Tucker and Orphan Car Show Weekend
September 16, 17 & 18

President’s Report
BY RON BLUHM

We make an effort to have our newsletter be a mix of articles hoping everybody finds something interesting. Because of our partnership with the Tucker Automobile Club of America’s national convention being held in conjunction with our 2016 Orphan Car Show, we are deviating from that practice and devoting this entire newsletter to Preston Tucker and his automobile company. Because Preston Tucker lived and did his engineering work here in Ypsilanti, he and his story are special for the Ypsilanti Automotive Heritage Museum.

Following is a schedule of events for both our 2016 Orphan Car Show and the 2016 Tucker Automobile of America events that are open to the public.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 16
9:00 AM – 5:00 PM
Registration at the YAHM

9:00 AM – 5:00 PM
A display of items from the club archives, Silent Auction items that you can bid on, and more.

1:00 – 3:00 PM
Steve Lehto will be signing copies of his new book, Preston Tucker and His Battle to Build the Car of Tomorrow. He will be available throughout the convention to chat and answer questions.

6:00 PM
Movie Night, featuring “Tucker, the Man and His Dream,” directed by Francis Ford Coppola, with commentary from Larry Clark, Martyn Donaldson, Steve Lehto, and others.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 17
8:30 AM – 4:30 PM
Chartered bus tour from the Hampton Inn to:

1. The Ford Piquette Plant in Detroit, birthplace of the Model T, for a guided tour through this special museum.

2. The Lincoln Park Historical Society to view the Tucker display there and have lunch.

3. The Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn, MI for a guided tour and a look at their Tucker car. The displays here are always changing and offer something for everyone.

The bus will return to the Hampton Inn in time for you to prepare for the evening banquet.

6:00 PM
TACA Convention Banquet featuring keynote speaker Steve Lehto.

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 18
8:00 AM – 4:00 PM
YAHM 20th Annual Orphan Car Show featuring the Tucker car

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Of interest and within walking distance of YAHM:

- The Michigan Firehouse Museum
- Ypsilanti Historical Museum
- Depot Town, a historic area of Ypsilanti and stomping grounds of the Tucker family
- Tucker home located at 110 North Park Street

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<td>Museum Entrance Fees</td>
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<tr>
<td>❦ Ypsilanti Automotive Heritage Museum</td>
<td>$5</td>
<td>NA</td>
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<tr>
<td>❦ Michigan Firehouse Museum</td>
<td>$5</td>
<td>NA</td>
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<tr>
<td>❦ Ypsilanti Historical Museum</td>
<td>Donations appreciated</td>
<td>NA</td>
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<tr>
<td>❦ Ford Piquette Plant</td>
<td>$12, Seniors $10</td>
<td>Sept. 13</td>
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<tr>
<td>❦ Henry Ford Museum</td>
<td>$21, Seniors $19</td>
<td>Sept. 13</td>
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<tr>
<td>❦ Lincoln Park Historical Society</td>
<td>Donations welcome</td>
<td>Sept. 13</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday Movie Night</td>
<td>$20</td>
<td>Sept. 16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Saturday Bus Tour</td>
<td>$62 (includes admission to the Piquette Plant, Henry Ford Museum, and Lincoln Park Historical Society)</td>
<td>Sept. 13</td>
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<td>Saturday TACA Banquet</td>
<td>$40</td>
<td>Sept. 9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sunday 20th Annual Orphan Car Show</td>
<td>$6, children &lt;12 free</td>
<td>Sept. 18, 8:00 AM—4:00 PM</td>
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Orphan Car Show Sponsors

Our Orphan Car Show Sponsors help make our show a success! Take time to shop/dine with them and tell them “Thanks” for their sponsorship.

- Ann Arbor/Ypsilanti Convention and Visitors Bureau
- Aubree’s Pizzeria and Grill
- Cueter Chrysler-Jeep-Dodge-Ram
- Depot Town Alternative Health
- Sidetrack Bar and Grill
- Standard Printing

PRESTON TUCKER’S YPSILANTI HOME
110 NORTH PARK STREET

According to Ypsilanti Street Directories, Preston Tucker and his family lived at 110 North Park Street from 1941 until his death in 1953. His home is a short distance east and south of the Ypsilanti Automotive Heritage Museum. The home is now owned and well maintained by Marsh Plating and, unfortunately, sits empty. A barn once stood behind the house where Preston did much of his engineering and prototype work. When the barn burned a number of years ago, wood patterns for his famous gun turret which eventually found use during World War II were found in the rubble. The wood patterns are displayed in the Ypsilanti Automotive Heritage Museum.
Hollywood – For the record, I loved the movie “Tucker: The Man and His Dream,” starring Jeff Bridges as Preston Thomas Tucker in this real-life story of the innovative automobile designer who, in the ’40s, just after World War II, designed the car of today. It had seat belts, fuel injection, a single push button that opened and closed all the doors, a center head light, disc brakes, a pop out windshield, and other safety devices used in 1988.

Tucker and his family lived in a large Victorian house in Ypsilanti. It was in the barn on their Ypsilanti property that Tucker’s “dream car of the future” began to take shape.

Eventually, fifty Tucker automobiles – but only fifty – were produced. Why only 50? Because (according to the story) of decisions by the big guns in the auto industry who … and there by hangs the story of “Tucker: The Man and His Dream.”

Two of those 50 cars are owned by George Lucas, the executive producer of the movie. One of them, the Tucker Torpedo, was parked (protected by security guards) at the Bel Age hotel in the valet parking area.

There was a Rolls Royce in the regular driveway that was ignored by those people entering the hotel – a Rolls is such a common sight today in LA. But everyone stopped to gaze at, and “ooh” and “ah” over, that beautiful, silver, shined-to-a-fare-thee-well automobile, for which the original factory price was $2,450. The cost today, if you can get one, is about $150,000.

Francis Ford Coppola, who directed this film, also owns two Tucker Torpedos.

The courtroom scene, in which Tucker fights for his right to produce his car, had, for me, the “Mr. Smith Goes to Washington” feel. Coppola’s direction of “Tucker,” seems to have a touch of Frank Capra, an unusual but wonderful combination.

I asked Bridges, who got to drive some of the 22 original Tucker cars acquired from owners across the United States for use in the film, how it felt to drive that car.

“It felt great! But I think I drove some of the owners, who came along with their cars, crazy; especially the owner of the car who watched me drive it off the production line. I could almost hear him take a loud, deep intake of breath and I did see him put his hands over his eyes every time I came careening off the ramp. (Laugh)!”

**BY SHIRLEY EDER, FILM CRITIC**

You appear to be a very relaxed guy on and off screen. Are you truly that relaxed?

“To a certain degree it’s pretty much of an act. The truth is that I struggle, as I suppose you and everybody else does, with little things and big things. I’m pretty self-judgmental and hard on myself. Playing Preston Tucker became a personal inspiration to me. He was a guy who really got involved with his dream. I’d like to get closer to my own dreams, and I’m moving in that direction.”

**Did you enjoy working with Coppola?**

“I considered it a big honor. I’ve admired his work so much.”

**Is he a director who lets an actor go with his own interpretation before he makes suggestions?**

“Yeah, pretty much so. Occasionally he would give me a slice of his own life that reminded him of this or that scene, and there were quite a few scenes which did. When we were doing the boardroom scene of the company I thought I controlled, Francis said, ‘I remember I was in a boardroom like this and they were telling me that they were taking over my company.’”

**How was it having John Tucker, one of Preston’s sons, around as a consultant to Coppola on the history of the family?**

“It was good. I guess the one person alive, that I based my characterization on, was Johnny Tucker. He’s so much like what I learned about his father. Also, I could ask him very specifically what expression his father had on his face, or how he was standing in a particular scene, because Johnny was there beside his father.”

John Tucker told me that Bridges looked and acted so much like his father that they were afraid for their mother, Vera, to see the film because the similarity between Bridges and her husband might be too much of a shock. Vera Tucker, however, saw “Tucker” The Man and His Dream,” and she loved the fact that Bridges was so like her late husband, Preston.

Tucker 48

One might wonder why the Tucker 48 is so revered when only fifty-one of them were built and the company was in business for such a short time. Part of it was the salesmanship of Preston Tucker. A bigger part of it was the advanced design and engineering planned for the car. “There is no question that the Tucker was 10 years ahead of its time,” Tucker designer Alex Tremulis once told a Society of Automotive Engineers meeting in Dearborn.

Styling: The car was considerably longer and lower than most cars of the day, but it had more interior room than the 1948 Cadillac. Doors were cut flush into the roof, a feature Big Three automakers didn't adopt until the 1953 Corvette.

Mechanical Engineering: Each wheel was independently suspended and braking was accomplished by hydraulic disk brakes. The car was to have torsion bar suspension and, in place of a transmission, two torque converters were to drive the rear wheels. In the beginning, an air cooled horizontal opposed 6 cylinder helicopter engine was planned. Later, that was dropped and a Tucker designed water cooled 6 cylinder opposed engine was developed.

Aerodynamics: Tucker's chief stylist was Alex Tremulis, a Cord-Auburn-Duesenberg stylist who pioneered the use of wind tunnels in automotive design. Tremulis estimated the Tucker 48 had a drag co-efficient of 0.30, excellent even by today's standards.

Safety: Tucker's advertising, unlike that of his competitors, stressed safety. Tucker 48 features included a pop out windshield and a “Cyclops Eye” headlight that turned with the wheels of the car. The driver was protected with a collapsible steering column. A padded area below the dash protected the passenger in case of a crash. Safety did not start to be an issue for the Big Three until a decade later.

Performance: In 1948, the Tucker 48 recorded lap speeds of 104 miles per hour at Indianapolis, about 20 miles per hour less than the pace setter in that year's Indianapolis 500. In 1950, a Tucker car shattered stock car speed records at the Bonneville Salt Flats by running 131.64 miles per hour. At 50 miles per hour, fuel economy average 20 miles per gallon.

Price: The Tucker 48 sold for $2,245.

After not being able to purchase a new car during World War II, the car buying public was anxious to spend their money. Existing manufacturers brought out cosmetically changed models from before the war. Tucker offered so many new automotive features, he and is car became and continue to be a symbol of innovation. Unfortunately, production of Tucker 48s ended before all of the above features were implemented.

Compiled from old newspaper clippings found in the Ypsilanti Historical Museum’s Archives.
Mark Lieberman knows a thing or two about Tuckers; he's owned three, two of which have gone on to set record prices in private sales or at auction, and he's the technical director and archivist of the Tucker Club (as well as a member of its board). Recently, Mark was able to acquire his fourth Tucker 48, and chassis 1044 may be the best-preserved Tucker he's ever encountered. Those attending this year’s Ypsilanti Orphan Car Show (held in conjunction with the Tucker Club’s annual convention) will get to see this “garage find” Tucker before Mark begins restoration.

Mark’s company, Nostalgic Motoring Inc., specializes in buying and selling “special interest” automobiles. A Tucker 48 certainly fits this description, and when Mark bought his first example, chassis 1006 in 1991, he quickly discovered that Tuckers are quirky cars without a readily available supply of spare parts. Take, for example, the Torsilastic suspension used on Tucker models. Instead of leaf springs, coil springs or even conventional torsion bars, Tuckers used a suspension system that combined rubber blocks and steel plates (later, steel tubes) to create the desired ride and handling qualities. With replacement parts unavailable, many Tucker owners and restorers used leaf springs or coil spring setups during restoration, altering the ride properties that Preston Tucker had worked hard to create. With a background in the plastics industry, Mark went one step further, creating new Torsilastic suspension components (made of modern and more durable materials) to fit both early and late production Tuckers, and these are now available as replacement parts through Nostalgic Motoring.

The company also specializes in Tucker restoration, and it was the work on a customer car that ultimately led Mark to Tucker 1044. Looking to duplicate a rare factory radio bezel, Mark contacted 1044’s then-owner, who invited him down to Ohio to photograph the dashboard and radio and take the needed measurements.

Calling the Tucker a “barn find” isn't quite right; after all, it was never lost, and it was stored in a gravel-floored garage instead of a dirt-floored barn. A plank floor had been built to keep the 48 off the damp gravel, and the outbuilding was both heated and sealed off from the elements. The good news ended there, as the car hadn't been driven in three decades; after acquiring the sedan in 1982, the Ohio owner enjoyed roughly 15 road miles in his Tucker before engine overheating and transmission issues prompted him to park it until the problems could be addressed.

As Mark told us, attempts to buy the Tucker were quickly rebuffed. The owner clearly loved the car, and one day planned to remedy its mechanical ailments so it could be enjoyed on the road. A year passed, then two, then three, but persistence paid off, and in 2016 Mark finally convinced the car's owner to sell. Details were worked out over the phone, and Mark headed south to Ohio to collect his latest Tucker.

Fittingly, our conversation with Mark took place while he was seated in the 48, which he calls a “special car.” Of all the Tucker's that have come his way, chassis 1044, in his words, “…just fits correctly. It was put together right, and it stayed together right.” In other words, while work has been done to the car, it hasn't been pulled apart by someone without Tucker experience. Tucker 1046, whose restoration was supervised by Nostalgic Motoring, once sported an Oldsmobile driveline up front, after an owner passionate about Tuckers wanted to create one that was easy for his daughter to drive and service.

We asked Mark about 1044's history. It carried a later serial number, but Tuckers weren't built sequentially, meaning this could have been one of the 35 assembled while the factory was in operation. It’s also possible the car was built after the Tucker plant ceased operations, but Mark's research shows 1044 was complete except for a transmission. At some point, the Tucker received a Cord transmission instead of a Tucker Y-1.

In digging up the history of the car, Mark found that Tucker authority Les Schaeffer was once an owner, describing 1044 as his favorite Tucker for both its condition and its reliability. At some point the car's original engine was swapped for a replacement, something that Mark describes as commonplace with Tuckers. In fact, it was intended as a feature for prospective buyers; should complex repairs be required, engine removal was a simple and straightforward process.

(Continued on page 6)
Lunchtime at the Tucker House
Since Johnny, Frank, and I were such close buddies and attended good old Woodruff School together, it only seemed natural that since the Tucker house was just across the street from the school, that we would each lunch together there. It didn’t make any difference that I only lived another half block away.

Mr. Tucker and his wife Vera (the first time I have ever used her first name) had a part-time employee by the name of Elizabeth to help cook and clean for the family. Now, Elizabeth was a “no foolishness” type person who had a strong hand when it came to lunchtime: meaning that what was put on the table was to be consumed, without question, and it was to be appreciated. Now I don’t know if Mrs. Tucker or any other family member had any input in the planning for these lunches, but I do know that they did not vary from one day to another, it was always tomato soup and tuna salad sandwiches, tomato soup and tuna salad sandwiches, day after day.

Elizabeth would brew her tomato soup the week ahead in a great big pit with a lid that looked like a band cymbal. We would all get together (unless you had other plans) at lunch time and sit at the table that was loaded with tomato soup and tuna salad sandwiches.
dining room table. It was made out of Cherrywood and could be extended to seat sixteen people. Each person at that table got a plate with a tuna sandwich and a large bowl of tomato soup with crackers on the side. You also got an admonishment that you ate it – or sat there until you did! I made it my definite habit to miss Saturday lunches even if I was working in the yard with Jimmy and the rest of the guys.

A few years ago, Elizabeth passed away, but I want everyone to know that lady made a lasting impression on me: to this day I hate tomato soup!!!!

**Surprise Guest**

A story I like to remember was that Mr. Tucker had always said that the den was not to be used as a short cut through the house.

Well, Johnny and I hit the back steps one day and were about two-thirds of the way through the den when we saw Mr. Tucker and another man. Needless to say, we were called to a halt and mildly reprimanded by Mr. Tucker, who then added that as long as we were here, he wanted us to meet the other man and said “Boys, I’d like you to meet Mr. Charles Lindberg.”

**Preston Tucker & Dan Leabu**

I really don’t remember the year that I first encountered Dan Leabu, but I had seen him around the shop (Ypsilanti Machine and Tool) several times when as kids we “toured” the area. One day, Mr. Tucker called me into his office and introduced him to me. I had worked part-time helping Jimmy Sakuyama with the yard work and other small chores around the shop. Mr. Tucker explained to me that he would be out of town a lot and that during his absence; Mr. Leabu would be my “Boss.”

Now that really impressed me. I had a mother and father. I sold papers and had set pins in a bowling alley, but I really never had a “Boss.” So I guess this was a new phase in my life. You have to remember, that as a kid, I really wasn’t aware of all the things that were going on around me as being that important, and I just did what was asked of me.

Mr. Leabu was fair to me, and on several occasions, he caught heck from some official for having an underage kid working in the shop while the machines were running. He could have fired me, but instead he set up a schedule for me to be in the shop when the machines were down.

One of my jobs was to sweep up the metal chips from under the drill presses and lathes and haul them outside to a scrap bin for pickup. I was a big boy for my age so it was no problem. I don’t remember who showed me a trick about picking up the metal shavings with a magnet, but I do remember how I hated trying to get the chips off the magnet with my hand. Anyway, this person showed me this trick that I still use today: all you do is place the magnet into a paper bag and then put the bag onto the chips. The chips then stick to the bag, and when you placed the bag over the scrap container, you removed the magnet and the chips would fall away from the bag. Boy, what a time saver that was.

I still keep in contact with Dan, and am proud to know and remember him as a friend. He autographed a copy of *The Indomitable Tin Goose: A Biography of Preston Tucker* for me and inscribed the cover as follows:

“To ‘R’ Donn Newhouse, Jimmy’s caretaker, Johnnies buddy, Preston’s and My handyman.”

I still never forget Mr. Tucker or Dan Leabu for their patience with me, or how they shaped my character for later years. I wish my children had the same opportunity even though they knew both of these gentlemen in their very young days.

I am writing this article in my den where I can look out of the window at the old Tucker house and barn and what is left of the original machine shop and offices.

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*As far as we know, R Donn lives in Alpena, MI with his son. Thanks to John Tucker Jr. for finding these precious memories originally written during the 1990s.*
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Make _______________________ Model __________________________ Year _________________

Are you interested in becoming a museum volunteer? [ ] yes [ ] no

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