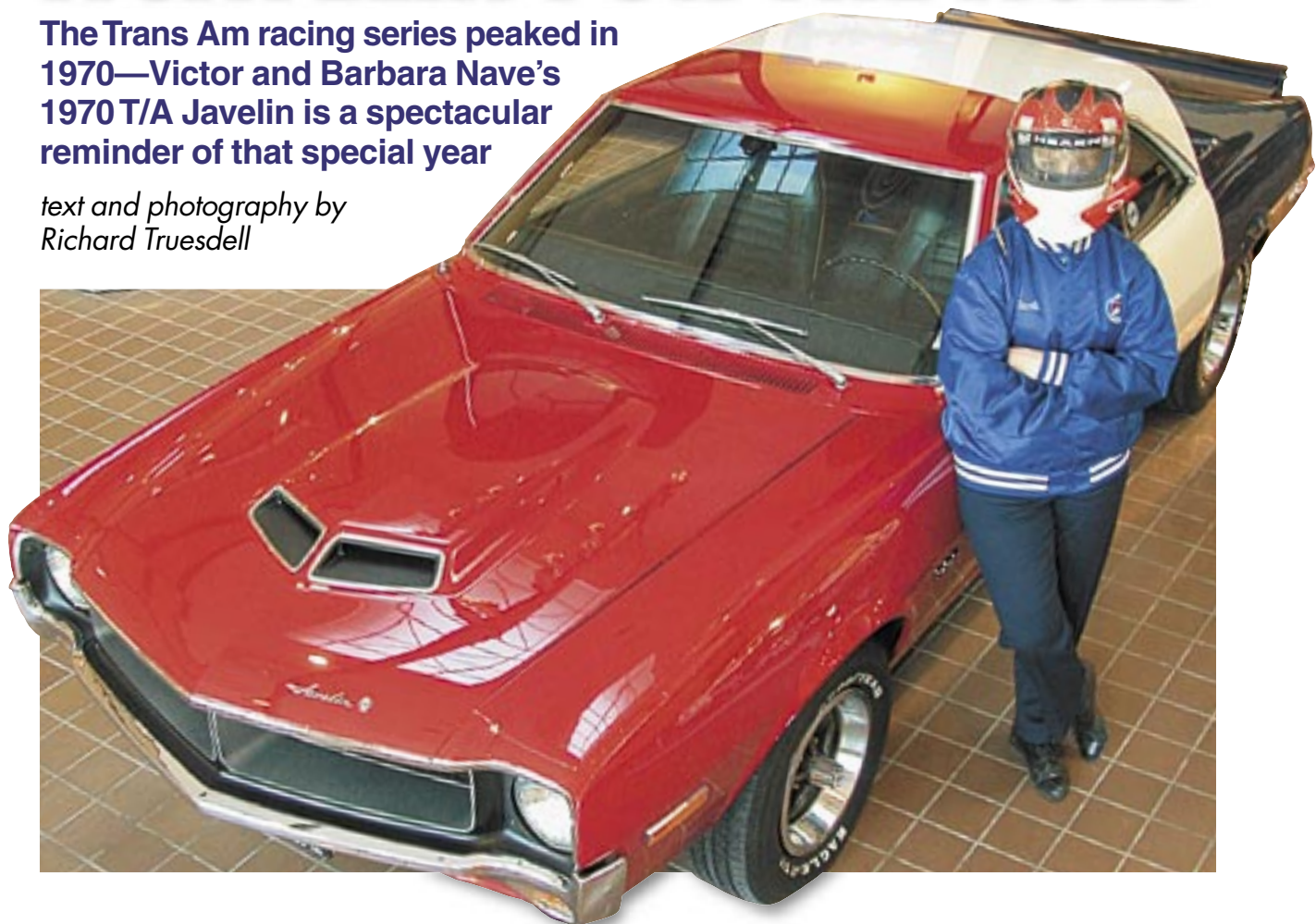


A JAVELIN FOR THE AGES

The Trans Am racing series peaked in 1970—Victor and Barbara Nave's 1970 T/A Javelin is a spectacular reminder of that special year

*text and photography by
Richard Truesdell*



Victor and Barbara Nave of Wolcott, Connecticut, have been married for more than 37 years. In a sign of things to come, they drove home as newlyweds in their 1966 Rambler Classic convertible (red, 287, three-speed automatic). Since that time they have owned an impressive roll call of AMC iron that includes just about every noteworthy musclecar the company produced in the late 1960s and early 1970s (see sidebar).

Indy Pace Cars

Before NASCAR became the pre-eminent racing series in America, the nation's motorsports scene revolved around the Indianapolis 500. The speed, the crowds—the sheer spectacle of the event was unmatched.

And while the open-wheel cars circling the track bore little kinship with anything rolling out of Detroit, the aura surrounding Indy led manufacturers to

reach for as much of the spotlight as possible. Providing the official pace car was a sure way onto the stage.

Supplying the Indy 500 pace car was no small undertaking for a manufacturer. Typically, the manufacturer and its dealer network had to provide dozens of festival cars for use by track officials and VIPs, not to mention the actual pace cars that would lead the racers around the track. After the race, these festival cars were

usually dispersed through the regional dealer network.

The roll call of Indy pace cars from 1964-1974 is straight from the musclecar hall of fame: The Mustang in 1964; the Plymouth Sport Fury in 1965; the Mercury Comet GT in 1966; the Chevy Camaro SS in 1967 and 1969; the Ford Torino GT in 1968; the Oldsmobile 442 in 1970 and the Hurst/Olds in 1972 and 1974.



Therefore, it's not surprising they found a way to acquire this stunning 1970 Javelin T/A, a special order, 1 of 100 car, that's equipped with the same 325-horsepower 390 cubic inch Ram Air V-8 found in the infamous 1969 Rambler SC/Rambler. To say that they have the recessive AMC gene is a gross understatement.

The history of this particular car (SN AOM797X118192) can be traced back three owners. It was originally delivered to Jack Doyle Motors in Germantown, Wisconsin. In 1988, in the hands of its previous owner, it underwent a

complete restoration and the car, as pictured here, is as it looked in 1988. In spite of the 15,000 miles that have been added to the clock since then, the car remains in virtually flawless, showroom condition, inside and out. *Musclecar Enthusiast* had the pleasure of meeting the Vic and Barbara (this is actually Barb's car, Vic currently has a pair of AMXs) at the Saratoga Automobile Museum in Saratoga Springs, New York (www.saratogaautomuseum.com) where the car was on display with an impressive collection of musclecars. (A

tip o' the hat to Pete Harrison for leading us to the Naves' Javelin—Ed.)

With the help of the staff of the Saratoga Automobile Museum, especially Collections Manager Holly Hulfish, *Musclecar Enthusiast* was invited to the museum where the volunteers and staff moved several cars on exhibit so that we could photograph the Javelin Trans-Am.

(We found the expressions of some of the visitors to the Saratoga Automobile Museum that day to be, shall we say,

interesting. Here was an

It was during the musclecar era, too, that Detroit figured out that they could market their own Indy 500 pace car replicas straight from the factory. Chevrolet was the first to really exploit this opportunity, in 1969, by giving Indy Pace Car trim a factory option code, RPO Z11. The division sold 3,675 Camaros so equipped that year. Since that time, most manufacturers have offered a limited production replica as a factory option.





impressive collection of musclecars that included a Plymouth Superbird, a Buick GSX and a Shelby GT-500, and the R/W/B Javelin Trans-Am attracted more attention. It's the same experience we saw when the 1969 SC/Rambler participated in our Muscle Car Tour of Los Angeles [see *Musclecar Enthusiast* March 2004]. Could it be that more than 15 years after AMC left the scene, that its cars are finally getting the respect they are due?]

AMERICAN TO THE CORE

Just how many AMCs have Victor and Barbara Nave owned? The list would be enough to fill a museum: a 1968 Javelin (dark green, 343, four-speed); a 1969 AMX (blue, 390, four-speed); a 1968 AMX (brown, 290, four-speed—both AMXs owned at the same time); a 1969 Javelin (blue, 343, four-speed); 1973 Javelin/AMX (orange, 360, three-speed automatic); 1969 AMX (dark green, 390, three-speed automatic); 1981 Eagle Wagon (blue, 258, three-speed automatic); 1983 Eagle SX-4 (red, 258, three-speed automatic); 1984 Eagle station wagon (black, 258, three-speed automatic); 1969 AMX (BBG, 390, three-speed automatic); 1969 AMX 500 Special (BBG, 390, three-speed automatic); 1988 Eagle (white, 258, three-speed automatic); 1969 Rambler American four-door (yellow, 290, three-speed automatic); 1969 AMX (BBB 390, three-speed automatic; and finally their 1974 Javelin/AMX (orange, 401, three-speed automatic).

Paper Trail

The 1970 Javelin Trans-Am you see here is equipped with the same 390 cubic inch Ram Air V-8 found on the 1969 SC/Rambler, combined with a four-speed manual transmission with factory-supplied Hurst shifter. The buildsheet and window sticker confirm these details. This is the real deal, a true numbers-matching AMC musclecar.

The buildsheet also indicates that this car, which carried a sticker price of

The Coming of Cobra Jet

In absolute performance terms, the FE-series 427 big-block was Ford's most capable V-8 throughout most of the 1960s. But the 1968-1/2 428 Cobra Jet, teamed with the Mustang, was arguably the superior overall package.

Like so many musclecars, the 428CJ also had a racing background. Ford had widened the Mustang for 1967 enough to accommodate the bulky FE-

series 390ci V-8 (Carroll Shelby soon followed by inserting the 428 police Interceptor V-8 underhood).

But the 390 Mustang performed a few steps behind its competition, particularly the SS396 Camaro and Firebird 400. And Shelby's GT-500s were expensive and built in small numbers. It all added to Ford's reputation for being a company that could win on the track, but not perform

on the street.

Prodded by the success of dealer Tasca Ford in Providence, Rhode Island, in swapping the 428 into the Mustang, Ford came out with a mid-year 428 "Cobra Jet." The 428 CJ was basically a combination of the lower-cost 428 short-block and race-influenced 427 heads, with a single Holley four-barrel feeding the mix.

Ford ran out a special mid-year run

\$3,995 (destination charges added an additional \$71) back in the first Nixon Administration, is also equipped with the special 00/00 code R/W/B "hash" paint trim, functional AMX-style Ram Air blister hood, bucket seats, instrument panel-mounted tach, Twin-Grip differential, power steering, Magnum 500 14-inch wheels, Goodyear Polyglas F70x14 SRWL tires, an AM pushbutton radio, 3.91:1 rear axle ratio, front and rear spoilers and a space-saver spare.

Initially the SCCA required 100 examples of a particular car to be built in order to be homologated for the Trans-Am race series, thus the Javelin Trans-Am was born. Its paint scheme mimicked the style used on the actual Trans-Am racers from 1968 and 1969 driven by the likes of Peter Revson, George Follmer and Janet Guthrie. (The 1968 and 1969 cars were built by Kaplan Engineering, headed up by ex-racer Ronnie Kaplan.)

Unfortunately they changed the rules in January 1970, requiring 2,500, not 100 examples of a specific model to be built in order to qualify for series participation. There was no way that AMC could sell 2,500 such outlandishly painted vehicles, so a second special edition Javelin for 1970 was introduced, the Mark Donohue version, which served to introduce the driver who would now lead AMC's efforts in the Trans-Am series in a Roger Penske-built Javelin. It was little more than a spoiler designed by the driver who had switched from his championship-winning Chevy Camaro and that could be ordered with any Javelin color combination and trim level. In addition, it was available as a dealer-installed option so there is no

of 50 428 CJ Mustangs built specifically for Super Stock racing. The weight was stripped to the bone, and the battery moved to the trunk. The cars debuted at the 1968 Winternationals, where Al Joniec promptly won the Super Stock title.

The Cobra Jet moniker may have been nonsensical, but the engine itself made perfect sense. At last, Ford had the respected street engine that could match its exploits on the track.

SELLING THE JAVELIN

How do you sell a red, white and blue Javelin to the general public? In this double page spread ad (the work of AMC's hotshot ad agency, Wells, Rich, and Greene) that AMC ran in several publications in late 1969, the company embraced its participation in the white-hot SCCA Trans-Am racing series in a corporate bear hug.

It should be noted that the ad wasn't necessarily a success, as doubtless few potential buyers want to be compared to the dude on the right. In addition, the R/W/B "hash" paint job had the undeniable ability to attract members of the law enforcement community, who would conveniently point their radar guns in the direction of anything with such an outlandish paint job.

Like the Dodge Daytonas and Plymouth Superbirds that had their wings clipped in an effort to move the metal, many R/W/B Javelins Trans-Ams were repainted and thus many were simply allowed to fade into history. Later owners had no idea of either their rarity or

way to determine if a Donohue Javelin was built in Kenosha since AMC made no distinction in the VIN—the only way is with a copy of the original window sticker.

Where just a few years ago, truly rare AMC musclecars could be bought for a song, such is not the case today. Their prices are rocketing into the stratosphere, pulled right along side other numbers-matching musclecars. Since so few AMC

potential for ultimate redemption as musclecar values reached heights unimagined just a few years ago.

There is no current registry for Javelin Trans-Ams and AMC experts candidly admit that it's likely that less than 25 of the original 100 cars still survive. The car you see pictured here is most certainly, one of the best of those that remain.

VIN Decode (A0M797X118192)

A = American Motors
 0 = 1970
 M = Manual shift (4-speed)
 7 = Javelin
 9 = 2-door hardtop
 7 = SST
 X = 390 4 bbl
 118192 = Sequential build number (Kenosha)

musclecars were built in the era's golden age they have attracted a small, yet cult-like band of devotees. With prices of legitimate yet more plentiful R/W/B AMC musclecars (SC/Ramblers and Machines) now blasting through the \$30,000 mark on a regular basis, it's really hard to put a price tag on the Naves' '70 Javelin. Needless to say, it will take a bucketful of cash to extract it from their garage. ■

