



# Braking News

Volume 4, Issue 2 / April - June, 2007

## A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT

Spring has arrived and Lane Motor Museum celebrated 2007's first special day on Saturday, March 3rd. "Start Your Engines" was a great success at the Museum as we started up about ten cars on the floor so everyone could hear what the cars sound like when they are running. We also opened the hoods on all cars so guests could get a better look at the Museum's powerplants.

The Museum has started its volunteer program to help enhance our visitors' experience while they are here. Training was held in February. Starting in March, the Museum will have volunteers on the floor for special events and weekends. I want to thank all of our volunteers for their support of the Museum.

The Great American Race 2007 will be stopping at Lane Motor Museum on July 2nd. This will be a great event with approximately 100 vintage cars on display from about 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm. Activities begin at 4 pm and the first cars will be arriving about 5:30 pm. The Museum is also planning a few pre-race arrival festivities, so mark your calendars and try to attend for an evening of vintage automotive fun.

Susan and I spent ten days in Paris and the Czech Republic at the end of February. We had the opportunity to spend two days with Claude Gueniffey (Président of the Les amis de l'Hélica) and his wonderful wife, Annie. Our trip to the Czech Republic was to view progress on the Tatra snowmobile (Aerosled) and the T-12 Targa Florio replica that we are having built. Ecorra (the premier Tatra restorers in the Czech Republic) hosted an impressive demonstration by starting the Aerosled for guests and dignitaries to see how the propeller works.  
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**In This Issue:**  
**Amelia Island Concours d'Elegance**  
**Great American Race 2007**  
**4th Annual Microcar Drive**



*Above: Jeff and Susan Lane with Mr. Hinner, Ecorra employees who are building the Aerosled, and former Tatra employees and dignitaries.*

*Below: The 1946 Hewson Rocket at the 2007 Amelia Island Concours d'Elegance.*



## A WORD FROM THE CURATOR

What a start to 2007! The Antique Automobile Club of America presented Lane Motor Museum a national award at the Annual Meeting held in February in Philadelphia. The AACA Plaque was awarded in recognition of outstanding achievement in the preservation of automotive history. We are humbled and honored.

We started our show season at the 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Amelia Island Concours d'Elegance to benefit Community Hospice of Northeast Florida. A special feature this year was the Cars of Coachcraft. On the show field were 7 cars built by this Hollywood, California coachbuilder. Our aluminum bodied, 1946 Hewson Rocket prototype drew a great deal of interest.

The Nissan exhibit currently features Historic Nissan Cars. On display until June 25 is a collection spanning from a rare, pre-war 1937 Datsun Konut roadster to Nissan's first utility vehicle—a 1971 Patrol.

Don't miss the Citroën 2CV exhibit that opens May 24 and runs through October 29. A collection of 2CVs and others built on 2CV chassis will feature a stock 1954 "Ripple Bonnet," a 2-engine Sahara, a rare Hoffmann convertible, production cars such as the Ami and Bijou, up to a present day 2CV chassis-based Burton.

The McQuay-Norris is soon to return from the Missouri Historical Institute. It was a highlight of "Shifting Gears: The Automobile Industry in St. Louis, 1890-1930." While attending the 2007 National Association of Automobile Museum Annual Conference at Peterson Automotive Museum we had a chance to view our 1938 Citroën Berline 11 Gazogene that is currently on loan there.

**Curator continued on page 2**

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***Above left: Jeff Lane in the Tatra T-12 Targa Florio replica with Mr. Hinner, President of Ecorra Restorations.***

***Above right: Susan and Jeff Lane in the 1946 Hewson Rocket at the Amelia Island Concours d'Elegance.***

***Right: AACA Plaque awarded to the Museum.***



### ***President continued from page 1...***

After a champagne toast, we were treated to a delicious authentic Czech lunch. The vehicle is looking great and although it is not finished, Ecorra has made steady progress on a very difficult project. The T-12 Targa Florio car was in running condition and I got to take a quick (and cold) drive down the road. Susan and I will rally this vehicle from Vienna to Koprivnice to celebrate "110 Years of Automobiles from Nesselzdorf" in August. Ing. Vitezslav Hinner (President of Ecorra Restorations) also spent part of the day giving us a wonderful tour of the local area.

To update you on other restoration projects, the Stationette is progressing slowly, but we still hope to have it finished sometime this year. The Citroën 2CV Cogolin (two-headed 2CV) is making fantastic progress and should be done in June. The Cogolin is a special one-off car made in rural France in the early 1950s. It was constructed so that it could be driven in either direction. The purpose was to patrol paths through the forest so narrow that a car could not turn around.

Sunday, June 17th will be our annual Father's Day event – "Luxury Vehicles Through the Decades." It's always a great day where fathers of all ages get in free and we offer Dad a rare treat – a ride in a car of his favorite decade, from a 1930s Lancia DiLambda to a 1970s NSU Ro-80. If you have the chance to come in on June 17th, it's always a lot of fun.

I hope everyone has finished their Winter projects and are ready to get their classics back on the road.

***Jeff Lane  
President***

### ***Curator continued from page 1...***

I hope you will come out to join us for our 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Microcar Drive at Lane Motor Museum. There will be a microcar show on the grounds before the cars head out to Percy Priest Lake. Be a part of this fun day with your microcar or daily driver. After a picnic lunch at the lake, a Gymkhana course will be offered at the Museum as well as a "Basement Tour" for all who register.

***Live Large, Drive Small!  
Susan Lane  
Curator***

## Delivery Room - New Arrivals at Lane Motor Museum



### 1896 Ford Quadricycle (replica)

This is a replica of Henry Ford's first automobile. The original was built in the shed behind his home in 1896. The engine is a 2 cylinder, leather belt and chain, 4hp, with a top speed of 20mph.



### 1929 BMW Ihle 600

This car is an Ihle 600 body mounted on a 1929 Dixi 3/15 DA 2 chassis. It has a tiny, light-weight, all steel body with a flat radiator and a pointed tail. Only a few of these were ever made.



### 1934 Tatra T-57 (convertible)

The T-57, one of the most popular models, remained in production until after WWII. Jeff & Susan Lane rallied this particular car in the 2006 Tatra Freunde International Rally.



### Peugeot Propeller Bicycle

In the early 1900s, France explored propulsion power. A propeller-powered apparatus was adapted to this bicycle. The Sicam 1-cylinder motor, which features a hand-pulled start, was built in Paris.



### 1947 Salsbury Superscooter 85

This model was designed to entice owners into considering a scooter. The controls on this scooter are similar to a car with foot operated brake and gas. Only 700 to 1,000 were produced.



### 1984 Honda City Turbo & Honda Motocompo Scooter

The Honda City Turbo was produced from 1982-87 and was based on the subcompact Honda City. The turbocharger produces 110ps at 5000 rpm. The Honda Motocompo is a super miniature scooter designed to fit in the trunk of the City. It folds to a compact 1' wide, 2' high, and 3' long and weighs approximately 90 pounds.

## Gas Station Conversations

I spend quite a bit of time at gas stations. While pumping fuel into museum cars I get a lot of odd stares and people at the accompanying pump usually have comments or observations about whatever oddity I'm refueling at the moment. Most of the time people are amazed to see something completely foreign and new (to them). Sometimes, people question my sanity for driving such a tiny, strange car on public roads. And on a rare occasion, the vintage European machine will strike a long forgotten memory and a complete stranger will share special memories from their past.

"What is it?" is the most popular inquiry. Tatra, Citroën, Fiat, Renault, Lotus, et cetera I dutifully answer, knowing that I might as well be speaking Greek. Most people have never heard of any of these makes and they follow up with: "Yeah, but what is it?" At this point I start explaining that it was made in Czechoslovakia, France, Italy, or England in whatever year. People are generally satisfied with this information and will nod positively. If they seem genuinely interested I'll give them a business card. Depending on the car, other questions routinely answered are: "How fast will it go?" "How much did it cost?" "I love it, where can I get one?" I answer: fast enough, I really have no idea, and try eBay. Most encounters are like this, brief and pleasant.

Occasionally, people seem honestly concerned about my well being. Maybe they think I'm too crazy to be on the streets with them. In this time of ever increasing car weights with more horsepower to motivate these beasts, maybe they are right. A Fiat 500 tips the scale at a little over 1000 pounds. I love these little cars because they have adequate power for their weight and a lively chassis that requires attention when maneuvering around 6000 pound Lincoln Navigators. These type people always say: "I wouldn't want to be in a crash in that!" There are no museum cars that I'd want to be in a crash in. I love them all and don't want to see any of them damaged.

Sometimes I meet someone who knows what it is that I'm driving and when I do, I learn something new about the car or about life. One never knows what is going to trigger memories, but sometimes it is one of the funny little cars that I drive. "Wow, I haven't seen one of those in ages," they start with and then it leads to melancholic reminiscing about lost loves. "When I was in high school the English teacher had a little MG just like this. Man, I had such a crush on her..." and then their voice trails off as inner thoughts get filtered and they realize that they should stop talking. "I used to have one of those when I was stationed in Europe" is something I hear from ex-military folks. This is usually followed by: "It was a lot of fun and I loved it, but it kept breaking." And then they tell me how great the beer in Germany is. One old-timer was quite taken with a Citroën 2CV that I was gassing up and went on to tell me about driving across Europe in one with his new bride almost 50 years ago. The honeymoon was a gift from his new in-laws and his first time abroad. Sharing wine and bread in the French countryside with young wife sounded romantic. Life goes on, but memories remain. His wife had recently passed away and it really cheered him up seeing a car that brought back fond memories. It is fun to drive cars that make people smile and remember happier times.

Gas station conversations are interesting, entertaining, and sometimes a little sad. Or maybe it is just the fumes.

**James Green**  
**Automotive Prep Manager**

## The Mighty LARC-LX

It seemed a bit ironic, normally I take great care not to damage the machines. But there I was, crushing a 1975 NSU 1000. I thought about a poster I once saw of a couple walking on a beach, their footprints following, the caption read: leave nothing but footprints. As I crushed the NSU under the massive tire of the LARC I thought, not today!

This winter I ventured out to the LARC to make a few repairs. While we have demonstrated the LARC since it came to the Museum in the winter of 2005, it rests in the back lot and is rarely operated. So I knew going into it that my list of repairs could grow, and to that end, I dedicated a full week to work on it. After three weeks had passed I had the monster working again, and I was just about worn out.

By far the biggest problem both in the design of the beast and in it sitting for long periods of time is in the pneumatic system. The beast has, without exaggeration, something in the neighborhood of 1/2 mile of compressed air tubing to supply air from and to various valves in order to control the function of just about every major system on the thing, including: engine starters; throttle control and synchronization between the four engines; transmission activation; and most importantly, the braking system is wholly activated by compressed air. Here's the problem; air has moisture, and when you compress massive amounts of it the moisture condenses into good old water. The next main event in the process is corrosion. The corrosion then inhibits the action of the valves and spreads particles throughout the system further messing things up. Just about all the time I spent working on the thing was spent repairing components of the pneumatic system.

Once all that business was done and I had the engines running, the tires aired up, and the ramp closed, I thought it would be a good idea to take it for a spin, although hesitantly because my motto for driving the LARC is *let's go break something*. But, no repair is complete without a test drive, so off I went. When I had first started the engines, one of the exhaust pipes spit out a bunch of abandoned bird nest material, it had smoldered for awhile and then subsided to the point I thought it was all gone.

**continued on next page**

### ***The Mighty LARC-LX continued from page 2...***

But, when I moved the monster and put the gas to it, burning embers came pouring out. When I thought it was all gone, more came out, it just kept coming out and burning until finally I had to shut the engine off, put the fire out and remove the charred remains of the nest by hand.

Once it was all back together and running well, we were approached by Stacey David, a man known for his off road antics on Spike TV, to film a segment using the LARC. The day of maneuvering the LARC around the back lot of the Museum culminated with the flattening of the NSU.

And flatten it we did, it looked like a pop can crushed under a car tire. **The segment is scheduled to air on Stacey David's GearZ on ESPN2, April 28<sup>th</sup> at 10 a.m. (CST).**

You can log on to Stacey's website for more information about the show –

[www.staceydavid.com](http://www.staceydavid.com).



**Above: 1959 LARC-LX on the day of filming Stacey David's GEARZ.**

Now when I get frustrated with one of the machines I'm working on, I find myself trying to get a little cooperation by saying under my breath things like: *Remember the NSU*, or *I can go and fire up the beast right now*, or *You could be next*. Idle threats? *Maybe!*

**Greg Coston**  
**Museum Restorer**

### **Max Hoffman - The Baron of Park Avenue**

Max Hoffman was the "Johnny Appleseed" of foreign cars in post-WWII America. Through this one Austrian immigrant, virtually every German, French, Italian, Swedish, and many British cars were brought to this country. In other words, he is credited with virtually single-handedly establishing the import vehicle business in the United States.

Inducted into the Automotive Hall of Fame in 2003, Hoffman is still largely unknown in this country, which is a shame. Born in Vienna in 1904, Hoffman was interested in cars, motorcycles, and racing at an early age, and competed in amateur events through the 1920s. He had already established himself as a central-European sales and marketing contact for many of the major European manufacturers, such as Rolls-Royce, Bentley, Alfa Romeo, Delahaye, Talbot, Hotchkiss, and Volvo. As the political climate in Europe began to change, he moved to France and away from the control of the Germany. Once war broke out, Hoffman was determined to escape, and he emigrated to the United States in 1941.

Arriving in New York with few prospects and almost no money, he quickly fell upon a profitable scheme. With the war raging, metal was in short supply. Hoffman came up with a method of plating plastic costume jewelry to closely resemble "the real thing" and made a small fortune. At war's end, he returned to his first passion, automobiles. In 1947, he opened a showroom right on New York's Park Avenue with a single French Delahaye to draw in clients. Soon, his determination to build up a business featuring European cars was fulfilled. One of his earliest and best known successes was with Volkswagen's Beetle. Two cars had been brought into the country by Dutchman Ben Pon, to less than enthusiastic reviews. Hoffman saw the potential, and was awarded the eastern half of the United States as "his" territory for VW. Sales began slowly, with only a few hundred sold in 1950. By 1953, however, sales were brisk, and Volkswagen decided to set up their own dealer network. One of Hoffman's sales "tricks" was to award dealerships of other prestigious models, such as Jaguar, with the provision that for every 3 "premium" cars sold, they had to sell a Beetle!

Without looking back after the loss of VW, and with an uncanny ability to predict or even direct the tastes of American customers, Hoffman continued to build relationships with the European manufacturers, often making his deals with just a handshake. Hoffman's reputation, both here and in Europe, was as good as any contract that could be written. On this basis, he was awarded full or east-coast distributorship rights to include Lea-Francis, Healey, Lagonda, British Daimler, and Lanchester. He also began importing Aston-Martin, Porsche, BMW, Volkswagen, and Jaguar. Around 1951, he began negotiations with Daimler-Benz AG, although Sir William Lyons of Jaguar tried to dissuade him. There were still hard feelings after the war, plus Mercedes was a direct competitor to Jaguar in this market. In 1954, this situation caused a rift, and Jaguar ceased relations with Hoffman. Max Hoffman was instrumental in introducing, and in some cases developing, many cars we consider iconic today – the Porsche 356 Speedster, Mercedes-Benz 300SL and inadvertently the 190SL, the BMW 507 sports car and Neue Klasse sedans including the 2002, and the VW Beetle.

As if introducing some of the most famous brands of foreign cars to the US market was not enough, Max Hoffman, the Baron of Park Avenue, in 1954 commissioned his new car showroom to be designed by none other than Frank Lloyd Wright. The showroom incorporated a spiral display ramp and mirrored 3-pointed star in the ceiling. Take THAT, Jaguar! Wright also designed Hoffman's personal residence in 1955 in Rye, NY.

As his especially close relationship with BMW grew in the early 1960s, Hoffman relinquished all other marques to concentrate on the Bavarian brand, and remained the sole US importer until the formation of BMW North America in 1974. Retiring soon afterwards, Hoffman moved back home to Austria, where he passed away in 1981. His impact on the American automotive landscape can never be forgotten.

**David Yando**  
**Museum Manager**

## Calendar of Events April 2007 through September 2007

### **Exhibit: Historic Nissan North America Exhibit**

**Dates: Now through June 25, 2007**

Historic Nissan exhibit will feature vehicles on loan to the Museum from the Nissan North America Heritage Collection. Vehicles will be on display for a limited time and will document Nissan's rebirth after World War II and the company's entry into the American market.

### **Event: 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Microcar Drive at Lane Motor Museum**

**Date: Saturday, April 28, 2007**

Join us for a Microcar Show on the Museum grounds and a Microcar Drive to and from Percy Priest Lake. A Gymkhana course will also be available on this day. All participants must be registered.

### **Exhibit: Hold Your Horses: The History of the Deux Chevaux (Two-Horsepower)**

**Dates: May 24, 2007 through October 29, 2007**

Featuring France's most popular car - the Citroën 2CV. View various 2CV chassis from a stock 1954 Ripple Bonnet 2CV, a 2-engine Sahara, a rare Hoffmann convertible, up to a present day 2CV chassis based Burton.

### **Event: Family Fun Day I**

**Date: Friday, June 1, 2007**

Join us for the first family fun day of the season with special children's tours, demonstrations, and activities.

### **Event: Special Day for Dads on Father's Day (Dads Get In FREE!)**

**Date: Sunday, June 17, 2007**

Let Dad take a vehicle ride as we celebrate *Luxurious Vehicles Through the Decades*. Offer Dad a rare Father's Day treat – a ride in a car of his favorite decade: 1930s – Lancia DiLambda; 1940s – Tatra T-87; 1950s – Citroën ID19; 1960s – BMW 3200S; 1970s – NSU Ro-80.

### **Event: GREAT AMERICAN RACE 2007 Stop**

**Date: Monday, July 2, 2007**

**Activities will begin at 4:00 p.m.**

**Vehicles will begin to arrive at approximately 5:30 p.m.**

Lane Motor Museum is excited to announce that the Museum will be an overnight stop on the **GREAT AMERICAN RACE 2007!** Watch the 100+ cars arrive at the Museum along with special ceremonies and other fun activities. Support Nashville as we compete to win the "Great American City Award" on this famous cross-country race. **This event has been recognized as an official Celebrate Nashville event by the office of Mayor Bill Purcell. Celebrate Nashville events are part of our city's 200th birthday celebration and highlight the people, places and activities that make Nashville a special place.**



### **Exhibit: Nissan Z Cars Exhibit**

**Dates: July 5, 2007 through December 31, 2007**

Explore Nissan's revolutionary rise in the sports car market from the 1969 240Z to the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary 300ZX. Included is the 1974 260Z owned by Mr. Yutaka Katayama, President of Nissan Motors North America and known as "The Father of the Z Car."

### **Event: Family Fun Day II**

**Date: Friday, July 13, 2007**

Join us for another fun-filled day with special activities, demonstrations, and children's tours.

### **Event: Magic of the Machine!**

**Date: Saturday, July 28, 2007**

Enjoy motoring madness at Lane Motor Museum with vehicle demonstrations, special tours and vehicle rides (vehicle rides for adults only).

### **Event: Three-Wheel Wonders!**

**Date: Saturday, August 11, 2007**

Ever wonder why cars were built with 3 wheels? Join us and learn more about these 3-wheel wonders. From the tiny 1 passenger Peel P50 to the 4 passenger (on one bench seat) American-made Davis Divan.

### **Event: Citroën Fall Meet**

**Dates: September 28 through September 30, 2007**

Lane Motor Museum is delighted to host Citroën drivers and enthusiasts from across the country for a fun-filled three day meet. All participants must pre-register as there is a fee to participate.

### **Hold Your Horses:**

**The History of the Deux Chevaux**

**2CV Exhibit**

**Begins May 24, 2007 through**

**October 29, 2007**



**Above: 2002 Burton will be featured during Hold Your Horses: The History of the Deux Chevaux.**

**Below: Drivers at Percy Priest Lake during the 2006 3rd Annual Microcar Drive.**



**Become a Lane Motor Museum member and help share in our mission of collecting and preserving automotive history for future generations. Museum membership entitles you to:**

- " Unlimited free admission for you and one guest for one full year.**
- " Subscription to this newsletter and monthly e-newsletter.**
- " 10% discount in the Lane Motor Museum gift shop.**

**Annual membership dues are \$50. Membership expires at the end of one full year from the initial membership start date. Downloadable membership forms are found on the website at [www.lanemotormuseum.org](http://www.lanemotormuseum.org)**

**Join today!**

## Down History Lane – Pre-War Era

Era: *noun*; defined as a period of time marked by distinctive character, events, etc.; the period of time to which anything belongs or is to be assigned; a point of time from which succeeding years are numbered; a date or an event forming the beginning of any distinctive period or span of time.

Many automotive eras have come and gone as we examine history lane, each with events and advancements that have brought us to the Modern era in which we live in today.

The first era, known as the Veteran era, began in the 1880s and ended in 1904. This was a time when cars were considered a novelty and breakdowns were frequent, fuel was difficult to acquire, and fast paced innovations made a year old car practically worthless. There were no set standards for basic vehicle design, body styles, construction materials, or controls. A tiller was commonly used for steering rather than a steering wheel and most cars only had a single speed chain drive instead of a driveshaft. Closed bodies were extremely rare. Panhard et Levassor of France formed in 1889 as the first company to exclusively build cars and Peugeot followed two years later.

Here in America, Charles and Frank Duryea founded the Duryea Motor Wagon Company in 1893, making it the first American automobile company. During this era Oldsmobile dominated the marketplace as their large scale production line of 1902 gave them the edge over all other manufacturers. By 1903, Cadillac, (which began at the Henry Ford Company) Winton, and Ford were producing cars in the thousands. Hundreds of car makers had begun production of vehicles powered by steam, electricity, and gasoline. Technologies we utilize today were attempted and abandoned, while current technologies such as gas/electric hybrids, multi valve engines, overhead camshafts, and four-wheel drive vehicles were tried and abandoned.

The Brass or Edwardian era began in 1905 and ended in 1914 at the beginning of World War One. The use of Brass in the United States for fittings, lights, and radiators coined the term Brass era, although some historians contend if this term should be applied to pre 1905 vehicles as well. Brass era cars are considered to be the true “horseless carriages”. Purchasers of cars were now average citizens and not mechanical hobbyists. At this time, Panhard et Levassor’s SYSTEME PANHARD had been widely adapted and standardized automobiles were created. This system of standards required vehicles with front engines, rear wheel drive, and internal combustion motors with sliding gear transmissions. Major innovations during this period include the electric ignition by Robert Bosch in 1903, the electric self starter by Charles Kettering for Cadillac in 1910-11, independent suspension, and four-wheel brakes. Steel began replacing wood as the frame material of choice and throttle controls allowed variable cruising speeds.

From 1914 to 1919, World War One raged on and auto production dwelled down until the end of the war. The Vintage era began in 1919 and came to an end in 1929 with the stock market crash. Front engine cars dominated and closed bodies with standardized controls became the norm. The internal combustion engine had matured into V8s – V12s – and V16s. England’s Austin 7 became the world’s most copied vehicle as manufacturers from around the world used it as a template for producing their vehicles. The Bugatti Type 35 became one of the most successful racing cars of all time with over a thousand victories in five years.

The Pre-War era began in 1930 at the onset of the Great Depression and ended in 1948. During this era, cars with integrated fenders and fully closed bodies became the big sellers. Sedan became the term used for these vehicles. These bodies allowed for trunk space in the rear for storage. The old open top runabouts, phaetons, and touring cars were being phased out. During this era, Andre Citroën reintroduced front wheel drive in the Traction Avant of 1934. Alvis and Cord had utilized this idea years earlier in their road cars. Auto makers began to decline as the industry matured and consolidated.

**Jimmy Carter**  
**Gift Shop Manager**

**Resource for this article: Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia.**

**Down History Lane - Post War Era will be continued in the July 2007 edition of the newsletter...stay tuned!**

**Lane Motor Museum is proud to be a member of NAAM (National Association of Automobile Museums). We look forward to hosting the 2008 NAAM/SAH (Society of Automotive Historians) Conference, April 2 - April 5, 2008 in Nashville!**



**Mr. Andersen visited the Museum recently and when I learned that he has owned the same Isetta for almost 50 years, I asked if he could share his experience with everyone. He has done just that, and I want to thank him very much for his article.**

**Jeff Lane**

### **Adventures of a 50-year old Isetta**

Soon after we were married, it became apparent that my wife Kirsten and I needed a second car. We had a Jaguar XK140 roadster and we each needed a car to get to our jobs.

In December 1958, while waiting in line to see the Christmas show at Rockefeller Center in New York City, I noticed an odd looking little car at the end of the street. I walked over to get a closer look and to my surprise the entire front of this strange little car could open up. It was a door, the only door. There was a nameplate on it that read "Isetta 300" and a BMW blue and white circular medallion. It was the neatest little vehicle that I had ever seen and I decided right then it would make an ideal second car.

A couple of months later while scanning the auto classifieds, there was a 1957 Isetta listed for sale for \$550. We went to look at it and after a short test drive, decided to buy it and it became our second car. It was quite different to drive from the Jaguar; it was noisy, under-powered, somewhat bouncy, and the 4-speed shift lever was on the left-hand side. But what fun to drive! By winding it out in each gear and anticipating the hills, I was easily able to keep up with the traffic of the 1950s. And as a bonus it got 50+ mpg while most other cars on the road get 17 to 18 mpg. 75 cents would fill the tank. I so enjoyed driving it that it became my number one car, and my wife got the Jaguar.

It was especially challenging to drive in the snow and also on a multilane highway as I shall explain. Several times after driving the 20 miles to work in the morning, it would start snowing during the day. A few inches of snow would soon accumulate on the roadways and cars would compact the snow creating two nice tire tracks. The closely spaced rear wheels of the Isetta did not follow the tracks of standard four wheel cars, so my rear tires rode on top of the virgin snow between the tracks. It was like driving in a continuous downhill position. Also, with such a short wheelbase, it would on occasion try to switch ends by doing a 180 or at least a 90, but the Isetta never got stuck and always got me home.

My wife and I drove the Isetta to New York City using the New Jersey turnpike from our home, which at that time was in Central New Jersey, a couple of times. We could keep up with the traffic in the slow lane, but when large trailer trucks whizzed by, the burst of wind would rock the little car with me clutching the steering wheel tightly trying to maintain a straight forward direction. That was a bit frightening!

**Einer Andersen**

**Adventures of a 50-year old Isetta will be continued in the July 2007 edition of Braking News...stay tuned!**



**Above: Einer Andersen with his 1957 Isetta.**



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**In the next issue: Details on the Great American Race stop at Lane Motor Museum - July 2, 2007!**