

JUST AS PARENTS HAD IN 1932**Robert Natale Fulfills His Quest Of Acquiring A 1931 Nash Convertible***By Robert Natale*

I first became interested in finding a 1931 Nash '881' convertible about forty years ago. I happened to find among a drawer full of old family snapshots a picture of my parents standing next to this old car with wire wheels and sidemounts and it was a convertible. I asked them about the photo, they told me it was taken by a friend that they had visited while they were on their honeymoon. Dad had purchased the car in 1931 and they were married in 1932. He said the car, a Nash, was fast for its day. He also said he had trouble with glass breaking in the driver's door when it was slammed, but few other problems.

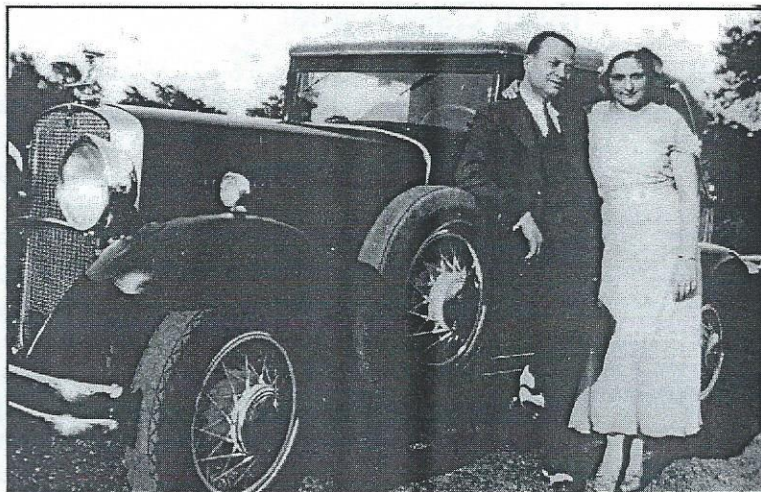
There was a story about dad and three of his buddies, all tailors, going to New York City in the car one weekend to attend a religious feast day celebration. They were stopped by police, not once, but twice, and had a hard time convincing the cops who they were and what they were doing in the city. It seemed that there was a disagreement of some sort between an organization in Scranton, PA and one in New York at the time. These gentlemen, all dressed to the nines in suits they had probably made for themselves, riding in this black convertible with PA tags, must have fit the profile of people for whom police were on the lookout.

My father only owned the car for two or three years, because it wasn't a practical family car. Dad traded the Nash for a Hudson sedan, another car that was fast for its day. Needless to say, that picture and stories about the car piqued my interest in finding out what I could about 1931 Nashes and this model in particular. It just happened my brother had a subscription to *Automobile Quarterly*. In 1977 they featured the Nash in their second quarter book. The cover showed a billboard that read: '80 MPH in Three Blocks?' *Nash Twin Ignition!* Inside, was a picture of a car identical to dad's, except it didn't have sidemounts, instead, a spare mounted behind the trunk between the two-piece bumper. The picture was captioned '1931 Model Eight-Eighty Victoria Convertible.' The former owner was named in the caption but that turned into a dead end.

Sometime in the 1980's I joined the Nash Car Club when my interest in the '31 Nash was rekindled. Through the club's roster, I located a car in Vermont. I tried a number of times to contact the owner by phone but my calls were never returned. Some years later when I rejoined the club, I discovered the car had been sold to a guy in England.

Fast forward to June of 2008. Earlier that year I bought a rough '62 Chevy Belair hardtop as a new project. I was busy deconstructing the Belair when a '31 Nash convertible was advertised in *Hemmings Motor News*. The picture in the ad appeared to be the model I had been looking for but with the basic artillery wheels and no sidemounts. It also appeared to be fully restored. I called the owner and he told me the car was indeed a model 881, with the overhead valve, dual ignition straight eight. It was a low mileage, original car with a cosmetic restoration from the early 1980's and it was located in the Seattle area. He further explained that he purchased the Nash from a lady who bought it at auction in 1980 and had kept it in her atrium for 25 years. He had befriended the woman and her husband some years earlier when he first learned about the car. This was because he was already a Nash enthusiast, having restored his uncle's 1927 Nash touring car. By 2005 the lady was widowed, could no longer care for the car and gave him first option to buy. After getting the car mechanically sound in the intervening years, he was ready to sell.

It was a Friday when I first talked to the Nash's seller. I thought about it over the weekend and decided this was probably my best and last chance to acquire the car I had been searching for such a long time. I had nothing



Antonio and Josephine Natale pose beside their 1931 Nash 881 convertible during their honeymoon in 1932. Years later, their son would own a 1931 Nash.

but a gut feeling that the seller's description of the car was honest and I decided to make an offer. I called the following Monday, made my offer, the offer was accepted and the car was mine.

It only took a few days to work out the details of the purchase and arrange for transporting the car to Baltimore. Within a few weeks it was being unloaded from a Horseless Carriage van in front of my home. The car was as described and as the pictures showed. As a matter of fact, even before it arrived I received lots of documentation, including details of the car's history and original manufacturer's specs from the seller.

Part of my rationale for buying the Nash was that it needed nothing and could be enjoyed immediately. After all, I had just started the '62 Belair project in 2008 and it needed everything. The only significant work I've done on the Nash involved the trunk. The seller had mentioned there was some rust on the trunk that he thought I would want to repair. In 2009, while the Chevy was having all its rusted sheetmetal replaced, I had the time to remove the trunk, have it repainted, the trim rechromed, then I reassemble and reinstalled it. The best part of this job was having the ornamental leather handles on the trunk remade by an Amish saddlery in Lititz, PA. The cost was \$25 for the pair, including shipping!

In the six years that I've owned the Nash, I've only driven it in the immediate Towson, Lutherville, and Cockeysville areas and shown it at get-togethers in those areas. Included in those shows was the East Coast Indoor Nationals at the Timonium Fairgrounds in 2009. The car did make it to the AACA Eastern Fall Meet at Hershey, also in 2009, when Gary Ruby volunteered to trailer it for me. Other than that it's spent a lot of time in my garage next to the ongoing '62 Chevy Belair project. *EDITOR'S NOTE: Color photos of Robert Natale's 1931 Nash appear on page 12.*

Comedian And 'Car Guy,' Jay Leno, Appearing At Baltimore's Modell Lyric Theater, January 22, 2015

Jay Leno will bring his comedy act to Baltimore's Lyric Theater on January 22. Many Chesapeake Region members have already purchased tickets for the single evening performance at 8 pm. At this writing, tickets were still available but the show is expected to sell out. Efforts are under way to obtain a photograph with Mr. Leno with members for publication in our 60th Anniversary Commemorative Publication.