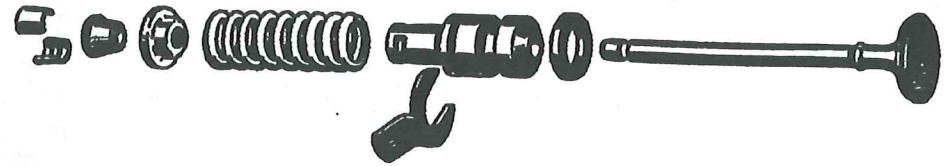




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INTRODUCTION TO A '42

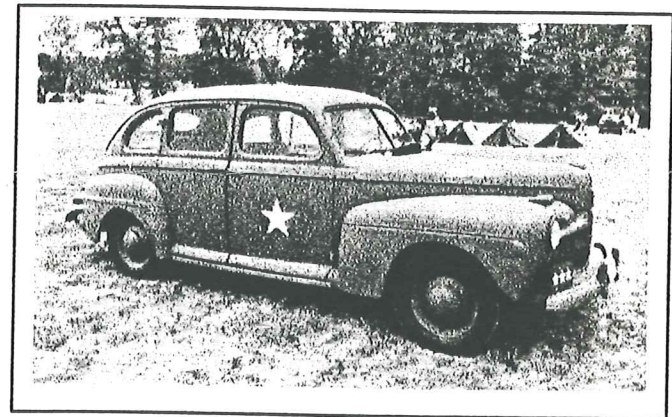
By: Philip Schreier

I'm one of those fortunate people whom God has graciously smiled upon and blessed with a career that is more play than work. As a former curator and now a manager at NRA's National Firearms Museum I have found a niche for my lifelong interest in firearms and military history. A benefit of working in a place that attracts national attention and has three million members is the wealth of opportunities that present themselves. Of all the great opportunities that I have had in the last ten years, one that truly changed my life came about when I was asked to curate Robert E. Petersen's collection of antique Colt revolvers.

Now you may be asking what someone's Colts have to do with a 1942 Ford US Army Staff Car. Well, Ford coupe street rodders know that Robert E. Petersen founded *Hot Rod Magazine* in the 1940's and *Motor Trend* later on in his highly successful publishing career. (Petersen Publishing sold last month for \$ 1.2 billion!) Next to his love for cars is his affection for rare and collectable Colt revolvers. In 1990 he loaned the NRA museum a collection worth \$ 8 million and sent Garry James, the Editor of *Guns & Ammo*, out east to supervise its installation. During the fabrication and installation of the exhibit, it quickly became evident that Garry and I were kindred spirits. We became fast friends and I now look upon him as the older brother I never had.

One of the areas in which Garry and I shared an interest was military...

where he lives, so he could "fix it up a little". Once he got started on it he soon realized that it needed to be re-restored down to its pins and bearings. The staff car meanwhile sat in Pennsylvania, while Garry and his wife awaited an anticipated job offer on the East Coast.



The Model T turned out to be a restoration nightmare. What had been advertised as an original 1918 was a mix & match of new and old junk as well as parts of unknown origin. I sympathized with Garry as I heard a daily synopsis of the trials and travails involved in the restoration of his truck for a solid eight months. Finally last September Garry called from LA with great news - the truck was done! In his next breath he asked if the staff car and the Model T were really owned by the same person. "They were", I informed him. He then asked, "Do you still have an extra Webley-Fosbery revolver in your collection?"

with Humphrey Bogart in *The Maltese Falcon* and then passed into obscurity. Finding one to add to my collection of Webleys took me eight years to accomplish. Within 3 months of finding the first Fosbery, I found another one that I couldn't live without and it was the second Fosbery that I traded to Garry for the car.

What I know about cars, modern or antique would not top off a thimble. Yet, with the blink of an eye and not much thought as to what I was getting into, I found that I suddenly owned a genuine article of military and vehicular history. I thanked Garry profusely for "letting" me trade him out of the car. He told me that he hadn't done me any favors. It would be awhile before I would fully understand what he meant.

Here is what I do know about what now inhabits and leaks in my garage:

Prior to the entry of the United States into World War II, Ford produced nearly 500,000 cars and trucks a year. In November of 1941 they introduced their 1942 line and produced nearly 40,000 before manufacture for civilian sales was halted in February of 1942. New Fordor Super Deluxes still on dealers lots in the late winter of '42 were "acquired" by the military for use during the war. This car was one of those civilian models returned to Ford for re-fitting as an Army Staff Car.

Military Staff Cars were meant to be official vehicles for Admirals and Generals serving in Headquarters areas, far removed from the sounds of battle. The alterations that were made included the addition of black out lights and switches, cats-eye style driving lights, a



side mounted searchlight and a fire extinguisher mounted on the passenger sidewall. The whole car, chrome and all was painted OD green, outside and inside.

This car has 39,000 miles on the odometer and suffers from a number of maladies. The wires are all frayed and need replacing. The gas tank had three-year-old gas in it and an unhealthy amount of rust. The rubber seals on the windows and doors had all shrunk and cracked allowing water to come into the car and destroy the headliner and upholstery. There is a small amount of rust and some holes around the doorframe and that is only the rust that I can see. I can see that the clutch is getting ready to go as the car "chatters" when I start off in first. I also noticed that the military star painted on both sides of the car is on the wrong doors and needs to be replaced and/or repainted.

I managed to replace the gas tank myself but I sure could use some help, guidance and direction as to where to turn next to get some of these other items accomplished. It would also be a great help just to have someone to talk to about small stuff like: Is modern brake fluid ok to use on the car? What driving and maintenance tips should I know