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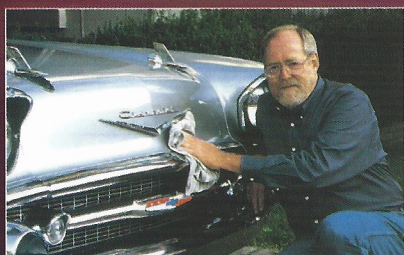
CAR COLLECTOR

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GTO

Building
A Legend



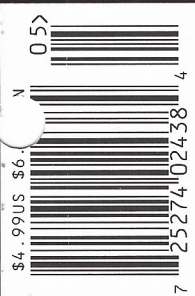
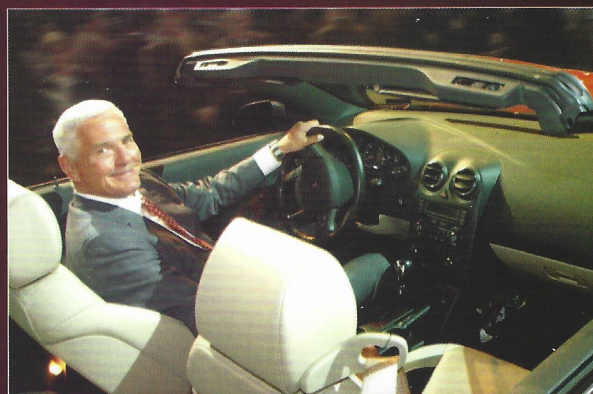
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Exclusive Interview

Bob Lutz

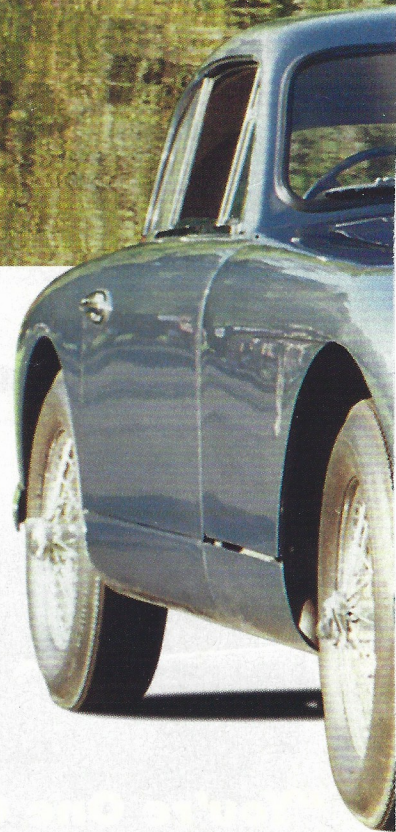
On The Future of GM





The Lutz Collection

*GM's Top Car Guy
Discusses His Eclectic
Collection of Elderly
Automobiles, Each
Very Special to Him*





Text by Gary Witzenburg, photos by Steve Purdy

GM

Product Development Chairman Bob Lutz, 72, passed his third anniversary on the job in September 2004, and shows no sign of slowing, or retiring, any time soon.

Rational football fans know it takes at least three years for a new coach to turn a program around. Given the realities of budgets and lead times, how long will it take Lutz to reinvigorate all the products and brands of the planet's largest car company? We'll see.

Meanwhile, we wondered how the product philosophies of GM's top car guy might be reflected by his own eclectic collection of special historic automobiles and the way in which he describes them. We spent a sunny autumn afternoon at his home to find out.

Lutz says he reveres his stunning yellow 1934 LaSalle convertible partly because of its flamboyant styling, the work of GM's famous first chief designer, Harley Earl, and partly because it's identical to the one his father once owned. "Look at the 'pants crease' in the fenders," he enthuses, "the ornaments at the front of the fenders, the grille, the biplane bumpers, those half-cups on the side. [Inside] the theme is carried through in the welts on the door trim, horizontal and vertical. It's just outstanding!"

Left: The 1952 Aston Martin DB2 in Lutz's collection is the one his father actually owned.

Top of this page: A great Cunningham enthusiast, Lutz prizes his 1952 C3 Vignale Coupe.

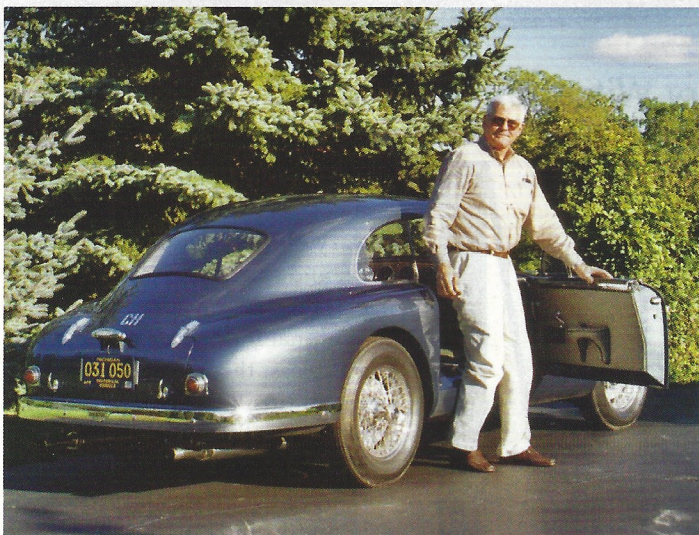




Bob Lutz and his wife Denise.

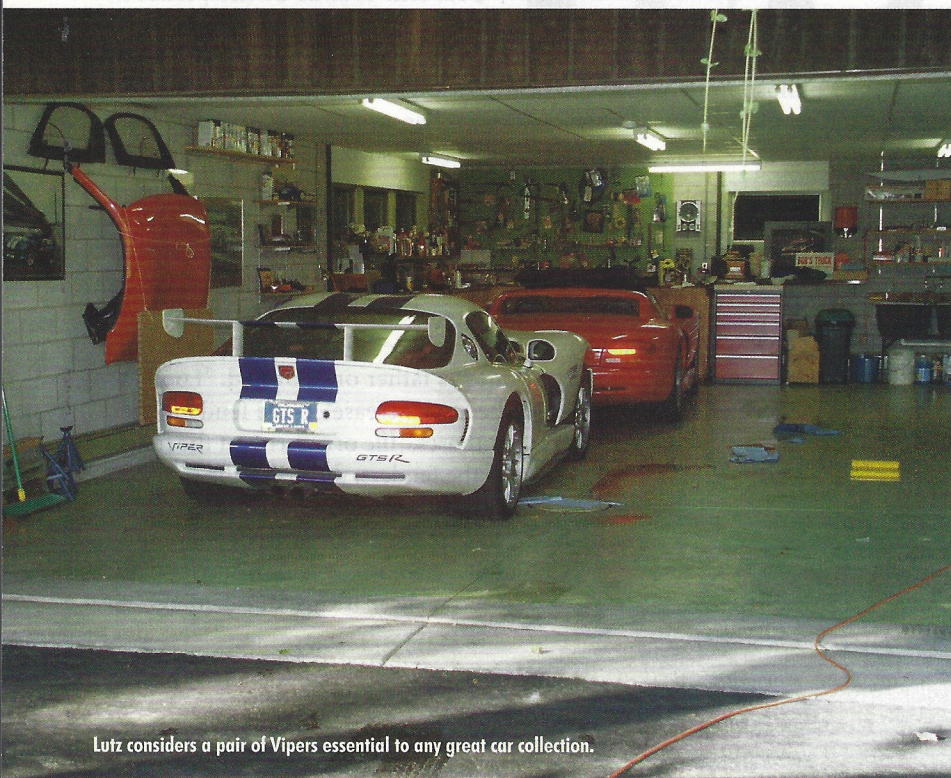


Lutz and his 1934 LaSalle.

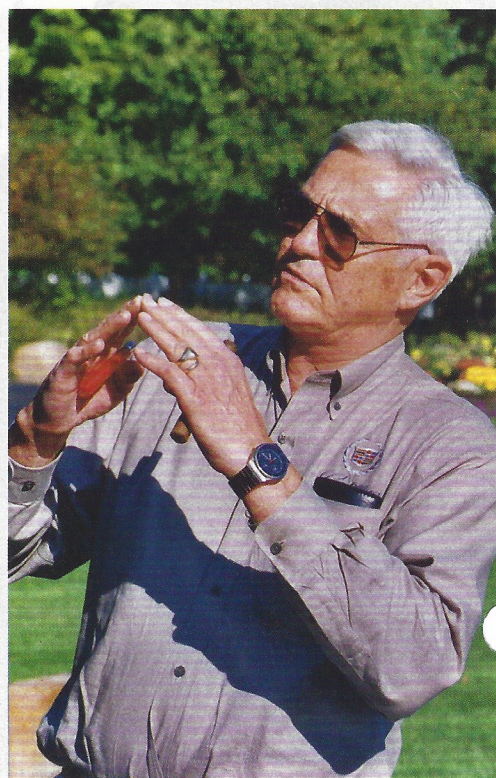


He calls the proportions of his rare 1934 Riley MPH Sports Competition Roadster, a spindly sports car straight out of an old British movie, "incredible. It looks a lot like the early '30s Alfa Zagato...the door cutline, the rear fender, the fin in back...but it's better than the Zagato because it has this extreme long hood and the very short, rounded, tucked-under deck. It looks like it's accelerating so fast that the whole body has slid aft on the chassis, which gives it a tremendous feeling of thrust. It has a beautiful instrument panel, and such a beautiful engine for 1934."

An odd yet familiar black sedan, looking like Inspector Clouseau's Pink Panther police car, is a 1952 Citroen 15-6: "It was the world's first in-line six front-drive car and the world's first unit-body car," Lutz explains, "and it's got full torsion bar suspension on all four wheels. Look at the '50s Hudson-



Lutz considers a pair of Vipers essential to any great car collection.

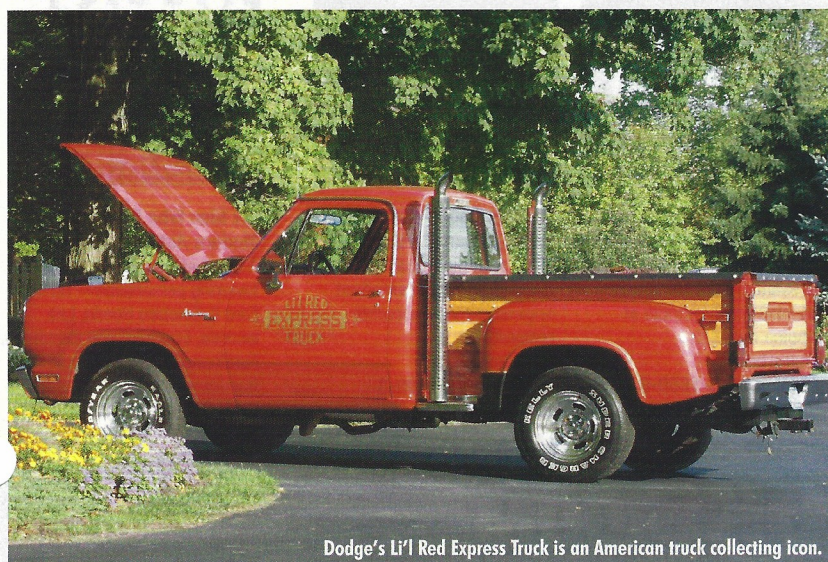




The 1955 Chrysler 300 is a car Lutz always wanted. The prototype Chrysler engine powered the 1952 Cunningham racecar pictured below.



This 1952 Cunningham C4R racecar is one of Lutz's favorites.



Dodge's Li'l Red Express Truck is an American truck collecting icon.

style step-down design and where the beltline is compared to a '34 car designed in the U.S. Look at the rear legroom. Also, no overhangs—they got the wheels absolutely out to the corners of the car, which gives it this wonderful, low-slung appearance. It's an absolutely modern proportion."

His 1952 Aston Martin DB2 Coupe is the one his father actually owned while director of a bank in Zurich, Switzerland. He bought it, Lutz says, because Aston Martin had done well at LeMans, so he could sort of be "King of the Hill." But he'd get blown off by colleagues with Jaguar XK-120s, which were half the price with way more horsepower. Still, he explains, he wanted to be loyal to Aston, because it was a make that he liked very much, and it wasn't ostentatious. He felt he couldn't have a Ferrari or a Maserati or anything too flashy. And this Aston was a breakthrough design in '52, the first Italian-style British sports car.

He turns to his cherished pair of 1952 Cunninghams, a red C3 Vignale coupe and a white C4R racer: "I just love Cunninghams," he says. "I was smarting under the derision with which my Swiss car-loving friends held American products in general: 'American cars don't handle, American cars don't brake, and there's never been an American car that's done anything at LeMans.' Then Briggs Cunningham started running and placing well at LeMans with basically the prototype Chrysler 300 engine."

Of the C4R, Lutz says, "This car lives by its proportions. There are bad features, but even the

things that are bad...give it character. And it has such *overwhelming* presence. It looks like a great big old '50s Ferrari, and it still rumbles and shakes and twists with torque. It's an old triangulated boxed, rectangular tubular space frame, very lightweight aluminum structure, about 2,100 pounds, with a 331 Chrysler Hemi V8, over 400 horsepower, on those skinny Dunlop racing tires. And there's nothing on it...no heater, ventilation, windows, door seals, door inner panels, carpeting...it's a *bare bones* sports car. At the California Mille Miglia, Denise and I sucked the doors off all the Ferraris, and it hangs with the C-Type Jaguars. It's really fast, *really fast!*"

He turns to his imposing red 1955 Chrysler 300 coupe: "This is another one I always wanted. In '55, when I was in the Marine Corp., this was absolutely *it*. To the enthusiast, this meant more than a Cadillac, because it was the first American muscle car, the first car with 300 horsepower. It dominated NASCAR for a number of years, so it was a genuine American high-performance icon. I always liked the design because it didn't slavishly imitate the '54 GM products, which were terrific. [It has] some plan

view and a lot of tumblehome...this niche in here and these Italian-style headlights and a very strong Virgil Exner influence, and Ghia influence from Italy. It's really a gorgeous car."

While externally original, Lutz's 300 is fortified underneath for vintage car events with adjustable Koni shocks, big stabilizer bars, 14-inch Corvette disc brakes and a 3-speed Torqueflite transmission. "It's fun going over the California mountains chasing the Porsche Speedsters," he says with a grin, "and they can't believe it: 'I can understand that this thing is faster on the straights,' they'll say, 'but I cannot believe a 1955 American car going through the corners that fast and being able to stop.' I always say, 'American cars were a *lot* better than you guys gave them credit for.'"

His 1971 Monteverdi 375 High-Speed Coupe is powered by a 375-horsepower Chrysler 440 Wedge V8: "I remember falling in love with this car at the '71 Geneva show. The design is by Frua, executed by Fissore. It has a lot of the same lines as the Ferrari 330, but I think it's much better. It's wider and longer, much better proportioned, with a much longer hood.

For 1971, everything on the car is *just so good!* That proportion is still excellent today...and not that far away from where we are with Cadillac right now."

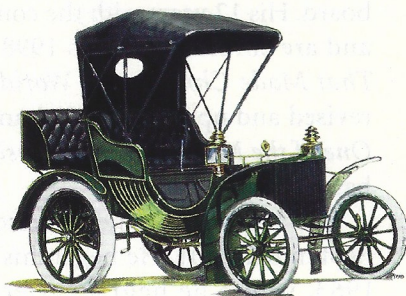
Anything else on his "always wanted" list? "Well, I've kind of disciplined myself," he responds, twirling his cigar. "I just know I'm going to own a 12-cylinder car at some point...might be a Ferrari. But I have to watch that I don't get too much stuff."

We noticed in one garage a lovely 1941 Chrysler convertible. "My Dad had one of those in exactly that color," Lutz explains, "and '41 was a fabulous year for American design—'41 Buicks, '41 Cadillacs, '41 Oldsmobiles, '41 Chryslers and DeSotos. It was when the designers discovered surfacing, and they had these beautiful full surfaces that blended into each other. It was the beginning of a great era of American design." He pauses; then, adds thoughtfully, "I think good design is coming back now."

How long will Lutz stay? "As long as Rick [Wagoner] and the Board are happy," he tells us. Given the recent rate of GM product progress, that could be quite a while.



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