

November/December 2022 | No. 524



Autoist

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CHILLING FEAR

Frosted chargers leave family in peril



Autoist

Since 1955

VWClub.org ✉ VWClub@aol.com f VWClubofAmerica

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New Family memberships are \$26 for the first year, then \$20 per year for renewal. Add \$6 to these amounts for residents outside the U.S. Pay by check to VWCA, P.O. Box 154, North Aurora, IL 60542, or visit VWClub.org, click the "Membership" tab and use a credit card to join or renew.

ABOUT THE AUTOIST

The VW AUTOIST is published bimonthly by members of the Volkswagen Club of America Inc., which is dedicated to helping the VW and Audi owner enjoy his or her car to the fullest. Both members and non-members are welcome to submit manuscripts, letters to the editor, photographs and artwork. Contributions should be sent to the AUTOIST editor. Material must be submitted by the 10th of the month preceding publication (for example, Dec. 10 for the Jan/Feb issue).

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Driver's Seat

BY CLIFF LEPPKE ✉leppke.cliff@gmail.com

Sign of the financial times

Have you checked out your VW dealer lately? I did. You'll get double-sticker shock. VW of Milwaukee North, for instance, embellishes the Monroney sticker. It posts a windshield notice extolling extras, bumping up a Taos' MSRP from \$32,355 to \$34,502. Each additional item is a profit scam. There's a \$750 market adjustment, \$999 paint and upholstery protection, \$199 wheel locks and \$199 nitrogen inflation. The latter is likely two kinds of inflation, one for the tires and the other for the vehicle's price.

You don't expect this brazen price gouging from Volkswagen — a brand that honed its reputation with a homely but honestly priced Beetle during the 1960s. According to VW's William Gock, VWoA cannot do much about a dealer's highway roadside robbery — OK, grand theft auto. In contrast, back when the New Beetle arrived, VWoA claimed it would pull dealer's allocation if it learned the store marked up its hot car. That said, VW's initial batch of New Beetles sported price-lifting factory options.

This VW dealer says it cannot get enough new vehicles

to profitably run a business. So, it must ask more than the list price. VW's USA sales this year confirm one part of that argument — first nine-month vehicle sales were 232,357 vs. 290,691 last year. Only one

model, the Taos, posed a sales increase. So, the higher sales volume needed to make a profit on vehicles with lower markups is missing.

I'd say car buyers dislike dealer sales practices. These profit-propping extras stink.

Detours into VW Thing history

Behind the scenes at the VW AUTOIST is our editor (Fred Ortlip). He sent me a submission by contributor Steve Midlock to review, a piece offering a brief history of the VW Thing. Midlock's clarity and grace struck me. His initial draft, however, irked me. He unknowingly perpetuated an inaccurate story about the *hecho en Mexico USA Thing*, namely that the vehicle used the VW Bus' suspension, axles and transaxle.

Nearly any story I've read about the Thing makes this error. The original Type 181, the genesis for the Thing, rolled on VW Transporter-style rear swing axles with reduction gears. VW, sensitive to the ruckus over swing-axle safety (Ralph Nadar's take on the pre-1964 Corvair in Unsafe at Any Speed) chose the IRS rear suspension like the 1969 VW Beetle's. As Michele Dustman (The Thing Shop in Chandler, Arizona) notes, the Thing is an odd duck, an assortment of VW parts,

Stock: V91426
VIN: 3VVLX7B26NM091426
Year: 2022 Color: Blue
Make: Volkswagen Trim: 1.5T SE
Model: Taos
Manufacturer Suggested Retail Price: \$32,355.00
Dealer Installed Options

WHEEL LOCKS Optimum anti-theft protection	\$199.00
NITROGEN Helps reduce tire pressure fluctuation in changing temperatures	\$199.00
POLYSTEEL PROTECTIVE COATING Paint and interior upholstery protection	\$999.00
Taos Market Adjustment	\$750.00

TOTAL PRICE \$34,502.00

DEALER:
Porsche Milwaukee North
1400 W Silver Spring Drive
MILWAUKEE WI 53209
414-290-1400

▶ TURN TO PAGE 27

Small Talk

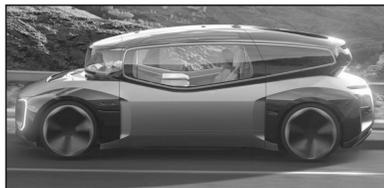
VW + AUDI AT A GLANCE

NEW & IMPROVED

ID. CAMPER BUZZ: U.S.

fans of the ID.Buzz won't be taking delivery of VW's exciting new EV until 2024, but they can plan on camping without the expense of a full conversion thanks

to German company Ququq, which has produced five different versions of a camper box for many types of European SUVs and vans, as well as some Japanese and American makes. The slide-in unit features a bed, kitchen and storage area providing a place to cook with a gas stove and sleep on a 3.9-inch foam mattress.



A LOOK INTO THE FUTURE: VW's Gen.Travel concept (above) was revealed at a show in Paris and aims to provide a realistic outlook for the mobility of the coming decade. The Gen.Travel drives autonomously and turns the driver into a relaxed passenger who has time for other things: work, relaxation, entertainment and family, a VW Design Group representative announced.

A TOUCHING MOVE: Controlling vehicle functions using capacitive touching may have seemed like a good idea, but it's been universally

panned by VW Golf GTI, R and ID.4 drivers, not to mention car reviewers. VW exec Thomas Schaefer announced on LinkedIn that it's going back to the old way. No timeline for the change was announced.

COMPANY NEWS

SCOUT UP CLOSE: Jeff Bade, a prominent member of the vintage Scout community, wrote on Facebook that he got feedback from some of the engineers and designers on the project as well as view prototypes. He reported that community and history are "very important" VW executives resurrecting the Scout and that they want to stay as true to the original as possible, meaning the vehicle and its variants will land

as true off-roaders.

AUDI U.S. PLANT?: The historic Inflation Reduction Act expanding federal U.S. tax credits will have a "huge impact" on Audi's North American strategy as the automaker considers building its first US EV plant, Audi's chief technical officer, Oliver Hoffman, told the *Automotive News*.

END OF ARTEON: VW's elegant Arteon sedan will disappear from the U.S. lineup in 2024, *Automotive News* reported. Its replacement is the fully-electric ID Aero sedan, a sleek Passat-size sedan with a Lucid Air-like fastback-profile roof.

BIG BUZZ DEMAND: Demand for the ID.Buzz in Europe has been so strong that VW plans to double production. Plans for next year are to produce 100,000 e-vans a year, increasing eventually to 130,000, possibly more depending on U.S. demand starting in 2024.

RECALLS

VW, AUDI MODELS: Potentially defective connecting rods produced for the base engine of 2022-2023 VW Atlas and Atlas Cross Sport models, along with the 2021-2023 Audi Q5 and Q5 Sportback, may be prone to catastrophic engine failure, prompting recall of 74,000 vehicles.

Retro Autoist

FROM THE VWCA ARCHIVES

10 YEARS AGO

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2012: VW has rolled out the latest Beetle Convertible, the third-generation of the iconic VW ragtop. VW says it's reinterpreted the Beetle Convertible's timeless design with a sportier and more dynamic silhouette, similar to the new Beetle coupe. The combination of a flatter roofline and a more upright windshield gives the car a shape that's more closely aligned with the first generation of Beetle convertibles.



20 YEARS AGO

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2002: VW's 1-Liter prototype car, which owes its name to the astonishing fact that it covers 100 kilometers (62 miles) using only one liter of fuel, was captured on film this fall in the streets of Johannesburg, South Africa. The 600-plus pound prototype is regarded as the world's most economic car and could be the first of a totally new family of cars. *Postscript: It was a clever attraction for the VW museum.*



30 YEARS AGO

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 1992: Canada is getting the fourth-generation VW EuroVan a half-year earlier than customers in the United States. VW says Americans will have to wait because a dual air conditioner won't be available until spring and that the front-only system will work well in the cooler Canadian climate. The EuroVan, a frontdriver, will be available in seven- or nine-seat configuration and offer a camper setup as well.

40 YEARS AGO

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 1982: Volkswagen executives in Germany have denied reports that it intends to sell its assembly plant in Sterling Heights, Michigan, to the Ford Motor Co. A spokesman said that VW was not seeking a buyer for the plant but that if someone was interested, VW would open negotiations. *Postscript: VW had entered a sales slump and never produced any vehicles there. In 1983, the plant was sold to Chrysler to produce the Dodge Shadow and Plymouth Sundance.*

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 1982: VW of America has announced its 1983 models and 1982 model-year vehicles sold after Oct. 1, 1982, will carry a limited warranty good for 12 months, with no mileage limitation. Previously, VW offered a 12-month, 20,000-mile warranty.

50 YEARS AGO

DECEMBER 1972: A German magazine that completed extensive driving tests on the New Volkswagen 412 reports that a high quality of workmanship can be expected, a roomy interior, good roadholding ability and very effective heating system. The engine starts and runs well when cold. Some of the less desirable characteristics: sidewind sensitivity, unpleasant engine noise at high speeds and very inconvenient and unconventional controls for heater, defroster and fresh air ventilation. *Postscript: History repeats, as similar complaints about ID.4 controls have been leveled 50 years later.*

60 YEARS AGO

NOVEMBER 1962: Laws requiring new automobiles to be equipped with seat belts have been enacted in Mississippi (1963 models), New York (1965s), Rhode Island (1964s) and Virginia (1963s). A Massachusetts law requires seat belts on vehicles used in driver training. Kentucky made seat belt anchors mandatory on new passenger vehicles.



COLD DISCOMFORT

Balky chargers leave family stranded in dangerous conditions

Last January my wife and I decided to take the ID.4 (2021 Pro S) for its first road-trip. We likely shouldn't have now that I know more, but the trip was across Wisconsin from Milwaukee to near Chippewa Falls, about 255 miles. Route planner ABRP told us we could go with one stop midway and make the journey in about 5.5 hours.

We loaded up the kids and stuff and headed

out. About 45 minutes in on the highway, I quickly realized we would not make it to the midway charger in Tomah, that we'd have to stop in Madison (about an hour earlier).

Super important context: it was cold. Not like cold for Florida but Wisconsin cold. Single digits dropping to minus 15 degrees F.

Holy cow, does that cut the range! So what was planned as one charging stop turned into

Image from VW's Drive In Climate Chamber at the Battery Engineering Lab

three, each for at least 40 minutes.

Inconvenience — and we'd get to our destination at like midnight instead of 9:30 p.m., but hey, that's an adventure and learning.

The nightmare started when we got to the Electrify America station at the Walmart in Eau Claire.

At this point, we had 55 miles of range showing and the destination was 54 miles away, deep into rural roads to a cabin where we'd meet some family friends. I was not about to chance that as the car already had a 30-mile error in its estimation so far and now the temperature had dropped to minus 12.

I get to the EA chargers and none of them will work. In bitter cold, each time I start the charge, it starts as normal (we've already charged twice tonight) but as soon as it draws the electricity, it reads "charging process error" (or something close).

I try all four stalls. Same error each time.

It's 11:30 at night. Temperature is dropping. I've got two kids in the back and an anxious wife, and I cannot get the car to charge.

I call EA. They try to help, restarting stations, initiating the charging themselves, telling me to lift up on the plug ... we try everything. I get the same error and all the stations again.

"We think it is likely too cold ..."

It's 15 below zero. In dangerous territory to be stranded. I know we can make it to somewhere for safety, but the car will not charge.

So I call my friend who's already asleep at the cabin we are visiting and ask him to come and get us. "OK ... I'll be there by 12:50 a.m.," he says. A real trouper and a good friend.

We wait in the car — miserable with worried kids

► **THIS ACCOUNT** Reprinted from the VWid4Owners community of Reddit.com whose author declined to give his name.



who can't sleep and a stressed and tired spouse, and I'm feeling like a total idiot for buying this car, for taking this car.

We sit in the parking lot with frost creeping over the windows and the climate control keeping the cold at bay, but, damn, I'm getting worried.

At last, my friend arrives, and we load all our stuff and kids into his Palisade and make it to the cabin, leaving the ID.4. All are safe and asleep soundly by 2 a.m. (after my friend gives me the appropriate grief about EVs).

We drive back around 1 p.m. the next day when it "warms up" to 10 degrees and I try charging.

Hallelujah, it works! Charges up while we get the grocery run list at Walmart and drive around killing time. I end the session at 90% state of charge and then we head back to the cabin.

I share this to caution anyone to think twice before venturing on a road trip when the temps are near

or below 0. The range got cut by 40% and we got stranded, unable to charge.

It was not a pleasant experience — and something I'll never do again.

One update: From a customer service angle, Nick of EA called me three times and eventually reached me to talk about my experience, hear the feedback and discuss what they should investigate or improve. Impressed with that customer service.

Of course, now they have to solve the actual issue, if the issue was the charger and not the car. But that was an important gesture and speaks to the culture there.

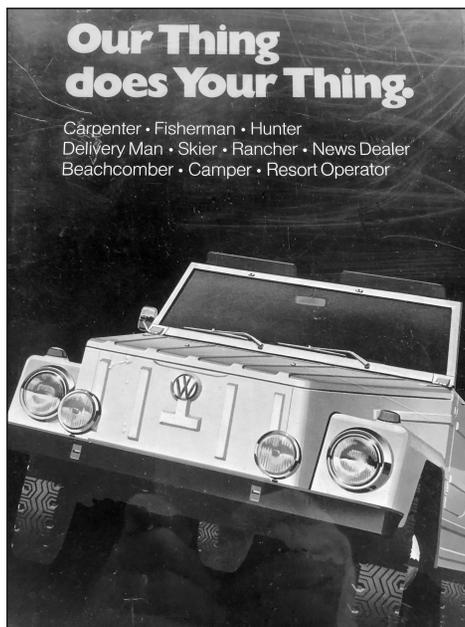
Minus-15 really was an extreme circumstance. Return trip, we drove home with temps in single digits, stopping at that charger and three others and they all were smooth and easy. **VWCA**

WHAT IS THAT



VW's quirky '70s vehicle has multiple uses

I enjoy driving my '74 Volkswagen Thing to Thursday cruise nights at our local Ace Drive In, which is known for its homemade root beer. There is an air of nostalgia as car hops bring food to the customers' cars. Cruise nights seem to have a special appeal both to vintage car owners and spectators alike. My VW Thing always draws people and questions. Earlier this year, a woman pointed at my car as she asked her husband, "What is that thing?" His response seemed to upset her as he replied, "It is a Thing." I intervened and explained that in the late 1960s the German army put out a re-



quest for a Jeep-like vehicle.

Knowing that it would be a costly endeavor with minimal profit, European auto and truck manufacturers were reluctant to submit a proposal. VW, however, realized that it could build a vehicle, using parts from existing cars, and could market it to police departments and NATO troops in addition to the German army. The Thing was assembled from a Karmann Ghia convertible pan, Beetle engine, lights and assorted parts. To expand the market, VW assembled and painted the Thing in its Puebla, Mexico, plant. The rural areas of Mexico appreciated the Thing's durability as

By Steve Midlock ✉ SMidlock@stfrancis.edu

their roads were quite rough.

In 1973-74, VW imported the Thing to the US. Only 25,000 were sold here then. It was crude and more expensive than a Beetle. Also, the federal government reclassified it from a multipurpose vehicle to a passenger car. This increased safety requirements, which were cost prohibitive. While it continued to be sold in South America and Europe until the late 1970s, it no longer could be sold in the US after the 1974 model.

As I explained this brief history to the couple, an elderly man stood nearby, listening intently. The couple thanked me and moved on to look at other cars. But the elderly man was fascinated by the Thing and asked several questions. I told him that the windshield folds flat, the doors come off and the top folds down, creating a dune buggy of sorts. The air-cooled engine is in the

rear. "Wow! That's some interesting engineering! What company made it?" he asked. I was dumbfounded that he didn't know that it is a Volkswagen.

I guess the Thing has an identity crisis. When first made available to the general public in Germany, it didn't have a name other than Type 181. VW even ran a naming contest. Called the Trekker in England and the Safari in Mexico, it became known as the Thing in the US. But the name wasn't the only factor of its identity crisis. It began as a military vehicle, but what was it to the general public? Was it a multipur-

pose vehicle? A beach buggy? A youthful car? A small truck? VW had to make it available to the public to make a profit, but how would it be marketed? In the US, brochures and magazine ads touted its ability as a vehicle for the outdoor life of fishing and camping. They also showed young people driving it on the beach, and in another picture, a carpenter driving it to a job site.

I admit that in my care, it has multiple identities. The rear seats fold down, exposing a metal floor that is convenient to carry bags of mulch, lumber and



even concrete blocks. It is a small truck that I frequently drive to the hardware store. It is comical to park next to large pickups there for the same reason. It also is a vintage car to drive to cruise nights and to generate lots of interest.

Of course, it also is a cruiser that I enjoy just driving around town and feeling the air blowing through window-less doors. The Thing is a Jeep-like vehicle, but it also is a four-door convertible. Yes, the Thing has many identities. As the lady at cruise night asked, "Just what is that thing?" **VWCA**



VINTAGE FUN

Colorful VW models provide plenty of adult/child interaction

Has inflation bit you hard? Have those additional dealer markups curbed your enthusiasm? Has Hagerty Insurance's upward evaluation of vintage VWs alarmed you? VWs, whether old or new, are expensive.

Well, there's a small workaround. Try Playmobil's officially licensed VW Beetle and Camping Bus scale model kits. You can get a 1960 surfing-safari Beetle (item No. 70177) for about \$45 or the 1962 Camping Bus (70176) for about \$60 or the Beetle Special Edition (70827) for about \$60, all at playmobil.us/shop-online/shop/volkswagen. I bought two of them at Volkswagen of Milwaukee North's parts department.

Each model kit comes in a

nicely illustrated sturdy box. Don't discard it until you've finished assembling its contents! It contains a vehicle, instructions, parts and accessories meant for adventures even if you don't stray from your living room. These colorful plastic models are nicely molded, finished and detailed.

I bought these VWs for my nephew Ru, 9, and niece Yi, 7. Each found assembling them engaging

and at times baffling — some instructions, for example, are fuzzy and their minuscule part numbers require a magnifying glass. This makes it difficult to determine part orientation — especially in how to apply decals.

Examine the product's box; inset photos show the accessories decorated with their



By Cliff Leppke ✉ leppke.cliff@gmail.com

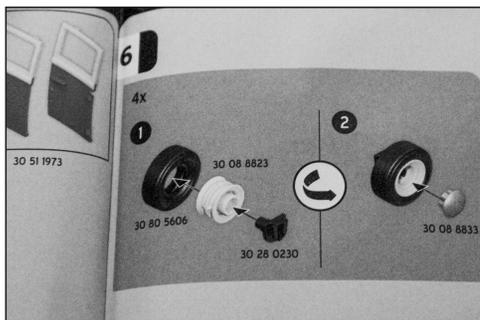
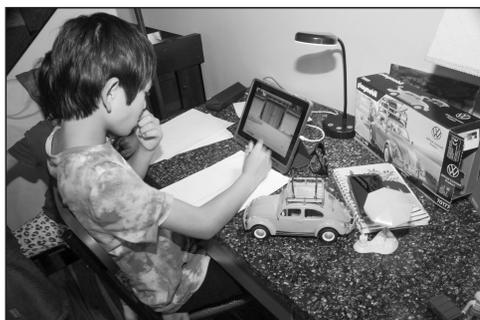
stickers. And, you might want to employ a Lego master, as some parts require considerable pressure to snap together (such as attaching the wheels to the chassis). The pliable tires, no tire irons supplied, require twisting/flexing skills my nephew and niece haven't developed. And attaching the Beetle's engine lid or the Bus' side door and hinges require deft part flexing to attach them.

Both kids dived into building their relatively affordable vintage VWs. Ru liked the surfing safari Beetle with its figurines — one a teen you can snugly affix to a surfboard. Ru wasn't fond of the plastic sandcastle (an amorphous blob) or the way it rests atop the plastic sandpile with an umbrella — just two circular indentations and no snap action fit — it just rests in the recess. A snugger fit would please him more.

I helped Ru with the tires. He tried to push them on and discovered they wouldn't pop over their rims. You must flex them like bike tires to mount them on wheels with grooves for the tire beads. So, I started the process and let him finish pushing a small arc of the tire onto the wheel. He found the mirrors too difficult to insert.

Sorry, Ru, the Beetle's trunk lid doesn't open. But the rear lid does, and the car's top is removable, letting you place the figures inside. Rubberized straps hold cargo on the rooftop carrier.

Yi instantly went for the Bus. She loves stickers, and the Bus has lots of them. She expertly located



ABOVE: The Playmobil VW models. LEFT: Ru with his completed safari Beetle model. BELOW: The instructions can be complicated.

ones meant for the folding seating surfaces, which added a zesty plaid motif to the Camper's interior. Decals for campside cooking items, however, were challenging — again consult the product's box insert photos. Some stickers wrap around the item 360 degrees and then an additional 90 degrees. Thus, the decal's design has a redundant section meant to overlay the first part you covered. Yi found the front turn signal lenses very difficult to affix. So, I pushed them into their holes and let her finish the process.

All said, each Playmobil provided plenty of adult/child interaction. And the resulting rolling models are suitable for play. And there's a faux tube of toothpaste to promote dental hygiene. Playmobil figurine hands are shaped to hold its accessories, including cameras, coffee cups, bags, brushes and shovels. So, you can create your own indoor VW adventure. And since the tasteful, colorful matte-to-satin plastics are nicely molded, you can display them on your knickknack shelf.

Playmobil's website lets you examine these 2022 "Toy of the Year" award winning models, their features and you can view the building instructions. **VWCA**

CARS 'n' KIDS

Can a younger generation sustain a hobby geared toward decades-old cars?

In the world of collector cars, including VWs, there is a concern that the younger generation might not be as interested in keeping the hobby alive as we are. I have hope in the future and would like to share some personal experiences. At cruise nights at our local root beer stand, I am amazed at how young families walk past Corvettes and muscle cars to get a look at my VW Beetle (pictured). Of course, the moms and dads have stories to share as they talk about their experiences with the legendary VW Beetle.

I am always eager to open the door and offer the kids a chance to sit behind the wheel of my yellow Beetle. This is usually accompanied by a photo. It brings me joy, but also hope that as we view ourselves as caretakers of history through our cars, we can plant the seeds to one day result in our passing the torch to these young people. It's interesting to note that back in its prime, Beetles attracted young people to own and drive them. Of course, they were readily available back in the day. It seems that our



beloved Beetles always had a connection with youth.

So, as I reflect on cruise nights and enjoying the opportunity to engage in Beetle stories and history, I recall some of my own memories. Probably a driving factor in wanting to have the kids sit in my Beetle goes back to an experience I had as a youth. Ironically, it was not with a Beetle, but the result was the same.

One Saturday my brother Andy and I were working at our school's paper drive. This was a fundraiser at which people would bring bundles of their old newspapers and magazines to the school parking lot. We would unload their cars and toss the bundled pa-

By Steve Midlock ✉ SMidlock@stfrancis.edu

pers into a semitrailer. One of us would be in the trailer, carefully stacking the bundles to fit the maximum number into the trailer. It was heavy work but fun seeing the different cars pull into the lot. It was amazing how big the trunks were that held massive amounts of newspapers. Cars certainly were gigantic back in the 1950s and '60s.

You can imagine our surprise when an Isetta (one door, microcar) pulled in the parking lot. How could that tiny car possibly carry any newspapers? The front door opened and one of our classmates jumped out. His dad worked for a car dealer who had taken the Isetta in on trade. We had never seen such a small car, especially one with only one door. The dad offered to take us for a ride, one at a time, of course (it only sat two people). My brother and I each got a chance to ride around the block in this fascinating car. Later that day, over the supper table, that's all we talked about. Our parents patiently heard the story over and over.

Fast forward 60-plus years. My brother and I recently were at a Mecum car auction, looking at all the cars waiting their turn to go across the auction block. We spied a 1959 Isetta and were quickly drawn to it. Knowing that it would sell for more money than I was able to spend on a hobby, I was happy just to sit in it. My brother and I reminisced



A 1957 Isetta.

about when we rode in one at the paper drive several years ago in grade school.

Later that evening, I was reflecting on the meaning of how much that simple gesture our classmate's dad had offered to us. Several decades later, we not only cherish that memory, but we're also keeping the history alive in the world of collector cars through our participation in cruise nights and other car shows.

I sincerely hope (and believe) that by offering kids the chance to sit behind the wheel of my Beetle at cruise nights, I can do the same for them that our classmate's dad did for us. [VWCA](#)

Helping VW & Audi owners enjoy their cars to the fullest since 1955.

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BRIGHT IDEAS

Shining a (head)light on the tangled web of automotive safety standards



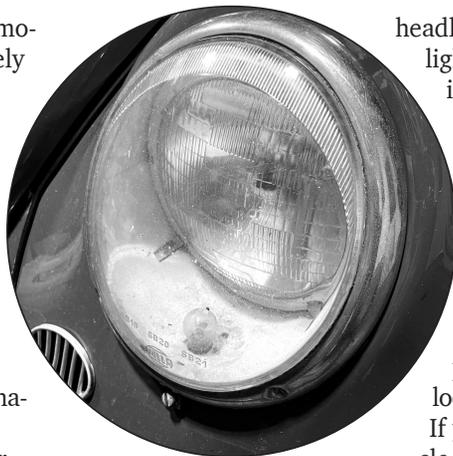
Headlight bulb from a 1927 Buick.

While the Flintstones' Flintmobile seemed to motor safely without headlights, motorists from the turn of the last century until the current one utilized some form of federally approved nighttime illumination — both to see and to be seen.

Expect more effective headlamps soon. The National Highway Safety Administration, after denying the VW Group's 2016 request for an exemption to import matrix-style adaptive driving beams, certified them. They must, however, harmonize with Society for Automotive Engineering's beam-pattern scheme or photometry.

Yabba-VW-Dabba-View!

This article, inspired by information gathered by VWCA member and past contributor Bob Beaumont, explores developments in this nation's automotive



Early '60s Beetle with headlight cover.

headlamps. Any analysis of automotive lighting should look at a variety of influences from carmakers, glass-makers, engineers, marketers and designers to state and federal regulators.

Beaumont pointed out, as do other VW collectors, that fairings, or light covers, were made illegal by the feds in the late 1960s: partly true. The reason given is pedestrian safety: false. So, let's look at the federal rules.

If you read the Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard's section 108 (headlamps), you'll notice something

missing — the subsection discussing pedestrian safety. In fact, the FMVSS doesn't ban fairings or headlamp covers! They just cannot cover a "burning" headlight. Thus, headlight performance, not pedestrian safety, was actually the issue. A 1968 VW Beetle

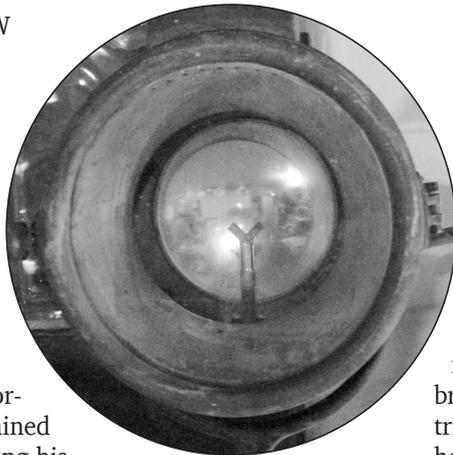
By Cliff Leppke ✉ leppke.cliff@gmail.com

brochure says VW moved the headlights to aid illumination. Thus, the notion of a federal conspiracy to thwart the sales of imported vehicles doesn't hold a candle.

This AUTOIST correspondent examined automotive lighting history using the equivalent of low candle power. One cannot exhaust all the ways various groups shaped our guiding lights. I'll explore headlights informed by relics found on the Leppke farm near Carrington, North Dakota.

The earliest lighting types I found were acetylene gas lamps from a 1912 Chandler car. A chemical process produced the gas, which in turn operated something like a Bunsen burner — a stretch but the best I could do. You opened a glass door and lit a ceramic Y shaped tube and let it glow. In my father's display case, I located Ford Model T kerosine cowl lamps. My mother's living-room knick-knacks include an E & J kerosine light made in Detroit. You likely poured kerosine into the lower bowl and ignited a wick.

Our 1927 Buick, however, represented a bright idea — electric lighting. Bulbs with two filaments (dipped beam, twin filament) are behind Fresnel-like lenses, which shape light. Be-



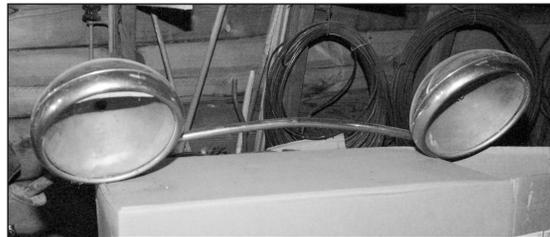
1912 Chandler with gas lamp.



Model T kerosine cowl lamp.



Buick headlight switch.



The 1932 Ford V8s attached headlights to a tie bar.

hind these bulbs are mirror-like reflectors. This system provided high-and-low-beam lighting, much like contemporary vehicles — certainly not as bright or precise. Yet, the bright idea of taking electrical energy from a battery/generator and using it to heat a filament became the norm.

These lamps (eyes, some say) became automotive signatures. Perhaps one of the most famous on a modest-cost car before WWII was the 1932 Ford V8's. Those little deuce coupes had shiny eyes on a tie bar. By the end of the Streamlined Decade (1930s), as Donald Bush dubbed it, headlights were integrated into the car's overall shape. While Pierce Arrow likely owned the notion of grafting headlights into the front fenders, other firms and their designers placed them in aerodynamic pods, or fairings, or flush mounted them into fenders or nearby aprons. Beaumont described glass-covered streamlined lamps as "fairings."

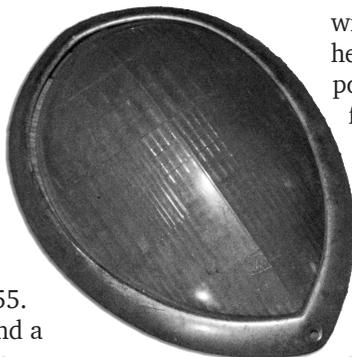
The 1938 Ford Deluxe Tudor had teardrop shaped lenses covering bulbs and reflectors. It was converted to sealed beam headlights, which were widely used in the USA for 1940 model-year vehicles. One advantage to standardized seven-inch sealed beams was they put their reflectors in a vacuum — also needed to make the filaments work. Thus, headlight beam pattern and performance weren't affected by atmospheric conditions (moisture inside lamp) or tarnished reflectors. Their widespread use led to standardized alignment methods and low-cost >>

HEADLIGHTS

replacements.

While most headlight histories suggest nothing changed after sealed beams arrived until halogen versions appeared, there were innovations. According to *Popular Science*, an improved sealed beam lamp debuted in 1955. On the Leppke farm, I found a barrel of early sealed-beam lamps. Many wore the manufacturer's logo — such as Ford.

Glass is fused to metal, likely utilizing a glassmaker's formula for glass with the correct "wicking" characteristics. The backside of this early sealed beam headlight is metal, not the enveloping all-glass type sold today. As such, it reminds one of the Cibie Bobi, a sealed beam lamp with replaceable halogen bulb

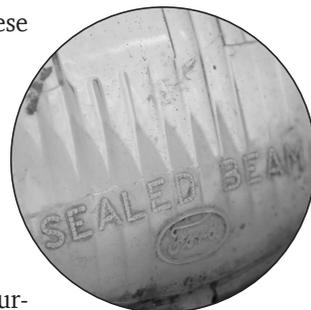


Teardrop headlight from a 1938 Ford Deluxe Tudor.

with metal backside. These headlights were briefly popular as an upgrade for standard sealed beams. I bought a pair in 1981 for my 1972 Squareback.

Dual headlights were the norm until the feds permitted four-lamp systems — first seen on the 1957 Cadillac Eldorado. Some states, however, didn't approve this change. By the 1958 model year, however, it and its 5.75-inch round lamps became the norm for most standard American cars. The 1971 VW 411 model wore four eyes.

The quad setup offered improved low beam and high beam performance due to their filament alignments. On the standard two-lamp design, the high



Ford logo on a sealed beam lamp.

The Ultimate Air-Cooled VW Book

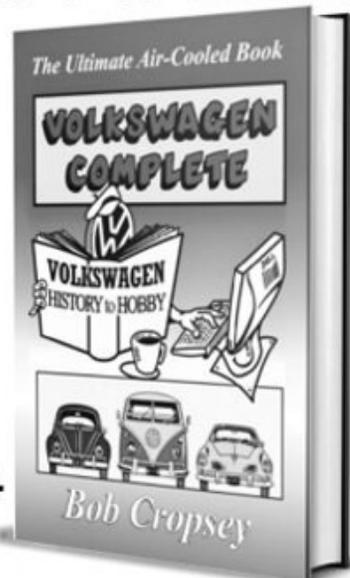
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beam filament is located for best optics; the low-beam filament is, therefore, out of focus. In the quad setup, the outer or upper combo high/low beam filament is focused for best low beam illumination while the inner or lower high beam's filament is aligned for best high beam lighting.

Under the covers

While some designers hid lamps behind covers — the Cord 810/812 is noteworthy — or prewar De Soto (1942), 1966 Olds Toronado or sexy Toyota 2000GT, Volkswagen, as did several other foreign marques, mounted sealed beam headlights (for the USA) behind glass covers — Beetle and Bus. You'll find glass covers on some American cars too — such as the Studebaker Avanti and Chrysler Imperial. On the Beetle, this complemented the car's streamlined design. Service manuals show European VWs utilized a lens-like cover, a bulb and reflector behind it —



TOP: A 1966 Fiat with fairings. BOTTOM: A 1968 model without.

much like the 1938 Ford's scheme. Thus, the USA setup added up to a rather complex and not necessarily needed affectation — lovable as it is. The Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard of 1966 likely dimmed the covered headlight or fairing as Beaumont described them — see Section 571.108/S7.8.5, Code of Federal Regulations 2004-

10-01, as it contains language shared with the codified 1966 Standard, which sources say took effect in January 1968. It states: activated in a steady-burning state, headlamps shall not have any styling ornament or other feature, such as a translucent cover or grill,



A pair of quad sealed beams on a 1958 Ford Custom 300.

in front of the lens. If VW wanted to use glass covers, it needed an expensive cover removing system — some deluxe American vehicles had hidden headlamps, which were uncovered when burning, complying with this rule.



Front design of the 1966 Oldsmobile Toronado (top) and Pontiac GTO were deemed as a pedestrian danger.

The rulemaking doesn't spell out what made the Beetle's glass lids problematic. Clearly, it wasn't pedestrian protection as they were OK if the lights were turned off. I suspect VW collectors conflate a later 2004 European rule requiring pedestrian-friendly deformable vehicle fronts. Automakers largely dropped headlamp concealment devices due to this rule. This pedestrian protection law, however, doesn't apply to the USA.

Those promoting highway safety (Ralph Nader, Center for Auto Safety and Cornell University), likely saw headlamps covers as problematic for optical reasons. For example, anyone with experience in TV servicing knows you can increase CRT brightness and cut reflections if you bond the safety glass (a cover) directly to the CRT's fascia — two glass panels are worse than one. So, vision or glare likely played a role. Plus, you can imagine arguments against covers

►TURN TO PAGE 25

2022

FRIENDS OF OUR CLUB

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

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22/01 COURIER

The Frontdriver

BY RICHARD G. VANTREUREN ✉ rgvant@juno.com

The powerful and troubled W8

Elder sister in Ohio had expressed interest in trading her everyday VW for a more sporty model, this eureka moment striking just after the Corrado had been dropped from the American lineup. The B5 iteration of the Passat was by then being offered as an all-wheel-drive, not to mention with four engine choices. We'd heard about the W8 model, but not actually having seen one, imagine our surprise when sister was offered a 2004 W8 still in the showroom well into the 2005 model year.

Ferdinand Piëch had decided the VW brand should attempt to target upper-income people, launching the Phaeton, while evidently hedging his bets by installing an oversize motor in the longtime flagship Passat. With sister ready to put ordinary Passats to shame, this writer took an interest in the W8. Too bad

for Ferdinand, the W8 turned out to be the engine nobody wanted ... and it seemed the feeling became mutual.

One writer summed it up this way: "Remember the Volkswagen's VR6, the narrow-angle engine found in the Corrado coupe and high-performance Mk 3-5 Golfs? Imagine chopping off two cylinders from the VR6 to form a VR4, then position another VR4 at 72 degrees to the first one, [then] run all the cylinders by a common crankshaft. ... The 4-liter unit could be comfortably fitted into the standard B5 Passat platform, which normally accommodated 2.0-liter 4-cylinder engines or 3.0-liter V6s."

► **LAST OF FIVE PARTS:** Richard VanTreuren concludes his historical review Passat ownership — including its early alternate identities Dasher and Quantum.

This reporter only drove her car once, with its big exotic engine providing excellent if not overwhelming power to all four wheels, all while being wrapped in a lot of leather in a well-appointed interior.



Sister's Passat W8 was exactly like this one, with black leather interior. While the oversize wheels and low-profile tires were a clue, the "W8" badge on the stern was the only sure way to know spot this car. Which could leave others in the dust.

Our family's Passat B5 era came to an end when the W8's "check engine" light came on. The dealer was unable to pinpoint the cause or give a good estimate; could be something simple, could require an engine rebuild. This seemed quite unfair for a car that had never been

abused, literally driven by a little old lady around town. Rumors abound that her W8 case was not unique.

Meanwhile, the B6 generation debuted in 2006, and Passat returned to pure VW's transverse engine. Featuring fresh styling and larger overall dimensions, all were powered by either a 2.0-liter turbocharged four making 200 hp, or a 280-hp 3.6-liter VR6, while offering Haldex-based 4Motion all-wheel-drive system. The complexity creep demanded standard ABS, stability control and six standard airbags. Our family skipped that generation, with sister trading in her exotic but troubled W8 for the new American-made Passat.

At the new state-of-the-art assembly plant in Chattanooga, VWoA starting building yet a different Passat, one specifically designed for North America. With massive amounts of rear-seat and trunk space, the larger Passat for 2011 was offered with a 140-hp turbodiesel four, 170-hp 2.5-liter five cylinder and a 280-hp 3.6-liter VR6. In 2013, the five cylinder was



ABOVE: The last ride for the US-built Passat, a victim of trending SUVs and EVs. **BELOW:** The W8 engine.



replaced by a turbocharged four making the same horsepower, but slightly more torque. Sister purchased a white middle-trim model, in every way flawless and a perfect performer.

The American model was refreshed in 2015, with slightly different styling and a raft of new driver assistance and infotainment systems. The diesel was dropped after 2015, and the V6 disappeared for model year 2019, by which time the 1.8-liter four was supplanted

by a 2.0-liter making 174 hp. For the 2020 model year, the design of the Passat was completely overhauled to freshen the looks. Sister's situation favored trading in the perfectly good white one, taking delivery of a beautiful Navy Blue model.

Shortly thereafter, the demand for SUVs and electrics found even the new North American Passat a slow seller, and the company ceased production. The photo here shows the last one coming off the Tennessee line. All in all, quite a run, 1974-2022 – and still going, outside the US. **VWCA**

Local Volks

Activities of VWCA affiliates

Camping, railroading and high water

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, Tom Janiszewski at Volkstom@sbcglobal.net, or the club office at VWClub@aol.com.

Here's what some of the locals are up to of late: **BADGER BEETLES AUTOFUN CLUB, MILWAUKEE:** It goes without saying that the Badger group held its annual Labor Day Campout at Lazy Days Campground. Featured were the new "Lawn Chair Olympics" and "Sunday Salad Supper."

NORTHEAST ILLINOIS VW ASSN., LISLE: Several members traveled to Union for the Illinois Railway Museum's annual Transport Extravaganza. Antique vehicles from motorcycles to locomotives were available for a hands-on experience. Later, NIVA's annual VW-Fest Car Show was held at Crystal Lake Volkswagen with a near-record number of cars attending. Despite all-

day dark clouds, not a drop of rain fell on the show cars. A fall color cruise is planned, ending with a visit to the Volo Auto Museum.

STATELINE VOLKS FOLKS, ROCKFORD, ILL.: The State-line's annual Vintage Picnic, postponed due to the pandemic, was postponed again, this time due to torrential rain the night before. Show-goers were met with barricades on the roads leading into the park due to flooding. On the plus side, it appears that some enthusiastic members have stepped up to assume some of the club's leadership positions.

Check our website, VWClub.org, for listings of these and 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. Occasionally, photos and videos of these events appear live as they happen on our Facebook page, facebook.com/vwclubofamerica.

And if your local chapter is planning an event, contact us at VWClub.org and we'll post it on our site.

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. If you're the one, contact VWCA at VWClub@aol.com or directly to the *AUTOIST* editor at VWAUTOIST@icloud.com. **VWCA**



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HEADLIGHTS

► FROM PAGE 17

because moisture might get under them, reducing their effectiveness. Plus, a headlamp's heat might not be able to melt snow/ice.

For 1967, VW altered the VW Beetle's front fenders and moved the sealed beam headlamps forward and didn't cover them. The 1968 "safety" Beetle, with raised tougher bumpers and higher tail lamps, continued the theme clearly echoing the sealed-beam trim seen on the American Type 3 series. The 1968 Type 2 line shared a similar transformation. The safety Beetle brochure states the new "headlights are vertical and throw a better beam." The Beetle's vertical lamp design became nearly universal worldwide.

Hip to be square

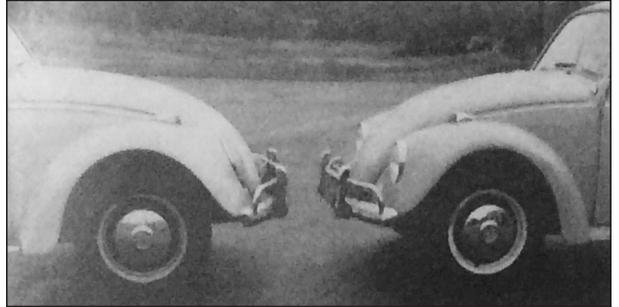
During 1973 General Motors petitioned the Feds asking for permission to use rectangular headlamps. GM's argument, according to *Consumer Reports*, was it could improve driver vision by lowering car hoods due to the reduced height of these flatter lamps.

Rectangular headlamps appeared for the 1975 model year, seen on the Chevrolet Monza. These rectangular shapes were likely the byproduct of rectangular glass bake-ware, if trade stories about rectangular screen CRTs introduced in the early 1950s are accurate — picture tubes were round faced as were sealed beam headlights — glass forming and strength sometimes favored drop or blown rounded forms.

VW's 1982 Scirocco and 1982 Quantum shared these lamps along with the 1982 Oldsmobile 98. Of course, Detroit's stylists couldn't resist stacking rectangular lamps — 1976 Chevy Malibu Classic obvi-



An '82 Oldsmobile 98 with rectangular beams.



Consumer Reports didn't say whether the '67 Bug's conventional lamps bested the covered ones from '66. But the '67 likely was better as it had 12-volt electrics too.

ously negated the stated reasons for federal approval of rectangular lamps. And this duplicitous dance continued, as future shifts in lighting shapes often couched as aero aids sometimes seemed to thwart any notion of smoothing airflow.

Halogen sealed beams

Ford's corporate archives claim Blue Oval was instrumental in two USA lighting changes. One was the sealed beam halogen headlamp announced in 1978 and first installed in the 1979 Lincoln Versailles. Long-lasting halogen/quartz-iodine lighting is whiter and uses a tad less energy (although filaments burn hotter) compared with standard tungsten filaments. The move to composite or variable size lamps (sometimes with polycarbonate lenses) is attributed to a 1981 Ford petition for lamps with replaceable bulbs. The 1984 Lincoln Mark VII was the first to wear this Euro-sleek lamp.

VW adopted rectangular halogen lighting for its 1982 Quantum and Scirocco. Later, it used glass, form-fitted composites for 1985 Jetta and Golf GTI. Composite lamps lent an upscale look to the 1999 VW Golf.

Projectors, HID and others

I'm going to compress this latter section, as headlight developments unfolded very rapidly from the 1990s to date. One development is the projector-type headlamp. We saw these high-intensity discharge »

lamps as optional units on the 2006 GTI. The 2013 CC came with standard Bi-Xenon lamps. The 2019 Toyota RAV4 uses a high-intensity projector lamp. Dipped lighting is white and extends nearly high-beam distance on the right with a dimmed glare-cutting area to the left. Choose high-beam and the unit fills in the darkened area on the left. On this vehicle, there's an auto high beam setting intended to promote high-beam usage as the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety advocates their use. A variation using light emitting diodes arrived in 2009.

VW's Audi division played up its vampire zapping daylight bright LED lights in a 2012 S7 Super Bowl ad. Expect similar theatrics with the matrix ADB LEDs when they arrive. Automotive designers will, as before, find new ways to cover them.

Controls and displays

The NHTSA granted VW an exception from the blue high-beam telltale. That's government talk for your instrument panel's high-beam on indicator. VW argued LED warning devices were more reliable than incandescent bulbs. But LEDs according to Standard No. 100-80 published Jan. 21, 1982, were not available in blue or white with blue filter. Thus, the agency let VW use green for its LED high-beam telltale until suitable blue ones were available. My 1983 Scirocco has a green telltale; it's on the right side of the LED warning array.

My 1986 Scirocco, however, has a blue LED telltale; it's in the middle of that array. Most cars these days use green for low beams and blue for high. **VWCA**

PUSHERS ...

Pushers, steerers and ... riders. In my early days as a mechanic, it was not unusual to encounter a customer's car that could not move under its own power. In these cases, the other mechanics would lend a hand pushing it into the shop.

The guy who was assigned to the repair was the "driver," and everyone else pushed. Driving was not an easy task, if you've ever tried to control a car with the power steering and power brakes inoperative. Inevitably, one of the "pushers" would call out, "I don't mind you riding, but don't drag your feet!" It was all in fun, though, but the point is that everyone pitched in because they knew someday it would be their car that needed to be pushed in.

VWCA needs a few "pushers," or pullers to keep this 'Wagen running smoothly. A few extra pushers now will make the job easier when it's someone else's turn to do the steering.

One of the keys to the success of our club is its organization. Each of our benefits of membership is tied to the efforts of one or more of our officers or appointees working together



NEEDED



...STEERERS

to keep everything running smoothly. We have the founders of our club to thank for their foresight way back in 1955 for this structure.

But lately, we have let things slip. Over the years, fewer and fewer members have stepped up to handle these functions. The result is that some of our key benefits have been curtailed, while others have fallen on a single person to keep them going. That means that only one person knows how to

do them!

Fortunately, generations of club leadership have created and persistently maintained a Procedure Manual, which not only defines the purpose and function of each position, but also describes how it is accomplished. What could be easier?! Also, a brief outline of the various offices and appointees has been prepared along with what each entails. Curious? For a copy of your very own, just send an email to vwclub@aol.com and we'll get it right off to you.

So, how about it? Are you a steerer, a pusher or just a rider? Without steerers and pushers, this 'Wagen is going nowhere.

— Shell Tomlin **VWCA**

DRIVER'S SEAT

► FROM PAGE 3

some of which Thing specific. About the only Type 2 transaxle part is the backup light switch. The transaxle code, moreover, indicates it's a variation of the VW Beetle's. For proof, look at its rounded case. The 1968-and-later IRS Type 2 had a "square" transaxle case.

Midlock, when confronted with my version of the vehicle's mechanicals informed by Dustman and VW's ETKA parts database, dutifully cited his story's sources — including Peter Vack's repetition of *Road and Track's* 1973 Thing review by Henry Manney. He claimed knowledgeable friends on dune buggy matters pronounced it (the lurid-orange Thing) a well-finished sheet-metal tub set on top of transporter suspension, gearbox and engine. Wrong.

Because this machine utilizes a Karmann Ghia convertible-derived platform, you cannot bolt a Transporter's front suspension to it. And there's that pesky round-shaped transaxle — a Beetle staple.

Yet this 1973 review's inaccurate quip from knowledgeable friends has legs. It still shapes how today's writers image the vehicle. What's worse is John Muir's 1984 edition of *How to Keep Your Volkswagen Alive* (aka the *Idiot Guide*), which says "all Things have two transfer cases" shared with the pre-1968 Bus. A later 1989 edition, however, thanked David Amaral for informing



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



Steve Midlock's 1974 VW Thing.

"us" that the Thing is a Type 181 with 181 part numbers and independent rear suspension — not the twin-transfer scheme used on the 1967 and earlier Type 2s. It took 25 years until this guide fixed a major error.

Midlock, after discovering the contradictory facts from VW's ETKA parts list, revised his piece. I was impressed. In our exchanges,

I discovered he's an academic with administrative talent. Midlock kindly shared his vita sheet, including academic and truck-collector publications. I wondered whether he has a Thing "Birth Certificate." He does. His vehicle's origin story — begun as a completely knocked down kit from Germany, however, has the wrong paint code or color — a common certificate complaint among Thing collectors. *Hot VW's* Lynn Anderson blames these errors on VWAG outsourcing its certification program, though I cannot confirm this. Eventually, VW fully manufactured the Type 181/Safari in Mexico.

While I've only met Midlock via email, negotiating a Thing story with him introduced me to a genuinely thoughtful VW enthusiast. And along the way, I found Nader's diatribe — a 1973 letter to the NHTSA blasting the agency for classifying the Thing a multi-purpose vehicle, which exempted it from car-safety rules. Nader claimed the maker of the "Small on Safety" Beetle foisted an even more dangerous vehicle on the American public. He argued it wasn't an MPV built on a truck's architecture — but an even more dangerous Beetle (actually a Karmann Ghia convertible) without shoulder belts.

One letter, published in *Motor Trend*, told the story of the highway carnage a doctor witnessed in Mexico. He said American tourists who crashed one were ejected from it. The Thing's be-everything folding windshield, removable doors and open top >>

DRIVER'S SEAT

represented careless design.

In the end, the NHTSA rescinded the Thing's MPV status. This meant VW had to certify it as meeting USA car-safety rules for 1975. It didn't. Thus, the mid-1973-introduced Thing continued through the 1974 model year and then expired, although Mexican production of the similar Safari continued.

Happy to meet you, Dr. Midlock. (*His updated Thing piece runs in this issue.*)

Travels in time for an '83 Scirocco

My 1983 Wolfsburg Edition Scirocco's odometer rolled to 348,000 miles this fall. I drove it to Chicagoland for an event called Chicago Drives Electric. This three-day electric vehicle promotion began with a media day, followed by a dealer day and finally a consumer-day drive opportunity. According to its organizers, 2,000 people signed up to drive the EVs and 500 were on the waiting list. It took only a few hours to fill the consumer-day slots.

Ironically, the first media-day event was the not-EV Alfa Romeo Tonale presentation. The EV conference followed that. Then, I teamed up with fellow autowriter Larry Rust.

We drove an assortment of BEVs, EVs and PHEVs. EV is the larger category for vehicles with some kind of electric drive, such as a hybrid that uses its powertrain to charge a battery and in turn uses that battery to power a motor. Plug-in hybrids add the ability to charge

the battery with household current. These machines usually travel 20-30 miles or so before they start their engines. Battery electric vehicles rely solely on batteries and motors for propulsion.

VW's William Gock provided three 2021 VW ID.4s. Sorry, no 2023 ID.4s built in the USA. A gasoline generator supplied charging current — hmm. VW hired Amazon's Alexa (plural form here) to guide consumer test drives. Amazon's artificial-intelligence persona (plural) answer questions about the ID.4's battery, charging capabilities, blind-spot monitoring and other features.

Andrew Savvas, VW's chief sales officer, says "Alexa

offer exciting ways to talk to consumers, using a voice service they already know." Interesting. After I demonstrated to Rust how you can say "Hello ID" and ask the vehicle to cool your feet or warm your hands, he tried opening and closing the panoramic roof's sunshade. He uttered, "Hello ID, close the sun screen." No luck. I countered with "Hello ID, close the sun shade." That worked.

I found this event's suburban Oakbrook Terrace setting at the Chicago Automobile Trade Association's headquarters congested. The busy major thoroughfare is lined with commercial buildings. Gated communities flank the side roads. I found a manse and parked the ID.4 in front of it. Meanwhile, I contemplated whether I should call a real estate broker for a tour of a nearby house. It sported a for-sale sign and lots



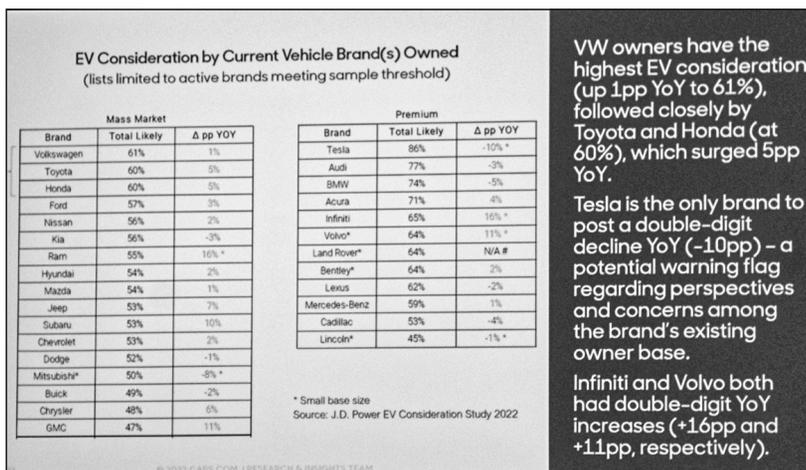
of garage doors. Perhaps if I pulled up in a pricey BEV, I'd look like the part.

I sampled the PHEV Jeep Wrangler 4xe. It's a Jeep thing. I didn't care for its sloppy on-road handling. But you can press a button and reserve its electric drive motor's battery power for locomotion when you hit the trails. Then, you can ambulate in stealthy EV mode. Hyundai's PHEV Santa Fe seemed to drive with greater finesse than the gas-only version. Ford's Mustang Mach-E has a sporty demeanor. And Blue Oval let us investigate its E-Transit full-size van.

GM's Bolt was for show only. Tesla and Toyota/Subaru weren't there. The latter two were likely sidelined because their wheels may fall off. Toyota says it figured out what's wrong — massive torque and variable wheel hardness cause lug bolts to snap. By the time you read this, Toyota/Subaru should have a fix.

Before and after morning test drives, event presenters discussed EVs followed by question and answer panel sessions. Talk focused on consumer tastes. For many BEV drivers, the ability to charge at home is very satisfying. We're told most EV shoppers want a dealer experience — the ability to see, touch and drive the vehicle before buying it. And VW drivers lead mainstream brands in BEV consideration. This tidbit came without an explanation. Perhaps, VW's elevated figures come from those seeking an elusive ID. Buzz van?

If VW owners are the most EV curious, VW's current BEV, the ID. 4, is on the list of BEVs with fewer new-vehicle registrations this year — January through August. Its deliveries declined 15% to 9,127.



VW owners have the highest EV consideration (up 1pp YoY to 61%), followed closely by Toyota and Honda (at 60%), which surged 5pp YoY.

Tesla is the only brand to post a double-digit decline YoY (-10pp) – a potential warning flag regarding perspectives and concerns among the brand's existing owner base.

Infiniti and Volvo both had double-digit YoY increases (+16pp and +11pp, respectively).

A PowerPoint display touts VW's potential clout among EV brands.



Three ID.4 models share parking space with Kia EVs at the Chicago event.

But deliveries are in the pipeline as Chattanooga production gets up to speed on 2023 models. In a webinar in October hosted by the New York-based International Motor Press Association, VW executive Hein Schaefer said ID.4 is now the brand's "fastest-selling" model in the U.S. lineup, with 30,000 advance reservations.

Meanwhile, from January to August, Tesla registered 298,383, Hyundai Motor Group (including Kia/Genesis) reported 43,072 BEV registrations and Ford's Mach-E tallied 25,596. Add Ford's other BEVs and the figure is 33,354 units. >>

DRIVER'S SEAT

Because this event was about EVs with an emphasis on BEVs, it tilted toward this vehicle type as a salve to automobility in the zero-tailpipe emission age. I had questions. Some were answered. I wondered whether it was good public policy to offer federal and state tax credits to those buying expensive, large, heavy vehicles. The Inflation Reduction Act lets you spend more for a luxury BEV truck or SUV but less on a BEV sedan. Ford's Lightning BEV truck is heavy. It weighs 1,600 pounds more than its internal combustion engine version. Volvo's relatively tidy XC40 "all electric" Recharge weighs 1,000 pounds more than its non-electrified version. This extra weight is disconcerting to those who motor in thrifty light-weight subcompacts. Just saying.

Commonwealth Edison's rep said EV charging during off-peak times should complement its power distribution system. It doesn't expect a shift to coal-powered plants to meet vehicle charging needs. In Europe, coal is back as an energy source due to the Russian conflict.

Quibbles aside, EVs are here. They meet relevant consumer tastes. Many excel in acceleration. And our presenters offered helpful data. And as Tesla demonstrates, it can sell more BEVs in the USA (so far this year) than all VW models, including gas engine and BEV.

Our experts were confused, however, by the Inflation Reduction Act. While they focused on the act's expansion of tax credits to, say, Tesla, which should increase tax-credit eligibility, they incorrectly thought those on the waiting list for previously el-

igible imported BEVs still qualified for the federal tax credit. Only those with sizable down payments or consideration may use the previous tax rules for an imported BEV.

Our panelists revised their language after journalists explained the IRS' interpretation of the IRA. All thought providing the federal tax credit at the point of purchase, rather than tax time, should help buyers make informed decisions.

Scirocco hits the road again to NoDak

After the CDE, I packed my 1983 Wolfsburg Edition Scirocco and motored from Chicago to my sister's place near Minneapolis. The following day I drove to Carrington, North Dakota. Nearly 40 years ago, this Scirocco was hot stuff. The second of VW's cars available in the States to get a high-output 90-hp gas engine, close-ratio five-speed manual transmission, sports seating and revised suspension tuning. The motoring press heaped praises on the American-made 1.8-liter GTI. VW enthusiasts were thrilled to get their hands on something very close to the previously unobtainable signature European hot hatchback. The GTI represented a shift from VW's prior emphasis on fuel economy (gas or diesel) to sports-car thrills in a practical suit.

By mid-1983 VW smartly placed the GTI mill and

tranny in the Scirocco, transforming it into a car that went as good as it looked. In addition, VW added an oil cooler, leather-clad seating, steering wheel, shift knob and shift boot. It came in one of three colors. The price was relatively



The marathon Scirocco, posed amid the automotive ruins of the Leppke farm.

modest for this hatchback sports coupe.

This was a wonderful transformation. Nonetheless, I considered it and the GTI, when they were new, made of “unobtainium.” Early 1980s inflation and my meager paycheck meant they were beyond my means.

This changed in 1988, when I bought a used '83 Scirocco for \$3,650 in Mesa, Arizona. It wasn't flawless, as nearly any rubber mount or seal died an early death. But after I replaced fuel injector o-rings, the clutch push-rod seal and other items, things changed.

Most of the new parts were composed of better materials, which in turn let me rack up the miles with relatively few unscheduled pit stops. I can drive it 700 miles in a day and arrive at my destination relatively fresh compared with my Squareback. The engine is smooth and hushed. It cruises well at 72 mph, sans cruise control. The large hoop in front of me tickles my fingers with manual steering road sense. Directional stability is good. Road and wind noise are moderate. Fuel economy is usually in the 31-34 mpg range. My car has a taller fifth gear, which I added. It reduces engine rpm, oil temp and accelerative amusement.

New for this fall's trip, the Scirocco wears an improved altitude and attitude. I replaced the sagging original front springs with OEM items from Germany, via VW Heritage in the United Kingdom — heritagepartscentre.com/uk/volkswagen. Trick: Use VW's Classic Parts in Germany, volkswagen-classic-parts.com, to check for availability. When you open its webpage, select United Kingdom/Eng-

lish. The USA/English option lets you order a “birth certificate” — but that's it. Search for parts and you'll get an error message because Classic Parts doesn't ship to the States.

After I consulted VW's ETKA database — volkswagen.7zap.com/en/rdw — using my car's front-spring color marks as my guide, I determined you can still get new front springs, as the diesel VW Caddy truck used them, too. As installed, they raise the car's nose for that leap'n lizards-look you see in the car's original publicity photos. You'll notice more tire body clearance in front. While this stance won't grab those who prefer their VWs lowered to an alligator's level, it helps the Scirocco travel over Wisconsin's acne roads or unpaved ones in North Dakota. Before the new front springs, the car's front slammed to its suspension stops and sometimes broke its strut insert dust caps. Yes, new rear springs are next.

You might wonder why I sought the OEM springs. Well, the springs sold through most USA vendors are generic Rabbit, Scirocco and Jetta ones. They've proven unsatisfactory. Even those marketed as GTI springs didn't work. And I didn't want to lower the car with sport springs or coilovers. I think the OEM suspension tuning is a decent blend of comfort and sport. It leans to the former.

Speaking of parts, my brother Gary's 2009 4.6-liter Ford F-150 pickup has been sidelined. The intake manifold cracked. This means it cannot be correctly fastened, which in turn creates a coolant leak. The part is on global back order.

I thought I'd use my Ford PR >>



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contacts to help Gary. I wanted to become the Dutch boy who put a finger in this Ford's dike. My contacts confirmed the back-order situation. Gary called Ford, which confirmed the problem. When a part's been back ordered, Ford will not let you or the dealer put themselves on the waiting list. Then, Ford offered further advice: set up an online account with Ford's parts outfit. There's a way to get a notification, when the part's available. This doesn't mean you'll get the part. But if you order it ASAP, should Ford run out, they'll put you on the list for the next batch.

My brother, an IT professional, discovered he couldn't open an account with Ford via its website. He'll ask his dealer for help.

While I cannot brag, some VW service parts are tough to find, it's surprising you can still get key items for a nearly 40-year old VW, but a relatively new Ford is another matter.

My vintage Scirocco, however, has its awkward moments. I had two during this trip. The high-beam switch melted during its hours-long use. Unlike my 1972 Squareback, the turn-signal-operated dimmer switch doesn't control a headlight relay. Instead, VW routes lots of electrical current through the steering column-mounted switch to the lamps. That's a dimbulb idea, but I've motored with it for decades until it fused itself in low-beam-only mode. I removed the car's steering wheel and stalks, opened the switch cover, and shaved off a blob of plastic. This "fixed" the problem.

The second mishap is my less-than-complete drive-line service. I had a warning, the left outer CV joint popped off the axle when I installed a new left front spring. I didn't carefully examine the axle; just pushed the joint onto its shaft. This got me to NoDak, but during my off-road drive behind the barn to locate a photo friendly angle, the front axle popped out of the left outer CV joint. Ugh. I spent nearly two hours pushing the car uphill to the barn's workshop on gravel! Sisyphus had it easy with that boulder roll!

Once inside the workshop, I disassembled enough

parts to access the joint and axle end. I couldn't find the joint's inner retaining circlip. Upon closer inspection, I found it recessed in an axle slot. It's supposed to stick out of that slot. You press the joint over it and the joint in turn snaps into place. I ended up bending the circlip, forming an exaggerated "C" shape. It clicked. The lesson I learned late: Always install new circlips, washers, spacers and axle nuts when you service a CV joint. New joints or boot kits have those parts.

With its improvised repairs, the marathon Scirocco proved worthy of its name. I drove it home to Milwaukee in one 700-mile trek. Everything went smoothly. Think of it as the "new" small wonder.

Newly departed

It seems like yesterday when I chided VW for not sending its vans to the USA. Perhaps the folks and Volks read our market better than I thought. Mercedes announced it's discontinuing its smaller Metris van. It will fill existing orders and then call it quits. The Metris camper van is a likely casualty. The larger Sprinter van will lose its gas engine option. That's because Nissan and Mercedes will shutter their joint engine plant in Tennessee. It produced the gas engine for both Mercedes vans.

Nissan axed its Titan pickups (regular and heavy-duty), plus its full-size NV 1500-3500 vans and its NV200 city van. I remember Nissan's Detroit press conference where it debuted the Cummins diesel Titan. Despite the herculean effort, Nissan just couldn't capture much market share. Ford, meanwhile, says no more Transit Connects, and Stellantis says the Ram Promaster City van is toast.

In sum, it sounds like garage-able smaller-than-full-size vans don't fill an American void. There was a time when VW proved they did. **VWCA**

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VW's 591-hp Nardo broke records but never made it to showrooms

The website Slashgear found 12 concept cars it wished had made it into production, including a VW called Nardo, pictured above. Here's their take:

It's not every day that a carmaker best known for making affordable, fun-to-drive cars shows off a W12-powered mid-engine supercar out of nowhere.

But, Volkswagen did just that in 1997 with its original W12 concept. Over the next few years, it improved the car, fine-tuning it at the race track and bumping its power up to a mighty 591 horsepower. The unique W12 engine configuration was made up of two VR6 engine blocks fused together to create one 5.9-liter unit. The car's design was handled by Italdesign, and power was transferred to the asphalt via VW's Sychro all-wheel-drive system.

This wasn't just a headline-grabbing design study, far from it. No, this was a fully-fledged supercar, just one that was never sold to the public. The fastest iteration of the W12 concept, called the Nardo, was built specifically for the Nardo Ring, a high-speed test track and proving ground.

VW reports that the car set seven world records at the Ring during its showcase event in 2001, and all seven remain standing today. The car received a lot of press attention at the time for its success, and simply for the fact that it was a VW-badged supercar.

The company had stated from the start that it never intended to sell the car in showrooms, and it kept its word, as the only prototypes built still remain under the ownership of VW today. **VWCA**

Parting Shot

High-voltage driving



New Hampshire resident Chris Williams says he remembered something about an April Fools' Day joke regarding Volkswagen changing its name to Voltswagen and thought at the time "that would make an amazing license plate."

He told the AUTOIST:

At the time I was planning on getting a Tesla Model Y and hadn't actually considered buying an ID.4, but when the time came, my wife talked me into shopping around and sitting in ALL the EVs available at the time. By all I really do mean all of them!

I'm 6'8" so fitting into the car is obviously a big deal. We drove all over New Hampshire talking to dealerships to see if they had available models to see if I could fit. We test drove Tesla, VW, Volvo, Audi, Mercedes, the Ford Mustang, you name it!

The ID.4 was *by far* the best fitting, most comfortable car for me. While it didn't have the torque of a Tesla, I'm more than happy with the AWD ID.4's performance.

In my opinion, Tesla is a software company that is learning how to build cars, and it shows in how the car's user interface feels and how the car handles. VW is a car company that built a car — it's not a software company, and that shows in the UI too. But it's my hope that that will smooth out as they learn about software deployment practices.



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VW Toon-ups

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