

February 2005

Hi;

I am Remy Baker.

Last Sunday my older son who now lives in Anchorage (for the third time), visited your car show and took pictures for me. I received them last night along with your web site information.



(1921 Rolls Royce Silver Ghost)

The only founding members I remember were myself, my wife (Betty), Larry Barrett and a man who owned a 1935 Ford. Betty believes a Dr. Morgan may also have been a member. The 1935 Ford was the 'newest' car in the group. Believe me, there were very few of us. For the period beginning in the mid 60s (which was when we tried to organize) until I departed in July '62, I was the President, with Betty operating as VP plus 'chief cook and bottle washer'. There were darn few of us, and others (like a man with the truck and one with a 'T') would join us if we could get their machines under way.



(Cordova Airlines Model T w/ 1914 tag)

(Click Pictures)



(Betty & I in the 1923 Baby RR 'razor' edge town car)

While a number of the autos there (and on your web) are post WWII cars, an era which I never 'played' with, I thought they were in great shape and I'm sure drew due attention. Betty and I have a very special feeling for the club because when we lived there ('53-'62), we brought two of our cars from NJ to Anchorage, my 1921 Rolls Royce in 1960, and Betty's 1923 Rolls Royce in 1961 and with the help of a couple of local nuts like ourselves, started the club.



(Betty & Friend heading to the State Fair in the '23 RR)

When we started the club, the state did not have a special tag for antique automobiles. Making a long story short, I went to the state bureau and they agreed to issue a tag where the number on the tag was the same as the year of the car to which it was registered, and they did. I still have mine for my 1921 RR, and Betty's #1924 for her 1923 RR. My deal with the license department was that if we had two cars of the same year, one would get the correct year tag, the other car would get a yr. tag adjacent to the correct yr.

Some one had a 1923 T because Betty took the 1924 tag for her car. If you have a member who was in the club then - maybe the Graus - ask them if they had/have their tag. Don't know if any original club members still have their tags, but found the one's the state issued for my 1921 and Betty's 1923 Rolls Royce. Note that the tags were stamped with the year issued – '62 - but were made so that the next year date could be clamped over the '62 date. (For some reason I can't recall, I also have a set for a 1917 tags - but I didn't have another auto there, so can't recall why I have them. If any one of the 1961-1963 members has a 1917 auto, I'd be happy to give the tags to them.) Since I departed the state in mid-63, I never applied for the '63 clip on date to fit on our 1962 tags. In those days, Alaska was an easy place to get things done.

Sometime after mid June of 1961 when Betty got her 1923 RR to Anchorage, we were asked to put the cars in a show. The sponsoring company moved all its cars outside and we occupied the show room and I'm 99.9% sure we were the only ones inside. That statement doesn't leave much room for error does it, but that's what I remember. Also, I believe this company had the OK to order/sell RRs. Don't remember them ever selling one, but that's what floats around in my thinking. I spoke to my son (who is now back in Anchorage) and he said it was that show room (*present location of Alaska Sales & Service*) in which our two RRs were parked, but he said either the building was updated considerable or replaced. Except for a couple of parades, we didn't do much as our numbers just didn't opt for doing a great deal. For example, I had a couple of cabin on Big Lake - and with all the people who came and went - I don't believe the club ever made it.



(Lined up in 1961 for Seward Parade)

One time, I made arrangement with the railroad to put on board all club cars and members and carry us to Seward, and return for their annual event where contestants had a footrace up and down the mountain. My son tells me Seward still holds that event. My wife says when we went down to Seward for their holiday event, we put the cars on the train the day before, and we drove down as a group, and after the day's activities were done, put the cars back on the train and drove home. I have a hard time believing we didn't ride the train down, but I learned some time ago, don't disagree with the wife unless I can prove otherwise, and that doesn't happen often. In the mid '80s we visited our son in Anchorage and went to one of the clubs meeting and they gave my wife a pin (25th Anniversary) with the logo of the club on it, though it appears that the car on the logo is not what was originally used. I would be very interested in knowing if any members of the club were members when we started the club in '60/61.



(1923 Baby RR & Roop's dump truck at Seward dock)



(Off to Palmer for the 1st State Fair in 1961)

I was very pleased to see the reprint of Larry's letter about our early attempts of starting the club, matter of fact, I still use Larry as an example of someone who really enjoyed the cars - what else could one expect of a man who drove his "T" with wooden wheels on one side of the car and wire wheels on the other side - he thought they both looked equally great. His memory was also intact - my RR Ghost was a 1921 and Betty's was a '23 20HP not a 20-25

which came about a few years later as the last upgrade of the 'baby'. The picture of Larry and his "T" was at the club's participation in the 1st. State fair held in Palmer. Betty drove the Governor around the fair in her RR. Another time, the club took a trip to Alyeska. On that trip, my older son rode with Larry and really got a charge - the road into the mountain was so bad that Larry just let go of the wheel and let the car take care of itself from pothole to pothole.



(Fall Tour to Alyeska, 1961 photo)



(Fall Tour to Alyeska, Larry's T follow by my '21 & '23 RR)

and we tried to put a Model "T" 19" tube on the 21" wheel - we got it on, started to blow it up using a hand pump and it blew up - knock me backwards into a mud puddle - Betty and the lady whose house we were at, had a laughing fit.

I have to backtrack a bit - maybe I should say 60 yrs. When I got out of the hospitals during WWII, a friend of my father left me a 1921 Maxwell roadster, and when I met Betty, that was my car. When we got married, we needed an enclosed car and I found

In trying to get cars up and running for a parade, we found this man who had an early truck in this garage where it had been for some time. He told me if I could get it running it could be used in a parade. As I remember, it was a commercial flat bed with a C-cab body truck, not a pickup - don't have any idea of the make. Someplace I have pictures of the flatbed which I drove to my house on Elmendorf. Betty also remembers us trying to get a model T truck on the road. It had a flat left rear tire. Believe Larry may have been with me,



(Heavy duty truck sitting in front of my quarters at EAFB)

a lady who had a 1919 model "T" coupe up on blocks, had 202 miles on it, never been in the rain, and a man who had been coming in from 1919 until 1945 to turn the engine over by hand and deflate and inflate all 5 tires with a hand pump. 1919 was the first year for an electric starter as standard equipment, and the car also had factory slip covers on doors and seats. Paid \$50 for it. People who knew both our families would cross the street to avoid me, thinking that I not only had my back fractured, but my head as well, for as you know, such cars were being used as scrap metal for the war. At the same time, we needed a bed to sleep in, and since Betty had no objection, I decided we would collect early American item to create our home furnishings - - thus I bought a most unusual rope bed made by the old Shaker sect - and to this day, we still sleep in it. Let me now shorten the story by saying our entire house - and when I lived in Elmendorf, unlike most housing, I had all my own furnishings, all antiques except for kitchen and bath - and today its still that way - children brought up on rope beds, 1850 furnishings, etc.



(Car we tracked down in the valley)

Now - back to cars: In 1948 we bought our first "modern" car, a 1937 Packard touring sedan because our 1st child was about due and Betty insisted on a newer car. From then until 1951, I had to deal with some other 'modern' autos, but that year I bought the 1921 RR which I had in Alaska, and in 1952 bought another RR, a 1927 Phantom I. In 1953, they wanted me to go to Alaska for 2 yrs, so I sold the 1927 RR, and put my 1921 in storage. However, Betty enjoyed Alaska as much as I did, so we decided to stay. In 1960, thinking I may be there a long time, the older son (now 12) and I flew to NJ, took the 1921 RR out of storage, drove it around for three days, and on the fourth day, took off for and drove to Seattle, putting the car on the boat, unloading in Seward and drove it to Elmendorf. While in NJ, I found a 1923 'baby' RR, gave it to my Dad to store, and in 1961 talked Betty into leaving the children and going with me to NJ, picking up the 1923, driving it across the states to Seattle, boat it to Seward and driving it to Elmendorf.

I'll tell you about Betty and me driving her RR to AK. In 1961, the Pa. Turnpike was the only 4 lane divided hwy - nothing else but 2 lane roads across the states. In April, I was scheduled for a CBR training session at a test center in the Utah Mountains for a week after Mother's Day in May. I talked Betty into leaving the children (12, 11 & 6) and going with me (since we lived on Elmendorf, had excellent 'baby' sitter and protection for the kids - further enticement was she could attend a formal dinner affair in NJ, see both families, and get her RR). Checked weather reports before we left - nothing but sunny, in the 70s all across the states, so we pack light summer clothes, light wind breaker for me and couple of sweaters for her. Had about 10 days to make the school.



(Betty's 1923 Baby RR is on clubs 1st emblem)

Somewhere along the route, we had a problem with the RR starter, which I took apart and fixed overnight - only mechanical problem on the trip. Shortly after leaving Omaha, it started getting cool, so we put on the side curtains, and the further west we traveled, the cooler it became, and we began using the lap robe from the passenger compartment across our legs in front. Now we are about 70 miles from Cheyenne, WY, and it started to snow - big heavy wet flakes - the car has one vacuum windscreen wiper and it took only minute to discover that it couldn't handle the snow - we're in the country, no place to 'hide', so we decided to go on through we couldn't see more then a couple of car lengths ahead. So - we took turns standing on the running board, wiping the windshield clean with our hands - 10 to 15 minutes at a time while the other drove.

Betty says: Rem forgot to tell you that when it was my turn to ride on the running board, I did so in a sweater and Mink stole. Was still darned cold with no gloves or boots for either one of us.

It took us three hours to reach Cheyenne, and the first motel we came to was one and a half blocks from the city's center. We pulled in - the motel had some garages with rooms over them - but the manager just rented the last such unit to the gentleman just signing in. When the manager and the gentlemen saw what we were driving, the gentlemen said we could have his garage space. It took myself and the other two men to weight down the RR to get it in the door way - we were about 2 or 3 inches too tall for the opening. Within minutes - we were in the room - one in the tub, other in the shower getting thawed out. Some time during the night, it stopped snowing. The next day, snow was knee deep in the center of the road - sun out - nothing moving. It was Mother's Day weekend, May 13. We decided to walk over to the theatre and see a movie. What was it?? Chitty Chitty Bang Bang. Of course we sat there with wet feet and trousers up to our knees. Stepped off a curb and the snow was knee deep. We made it ok, no colds at all. On the third day, plows out but they said the hwy going west still closed - because of my orders, went to the railroad station to see if I could put the car on the train - no trains running. So - started 'hounding' police and hwy department. By mid afternoon, one lane was open out of town - state hwy personnel said I could leave, but if I had trouble, they would not be able to help in any way. We agreed, left in the afternoon, and got our selves out of the snow area before night. End of the snow story - but the adventure didn't end until we got to Yakima, WA, - but that's another story -



(1915 Woods Mobillette in our museum)

My 1st interest was not in getting a group to join AACA of which I was already a Life member since early 1951, but to get old cars on the road. So, give whatever credit is due to Leo for his getting the group I was getting together, into AACA as a club. (As you know, I had to leave Alaska in 1962, so paper work after that had to be done by others. Oh, at the same time I bought a 1918 Baker Elec. Shortly after getting the 1923 RR to Elmendorf, I started having a medical problem which kept putting me in hospital. At the same time I kept in touch with antique cars, and came up with some pictures of a 1929



(1916 "light" Milburn Electric)

Studebaker Housecar for sale in S. Calif, told Betty we ought to have it - she finally decided to put her foot down and said NO. My next trip to the hospital had nothing to do with her decision - but in short order, the Docs went to her and asked if we could afford to buy this 'car' - she said yes, they said please do so we can get your husband off the walls. So we bought the 'car' based on some pictures which the seller sent.

In 1962 I was still having problems, and the government decided I needed to 'go home', and in July sent me to northern NY. In 1963, my Dad and I decided we ought to see the Housecar - so we flew out to California, looked at the car at midnight, drove it around the block the next morning and at noon that day, took off and drove this '29 9.5' high. 29' long car with French leaded windows - including a bay window in the rear bathroom - across the states. Problem then was storage - found a barn in the country near by and put it in there.



(1934 BSA three wheel)

Are you ready for more?? While driving the Elec, we found a nice 1923 Franklin 2-dr sedan. I had no more then bought it, when a rep for NY State came along and wanted the Franklin to be put in the NY State Exhibit being set up for the Worlds Fair - so I let them have the car. Now the government wanted me to move again, so I took our modern



(1908 Buick Model 10 re-bodied as a racer)

car and left Betty with her 1923 RR to care for the family and put the 1921 RR, 1918 Electric and 1929 Housecar in storage. Moved - bought a new house, left those cars in storage where they were, sold the 'old' house we're back in business with the 1923 RR and modern car. While in this new house, I found a 1920 RR Silver Ghost and made an arrangement to buy it whenever the owner wanted to sell. In the meantime my Dad found a 1929 Nash 4 passenger coupe in NJ, and I bought that for the older boy.



(1914 Woods Mobillete)

I hadn't been in this 'new' house more than a few months, when the government decided they wanted me in SC. So, leaving the Housecar and Electric in storage, we left NY, stopped in NJ and hitched the '29 Nash to the modern car, which my older son now drove, Betty driving the 1923 RR and I the 1921 RR, and took off for SC. Found a big old 1840 plantation house, built a very large garage, put the three cars in and settled down.

Within 6 month, I returned to NY, bought the '20 RR and drove it to SC. Then I bought a 1939 RR, and two 3-wheelcars - a 1930 Morgan and a 1934 BSA all within the first 2 years in SC. Followed this with two motorcycles, a '12 Yale & a '32 Excelsior. In 1968, by accident, I acquired two Phantom III RRs and decided some had to go - so sold the Elec, Franklin, '39 RR and the two Phantom-IIIs - why - because the government wanted me to move to Florida, which I did in '71. Between '71 and '75 I acquired a 1928 Custer car, '20 Indian and '30 Servi-Cycle and 1913 Metz.



(1908 Sears Autobuggy)

Then up came the health problem again - and the government said I had to retire which I did on the last day of Feb 1976. So what to do with all the thing we collected - cars and antiques of all kinds. I was told 6 months before I was forced to retire, that the event would occur. In that period, we came up from Florida to Clemson University see the boys - the older one a Professor at the university, the younger one running a department in a large international



(1913 Overland Tourer parked outside our museum)

construction system with headquarters just a couple miles away. On this visit, I found two adjacent buildings which had been county school, but now just sitting empty: Betty, the boys and I talked it over and decided to buy and rehab them, and bring together all the cars and different antique items we had collected in 50+ yrs. under the two roofs.



(1913 Woods Mobillete)

That's what we did - and as laid out, became a museum - - the largest varied collection of antiques south of Washington and east of the Mississippi - not just cars, but toys, stores, children's carriages and sleighs, tavern, etc. Of course we had way too many cars - so over the past 5 yrs I've sold all those stored elsewhere and couldn't get into the museum.

One of these was a one-off RR & AACA 1st, but we still have 2 cars which were AACA 1st, and 3 one-off cars. We still have: 1904 Riley (3 wheel, 2-passenger in tandem), '05 Armac , '08 Sears, '08 Buick model 10 (re-bodied as racer), '09 REO, '11 Cadillac Limo, '12 Ford T delivery, '13 Woods Mobilette, '13 Metz, '13 Overland '14 Hupmobile, '14 Woods Mobilette, '15 Woods Mobilette, '16 Milburn (electric), '16 Saxon chassis, '17 Saxon, '21 RR, '24 Hupmobile (3dr sedan), '27 Chrysler (which I'm about to sell), '28 Custer Car (elect), '28 Hudson (custom bodied), '29 Studebaker Housecar, '34 BSA (3 wheel). Motorcycles include a '12 Yale, '20 Indian Power Plus, '30(?) Servi-cycle and a '32 Excelsior.



(1912 Ford Calliope)

About 5 or 6 years ago, I took a family through, looked at a dozen or so cars, then toys, general store, tavern, etc. and ended that part of the tour by looking at 3 cars in an annex; the middle car of the 3 is my 1921 RR. I'm about halfway through my talk about the car when the man says "I saw a car like this years ago". I asked him where and he said at Elmendorf AFB. He said he worked in the heavy equipment area, and while standing outside, the doors on the storage building across from the his shop opened and out came this RR. Needless to say, I was surprised and he was right, for it was my RR. The Air Force let me store the car in locked storage when I was not using it. I was really surprised to say the least.



(1912 Hubmobile)



(1905 ARMAC with leather belt drive)

Recently I had a massive heart attack – twice the Docs told Betty they gave me next to no chance to survive. They just forgot who has the last word – but it has made us decide to close the museum – the kids have always been interested but are no longer in a position to handle it. Talking to a man who wants to buy everything – well, not the house, but everything else. He wants to use it as the base to a museum 5 times the floor space I have. That would please me considerably. It's in the works but not jelled yet.

Betty and I started looking through the slide that we were able to locate. Sixteen years ago, our house burned down and we lost 99% - pictures burn easily. We lost most but found one box full which we started going thru last night. We have some pictures of AK but with no ID on the frames, we have to go through them all.

'Talking' to you brings back lots of little thing - I'll sight some in the next msg. Remy

The above is a combination of many email messages received from Remy in the early months of 2005. They have been combined and edited to create the above story. Greg Lear



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Betty & Friend and '21 RR Cond.jpg Posted by  GregLear on 9/10/2006, 160KB

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