



Bob's Plymouth was just an old cut-up 383-powered racecar when he bought it back in '89. It's seen some improvements since then. Spear hood ornament is said to be unique and has no part no. It might have been one of several that Plymouth was considering at the time. Selling price when new was \$2,982. There were 63 produced.

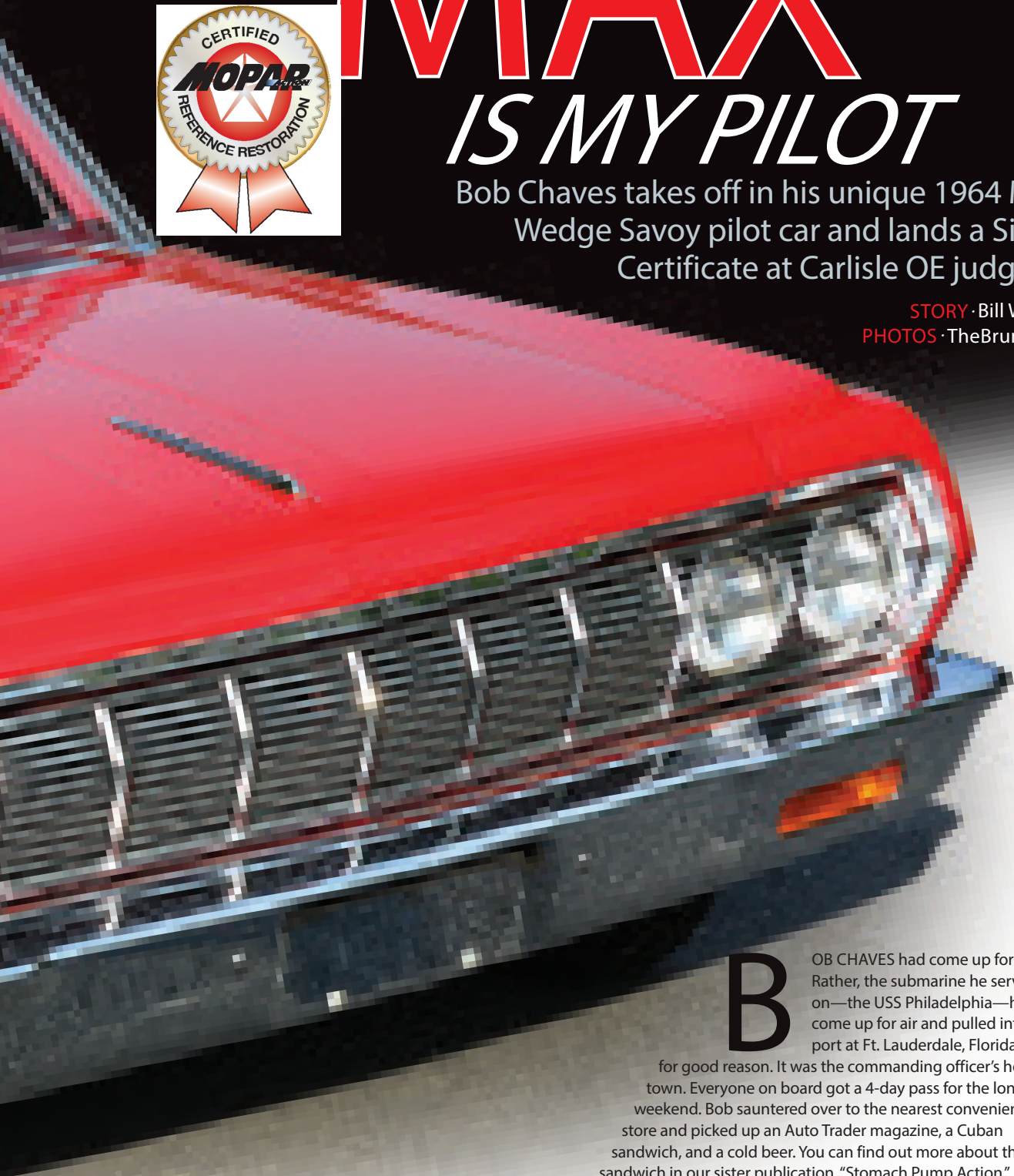


MAX

IS MY PILOT

Bob Chaves takes off in his unique 1964 Max Wedge Savoy pilot car and lands a Silver Certificate at Carlisle OE judging.

STORY · Bill Woods
PHOTOS · TheBruntBros



BOB CHAVES had come up for air. Rather, the submarine he served on—the USS Philadelphia—had come up for air and pulled into port at Ft. Lauderdale, Florida. And for good reason. It was the commanding officer's home town. Everyone on board got a 4-day pass for the long weekend. Bob sauntered over to the nearest convenience store and picked up an Auto Trader magazine, a Cuban sandwich, and a cold beer. You can find out more about the sandwich in our sister publication, "Stomach Pump Action." Since Ft. Lauderdale wasn't his hometown, Bob didn't have much to do as he wasn't about to hang out with the CO and his family. But like any car guy, he was curious as to what iron was around. Bob's favorite car always had been a '64 Max Wedge



Bob bought a rust-free Arizona donor car to replace all the race-prepped cut sheetmetal. Mancini laid on the flawless paint. He still needs to find NOS tires.



This clear windshield decal was supposed to be removed by the dealer. It wasn't, and was still on the glass when Bob bought the car. The original was repop'd exactly for Mancini when he replaced the windshield.

4-speed red on red Plymouth. Flipping through the pages, Bob came upon an ad for (guess what?) a '54 Buick Century (see, you guessed wrong). But right underneath that was an ad for a '64 Max Wedge 4-speed red Savoy. The car was located in Nashville, Tenn. Bob walked over to a pay phone, dropped in a few quarters and dialed up the seller. In less time than it takes to tell (actually it took more time than it takes to tell, but we need to meet our quota of worn-out clichés) Bob was on a plane to Nashville. The seller picked him up at the airport and they drove over to see the car.

Bob copied down all the car's numbers and dialed up gumburs nuru Galen Govier

(those were the days when he actually answered the phone). Galen confirmed that the Plymouth was indeed a factory Maxie, but it should be an automatic not a 4-speed. That was good enough for Bob. He gave the seller a \$400 deposit (all the money he had, which meant no more Cuban sandwiches), and told him he'd be back for the car.

Three months later, the sub sailed into home port in New London, Conn. Bob arranged to borrow his brother's truck and trailer and he hauled the Plymouth home to Rhode Island. Researching the car further, Bob sent all the numbers (VIN, fender tag, radiator core support tag, and rear package tray) to Max Wedge expert, Darrell Davis. According to Davis, Bob's Savoy was a Max Wedge pilot car that was built three weeks before regular Max Wedge production. As such, it has several unique features. The first run of '64 Stage III Max Wedges were high compression (12.5:1) aluminum nose (front bumper, fender, hood and scoop) cars. Plymouth's initial run was about 30 with Dodge knocking out about 25. After the initial run, you could order aluminum or steel. Bob's pre-production Plymouth was a low-compression, all-steel car.

The hood ornament, or spear, on the nose is unique. Bob, who is now heavily into Max Wedge cars, says he's never seen another like it. The part has no casting or any other number. Plymouth might have been evaluating several ornaments before they decided on a final design.

When Bob bought the car there were several pieces of the original trunk mat still in the car. The mat differed from the production trunk mat as it was not cut to fit the three brackets used to secure the positive battery dual cables across the rear axle hump and the one bracket to secure the positive battery dual cables just in front of the trunk mounted battery. However, the original trunk mat was



Rear is the #742 case with Sure-Grip 3.91s. Exhaust has capped cutouts up front for race duty.





Snap! Spackle! & Pop! Mancini repop'd the correct red/black spackle effect on a black rubber taxi floor mat using the deteriorated original as a reference. Legendary supplied the seat covers and door panels. The Plymouth is radio/heater delete. The chrome button just partially visible above the right steering wheel spoke is original. Repops are not exact. An NOS button can go for as much as a grand.

cut out (probably with a hand blade) to accommodate the special six-hole black rubber grommet used with the trunk-mounted battery, the rubber battery tray drain hole and the battery J-bolts hold-down brackets welded to the floor. Mike Mancini repro'd a mat using what was in the Plymouth as a pattern. The car did

not come with a spare, jack assembly or trunk jack instruction decal stuck to the underside of the decklid. There was no evidence that a spare was ever included, so Bob saved a couple of bucks by not having to buy one.

As a side note, all 1964 Max Wedge cars (both all steel and aluminum light-

weight cars) were equipped with the same maximum performance rear springs. The right spring was part number 2495060 (eight leaves) and the left spring was part number 2495061 (six leaves). These special springs had a front segment one-inch shorter (20-inches) than the stock springs by relocating the spring center bolt one-inch forward on the leaf springs. This required using a driveshaft that was also one-inch shorter than stock.

The Plymouth that Bob hauled back from Tennessee was far from how it looks



Engine compartment is Reference for the most part. Our tech ed points out incorrect shock washers, lack of paint on exhaust manifolds and wire separators. Wiring harness was clipped to the fender aprons for easy engine removal.

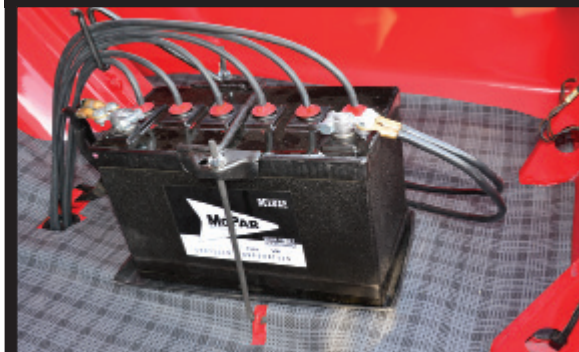
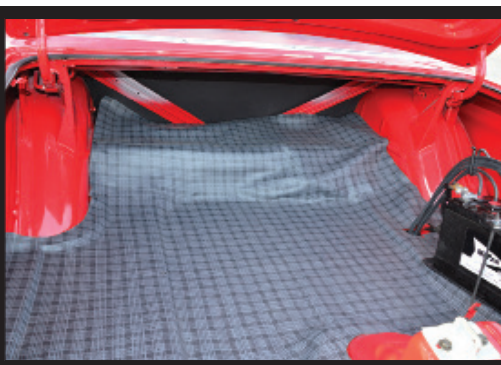
here. The owner had bought it as a racecar with no interest in any possible historical significance. He had no idea it was a pilot car. Under the hood was a 383 that was raced with the 4-speed. The seller did not know what had happened to the original 426 Max Wedge. Typical of a hard-use racecar, the fender aprons had been cut, the car was tubbed, the quarters radiused and a crude rollbar had been installed. The Plymouth had been flat-towed, so there were nasty dents and dings in the frame rails. The headliner had gone AWOL along with the rear bumper and stainless trim.

On the plus side, the correct A727B along with the cables, torque converter, flex plate, trans rear cross member, correct rubber insulator, speedo cable, correct oil filler tube and dipstick, propshaft, a can full of nuts and bolts, and more, were stashed next to the car. The clock showed only 1,117 miles, but the speedo cable was never hooked up when the 4-speed went in.

The car needed a lot—maybe more that Bob was willing to deal with at the time, so he parked it in his garage and didn't bother with it again until 2013. That's when he figured he'd just drive it with the 4-speed and have some fun. A "restoration" wasn't even on the table. Bob brought the car over to Mike Mancini at Mike Mancini's American Muscle Car Restoration (www.amcr1.com) for some "fixing up" to make a decent driver. Mike explained that because of the Savoy's historical significance as a pilot car it deserved to be restored—to a high level, which is what Mancini is known for. Over the years, Bob had searched and bought all the engine parts needed to put together the correct low compression, 1964 Super Stock 426-III engine.

Before Mike took over, Bob, his brother Ron and two friends—Frank Mazzola and Richie Souza, took on the body work. Bob bought a complete 1964 Plymouth Savoy body shell (no doors, glass, fenders, hood, decklid or running gear) from Desert Valley Auto Parts in Arizona and had it shipped to Rhode Island. From the donor car they used both rear quarters with the inner fender wells, most of the floor, the cowl and firewall, both front inner fender panels and other small sheet metal pieces. There was not much left of the donor car. Mike then went to work on the 3-year restoration. In the interim, Bob helped scout missing items—especially NOS engine and exhaust parts. He's become very knowledgeable and now owns three Maxies. Chrysler Historical, as well as Galen and Darrell Davis were good sources of information.

All '64 Max Wedge cars came with a rubber mat with no jute backing. Bob's mat was pretty much destroyed, but there was



Production trunk mats had cutouts for the 3 brackets that held dual positive battery cables. The pilot's mat just covered those brackets. There was no evidence of a spare tire or jacking instructions label. There were hand-cut openings for vent tube grommet, positive battery cables bracket and J-hook brackets.

enough left to see what it should look like. Nobody repops those mats, so Bob got a black mat from a taxi, and Mancini reproduced the correct red/black spackle color

and pattern. Pretty neat. One thing Mike was not able to come up with is four NOS 7.50 x 14 Goodyear Super Cushion black sidewall tires. If you have a few sets taking

up valuable space for your bobble head doll collection, contact Mike at American Muscle Car Restorations.

Chrysler Historical's records showed the car had been sold by a dealer in Buffalo, NY. Bob is the third owner. No longer a "knock around" 4-speed toy, Bob took his Maxie to the Chrysler Nats at

Carlisle OE judging. The judges conferred with noted Max Wedge/Hemi expert Greg Lane, and the Plymouth ended up being awarded a Silver Certificate. According to Greg and the judges, Bob's car is now the standard for judging all '64 low compression steel Max Wedge Savoy's. 'Course none of this would have happened if Bob's submarine CO lived in San Francisco. Bob might have left his heart there, and the Max Wedge would have remained Nashville. Worst of all, he would have missed that Cuban sandwich (Buurrrp!)

Bob has compiled a comprehensive chart of Max Wedge engine specifications 1962 - 1964. We have reprinted it, with permission, on our website. 🍷