



Northern Virginia Regional Group



# VALVE CLATTER



## THE EARLY FORD V-8 CLUB OF AMERICA Regional Group 96

Volume XXI, No. 1

January 1998

Cliff Green, Editor

The Washington Times

PAGE E26 / FRIDAY, DECEMBER 26, 1997

OUT OF THE PAST / Vern Parker

# Dream of a rare 1940 Mercury is fulfilled

Steve Dawkins drove a used 1946 Ford during his long ago high school days in Ridgewood, N.J.; but he wished it were a Mercury.

Mercury had been introduced in 1939 by Ford's Lincoln Division to do battle against General Motor's Oldsmobile and Buick but had its momentum cut short in 1942 by World War II.

Even so, the young Mr. Dawkins was enamored with Mercurys. In 1951 his father had bought a Mercury that elevated him — in his son's eyes — to "cool" status.

The Mercury-obsessed teenager even got a job at the Ken Smith Lincoln-Mercury dealership in Ridgewood starting in 1953. As a lot boy, he mainly polished cars and eventual worked his way up in 1955 to mechanic.

Countless Mercurys of endless models passed before his eyes while he worked at the dealership.

However, he never saw one particular model. The one he considered then and considers today — the holy grail of Mercurydom —

the rarest of the rare, a 1940 Mercury Convertible Sedan. Only 978 were produced and not one came to the Ridgewood, N.J., dealership for service.

"It's been my dream car for years and years," Mr. Dawkins, now a consultant to the state Department, said, even though he had only seen it in photographs.

He knows the unseen car intimately. He knows it was the most expensive Mercury model in 1940:

- Convertible Sedan.....\$1,212.
- Convertible Coupe.....1,079.
- Town Sedan.....987.
- 2-Door Coupe.....978.
- 2-door Sedan.....946.

He knows the car weighs 3,138-pounds, the heaviest of all the 1940 Mercury models.

He knows his "holy grail" is four inches longer than a 1940 Ford and he knows it rides on a 116-inch wheelbase.

He also knows the trusty 239-cubic-inch flathead V-8 engine generates 95 horsepower.

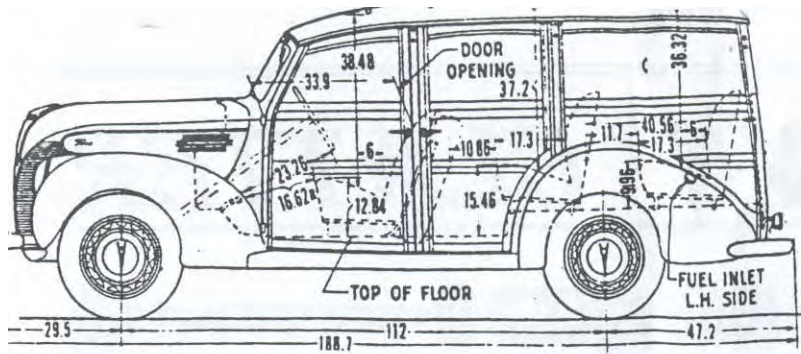
There's not much he doesn't know about the 1940 Mercury Convertible Sedans except for a Communist mystery. Besides the 978 cars produced in the United States, another 105 were sup-

posedly produced in 1940 on a Ford assembly line in Bucharest, Romania.



Steve Dawkins displays the mighty 239-cubic-inch flathead V-8 engine.





## Up front with The President

JANUARY 1998

As we enter the new Year, Barbara and I wish all the best for each of you and your loved ones. I hope you enjoyed some of the event of the Club last year. Some of the highlights included a tour of the FBI Academy; a visit to Hamilton, Virginia; White's Ferry ride to Brookville, Maryland for the NCR show; Dellmas Wood's "FDR" Museum; the Lebkicker Tour to the Ingleside Plantation Winery, Strafford Hall, and Fredericksburg; Great Meadow Wine Festival; fantastic weather at Hershey and a wonderful Christmas Party, to name a few.

For the membership meeting in January we are going to try something a little different. We are not going to have any fixed agenda except to visit. It always seems that members don't have enough time to see each other and get their business discussed when we have a presentation. So we decided to do an open meeting one time. Bring you "stuff" and your questions, and let's see what we can learn from each other. I have a jack I bought at a Flea Market in Ohio for \$5 and I have no idea what it is for. Maybe one of you can tell me. I sure hope it is not for a Chevy, that would be embarrassing.

Bill Vincent is doing much better, and we hope to see him on the road in the spring.

Things are moving apace on the May Car Show. Now that the holidays are over, we will be busy on the details. All of the committee members are very enthused about this event and it should have the style and class that this club is famous for!

Congratulations to Steve and Jane Dawkins for having their 1940 Mercury convertible sedan featured in Vern Parker's "Out of the Past" section in the Washington Times!

Remember, **your dues are due** - this will be your **last issue** of the "Valve Clatter" if you do not reup this month. Do not miss another informative issue. If you and your spouse came to our Christmas Party, with the club subsidizing \$10.50 a head, your dues were more than covered.

That's it, so remember, if we all do a little, together we can accomplish a lot!

*DAVE*

**THE END  
IS HERE!**



... UNLESS YOU RENEW



The factory was never reopened after World War II. Reports have surfaced that "knock down" assembly units for 105 of these Mercurys were shipped to Russia in 1940. The trail ends there.

Mr. Dawkins resigned himself to the fact he was never going to even see his dream car. Then, while on vacation in Key West, Fla., in August, he saw an ad offering his dream car for sale. The ad included a tiny photo that further enticed Mr. Dawkins and when he saw the car was in Naples, Fla., the decision was made for him.

He told his wife, Jane, of his discovery, and knowing it was his dream car, she encouraged him to go for it.

He flew to Naples and was met by retired Dr. Mason Seibel who had restored the Mercury.

Mr. Dawkins knew what to look for and thoroughly inspected the car.

He found zero rust under the car with perfect rocker panels and, incredibly, all four fenders were new. Additionally, the obligatory blue dashboard was new along with the impossible-to-find plastic trim pieces on the dash.

Even the two ribs on each of the four bumper guards had the required red stripe. The chrome "Mercury Eight" was on each side of the engine hood as well as on the trunk lid.

Mr. Dawkins flew back to his vacation and wife and excitedly told her of his find.

Negotiations ensued and an incredibly surprised Mr. Dawkins discovered he, after all those years, had finally bought the car.

The owner agreed to truck the Mercury via commercial trucker to Mr. Dawkins' home in Alexandria.

Mr. Dawkins knew when the truck pick up his Mercury in Florida and he anxiously waited and waited and waited some more.

The day after the Labor Day weekend, the delinquent truck driver called to say he was dropping off the car at nearby Hayfield High School.

Mr. Dawkins and his wife (who had not seen the car) raced over to the high school in time to see it being rolled on its 6.00x16-inch tires off the truck.

Since taking delivery Mr. Dawkins has learned his new/old car was an original Chicago car and with only 1,021 miles on the rebuilt engine "it cruises nicely at 50 mph."

Mr. Dawkins reports that 1940 Mercury sales literature ballyhooes how easily the automatic vacuum power top goes down and up on the two-door convertible coupe. Not a word is mentioned, he said, about the top on the convertible sedan. "With good reason," he said. The convertible sedan top is mechanical and, Mr. Dawkins said, "It takes three men to put it down."

If that weren't enough, Mr. Dawkins said you have to know exactly which top iron to push in the correct order to avoid snapping some of the steel slats.

Once the top is down the "B" pillars are easily removed to give the car a sleek appearance. Sur-

prisingly, each "B" pillar is filled with a wooden 2x4.

Unusual for a "deluxe" model, Mr. Dawkin's car has a two-spoke steering wheel with only a horn button and no horn ring.

The antenna is mounted above the windshield, just above the vacuum-operated wipers and the cowl ventilator.

Inside the car mounted between the windshield halves is the oval rearview mirror.

Since acquiring his broad-shouldered machine, Mr. Dawkins has become intimately acquainted with his car. He has learned how to handle a loose transmission shift rod and has installed four new brake cylinders.

And he has discovered the wisdom of carrying a spare coil and condenser.

"Little things happen," he said, "like the accelerator linkage falling off the carburetor."

Such tribulations leave Mr. Dawkins undaunted because — at long last — he has the car of his fantasies.

## MERCURY



Steve Dawkins removes one of the "B"-pillars. The removable hollow steel post is filled with a sawed off 2x4.



**REGIONAL GROUP 96 CHRISTMAS PARTY** by Charlie Morrison

Once again the members of our RG gathered at the Country Club of Fairfax, on Saturday December 6, for our annual Christmas Party. The setting was as lovely as usual with Christmas decorations everywhere. For those of you who have never attended our party in this beautiful setting, you don't know what you've been missing. We are grateful to **Cliff and Sandra Green** for arranging for our use of the gorgeous room.



The evening started with a relaxed "V8 social session" which was followed by an excellent dinner. I don't meant to "push a dead Chevy", but each year everything at this venue gets better. The staff, the setting and the food are all up to "v8 standards".

The meal was once again opened with a prayer by Charlie Morrison who tries each year to weave a V8 theme into a year-end thank you for favors granted:

*"Dear Lord,  
Once again we thank you for guiding us and our old cars along the highways of life to this celebration of the Christmas season. We are grateful for your support through vapor-locks, dead coils and frozen bearings as we nurse our "vintage vehicles" through the years. We ask you help in the coming year as we once again journey to Dearborn for our pilgrimage to the city of our cars birth. Grant us compassion as we motor past our friends in Chevys, with their heads under the hoods - they know not what they*

*do - help us lead them to the "V8 light". Bless our old cars and the spouses who suffer and support us through skinned knuckles and dirty fingernails. They are indeed angles who deserve special consideration. We thank you for your blessings and ask that you continue to hold the Early Ford V8 Club to a special place in your kingdom.  
Amen"*

Following a delicious dinner of filet mignon or Chicken Chesapeake, we had the usual raucous session of gift exchanges. The rules change from year to year (presumably to confuse us older folks) and this year was no exception. This time when you number (from a ticket given only after you paid for your meal) was called, you selected a package (no shaking)and opened it. You then had the option to keep your present or trade for any other present already opened. This year there was no "bundle of shop towels" but a few folks were seen to hid especially nice gifts (a 40's gas station ceramic lamp, a scale model of a '36 Ford pickup, a great book on woodie wagons, and a beautiful framed print of a garage scene) to hide it from a swaps. The first number called is in the "V8 drivers seat" (**Bill Selley** was the lucky one) since he/she gets the last choice and may select any present at all.

The evening ended with promises to "keep in touch" and "lets go to Dearborn". Let's do it!







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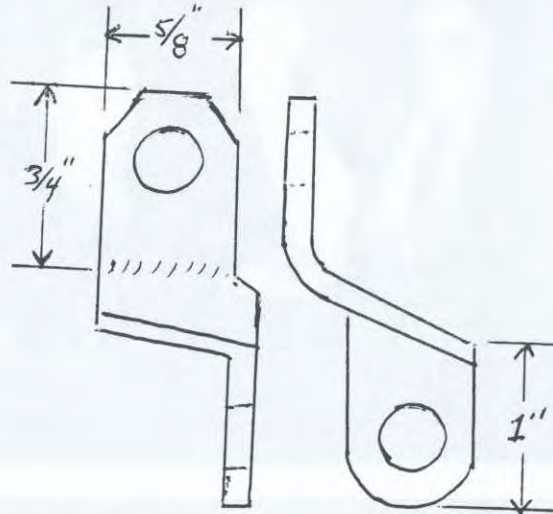
**VALVE CLATTER**



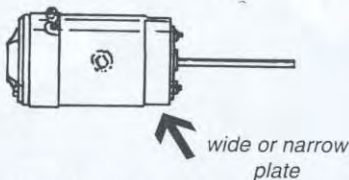
## OIL PAN ATTACHMENTS

Editor

In late '38 when Ford went to the 24 stud block, they engineered an improvement that provided support to the started motor. 81-11140 was introduced : Bracket (starter to oil pan attachment). I don't know why this bracket was now required, for millions of Fords were produced prior to '38 without it. Were the two long bolts that go through the starter to attach it to the housing no longer thought to be sufficient to support the weight of the motor? This could not be true because the earlier starter motors 32 - early '36 (I think) has a wide 1" thick plate that took a 5/16-18 bolt x 7.18" long and had no support bracket while the later cars had a narrow plate with a 1/4"-20 x 6.93" long through bolt ( see illustration) and now required the bracket. You would think that the longer motor would require support too!



81A-11140 Bracket (starter to oil pan attaching) \*



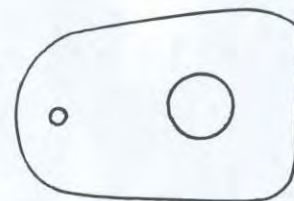
Wide plate is 1" thick  
Narrow plate is 3/8" thick

I ran my '40 for 25 years before I realize that I was missing this part! This was typical of most Ford starter repairs - the mechanic, shade tree or professional, would forget how it was mounted, lose it, or in the haste to complete the job, ignored replacing ol' 81-11140. Now this part is not easy to find - every vendor seems to have one back home and there are replacements out there (non-Ford). However, this

part is easy to duplicate yourself using the drawing. With mild steel and a vise you can use the trusty ball peen hammer and make a suitable replacement, IF you are worried that your motor might have so much torque it will twist off the housing, or you are concerned that THE JUDGE will eyeball to closely and deduct a point, otherwise forget about it! However, as a disclaimer, we are duly responsible to restore it "As Henry made it"!!

## ANOTHER OVERLOOKED OIL PAN ATTACHMENT!

When Henry introduced hydraulic brakes in 1939 we restorers were left with a dilemma on where to attach the xx-2456 spring (brake pedal retracting). We '39 to '48 owners took what ever length spring was around and applied a sufficient tension to it by attaching the hooked end to any convenient part on the frame, so that the brake pedal would snap back after being released. Now that the standard of judging has been increased , it is important to know the correct spring length and where it is attached. For the '39 and '40 the end of the spring is attached to a hole in the frame. In 1941 on, the mystery of what hole to



99A-7243 FULL SIZE



## Oil Pan attachments (cont)

use is now eliminated by part 09A-2442, clip (brake pedal retracting spring). This clip is attached to the last pan bolt on the left side and a 7.6" spring (99A-7243) is conveniently hooked!

This mystery part was revealed to me by **Ken Burns** and I researched to see if it belonged on my '40 woodie (no). However, **Bill Selley's** '41 panel did require one and he made up a couple using an original piece. So, rush out the garage and check your '41- '48, and if you don't have it installed, Bill will give one away to the 3rd caller!! 703-273-5334

Because I am most familiar with '39 - '48, I can write technical articles about these cars using my library for information. However, I have no knowledge about later flatheads '49 -53 and little about early '32 - '38 , so, I need some tips from you owners to keep this newsletter interesting to all members. Editor

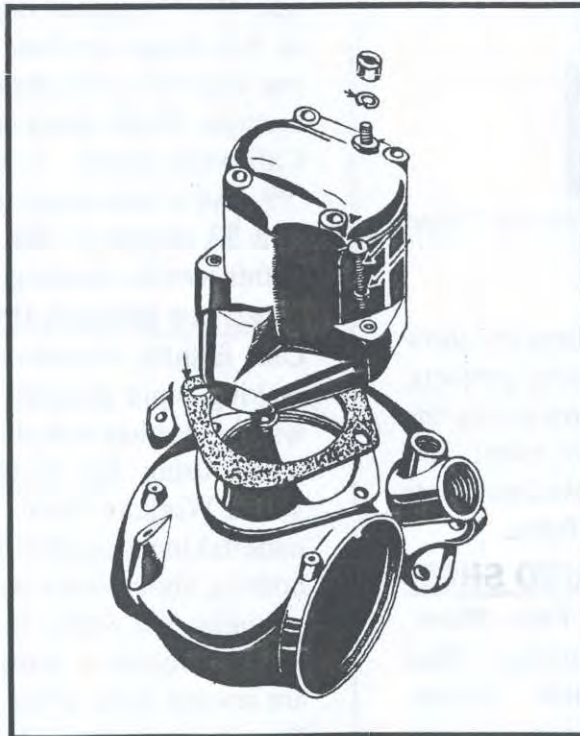
## MYSTERY COIL

Editor

Last year at Winchester , which has a good flea market, I looked at a coil that I have never seen before. Neither **Selley** or **Amster** recognized it. The Vendor did not know what the Ford script coil mounted to either, but he said for \$5 I took take it home and try to find out.

The black base of the coil 41 distributor, however rectangular with a brown rivits! I asked several the coil, and no one knew **Jerry Hill**. He dug out a and behold there was a subject!! This unit was a manufactured during the number 81A -12036 coil rivits - 2 mounting out the point that the reference only, not what

Armed with this to a membership could name the Part - stump **Buzzy Potter** and



would mount on a 37-the top was top held with four "Ford" people about except for member "Green Book", and lo drawing of the replacement coil war years - part assy - dome top with 4 screws. This brings "Green Book" is for is correct for your car!

information, I took it meeting, and no one including the hard to **S. L. Ross!!!**

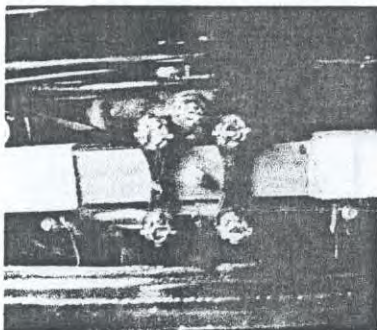
I have no further infromation on this coil as to how long it was manufactured. The production must be low as I have spotted only a few others at Hershey this year. I have not tested this coil on my car - it would only be used as a spare, anyhow - I had fun with it for \$5!!!



## V8 TIMES

The *V8 Times* Editor **Jerry Windel** has been publishing articles from the "Valley Clatter" much to the astonishment of the Editor. I would be more precise and less "chatty" if I knew I was writing for National readership, especially with "tech tips"! I do not have the experience to write, compared to some of the west coast guys, who rebuilt flatheads and raced them on Bonnaville or built them on the assembly line at Long Beach! I am very flattered that our newsletter has been recognized so often!

Notice that I was mildly chided about the cotter pins - on how the assembly line workers hit them with a ball peen hammer - now if you look at the V8 Club 1940 restoration manual, page 4-1, there is a picture of a 100 point car from Benny Bootle - look at the cotter pins:



Looks like a 1 point deduction for "over restoration"!

### JANUARY MEETING - 13TH

This will be a chance for members to "show and tell". Bring in mystery parts, projects, literature, what have you, to show or ask the members. This is always a fun event. Be creative and bring something! Refreshments will be provided by **Mike Bellefaire**.

### FAIRFAX HERITAGE AUTO SHOW

The steering committee of **Tom Shaw**, Chairman, **Dave Blum**, parking, **Don Lombard**, registration, **Cliff Green**, Advertising and **Dave Westrate**, awards, met at the Fairfax City Police Station to move forward with the event. Other members will be asked to participate as

more duties a formalized. We will need the entire club support at this potential fund raiser. We (The Downtown Fairfax Coalition, the Fairfax Museum and NVRG, along with the City) see potential in this event!

The event logo is being finalized with the City of Fairfax - it will appear on awards, advertising and literature. We have the Massey building parking lot (2,200 spaces). A report will be made at the January meeting

### FOR SALE

1934 through 1936 Aluminum heads \$300 pair. 1935/36 closed car radio \$150. Other early Ford parts available, please inquire.

Allen Ponton 804-293-4400

1987 Ford Pickup - short bed with Lear Cap. 6 cyl, fuel injected, 4 speed, 63,000 miles. Always garaged, never driven in snow. Lariat trim with alloy rims and new Michelin tires. \$5,500 Cliff Green 426-2662

Good front spring for '40 \$25, NOS '41 covered rear spring \$125 Cliff Green

### CALENDARS

The 1999 Western National Meet to be held in San Diego at Dana Point (a must) have put together a 18 month calendar featuring member Fords taken at various historic S. California sights. It spans Jan '98 - June '99. As a fund raiser, they are charging \$10 plus \$3 shipping. **Bill Selley** will have one at this months meeting.

### PRES '39 WOODIE UPDATE

Our faithful President **Dave Westrate** is making rapid progress on his '39 standard wagon. He has completed the making of the wood using the facilities of the Vienna Wood Workers Club! This is an enormous undertaking considering he knew little or nothing about wood working! Dave is now stripping the frame to have it dipped and powder coated a semi-gloss black. There are several areas of the frame to be repaired. Dave is again leaping into the unknown, as this will be his first restoration. He is looking for lots of advice!

**DUES ARE DUE!**



# NVRG EVENTS CALENDER

## January

- 10-11 Charlotte-In-January Autofest, MetroLona Expo, Charlotte, N. C.
- 13 *NVRG Montly Meeting - Show & Tell*
- 24 Bay Country AACA Indoor parts meet  
4-H Park, Denton, Md
- 27 *NVRG Director's Meeting*

## February

- 10 *NVRG Monthly Meeting*
- 13-15 Atlantic City, Flea Market & Auction
- 19-21 Zyphry Hills Flea Market, Fla
- 24 *NVRG Director's Meeting*

## March

- 10 *NVRG Monthly Meeting*
- 24 *NVRG Directors Meeting*
- 28-29 Frederick -28th annual indoor swap meet,  
Fairgrounds

## April

- 2-5 Charlotte Auto Fair, Charlotte Motor Speedway
- 14 *NVRG Monthly Meeting*
- 23-26 Spring Carlisle
- 28 *NVRG Director's Meeting*

## May

- 9 Winchester
- 12 *NVRG Monthly Meeting*
- 17 City of Fairfax Heritage Festival, Antique and New Car Show - NVRG Sponser  
*Meeting NVRG Director's*
- 26 *Meeting NVRG Director's*

## June

- 5-7 Carlisle All Ford National
- 9 *NVRG Monthly Meeting*
- 19-20 AACA Eastern National Meet, Salisbury, Md
- 23 *NVRG Director's Meeting*
- 29-July 4 EFV8CA Grand National Meet, Dearborn

## TIME TO RENEW!



PLEASE MAIL YOUR \$15 CHECK TO: **BRIAN BOARDMAN**  
**9023 CHESTNUT RIDGE DR**  
**FAIRFAX STA, VA 22039**

The Early Ford V8 Club of America rules states that you must be a member of the National to renew with NVRG. Only paid up members will receive the February "Valve Clatter".

Names (include spouse): \_\_\_\_\_

FILL IN ONLY PARTS THAT HAVE CHANGED: **NO CHANGE, CHECK HERE**

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone (Home): \_\_\_\_\_ (Work): \_\_\_\_\_

Year	Model (Standard, Deluxe, Super Deluxe, Custom, etc.)	Engine	Body Style



# BOARD OF DIRECTORS

## NORTHERN VIRGINIA REGIONAL GROUP



President: **Dave Westrate**.....620-9597

Vice President:	<b>David Blum</b>	281-1654	Programs:	<b>Bill Simons</b>	536-3648
Secretary:	<b>Tom Shaw</b>	771-9394	Property:	<b>Bill Selley</b>	273-5334
Treasurer:	<b>Hank Amster</b>	753-9575	Historian:	<b>Don Lombard</b>	690-7971
Membership:	<b>Bryan Boardman</b>	643-2661	Refreshments:	<b>Mike Bellafaire</b>	540-720-1729
Tours:	<b>Hank Dubois</b>	476-6919	Newsletter:	<b>Cliff Green</b>	426-2662

Monthly general membership meetings are usually held at 7:30, the *second Tuesday* of each month, in historic Hunter House, located adjacent to the tennis courts, Nottoway Park, Court House Road, Vienna, Virginia. Check the newsletter for occasional alternate sites. **SEE YOU THERE**



### FIRST CLASS MAIL

Regional Group 96  
Early Ford V8 Club  
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