



Six Steps to Find “The Classic Car I Always Wanted”

Is “The Classic Car I Always Wanted” still out there somewhere?

YES!

Are there resources available that can help me find “The Classic Car I Always Wanted”?

YES!

Can I successfully use those resources to find and buy “The Classic Car I Always Wanted”?

YES!

Step 1 – Which car *is* “The Classic Car I Always Wanted?”

How many choices of Make, Model, and Year are on your list?

Do you want that one particular car?

If you are like most people there was, and/or is, a certain kind of car that really catches your eye. It may have just that certain style, or look that causes a real emotional response inside. Cars are a lot like woman in this way. You may see a whole lot of pretty woman, and appreciate several really nice ones, but there is just something about that particular look that you are especially drawn to.

There could be a very short list of cars that are going to be worth your time looking at, because you are very particular about where you want to spend you money. If you are going to invest in “The Classic Car I Always Wanted,” you are a very discriminating person. It is important that you get just the right look and feel in the car you drive. Cars are an expression of who you are and how you feel about things. There is a certain communication there and a certain message about you.

If there is only one particular make, model, and year that is your favorite and you intend to find that exact car, you are in luck. The techniques described here will get you to that destination and you will be very satisfied when you are done. The nice thing about looking for your classic car, that one particular car, is that you can take your time. That one particular car is out there, it is waiting for you, it and even a few others can be near or far, but there for the finding either way.

On the other hand, do you have several different cars on your list?

Maybe you are the kind of person who has lots of nice cars on your mind. There may be a whole bunch of cars that could be “The Classic Car I Always Wanted.” The variety, diversity, range, mixture, and spice that have been the appeal of cars over

the years is the reason you like so many different cars. There is a certain automobile buffet awaiting you as you begin your search.

You will have the most fun looking for your car and find lots of possibilities. The search will or might be the most thrilling adventure of your life. There will be a great assortment, but in the end, you may find it difficult to narrow down which one to buy. When there are so many choices it can be difficult to pick just one. On the other hand you might be able to have your cake and eat it too. With the variety of value in the classic market you might either buy more than one, or you can buy one, sell that one, buy another and over the course of time, own a lot of your favorites.

Is this the car you used to have, date back to the time of your youth?

When we were teenagers our car was very important. It made a statement. It was our independence, our escape from the house, our image and style, and our way to get from place to place without parents. From the 50's on, teenagers have had a love affair with cars. The subsequent generations have seen cars as transportation, but also reminiscing to those days of youth when my car was just a little more than that.

That first car may be the one that you always wanted to fix up *just perfect*. You may not have had the money, or the time, or the support to do what you really wanted to that car. It still holds a special place in your heart, almost like that first kiss from your best girlfriend. That first car got away from you some how and never really got the attention it deserved.

Maybe you had to sell that car to afford college, or a wife, or a new child. Some times life throws us a curve that is unavoidable and decisions have to be made with higher priorities than a car. Life changes and we adapt. The memories may have faded a little, but the connection is still there. A lose, but not lost forever.

Maybe your car got in a wreck and you could not afford to repair it, but always wanted to bring it back to life. Maybe it just needed too much work, and it became unreliable for the needs you had at the time. Cars can be a lot of work and a lot of money and a lot of hassle. Other people sometimes make decisions for us and stuff happens and disappointment becomes something we have to deal with.

Nevertheless, to some degree our youth is able to be recaptured. Some things we can have again. That Classic Car I Always Wanted is one of those things.

Is this the car you always wanted, but you never owned?

It could be that "The Classic Car I Always Wanted" belonged to someone else, like your best friend or your arch rival. Were you jealous and envious, or was it a friendly, healthy, but competitive sharing experience that you look back on with great satisfaction?

It could have been your girlfriend's father or brother's car, and you got to drive it, but never own it. The pleasures of driving increase without the pressure of maintenance and payments and insurance, etc. Maybe you did get to work on the car, and maybe you were influential in some of the decision on modifications, or improvements. You were "part owner" in that car and it *felt* like your car.

It may have been on the new or used car lot when you were out looking and some else came along and bought it before you could save up the money for it. There may have been a time when you had spent a whole summer waiting for and wanting that car, and there were even others *in on the dream*. Your family and friends knew of your strong desires and were just as disappointed when it got away. Or maybe it was just in your heart, a heart-break you never told anyone, or you wanted to, but just couldn't.

That car you never owned can be your car now. There are ways to mend broken hearts, and get over disappointment. The reality of today is that that car that "got away" is able to be found today.

Is this the car that makes "just the right statement" about your life and who you are right now?

Are you going through a *perfectly justifiable mid life crisis*? Is there a burning in your inner soul for more expression, more fun, more wind in you face, more **just plain manliness**? Do you see "The Classic Car I Always Wanted" as an essential part of your breaking out of that rut you are in, and screaming for a new and better you? Cars can do that. They can display a different image and help that "real you" come out into the open and help fulfill the potential within.

Are you tired of looking ordinary, but want to be "noticed?" (in a good way of course) Does the everyday work-a-day world seem plain, and when the weekend arrives it has less spark and appeal it used to have? Then "The Classic Car I Always Wanted" seems to be something that just might help.

Are you a lot more fun than you appear to be in that "same old, same old" modern sedan that everyone owns and drives?

It is okay to have fun, it is healthy to have fun, it is good for you to have fun, and it is even "fun" to have fun!

No matter what the reasons may be, there is in all of us, a longing to find, "The Classic Car I Always Wanted."

- Do not deny the emotions involved with this decision.
- Remember this car will probably not be the car you drive to work everyday.
- This car will have much more importance in you life, than just daily transportation.
- Emotional expression and having a healthy way to express it is a very powerful thing.
- We deserve to have some emotions and sentiment attached to a car.
- It is not wrong to want to have some connection to our past, youthful period in our life.
- If you feel "The Classic Car I Always Wanted" sounds like fun, then move forward with the commitment and passion this deserves.
- Take the steps necessary to begin the search.

What are the highest priorities on your list? "THE SEARCH BEGINS"

Make (what car manufacturer built the car)

Domestic or foreign

- ◆ Are you a "Made in America" patriot or do you support the world market and like classic imports? It does not matter in the long run. Either way this information applies to you. The greatest thing about the automobile in America is that there are so many to pick from. You can have it all.
- ◆ The availability of foreign cars is much less than domestic cars, but they are out there and good deals are to be had. Some collectors love to work on the metrics from across the sea. Parts may be a bit hard to find, depending on the models and years, but with the boom of the Internet, you can get just about anything.

Ford, GM, Mopar, or Independent; BMW, Mercedes, Rolls Royce, or MG

- ◆ The variety of manufactures offers the classic car buyer many different styling, performance, and handling options. The automobile industry is famous for being creative, imaginative, and even experimental.

Where do I start, so much to choose from, so many options?

- ◆ We all have a favorite make or manufacturer. Some people are "Ford all the way!" some would not be caught dead in one. Some believe that GM has the best engines, and Mopar has the best styling, while Independents are the most innovative and creative. On it goes, because variety is the spice of life.
- ◆ Thank God we are not all the same; we all could be driving Yugos!

Model (body style and subcategory name)

Convertible

- ◆ "If the top goes down, the price goes up." "There is nothing like the feel of the wind in your hair!" "Cruisin' with the top down, great feeling!"
- ◆ Everything about a convertible says, "Driving for the fun of it."
- ◆ Even though the body and frame take an extra strain from not having a roof to help support the weight of the car.
- ◆ Even though they are prone to metal strain in places most other cars are not, and can hence shorten their life.
- ◆ Even though rust is more likely because of the additional flex of metal causing paint separation and cracks.
- ◆ Even though they are not safe in an accident and were banned by the government for a time, because they are dangerous.
- ◆ Convertibles are the most popular style and the most desirable cars for classic car buyer. They continue to bring the highest price tags and hold their value the longest of any style automobile

Coupe

- ◆ The second most desirable body style is the two door, or coupe. These styles are sportier by nature, and have better lines.
- ◆ Manufacturers offer more performance package options in coupes than in sedans. Racing engines and transmissions are almost always in a two door style.
- ◆ Some drawbacks of the coupe are:
 - the extra heavy doors cause doors to sag and misalign, due to hinge strain and wear.
 - rear seat passengers have a more difficult time seeing due to more sloping roof lines and smaller side windows
 - the difficulty entering and exiting the rear seat. Not having their own door, and having to hinge the front seat forward, can be very difficult even for the average person, let alone someone of additional size or age.
- ◆ The coupe is the most available and the most collected body style by collectors of any classic car today.

Street rod

- ◆ Custom street rods, whether pre-war or 50's – 70's are popular among some very serious classic car enthusiasts.
- ◆ These cars are almost always modified, customized, specialized, and modernized to make a very unique and special road machine.
- ◆ There are lots of exciting and outrageous options from chrome to powder coating, turbo chargers to Flowmasters, flames and pinstripes, leather and denim. You are only limited by your imagination.

Sedan

- ◆ Traditionally classified as a family car, the four door or sedan has grown in popularity over the years. Always taking a distant third place after the convertible and the coupe, the sedan can have some very high quality and excellent performance offerings.
- ◆ Sedans are reasonable to purchase and can be found being very well maintained. Often these cars spent their life in the garage, and therefore can show minimal aging and wear. Because they were a family car, there is often more interior room, and larger trunk space. These factors often lead to more weight, greater length, and poorer performance. To balance the other side the ride of a sedan is often smoother, and more comfortable than the coupe. The suspension was designed to support more passengers and cargo, therefore a greater load capacity and heavier duty components.
- ◆ All this being said, there are many very appealing sedan that have great styling, performance and handling that for much less money than the comparable coupe, you can get a great car.

Station wagons

- ◆ This little remembered and often ignored classic automobile has really gained in popularity in the last few years. Once mocked and ridiculed as the “ugly step-sister” the station wagon is becoming the latest craze among classic car buyer and restorers.

Keep watching this market, and if you are interested in a good station wagon, there should be one out there for you, priced quite reasonably.

Trucks

- ◆ Trucks are becoming a very popular and profitable option for the classic car market. Traditionally classified as a work vehicle, the truck is gaining followers for restoration and refurbishing, as well as customizing and street machine status. There are still a lot of good trucks out there at reasonable prices. Many of the same tools and ideas shared here about cars apply to the **“The Classic Truck I Always Wanted”**

Year (the year the car was manufactured)

Pre-War

- ◆ Hot rods and roadsters, T-buckets, and Model A's are all part of the list of pre-1945 vintage automobiles for the very discriminating car buyer. As far as pricing, most pre-war vintage cars carry a high price tag, both for purchase and maintenance. These are not for the faint of pocketbook.
- ◆ It will not be unheard of to spend over \$20,000 for a good driver and \$50,000 and up for a full restoration. These cars are a much higher investment. You either have original equipment issues with parts, or some serious aftermarket modifications requiring knowledge and expertise.
- ◆ These cars take a very special owner with knowledge and friends who can help keep these wonders running and functioning correctly
- ◆ If you are interested in such an automobile the first item on your agenda is research. There are dozens of very reliable and helpful websites, national car clubs and publications dedicated to these mechanical marvels. So much of the problem with owning these vintage cars is the parts availability. Sometimes the only way to get a replacement part is to have it fabricated from scratch.
- ◆ I am not an expert on vintage cars, so if that is your interest, find someone who has more experience.

50's

- ◆ The era of really exciting growth of automobiles in America is the 1950's. No decade prior to the 50's so romanticized and identified so closely to cars. The “Happy Days” of nostalgia and all the fashion, fun, as well as horsepower, styling, and popularity of the automobile tends to make the 50's bigger than they really ever were. Nonetheless, cars were great in the 1950's and are still very popular.
- ◆ If this is the decade you are looking to purchase a classic car, you will have many choices. The pricing on cars in the 1950's will be at least \$12,000 and up for a running daily driver. You will count on reliability and yet need regular maintenance and repair. Cars needing restoration from the 50's depending on their inherent popularity can be bought for less than \$10,000 always depending on condition.
- ◆ If you are seeking a restored car, you will be spending over \$20,000 and upwards into the \$50,000 to \$100,000 for a complete frame-off restoration on the most popular makes and models.

- ◆ Reliability, power, styling, performance, handling, and safety were all engineered at a dramatic pace, increasing almost geometrically into this generation of car junkies. There are such differences between the cars of the early 50's to the late 50's. Conversion to modern V8's, 12V over 6V, high performance engines, automatic transmission, suspension changes, etc.
- ◆ Some would say that no other decade has come close to the artistic styling and design of cars in the mid to late 50's. Who can see a '57 Chevy Belair or a '59 Caddy without seeing drama, grace, and all out 'Wow?' Early 50's cars were round and plump, almost lethargic looking, post-WWII cars retained pre-war styling for a few years. Imagination took off around 1955 and flare over the top and by 1959 fins were huge.

60's

- ◆ The 1960's continued the diversity of styling, performance, and innovation. Many more modern conveniences emerged in the '60's with smoother ride, more comfort options, and an increase in engine/transmission combinations.
- ◆ Almost any Make and Model could be customized with performance packages and creature comforts with the average driver being able to afford more than ever.

70's

- ◆ The early 70s' saw the biggest, heaviest, most powerful cars ever built.. Huge big block engines running on premium gasoline producing 300 – 500 horsepower or more, in a factory installed performance package. Just prior to the EPA restrictions, and the oil tragedies coming in the late 70's and 80's American cars were powerful, sleek, luxurious, and thirsty. Never again were American cars so roomy and huge.
- ◆ As the 70's ended, reduction in overall size, weight, compression ratio, cubic inches, and metal in all American cars generally ended the classic car era, in my opinion.

Engine size (cubic inch displacement CID / Liters and Horsepower)

Big block

- ◆ Big block refers to the engine size; most manufacturers built engines in two basic block categories. If the cubic inches were in excess of 400 CID when the block was stock that would be considered a Big Block. Certain makes fudged on that number slightly, 390 or so could also be called a big block.
- ◆ The key was the possibility for massive displacement when the engines are bored to larger cylinder/piston sizes, and stroking the crankshaft for greater compression ratios, and adding performance camshafts and ultimately the horsepower increases being huge.
- ◆ Often the choice of true classic car purists, the big block engine is more desirable, and often had more limited production numbers and that corresponded to higher value.

Small block

- ◆ By definition if it is not Big it is Small, or under 400 CID originally.

- ◆ Many great and wonderful things have been done to small block engines including some very large displacements and horsepower.
- ◆ Small blocks are generally designed for smaller cars, and mid-size autos, but have been used in full size cars successfully.
- ◆ Now a days fuel economy pushes the small block in for better gas mileage and performance combined.

Numbers matching original

- ◆ When a car is said to be a numbers matching original that simply means that the engine block #'s, are the ones the car had when new, and they match the VIN, which matches a build sheet, if you have one. Ideally the transmission case is original and then you have a complete set.
- ◆ I just read an article in Hemmings Muscle Cars magazine where VIN #'s and fender #'s, and radiator support #'s are being cut off junk cars and sold to rebuilders to illegally falsify the identity of a car.
- ◆ You buy certain ID codes and weld them on another car, trying to fool a buyer into believing it is a car that it is not. Do you smell jail time?

Transmission

Automatic

- ◆ Automatic transmissions are able to produce powerful results and hold together under great demands that were once reserved for the manual transmission.
- ◆ Needless to say an automatic transmission is easier to use than a manual transmission from the driver's perspective. All you have to do is put the gear shift in D and push the accelerator and you go.
- ◆ The choice of Auto vs. Manual is almost always the buyers. Value can be higher for a 4 speed performance package, but for the average classic car buyer, it is just personal preference.
- ◆ An automatic transmission will usually cost you a little less on the maintenance side of your purchase. If you change the filter and fluid right away upon purchase and it is operating well at that time, you should have little trouble with an automatic.

Manual

- ◆ Three on-the-tree, four speed Hurst, top loader, and many other terms differentiate the choices for a manual transmission.
- ◆ Changing gears by controlling the shift point on the power curve, does give the driver more involvement with the transfer of power with a manual over an automatic. You also more control over the use of the horsepower the engine is offering you.
- ◆ Because a manual transmission has user controlled parts, the wear and tear on a manual transmission is directly proportional to the way it is treated. If you are rough on it and ride the clutch or do heavy racing and high demand driving your transmission system will need more maintenance and more costly maintenance.

- ◆ In the end, an manual transmission will cost you more. On the initial purchase, there are fewer classic cars with a manual transmission available, and the pricing will probably be a little higher depending on the make and model.
- ◆ I have found though, on the not so popular makes and models, that a manual transmission will lower the selling price, because there is a higher desirability with the automatic.

Air conditioning

Those of us, who live in the South, look at air conditioning not as an option, but a necessity. When you have several months in the 90's all the time, it is difficult to enjoy your classic car, when you are sweating all the time you are driving, not to say your girlfriend not liking to sweat at all.

If you are a Northern car owner and see air conditioning as a luxury, unnecessary for your climate, consider a classic car trip, or cruise in, or national meet that you might want to enter your car in. Then look at A/C for your car and consider the advantages again.

The problem with factory installed air condition is that prior to the 70's, it was an expensive option. It was rarely, if ever, installed in a performance or sports car.

If you are looking to have after-market air conditioning installed or installing it yourself, there are several very good companies out there. Pricing ranges from \$900 to \$2500 for do-it-yourself to professional custom jobs.

When you purchase a car try to find a car that has factory air installed, even if it does not work, the components are surprisingly available all over the country.

Color, chrome, upholstery, fuzzy dice, etc

Oh, to pick your favorite color or add some "eye candy" chrome here and there to dress up your ride. There are a multitude of colors available where they be the original factory color, or a custom color you choose to have you baby morphed into. Color makes a statement and is very important to what you want to say. Choose wisely

Paint is a maintenance issue as well as a message issue. You will want to keep your classic car free from rust for as long as you own it. Regular washing, polish, wax, sealants, and dressing for every part of your car are available on the market. Find a good one. I will be sending future articles on the topic Care After The Purchase

Wheels and tires

Many times you see a car with fancy wheels and tires that are worth more than the car they are mounted on. For some reason, there is a real strong desire to have fancy rims and tires.

There can be a real "bling" effect you are looking for and that particular set of rims and tires will give just that result. It is my advice for your classic car, that you do the car first and then do the wheels and tires.

Wheels and tires should draw attention to the car, not distract from it. If you just have fancy wheels, and you are driving an ordinary car, you have just that, an ordinary car with fancy wheels.

Why not do both, in concert with each other. Look at them as a package, and combination of all the looks you are trying to get, along with the statement you are trying to make.

Sound system, video, etc.

Today, the sky is the limit almost, with what you can do inside your car for sound, video, lights, neon, electronics in general. Keep in mind the level of originality you might want, and the level of modernization you require. They can live together in harmony. You need not sacrifice one for the other, and manufacturers today and making that possible with dozens of outlets for really cool electronics for classic cars.

Step 2 - Restored/ Refurbished/ Modified/ Repaired?

Restored are the most thorough and the most expensive and the best

Full frame off restoration is the highest level available.

Completely disassembled
Frame stripped, sand-blasted, and coated with rust proofing
Body stripped, rust removed, straightened, repaired, and realigned.
Interior completely redone (dash, upholstery, chrome, glass, etc.)
Drive train rebuilt (engine, transmission, rear-end, and driveshaft)
All other mechanicals new or repaired to original condition (brakes, tires, a/c, electrical, etc)

On frame restoration with paint stripped and interior redone

Often as complete as frame off, just not separated from each other
Either not needed, or unable for time or money or skill
These are often done by the hobbyist, rather than the professional restorer
Includes #3 – #6 from “Full frame off” above

What is a “turn-key” classic car?

The term “turn-key” has been used for all kinds of applications. Industry defines it as a solution that simply works the moment you plug it in.

The same could apply to a “turn-key” classic car. I would say that the closer you can get a restored car to being as new as a used car can be new, then the closer it is to a “turn-key” solution. It has to be much more than everything works. There needs to be an understandable length of wear, and level of professional restoration that would say this car will last and be reliable as much as a new car can be.

Refurbished refers to “bringing back to original condition”

Reconditioning is another word for refurbishing.

Mechanical systems are brought back into full function

Cosmetics are done, with minimal invasiveness and/or rust

Often original upholstery and headliners are preserved and protected

Usually requires only a repaint or repair

Cars needing only refurbishing often have a good paint job, either repaint or original

Chrome can, but does not need to be rechromed.

Interior may or may not need replacement, maybe just repair

It is highly desired to keep the original interiors, if possible

Repair and protection are the goals.

If unable to repair, original or as close as possible is desired

Modified or modernized involving aftermarket or new part upgrades, not original to the car

Certain modifications and modernizations are very desirable and fairly invisible and a great benefit for reliability and safety

Engine ignition converted from points and condenser to electronic ignition

Drum brakes converted to disc brakes, usually front only

Air conditioning added or at least converted from R-12 to R-134a

Radio/CD sound system modernizations

New and/or modern rims and tires

Engine power and efficiency modifications increase performance and economy

Repaired usually involves getting a car running that is currently not

How much are you mechanically able to do?

Can you change the oil, replace belts and hoses, and do a basic ignition tune-up?

Are you able to tackle a brake job?

Have you the confidence to change front end parts (ball joints, tie rods, etc)?

What about rebuilding a carburetor?

Do you have leaky valve covers?

What if your alternator went out?

Can you see yourself replacing a water pump?

Can you and/or do you want to maintain your own car with a little help?

What kind of tools do you have to do your repairs?

Where can you find good, economical, and reliable tools?

Is your garage and drive way space large enough to tackle most repairs?

Step 3 - Preparing for the Hunt

Doing the research necessary for success

Whom do I ask and trust?

A friend who is into classic cars?

Friends can be a great source of local expertise. Just make sure the friend is as knowledgeable as you think they are. Sometimes friends will say things and share things that may be a bit bigger than life.

Contact a local car club that may have your make in their membership?

Car clubs are filled with very experience car people. If you have a local club that meets regularly, consider joining even before you get your car. These are usually very friendly and helpful people.

Local shop family mechanic?

Check around and see what shops work on classic cars. Some times there are specialty mechanics in your area that do have a great amount of experience with older automobiles. It may cost you in time and money to employ one of these professionals, but it sure helps to have a professional on your side when you need one.

An online classic car broker service?

These are a growing service company that depending on your location may even have a local contact. Because these are a new kind of business, there are the same concerns you would have for any new kind of business. Do your research, ask for references, discuss their fees, and make sure they are just not trying to sell you their cars.

You are looking for someone who is genuinely interested in helping you find “The Classic Car I Always Wanted” and with that in mind will do what you need them to do in finding just that.

A new or used car dealer?

There may be one of these in your town that specializes in classic cars. If you do know of one that is willing to help you check all the same items in car broker services listed above.

Where should I look?

The first place to start looking for a car today is *eBay Motors*.

You may not end up buying your car online, but *eBay Motors* is the largest used car lot in the world.

You will find the largest number of about any model for which you might be looking

You will learn the range in prices for the car you are looking

You will especially find the range of condition that is available.

You ultimately have to decide what you are willing to invest in a Restore, Refurbish, Modification, or Repair depending on the condition of the car.

Condition is also very hard to determine online, without seeing the car

Photos can be and are “doctored up”

Even if they are not, photos do not tell the whole story

If you can see the car “in-person” you are in the best position to make a decision about condition

Where the cars are located is very important

Most cars above the “rust belt” or “up Nort” as we call it, will be in poorer condition by nature of the weather and salt used on the roads.

Not all cars from the South are great cars, but they do have a better chance due to the more favorable environment.

Believe the Arizona sellers when they say, their cars have little or no rust.

How long will it take?

This is best answered by, “How soon do I want it?”

- ◆ If you want the car within the next month, then you may be frustrated. In order to go through the check list of what you are looking for, do the research, make the contacts and do the search, you are looking at a month or more easily.
- ◆ If you want this car within the next year, then you are being realistic. It may not take you a year, but you need to understand the process and that will put you into a better time frame of mind.
- ◆ Depending on the Year, Make, and Model the availability and condition of classic cars vary dramatically. There are common cars that are more available for collectors and other cars that are not that common. Your prioritizing will determine what you are looking for and then discovering the availability of that choice.
- ◆ If you are looking for a common, popular, already very collectible car, then there should be several to choose from in a variety of conditions. You may find the car you want in as short as a month if you happen to get lucky and it is in the neighborhood. Larger cities have more available outlets for any car you are looking for.

- ◆ If an exotic is on your radar then the possibilities and available cars go way down. The more unique the car, the more interesting and involved the search. If you are like me, you enjoy the hunt as much as having the car in your garage.

What is my budget?

- This must be answered for the completed car, not the initial purchase price.

All cars need some work, maintenance, and repair. If you can budget repairs for your daily driver you can budget about the same amount for your classic. The oil needs changing every 6 months, the radiator needs a flush every 12 months, there will need to be a tune up done every 24 months. New air filters every 12 months, and a new fuel filter and wiper blades every 24 months. Transmission serviced every 48 months, and even though your miles are less, keeping track of these routine maintenance items by months helps you keep your car in top shape no matter what the miles you drive.

A restored car will be the most expensive, but may cost the least to maintain because so much was done to it in the restoration. There are a lot of new parts and modern parts that maintenance may be the only budget expense.

If you are trying to find a daily driver that you can gradually refurbish and/or restore, set your sights on a car that has a fair initial investment and include in your budget the necessary funds over time to complete the project. If you spend \$5-8000 for a car, then expect to spend as much over time to finish the job.

What scams should I look out for?

- A common scam now days if you are selling a car from an Internet site, is the buyer offering a Cashiers Check to you for more than the asking price. You will receive the cashiers check and return the difference to the buyer, but then the Cashiers Check gets voided or cancelled on the other end, and you are stuck with the difference owed to the bank, and maybe even lose your car.
- Listings that are obviously “too good to be true,” are almost always, just that!

Rarely is there such a good deal, that you could triple your money without even washing the car!

You can not buy a 1969 Mustang Fastback for \$2500, even if it does not run.

I actually bid on a couple of those “deals” just recently that all turned out to be an obvious fraud

1969 Camaro “Yenko clone” for \$5500. When the seller was contacted, the listing immediately was pulled and there became no trace of it anywhere.

1966 Rolls Royce Silver Shadow \$1000 NO RESERVE. The car was available locally and when contacted an appointment was even made. Within hours the car listing was cancelled and the owner decided he changed his mind about selling the car.

1962 Cadillac Eldorado convertible \$57 opening NO RESERVE. This listing was on the Internet with a dozen other cars with the same low starting price and No

Reserve. Within a day all 12 listings were cancelled and warnings sent to bidders saying beware of this listing seller.

Unfortunately I did speak to a guy who sent **\$9500 to England to get the “Car of his dreams.”**

This is a true story. It appeared the transaction was using Yahoo for the money transfer service, but the scam artist copied all the HTML code off Yahoo’s site and pasted it into an email, changed the transfer funds link, and got the full \$9500 transferred to his personal account, and before he was able to do anything, my friend lost his \$9500, “the car of his dreams,” and almost lost his wife and family.

- When you are only contacted by email and the person will not give you a phone # **BEWARE!** It is very important to speak directly to the person selling the car. If someone refuses to give you a phone # I would stop all contact. If they are really a legitimate seller, then you need to talk.

Step 4 - The Hunt

Looking, searching, working, and agonizing through the process

Using online resources

www.eBayMotors.com

I have used *eBay Motors* to buy and sell almost all of my cars. I found it to be very reliable and everyone I have worked with, except the obvious SCAMMERS, to be very helpful, honest and cooperative.

There is no other website on the Internet with as many great choices, inventory changing daily, and variety of makes, models, years, condition, you name it.

The bidding process has a level of excitement, but be careful to keep you emotions in check or you can do things you would not do, “in your right mind.”

Buying on eBay Motors must be an intellectual process. Yes, there will always be the bit of emotion and that is a good thing, when you keep the reins on it.

Do not make a decision without doing all the home work!

www.CollectorCarTraderOnline.Com

This website has a great variety of cars. They tend to be a little more affordable than some of the other sites and I have found some really good deals on some drivers that may not have been put on some of the other more “high end” sites.

I have purchased a couple of cars using CollectorCarTraderOnline.Com and have had success working with their marketing team combining website with print media marketing a car in the summer of 2006.

Hemmings Motor News and www.Hemmings.com

Marketed as the *World's Largest Collector-Car Marketplace*, Hemmings has in their publications and their website links to thousands of cars, parts, services, publications, etc.

I have been reading Hemmings for years and find them to be an excellent source of reliable and high quality service providers.

Their monthly magazine is well worth the subscription price. I look forward to its arrival and often sit down right away and read at least an hour or more to find some new bit of information that I never knew before. Their new format as of this last year has really improved their look and quality for a print publication.

As a resource I would list them very high on my list for places to keep on looking even long after my purchase.

Other websites I have used and looked at, but not done extensive research on are www.Cars-On-Line.com, www.DealsOnWheels, and www.BuyClassicCars.com

Using paper publications

Hemmings Motor News

As mentioned earlier, Hemming Motor News is considered by many to be the premier publication in the collector car industry. If you need to find a part, service, or any collector car help, Hemmings Motor News will probably have what you need.

I contacted many service suppliers listed in Hemmings, while restoring my 1952 Cadillac Series 75 six passenger sedan. I was never disappointed. Everyone I spoke with all over the country is connected by a love for classic cars. It is a great networking tool.

Auto Restorer

This is a fantastic monthly magazine that is invaluable to the hobbyist working on his own car, and interested in some detailed articles and how-to's from some really excellent writers. I am very glad I stumbled across an ad to subscribe to the very informative and interesting publication.

National Street Machine Club - Classic Thunder

This national car club/magazine publisher is a young company dedicated to the car enthusiast.

They have magazine resources, videos, apparel, and other information presented in a very upbeat and understandable manner. I am very impressed with the books and videos available to the members.

Keep up the good work, guys. I am a life member of the National Street Machine Club and wear my cap and leather jacket proudly.

Auto Trader

There are many national and regional publications that list classified and picture ads for classic cars. Auto Trader is one of the biggest and oldest in the industry. They have sub categories for trucks, vintage, newer used cars, etc.

You get a tremendous amount of national coverage when listing a car in Auto Trader, and you will have a lot of national cars to choose from when you buy Auto Trader when are searching.

These classified ad publications are relatively easy to peruse, noting that these publications come out once a month usually. By the time you get the magazine the car you are looking at may or may not still be for sale. Many sellers use several avenues to sell their cars and rarely rely on one single source.

Local newspapers and flyers

The local newspaper want ads have historically been the place to find used cars, even classic cars. Unfortunately, depending upon your municipality, the local paper has decreased significantly in circulation and readership. There are more and more car dealer ads, and fewer individual ads.

Your local paper may not be devoid of classic car ads, but it has been my experience it is not worth my time to check the local paper for classic cars.

The local flyers for free or almost free in the grocery stores, etc. are again dependent on your locale and will be a source for good deals if you are interested in searching them weekly and religiously. If you are such a shopper, patience and research is the key, just the same as any other method.

Asking the right questions

When you find a car you are a little bit interested in, you need to ask good questions. The questions I always ask are as follows:

#1 “How long have you owned the car?”

- This question tells me right off about the knowledge the person will have about maintenance history, any hidden problems that may exist, and also their commitment to a fair deal. If they have only just bought the car themselves, and they are just trying to make a couple of bucks on it, I may be hesitant without some real good face to face with the car.

#2 “Is the title in your name, and from this state?”

- If there is not a clear title or it has not been transferred to this state, you are just asking for problems in paper work.
- Yes, you can even get a title for a car, if it is sold without a title (something I have not yet done, nor do I plan on buying a car with a “bill of Sale” only)
- If the car is in the sellers name and it is still registered in a previous state you will have some extra hoops to jump through with your Department of Transportation folks. This can be avoided if the seller just gets a title in the state he is selling the car.

#3 “Where is the car, and how soon can I see the car?”

- I have only bought one car without seeing it myself first. That one was close to my parents and they did a look see for me. I trusted them, but they did not even see everything I wanted them to look for. I trust my own eyes, or the eyes of only a couple good friends of mine who also know cars. I will continue later talking about *buying a car sight unseen*

#4 “Can I see the receipts you have for the work you have done or had done to the car?”

- If they have no receipts and have claimed some major work like an overhaul or brake work or even a tune up. I would question whether the work was done.

#4 “Do you know the previous owner, and can I speak to them?”

- If you can do this, you are even more miles ahead than ever. Remember, the more research the better. It will be rare if you can speak to any previous owners, but it is worth asking the question. He may be living next door to the seller.

Buying a car sight unseen

- This can be scary, but there are some pointers to be shared, that may help.

First of all make contact with the seller personally. You need to talk on the phone with the seller. Do NOT do all your correspondence over email. This is the first indicator of a possible SCAM.

Second, get **more pictures**, and **more pictures**, and **more real close up pictures**.

You can get photos that are all doctored up, but if you get a lot of photos you will be able to see as much of the car, as you can, from as many different angles as possible.

Today with the new digital photography the expense for taking photos and sending them to a potential buyer is only an investment in time.

If you need more close-up photos of the underside of the car, or behind the quarter panels, or under the trunk liner mat or up close in the door jams, ask for them.

If the seller is hesitant to take a lot of pictures, I would be hesitant in buying his car.

Third, try and find an independent set of eyes to look at the car in person.

This means calling a car broker in the city where the classic car is located and asking if they do inspections for a fee, or know of a reputable inspection shop.

I know that Pep Boys does an inspection of sorts for people interested in an independent evaluation.

You do know that the owner must be willing to take the car to the shop and relay the evaluation to you. Some sellers may say, no.

Finally, I would spend at least a total of two hours on the phone over a total of 5 days with the seller asking every possible question I have listed above and any others you think of, while taking excellent notes that you can read through later.

I plan on including a form at the end of this article with a check list of questions to ask and areas to inspect before you buy “The Classic Car I Always Wanted”

Step 5 - Is It Time to Buy?

You have found your car, or you think it might be your car

Before you go and look at the car, you need to know what the value range is.

- Determining national price guidelines is very important and will give you leverage when you get down to making offers and counter offers and finalizing purchase price. There are several ways to determine price ranges for cars.

If you use an auction site like eBay Motors you can look at cars that have been sold under the Completed Listings section on the left column. This will not show you what people want for their cars, but what they have actually sold for over the last few months. This sale history has its limitations, but is far more reliable than the asking prices and reserves people have on current listings.

There are other websites that have ways to determine what sellers are asking, but only a few that actually list cars that have SOLD. The SOLD sign is what you really need to look for.

When you have researched the classifieds, and the auction sites you need to get an official range for what has become to be a reliable source for relative value on used and classic cars. They are the price guide sites.

- **What price guides should you use?**

NADA.Com

- ◆ The best resource for classic car value on the net, bar none.
- ◆ There are other resources, but NADA.Com has proven itself to be a reliable and user friendly website.
- ◆ Within seconds, using a very intuitive interface, the Internet user finds Low, Average, and High values for the car and not only values, but what the cars value would be with certain option packages. A very excellent web design team maintains this resource.
 - Step by step you start by going to www.nada.com
 - Click on Consumer
 - The second tab at the top is Classic Cars click there
 - I always click the bottom choice Passenger Cars under Used Values on the far left
 - You will be asked for your Zip Code sometimes, who knows?
 - Then choose the MAKE of the car from the alphabetical list
 - Select the YEAR
 - Next is the MODEL & TRIM (this is very important to get accurate)
 - Then finally the OPTIONS (there may be many, a few, or none)
 - The Classic Car Report is now showing with Low Retail, Average Retail, and High Retail. Print this page and use it as reference for yourself and the seller.
 - This authority is there for your information and for the seller. We want a fair transaction for both parties.

- ◆ I have printed below the descriptions for these three categories and it is important to understand what determines the category.

Low Retail Value

This vehicle would be in mechanically functional condition, needing only minor reconditioning. The exterior paint, trim, and interior would show normal wear, needing only minor reconditioning. May also be a deteriorated restoration or a very poor amateur restoration. Most usable “as-is”.

Some of the vehicles in this publication could be considered “Daily Drivers” and are not valued as a classic vehicle. When determining a value for a daily driver, it is recommended that the subscriber use the low retail value.

Note: This value does not represent a “parts car”.

Average Retail Value

This vehicle would be in good condition overall. It could be an older restoration or a well-maintained original vehicle. Completely operable. The exterior paint, trim, and mechanics are presentable and serviceable inside and out. A “20-footer”.

High Retail Value

This vehicle would be in excellent condition overall. It could be a completely restored or an extremely well maintained original vehicle showing very minimal wear. The exterior paint, trim, and mechanics are not in need of reconditioning. The interior would be in excellent condition.

Note: This value does not represent a “100 Point” or “# 1” vehicle *.

* “100 Point” or “# 1” vehicle is not driven. It would generally be in a museum or transported in an enclosed trailer to concours judging and car shows. This type of car would be stored in a climate-regulated facility.

Kelly Blue Book

- ◆ www.KBB.com is a good resource, but is designed more for the newer used car market. Kelly, it seems, has stepped aside and allowed NADA.com to be the classic car pricing leader.

I think am ready to make an offer, where do I start?

- You must determine from your budget how much work and money must be invested into the car after you buy it before you even make an offer to purchase.

By using the checklist I have provided in the back of this pamphlet you will work backwards and know if this will fit into the budget you already have determined.

As you calculate “**must** have” repairs and then the upgrades you “**would like** to do over time”, your time table will emerge and you will be in a better position to negotiate.

How to make an offer

- Do NOT ask “What do want to get for it!”

It is a negative statement and approach, and will send a bad first impression.

People have varying opinions on the value of the car. There is a built in prejudice when the owner is

Besides, they may be the farthest thing from an expert on the true value you could ask.

- The first question is “What is your Bottom Price?”

Always find out what the person believes is the lowest they can sell the car for.

By starting at their Bottom Price you can look back at your research, and know if you are even close to your determined value and what your budget will allow you to spend on the purchase price.

- Always begin below their Bottom Price.

It may be where you end up, but most sellers have built in some margin for negotiation, even if they say it is their “Bottom Price”

“How little is the seller willing to take, and how much is the buyer willing to pay?” ultimately is the bottom line to any sale.

- Please discuss with the seller your ability to pay. A seller will be very open to your situation, if they know it up front.

If you have to get a loan after you negotiate the price, the seller will not negotiate very much.

If you already have the money and you just need to go get a cashier check, he might be a little more willing to negotiate.

You are looking to get the best deal you can, but remember they only have one agenda item; they want to sell their car.

- Bring cash if you have it.

Cash is a very powerful buying tool. You want to buy the car for \$3000 and the seller really wants \$3300 you will impress him and influence him if you bring out 30 one hundred dollar bills. It is really difficult to say “No” to cash money.

When you walk in with “green backs” to buy a car you say, “I have the cash right now; I am serious about this deal, are you?”

Payment options:

- **Cash**

- ◆ Always the best method of payment, except when counterfeit currency is involved, but cash money is still accepted by the most sellers.
- ◆ Use cash for the local transaction; NEVER send cash through the mail!
- ◆ Cash is still the most universal payment method for the purchase of a classic car.

- **PayPal**

- ◆ If you are using an online auction site like eBay Motors, PayPal offers some protection from fraud and non-delivery that other pay options may not.
- ◆ It is also becoming a universally acceptable method of payment for a multitude of buyer levels.

- ◆ In other words, you can use PayPal to do international business, buy from individual and corporations, transfer funds, and many other versatile money transactions.
- Cashiers or Personal Checks
 - ◆ Checks are not recommended, but sometimes accepted.
 - ◆ The cashier's check can be a very safe method of payment if there is a guarantee of funds, and it is from a reputable financial institution. There has been an increase in fraudulent use of cashier checks and hence a shying away from that method of payment in favor of EFT. Several internet scams use cashier checks (see section on SCAMS)
 - ◆ Personal checks are rarely accepted anymore, even for local transactions because of the high probability for NSF or simple cancellation of checks after the deal is made. This is illegal, and prosecutable, but very costly and time consuming, and better for you to avoid it all together. Don't use or accept a personal or business check.
- EFT (Electronic Funds Transfer)
 - ◆ EFT is the safest transaction of all.
 - ◆ When the transfer of funds is authorized and executed the money is there.
 - ◆ It is safe for the buyer and the seller, because the institutions handle the verification of funds
 - ◆ Once transferred, the money is there and can not be cancelled.

Financing your purchase, if you do not have all the money

- If you need a loan to buy your classic car, you will need good credit and a supportive financial institution.
 - Classic cars are usually not valued as high by your lending institution, and even may be valued lower than your purchase price. Most banks will undervalue or even devalue the car and require additional collateral to secure the loan.
 - Because lending institutions want guarantees of repayment, some may be reluctant to accept any value at all for the car. This will force you to have tangible property to use to offset the amount of money you can borrow.
 - Some lending institutions won't even write a loan for a classic car. Do your homework in this area before you get too close to finding "The Classic Car I Always Wanted"

Step 6 - Bringing it Home after the Sale

When should I drive it home?

- If the car you are buying is a local sale, of a licensed, inspected, and registered running daily driver I would drive it home. There needs to be a confidence that no harm will be done to the car by driving it the distance you know it needs to be driven.
- If the car is from a friend or a local reputable dealer lot, and you have personally driven the car for several miles prior to buying the car, you could feel fairly safe to drive the car less than 100 miles.
- You still run the risk of having mechanical difficulties when you are not completely sure the car is road worthy.
- I drove a 1977 Lincoln Continental Sedan from Wisconsin to Houston last Christmas. I really got to know the car in that time, for which I was very grateful when I arrived home safely. I did have to spend \$175 to replace the muffler and tailpipe when the muffler exploded two miles away from the seller's house after picking up the car.
- Some benefit is definitely gained from driving a car for an extended period of time. You get a good feel for suspension issues, transmission smoothness, gas mileage, any squeaks or noises that could indicate some repairs needed. I would only recommend this if you have your tools in the trunk and a real good idea that the fluids, belts, and hoses are fresh, and you have good rubber on the tires and they are not aged..

When must I pay for transport?

- When the car is not running, do not attempt to hook up a chain or cable to the car and have your brother-in-law drag you across town behind his new F-350. You are risking damage, not only to the car from the chain or cable, but to the car's front end if you ram into his bumper because he stops short, or some careless driver causing an emergency maneuver.
- When the car is located more than an hour away, even if it is a driver
 - Do not risk your investment because of a \$100 transport fee, when something has not been checked out, or fluid leaks, or radiator over heating, or whatever other possible mishaps could happen. BE SURE!
 - You do want to trust the person selling the car, but not every one is honest. You are legally, the investor in an AS IS sale, with NO recourse after you hand over the cash. The car is yours no matter what happens even if the seller had no idea there was a problem. You are the 100% owner then.

Future Edition - Care after the purchase

- **Coming soon in a future edition.**