



# ROCKET RUMBLINGS

Newsletter of the New England Oldsmobile Club

Vol 25 - #1 Spring 2021

WWW.NEOLDS.COM

## Buyers Beware the Ads of March: If It's Too Good to be True, It Probably Is



By Mark Misercola

As soon as I saw the online ad I knew it had to be too good to be true. The bucket-list, two-tone red-and-white 1955 Oldsmobile convertible of my dreams was staring back at me in fully-restored living color for \$26,900, or roughly \$30,000 below what it should be going for in the condition it appeared.

But curiosity got the better of me a few years ago and I sent an email to the owner and asked if the car was still available. The location was listed as Saddle Brook, N.J., a two-hour drive away. But I never heard back so I let it go (sort of). It was hard not staring at the pictures and then looking at the nearly identical Danbury Mint model that's been sitting on my credenza for years.

Right before the holidays I showed the ad to a friend and fellow Olds owner who lit up as soon as he saw the pictures. "Why don't you send him a note and ask if the car still available? Tell him if it's legit you'll pay cash." I dismissed it as crazy particularly for a sight unseen car on the internet. But then again, I thought, it couldn't hurt to send the owner another note.

A few days later the response came back from a fellow named Jacek, who said he and the car really weren't in New Jersey. They were both in Poland. (Go ahead and roll your eyes.) His story, unedited and as he wrote it, goes like this:



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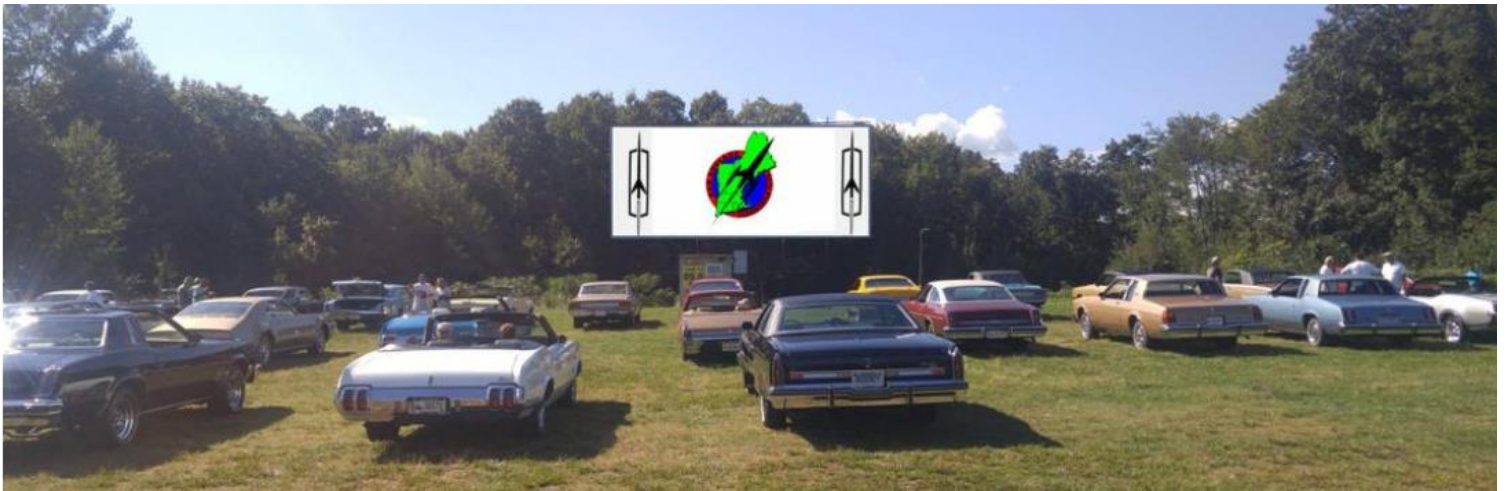
*My bucket-list dream car deal for this 1955 Oldsmobile convertible turned out to be a digital scam.*

*"Due to the high volume of internet scams, I give you the chance to receive the car at your home address BEFORE I receive my money for it. I appreciate your interest but I want to let you know that the car is located in Poland. I purchased the car in US and I moved to Europe, in Poland the law is different recording the registration of a vehicle that is outside of Europe, it is expensive and difficult to register this car in Poland, this is the reason of selling. Instead of letting it sit in the garage I've decided to sell it at low price. I can ship the car to you, also I can be responsible for the transport cost and you'll pay after inspection.*

*(See Buyer Beware on page 7)*

*Take a ride down Memory Lane with Glen Morris in an exclusive Rocket Rumbblings retrospective on the behind-the-scenes planning that went into the 2010 OCA National Meet in Sturbridge, Mass., starting on page 8, and our Rocket pictorial on page 10.*





*The NEOC Car Show — a traditional fall classic — is looking to return to the Southington, CT., Drive-In this fall pending health and safety conditions.*

## NEOC Show Car Show Update

By Mike Barillaro

Hello fellow NEOC members. We definitely missed seeing all of you at club gatherings and local car shows and cruise events last year.

We sincerely thank all club members and sponsors who so generously donated to the Shriners Hospital for Children without even having a show.

We are looking forward to this year and have identified Sept. 19, 2021, as the date for our annual car show.

We hope that by that time conditions will be safer for gatherings of this size and we can return to meeting up with fellow Olds enthusiasts in person.

Our club president Jeff Walsh has reserved the use of the Southington Drive-In again this year.

We will begin aligning show vendors and sponsors this spring and will continue to keep the club membership informed as plans progress.

We are always looking for feedback on how to further improve the show, so please contact us with any suggestions you may have.

### Think you know Oldsmobiles?

Put your knowledge of Oldsmobiles to the “Supreme” test. We’ve retrieved some of our toughest Olds trivia questions straight from the NEOC archives and will be featuring them from time to time in *Rocket Rumblings*. If you answer correctly, you’ll qualify as a certified Good Olds Guy Expert. Good luck!



#### What does 442 stand for?

- A. 4-barrel, 4-speed, dual exhaust
- B. 4-barrel, 4-speed, 2 miles per gallon
- C. 4 parts gin, 4 parts vermouth, 2 parts 10W-30

### Remembering Bob Hellstrom



The NEOC mourns the recent passing of one of our longtime members, Bob Hellstrom. Bob was a founding member (#006) of the Oldsmobile Club of America (OCA). He teamed up with Garry and Hank Pinckey in 1970 to create the OCA and was also the first editor of the club’s magazine, *“Journey With Olds.”*

Bob joined the NEOC in 2004 and immediately became involved in our monthly meetings, bringing many amusing automotive stories to the table. He regularly attended our annual car show and was somewhat of a diplomat for our club. Bob owned several Oldsmobiles including four 1941 Coupes and a 98 Convertible Phaeton, and a 1950 88 wagon. He will be missed. Read Bob’s [obituary](#).

# Talk With the President



**By Jeff Walsh**

I think we can all agree that the 2020 car show season was lousy due

to the COVID 19 pandemic, and to add salt to that wound, the weather last summer was one of the driest on record. So there was almost no rain on weekends. However, one of the bright spots for me was that after about two years of discussion and planning, we were able to pull off an OCA Zone Show here in the northeast region.

Before we discuss the show, let's go back and review what transpired over the past two years to get us to this point. Back on a cold snowy night in February 2017, Sal Barberi, the President of the Hudson Valley Olds Club at the time, and a member of NEOC, started a monthly conference call with the other northeastern OCA chapter Presidents.

The purpose of the call was for chapter Presidents to get to know each other, to learn about any car shows/meets they were hosting, and share ideas. In addition to this discussion, the group was seriously looking into hosting a zone show in the northeast and making it a yearly tradition.

## **Eye on Quad States Show**

We were eyeing the Quad States Zone Show (Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin) that has taken place each fall for the past 40 years as a working model for setting up our show., which would take place over of long weekend (Friday, Saturday, and Sunday) and be judged similar to the OCA Nationals.

However, with the upcoming 2018 Nationals taking place in Gettysburg, PA, we decided to push this off until 2019 to not take anything away from the Nationals.



Next on the discussion list was to select a location. Many suggestions were made, however, the group agreed that we should host this show in centralized location for at least the first year, so that no particular section of the region would have to travel a further distance than the rest of the chapters in the region.

A lot of discussion took place over the central New Jersey or eastern Pennsylvania area. The Delaware Valley Olds Club (DVOC) then suggested the Classic Auto Mall in Morgantown, PA. The Classic Auto Mall is a large classic car showroom that displays and sells cars from the 1910s up to the 1970s and has started hosting car shows on its property.

The Mall occupies a building that was originally built to be a mall but was never utilized as a mall. In addition, there is a Holiday Inn hotel next door. Morgantown is just off the Pennsylvania Turnpike, west of Philadelphia, and a little over four hours away from central Connecticut. After looking at Google Satellite views of the area, everyone was sold on this being the spot for our Zone Show.

The timing of this show was another point of discussion. Some wanted the show to take place in the summer, before the school year starts, in case families wanted to plan their vacations around the show. Others wanted it to take place in the fall when the weather would be cooler. The major challenge was getting this Zone Show scheduled without conflicting with any of the chapter's annual shows.

Since most of the chapters host their annual shows in the fall, the consensus was to schedule this show for late August.

Due to the extensive undertaking and not wanting to rush this, the group passed on hosting a show in 2019, so we spent the winter of 2019-2020 finalizing our budget and other administrative items.

*(Continued on page 4)*





# Talk With the President (continued)

*(continued from page 3)*

Everything was finalized and ready at the beginning of March 2020, when the COVID 19 pandemic hit, so we put everything on hold. The original plan was to have this show take place in late August.

However, given the outdoor gathering size restrictions in place during the summer in Pennsylvania, we would have had issues putting on the show, along with the fact that many would probably not feel comfortable driving outside their home area to attend. So in early July, we pushed the show back to Saturday, October 10th as a one-day show.

## **Can we pull this off?**

As the days counted down to October, there was still uncertainty if we would be able to pull this off this year. Then finally in early September, the outdoor restrictions in Pennsylvania were lifted, and everything looked safe, so we finally pulled the trigger and committed to doing a scaled down show for this year.

A lot of credit goes to the DVOC for being able to pull this off with minimal lead time, with support from outgoing OCA President Jerry Wilson and incoming OCA President Sal Barberi.

Even I was a little apprehensive that we would be able to pull this off in 2020. However, once I got down there on Friday night and met up with the DVOC and some members of the newly formed Garden State Rockets chapter at the nearby Sonic Drive-In, I knew that we made the right call to push ahead with this.

A group of us hung out at the Sonic until after 9 pm, before heading back to the Holiday Inn.

Then we hung out in the lobby until after midnight, just like what many of us have done over the years during the Nationals!!

Throughout the night, we spoke about only one thing, Oldsmobiles and nothing else. It was great during those hours to forget about everything else going on in the world and just talk cars with a bunch of fellow car enthusiasts. Saturday morning, there were cars unloading from trailers before 8 a.m., and they continued coming in all morning.



The official tally from the DVOC was 79 cars and those cars came from Connecticut, New York (including some from the Buffalo region), New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, and Virginia.

Everyone respected everyone's social distance space and had a great time. I also had a chance to reconnect with

some old friends but more importantly, I met several new friends. Everyone who attended was just glad to be able to get out and enjoy their Oldsmobiles with others.

## **Check our Facebook page**

Be sure to check out the NEOC's Facebook page where I uploaded photos of all of the Oldsmobiles in attendance at the Zone Show from this past October.

Before the show ended, several of us were already talking about the second annual zone show in 2021. During our November Zoom meeting, all the chapter Presidents on the call and our two OCA Zone Directors all agreed to host the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Zone Show at the same location in Morgantown in late August 2021.

So mark your calendars now for Aug. 26-29 for the Second Annual OCA Northeast Zone Show!

Assuming conditions improve this spring and summer, this will be a judged show and will follow OCA judging rules. As additional incentive to make sure that you put this show on your calendar, our own Glenn Johnson is coming out of judging retirement to be the Head Judge at this year's Zone Show! Just leave your checkbook at home, like I did this year, otherwise you may end up buying a car at the Classic Auto Mall.





*Neither rain, nor snow, nor dark of night prevented NEOC's John Lenihan from driving his 1971 442 W30 from Oklahoma City to New England in 1988.*

## The Voyage Home: Buying My First Oldsmobile

By John Lenihan  
NEOC Member # 10

It was October of 1988 and I was eager to buy a muscle car. To do this, I decided to sell my '63 Corvette roadster. My wife, Margaret, and I were blessed with a daughter, Meghan, a month earlier in September. Selling the Corvette would help buy our first house and still leave me a few dollars for a family fun car.

So with my wife's blessing, I began the search. My buddy, former NEOC member Jim (JT) Taylor, let me look through a couple of *Hemmings Motor News* books. My first choice was a Buick GS or GSX, but then a '70 442 convertible caught my eye, and I began corresponding with the seller in Oklahoma City, OK.

Those were the pre-internet days, so everything was done by landline phones and mail. I decided to buy this vehicle and purchased two airline tickets for Oklahoma. But Murphy's Law struck and I was injured at work, rupturing a tendon in my right ring finger. This ultimately prevented me from following through with the purchase.

The seller understood and informed me that he had a back-up buyer only 10 miles away so not to worry. I only had to resolve the airline tickets and recover from what would become a permanent injury. It was the kind of event that makes you think about everything.

It also made me think about a muscle car more than ever. JT brought me a new *Hemmings's* in November. It was in this edition I spotted what would be my family fun car; a 1971 Olds 442 W-30. I immediately started corresponding with the seller and shortly after looking at pictures, decided to buy it. Best of all it was in Oklahoma City. I guess one could say the "luck the of the Irish" was with me.

I quickly got the blessing of my hand therapist and Margaret to make the trip. All that was left was getting a second driver who could make the trek halfway across the country and back in December.

*(Rocket Memories continued on page 6)*



# Rocket Memories

## The Voyage Home

*(continued from page 5)*

JT could not go, so I ask another friend, Gary O'Brien (a Mopar guy), and he said I'm in. I let the seller know about our flight and arrival information. He said he would get the car ready with an oil change and check the coolant, brakes and tires. The seller said, "once you land call me and I will meet you at the arrival gate with the car."

We arrived at the Will Rogers Airport safely after one small flight delay. Within 10 minutes we met the seller, Jerry Dickison, as planned outside the terminal. After double checking everything and a short test drive, the '71 442 deal was finalized.

I replaced the Oklahoma plates with Massachusetts plates and Gary and I began the long trek back home. There was no GPS or cell phones back then, so a Rand McNally map book would be our guide back to New England.

Once on the highway the 455 cubic inch engine just purred along doing what it did best, cruise. We headed northeast towards Indiana. Despite the 323 rear gear ratio, we by-passed very few gas stations, which made us feel like we were in a jet fighter instead of a car. So the 442 was both quick and thirsty, but very comfortable.

## The Perfect Storm

We quickly got into a routine and the trek was smooth sailing right from the start, making great time with an average speed of 75 mph. We would change drivers every couple of hours. Night driving was the hardest due to the limited ability of the original T3 headlights, but it was nothing that high beams couldn't handle. The big backseat was often used for power naps as we knew this was going to take nearly a day and a half to complete.

We expected the rest of the trip would be uneventful, but not so. The direction and severity of a winter storm we thought we were ahead of had changed.

The storm, now predicted to hit eastern Pennsylvania, upper New Jersey, and southern New York and Connecticut, would be directly in our path. We had to decide how much of this we were able and willing to deal with in a vehicle made for fair weather.

This was the kind of snow storm that made you wish you had four-wheel drive and snow tires, we had neither. Vehicles were skidding off the highway all around us including some tractor trailers. I suspected the Olds' "Posi-traction" was helping us more than we knew at the time.



*John's 442 in more favorable New England driving conditions.*

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Finally, we crossed the state line into Connecticut and thought the worst was over. But not so. The highway crew could not keep up with the snowfall and those famous snow rut trails started to appear.

We kept the 442 crawling through tire ruts in the road but it started to become too much as we entered the New Haven area. This appeared to be the end of the line as the Olds struggled to make another mile.

By the way, did I mention that Gary O'Brien was born and raised in the greater New haven area? This would be our ace in the hole, or as I like to think of it, a bit of Irish (pre-GPS) luck. Gary said to get off at the next exit and we would try some back roads that he knew were usually plowed.



*(Continued on page 11)*



## On the Hunt

*(Continued from page 1)*

*"Within 19 days you will get the car and you will have a period of 2 days to inspect the car and when the inspection period ends, if everything is fine you can make the payment. CLEAN TITLE IN HAND, NO LIENS OR ISSUES!"*

I nearly dismissed it again right then and there, but after some prodding Jacek sent along the VIN number and more pictures. Another classic car friend quickly tracked down the VIN. And it turned out the number and the car were legitimate. This particular '55 Olds had been restored by a well know restoration shop in New Jersey. A year before, it had made its way to the world's largest indoor classic car auction house in Atlantic City, but the owner rejected an offer of \$46,000.

From there, the Olds appeared over the summer on eBay and sold for \$57,000. The odometer had about 4,000 miles less on it than what Jacek said is on it now.

### Registration costs in Poland

In later emails and two subsequent phone calls, Jacek said he bought the car here and didn't realize it would cost him as much as \$18,000 to register it in Poland. I was able to confirm the registration story through a friend of another classic car colleague who holds dual citizenships in both the US and Poland. So parts of Jacek's story, and the legitimate VIN number on the car, made sense.

The conversation continued. Jacek said he would ship the Olds to the US at his expense. Once it arrived, I would have 48 hours to inspect the car. If the car checked out and I was satisfied that it was everything that the owner said it was, I would buy the car. And if it didn't, Jacek would ship it back to Poland at his cost.

He never asked for money, bank accounts, or ID. And just to keep it that way, Earl Bancroft, who owns [Shifting Gears Vintage Auto Repair](#) in Glastonbury, agreed to accept delivery of the car and inspect it for me. So the deal was set, the car was ready to ship from Poland to Florida and then up to New England.



And then things began to turn. A week later paperwork came through from a shipping company in Poland with the rather dubious name of "PU Communications," along with a shipping date, tracking number, and finally a note at the very end with terms, requiring me to send the shipping company a 30% deposit (or \$8,070) before the car ships.

The shippers seem to have thought of the obvious as the very next paragraph below graciously provided the answer (in less than perfect English):

### *Why we need this deposit?*

- We have asked for a deposit to our bank account so we can be sure that you are a legit buyer. Bank transfer is the only service that has ultimate authentication of the identity of the sender of funds. The amount you will send to our bank account will be on hold until you will decide to keep the merchandise (vehicle);*
- The deposit won't be released to your seller until you will decide to keep the merchandise (vehicle) and at final will represent a part from the final price of the merchandise. In case that you don't keep the vehicle the deposit will be return to you in full;*
- After you complete the transfer of funds we request the following details:*
  - The scanned receipt from the bank. " Upon payment verification, we will ship the merchandise at the address you (or the seller) have provided to us;*
  - After the vehicle is received, inspect it and receiver sign for reception we shall transfer the funds to the seller;*

This is the part of the story where I called Jacek and said, "Do you think I was born yesterday? I'm not giving anyone 30% down for a car I haven't seen." His stoic response was simply: "OK, fine. I will sell it to someone else, goodbye."

**End of story?** Note quite. I never gave the so-called owner a dime. But a search of the shipping company revealed a flimsy website and multiple forum posts about the company and scamming activities. How much is fact and how much is fiction? I'm not sure. But as the old adage goes, "buyer beware."

# Rocket Retrospective

## 2010 OCA Nationals Planning



By Glen Morris

Ten-plus years ago, the New England Oldsmobile Club pulled off a huge endeavor and hosted the 2010 OCA Nationals in

Sturbridge, Mass. Many current members of NEOC may not have been involved and/or don't remember what was required in order to do this. I will attempt to recall and share some of the challenges here.

Several NEOC members attended the Oldsmobile Club of America's (OCA) National meet in Texas

from June 28 through July 2, 2006. This is where I got brave and approached some show officials about holding a national event. I was told that the host chapter needed near 100% cooperation along with 30-40 full-time volunteers.

Everyone who attended from NEOC discussed this loosely over dinner and adult beverages one night without coming to a real consensus about whether our chapter could handle the event. But the beer was good.

### Searching for a Venue

Fast forward to January 2007. We had spoken about hosting a national event at several club meetings. In March, a vote was taken with 60% of the members responding favorably.

Bill Black and I volunteered to be co-chairmen, not knowing the work ahead of us. Now the search was on for a venue in New England that could support an event of this nature.

The host hotel would need 400+ rooms, parking for 400 spots (11X20 each) along with spectator parking, banquet facilities for 400-500, meeting rooms, and 1-2 acres minimum for a swap meet, in addition to room for parking 100 or so tow vehicles and trailers.

We narrowed down our search to one place in Warwick RI, one in Marlborough Ma., and finally picked the Sturbridge Host Hotel.

On July 19<sup>th</sup> Bill, I and several other NEOC members made a passionate pitch to the OCA's Board at the Bowling Green Kentucky OCA Nationals.



*Plenty of classic rockets were on display in the host hotel lobby in Addison, Texas, during the 2006 Olds Nationals.*

We were unanimously approved, but truth be told there was no surprise here because no one else made a proposal!

Now the real work started. We needed volunteers for hotel contract negotiations, a registration/database, budget, show field, security, swap meet, judging, banquet and meetings, magazine/advertising, women's activities and trips, entry packet/raffle, and more.

We had to combine several of these groups because there weren't enough volunteers for the 20 groups recommended by OCA.

*(See OCA Nationals Planning on page 9)*





# Rocket Retrospective

## OCA Nationals Planning

*(continued from page 8)*

Needless to say, there were MANY meetings. Most club meetings focused on the nationals while still addressing our regular business. Two or three times a year we would have special show meetings and these were sometimes held at the host hotel.

Bill and I met with the Sturbridge Chamber of Commerce, the Sturbridge Police and Fire departments,



Local Texas officials encouraged NEOC representatives to host the National meet in 2006.

the town council, Fusick Automotive, the host hotel, the swap meet land owner, trailer parking area owner, the neighboring GMO chapter in Eastern Massachusetts, and many more! After all that, we decided to hold our annual NEOC show at the host hotel starting in 2008. This required even more meetings.

We were also required to make update presentations at the 2008 and 2009 Nationals. Fortunately, the Nationals were relatively close by and we had a strong showing of local members including many members from the GMO chapter. The GMO would turn out to be a major supporter for us in 2010.

Just when things seem to be all set, we discovered that the swap meet area (which we had to pay extra for) needed the surrounding trees trimmed to accommodate large vehicles.

So several NEOC members stepped up with their chainsaws, trimmers, and pent up energy for a day-long tree trimming party to clear the way.

We were also not able to use a local area for trailer parking and had pay extra for another parking area six miles away in Brimfield, Mass.

Fortunately, Bill Black managed to negotiate a reasonable price at the trailer parking area.



So, did we have our Oldsmobile cake in 2010 and eat it too? Stay tuned. In our next issue, I will write more about the National event in Massachusetts.



*(For more pictures go to page 10)*



# Rocket Retrospective



*The first NEOC club cruise to our proposed host hotel in Sturbridge, Mass., on June 6, 2007, attracted a host of rockets from across the region including many spectacular 442 and Cutlass models.*

## OCA Nationals Planning

*(continued from page 9)*



*Glenn Johnson, left, and Earl Bancroft man the microphone during award ceremonies at the host hotel in Massachusetts in August, 2009.*



*Dave Richter continued to lobby hard for a New England OCA show at the 2008 OCA Nationals in Michigan with the first lady of motorsports, Linda Vaughan, Miss Hurst Golden Shifter.*



## My First Oldsmobile

(continued from page 6)

The 442 was much happier on these secondary roads and we continued due north. Once we reached Hartford the snow turned mostly to rain so we elected to return to the highway.

We were traveling a bit faster on Route 91 as we entered the last leg of our 32-hour journey. Ironically, that trip to bring my new purchase home was 32 years ago.

We made it home safely that day. Since then, the 442 has been a part of our family and has given us many enjoyable memories. We've driven the car to shows all over New England and New Jersey and we've made many new friends along the car show trail.

### 1993 Olds Nationals

Most noteworthy was the 1993 New Jersey Olds Nationals where many of the founding fathers of NEOC would talk about forming a club in central Connecticut. The talk turned into meetings back home, and within a couple of years the NEOC was born.

The spring dust-offs at Berejik Olds hosted by the GMO Club became an annual event for our club. Unknowingly at the time, the end of the Oldsmobile brand was coming in 2004. How could GM terminate America's oldest manufactured vehicle, especially to retain Saturn?

Thankfully, loyal Olds enthusiasts such as Fusick Automotive Products in East Windsor, CT., continue to make and sell parts. Engine issues are no problem thanks to members like Dave "Gearhead" Richter, who has kept my car and many other classics running. Dave first rebuilt my 442 motor in 1996 and refreshed it again in 2010.

In recent years, I decided to get the Olds repainted. I'm still waiting on one portion to be completed before the 442 hits the car show trail again. I hope you enjoyed my story, and I can't wait to read other fellow club member's car stories.



## Rocket Advertising



**Vintage Auto Repair**

**860-633-3669**

**Earl Bancroft - President**

**Ed Chase - Manager**

138 Welles St.

Glastonbury, CT 06033

## Rocket Classifieds

**For Sale: 1973 Oldsmobile Cutlass Supreme interior door panels.** Interior panels for 73 Cutlass Supreme 2-door (red interior) including dash, upper and lower door panels, front and rear kick panels, A-Pillar panels and Sail Panels. \$300 for everything. Please contact Mike at mikbl@att.net.

If any club members have or work for a business that would like to advertise in the newsletter, please email me. Many members here WANT to take their pride and joy to someone who understands the investment and pride that we have in these vehicles.

Members are also entitled to one free classified ad per issue. Insert a photograph for better results. Please submit ads by the 15th of the month. Email submissions are preferred, but snail mail is fine. If you need photos scanned and returned, please include a SASE.



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Vice President - Jim Schmitz  
Treasurer - Bill Black  
Secretary - Glen Morris



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