

# The Chalmers Automobile Newsletter

Published by the Chalmers Automobile Registry, © 2005

All of us have been affected by the terrible acts of terrorism that took place September 11, 2001. My prayers and heartfelt condolences are extended to all the victims and their families, friends, and neighbors. To the firefighters, police officers, rescue workers, and other heroes who helped in the rescue efforts; MAY GOD BLESS YOU.

## NEWS FROM THE MEMBERSHIP

Alan & Linnea Leclair (#42) recently sent me news about the awards won by their 1909 Model F "30" at two shows earlier this summer. This Chalmers was once owned by Fred Haller who rebuilt the engine to produce 150 HP. Fred and a friend then toured Europe covering 5,000 miles in this unique Chalmers. The story of the European tour is told in "The Bulb Horn", volume XXVI, No. 6, November-December 1965. The Veteran Motor Car Club of America and the publisher of Bulb Horn were kind enough to grant me permission to retell the story for this newsletter.

The first showing of Alan & Linnea's 150 HP Chalmers was at Milford, CT in mid-June. They were invited to participate in this local event by one of the organizers who had admired the Chalmers a week earlier during an elementary school display of old cars. Alan & Linnea won the "People's Choice" award at Milford.

Next came the Housatonic Valley AACA show at Bridgewater, CT in late June. They picked up two awards at this show: "Second in Class (pre-1916)" and "Oldest Car". The oldest car was actually a 1904 curved dash Olds (seen next to the Chalmers in the photo on the right), but the owner was a club member and therefore excluded from the competition. The next oldest car was a 1912 Ford Model T. Alan & Linnea are very pleased with their awards and are looking forward to future shows. Congratulations to both!



150 HP Chalmers in late June

## CHALMERS CLASSIFIED

The Chalmers Classified listing is intended as a service for members to advertise Chalmers cars and parts that are for sale and/or wanted. Please contact me regarding items that should no longer be listed and pass-on your new wanted and for sale items.

### WANTED:

- 1922/1923 hubcaps (posted 4/2000) - contact Bob DuBois (#9).
- 1912-1914 Chalmers Model 12/18 "Six" (also 1910-1912 Model "Forty", 1912-1914 Model "36", or 1914-1915 Model 24/29 "Master Six") (posted 4/2000) - contact John Lehnert (#35).

- 1914 Chalmers Model 24 "Master Six" shop manual (posted 4/2000) - contact Jim and Donna Stamper (#52).
- Model T Splitdorf magneto for 1912 Chalmers Model 11 (posted 12/2000) - contact Al Shaw (#25).
- 1911 Chalmers Model "30" Pony Tonneau complete rear axle assembly (or any parts for it) (posted 7/2001) - contact Fred Hoch (#38).
- 1910-1912 Chalmers Model 11 "30" exhaust manifold gaskets (posted 3/2001) - contact Al Shaw (#25).
- 1908-1909 Chalmers-Detroit Model F "30" radiator (posted 10/2001) - contact Alan Leclair (#42).

**FOR SALE:**

- 1916 Model 35-A "Six-30" parts and some sheet metal (posted 4/2000) - contact Don Ohnstad (#19).
- 1909 Model F "30" engine cooling fan assembly (includes fan, hub, pulley, and bracket) in good painted condition with no rust for \$95 or best offer (posted 9/2000) - contact Chuck Fanucci (#45).
- 1917 Model 35-A "Six-30" described as a diamond in the rough that is drivable but needs some restoration for \$5,000 (see it at <http://www.AlternateFuels.com/1917.htm>) (posted 3/2001) - contact Glenn DeRosa (#58).

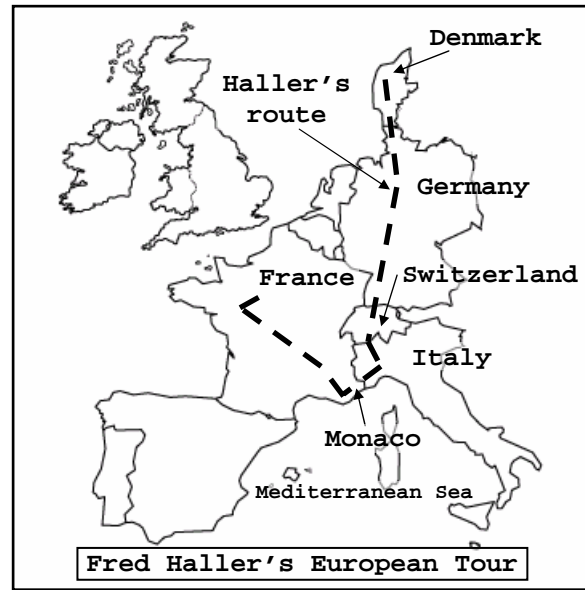
**150 HP CHALMERS TOURS EUROPE IN 1965  
(The Fastest Car from America)**

Fred Haller grew up in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and, from an early age, began to cultivate an interest in old cars. As soon as he could, he started collecting old cars. By 1965, his collection included: a 1904 Pierce, a 1909 Chalmers-Detroit, a 1911 Chalmers, and 8 other cars from 1912 to 1933. Fred had a desire for going fast and this led to plans to modify some of these old cars for high-speed performance - much higher than they were designed for. Along with this desire for speed, was an innate competitive spirit for winning races. All of this made Fred a rebel of sorts, but because these revolutionary ideas involved old cars, he was a good rebel.

Fred's 1909 Chalmers-Detroit was a Model F "30", which from a distance looked like a standard factory car. But, listening to the engine or lifting the hood provided evidence that it was not a standard 30 HP factory car. The engine's two bearing crankshaft (see newsletter 6-2) was swapped for a five bearing design complete with crankcase modifications to support the new bearings. Additional performance improvements were made to the engine and other parts of the car. At 4,000 rpm, this engine could deliver 150 horsepower! However, it still had the normal two wheel brakes at the rear.

Fred had already won the 1957 Anglo-American Rally in the '09 Chalmers (without using third gear!) when, in 1965, he decided to take the 150 HP car to Europe for a six-week tour. He planned the trip to include two notable European auto events, the Monza rally and the Le Mans 24-hour race. Fred's friend, Ed Roy, accompanied him through a total of nine countries and about 5,000 miles. Starting in Denmark (they had previously begun the tour elsewhere), they proceeded through Germany, Switzerland, Italy, Monaco, and finally France.

During the first leg from Skieve, Denmark to Stuttgart, Germany, they experienced some trouble with the Bendix drive on the electric starter. The electric starter was one of the modifications that Fred added - it was more convenient than the standard hand crank. Ed found the problem and fixed it before leaving Stuttgart.



They drove south through Germany toward Switzerland and the Swiss Alps. The Alps seemed to be the first true test of the over-powered Chalmers as the terrain had been relatively flat until now. The question was: can the Chalmers handle the steep and twisting mountainous road? Surely, Fred and Ed were worried about a possible mechanical failure of the engine, or clutch, or transmission, or brakes (or all of these!) as they proceeded toward looming Swiss Alps. At the end of the day, just short of the highest point of their climb through the Alps, they stopped for the night at Andermatt. So far, it was easy going for the Chalmers. But then, this was just the beginning of the test. The overnight stay, which included a rendezvous with an old Haller friend from Pittsburgh, was very enjoyable - and there was nothing for Ed to fix in the morning.

The next day, they completed their crossing of the Alps through the San Gottardo Pass followed by steep and twisting descents that tested the two-wheel brakes. During this descent, the single clutch/brake pedal must have been a challenge to Fred's agility! Eventually the road became flat again, comparatively speaking, and they headed for the next stop in Milan, Italy. Amazingly, the Chalmers easily handled the Swiss Alps and there were no mechanical problems on arrival in Milan. It seems that the answer to the previous question is: yes, "the Chalmers handled the mountains with the best of them".

Nearby Milan is Monza where Fred and Ed participated in the famous Monza rally. On the track, the Chalmers ran very hard and she pressured the competition - some being 26 to 30 years younger. Ed piloted the '09 Chalmers to a "First in Class" win in the endurance event. In addition, the overall Concours d'Elegance Award was presented to them! This was quite an accomplishment for the American carpetbaggers and their over-powered Chalmers. During the Monza event, a manufacturer of miniature antique cars known as R.I.O. made a deal with Fred to produce miniatures of the Chalmers-Detroit. R.I.O. makes miniatures similar to the well-known "Matchbox" cars manufactured in England.

Following the Monza rally, the Chalmers headed toward the French Riviera. Along the way, Fred and Ed visited the Palace Museum of Antique Cars in Monaco where the Secretary-in-Charge entertained them. The Secretary assured them that if Prince Rainier had been in town, both he and Princess Grace would have asked, without a doubt, for a ride in the Chalmers to satisfy their interest in antique cars. Unfortunately, the Prince and Princess were visiting her family and friends in Philadelphia.

The Chalmers continued its journey along the French Mediterranean coast and then North through the picturesque Rhone River Valley. Fred and Ed made a spur-of-the-moment decision to stop for a short visit with the 1913 Indianapolis 500 winner to quench Ed's thirst for vintage car racing. Jules Goux, driver of the winning Peugeot, entertained the two Chalmers drivers for hours with lively conversation about old-time racing.

After getting their fill of old racing stories, the twosome headed toward Le Mans, France for the next stop and another motor event. Ed had previously made arrangements for his Delage to be shipped to Le Mans. This Delage is noted for winning the original Le Mans 24-hour endurance race 50 years earlier. Ed performed an exhibition run before a grateful crowd. Fred's 1909 Chalmers-Detroit was temporarily placed on exhibit in the Le Mans antique car museum while the two enjoyed the race.

Ed then went off with friends for a few days and Fred's new road partner became an Englishman he met during the Le Mans race. The two became fast friends in more ways than one. They headed for Paris on those famous wide and smooth French highways. These roads are without speed limits and Fred pushed the Chalmers with a wide-open throttle. To Fred's delight, the Englishman enjoyed the speed much more than Ed did. Fred found that he could stay at 90 MPH if he folded down both the top and the windshield. There was no urge to back off, but the thought of having two-wheel brakes and wooden wheels was in the back of his mind.

Upon arrival in Paris, the Englishman was so impressed with the speedy Chalmers that he arranged for the television news people to check it out on the Auto Route Ouest. With a cameraman riding next to Fred, the Chalmers was clocked by two (pre-arranged) highway motorcycle patrol officers. Fred was asked to go as fast as he could and his cameraman/passenger captured the reading on the speedometer, Fred's facial expression, and the traffic being passed. The speedometer was recorded at 90 MPH and the gendarmes clocked the Chalmers at 145 KPH! After the story hit the airwaves, Fred found new fame as the driver of the fastest car from America. News of the event continued to mount as the printed press started to interview Fred and publish the story with pictures of the Chalmers. Even the United Press got into the act and soon readers across the U.S. were enjoying the story of the fastest car from America.

Overall, the 1909 150 HP Chalmers-Detroit performed without serious mechanical failure and never needed a brake adjustment during 5,000 mile tour. The only reported problem was the Bendix drive for the electric starter. This is a real testament to Fred's modifications and driving ability as well as to his friend, Ed Roy, for his driving and mechanic skills. Afterwards, Fred Haller declared: "while touring Europe, in these six weeks, I do believe that Ed and I had a better calling card than any diplomat with my 1909 Chalmers".

That's all for now and I hope you enjoyed the story of the fastest car from America. Please forward your questions, comments, or other items of interest for the next newsletter.

Dave Hammond