

From Rags to Riches

What's Next?



Our 1930 Packard 7-34 Speedster Eight Runabout has been in the Peterson collection of antique cars since 1973, but it was not until last month that I completed a grueling – however most satisfying – ride through AACA's judging hierarchy with it. At long last, the car received its Senior Grand Nationals status.

While it has received other pinnacle awards presented by AACA, such as a National Award, a Grand Nationals "Senior" tab indicates AACA's highest and best award within its point-based judging system, so it was a gratifying moment when I affixed the Senior tab behind the car's Grand Nationals badge. As I previously shared in a three-part column in 2020, it was only after several years of searching that I was able to find all of the proper authentic parts that our Speedster lacked. Even when finally armed with the parts needed for historical accuracy, the fact that the car had been restored so long ago (in 1999) – and had been driven some 20,000 miles since then – extensive re-restoration work was also required. While I have participated in showing our family's cars in AACA since 1980 (and in the Classic Car Club of America since 1965), this was a first attempt to advance one of our cars beyond the Senior level. I found the whole experience to be fulfilling and rewarding.

Given that I was literally born-into the old-car hobby, one would think that my knowledge of how AACA's judging system works would be a foregone conclusion. In fact, I must refer to the *AACA Judging Guidelines* whenever a question arises as to what is required to achieve various award levels ... not to mention questions about the plethora of awards that are available. So, if I'm in the dark, then there likely are others out there who need enlightenment as well. The best thing to do is to either purchase a hard copy of the *Guidelines*, which is regularly updated, republished, and available from national headquarters (or you can download it for free at aaca.org ... select the "Shows/Tours" menu).

Most AACA members are intimately familiar with the Club's entry-level awards, those being the First, Second and Third Junior. To advance to the Senior level, a First Junior must first be earned, requiring the scoring of a minimum of 365 of 400 points AND coming within 10 points of the highest-scoring car in your class (for that proviso, the good news is that your car is only judged against cars in your class that are also seeking a First Junior award). After a vehicle receives its First Junior, it is then eligible to compete for a Senior award, this time requiring the scoring of a minimum of 375 points, with the same 10 point proviso applying as to other cars in your class that are seeking Senior status. Thereafter, having earned a Senior badge, you can continue to have your car judged at any AACA Nationals, where you will be eligible to receive a Preservation plaque (350 points minimum), and then individual ingots that signify each Nationals attended where 350 points or more are scored. In addition, Senior cars are eligible to be shown in an AACA Grand Nationals, which are held only once a year.



Just as with the entry-level of AACA's awards hierarchy, when showing a Senior car at a Grand Nationals, an owner can receive a First, Second, or Third "Grand Nationals" award," but the points bar for those awards are set far higher. In order to achieve a First Grand Nationals, the car must attain a minimum of 380 points and must score within five points of the highest scoring car in its class. Then there's the top-dog award: a Senior Grand Nationals, for which a minimum score of 390 points must be achieved. For this award, cars are not judged against any others in the class. After receipt of a Senior Grand Nationals, if a car is shown at any subsequent AACA Grand Nationals, so long as the car scores 390 points, the owner will receive a Repeat Senior Grand Nationals award.

Such are the "Cliff Notes" for AACA's 400-point judging system; however, the chart illustrated below – taken from the last page of the *Judging Guidelines* – is also an excellent reference.



THE FAMILY TREE OF NATIONAL PRIZES

Minimum Points	Nationals			Grand Nationals	
	Junior Category	Senior Category	Preservation Category	Participant Category**	Senior*** Category
390					Senior
380				1st	
375		Senior			
370				2nd	
365	1st				
360				3rd	
350			Preservation		
330	2nd				
295	3rd				
Point Spread for Ties*	10 pts.	10 pts.	N/A	5 pts.	N/A

* Tying Points must be above the respective minimum required.

** All participating vehicles at a Grand Nationals are eligible to receive a Preservation Award if they score 350 points or above.

*** A Grand National Senior competitor is a vehicle which has previously won a Grand National First Prize. A Senior Award is won if the vehicle scores 390 points or above. The GN Senior can be won repeatedly.



CERTIFICATION CLASSES

If you want to enter your car in an AACA Nationals, but do not wish to have your car judged, there are two options. You can enter it into class judging and select “Display Only,” or you can enter it in one of the certification classes: HPOF, DPC, Class 24 and Class 39.

HPOF (Historical Preservation of Original Features): Vehicles in this class represent originality as opposed to restoration. Since its founding, AACA has been dedicated to the preservation, restoration, and maintenance of automobiles, recognizing vehicles in their original as-manufactured condition. At the first level of HPOF, a vehicle is “certified” based on the percentage of its original features such as paint, chassis, upholstery, engine compartment, etc., that remain essentially as the car was originally delivered. These vehicles are not point judged.

HPOF Original: Once a vehicle has achieved its HPOF certification, it is eligible for a higher level of originality certification at a subsequent Nationals, which is the HPOF Original award, where a higher percentage of original features are required.

DPC (Driver Participation Class): Like HPOF, DPC is a class that is not point judged, but is available for 25-year-old or older vehicles that are set-up to be driven regularly. Cars must be roadworthy and able to pass a state safety inspection. Certification in this class allows for some non-authentic upgrades, but in general, the car should be equipped as when it originally came from the factory. Modifications that are permitted include seat belts, seat coverings, turn signals, stop lights, sealed beam/halogen headlights, radial tires, alloy wheels (of the same era and/or same vehicle manufacturer), radio upgrades, electrical upgrades, brake upgrades (bolt-on), steering upgrades (bolt-on), air-conditioning, overdrive, and altered exhaust systems.

Class 24D (Unrestored Race Cars): This is a class for unrestored race vehicles (25 years or older) that are still being campaigned in vintage racing events. These vehicles may have safety or other upgrades required to enable continued vintage racing competition.

Class 39 (Special Interest Vehicles): This is a display-only non-judged class, but prior to entry, all Class 39 Special Interest Vehicles must first be approved by AACA’s Class Acceptance Committee. Acceptance is based upon consideration of vehicles that appeared in movies or television, of unusual or significant historical significance or provenance, or innovative design that never matured into production. This class is not for modified vehicles, hot rods, street rods, choppers, etc.

Whether you’re simply maintaining your car for tours or pleasure, carefully preserving its original features, or fully restoring it, AACA has something for you. The old-car hobby perpetuates itself with the richness of owners sharing their cars and information with fellow enthusiasts and admirers. Participation at AACA Nationals is fun and extremely rewarding, and offers bona fide recognition for diligent research, restoration skills, and effort put forth in preserving antique cars.

Next issue: AACA’s National and Zenith Awards.



From Rags to Riches, Part II

Beyond AACA's 400-point Judging Hierarchy National Awards "Cliff Notes"



AACA annually organizes and presents 8-10 national antique automobile shows for its members, referred to by the Club as "Nationals." With 350 Regions and Chapters spread across the Nation, and a membership roster surpassing 52,000 members, Club leadership has stayed true to its commitment to migrate AACA Nationals throughout the U.S., and even to Puerto Rico, providing relatively close venues for all members to easily participate on a national level.

While AACA recognition starts with the Club's standard 400-point judging criteria — applied to each car entered at a Nationals by judges who enjoy reviewing the cars as much as they enjoy showing them (see "From Rags to Riches," September/October 2021 issue) — there's also a "next level" of judging beyond Junior, Senior, and Grand Nationals competition that takes place at every Nationals — AACA's National Awards Judging. As mentioned in Part I, despite one growing up in the hobby, understanding AACA's award system still requires vast research of AACA's Judging Guidelines. Questions often arise as to what is required to achieve various award levels as well as numerous inquiries regarding the myriad of available awards.

Some Nationals are conveniently presented by AACA in the same location every year, affording participants an opportunity to become familiar with the event's geographical area, enabling Club members to return to and enjoy favorite hotels, restaurants, museums, and other area attractions. Members typically plan an annual return to these events long in advance. For example, the Eastern Fall Nationals held in Hershey, Pennsylvania, has been a time-honored tradition since 1954 that many place on their calendars — indelibly — years in advance. Likewise, the Southeastern Spring Nationals in Charlotte, North Carolina, held each year since 2008 (with its highly anticipated flea market held on the infield of the Charlotte Motor Speedway), and the Central Spring Nationals,

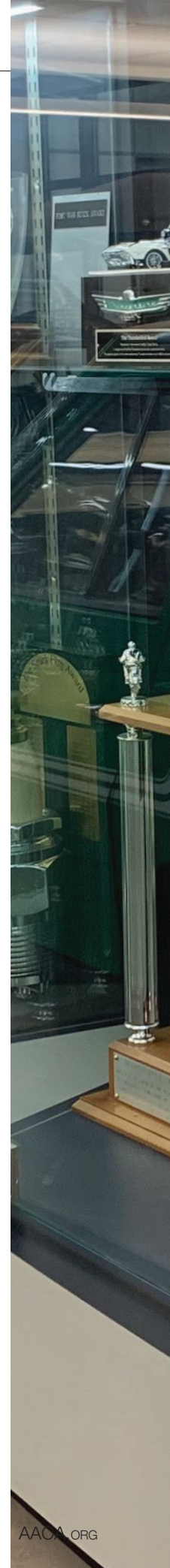
which has been held in Auburn, Indiana, since 2013 are examples of well attended events that occur at the same venue every year. In addition, the Central Spring Nationals has become an annual "not to be missed" AACA event, earning a fine reputation for being well organized and sharing the show field with other car clubs.

For those who have performed restorations of notable quality and authenticity, or who have excelled at preserving an original car, AACA's National Awards program recognizes superior achievement. Exceptional cars are nominated at each Nationals and Annual Grand Nationals, and with some 47 available awards (several with multiple winners each year) there are plenty of opportunities to earn recognition.

AACA's annual show season typically begins with the Club's Winter Nationals, which takes place in February or March. Each show season concludes with the last Nationals held that same year. At each event, the National Awards judging team — a separate and independent team from the 400-point judging teams — reviews each car for quality and authenticity. The best restorations are then "nominated" for consideration to receive a National Award. Original vehicles and "driver" vehicles are also nominated for outstanding preservation or maintenance. During National Tours, cars that complete the event are nominated based on age, authenticity, appearance, condition, and distance. During the Annual Grand Nationals (AGN), there are no National Award *nominations*. However, two cars are ultimately selected at the AGN for the National "Pre- and Post-War" Annual Grand Nationals Awards.

Following the conclusion of the Eastern Fall Nationals, award nominees are notified by mail and are asked to submit a short questionnaire and two photographs of their vehicle. (If there is a Nationals that takes place in November after the Eastern Fall Nationals, nominees from the event receive letters immediately after the event's conclusion.) In December, the National Awards committee meets at AACA's National Headquarters with the task of selecting winners for each of the National Awards from the list of nominees.

Given that a National Award nomination is an honor in itself, each nominee receives an impressive certificate commemorating their nomination. Winners receive a letter from AACA Headquarters that they have won a coveted National Award, to be presented at what is often referred to





The AACA Cup

Outstanding restoration of the year of a post-1921 automobile entered in each Division. Established in 1989 by a number who desired to remain anonymous.

The President's Cup

Outstanding restoration of the year of a 1921 through 1942 automobile entered in each Division. Award established in 1989 by AACA.

The Borgmarder Award

Outstanding restoration of the year of a post-1942 automobile entered in each full class. Established in 1987 by AACA in honor of William and Jane Borgmarder for their 25 years dedication as executive director and office manager of AACA from 1969 through 1994. The trophy itself was donated by Mr. Edward H. Martin.

The AACA Post President's Racing Cup

Outstanding racing car entered in each Division. Established in 1987 by Mr. and Mrs. Bob Hunter, in honor of a trophy they were awarded on June 18, 1910, driving a Buick in the first Point to Point Race Track in America with the purpose of the Antique Automobile Club of America, who was chairman of the committee of the Quaker City Motor Club and presented the cup to the winner in 1910.

The Joseph Parkin Award

Outstanding Packard entered in each Division. Established in 1973 by Joseph Parkin, Jr., former race driver of the Hammond Park races and the Point to Point races. Joseph W. Parkin, Jr. won this trophy in 1913 with a Packard 35.

The Post War Car Award

Outstanding Japan Post War automobile entered in each Spring Meet. Award established in 1989 by the Southern California Division and R.J. LaFuria, Bill Hinds and Al Chersich.

The James Melton Federal Cup

Outstanding Buick entered in the Spring Meet in each Division. Established in 1989 by Dr. Samuel L. Federal in memory of James Melton (1905-1981), former AACA president and internationally known engine, the maker of the racing trophy won by the late Anne Warner Butler in 1905. Award was once prized possession of James Melton.

The Annual Grand National Award

Annual Grand National Meet participant which best exemplifies the restoration, preservation and enjoyment of antique motor vehicles along with the purpose of the Antique Automobile Club of America. Award established in 1980 by the Southern Region of AACA, honor Region of the first Annual "Grand National Meet". This is the only National Award presented in the Annual Grand National Meet.

The Mercer Plaque

Outstanding Mercury automobile entered in a National Meet and awarded on the basis of the quality of the restoration, the condition, condition. Established in 1989 by the late Henry mercurio, Vincent Cooper, who was a member of the racing trophy won by the late Anne Warner Butler in 1905. Award was once prized possession of James Melton.

The Auburn-Cord-Duesenberg Award

Outstanding Auburn, Cord, or Duesenberg automobile presented. Selection may be a Junior or Senior vehicle. This award was made possible by the Auburn-Cord-Duesenberg Museum, Auburn, Indiana.

The Foo-Doo Trophy

Outstanding Buick-Rule automobile entered in a National Meet judged on the basis of age, style and quality of coachwork, mechanical appearance and mechanical condition. Award established in 1941 by former AACA President, L. Coleman Peck. The trophy itself is an ancient and valuable Chinese wood cut of a Foo.

AACA Post War Buick Award

Outstanding Post War (WW 2) Buick entered in a National Meet. Donated by Elmer and Gladys of Washington, Ohio.

The Buick Sculpture Lifetime Award

Awarded to an outstanding person for Buick. Buick entered in a National Meet. Presented will be given to a well preserved original car, although recent cars are eligible. Donated by the Buick Heritage Foundation in honor to Buick Heritage and Post President, Dr. J. Coleman, by the voting conducted by the members of the Southern California Division, and the following description by the presentation of Buick Heritage.

The Walter P. Chrysler Award

Outstanding Chrysler Buick entered in the Plymouth, Dodge, Oldsmobile, Chrysler, Imperial, Jeep or on track shows at the National Meet. Awarded for the year. Established in 1988 by Dr. David L. and Jacqueline Duesenberg.

The George R. Norton, Jr. Award

To an individual or group which has significantly contributed to the development and growth of AACA membership. Established by the Oldsmobile Region in memory of Mr. Norton.

The Samuel E. Bally Memorial Award

AACA member in recognition of an outstanding contribution to the improvement of performance of the AACA membership. Presented to the winner of the judging program. Award established in 1975 through the efforts of Founding Members Abraham Throckmole, Earl Eichel, Sr., and Ted Paul, Jr., but was as the "Chrysler Award" presented by the Oldsmobile Region in memory of Mr. Norton.

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The Thomas J. Wells Memorial Award

AACA Field Judge whose continued participation has contributed to the success of the judging program. Award established in 1975 through the efforts of Founding Members Abraham Throckmole, Earl Eichel, Sr., and Ted Paul, Jr., but was as the "Chrysler Award" presented by the Oldsmobile Region in memory of Mr. Norton.

The Founders Award

Current National Director or Chairman selected by the fellow directors who, in their opinion, has contributed considerably to the success of the judging program. Award established in 1975 through the efforts of Founding Members Abraham Throckmole, Earl Eichel, Sr., and Ted Paul, Jr., but was as the "Chrysler Award" presented by the Oldsmobile Region in memory of Mr. Norton.

The AACA Plaque

Recognition of outstanding achievement in the preservation of the automotive history.

The Ann A. Eady Memorial Award

Editor of the journal or chapter newsletter for their contribution to the general welfare and the success of the AACA membership. Award established in 1975 through the efforts of Founding Members Abraham Throckmole, Earl Eichel, Sr., and Ted Paul, Jr., but was as the "Chrysler Award" presented by the Oldsmobile Region in memory of Mr. Norton.

The Thomas McKean Memorial Cup

Awarded for worthwhile effort in the year in automotive historical research on the basis of original research and presentation of the results to which the research is put. Presented by the AACA in 1948 in honor of Thomas McKean (1900-1990), former president of the AACA.

The Chocolate Town Trophy

Outstanding Senior Car Award presented in the PM Meet at each District. Established in 1972 by the Hershey Estates and the Hershey Foods Corporation in commemoration of the first annual PM meet held in Hershey in 1944. The Hershey Food Mfg. largest of its kind in the world, has been used as trophy in its meetings.

The W. Emmert Swigart Memorial Cup

Outstanding restoration of a new and unusual automobile entered in a National Meet. Established in 1959 by Mrs. V. Edward Swigart (1885-1949), former AACA director and an early collector of antique automobiles and automobiles.

The S.F. Edge Trophy

Outstanding restoration of a piece of a foreign-made automobile entered in a National Meet. Established in 1969 by Mrs. V. Edward Swigart in memory of S.F. Edge (1888-1949), owner of the Grandstream Hotel in 1920, and who was known as the "father of the British car industry". An association of foreign engineers designed the first six-cylinder engine ever made.

The Pamphilon Distinguished Car Award

Pre-1918 gold-plated wheel vehicle of outstanding merit entered in a National Meet. Award established in 1960 by Mrs. V. Edward Pamphilon in memory of a L. Edward Pamphilon who gave generously of his time and energy to the Antique Automobile Club of America and to the advancement of the hobby.

Bert S. Harrington, Jr. Brighton Era Award

Pre-1905 automobile awarded on the basis of restoration, maintenance or preservation selected from a National Meet or Tour. Named by Mrs. J. Harrington in memory of her husband.

The Edgar E. Rohr Memorial Award

Awarded in 1931 to older Buick automobiles on the basis that it had completed an AACA National or Divisional Tour. Named by Mrs. Walter Rohr in memory of his husband, a great promoter of the hobby who was a National President (1924-1942). The latter participated in more than 33 Oldtime Tours in his 1913 Buick.

The Ford Award

Awarded to Fords of the best class of model years:
 Essex Model cars & Models "T" era (1903-1917); Model "K" era (1918-1924); Pre-War Ford cars (1925-1945); Ford Model T cars (1946 to current date).

One winner will be selected annually from the nominees from all National Meets. Junior and senior cars are eligible. Competitors and exhibitors of 1939 through current models may compete. All winners are eligible. With consideration given to drive cars. The award is made on the basis of outstanding achievement and reliability. Award established in 1975 by the Southwestern Region of AACA.

George M. Holley Award

Outstanding restoration of a 1931 through 1942 antique vehicle entered in a national meet for each division, senior vehicles only. Named after the Holley Pontiac dealer.

Peterston Tire Apparatus Award

Outstanding tire apparatus entered in a National Meet. Presented in 2001 to Edward L. Peterson President of SPANZAA.

The Cadillac-Lafayette Award

Outstanding Junior or Senior Cadillac or LaSalle shown during the year at a National Meet. Presented by the Cadillac-Lafayette Club.

Discontinued Automobile Award

Outstanding automobile whose manufacture ceased during the period of 1939 through current models was entered in a National Meet. Established in 1989 by Daniel and Jacqueline Davis in honor of Paul D. Davis.

The Discontinued Award (Late Model)

The award is presented by The Garton family in honor of Robert H. Garton and Anne J. Garton and their son, Jeffrey, and refers to the Antique Automobile Club of America's Best and Most Interesting Cars most likely to have worn unique, unperfected, and/or otherwise hard to replace parts. The Garton family indicates the award to those Antiques which have added treasure to the success and growth of the hobby.

HPOF Award

Outstanding vehicles in the HPOF (Statistical Presentation Original Restored) Class in three categories.

Two or Three-wheel Cycle Vehicle Award

Award established in 1989 by the Southern States California Antique Motorcycle Region.
 Vehicles through 1929 (excluding two- or three-wheel vehicles)
 -Award established in 1991 by the AACA Kentucky Region.
 Vehicles 1930 through current allowable year (30 years or older)
 -Award established in 1991 by the AACA Maryland Region in memory of Dudley M. Mader, longtime member and Secretary of the Kentucky Region.

The Thomas McKean Tour Trophy

An antique automobile which completed a National Tour on the basis of age, authenticity, appearance, condition, and historical interest to and from the tour. Established in 1944 by Thomas McKean, former chairman of AACA.

The M.J. Duray Memorial Cup

AACA member for numerous contributions to amateur history through the ANTIQUE AUTOMOBILE magazine during the year. Awarded in 1982 by the American Southwest Region and knowledge of AACA (1985-1987), a former president and editor who contributed much to the success and growth of the AACA both as an exhibitor in our nation in his time.

The Editorial Award

Member of the staff of the ANTIQUE AUTOMOBILE collection in recognition of outstanding editorial services. Sponsored by the Raymond E. Holland Automotive Art & Toy Collection, Alhambra, California.

The Sparkplug Award

Whichever of a region or chapter elected members for their contribution to the general welfare and spirit of the AACA. Drawn by Ruth and Robert DeChapelle.

The Senior Master Judge

Senior Master Field judge with less than 10 judging credits. In recognition of outstanding performance and knowledge of AACA judging principles and practices. Presented in memory of Glen Henrich, an AACA judge with 39 years of judging experience.

The Drivers Participation Award

In memory of John E. Bimler & J. William E. Bimler, Jr. Presented by the Southern States California Antique Motorcycle Region. ACO recognizes an outstanding car owner who exemplify the spirit of participation in the hobby. The award is presented to the particular person(s) of both Mr. Bimler and Mr. Bimler, Jr. who believed that automobile owners must be involved actively, it was for the fun of driving on the highway. The award is given in a pre-war and post-war vehicle.

Bus Award

The most outstanding bus shown at a National Meet. Award established in 1927 in honor and memory of Samuel D. Laflin, Jr., the National Museum of Southern Florida explained the award in buses' history in grateful appreciation for his service and generosity to the museum.

Factory High Performance

Outstanding vehicle of factory high performance. Mrs. A. Award established in 2007 by the Cooper Family in memory of Tom Cooper. Registered in 2010 this award will be presented to a winning vehicle in each division.

The Corvette Award

In honor of Mel Morris in appreciation of his dedicated service to AACA and as recognition as a collector's life Corvettes. Presented by Bob Florida Begins AACA.

Ransom E. Olds Memorial Trophy
Presented by Oldsmobile Division, G.M.C. honoring the year's most outstanding restoration of a Buick Motor by a product of Olds Motor Works or Oldsmobile Division, G.M.C. Trophy donated by Classic Oldsmobile, Merrillville, Indiana.

Louis Chevrolet Memorial Award
Awarded to an outstanding Junior Chevrolet car at an AACA National or District event. The trophy was made possible by Chevrolet Motor Division, General Motors Corp.

Senior Chevrolet Award
Awarded to an outstanding Senior Chevrolet shown at an AACA National Motor Meeting the year. Established in 2003 by Ladyette and Joyce Williams.

The Motorcycle Award
Awarded for an outstanding restoration of the year of a motorcycle shown at a National Meet. Established by the Southwest Two Wheelers Region of AACA.

The Minicruze Award
Outstanding restoration of a minicruze entered in Classes 5d and/or 5e at a National Meet (other than at AGNSB) during the year.

The Hershey Region Junior Truck Award
Outstanding Junior truck entered in a National Meet. Established in 1989 by the AACA Hershey Region.

The Hershey Senior Truck Award
Outstanding Senior truck entered in a National Meet. Established in 1980 by the Hershey Region of AACA.

Benry T. Bostle Memorial Award
Outstanding Fly Boat Automaker, which completed an AACA National Tour (Shorelands, Clinches) and, Established in 1989 by Mrs. Denise Bostle in memory of her husband who was an AACA club member and served as AACA National President in 1986.

The Augustus Post Memorial Plaque
AACA member doing the most to preserve or re-create the spirit of the original Children Truck during a National AACA Tour. Presented first in 1993 by AACA and since 1999 by the AACA in memory of Augustus Post, a founder of AACA, early restorer and activist, and instigator and participant of early original Children Truck (1906-1912). The participants with AACA in every revived Children Truck from 1948 until his death.

The AACA Divisional Tour Award
An individual in the region in recognition of their outstanding contributions in hosting a Divisional Tour.

The Winters Racing Award
AACA member in recognition of an outstanding contribution to documented racing vehicles by his or her deeds and display of enthusiasm. Established in 1996 by James L. and Claire B. Winters, racing enthusiasts.

The Charles E. Duryea Cup
AACA member for outstanding effort on behalf of the Club on the basis of the value of his or her efforts in the promotion of the general welfare of the AACA. Presented by Marion and M.J. Duryea in memory of their son, Charles E. Duryea, who was an AACA member and a founder of the AACA. Established in 1983 in Springfield, Massachusetts.

AACA Library and Research Center Award
Presented to an AACA member in recognition of his or her efforts in the promotion of the general welfare of the AACA. Established in 1983 in Springfield, Massachusetts.

The Fiala Old Faithful Award
Member of AACA, who is elected or elected as a Board member, who best exemplifies the true spirit of our Founders by his service and dedication to the AACA. Established in 1983 by the Fiala family, who are her heirs and display of enthusiasm through the years. Established in 1995 by the children of Theodore and Roseanne Fiala in their parents' memory.

The L.C. Kirkham Membership Award
Region or Chapter with the greatest membership gain according to a weighted formula that considers the number of new National members acquired and the percentage of increase in membership. The L.C. Kirkham trophy is presented by the Geneva Valley Antique Car Society Region in memory of Ernest Kirkham who probably sponsored more new members for AACA than any other person.

The Military Vehicle Award
Presented for an outstanding military vehicle (jeep or senior) presented during the Harley Fair era, (1987-1989). This award is a tribute to Harley Fair, who is considered the Dean of Automotive Designers in the United States. This award is sponsored by Margaret Vaila in memory of her late husband George Vaila. George was the president of a car guy club and owned Oldsmobile Buick.

The Thunderbird Award
Presented in the name of Earl Tardiff Family, in recognition of the Ford Thunderbird and its role in automotive history. This award is given to the most outstanding Thunderbird at an AACA National Meet.

The Lincoln Continental Memorial Award
Presented to the Lincoln Continental, Continental at Henry at an AACA National Meet. Established in 2013 by the Western Pacific Region of Clinches. North Carolina in recognition of Lincoln and Henry's role in the automotive industry.

The General Motors Styling Award
Awarded at the AACA Annual Meeting for an outstanding GM vehicle presented during the Harley Fair era, (1987-1989). This award is a tribute to Harley Fair, who is considered the Dean of Automotive Designers in the United States. This award is sponsored by Margaret Vaila in memory of her late husband George Vaila. George was the president of a car guy club and owned Oldsmobile Buick.

The Automotive Supplier Award
Presented to a supplier or restorer of automotive restoration parts or components who has made a significant contribution to the AACA. Established in 2013 by the Western Pacific Region of Clinches, North Carolina in honor of the General Motors in recognition of its role in the automotive industry.



Above: All of AACA's permanent National Award trophies are spectacularly displayed in multiple custom-built lighted display cases that are prominently situated in the lobby atrium of AACA's Headquarters, a favorite attraction for visitors.

Left: AACA's website (aaca.org) provides a detailed list of each National Award, including a plethora of service and literary awards. AACA's National Awards program offers approximately 47 awards for antique automobiles (several with multiple yearly winners), so if your restoration is of superior quality and authenticity, or you've excelled at preserving an original car, the National Awards program provides excellent opportunity for recognition beyond the Club's standard 400-point Junior, Senior, and Grand Nationals judging criteria. (Direct link to awards page: tinyURL.com/NATSaaca)

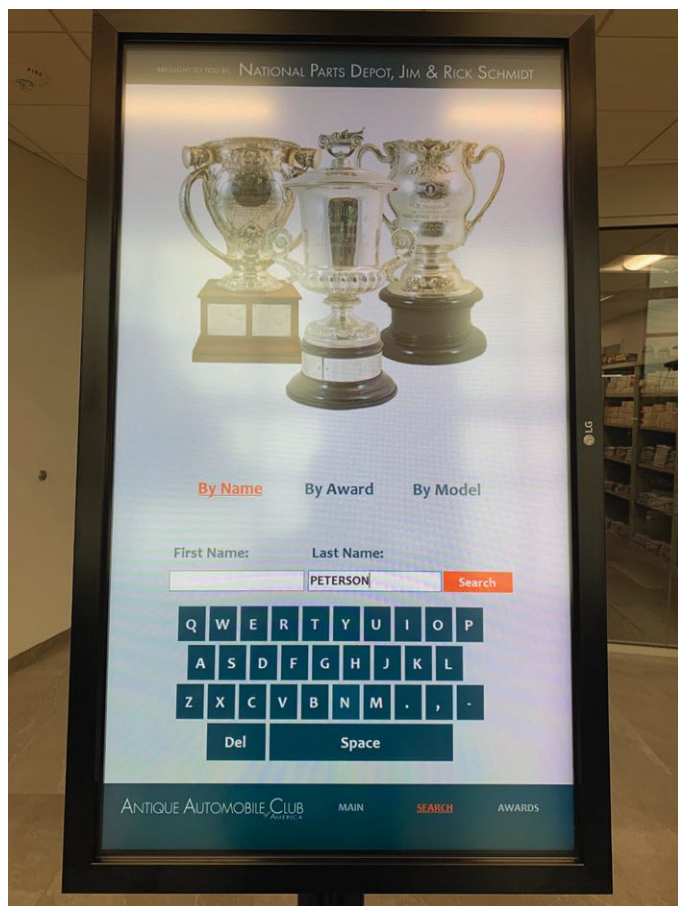
as the “Oscars of the *Antique Automobile Hobby*” — a formal banquet held every February in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, culminating the Club’s annual convention, replete with trade show, seminars, and other activities. Winners receive an engraved lead crystal award commemorating their achievement, along with a tab to be placed behind their AACA Junior (or Grand National) car badge that signifies their car is a “National Award Winner.” The permanent National Award trophies — some of which memorialize specific individual winners — are beautifully displayed in the lobby atrium of AACA’s National Headquarters.

National Award winners are not informed as to which category they have won until the actual February presentation, so there is always a high level of anticipation and excitement at the annual banquet. National Award winners seem to be consistent in their expression of the same sentiments: the pageantry of such a special evening is one of the most memorable experiences offered by the old car hobby.

In addition to the National Awards presented for outstanding vehicles entered in AACA Nationals and Tours, other National Awards are presented for specific achievements of individuals or organizations, superior contributions to AACA, the AACA Library, and the antique automobile hobby, as well as for participation in special events. In addition, National Awards are presented for literary achievement, including AACA’s Region/Chapter newsletters and websites, along with awards for outstanding literary contributions to *ANTIQUE AUTOMOBILE*. A complete list of National Awards can be found on the Club’s website.

If you haven’t yet experienced showing a car at an AACA Nationals, I think you will find it enjoyable as well as fulfilling. Nationals and tours provide a chance to meet fellow Club members who share the same passion for antique automobiles. It’s not uncommon to find multiple entrants of the same automobile type, sometimes right down to the same year, marque, and model, which provides a unique opportunity to compare notes and exchange information. AACA’s Nationals are perfect venues for that, where there is always an opportunity to see, enjoy, and learn about each other’s cars, and to form new friendships along the way. While the fellowship will surely keep you coming back, there is also the bona fide (and esteemed) recognition offered by AACA for the diligent research, restoration work, and years of effort that we passionately invest into our antique cars.

Next issue: From Rags to Riches, Part III: Zenith Awards “Cliff Notes.”



Also situated in the lobby atrium of AACA’s Headquarters is a flat-panel touch screen “kiosk” containing a data base of every National Award winner. Visitors can cross-reference by winner’s name, award name, vehicle name, year an award was won, and other criteria. The data base is updated after each year’s National Award winners are announced.

From Rags to Riches, Part III

AACA's Zenith Award

The Pinnacle of Achievement for Automotive Restoration

Even though AACA is most certainly the largest, definitely the oldest, and arguably the most esteemed antique automobile club in the world, it has never rested on its laurels, which is perhaps the reason for its continued success. While many other antique car organizations find reason to reinvent themselves, AACA's recipe has remained consistent. However, increasing and improving the Club's offerings to its members have always been at the forefront of its goals—a mantra that has served the Club well and has been faithfully carried forward as AACA's board of directors has changed throughout the years. From its just-delivered gleaming new national headquarters facility housing the largest automotive library in the world, to the Club's tours, Nationals, annual convention with its trade show and wide variety of seminars, and, of course, its award-winning magazine, AACA continues to provide the very best to its members. So how better to express Club leadership's ongoing desire for quality and distinction than with an award that signifies the same?

Throughout its 86-year tenure, as members' preferences have evolved, AACA has responded. Two-time AACA Past President Tom Cox has always been particularly cognizant of such things. He was aware of the intensive media coverage annually showered upon the top awards at noteworthy automotive events such as the Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance Best of Show, the Detroit Autorama Riddler Award, and the Grand National Roadster Show's "AMBR" Award. Cox speculated that given a majority of AACA members are restoration enthusiasts, the Club deserved its own "pinnacle" award.

In 2015, Cox began discussions with Chief Executive Officer Steve Moskowitz about how to create a notable AACA award that would recognize superior restoration achievement. After much brainstorming and research into the criteria surrounding other significant automotive awards, Cox and Moskowitz reached a consensus. They proposed an award program to the AACA Board of Directors that would be substantially different from, but would be compatible with AACA's Grand Nationals and National Awards programs, both of which sat atop AACA's awards hierarchy (see "From Rags to Riches, What's Next," and "From Rags to Riches, Part II," Sept/Oct and Nov/Dec 2021, issues). The two proposed a totally new AACA event where the crème de la crème of automobile restorations would compete for a signature award to be presented for "Most Outstanding Restoration of the Year"—the "Zenith Award." A scant five years after its approval by AACA's directors, the Zenith Award represents the epitome of automotive restoration achievement, taking its rightful place alongside America's other significant automotive awards.



AACA recognizes the benefits an indoor venue can deliver, including abundant space, air-conditioning, gleaming floors, excellent lighting, and cleanliness throughout.

AACA's highest honor is signified by a unique cloisonné grille badge. The Zenith badge is intended to replace the First Junior badge, but because of the significance of the achievement it signifies, many winners have chosen to display their Zenith badge independently—and in addition to—their other AACA badges.

AACA administers 8-10 Nationals each year, which are held in various locations throughout the U.S., and range in size from 100 to 1,250 cars. Combined attendance each year averages more than 4,500 antique cars, but only two cars from each Nationals are nominated for entry to the Zenith Award competition, which is held annually at each Grand Nationals. Moskowitz explained that, "It seemed appropriate to hold the two most significant AACA events together because each event would bring prestige to the other."

For each of the first five Zenith competitions, nominees included a wide variety of cars consisting of brass-era, prewar, postwar, sports, muscle, and trucks. Moskowitz is pleased, commenting, "An eclectic mix of automobiles have consistently been nominated, as opposed to vehicles all of one genre, which hasn't been by design ... it has just happened that way. It's a great sign that AACA members are restoring different types of vehicles from all eras incredibly well, and the nominating judges recognize that."

AACA's board of directors was enamored with the idea of an event solely dedicated to celebrating Club members' best restorations, so Cox and Moskowitz were next tasked with how to best manage the judging criteria for such painstakingly restored automobiles, crucially important to the Zenith Award's credibility and success. According to Moskowitz, "We only wanted judges that would lend credence to the award, which

meant establishing a judging team not only consisting of highly competent AACA Senior Master Judges, but also knowledgeable guest judges that understood concours standards.” Zenith judges evaluate each nominated car based upon the quality and authenticity of its restoration, while also, according to Cox, “taking into account the degree of difficulty and certain subjective criteria, such as provenance, historical significance, and rarity—although to a somewhat lesser extent.”

It is no surprise that, for the judges to effectively do their job, a specialized venue is required. Moskowitz recalls that, “When the Zenith Award was first created, for the first few competitions, Grand Nationals sites had already been chosen, so the scramble was on to locate suitable indoor spaces. We wanted plenty of space between each car so that the judges would have room to work, and an indoor venue was necessary to eliminate weather as a factor. Now that we’ve done this for a few years, a set of rigorous standards for our indoor facilities have been developed.” The facility selected for 2021’s Zenith competition in Minnesota was the New Ulm Civic Center. Its abundant indoor

space, ice-cold air-conditioning, thoroughly cleaned and mirror-polished concrete floors, and its excellent lighting, are indicative of the standards we might expect at future Zenith competitions.

With only two cars per Nationals selected each year to compete for the Zenith Award, every nominee will tell you there’s a lot more to all of this than just points and awards. When asked about the most fulfilling aspects of co-founding AACA’s Zenith Award program, Moskowitz responded, “Each year, when the Zenith winner was announced, all of the nominees were as thrilled for the winner as if they had won the award themselves.” There is indeed a special esprit de corps that develops among participants in each Zenith competition. It’s a feeling of pride, fellowship, and common loyalty among a select group of enthusiasts whose scrupulous attention to detail and historical accuracy make each of them winners in their own right, so it is particularly fitting that all Zenith nominees receive a slightly smaller version of the 21-inch tall crystal winner’s trophy.

As you work your latest restoration through AACA’s judging hierarchy at its Nationals, remember that in addition to the contingent of judges that will review your car for the usual 400-point judging (Junior, Senior, and Grand Nationals levels), be aware of an additional contingent of judges responsible for AACA’s National Awards nominations and the judges that are tasked with seeking Zenith nominees. For quick and easy reference to most every aspect of AACA judging, as soon as AACA launches what promises to be a spectacular new website in the spring, you’ll be able to download “From Rags to Riches” parts I, II, and III (as well as part IV, which will address AACA’s prestigious Service Awards in the March/April issue).

The Zenith Award will be presented for the sixth time during the AACA Grand Nationals in Virginia Beach on May 19-21, 2022. We look forward to seeing you there!

—David M. Landow



To signify their win – and to commemorate such a milestone accomplishment – the winner of the Zenith competition receives the largest version of the unique crystal Zenith trophy, which stands at an impressive 21 inches tall. The runner-up and each Zenith nominee receive smaller versions of the winner’s trophy.



A nomination for the Zenith Award is an honor aspired to by many, but achieved by few. Under the personal direction of Tom Cox and Steve Moskowitz, world renowned trophy supplier R.S. Owens was tasked with creating a one-of-a-kind crystal award that would express a “pinnacle” of achievement. Owens had never produced anything like it. The design of the Zenith trophy is exclusive to AACA and is trademarked. The permanent Zenith trophy is housed in the lobby atrium of AACA’s National Headquarters, where it is displayed with all of the Club’s National Awards. Each winner’s name is engraved on the trophy’s base.