, both finished in an identical shade of dark blue. The west end of the building was lined with a row of Rolls-Royce Phantom models, I through VI, plus a Silver Ghost. Interspersed throughout the Museum were half a dozen V-16 Cadillacs, plus strong representation of Packard, Pierce-Arrow and Lincoln.

We formally assembled at 9:45 a.m. for a guided tour of the original San Sylmar building. The lower level is filled with cars and memorabilia—event posters, ceramics, figurines, photographs and news clippings illustrating the Nethercutt's long participation in the old car hobby. The main floor Grand Salon is as spectacular as ever, a mixture of marble, mirrors and chandeliers, with music appropriate to the setting playing in the background. But it is the cars of the Collection that are most memorable.

- Rollston coachwork on the Duesenberg Model J chassis in the form of a JN Convertible Coupe and the Arlington "Twenty Grand" Torpedo Sedan.
- Two 1934 Packard 1108 Twelves: the LeBaron Sport Phaeton and the Dietrich Convertible Sedan.
- Packard Eights such as the 1931 845 Dietrich Sport Sedan and the rare 1930 734 Speedster Victoria.
- A Hispano-Suiza trio: the 1922 H6B Cabriolet deVille by Saoutchik, the 1928 H6C Binder Convertible Coupe, and the 1933 J12 Binder Coupe deVille.
- Front-wheel-drive Classics in the form of the 1930 Cord L-29 Town Car by Murphy, a 1930 Ruxton Sedan and a 1937 Cord 812 Supercharged Phaeton.
- Isotta Fraschini, Stutz, Mercedes and Mercedes-Benz—it goes on and on.

From the main floor, we ascended to the mezzanine, home to a vast collection of automobile mascots, music boxes and trophies. This elevated level also provides breathtaking views of the Salon below. Climbing "The Stairway To The Stars", visitors arrived at "Cloud 99", the fourth floor of the structure and home to the equally impressive collection of musical instruments. Displayed and demonstrated are musical watches, music boxes, phonographs, automatic musical instruments, player and reproducing pianos, orchestrions and the mighty Wurlitzer theater organ.

As with everything else in the collection, these are not just art objects—they all operate as when new, true to the Collection's mission of restoring, preserving and sharing Functional Fine Art. Hearing the mighty Hupfeld Excelsior Pan Orchestrion play, you come to appreciate technology that is now nearly 100 years old.

After the guided tour was complete, we returned to the Museum for further investigation (or more accurately, appreciation) of the cars. In doing so, it became apparent that it is not only the grand things for which the collection so memorable; it's the little things that remind us >





Photo above: 1937 Pierce-Arrow 1702 Enclosed Drive Limousine with the Model A Travelodge, aka Tabulating classroom. Below photo: The crowd in awe of the Grand Salon.

why this place and its mission is so important.

Color has always been a distinguishing element of the cars in the Collection. Consider the stark white paint and maroon and purple trim on the Packard 734, or the mustard and green combination on the Isotta Fraschini Town Car, or the most famous orange-yellow tone on the 1934 Dietrich Packard. That color selection came about after Roger Morrison shared a 1934 Packard advertisement with J.B. during its restoration. The goal was to match the color used in the ad and as John C. Meyer, III wrote, "a combination of orange, red and yellow was mixed to J.B.'s satisfaction, a vividly rich hue, tailored for the car soon to be known as "Orello".

Long before mere mortals could acquire personalized license plates in California, J.B. had a wide array of descriptive tags appropriately paired with cars in the Collection. "V16 XTC" on the Cadillac Aerodynamic Coupe, "P II" on the Rolls-Royce Phantom II Brewster Town Car, "NO H2O" on an air-cooled 1933 Franklin Twelve and "Fatty" on the 1923 McFarlan, a nod to its first owner, Mr. Arbuckle. But most significant to Club members is the plate affixed to the 1932 Chrysler Imperial CL LeBaron Convertible Sedan (Senior Classic #422), carrying the four simple letters: "CCCA".

Admiring the 1937 Pierce-Arrow 1702 Enclosed Drive Limousine attached to the Pierce-Arrow Model A Travelodge trailer, Belva Baltzar shared a memorable story about her involvement with our Club. Years ago, J.B.'s secretary, Viola Bourland was heavily involved in the tabulation process once the Classics were judged. She recognized that others in the Club needed to learn this process and recruited Belva as a future tabulator, using that Pierce-Arrow Travelodge trailer as a mobile classroom.

These little things, as well as the grand things, make a visit to the Nethercutt Collection so special, capturing the common bond CCCA members share. That bond was best explained by J.B. himself:

"The Club will survive, not because of any person or group of persons, but because of the cars. They were built without compromise and no matter what anyone does, the cars will always draw people together who appreciate them". •

Thanks to Jack, Jr. and Helen Nethercutt for continuing this legacy, and to the very gracious staff of the Nethercutt Collection.

THE VAULT

AT THE MONTGOMERY

PREMIUM VEHICLE STORAGE



Private and Gated Vehicle Storage with Personal Storage Available in Toluca Lake, CA



- Gated Subterranean Garage
- Controlled Access - Keyed Entry
- 24 Hour Lighting
- Power for Battery Tenders
- On Site Storage Rooms Available



**CALL FOR MORE
INFORMATION:
(818) 509-1663**