

A Tribute To Martin Milner

By Myron Smith

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Many of the television programs of the 1950s and 1960s were westerns. Drifters and cowboys were often the plot of shows such as 'Have Gun Will Travel', 'The Lone Ranger' and my favorite western 'Cheyenne'. However, one of these drifter shows set in the current time of the '60s: was 'Route 66' which aired from 1960-1964.

The show starred Martin Milner and, for most of the series, George Maharis. Two guys and a new Chevrolet Corvette traveling across the country working odd jobs and usually finding a problem to fix or a damsel in distress. I don't know how much the show actually influenced my young mind, but I thought enough of the show to keep the TV Guide magazine which featured the duo on the cover for all these years.

The shows allure for me at the time had a lot going for it: seeing different parts of the country (even if it was in black and white) a Corvette, and Chevrolet as sponsor for much of the series. Add a snappy Nelson Riddle theme which I can still hear in my head. I even had a 1/25 scale luggage rack, suit case and bed roll on the back of my model Corvettes as I traveled in my make believe world around the living room floor.

What I remember of the writings about the show, from when it was aired, was that the filming was a grueling process with most scenes shot on location. I also recall that in reality, Milner traveled with his family in a station wagon with his wife and five children, while the show was being filmed. Milner was the one who remained on the series for its entire run. For awhile after Maharis left, Milner traveled alone until actor Glen Corbett was added to the cast as a new traveling companion near the end of the series in 1964.

Although the show was called 'Route 66', the duo were rarely on the U.S. Route 66. The highway nicknamed 'The Mother Road' was the most direct route between Chicago and Los Angeles. It has been a famous road and one about which much lore still exists. Much of the road can no longer be found as it was replaced by interstate highways. Tourists do travel as much as possible on the original route just for nostalgia's sake. Many signs have been erected to advertise 'Historic Route 66.'

I noted with sadness last September the death of Martin Milner at 83, but was not aware that the show might have affected others in the same way until I read the excellent essay in '*Hemmings Classic Car*' by Jim Donnelly (December 2015). Donnelly also enjoys automobiles and traveling by car throughout the United States and Canada.

I wonder how many of us were influenced by this TV program and are now 'touring' in our antique vehicle even if we don't have a Corvette.

Thank you Mr. Milner--A man I never met.--*Editor's Note: If you have trouble placing the actor Martin Milner, he also played the lead patrol officer, 'Pete Malloy' on the late 1960s cop show, 'Adam 12'. Kent McCord played his rookie partner, 'Jim Read.' The show started with them driving Plymouth Satellite black and white patrol cars. They gravitated to AMC Matador black and white sedans. These vehicles were essentially what the Los Angeles Police Department had in service during the show's run. Jack Treadwell's 'Route 66' piece brought to my mind the TV program of the same name.--Bill Wurzell*



Gary Ruby photo

From Jalopyrama...Al Zimmermann's original restoration, 1934 Ford Cabriolet

Ruth Synodinos Explains Late Husband Jim's \$35, 1933 Plymouth Coupe Purchase

In 1955 my husband, James Synodinos, purchased a 1933 Plymouth Coupe from Mr. Schwing of Schwing Motor Company in Hampden for \$35. Both the Schwing and Synodinos families lived in the Mayfield section of Baltimore. Jim only had \$28 and had to borrow \$7.00 from his brother John. Over the years, Jim could not remember if he ever paid his brother back.

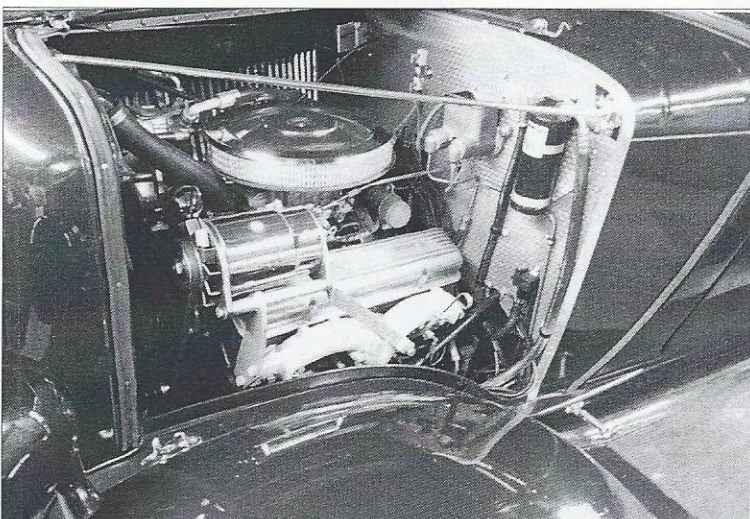
Jim was only fifteen years old at the time of the Plymouth purchase and didn't yet have his driver's license. The Plymouth had white 'house' paint on it; Jim had the car painted in 1959 by Pat Navel in Cadillac Green. It was upholstered in late 1972 or early '73 by Ben Gugliuzza of Ben's Auto Glass, Upholstery and Tops in Parkville.

The car has a 1963 Chevy 327 c.i., engine, three-speed LaSalle transmission and a Cadillac differential. Jim made the custom drive shaft himself. In 1998, Jim installed air-conditioning.

This car will always be in our family, enjoying the rides!



The Synodinos Family's beloved '33 Plymouth Coupe



Chevrolet 327 c.i., small block V8 powers the Plymouth nicely

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