

CAR CHRONICLES —

The Marquee Years - Mercedes Benz



By CAL APPLEBEE
Special to the Siuslaw News

Contributing factor to the high car-count in my life is the habit that evolved early on, where I would become enamored with a particular marquee and then focus on that brand.

I went through this with several marquees — VW, Mercedes Benz, Thunderbirds and, of course, Jeeps. Lately, old tractors have started catching my eye.

This started during my college days with a buddy who was a huge fan of Mercedes Benz. His folks owned one, and Bill and I would visit the Mercedes Benz dealer in Boise, Idaho, and drool over the cars in the showroom, pick up brochures and devour the details inside. (Probably should have put the same level of attention into my class studies!)

During those years, twice I

had the opportunity to purchase the 190 SL — the two-seat roadster — one for just \$2,200 and the other for \$1,800. But with my lifestyle at that time, I couldn't even muster that much money.

Eventually, I did purchase my first Mercedes Benz, a 1957 180 four-door sedan, four-cylinder, four-speed column shift, from another classmate, for just \$50!

This car had a mild knock in the engine and came with the promise of a replacement engine which never materialized. The deal was reversed eventually but not before Bill and I took the car off-roading in the foothills of the Owyhee mountains.

That little four cylinder in first gear was amazing at climbing!

The next Mercedes Benz to park in my driveway was undoubtedly the best specimen of that brand that I would own, and simply further cemented my fascination with Mercedes Benz.

By this time, I had followed Bill to California seeking fame and fortune in real estate. Instead, I ended up in the title and escrow business. Bill discovered the 1963 220b, the low-end offering in the 220 series, which was a six-cylinder with dual single-barrel Solex carburetors

which were quite a challenge to keep balanced.

The 220 series had three levels in it, the top level being 220SE that had leather interior and fuel injected six cylinder. The car Bill found was owned by the proverbial little ole' lady from Pasadena who had purchased it new, and was now replacing it with another new Mercedes. She literally wiped down the engine compartment on a monthly basis, and the rest of the car was just as immaculate. It was the four-speed column shift, cloth interior and minimal wood on the dash. I felt like royalty driving that car.

I paid \$600 for the car and owned it for five years, during which time the engine was rebuilt and it went into the body shop three times — twice from being hit while parked, and one via compliments of a wind-tossed tree limb.

I eventually sold the steel grey luxury car for \$2,500 to pay for air conditioning in my house. But by then I had started collecting Mercedes Benz, most of them of the same 220 series. I did have one iconic 220SE coupe that was simply stunning with its white leather interior and wrap-around wood dash appointments.

For whatever reason, the coupes didn't share the tail fin the sedans carried, and were really a much better looking design. Eventually, my Mercedes fetish culminated with a brand new 1981 240 D, which I leased for a couple years. During the half-dozen or so years I dabbled in the MB marquee, I owned eight different Mercedes cars, some of them simultaneously. I also got heavily involved in the MB Club of Sacramento, serving as president for one year, holding road rallies and parking lot gymkhanas, and judging in a concours d' elegance event up in Chico one year — quite an exciting experience.

My eyes started noticing Volkswagens around that time, and one by one the Mercedes Benz cars started getting replaced in the driveway.

Although I really enjoyed all of the MBs I owned over that time, the marquee isn't without some weak points.

But I still perk up when I spot an old 220 driving down the road with the iconic vertical twin headlight configuration, and the smart little fins on the rear fenders.

Okay, so the fins do resemble a 1959 Rambler... just a little.

Travel Safe!

Hillsbery in WSO exhibit



COURTESY PHOTO

Carole Hillsbery's watercolor "Jewel of India" is part of the Watercolor Society of Oregon's Experimental Convention being held this month.

Nationally acclaimed watercolorist and Florence resident Carole Hillsbery had her painting "Jewel Of India" accepted into the Watercolor Society of Oregon's Experimental Convention being held at the Oregon Garden Resort this month.

"Jewel Of India" was painted from a photo her daughter, Mary, took on a trip to India this past year. It is watercolor with India ink and gouche touches.

Hillsbery has been painting for more than 40 years. She has been painting, exhibiting and teaching professionally since 2003.

She studied with Kathyrn Davis, Ted Nuttall, Charles Reid, Lien Zieng, Robert Wood and many other well-known artists

Hillsbery is also announcing a Figurative Watercolor Workshop to be held in Florence on Friday and Saturday, June 10 and 11, at

the Cross Road Church.

This workshop is designed to teach how to loosen up and explore color while communicating a story or feeling. Hillsbery's many techniques, demonstrations, and candid conversations with artist will be sure to inspire as she encourages each student to discover their own unique painting style.

Artists can either draw or trace the figure using their own photos.

Some knowledge of watercolor is needed.

Hillsbery is a national award-winning artist and a signature member of the Transparent Watercolor Society of America and a member of the Watercolor Society of Oregon.

To view her paintings, visit www.carolehillsbery.com.

For more information and a registration form, contact Charlene Wilson at charwilson66@gmail.com.

FRAA 'Empty Bowls' art deadline extended

There is an opportunity for members of the Florence Regional Arts Alliance (FRAA) to submit ideas and get their art noticed while helping support a vital cause in the Florence community.

The annual "Empty Bowls" Event, held at the Florence Events Center, is one of the biggest fundraisers for the Florence Food Share each year.

In addition to the many beautiful pieces of pottery ac-

tioned off or sold at the event, there will also be a special piece of artwork that will be featured on posters and raffled off. This is usually a 2-dimensional painting or drawing that reflects the importance and beauty of feeding others.

The chosen artist's name will be featured in numerous public service announcements and the work will be shown at locations throughout Florence as the raffle takes place.

This is open to FRAA members only and the work that is submitted must be in pdf or jpg files to be accepted.

There is no cash award and the winning artist relinquishes all rights to their work.

All submissions will be for the "Empty Bowls Event" and FRAA will also be accepting submissions for the Oregon Public Bank (OPB) project at the same time.

Submit a proposed design to

the Florence Regional Arts Alliance no later than June 15. Artists can also submit samples of work along with their design in jpg file formats.

A selection will be made and the winning art piece will need to be completed by Aug. 1.

Submit design idea and samples to fraaoregon@gmail.com and be a part of helping Food Share alleviate hunger in Florence and Western Lane County.

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