

Winter 2011 Vol 14, No 4

Did Santa Leave One of These for You??



Custom Safari Chapter

Pontiac Oakland Club International

From the Prez's Garage

By Steve Cook

Season's Greetings from Andrea and me to all of our fellow Safarians. It seems like it takes me longer and longer to create a Prez column at a time when I have less and less time. The fact that no members have come forward to volunteer for the Custom Safari Chapter Presidency is weighing heavily on me. I searched some archives of the chapter, hoping to find an answer. What I found is that there has always been a plead going out for "who will be the next President?" I wish we had the same problem at the White House.

I did uncover some interesting information to share with everyone. Our Safari Chapter got chartered into POCl in June 1977, the 11th POCl Chapter. There were 42 Charter members, and if I did my homework right, Lou Calasibetta and Ron Pittman have been in it continuously since the beginning. Wow, 34 years of loyalty to a Specialty Chapter, now that's devotion. Thanks guys and a big Saaaluute from all of us.

I would like to share the names of those who have held the President's seat thru these 34 years:

1977- Steve Cory	1989-	2001-Robin Clark
1978- Steve Cory	1990-	2002-Robin Clark
1979- Art Ruscher	1991-	2003-Robin Clark
1980-Bud Stowers	1992-	2004-Mark Petry
1981- Karen Campbell	1993-	2005-Mark Petry
1982- Lou Calasibetta	1994- Robin Clark	2006-Mark Petry
1983- Lou Calasibetta	1995- Robin Clark	2007-Steve Cook
1984- Lou Calasibetta	1996- Robin Clark	2008-Steve Cook
1985- Lou Calasibetta	1997- Robin Clark	2009-Steve Cook
1986- Lou Calasibetta	1998- Robin Clark	2010-Steve Cook
1987- Lou Calasibetta	1999- Robin Clark	2011-Steve Cook
1988-	2000- Robin Clark	

I contacted Lou C, Robin, and Rich to help fill in the blanks. Rich in turn contacted Tom Young, another long time devoted member, for help with the missing years. Tom recalled that the chapter sort of fell inactive from 1988-1993. Lou had been Prez for 6 years, no-one else would step forward to relieve him, and so Lou kept the archives and Treasury safe and sound until Tom convinced Robin Clark to give the chapter a saving breath of fresh air in 1994, helping to give it the re-launch it deserved.

Here is the happiest next chapter of this tale.....Rich Pye asked Tom Young if he would accept a nomination to be our next President of the Custom Safari Chapter, and he has accepted. Yeah, yahoo, yippee! Thank-you Tom. All of you will find your official ballot elsewhere in this issue, and I hope everyone will join me by giving Tom our unanimous support.

I hope everyone appreciates what Robin and Rich do for the chapter. Both have very busy schedules, yet continue to run the chapter and produce a fantastic newsletter. Rich has produced the Safari News since 1999 (actually taking over for long time editor Tom Young), and we have enjoyed every single issue. Since dues are due Jan 1, let's help Robin by sending them in right away. She shouldn't have to send reminders and use chapter funds on extra postage. Thanks again, Robin and Rich!

Well, my last Prez Sez Column has been an interesting one. I guess you can tell that it was not all penned in one sitting, but rather a piece now and then. It has been rewarding to have served as the chapter's president, and as I've mentioned before, I enjoyed being president except for the time necessary to sit at the computer and write the Prez Sez column. I sit here pecking away thinking "I really should be working on the '29, or the '56, or the"

MERRY CHRISTMAS and have a safe holiday. (Tom, thanks for our present, it's just what we wanted)

Steve Cook, "The Prez".

Behind the Wheel in the Editor's Seat

By Rich Pye

Hello Everyone,

I hope you all are having an enjoyable holiday season and got all of your Safari winter planning done on time and to your satisfaction. For those that enjoy winter?!? that means getting your Safari tucked away for a little rest. For those that don't have to deal with that.....well maybe getting the heater working for those cold morning drives!

As I finish this newsletter (which always ends with my Editorial Wheel article) I think about the tasks at hand. This time it includes Chapter President vote, explaining the items in this issue, wishing outgoing officers well, dues reminders, Robin's inserts, and requests for info.

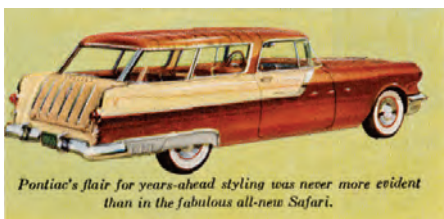
So here it goes: This issue contains an in-depth article covering the history of the Fisher Body Company and Division researched and written by Dennis Dana. There are some interesting things in there that I didn't know, especially who did what in the assembly process and how things were done from start to finish. I found it quite interesting as I typed it all in (no complaints here on that as I ALWAYS appreciate content for the newsletters!!). In a future issue Dennis is also going to share items around the body tags on our Safaris. His article got me motivated to look at all my Safaris and their assets. One interesting thing about my '57 is the location of the body tag. Mine is on the AC box vs. the cowl. Anyone else have theirs there?

Dues reminders come from all of us. As Steve said please try to get this in as soon as possible and please try to complete the form the best you can. We are re-collecting the Tag information and filling it out on your renewal form is the easiest way of helping us. On the flipside of the renewal is the Safari Member of the Quarter form. If you haven't been the recipient for awhile or never have been before, please fill this out and also send a photo or two (emailing that is fine). I actually think I'm caught up with these with what I have (apologies if I've forgotten you, so update your info and I'll get you in). Robin has also included a form for ordering Chapter T-Shirts. If you're interested, just return that with your renewal form and payment.

So, on to the changing of the guard.... and the reality of Steve Cook ending his presidential term. I always have mix-reactions to presidential changes. I've enjoyed working every one of the presidents that I've had the opportunity to create these newsletters with. Robin Clark, Mark Petry and now Steve Cook, who has been no exception to the excellence I've worked with. Each one has had their unique perspective and Steve brought a strong ability to work with POCI and his connections with other Chapters. It's amazing that 5 years went by so fast. Thanks again Steve, I appreciate all your support!!

Now on to my nomination of Tom Young as our next Chapter President. Tom has been involved in the chapter for a long time and my predecessor as the newsletter editor. He was instrumental in re-vitalizing the CSC back in the early 90's and got me involved in the chapter and the editorial position over 12 years ago. I've nominated Tom because of his vast knowledge of the CSC and Safaris themselves and his love for the hobby. I believe he will continue the great tradition of chapter leadership and will provide a good perspective to the office. Please find the official ballot in this issue. Tom's name plus the ability for a write-in candidate will be provided. Please return this to Robin with your dues renewal.

So I now need to wrap this whole thing up and try to get it to the printers in hopes of getting it to you before Christmas or shortly after. Safe travels and Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all!!!



Pontiac's flair for years-ahead styling was never more evident than in the fabulous all-new Safari.

Rich

On Safari with the Fisher Men

by Dennis Dana

Pontiac Safari. The most exquisitely styled and lavishly appointed wagon General Motors ever graced the highways with. The Safari is versatile and at home in any situation. Fold down the rear seat and go camping, or fold it back up and take friends shopping on Beverly Hills' famous Rodeo Drive. Your Safari will be equally admired in both venues.

Most of us are familiar with the story about how the Safari came to be. How the 1954 Corvette Nomad was a sensation at that year's fabled Motoramas across the country. Then, GM Styling wizard, Harley Jacob Earl, decided to marry the sleek, Carl Renner styled, Nomad roofline to a production Chevrolet for 1955. This marriage was history in the making. The Nomad design was approved by Chevrolet brass. The next step was to meet with Fisher Body about the cost of producing the Nomad body. The cost was more than Chevy could afford independently.

The high cost was because Fisher worked on the "more is less" principle, common to all production shops. If more bodies could be ordered, less cost per unit was promised. Fisher suggested inviting Pontiac into the fold. Offer them their own version of the Nomad. This prospect thrilled dream-car junkie, Harley Earl. He set up a meeting between himself and Pontiac executives to discuss possibilities. Pontiac was indeed interested. They wanted to see how the Nomad roofline would translate to a 1955 Pontiac body. Pontiac's Chief Designer, Paul W. Gillan, and crew went to work. By using full-size drawings, Gillan and associates adapted the 1955 Pontiac quarter panels to the Nomad roofline and two-doors. The results were stunning. Harley Earl and Pontiac gave their hearty approval. Hank Crawford, Pontiac Sales Manager, had one request. He wanted a head-turning, senses grabbing, luxurious station wagon. Mr. Crawford got his wish, in spades. Next, a name was needed. In true dream-car fashion, Paul Gillan's inspirational name was "Safari".

The development of the Safari/Nomad production cars involved many participants. Each department had an important and balanced role. Harley Earl's General Motors Styling was interested in bold and daring designs. The divisions were concerned with what would sell best, and at an affordable price. Fisher Body's input would dictate which designs could be produced efficiently in their plants, and at what cost. So there was constant compromise between cost, economy, bold design, and production controls. With Fisher's experience as automotive die builders, they were the last word if a design was too radical for mass production.

Fisher Body Division was GM's proverbial "elephant in the room". Everyone knew it was there, but no one talks about it. Today, this massive division remains the least understood of all the

divisions. Until the mid-eighties, GM cars proudly wore the "BODY by FISHER" (trucks and Corvettes) logo on their door sill plates. Fisher Body Company had a long and illustrious tenure spanning nearly eighty years. The following is a synopsis of the Fishers, and their legendary company.



Left: Few photos exist of all seven of the Fisher brothers together. This one was taken on August 22, 1927 during a rainy groundbreaking ceremony for the Fisher

On Safari with the Fisher Men

by Dennis Dana

Family History:

The Fisher family beginnings were quite humble. The Fisher brothers' grandfather, Andrew Fisher, emigrated from Germany around 1835. He settled near Peru, Ohio and operated a blacksmith shop. His son, Lawrence, worked at the shop when he was old enough. Lawrence married Margaret Theisen in 1876. They produced eleven children. Six of the seven sons would go on to build the Fisher Body Company into an industrial giant. The youngest, Howard, never work for Fisher Body. He managed the Fisher holdings in Detroit after Fisher Body succeeded.

In the late 1880's Lawrence moved his family to Norwalk, Ohio. He, his brother Andrew, and Margaret's brother opened up a carriage works in Norwalk. All the brothers worked in the carriage shop, learning the wood working trade. In his early twenties, oldest brother Fred moved to Detroit around 1902. He landed a draftsman job at the C.R. Wilson Company. About 1904 second oldest, Charles, joined Wilson. At the time Wilson was the largest builder of horse-drawn carriages. They were also branching out into the auto body building business. In 1908 the brothers quit Wilson over salaries. They both found employment with their Uncle Albert at his Detroit-based Standard Wagon Works. Standard had built fifty bodies for Henry Ford before their arrival.



The Beginning of the Business:

Shortly after joining Standard, Fred and Charles made their uncle an offer he couldn't refuse. They invited him to partner with them in opening their own body building company. Uncle Albert threw \$30,000 into the pot. The brothers put in \$20,000. So with capitalization of 50 grand, the Fisher Body Company was born on July 22, 1908. Ford and Olds were two of their famous first customers.

The brothers acted upon a suggestion to create an affordable "closed-body" (a closed body has glass side windows and a hard top). Uncle Albert protested this

development and demanded they buy him out. Fred and Charles sought the help of Detroit businessman, Louis Mendelssohn. Louis bought out Albert and become Chairman of the Board and handled all financial matters. Under this new partnership Fisher Body flourished. By 1909, ten open bodies per day were being built. More and more automakers were going into business, so Fisher had to expand fast. New Fisher plants started multiplying like rabbits. The brothers were determined to support the growing demand for bodies.

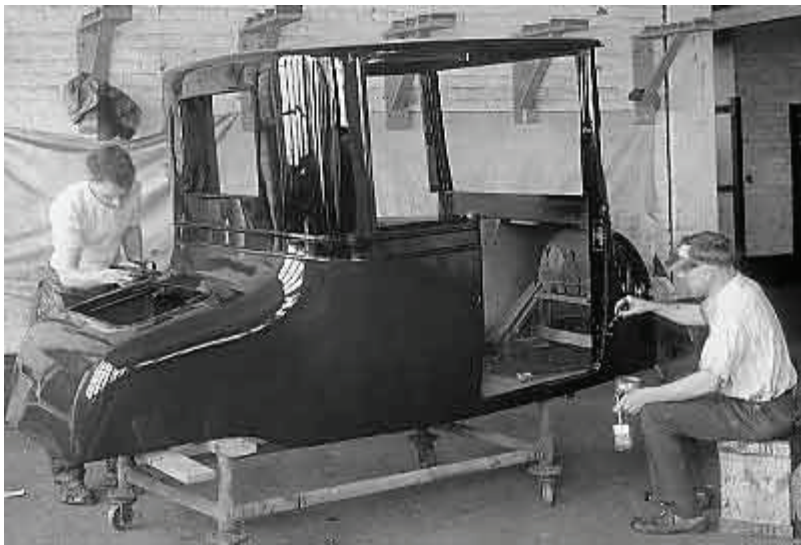
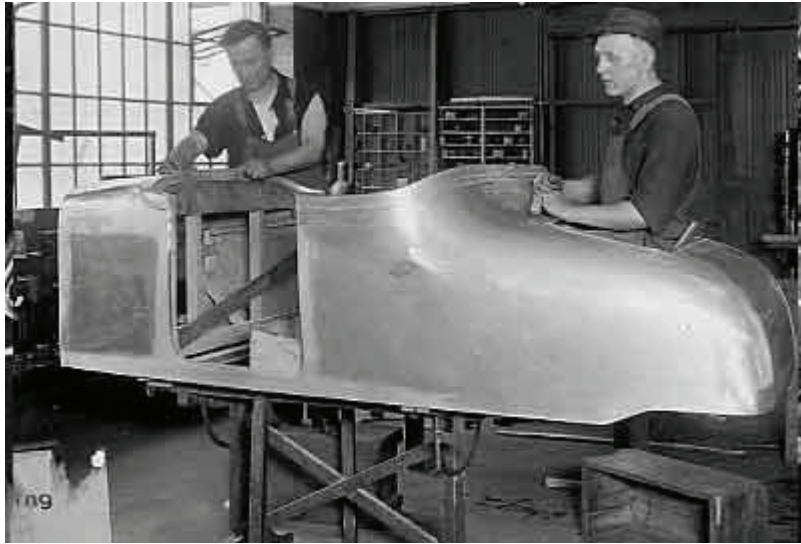
To better understand the relationship between body supplier and automaker, we'll take a step backwards. At the beginning of the auto industry around 1900, chassis and body manufacturing were two entirely different disciplines. Early automakers like Ford, Oakland, Olds, Cadillac and others only built the mechanical parts for their cars. These companies purchased their bodies from outside sources, such as Fisher, Briggs, Murray or Budd and installed them on their chassis. Pontiac MOTOR Division, General MOTORS, Ford MOTOR Company, Chevrolet MOTORS, to name a few, describes exactly what they were interested in, motors and chassis.

On Safari with the Fisher Men

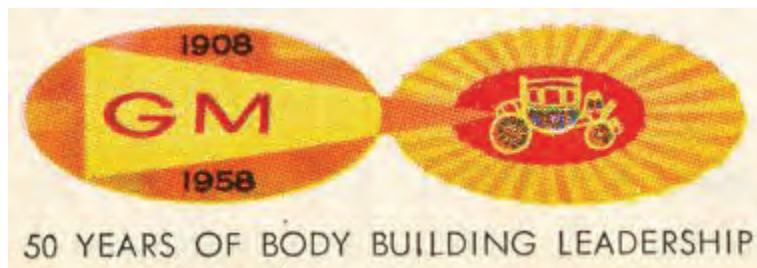
by Dennis Dana

Since only the fanciest of bodies had their coachbuilder name displayed, it was natural for people to assume the production automakers built the complete car. That simply wasn't the case back then. The body builders, such as Fisher, would provide a completed body from the firewall back, ready to install. The automaker, such as GM, would provide the rolling chassis, drive-train, front end sheet metal, rear fenders, running boards and bumpers.

With Fisher's expansion program in full swing, Cadillac ordered 150 closed bodies in 1910. Other automakers were placing similar orders. To accommodate this fledgling market, Fisher Closed Body Company began in 1910, and Fisher Body Company of Canada LTD was founded in 1912. Brother Lawrence joined the family business that year also. Edward and Alfred joined in 1913 and Fisher Body was now building 100,000 bodies a year. They became known as the world's largest auto body manufacturer by 1914, while building 105,000 bodies that year. Fisher had ten plants around Detroit and Canada in 1914. William was the last to join his brothers in 1915. The company became the Fisher Body Corporation in August, 1916 and was now building 370,000 bodies per year, with 18 automakers as



customers. Through all their success the brothers remained loyal to each other. Charles' son, Thomas K. Fisher, once said, "When one cut himself, they all bled."



arrangement GM agreed to purchase all their bodies from Fisher for the next 10 years at cost plus 17.6%. Fisher rolled 328,978 out their doors in 1920.

GM Acquisition:

Exactly why the Fishers decided to sell their company is a mystery. General Motors, Ford and Studebaker were all hoping to add Fisher to their ranks. William Durant and General Motors were the winners. The two-phase buyout began in late 1919 when GM bought 60 percent ownership for \$27.6 million. As part of the

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by Dennis Dana

A revolutionary new paint product was released by GM and DuPont in late 1923. Duco was a new nitrocellulose pyroxylin lacquer which dried instantly. This discovery eliminated the use of varnish and paint brushes used by the auto industry up till then. The early varnish jobs required up to eight weeks in the paint shops. Duco cut the paint time to a few hours. Fisher benefited and was reaching new heights by 1924. Their production topped 575,000 bodies that year, made by 40,000 employees at 44 plants. In 1925, they bought out the Fleetwood Body Company.

The year was 1926, the date was June 30th. On this day, General Motors completed the Fisher buyout. It was now a wholly-owned division of GM. The Fisher brothers received 664,720 share of GM stock, valued around \$100,000,000. The Fishers were now GM employees. In 1927, Fisher introduced safety plate glass, adjustable sunvisors and other innovations. Fred and Charles retired from GM in 1934. The brothers created Fisher and Company to handle their investments. Charles was in charge of this operation. The last four Fisher brothers remained in service to their namesake division and General Motors.



The Fisher Body Division continued to grow and shake the auto industry. A major body advancement was premiered on the 1935 model year GM vehicles. Named the "turret top", this new roof was a seamless piece of stamped steel. It was quickly adopted industry-wide. GM was the sole remaining automaker still utilizing wood frames. Fred and Charles were both believers in composite (wood) frames, with sheet metal stretched over the wood. With the founding Fisher brothers retired, GM began to "get the wood out". Fisher's conversion to all-steel substructures began in 1937 and was completed in 1938. The last pre-WWII body built by Fisher was in

early 1942. The total number of bodies constructed by Fisher topped 21,000,000. Fisher contributed heavily to the war effort. One plant's product output earned Fisher Body the prized Navy "E" flag with six stars, for excellence in production. The date was Monday, August 14, 1944. Lawrence, William, Edward and Alfred waved good-bye to Fisher Body and General Motors. At their press conference Edward stated how they all felt. He announced simply, "We started together and we want to finish together."

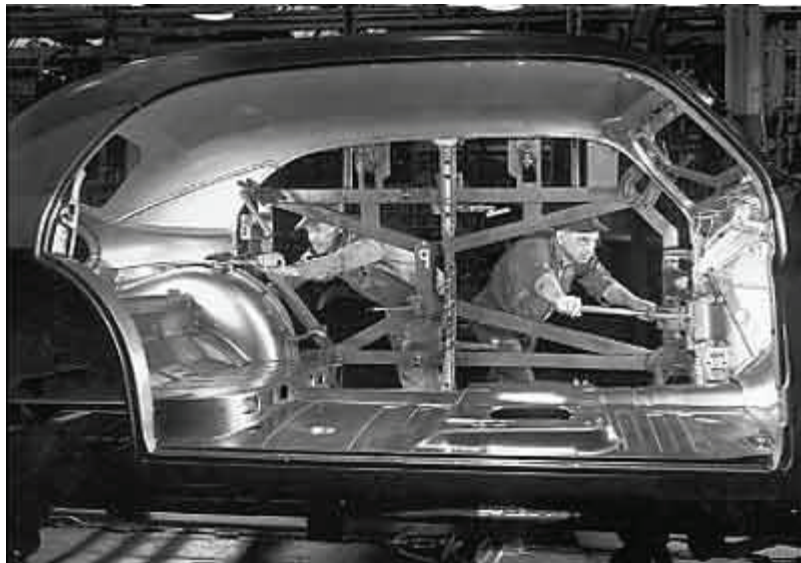
But all was not lost. Their successors enhanced the Fisher legacy. They strove to expand General Motors' and Fisher Body's place as the industry's trend setting mega powers. An excellent example of: Fisher leading, others following, appeared on the 1949 model year cars. The first pillar-less hardtop was introduced. It became known as the "hardtop coupe". The public and critics loved it. Shortly after, others were releasing their versions of this sleek roofline. By the dawn of the fifth decade, nearly every driveway had a car in it. GM was supplying nearly half of these vehicles. After the Korean conflict, Fisher embarked upon an aggressive expansion program. It began in 1953 and ended in 1955. It added an additional 4.5 million square feet of floor space to the Fisher Body Division.

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by Dennis Dana

Station Wagon Plants:

The story of Fisher Body has now caught up with the Safari/Nomad development. One by one all of the Safari/Nomad pre-production details were falling into place. The Safari was scheduled for a January, 1955 premiere. Fisher die-shops were feverishly building the unique stamping dies. Next the dies were shipped to the Fisher metal fabrication plants to stamp out the Safari/Nomad body panels. As fast as the stack of panels could be loaded into the freight cars, they were shipped out.



Their destination was the Fisher Body station wagon plant on the outskirts of Cleveland, Ohio.

The plant was one of two in the Greater Cleveland area. The only true Cleveland Fisher plant was located at East 140th and Coit Road. Opening in 1921 this facility primarily built bodies for Chandler Motor Car Company, Cleveland Motor Corporation and a few others. Peak employment was during WWII with 14,000 workers. By 1946 lost jobs tallied 10,000. Towards the end Coit Road produced large stamping dies, upholstery and trim sets. Coit Road was ordered closed by GM in 1982. Sadly 1,300 hourly workers accompanied 400 salaried workers in losing their jobs.

All Pontiac and Chevrolet station wagon bodies were built in the Cleveland Suburb City of Euclid, Ohio. Euclid's beginnings date back to 1798, when it was founded as a township. In 1903 it became a city, and by 1950 was an up and coming mid-century suburbia with a population of 41,396 residents. The address of the station wagon plant was 20001 Euclid Avenue, Euclid, Ohio. It was constructed by the Cleveland Pneumatic Aerol Company. They produced WWII aircraft landing gear parts at the plant beginning in 1943. Needing more production room for Buick, Chevrolet, Olds and Pontiac, Fisher purchased the property in 1947.

The Euclid plant remains an important ingredient of fifties era Pontiac and Chevrolet station wagon history. Very little seems to be known about this facility. An investigation is on-going. (Author's note: If any readers worked at Euclid during the fifties, know anyone that did or has detailed information about the mysterious plant, PLEASE write me or email any information to POCI's 1957 technical advisor, Todd Crews. His email address will be listed with this story's references. Thank you.) As a rule all GM divisional assembly plants were complete with an adjacent Fisher plant to supply their bodies. Euclid was one of the rare exceptions as it was a "stand-alone" plant. Their mission was to build and ship the completed station wagon bodies to one of eight Pontiac or Chevrolet assembly plants.

Euclid during the years 1953 through 1958 (possibly longer?) produced all Pontiac and Chevrolet station wagons exclusively. It ran two shifts, each eight hours long. During its 1955 peak, 2,958 workers hung their hats on Euclid's pegs. A comfortable assembly line speed of 35 cars per hour produced maximum results. Any faster and anarchy could ensue. An average of 560 bodies a day left the plant. The assembly time required to complete a Fisher body was approximately two days. Pontiac final assembly needed an average of 1.5 days to finish the job.

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Safari Assembly Process:

(Author's note: As this article continues, Fisher Body's contribution to each GM car will be better understood. While the following assembly line process was common to all station wagons, our Safaris would be the stars. So sit back and enjoy the ride.)

The 1949 model was Pontiac's first all-steel station wagon. These bodies were built by Fisher during the production years 1949 – 1952, probably in Lansing, Michigan. By 1955, station wagon popularity was on the rise. Young families were on the migration trail out to suburbia. Pontiac and Chevrolet increased their menu of 1955 wagon models to 4 and 5 respectively. Now these new suburbanites could select a station wagon which best fit their needs. They could choose a 4-door workhorse or a sophisticated Safari. But before the public could purchase a Safari, theirs had to be built.

To begin the body building operation Safari sheet metal panels arrived daily from the stamping plants beginning in late 1954. The stacks of raw panels were off-loaded and sent to the body shop. This was where the magic began. First the underbody and substructure were welded together. Further down the line the outer shell was welded to the inner panels. The body shell was now complete. The shell was transferred from the body shop "build truck" to a simpler reusable body frame. The body remained on this frame until completion. The next step was to mount and adjust the doors and tailgate. Then any necessary body repairs were done. The last body shop stage was a thorough inspection. Upon arrival the body would graduate to the paint shop.

(Author's note: Exactly when the cowl tag was attached isn't very clear. Some say they were riveted over bare metal before primer. My 1956 has primer under its tag. A 1957 Star Chief owner says topcoat was under his tag when he restored the car. What surface is under your cowl tag? A more thorough cowl tag examination will follow in the next issue.)

In the paint shop the body was washed down with a solution to remove contaminants and oils. Next an acid etch was applied to instigate primer adhesion. The primer was applied both inside and out by painters and then oven-dried. When set, the body continued along to the wet sanding area. Here the primer was sanded smooth and dried again before topcoat. Once inside the first paint booth the body was cleaned with tack-rags. The lower color was applied to the top, cowl, lower body and interior and another trip through a drying oven. The next phase was the masking department. With two-tone paint jobs being so popular, the masking department was very busy. Records show more Safaris were two-toned than not. All of the lower color was covered with masking paper to prevent overspray. With the masking work done, the upper color, usually White-Mist, was applied to the upper body and rear section. This final color also rolled through a drying oven. Now the paint was completely finished. Next step was the trim department.

An important facet of any assembly line was "scheduling". This means the highly optioned bodies requiring the most assembly time were mixed in with the standard bodies needing less time. Nor were two like makes and models built in sequence either. This practice maintained assembly line continuity and prevented bottlenecks.

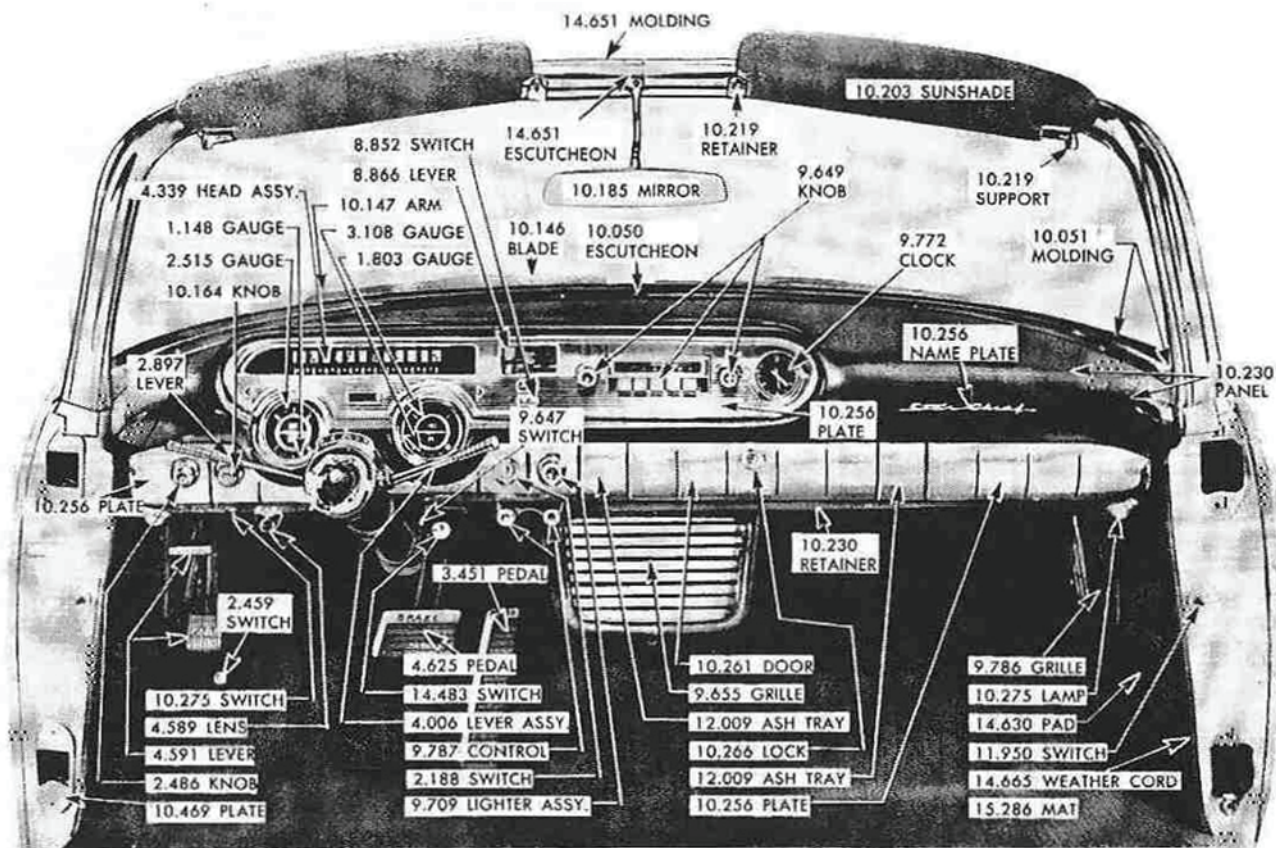
The trim shop represented the final leg in the body building process. Here the cowl tag trim and accessory codes were king. This line was responsible for more than installing options. Complete interior and exterior components were attached on this line also. The exterior received its allotment of stainless and chrome trim to complete the outside. This included the liftgate, taillights and wiring. Inside, I believe, the headliner and chrome bows were completed first. This was followed by the slider window channels, glass and weather-stripping. All color-coordinated carpeting and matching vinyl trim was added. The four locks were mounted with matching ignition switch. The upholstery

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was also bolted in. The seats came in leather or cloth. Colors were either copper or blue for 1955 only.

This brings us to focus on the instrument panel. One highlight to mention is that the completed Fisher body did not include several dash items. Notice on the provided "DRIVING COMPARTMENT" illustration that most dash switches, controls and gauges were Pontiac installed. To distinguish which items were Fisher provided and what Pontiac installed, use this formula: all items with Group No. 10.000 and higher were Fisher equipped. All items numbered 9.999 and below were installed by Pontiac, including the steering wheel and column. Enjoy!



It is safe to assume each body was subjected to the water test booth. As is well known, Safaris and Nomads are known for leaking liftgates. Exactly how these bodies fared during this test is anyone's guess. Maybe it took a few months for the torsion bars to begin their destructive work. By mid-1955 Pontiac and Fisher Body released water-leak repair kits with instructions. After final inspection, the body was lifted off the build frame and transferred to the body pond. Here all the bodies tarried together. They were waiting for transport to their designated final assembly plant. Our Safari commonly shared these plants with Buick and Oldsmobile. The one exception was the Pontiac, Michigan plant where they only built Pontiacs.

The closing chapter of the car building process was located on the final assembly line. Pontiac's contribution to each Safari body was to attach the VIN tag, complete the instrument panel, and install the power brake booster, antenna, heater, defroster and air conditioning cowl parts (if

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equipped). Pontiac's major responsibility was to provide the rolling chassis and drive-train. As the body and rolling chassis met, the body was lowered onto the chassis and bolted down. The painted front end sheet metal was installed, and then both bumpers were fitted. The steering wheel and column were bolted to the steering box. All lines and hoses were attached. Gas and brake pedals were added, along with miscellaneous items. The car was complete by the end of the assembly line then inspected and driven to a holding area. Here they waited to hitch a ride to new car dealerships across the country. Now the new suburbanite family could buy the Safari of their dreams. Ron Panzer recently said that Safaris were big sellers in the Washington State apple belt. It seems the apple barons wanted a classy wagon to drive around in. Guess they found out about the leaky liftgates later on!

As previously explained, the body was painted by Fisher. The front-end sheet metal was sprayed by Pontiac. This meant each car's paint job was the result of two separate paint shops. Was it possible for these two shops to produce a perfect match? It wasn't. On GM cars it was common to see a slight paint mismatch and/or misaligned stainless trim. If objectionable enough, the flaw would be corrected after assembly or later at the dealer. DuPont's adoption of the Munsell Color Company's "practical system of color measure" years earlier did in fact reduce the mismatches to be barely discernable, if noticed at all.

Safari to the rescue! Station wagons represented one percent of the Pontiac production total in 1949. By the spring of 1955 they represented 8 percent of Pontiac's total production. As the Safari continued into the third model year of production sales dropped dramatically. It was time to move on. Pontiac's last Star Chief station wagon was the Custom 4-door Safari. It came to be known as the Transcontinental. Only 1,894 examples were adopted. The Safari name survived several more decades, but gone was our two-door Milestone car.

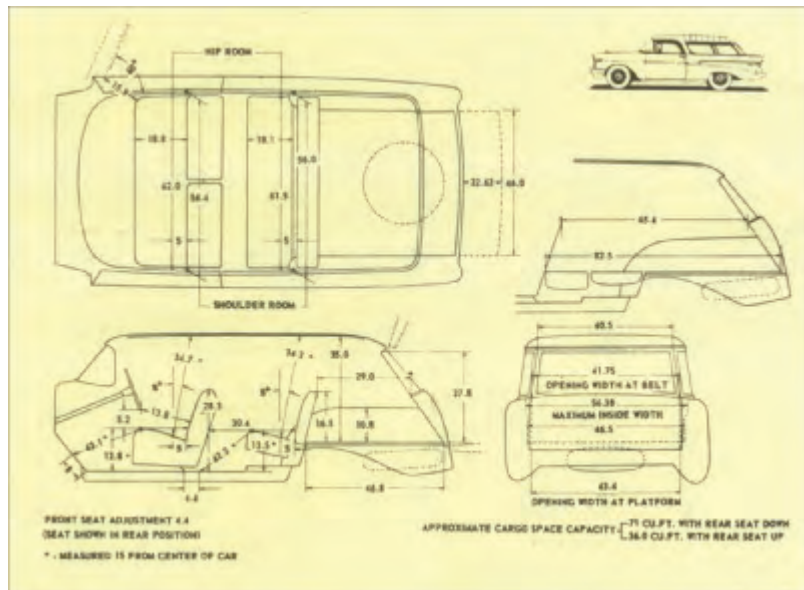
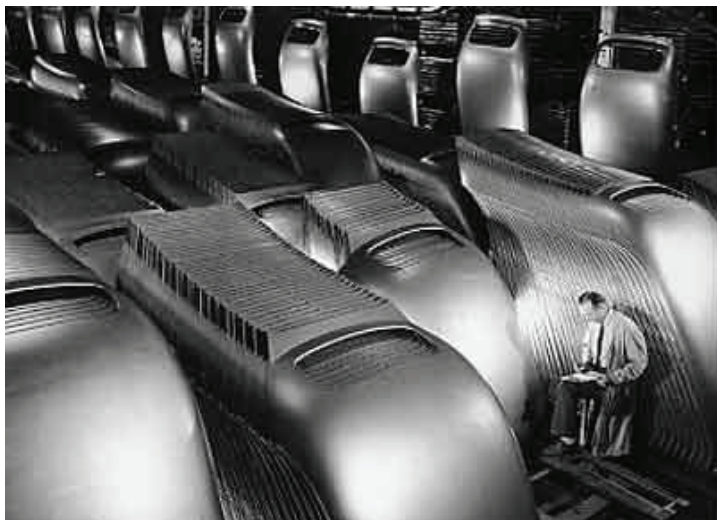
The End of an Era:

Now we will conclude Euclid's story. Station wagon bodies continued to be built here for a few more years. In 1970, operations were moved to more efficient plants in Michigan. General Motors decided to shelve Euclid in February, 1982. Only 1,182 employees parked their cars in the lot at the time. Workers concessions bought them some more time. Euclid was renamed "Inland Division of General Motors". The trim shop continued manufacturing seat covers, door panels, sunshades and assorted interior parts for Buick, Pontiac and Cadillac. To help booster their bottom-line, a contract was negotiated with Sea Ray Boats in 1986. The contract called for Inland to stitch together seats and cushions. GM announced a closure once again in 1991. Only 596 workers were earning paychecks there by that time. The Inland family once again offered concessions but this time GM wasn't buying. They initiated termination in 1992. By the summer of 1993 the pad locks were set in place and so ended the life of Fisher Body Division's Euclid, Ohio plant. Some may call it progress, but I call it the sad end of an era.

Fisher Body Division continuously reached for the stars. They successfully introduced many more industry firsts. Here are a few: The Corvair was America's first rear-engined mass-produced car. New for 1966 and '67 the Oldsmobile Toronado and Cadillac Eldorado were America's first front wheel drive luxury cars. With the introduction of the Toronado, Fisher had a product line of 175 different body styles. The "circulate ventilation system" eliminated the need for wind-wings to circulate in-cabin air. New strato-seating offered a stylish and comfortable front seat. In 1969 Fisher Body Division had the following assets: 13 fabrication plants 11 assembly plants, 7 hardware plants and 4 plants for tooling, engineering and research. A total of 40 million square feet of floor space was located in 24 cities in 8 states.

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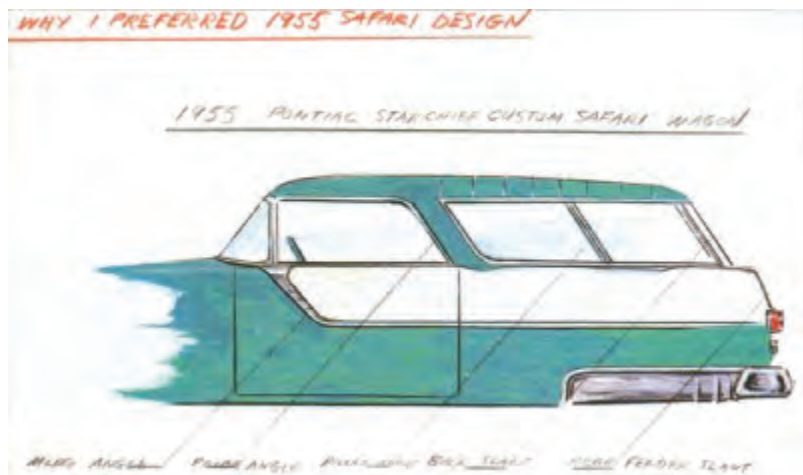
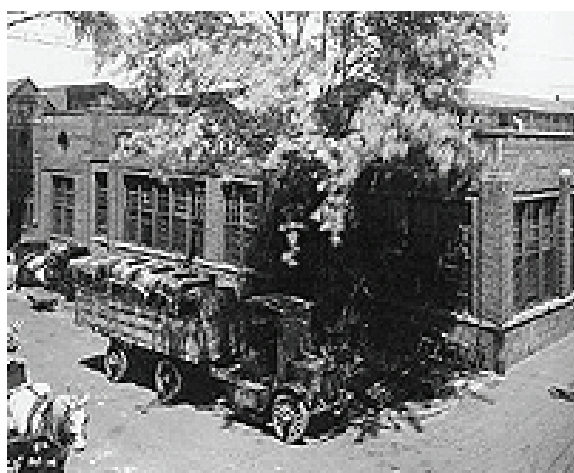
by Dennis Dana



Above Left: Worker sits in the middle of stacks of hundreds of roofs in a Fisher plant.

Above Right: Workers weld body parts together on a Fisher body. The body is on the temporary rolling frame in the assembly area. **Middle Left:** Sketch of Safari dimensions (sorry for the image quality).

Below Left: Outside view of one of Fisher Body's many Detroit plants during the teens and twenties shows a truck loaded with car bodies while at left is a horse pulling a wagon-load of lumber. **Below Right:** Sketch of a '55 Safari highlighting the sleek elements of the car's body slants which make it unique from any other wagon.



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by Dennis Dana

The year 1984 brought about the famous General Motors reorganization. Through this step Fisher Body Division was broken apart and divided amongst the divisions. Fisher Body's demise turned the page in GM's history book and left an innovation rich mega-legacy. Today Fisher Body is little more than a memory.

Authors Final Notes:

Through this discourse it was my intention to offer light and understanding to the magical phrase, "BODY by FISHER". Let's celebrate this historical division for the star it truly was. We Safari owners are a loyal bunch. Personally I've owned my '56 for 37 years. Of all the many cars I've owned it remains my favorite. Beginning in 1968 I've owned all 3 years of Nomad and Safaris. This feature was specifically written for the Custom Safari Chapter. It contains a few highlights of the substantial more in-depth General Motors and associates project I'm currently working on.

Also in 2011 with the encouragement of Steve Cook, Rich Pye and several CSC members (thank you all), I have been actively documenting all the Safaris I can "find". Unfortunately the chapter participation has been....sparse. Non-participation hurts the whole membership, not just one. I have taken the time and expense to send each Safari owner a questionnaire to fill out. It can either be returned to me or Rich, who has graciously offered his email address for electronically filed surveys. Again this project will benefit all of us. Please join the party so we can have an accurate accounting of as many Safaris as possible. Are you curious how many Safaris have a particular option? If everyone completes the survey and sends it in, we will have an accurate count to present to the CSC membership and your question will be answered.

Stayed tuned for the next issue. It will include a cowl tag examination. Also what several of us have been waiting for: The results will be revealed from 2011's Safari search. I will break down each Safari's options and how many members have each one. So again, PLEASE take a few minutes to complete and send in your survey. If yours is lost, please let Rich know and he'll email you another or let me know and I'll glad send out another. Have your Safari listed with the others.

Finally I want to thank POCI's 1957 Technical Advisor, Todd Crews. Without his patience, auto related library and master of the internet, this look into the past would not have been possible.

Safarilly yours,

Victor Dennis Dana

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Member Roster

First Name	Last Name	Address	City	State	Zip Code	Telephone #
Tony and Helene	Bardelli	109 Stonefield Dr	Cranberry TWP	PA	16066	724-779-0085
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Kelly and Robin	Wood	280 N. 1275 E	Layton	UT	84040	801-544-9714
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Michael and Sandy	Zarbolias	PO Box 1886	Missoula	MT	59806	406-251-2502

Safari Search

Cars for Sale

1955 Pontiac Safari: 144K miles, same owner since 1971 averaging less than 2K miles/year. Garage stored for 14 years. Near all original with very little rust and only minor dings. Paint almost through to primer from polishing. Interior fair, no carpeting. Extra parts available. December, 2010 Old Cars Report Price Guide values a #3 - 1955 Custom Safari at \$26,100. Price is negotiable but close to guide value. Contact Louie E. Brown, 316-685-0540 H, 316-393-9362 C, or L_EBrown@att.net



1956 Pontiac Safari: Solid, stored in a warehouse for 25 years, 99% complete, \$7500, (864) 862-4427. See pictures at: <http://www.classiccarsofsc.com/2011/03/1956-pontiac-star-chief-safari-wagon/>

Services

1955-1957 Pontiac Safari: Rear upper liftgates. straightened and triple plated to beautiful fit and finish. Satisfaction guaranteed or your money back. Best you will find. Will straighten your liftgate only, if you prefer to use your own chromer. Also available rear liftgate gas struts to help open liftgates after torsion rods are removed. All safari/nomad interchangeable parts including window trim. Please call or email. michaelbakotich@ca.rr.com (310) 528-0482 - Mike

Parts for Sale

1957 Pontiac: Front Brake Drums complete with Backing Plates, Shoes, Wheel Cylinders and Wheel Bearings, \$100 each; also Two Radios with Speaker Boxes, one Maroon and one Green, \$150 each; Complete Rear End Differential with 3.23 Gears, \$100; 5 Hub Caps Good Condition, \$100..... call Bill Hanners @ 239-543-3510, FL.

1955 Pontiac: Parting out a 2 door Chieftain. email Rich Pye @ rpye@rochester.rr.com or phone 585-637-2720 with needs.

1957: hi comp engine core for rebuilding/parts, includes 4 bbl intake & exhaust manifolds, valve covers, block, \$150. 1958 radiator, last used over 20 years ago, did not leak, \$50. Delivery in California may be possible for costs, otherwise, you pick-up. Tom Young, Newbury Park, CA 805 375-1320
pontiactom@ix.netcom.com

Wanted

1956 Safari: Information needed to how to replace rear leaf springs. Contact Cary Birenbaum @ mrpontiac@mindspring.com

1957 Safari: Stainless Spear, front of gas door. Trim under the tail lights. Donn Fallenbuchel, (928) 855-5494.

1957 Safari Car Wanted: If you have any leads on one, please contact Dwight at dwhitmire3153@charter.net or call cell 770-851-1010 or work 770-531-1010.

1955-56-57 Pontiac station wagon, Exterior Tee handle for liftgate on with as many attached parts as possible. Steve Cook jumbodog54@sbcglobal.net or 314-795-4700

1957 Pontiac (Any Model): Air Conditioning components that mount to the engine, brackets, compressor, condensor, etc. Don't need firewall pieces, but interested if part of package deal. Rich Pye, rpye@rochester.rr.com or 585-637-2720

To place a free ad to sell a car or parts or to place a want ad, send your request to Rich Pye @rpye@rochester.rr.com. Your ad should be related to 1955-58 Pontiacs, and it is recommended to include photos.

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 539 Victor, NY 14564

Annual Dues are \$21.00. Renewals are due January 1st of each year. New member dues are pro-rated quarterly from January 1st. Applicants must be a current member of POCI prior to joining the chapter. Send payment to Robin Petry.

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