

## We need constant supervision

**A** funny thing occurs when you put a couple of dedicated car people together at an automotive parts meet. It's like a feeding frenzy for everything car-related, from a horn bezel to a restored muscle car. At a venue like this, there is no such thing as safety in numbers: It's just the opposite. Each feeds off the other, coaxing and cajoling to get the others into swap meet trouble. I have several friends like this.

I know folks who go to a swap meet with only a couple of bucks in their pocket. There is a good reason for this, as sometime in the past they heard "ah, go ahead and buy it, you need it, don't be a cheapskate, if I had your money I'd tear mine up!" All good-natured chiding, encouraging your buddy to part with some or all of his money. It becomes a contest to see who can be convinced to spend the most, with the rest of the gang secretly laughing. And since we all know what's really going on, it's fun!

Think about it, when you go with several friends to an event where cars and parts are for sale, what happens? Somebody goes home with stuff they don't really need, as a result of persistent heckling from one of the group. I go to the Pomona swap meet several times each year with a few other gearheads, and inevitably throw another part into the "whatever" box when I get home. On one occasion, we talked a friend, who owns a Buick GS ragtop, into buying a set of restored 455 Buick heads, at the very beginning of the parts rows, of course. Then we talked him into buying a hand truck to wheel them around and out to the parking lot. Now that's salesmanship! The rest of us also took advantage of the truck to schlep some of our junk as well. Misery loves company!

We have fun with one of the retired guys who has a fairly large piece of property, at least large by California standards. He has several eclectic multi-door cars stashed there; an example being

his '48 Plymouth four-door. It needs restoration (they all do) and it sits with several other not-so-very-exciting cars, but he likes them. Now we all know the kind of cars he would park with this snoozer entourage, so we constantly find stuff for him to go and look at. We figure that because he doesn't have a job, isn't working on any particular car, and has the space and money, we may as well keep him on his toes. His wife bribes us with chocolate chip cookies to get him out of the house. Plus, you never know what else he might find for us while checking on his next favorite four-door. There's always the chance!

Then there is this other guy who is the world's biggest sucker for automobilia. He has a couple of nice muscle cars, a couple of tons of money and hundreds of old signs, oil cans, miscellaneous garage stuff, and anything related to any year, make or model American car. Now this guy is a real treat to take to the swap meet. He has a pro-street Red Flyer wagon with a top-fuel wing on the back. The wagon probably cost more than my first car! Anyway, he usually comes with a pocket full of cash and buys anything old or rusty that strikes his fancy. His extra large, non-economy size garage isn't so much for the cars as all this collectible stuff. There isn't an inch of wall not covered with neon, porcelain, brass, chrome, tin or various chunks of sheetmetal or parts. It's ludicrous, but plenty of fun!

Another one of our friends is an NOS (new old stock for the uninitiated) junkie. He's the guy you see spending an hour searching through a crate full of old original parts boxes. We usually set a time and place to meet with him when we're all leaving the event. We can walk five miles and he'll make it three rows, scratching and pillaging his way through NOS stuff. He's amply proud to give you the tour through the multitude of well-organized shelves in the garage, instantly able to identify each part as to year, make and model. His favorite comment is "it's all going to be worth a lot of money someday!" Probably will, provided his garage doesn't implode from the weight of it all.

Automotive measuring tools are the favorite of another member of the gang. He roots around all the old tool dealers' spaces looking for all sorts of calipers, feeler gauges, torque wrenches, old diagnostic and tune-up equipment, etc. At the last swap meet, he found a Fifties-vintage Sun distributor curving machine that looked like it had been run over by a train. We had to carry that baby out to the parking lot because our hand truck guy didn't show up. That was about a mile-plus of nothing but fun!

Another character that occasionally shows up is a guy I have mentioned in a previous column. We call him Mr. Big-Block! He's one of the only enthusiasts I know who isn't interested in parts. He's only interested in... you guessed it, big-blocks. He wanders through the huge cars-for-sale area only looking for... you guessed it! He has a small collection of (no, I won't do it to you again) cars with large-cubic-inch engines. I totally confused him with my HMM#29, February 2006 "Cruisin' around the block" column. (Sorry, Ford guys.) He thought he had the big-block identification situation under control until he read that. Now he has to ask the owner if it's a small big-block or a big big-block! That's really fun!

Obviously, the whole idea behind these expeditions is to have as much fun as possible. That's what the car hobby is all about. It's not what or how much you own, it's simply the fact that owning whatever you like is fun. Fortunately, or unfortunately, swap meets provide us with access to lots of stuff we like. Many of us have spent a lifetime toiling away to reach this time in life where everything we do should somehow be related to fun. Thinking back, even carrying that train wreck distributor machine was... kinda fun! 🍀

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