

THE MANY CHAPTERS OF THE PHRENDLY PHAETON

A postscript to the Bill Burchett Tribute in Issue 4, 2020 of the *Side Mount Mirror*

By Bob Burchett
Cousin to Bill Burchett

Bill is happily sipping 20-year-old Scotch where he is while I get Jack Daniel's...doesn't seem fair somehow. But since Ron Verschoor requested that I provide a postscript to the story about Bill's 1928 Dual-Windshield Phrendly Phaeton (that's Packard 443 to a few of you), I need some fortification to help me get through this exercise, so here goes. I sure do miss Bill!

First, have any of you ever cleaned out 200+ pounds of CCCA trophies, 10,000 photos, 500 catalogs, 60 judge's badges and 300 odd awards from a relative's home after they left town never to return again? God, for your sake I hope not, but with the help of David and Dianne Reidy, my wife Phyllis and the venerable trustee Chris Bock, we all sifted through the automotive insanity that defined Bill Burchett from his apartment in Fullerton. Frankly this is all of your fault and I am here to explain why.

If you recall in the last issue of the *Side Mount Mirror*, I recapped how Bill was always married to the vintage and Classic automobile world since (in his opinion) there was no member of the opposite sex that could keep their same shape, exterior and cost over a 50+ year timeframe the way a Classic car can. I am not expecting any argument here, so moving right along.

I transferred Bill's phone line to my cell phone so I could tell all of the charitable causes Bill seemed to endlessly donate money to that sorry, he would not have them on the Christmas card list so please

delete his name permanently. The good part was I did hear from lots of the friends he made over his 86+ years on "this side of the lawn," as he referred to it. The call forwarding allowed friends to explain the circumstances of how they met Bill and share the wonderful tales of the times they had with him. That made it all worthwhile, but there WAS one predicted part I was prepared for because of the advice and council I had received in advance. Invariably, after reminiscing about the good times (and you probably know where this is going), the conversation typically proceeding along these lines: "Sorry to hear about Bill—so what became of the CAR?"

That is the reason for this Dear Phrendly advice column where a 93-year-old car dispenses wisdom about an 86-year-old driver so here it comes (got your Scotch ready?).

The poor Packard suffered a major mechanical failure in 2019 where the #6- and #7-cylinder walls cracked due to overheating (apparently) when the water distribution tube was blocked up due to rusting. This was despite the fact I had both the engine

and radiator back-flushed and installed a Pyrometer (non-electric) gauge to watch the temperature since Bill told me he had overheated the car years ago and caused it to need a cylinder wall crack to be repaired. The water leak adjacent to the exhaust valve seized in the guide on #7 and that caused a damaged cam follower for which I ordered a replacement set but even with the infamous Calvin's help (see him at Robert Escalante's

shop, as you know) we were unable to free the stuck valve so off it went to Harry Nicks' Old Car Repairs on a flat bed.

The Packard was still in Harry's shop after Bill's passing and with a new radiator core and a freshly repaired block Harry got it all humming again and now it needed a new home so Chris consulted the Trustee documents which spelled out the legal dispensation of the assets of Bill's estate.

Now we need that drum roll I promised. Bill had long since sold off his other vintage cars so now Chris needed a buyer for the Packard and Bill had that all spelled out 25+ years ago. Still awake? The Phamous Phrendly Phaeton had a sales-hierarchy all in place where, along with any remaining assets, it was to be sold and the cash disbursed in accordance with the document SO I was now third in line to buy the car.

Just goes to show that YOU, the CCCA folks ranked way higher! So, the first and second pre-arranged buyers were consulted and both had more cars than they needed and politely declined the car, leaving it to me to decide. Did I want it? Of course I did! Could I buy it? Not a chance!

Now remember that part about the CCCA being Bill's shining star he always drove toward on the CARavans? Well Bill wrote >



The Packard on the 2012 Oregon CARavan



Photos clockwise from top left: The Reidy Museum Commemorates Bill; The Phrendly Phaeton somewhere in Arizona on the 2007 Spirit of the Southwest CARavan; David Reidy with the Packard.



into his trust that the CCCA Museum was the primary beneficiary of Bill's Estate! Additionally, Bill was both a Master Mason (for those not so-oriented, that means a 3rd degree Mason, as I am) but Bill went the step farther to become a member of the Shriners and so he earmarked the balance of the assets to go to the Shriners Hospital. OK so now I have to take back 10% of what I said about him; that was cool.

While it did feel good to be mentioned in the Trust as in-line for the car, even as Bill's next-of-kin I knew that my ownership of some 15 other cars meant there was no room in the garage(s) nor the cash to buy Phrendly, so I did the next best thing: I conned (er...I mean assisted) Dave Reidy into the idea of buying Phrendly to keep the car in the Southern California Classic Car-escape. This way it would remain where it was best-known; visiting at the Packard International

Club meet, the San Marino Motor Classic event, the HCCA holiday motoring excursion and others that Phrendly was so much a part of. Hey, that is a Win-Win in my book and now I could retire my blue-suede shoes as the last known Packard salesman for Earle C. Anthony, right? I am still awaiting my commission check (lost in the mail with my Nov 3 election ballot I think).

Chris quickly had Harry put the Packard on a flatbed and before Dave could re-think the insanity of this purchase, had it dropped off at his place and got out of sight quickly to avoid any stray gunfire. You don't want these kinds of shady deals going south on you over a few pesky details, right?

Lucky for me (and Chris), you can fool some of the people some of the time so sight-partially-seen but baffled by B.S. anyway, Dave Reidy became the proud owner of The 1928 Packard Phrendly Phaeton and

now he OWNS ONE more (pun definitely intended!). By the way, "Owns One" just happens to be the California license plate Bill had on Phrendly.

Consider that since Bill drove the car daily for 32+ years, Dave inherited a non-synchronized transmission that probably needs dental work on the gear-teeth, brakes that only seem to slow the car down occasionally, four bald, overpriced (did I mention non-existent?) tires, orange-peeling, crazed and cracked paint, a broken gas gauge, a clock I ordered from Argentina that worked for three weeks and quit, stripped bolts in the spotlight, an original Packard Klaxon motor horn Bill had long since worn out completely, a non-functioning set of second-windshield brackets, impossible to turn steering AND (this is the best part) two partially consumed quarts of Johnnie Walker Red Scotch hidden

in the trunk. Such a deal!

So what if it doesn't fit in your garage? That wasn't in the fine print and who said anything about a warranty?

Dave slowed down (a little) on the complaints when he was bequeathed a 50-year collection of brand-new Pebble Beach Concours ties (Bill never wore them; he was always attired in his signature Bolo ties, remember?) and jackets (see a couple on the commemorative wall). Dave also now has the 1928 Packard framed stained-glass window Bill commissioned so long ago that was (at one time) illuminated by two strings of incandescent tiny bulb lights in tubes, one on each side. While extraordinarily well done, they were the old "series string" so when one went out, they all went out, so I promptly replaced the left-and-right side light tubes with four sides of LEDs and installed a regulated power supply to run >

PHRENDLY PHAETON

them. Dianne then dedicated a space in their Hollywood/ Shirley Temple/ Packard museum and placed the freshly illuminated window in it along with Bill's stinkin' badges collection and great photos of Bob Hope and Bill in the car and much more. Note that Bob Hope is in the photo as well. Nice touch from the original Wax Museum, eh?

Dave now has a new toy to play with and he is working hard to roll back the condition of Phrendly to the 1980s era when Bill first took delivery of a really nice car. As you all know Bill drove the car literally rain or shine daily and while intensely loved, the car really showed the wear. A lesser car would have collapsed into a pile of loose bolts in the garage but this is a right? Now that Dave has spent a few thousand hours on his new ride if you come to visit it, please wear your face mask (has nothing to do with a virus; Dave doesn't want you to exhale on the car) plus sunglasses (his insurance reportedly doesn't cover blindness induced by staring at an overly pretty car finish, bright chrome or freshly cleaned running boards) and if you are allowed into the car kindly wear your white gloves out of respect for your 93-year-old, four-wheeled elder, okay?

So that, dear Classic Car Readers, is the latest chapter in the tale of the Packard you knew so well. I am certain Bill now knows that Dave and Dianne have the Packard in their new home along with all of the memorabilia that goes with it. This includes Bill's awards, framed items, trophies and a lot more but we want to remind you all that there are lots of photos of Bill and the Packard out there stuck in cellphones and we want them!

Dave & Dianne have Bill's photo collection in their museum to remember him by so now you do your part and email those pictures and information to William.Paris@Burchett.org or if you have pictures in your phone to directly email they can go to the digital picture frame I maintain at Bill.Burchett@MyPixstar.com

The lives of our Classics have many chapters—we are only the stewards of these great cars. ●

> Bob Burchett

> 310-686-9973 to my cell phone



The Reidys with the 1928 Packard

The elaborate figure-heads of famous American clipper ships were not cast from solid conduct, but built up of fitted pieces—then carved to final form

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