



Alive

Council Saves Christmas With New City Parade

■ Old Hollywood holiday parade is dead. City starts new 'Santa' parade, set for Sunday, Nov. 25.

COUNCIL — Have no fear: Santa will still be coming to Los Angeles this Christmas.

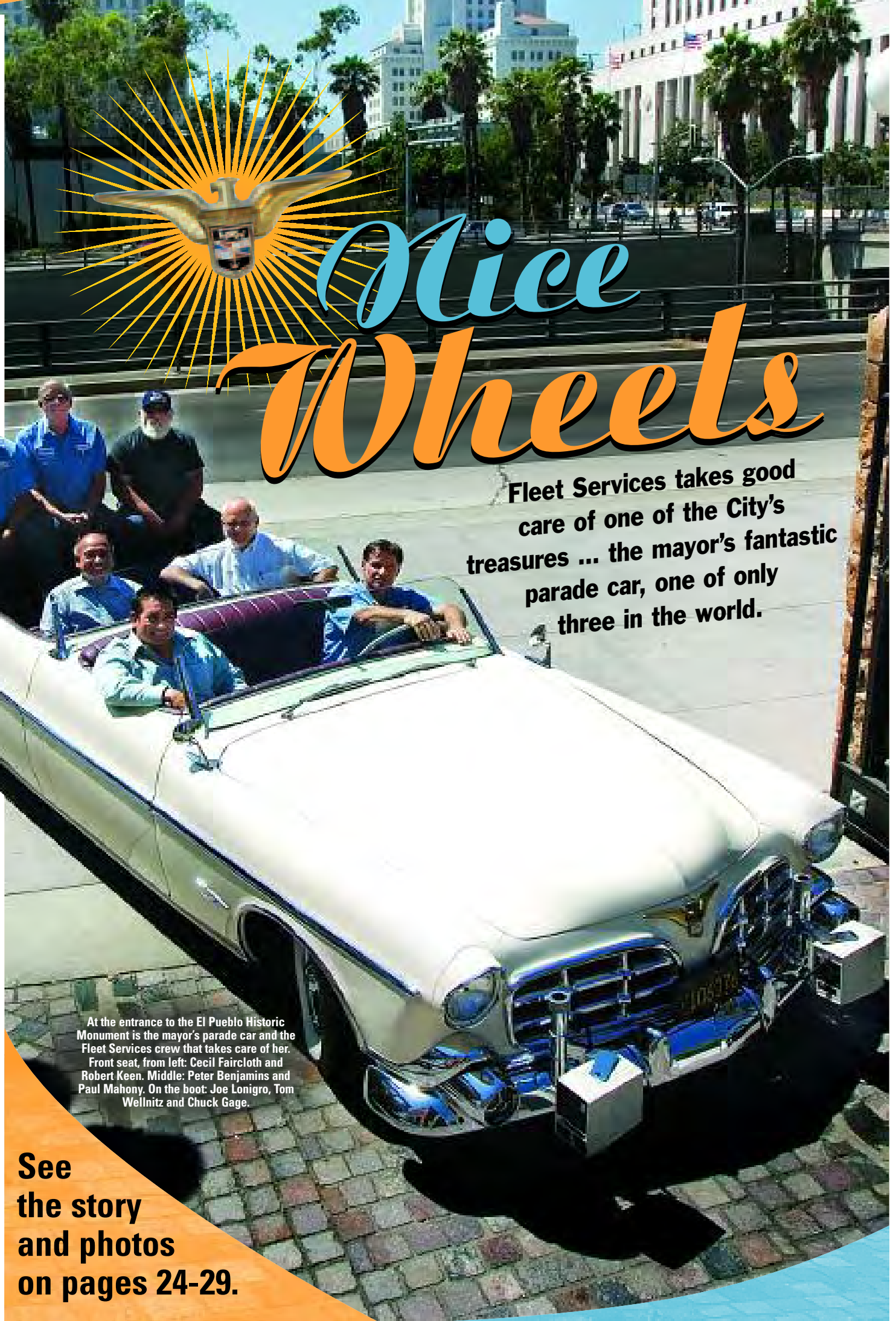
Thanks to the City Council, and especially Councilmembers Tom LaBonge, Club Member, and Eric Garcetti, there will be

a parade in Hollywood this holiday season.

It's not the old Hollywood parade, which ceased operations. This new one is called the Hollywood Santa Parade.

"The Hollywood Santa Parade is a new direction for an old tradition," said Council President Eric Garcetti, who represents the area that includes the parade route on Hollywood Boulevard. "All of Los Angeles will be excited to know that Hollywood will continue to kick off the holiday season in style."

For more details, including how to get tickets, see the story on page 13.



Oliver Wheels

Fleet Services takes good care of one of the City's treasures ... the mayor's fantastic parade car, one of only three in the world.

At the entrance to the El Pueblo Historic Monument is the mayor's parade car and the Fleet Services crew that takes care of her. Front seat, from left: Cecil Faircloth and Robert Keen. Middle: Peter Benjamins and Paul Mahony. On the boot: Joe Lonigro, Tom Wellnitz and Chuck Gage.

See the story and photos on pages 24-29.

Now Is Time To Consider Life Insurance

■ Do you have enough life insurance? Talk to your Club Counselor today.

CLUB HEADQUARTERS — Insuring that your loved ones are taken care of is the right thing to do.

Do you have enough life insurance? Surprisingly, even those who have life insurance might not have enough.



The Club offers strong, solid, affordable life insurance with great service with benefits you can depend on.

As the years roll on and costs rise, your insurance policy might not be enough. When's the last time you checked to make sure?

Look inside to the story on page 11, and call your Club Counselor. You and your family will be glad you did.



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350 S. Figueroa St., Suite 700
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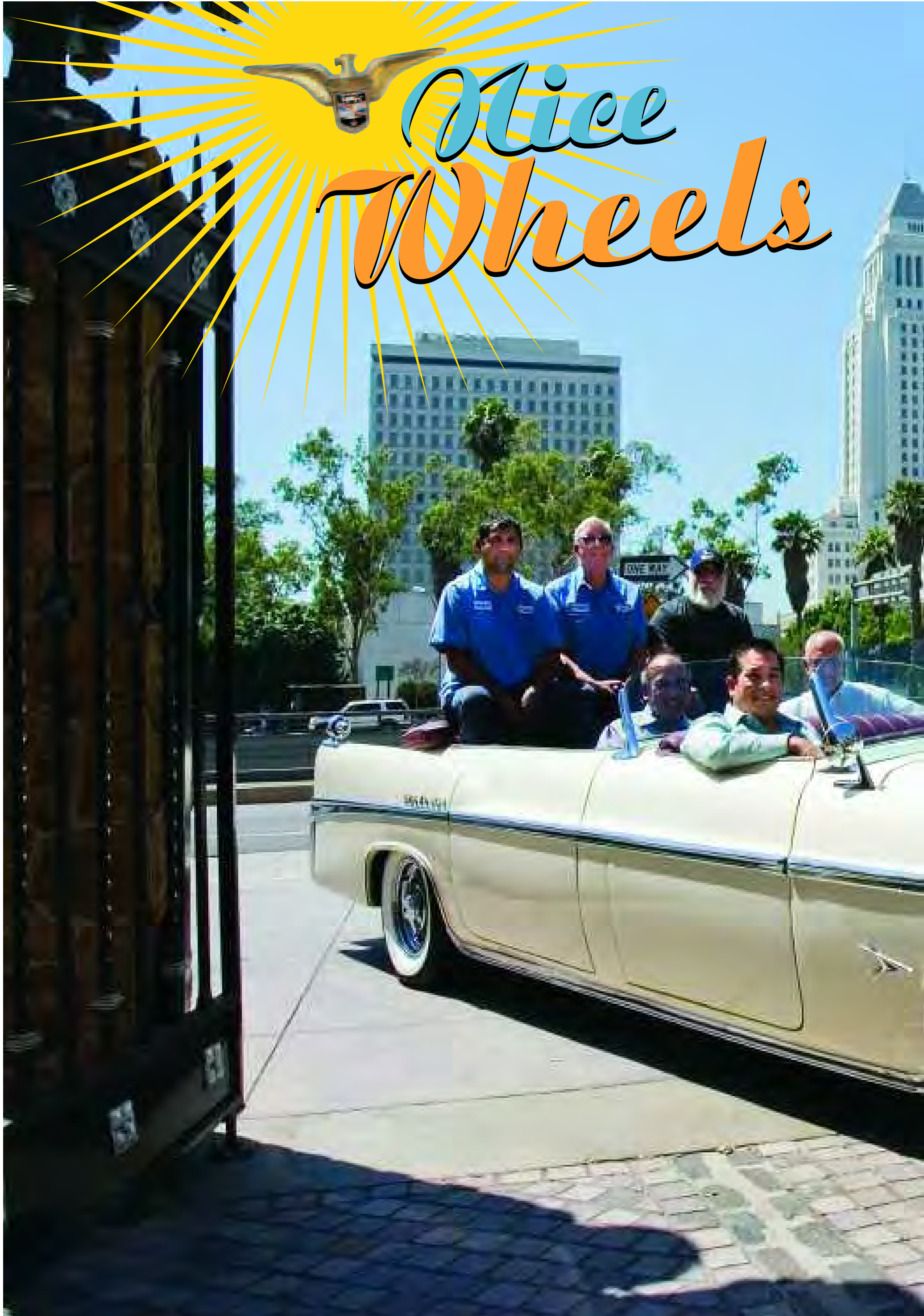
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GET 'EM WHILE THEY'RE HOT HOT HOT!

New Club B-Label shirts are a big hit. Get one or two today!

See page 50 for the Club Store.



Alice Wheels



Nice Wheels



Whether it means an enlarged radiator to keep an ancient engine cool during long, grueling parades ... a rebuilt hydraulic suspension to support the growing number of VIPs who share the mayor's spotlight ... a powerful loudspeaker system ... rare tires ... a classic interior that must weather the environment ... or huge brakes to keep the whole thing under control ... it's not easy keeping an aging and rare masterpiece in tip-top shape.

Meet the crew that keeps the mayor's 1952 Chrysler Imperial Parade Phaeton, one of only three in the world, showing the City in its best light.

The story and photos begin on the next page.



At the entrance to the El Pueblo Historic Monument is the mayor's parade car and the Fleet Services crew that takes care of her. Front seat, from left: Cecil Faircloth and Robert Keen. Middle: Peter Benjamins and Paul Mahony. On the boot: Joe Lonigro, Tom Wellnitz and Chuck Gage.

Alive! photo by Angel Gomez, Club Member Services Manager



Maintaining the Mayor's Masterpiece

■ The mayor's parade car – a 1952 Chrysler Imperial Phaeton – is one sweet ride. It's kept that way through the efforts of Paul Mahony, Automotive Supervisor, Fleet Services.

Alive! photos by Angel Gomez, Club Member Services Manager

GENERAL SERVICES — On Wednesday, Sept. 12, *Alive!* spent an afternoon with Paul Mahony, Automotive Supervisor, Fleet Services, and his crew to take a peak inside this rare and magnificent piece of City history.

Alive! thanks the crew for their time and efforts.

Alive!: Thanks for welcoming us, Paul. How long have you been with the City?

Paul: It will be seven years next April.

Where did you come from?

Paul: The private sector. I have worked all over the Westside, in various car dealerships and restoration shops. I have been involved with automotive repair since I was 19 or 20.

What's your official responsibility for the car? Are you the supervisor of it?

Paul: The car is assigned to Piper Tech for maintenance. We take care of it here. I transferred here from North Hollywood. I was the supervisor out there. I inherited it when I came here. It had all sorts of problems.

I'm sure. Your responsibility with the car is to maintain it?

Paul: Yeah.

Prepare it and have it ready for the parades and other official functions?

Paul: Right. We check it between parades.

Repairs and Responsibilities

Let's go through the guys on the crew, and tell me what their responsibilities are with the vehicle.

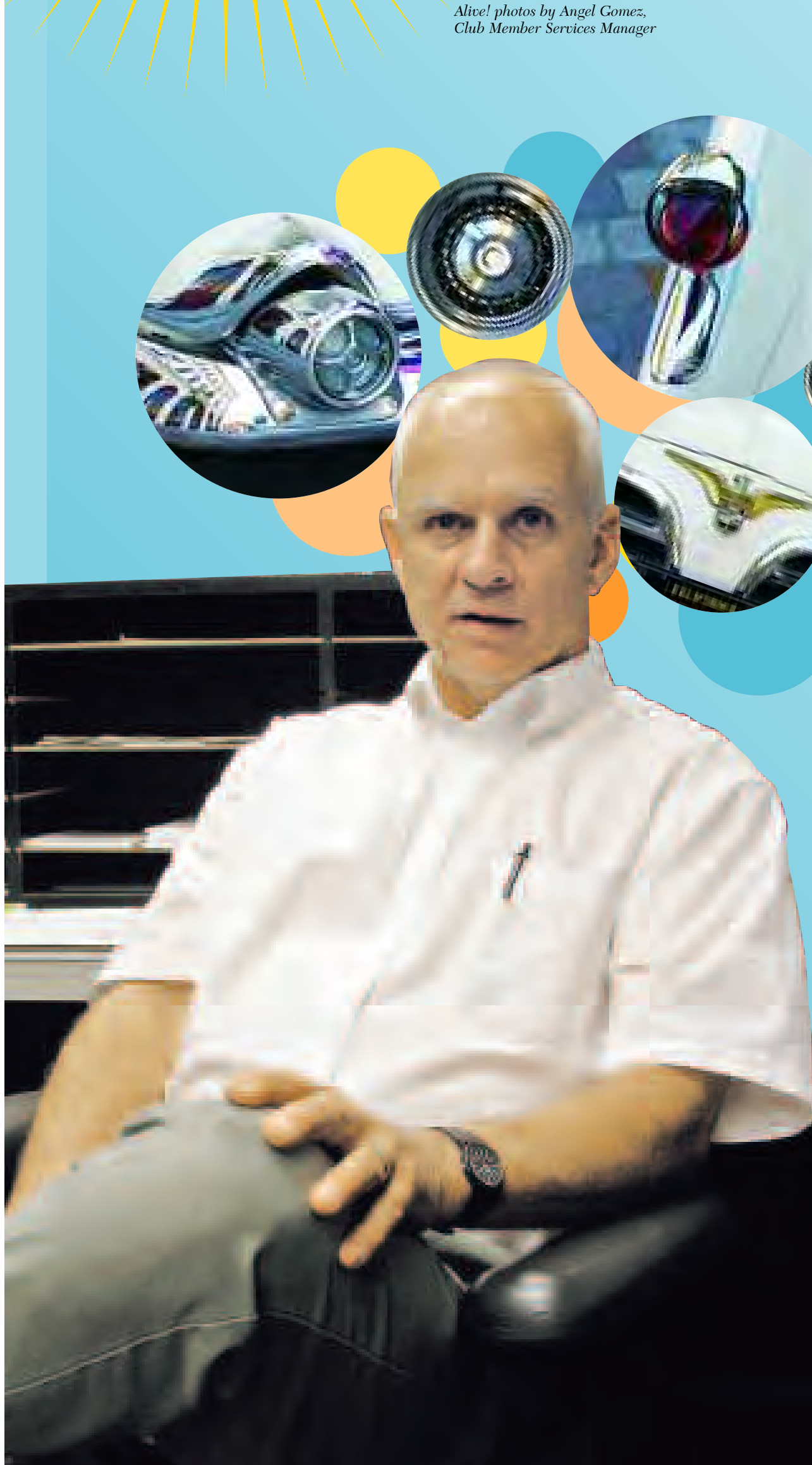
Paul: Well, the guy driving the car in your photos – the guy sitting at the wheel – is Robert Keen. He is one of our mechanics here at the shop. He does the inspections between parades, and he is the primary mechanic now, assigned to keeping the car running right, and also making various upgrades. Joe Lonigro, a mechanic here also, helps Bob as an assistant. Bob is the senior guy working on the car.

[General Services General Manager] Alvin Blaine's instructions to us are to make the car look exactly original as much as we can, but to perform safety upgrades and reliability upgrades. We have added a bigger radiator and a electric fan for parades – it will drive for an hour and a half sometimes at idle speed and, that's asking us to do what a CHP cruiser might have to do.

And we have gone to a 12-volt system on it because of all the accessories, including the sound system, and so on. They just didn't have that stuff back in 1952 when the car was new. And so we have an alternator on there.

And then we have air shocks in the back, so when they load it to capacity with people, they can level the car out with a little switch on the dashboard. And then Alvin wanted a dual brake system, so you would not lose your brakes completely; they did not have that in '52. We put a dual brake system on the car, and that fell on Chuck's shoulders, Chuck Gage. He is like a

Paul Mahony,
Automotive Supervisor,
Fleet Services





hot-rodder to the Nth degree. He surveyed the original brakes on the car and designed a system for the car.

Alvin's instructions were that, whatever we did to the car, we were to keep the old part and everything had to be bolted on. We could not cut or weld on the car. It all had to be the capability to be brought back to the original anytime we wanted.

You are keeping all the parts.

Paul: We keep everything, yeah.

Chuck put Dodge truck disc brakes on the front, and big, modern drum brakes on the rear. And to make the original wire wheels still fit, we had to have adapters made. And to make these brakes fit the car, we had those special brackets with the calipers, and that was Cecil Faircloth. He was a machinist at the time with the North Hollywood Machine Shop, the North Hollywood Consolidated Shop out there. They have got a big welding and machine shop, and he was working out there as a machinist. Chuck gave him all his drawings. Neither of these guys is an engineer, but they are just terrific fabricators, so Chuck gave them all the dimensions and Cecil machined everything up, and put it into computer operated mills. We can make a 100 of these parts now if we ever needed them.

Right.

Paul: And so then we had to come up with a power brake master cylinder that would fit underneath the floor like the original one, and still have power brakes. Chuck is like an encyclopedia on hot rod accessories, and he knew which one would work and still be able to connect to the original pedal on the floor. This stuff sounds simple until you start trying to do it, you know. And then he had to come with the correct metering belt so that when you step on the brakes, the rear brakes would not apply too hard and skid while the front stopped correctly. And then we put a whole different rear end in the car so that we could have the right brakes and still have the correct wheels on it, because you could not do that with the old rear end. So it is a whole new rear end that sits on the old springs. It is all bolted in, and we kept the old one, of course.

Right.

Paul: And that required a different drive shaft, so we had that custom-made.

And then after we got the brakes working, we noticed that the car would stall sometimes. The previous mayor would use it once or twice a year. And Mayor Villaraigosa likes to use it

frequently. We started giving attention to these little things that had been forgiven in the past. And one of them was the stalling: It would stall sometimes during a parade, and that is just the worst thing that can happen in a parade.

So Bob Keen and I started down this path of making the car reliable. He came up with the carburetor for the car that would work. He found a brand new replacement carburetor, and it is more modern, but it fits right on, the same brand and everything. I put electronic ignition on it, because it had the old points and condensers.

And a distributor?

Paul: Yeah. We upgraded all that.

And then Tom Wellnitz rewired the car because the old wiring was fabric-covered and would crystallize and fall off. So he rewired the whole car, and I worked with him to put the right alternator on there. And we had the starter converted to 12 volts. He oversaw all that.

I took the dashboard apart, because, besides management, I have been a mechanic all my life.

The interior had this terrible look. White vinyl had been put in there over the storyboard together. I got pictures of what the interior should look like. We took a tour with our Assistant General Manager to the Petersen Museum, and showed him the other Chrysler parade car in the collection down there. We made a business case for doing the interior in a certain way. Management bought off on it. So we had the car reupholstered. That is a major job on a car this big to get it correct. We took a lot of pictures of the car at the Petersen because it was original. And then we had our car reupholstered. An outside vendor did that, but we had them do it here because the car is so valuable that we did not want it out of our hands.

And it is close to its original color, maybe not exactly, but pretty close.

Paul: Yeah. We wanted the contrast. My experience on the outside has been working in several big restoration shops, and you always want to get a nice contrast. Light-colored cars always have a dark interior, typically a burgundy or a dark red. So we got that done.

And then the last mayor, Mayor Hahn, used to take sort of a karaoke system and a microphone to these parades. But Mayor Villaraigosa wanted really good sound. We were not

experts at sound, so we got ITA involved. Peter Benjamins got his crew involved to come up with a sound system. He got the Council audio guys who do all the City Council chamber audio.

Makes sense.

Paul: They kept trying different speaker configurations. The ones we have hanging in the car now are large, but they really get the job done. We had a couple of glitches the first couple of times out, while they get it all dialed in. But now it is pretty much right on.

The latest concern that the mayor keeps mingling with the crowd and wants to go cordless on the microphones. So Peter is going to come up with something.

So the sound system is working well. And the car runs cool. And it is dependable. It is smooth, and it is pretty quick, really, for what it is.

When you put the sound system on, did you drill any holes?

Paul: No. The speakers clamp onto the rear bumper or they slide over the flagstuffs in the front. And the wiring is tie-wrapped all the way back to the trunk. They made a false panel in the trunk to mount their amplifiers. And then they rigged up a cooling fan to blow air into the stuff, to keep it all cool. When you get out on the parade routes, the temperature in the trunk is horrific.

One time it cut off in the middle of a parade temporarily because of the thermal overload. You find out some of this stuff by trial and error.

Does it have air conditioning?

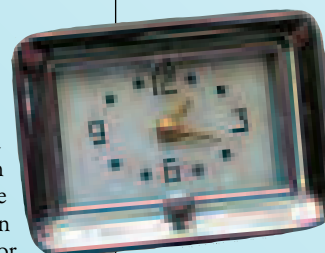
Paul: No. We do not have that. We could put it on there, though.

How new is the paint job?

Paul: I do not really know. I have been with the City for only a short time, six and a half years. It has never been painted since I have been here.

If it looks like rain, what do you do?

Paul: They usually cancel the parade, but it has been caught in the rain before. We have umbrellas in the trunk for the people in the car. The rain really would not hurt the car, but



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IMPERIAL

A view of the dashboard from the forward passenger compartment as the mayor sees it when he stands up during a parade.



Paul Mahony and the maintenance crew pose for their photo with the car in front of Pico House, El Pueblo Historic Monument.



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I don't think they would allow it to get caught in a downpour.

Right. Does it have a top?

Paul: It has a top, but it is what they call a surrey top, and it just covers the backseat. It's a funny, strange-looking thing. It's like a surrey buggy from the horse and carriage days. It really does not suit the car. They do not use it much.

Metal or canvas?

Paul: Convertible top is fabric with a metal frame.

Hemi-Powered

How is the engine? Is it the original block?

Paul: The original engine and transmission with 46,000 miles on it, very low mileage. It just purrs. It runs super.

The same engine?

Paul: It is a Hemi.

One of the original Hemi's?

Paul: Yes. The second year they came out. It is a big motor.

How many cubic inches?

Paul: Well, small cubic inches, 331. But it is physically a big motor. The valve covers are just a Hemi like you see today.

Are they chrome?

Paul: Yeah, they are chrome.

Very nice!

Paul: It is a nice car.

How many speeds in the transmission? Is it an automatic three speed?

Paul: Two speeds.

Just two speeds?

Paul: Yes. With a passing gear, though.

A Pretty Penny

How much is that car worth?

Paul: I do not really know. I do not think anybody does. Chuck Gage says that he had heard that the [Parade Phaeton] at the Imperial Palace was valued at \$750,000. And ours has more history than that car.

Because Richard Nixon rode in this car.

Paul: I think Khrushchev, Robert Kennedy and Eisenhower, too. Nixon was the first one. He was in the very first parade it was in, the Rose Parade, the Grand Marshal.

That was the first time.

Paul: First time it went out.

Fun, and Work

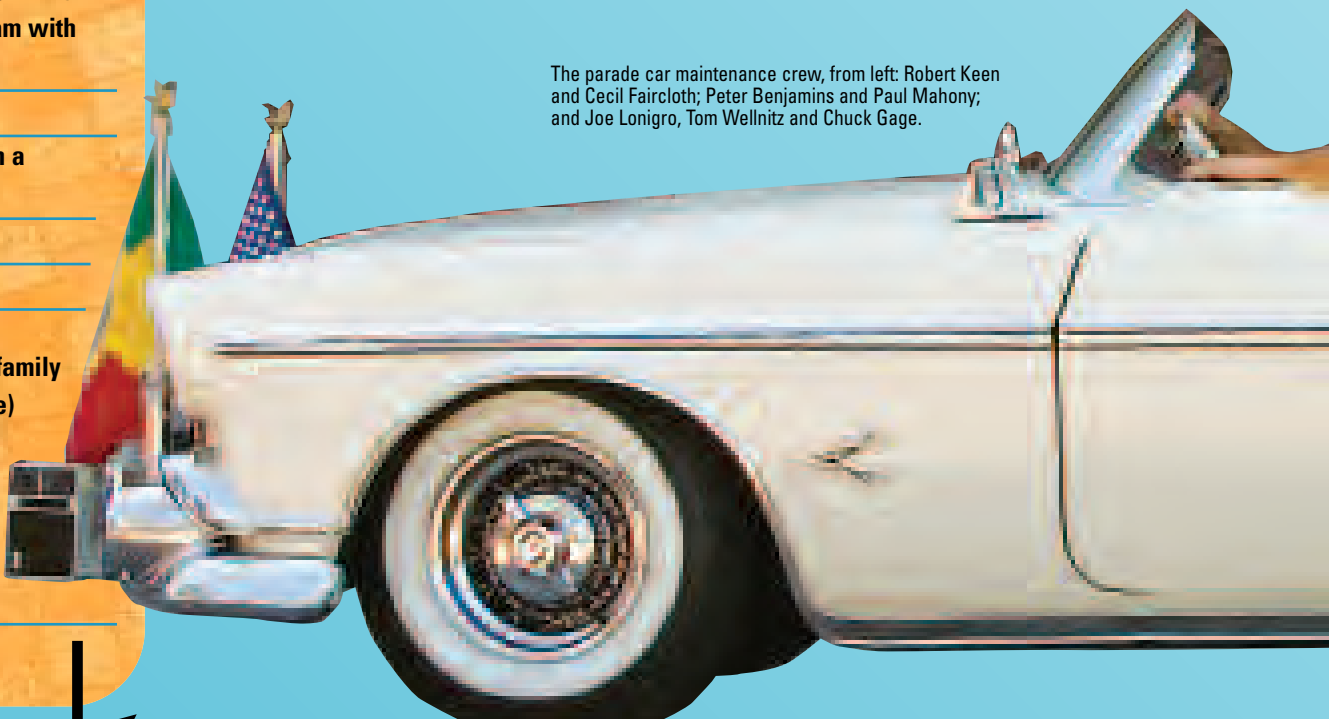
It must be fun working on this car. I cannot imagine too many in the world have this kind of responsibility for a car, where there are only three of them in the world.

Paul: It is kind of fun working on the car, but it is very touchy when it goes out on a parade if anything goes wrong. They follow us pretty good. When we have little problems with the car running warm or stalling, or the sound system acting up, we had all the best brains in Fleet Services putting it under a microscope figuring out why it stalled. We could never duplicate the problem here. It is very hard to duplicate a parade situation here, even if you let it idle for half a day. And we had pressure from the Mayor's office to make it perform right. It is a nice challenge to rise to.

1952 Chrysler Imperial Phaeton Parade Car

BUILT:	1952, face-lifted in 1955 with 1956 design
COLORS:	Cream with rose interior (original); Cream with white interior (after 1955 face-lift); cream with rose interior (current).
HORSEPOWER:	180 (original); 250 (today)
TRANSMISSION:	Powerflight (two speed automatic, with a passing gear)
WEIGHT:	6,005 pounds
LENGTH:	21 feet
FIRST USE:	1953 Rose Bowl Parade, carrying Vice President Elect Richard Nixon and his family (he was a California Senator at the time)
SIMILAR CARS:	One built for New York, still in existence; one built for Detroit that was obtained by the Imperial Palace Hotel car collection and is now at the Petersen Museum in Los Angeles
VALUE:	Unknown, but thought to be worth at least \$750,000

The parade car maintenance crew, from left: Robert Keen and Cecil Faircloth; Peter Benjamins and Paul Mahony; and Joe Lonigro, Tom Wellnitz and Chuck Gage.



Work on Display

You get to see your work on display maybe once or twice a month, or more often than that.

Paul: Yeah. He stays pretty busy with it usually. I expect he will not slow down much because there is Thanksgiving and Christmas and New Year's Eve. He goes somewhere in all those parades as a rule.

Where do you get those huge white-wall tires?

Paul: They are available. There is a company that makes them and you can find them online.

We have had to make parts and have an exhaust system made for it. But most of that stuff can be fabricated. Or we have gotten steering and suspension parts through the Chrysler Club. There is a guy in Northern California that has 70 or 80 old Chryslers and is very reasonable on the prices.

Did anybody ever try to buy it from the City?

Paul: No. Not that I know of. But I wouldn't know personally. There have probably been offers, but I wasn't included in the conversation.

Anybody in the movies ever use it?

Paul: They used it in a movie in the past, but it was before my time. It was one where Charles Bronson played a presidential security guard. I cannot remember the name of the movie. [Most likely Assassination, 1987. — Ed.] The car was painted green for the movie. And then brought back to this color.

Has anyone ever asked you to let them use in their daughter's wedding or something like that?

Paul: No. But, as we work on it, we have had to drive it. We always get waves and hellos and all that.

It draws a crowd, especially when the flags are on there, and you know it is not a normal car. It usually attracts people. It draws a crowd.

The Road Ahead

It is pretty well set for the future, it looks like.

Paul: In the last year or so, we developed our own preventative maintenance checklist just for this car. And we have a series of things we do between each parade. It is almost like a pre-flight checklist. And so Bob Keen does that.

I have got a terrific crew here. There are only so many things you can do for camaraderie here, to form a cohesive unit. This is the kind of thing that pulls a crew together. We are proud of the way the car looks and performs now. And so I try to make sure these guys get some credit for it. Because they have done all the real work on it.

I am glad the car is here. With my background in vintage cars, I am glad I am able to get my hands on it.

Thanks!

Paul: Sure thing.



21 FEET !