



## OUR FAMILY CAR



My name is Gary Cummings. My wife's name is Shirley Cummings. We met the day before Thanksgiving in 1960. We began dating and she quickly found out that I was a bit of a motor head. At the time, my car (my very first one) was a 1950 Pontiac Silver chief. It was a six-cylinder sedan. When I was 15 years old, I sold my coin collection to have the \$175 for the cars purchase. It was black with gray broadcloth upholstery. After only six months, a friend asked to use the car and put a connecting rod through the side of the engine by driving it far too fast.

***Note: If you are wondering how and why I bought a car before I could legally drive it, that is a separate story all by itself that I may tell later.***

When I finally got my license, my father told me that I could not buy another car but must repair the car that I had. Thus, began my deeper education beyond driving the car.

### MY MECHANICAL EDUCATION

Our house on Capitol Hill was two blocks from a Signal Gas station. That was good fortune for me but not necessarily good fortune for their full-time mechanic. His advice to me was to try to purchase a used engine at a local wrecking yard. \$50 later I had a good running engine delivered to our driveway. From that started the remove and replace saga that took about a month. I now realize that it should have been a one- or two-day process, but the self-taught education was irreplaceable. I wore a path from our

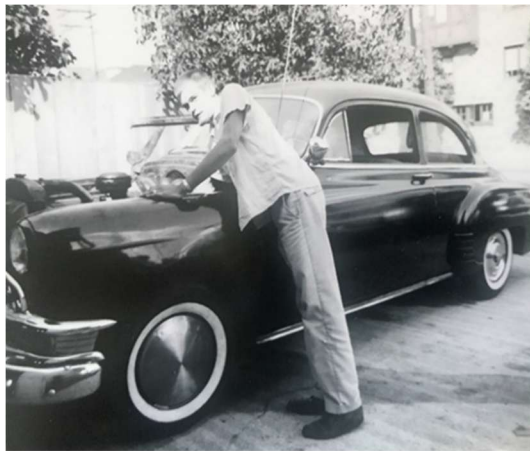
garage to the gas station usually going down three or four times per day. The mechanics name was Ray. He was a very patient fellow to say the least. I was truly lucky to have Him.

I took a month to do a one-day motor installation.



Just before I completed the project, I had to have my tonsils removed. All I had yet to do was to install the transmission. When I came home from the hospital, the doctor told me to stay in bed for two days while eating ice cream and not do anything strenuous for a week. He said he did not want the stitches to risk separation. He probably would have kept me in the hospital if he had known that the next day, in my pajamas, I would be underneath the car with the sixty pound transmission on my chest moving it into place on the bell housing of the engine. Somehow the stitches held, and I survived.

A day later I drove it down to Ray, and he was able to see the results of all his education. The smile on his face indicated that he had been rewarded for all his help to me. Thus, I learned many mechanical and electrical aspects of a car and maybe more importantly I learned how good people such as Ray can be.



Mechanical education. Replacing the engine.



Body education. Replacing the front clip after accident.



*With the new engine installed, I finally had wheels that rolled. "L'il Stinker" (see the skunk decal on the fender) had baths more often than I did. My Black Chariot and first car...a Pontiac Silver Streak. I now had a car for my Senior year of high school.*

The car drove great. The engine ran beautifully. I was now about to learn the next phase of my education.

### MY CAR BODY EDUCATION

Two months later, on a fall day while driving to school, I needed to stop very fast behind a car waiting to make a left-hand turn. It was raining and there were leaves on the road. As you can anticipate, it was like trying to stop on wet snow. The front end of the Pontiac slid very nicely under the rear of a fellow student's 57 Chevrolet. Even at 20 miles an hour, my grill ended up through the radiator and made an accordion out of the front fenders. Now I had my chance to learn a whole new set of skills. I learned very quickly that the "front clip" meant the entire front bodywork of an automobile from the cowl forward. Once again, Ray was a great help and gave me much guidance. One month later I was behind the wheel again.

### FINDING OUR "FAMILY" CAR

At this point, let me fast forward a year. In the spring of my senior year of high school, a friend of mine was creating a Resto Rod out of a 1933 Plymouth coupe. I thought it was a great looking car and I began looking around for something similar. In May of 1961, Shirley went to a yard sale at a neighbor's house. She heard that there was an old car in the garage. She told me about it, and I went to look at it, and lo and behold, I saw a car, the likes of which I had never seen before. It had a relatively new paint job and new canvas top. Most of the windows were cracked and fogged over and the English leather upholstery had springs sticking up through it. However, when I started it up, the engine ran great.

The family was asking \$300 for the car. I knew that if I sold my current car, I would only have about \$200 to spend. After three weeks I was finally able to talk them into a price of \$175. I took possession of the car on a Friday afternoon, the day before I graduated from Seattle prep high school. The next day I drove it to my high school graduation.



1961 The girl and the car, both beauties.

One week later I was able to sell the 1950 Pontiac to a friend. I used the \$200 to pay back my father for the temporary loan. And I had another \$25 in my pocket as well. I was able to have the front and back seats reupholstered for \$50. I then went about taking the window glass out of the doors and having them replaced with new glass for another \$50. Now I had a fully functional car. For the next year and a half, Shirley and I thoroughly enjoyed the car while we dated and attended our first year at Seattle University.

### OUR HONEYMOON CAR

Eighteen months later, on August 25, 1962, we were married. The Pontiac was still my only transportation. We took it on our honeymoon to Victoria, British Columbia and then along

The Washington coastline all away down to Brookings Oregon on the California/Oregon border.



As a newly married couple, we moved to Bellingham Washington and attended Western Washington State University. Every two weeks, the car traveled the 90 miles to Seattle faithfully and without problems.

In January of 1963, we purchased another car, a 1959 Volkswagen convertible, from a bank that had repossessed it. Because of body damage and interior neglect, the price was \$300. After some bodywork and a new top, we had another convertible that was just as cold during the winter months as our Pontiac. But, at age 19, you don't worry about things like that.

Six months later, on July 6, 1963, our son, Kevin Michael, was born. I had driven Shirley to the hospital in the Pontiac and a day later I drove my new son and my wife home from the hospital in the Pontiac.

As a two-car family, I drove the Pontiac and Shirley drove the Volkswagen. Two years later, we graduated from the University of Washington and begin teaching school. Two years after that, on August 11, 1967 we welcomed our daughter Katie Megan into the world. Once again I drove my wife to the hospital and drove my new daughter and wife from the hospital in the Pontiac. After all, the Pontiac had been officially adopted as a family member. Therefore, it was always used for the special occasions.



1969. Winter and summer family fun in the Pontiac.

### THE RESTORATION STARTS

Fast forward to 1976. The Pontiac was not running as well as I had wanted it to. It seemed to always be starved for fuel. It was like the fuel pump was not working properly. After having replaced the fuel pump, checked that the gas line was not plugged, and doing many other electronic things to make sure that was not the problem, I decided the car was due for a full restoration. I had thought it would be a three-year process. Of course, this would have been while running my business, raising my preteen children, remodeling our house on Vashon Island, and making sure that I remembered to pay attention to my wife and rest of my family. Well, I'm glad I chose family before car, (at least most of the time) and this divided attention made the restoration process take 11 years instead of the 3 years I had thought. Of course, an underestimation of the work involved had nothing to do with it. And my marriage did survive!!!



1983. Can Humpty Dumpty be put together again?

In 1984, I had been in the restoration process for eight years. During this time, I was unable to enjoy that special pleasure of driving the vintage car that had been such an important member our family fun experiences...our 1937 Pontiac. I was beginning to get impatient and frustrated and disappointed. I even thought about selling the Pontiac! Shirley, my greatest supporter who can also read me like a book, said that if I ever sold the Pontiac, she figured she might be next! Therefore, I convinced her to allow me to buy a second old car. It was my hope that being able to drive one would motivate me to finish the Pontiac restoration. Therefore, I wanted a car that was either an excellent original or a restored car so I did not have to divert my energies from the Pontiac.

After spending six months of looking around, writing letters, talking to people across the country, I narrowed my choice down to a 1932 Buick located in California and they 1931 Buick located in Wisconsin. On Labor Day weekend 1984 I flew to California and then to Wisconsin to look at each of the cars. On Saturday night I called my wife from Wisconsin and told her that I had decided on the 1931 Buick Opera Coupe. She agreed to fly to Sioux Falls South Dakota the next morning and I planned to pick her up when she arrived Sunday evening. The Strabo family who I bought the car from me showed me all the unique features of their car. They promised me it was worthy of driving across the country. Therefore, on Sunday morning at 7 AM, I left Wausau Wisconsin and headed. At five o'clock in the evening, I picked up Shirley and we continued our way. 40 hours later we arrived in Seattle. The Buick had made it perfectly. And yes, it was a fast trip. But it was a fun one as well.



Kevin Billings was a young mechanic who assisted rebuilding the engine and car.

1984 to 1987, side by side in the garage, the Buick motivated my restoration of the Pontiac.

For the next three years, the Buick gave me the driving pleasure that I had hoped for and, most importantly, the motivation to continue working on and finally completing the restoration of the Pontiac. It served its purpose. In addition, it was a joy to use and became a continuing part of the Cummings family.

ELEVEN YEARS LATER-RESORATION COMPLETED

In 1987 the restoration was completed. Thousands of hours, many helping hands, and much learning and patience had occurred. The Pontiac was just turning 50 years old, and our marriage, which had survived the restoration, was 25 years old. The stars were in line.



I began driving the car daily to work. Most of my client's enjoyed business lunches riding in the old Pontiac...freshened up with the completed restoration.

*A MECHANICAL SIDE NOTE FOR THE CURIOUS AND/OR MECHANICALLY INCLINED: The problem with the smooth running of the engine turned out to be inside the exhaust manifold. A steel pipe that the gasoline from the carburetor passes thru on the way to the intake manifold had rusted through and allowed exhaust vapors to be mixed with the fuel vapors on the way to the piston combustion chamber. Therefore, I could have had a good running car in 1976 with some labor and a \$15 part which would've saved me \$20,000 of restoration since I would've probably just used the car in its unrestored but very drivable condition. However, it would not have been the finished car that I now have.*

In August of 1987, on our 25th wedding anniversary, Shirley and I reenacted our honeymoon trip by driving to the Washington Oregon Pontiac show in Portland Oregon. We were proud to take the Best of

Show honors. Even better, we were also awarded the People's Choice, which for us was the most important since our goal in the restoration was to bring smiles and pleasure to all those who see this rare and unusual car. It was great pleasure at the show to meet and greet so many nice people who enjoyed hearing about the restoration and our family history of the car. The car ran beautifully, and we had a comfortable 400 mile ride to the show and home again afterwards.



1995. The Pontiac takes BEST OF SHOW and PEOPLES CHOICE at Clackamas, Oregon Pontiac Oakland car show. Gary and Shirley, proud owners.

### MOVING ON

In 1991, my son got married. After the marriage ceremony, he drove the car to the hotel he stayed at with his new bride, Kelly Brock Cummings. As always, the Pontiac was a reliable chariot. Kevin was able to get there and return without a problem.

In 1996 my daughter, Katie, married Matt Rossmeissl. My new son-in-law drove himself and his new bride to the guest house on Vashon Island that they stayed at for their first honeymoon night. Once again, the Pontiac served in its important family role as the get-away transportation for Katie and Matt

I was now using the Pontiac any time the rain was not pouring. So much fun. Family, clients, and friends either endured or enjoyed the Pontiac. So much fun for me...and I hope at least some fun to my captured passengers. Many pictures, many memories, so, so much fun! With so much support from my wife, the rest of my family, my friends, my suppliers, and restorers. Was it worth it! Absolutely!!! Nobody does it solo. It is a community effort.



Part of the restoration team: Eric at Bardahl and Karl at Paul's Upholstery. There were many, many more.

Once our Pontiac was reunited with our family as a functional and fun vehicle, I found myself no longer using our 1931 Buick, nicknamed "The Pumpkin" because of its orange color... less and less. Finally, in 1990, I decided to sell the Pumpkin and give another family an opportunity to enjoy a great car. Once I found new owners, I called the Straub family in Wisconsin and thanked them for the wonderful restoration they had performed on the Buick and all the joy our family had had with it. I also thanked them for the fact that it had helped motivate me to complete the Pontiac's restoration.

### AN OLDER MISTRESS

A few months later, Chuck Straub sent me a picture of another car they had for sale. It was a 1931 Buick convertible coupe. They had just completed a mechanical restoration on the 90,000-mile original mile car and were ready to sell it. It was an unbelievable opportunity that I could not pass up. Shirley agreed that it was a beautiful car and gave me permission to go ahead.

Before taking ownership of the car, I asked Chuck and his brother Tom to paint the car and do a few additional items. Finally, in the fall of 1995, I was ready to bring the car home. Shirley and I flew back to Wisconsin and begin our trip to Seattle.

In Billings Montana, we met up with my son Kevin and my four-year-old grandson Connor. Shirley flew home, and Kevin and Connor began traveling with me for the remainder of the trip. It was a wonderful trip.

Entering the park at the Northeast entrance near Red Lodge, we climbed from 4000' to 11,500' via Bear Tooth Pass...a hairpin turning climb that would make Pikes Peak seem like child's play.



Son Kevin with Grandson Connor. Shirley and me in Wausau with Chuck and Ellen who restored the Buick.

Elk, herds of buffalo, geysers, Old Faithful, the Continental Divide, and bears...what a great National Park.

It was September. The leaves were turning beautiful shades of red, orange and yellow, and I was with two of my most important investments in life... my son and my grandson.

We took many photographs and had a chance to see many of the geological wonders that makes Yellowstone National Park one of the Seven Wonders of the World. Thank goodness for Teddy Roosevelt's vision.

On September 15 as we were leaving the park, can you believe it began to snow with the temperatures getting as low as 15°. That wonderful Buick performed beautifully in the tradition of all the Straub restorations. Even though the cold air found places to penetrate the driving compartment, the wonderful heater kept us warm. From there we traveled through the rest of Montana, Idaho's Panhandle, and the deserts and Cascade Mountains of Washington. We arrived home on September 17, 1995 just in time for Kevin to watch his beloved University of Washington Huskies play a great football game. The Buick had completed the trip in flawless fashion.



Connor in Yellowstone Park on the Buick. The Pontiac and family: Gary, Shirley, Katie, Connor and Kevin.

We had two great cars to enjoy. We still used the Pontiac, but not enough.

Over the next few years, I found myself driving the Buick more and more and the family Pontiac less and less. In our hearts, the Pontiac was still first, but the Buick had all the enchantment of a mistress... It was a new adventure and I was motivated to gain tradition and experience with it. It had many things different from the Pontiac. A rumble seat, a golf club compartment, classy looking landau bars, a folding front wind shield, long rolling front fenders, and side mount tires in the front fenders. And a luggage rack with trunk for extra traveling space. And it was fast with an overdrive that could carry it to 70 miles per hour with ease...faster than the Pontiac. And finally, it was recognized as a true Classic by the Classic Car Club of America! A trophy mistress!

In 2001, I joined the local Buick club. I learned that the Buick Company Centennial would occur in Flint, Michigan in 2003. The North Cascade Chapter of the Buick Club was planning a caravan of Buicks from Seattle to make a six-day trip to the national meet in July of that year. There would be almost 50 cars on the caravan along with almost 150 people. Since the Buick had already made it from Wisconsin to Seattle, and since I had driven the car 15,000 miles since 1995, I was confident that it could make the trip. If I drove it, I would have the fun and prestige of having the oldest car in the caravan by quite a few years.

Over the next two years prior to the trip, I made a few cosmetic improvements to the car as well as tending to some minor mechanical items. Meanwhile, our family Pontiac languished in the heated garage under protective cover with little or no attention paid to it. I was to find out later that cars are like wives. They need constant attention and use and need to be part of the family...or you will pay later.

In 2003, Shirley and I began our trip with the Washington Chapter of the Buick Club of America caravan. The Buick performed beautifully as I expected. It was truly an adventure of a lifetime and gave us a great perspective as to what it was like to drive a car a long distance in 1931. Shirley is a great partner and a great wife and especially a great sport. Our Buick was one of the stars of the National Convention which hosted more than 800 vehicles. At the show, the Buick received the Longest Driven Award for pre-World War II automobiles.

Shirley and I left the Buick in Wisconsin with the Straub family. It was our plan to return in September when the weather was cooler to drive the car home. We did this and once again traveled through Yellowstone Park visiting Old Faithful Geyser. It was there that I decided to give the Buick its nickname... Hence forward it became and is **OLD FAITHFUL**.

### MEANWHILE, WHERE IS THE PONTIAC???

#### **Fast forward five years:**

In 2008 I began thinking about our forgotten family member, the Pontiac. I decided that I had not driven it enough. There were a few years where I did not even start it up. I was to find out that I would pay the price for this lack of attention.

The list of problems I had to face is too long to go into detail. Therefore, I will summarize. And all these occurred while it was stored in a secure, dry, and heated garage!

The following items rebuilt:

- Fuel tank sending unit (rusted in place from lack of movement).
- Fuel pump (new fuel destroys the older diaphragms').
- Carburetor (new gas clogs if left in place).
- Radiator core (antifreeze turns acidic over time).
- Heater core (same as above).
- Engine thermostat (stuck in place)
- Water pump (do not know why)
- All lighting (contacts had tarnished and oxidized).
- Speedometer unit. (I now know how to assemble a mileage odometer. Remarkably interesting)
- Brake wheel cylinders (brake fluid has water in it and the two separate over time. Then rust!).
- Emergency brake cables (rusted into place. Too late to just lube. Had to replace.)
- Manifold (preheat butterfly rusted in place).
- Radio (needed rebuild...had been working fine).
- Clock (same as above).

It took me the next two years to repair many of these items. I began using the Pontiac again and the Buick less. It is hard to have two lovers. More power to those that can do it.

I still had more to do, and I was about to get an added incentive to not only finish these items, but to make further improvements to Our Family Car.

#### ANNIVERSARY PREPARATION FOR CAR (75<sup>TH</sup>) AND FAMILY (50<sup>TH</sup>)

##### SEATTLE, WASHINGTON TO MORRO BAY, CALIFORNIA IN 2012

In the Fall of 2010, I saw Arnold Landvoigt at the Hershey Car Swap Meet in Hershey, Pennsylvania at his usual post of pushing Pontiac Club memberships. He told me that the Pontiac Flat Head Reunion on the West coast was occurring in 2012. It would commemorate the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Car...the 1937 Pontiacs. He said he hoped to see my car there. I told him I would let him know.

When I got home, I shared this with Shirley to see if she might be up to such a long trip in a 75 year old car that had no air conditioning, no coffee cup holders, no turn signals, no seat belts, no tinted windows, no ability to move or tilt the seat and of course, no heated seats, lots of wind cracks around the doors, a comfortable but slow maximum speed of 50 miles per hour, window wipers that worked if you took your foot off the gas, and many other creature comforts that have occurred over the last intervening 75 years that we all have come to expect.

I tried selling her on the adventure by reminding her that we had taken a similar trip on our honeymoon. I also said that in 2012, it would be our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, and that we could relive that day along with the same car. What a salesman I am.

I had hoped for a historical remembering response. Instead I received a rather astonished look and then a rather hysterical laugh from her. However, after a moment, the love-of-my-life asked if I could install seat

belts, turn signals, and a plug-in to accommodate the 12 volt GPS and CD player for the Books-on-Tape that we use on long road trips. In addition, she said we would have to bring Webster, our dog and constant companion. What I trooper!!! Now you know more reasons why I love her so much.

For the next 2 years we I worked to ready the car for the 3000-mile trip. This included the items Shirley required. It also included using the car often so I could make sure that all was in good running order. Even with all that had been done from 1976 to 1987...and again from 2008 to 2010...I found much to keep me busy. Some of it was cosmetic so it would "look" good. Some of it was general maintenance and tune ups. Some was gathering extra parts to bring along...just in case. And some was the discovery of additional items that had existed even before I had acquired the Pontiac in 50 years before in 1961.

During this time, I had the assistance of many people. All took an interest in the upcoming adventure/trip. As the saying goes, without them all, the trip would not have occurred.

To give you an appreciation of the planning and work that goes into a trip of this magnitude, I have copied my notes with three- and one-half weeks to go.

### **24 days to go: Tuesday, April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2012.**

**Sent:** Tuesday, April 3, 2012 7:38:51 PM

**Subject:** Project update...Morro Bay trip April 28th ...

Gettin' close. 24 days.

Project update.

The DONE ones:

1. Differential regearing. [Greg/Randy](#).
2. Radio- installed and working. [Randy/Gary](#).
3. Rear shocks- leave on the adjustable air shocks. [Gary](#)
4. New NOS hubcap- installed. [Gary](#).
5. Wheel pinstripe. [Randy](#).
6. Carburetor oil bath air cleaner decal installed. [Gary/Randy](#).
7. Ash tray mounting base (curved for glove box door) fabricated. [Gary](#).
8. New mirror for rear view mirror. [Gary](#).

PARTIALLY DONE ones with progress details:

1. Turn signals- wires run. **Need** to install turn signal unit on steering column. **Need** to get clamp to Randy. **Need** rubber hose for covering clamp. **Need** to fabricate bracket if hose clamp idea does not work. **Need** to test. [Greg/Randy/Gary](#).

2. Fog Lights- Installed on custom bracket. **Need** to connect wires and test. **Greg/Randy**. **Need** to make cover for lenses 7 1/4" diameter. **Gary**.
3. Grill sections- After fog lights installed, **Need** to install repainted sections. **Randy**.
4. Battery kill switch- Installed. **Need** bracket on firewall. **Randy**
5. Grill guard- At chrome platers. **Need** to complete plating. **Ardis/Mike at Art Brass**. **Need** paint on grooves. **Need** install. **Randy**.
6. Bumper guards- **Randy** has off car. **Need** paint grooves. **Need** install. **Randy**.
7. Clock- Has been repaired. **Needs** to be installed. **Greg/Randy**.
8. Dash woodgraining- **Lauren** has completed redo. It is "in the mail" as of today. **Lauren**. **Should** arrive by end of week. **Needs** to be installed then. **Greg/Randy**.
9. Possible Pontiac t shirt project- **Eric Lindstrom** **Need** artwork if going to do. **Eric and Gary**
10. Email travel log update project- Have emails loaded. **Need** introduction and start. **Gary**
11. Shift lever- Color coating completed. **Need** to install. **Gary**



12. ?

#### TO DO projects:

1. Fuel tank filler neck- **Needs** to be bent so it is 1/4" higher in fender hole. **Greg/Randy**.
2. Fuel tank sending unit- **Needs** float arm bent up slightly so gauge reads correctly. **Greg/Randy**.
3. Speedometer testing- **Need** to test for gauge accuracy with new ring and pinion gears. (First test seems to indicate no need for a speedometer compensating gear. I am surprised!) **Gary/Greg**.
4. Spare parts supply- **Need** to assemble and get some to John Edwards. **Gary**.  
Water pump, generator, voltage regulator, distributor, electrical tune up parts, carburetor, radiator hose, gasket making material, tools, Pontiac shop manuals...**Gary**.
5. Dash for Arnold Landvoigt- **Need** to package and send with John Edwards. **Randy**.
6. Gear shift ball. **Need** to glue. **Greg**.

7. Inverter- Do I have one under front seat? If not, can I install one easily. **Need** if possible. Gary/Greg.
8. Converter for 6V to 12V- **Needed** with plug outlet for GPS travel unit. Gary/Greg.
9. Blue tooth- **Need** to make sure my old one is working. Gary.
10. Garmin travel unit- **Need** to make sure Shirley's works or buy a new one. Gary.
11. Copytalk- **Need** to see if I can email to GROUPS of contacts. Gary.
12. Sheila- **Need** to discuss emails with pictures while on trip. Gary.
13. Randy Gardner- **Need** to discuss a Facebook page for trip story. Gary/Shirley.
14. Camera- **Need** enough battery's and memory cards for movies and pictures. Gary.
15. Trip Logbook- **Need** to make or buy. Gary/Shirley.
16. Picture Plan- **Need** to outline trip photo ops. Gary/Shirley.
17. Trip story plan- **Need** to outline story of trip. Gary/Shirley.
18. Lead additive- **Need** to pick up "Bit-O-Lead" from Bardahl. Gary
19. ?

Well, things are moving along well. I hope to get it out for some miles before TAKE OFF day occurs.

And so, it went, right up to the day of departure.

### THE ANNIVERSARY TRIP



Ready for the 2500-mile trip to Morro Bay to celebrate our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and the Pontiac's 75<sup>th</sup> year.

On Saturday morning, April 28<sup>th</sup>, 2012, Shirley, Webster, and I entered our 75-year-old trusted Pontiac for our grand journey to Morro Bay, California. There we would link up with other West Coast members of the Early Times Chapter (ETC) of the Pontiac Club. A 3000-mile round trip journey in our trusted family member. And celebrating our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our marriage in the same car we used on our Honeymoon 50 years earlier along the very same route...the beautiful coastlines of Washington, Oregon, and California.

The Pontiac performed as always. Dependable and enjoyable. A 75-year-old native American orphan. Always drawing an appreciative, curious crowd as we traveled. Traveling from Seattle, Washington to Roseburg, Oregon. Then onto Chico, California and Half Moon Bay and finally to Morro Bay, on the spectacular California Coast.



On the road to Morro Bay. California. 2012

For the next four days we enjoyed our great group of fellow old car friends with their own Family Steeds. A grand celebration.

Our trip back home was a trip down Memory Lane. Like our honeymoon trip, we traveled all the way on Hwy 1 or Hwy 101 on the coast from Morro bay to Seattle.

Some of the places revisited:

- The California coastal redwood forest where we had driven the Pontiac *thru* one of the giant 400-year-old giants.



The California Redwoods and then on to the spectacular beaches of Brookings, Oregon.

- Oswald State Park in Oregon where we used wheelbarrows to haul our camping gear to the beach where we spent the night 50 years before. (At age 19, the cost of a motel was not affordable.)
- Astoria where only a ferry existed to cross the mouth of the great Columbia River. Now a bridge carried us over the silt laden delta of the river from Oregon to Washington.
- Ocean Shores where we had slept on the beach after driving many miles on the hard-packed sand with ocean waves almost reaching where we slept when the tide came in further than we expected. Have you ever slept on sand where somehow there is more in your sleeping bag than under it? But as newlyweds, you do not even notice it.
- The final leg back to Seattle. This time the engine did not overheat the last 150 miles back home. Therefore, we did not need the three buckets of water in the back seat as we had on the original final leg.

#### AFTER MORROW BAY, 2013 & 2014

The story of our trip was a 3-issue newsletter story edited from my own log by Arnold Landvoigt, a great supporter of people in the old car hobby. Since the trip, we continue to use the Pontiac often. I also continue to find new projects to continually improve the Pontiac as well as keep it running in good order.

The trip itself made me aware of things to repair or improve.

- An engine oil leak thru the rear main bearing into the clutch.
- A “sometimes not working” voltage regulator.
- A leaking rear end. (The bolts just needed tightening.)
- An exhaust manifold leak (It turned out that it kept blowing out gaskets because it was out-of-flat with a .035” warp. It is now flat again. Problem solved.)



Darrel at Art Brass, a metal finisher artist. The “new” old style accessory turn signal accessory installed.

The projects continue. The original convertible rear window. Convertible top chrome accents as original. Better hood alignment. The radio has stopped working. The clock hour hand has come loose. The turn signals stopped working. The speedometer makes a noise at 50 MPH. And so, it goes.

Did you know that every 500 miles, the Pontiac Owner’s Manual says to:

- Oil the generator bearings.
- Oil the starter bearings.
- Add grease to the distributor and water pump grease cups.
- Light oil to window wiper transmissions.
- Light oil to door and trunk hinges.

And every 1000 miles:

- Change the oil.
- Check brake fluid and adjust the brakes.
- Check oil in steering gear, transmission and rear end.
- Check water in radiator and battery.



With an engine this simple, it is very easy to work on and provide maintenance.

Can you identify what you see? What feeds the carburetor? Can you see it?



7

2014 at the same place as the 1961 picture. And 2020 on Jan 1<sup>st</sup> with all four Cummings at Golden Gardens Park. Yes, we enjoy the car in winter. It is not just a Garage Queen. We USE it often and year-round.

Is it any wonder that a responsible new car owner in 1937 had a very personal relationship with their car...or a full-time chauffeur and maintenance employee as a member of the household staff!!!

### WORLDWIDE HOBBY MEANS WORLDWIDE FRIENDSHIPS

Since I first bought the car in 1961, I have taken every opportunity to acquire extra parts for the Pontiac. Back then, I could...and did buy whole cars for \$10 or \$15. I would then take off the parts I wanted, and then scrap out the car for \$20. If I had only known.

Now, 50 years later, I have 75 boxes of parts as well as many large items that do not fit in a box. Most are for the Pontiac, but when I saw non-Pontiac parts, I saved those as well. In the last two years, I am finally reaching out to fellow car collectors who may need some part that I have. I have started cataloging my extra parts did not realize how many duplicates of many parts that I had. Three starters, five generators, ten carburetors, four transmissions, and the list goes on.

As I have listed parts for sale, I have made friends with many people throughout the United States and beyond. It is so pleasurable to help a person find “that part”. It is also fun to help people learn the correct color or part to make their car the way it came from the factory. And sometimes the teacher becomes the student when one of these people helps me to bring greater authenticity to my car.

### OUR FAMILY CAR...A CONTINUING STORY

The story of OUR FAMILY CAR is a continuing story...like our family. As we age, so does our car. We are fortunate to have so many friends and fellow hobbyists to keep it a useable car. I want and hope to keep it a driver where more people can see and enjoy it on a continuing basis. And keep it as authentic as possible. 77 years old...going for 100 years!!!

In addition to our wonderful son, Kevin (who we lost to cancer in 1996), we have his son, Connor. We also have our incredibly special daughter Katie who brought us Matt, our son-in-law. In turn, they gave us three more grandson's, Sam, Jack, and Sean. I hope someday one or all of them will be able to adopt the Pontiac and keep it in the family. Perhaps my interest in “all things mechanical” will be adopted along with the car.

That is another reason for selling the extra parts. Only I know what many of them are. If I was not here, they might be sold for scrap and be lost to the hobbyists who might really need them.

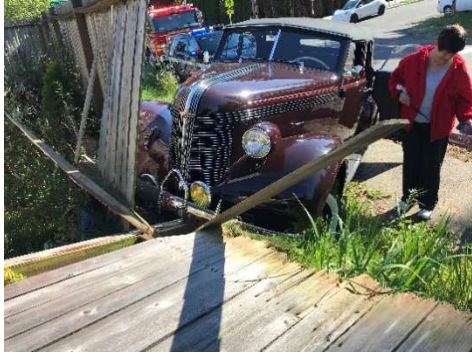
So many things to think about, so much to do. However, therein lies the fun. Setting goals and plans with something you enjoy. Opportunities to make new friends and help and learn from others. Keeping the mind and body active to stave off “going to seed”.

Over the next few years, I will continue to add New Chapters to the story of

#### OUR FAMILY CAR.

PS: Old Faithful is still waiting for attention. Can I do ownership of her justice while continuing the care-and-feeding of the Pontiac? Or should I find a new, more attentive caretaker? We shall see.

## A NEW CHAPTER, THE ACCIDENT!!!



April 20, 2020. !!!!!!!

With the Pandemic came stay-at-home and non-social activities. Not my kind of environment. I never was inclined towards being a hermit. Never-the-less, Shirley and I complied with recommended and mandated health advisories. Our car became our way to get out and still stay separated from others.

It had been a while since taking the Pontiac out. We decided it was time to exercise her and keep her from getting flat sided tires. Three miles from home on a rural road of no stop lights and all stop signs in our favor, a young 25 year old woman of foreign birth driving her boyfriend's car must have been confused and turned right in front of me. I had no time allowance to avoid the collision. You see the results above.

We were lucky. Other than bruising and swollen muscles, everyone survived far better than our Pontiac.

### **OCTOBER 15<sup>TH</sup>, 2020, SIX MONTHS AFTER THE ACCIDENT.**

Time and physical therapy seem to be healing our pains and bruises. And, when I put the word out to the network of other Pontiac owners, the parts I needed were located and started flowing in.

Financially, the other driver's car insurance is covering most of the cost. However, the time lost to be able to use the car is not replaceable...nor is it covered by insurance as an identifiable loss.

However, the process of bringing it back to the road is a fun challenge. Also, I am having an opportunity to meet new people and reacquaint with other motorheads that I have met in the past. A few pictures tell the ongoing story best:

**APRIL/MAY:** Assess the damage and start the disassembly. Get insurance appraisals started. Contact my network of car friends for help on finding 80-year-old extra parts.



**MAY:** Parts arrive from Ontario, Virginia, Connecticut, New York, Maryland, and more. Car is taken to restoration shop.



**JUNE/JULY:** Restoration progresses sloooowly but workmanship was first class.



**JULY:** A decision to move restoration/repair to another shop that may have more time for the car.



**AUGUST/SEPTEMBER:** Frame straightened; damaged suspension restored/repaired.



**OCTOBER:** Front end sheet metal time. Repairing, prep work, fitting, and...yes...painting!  
Right front fender skim coated. Primed and ready for paint. Just LOOK at 'em shine!



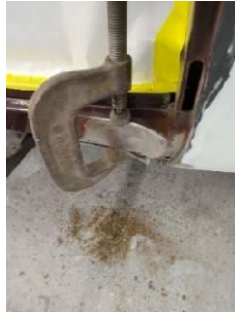
And, as many of you know, they will now be wet sanded, then clear coated and more before they are finished. Absolutely beautiful!!!

**OCTOBER 14:** Oops, a step back. Rust in a hidden spot on the lower right cowl was discovered. Fear not. Scott and his team analyzed and then handled it professionally and artfully. Now, back to forward movement.

Cowl at the rocker panel.

Repair in progress.

Repair completed.



**OCTOBER/NOVEMBER:**

**All the “little” time-consuming projects.**

There are still small parts to chrome, prep, paint and restore as needed. Headlights, fog lights, fender braces, grill shell bottom, etc....

My old fog lights before ..... and after the accident.

The “new” old ones I located.



**Sprucing up the engine compartment.**

While the newly painted parts cure and are completed, it is a great time to clean and repaint the very accessible engine and front suspension. The cleaning has been started as can be seen.



**Putting all the correct bolts with the pile of nuts and washers into the correct holes.**

Thank goodness for zip lock bags and marking pens.

**The horizon has a rainbow in the near distance.**

I agree with Scott. I think I can see the end of the tunnel. Yes, I am sure the Phoenix will rise again...soon.

The next segments of this Chapter will be the car on the road again.

Thanks to all of you who will have made it possible to continue this journey.

Gary Cummings and Family  
October 15, 2020