

## The Final Word

Well, it had to happen. I finally did not have enough actual Club info to fill up the usual 12-page issue. So, for this issue, I had to reduce the number of pages, and rely on an interesting outside article to fill the void (thanks again, Alex!!). Like I've said before, lots of other Club newsletters are only a couple of pages long; so I don't feel too bad about it!! Hopefully the next issue will be up to my old standards, providing one of you members writes an article on the Lone Star Regional Show (with photos!!).

Since I don't get out to many Club functions any more due to caring for my sick spouse, it kind of puts a crimp in my usual glib first-person newsletter writings. Kind of hard to write about something when you have no direct involvement (but I plan to soon hire some home-care help so I can get out a bit more). So, here is another one of my installments in the begging category:

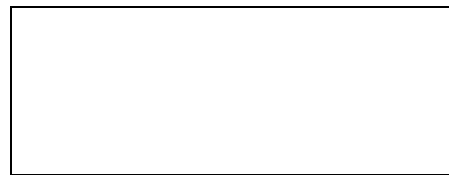
How about some of you members send me something to use here?? Car story, repair story, road-trip-to-a-car-show story, wife-got-all-the-cars-in-the-divorce story, whatever!! If you don't think you write well, not to worry; I'll fix it up and not tell anyone (that's what an editor does!!). How 'bout it??

Until next time; Ramble On, dudes, George G.

American Motors



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2005

# The Texas Takeover



The Official Newsletter of the American Motors Club of Houston

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## Meet Your New AMCoH Office

You figure out who's who (it's pretty obvious to your Editor, who by the way is NOT in the picture!).

Sorry; couldn't resist (didn't have any convenient photos of them!!).

Sincere apologies to *Mad Magazine*.



<b>Also In This Issue:</b>	<b>From the Officers - Latest Club News You Can Use</b>	<b>Page 3</b>
	<b>Mechanic Mistakes, and the Risks Involved</b>	<b>Page 4</b>
	<b>Member Tidbits</b>	<b>Page 6</b>

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The American Motors Club of Houston (AMCoH) is a nonprofit organization which exists expressly for the purpose of aiding and encouraging the use, enjoyment, preservation, and restoration of all American Motors vehicles. Any suggestions in this newsletter regarding modification of your vehicle are subject to common sense compromises among safety, longevity, reliability, legality, and resale value. AMCoH will not assume or accept any liability resulting from information contained herein. Any modifications are the sole responsibility of the person(s) performing those modifications.

## Club Information

The *American Motors Club of Houston* was founded in the early 1980's with the goal of advancing the image and preservation of AMC vehicles in Southeast Texas and the surrounding area. Our Club is one of a triad of AMC organizations in Texas - the *American Motors Club of Houston*, *Alamo AMC* based in San Antonio, and *North Texas AMC* headquartered in Dallas form a strong contingent of Texas AMC fellowship, experience, and support.

We are a chapter of the American Motors Owners Association (AMO). Although we strongly suggest joining this fine organization, AMO membership is NOT required to be a member of the *American Motors Club of Houston*.

Planned activities include a large display in the annual indoor Thanksgiving Houston AutoRama Show, the annual AMO Lone Star Regional Show (location rotates between Houston, San Antonio, & Dallas), family picnics, cruises, parties, races, etc. The 2001 AMO National Meet was also held in Houston!!

We have regular monthly meetings on the second Tuesday of every month (7:30 PM) at the Hickory Hollow restaurant, located at 101 Heights Blvd. (just a few blocks south of I-10). If you are not already a member, feel free to join us for a "get acquainted" session before you sign up.

Ownership of an AMC vehicle or residence in our local area is NOT required to join our group. Interest and enthusiasm are more than enough. We'll gladly help you find your own treasured AMC if you don't already have one!!

Dues are \$20 per year - we are a non-profit organization, and 100% of your dues go to supporting club activities. The club officers do not receive a salary for their efforts. Dues and an enrollment form may be submitted at our monthly meetings, or mailed to our Treasurer.

AMCoH exists specifically to support you in your AMC endeavors; and we look forward to adding your own AMC experience to our knowledge base. If you need any additional information, feel free to contact any of our club officers.

Check us out on the Web at  
[www.AMCofHouston.com](http://www.AMCofHouston.com)

## The Club Store



The shirt at left is a short-sleeve button-front "work shirt" made from 65% Poly / 35% Cotton, so the garage grease and grime will wash out easily!! These have been selling like hotcakes at \$22 each (any size). It has the AMCoH logo embroidered on the front, and an AMC block emblem on the sleeve. The shirt at the right is a winter-weight long-sleeve button-front denim shirt. It also has the AMCoH logo embroidered on the front, and an AMC block emblem on the back below the collar. These are also only \$22 each (plus postage) for any size. Call or email any of the AMCoH officers to buy these cool shirts.



The Club still has **two styles of AMCoH hats** for sale; the old tried-and-true red, white, and blue "Lone Star" hat, and a new cheaper "economy" 2-color model that you won't mind sweating up!! All logos on both hats are **embroidered**; not just painted on. The new hats (right) are **\$10 each**. The original RWB hats (left) are **\$15 each** (plus postage).



Also for sale are our AMCoH Golf Shirts, in both plain white and fancy R/W/B collar/sleeve versions (fancy shown here). **\$35** for the fancy, and **\$22** for the plain. Both styles have the AMC logo on the sleeve, and the Club logo on the front. The fancy shirts are very high-quality items; and the cheaper ones are pretty nice, too!! **Show your colors!!!**



We still have some **Lone Star Regional T-shirts** left over from the show. **Only sizes left are S and L.** These are extra-good quality T's, and show the various show and club logos, a '64 American Convertible!! Sponsors are listed on the back. How often do you see a show shirt with a Rambler on it??!! **Closeout-priced at \$5 each. Get 'em soon, while you still can.**

As always; 100% of the proceeds from the sale of these items goes directly into the Club Treasury to support your Club activities.



## Member Tidbits:

**Dan Startin's** '69 Big Bad Blue AMX is currently undergoing a detailed restoration in Baltimore!! If all goes to plan, it should be completed sometime in November. Hope Dan is planing to have it in the AMCoH AutoRama display this year!!

**Gary Parente**, after a couple of years hiatus from AMC ownership, has now acquired his latest project; an interesting heavily-optioned '67 Rebel 343 4-speed car. Needs quite a bit of work, but its all there and not so bad it can't be saved. Although its been sitting for a number of years, Gary just recently got it running with minimal work, but plans to overhaul the engine anyway (it kinda smokes). Next stop, the body and paint shop. If any of you have any Rebel interior parts laying around you no longer need, give Gary a call; he may need them. He also plans to have it finished in time for the AutoRama!!!

### Richard Giddens

put a fresh look on his race car (you'll remember the in-process photos in the last newsletter). "Rare Breed"!! What a great name!! Suspect he'll have it doing test runs at the track very soon.



**George Graham**, finally sick of high gas prices, found a use for his wife's horse (hey, its Texas; the law requires that you own at least one horse!!), and what was left of an old Simca he found at the local Pick & Pull. George says: "Since I have to feed the &%\$#! horse anyway, I may as well get some use out of him". At least its left-hand-drive!!



## From the Officers:

**Officer Elections** -- Well, it wasn't much of an election from a competition standpoint, but the votes are in. Please welcome new officers **Jerry Melton** (Prez), **Tom Taylor** (VP), **Ted Davis** (Secretary), and **Cliff Osborne** (Activities). Returning for another term are incumbents **Charles Fisbeck** (Treasurer), and **George Graham** (Newsletter Editor). The only office with multiple entrants was the Treasurer position. Seems everyone wants to get their hands on the money!!! Kinda scary, really. So, all you members out there, please give these folks your heartfelt thanks and appreciation next time you see any of them. Running a Club can sometimes be a thankless undertaking, so give them an occasional pat on the back to show you care!! They have some good ideas to try to re-energize the member base -- such as "localized" events in different parts of town for those who don't want to drive way across town for an event. More details forthcoming as they become available.

**New Members** -- Please give a big AMCoH welcome to some new members; **Carl Benton, Jurl Davis, Allan & Tim Downs, and Billy Walters**. Welcome aboard, guys. Let us know if there is anything we can help you with on your cars, or even help you find a car!!

**Annual Dues** -- The officers (both past and present) want to extend a **HUGE** AMCoH thank you to all of you who re-upped your membership in the Club. If it wasn't for you all, there would be no point in having a Club at all. There are still a few holdouts who have not renewed their dues yet, so beware; the AMCoH Goon Squad will be personally abusing those folks in the near future. If you're in that category, be scared, be very scared..... For those of you who are not on the "April Dues Plan", not to worry; you will be notified when your dues are due. We're not letting you off the hook that easy!!!

## Interesting Car Club Factoid

In a recent Hagerty Insurance newsletter, well-known auto-enthusiast author John Gunnell wrote:

*"Attracting new members is the lifeblood of a club. No matter how good your club is, you'll be doing well if 60-70 percent of the members renew year to year. Any higher rate of retention is way above average. This means that if you have 100 members today and want a larger membership next year, you have a goal of attracting at least 41 new members just to count on adding one person to the membership list. That's a shocker, isn't it?"*

That said, it's good to know that our Club as been steadily expanding since we hosted the 2001 AMO International Convention. Shows just what energized officers and members can do when they have a fat treasury to work with!!! What keeps the treasury fat (besides hosting a national event)?? Continued support by all of you fanatical AMCoH members, that's what!! We currently have 55 paid members, plus a few more we know will re-up their dues once we bug them. That's the highest in AMCoH history!!



## Mechanic Mistakes and the Risks Involved by Alex Leventhal

Reprinted with author's permission -- thanks, Alex!!

Everyone makes mistakes... to err is human. But when service technicians (when did they stop being mechanics?) working on collector cars make mistakes, it can quickly get expensive and risky. Over the years I've been aware of many instances where major mistakes were made by shops when working on customers' cars – very expensive mistakes.

In humorous example, my Ferrari mechanic, (and Ferrari god) Bill Pollard of Sport Auto in Connecticut told me of a fellow mechanic who hired an assistant and asked him to perform a "leak down" test on a Ferrari Daytona. (The test involves rotating the engine to TDC for each cylinder.) The assistant decided it was too hard to rotate the engine by hand, so he put a screwdriver down the spark plug hole and then bumped the starter to turn the motor. The result? The mechanic was out \$20,000 – the amount it cost to rebuild the customer's motor after the screwdriver broke off in the cylinder bore.

In another instance, one Ferrari enthusiast found a great deal on a Ferrari 512 TR (the last of the "one word" Testarossa series). It had low mileage, was red/tan and purchased for well south of \$100 grand. Now, we know Ferrari's rubber-toothed timing belts require service based on time, as well as mileage, so before taking delivery this new owner had an independent Ferrari shop perform a major service on the car. Upon completion he had it shipped to his home.

Unfortunately, soon after driving off on a maiden voyage with his new "redhead," the motor began to sound like a handful of nuts and bolts thrown into a blender. Upon inspection, it became clear that both cams on one bank were not rotating, while the crank, pistons, and other cams were. (This can happen if the cam belts are over tightened or the pulleys aren't secured or from other mistakes during a major service.) The horrible noise was the motor's pistons self-machining its valves. The repair estimate from his local Ferrari dealer was more than \$30,000.

As this was the first drive after a major service in which the cam drive belts and cam journal bearings were replaced, it was clear that a mistake on the mechanic's part was to blame for the damage. Reluctant to ship his vehicle back out of state to the mechanic who damaged it, the owner had an authorized Ferrari dealer do the work, and he asked the independent mechanic, whose error destroyed the engine, to pay for it. When presented with a claim for the damages and resulting repairs by the owner's legal counsel, the mechanic, not having any insurance to cover such a claim, declared bankruptcy rather than pay for the repairs. The owner is unlikely to ever recover the cost of the repairs – or his legal fees.

These examples beg the question of what happens when a mechanic can't afford to pay for any damage done in the shop. There are risks to owners every time their cars go into the shop. These risks can be mitigated, however, and not just by not owning a car where a motor rebuild is a \$30,000 event.

Before you retain a mechanic for service work, verify that he or she has an "errors and omissions" policy in place, which will indemnify you should your vehicle be damaged due to the mechanic's negligence. If the mechanic has this type of an insurance policy, he won't be driven into bankruptcy if an error is made, even a high-dollar error, and the vehicle owner will not be left having to pay the repair costs out of pocket. If the mechanic does not have such a policy in force (and it is surprising how many don't), either seek another shop, or at least make sure that the shop in question is not likely to run from the debt that could be created if a truly catastrophic mistake were made. For example, it is unlikely that an authorized Ferrari dealer that has been in business for decades would close up shop to avoid paying for an engine rebuild, even on a 512 TR, but an independent shop might not be able to make good on a claim of that magnitude.

In order to protect themselves, the owners of high-end or high-dollar cars must evaluate the worst case damage that could be done to their classics as the result of a mechanic's mistake (generally, a near total loss) and ensure that the shops they deal with either have insurance policies that cover their errors and omissions (ideally), or at least a sufficiently capitalized and stable to "self insure" themselves against such damages and pay on such claims.

**Alex Leventhal** is an attorney and car collector living in New York City. His early practice experience included the representation of new-car dealers and dealer groups engaged in complex transactions, as well as other merger and acquisition business. Alex currently owns a Ferrari Berlinetta Boxer 365 GT4 and a Dino 308 GT4, along with an Aston Martin V-8 Vantage and other European collector cars. He's also director of the Aston Martin Club of North America.