

# Road

Website: [www.nirgv8.org](http://www.nirgv8.org)

Early Ford V-8 Club of America

May 2020

# Chatter

Northern Illinois Regional Group #8 Volume 54 Issue #5

**New for 1950  
Ford's Unique  
Crestliner pg.4**



**Ken Bounds' Coronation Red  
Metallic 1950 Ford Crestliner pg.6**

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**Ben & Stella Mae Dickson  
Last Pair of 1930's Public Enemies  
Used Ford V-8s in Crime Pg. 8**



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## MEETINGS

7:30 pm on the third  
Tuesday of the month at  
the Wheeling Township  
Service Center, 1616 N.  
Arlington Heights Road,  
Arlington Heights, IL

## NEWSLETTER

Send submissions to  
Editor, 3890 Woodlake  
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**Road Chatter** is published  
monthly by NIRG.

Other Early Ford V-8 Regional  
newsletters are welcome to use  
material from the Road Chatter,  
provided that Road Chatter is  
credited as the source.

## A Word From NIRG President Ron Steck

*President's message*

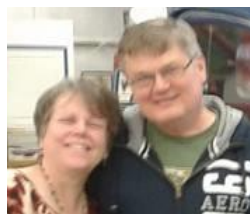


I hope everyone is doing OK during these times. I was sorry hear that one of our members, Jack Frank had been hospitalized with COVID-19. I haven't heard of any other members falling ill from the virus so that's a good thing. Please continue to take recommended precautions.

All our April get-togethers were canceled as you know. Our May driving tour has also been canceled. I just learned that our May 19 meeting can not be held because Wheeling Township will be closing their meeting rooms, possibly until August. If it becomes safe to gather we will announce alternative locations or activities in place of our regular meetings in June and July. Some of us who had our cars used for the TV show Fargo were informed that the show filming was on hold until the end of April. I personally don't have a problem with it because we can't go to car shows or even just drive our Ford V-8s during this "shelter at home" situation.

With so much time confined to home, I am sure your list of things to do is getting smaller. I have been redoing my deck and getting ready to do a pergola and paver project. I hope that all of you had a good Easter even though you were not able to go to church and be with family. I hope to see you all very soon. Take care everyone.

*Ron*



## The Editor's Desk



*John & Robin*

Dear Readers:

The shelter in place order due to the Corona Virus and cancellation of our regional group events made things a little difficult in putting together this month's Road Chatter. We would have liked to have run a story on "Eggs & Eights" with photos of our early Ford V-8s parked out on Fulton Street in Geneva as we have in years past and also minutes from a members meeting. These things, however could not take place. On a lighter note Robin and I were honored when Road Chatter received a "Golden Quill" Award from Old Cars Magazine in the Compact Chapter Category. Enjoy this May issue.

*Old Cars*  
**Golden Quill**  
Awards



## Early Ford V-8's in Hollywood Movies



### W.C. Fields takes harrowing ride in a 1933 Ford V-8 in 1941 film “Never Give a Sucker an Even Break”

by John Emmering

**A**t last appearing in a film he himself uniquely created, W.C. Fields starred in the 1941 madcap comedy “Never Give a Sucker an Even Break”. Determined to craft the film in his own style, Fields wrote the original story under the pseudonym of “Otis Criblecoblis”.

**F**ields chose the film’s cast himself. The most notable of which was 15-year-old Gloria Jean, cast as Field’s niece. Gloria Jean was a young actress with an operatic voice who had been performing on radio since age three. Although fans of W.C. Fields have come to love the film, at the time Universal Studios was disappointed with it and did not give it the big release that they had anticipated.



**P**laying himself in this, his last starring role, Fields is shown explaining the story to a producer at Esoteric Studios, Mr. Pangborn. The movie depicts the story being touted by Fields, which is rejected by the producer. While the producer is interested in using Gloria Jean for a role, she refuses and leaves with her “Uncle Bill” Fields.

**I**n the film’s conclusion Fields waits in his 1933 Ford for his niece who is shopping. When he overhears a woman say she needs to get to the maternity hospital he mistakenly believes she is about to give birth and rushes her to the hospital in one of the wildest comedy car chases ever. Ford V-8 enthusiasts will love the chase scene. You can catch it on YouTube.







# Ford Crestliner Still Sensational at 70

by John Emmering

As the new decade of the 1950's rolled in Ford Motor Company was riding high. Ford's successful post-war redesigned line of cars had gone over with the public and were selling well. Ford Motor Company had a new organizational culture and again was showing a profit.

There was however a fly in the ointment. For 1950 rival Chevrolet had introduced an innovative new model that would set the tone for years to come when they unveiled the Styleline Deluxe Belaire. While the style, known as the "hardtop convertible", had been introduced by General Motors back in 1949 in the more expensive Buick, Oldsmobile and Cadillac lines, Chevrolet had the first hardtop in the low priced field.

Anxious to counter Chevrolet, Ford stylists found that that the 1949-50 bodies did not lend themselves to removal of the B-pillar located to the rear of the doors as the bodies would not be strong enough. Initial trials found use of the convertible body would be too expensive. The Ford styling department sought to produce a unique model that would take some of the spotlight off of Chevy's two door hardtop model.



Surprisingly a solution developed when a member of Ford's design department, Art Querfeld, purchased a new 1950 Ford Custom Tudor for his wife. Desiring to give the car a sportier look, Querfeld had a trim shop install a padded leather covering over the vehicle's roof. When he drove the car to work, some of the other designers took notice and soon it caught the attention of design department executives. Querfeld's customized Tudor was brought into the design studio and the decision was quickly made to produce a new model based on this example in an effort to counter Chevy's hardtop.

In addition to the unique basket weave pattern vinyl top, designer Bob McGuire complemented the body with curved stainless-steel side trim, termed the "Airfoil", separating the dual body colors.

Rocker panels received stainless steel moldings and special wheel covers replaced the standard "dog dish" hubcaps. Items which were available as accessories on Custom and Deluxe Ford models, such as twin outside rearview mirrors and three ribbed fender skirts, were standard equipment on this car.

Ford's unique "Four-Spoke" steering wheel offered in ivory as an accessory for their cars since 1949 was also standard equipment, although in a black or brown version depending on the body color. The dash boards also were given special two tone treatment and the interior generally upgraded, including chrome plated windshield garnish moldings. Originally dubbed "Sedanca" the new model's final designation became the "Ford Crestliner".

Thick pile carpeting replaced the usual rubber mats covering the front floorboards. Crestliners came in the distinctive colors of Coronation Red Metallic and Black, Sportsman Green and Black and also Hawaiian Bronze Metallic with the lower body in Mahogany.



## New FORD "Crestliner"



**C**restliner was introduced as a late entry into the 1950 model year when it was unveiled in July 1950. The Crestliners were only equipped with the 100 hp V-8 engine and the base price was \$1,700. Production of the 1950 Crestliner reached 17,601, which was reportedly more than Ford Motor Company had expected to sell.

**A**s plans for the 1951 model year began the Crestliner model was kept in production by Ford Motor Company. The 1951 model shared the twin spinner grill, wider tail lights and buyers could order the optional Fordomatic transmission. For 1951 the colors offered were somewhat different. Crestliners could be ordered in all black as well as Greenbrier Green and Black and Hawaiian Bronze and Mahogany. The Coronation Red and Black and Sportsman Green and Black color scheme were also carried over

on some early models. Crestliner prices dropped down to \$1595 in 1951 but only 8,703 units were produced, making a 1951 Crestliner a rare car today.

**B**y the spring of 1951 a genuine pillarless hardtop, the Ford Victoria was introduced, replacing the Crestliner in the Ford line of cars. The Victoria was what the public was waiting for and 110,286 1951 Ford Victoria hardtops were sold, beating out the Chevy Styleline Deluxe Belair by 7,000 units.

**F**ord had at last entered the hardtop market with the successful Victoria. The two model year run of the attractive Crestliner was over. While very few in number, the Crestliners are the most unique cars of 1949-51 Ford series and greatly admired and prized by collectors and those who appreciate early Ford V-8 automobiles.







# A Pair of Northern Illinois Regional Group Ford Crestliners

by Ken Bounds

**I**t was a warm early summer day in Chicago on June 29, 1950 with a high temperature just over 74°. Only a short five years earlier, the Ford Torrence Avenue Assembly plant was building the M20 armored car for the war effort. But this Thursday began the second week of production of Ford's latest automobile creation, the Ford Crestliner. The 240<sup>th</sup> vehicle to roll off the line that day was a two-toned Coronation Red and Black Crestliner – let's call her Nettie.

**T**wo months later, on August 31, Nettie Eitel left her ranch near Green Castle, Missouri, in her 1939 Chevrolet and drove the 15 miles to Miller Ford in Kirksville (my home town). She traded in her well-used car for the spiffy new Crestliner (coincidentally, also named Net-

tie). She drove directly back to the ranch and took a picture of her new car in a field by a prized bull.

**O**ver the next 20 years, Nettie USED that Crestliner. She used it for ranching, she used it for herding, she used it for "driving to town" for groceries and supplies. She apparently liked pink because somewhere along the line she had her ranch foreman paint the maroon portions of the car pink. A young kid I know remembers seeing that distinctive car on the streets of Kirksville.

**B**oth Netties aged. Nettie (the person) was issued her last driver's license on October 10, 1970. Nettie (the car) was taken off the streets by 1981. She had served her owner well.

**S**omewhere in the 80's, someone got the idea that Nettie (the car) was valuable. She got a fresh coat of maroon paint, a new vinyl top, and was put up for sale. When reality set in that the asking price was not realistic, she went back into the barn. While visiting my parents for Easter in 1988, a friend told me that he had seen the Crestliner on a used car lot.

**I** wrote a detailed story about buying the car and what I did with it over the next 20 years that was published in the Road Chatter in November and December 2008. Both part one and part two of the story are posted on the newsletter section of Northern Illinois Regional Group website. Let me know if you want a copy of that article.





*There's never been a car like the new  
FORD Crestliner!*

To summarize some of the highlights, I bought the car from Nettie on April 20, 1988. My dad worked with a guy at a local gas station to get the Crestliner road worthy. My dad drove "Nettie" to probably her first car show, a shoebox meet, on June 25. The next day I drove Old Nettie from Missouri back home to Chicago where she had been built 38 years earlier. Over the next 20 years I drove Nettie on many V-8 Club tours and to a couple of National Meets. In February 2007, I asked a local man named Everett Plata to do some body work and paint Nettie. Although I had never planned on a total restoration, that is what happened. And after many months of hard work, Nettie was awarded a Dearborn plaque at the 2008 Grand National Meet in Dearborn. This is where the previous story ended.

Since 2008, Nettie has been a regular on V-8 Club tours and has logged over 7,600 miles just going to National meets. She has received her Dearborn Medallion awards and four Dearborn Emeritus awards. She is a really fun car to drive.

In 2016, Dan Pudelek decided to jump on the Crestliner bandwagon and began looking for a 1950 model in Sportsman's Green. In October he brought home a gorgeous example from Ohio that had spent time in a museum. After spending the winter working on mechanicals to get the car ready for touring, Dan drove the Crestliner on its inaugural tour in May 2017 to the Spring Fling in Lincoln, Nebraska. Just a week later, Dan & Diane drove their "new" Crestliner to the 2017 Eastern National Meet in Chantilly, Virginia, where it was awarded a Dearborn Award! Since then Dan has driven the Crestliner on many tours and has received Dearborn medallions at the 2018 Grand National Meet and the 2019 Central National Meet.

Very late in the 1950 model year, Ford expanded the Crestliner offerings, adding a Hawaiian Bronze/Brown paint scheme to the earlier Sportsman's Green/Black and Coronation Red/Black versions. Now all our Club needs is for someone to add the latter model so we can display all three!



Ken and his Dad, Ray Bounds  
with "Nettie"





## Robbers Ben & Stella Mae Dickson End the 1930's Outlaw Era Driving Ford V-8s

by John Emmering

Pulling open the doors of the old garage on a residential alleyway in St. Joseph, Missouri on the morning of Friday, December 15, 1938, agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation unveiled a banged up 1936 Ford Tudor, its windshield cracked, and fenders dented. Two days earlier the agents had received a telephone tip from the owner of the garage that the young couple he rented out his garage to might be bank robbers Ben and Stella Mae Dickson, sought by the FBI.

The 1936 Ford V-8 Tudor appeared in poor shape. The interior was strewn with magazines, books and letters Ben and Stella Mae had received from family and friends. Popcorn and puffed wheat cereal had spilled on the car's seats and floor. Ben and Stella Mae, who changed cars often, were however not to be found, having fled to New Orleans, Louisiana.

It was a tangled path that led Topeka Kansas natives, 26-year-old Ben Dickson and his 16 year-old bride Stella Mae, from typical young people to roving outlaws. That path was strewn with hard luck and poor choices. Ben was the youngest of the three male offspring of James and Alma Dickson, a middle class Topeka family. Ben's father James was a respected High School Chemistry teacher and his mother Alma, was a home maker who had physical and emotional difficulties. As a child Ben was bright and athletic.

Ben's trouble with the law began in 1926, when, as a 15 year old, he took a neighbor's Packard automobile for a joyride after finding the car with the keys left in the ignition. Upon returning with the car, Ben was arrested by an awaiting Topeka police officer. Receiving juvenile probation for his offense, Ben did not learn from his experience. He was in and out of juvenile detention for burglary, curfew violations and disorderly conduct. In 1929, 17 year old Ben was convicted of an adult charge of robbing a cab driver. Ben was sentenced to two years in the State Reformatory.

Upon release in 1931, instead of making a fresh start Ben headed out to Missouri with a friend from the reformatory and an older man. The trio robbed the State of Bank of Stotesbury of \$1,147. The offenders were traced to a farm near Fort Scott, Missouri and arrested. Ben was convicted of the robbery and was sentenced to the dismal Missouri State Penitentiary in Jefferson City. After six years Ben was released to the custody of his father. Returning to Topeka Ben began to use the name Johnny O'Malley to hide his past. It was at this time Ben met and formed a relationship with 15 year old Stella Mae Irwin. Ben soon accepted a job as a Taxi driver, but needed a Chauffer's license. As he was issued his license the examiner taunted Ben about his "jail bird" past. Ben punched him, and then beat him in a fight, resulting in issuance of a warrant for Ben's arrest.



**B**en fled the jurisdiction to avoid arrest, ending up in Los Angeles, California. While in Los Angeles he registered for classes at the University of California at Los Angeles, supporting himself by occasional armed robberies.

**T**roubled at home Stella Mae ran away, traveling to Los Angeles where a girlfriend of hers lived. After a short time, she was reunited with Ben and the two moved in together. After hearing of the death of Ben's older brother Spencer, the couple packed up the 1936 Ford V-8 Tudor Ben recently had purchased and headed back to Topeka in the summer of 1938.

**A**fter a reunion with their families in Topeka, Ben and Stella Mae joined the Dickson family in their annual summer vacation in Lake Benton, Minnesota where they owned a summer home. After an enjoyable time of rest and recreation Ben and Stella Mae were married in a civil ceremony on August 3, 1938 in Pipestone, Minnesota. After their marriage Ben explained to Stella Mae that if they were to make a new start, they would need money and the fastest way they could obtain it would be to rob a bank. Stella Mae bought into Ben's victim mentality and agreed to help in the robbery.

**T**he 1936 Ford V-8 pulled into the small South Dakota town of Elkton on Thursday, August 25, 1938 with Ben at the wheel. Ben entered Elkton's Corn Exchange Bank and announced a robbery. Since the vault was on a time lock the robbers waited 35 minutes until the vault opened and then got away with \$2,187.64 in cash.

**S**pending their money quickly, Ben decided they would rob the bank in the larger town of Brookings, South Dakota. The robbery took place on October 31,

1938. This time the couple got away with \$17,593, worth about \$300,000 in our current money.

**R**eturning to the Topeka area, the police, seeking Ben only for assault and car theft, were tipped off that the couple were staying in a travel court outside town. Confronted by police, Ben and Stella Mae pulled away in their current car, a Pontiac and were met by a hail of police bullets. Ben and Stella Mae sustained injury in the shooting but did not return fire.

**S**tealing a Buick automobile the pair drove to Michigan where they were pursued by State Police. Losing the police, and needing a new car they stole a 1934 Ford V-8, taking the owner hostage, but discarded it when they found it had a speed limiting governor attached.

**B**en and Stella Mae changed cars often purchasing a Chrysler which they soon traded in on a new 1938 Ford V-8. After stashing their 1936 Ford in the St. Joseph, Missouri garage they drove to New Orleans to hide out.

**F**itting the profile of a latter day Dillinger Gang or Bonnie and Clyde the FBI public relations unit touted Ben and Stella Mae as Public Enemies Number One and Two. Numerous FBI press releases elevated their criminal stature. Further, agents got some of Ben's friends to become informants with the promise of a reward.

**T**raveling to St. Louis with Stella Mae on April 6, 1939, Ben heard that an old prison friend named Walt needed money to care for his sick mother. Not knowing Walt had become an informant, Ben agreed to meet Walt's sister at the Yankee System Hamburger shop to hand her some money from the Brookings Bank Robbery.

**P**arking the 1938 Ford V-8 down the street Stella Mae waited while Ben entered the Hamburger Shop to meet his friend Walt's sister Naomi, who came to be known as the "Woman in Brown". Ben exited the eatery, and Naomi followed. As they stepped to the side walk, Naomi exclaimed to the agents "There's your man". The FBI men shouted "Federal Agents" and Ben turned to escape, running to a doorway and grabbing the handle of a locked door leading to an apartment. One agent, John Bush in the excitement fired two shots into Ben's side killing him.

**S**tella Mae was captured a couple days later as she tried to make her way back to Topeka. She served ten years in prison, and applied for and received a pardon years later from President Nixon. She lived a reclusive life and died in 1995 at age 75.

**A**nd so the careers of the last two notable roving outlaws of the 1930's had ended. The era of the "Highway Bandits" often driving Ford V-8s in commission of crime had come to and end.



**Stella Mae and Ben Dickson  
on the run in 1938**

# UPCOMING EVENTS



Mark Your Calendars



| April  | May  | June   | July   |
|--|--|--|--|
| <b>All April Events were CANCELLED due to COVID-19. Future events are tentative.</b> | 17 Rosehill Cemetery Tour <b>CANCELLED</b><br>19 Meeting <b>CANCELLED</b><br>19 Zoom Board Meeting 7:00 pm | 15-18 Eastern National Meet <b>CANCELLED</b><br>16 Meeting <b>CANCELLED</b><br>20 Drive Your V-8 Day | 9 Board Meeting<br>21 Meeting <b>CANCELLED</b><br>26 Proposed date for Annual Picnic |
| August   | September  | October  | November   |
| 8 Friendly Ford Car Show, Roselle<br>18 Member's Meeting                             | 15 Member's Meeting<br>20-24 Western National Meet, Colorado   | 2-4 Lake Geneva Poker Rally, Delevan WI<br>8 Board Meeting<br>20 Member's Meeting                    | 15 MARC Turkey Dinner, Elburn IL<br>17 Pizza Meeting                                 |

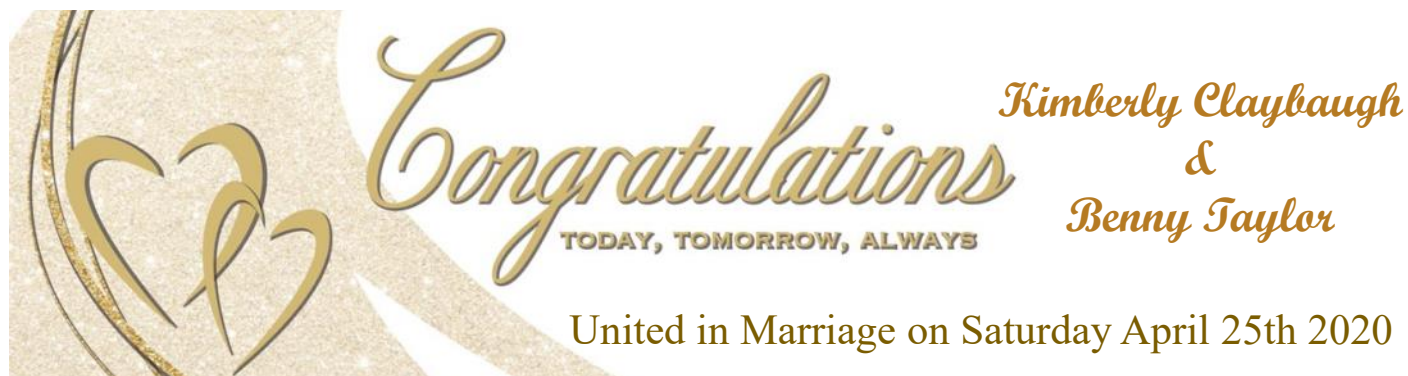
## Happy Birthday

|                   |        |                  |        |
|-------------------|--------|------------------|--------|
| Stan Stack        | (5/2)  | Ray McMahon      | (5/14) |
| Phyllis Madrigali | (5/4)  | Caroline Mireles | (5/14) |
| Dick Livingston   | (5/5)  | John Bauer       | (5/17) |
| Jim Taylor        | (5/6)  | Frank Koeder     | (5/18) |
| Dawn Zulas        | (5/8)  | Irene Vinyard    | (5/18) |
| John Ellis        | (5/9)  | Gary Osborne     | (5/20) |
| Grace Mohawk      | (5/9)  | Jeffrey Trilling | (5/22) |
| Marilyn Krenger   | (5/13) | Ginny Magnusson  | (5/31) |

## Happy Anniversary

|                        |        |                            |        |
|------------------------|--------|----------------------------|--------|
| Scott & Nicole Gilday  | (5/6)  | Jeffery & Mondira Trilling | (5/30) |
| Neil & Julie McManus   | (5/14) | Paul & Joanne Linzer       | (5/31) |
| Mike & Susan Freund    | (5/17) | John & Robin Emmering      | (5/31) |
| Sam & Nina Van Bruggen | (5/24) |                            |        |





**NOTICE:** Our May Meeting  
scheduled for Tuesday May 19th has been

**CANCELLED**

Due to the temporary closure of the Wheeling Township Service Center  
Our Meeting Place may not be open for our use until August.

Please watch future issues of Road Chatter and Email announcements  
for possible alternative locations and activities if conditions permit.

Ford Times November 1949



*She wonders if we can deliver it with a  
spare bumper instead of a spare tire.*

Ford Times November 1948



*“Golly, Mom, won’t Daddy  
be surprised!”*



### **10 Years Ago This Month – May 2010**

Thirty V-8ers braved a brief shower to bring out nine classic cars on a warm May 1st evening for a tire kick and dinner at Home Run Inn Pizza in Addison. John Emmering drove his sharp '51 Custom Fordor to his first NIRG event. We had a fantastic turnout and a beautiful, sunny day for our spring driving tour Sunday, May 23, to show our V-8s at the Illinois Veterans' Home in Manteno. Twenty-four members drove 15 classic Fords to display for the Veterans who live in the home. On our return trip we stopped for a great lunch at a true Route 66 landmark, White Fence Farm.

### **20 Years Ago This Month – May 2000**

On May 21 Tom O'Donnell hosted a driving tour to Argonne Labs and the Beller Museum. At least nine Early V-8's and several other classic and modern cars made the trip. The science display at the Argonne tour was incredible and even the white deer living on the grounds left us memories. At the Beller Museum we viewed items belonging to the V-8 Foundation.

### **30 Years Ago This Month – May 1990**

On May 20, Terry & Kitty Freihage hosted a joint NIRG tour with the Badger State Group. Fifteen families from our group joined eight Wisconsin families for a drive and visit to the Volo Museum, followed by a tour to Trevor, Wisconsin, for a buffet at Memories Restaurant. The May Road Chatter contained an excellent pre-tour tune up article by Chester Lawrence.

### **40 Years Ago This Month – May 1980**

George Cech won a 1st place trophy for his '36 Phaeton at the annual Grayslake meet May 4. At the May 13 monthly meeting, President Howie Bischoff pushed for CB Radios in antique cars on tours. He was compiling a list of members' CB handles. The Padgetts and Groots set up a tricky 29-mile Road Rally through the Northwest suburbs May 25. Chuck & Diane Wrobel mastered the 96 clues to take the first-place trophy among the eight couples entered. A buffet at T.C. Spirit's in Crystal Lake followed.

### **45 Years Ago This Month – May 1975**

Thirty members and spouses attended the May 13 monthly meeting at Tom Young's freshly cleaned and painted body shop. George Anderton presented a program on welding. Don & Elaine Braun hosted a picnic May 25 at the Pheasant Valley Hunt Club in Kenosha, Wisconsin, attended by 26 adults and 16 youngsters. Sounds like a great time was had by all and the guys actually had a few beers.



*Ford V-8  
Snap shots  
from the past*

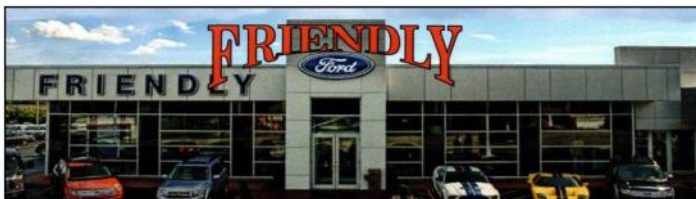
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## Used Car Lot



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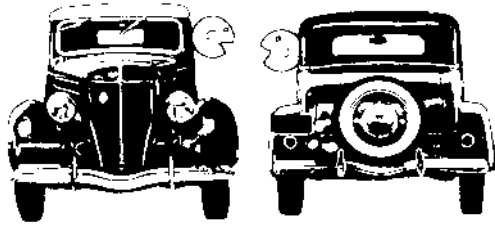
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**Photo of the Month**

**Dan Pudelek's 1950 Ford Crestliner is shown in this photo from the 2018 Grand National Meet. Ford Crestliners are this month's featured car as we commemorate the 70th Anniversary of this unique Early Ford V-8 model.**