



Winter 2014 Vol 18, No 4



# *Safaris For Sale*

*Custom Safari Chapter*

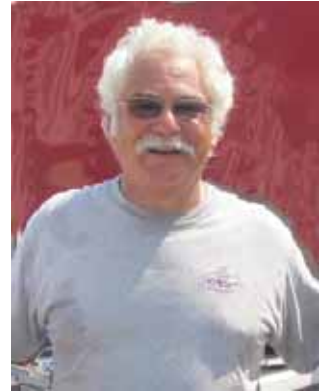
*Pontiac Oakland Club International*

# From the President's Garage

*By Lou Calasibetta*

*We had a good 2014. One of the many things I look back upon and smile about was the convention in Kansas. Although it's a long drive from New Jersey, the destination is always worth it! Seeing our friends and hundreds of cool Pontiacs is priceless.*

*As the President of our Wagon chapter, I want to wish you all a happy New Year, and first, I want to express my personal thanks to Rich. Rich who is the editor of our newsletter, is doing such a great job on putting together the newsletter. I know it is a challenge to create reading articles, stay updated on all of the current happenings, and collaborate information to produce such great reading material for ALL of us. One thing which would help make life easier and create an even better newsletter would be to our club members input. Sending information or articles on our cars to Rich, would be cool and help create an interesting newsletter.*



*Next, our membership dues have come to my attention. Last year was a free ride; we did not have a newsletter. This year we hope to make about four or so newsletters. I want to bring to your attention that a yearly membership of \$21.00 was due in January. Robin will send out flyers which you should have received by the time you read this. Please pay this as soon as possible upon receipt of the requests dues.*

*Being part of the car world we meet and build and friendships with many people. Jay Hammond is a great friend of mine, who I recently saw at a sway meet in Pennsylvania. Jay has a very successful parts vendor business. He is extremely knowledgeable in mid-year Chevrolets, specializing mostly in 1955-1957 Chevrolet items. Jay showed me a really cool reproduction part he is offering for wagons. A Safari/Nomad tailgate. This is such a great piece of metal which I wish I had back in 1976 when I restored the family's 1957 Safari. If any of you have an upcoming project please contact Jay at 302-322-1833. He may have the part you are looking for, and will be glad to assist you.*

*Finally, I have been receiving many calls from people and members looking for a Safari. This goes to show us that they are becoming sought after and values are increasing. It is hard to believe that years ago no one wanted a wagon. The increased popularity of the wagons has caused a rush of people buying and enjoying their wagons. The higher demand has made it hard to find a wagon and the prices have sky rocketed. I advise to look in Hemming's motor news or go online to a site such as eBay to search for a wagon. Make sure you see and inspect the car before you confirm your purchase.*

*So this is it for now friends. I hope to see you all in Louisville in 2015.*

*Sincerely,*

*Lou*

# Behind the Wheel in the Editor's Seat

*By Rich Pye*

Hello Everyone,

The snow is finally melting up here in Western, NY, so I thought it was time to get the Winter 2014\_15 issue out!

It's been a long, errr.....very long winter, with some crazy weather in the northeast. We had the coldest February on record with the most snow.....nuts. Also during February I was told to "retire" after 34 years by my company. One would think more time on my hands would be great and I'd be bored, but no way. I feel like I am at a daily tennis match with the my head shifting left, then right, then left, then.....well you get the picture. I finally found a computer at home that had my newsletter software working on it, so I decided it was time to get this issue out.

In this issue you'll see an update from the Western Regional POCI meet by Tom Young, along with some photos from a '56 Safari sold at a Mecum auction in Kissimmee, FL. The pictures were from an original CSC member, Len Sokol, who got to drive this beauty at the auction. You will also find a story from Dennis Dana, entitled The Duco Color Advisory Service and the Color Revolution. It was a look back on how color was added to automotive paints and how the process evolved over the years. I hope you enjoy all the content in this issue.

Finally, with my retirement, a big project for me is to liquidate to some extent. Part of my liquidation is a reduction in my auto collection. To start with I think I'm ready to sell my original '55 Safari. It is currently my only "driver" in my stable, but I don't have the time or energy to get it where it needs to be in a restored ate. "Chief" as I've called it since 1987, has been a faithful companion, but I really want it to go to a home where someone can spend the time and money to bring it back to its original glory. Chief has a strong, rebuilt 287 cu-in, bored out 0.040" over with approximately 6,000 miles on it. Like most hydramatics, Chief always likes to make the 2nd to 3rd gear shift interesting while you are driving. The car rides straight down the road and sits on radial wide-whites. The downside is that it needs some floor panel repairs, a freshening up in the interior and new paint as the lacquer has seen much better days. Re-chroming would be the finishing touch as well. I am asking \$15,000 based on what I've seen around.

Anyhow, I'm putting it up here for sale first and as Lou said in his article these are getting hard to find. Having this car for almost 30 years, I can tell you just about anything you want to know about it. Email me if you are interested.

Also, please keep the content coming my way, with pictures. It makes it so much more interesting for the readers to see pictures and stories together. I know everyone gets tired of the repeated pleas for information, but really if half of you spent an hour or so over a 3 month period and sent me something that you've done with your Safari, I would be buried in information for years.....Think about it.

Funny thing is as I write this last sentence I am looking out the window on March 30th and it just started snowing again.....UGHHH...time to really clean this place up and move South!!!



*Rich*

# Sun, Rain, Elvis and a Bear!

## Adventures bound at the Western Regional meet *By Tom Young*

Bass Lake, California was the place to be in late September, 2014. A long and hot summer season came to an end when dark clouds appeared just as the Pontiacs of the Central Valley Western Regional's meet was winding down. The rain was a welcome sight that provided a brief but badly needed break from a severe drought. Before the fall of the first rain drops, more than 300 Pontiac enthusiasts enjoy a great car show in a perfect venue near Yosemite National Park.

Seven Custom Safari Chapter members attended the meet. The unofficial long distance award went to Carla and Dan Dickey who drove down from Washington State. I surprised everyone by making a rare appearance at the show. The pending wet weather created an opportunity for me to take a quick break from wild land fire fighting operations.

The surprise of the day came from Chapter member Dick Hanson who brought his recently restored '56 Safari wagon to the show. Dick says that it took seven months of hard work to restore his wagon. Wow! Now that's fast! His wagon really attracted a lot of attention. Even Elvis was seen admiring Dick's Safari wagon!



Vern Vassar and Tom Young shared a swap site during the show. Vern offered a set of '54 wire wheel covers with NOS caps while Tom worked on recruiting new chapter members.

Tom brought a repro '55-57 electric antenna (supplied by CPR) along with a factory original antenna for comparison. Most folks were impressed by the quality of the CPR reproduction antenna.



**Custom Safari Chapter show attendees:** From left to right: Vern Vassar, Summer and Tom Young, Dick Hanson, Carla & Dan Dickey. Not shown: Ed Vassar and his wife. They arrived later in the day.

Plain but effective, our Custom Safari Chapter display board attracted a bit of attention to people who like '55-58 Pontiacs. Nearly all of the Chapter membership applications sitting on the display table were taken!

This is the third time that the Pontiacs of Central California has sponsored a Western Regional meet. The last time was back in 2008. Lead by POCI members Brian Massey and Sam Fisher, Chapter members worked hard on making the event a huge success.

No visit to the Sierra Nevada Mountains in California is complete with seeing a bear. A day after most everyone left for home, a bear was spotted near the host resort. On the following morning, the bear found an unsecure trash dumpster near Tom's cabin and tossed most of it's contents onto the ground. What a mess! Lucky for me, the bear did not find the cookies that I had left in my wife's new car!



Dick Hanson's '56 Safari added several personal touches in building a very special custom Safari wagon including Cadillac power bucket seats, updated air conditioning, satellite radio, custom paint and a hand-made, glass transmission gear selector knob.



Above: Dick Hanson , proud owner of a truly custom '56 Safari wagon.

# The Duco Color Advisory Service and Color Revolution

*By Dennis Dana*

## INTRODUCTION

Today, a wide variety of exciting and vibrant colors is as American as apple pie. But this hasn't always been the case. There was a time when color choices were a mere handful. The first credible attempt at a larger palette came about in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century when paint brushes were used to apply numerous coats of varnish on to metal auto bodies. Then in the early twenties, E.I. DuPont de Nemours and Company developed "Duco", a sprayable quick drying nitrocellulose lacquer. Next came their partnership with General Motors to adapt Duco to the rigors of assembly line use. Duco was an immediate sensation and within months weaved its way into American manufacturing – especially the auto industry.

As the list of colors grew, so did the need for guidance in the proper selection of colors for their products. To address this need, DuPont established the Duco Color Advisory Service and staffed it with a team of professional colorists captained by ex-camoufleur, H. Ledyard Towle, and subsequently, ex-admin Howard Ketcham. These two visionaries introduced such revolutionary concepts as "visual streamlining" and "color forecasting", both very effective design management tools.

Today, while Duco Color Advisory Service has been relegated to the pages of history, professional colorists remain an integral part of this new era of automotive design.

## BEFORE THE REVOLUTION

There is truth to the adage claiming that you don't miss what you never had. Being settled in the 1600's, the original Thirteen Colonies weren't exactly hotbeds of style and color. While shades of red and other colors were extracted from berries, dark blues issued forth from indigo plants. However, these hues did little to introduce the colonists to the world of vivid color. By the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, many colorful items were arriving from the Far East and Europe, but seldom traveled beyond the East Coast.

The Victorian Age (1837-1910) was a time of great change. The use of colorful synthetic dyes imported from England and Germany were used by American mills to create bulk cloth and clothing in many vibrant colors. "Chromolithographers", as they were called, used polychromatic dyes to create showy prints (pictures) for home display, trading cards, and audaciously colored billboards and posters for commercial use. This tantalizing taste of bright colors introduced the public to what many did not know they were missing; the addictive world of style and color. The "Color Revolution" was underway.

By 1930, the effects of the Color Revolution were not only felt at home; the high fashion centres of London and Paris were also under its spell. This outpouring of style and color was gaining momentum as an important sales tool. To highlight this phenomenon, Fortune, the fledgling corporate magazine, featured the 1930 article titled "Color in Industry". In this first-ever issue, Fortune named this movement "The Color Revolution" and described a "suddenly kaleidoscopic world" with color as the "master salesman, a distributor extraordinaire."

## IN THE BEGINNING

Not surprisingly, color's beginning blends in with the origins of paint, with paint itself dating back thousands of years. Since paint life was short prior to the mid-1860's, these earliest of coatings were painter mixed for their own use. For this reason it was prudent to make only what was immediately needed.

As America approached its centennial, a torrent of new inventions and discoveries were sweeping the country. One such discovery was how to increase the shelf life and reliability of paint. Through diligent research, New England paint makers learned that when silicate of soda was mixed into the popular linseed oil-based varnishes, its shelf life increased substantially. With self-mixing no longer necessary, this breakthrough sparked the pre-packing of paints shortly after 1865, and marked the beginning of the American paint industry.

## THE MARKET GROWS

As the 19<sup>th</sup> century drew to a close, the horse-drawn vehicle days were numbered. The dawn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century brought with it a growing list of automobile owners. However, many older citizens resisted the automobile. Case in point: one old-world farmer vocalized his opinion by calling it a "devil wagon."

As new car sales increased, some carriage makers changed with the times and began building automobiles and/or bodies while slowly phasing out their wagon and carriage operations. Others simply closed their doors. The varnishers working for the cross over shops, coupled with the newly unemployed painters, began adapting their talents to the varnishing of automobiles. At first the continued the age old tradition of brushing up to forty coats of material onto the bodies; a tradition which would continue

throughout this first decade.

While learning how to adapt their talents from varnishing wooden vehicles to the modern metallic surfaces, they discovered that most of the challenges previously experienced were no longer an issue. They soon became adept at painting the hard, non-porous metal surfaces.

With the Art Nouveau movement in full swing, the only noticeable evidence of a colorful world was in the big cities where bright colors decorated everything from household items and clothing to the vivid red storefronts of F.W. Woolworth's Five & Dime stores and A&P supermarkets. Not to be overlooked, steamship travel was bringing the fashionable styles and colors of London and Paris to America. With the American lifestyle being more casual and diverse, the sometimes outrageous European colors had to be tempered.

As the first decade of the new century drew to a close, the rising tide of auto sales called for an increase in production.

This increase was possible due to the introduction of time and labor saving machinery and equipment. These crude improvements, like the primitive drop presses used for stamping sheet metal, caused the newly made auto bodies to begin piling up in the paint departments.



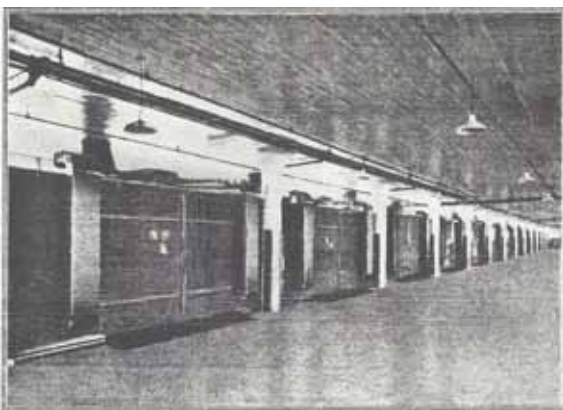
With the industry focused on the mechanical aspects of the automobile, the painting and finishing phase was largely overlooked. In short, try as they might the paint departments were incapable of staying in step with the assembly floor. Note: The "painting" of a body referred to the application of primers and color coats. Laying the clear varnish over these coats constituted the "finishing" of the paint job.

During the earliest days of varnishing, room temperature air drying, or slightly above room temperature, was the only way to dry the paint. This was perhaps the single largest obstacle hampering increased paint-room output. It also contributed to the inordinate amount of time the new bodies languished within the paint shops and storage areas. To drive this point home, the Fisher Body Company reported a 12 to 33 day varnish and paintbrush marathon, with other body suppliers proclaiming 3 to 8 weeks. The AUTOMOTIVE MANUFACTURER magazine for June 1922 reported that not counting a trim time of about 2 days to install all interior and hardware, and before the introduction of drying equipment that "it would take from 22 to 30 days" to paint and finish a body. Furthermore, the January 17, 1012 issue of THE HORSELESS AGE stated, "the elapsed time [before drying equipment] may be four to six weeks."

Considering the above handicaps, the paint departments whether belonging to an automaker or body company, were forced to adopt a system of supplying a steady stream of complete bodies. To accomplish this task, they had the burden of storing thousands of bodies in varying stages of paint. The storage space required, and the financial investment in otherwise completed bodies was enormous. To provide some insight into the enormity of this challenge the Fisher body Company built acres of warehouses to store its "in progress" bodies. In addition, when Henry Ford opened his Albert Kahn designed Highland Park (Michigan) auto plant on January 1, 1910 all six floors of the four building lining Manchester Avenue were built to store the drying Model T bodies. Since four coats of materials were used on each Model T, storage space was required to hold some 8,000 bodies by 1916!

#### SPEED 'ER UP

The second decade brought with it even more changes. By 1915, carriage houses were transformed into garages as automobiles replaced "ol' Dobbin" and the family buggy. This conversation spoke to the rising infatuation with the automobile. The automakers recognized the fortune to be made and decided to increase production even more via modernizing the industry.



*The enormous baking ovens—twenty-four of them in all—each large enough to easily accommodate eight of the "Four-Ninety" bodies at one time.*

Where only crude implements existing before, it was often incumbent upon the industry to suggest or sometimes even design these upgrades then have them built by manufacturer of such goods. After the equipment was proven reliable each was then duplicated and widely adopted by the industry.

During this period it was the job of the paint departments to regulate assembly floor output. This practice was called into question when these improvements further increased body output and placed a further strain upon the already overburdened paint departments. Due to this increasing bottleneck, the heat was on to increase output and efficiency.

One such tool to satisfy this need was the employment of hot air ovens. Pictured on the left from early 1918 these enormous baking ovens, twenty-four in all, each held up to eight Chevrolet Four-Ninety bodies at a time. These new baking ovens and drying rooms absolutely revolutionized the industry. One of the earliest uses of these ovens can be traced to Ohio in

1911. There a woodworking shop used 15 ovens, each the size of a railroad boxcar, to dry the paint used on the bodies they built. While the Paul Maehler Company of Chicago installed drying equipment in many of the large auto and body plants, while the Young Brothers of Detroit claimed that by 1918 their company installed "over 97% of the japanning and drying ovens in the auto industry."

To materially shorten the painting operations it became clear that up to forty coats of such material wasn't necessary. They learned that it was possible to make as good, if not better paint job, using fewer coats than was formerly thought essential. After much consideration, it was decided that 10-15 well selected and properly applied coats of material, or slightly more for high-end work, was of sufficient amount to render a durable paint job. This accelerated schedule, combined with the use of drying rooms and ovens, resulted in a paint schedule of between 3.5 and 12 days to paint and trim a body. This was a vast improvement, but still not enough. More bodies were delivered to the paint rooms than they could handle. An even larger bottleneck was forming.

#### SOMETHING HAS TO GIVE

With the pressure on to pump out even more completed bodies, corners were cut and the varnish jobs suffered; with the primary culprits being the high-volume production plants. In an effort to keep up with production, the painters, while possessing the requisite skills, were forced to engage in mercilessly quick painting and finishing practices. To add to their problems, many times the purchasing departments supplied them with cheap, incompatible products. But even when first rate primers were matched with the most expensive and highly elastic varnishes of the same maker, the resulting finish rarely saw their second birthday without major deterioration.

To take this one step further, within months after the vehicle was pressed into service, decay would commence. The average life expectancy of the typical varnish job was one year or less, with many peeling before delivery. With heat, oxidation and natural chemical changes the varnish darkened, colors dulled, the clear coat yellowed and cracks appeared in even the most pampered varnish jobs. To maintain their social standing most wealthy custom bodied vehicle owners scheduled yearly re-varnishing appointments with their coachbuilders. And for a mere \$25 this yearly service was performed on production cars by local re-varnishing shops.

By the early 1920s something had to give. With all of the problems associated with varnish use, the public's leading complaint was the lack of color choice. To satisfy this growing dissatisfaction the DuPont Company accepted the challenge to develop a new, easy-to-apply paint in a cornucopia of colors.

#### DUPONT SPREADS ITS WINGS

Well before this time, DuPont was already engaged in programs that would allow it to outstrip the competition by expanding into two fields of paint products simultaneously - nitrocellulose lacquer and varnish. Without venturing into its extensive varnish commitments we'll delve into a short lacquer lesson.

From 1802 to 1905, DuPont primarily produced commercial and military grade explosives and gunpowder with the United States Army and Navy as its chief customers. In 1908, much to DuPont's consternation both military branches built and operated their own gunpowder plants. DuPont's future was in jeopardy. The search began for new outlets for the smokeless powder's chief raw material - nitrocellulose.

That same year (1908) the Dupont Executive Committee appointed the Development Committee to investigate and report on alternative uses for guncotton and the other products of its smokeless powder plants. The Committee conducted its investigation and in 1909 issued its findings. They determined that the following industries, from largest to smallest, were excellent investment candidates: celluloid artificial leather, artificial silk; and lacquer, a product DuPont was already invested in.

DuPont dipped into the well of lacquer experimentation in 1905 with the purchase of the International Smokeless Powder and Solvents Company. The First World War halted lacquer development, as DuPont's explosive sales boomed. With a 1915-1918 profit of about \$232 million, in August 1916 DuPont resumed its lacquer development program. To aid in development, due to the purchase of the Arlington Company in September 1915, the resources of one of America's two largest celluloid movie film producers was at DuPont's disposal.

In 1920 DuPont introduced a small, diverse line of nitrocellulose lacquers which were durable and quick drying, but low solids content left them with poor coverage capabilities. Chemists attempted to improve coverage by introducing more solids, which left it too thick to apply. The search for the perfect balanced continued.

Visions of future paint sales to the auto industry revved up DuPont's engine. This prospect also stimulated the creative juices of DuPont chemists at DuPont's Redpath laboratory in Parlin, New Jersey. While working with movie film, and using nitrocellulose as the base they created the nation's first colorable quick drying and durable lacquer with enough film-forming solids to provide good coverage. Marketed as "Viscolac", it went on sale in 1921.

#### THE STAR IS BORN

DuPont continued experimenting. By late 1920, Edmund M. Flaherty, Assistant Director of Sales for DuPont's Chemical Products Division, hit pay-dirt. He created a durable lacquer containing a substantial amount of film forming solids for superior coverage. This new product was patented under the trade name of 'Duco'. First marketed in 1922, Duco was used by a few automakers including Franklin and Pierce-Arrow, the auto refinishing trade, and by manufacturers of furniture, brush handles and pencils. The time was ripe to bring the paint departments out of the dark ages. For reasons already mentioned the antiquated varnishes needed to be replaced. Even the "high-heat" varnish based enamels used by Ford, Dodge and a few others dried too slowly to



effectively ramp up production. General Motors led the way, and due to the advice of Walter P. Chrysler (of Buick) and Herman L. Weckler, Buick's works manager, in December 1921, GM established the Paint & Enamel Committee. Its objective was to contact all paint manufacturers and request samples of their non-varnish paint products. The goal was to locate a quick drying and durable replacement, then develop it further if necessary.

Upon contacting DuPont in the spring of 1922, Edmund Flaherty agreed to send samples of Duco to Charles Kettering's General Motors Research Laboratory in Dayton, Ohio. After rigorous testing of all samples it was agreed that Duco, with further refinement, held the greatest promise. DuPont and General Motors then formed an alliance lasting about two years as they set out to adapt Duco to the intense nature of assembly line use. By early 1923, GM Research believed Duco to be the wave of the future. Since it dried dull in March 1923, Oakland Paint Superintendent, RS Rogers, developed a burnishing process which produced an acceptable shine. By late 1923, Duco was ready to meet the public. The star was born.



Duco's first public appearance was in December 1923 at the New York Automobile Show, held at the Grand Central Palace. The 1924 Oakland was chosen for this honor. With a color name of True Blue, all seven Oakland body styles were lacquered in this one color using DeVilbiss pressure-feed spray guns and striped in either orange or red. Billed as the "True Blue Oakland Six", the decision to blend Oakland and Duco was in the hopes of breaking Oakland's sales slump. It worked like a charm. This move was not only hailed a triumph, one executive announced in early 1924 that "Duco has become so popular that customers are now demanding it."

With Duco being spray gun applied, brushes and varnish became obsolete. Many colors were already available and none faded or yellowed. With its superior flexibility, cracking was no longer an issue. All this considered the biggest news of all was that paint times were reduced to just hours; a most welcome result which broke the bottleneck, eliminated the need

of storing thousands of bodies, freed up acres of floor space, and lessened the financial burden for all involved.

NOTE: The pictured 1924 True Blue Oakland is owned by Bill and Judy Hewitt, and shown displayed at the Oakland County Courthouse in Pontiac, Michigan. The Hewitt's said they are "delighted to share its beauty." This is an important Oakland because a previous owner was George Hannum, Oakland Division President from 1920 to 1924.

#### IT'S 1925 AGAIN

As the changeover to Duco continued within GM, by 1925 varnish was universally rejected as an automotive finish. The first Duco contract between DuPont and General Motors took effect in January 1925. In Los Angeles, there was one car for every two residents with a national average of one car for every 6.6 residents. During this same year, the Minnesota Mining and Manufacturing Company (3M) released the first successful masking tape. At the end of the 1925 model year production run, the Fisher Body Corporation announced a body output of 1,300,000. This increase was largely due to expanded plant openings across the country and lower closed body retail prices. DuPont reported selling "more than one million gallons of Duco at \$5 each." By 1927, other paint manufacturers were selling good quality lacquers - under license from DuPont.

#### THE DUCO COLOR ADVISORY SERVICE BEGINS

The firestorm of Duco sales blended in with the bold Art Deco colors. Auto buyers with visions of color swirling all around them began demanding an even larger Duco palette. To control this growing demand, DuPont decided it was time to employ a professional colorist; someone capable of predicting future color trends and knowing how to create exciting colors and combinations for even the lowest priced vehicles.

To set the wheels in motion, two DuPont managers began their search in January 1925. The search ended in October of 1925 with the hiring of Captain H. Ledyard Towle. To make his talents accessible to its customers, DuPont opened the New York City based Duco Color Advisory Service and put Towle in charge. Because of his industry related background, Towle and his new position were in one accord. His first order of business was to hire a staff of colorists. Their mission was to guide customers in the selection of eye pleasing colors, splendid two-tone combinations and attractive accent stripes which sang in harmony with another. They also instructed their customers in the fire art of applying a selected combination to best flatter the bodylines and draw the eye away from any flaws. And without a doubt, no one was more adept at this than Ledyard Towle.

To spread the word, advertisements for the service appeared in trade journals as AUTOBODY magazine. The copy stated that with this service's guidance, the DuPont selection of colors were "known to please the average", meaning DuPont colorist could "choose with certainty" the colors for all automakers. To accomplish this task they were successfully weaved European couture fashion and the public's evolving thirst for variety into exciting colors and combinations.

#### TOWLE SHOWS OFF

Since color trends were dictated by the flamboyant French clothing designers, Towle decided to keep abreast with fashion by attending the major auto shows of both here and abroad. He first visited the January 1926 National Automobile Shows in New York City, where automakers displayed their latest innovations and color studies. Twelve brilliantly painted Lincolns were among

the most memorable, with each one adorned in colors of the world's rarest birds: The green tanager of Ecuador, Haiti's lizard cuckoo, and the yellow woodpecker from the deep forests of Venezuela, for name a few.

Next Towle visited London and Paris in the Fall of 1926. Upon attending London's British Motor Show at the Olympia, and then the Salon de L'Auto at the Grand Palais in Paris, he nearly succumbed from a fashion and color overdose. Brilliant colors surrounded him. He sent cablegrams back to his colleague raving about his experiences. They in turn issued press releases with his reports of how maroons and burnt oranges highlighted the Paris show, and how the boulevards of Paris were awash with cars of the "haute monde and demi-monde" as they drove by in "squadrons of satisfying color...like a flashing mountain torrent at the end of the rainbow." His vivid descriptions prompted the Providence (Rhode Island) Tribune to report in late 1926 that "All Paris is color mad."

While in Paris, Towle visited several couture runway shows and took notes for trade articles on high fashion fabrics. He also enlisted the service of such major designers as Lucien Lelong, who draped a roadster in shades of green and peach. A second roadster was two toned in Dekkan Brown and another shade of brown called London Smoke by sports car enthusiast and designer, Madeleine Vionnet.

Towle became known as the 'mass production man'. In January 1927 he once again visited the National Automobile Shows and experienced an even greater outpouring of color. Through the Brooklyn Standard Union and the Pittsburgh Gazette Times, he explained that "the whole country is becoming more fond of the use of color." He went on to describe how "long vigorous stripes along the lower band molding" made a model "look longer" in a 1927 article published in the Brooklyn Standard Union. Pleased by what he saw, Mr. Towle declared that the 1927 auto shows were "the high water mark in color harmony."

Automakers quickly responded by producing two tone combinations in warm, pleasing harmonies. Yet while some could calm the savage beast others were visual faux pas, which brought out the best in Towle. By applying the form-follows-function philosophy for every disaster he had a remedy.

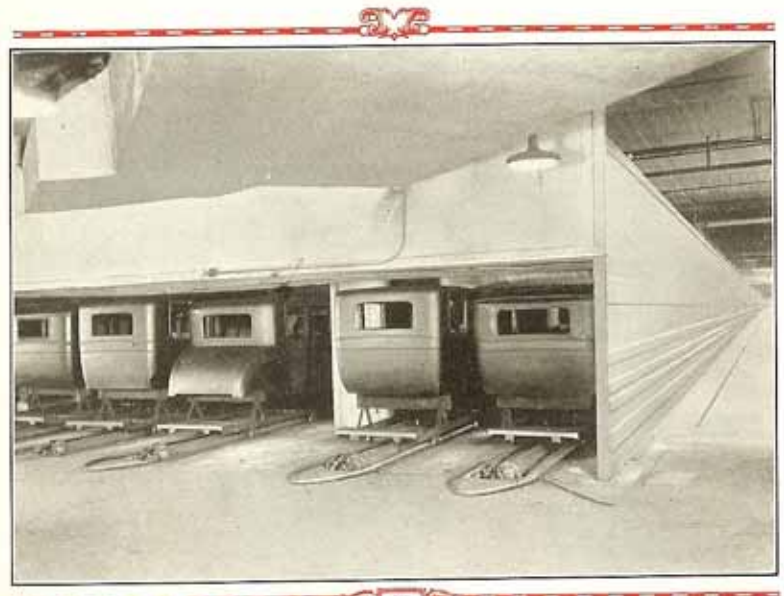
#### TOWLE MOVES ON

On June 14, 1927 Alfred P. Sloan and Harley J. Earl opened the soon to be famous General Motors Art and Colour Section. They needed of a staff colorist and Towle was right for the job. After nearly three years with DuPont, Towle felt it was time to move on. So after months of negotiations he accepted GM's offer and moved to Detroit in July 1928. Harley Earl names him head of the colour and trim department, and gave Cap Towle, (as Earl called him), a studio next to his on the 10<sup>th</sup> floor of the General Motors Building.

As head colorist, he assembled monthly reports showing the car buying habits of Americans according to colors, models and regions. For example, his June 1929 report cited that 87% of Pacific Northwest Pontiac buyers bought shades of blue, while only 17% of Northeast Buick buyers preferred blue. He explained in the Society of Automotive Engineers publication how he compared "dealers" input and public taste as revealed in the periodicals, in newspapers, and over the radio as regards to clothing, house furnishings and other articles.

A perpetual teacher, Towle continued his instruction on how to link style, color and the automobile. After only two years with GM, he moved on in 1930 to the Detroit offices of Campbell-Ewald, a former employer. Once again as the Art Director he pursued his passion for mixing color, design, and advertising by focusing on billboards and posters. In 1934, Pittsburgh Plate Glass and its Ditzler Color Division hired him as the founding director of its new division of Creative Design and Color. According to PPG, this new division "created color schemes for appliances, layouts for showrooms, and storefronts, new hues for paints and varnishes, and company advertising."

#### SCENES FROM THE 1927 FISHER BODY SALES MANUAL



*Long lines of bodies in course of lacquering are passed automatically through drying ovens.*



*Automobile bodies are no longer painted—they are sprayed with lacquer. Here are typical scenes in one of the Fisher plants*



*Striping a body—This is a delicate job, requiring highly skilled specialists. Mechanical methods of striping have never been successful. Some striping jobs are comparatively simple; others, intricate and costly*

#### HOWARD KETCHAM: COLOR ENGINEER

Fellow ad-man and New York socialite, Howard Ketcham (1903-1982), was hired on as art director at the H.K. McCann advertising agency. He moved up to art director when Towle left for DuPont. He furthered his education by studying at the New York School of Design. Then in 1927, he followed Towle to Duco's Color Service. He was promoted to head colorist after Cap Towle left for GM.

As DuPont's new head colorist, Ketcham advanced Towle's philosophy of marketing color and elegance through collaboration with the Cheney Brothers silk mill. By being fashion industry savvy, Cheney developed a three-level system of color selections: Seasonal items were called "novelties" then the "second season" line was followed by the "staples" line. The novelty items earned the highest profits by using their most advanced colors and patterns.

Paul Thomas was Cheney's sales director and very pro DuPont. He believed that by providing DuPont with their silk color predictions, Cheney Brothers could capitalize upon this alliance and flourish as an industry leader. Conversely, Ketcham expected Cheney Brothers to provide high-fashion marketing strategy.

By applying Cheney's predictions, in late 1928, DuPont proudly released a whole new palette of Duco colors including Red Shadow Red "a yellow red suitable for use with either brown or beige as a wire wheel color or for striping". Sea Bubble, a "natural beige first developed by the silk industry which has received wide acceptance in the textile trade as well as in the automotive industry". More snappy colors were: Bay Tree, Blue-Gray, Gray Gull, Lei Orange, Pewter Pot, Verdancia and Water Glo.

#### THE DUCO PALETTE SHRINKS

While faithfully executing the concept of style and color working together, Ketcham was just as committed to engineering professionalism. This quality caused alarm when he discovered that the Duco color list was 7,500 names long! He then set an ambitious goal for the color service; to oust all but the most popular colors of the middle class, his largest market. To get underway, his idea was to track the sales of each Duco color through a series of Cap Towle-style charts and graphs with his version of Cheney's three-level system of color selection. The resulting Automotive Color Index separated each Duco color into either the Style, Standard, or Staple group. Research began in the summer of 1929.

As the Depression descended upon America, charting continued with some interesting results. Through his studies he saw a pattern emerge of how the Depression was influencing color choices. Blues, for example, were being overlooked in favor of black. His findings allowed the elimination of some 7,200 out-of-demand colors.

## PRESENTING: DUCO CALIBRATED COLORS

DuPont, the perpetual trendsetter, once again came in first when Ketcham introduced his crowning achievement; Duco Calibrated Colors, consisting of 290 of the most popular hues. To help create this selection, he enlisted the help of the Munsell Color Company's practical system of color measure and its newest colors atlas, the Munsell Book of Color (pictured)

The Munsell Color System was state of the art. It proved that all colors are three-dimensional and created by combining its three dimensions. Hue is the first dimension and describes all colors of the spectrum, such as red or blue value. Value is the second dimension and describes a color's lightness or darkness on the gray scale. For example, light red is pink and high on the gray scale. For example light red is pink and high on the gray scale, while maroon is dark red and low on the gray scale. Chroma is the third and final dimension and describes a hue's gray content. Pastels, for example, have a high gray content whereas dark, rich reds would be nearly or completely devoid of gray.



Howard Ketcham vigorously pursued the art of color uniformity batch after batch. Through the use of improved methods of pigment measurement when mixing a color, only Duco Calibrated Colors offered a set formula for each color. To further demonstrate just how unique Duco Calibrated Colors were, by 1932 all other paint manufacturers had a staggering total of about 11,500 colors – some popular, others not used in years. These same suppliers were plagued with erratic pigment measurements and chemical reactions resulting in as many as 80 variations of one original color. These off hues were shipped to customers. Once delivered and accepted if a mismatch was found, it could not be returned. Some switched to other suppliers, but this only exacerbated the problem by trying, with calamitous results, to match each other's colors. As these suppliers struggled to perfect their products and achieve uniform results, Ketcham's use of the Munsell System placed DuPont on the top rung of the paint and color innovation ladder.

## THE INDUSTRY EVOLVES

While Ledyard Towle endorsed the "psychology of color", Howard Ketcham believed in the reality of facts. By using Munsell's system, Ketcham aptly described a color scheme for a refinishing trade magazine as follows: "All over color a light maroon. The character of such a maroon can be improved through the use of light, bright blue-green as a striping accent. Maroon is in reality a low value of red. Blue-green is the complement (opposite) of red. The use of color and its complement tends to intensify both colors." Ketcham's understanding of how to apply color with optimum results announced DuPont's ability to tame, control and package color like no other.

In time, Howard Ketcham would be named the "father of color engineering". While writing for the trade journal, Industrial Finishing, he stressed that "it is just as costly to be far ahead of the color trend as it is unprofitable to lag behind it. So the manufacturer or dealer who wishes to meet markets when they arrive does well to determine in advance the public's choice of colors." As a result, the professional colorist mastered the art of staying in step with the fashion industry whose color predictions were a foretelling of what was to come. Whether they counted blue Pontiacs, attended runway shows or visited fashion designers, it was the colorists job, his obligation "to keep abreast of the consciousness of the color consumer."

In 1935, Ketcham left DuPont to open Howard Ketchum Inc., a color consulting firm based in New York City's Rockefeller Center. This would remain his business home for 35 years.

While automakers seldom used the exact colors of couture fashion, (these colors could look strange on cars), each color and shade had its specific use and allowed the middle class consumers to express their individuality. Yet whether the colors were for textiles, vehicles or the industrial arts, there was a color for everyone.

The color industry continued to grow and evolve. DuPont settled into following the trends set by the textile industry. Companies like Cheney Brothers knew how to predict and sway color trends and did it well. Duco Calibrated Colors was just the beginning in DuPont's quest to keep pace with the fashion world while outpacing the competition.

By the early 1930s, the Munsell Color Systems was gaining ground as the industry standard. As these companies embraced the system and up-to-date methods of pigment measurement, mismatches were reined in and business grew exponentially. Before Duco's patent expired in 1944, DuPont issued over 250 lacquer licenses to other manufacturers. However, even with this growth, the fact remains that DuPont and Duco set the tone for the modern paint and color industry.

## IN CONCLUSION

This article was designed to give you, the reader, a glimpse into the paint and color industry. From the earliest days of a few simple colors, to the broadening palette of colors created by color grinders, our ancestors experienced how eye-pleasing colors could transform a blue mood into happy steps. After the fragile varnishes were abandoned in favor of a virtual riot of lacquer colors, colorists continued to stimulate our senses through the use of striking two and three tone combinations on post World War II cars.

During the 1950s, all automakers offered a dizzying choice of colors, color combinations, body-styles and options. For example, the 1958 Edsel was available in any one of 484 dazzling colors combinations. When new, it sometimes wasn't the make or model of a car which drew admirers, but the crowd pleasing colors with dramatic matching interiors. This fact is still true today as we gaze adoringly upon these rolling exhibits of Detroit's Golden Years.

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# Mecum Auction in Kissimmee

## Former CSC Member Len Sokol Drives this Beauty



*If you want to see Len Sokol driving this beauty across the auction stage, check this link out: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IIf0Gf4y8I0>*



# Safari Search

## Cars for Sale

**1955 Pontiac Safari:** Straight car from Tennessee on a early 80's restoration. Needs to be restored body-wise again. 6K on engine rebuild, 4bbl, not numbers matching. Pretty much all original. I've owned it since 1987, rebuilt the engine and replaced missing pieces. \$15,000 or BO. Rich Pye, rpye@rochester.rr.com for pics and more info.

## 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 Pontiac:** NORS rear wheel bearings, new in box, with updated retainer collars. Pair, \$85 inc. shipping. **1957 Transcontinental:** aluminum side panels & wheel well trim most pieces available in various conditions. Sorry, no short rocker molding extensions. Let me know your needs. **1958 Pontiac Star Chief:** cast chrome door pillar paint divider moldings, set of 4, fair chrome, \$45 set, inc. shipping. Contact Tom Young at [pontiactom@ix.netcom.com](mailto:pontiactom@ix.netcom.com)

## Wanted

**1955 Pontiac:** OEM side view mirror (#519802) ? and a OEM Non-Glare rear view mirror (#521170 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.

**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](mailto:jumbodog54@sbcglobal.net) or 314-795-4700

**1957 Pontiac (Any Model):** Air Conditioning components that mount to the engine, brackets, compressor, condensor, etc. Rich Pye, rpye@rochester.rr.com

**1957 Pontiac:** Rust free, stock 14-inch wheel rims, contact Tom Young at [pontiactom@ix.netcom.com](mailto:pontiactom@ix.netcom.com)

**1950-52 Pontiac:** Exterior and Interior Trim, contact Paul Gore

**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](http://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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