

**Radnor Hunt Concours d'Elegance  
Chester County Town & Country Living  
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Take a spin in a shimmering yellow Cadillac and heads will turn. But when that Caddy is a pristine 1928 dual cowl phaeton, total strangers wave, honk their horns and give a 'thumbs-up.'

Driving a classic car – defined by the Classic Car Club of America as 'distinctive motor cars produced between 1925 and 1948' – is as much an exercise in being seen as it is in motoring from one spot to another. Those who drive and collect classic cars are a breed apart. Not only must they have enough disposable income to invest in this often expensive hobby, but they must have a passion for the automobile and an appreciation for aesthetics, fine lines, elegance and refinement of the cars of this era.

The Radnor Hunt Concours d'Elegance allows some of the top collectors along the east coast to exhibit their cars for two days each September: English and European Classics – Rolls-Royce, Bentley, Jaguar, Citroen – sports cars – Aston Martin, Austin Healey, Porsche – American Classics – Auburn, Cadillac, Packard. For some their cars are a passionate hobby, for others, a driving force in their lives.

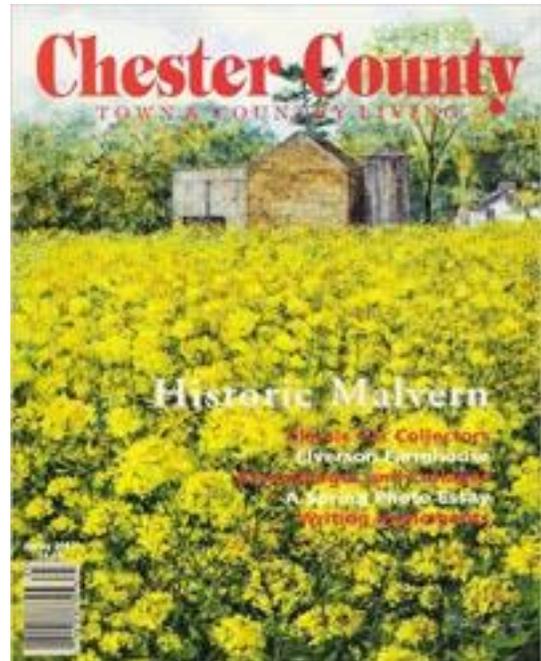
While investment is certainly part of the reason collectors buy these classics, investment value doesn't seem to be the main reason behind the collecting. The three collectors interviewed for this story all look for cars that fulfill a basic desire to own something beautiful – a benchmark of an era – yet functional – and that can be just plain fun to drive.

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Michael G. Tillson III, or Mike as he prefers to be called, owns and operates Mike Tillson Motorcar Service and Sales in the Overbrook section of Philadelphia. He and his crew service foreign sports cars and restore and sell classic cars.

He's been collecting classics for about 20 years, but the family interest in cars goes back three generations. Walking through Tillson's warehouse with him, where an eclectic assortment of cars sit fender to fender, is a lesson in the history of the automobile.

The oldest car in his collection is a 1928 Cadillac dual cowl phaeton painted the original curite yellow with bright orange trim. The 9,000 man-hours it took to restore this luxury touring car are evident in the touches that make it unique: wide running boards, small



drawers under the seats for tools, a large outside trunk and fold-down rack for extra storage, and side dual-mounted spare tires fastened with wide leather straps. Tillson takes care to point out that all the bright trim work on the car is nickel plated, since chrome wasn't used on cars until 1929.

Remember the little Aston Martin Tippi Hedrin drove in Alfred Hitchcock's "The Birds"? Tillson has the same model, a 1956 DB2/4 'blue haze'.

His 1953 Jaguar XK120 was restored "from the ground up" and is known as a 100-point car, because the judges can't find anything wrong with it. "It's better now than when Jaguar built it," he says. "But some judges don't like that (because it's been changed). They feel that once you do anything to it, it's no longer an original."

His 1930 Packard – with a Derham body – comes with a unique background and is his favorite car of that vintage. Some years ago, while searching for a Packard to buy, he came across this car, which had been custom designed by the Derham company in Rosemont, for whom he had worked in his first automotive job. One of only two made, this Packard holds a special place in Tillson's collection.

Tillson took his little 1957 BMW 507 Roadster to Italy with him last year for an event where he was privileged to meet the car's German designer, 88-year old Count Albrecht von Goertz, who signed the outside of the glove compartment; adding unestimable value to the car.

His latest model car is a 1992 Porsche Carrera cup car. Built specifically for racing, this car is one of only 45 manufactured. This purpose built track car is fast, able to run at speeds of up to 160 mph.

Tillson works with cars, collects them and organizes one of the country's esteemed concours events. He admits that cars are both his vocation and his hobby, and it's obvious by his demeanor that that's quite all right with him.

"Collectors have a certain heart for it (collecting), and they have stamina," explains Tillson. "Collector cars are a good investment, but only the rarest cars recover the costs of restoration. You won't get rich this way, but it's a passion."

"The cost of the restoration doesn't make the car valuable," he adds. "Depending on the car, you can expect to pay \$200,000, plus, for a complete restoration – where the body comes off, all components are rebuilt, all pieces refinished, all while keeping the car as much in its original state as possible. It can get quite elaborate."

He recommends buying a car already restored. "It's hard to find a qualified restorer and there are always frustrations and delays when restoring something, especially when searching for the perfect part. To restore your own vehicle, you have to understand engine mechanics and hydraulics, work with metals and upholstery. There is so much knowledge, time and money necessary."

**The Radnor Hunt Concours d'Elegance** is more than a car show. It is an exhibition of classic cars with elegant lines and often elegant lineage to match. Packards, Cadillacs, Ferraris, Mercedes and Jaguars line the open field of the Radnor Hunt Club each year for two days in September, attracting around 3,500 visitors of every age and background.

Michael G. Tillson III, member of the club and car enthusiast, felt the rolling greenery of the Radnor Club would provide the perfect backdrop for an exhibition of fine, classic cars. He wanted to emulate the great concours events of the world, including Amelia Island, Florida; Ville d'Este in Italy; Louis Vitton in Paris; and what Tillson calls the *crème de la crème*, the Pebble Beach, California, Concours d'Elegance.

"Concours d'Elegance was started in Europe in the 1920s in part as a way to introduce the new ladies' fashions," explains Tillson. Today, the show he started six years ago – with a group of friends and their 35 cars – incorporates a black-tie dinner, fashion show, exhibit of the automotive photography of Michael Furman, a two-hour competitive driving tour of the countryside, a luncheon, awards for best of show, peoples' choice, best in class and more, and of course, the cars.

At a standard car show, anyone with a suitable car and the entry fee can drive onto the field and show off his or her car. Here car collectors are invited to exhibit based on certain criteria: If the automobile is unusual, elegant, rare and has a significant provenance, chances are it will be seen at Radnor. A lovely, clear acrylic trophy goes to the winners, but no prize money is awarded. "These collectors love their cars and simply want to share them with others," adds Tillson.

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According to the Classic Car Club of America, a classic is a car that was manufactured between 1925 and 1948. For the purposes of the exhibition, the Radnor Hunt committee stretches that definition to include some cars of more recent vintage. While as many as 135 cars from the entire east coast have lined the Radnor field, Tillson would like to limit the entries to 100, a number that fits the area perfectly and allows for plenty of space around each vehicle, the better to view them and take in their classic beauty.

2003 Radnor Hunt Concours d'Elegance  
Radnor Hunt Club, Providence Road, Malvern, PA

Saturday, September 13  
8 a.m. - Pre-rally breakfast  
10 a.m. - Road rally  
Saturday night black-tie gala  
(The public is invited to Saturday's events with pre-registration at [radnorconcours.org](http://radnorconcours.org) or 215/473-6400.)

Sunday  
Public exhibition 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.  
Admission: \$10  
The concours is held rain or shine.

Special guest:  
Carroll Shelby, the designer of the Shelby Mustang and Cobra.  
Featured cars:  
The Alfa Romeo  
The Ford – Although not considered a classic car, the concours will recognize the significant contributions of the Ford automobile company to the automotive world.  
Celebrating: The 50th anniversary of the Corvette  
All proceeds benefit the Willistown Conservation Trust.

Bill Borden of Devon started collecting classic cars in the late 1980s after other life responsibilities had been met. The retired mechanical engineer and his late wife, Joan, raised three children and put them through college before they turned their eyes toward buying something they both wanted.

“For years my subscription to Road & Track was my only connection to this hobby,” he says with a smile.

Finally, the time was right, and Bill and Joan bought a 1935 Alvis Speed 20. “It just had an overall high quality – advanced synchromeshed transmission, independent front suspension, and custom coach work.”

He has always looked for cars that epitomized elegance, beauty and class, right from his first purchase – of a 1923 Rolls-Royce Silver Ghost when he was just 17 for \$112. 50.

Borden drove this sporty light blue Alvis with the top down and while wearing a WWII silk scarf from a Navy flier friend. He admits it's his favorite car because it was his first and it's a true sports car

“It was the kind of car driven by dashing RAF types, the wind-in-the-face, windshield-down lovely car of the '30s,” adds Michael Christie, Borden's friend and fellow collector who is visiting from Virginia.

Bill and Joan drove that Alvis all around the country before buying a 1932 Rolls-Royce Phantom II Continental.

Designed for touring, this car can reach a top speed of 90 mph and was voted “Best Rolls-Royce” at the 2000 Radnor Concours. Its deep burgundy finish is polished to shiny

perfection, and the rich brown leather upholstery and burnished wooden interior speak of luxury and class.

“This car is very functional and clean. It’s not ostentatious, but really understated, and it’s almost three tons of motorcar” says Christie, as he walks admiringly around the car.

“I could float along all day at the speed limit -- or at 70 mph if I want to,” adds Borden

Prior to WWII, all Rolls-Royce and Bentley cars came only with a chassis, engine, radiator and grille. The coaches were custom designed and built by top designers with subtle changes depending on the customer. Borden’s Rolls was built by H.J. Mulliner. The body is framed of ash with aluminum panels framed over the top.

“This car cost around \$10,000 to \$12,000 at a time when Packards and Cadillacs were going for five to seven thousand,” says Borden. “There is more handwork (in the Rolls) and it’s very complex. Legend has it that there are two and a half times as many parts in the Rolls as in a comparable car of the same size.”

The Phantom II was limited to fewer than 1,800 made and of those, only 281 are the sportier Continental model. It’s characterized by a shorter wheelbase, the nearly horizontal position of the steering column and stiffer springs.

Sitting across the garage from the Rolls is a 1935 Derby (pronounced Darby) Bentley, another English Classic, produced by the Rolls-Royce company after it bought out Bentley in 1931. Originally the Bentley was manufactured with very “masculine” lines, says Christie. “It was beautifully engineered, but had brutal, hard lines.” Bentleys won the Le Mans 24-hour race five times in six years, and had quite a reputation among the men – known as Bentley Boys – of whom it was said, ‘They have champagne in the boot and a girl in the seat,’” Christie says with a laugh.

Whatever the truth of that legend, the Bentley was built with speed and reliability in mind and made touring the Continent practical. Borden still tours with this Bentley, enjoying the attention it draws.

The most recent addition to Borden’s collection is the quite rare 1953 Bristol 401. Only 605 of this highly streamlined and aesthetically pleasing model were manufactured over the course of four years.

Borden continues the hobby he had shared with his wife, who he calls “a true partner”. “We looked for high quality and design and wanted cars with beautiful aesthetics and in good running condition,” he says, pointing to a wall full of pictures of his family. She liked ‘car people’ – felt they were warm and friendly.”

Borden is past president of the Delaware Valley Region of the Classic Car Club of America and continues to edit its newsletter, Classic Driver.

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In his late 70s, Ray Carr of Chester Springs approaches his work, car collecting and one imagines his entire life with gusto. Settling into a leather chair in his wood-lined conference room in Exton, Carr regales a visitor with tales of adventure.

“Back in 1986 I had \$71,000 to put into the bank,” begins the real estate entrepreneur. “I went to an antique car auction in Reno (Nevada) with my son and grandson, and – I’ve always had a love affair with trucks and cars – decided to put the money into some cars rather than in the bank.”

So he did, and came home with a 1902 one-cylinder Northern, a 1912 Baker electric, 1913 Model T and a 1939 Ford convertible.

The chain-driven, single cylinder Northern is steered with a tiller and manages to chug along at an impressive 25 mph. Carr affectionately calls this favorite little car “Chuffie.” Carr and Chuffie chugged their way across the country, from California to Georgia in 24 days, setting a world record for the oldest car to cross North America.

Carr bought the Baker because of an abiding interest in electric cars, and in 1995 powered it up and zipped across the country again, from Oregon to New Jersey, setting another world record.

Not content with two records, Carr went for a third when he filled his 1909 Stanley Steamer’s water tanks in 1996 and steamed his way from Alaska to Maine in 46 days.

Carr not only raised money for the American Red Cross on this last journey, but he had dozens of newspaper articles written about him and appeared on numerous television programs, all which fueled his desire to travel around some more in one of his vintage cars.

“It was unbelievable the people I met,” he says, his eyes crinkling up in pleasure at the memory. Sure, there were some scary moments like the time he lost the brakes in the Steamer and when heavy winds picked up the lightweight Chuffie, nearly tossing it and him over the side of a cliff. But someone was watching over him – in addition to his good friend who followed with a jeep, trailer and tools – and he arrived safely at his destination each time out.

Push-pins stuck into large world maps tacked to a wall in his office complex mark the routes he has traveled – not only in North America – but abroad as well.

“I drove from Peking to Paris in 1997,” he says proudly. “We camped for six nights because there was nowhere else to stay and once we were at 17,800 feet, without oxygen. It was pretty rough.”

But he and his navigator/mechanic managed to traverse that rough terrain, all 10,241 miles of it, in 43 days in his 1939 Ford Model 91A Deluxe Convertible Sedan. The 1997 Peking to

Paris Motor Challenge was organized by the Classic Car Association in England as part of the 90th anniversary of the first and only other road rally between the two cities.

“Ray Carr’s Postcards: Peking to Paris” chronicles that event and its flyleaf says it all: “If I had known how hard it would be, I never would have started. It wasn’t fun, but it was a grand adventure.”

Maybe it wasn’t so bad, since he’s planning to drive from Cape Town, South Africa, to Kenya in a 1939 Chrysler as part of another British-sponsored road rally. The map is already on the wall.

Other cars in Carr’s collection include two Pierce Arrows, a 1926 4-door and a 1937 7-passenger limousine; two Packards, a 1937 convertible with rumble seat and a 1938 convertible; a 1928 Studebaker convertible and a 1931 Austin formerly owned by Will Rogers.

Carr has no real rhyme or reason to his acquisitions, but attends several auctions each year, buys vehicles in various conditions and says, “If I see it and like it, I get it.”

Carr has derived hours of enjoyment from packing up dry ice in coolers, loading them with ice cream and handing it out at car shows and local fairs from the side of his 1929 Ford Model AA ice cream truck.

A 1962 T-bird convertible and a rare 1967 Pontiac GTO with right-hand drive are two of his more recent models, but it’s the 5-horsepower Chuffie that “pops along” that remains his favorite. “It gave me the most thrilling ride I can imagine.” And one believes he would repeat the ride given half a chance.

His family worries about him, and he admits the hobby is kind of expensive, but as he says, “I’ve earned it.”

Most recently, Carr packed up his 1939 Ford and traveled across 17 countries in order to circle the world in 80 days, airlifting the car across the oceans, setting another record as the oldest driver to drive in the longest road rally ever, and the first to circle the globe. What a Classic.