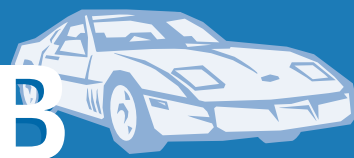




The CAR CLUB



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The Nethercutt Collection



We are creatures of comfort. We decorate our homes to satisfy our desire for peace and relaxation. Hours or days are spent wandering aisles, looking for that picture frame for the hallway or the stainless steel appliances for the kitchen.

What do you do if you have a fleet of cars that's worth more than a small country, with the cars being so rare that they are the only ones in existence? Why, you import Italian marble for the floors and pillars, and decorate the walls and ceiling with mirrors. You hang crystal chandeliers.

It is not a dream. It was the vision of J.B. Nethercutt and his wife, Dorothy. What they built is absolutely spectacular, to say the very least, and rests in the foothills of Sylmar. As Jay Leno puts it, "It's the hall of fame for cars."

Before we learn about the Nethercutt Collection, we must get a glimpse into the life of its founders.

Born in 1913 in Indiana, J.B. Nethercutt moved to Santa Monica in 1923 to live with his aunt, the founder of Merle Norman Cosmetics, Merle Nethercutt Norman. He later went into business with his aunt.

In 1933, J.B. married his high school sweetheart, Dorothy Sykes. During their early years

together, J.B. and Dorothy began their love affair with old cars.

In 1956, J.B. purchased two cars: a 1936 Duesenberg Convertible Roadster for \$5,000 and a 1930 DuPont Town Car for \$500, both needing total refurbishing. The DuPont restoration, which J.B. estimated would take a few weeks, instead took 18 months and cost more than \$65,000. By 1958, his meticulously rebuilt project claimed its first prize — the coveted "Best of Show" award at the prestigious Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance. By the summer of 1992, his cars had won the Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance six times, more than any other individual. The Duesenberg and the DuPont are still part of The Nethercutt Collection.

As J.B.'s collection grew, he was determined to share his masterpieces with the public. In 1971, he and Dorothy opened a museum, free to the public, in the foothills of the San Gabriel Mountains.

J.B., who passed away in 2004 at the age of 91, memorably stated: "The recognition and preservation of beauty has been a major focus of my life. It would suit me well if what people remembered about me was, 'Where he went, he left beauty behind.'"

I can't remember how many times I have visited the museum. And after every visit, I feel like I missed so much that I must return the next day. There are two buildings that are on opposite sides of Bledsoe Street. One houses restored cars and, behind it, a restored 1937 locomotive and 1912 Pullman private car. Across the street is where reservations are required, and you are given a docent lead tour through four floors of remarkable beauty. Not only are cars on display, but the fourth floor will welcome you with music blaring from a Wurlitzer Theatre Pipe Organ (the largest outside of Radio City Music Hall). This building was used by the Nethercutts every Friday night when they would host dinner parties in the Louis XV-inspired dining room that lies in the center of the music room. While eating dinner prepared by the Nethercutt's chefs and staff, they were surrounded by reproducing pianos, nickelodeons, and music boxes.

On your visit, you will see the Duesenberg known as "Twenty Grand" (that was its asking price in 1933), actress Constance Bennett's (no relation to me) Rolls Royce, Clark Gable's 1934 Packard, and my absolute favorite, a 1911 Oldsmobile limousine. It has 43-inch wheels, is in its original condition, is the only one in existence, and its sheer size would make the Prius Owners Club cringe uncontrollably. If that doesn't impress you, perhaps the aisles of Packards, Renaults, Maybachs, Cadillacs, and Mercedes Benzes might.

There are so many more to mention (more than 250) so you will just have to check it out for yourself. Believe me, you will not be disappointed. And if you just happen to be, there aren't any refunds because it is all free!

Check it all out at www.nethercuttcollection.org



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

**PROUD OF
YOUR WHEELS?
SEND IN
A PHOTO!**

THIS MONTH AT THE

Cabrillo Marine Aquarium

May 19:

Salt Marsh Open House

1 – 3 p.m.

Join CMA Educators and volunteers to learn about the Salinas de San Pedro wetlands habitat at Cabrillo Beach by using binoculars and microscopes to observe live animals. Visitors can view the birds of the marsh, learn about native plants and observe the changes in the tides.

(310) 548-7562.

Fee: Free. Groups should pre-register. Parking: \$1.

www.cabrillomarineaquarium.org



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