

T-Town Wheelers NEWS TULSA OKLAHOMA

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March 2003



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Remember:

- The next TTW Club meeting will be at Reed Park from 1:00—3:00, Saturday, March 22nd.
- It's time to pay your Fees for 2003. Please contact Sherry Dake at 599-8440.
- Get on the Club Car Committee if you want to help make decisions on the Swoop Coupe.
- Do you have a meeting place that we can use every month? We are still in search of a new place. Bring your ideas to the March meeting.
- It is not too late to start thinking about the next show. We can start organizing it with your thoughts in mind. Share your ideas!!!

1ST SHOW OF THE YEAR...

Well, I for one had a great time at the show. As usual, I did not have a chance to get around to everyone's table to see them but that was good as I was busy. I do know that all the tables around me had people standing at them and kids were passing back and forth in front of us, so it appeared to be busy for all. I would always like to see more people, but that comes in the form of "Getting the Word Out" through our members. Robert was able to get a plug in for us on a local radio station, so that helped too. Thanks to everyone that assisted in setting up and tearing down. Gotta love those volunteers. Here are the results of the Customs Contest.

Youth Division

1st Place Chase Pendleton
2nd Place Patrick Long
3rd Place



Club Customs Feb 2003 Show

Mild Division

1st Place Bob Chanley
2nd Place Steve Richards
3rd Place Charles Pendleton

Full Division

1st Place Steve Richards
2nd Place
3rd Place

Radical Division

1st Place Steve Richards
2nd Place Jack Thompson
3rd Place /tie Chase Pendleton
3rd Place /tie Jeff Johnston

2003 T-TOWN WHEELERS CLUB OFFICERS

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www.microcollector.com

Still hot

They turn 35 as the world's most popular toy, riding the crest of a sea change in culture and technology. That, or Hot Wheels just go really fast.

By **ANDRE MOUCHARD** The Orange County Register Friday, February 28, 2003

Hot Wheels don't have faces.

Other attributes, yes. Fat tires. Great paint. Totally boss fake engines. Enough cool stuff to make the tiny die-cast cars, which turn 35 this year, the most popular toy on the planet, at least if you measure popularity by units sold.

Still, no face. And that's a problem if you want to figure out how, or if, Hot Wheels have changed the world. Barbie has a face, among other things. And Barbie has a lot of people thinking lots about her. Poets write poems about Barbie. Painters paint her. At least one professor teaches college courses about the ripple effect Barbie has made in American culture. And she (the professor, not Barbie) has tenure.

GI Joe (has a face) also has egghead followers. Monopoly (no face on the board, but it does have "The Monopoly Rich Guy" icon, which does, in fact, have a face), ditto. Pokemon (weird faces) has some following. The list trickles off quickly from there, but you get the idea.

The faceless Hot Wheels, meanwhile, live a mostly unexamined life. No literary homage. No professor-led discussion groups about Hot Wheels culture. No sociological deconstruction of how Hot Wheels lust has turbo-charged American consuming. For Hot Wheels wisdom, one must turn to guys like David Reed, a welder in Anaheim. Fortunately, Reed is practically Buddha when it comes to Hot Wheels. "I can remember, as a kid, we'd put a Hot Wheel in a vice. Then we'd crank down until it sort of exploded. That was really, really cool," says Reed, 41, who today collects Hot Wheels for his toddler son, Matt. "And I wish that I had one of those cars now because they're worth a lot of money. "But, dude, that's all Hot Wheels mean," Reed adds, turning serious for a moment: "They're toys. That's it." Heavy. And yet, somehow, incomplete.

If Hot Wheels are so innocent, so simple, how come the Federal Communications Commission once saw danger in a cartoon about Hot Wheels? The FCC urged Hot Wheels' creator, Mattel, to pull the 1969 cartoon, saying it was nothing more than a long

commercial. If Hot Wheels are only toys, how come something generically referred to as "Hot Wheels Movie" is in development in Hollywood?

And Hot Wheels, if they're just toys, surely wouldn't have a place in the Petersen Automotive Museum, which sees its mission as a chronicler of auto culture. Next month, the Los Angeles museum will open a permanent exhibit of full-size concept cars designed to look like Hot Wheels, reversing the order that usually has Hot Wheels designed after full-sized autos.

If Hot Wheels are just idle playthings, how come Hot Wheels are among the most collected items on the planet, with a national collector convention held annually in Irvine drawing 2,000 or more allegedly full-grown men and women who spend a huge chunk of their lives on Hot Wheels? In that same vein, would Bruce Pascal, an apparently successful commercial real estate agent in Washington, D.C., pay something close to \$70,000 for a bright pink Hot Wheels version of a Volkswagen bus if it was just a toy? "Yeah, it's just a toy. I know," Pascal says giddily. "I'm the crazy guy."

The cars were built to be collected. Little boys who got into Hot Wheels in the late 1960s could buy carrying cases. It wasn't a first. Boys had collected other things before Hot Wheels. But Hot Wheels may have been different. "(Hot Wheels) sort of taught boys to differentiate, to pay attention to detail," says Gary Cross, who teaches cultural history at Penn State University.

Boys still collect Hot Wheels. So do grown-ups. There are about 15,000 adult Hot Wheels collectors. And by some estimates, 40 percent of the Hot Wheels sold today are bought by grown-ups adding to their collections. Most of those collectors are guys like Reed, who swaps Hot Wheels via eBay or through collector shows held monthly at hotels and bars in Southern California. A few are like Pascal, who describes the desire to collect things in the way a genetics expert might discuss a segment of the human genome.

Pascal owns the Hot Wheels long-playing album. It's a real record, on wax, cut by an anonymous group of musicians to be the soundtrack for the defunct Hot Wheels cartoon. ("The record isn't

very good," Pascal admits). He owns miles of Hot Wheels track, which was, and is, orange. Little boys of a certain age alternately use it for Hot Wheels racing or sword fighting. That's been the same for 35 years. He's got the Speed-O-Meter, a toy that kids used to measure the speed of their Hot Wheels when they came zipping out of a Hot Wheels Super-Charger, another product in his collection.

He even keeps, in his basement, some Hot Wheels curtains and a few yards of Hot Wheels cloth, stuff intended to be used for a sofa or a bedspread. "I don't actually use it," Pascal says of the cloth. "I'm not that weird."

Nor does Pascal wear Hot Wheels underwear. Likewise, he has no Hot Wheels tattoo. But he could. Neither item raises eyebrows among adult Hot Wheels collectors. Still, the heart of Pascal's collection speaks to a broader Hot Wheels culture, something that might be bigger than toys. Or not. Pascal says he's spent about \$200,000 on Hot Wheels in the past few years. In return, he's received only 750 vehicles, a number most Hot Wheels collectors would consider small potatoes.

But Pascal's collection is the rarest of the rare, the prototype vehicles that mass-market-minded Mattel never put into full production (such as the Rolls Royce once aimed at the United Kingdom), or the mistakes (like his bright pink VW bus that turned out to be too thin to run through a Hot Wheels Super-Charger) that were quickly fixed or discontinued. "People pay weird premiums for things that have no utilitarian value," Pascal says. "The rarest Hot Wheels qualify." The collection is rare enough that it's evolved into something bigger than cars.

In the past five years, Pascal has made contact with about 350 former Mattel employees, most of whom, he says, live in Orange and Los Angeles counties. When he's done asking to buy their old cars, Pascal steers the conversation to history. What was it like to work at Mattel in the 1970s? What was it like making one of the world's favorite toys?

Continued on Page 3

Still hot continued from page 2

Those stories will be part of a Hot Wheels book to be issued by Mattel this year, Pascal says. "I turned my notes over to their writer," Pascal says, laughing. "I'm a terrible writer." But a great schmoozer.

One of the former employees Pascal has befriended is Elliot Handler, 86, the retired co-founder of Mattel and the man credited with the idea for Hot Wheels.

Handler, according to Pascal, is somewhat puzzled by the notion that grown people collect and trade Hot Wheels. When Pascal brought Handler to a Hot Wheels convention in Irvine a few years ago, Handler reportedly said this: "This is crazy; these are just toys." There are many versions of how Hot Wheels got started.

One goes like this:

Handler, circa 1966, had a toy car on his desk, a Matchbox. These days, Mattel owns Matchbox, but at the time Matchbox was an English brand of tiny die-cast metal cars that often replicated grown-up but not always fun vehicles, things like milk trucks and family station wagons.

Matchboxes were interesting replicas, with a lot of visual detail for an inexpensive toy. But at the time, they had thick axles. They didn't roll particularly well. The cars, as cars, were slow, sluggish. And, according to lore, Handler wondered, aloud, what good it was to have a car that didn't "go."

He dispatched one of his key toy engineers to make the car roll better. An hour later, the new version presented to him, Handler reportedly flicked the vehicle with a finger and it zipped across his desk.

A franchise was born.

The toy company hired auto designer Harry Bradley away from Detroit to work on early models. After that, the head Hot Wheels designer was Larry Wood. By 1968, the company brought 16 Hot Wheels to market. All were based on sports cars then being made in Detroit, such as Chevrolet's Corvette and Camaro and Ford's Mustang. They were given crazy names like "Heavy Chevy" and "Cheetah."

After fits and starts with supply in the early 1970s, Hot Wheels quickly shifted from toy fad to toy staple. Mattel has made more than 10,000 Hot Wheels models, and more than 2 billion have been sold worldwide.

The trick to it all, says Derek Gable, an inventor and toy designer who joined Mattel in 1968, is some surprisingly intricate technology.

A Hot Wheels axle, Gable says, was (and is) made of wire thin as fine music wire. The wire is so thin it requires some protection, and that comes in the form of a housing made out of a high-tech plastic called Delrin. The combination is what makes Hot Wheels wheels feel so squishy, the way actual car tires might feel if you could pick up your BMW and squeeze the wheels between your finger and thumb.

Finally, the wheels of Hot Wheels are fat and slick. That's why the cars roll really fast when you set up your Hot Wheels track to run from the kitchen table into the living room floor.

Gable, 60, who lives in Rancho Palos Verdes, created several Hot Wheels add-on products like the Speed-O-Meter and the SuperCharger. He also led one of two teams of inventors charged with creating new products.

When Hot Wheels were still new, inventor teams at Mattel worked independently and competitively, separated only by a 10-foot-tall wall. Often, when it came time for management to decide which toy to bring to market, a contest would be held.

"We had a drag race once to decide which vehicle would be used for a new toy," Gable says, painting a picture of an entire company watching other alleged adults race toys through an office. Gable says his car won. "It was tremendous freedom for inventors, as long as you came up with the goods," Gable says.

"If you've seen the movie 'Big,' well, Mattel, back when Hot Wheels were first coming out made that place look totally normal."

If Hot Wheels have made any cultural impact beyond bringing smiles to kids' (usually, but not always, boys) faces, it's been in one area: Car design.

The kids who wanted cool-looking Hot Wheels have demanded something similar when they've grown up to buy their own cars.

"It's definitely changed what carmakers put into production," says Dick Messer, director of the Petersen Automotive Museum. "And if you look at where car design is, Southern California – which is really the base for Hot Wheels – is now one of the places where everybody has a car studio. It's part of the culture in that sense."

Penn State historian Cross, who wrote "Kid Stuff: Toys and The Changing World of American Childhood," says Hot Wheels have some historical import as well. He describes Hot Wheels as a "bridge toy," the toy that links mechanical playthings that were popular in the mid-20th century with the modern video/digital world of toys that today serve as hyper-speed entertainment.

"Hot Wheels were toy cars. And there had always been toy cars or trains around for little boys. That wasn't new," Cross says.

"But the cars that Hot Wheels were supposed to be, the muscle cars of the late '60s, were toys in themselves, really. And that was new.

"They were cars that a guy was supposed to own just for himself, not for taking his family places or going to work," Cross explains.

"Little boys got their Hot Wheel muscle cars, and the idea sort of stuck with them. When they were older they could have cars and lives that were all about themselves."

So Hot Wheels turned little boys into me-first types? They had a broad social effect?

"Nah," Cross says. "They were just toys."

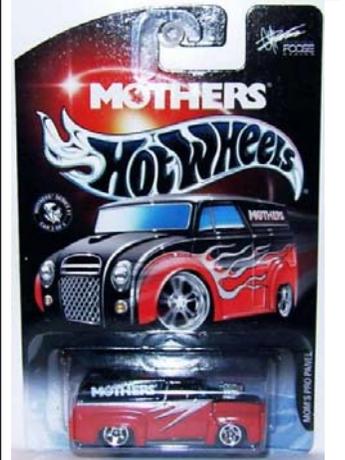
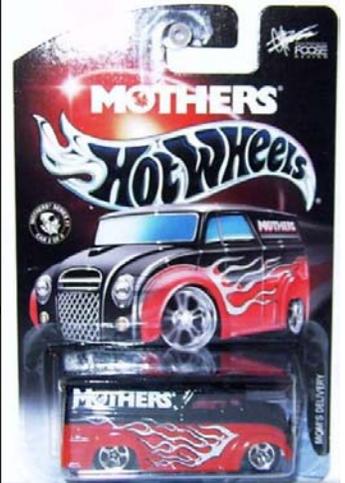
A WORD FROM ROBERT...

Hi all, If you missed the February show you missed an excellent show. There were lots of Real Deals there. I watched a 1996 FE VW bus sell for \$20.00 MOMC..... Wow what a deal!! We had a great time racing cars on the downhill track and the kids had a blast watching the Sizzler cars run. The votes were counted and the 2003 FE Swoop Coupe was voted in and now the club car committee will get to work on it.

The March meeting will be held at Reed park again due to bad weather and some concerns with the new options. This will be the last meeting to sign up for a committee before you are assigned to one. These committees are your chance to make your voice heard and show that you BELONG to the club not just show up for it. More info on the 2002 club cars are that it has also hit a snag, the artwork for the card is locked up

in Paul's computer when it crashed. We are working on options to either retrieve it or head another direction to get these cars out to you. More information will be available soon. And last but not least, it is tax time once again so don't forget to write off all those HW purchases and gas and travel expenses under hobby expenses..... LOL!! See you all on the 22nd at Reed Park. Thanks, Robert

New! Mother's Car Wax. Look for these wherever Mother's is sold. Get extras for the club members if you can.



LARRY KUPP—ANOTHER CHANGE COMING...

Well, decision time came yesterday (3/13) and I accepted a Director of Training position at First United Bank in Durant. I cannot complain, getting a job offer 7 days after being laid off. I would have enjoyed staying here, but you gotta go where the job is in today's economy as you all know too well. While I am disappointed in the suddenness of this, I am excited about

the job. It will be a great fit, good experience and a nice change.

I wanted to let you know this as soon as I knew because so many of you keep asking and I appreciate your concern.

Of course I am not changing my E-mail address or AIM name, so please do not forget about me.

Oh, Geary and I will be working together to get the Newsletter out for the remainder of the year.

Please help us by sending us your stories, finds, new stuff, etc. We ALL want to know about what you see.

Larry

WHAT'S NEW?

davids-wheels is closing

After 6 1/2 years I have decided to shut down the site. I just want to say "Thank You" to all who have supported us over the years. While we've had our ups and downs over the years, I believe it's been a place where people have come together, learned a few things, made a few friends, and gained a little insight into this wonderful hobby. I wish you all the best in your collecting future and maybe we'll bump into you again in the toy aisles. David Allman

2003 FEs:
Boom Box 23/42
Sand Stinger 26/42
(3 Known Color Variations)
ENZO FERRARI 24/42

New 2003 series cars and 2003 singles showing up.

2003 ANIME SEARED TUNER #070
2003 ANIME JAGUAR D-TYPE #071
2003 ANIME '68 COUGAR #072
2003 ANIME OLDS AURORA #073
2003 ANIME SERIES OLDS 442 #074
2003 FLYING ACES TRACK T #076
2003 TRACK ACES TURBO FLAME #125
2003 WASTELANDERS SOOO FAST #130
2003 ZENDER FACT 4 #132
2003 ALT TERRAIN FLAT RACER #137
2003 TRACK ACES HW PROTOTYPE 143
2003 TRACK ACES I CANDY #146
2003 WORK CREWSERS BUS #149

2003 WORK CREWSERS
DODGE RAM #138
2003 WORK CREWSERS TOW
JAM #153

"If you know of a cool new release, please e-mail Larry Kupp at larm4@aol.com and it will be in the next newsletter."

PROFILE OF THE MONTH—LARRY KUPP

Ok, well no one sent me their story so I figured it must be my turn. Please e-mail or write it out and bring it to the meeting ASAP for the April edition.

I started collecting Hot Wheels a little over 6 years ago. I needed a hobby and there it was, on the back of a cereal box, three McDonalds Race Team cars. All I had to do was mail in some money and a proof of purchase or two.

That's it. That's how it started. Once they arrived, I went to the local stores and before you know it, I had hundreds and had the fever. I collected every one I saw. If I did not have it in my database (which I started after about 300 cars), I had to have it. I learned of flea markets and how much was a fair price (**Note to self:** not in flea markets). I met people in the toy isles and on the internet that were into trading or needed one that I had found. It started out simply enough. Then I found out they put them out at night and you had to be 1st in line at Target and Walmart EACH and EVERY morning. Man, what was I getting into? I met Chris Perrin, David Rutledge, Robert Priebe, and so many other nice people. They caught me up on what I did not have and also cars from before I started collecting. Before you know it, I had about 1000 cars and in less than 8 months after I started collecting. Then David and Robert invited me into the T-Town Wheelers where I met Joan O'Toole. She was the "Limited" Lady. She had the 2-3-4 car sets and the \$15-\$25 cars. Wow, I had no idea these little cars could cost so much. I decided that I wanted to start with 1995 First Editions and come forward versus going back to blue cards and redlines. Too much money on that side of the collecting fence. I think I

got all of my 1995 FEs and Series cars (except THs and Real Riders) that first year. It took me 2 more years to get the Real Riders Series 4 car set and my '96 FE Bus for reasonable prices. I did not know about Treasure Hunts other than they were very expensive and I finally told myself I would not pay more than \$1 for any TH or I did not need it. Well, I started collecting THs in 1999 and I have a very good group of friends. I may have paid a little more than \$1, but I have never purchased one on EBAY or from a flea market. I thank David, Chris, Steve, Larry, Robert, Doug, Gary and so many other friends for helping me.

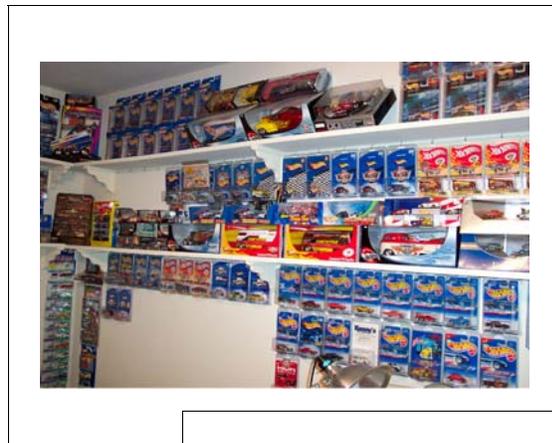
OK, in January of 2001, when the stores slowed down, I had the fever to buy loose MINT cars. I looked at the Tomart's guide and picked out a casting that I thought I could start with and get all the listed variations for reasonable money. Little did I know that I would become obsessed with the '67 Camaro.

Well, as a lot of you know, I have amassed all the known variations of the '67 Camaro other than the reddish orange Pavement Pounder with sawblade wheels. I have only seen one on EBAY from a reputable seller, so I am not 100% sure it exists. I will probably never have the painted base on the 3 Red Line Club cars either. Last auction I saw them go for over \$1,000 and there is believed to be only 10 sets of those. I did get my '95 TH for a reasonable \$60, but have not set it free yet. Have not been in the right mood.

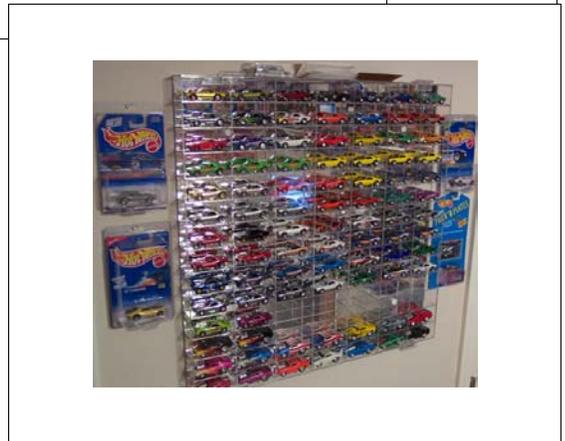
Ok, well that is about it, other than I have a little over 6,000 cars in my collection today, but have decided to scale it back to just what I want to collect; '67 Camaros, Busses, Bugs, Convention cars, HWC.com and other cool cars. I have really enjoyed this hobby and although at times it gets hard to



Some of the Limiteds!



More Limiteds!



My MINT Loose (mostly) '67 Camaros!

deal with the scalpers and attitudes, 99% of the people are awesome and friendly. I have learned that I do not need every variation or even every casting. Once I focused my sights on what I really wanted to collect, I started enjoying it more. If you ever get the chance to go to a Mattel Convention, please do. They are worth the time and money. It rejuvenates the collecting spirit.

Thanks for reading my story.

I included a few pics before I packed them for storage.

T-Town Wheelers

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HW 2003 Poster Offer

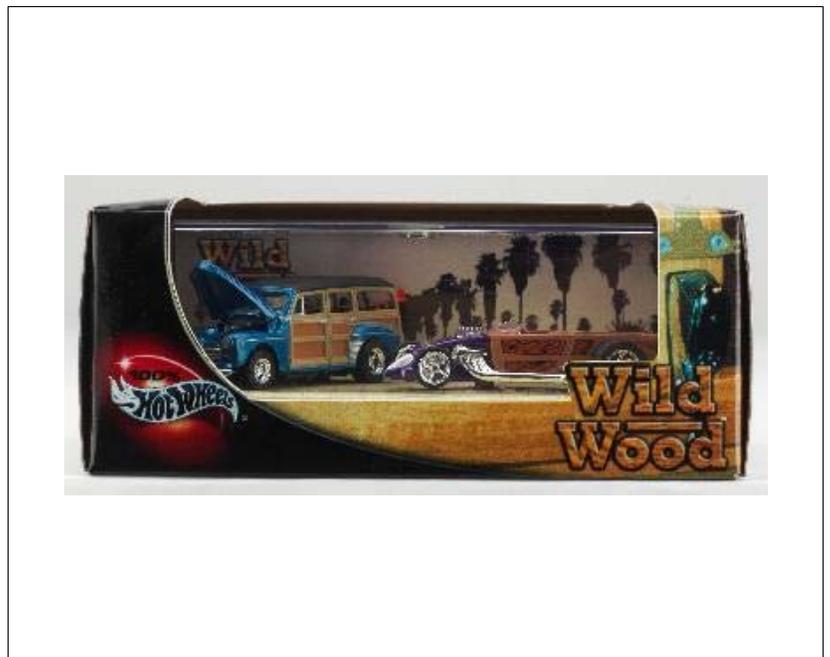
Please send \$3.00 (checks or money orders only) for shipping & handling to:

HW 2003 Poster Offer
PO Box 1229
East Aurora, NY 14052

Bob Chanley is looking for some single car plexiglas display boxes. The kind that the 100% Hot Wheels come in, If you have some laying around, he will buy them from you. Please call him at: 543-3486

OTHER THINGS WE WILL BE DOING THIS YEAR IN THE NEWSLETTER...

- Proposed meeting and show dates
- Announcements
- Collector's stories
- Bulletins
- Pictures
- Customs tips
- Links
- Club History



Coming Soon—Wild Wood 2 Car Set