REVOLTIN' DEVELOPMENT

FAPA MLG. 90

Martin E. Alger
27886 Dartmouth
Madison Hts., Mich.

THE 1949 PACKARD CUTOM (S)

OR, I OWE MY HORSE $650!

Man dig that plural! Since the last Revoltin' Development I have bought two more Packards. The first one, bought last April, is a 1949 Custom 4-door sedan, just like the origional. The body shell is in better shape than that of the origional, and I bought it mainly because of that. It was in running condition and I was able to drive it home, though it had a broken tooth in reverse gear and the motor ran rough. The engine turned out to have several cracked valve seats, so I stripped it down and junked the block and bought another engine from an auto wrecking yard. This I also stripped down and with only a few new parts, rings and bearings and a few valve lifters, I was able to make one good engine out of the two and still have a lot of good parts left over.

I replaced the reverse idler gear and a few minor parts in the overdrive, put in a new clutch, had the radiator repaired and put the new engine in. Put new brake lining in and replaced one rear wheel bearing. Now with the transmission quiet and the clicks and raps chased out of the engine I can hear the grinding of the bad pinion shaft bearing in the rear end! I'm expecting to get it replaced in the next few days. Then all I'll have to do is repair the ripped front seat, sort out the loose wires under the dash and see if I can get all the lights working properly and then replace some chrome strips which are missing. I might even have a decent car when I get done.

One of the most interesting parts of this whole deal was the junk yard combing for parts. Just like browsing through dusty book shops in hope of finding a rare item. So far, I have gone through at least 8 or 10 yards, some of them with 3000 or 4000 cars and I only found one '49 Packard Custom, the one from which I bought the engine. However, quite a few parts are the same in the smaller Deluxe and Super models and I found dozens of those. It is amazing how cheap most used parts are, on the average only 5% to 10% of new list price and most of the yards will either check the unit or let you open it up and look at it before you buy. For example, I bought a complete transmission and overdrive for $20. A new one lists for about $275. A new engine lists for over $500 without the "bolt on" equipment, I paid $30 for the used one complete, ready to run. And when I tore it down, it seemed good enough to have used just as I got it.

An odd thing is that two junk yards only a few miles apart may vary as much a 2 to 1 in price for the same item. One of them asked $35 for a transmission and overdrive but he was the lowest of all for a radiator. So, it offers the thrill of

bargain hunting and even a bit of "hoss trading" as most of the dealers can be talked down a few dollars if you take several items at one time. Anyway, as a result of all this junk yard junketing I got most of the parts needed to fix the second car and in addition ended up with enough parts to make one complete transmission and overdrive, an extra overdrive and a bucket of assorted extra gears and parts. (Any of you happen to need a Packard cluster gear? I have only 6 or 7 on hand!) I also got the complete front end, wheels and even steering post from the car I bought the engine out of, the works for $25, just to have for parts.

In case any of you FAPS are wondering how much it does cost to restore an old car here are the rough figures on this one. The car cost $125 and right now I have just under $175 in parts and repairs, not counting my time and labor. When I get it all done I expect I'll have a total of slightly under $350 invested in it. At first thought that might seem too much to spend on an old car but I'll then have a car which has had just about every moving part torn down, checked and repaired or replaced where needed. With normal luck I should be ready for at least 5 years use with very little further expense and it is very unlikely that one could get anything like that from the average $350 used car.

In my case there is the added advantage that having two cars of identical make and model one can always swap parts to make one good one out of the two. The only thing that isn't the same is that the second one has the older R-9 type overdrive while the origional has the newer R-11 type. The complete units can be swapped but not most internal parts. (Packard changed over from the R-9 to R-11 overdrive during the 1949 production.)

In addition to tinkering with the second car, I had to put a new main shaft in the transmission of the origional as it broke a tooth in second gear last summer, at about 124,000 miles. It was the first part to break (as opposed to gradual wear) in the life of the car.

Then last November I heard several reports of a Packard hearse for sale in Detroit, several people told me it was the same model as my cars and seemed to be in good shape. Thinking it might be worth having for parts, I went down to look at it. To make a long story short, it was the same model, in good shape, only 42,500 miles on it and a one owner car. The hearse and ambulance agency which had it had sold it new to an undertaker in a small western Michigan city and had taken it back from him in trade. They had been asking $250 would take $200 as it had been on the lot for sometime without selling. Then they told me that for personal use I could register it as a station wagon and so pay passenger car license rate on it, $21.70 per year instead of over $50, that did it! I have the largest station wagon in Madison Heights.

For you car fans, the statistics are; wheelbase 149 inches, weight 6200 pounds, tire size 7.50 X 16, axle ratio 4.54 to 1, same engine as my cars (356 cu. in., 160 bhp @ 3600 rps.).

It has push-button windows and power seat (and they still work) and best of all the body style is such that with the drapes off the windows it looks more like a station wagon than a hearse. Talk about room! With the seat run all the way back it is over 10 feet from the back of the seat to the rear door.

As might be expected, it seems to be in very good condition, a hearse gets A-1 care and doesn't get the rough use than often makes an old ambulance a questionable buy. Unlike the sedan, it needed very little work, I replaced the rear light sockets, as they were rusty, replaced a bunch of burned out bulbs in the dash and put on a windshield wiper arm. The only other defect that I have found is that the lower hinge of the rear door is rusted loose inside the body. Brakes are good, engine runs OK and sounds good.

I suppose I'll want to put an overdrive on it if I do much long highway driving as the very low axle ratio of 4.54 to 1 makes the motor wind up pretty fast at highway speeds, in fact it reaches the rated 3600 rpm at about 70 mph. Probably would be a gas hog too, though I haven't tried it on any trips as yet, just driving around town it has averaged between 8½ and 9 miles per gallon, but that probably can be improved by a tuneup, I haven't even checked points, plugs or timing yet. In any case it is a fannish type vehicle, think of pulling into a Convention with the purple drapes on the windows and a bunch of fans with green painted faces in it!

What does all this have to do with me owing a horse $650? You see a year or so ago when the horse bug bit me again I started to put all my "hobby income", sale of guns, s-f mags, photos etc, and then when I bought the Packards I put I.O.U.s, in the "horse fund" as I called it. Between the cars and a few guns and similar items I now find I owe the poor horse $650 and I don't even know him yet. On the other hand if I do get one I might be able to find one who would like to ride in a Packard ~~Hearse~~ - er- station wagon.

Looking back on it, I suppose I wouldn't have bought the 2nd sedan if I had know I was going to get the ~~Hearse~~ station waggon. Do any of you know how to get the odor of enbalming fluid out of a station wagon?

DETENTION PHOTOS

In case any of you want color photos of the Detention, I have 4 shots of the costume ball, two group shots; one of the judges looking over the lineup, one of Randy Garret and harem, two individual shots, one of Randy in his outfit and one of Friar Tucker. For the set of 4 shots, $1.25 for 35mm slides and $1.50 for wallet size color prints.

Lee Hoffman, in A Fanzine For ....., you mention that there are more horses arond now than in the pre-auto days. I'm sorry to say that you are way off the beam, just a few months ago I read in one of the horse magazines, Horse Lovers, I think it was, that the present U.S. horse population is now under the four million figure, 3,800,000 or 3,900,000 or around there. About 1900 Russia and the U.S. each had around 15,000,000, I don't recall the exact figures but these were the two leading horse nations and one had 15,000,000 and the other nearly 20,000,000, I'm not sure which had the most. In any case, our 1900 figure was some four or five times as great as at present.

Your point may be true that the average person in those days was not as likely to own a horse as the average person is to now own a car. That may have been true of city dewllers, but it certainly was not true in rural areas and even in small and medium size town. And in those days the city dwellers made up a much smaller part of the population than today. Speaking from personal observation I can say that in Northern Michigan in the Straits ares, the great majority of people living in the rural areas had a horse of horses during the 1920-1930 period and a lot of them did up to WW II, and I'm not just speaking of the real farmers but almost everyone who had a few acres of land. And there were a fair number kept in the towns too.

It may be that they were somewhat expensive to keep in a large city but the reverse was true in the country, because they were in a sense selfsupporting in that if you had one you could use him to cut and put up hay to keep him. If you did not have a horse drawn mowing machine, you probably could borrow or at worst rent one for a few dollars, the same with a hay rake to gather the hay and with a few boards of poles you could put a rack on a wagon or cart to haul the hay in. Most people would have a few acres of grass which would yield enough hay to keep a horse or two over the winter. If not, someone without a horse would and you could haul him a few loads of firewood or something in exchange for cutting his grass. Also there was some vacant State land and nobody seemed to care if you cut hay on it. If you had a barn to put itin, fine. If not, make a stack. Sure, weather would spoil some, but after all it was free, so stack an extra ton or so. I recall that I piloted our old Dan and hayrake around the neighbor's orchard and the rural school yard during my early grade school days. We didn't have a mower so we hired someone to cut, or in small patches used a scythe. So in those days the actual cost of keeping a horse in rural areas was very slight, at most a few dollars and a few days of work gathering hay.

Today, buying all your feed, I understand that the average horse will cost around 75¢ to $1 per day to keep. All considered horses arenIt very expensive today, if you have a place to keep one rather than boarding it out.. Local owners tell me that a good average horse of most breeds can be bought for around $300 to $400. Nothing special or fancy of course, but a good sound horse. Of course you can go way up into five figures too.

I'm now a four times dirty old pro, having sold a fourth gun article. This one being on the Remington Rolling Block, a more or less general type article, dealing with the various models and types. It was aimed mainly at the general gun fan who might have a rolling block gun and wonder just what type it was. It was my longest article so far and brought me $200.

I don't think I have added any unusual items to the collection since the last mailing, I did sell a few and picked up one but they were all rather common types and in most cases duplicates. The last few years I have tended more to shooting and away from serious collecting. For one thing, I have most all the Rolling Blocks that I want except for a few which are so rare and thus expensive that I probably never will get them.

I have developed quite an interest in loading and shooting with cast bullets in the rifle and so have bought bullet moulds in a number of calibers and am trying to develope loads which will shoot well in the various rifles I have. In some cases I have had good results, with other calibers I'm still experimenting. One load in an 8mm rifle has shot quite a few groups around an inch at 100 yards and a half inch at 50 yards, which as good as most factory jacketed bullets will do and better than many.

I also bought one of the new handgun scopesights with long eye relief and have it on my Hi Standard Flite King .22 Short auto pistol. It seems to work OK and I have made some groups with it which were quite a bit better than I ever did with regular sights. It is a rather crude and cheaply made item (but all one can expect for the price of $14.95) and it does fill a need in the gun field. The idea is not new, Stevens made a scope for pistols back around 1900 it has long been off the market and most shooters never heard of it.

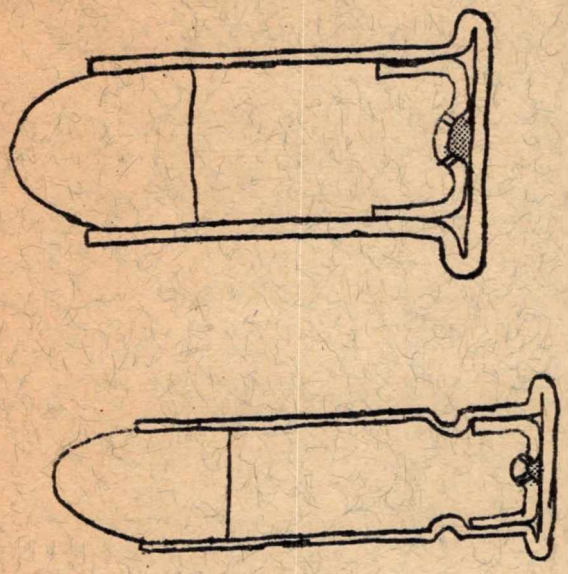
I have long claimed that the zap-gun would never replace the Remington Rolling Block, last Christmas the Rolling Block just about replaced the zap-gun! Around here all the toy stores were selling an Indian Scout Rifle which did have a rolling block action and is a pretty good copy of the real thing. There are some minor changes but the general design and method of operation is very similar.

In recent years I have also become interested in the larger caliber rifles, I have one rolling block rebarreled to the .450 Nitro (a British elephant rifle caliber) and have done some experimenting with a rifle for the U.S. caliber .50 machinegun cartridge. This is almost too much for a shoulder rifle, if the rifle is light enough to hold in a normal way the recoil is just about unbearable and if the rifle is heavy enough to tame the kick it is too heavy to hold up. However in a heavy rifle shot from a rest this caliber does very fine long range shooting.

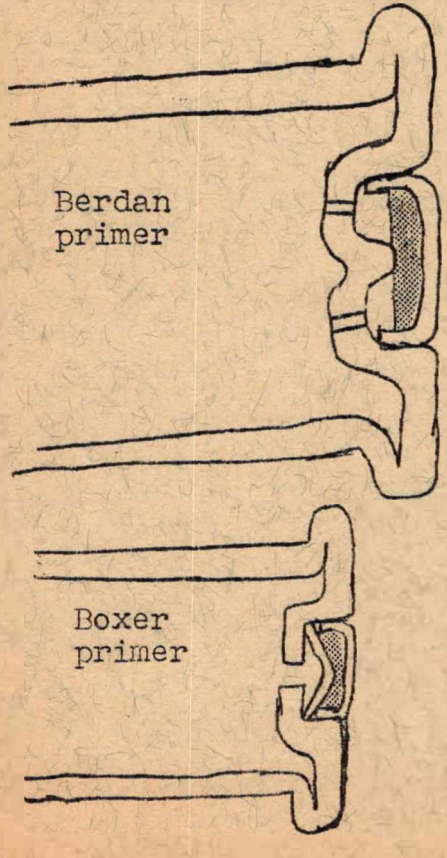
As I mentioned in a previous mailing, a few years ago I bought a batch of Youth's Companion magazines from about 1885 to 1928. I hope to do a report on them, I sold most to Coswal but read Most of them before I sent them on to him.

GUNS

(Chapter III)



Early inside primed cartridges.

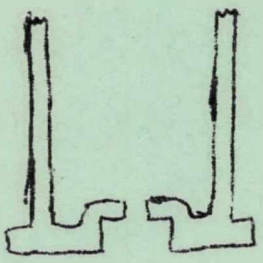


Once again taking up where I left off a couple of years ago. As was mentioned in the last chapter, the rimfire type cartridge was much used in the Civil War and it was the first type to prove good for general use. The disadvantages were that it was not strong ehough to hold heavy loads and the fact that it could not be reloaded. As the cartridge case is the most expensive part of ammunition it was natural that shooters wanted shells that they could reload.

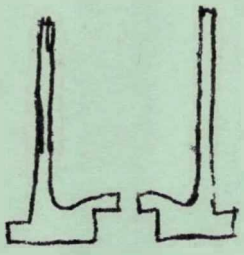
The idea of a centerfire shell was not new, some were made long before the war but the idea did not catch on at first. After the Civil War the U.S. converted the muzzle loading muskets to breech loaders using centerfire shells. At first the cartridges were made in the form called "inside primed" which had the priming charge put inside the case during manufacture. These could be made sonewhat stronger than rimfires but they could not be reloaded. However, the U.S. Army used this type in the field for many years. Under field conditions it would not be convenient to gather and save the empty shells anyway.

In 1867 the Union Metallic Cartridge Co. introduced what is now called the "outside primed" type of center fire cartridge. This has a pocket in the center of the shell head and the priming is in a small metal cup pressed into the pocket from outside. There are two types, the Berdan which has a hump in the center of the pocket to serve as an anvil to crush the priming against, with one of more off-center flash holes and the Boxer which has a central flash hole and an anvil in the cup. Either type can be reloded by replacing the primer cup with a new one.

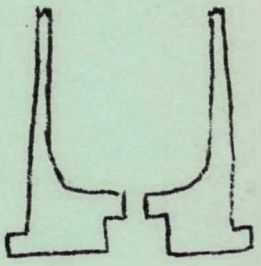
It happens that the Berdan type, which is an American invention, is used by most all foreign nations and the Boxer type, which is a British invention, is used in the U.S. and Canada. The Boxer type is prefered by reloaders because the large central flash hole permits the fired primer to be pushed out with a simple punch through the mouth of the shell, a system which is not suited to the Berdan type with the smaller off-center holes. The Berdan type requires a special tool to pry them out from the outside. Once the fired primer is out, one type is as easy to reload as the other.



First type of solid rim.



A later and stronger type.



A modern type of solid head cartridge.

While these early centerfire shells were stronger than rimfire shells they were still rather weak at the rim so a reinforcing cup was inserted inside the head. Some years later a method of drawing a shell with a solid rim was developed and these were so much better that the old folded rim type was soon obsolete. These newer solid rim shells gave satisfactory results with even the heaviest loads of blackpowder and would stand reloading many times. Most blackpowder cartridges developed rather low pressures, most were in the 10,000 to 20,000 pounds per square inch range.

Starting around 1886 smokeless powder started to replace the old black powder and average pressures jumped to 38,000 to 42,000 psi and this required still stronger shells, so shells were designed to have even thicker brass in the heads. Such calibers as the French 8mm Lebel and the U.S. .30-40 Krag fall in this class. As the demand for for more velocity and power grew, the pressures went still higher, up 50,000 psi in the U.S. .30-'06 and the German 8mm Mauser, which were developed just after the turn of the century and these have still thicker brass in the heads. Today a few modern calibers have normal working pressures as high as 55,000 psi and these require very thick heads of the best quality brass. In WW II many cartridges were made of steel rather than brass but this was due to brass being in short supply, steel wasn't as good as brass but it did work fairly well.