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Autoist

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BEATER BUS BETS ON VEGAS

UK team takes on a 10-day challenge for cable TV episode



Autoist

Since 1955

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series, takes on a 1969 VW Bus.

Driver's Seat

BY CLIFF LEPPKE ✉ leppke.cliff@gmail.com

2019 Detroit show decelerates

Have you noticed the auto industry's nameplate ecology? Carmakers recycle sobriquets. Sometimes, they're associated with infamous flops such as Ford's late-1950s Edsel. For Dearborn the E car honoring Henry Ford's son, Edsel, made sense. The rest of America asked, "What's an Edsel?" The answer: useless gimmickry on wheels.

The Edsel division spawned a bevy of model names. And a lot of jokes. Ford and GM recycled them — the names, of course. Five former Edsel model names found their way onto other marques. The entry-level Ranger became a Ford truck. The high-end Citation a Chevy. Now, the Corsair is a Lincoln. The Pacer went to AMC. Villager graced Mercury wagons and minivans. Anyone for a sixth Edsel, a Bermuda?

There are more. The Rambler Classic, which never was, and the Ram Classic. And, of course, Chevy put Classic badges on Malibus. There's the AMC Rebel, Rambler Rebel and Ram Rebel or Eagle SX4 and Suzuki SX4. Ford had a Falcon Futura and a Fairmont Futura. VW brought back the Rabbit twice. It's currently a mid-tier GTI special.

Others:

- Studebaker Daytona and Dodge Daytona
- Chevy Suburban, De Soto Suburban and Plymouth Suburban
- Corvair Monza, Chevy Monza and Ferrari Monza
- Studebaker Challenger, Dodge Challenger (three times)
- Renault Caravelle, VW Caravelle and Plymouth Caravelle
- AMC Concord and Chrysler Concorde
- Fiat 500, Ford Five Hundred,
- Gremlin X, Taurus X, Fiat X 1/9, GM X platform cars

- Opel Diplomat, Dodge Diplomat
- Lincoln Continental, Bentley Continental GT
- Hudson Hornet, AMC Hornet
- Dodge Duster, Renault Duster

If we open the name game to prewar and world cars, the ecology of names is amazing.

VW's signature: a blessing and a curse

Art critics are fussy. They examine masterpieces. They scrutinize an artist's signature, which extends beyond name techniques and subjects. Andy Warhol, for example, is Pop silk-screens and celebrity culture. Jackson Pollock evokes drip painting. In films, Federico Fellini has existential circuses, while Ingmar Bergman probes bourgeois melodrama.

Does VW have a signature, and does it matter? Yes; a lot. As critic Susan Sontag noted in her review of Bergman's *Persona*, a signature clouds our thinking. She claimed *Persona* wasn't seen as a revolutionary because its creator was an icy Swede. In America, many have a blurred image of VW due to the Beetle's halcyon days. Bergman's oeuvre, according to most critics, was Nordic angst. Sontag saw *Persona* as modernistic Art. It challenged our cinematic sense of the "real." The film repeats scenes, as if we were watching music. It wraps enigmas in enigmas, presenting itself as a film about film.

Our understanding of VW has a similar problem — especially in the USA. We cannot see the car due to the Car, the Beetle. VW tries. Yet, it's been very difficult for it to move past its People's Car history. The Small Wonder remains a point of reference, an American success story. It cheerfully proved think-big Detroit cars were silly.

The current and oft recycled story is VW hasn't hit pay dirt, since the late 1960s or early 1970s. It sold

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Small Talk

VW + Audi at a glance

NEW & IMPROVED

RIOT VAN: With terrorist acts in Europe becoming more prevalent these days, Volkswagen has introduced a new UK riot van conversion for its Crafter van. The new vehicle fea-



tures an unbreakable plastic windscreen and new side windows, as well as a prison cell in the rear, racks for riot gear and room for seven people.

RAISE A TOAST TO A BUS: If you've got a Napa Valley wine tour in the works, you might consider renting a vintage VW Bus — a 1968, 1969, 1971 or a 1979 model. West Wine Tours is offering the deal on Airbnb. For more details navigate to bit.ly/2XTRLbg.

VEHICLE SUBSCRIPTIONS: Audi select, Audi's monthly vehicle subscription service, has a new pricing tier called the Core Collection, available exclusively in the Dallas-Fort Worth-area. Subscribers to Audi select Core Collection receive access to the Audi A4 and S3 sedans, Q5 SUV and TT Coupe for \$995 per month, plus two rental days per month at no additional cost of the Silvercar by Audi service available at 26 major U.S. airport and city locations.

EV NEWS

SLOW GOING, SO FAR Although demand for electric vehicles remains low in the U.S. market, industry executives at the New York auto show in April said they are pushing ahead with billions of dollars in investments. Volkswagen and Audi are introducing a half-dozen new electric vehicles in the coming two years and have aggressive volume targets, aiming to have 20 to 30 percent of its sales as EVs by 2025.

MOBILE CHARGERS: CEO Herbert Diess told *Motor Trend* that VW will likely move forward with a limited production run of the electric ID Buggy dune buggy, which will join an electric Microbus based on the ID Buzz concept slated for 2022. But the hope



that the Beetle would get a third life as an EV is no longer in the works.

RECALLS

COIL SPRING PROBLEM: Because rear coil springs can break without warning and cause people to lose control of their vehicles, VW is recalling 56,000 vehicles: certain 2015 through 2019 Golf models, the 2017 through 2019 Golf Sportwagen, the 2019 Jetta sedan and 2018 and 2019 Tiguan SUV.

DIESEL SCANDAL

FRAUD CHARGE: Former Volkswagen CEO Martin Winterkorn, 71, was charged with fraud in Germany over his role in the diesel-rigging scandal. Winterkorn was accused alongside four other managers of equipping vehicles sold to customers in Europe and the United States with a so-called defeat device. They could face a sentence of as long as 10 years.

Retro Autoist

From the VWCA archives

10 YEARS AGO

MAY/JUNE 2009: After abandoning the Golf name in America for its 2006 models, VW is returning to the label most of the rest of the world is familiar with, canning for a second time the Rabbit nameplate. The Rabbit logo hopped back into VW's American lineup in an effort by VW's U.S. marketing wing to revive interest in the fifth-generation of VW's venerable hatchback.

MAY/JUNE 2009: Just days after the debut of the new Golf GTI, its diesel-powered sibling, the new Golf GTD, has been introduced at the Leipzig Motor Show. Taking its exterior and interior styling cues from the new GTI, the GTD features a new 2-liter engine, accelerating from 0-62 mph in 8.1 seconds on to a top speed of 136 mph. Factor in 53 mpg (UK) as performance meets economy.



20 YEARS AGO

MAY/JUNE 1999: The British-based publication *AutoExpress* reports that VW is working on convertible and two-door versions of the newly redesigned Jetta. The no-roof Jetta would be a true open-air car with extra stiffness built directly into the chassis to compensate for no roof — or roll bar found in the Golf-based-Cabrio. (Postscript: It never came to market.)

30 YEARS AGO

MAY/JUNE 1989: Volkswagen's "Think Small" ad campaign from 1959 topped *Advertising Age's* list of the top 100 ad campaigns of the 20th century. In *The*

Advertising Century, editors looked for ways advertising has entertained, moved and motivated consumers. VW's campaign featured black-and-white shots of the Beetle combined with self-deprecating humor.

MAY/JUNE 1989: Volkswagen will drop the rear-engine, rear-drive, horizontally opposed format of its Vanagon in favor of a transverse, water-cooled, inline four with front-wheel drive (4WD is an option). A prototype of the new Vanagon, expected to make its bow in 1994, looks similar to the current model with the exception of its nose, which has grown to accommodate the engine and transmission.

40 YEARS AGO

MAY/JUNE 1979: Ever hear of a car called Multimillionaire? Celebrating the completion of the 2.5 millionth VW Golf, Volkswagen issued a specially equipped, limited production model called the Golf Multimillionaire. It is really the basic Golf powered by a 1.1-liter engine with a special paint job and a few extra options.

50 YEARS AGO

JUNE 1969: With this issue of the *AUTOIST*, an era of the VW Club of America will come to an end. Members will soon receive "World Car Guide," a magazine devoted to the VW owner while the *AUTOIST* will become a monthly newsletter with information about meetings, club and national events.

60 YEARS AGO

JUNE 1959: The possibility of forming a member-only group to tour Germany and the factory and also to buy a new VW on site was discussed at the 12th executive committee meeting on May 9. (Postscript: It became a popular annual event.)



FROM BEATER BUS TO DRAGSTRIP DEMON

*UK team tackles 10-day challenge
to transform a 1969 Volkswagen*



On a Monday in March, two fearless adventurers, Jimmy DeVille and Helen Stanley, started a road trip along America's West Coast with one objective in mind. To take an old, beat up VW Bus and transform it into a lean, mean, drag machine. But who were these intrepid explorers and what had inspired this dream?

Jimmy and Helen, along with Ant Partridge, make up the Goblin Works Garage team, a UK-based collective that specializes in taking cars and bikes and turning expectations on their head with the incredible builds they produce. The trio's efforts are documented on screen for Discovery's hit international show "Goblin Works Garage," shown in the United States on Velocity channel, which has entertained millions of car lovers in the UK, USA and around the globe.

After the success of the first series of six episodes in 2018, the Goblins decided it was time to challenge

themselves, and what could be more challenging than completing their biggest build ever in just 10 days? All while traveling from San Diego to Las Vegas! As if this wasn't difficult enough, they would be doing it one Goblin down as Ant had to stay behind to complete a VIP bike build. He wasn't completely off the hook though — he would have to take up the role as man behind the curtain and set up help along the way for Jimmy and Helen.

The first port of call for Jimmy and Helen was picking up the 1969 Bus that Ant had arranged for them. To keep the cost down and with a new engine install in mind, Ant had opted for the cheapest Bus he could find. But the two Goblins were not prepared for the shell they were about to receive upon their arrival in San Diego.

Deciding not to focus on the negatives, Helen found a silver lining. The Bus had no engine, so this left them with one less job to do — already they

By Sean Ponzini ✉ sean.ponzini@wbtv.uk

were ahead of schedule! They arranged to stop at Subi Swaps across town, a Subaru engine converter specialist and there they threw themselves at the mercy of David White. Together they chipped in to get the new water-cooled turbo engine installed and to get the Bus on the road. It wasn't easy but after *a lot* of blood, sweat and tears, eventually the Bus was mobile again. Now they needed to sort out the exterior.

Agreeing it wasn't sensible to get a paint job with such limited time before having to take the Bus down a drag strip, Jimmy and Helen decided to get themselves a body wrap, so they pushed on to the next stop, Los Angeles. Helen had heard good things about a place there called Impressive Wraps and, boy, did they live up to their name. The team worked into the night alongside the Goblins, and together they prepped the surface of the beaten-up Bus and started to transform it. Helen and Jimmy decided to take the Bus from its original maroon and give it a dark and moody makeover, opting for a satin black wrap around the sides with a gunmetal gray roof.

Rewarding themselves with a bit of respite while awaiting the completion of the wrap, Jimmy and Helen caught wind of a local car meet and couldn't resist popping along, discovering the Odd Squad Car Club, and were amazed at some of the vehicles in show. The club had some awesome classic cars and trucks, just the sort of vehicles that spring to mind when you think of the LA car mod scene. Jimmy and Helen were like kids in a candy shop, and the locals had welcomed them with open arms and sounded excited about what the Goblins had up their sleeves for their own Bus mod.

Rejuvenated by their dip in the local car scene,»



ABOVE: Helen Stanley and Jimmy DeVille pose with the original VW Bus. RIGHT: The rejuvenated Bus on the Las Vegas Motor Speedway dragstrip.



BUS

Jimmy and Helen headed back to Impressive Wraps and could not believe the transformation. The Bus was now unrecognizable from before and was closer than ever to being a real Goblin vehicle. The next stop on the tour was Las Vegas.

Now that the Bus looked the part, they needed to make sure it was fit for purpose, so Jimmy called up an old friend, Dino, who could help the guys with the missing pieces. Dino helped fit new racing seats and with the help of Jimmy fabricated a roll cage to make sure the Bus was as safe as possible for the strip. Meanwhile, Helen kept herself busy by fitting the new wheels. After a very long night, the Goblin Bus was complete. The guys had a lean, mean drag racing machine and were ready for action, just in time.

After 10 long days on the road, it was finally time for the Goblins to see if they could pull off the impossible and send this bus down the quarter-mile at eye watering speed. Jimmy had one last trick up his sleeve, though — he couldn't help but feel that the Bus had been missing something special, so he arranged for third generation pin-striper and Las Vegas native, Shaun Hartman, to add the pièce de résistance, a bespoke hand-painted design onto the Bus. With nothing else left to do, it was time to tackle the strip.

As the day got under way at the track, Jimmy and



ABOVE: Video monitor shows the Bus as it's headed for Las Vegas. **RIGHT:** Production team and presenters with Impressive Wraps pose with the reformed Bus.



GOBLIN WORKS GARAGE

On cable: Velocity channel. Season 1 is in rerun now; Season 2 comes later this year

Online: iTunes, Google Play, Vudu. Amazon Prime will carry Season 2.

Helen were taken aback to discover a fleet of VW Buses coming through the entrance to the speedway. Ant had pulled off some last minute social media magic and arranged for a group of local VW Bus owners to at-

tend to cheer on the Goblin Bus and possibly even drum up a sale.

As for how the bus performed on the track? You'll have to catch this episode of the Goblin Works

Garage series to see how it got on. [VWCA](#)

GOLF SE MANUAL



Ludwig Mies van der Rohe’s “less is more” philosophy moved from Bauhaus to our mid-century American dwellings. His values gave us pared-back ornamentation, minimal structure and maximum open space—and TV’s “Madmen” aesthetic. VW’s signature Golf puts Rohe’s ideas on wheels. This premium compact hatchback efficiently transports people and their stuff.

Its congenial manner, however, won’t win an American popularity contest. While the Golf is a European staple, it’s like “Caddyshack’s” Rodney Dangerfield in the USA. It doesn’t get much respect. VWoA sells fewer than 1,000 Golfs (S or SE) each month.

For 2019, VW pushes the less is more concept fur-

ther. It reduced the engine’s displacement and horsepower (1.4 liters vs. 1.8; 147 hp vs. 170). Under the hood, the EA211 mill sports an alloy-block, which weighs less than the cast-iron EA888 it replaces. Curb weight, therefore, is lighter (down 72 pounds to 2,873). The original 1970s subcompact Golf weighed 1,937 pounds. VW, nevertheless, reduced the Golf’s weight where it improves the front-wheel-drive car’s chassis dynamics. Plus, VW endows the Golf with a sporting independent rear suspension rather than the Jetta’s beam axle.

Despite the smaller mill, the 2019 Golf SE pours down the interstate with similar brio. One reason is 184 lb.-ft. of torque at 1,400 rpm. This figure is >>

By Cliff Leppke ✉ leppke.cliff@gmail.com

GOLF SE MANUAL

identical to last year's engine with a manual transmission, but not up to the 2018 automatic Golf's 199 lb.-ft. The new engine is sophisticated with variable valve timing, two camshafts and a quick-warmup cooling system.

VW ekes out respectable performance by adding gears. The manual transmission gets one more cog — yes, it's a six speed; the automatic gets two extra cogs for eight. The result is improved fuel economy. I netted a diesel-like 38 mpg overall. On highway treks, you can easily top 40 mpg. According to the EPA, the Golf SE with either transmission gets 29-mpg city, 37 highway and 32 combined. Last year, it was 25 city, 34 highway and 29 combined with the manual. The previous automatic lost 1 mpg in each EPA cycle.

A stick with more shtick

Want more doodads but rather stick with the stick? VW doesn't force you to Dumpster dive to base trim. Whereas many rivals only offer a manual in their hose-it-out models, VW lets you perform three-pedal ballet with either S or SE trim.

Driving the manual Golf is easy. Clever packaging — good pedal placement — plus engine management, braking tricks and an onboard shift adviser help. My father would dig one VW nanny — a slipping clutch icon. It reminds you or your kids not to rest your left foot on the clutch pedal. There's more. First, the engine rpm increases from 750 to 1,200 as you reach the clutch's friction spot. This ends the tyranny of left-foot/right-foot induced engine stalling. You don't need to feather the accelerator pedal to get rolling; the Golf does it for you. Second, VW holds the binders, reducing rollbacks, when launching on an incline. Third, there's an up-

shift-downshift prompt on the instrument cluster and VW's center-stack eight-inch infotainment screen's "Think Blue. Trainer." This latter display encourages moderation. A round floral-disc ECO graphic rewards efficient driving. Brackets surround a daisy petal-like time graph. They move up or down revealing the effects of braking or accelerating on your fuel supply. Ideally, you keep those brackets in the center.

Follow the leader

Shift as directed. VW's program fits the car's low-rpm demeanor. It's not like the grin-inducing, rev-happy GTI's close-ratio setup. Why? VW chose a restful 3.39 final-drive ratio and then made fourth, 0.97; fifth, 0.77; and sixth, 0.63; as overdrive ratios. Engine rpm at 60 mph is 1,700. At 60 mph in sixth, the engine lugs when climbing expressway overpasses. At 62 mph, the Golf perks along politely. Top-gear acceleration is weak.

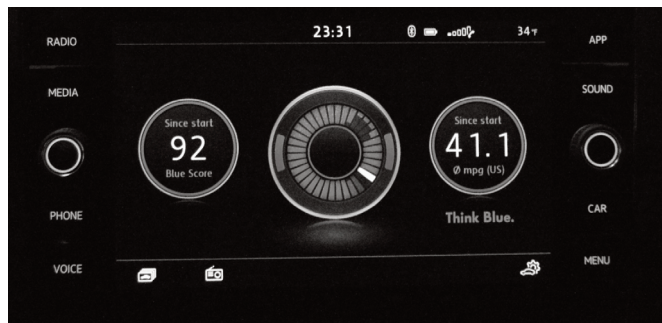
Want an adrenaline rush? Spur those turbocharged ponies with third gear. At 30 mph, just leave the car in third, enter the expressway ramp and stomp on the vertical pedal. Acceleration is brisk. The engine

provides an aurally satisfying whoosh. It will easily blast past the legal limit in most states — no upshifting before redline required. Then, go immediately to sixth. Enjoy the Golf's luxurious tranquility.

In fact, sometimes the silky power source

whispers so softly you'd think the engine isn't running. There are flies in the ointment: a bulky shifter makes snatching reverse awkward; certain engine speeds cause pedal shake, as if you found an automotive fault line.

VW's designers exercised restraint. Exterior sheet-metal wrinkles are gem-like facets; the hood has only two strakes. Golf-themed heritage cues include a



Dash prompts may inspire you to save fuel.

watch band-like grille. At its center is a round clock-face VW emblem, which covers a forward-collision sensor. Of course, this Golf wears wide rear C pillars. VW revised the headlamps, taillamps (LED) and front and rear bumpers last year. The halogen headlamp performance is fair. A bright-metal ring elegantly frames the lower front's air intake. The two exhaust outlets are fake.

Wagon-like stowage

The Golf's familiar two-box body slam-dunks practicality like an NBA draftee. The rear aperture, for example, is tall and wide. The spacious interior has wagon-like stowage. Tall drivers enjoy lots of legroom and an adjustable leather-clad steering wheel. Soft-touch door cards and dashboard feel upscale. Glossy inlays look elegant. Indented B pillars open extra elbow room. Some drivers might not like the center tunnel's bulge. It didn't bother me, however.

Drivers and front passengers get equal rights. Both front seats power recline with manual height, lumbar and fore-aft adjustment. The plastic lumbar lever on my tester popped off its plastic shaft. Any pilot commands a neatly laid out cockpit with big analogue-style gauges. Everything you operate, from the door's window and mirror controls to the manual climate dials, is canted — easy-to-grab and grasp. Thumb wheels modulate vent outlets.

Stash your gadgetry in the Golf's numerous cubbies. There's a slot with USB port in front of the shift lever for your smartphone. VW includes Android Auto and Apple CarPlay. Bluetooth pairing is simple. You can tune the car's radio and accomplish other feats via your voice. Just press a steering wheel switch and speak. I found uttering satellite radio's "Willie's Classic Country" more reliable than asking for channel 59, which often fetched "50s on 5."

There's a smorgasbord of steering wheel switches. The cruise control's on/off and set buttons are oddly shaped. The +/- toggle, however, is ideal. VW illuminates its switchgear and lights the glovebox where you'll find a CD player and SD card slots. You can simultaneously adjust instrument and the infotainment screen's brightness via the headlight switch's "rheo-

stat." Both visor mirrors have overhead lamps. Each visor swivels and extends to block side-window glare. Rear riders don't get face vents. They do, however, enjoy a center armrest with ski pass through and two seatback pockets.

All Golfs include driver assists such as autonomous emergency braking with pedestrian detection. Depending on vehicle speed and what's ahead, warnings begin with a chime, brakes will jerk to get your attention and if you don't intervene, braking force increases. VW's Mark Gilles says preventing injuries is a priority. A manual transmission Golf's engine will stall if AEB halts the car.

Other assists include blind-spot monitor and rear cross traffic alert. The across traffic alert worked well. It noticed a vehicle moving perpendicularly to my driveway, which I didn't see due to parallel-parked SUVs. This setup IDs pedestrians, too. It beeped, while I was parking, because people suddenly entered the crosswalk behind me. VW includes rain-sensing wipers. Fog lamps behave as low-speed cornering lights.

Cargo haulers get a 12-volt aft-compartment outlet, a 60/40 split rear seat and dual-level load floor. Lift that floor; it locks upright to access the compact spare tire and tools. A 16-inch alloy road wheel should fit into the spare's well.

Keyless entry, pushbutton start

Although ride quality is resilient, it's punctuated by pocked roads. Body roll feels nearly equal front and rear encouraging you to tackle twisty backroads. Because the Golf's steering communicates road texture, your inner Mark Donahue dials nicely weighted steering. The comfortable 205/55/16 Hankook Kinergy tires lack cornering bite.

VW's Golf is neatly trimmed with a hemmed cloth headliner and cloth-like windshield pillar covers. Pocket the key fob. You get "keyless" entry and pushbutton start. Just pull the door handle and you're in. Swipe that handle, the car doors lock. Another treat is the hood's hydraulic support strut. All the Golf SE's goodness is yours for \$25,040. If that's too rich, go S at \$22,840. Alas, there's a Golf verity: one must pay more in order to get more. **VWCA**



I was 6. The shifter in question lived in a late '60s VW Beetle that my dad had purchased from one of my brothers whose eye had wandered to a new mechanical love. The faded green paint, white interior, rusted floorboard and that knob on the end of a stick ... I loved that car.

Being the only girl and the youngest in a family of five kids allowed me certain privileges with Dad. We ventured the streets and byways of our hometown in northern Illinois in that car, and Dad taught me to shift. He would clutch and I would shift lefthanded. I can drive in Europe thanks to him!

Timing my tiny hand with his size 11 shoe became a fun game that we "didn't tell Mom" about. In a house full of men, there were a lot of things we (namely me) "didn't tell Mom" about when it came to riding in cars and on motorcycles. That car still brings fond memories to mind as I write this blog post. It was my first true car experience as the driver, or as close as a 6-year-

old could get. Power like that at such a young age corrupts.

A '78 Rabbit was the next VW product to drift across the driveway. I was 16 and wanting some independence. Our next door neighbor was a VW mechanic, so in my dad's eyes that sealed the deal on another VW in our house. Spending a whopping \$800 on that orange beauty was a bargain. I paid half, Dad the other. Funny, all that shifting lefthanded did me no good as I rode shotgun on the way home from purchasing the gem.

Sitting in the driver's seat was a bit different from a Sunday drive with Dad at the helm. A few driving lessons later on the National Street hill and he was done. My tutelage was left to a friend who had mastered her own stick shift via the Mazda wagon of about the same year as my VW. Manuals have peppered the landscape of my life and I currently enjoy my Subaru Legacy very much while I do some downshifting and passing on the B and C roads of life.

While I talk of the love

MY AFFAIR WITH THE STICK SHIFT



By Jules Stayton JulesOnWheelz.net

of a manual transmission, it makes me wonder where we will go ... people like me who love to drive ... when cars are more autonomous. I'm not alone in my despair; the reality of it is here. More and more features on today's new rides have a mind of their own. Many are for safety, others for convenience. Today's cars will be on the road at least 15-20 years. I've got awhile before we go completely autonomous.

One thing I do know — as long as [a NASCAR race exists] there will be drivers of manual transmissions. Maybe I should get into racing ... looks like fun to me!

I bet Dad would have enjoyed it too!
Keep shifting, my friend... **VWCA**

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FROM CLIFF LEPPKE I met Jules Stayton while covering the 2019 Chicago Auto Show. She's an excellent people person with a keen sense of who's who — especially the vehicle maker



reps. She's a multimedia journalist who uses a smartphone and social media to promote her stories. She blogs at juleson-wheelz.net and posted one about this writer at bit.ly/2vgtEHm after the Chicago show. Our paths have crossed several times. One thing I learned: She wants a 1971 Beetle with a stick shift. The post-1968 Beetle evokes fond memories. Her accompanying blog post concludes with an image of a NASCAR race.

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With the VWCA's **Friends of Our Club**, members can save money on parts, labor and accessories from affiliated Volkswagen dealers and independent shops in the United States and Canada. Turn to the Autoist centerspread for more info.



THE WINDING ROAD OF **AUTO SHOWS**

Early spectacles evolved from the highlighting of model changes to 21st century marketing strategies



Record crowds visited the New York Auto Show at the Grand Central Palace in January 1927.

At the dawn of the auto era, shows — especially in New York and Chicago — were the *sine qua non* of vehicle marketing. These choreographed events drew car buyers, dealers and distributors together. They kicked off a sales season, which commenced in the early spring, after dealers received newly minted models. Manufacturers built new models in January.

It's helpful for our understanding of auto shows to review their evolution. Expositions and trade shows, such as the New York Crystal Palace Exhibition (1853) or the 1876 Centennial International Exposition in Philadelphia were important spectacles. People witnessed sublime new industrial marvels at them. Walt Whitman wrote "Song of Exposition" be-

fore the 1876 Machine Age fair, and Henry Adams wrote "The Dynamo and The Virgin" after witnessing a later expo.

One key to the auto story is, surprisingly, Albert Pope, "the father of American bicycles." He saw a British Smith & Starlet bicycle at the 1876 Centennial Exhibition. He later contracted an American firm to manufacture a version of this high-wheel or ordinary bike dubbed the Columbia.

The early bicycle industry combined annual shows with annual model changeovers. Bike makers used systematic annual model changes to grow interest and encourage existing owners to trade in and move up. Bike sales fit a seasonal demand cycle. David

By **Cliff Leppke** ✉ leppke.cliff@gmail.com

Hounshell, an academic known for his work on the history of research and development in the United States, says neither mass-produced farm machines nor sewing machines during the 1800s incorporated change for change sake. He says McCormick reaper's managers feared that annual model changes created an unwieldy business.

Bicycles, in contrast were marketed differently. By the late 1800s, bike makers nurtured demand by sponsoring annual trade shows. In 1896, the Chicago show drew more than 225 exhibitors and 100,000 admissions; New York counted 400 exhibitors and 120,000 admissions.

The big change for change, ironically, was Ford's Model T. Henry Ford pursued specialization in production. This led to overproduction on an unprecedented scale. Ford saturated the world market and achieved unheard of productivity. Other firms discovered a genuine necessity for annual model changes as a marketing strategy. The company that best expressed the evolutionary annual model change was General Motors.

Ford's seasonal changes arrive in 1919

Initially, the Blue Oval gradually altered Model T features, such as shifting to only black cars. By 1919, however, Ford changed the T seasonally. Model T collectors point to revised lighting, grilles and metal work plus additional body styles. Yet, Henry Ford was hush-hush about changing his evergreen universal car. Nonetheless, it changed. By 1926, the car was lowered. An all-steel body came in multiple hues. Wire wheels arrived in 1927. Yet, Ford's inventories of unsold T's grew. Lower prices, more standard



Inside New York's Grand Central Palace, site of the 1927 New York Auto Show.

equipment and a lower stance couldn't save the T.

Ford presented the Model T's replacement — the Model A — at New York City's Waldorf on Dec. 1, 1927. Most automakers presented their cars at Madison Square Garden and the Grand Central Palace in those years, but Ford, which didn't join the Automobile Manufacturers Association, always chose the Waldorf.

He coupled the A's introduction with his first concerted national advertising campaign. It cost \$2 million for its first week (nearly \$29 million in today's dollars). Advertising, Ford learned, was a fundamental part of a changeover strategy, as was credit financing. To compete with GM's Acceptance Corp., Ford's Universal Credit Corp. allowed Ford's dealers to stock new cars by advancing only 10 percent of the retail price.

There was more to Ford's four-cylinder A than the car itself. Although Ford predicted producing 10 million A's, (Edsel Ford claimed 20 million), fewer than 5 million A's were built. Production problems pinched output at first. Then, an economic downturn



The next-generation Jetta prompted VW to Think Big at the Detroit show in 2018.



We do our thing.

The funny thing is, we didn't even know we had a "thing."

We've been perfecting one car for 25 years, steering clear of the idiocy of annual model changes.

Our only worry has been how to make the VW work better, not look different.

And we haven't done badly at all: The 1970 VW is faster and quieter with a longer-lasting engine than any other beetle.

But you still need a scorecard to tell the '70 from other years. Or any year from any other year.

Nobody in the world makes and serv-

ices a car as well as we do. Because nobody's been doing it as long on one model.

We still use old-fashioned words like "nifty," "peachy" and "swell".

And we stick to old-fashioned ideas like craftsmanship and dedication and skill.



VW's classic Beetle ads mocked the industry's annual model changes.

norm. It's easier to retool a factory while assembly workers are on hiatus.

The kick that moved auto shows to the fall was the Depression. The New Deal's National Industrial Recovery Act aimed to smooth out large fluctuations in auto industry employment. In January 1935, President Roosevelt signed Amendment 5 to the Code of Fair Competition for Automobile Manufacturing Industry. It requested the industry to introduce new autos in the fall.

The auto industry adopted the fall-model introduction in 1935.

Both Chicago and New York auto shows shifted seasons. Each held two shows in 1935 — one in the winter for 1935 model year cars and October or December for the 1936 model year. While the Recovery Act was ruled unconstitutional, the industry continued this scheme well into the postwar era. Chicago's first postwar show, however, switched to a winter date.

Fall-of-the-year auto kickoffs became a national sport — one that VW's advertising ridiculed as wasteful. Ford's Edsel, for example, was heavily teased during the summer as the "You" car. It arrived in September 1957. The Edsel flopped. Sales records, however, show that fall introductions led to an additional autumn peak in car buying. Spring still ruled as the key car-buying period.

Meanwhile, the show schedule continues to evolve. Many venues around the country maintain the traditional fall-early winter scheme, but Atlanta held its event this year in late March; the Washington, D.C., show was in early April; and New York's was in late April.

The North American International Auto Show's move in Detroit to summer of 2020 reflects the new marketing strategy. It borrows the Midwest's longtime auto-hobby practice of warm-weather vintage car shows. Detroit Concours d'Elegance? **VWCA**



2019

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CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

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UTAH

SALT LAKE CITY: STRONG VW, 1070 S. MAIN ST., 801-596-2200, P-10 A-10 L-10 AC

VIRGINIA

FAIRFAX: FAIRFAX IMPORTS, 11050 MAIN ST., 703-273-6700, P-15 A-15 L-15 AC

VIENNA: STOHLMAN VW, 8433 LEESBURG PIKE, 703-893-2990, P-20

WASHINGTON

BELLINGHAM: ROGER JOBS VW, 2200 IOWA ST., 360-734-5230, P-25 A-25 L-10

SEATTLE: UNIVERSITY VW, 4724 ROOSEVELT WAY NE, 206-634-3322, P-10 A-10 L-10

WEST VIRGINIA

PARKERSBURG: LARRY SIMMONS VW, 1710 14TH ST., 304-485-5451

WISCONSIN

MADISON: ZIMBRICK VW OF MADISON, 1430 N. STOUGHTON ROAD, 608-241-5201, P-10 A-10

MILWAUKEE: VW OF MILWAUKEE NORTH, 1400 W. SILVER SPRING DR., 414-290-1400

AUDI DEALERS

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BURLINGAME: AUDI BURLINGAME, 1010 CADILLAC WAY, 650-348-0111

CONCORD: AUDI CONCORD, 1300 CONCORD AVE., 925-771-2888

ELK GROVE: ELK GROVE VW, 9776 W. STOCKTON BLVD., 916-405-2650

SANTA MONICA: SANTA MONICA AUDI, 1020 SANTA MONICA BLVD, 866-982-5667, P-10 L-10 A-10

WEST COVINA: PENSKE AUDI WEST COVINA, 2016 E. GARVEY AVE. SOUTH, 626-384-3400

GEORGIA

MARTINEZ: GERALD JONES VW/AUDI, 4022 WASHINGTON RD., 706-228-6900

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CHERRY VALLEY: LOU BACHRODT VW, 7070 CHERRYVALE N. BLVD., 815-332-3000

Dealers and businesses listed here are friends, and we hope you will patronize them whenever possible. They are soliciting your business and will do all they can to satisfy you.

Several companies offer discounts to VWCA members showing valid membership cards. Discounts are shown next to the dealer's phone number. **P-15, A-10, L-5** means a 15 percent discount on parts, a 10 percent discount on accessories and a 5 percent discount on labor. **AC** means dealers service air-cooled VWs.

Because service and parts advisers may not be familiar with the discount offered, it might be helpful to show a copy of the AUTOIST and VWCA membership card when requesting the discount.



INDIANA

EVANSVILLE: D-PATRICK, 200 N. GREEN RIVER RD., 812-473-6500

IOWA

DAVENPORT: VW OF QUAD CITIES, 3700 HARRISON ST., 563-386-1511

MISSOURI

KANSAS CITY: MOLLE VW, 808 W. 103RD STREET, 816-941-9500

NEW YORK

YORKVILLE: STEET PONTE IMPORTS, 5046 COMMERCIAL DRIVE, 315-736-8291, P-15 A-15 L-10

VIRGINIA

FAIRFAX: FAIRFAX IMPORTS, 11050 MAIN ST., 703-273-6700, P-15 A-15 L-15 AC

WASHINGTON

SEATTLE: UNIVERSITY VW, 4724 ROOSEVELT WAY NE, 206-634-3322, P-10 A-10 L-10

CANADA

MARKHAM: AUDI UPTOWN, 4080 HIGHWAY 7 EAST, 905-513-8820, P-15 A-10 L-15

OTHERS**ARIZONA**

PRESCOTT: PRESCOTT IMPORT CAR SERVICE, 710 RUTH ST., 928-

778-9305, P-5 L-5, INDEPENDENT SERVICE FACILITY

CALIFORNIA

FULLERTON: RANCHO PERFORMANCE, 1015 E. ELM AVE., 714-680-6737, P-10 L-10 AC, PARTS & SERVICE

SANTA BARBARA: TOP SHOP AUTOMOTIVE, 177 S. PATTERSON AVE., 805-964-6554, www.topshopautosb.com, INDEPENDENT SERVICE FACILITY

VENTURA: AIRHEAD PARTS, 1604 MORSE AVE., 866-664-3724, P-10 A-10 AC, AIR-COOLED PARTS

VENTURA: KARMANN GHIA PARTS, 1604 MORSE AVE., 866-664-3724, P-10 A-10 AC, AIR-COOLED PARTS

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OLD SAYBROOK: CARDONE AND DAUGHTER AUTOMOTIVE, 4 CUSTOM DRIVE, 860-664-0727, www.cardoneanddaughter.com, AC, INDEPENDENT SERVICE FACILITY

ILLINOIS

DOWNERS GROVE: SPAROMOBILE, 503 OGDEN AVE., 630-963-8410, IMPORT PARTS

EVERGREEN PARK: BEETLE CRAFT SPORT TUNING, 9535 S. PULASKI RD., 708-422-7548, P-10 A-10 L-10 AC, INDEPENDENT SERVICE FACILITY

OAK LAWN: G&H IMPORT AUTO PARTS, 9734 S. CICERO AVE., 708-422-9272, IMPORT PARTS

INDIANA

FORT WAYNE: WERNER'S GARAGE, 7804 FRITZ ROAD, 260-489-9783, AC, INDEPENDENT SERVICE FACILITY

MICHIGAN

WATERFORD TOWNSHIP: MUNK'S MOTORS, 3080 W. HURON ST., 248-681-8081, www.munks.com, AC

NEW YORK

MASSAPEQUA: G T PRECISION IMPORTS, 190A MARGARETTA AVE., 516-799-1100, www.gtprecision.com, P-10 L-10 AC, INDEPENDENT SERVICE FACILITY

WATERLOO: SELECT EUROCARS, 0685 WATERLOO-GENEVA RD., 315-789-2200, P-10 A-10 L-10 AC, VW & AUDI CARS, PARTS & SERVICE

OHIO

CLEVELAND HEIGHTS: VW SERVICE-HEIGHT, 1815 S. TAYLOR RD., 216-371-5100, AC, INDEPENDENT SERVICE FACILITY

WISCONSIN

GLENDALE: MOFOCO ENTERPRISES, 4170 N LYDEL AVE., 800-558-8955, IMPORT PARTS

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The Frontdriver

BY RICHARD G. VAN TREUREN ✉ rgvant@juno.com

Cuba, Part II: Beetles are few

Last issue I'd covered some of our January cruise trip to Havana. I'd missed getting a photo of a giant old Russian-made ZiL limousine that Fidel Cas-

tro used as his state cars. We saw one but we had no chance as we passed it on the bus. (We're told the current president goes about in Mercedes caravans.)

Another hotel stop was the favorite of organized crime figures who sought to turn Havana into the playground even wilder than their Las Vegas interests. Understandably few VW Beetles had been barged over with this crowd. Eventually, we saw a grand total of two Bugs — but they were a lot newer than the typical 1950s cars that ply these roads. (Likely the VWs followed Castro's route from Mexico, many years after his invasion, actually launched from a yacht.)

On one side of the old fortifications, a display contained

some Russian missile mockups and the left wing of the Air Force U-2 spy plane they shot down in 1960, three years before the Cuban missile crisis. No photo! OK, OK, I moved along. It happened to be Jan. 28, in

Cuba the celebration of José Martí, the hero who led the country's war of independence against Spain concluding in 1898.

A marching band and three cadet troop companies passed in review, practicing, during our visit. When they secured from quarters, I managed to get a photo of an old Russian military heavy jeep-like vehicle perhaps being used by the officer staff.

There were plenty of cars we'd never heard of ... the Renault Fluence? How did they get there? Private imports



One of two Beetles seen on the Cuba excursion, this one a 1970s model, a lot newer than the typical 1950s-era vehicles in Cuba.



A jeep-like Russian vehicle is parked near cadet troop companies passing in review.

seem unlikely in a land where the government discourages private ownership.

Even cars from pre-WWII would be seen occasionally, such as a cabriolet passing by Revolutionary Square, site of the Martí memorial and hour-long fiery speeches from Castro back in the day.

One tour included a meal at a pub once frequented by Ernest Hemingway, finding us sampling Cuban dishes of pork and chicken. The atmosphere was feisty and musical and the meal offered unique local flavors. We didn't feel quite so good later, not due to indigestion, but rather when we found out the average Cuba might go a month or two in between meat meals. Seeing a long line of people queuing up for eggs being unloaded from a truck, one guide let slip that "everything is rationed."

Because the third generation Passat was also made in China, this bright yellow cab might>>

BELOW: A bright yellow 1990s Passat offered both taxicab and Uber services.



Revolutionary Square, where this monument and a statue of José Martí honor the country's independence. The square has witnessed many important activities in Havana, including the mass rallies in which Fidel Castro delivered fiery speeches typically lasting several hours.



RIGHT: A French-built Renault with some influence ... or just fluent in ferrying tourists around town?



FRONTDRIVER



A newer model VW Gol, produced in Brazil.

have originated there. It was the single Passat we saw. All the other cars were in a queue at the Havana Hilton (er, that is, the Hotel Tryp Habana Libre), where Castro had his penthouse HQ for the first few months after taking over.

Likewise was a somewhat newer Brazilian Gol, the “City” trim model, sporting its newer-style license plate. However, by far the streets were dominated by the big Detroit iron from a bygone era.

No magazine article could do the visit justice, all in all a unique experience we’re still trying to figure out.



Eos' great-grandfather

A few years ago I'd written in these pages about my 1950s conclusion that the Ford Skyliner was the answer, because it was both hardtop and convertible. That longtime fantasy came to fruition with the purchase of our VW Eos.

The photo above shows the single Ford Edsel we saw, and it turned out to be anything but ordinary. I did not know there had been such a thing, but I watched as the men back-opened the truck, folded back the hardtop and — *iAy, caramba!* It was a hard-top convertible. (The Spanish verbiage on the vest delivers a don't-drink-and-drive message.) **VWCA**



Gleaming American classics from the 1950s dominate the Cuban landscape.

Local Volks

Activities of VWCA affiliates

Campout adventures

We've always said that participation in local chapter activities is a huge part of "enjoying your VW to the fullest." It is the purpose of this column, therefore, to highlight these events and activities, give the planners and organizers a little recognition for their efforts and perhaps inspire other chapters to try some of the unique and fun ways we enjoy our VWs.

If there is no local chapter in your area and you'd like to start one, contact our vice president at volkstom@sbcglobal.net, or vwclub@aol.com.

Here's what some of the locals are up to of late: **BADGER FUNCLUB, MILLWAUKEE:** What better way to shake off those winter blues than to plan the annual Memorial Day Campout? Also, some are planning to attend the first 2019 Volkswagen Adventures, a three-day driving event in Wisconsin Dells, sponsored by Mid America Motorworks.

CENTRAL FLORIDA VW CLUB, ORLANDO: The CFVWC

folks were in the right place at the right time to join Disney's 50th anniversary of the "Herbie the Love Bug" series. A total of 38 Herbie replicas and 112 participants were scheduled to arrive from all over the U.S., and even from Belgium and New Zealand. The four-day celebration included a club cruise with a visit to the Orlando Car Museum.

NORTHEAST ILLINOIS VOLKSWAGEN ASSOCIATION, LISLE:

The finishing touches were complete for NIVA's huge Indoor Swap Meet at the DuPage County Fairgrounds in Wheaton, Ill. This is one of NIVA's premier events and promises to gather a large number of buyers and

sellers.

STATELINE VOLKS FOLKS, ROCKFORD, ILL.: The Volks Folks had a pancake breakfast in March followed by a cruise to the Volo (Ill.) Auto Museum. Later, a Fix-It day is planned to shake out those winter cobwebs and get all the VWs ready for the summer show season.

Check our website, VWClub.org, for listings of these and other future events. You'll always find the latest updates there – and even some events that were announced too late to make the AUTOIST publication schedule. And if your local chapter is planning an event, contact us at vwclub@aol.com and we'll post it on our site. We're waiting to hear from you!

Finally, this column is in need of a member to compile the activities of our local chapters and send them bimonthly to the AUTOIST editor. You'll find it fun to learn about the clever and innovative events developed by our local chapters and share them with other members. If you're the one, contact VWCA at



Swap meet swag, a highlight of NIVA's Indoor Swap Meet.

vwclub@aol.com or directly to the AUTOIST editor at vwautoist@mindspring.com. We're waiting to hear from you! **VWCA**

► **BUYING OR SELLING?** Try the classified ads. They're free to members!

VolksWoman

BY LOIS GRACE ✉ vlkswmn@sbcglobal.net

Random thoughts and observations

Welcome, folks, to another edition of VolksWoman nonsense, acquired as bits and pieces of information that cross my brain pan on a regular basis. What I can remember of those bits and pieces becomes junk food for thought. What you are about to read is the result. Let's begin with...

Those Chevrolet commercials

Is it just me, or are these Chevy ads we are seeing really stupid? As I write this I am not seeing them as much so hopefully you'll know what I mean. In the ad for the Equinox, I want to cringe every time I hear the guy say "She's a bad mamma-jamma." Or does he say "That's a bad mamba-jamba"? I can't tell.

Either way he sounds ridiculous and what does that mean anyway? The guy uttering this nonsense does have a man-bun, which we all know means he has no credibility whatsoever so why should we care what he thinks? It just sounds like he simply cannot think of anything else to say while the Chevy camera is on him.

Then there's the assortment of guys watching the new Chevy pickups roll out. Lots of shiny paint and chrome flashes by while the guys say things like "It looks like it's gonna EAT YA," and "WOW, that's awesome." Really? Chevrolet seriously wants us to think of its trucks as tough and sexy? I mean, that's the whole point of an ad, to make you want to run right out and buy whatever it is, but this is so insipid to me that I cannot take it seriously!

I'm sure many will swear that a Chevy truck is the way to go, but I've never owned a

Chevy so I don't know. When we need a Big 'Un, we are Dodge truck people. Honestly, these ads do nothing to encourage me to buy one because the trucks they show are so unremarkable. They look just like every other truck out there. Which must be why I love my old flat-snout VW single cab.

Those Subaru ads

Subaru might be the best of the lot (even if it did borrow the idea from VW) with its unexpected warm-fuzzy-producing ads of family love and loyalty, Subie Style.

After years of simply showing us how great they are, Subaru wants us to get all misty-eyed and weepy when we think of Subaru and what the car means to the families who own them. One notable ad shows a young guy going to meet his grandpa at the beach. The grandson drives up in a brand new Subaru SomethingOrOther, with a surfboard on top and greets Grandpa, who is pulling on his wet-suit and taking his board down from his own vintage Subaru wagon.

All the while a song named "Forever Young" is playing with its plaintive guitar twangs. OK, it's a great commercial and will resonate with anyone who has owned a Subaru. But for me, these ads fell flat. While it's good for a few momentary warm fuzzies, I want to shout at the TV every time it comes on. "IT'S BEEN DONE! VOLKSWAGEN did it



first, and they did it over 60 years ago, and they are STILL doing it, so they win!”

In the interest of completely unbiased journalism, I will say here that the ad featuring the Golden Retriever family does make me smile, but it’s probably only because I have a yellow Lab that behaves so much like the dogs in this ad that it hits close to home. After all, how can a mere Subaru come close to having the same emotional value as a VW?! I mean, it’s ridiculous. I’d recommend that you save your warm fuzzies for those cars that truly deserve them, which brings me to...

That ONE VW ad

You know the one I mean. I was hit smack-dab in the heart when I saw it for the first time. It’s the one where Grandma and her adult kid and grandkids are on a cross country trip to see the sights.

Apparently, Grandma and Grandpa emigrated to the U.S. for a better life but they were so busy making that life they didn’t explore the country much. Before they leave, she shows them a note Grandpa has written where he tells her to “travel, see the sights.” With a wistful look, she says something like “From the day I arrived, I wanted to see this great country,” in a slightly foreign accent.

Next, you see all of them in the VW Atlas while Simon and Garfunkel’s “Look For America” plays in the background. As they tour the U.S., somewhere in the middle of the trip Grandma looks out the window and sadly says, “Oh, how I wish Grandpa were going with us.” At the end we see Grandma and her grown daughter standing at the beach, waves breaking behind them. We also see a grandson standing on the rocks holding what looks like an urn. (Right here



is where my waterworks began.)

Of course, the next thing you, the viewer, think of is that that urn contains Grandpa, and he did indeed get to go on that cross country trip. Just not in the way Grandma had hoped.

The first time I saw this ad, I came completely unglued and sat on the sofa in tears. Maybe it’s just because I’m kinda sappy and sentimental that way. And, maybe it’s because this is the first ad for the new Atlas, and it is surely the most momentous of VW ads since the DD&B days of VW ads.

The fun thing about this particular ad is that Grandma and her family appear in other ads, all while they are on the way across America to leave Grandpa’s ashes in the Pacific. One showed all of them sleeping peacefully in the new Atlas, in the middle of the desert somewhere, while Dad snores noisily in the tent. Another features the family in their Atlas, showing how the optional pedestrian monitoring system works.

These ads are so clever, so heart-wrenching, and so seamlessly produced that each time I see one it’s as if I am right along on that journey with them. Does this make me want to rush out and buy a new Atlas? Maybe not (after all, I am that purist-vintage-VW-weirdo), but boy does it make me take notice. Taking notice is the first step and re-creating a feeling would be the ultimate sales grab.

Volkswagen has always been the best at doing that, and my prediction is that they always will be. Any way you slice it, these new ads are winners.

And if I might be allowed, I get a chuckle every time I see the ad with the new Blue Jetta, break-dancing on the turntable. It’s just so stinking cute.

Remember your manners

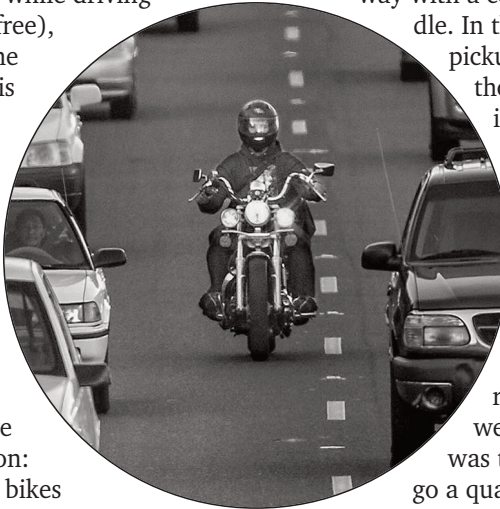
And, for my last random thought I’ll drag out the old tired “other drivers are so irritating” comment. Why, just the other day I must have run into an example of everything you shouldn’t do behind the wheel.

Passing on the right, texting while driving,»

VOLKSWOMAN

blabbering away on a cellphone while driving (I don't care if they ARE hands-free), and, of course, speeding. The one thing I see most often probably is lane splitting by motorcycles. This is when traffic is crawling along and a bike goes between two slowly moving cars to get ahead faster. California has made it legal, if you are traveling at 45 mph or under. I've seen lane splitting at 70 mph! Because of this and for the biker's safety, I move to the side to give them more room. But I've also noticed a weird phenomenon: riders of super-fast "rice rocket" bikes will nearly always thank you for moving aside and giving them more space. And, bikers riding Harleys will rarely thank you. Interesting.

And I will now end with the wildest thing I've seen lately: I had just turned right onto a four-lane high-



way with a cement barrier wall in the middle. In the left lane was a full size pickup, coming straight at me. Even though my brain didn't recognize it immediately, he was on the wrong side of that cement barrier wall.

My eyes said "DANGER! Truck coming at us! But my brain said: "Well, yes, but he's on the left side and you're on the right in these two lanes." Wait, WHAT?! We travel this road maybe three or four times a week and have never seen this. It was two farmers who didn't want to go a quarter mile out of their way to make a U-turn at the light so they just turned out of their road the wrong way onto the highway and made their turn at the light when they got there. CRAZY.

Be careful out there, folks. **VWCA**



Facebook.com/VWClubofAmerica

DRIVER'S SEAT

►FROM PAGE 3

423,008 Type 1 (Beetle and Karmann Ghia) vehicles in 1968. Dub sold 569,696 Beetles, Buses and Type 3s in 1970. Forty-five years ago, it introduced the Rabbit, which hopped to nearly 215,000 units in 1979. VW hasn't beat those records in 40 years. The competition has.

VW tried Raid and a flyswatter, but the Beetle story endures. VW discontinued our Beetle sedan in 1977 and the convertible in 1979. Mexican production continued through 2003. Eventually, VW created another sensation. It revived its silhouette via the New Beetle in 1998. For 2012, VW revamped it with a less bulbous shell. That car retires this year.

A New York Times journalist asked me how I felt about the Bug's demise. I said I really didn't care, it's not my kind of VW — it doesn't have a clutch pedal. Besides, I'm still mourning the demise of the "three-door" GTI. I lived through the first Beetle's death. I survived. That air-cooled car was outmoded, the new Golf/Rabbit was superior.

Few Americans know a salient fact: the VW brand is the world's second-best selling; the parent company is the world's largest in vehicle sales. In Germany, the Golf is its most popular model.

VW, therefore, is alive; it's not just selling Beetles. For us, despite the current Beetle's death, the Bug



Cliff Leppke, a regular AUTOIST contributor since 1993, has upgraded his wheels since getting his first car in the early '60s.

idea endures. It's a culture touchstone. Generations of people have Bugs in their hearts. This signature car is very different from, say, Ford's Model T. VW, for example, presented a 1960s Beetle at the 2019 Detroit auto show. Ford exhibited a 1960s Mustang. Throughout the world, the Beetle is woven into national

cultural identity — a symbol of postwar German renewal, Mexican pride and American affection for underdogs.

Let's compare VW's signature auto with Ford's Universal Car. Ford's T played a significant role in American automobility. It signaled new styles of physical and social transportation, ethics, pop culture and mass production. Historians say Ford's reliance on the T caused a colossal crisis in Dearborn. When the Model A replaced it, Ford entered a new era. It began credit sales, advertising and regular model changes. The A's tenure was relatively brief — four years.

VW's story is similar. The Beetle, which received many worthwhile mechanical updates, became outmoded. Surprisingly, American demand for the Bug kept Wolfsburg cranking out Beetles even though Germans were tired of it. Unlike the T, Beetle production continued long after VW began producing all-new models for Europe and the USA. The Golf, which symbolically replaced it, proved a successful recipe. It's a brand staple. The version with a kick, the GTI, has a cult following. Many tweak their GTIs, just as Gene Berg did the Bug.

Ford's T is a popular antique hobby vehicle. Yet, American roadways aren't teaming with T's. In contrast, you see VW's signature auto. One factor is mechanical. Most air-cooled Beetles can keep up with current traffic. Another is the New Beetle, which for a time, became the brand's American ambassador. Even Bugs, which have died, become adorable vending machines.

In a sense, VW squandered the New Beetle moment. It was chic but not particularly durable. VW upped the tempo with a turbo, offered a diesel and a convertible. VW failed, however, to extend this model's appeal. Why didn't VW build a 1990s-era Toyota RAV4-like Bug or a European-style Golf Country, a 4WD off-road vehicle?

Look at Jeep's Wrangler. It evokes the CJ's form. Jeep didn't stop there. It added two side doors, turning it into a family-style SUV. It recently revived a pickup version, the Gladiator. Jeep Wrangler sales climbed to more than 200,000 units a year in the»

DRIVER'S SEAT

USA. Jeep sold 21,963 Wranglers during March 2019, whereas VW sold 17,845 cars in all, including 2,027 Beetles and 865 Golfs.

I test drove the Wrangler at a Chicago press event, where FCA unveiled the Gladiator. Its aluminum-intensive body cuts weight, the V-6 engine is powerful and you can remove its top, fold the windshield and pull off the doors, just like a VW Thing. The longer-wheelbase pickup borrows the Ram truck's rear axle, so it's more than just a bed behind the cab. Yet, the much-improved Wrangler crawls down Halstead Street and treks through mounds of icy snow rather crudely. Charming. At nearly \$40,000 for starters, it's expensive.

Carmakers, as I've noted, often pay homage to their most loved machines — especially their silhouettes. Porsche, for example, offers the timeless 911.



The Jeep Wrangler alone outsold all VWs in March.

VW, however, didn't update its water-cooled Beetle to set or fit current trends. It could have turned it into a compact crossover, a real dune buggy, but didn't. It could have added two side doors with smart "coach" style hinges at their rears. VW could have tried a small truck or panel van.

Goodbye, 2019 Beetle. VW's current ID electric vehicle platform, which underpins its buggy and the bus concepts, suggests there's a different kind of VW in our future. If VW achieves the economies of scale to make them affordable, people might want them. They're attractive additions to a family's motoring fleet. In that sense, what's old is new again. The Bug's American success story is closely tied to multi-car households. VW's upcoming electrics, moreover,

have separate bodies and platforms. Custom coach builders could put their 21st-century Karmann, Hebmüller, Rometsch and Meyers Manx bodies on them.

Things change, right? Signatures matter.

2018 worldwide sales rankings

Once upon a time there were the Big Three — GM, Ford and Chrysler. They dominated domestic and international automotive markets. Last year's light-vehicle sales figures reveal an amazing change in automotive hegemony.

- VW Group, 10.8 million
- Nissan, Renault, Mitsubishi, 10.76 million
- Toyota, 10.6 million
- GM, 8.6 million
- Hyundai/Kia: 7.4 million
- Ford, 5.6 million
- Honda, 5.2 million
- FCA (Fiat, Chrysler), 4.8 million
- PSA (Peugeot, Citroen, Opel): 4.1 million
- Suzuki, 3.0 million

The best-selling nameplates:

- Toyota, 8.1 million
- VW, 6.1 million
- Ford, 5.3 million
- Honda, 5.0 million
- Nissan, 4.8 million
- Hyundai, 4.1 million
- Chevy, 3.9 million
- Suzuki, 3.0 million
- Kia, 2.6 million
- Mercedes, 2.6 million

Audi's MMI Touch Response system

Audi's new touchscreen interface gives new life to automotive controls. You might think it's like Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel fresco: The Creation of Adam. That's an exaggeration but it contains a truth. Much like God's finger reaching out to Adam, Audi's creative display has the spark of life; it's alive.

If you press either one of two stacked central touchscreens, haptic response and screen graphics generate a sensation, as if the screen moves inward



Audi has taken its touch screen capability to a new level.

and detents confirming your choice.

Paul Sklba, a brand specialist at Audi North Shore near Milwaukee, let me demo Touch Response (Audi prefers lowercase). It's available on the A6, A7, A8 and Q8 models. The upper 10.3-inch screen is smart-phone-like. You arrange icons as you please. The lower 8.6-inch buttonless panel adjusts HVAC, seating and offers 32 shortcuts. You can use the shift lever as a palm rest while poking this display.

Due to the physical feedback, you know when you've turned, say, the steering wheel heater off or increased cabin temperature. You can write on this tablet or use Audi's natural voice recognition, too.

Welcome to Audi's brave new interface world. Due to its touch of life, I'd say it works better than Cadillac's Cue or Lexus' Remote Touch. For purists, Audi kept its familiar volume knob, which changes channels if you tap it sideways. It's on the center console near the shift lever.

Things that go bump

Those who collect or drive VW's water-cooled machines often encounter rude rides. Their springs,

shocks and suspension mounts wear out.

Spring sag plagues early H2O VWs. The front coils often lose height, leading to more jounce than bounce. Suspension stops and strut dust caps crash and smash. Your teeth chatter. VW, aware of early suspension woes, modified parts. Later, it in-

creased the suspension travel on its second-generation and later cars.

My ugly 1986 VW Scirocco (aka the impostor) has broken two sets of OEM front springs and one rear spring. Blame rust. It weakens steel, causing fractures. My rust-proofed 1983 Scirocco, in contrast, hasn't broken a spring despite traveling 336,000 miles.

The following message is decades late. VW fans, who restore early water-cooled VWs, won't find unmo- lested project vehicles. Nonetheless, employ my advice when fixing any coil-sprung VW.

When your VW left the factory, the black-painted coils had color codes or marks. Rust destroys these codes. So, take a picture or jot down color codes if you can and save this info. On my 1983 VW Wolfsburg Edition Scirocco, the original front springs have one white mark and one brown mark.

You need these codes due to the way VW identifies parts. Its ETKA database simply lists VW part numbers for springs by their marks. You take your original code, head to your VW dealer and ask their parts associate to pull up your vehicle's ETKA. On the front suspension page, you'll»



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find a list of codes and their original part numbers. ETKA shows four different springs for the second-gen Scirocco. The brown/white code part number is 161-401-105F. VW poached this spring from the 1.6-liter diesel VW Caddy pickup — although the 161 prefix sounds first-gen Jetta diesel too.

In a perfect world, VW would explain what springs belong with which cars. For instance, VW likely ups the spring rate, when the engine is heavier or there's air conditioning. Some sporting models, like my 1987 16-valve Scirocco, have lower stiffer springs (three gray marks).

Unfortunately, many repair shops or do-it-yourselfers don't check these important marks. VW uses more than one spring height or rate on a given model. Few techs care. This leads to a penny-wise but pound-foolish industry. People buy remanufactured front strut assemblies as a simple solution to suspension troubles such as worn strut inserts or shock absorbers. With these assemblies, one doesn't need to buy, say, a strut/spring compressor, in order to fix a car. This cuts shop time and labor costs.

These remanufactured parts, however, might use the wrong springs. In fact, the Parts Place Inc. sells one unit to fit all Rabbit/Scirocco/Jetta/Cabriolet models. Whether this part works properly on your car is unknown. PP's aftermarket heavy-duty spring, which I've tried, definitely lifts the car's front up about two inches. This lift doesn't last indefinitely. Mine sagged after two years. So, I bought another vendor's springs. They sagged too.

Replacing worn or broken springs is problematic. Most aftermarket vendors offer only one spring for a variety of VW models. They don't ask you for the original codes, search for VW's correct part number and use this info to cross reference aftermarket vendors. I've gone through this headache. Parts guys have sold me weak springs labeled for all Mk I Rabbits/Jettas/Sciroccos and Cabriolets. Ugh!



VW coil spring paint marks.

Recently my “impostor” Scirocco became a very rough rider. The four-year-old Suplex front springs sagged, causing the Bilstein HD inserts to slam against their internal stops. One insert puked oil, too. Because OEM springs are rare, I called Parts Place, bought and installed their HD springs. This improved the front suspension's compliance. I'm still wrestling with Bilstein's warranty department, though. Despite many phone calls and emails (I sent images of the original invoices), Bilstein hasn't sent replacement units. When I asked them to make good on the warranty, they offered to rebuild the struts but sent me a price list for this service.

The car's improved front suspension emphasized another fault: the rear springs and shocks. The right rear spring broke and the Bilstein HD gas shocks leaked. One shock knocks. I installed rear springs from another Scirocco and repurposed two old T-kico gas dampers.

Now, the car rides better. The stiff high-pressure gas shocks, however, aren't ideal for an everyday driver. I use these units in order to get a small increase in ground clearance. This helps me get to and from work during wintry weather. Sometimes I must trek where snow plows haven't. I'd rather blast through snow in a low-center-of-gravity bomb than a fuel-guzzling high rider. **VWCA**




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WANTED: For 1983 Rabbit GTI: (1) Both upper door panels in red, with hole for door lock button. (2) Rear deck hardware for Kamei rear spoiler — assume some glue is required. (3) Mounting hardware for front spoiler — or information regarding source for this hardware. Email patoin@aol.com (preferred) or phone 812-332-4089 (IN).

FOR SALE: 1952-2009 VW Factory Shop Manuals: \$29.95-\$149.95. Aftermarket VW Shop Manuals (6 different publishers): \$9.95-\$34.95. 1954-1979 VW Restoration Manual \$37.95. Alex Voss, 4850 37th Ave. So., Seattle WA 98118, (206) 721-3077 or toll free (888) 380-9277.

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Parting Shot

Bring a big bib



Our Richard Van Treuren was back at the campground for Sun 'N Fun, Florida's largest air and trade show in Lakeland and snapped a photo of this ravenous lobster appearing to devour a VW Beetle. Alas, this oversized red crustacean is one with Boston Lobster Feast that avoids ending up in hot water.

Don't miss an issue

► Moving is hectic, but so is missing an issue of the *AUTOIST*. Bulk mailing of the publication doesn't allow for forwarding, so it's important to let us know your new address promptly. Check in with Lynida Tomlin, VWCA, P.O. Box 154, North Aurora, IL 60506. Or send an email to VWClub@aol.com.



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VW Toon-ups

By Tom Janiszewski ✉ volkstom@sbcglobal.net

