



It's wild to learn that this aluminum-bodied, one-door Martin Aerodynamic Car was built in 1928 at a cost of \$17,000; its airplane-type suspension doesn't use springs

couple of weeks with other car enthusiasts."

The Lanes mechanically restored the Tatra and ran it again in 2004, and they used their McQuay-Norris the next year. "After I drove the McQuay, I thought it would be pretty capable to do the Great Race," Jeff says. "Because nobody knew what shape the engine was in, we decided not to risk it. We installed a new flathead V-8, did a brake job, fixed some wiring issues and a broken leaf spring."

"A large percentage of the crowd couldn't believe the car—its shape is so different," Susan adds. "We'd pull into a stop and people would just crowd around the car. A small percentage of people came up and told us about their memories of these cars... it was amazing that during a stop in Rockford, Illinois, (the car's builder) Mr. Norris's grandson came out to greet us. That was when you realize how small the world is."

Jeff and Susan set their sights a bit wider for the 2006 rally season, when they became the only all-American team running in the seventh Rallye des Princesses from Paris to Monaco. This five day, 1,500-kilometer vintage rally, driven by 40 teams in vehicles ranging from 1929 to 1974, is a recreation of the women-only 1929 Paris-Saint Raphael motor race, now open to women drivers and female or male navigators. "We had picked up a flyer at Retromobile in Paris five years ago, as this is an event that's not promoted much outside of France," Susan explains. "I decided that I wanted to navigate, like I do for the Great Race, so we asked our friend Eve Hutcherson to drive, and Jeff would be our support crew. We looked for a classic American car to bring, and we settled on a 1956 Thunderbird, which we picked up one week before it had to be in Baltimore

to be shipped overseas. I chose it for its looks—the teal color is pretty, and it looks like a car a princess might drive."

In addition to being shorter than the Great Race, the Rallye des Princesses treated its competitors differently; "While they were inspecting the cars, we were taken to a salon and had our hair and makeup done. We had incredible four and five-course meals, a baggage car carried our luggage, and we found a gift from the rally's sponsors each night in our hotel rooms. It wasn't the typical up-at-dawn, grab breakfast and run," she laughs. "I borrowed an idea from Linda Pike and Sheila Watson (The Lacey Racers' of Great Race fame), and Eve and I dressed up in teal outfits to match the car, like saddle shoes and poodle skirts. It added something to be in a vintage car

with a vintage look, and it was a hit.

"We were allowed to use a manual rally computer, which made it easier for me to navigate; all the navigation in the Great Race is done by mental calculations, and I don't do that—Jeff is the mathematician, he keeps those figures in his head," she continues. "This rally allowed us to use a computer synchronized to calculate the kilometers, and knowing a turn would be coming up in 0.6-kilometers allowed me to watch and not be anxious—it took away that element and allowed us to be more accurate with speed and timing."

Although the American team faced a language barrier, they found that their Thunderbird was a hit with the Europeans. "Although it seems small in America, it was way too big to rally in Europe. It was really wide, and tough on the curves in the mountains, although it could really zip along on the straightaways," Susan recalled. "People really loved that car," Jeff adds. "I opened the hood, and they'd start snapping pictures—'Ooh, five liters!' That V-8 was a huge engine for Europe. The car ran pretty well—there were a couple small issues with a noise in the rear end and losing one muffler, but we met our goal of having a good time and promoting the museum." The Lane Motor Museum team also received the Rallye des Princesses' honored "Prix Special" award for "bringing the ambiance of the 1929 event to the race."

So whether they're hands-on in the museum, out cruising the roads around Nashville in an unusual car or crossing the French Alps on the way to the next timing checkpoint, Jeff and Susan Lane continue to spread the gospel of vehicular nonconformity and driving enjoyment to everyone who will listen. 🐾



Lanes rallied McQuay-Norris across the USA in 2005 Great Race



1956 Thunderbird was purchased for French Rallye des Princesses