

history

A Rare Car from the Santa Cruz Mountains Marilyn Waiton

In April, one of the rarest cars in the world moved from our Santa Cruz Mountains to the world-famous Blackhawk Museum in Danville, California. Although this vehicle has been in my family since 1940, it deserved a larger audience.

The 1937 Cord model 812 s/c Phaeton with rear-mounted spare is so unique, that it was purchased by only three people: Al Jolson, Tom Mix, and Barbara Stanwyck. Only three of these cars are known to exist, and only one is truly original. The Tom Mix Cord was severely damaged in an accident that claimed the owner's life. The Stanwyck Cord was modified, losing its special rear-mounted spare.

Thanks to a loving restoration, the Al Jolson 1937 Cord model 812 s/c Phaeton with rear-mounted spare is still alive and beautiful. Pontoon fenders are sculpted into a long, flowing coffin-hood nose, with hidden pop-up headlights, chrome-plated exhaust pipes on each side of the hood and grill, wide "suicide" doors, and beautiful lines unobscured by running boards.



The distinctive, rare, rear-mounted tire shouts '30s style. Yet, this car is ahead of its time, with a powerful, straight-eight engine, front-wheel drive, locking gas cap, locking ignition, and invisible weighted lines that secure the convertible top when stored.

It's not surprising that our car won many first-place show awards. The design was the dream of Gordon Buehrig, chief designer of the Stutz, Model J Duesenberg, Boattail

Speedster, Cord 810 and 812 coupes, sedans, and convertibles with the guidance of automobile visionary E. L. Cord.

The ACD Club is dedicated to the restoration, preservation, and promotion of original Auburn, Cord, and Duesenberg automobiles. Restoration of our car was accomplished with the support of Josh Malks, Luke Rizzuto, and Mark Tomei.

Josh Malks wrote the books *Cord Complete*





and *Cord 810/812*. An ACD Club expert, he has owned five Cords. His last one, a 1936 Cord 810 donated to the ACD Club, was driven to Auburn by Luke Rizzuto. Luke's trip won the Doug Johnson Long Distance Driving Award for our mountain neighbor Luke, who also carefully rebuilt my car while preserving its traditional quality using original parts from the manufacturer, Auburn. Mark Tomei is an ACD Club judge who provided his special expertise to the renovation.

The ACD Club published a two-page article about our car, entitled *Al Jolson's Cord*. Michael Hayward, a published Cord historian, and Ed Holloway, director/newsletter editor for the Northern California Region Classic Car Club of America, reviewed documentation.

We thank these automobile experts for accepting our beloved vehicle to Curator Brian Murray's Blackhawk Museum. The museum is reknown for its collection of classic, rare, and unique automobiles. The



museum is open Fridays through Sundays, and is located at 3700 Blackhawk Plaza Circle in Danville. For more information, visit www.blackhawkmuseum.org, or call 925-736-2280.

I thank the many people who contributed to making this renovation a reality. I'll miss seeing my Cord every day, but the museum will give more exotic-car lovers the opportunity to see and appreciate this beautiful and unique automobile.



An old photo of the 1937 Cord model 812 s/c Phaeton with rear-mounted spare

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