

# Car buffs drive in nostalgic style

By Lisa Simon  
staff writer

Call it a car craze, a time-consuming hobby, or an affinity with American nostalgia.

Antique cars have inspired a generation of collectors, a multitude of car clubs, shows and swap meets, and an assortment of related industries like restoration, classic car cleaning, and old parts dealers and traders.

Three Farmington residents caught the old car bug, and dedicate their free time to working on the cars and travel-

ing with and meeting others who have antique cars.

John Sobran, a retiree of 10 years, takes pride in his vintage 1948 Ford Lincoln Continental. Painted the deepest of midnight blues, the car is one of only 452 cars of the same model made in 1948. At the time, the car sold for a list price of \$4,662. Sobran said in modern times, the car is worth "what you're willing to pay me for it, and what I'm willing to part with it for."

Sobran said he had his eyes open for a 1948 Lincoln Continental since 1948. In order to obtain the one he has now,

Sobran conducted a search that spanned the nation. At one point he almost bought a 1948 Lincoln Continental that had belonged to the late Mrs. Clark Cable.

Eventually, Sobran advertised for the car he wanted in antique car magazines like Hemmings Motor Magazine. He took what he calls several "dry runs" to New York, Connecticut and Illinois to check out cars he said were "100 percent misrepresented." What the cars sounded like through telephone conversations were quite different than their actual condition.

In 1980, he finally found the 1948 Lincoln Continental "dream" car he had been searching for, from a man in Columbus, Ind. This particular seller had a collection of 28 vintage automobiles.

Sobran, who has always been interested in cars, along with his son, who has a large library of automobile books and literature, said his hobby is a "labor of love."

HE SPENDS hours each week "linking around" and pursuing a search for necessary or supplementary parts. His most recent purchase was a \$100 windshield wiper part. He has also bought a new convertible top and new chrome plating.

"As far as I know, it's completely original and that's why I purchased it," Sobran said proudly. "It just has classic proportions to it, it's a true classic."

The car costs about \$200 a year to insure, gets about six miles to the gallon, takes regular gas, has a powerful 12-cylinder engine, and weighs 4,700 pounds. The original odometer reads 22,000 miles.

A member of the Lincoln Continental Club, and the Classic Car Club of America, Sobran said his greatest pleasure comes from shining the car until it gleams and driving it to an outing so that other people can enjoy it too.

In large antique car happenings like the recent Freedom Festival in Detroit and Windsor, Sobran dresses to fit the era of his car, like many other enthusiastic vintage automobile owners. Sobran also participates in Farmington's Founder's Day Parade and will participate in Meadowbrook's Concord D'Elegance, a prestigious vintage car event in early August where antique car owners are selected to participate by invitation only.

*'I just had an urge to own an old car.'*

— Bill Wolf

BILL WOLF, also of Farmington Hills, is the proud owner of a 1937, fire-engine-red Packard. His first vintage automobile was purchased in 1976. "I just had an urge to own an old car," Wolf said.

Wolf, who owns a 1941 Buick and a 1955 Thunderbird as well as his Packard, likes to buy his cars in excellent condition and work hard at maintaining them.

He has owned his Packard for two years, although he had his eye on it since 1976.

Wolf likes to drive his cars when ever possible.

The Packard was repainted in 1951. Wolf said, "otherwise, it is completely original." Wolf's particular Packard is especially rare because it is one of very few four-door convertible models. Compared to today's standards, Wolf said, the top is extremely heavy. It takes at least two people to put it down.

Wolf explained that good upholstery is important when buying original cars. As for the outside, if it's "so-so, it can always be repainted."

With 92,630 miles on its sturdy eight-cylinder engine, Wolf drives his Packard up to 50 mph. He gets approximately 15 miles to the gallon.

Antiques are a favorite passion for both Wolf and his wife, Georgann. She said, "We have a lot of paraphernalia connected with antique cars."

Aside from a collection of pewter reproductions of vintage cars, the

Wolfs have an antique car horn and a picture of an old car made out of watch parts. Hanging above the hearth in the Wolf's family room is a picture of a 1936 Packard — "Billy's ultimate dream car," according to Georgann.

The Wolf's plans include a variety of car extravaganzas including events with the Packard Club and the Veterans Motor Car Club of America. Wolf is an active member of both clubs. Wolf's Packard has also been invited to participate in Meadowbrook's Concord D'Elegance.

VIC HOLLINGSHEAD, another enthusiastic vintage car buff, is the proud owner of a lime-green 1949 Ford coupe. After spending time with his son, Glen, restoring a 1934 two-door Ford coupe and a 1950 Ford pick-up, Hollingshead decided to buy a nostalgic vehicle that was ready to go. "I got tired of working on old cars, so I went and bought one," Hollingshead said.

"Let the mechanic do the work now, I get 'em when they're ready to go."

Hollingshead, a man who "usually drives Plymouths," bought his car from a friend, Joel Johnson, who had restored a 1949 Ford coupe engine for the car, rechromed it, and repainted it.

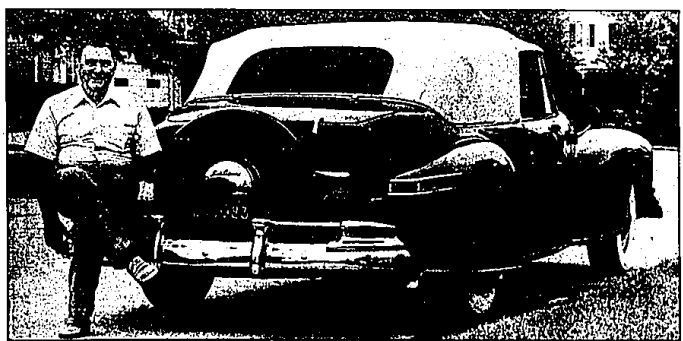
Hollingshead explained that the car was a common model, but not one that stood up for a long time. "I bought it to drive, not to show," he said. He likes to take it "cruising" to Gurnsey's Ice

Please turn to Page 4



RANDY BOBIST/staff photographer

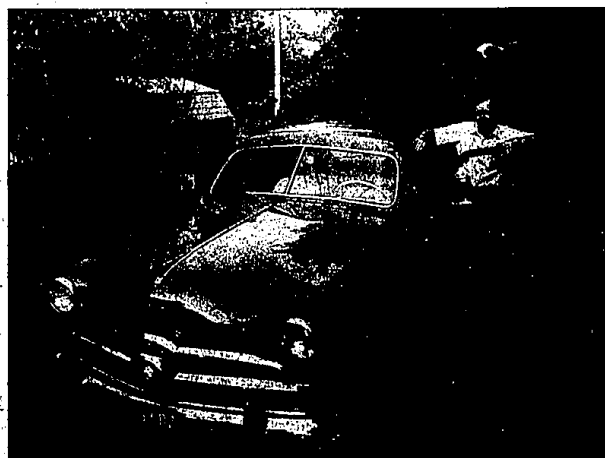
Bill Wolf's 1937 Packard gets a fair share of pampering. The classic auto has 92,930 miles to its credit and can go 50 miles an hour.



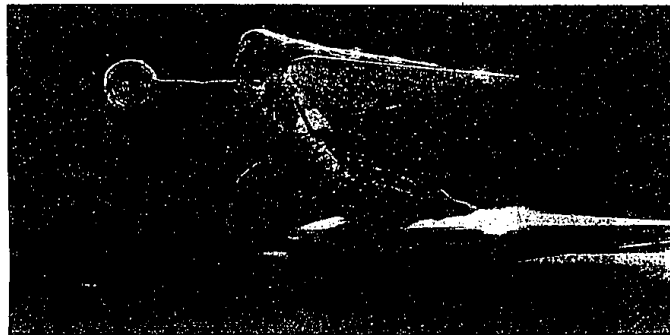
John Sobran calls his 1948 Lincoln Continental with a 12-cylinder engine a "true classic."



You won't find chrome grilles anymore like this one on the 1949 Ford Coupe.



Owning an antique car, such as his 1949 Ford Coupe, is a dream come true for Vic Hollingshead. He and his son Glen have restored two other antique cars.



**BE FASHION-WISE**  
**SOMERSET'S FALL FASHION SEMINARS**  
**A SHOW — AND MORE**

**Every Monday Evening**  
**7:00 PM**

August 5  
*Options for Your Lifestyle*  
August 12  
*Accessories Do Make the Difference*  
August 19  
*Camouflage Your Figure Problems*  
August 26  
*Hairstyles & Face Colours for Fall*

Fashions from: Bonwill Teller/Cache/Copper & Copper  
Ecclestone/Gucci/Jaeger/Laura Ashley/Page Boy  
Roder/T. Edwards/Tennis Lady/Nino-Hairdresser

**SOMERSET MALL**  
Big Beaver Road at Coolidge/Troy  
Sunday 12-5/Monday, Thursday, Friday 10-9/Other Days 10-6