

Safari Wagons Come Out Of Winter Hibernation

Pontiac-Oakland
Club International

Custom Safari Chapter

Spring 2018

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Overnight snow accumulation on Tom Young's '57 Safari wagon on a fall morning at Crater Lake National Park, 1982.

For many Chapter members, this past winter season extended well into the spring. Everyone experienced cold weather but now sunny skies are here and it's time to get our Safari wagons back on the road. After all, there is plenty to do..... such as attending local shows and of course, joining your fellow chapter members for our **Annual Custom Safari Chapter Meeting** set for **Tuesday, 2 pm, June 26th** at the Chula Vista Resort in the Wisconsin Dells, WI. It's a great location for Safarians to gather and enjoy local sights and activities of the POCI National Convention.

Remember that our unofficial West Coast meet is set for **July 22nd** at the **Wounded Warrior** car show in Redondo Beach. You can't beat a venue that has a nice cool ocean breeze during the heat of the summer season!

So rather than scraping snow off your Safari, you will soon be scrapping bugs as you make more summertime Safari motoring memories.

From the President's Garage

Hello members.....

So here I am on March 21, 2018, sitting trying to create a motivated letter for all of you. As I look out of the window I see snow and hear the wind. It is now Spring and I should be in a short sleeve shirt but no..... I'm wearing a flannel shirt and sweat shirt! This has been one of the worst March months that I can ever remember. I suppose we can blame it on the old fuzzy ground hog < let's leave it to that?>

How about the last few Smoke signals that had feature articles about the wagons? Hats off to Dennis Dana; he did a wonderful job. Such secret history that I never to my wildest thoughts. I am quite sure you guys read it a few times. We are very blessed to have an interest in these milestone wagons. This is why we try to preserve them as long as we are the current care givers of them. Getting back to the weather.... I cannot wait for the salt and grit and snow to leave our village. Hey I want to drive an old Pontiac and make mine a custom Safari!



Our chapter seems to have a black cloud as of late. Rich's computer has been on the fritz! He lost a lot of chapter information. Guess whatTom as usual comes to the rescue he has all of the missing files & links on his back up system. Now we are back into the business of a successful chapter once again. Thanks guys. You see this is the team that keeps us all going forward and organizes our newsletter and yearly meeting. Robin along with me always tries to put it together for you members. With all of their help we can possibly finally decide on that new chapter T shirt at the POCI National Convention in Wisconsin.

You will find member stories in this newsletter! Lets enjoy all of your new stories and photos that you are going to send into us. Remember this is all done for you the paid members of the Safari chapter.

I seem to see more Safaris on eBay for sale many of them look like great buys. Many of us likely have friends that might want one to play with. Hey! We need more members with their stories!! Why not? This is what keeps our chapter going on! OK guys, I have mumbled enough have to keep my strength to go out today March 21st to push the snow!

Sincerely,

Lou Calasibetta

Member Reminders:

- *The 2018 POCI National Convention starts June 24th through the 28th. Please join us for our annual chapter meeting set for **Tuesday, June 26th at 2 pm.***
- *The **Wounded Warrior Car Show** is set for **July 22nd in Redondo Beach, CA.** Please support this worthy cause.*



Behind the Wheel in the Editors' Seat

Hello Everyone!

*Rich here, on my newly rebuilt/repared laptop. More below on that whole disaster. First off, I want to remind everyone **that our annual chapter meeting is on a Tuesday, June 26th at 2 pm.** This is a big change in date & time from our traditional meetings which generally have been on a Thursday just before or right after lunch. For next year, Lou is planning to set up a cruise and lunch meeting venue. But this year, our time slot puts us in competition with other convention activities. Please do your best to stop in for the CSC meeting. Your input in these meetings is important to the chapter and makes the officers, like Lou and Robin, feel important and liked!! Unfortunately, I cannot be there again this year, but I am hoping next year I will finally be able to make it for the first time in a long time.*

*On the Safari front, I have finally installed my new dual exhaust system in my '57. It's stock size and design since I just want to get this thing on the road and that was the quickest and easiest way of doing it. I still had a little bit of fun trying to fit everything in correctly, but it's ready for test run. I did purchase an NORS **Rochester 2-Jet**, but I am having trouble getting it tuned correctly. If **ANYONE** has experience with setting these up, please email as soon as possible. Chiefpontiac57@gmail.com Mine starts, runs for a few seconds and then stalls. I can't seem to keep it going.*

So back to the laptop. As I advance in age, I find it necessary to get up each morning and sit in my recliner with a heating pad on my lower back and catch up with what's going on online. I know, sad start to everyday! One day I went out and my laptop was precariously close to slipping through the recliner. I went to grab it and it fell.....then it started it beeping at me.....hard drive death. I lost 2 years of EVERYTHING.....no recovery possible. Being a small business owner, that was the worst part. Being a newsletter editor that was horrible as well, but Tom Young was to the rescue, AGAIN. But I did pass the bad luck onto him as he ended up with a trip to the ER for a two for one operation of his appendix and hernia repair. Seems like we might have a small black cloud following us, but just as Tom would say, "like in nature, the storm always clears to another bright and promising day".

*If you have sent me anything this year and you don't see it in this issue, please consider it lost on my laptop and resend it to me. Everyone else please feel to **start sharing your experiences in finding parts sources, chrome restoration, upholstery work, body, paint work, repairs and restoration.** Everyone has experiences so please help spread the news about a good paint shop or a chrome plater that does good pot metal work at a reasonable price. Or just brag about something you did that you are proud of.*

Finally, a big "hats-off" and thank you to Aspen Pittman and his editor for their '56/57 Safari wagon stories in Smoke Signals and a special thank you to Dennis Dana for his excellent GM/Pontiac history articles.

Rich

You never know what you find at a local show. Just look at this beautiful '55 Safari wagon fresh from restoration. It belongs to Bob and Pam Ambuehl of Southern California but Pam she says that the Safari is hers! Bob did a great job in transforming a rough car that had not been driven in over 3 decades into a beautiful road cruiser. The Safari sports a modern AC system with custom vintage looking under dash controls. This Safari is meant to be driven!

Remember that when you attend a car show, if you find a Safari that you have not seen before, take pictures and sent them in so that your photo can be shared with everyone in the chapter. There are many great Safari wagons out there to be discovered so lets see what you can find!



Our Chapter T-Shirt Project Moves Forward!

After years of talk, we are finally moving forward with offering a newly designed Custom Safari Chapter T-Shirt. During our last chapter meeting at the POCI Nationals in Fort Worth, those who attended decided on moving forward with getting a design concept to a graphic artist for development into our next membership t-shirt. Using graphics from various sources, Tom Young has cut & pasted images to provide a general impression of the design concept. The concept that was accepted is shown below with "rough-cut" images.



With the concept in place, the final design will be printed on the front of our new t-shirt. The images required by the designer and t-shirt manufacturer must be of the highest resolution possible. This has not been a easy task to accomplish. It took Tom many months to finally come up with some quality images. Some images come from very hard-to-find publications and are often found in faded or stained condition. We now have all of the images required.

Our next step is in process is left to the graphic designer. Robin Petry will work with the graphic designer for a final design that she can use for production of the new t-shirts.

Some of you may be asking why is a 1958 Custom Safari 4 door wagon included in the concept design. Well, when our chapter was reorganize in the early 1990s, there was a general agreement that the Custom Safari wagons of 1958 should be included because they had custom trim and still retained that unique combination of luxury and performance of the 1955-57 models. Thus the 1958s were included in our chapter Constitution.

We will have another update for you on the progress of our chapter project during our annual meeting at the POCI National Convention which is set for **Tuesday, June 26th at 2pm**. For those who can not attend the meeting, we will share the results of our meeting updates with you in our next newsletter.

Support Your Pontiac-Oakland Automobile Museum

Tax season means that for some fortunate members a refund is soon coming to your bank account. Having a little more money is great but have you considered sharing just a small portion of your refund to help preserve your hobby?

The Pontiac-Oakland Automobile Museum & Resource Center in Pontiac, Illinois provides unique and exciting exhibits and truly supports their mission to promote, display and educate while preserving Pontiac & Oakland history.

Your support is important!



The Pontiac-Oakland Automobile Museum & Resource Center is

a 501(c)(3) public charity organization that is dependent on the donations and support of individuals, organizations and businesses.

Please consider donating to the museum while you still have a few spare tax refund dollars!

Send a check to: **205 N. Mill Street, Pontiac, IL 61764**

For more information, go online at
www.pontiacoaklandmuseum.org
or call **815 842-2345**



Ghost or Real ?? — Body Number 1296!

By Tom Young



So how many 1957 Custom Safari 2 door wagons were produced? The generally accepted number is 1,292. Take a look at the cowl tag shown on the right. It says 1296. So what does this mean? Well, that's the million dollar question!. Discussions are on-going between some long-time Safari and '57 Pontiac specialists. So far, the earliest information resources point to 1,292 being produced as claimed by the Pontiac Motor Division of GM. Many thoughts abound on why a cowl tag with body number 1296 is shown on a production plate. Most agree that it is likely not a fake plate yet thoughts vary about why the plate exists.

In April of this year, a weather beaten '57 Pontiac Custom Safari 2 door parts car (pictured above) was offered on eBay. When the bidding was done, it was sold for just over \$2,000 to Rich Plastino, owner of California Pontiac Restoration (CPR). Rich has recently flown over to Muskegon, Michigan where the Safari has resided for more than 30 years. He found that the cowl tag appears to be authentic but Rich was disappointed to see that the frame and body had deteriorated to the point where a lot of replacement metal will be required to bring this Safari back on the road. Rich plans to ship the car back to California and start an epic restoration effort to restore possibly the last Custom 2 door Safari wagon produced.

For more information about the background of this Safari and on-going efforts to restore this wagon, go to the new internet website dedicated to this Safari wagon. Follow the blog for updates as Rich reveals more information about his unique Safari wagon.

www.thelastpontiacsafari.com

Check this site for updates on the continuing story of Safari Body #1296.

PHOTO STORY - Jack Johnson's 1955 Safari takes honors

By Tom Young

We all know that when you drive a Safari wagon, people will stop and take notice. But there are some Safari wagons that really stand out from the crowd. One of the best crowd stoppers is Jack Jackson's customized '55 Safari wagon. Jack drove his Safari from Riverside, CA to Bettendorf, Iowa in 2016 to attend the POCI Nationals. Everyone had to take a good look at his wagon.. Jack eventually drove over 7,500 miles throughout our Country before returning to California. Wow!



Photos below & right by Jack Johnson



Above: Jack (right) takes a trophy home along with two other participants.

Left: Jack's car at the *Cruise to King* car show.

Below: A view of Jack's Safari at the 2016 POCI National Convention.



To top off 2016, Jack attended the *Cruise to King Car Show* at a church in the desert community of Banning, CA. His Safari wagon was recognized as one of the top 10 cars at the show as determined by popular vote. He was awarded an American bald eagle trophy!

Jack has moved his personal work shop from California to Tucson Arizona where he is working on getting a replacement engine into his Safari. There is no doubt that Jack will be back on the road. We are all looking forward to seeing him and his cool Safari.

We should all thank Jack for contributing some photos so that we can share them with you. It just took a few mins for Jack to email them. Shortly thereafter, Tom Young made a 10 min follow-up phone call. It's a great way to stay linked. Now it's your turn! Send in some photos and we will tell your short story.

MEMBER PHOTO STORY Michael Gomez's '57 Safari Wagon *Back on the road after 40 years of rest!*

By Tom Young

Just imagine taking a rest for almost 40 years. Well that's exactly what happened to Michael Gomez's '57 Safari. Ever since 1963, when his father, Jim Gomez purchased the car from a local Southern California car dealer, the Safari has been in Michael's life. In fact, his mother, Joan was pregnant with when his father purchased the Safari wagon. Michael may be the youngest member of the Custom Safari Chapter to have taken a first ride in a Safari wagon! Wow!



Above: Michael proudly poses with his Safari at the Wounded Warrior Show in Redondo Beach, 2017.

Above Left: An all original "early" production Safari interior complete with star emblems. Body # 636 which may be one the highest # Safari with seat stars emblems.

Above right: Nice original door with rare original power windows.

Left: Original cargo deck still looks great!

As early as 4th grade, Michael remembers his mother driving him to school in the Safari. His mother used the Safari until about 1978 when it caught fire in their driveway. He put out the fire with a garden hose that barely reached the Safari. Little did Michael know that his Safari saving actions would reunite him with the wagon nearly 40 years later! After the fire, the Safari sat in a Central California family garage until July 3rd of 2017 when Michael's son rented a U-Haul trailer and towed the car to Southern California.



The picture below shows the Safari sitting in the garage before it's trip down south. Since the engine was running before its long sleep, the cylinders were soak with Marvel Mystery oil before the engine was turned over by hand. Eventually enough cylinder pressure was developed to fire up the engine. With all carbs rebuilt, a new fuel pump and a fresh battery, the engine back fired several times. Much to Michael's surprise, the engine coughed-up a solid stream of nuts and nesting materials from a pack rat. He said that it "blew corn nuts everywhere"! Eventually the exhaust system was clear of nuts and the engine ran just fine.

With a lot of clean-up, polishing and some mechanical repair, Michael decided to preview his Safari wagon at the 2017 Wounded Warrior's show. The show crowd really loved his Safari. Nobody had seen it prior to the show so the car generated a lot of interest and many questions for Michael to answer. With one repaint and a replacement 389 engine, his Safari still looks great and is very road worthy. Thank you Mike for sharing your Safari story. We all look forward to seeing more of you and your car!



Pontiacs of the Central Valley Chapter's annual Buick-Cadillac-Oldsmobile-Pontiac Show

You got to be proud of hard working POCI members and there is plenty of evidence of some great work done by the Pontiacs of the Central Valley Chapter. Their annual car show was held again at the Bicentennial Park in Clovis and it was thoroughly enjoyed by everyone who attended. Beautiful Buicks, Cadillacs, Oldsmobiles and Pontiacs filled the park on a perfect weekend day.

Custom Safari Chapter members Vern & Ed Vassar & family, Tom Young and Rich Gabrielson attended the event. As usual, Tom set-up the Custom Safari chapter display. He recruited one new member (Vern) and has hopes that the owner of the nicely modified '56 picture below joins our group sometime in the future.



Above: Our Chapter Display set-up by Tom Young

Below: (top) A very well driven '55 Safari wagon once used as a drag strip hauler. Its owned by Rich Gabrielson,.

Bottom: A beautiful modified '56 Safari wagon owned by Ed Rogers. His Safari is road ready!



Above: Hanging out at the Chapter Display. Vern & Ed Vassar (sitting), Rich Gabrielson standing.

Safari Wagons attend the All-Pontiac Car Show in Yorba Linda, CA

Safarians gathered on an overcast spring day in Southern California to show their support for the Southern California Chapters Annual All-Pontiac car show.

A total of 4 Safari 2 dr wagons attended including one '55 and three '57 wagons.

Tom Young staffed our chapter recruitment display and Rich Plastino brought a fresh batch of POCI newsletters and membership applications. Tom was able to catch the attention of 3 prospective new chapter members.

About 110 Pontiacs and one '57 GMC truck participated in the show. A few vendors attended too. The diversity, quantity and quality of the cars seen made this meet feel like a mini national convention!

New Custom Safari Chapter members Michael Gomez and Danny Arant brought their super nice '57 Safari wagons. Pam & Bob Ambuehl and Bob Longpre brought their freshly restored Safari wagons too.

Everyone had a great time and appreciated the support of Duke's Café who helped sponsor the event. Duke's offered a discount on their fine food for POCI members.



Above: Four Safari wagons with a '55 sedan. Cool!

Left: A freshly restored '57 owned by Bob Longpre.

Right: Danny Arrant holds the Duke's Manager's Choice & 2nd place in class trophies.

Below. Michael Gomez (L) & Bob Ambuehl (R) talking about gas-charged lift gate arm supports.



The West Coast Annual Safari Gathering

Once again, Safarians will have a great opportunity to gather for our unofficial West Coast meet in Redondo Beach, CA at the **11th Annual Wounded Warrior Car show**. So mark your calendars for **July 22nd**.



Last year's show was a great success! Five Safari wagons attended including one '56 and four '57 Safari 2 dr Custom wagons.

The event is held on the grounds of the modern designed Redondo Beach Performing Arts Center. A large number of quality vendors offered food, services, clothing and parts that would suite most everyone's interest.

The Parking lot was nearly overflowing with cars as its apparent that this event is growing in popularity.

A wide range of cars were seen from classics of the 1920s & 1930s to resto rods and modern muscle cars. The show is clearly one of the best multi-make gatherings on the west coast! But remember, this show is a fund raiser. According to Mike Green, the show in 2017 generated over ten thousand dollars! Another mission accomplished Mike!



Five Safari wagons attended the show including a new member, Michael Gomez. Recognition for an "extended pit-stop" was given to chapter member Marvin Morton who encountered a leaky radiator just before driving to the show. Aspen Pittman provide unlimited wisdom and humor while Randy Kerdoon maintained the responsibilities as the event Awards MC.

Above: This way cool looking Safari belongs to the event coordinator, Mike Green. His car abounds with custom touches that makes his car a true "custom" Safari. Nice!

Right: Hidden behind his very own display board is a well known '57 Safari owned and driven daily by Randy Kerdoon. "Everyone has a car story" is a statement that Randy brings to life with his on-going podcast, **Talking about Cars**. Randy interviews automobile personalities throughout California and beyond seeking their car stories.



You can listen to his podcast on *iTunes*, *Soundcloud* and at www.talkingaboutcars.com. You can also watch him on *Facebook* and *Youtube*!

Right: Apsen Pittman maintained the original weathered appearance of his very low mileage '56 Safari wagon while restoring the mechanical and interior back to factory specifications. He transformed his Safari into a true urban road warrior and now drives it in some of the most challenging traffic in our Country.

The Safari was the only '56 in the show. It drew a lot of admiration and kudos from the crowd last year.

Nice Safari wagon Aspen!



SHOW INFORMATION

(310)343-9634
threentheatre@yahoo.com
Web: www.
woundedwarriorcarshow.com

Go to the website for registration. Download the form and follow the instructions.

Remember that the date is **July 22nd** in **Redondo Beach, CA.**

Register as soon as you can so that Mike Green can save the appropriate number of spaces for our Safari wagons.

If you can't bring a Safari, bring another car or at least bring yourself!

Our Chapter Display & shelter will be on site along with extra table, chairs and plenty of free literature.

See you at the show!

**11th Annual
Wounded Warrior Car Show**
SUNDAY, JULY 22, 2018
9:00 AM - 3:00 PM

**AT THE
Semper Fi Fund**

Serving Those Who Preserve Our Freedom

**OPEN TO ALL SHOW CARS, TRUCKS
AND SPECIAL INTEREST VEHICLES**
Gates open at 7am. Cars Parked by 9am.
Limited to the first 225 entries

Redondo Beach Performing Arts Center
1935 Manhattan Beach Blvd, Redondo, CA 90278
(see reverse for map)

Registration

\$35 before June 23, 2018 includes t-shirt
& dash plaque.
\$40 after June 23 and day of event, based
on available space.

Visit www.woundedwarriorcarshow.com
for additional information on the
Semper Fi Fund and previous shows

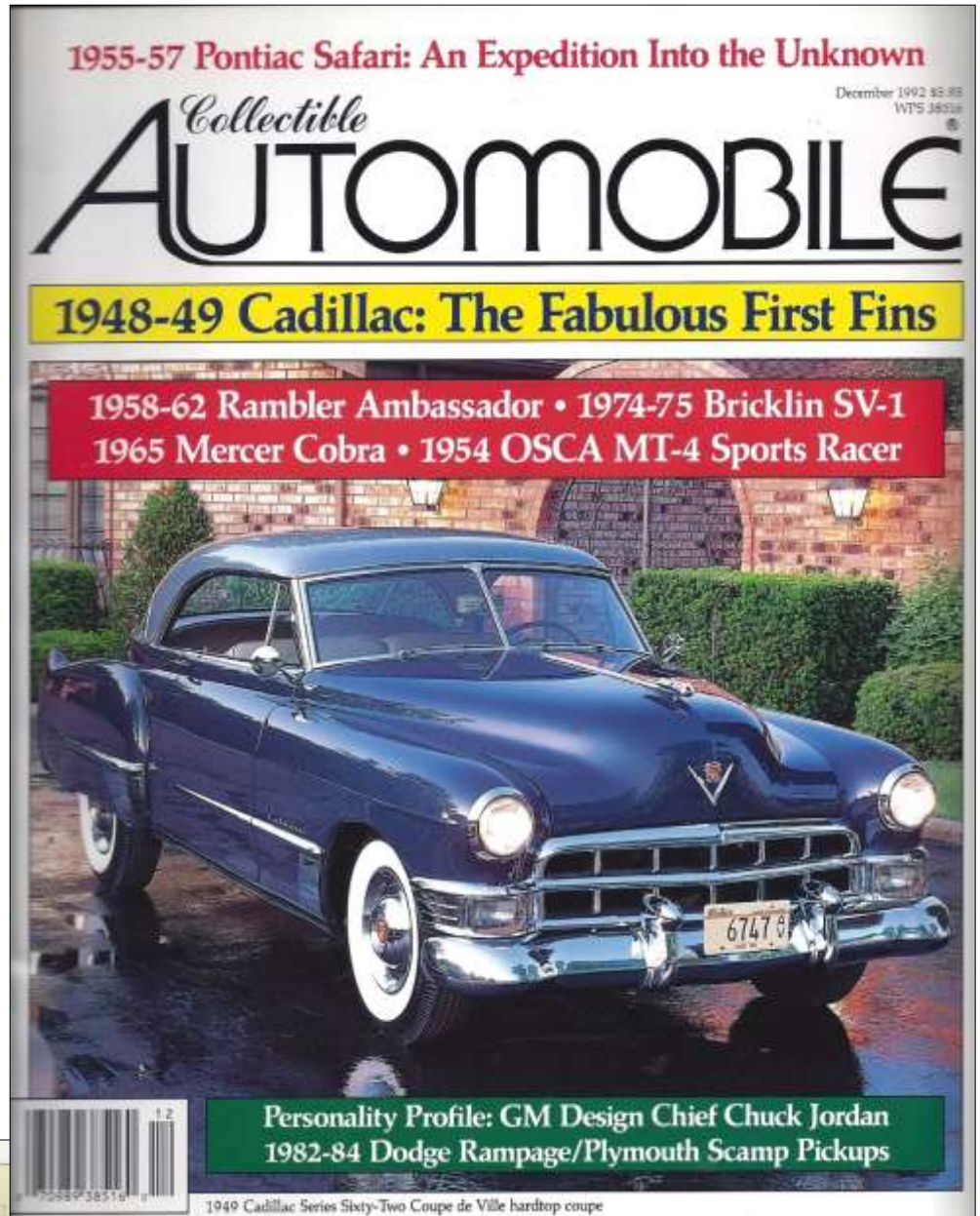
No Alcoholic Beverages

1955-57 Safari: “An Expedition Into the Unknown”

One of the top 10 articles written about '55-'57 Custom Safari wagons comes from the Pat Chappell's report in the December, 1992 issue of the *Collectible Automobile* magazine. At the time of the magazine's distribution, our Chapter was on hiatus but Chappell's article created a movement that increased interest in Safari wagons. In less than two years, our Chapter was back.

14 pages of full color photos, drawings, and tables of information are contained within the magazine. A special interview with Pontiac Chief Designer, Paul Gillian, is featured along with a special drawing of the 1955 Safari wagon. Comparisons are made between Nomads and Safari wagons too.

The *Collectible Automobile* magazine always produces quality articles so if you like some good reading, its worth the time and money to purchase the December, 1992 issue before they are



1949 Cadillac Series Sixty-Two Coupe de Ville hardtop coupe

As preparations were made for the 1955 Safari wagon, GM's chief designer, Paul Gillian, was contacted by the magazine's editor, Pat Chappell, who wanted to know what the Safari wagon was like. Gillian's response was a detailed drawing of the car, which was published in the magazine. The drawing shows the car from a side profile, highlighting its unique design and the hardtop roof. The drawing is a technical illustration, showing the car's lines and proportions. Below the drawing, there is a small text box with a barcode and the number 12. The drawing is a technical illustration, showing the car's lines and proportions. Below the drawing, there is a small text box with a barcode and the number 12.

The drawing is a technical illustration, showing the car's lines and proportions. Below the drawing, there is a small text box with a barcode and the number 12.

The four small photographs show different views of the 1955 Safari wagon: a side profile, a front view, a rear view, and a view from the driver's side. The car is shown in a dark color, possibly black or dark blue, with a light-colored hardtop roof. The background of the photos is a plain, light color.

Back Issues of the *Collectible Automobile* magazine are available.

Call 1-800 871-2022 or to order by mail:

**Magazine # 1110800,
December 1992 issue.**

12.95 each plus 4.95 postage.

Enclose check or money order and mail to:

Collectible Automobile
8140 Lehigh Avenue
Morton Grove, IL 60053

Safari Search



FOR SALE: 1957 Custom Safari 2 dr: Restored in 2000. 1968 428 motor with disc brakes, vintage AC- car came with air. 7000 miles since restoration. Very nice car. \$50,000. Call 231 690-0429 for more info.



PARTS For Sale

WANTED

1955 Pontiac: Parting out a 2 door Chieftain. Email Rich Pye at rpye@rochester.rr.com.

1955-57 Pontiac: Custom Safari new gas tanks, \$399.00 plus shipping. New lower tailgate assembly, \$850.00 plus shipping. NOS 1956 Pontiac lit hood ornament, original box, \$600. Jay Hammond. 302 322-1833 jhchevyparts@aol.com.

1957 Pontiac: Front brake drums complete with backing plates, shoes, wheel cylinders & wheel bearings, \$100 ea. 2 radios & speaker housings, maroon & green, \$150 ea. Complete rear differential, 3.23 gears, \$100. 5 hub caps, good cond., \$100. Call Bill Hanners at 239 543-3510 FL

1957 Pontiac: Firewall heater core box water pipe seals (shown below). New reproductions. Pair (L & R). \$20 includes shipping. Tom Young, 204 Acacia, Newbury Park, CA 91320 805 375-1320 pontiactom@ix.netcom.com.



1955 Pontiac: OEM side view mirror (#519802) ? And a OEM non-glare rear view mirror (#51170 or #988647) ? For a '55 Safari. Not sure about the correct part #'s. NOS is not necessary but would like to find something in good to very good condition with minimal pitting. gpark14@aol.com

1957 Safari Wanted: If you have any leads, please contact Dwight at dwhitmire3153@charter.net or call cell 770 851-1010.

1955-57 Pontiac station wagon: Exterior Tee handle for lift-gate on with as many attached parts as possible. Steve Cook jumbodog54@sbcglobal.net or 314 795-4700.

1957 Pontiac: AC components that mount to engine, brackets, compressor, condenser, etc. Rich Pye. rpye@rochester.rr.com

1962 Pontiac Safari Wagon: Looking for American or Canadian models (see example below) Leads appreciated. Contact Daral Travis at meteorman56@icloud.com



TO PLACE AN AD: Looking to sell parts or a car? Send your request to Rich Pye at rpye@rochester.rr.com. Your ad should be related to 1955 to 1958 Pontiacs and include photos when possible.

POCI Chapter #10

www.customsafari.org

The Custom Safari Chapter is an official international chapter of the Pontiac Oakland Club, International, Incorporated. The POCI headquarters address is P.O. Box 68, Maple Plain, MN 55359 US Website: www.poci.org

Annual Dues are 21.00. Renewals are due January 1st of each year. New member dues are pro-rated quarterly from January 1st. Applicants are encouraged to maintain membership in the POCI. Send payment to the Secretary/Treasurer, Robin Petry.

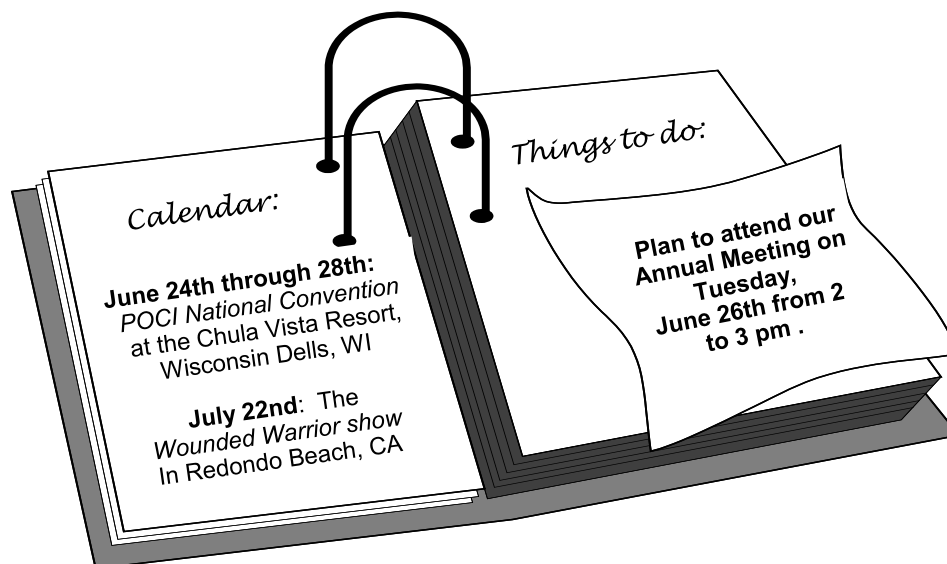
The Safari news is a quarterly publication produced by the chapter. Volume 1, Number 1 was distributed in June, 1977. Distribution was reset as Volume 1, Number 1 in December, 1993. A limited number of back issues may be available. For additional information, write to the editor, Rich Pye.

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TOPFLIGHT
Professional Digital Lab



In the next issue of *SAFARI NEWS*...

Our SUMMER season issue will feature:
Our National Convention report & photos, technical repair & restoration articles, and more Safari member short stories.