

# INTRODUCTION LETTER: AMC Special Issue

## FARNA Systems PUBLISHING

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Dear AMC/Rambler Enthusiast,

Thank you for taking a look at this publication. I want to fore-warn you that this is a special "teaser" issue. It contains one or two pages of each article, just enough to give readers a taste of what to expect in future issues. This was done to make the file small enough to easily download and print. And yes, it was done to get you interested yet leave you hanging and wanting more -- what any good marketing strategem should do! Hopefully, I've succeeded and you will want to subscribe.

### **A Little History**

I personally have been involved with AMCs since the first one I owned in the summer of 1978. Since then I've only been without one for a total of 18 months, all at one time. Shortly before I married in 1982, I sold my old 62 Rambler American and bought a "more responsible" car. I didn't know at the time I'd miss my Rambler, but I did. About six months after the marriage I joined the USAF. No time for a car in basic training, and then my wife and I had to move right after! It wasn't long before we settled at our first base, and I was somehow noticing every old Rambler around, though there were few in Mountain Home Idaho! We needed a second car anyway, so what better than another Rambler? It wasn't long before I obtained one -- a 63 American 440 sedan, this one with the "more powerful" OHV six!! Much more driveable than the old L-head! I drove that car for 14 years. It lasted much longer than my first marriage.

I noticed that there was very little information available for Ramblers soon after I got my first one in 78. By 1980 I had started collecting as much info as I could, and joined the AMC Rambler Club. I was having better luck finding information, but there was no single source -- it was scattered everywhere! That's when I determined to write a book on Ramblers. I pursued this as a hobby for several years. Classic Motorbooks was interested in 1983, and they liked my rough draft enough to engage a marketing survey. The survey determined that they could sell about 100,000 copies over a three year period. Classic Motorbooks is the largest automotive book publisher in the U.S. -- they wanted to be able to sell 100,000 copies a year for three years. The head editor suggested I look for a smaller publisher. In the meantime, I'd promised many people in the AMC clubs that they would have a chance to get this book. I decided to self-publish a cleaned up version of the draft I'd sent Classic Motorbooks. I sold over 150 copies of "The Unheralded Rambler" over the next year and a half (circa 1986). Unfortunately desktop publishing wasn't really in use at the time, and the quality of the xeroxed pictures and type written text left much to be desired. At the same time, there was no other consolidated information source -- no one complained or returned a copy.

Rather than peddle the same publication to a smaller publisher, I decided to expand the scope and make the book appeal to a larger audience. "The Unheralded Rambler" only covered U.S. vehicles sold with the Rambler nameplate from 1950-1969. It wouldn't be terribly difficult to add the other AMC vehicles through 1969, but I decided to go through the last year for rear wheel drive cars -- 1983. I reasoned that this just might make the book meet Classic Motorbook's expectations.

I finally finished the manuscript in 1991. Unfortunately, Classic Motorbooks had just printed a couple AMC titles (mostly picture books -- mine were mostly information) and weren't interested in another that would compete for buyers. I sought a smaller publisher and found one. Unfortunately the down-turn in the economy in the early 90s forced them to cancel the project. I had a signed contract and could probably have forced them to do something or pay potential damages, but decided that wasn't the right thing to do.

Instead I turned to self publishing again, this time with the help of a friend with a print shop. He set me up to use his Macintosh computers and PageMaker, and assisted in laying out the pages. "The Compact Chronicles", published in 1992, turned out much better than the previous book, and sold over 500 copies over the next three years. This doesn't sound like much, but I probably made as much as I would have with a publishing contract. But there wasn't 5,000+ copies of the book out there. Honestly, my goal was to print something useful to the AMC/Rambler hobbyist, not to make a lot of money or a name for myself. I still felt a better book could be produced. Laser printing and desktop publishing helped quality tremendously, but the illustrations and photos still lacked quality at 300 dpi.

I decided that an even more comprehensive and higher quality publication was needed. There were still a lot of "information holes" out there! So how do I collect this information yet still continue working on the book? I had a bright idea -- print an AMC magazine! I'd been printing a small home computer magazine for several years, so why not? I already had a lot of information, and researching articles would help me gather more by working in "bite sized chunks" rather than looking at the daunting task of writing an entire book all at once. Thus "American Independent Magazine" (AIM) was born, with the first issue going out in October of 1997. The reason for the name was two-fold: AMC was the last major independent auto maker in the U.S. This also left room to add the other independent makes to the title. If all the independents could join in, this effort could end up being a very nice magazine indeed! Unfortunately, I was unable to entice anyone with enough knowledge to write regularly for the other independents. They just weren't interested in supporting an outsider. It probably didn't help that I told everyone up front that the main emphasis would be on AMC related vehicles, but I did promise a certain percentage of coverage, with coverage growing in relation to subscribers.

AIM has been reasonably successful. There has been a relatively steady number of subscribers for the last few years. This is a hobby enterprise, and always has been. The primary goal has been that the magazine cover actual out of pocket costs. This has never been a problem! In fact, I "make" a little money -- about \$2.00 an hour. It's easy to see I'm not in it for the money! It takes an average of 60 hours to complete each issue from start to mailing out. At \$2.00 an hour I could easily find something more productive to do with 240 hours of my "spare" time each year!

As of December 2006 AIM has been published steadily for nine years. At the beginning of the tenth year I decided it was time for a name change, one that would make the subject obvious. There will be no adding other independents to the coverage in this magazine -- the subject has been and will from now on be "**American Motors Cars**".

I hope you found this history interesting and informative. It should acknowledge my commitment to my readers and to the AMC hobby. I expect to continue publishing for years to come, barring any unforeseen events. I am retiring from the military as of June 2007, so there goes a lot of possibilities! In the vent that I am forced or compelled to discontinue, readers will know first. Read the Editorial in this sample issue, and every issue if you subscribe. I use that to keep readers informed of anything that may affect their subscriptions. I'm always open and honest with subscribers. If you have any questions simply contact me!

Sincerely,

*Frank Swygert*

Francis (Frank) G. Swygert  
Owner, FARNA Systems Publishing  
Publisher, "American Motor's Cars" (AMC)

*P.S. -- My cars might be older AMCs, but don't think I don't cover newer ones as well! AIM has covered the gamut from restorations to performance for all years and models, so will AMC!*

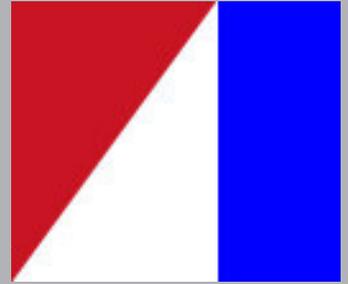


**Above: My former 1963 American, circa 1995. It was sold to make room for the more modern Classic below. I'll build another American one day!**



**Left: My current AMC -- a 1963 Classic wagon. It's a bit of a mild hot-rod, I bet readers were expecting more of a restored car! I like to *drive* my AMCs, and it's hard to keep a show/restored car while moving around the country in the military. Therefore my best bet was to modernize a Rambler as a dependable daily driver. The car is powered by the most modern AMC engine available -- the AMC/Jeep 4.0L six, complete with computerized fuel injection. AMC quit building them, so I had to build my own "new" Rambler!**

# American Motors Cars



Issue Number 1 (Volume 1 Number 1) • Winter 2006



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**OPERATOR'S MANUAL**

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# American Motors Cars

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*Winter 2006*

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Mustard Broussard Coupe

**Subscriber's may submit photo or word  
ads of any cars/parts they have for sale.  
They will be printed on a space available basis  
FREE OF CHARGE! (dealers inquire)**

# Editor's Comments

Out with the old, in with the new... well, almost. There's not a lot new and different about the magazine, just the name and front cover really. From most of the comments I get, most readers like the balance of car stories and technical features, so there's no real need to change. So why even change the title after nine years of publishing?

Well, the main reason is recognition. AIM doesn't really say anything all by itself. It doesn't invoke any particular feeling or image in anyone's mind when they see it. For an AMC fan, the letters A-M-C do. Even when they see those letters on something else, like the antique kitchen stove I recently bought (that has nothing to do with the car company), they immediately take an interest, at least have to have a look. Hopefully that same "have to take a look" interest will rub off on the magazine.

The subscriber base has been real steady -- I lose a few all the time, but also gain a few new readers. It's been that way for the past few years -- a nice reasonably steady readership. Enough for me to keep plugging away, especially since I do it mainly as a hobby, but there's always room for more! The more subscribers the more work it is to assemble and mail out each issue, but it also leaves me with a good feeling when I go through updating the database and find there are a few more than last time.

As many of you know (I'm sure I've mentioned it here before!), I'll be ending my career with the USAF early this summer. As of 06 April 2007 I will have served 24 years in the USAF, standing ready to defend this great country and its interests, as well as those who

can't defend themselves. I won't make too much of it, many of you have done the same -- some for a few years, and some have also done the full 20 (or more) and retired. It takes all of us.

I'm in a support role, not a front line combat role, but have been under fire, and had occasion to fire back. Not a lot, in fact both have been rare, but it takes everyone on the team to get the job done.

When I was an instructor for my career field (construction), I used to ask my students what the "lowest" job was in the Air Force, the one they'd least like to have. It generally got down to a cook, though a plumber was usually on the list. I'd describe a situation where they'd been out in the field for a week eating nothing but MREs (Meals, Ready to Eat officially; or "Meals Rejected by Everyone", "Mr. E Meals" (mystery meals), or "Three Lies" -- not meals, not ready, not edible... but really not that bad, especially compared to the ones before them!), and then a field kitchen shows up. They just need a little help setting up to start cooking. That cook suddenly becomes the most powerful man in camp -- he can have just about anything he wants so we can get a hot meal. It's all team work, and there are no unimportant jobs, just some inherently more dangerous than others.

That's what it takes to keep this AMC hobby afloat too -- teamwork. It takes support from all kinds -- vendors, restorers, hobbyists, spectators, and the guy who just likes driving his old car. All of us support each other in one way or another, and every little contribution adds up to keep the hobby alive, and to keep it fun.

**AMC**



Call for your AMC parts needs! We specialize in Javelin and AMX used parts, but often have hard to find NOS parts and parts for other models. Send \$7 for catalog. Contains parts/literature list and contacts for clubs and other vendors, paint/trim/VIN codes for 68-74, and much more! Check the website for interesting information.

Don't just say you wish you had an AMC, check my famous "Shut Up and Drive" list of AMC's for sale across the country!!

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# Reader's Remarks

## Just a note with a renewal...

Frank,  
Enclosed is my subscription renewal for another year to AIM. I enjoy your awesome AMC magazine!

Sincerely,  
Merle Olsen

*I'm glad you like it Merle, you'll have to send some pics of your car one day, and a little about it (them)! Hope you like the new title as well and cover design as well.*

## 2007 AMO National Convention Info!

The Colorado American Motors Club is proud to announce that it has been chosen by the National American Motors Owner's Association (AMO) to host the 2007 "Mile High" International Convention. This annual convention (which has only been held once before at a location West of the Mississippi) is scheduled to take place from July 5th through July 7th at the Radisson Denver Southeast Hotel in Aurora, Colorado. This momentous event is a tribute to all who work hard in an effort to preserve the history of American Motors cars and an opportunity for proud collectors/owners of American Motors automobiles to show their vehicles and compete in "Concours Level" judging. Events at the convention will include a tour of the over 300 car AMC Museum (ed: Terry Gale's collection), a swap meet, AMC exhibition drag racing, tours throughout our unique state and culminates with the car show. Advance registrations indicates attendees will be coming from Canada, Mexico, the Netherlands, Sweden, and many states throughout our own country.

For more information, or if you have any questions, please see [http://www.coloradoamc.bappy.com/whats\\_new.html](http://www.coloradoamc.bappy.com/whats_new.html), call Bob Kenworthy at 303-680-0139, or write at 19367 E. Eastman Place, Aurora, CO 80013.

*Sounds like the place to be if you can make it! Unfortunately I won't personally be able to make the trip to Colorado. I'm retiring from the military soon and already made plans for the big Kenosha meet. Time and budget will only allow me one long distance trip this summer, unfortunately. I may have to look into flying out to CO by myself though. I just might be able to swing that and rent a car for the weekend...*

## AMC Dealership/Factory Models

Frank, thought you'd like to see these! They were built with three things in mind. One was to honor my father, Homer T. Stakes, Sr., who passed away October 30th, 2005 at the age of 79. He worked for American Motors dealerships for many years and it was this exposure to the dealerships, employees, and cars that got me hooked. Two was/is that I will not let American

Motors' wonderful dealership history fade away into automotive history. All the cars came from somewhere and each dealership, no matter how large or small, has hundreds of stories to tell. While I can't tell them, I can remind people of those dealerships and their glorious pasts.

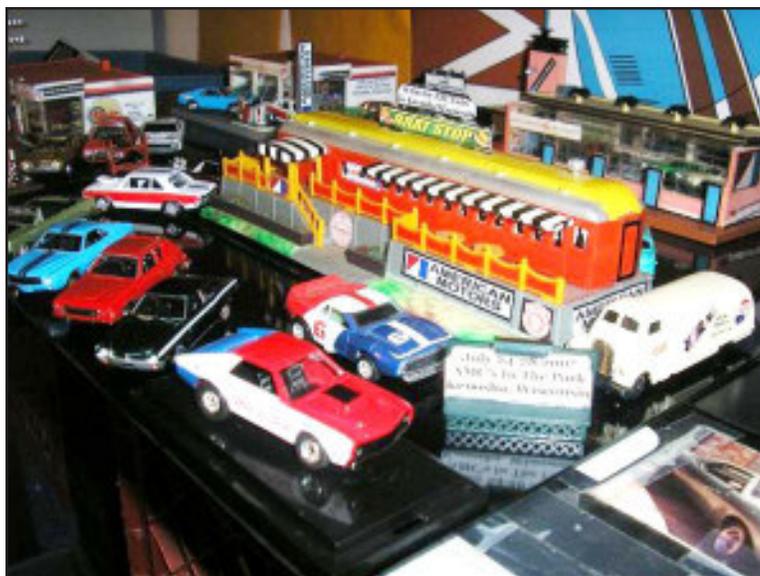
Third and possibly most important, it was a way to get both my two small boys, Noah and Jacob, involved in the AMC hobby. Both have formidable Hot Wheels collections, massive considering the one Hot Wheels car I was allowed per week in 1968. Hey, dad worked for AMC and made \$156 a week for a family of four. Spending 39 cents on a Hot Wheels when he could have got a gallon of gas for our Rambler wagon, or two loaves of bread at the Rainbo day old bread store -- well, he did what he could. Noah and Jacob are lucky to have so many, some even in blister packs still. But it was my intention to get them involved in my hobby and learn about AMC (ok, among other things!) at an early age like I did and it has worked!

So with that in mind, we made TEN AMC Dealerships and Kenosha Factories in miniature. Hope someone learns something and will build some too. All of these were sold on e-bay when finished. Hopefully each one carries a unique significance to those who ended up with them and they have as much fun with them as me and the boys did building them!

Eddie Stakes  
[www.planethoustonamx.com](http://www.planethoustonamx.com)

*Great job Eddie and sons! I see that one of the dealerships sold for \$200, while the "Brat Stop", depicting a possible scenario for the upcoming 2007 Kenosha meet, sold for a nice \$234! I like the factory models also. Maybe you should make one every now and then, just to keep interest up. See the "Brat Stop" (a notable Kenosha establishment near the old AMC plant location) below, all the models at: [http://www.planethoustonamx.com/amcdealerships/amc\\_miniature\\_dealership.htm](http://www.planethoustonamx.com/amcdealerships/amc_miniature_dealership.htm)*

**AMC**



# Summer's First Drive

by Jack Barncord

In the middle of July, 2006, I waved goodbye as my wife drove off to Chicago. She met up with her mom & number one daughter and caught a plane to a wedding in Arizona. She won't be back until Wednesday.

I started working feverishly on all the chores that needed to be done like mowing the grass and so on. By Sunday morning I was free to work on any project I wanted, so off I went to the hawgshed.

In the hawgshed, up on jack stands since late last summer, was my 1970 Hornet two door. I bought this car for my fiftieth birthday and it hadn't seen the road for more than a jaunt up and down the quarter mile driveway. The car has 13,965 actual, verifiable, miles showing on the odometer. The last time this car was driven was in 1994 and it had all the problems sitting still causes.

The brakes were stuck, the engine wouldn't run (due more to the effort of the guy I bought it from than anything). The starter was a fresh rebuilt that was installed with the brush cover bolt pinch between the starter and the engine so it was pretty well torn up.

I straightened out the starter problem, tuned up the engine, put the spark plug wires on the cap in the right rotation & order(that always helps), and replaced the fuel filter. The previous owner had changed the oil & filter before I bought it, so I left that alone for now.

The little 232 popped right off. It runs so smooth that

the original plan of swapping it out for a 401 has been scrapped.

Last year I put it up on stands and pulled the wheels off to find the brakes like new, but the wheel cylinders stuck and full of a mud like substance. I ran right out and bought all the parts needed to bring things to a smooth stop and then everything stopped. Winter in the hawgshed is brutal so she got covered up until last Sunday.

With the brakes overhauled, bled as best as one guy can and a set of radials stolen from another project car she finally got back on all four wheels. After sitting all winter and spring just a few stabs of the foot feed and she came right to life. Tess, my Brittany Spaniel, jumped in and we drove out of the hawgshed, into the yard and the shade of a row of pine trees where she (the car, not the dog!) got a bath and wax.

The interior of this car, dare I say, is as perfect as the day it rolled off the line. The dash is soft and supple, the seats are encased in those clear bubble wrap covers of the 70's and the door panels have just a smudge of dirt from some careless mechanic on the white arm rests (probably me).

After the bath and wax job I thought it only proper to take a run to town. I planned the run out with the first stop being the gas station to fill her up, the second stop was AutoZone for a spare fuel filter, then a ride around town to see if the filter would plug from all those years



# Matador X-press!



To paraphrase an old AMC advertisement, “What’s a Matador?” Well, my AMC friends, THIS is a Matador! I’ve seen a couple other customized Matador Coupes, but never one like this! In my humble opinion, this is the very best custom Matador Coupe I’ve ever seen! I hate using so many exclamation marks in one paragraph, but I really can’t see any way around it. I think most readers will agree, this is one Mat Coupe to be envious of!

I first saw photos of the car in primer at the big Kenosha AMC show in 2002. It had the makings of a great car then, and I told the owner to keep in touch, that I’d like to feature the car in AIM. A year later, in June 2003, Ted Marshal (the owner) sent me some great pics of the car. He called it “99% finished”, but the 1% unfinished must have been just another layer of wax -- the car was beautiful! I should have featured this outstanding car much earlier, but had already planned the next couple magazines when the photos came in. One thing led to another, and I simply forgot I had them. I recently saw photos of the car at a 2006 Dayton Ohio show and recalled that I had a set of photos. I quickly contacted Ted (I saved his e-mail address too!) and got an update on the car, including some more recent photos. But first, let’s go into a little of the storied history of the Matador Coupe itself.

The Matador Coupe was conceived by AMC’s chief of design Richard Teague. Teague had been wanting to build a stylish car, but AMC simply didn’t have the money. Somehow, he convinced the AMC board of director’s to produce the Matador Coupe. This was quite a bold step for AMC. The Matador Coupe was a big car, and it was almost totally unique. The drivetrain and front suspension were shared with the Matador sedans, but that was all. This made the car very expensive for AMC to produce, at it came out at

the very worst time possible. The U.S. was in it’s second gasoline shortage when the new Coupe came out. It was a big sporty/personal luxury car, but the market for that type just about dried up over night. It was a competitor to GM’s Monte Carlo and Grand Prix, Mercury’s Cougar, Ford’s Torino, and Chrysler’s 300 and Sport Fury/Fury Gran Coupe. Those cars stopped selling as the Big Three hastily prepared downsized versions, but poor AMC had spent a wad of cash on the Coupe and was stuck with it.

I’m not the only AMC historian to cite that the Matador Coupe and the Pacer are the cars that helped kill AMC. Nothing was “wrong” with either of them -- except for the timing of their introductions and that they were totally unique platforms. It took a minimum of three years to prepare for a new model back in the 70s, and unique models such as those two took much longer, especially with limited funds. AMC “bet





**ABOVE:** Nicely detailed engine also has a cover (top right). Note the new shock tower (circled above) required to lower the front without losing shock travel.

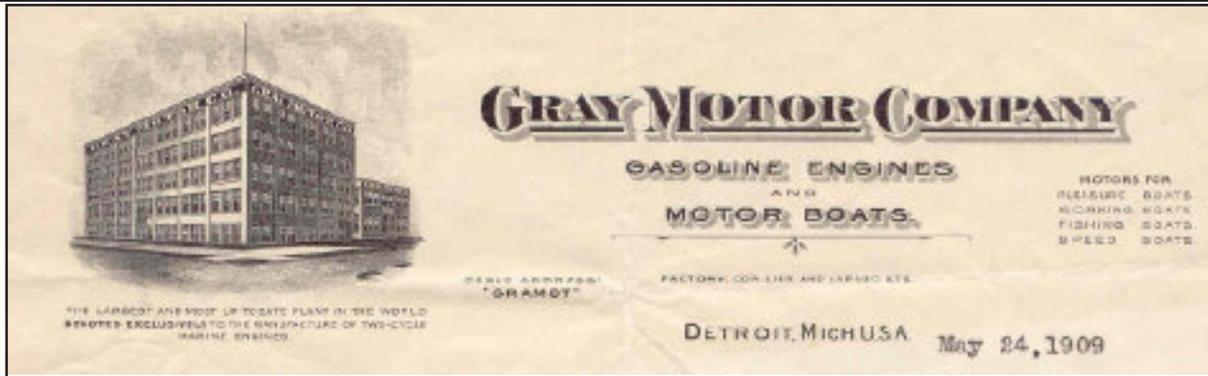
**RIGHT:** Stock Matador "Individual Reclining Seats" are covered to blend in.

**BOTTOM:** Air Ride components are neatly tucked into a special compartment in the trunk. Note the recessed lettering in the panel under the trunk lid - a very nice touch!



# A Short History of GRAYMARINE

by Frank Swygert



So what does the history of a boat motor company have to do with AMC? Well, many people are familiar with the Graymarine (sometimes written as two words) marine conversions of AMC V-8s in the late 50s, but few know anything about the company. As an AMC history buff I found the history of the company interesting, and thought that readers would as well, even though there is no direct connection to AMC (AMC just sold Graymarine engines).

The Gray Motor Company was incorporated in 1905 with Ora J. Mulford as president and Paul and David Gray as his associates (Vice President and Secretary/Treasurer, respectively). Prior to this Mr. Mulford had been president of the Michigan Yacht and Power Company, also in Detroit, until late 1905. At that time he sold his interest in that company and formed Gray Motor Company.

In 1909 Frank Biscoe formed the United States Motor Company to merge Maxwell, Columbia, and Stoddard-Dayton Truck. This new company bought Gray Motor Company and O.J. Mulford became vice president of U.S. Motor Company.



Early 1900s Gray Motor Company “Hit ‘n Miss” 1.5 hp stationary engine. Before electricity was available to the rural population these things powered everything from butter churns to washing machines. They were usually mounted on carts so that one engine could be moved about to power many appliances. The large “hopper” above the cylinder held water that acted as a heat sink for cooling. There was no circulating water. These engines were low compression (3-5:1) and ran slowly, so there wasn’t a great amount of heat generated.

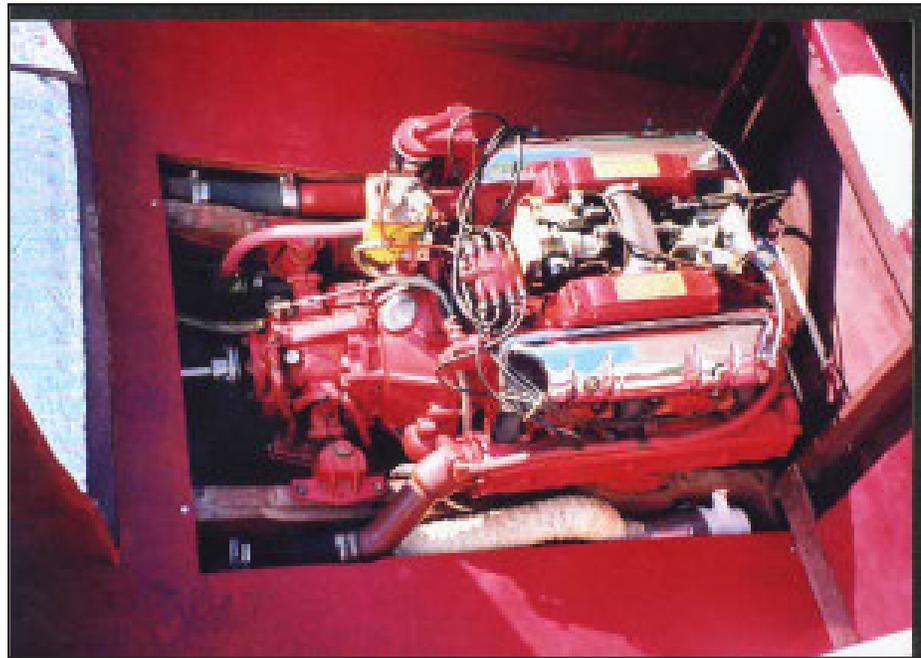
At that time Gray was building around 7,000 engines annually. Unfortunately, the new corporation, which had aspirations to be something like General Motors is now, went bankrupt the following year. Mulford, along with other investors, bought the Gray assets and reincorporated the Gray Motor Company. The intention was to build automotive and marine engines. A few cars used Gray engines in the early years of the automobile in the US when many cars were assembled from parts purchased from other companies. There were a few hundred “automobile manufacturers” at this time, though few would survive past the 1929 U.S. stock market crash and the world-wide Great Depression.

Gray built two cycle engines exclusively through 1910 in one, two, three, and four cylinder variations. The Model U one and two cylinder two cycle engine continued in production through 1927. Only four cycle engines, first introduced as the Model D in two and four cylinder varieties in 1911, were built after 1927.

With the U.S. entry into World War I marine engine production was all but terminated. Some four cylinder Gray engines were used to power lifeboats and to run pumps to keep the trenches as dry as possible. These were called “Victory” models after the war. Gray also built truck and tractor engines from 1917-1921, and machined artillery shells.

Stationary engines were dropped after 1920. From then on the company concentrated on marine engines exclusively. Remember that rural areas didn’t have electricity, so there was a need for stationary engines to power all sorts of farming and manufacturing equipment. Gray even advertised an electric generator for rural use for a short time. Gray also made outboard boat motors from 1915 through at least 1920. These used a flexible shaft from the engine to the propeller instead of a gear box. They were of relatively low power, 10 hp or less. The flexible shaft wouldn’t have tolerated much more power.

The Gray automobile was introduced in 1921. The inexpensive model Z engine (a 12-18 hp L-head four which resembles a Ford Model T engine) was developed specifically for the car. 75,000 cars were built from 1922 to 1924. By then the car operation was in very bad financial condition, and was going bankrupt. Mulford managed to buy back the marine engine part of the business in 1924, together with 3,000



ABOVE: Graymarine (AMC GEN-1) V-8 installed in a cabin cruiser. A newly rebuilt version is pictured in the lower left. Most engines were painted to match the boat, I'm unsure of any standard color, though most were painted green to match the Continental engines.

ABOVE LEFT: Cover of "Fireball" operator's manual clearly shows all three GEN-1 AMC V-8 sizes.

LEFT: Exhaust manifold parts are the first to go since they are subjected to high heat and water running through them to keep cool. Barr Marine ([www.barrmarine.net](http://www.barrmarine.net)) has replacement parts.



One last item bears mentioning when AMC powered boats come to mind. One reader has a mid 70s "jet" boat (water jet) that came from the factory with an AMC 401. The boat was manufactured in California, but I don't know the exact manufacturer. Hopefully he'll read this article and send some more info and pics!

Anyone else have an unusual AMC powerplant application? If so, send pics and what information you have. I've heard of AMC V-8s powering irrigation and even oil pumps out west, but have never seen one myself. Of course this "scavenger hunt" isn't limited to V-8s, unusual six cylinder applications will be welcomed as well!





**1951 “Lois Lane” Nash Rambler Convertible**  
*owned by Bob Wilmoth, Bel Air, Maryland*

*by Frank Swygert & Bob Wilmoth*



Nash took a big gamble when they introduced the small Rambler in 1950. There had been small cars before, but none had been truly successful. Still, George Mason, cigar chomping head of Nash-Kelvinator, believed that the American public would eventually come around to the idea of a small car. I thought we had in the 70s and 80s, but then in the mid to late 90s we went back to buying behemoths just to drive around in -- this time mostly truck based!

In order to give the little Rambler a better chance, it was introduced as a premium car. It was to be a personal indulgence, not a stripped down economy car as small cars up to that point had been. Therefore the first body style was a smart convertible, even in the 50s an expensive model. Only this convertible had a twist -- it had fixed side window frames that would even support the weight of the car! To prove this, Nash circulated publicity photos with the car upside down. Of course it was gently lifted, rotated, and let down, it didn't roll over at speed, which would have made quite a difference! Even so, the fixed frames offered more protection than any other convertible, and Nash capitalized on that fact, advertising the little Rambler as "the worlds safest convertible".

The frames weren't really there for safety, however. They were needed to make the body stiff enough to ride and perform well without a lot of additional heavy bracing traditionally required for convertibles -- even those with full frames (the Rambler was a unit body). When AMC reintroduced a convertible on this body in 1961 (the original was made through 1954) the window frames were removed. Heavy underside bracing was required in their place.

In the summer of 1951, on the back lot of a movie studio in Culver City, California, producers began filming the first season (26 episodes) of a new TV show based on the National Comics (now DC) comic book character "Superman". It featured George Reeves as "the man of steel" and Phyllis Coates as Lois Lane. You'd think that Nash sponsored the show,

since there were so many Nash cars in it, but that's not the case! There must have been a friendly Nash dealer nearby, because Lois Lane was seen in many episodes dashing around in a 1951 Rambler convertible! Of course many of the other cars were Nash products also.

A lot of people contribute the little Nash's relative popularity to the TV show, but that's not likely the case. The first episodes were filmed in 1951, but they weren't aired until 1953. There was, however, a movie shot at the same time with the same actors (and cars) that was released in 1951. Production didn't start again until 1953 and continued through 1957 -- 82 episodes (plus the original 26). Phyllis Coates was unable to reprise her role as Lois, so Noel Neill stepped in. It couldn't be confirmed if a Rambler convertible made an appearance in other than the first season. Whether it did or not, it has become well known as the "Lois Lane" Rambler.

Nash just had the right marketing scheme for the car! Where previous small cars had also been cheap, the Rambler was priced only slightly below the competitions medium sized cars, but with nicer appointments. Rambler buyers were getting upscale sensibly sized cars, not small and cheap ones!

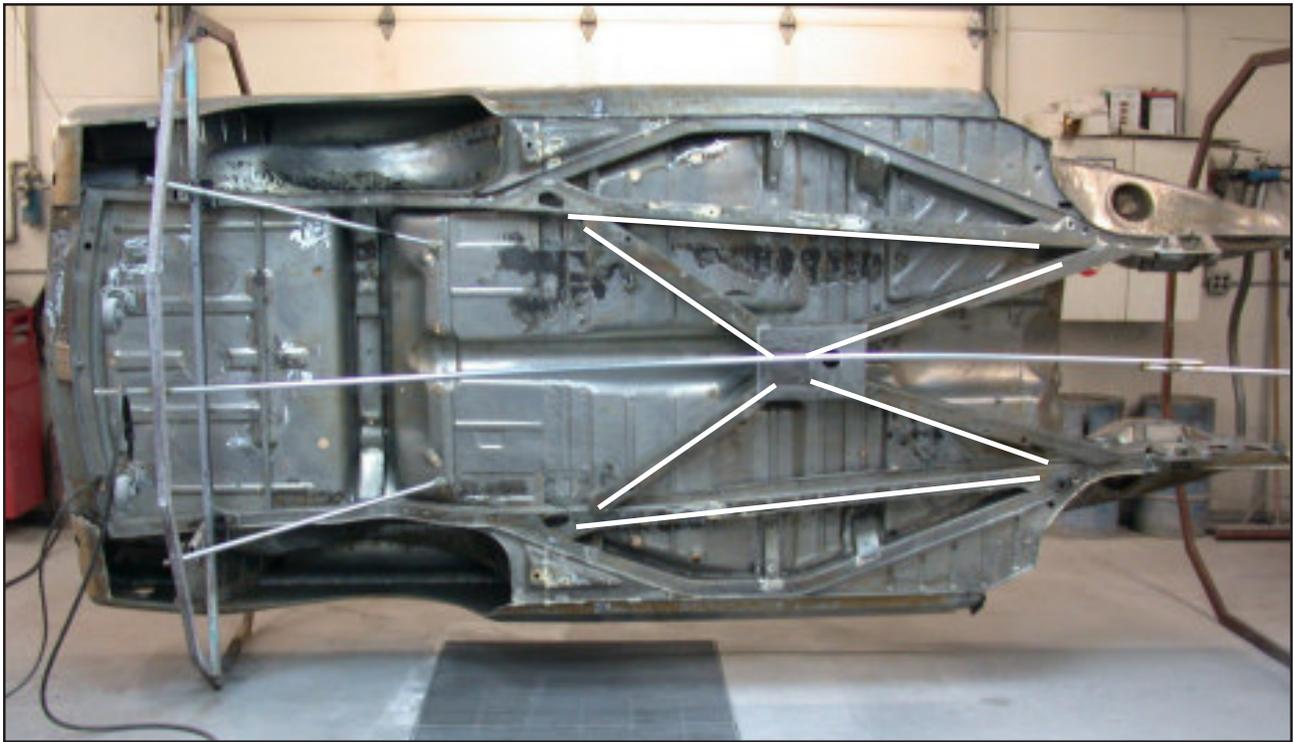
The second model was a very utilitarian two door station wagon in 1951. This was followed shortly by a two door sedan the same year. The sedan used the same body dies as the convertible -- a steel roof panel was simply welded atop the window frames. Obviously that was the plan all along.

A smart looking Country Club hardtop appeared in 1953. The Rambler didn't get a practical four door sedan until 1954, and then on a longer 108" wheelbase. The nifty little convertible was dropped after 1954. All 51-55 two door models rode a short 100" wheelbase.

By 1954 the Rambler was a definite success. It had established itself as an economy and value car, not just a cheap little car as most small cars before it. It was such a success that George Romney, Mason's successor, bet AMC's future



**OPPOSITE PAGE:** Two nice views of Bob's convertible. Note the fixed side window rails, the most distinguishing feature. **ABOVE:** Bob's 51 convertible parked next to a smart looking 1954 hardtop. The hood and grille changes first appeared in 1953, the hardtop in 1952. A sedan was offered in 51. It used the convert side rails with a metal roof.



**ABOVE:** Underside of a 1961 convertible during restoration. The white lines indicate additional underside bracing required by removal of the window rails. The 50-54 convertibles had no additional bracing.

**RIGHT: TOP TO BOTTOM --** 1952 Nash Rambler Convertible, 1958 Rambler American Sedan, 1961 Rambler American Convertible. It's hard to tell, but except for changes in exterior sheetmetal and the firewall these cars are all built on the same body! Note the window frames of the 52 are identical to those of the 58 (under the drip rail). The 61-63 convertible did away with the frames, required the bracing above for the lost rigidity.



Champagne Ivory. This was the most popular color on the 1950 and 1951 Ramblers.”

The 1950 Rambler is the “grandfather” of all AMC’s after it really, the only older “direct kin” is the 1941 Nash 600, which was the first unit-body Nash. I suppose we can call that the “great-grandfather” of AMC cars, but it has no direct lineage as the 1950 Nash Rambler does (except for the engine design).

If the Nash Rambler had not been a success, AMC probably would have ended its days in the late 50s along with the Nash and Hudson parent companies, or struggled along as did Studebaker into the mid sixties, bit no more. But succeed it did, and took AMC further than any of the other American independent car companies.

Bob has done an excellent job of taking care of this piece of AMC history. It deserves every bit of attention it gets! When you see one of these cars, look it over really good. Even if you prefer the late 60s and 70s AMC cars, you should appreciate the fact that this car’s success made your preferred model possible.



# Steering Column Interchanges

by Frank Swygart

**NOTE: Any modifications made to your car can compromise safety if not carefully thought out and competently accomplished. This magazine bears no responsibility for any reader modifications to their car.**

Lately I've seen several mentions on-line about swapping steering columns around. There are many reasons for this -- updating a car, replacing hard to find parts in a driver, changing from manual to auto transmission (or vice-versa), column shift to floor shift conversion, or customizing are the most popular. Many would like to fit tilt steering columns to their old cars, but want to find a bolt-in solution. Others are willing to do a bit of work, but not "to much" -- in other words, they don't want to have to reengineer the entire steering system!

In some cases it's easy -- find a similar AMC model with what you want and bolt it right in. If you're talking about a Hornet, Gremlin, Concord, Spirit, or Eagle finding a bolt-in column from a donor vehicle is reasonably easy. In almost all others, you're pretty much out of luck -- that is unless there's someone nearby with a cache of high-end AMCs around. Not a likely situation for most of us! Like all interchanges, a little history is in order first.

If you want a tilt column, they first appeared in 1965. They were only available in the Classic and Ambassador. It was a relatively common option for the big cars from then on, especially in the Ambassador. "Adjust-O-Tilt" was also optional in the 68-70 Javelin and AMX, but was never offered in the American line. Tilt steering was first offered in the Hornet and Gremlin in 1972, but only with automatic (column shift) transmission. Tilt steering was only available in cars with column shift automatic until 1978. All pre 1978 sales literature specifically states "with column shift automatic only". Tilt columns are rare in 60s and early 70s vehicles, but started picking up in popularity in the mid 70s. Direct bolt-in interchanges are:

65-66 Classic and Ambassador (Ambo may use an intermediate shaft between steering box and column, Classic does not)

67-78 Rebel/Matador/Ambassador

68-74 Javelin

70-88 Hornet/Gremlin/Concord/Spirit/Eagle

There are some differences over the years, but none that can't be overcome. Note that collapsible columns first appeared in 1967 with all types of steering. These connect to the steering box through a "rag joint" that is also designed to break away in a hard impact. This joint is flexible enough to correct minor misalignments and also reduces steering wheel vibration transmitted from the suspension. 65-66 power steering systems use this type of joint also, but manual steering used a solid shaft from the gear box to the steering wheel. In a hard frontal collision (such as a head on collision) the steering wheel can be pushed into the driver's chest, causing much greater injuries than when the steering column collapses and/or breaks away. It's important not to override these features when swapping columns, though sometimes it can't be helped.

Most readers know that AMC purchased columns from GM starting in 1966 (65 for power steering cars). A popular



**Late 80s Chevy S-10 tilt steering column looks right at home in author's 1963 Classic. Steering wheel is from a Jeep XJ Cherokee with the leather wrap removed and an aftermarket cover added. Chrome center button is "R" emblem from a 65 Classic 770 glove box door - a perfect fit!**

question is "what GM car model columns will bolt into my AMC". The answer is "none" if you want a direct bolt-in with no modification, "many" if you don't mind a bit of work. Most columns can be adapted to fit an AMC in a day if you do a little home work first. I have a late 1980s Chevy S-10 Blazer tilt column in my 1963 Classic wagon, for example.

First you need to make sure the column you want to use is long enough for your car. Measure the existing column from the center of the steering wheel to the floor. Then look under the hood and measure from where it comes through the floor to the shift arm. While you're under the hood pay close attention to that shift arm location if using a shift column. What's around it? Could it be a little shorter or longer and not interfere with anything? If you're using a floor shift column you just need to know how far it will protrude through the floor. Don't worry too much about the flate that bolts the column to the floor -- it can be moved. Hopefully you'll read the entire article before looking for a column (very advisable!).

Once you have a column that will fit it most likely needs to be modified. Modifying a column to fit physically isn't terribly difficult. The four items that must be overcome are:

- 1) Length of the intermediate shaft between the column and steering box.
- 2) "Toe Board Plate" on the column that bolts it to the floor.
- 3) Column to dash mount.
- 4) Wiring connector.

## Intermediate shaft length

The intermediate shaft goes between the end of the column and the steering box. A typical GM shaft is telescoping.

A solid half is on the steering box and a hollow shaft is on the column. The solid shaft will slide in and out of the hollow portion, but it will be stiff. There is a flat "leaf" spring inside that keeps tension on the shaft. You will need a shaft that's about the right length for your car. Collapsing or extending these shafts about an inch either way isn't a problem, but you don't want to adjust them any more than that. The shaft is designed to have plenty room to "give" in a frontal collision. The "rag joint" is also designed to break away if the steering box is pushed back far enough. NEVER try to shorten an old style column (late 60s) by collapsing it! It's designed for one length and a one time collapse, period. The intermediate shaft type will have a coupling or universal joint just below the end of the column that comes off after removing a bolt that clamps the shaft on and usually fits in a notch in the column shaft. The shaft can be disassembled and the length modified, but this should be done as a last resort. There are many different length shafts out there, shop around at your nearest salvage yard for one as close to the needed length as possible. You may have to install the column before determining the needed length.

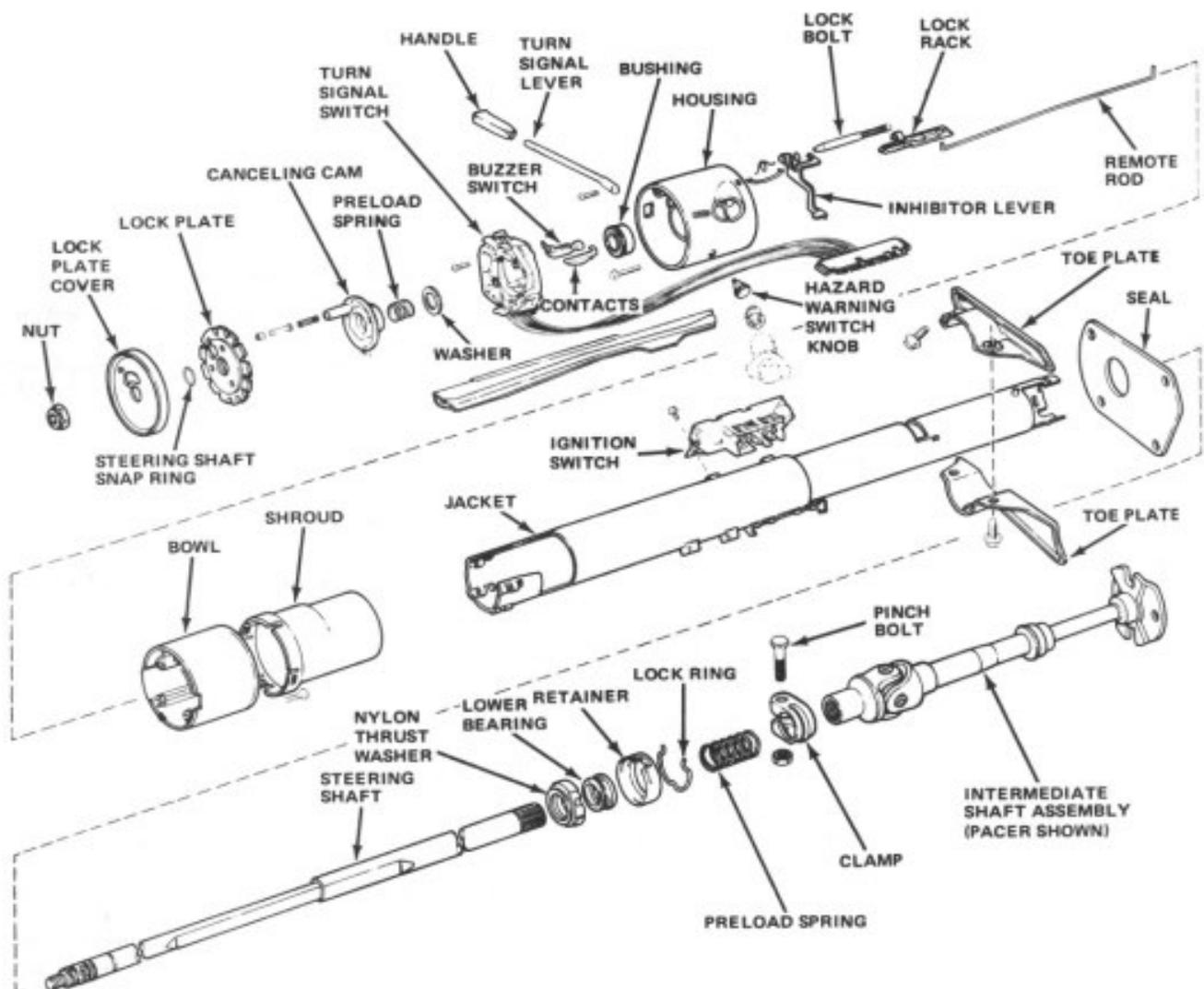
### Toe Board Plate

In the AMC Technical Service Manual (TSM) this is called the "Support Plate", "Dash Seal" (sometimes just "Seal"), or

"Toe Board Plate", depending on year. I'm going to use a 1980 illustration for reference (below), so will use terminology from that illustration. The illustration is for a column without a shift arm (floor shift column).

In our example, a 1980 Pacer floor shift column, the toe board plate is in two pieces and removeable. That isn't always the case, especially on GM columns. Often the plate is welded to the bottom of the jacket. In this case, carefully cut the lip of the plate around the diameter just below the weld. You only want to cut through the plate itself, not through or into the tube. Cutting or deeply scratching the jacket won't hurt a thing, of course, but try not to cut into it too deep. Once this cut is made the plate may slide off the jacket. I found it easier to cut the plate itself from the edge to the jacket as well. A hack saw or cut-off wheel works fine. If you want to cut the plate as well cut it first. I made two cuts in the plate across from each other then cut each half from the jacket.

So what about installing the column in your AMC? A lot depends on how the toe board plate is made on the original column. On my 63 Classic there is a large plate and seal that screws to the floor. The plate has a raised section around the jacket hole. The raised section had two threaded holes across from each other where a support plate that slid over the original column jacket was bolted down to the toe board plate. To mount the S-10 column I cut two pieces



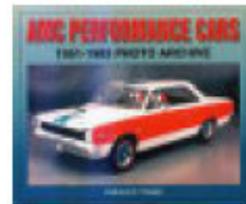
Can't get on-line or don't have the time? Order your copy of the **AMC-List CD-ROM!** Contains searchable archives of all discussions since April 1995! Bonus selections include AMC related photos and data files. Only \$32 each (US funds). The disc is updated yearly. The first update is only \$12, \$17 afterwards. All data is formatted for included search and retrieval software. *LOTS OF HELPFUL INFORMATION NOT FOUND ELSEWHERE!!*



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# ***Articles Wanted!***

If you'd like to see your car or project in AMC, simply write a story about it and yourself (how you got interested in it, what you've done, plan to do, etc.) and take a few photos. Send or e-mail to AMC and it will be seriously considered as long as it pertains to AMC vehicles. PROJECT CARS ARE WANTED! All show cars and nice drivers start somewhere. AMC is interested in showing how projects come together along with the problems encountered and their solutions. We all like to see what you did, but knowing how you did it is even better! I hate those articles in other car magazines that give you just enough information to wonder how something was done, and never enough information on how to do it!!

## **General Article Guidelines:**

E-mail is preferred, as it saves the editor typing! If you don't have e-mail, typed or hand written articles are accepted -- just write as clearly as possible and include a phone number in case there are questions. Photos will be returned if requested. I'll even put the photos used in AMC on a CD for you if you'd like. Scanned photos should be at least 150 dpi, 4"x6". Larger are accepted, but try to make the files no more than 3.5 mb each. If you have any questions just ask! Text will be edited as necessary for clarity and space requirements. It is AMC's policy NOT to edit extensively for "style". I like to read some of the individual in a story, not to have all stories "conform" to one style and sound as if the same person wrote them all.

Send all article submissions to the address on the subscription form. e-mail or call Frank Swygert with any questions.

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*(5-10 pm Eastern time weekdays, try anytime weekends -- will return messages)*