



23 ANTIQUE CARS FOUND ON FARM Rossie, Iowa (UPI)

A treasure of antique automobiles, including one of the rarest vehicles known, has been discovered on a farm near here. The 23 autos were discovered by three men on the farm owned by the late Leopold Brown. The vehicles were vintage models ranging from 1905 to 1951. Included in the find was a 1905 Winton touring car which antique buffs say is one of the two known to exist. The men said the cars were stored in boarded-up barns and sheds, and seven were found in a grove of trees. Some cars were buried up to their axles in dirt, and others were covered by underbrush. The find included a 1926 and 1927 Whippet coupe and a 1919 Hudson Six roadster. Oddly enough, there was also a 1951 Chevrolet with Power Glide, rare because it has only 43 miles recorded on the odometer.

Somewhere in J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher In The Rye*, Holden Caulfield, the arch teenage anti-hero, remarks that he once read a book and had an overwhelming desire to meet the author. Well, that's all right, I suppose, as far as it goes, but let's face it, fellow victims, authors write books and create fiction peopled by figures of the imagination, men who never were. There ain't no Yossarian. Ahab sailed on the poop deck of a ghostly, non-existent Pequod, and even James Bond was made of the sheerest pulp. But there was a Leopold Brown who walked this earth—in Rossie, Iowa—thought his mysterious thoughts and dreamed dreams far beyond the reach of any character ever invented by Norman Mailer.

Car collectors everywhere, reading that tiny item detailing Leopold Brown's spectacular back yard, can't help but feel a tightening around the throat of a shortness

of breath caused by intense visceral excitement. Holy mother of God, a 1905 Winton Tourer and a 1951 Chevy (Power Glide) with 43 tiny miles on the gauge. For 20 years that Chevrolet (Power Glide) has rested amidst the weeds cowl-to-cowl with a 1927 Whippet Coupe. Within winking distance of a jaunty 1919 Hudson Six roadster. It's one thing to collect old cars because they are old cars, and some guys just have a compulsion to glom on to anything that has even a hint of the antique about it; pop bottles, coffee grinders, horse collars, trombones, stuffed goats. But it is a totally different thing to deliberately go out and plunk down a couple of thousand good ones for a new Chevy, drive it back home to the farm and park it next to the Whippet to add to the good old collection. *From all the evidence, the 1951 Chevy was never driven again after the day it left the dealer's showroom!*

Personally, you guys who would like to meet in the flesh Yossarian or Holden Caulfield are welcome to them. Both of them are staid, straight-laced, unimaginative ciphers compared to the late Leopold Brown. A man capable of stashing away what he did in his back yard, without apparently making much noise about it, was a guy obviously capable of a hell of a lot more in his life that is not recorded in that brief newsnote.

I was squatting patiently on one of the plush settees at Mister Toni's, an elegant *salon de'coiffure* in the heart of the high-rent district on Lexington Avenue, when I came across the enigmatic newsnote that dealt with the late Leopold. Mister Toni's used to be called Tony Mozzarella's Barber Shop just a few semesters back and featured heavily-jowled, white-coated balding men who breathed garlic down your neck and told you dirty stories while they skinned your onion. Things are different now, and old Tony has not only changed the spelling of his name but the entire atmosphere of the joint has become redolent of rare perfumes. The swish of hair nets competes with the hum of permanent wave machines. The stylists; wasp-waisted, gentle boys, flutter about each chair, making fluting noises and speaking in *sybillant* lips. So naturally I caused a little stir when involuntarily I barked "Holy Christ Almighty, a Hudson Six!"

Realizing immediately that Toni's was no place to discuss things of the real world that dealt with the affairs of genuine men, I quickly returned to *Gentleman's Quarterly* and its continuing discussion of the place of Belgian lace in the well-dressed man's attire. But I couldn't shake Leopold Brown out of my mind.

A few hours later, struggling up Broad-

way in a driving rain, on foot naturally since no self-respecting New York hackie ever ventures out into weather more sinister than a slight mist, I passed the new car showrooms that infest the area around 57th Street. There in the window of the Ford agency was a pair of new Pintos. Across the street I could dimly see through the driving rain a sparkling new Plymouth Duster. Not far away, enshrined in glass, there was a steel-gray Electra.

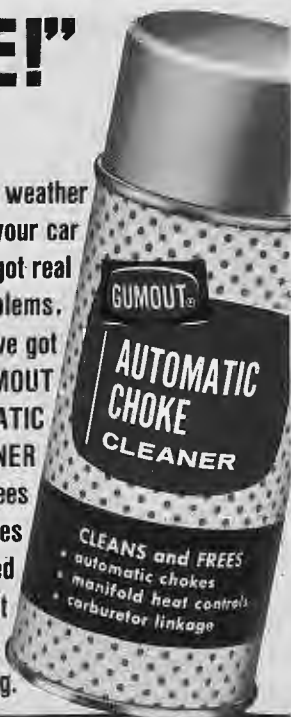
Maybe it was the rain, or the wind, or the aftermath of the heady, expensive two hours at Mr. Toni's, but Leopold Brown popped back into the quagmire I call a mind. Is there one among us who could dare to do what Leopold did? I doubt it. Men of his style just don't exist today. Which of these cars would Leopold have chosen for immortality? The Pinto? I doubt it. The Electra? Hardly. The Plymouth Duster? Don't be silly. The reason none of these fit exactly is because it is obvious that the late Leopold Brown was a genius. The mind of the genius always walks alone in solitary, unapplauded splendor. The world totters at the feet of such as Johnny Carson or Dick Cavett, while resolutely ignoring the likes of Leopold Brown. It was always thus; it will always be thus. True genius is a frightening and enigmatic thing. What makes the late Leopold Brown unique is his totally inspired choice of a 1951 Chevrolet (Power Glide) for preservation and immortality. The very mundanity, the staggering ordinariness of the 1951 Chevrolet (Power Glide) is the hallmark of Mr. Brown's blinding talent.

Unfortunately, the small news item does not list the rest of his selections; merely the Winton, the Hudson Six, the Whippet and the Chevy. There is a unifying theme here, and any truly serious student of automotive trivia can instantly spot it. What is it? As the rains battered against what was left of my shredded *pliofilm* Edwardian raincoat (naturally it was shredded, since I had already worn it for better than 40 minutes and it was nearing the end of its life) it hit me like an illuminating flash, the same thing that used to happen to guys in the comics when that 60 watt Mazda switched on over Andy Gump's noggin. Of course! Now I saw it!

Leopold Brown's collection, *en toto*, was his legacy, his statement to the world. Think about it. A *Whippet*, a *Hudson Six*, a *Winton*, and—a master stroke—a 1951 *Chevrolet (Power Glide)*. These cars have one characteristic in common. Each one was a stupefying Nothing of its day. The reason no Wintons exist is because the 1905 Winton was a colossal dud of that year. It had all the endearing qualities of a covered wagon powered by a rubber band,

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steerable only by heavily-muscled stevedores on the rare occasions when it actually ran.

Leopold Brown obviously realized that the Winton (1905) represented more than a car for its day. The 1919 Hudson Six was another thudder, not anywhere near its contemporaries such as the Stutzes and the Lincolns of the day but yet not a total bomb, existing somewhere in that great gray misty area of anonymous mediocrity. The Whippet 1927 vintage speaks for itself. And of course it would take someone like a Leopold Brown to see (at the time!) that a 1951 Chevrolet (Power Glidē) definitely belongs among the classics of the *Lumpen Proletariat*.

Try it yourself. Try to pick a showroom model of today that you would preserve to speak for our time. Keep in mind Brown's Law: "Neither the superb nor the ridiculous, but the unobtrusively mediocre speaketh for the men of the time." Don't rush to say "Yeah! How 'bout one of them great Datsun 240s or one of them Vegas!" No, my friend, you betray the usual narrowness of mind of the museum curator who believes that the best Art of a time speaks for that time. It's a great game to play when you're waiting in line at the cleaners or seeing your life go up in smoke sitting in some reception room waiting for the blonde at the desk to tell you that Mr. Bullard will see you now. Just what car really does say it for our time, this year?

It's not as easy as you think. In the end it takes men of the stature of Leopold Brown to make such brilliant, incisive selections as he did. Like all men of genius, Brown must have had his troubles from the lesser men who surrounded him. I can see the scene now:

CHARACTERS:

Leopold Brown, a slight, somewhat paunchy man of late middle years, wearing rimless glasses and a perpetual frown. Chevrolet Salesman, a beefy, florid, hearty gentleman who resembles somewhat Lee J. Cobb. He has a rich voice and an Elk's tooth hanging on a gold chain on his yellow checkered vest.

SCENE: A Chevrolet showroom, 43 miles from Rossie, Iowa.

LEOPOLD BROWN enters through the swinging doors. Huge signs hang from the ceiling: "1951 THE year for Chevy!" "The 1951 Chevy means Fun!"

We see scattered around the walls pictures of Dinah Shore and the slogan "See the USA in a Chevrolet," with musical notes encircling her face.

SALESMAN: Yessiree, nice day, it sure is. Seen the new Chevy? Boy, they really did it in Detroit this year. Yessiree, that new.

BROWN (interrupting him): Yep (his voice is low and purposeful).

SALESMAN: Uh . . . yep? Yep what?

BROWN: Yep, I seen it. That's why I'm here.

SALESMAN: Beautiful, isn't it? Magnificent car. Let me tell you, the beauty of the new Chevy just doesn't.

BROWN: Nope.

SALESMAN (stunned): Excuse me, did you say Nope?

BROWN: Yep, I said Nope. It ain't beautiful. That's why I want one.

SALESMAN: Er . . . heheheheheh. (He laughs a forced laugh at what he thinks is Brown's little joke.) You want one. Well, we have a beautiful new Golden Sunset Bronze, and the convertible like Dinah Shore rides has just come in. Now, I can show you our brochures, and.

LEOPOLD BROWN: I want a plain two-door Chevy with Power Glide. I want that one over there. With the bad color. And the plastic seat covers.

SALESMAN: Yes sir. It just so happens I can make immediate delivery.

BROWN: How much?

SALESMAN: That'll be one thousand nine-hundred and seventy-nine dollars and eighty eight cents. And that includes, of course, the Power Glide. And you are really gonna enjoy driving this car. Let me tell you. . .

BROWN (interrupting, peeling off the exact amount in worn bills from his large wad. He puts eighty-eight cents down on the counter): Nope. Ain't gonna drive it.

SALESMAN: By George, that's a good one. (He slaps his knee) I'll have to tell the boys at the Rotary Club that one. That's a hot one. 'Ain't gonna drive it.' Yessir, Mister Brown. Probably buying it for the wife, eh? Or your daughter. By George, that's a goodie.

BROWN: Nope. Buyin' it for myself. Gimme the keys.

SALESMAN (speaking slowly, as though to a small child): Of course, Mister Brown. Here are your keys. And since you're not going to drive it, I suggest. . .

BROWN: I know my business, son. Don't need no advice. Been buyin' cars for years. As long as she can make it to Rossie, that's all I need. It's forty-three miles on the dot, and I want to get back before dark.

SALESMAN (handing Brown the keys): Yessir, and, er . . . ah . . . drive happy!

Without a word Brown drives car out of showroom and disappears into the dusk.

SALESMAN: Boy oh boy. We sure can grow 'em here in Iowa!

It never changes. The man of vision and foresight is always alone. Leopold Brown, hail and farewell. There have been few like you.