

Show At Sunshine Grille In Fork, Brings Out Enthusiastic Group Of Members

Saturday, September 27, Joanne Day and Read Van Zile were 'officers of the day' for the show at Sunshine Grille, in rural Fork, MD. They must have put in a special order for an absolutely perfect day...make that weekend, the last week in September. A weekend of many events in the area.

Joanne's 1963 Thunderbird convertible affectionately known as 'Ol Gal', basked in the sun all day with the top down. So did Art and Boots Petrucci's gorgeous fire-engine red '64 Chevrolet Corvair convertible. In fact, nearly every convertible on the show field had the top down with the possible exception of Al Zimmerman's 1934 Ford Cabriolet 'rumble seat roadster.' Al and Nancy's plan was to win the award for 'first place', it worked! Actually, Al's eight year labor of love restoring his beloved '34 Cabriolet to a condition that is beyond 'like new.' You'll run out of superlatives trying to describe this car, no kidding.

Bob Battista's 1957 Ford F150 grabbed second place money and a couple prospective members Mr. and Mrs. George Hubbard garnered third place with their outstanding 1959 Mercedes-Benz, 190 SL, two-place convertible.

The entire list of participants: Joanne and Read, '63 Ford T-Bird. The Petrucci's '64 Corvair; Al Zimmerman and Nancy Mattheu, '34 Ford 'rumble seat' Cabriolet; Gary Wilmer, '63 Chevrolet Impala '409'; Dave Chiu, '50 Ford Coupe; John Shenton, '66 Plymouth 'Cuda; Bob Battista, '57 Ford F150; Ruth Synodinos, '47 Cadillac; Jerry Ross, '54 Kaiser; Buzz Diehl, '90 Chevrolet Corvette; Lew Mendenhall, '52 Hudson convertible; John Shenton, Jr., '78 Dodge Little Red Express Truck; George Hubbard, '59 Mercedes-Benz 190 SL convertible; Jerry Gordon, '64 Lincoln Continental convertible; Jim Richardson, '57 Porsche 356; Paul Holt, '48 Chrysler; Dan Denman, '55 Chevrolet Bel Air hardtop; Steve Kilroy, '67 Chevelle; Paul Habicht, '94 Lincoln Towncar; Bill Wurzell, '54 DeSoto.



Al and Nancy pose beside the 'numero uno' at the Sunshine Grille Show in Fork, Maryland, Saturday September 27. Below left, 2nd place, Bob Battista; for his 1957 Ford F-150. Right: Mr. & Mrs. George Hubbard, 3rd place winner, for their outstanding 1959 Mercedes-Benz 190 SL Roadster. Beautiful day, beautiful cars!

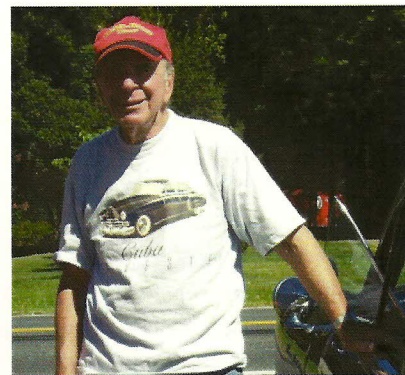


STRAIGHTENS OUT MISINFORMED EDITOR

Kaiser Manhattan Owner Jerry Ross Knows His Vehicle Inside And Out

I finally had an opportunity to talk to Dr. Jerry Ross at the Sunshine Grille show, Saturday, September 27. Jerry has owned his 1954 Kaiser Manhattan nearly twenty years. In that time he has come to know the car very well. More than well enough to straighten me out.

For years I had a nice 8.5 x 11 picture of what I thought was a 1955 Kaiser Manhattan that I also believed to be the last Kaiser to roll off the assembly line in Toledo, Ohio. I showed the picture to Jerry and he immediately said: "that's not a '55 Manhattan, that's a '54 Kaiser Special!" "What?" I took the photograph at the 'Das Awk-fest' show in Macungie, Pa., in 2004. That year Kaiser-Frazer were the featured 'marques' at the show; also included, Henry J's, and Kaiser Darins.



Jerry Ross

If Jerry and I were butting heads in court, my client would be on death row. Jerry completely disposed of my assertion. I had a postcard from the show about the 'last car' and I incorrectly linked it to the picture. Before I retired, I had the picture in my office and I told people it was a '55 Manhattan. Jerry referred me to his vast collection of Kaiser 'evidence' and proved beyond a reasonable doubt how badly I was mistaken. Jerry, however, did so in his pleasant, gentle way. Jerry's relationship with Kaiser Manhattans goes back to his high school days as his father bought a brand new 1954 Kaiser Special, one trim level below Jerry's beautiful white over blue sedan, with optional 'Hydramatic' transmission, supercharger and spotlight.

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The 1954 Kaiser Manhattan is a very attractive automobile from every angle. The color-keyed interiors were a first in the industry.

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From as far back as I can remember, I always thought Kaisers to be very attractive with colorful interiors and a gorgeous dashboard. As with many 'independent' manufactures in the 1940's and '50's, Kaiser-Frazer Corporation suffered from a lack of capital to compete effectively with the 'Big Three.'

Kaiser-Frazer hit the market immediately after WW II with new and completely different looking cars from the warmed over versions of 1941 cars from GM, Ford and Chrysler. K-F 'hit the ground running' at least for awhile. By 1950, when their post war cars

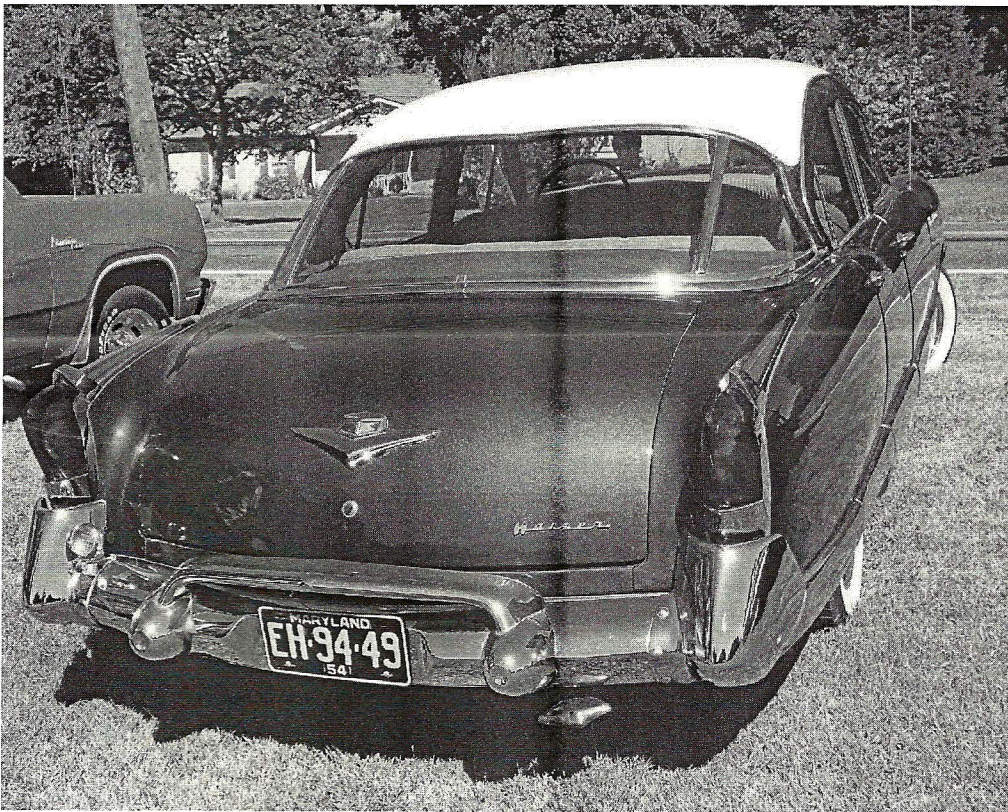
were getting stale, they came out with a completely different model. About this time, Henry J. Kaiser and Joseph P. Frazer had a falling out over the direction of the company and Frazer abandon ship. His departure allowed Henry Kaiser to bring out the economical 'Henry J.' Unfortunately, the Henry J was not well received. They only had ONE model, a two-door coupe. The early models didn't even have an opening trunk lid. Storage was behind the rear seat. In order to boost sales of the Henry J, they made an arrangement with Sears & Roebuck to market the

'Allstate.' Simply a re-badged Henry J with all Sears consumables; Silvertone tires, belts, hoses, battery, ignition wires and the Allstate logo. You could order one from the Sears catalogue along with a complete, pre-fab Sears house if you desired. In those days, Sears was everything to everybody, especially if you had an outhouse. I'm told the thick catalogue was far superior to corncocks.

The 'Allstate' gamble didn't bode well for K-F or Sears. The Henry J. really wasn't all that more economical than a full-size, Ford, Chevy or Plymouth. Gasoline was about 25 cents a gallon but incomes were much less too. 'The low price three' cars would accommodate six adults and had larger, more advanced motors with Chevy's overhead valve six and Ford's snappy flathead V8. The Henry J was only around for three model years in the early fifties. Speculation at the time was if Joe Frazer had prevailed and the company would have developed a V8 engine and their own automatic transmission they might have been able to survive by not introducing the Henry J and focusing entirely on the Kaiser models.

Jerry related a story that I vaguely remembered hearing before. Around 1950 Kaiser approached Oldsmobile Division of General Motors about purchasing their nifty new overhead valve V8 for the Kaiser Manhattan. Story goes that Oldsmobile did sell Kaiser an engine for testing. Turns out, the Kaiser was faster than the Oldsmobile 88 with the same motor! Oldsmobile then refused to sell the motors.

In very short order the handwriting was on the wall and production ended in 1955. But that wasn't the end of the car. All the production equipment was packed up and sent to Argentina, South America where the Kaiser was produced as the 'Carabela' for six years until the body dies wore out. A sad ending for a once promising line of cars. Just ask Dr. Jerry Ross.--Bill Wurzell, Editor



Jerry Ross' 1954 Kaiser Manhattan is just as attractive from the rear. The large, easy to see taillights are probably the largest on any car including 1955 Chrysler taillights.

CORRECTION

In the last two editions of *THE CHESAPEAKE BULLETIN* was printed a notice of increase in annual membership dues from \$15.00 to \$20.00 per year.

This notice INCORRECTLY appeared as being under **ARTICLE VII** of THE CHESAPEAKE REGION by-laws.

It should have appeared as being under **ARTICLE VIII** of the club's bylaws.

WE REGRET THE ERROR