

A Closer Look

EVERY CLASSIC HAS A STORY

DIGGING DEEPER INTO THE HISTORY OF **THREE CARS** PICTURED IN THIS ISSUE'S "MEMORIES" SECTION UNCOVERS SOME FASCINATING DETAILS.



1931 DUESENBERG MODEL J MURPHY CONVERTIBLE COUPE

1 Roughly 200 of the approximate 480 Duesenberg Model J chassis carried Murphy coachwork and somewhere around 50 of the Murphy-bodied examples were convertible coupes. Duesenberg J-395 (engine number) on chassis number 2414 is a short wheelbase (142.5") chassis equipped with Murphy's sleek disappearing top design. Dwight Schooling shares history of this car and reports it was equipped with body number 921 finished in primrose yellow and pale green.

Its earliest known owner was Blake Garner (1936) of either Chicago or Philadelphia. A postwar photo shows the car with 1949 California license plates and it was part of the fleet of Classic that made up George Sweiger's Pacific Auto Rentals. The car passed through other owners



then returned to Pacific Auto Rentals for use on the screen.

J-395 played an important role in the 1962 film, "Whatever Happened to Baby Jane" as the vehicle that paralyzed Blanche Hudson (played by Joan Crawford), establishing the background for the drama between Blanche and her sister Jane (played by Bette Davis). Interestingly, the driver behind the wheel is not revealed until late in the film but it's well worth watching (or watching again) to learn the entire story. The car also appeared in the 1976 television movie, "Gable and Lombard" and the 1980s television series, "Bring 'Em Back Alive."

Following restoration at the Fennel shop, the car was shown at the Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance in 1986 and there were so many Duesenbergs entered that year that a separate class for Murphy Coachwork was created. New Jersey CCCA member Oscar Davis owned the car at the time before it returned to the western part of the country as part of the Imperial Palace Collection and later, the Blackhawk Collection. In 2005 it returned to Pebble Beach and placed first in the Duesenberg class, then owned by Chris Koch of Florida. It garnered A-C-D Club primary and senior first place wins at the Auburn, Indiana reunion in 2005 and 2006, respectively.

J-395 was seen at the 2012 CCCA Annual Meeting when part of the Andrews collection in Fort Worth. It sold for \$3.5 million in 2015. >

Clockwise from top left: J-395 in 1949; On the field at Pebble Beach in 1986; In the Pacific Auto Rentals warehouse; Another photo from 1986; Arriving at Eckhart Park in Auburn, Indiana on Labor Day weekend 2006.

1933 ROLLS-ROYCE PHANTOM II DARRIN TOWN CAR

2

Following the end of Springfield, Massachusetts's production, Rolls-Royce offered a limited run of 125 Derby-built Phantom IIs well suited for the American market. The AJS and AMS series chassis featured left-hand drive and most were fitted with Brewster coachwork. AJS243 is an exception as it carried distinctive town car coachwork by Darrin.

From John DeCampi's "Rolls-Royce in America" comes the notation: "Darrin town car for Countess di Frasso fitted circa 1938." The story goes that a friendly fashion rivalry between the Countess (also known as Dorothy Caldwell Taylor) and cinema star Constance Bennett went far beyond mere apparel. Ms. Bennett's preferred mode of transportation was a stunning Rolls-Royce Phantom II Brewster Town Car (chassis 69WJ) and the Countess countered with this Darrin-bodied Town Car. Choosing a favorite between the two is a matter of taste: the stately and elegant Brewster body versus the more flamboyant Darrin design. In terms of accolades, the Brewster gets the nod with Best of Show awards at the 1992 Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance and at Amelia Island almost a quarter of a century later in 2016.

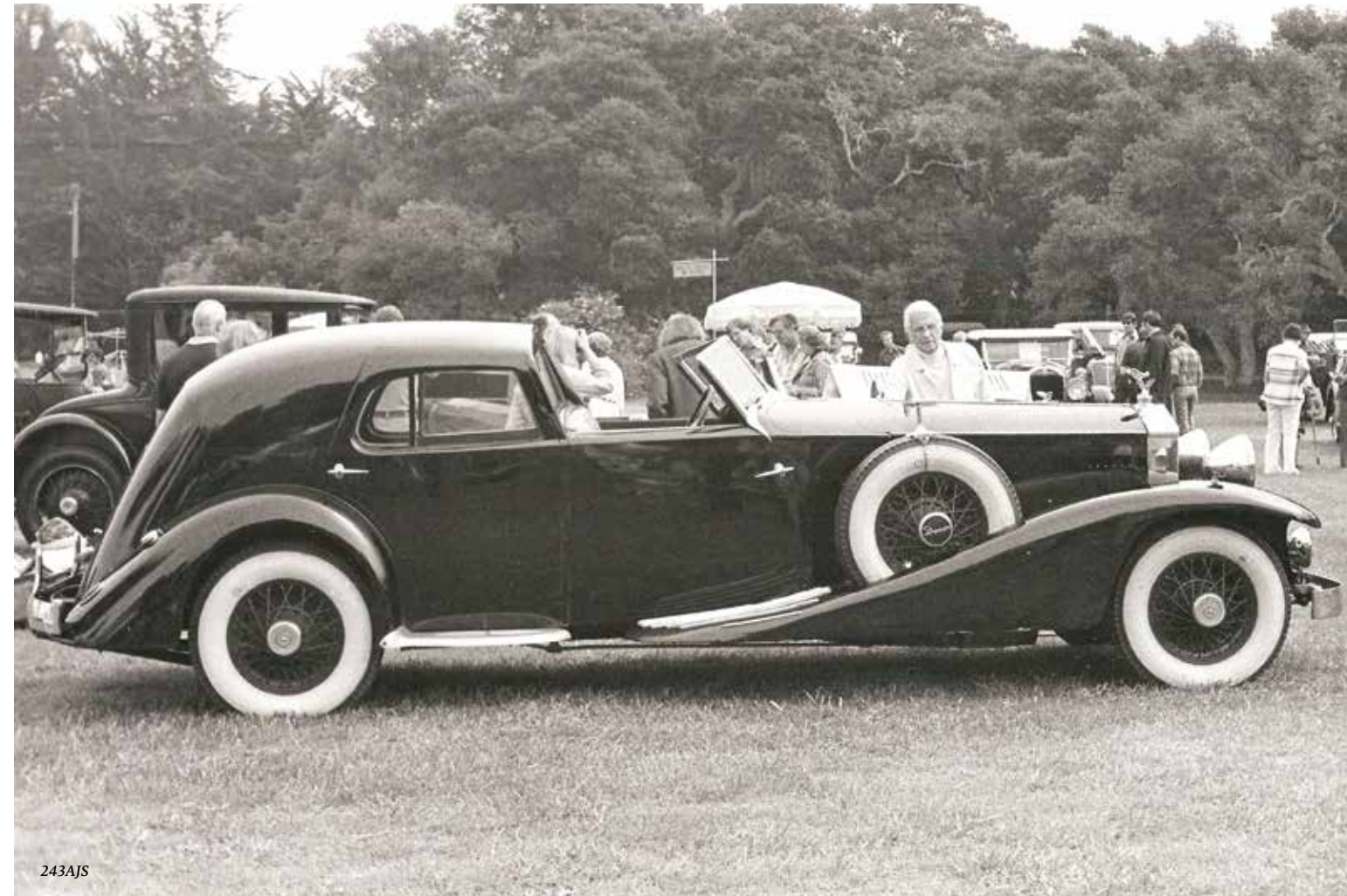
Both are well known to Southern Californians: 69WJ has been part of the Nethercutt Collection for many years and 243AJS was part of the William Lyon Collection. >



Advertisement using 243AJS.



69WJ



243AJS



WHO WORE IT BETTER? TOWN CAR DESIGNS ON PHANTOM I CHASSIS:

At left, Dutch Darrin and his design for 243AJS. At the top of this page, a Brewster design on 69WJ; These two smaller images show 243AJS circa 1985 and 1977.

An aside about "Beaulieu": while Hibbard & Darrin and Fernandez & Darrin have sections in this coachbuilding encyclopedia, there is no listing for Darrin alone. The Fernandez & Darrin (1932 to 1937) section glosses over Darrin's efforts in the United States, simply stating "Darrin returned to the United States, where he worked for Packard on the 1941 Clipper, and after the war for the Kaiser-Frazer Corporation." I wonder what Packard owners would have to say about that?





17EX



16EX

Clockwise from top left:
17EX by Jarvis at Pebble Beach in 2004, Dwight Schooling photo; 15EX by Hooper, Rolls-Royce Foundation image; 16EX by Barker, Rolls-Royce Foundation image; 16EX at Pebble Beach in 1987.

1928 ROLLS-ROYCE PHANTOM I OPEN SPORTS TOURER, BARKER

3 Chassis 16EX is a 1928 Rolls-Royce Phantom I, historically significant in that it was one of a trio of experimental cars developed to explore the high-speed capability of the Rolls-Royce chassis. These triplets had an older sibling in 10EX, a Phantom I built at the end of 1925 and the original test bed for a performance-oriented Rolls-Royce. Chief Project Engineer Ivan Evernden was instrumental in the design of these cars and in a 1965 article published in the Rolls-Royce Owners Club's *Flying Lady* entitled, "The Phantom I Continental" reveals the inspiration for these cars was:

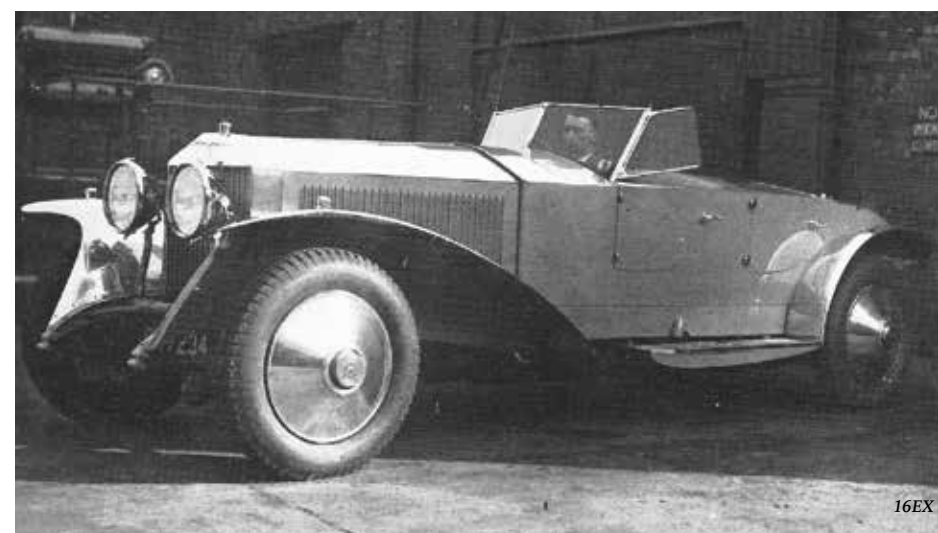
"To appeal to the small but influential fraternity of owners who would accept the discomforts of an open touring body in exchange for an increase in performance and particularly in maximum speed. In this category were certain Europeans who indulged in Continental touring and the Maharajahs of India."

10EX carried sleek sports tourer coachwork by Barker which received mechanical and cosmetic upgrades in 1926, incorporating aerodynamic elements such as its tapered rear tail similar to that of a boat-tail speedster design. The minimalist design provided the added benefit of reduced weight.

Two years after the development of 10EX, the trio of chassis serving



15EX



16EX

as the continuation of the project was dispatched to three different coachbuilders: 15EX to Hooper, 16EX to Barker and 17EX to Jarvis & Sons. While similar in design, all three differed in detail.

In Lawrence Dalton's "Rolls-Royce: The Derby Phantoms" he makes these observations about the three chassis:

- 15EX: Crashed in 1928 and rebuilt as 29CL
- 16EX: Sold in January 1929 to Capt. J.F.C. Kruse
- 17EX: Sold in March 1929 to the Maharajah of Jammu & Kashmir

While 15EX/29CL was eventually rebodied with Hooper limousine coachwork, the other two experimentals survived. The photo of 16EX provided by Andy Spilkoman comes from 1987 at the Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance when it was entered by Don Williams. Its most recent sighting was at the Geneva Auto Show in 2016, displayed alongside 100EX, a 9-litre, 16-cylinder experimental model based on the "Phantom VII" model. If anyone has current 16EX ownership information, please share it.

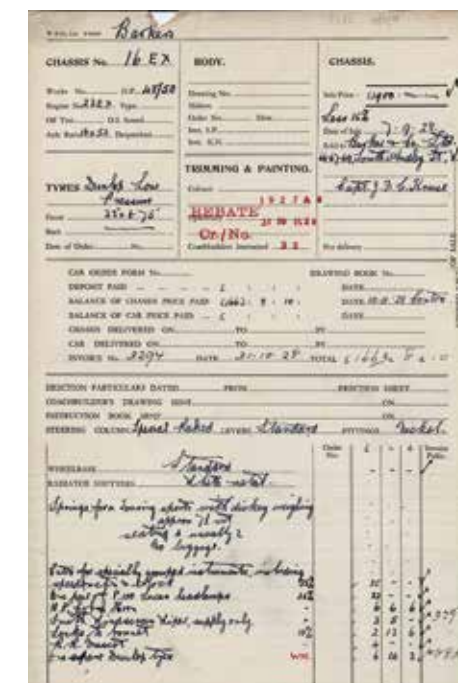
17EX was part of the Rolls-Royce centennial feature at the 2004 Pebble Beach

Concours d'Elegance and more recently appeared at the 2013 Villa d'Este Concours.

Back in the day, the timing of these experimental chassis is important because development of the Phantom II was well under way. Raymond Gentile's "Rolls-Royce Phantom II Continental" mentions the important role these chassis and designs played in the development of the Phantom II Continental chassis, Rolls-Royce's production foray into a special chassis designed for high-speed touring on the European Continent.

Writing about the four experimental chassis, Gentile states: "The completed experimental cars were loosely referred to as "Continental" Phantom I's by the experimental department; however, the version was never put into production or represented to the public as a "Continental".

While both Hooper and Barker coachwork for Rolls-Royce were popular at the time, Jarvis & Sons is less well known. Located in Wimbledon, London, Jarvis was in operation from roughly 1921 to 1949. The "Beaulieu Encyclopedia of the Automobile,



Build sheets for 16EX, courtesy of Hunt House Archives

Coachbuilding" mentions the firm was "renowned for its sporting and racing-car bodies. A particular specialty during the middle of the decade was boat-tailed designs."

Ian W. Rimmer's "Rolls-Royce and Bentley: Experimental Cars" is an excellent resource exploring test bed and developmental models by both firms and another book, "17EX: A Fabulous Destiny" focuses solely on the last of this trio. •

Side Mount



Mirror

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