

THE CAR CLUB



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**PROUD OF YOUR WHEELS?
SEND IN A PHOTO!**
(SEE DETAILS AT BOTTOM)

Coachcraft: An L.A. Classic

Hello again, everyone!

Don't be shy about sending in photos of your hot wheels, now. Let me show off your car here in *Alive!* You will be the envy of Club Members everywhere!

Meanwhile, this month, I'm going to write about Coachcraft, one of the foremost custom car builders in Southern California. I recently visited the Automotive Driving Museum in El Segundo, and I saw a number of classics built by Coachcraft.

Hollywood, 1950: On a hot, sticky afternoon, a stocky, well-dressed gentleman walked into a shop on Melrose Avenue. He began a conversation with the owners about work he wanted done to his new 1950 Cadillac. This project was going to be like nothing they had ever done before. First of all, the car owner, who had a collection of businesses, was connected in Hollywood and had a lot of "associates" on the East Coast. Despite all of that, a bombing at his house a few months prior and a stream of bullet holes put into his old Cadillac had him a little paranoid. So what did Mickey Cohen, the car owner, do in a situation like this? He had an armored car built.

Coachcraft Ltd. was comprised of three owners and started back in 1940. Each owner had a specific talent that completed the circle and made this growing shop world-renowned. Burt Chalmers, the front man, had Hollywood connections and had sold cars for Cadillac. Paul Erdos was the master metal shaper who clothed the wood frames, built by Rudy Stoessel.

One year after construction began on Mickey Cohen's armored car, it was ready for delivery. It was now equipped with a glass windshield three inches thick; side glass two-and-a-half inches thick; and bulletproof military tires. The weight of the car had ballooned from about 4,500 pounds to 10,000 pounds. There was only one small problem: The Highway Patrol would not issue Cohen a permit to license the car, since something like this would make someone untouchable. After handing over \$25,000 to the builders, Cohen sold the car for \$5,000 less to a Texas racing circuit that used it as a promotional piece. The car now rests in a museum in New Zealand.

You know you are big-time when Henry Ford II sits down with you and wants you to build him a car. Ford's friend, Hollywood actor Gary Cooper, turned him onto the shop, and Ford would stop there and indulge in some whiskey consumption from time to time. After a drawing of Henry's car was on paper, two chassis were sent from Detroit. The chassis were Mercurys, and 1940 Lincoln fenders and a 1946 Lincoln front end were to be used. Ford was going to equip this car with a not-yet-released 1949 Lincoln motor. Henry Ford was so happy Cooper turned him onto this shop, that he wanted a car built for Cooper, too,

but in the end, only one was built. At first, the car pictured (in green) came with a three-piece removable top, but it soon passed to Henry's wife, who had the top changed to a full removable top.

The car I have fallen in love with at Coachcraft is called the Yankee Doodle Roadster.

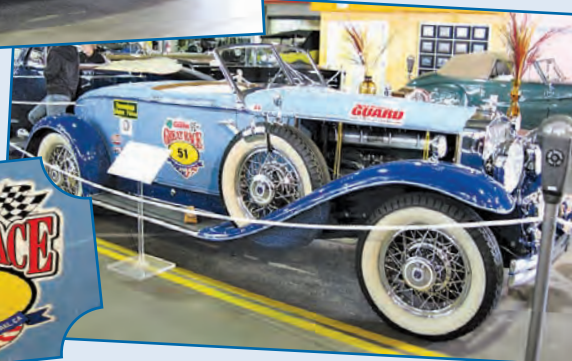


The chassis was built by the son of *American Weekly* magazine owner in the early 1940s. After he and his friends finished the frame, Seward Allen drove to Coachcraft and commissioned them to build his dream. 1940 Mercury fenders were in place, and the rest was to be constructed by Coachcraft. The rear of the car resembles the lines of the 1960s Ferraris. Rumor has it that Gary Cooper and Clark Gable gave the car its name. By the way, the car is for sale and it can be all yours for the small sum of \$350,000. Not bad for a car that originally cost \$1,500 to build.

Four of the Coachcraft-built cars are on display at the Automotive Driving Museum in El Segundo through April. I highly recommend visiting and viewing all the pictures, articles and of course the vehicles that Bill Stoessel (Rudy's son) and the museum have set up. I must say that

it is pretty impressive to see a car in person that you know was all hand-built. In my eyes, they represent true craftsmanship.

Also, keep your eyes peeled for the March of Dimes car show that will take place at the museum in the next couple months.



Send in a photo of you and your car, and we might publish it!

Send us your information, too – name, title and City department, a phone number (we won't print it) and a paragraph or two about why you love your car, what kind of car and year it is, and maybe some fun details of how you got it, how you restored it, etc. Send it all to: talkback@cityemployeesclub.com

Important City Election

March 3 election could decide mayor, other offices; and contains City measures.

Voters in the City's March 3 election will be asked to vote for mayoral, administrative and council positions, and determine five local proposals, ranging from an independent assessor for the LAFD, to a solar energy plan for the DWP, to retiree benefits.

The mayoral race pits incumbent Antonio Villaraigosa against ten opponents. In other races, the City Attorney position is up for grabs, as current City Attorney Rocky Delgadillo is termed out; Councilman Jack Weiss is perhaps the best-known candidate for that position. The City Controller office is also on the ballot; the best-known candidate in that race is current Councilwoman Wendy Greuel, who is termed out of her Council seat. Other open offices are City Council Districts 1 (Ed Reyes is running for re-election), District 3 (Dennis Zine is running for re-election) and District 5, being vacated by Jack Weiss. In District 7, Richard Alarcón is running unopposed; in District 11, Bill Rosendahl is running for re-election. Club Members Jan Perry (District 9) and Janice Hahn (District 15) are running for re-election, as are Bill Rosendahl (District 11) and Eric Garcetti (District 13). Voters are reminded to consider the full slate of candidates for these offices.

Measure A would create the post of independent assessor in the LAFD to oversee reforms aimed at ending sexual and racial harassment, which have resulted in high-profile, costly lawsuits.

The measure reportedly is backed by Controller Laura Chick, Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, Fire Chief Douglas Barry and several department employee groups.

Measure B asks voters to commit the DWP to install 400 megawatts of solar panels by 2014. It has sparked controversy and a lawsuit in part due to a contention that it would block private competition.

Measures C and D relate to survivor benefits of the LAPD and LAFD. Measure C allows a disabled surviving child past age 18 to get benefits that a surviving spouse would have received if the spouse had not married again. Measure D allows retired firefighters and police officers, at their own expense, to purchase a survivor benefit for a spouse or domestic partner.

Remember to vote on March 3!

Go to the Los Angeles Zoo!

Discount tickets at the Club Store.

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