ALKEN D-2

press packet

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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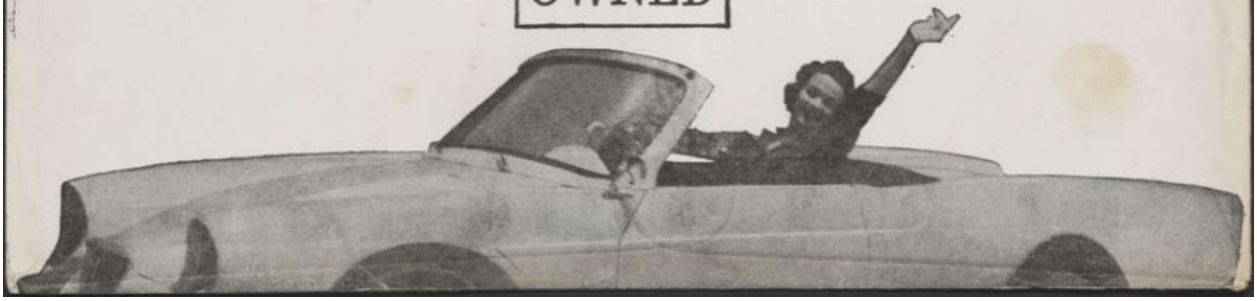

Welcome to the Story of the Alken

I have looked for one of these American sports cars to restore for over 30 years and completed one in 2016.

My specific Alken was one of the first 3 made. It was finished in the Alken shop in Venice, CA and it was used as their marketing car. The same car was shown to the public in the November 1958 issue of Road and Track. I have been able to find copies of original photos from the photo shoot from this article, handwritten test track notes, and photos from another Motor trend photo shoot.

This is the first fiberglass body designed specifically for the VW chassis. Allen and Kenneth White formed the name ALKEN from joining their first names. The spend over $100K USD to launch the car and sold completed bodies for $1295, quite expensive in 1958.

Please enjoy the story and documentation of a great American design that kicked off the entire VW kit car scene soon to follow. The Alken D2 from Venice, California. For "Immediate Release"

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ALKEN CORPORATION
2100 ZENO PLACE
VENICE, CALIFORNIA
EXbrook 6—6993

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ALKEN D-2 INTRODUCTION CULMINATES YEAR OF EVOLUTION AND TESTING

At Alken, as at any firm geared to production in small, exclusive quantities, the investment in a new product is great but the gamble on success greater. The Volkswagen sports car replacement body produced by the firm took a big slice of time to create, a sizeable chunk of capital to build and a staff of trained men capable of a variety of jobs to engineer for production.

The creation of the Alken D-2 is unlike a similar development by a major automotive company. It is more like the virtually forgotten art of custom car styling popular in the early days of the automobile when greats such as Detriech, Darrin and Murphy held sway.

The D-2 had its start on a hot, sultry July evening last year. In Venice, an oceanside suburb of Los Angeles, four men huddled a littered drawing table beneath a single, bare electric light. Daylight had long ago given way to darkness and the glowing light cast weird shadows in the room.

With Alken's project engineer, English-born John Macnamara, was Alken, president, Alan White, and industrial designer Bill Pierson.

"That's close to it," Macnamara told Pierson, as they checked drawings for the proposed car, "but the front fenders are not right."

Pierson began a new sketch as they talked, roughing in contours of a lower, longer, more angular car. His pencil quickly traced in the lines. The men talked excitedly: Pierson changed contours as they talked, erased and changed again. Finally, he stopped.

"That is it," Alan White said, "how long will it take to build? Can we have it by December?"

"That depends upon the headaches," Macnamara replied. With but five months to transform the artist’s ideas into a solid, marketable car, Macnamara got on the job quickly. He changed the sketches into engineering drawings, outlining cross section body contours at 40 stations from bumper to bumper. From the station drawings he built a quarter—scale, three dimensional clay model. From checks made on the model, White approved the styling.

Macnamara enlarged the contours of the 40 stations to full size and transferred the outlines to plywood. The cut—out plywood stations were mounted to 6 x 8 timbers in the proper relationship and the open space between the stations was filled with burlap supported by wires strung through the stations. Over the burlap, Macnamara and his crew poured plaster to the top of the stations, then sanded the hardened plaster smooth. The result: an accurate reproduction of the artist's sketch.

The styling was checked again, the full—scale mock—up.

In full size the contours looked different.

"It isn't right," Alan White told Macnamara, "Design is our most important asset and this one is wrong. The nose is too stubby and flat; the rear is heavy and squat. Scrap the design and we make a new one. There goes the December deadline."

Pierson, the designer, was called in again.

"The car should have a sculptured look," White explained to him, "a design that is modern and simple, yet distinctly American. We want no eviscerated Ferraris; no pouting Detroit dream cars."

Four days and half a hundred drawings later, Pierson came up with a new design. Macnamara again transferred the sketches to full size and built a plaster mock-up. The model was checked again. Design two was approved.

"Can we finish D-2 by February?" Alan White asked.

"We can try," Macnamara replied.

The plaster mock—up was completed late in December. The big jobs were ahead. The final body, from which the production molds were to be made, would not be the plaster mock-up. Body contours on the plaster mock—up could always be rough and imperfect. To prevent the troubles arising from use of the plaster mock-up, Macnamara ordered a preliminary female plastic mold and from it a plastic body upon which final corrections could be made and attaching panels such as the inner bulkheads, the doors, hood openings, dash and cockpit lines could be fitted and copied into the production molds.

The female mold was laid up two days, then two weeks

were spent smoothing and perfecting its surfaces. The inner surface of the female mold had to be as smooth as possible: It would be responsible for the smoothness of the production body. When the female was finished and the production body made, the first Alken body was checked, approved and mounted on a V-W chassis for final construction.

By mid-February, the body shell was completed, smooth and perfect with body lines as they were to be on the final bodies. Wheel wells had been cut out and molded, headlight cavities had been molded and installed. Slowly crews designed the bulkheads, fitted them and made molds. This took a month. The dash panel was designed in plaster, copied in plastic and fitted to the body for final molding with the body shell. The same repetitious procedure was followed for the other internal parts. A few parts, bumpers and cockpit liners, could be molded directly on the production body, but most had to be made separately, copied, then fitted to the body.

It was impossible, for example, to make the doors, on the the production mold. These had to be molded individually. To do the job, Macnamara made a plastic mold of the side sections of the body where the doors were to fit, made copies or these areas, and mounted the copies on wooden frames. Door openings were cut into these copies and door jambs, weather sills and hinge posts were molded on plaster onto the copies. Then the door shell was fitted to the unit and an inner shell molded. Each part was then copied and fitted into the production body before molding.

It was now late in April. The second deadline was gone,

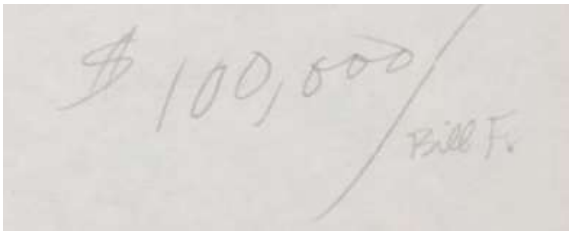
Macnamara refused to assign a new one. "When the D-2 is completed," he said, "It will be done -- not before."

Fina11y, late in June the body was finished. Bulkheads, liners, doors, light cavities and shell were smooth and perfect. Crews double—checked every inch and announced it was right. Macnamara made the first set of production molds from which copies could be produced.

The molds were made in sections so they might be quickly assembled for molding, then quickly removed when the body was ready for removal. Molds were made of: the lower front section, separate molds for the hoods, body sections and cockpit as well as inner bulkheads and doors. Each mold had to be numbered and flanged to fit together precisely.

Quickly, Alken crews built the first perfected body. This was mounted on a chassis and given four weeks of intensive, rigid testing. Every inch was checked for perfect fit, strength and durability. When, on June 20th, the body was approved, Alken was ready to announce the car to the public.

Behind that moment lay 12 months of building, $50,000 in labor and raw materials and infinite hope. Mcnamara's job was done. The future of the D-2 was in the hands of the public, owners and sports car buyers. Their response would decide the gamble. *Hand written on page "$100,000 Bill F."*



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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

ALKEN CORPORATION

The Alken Corporation was formed a year ago for the research and development of reinforced plastic products. Its first project was the development of the D-2 V-W sports car body. After completion of a year long research and development program, the D-2 has been readied for production, yet Alken wi11 not produce it. Routine production be handled by a Los Angeles plastics com— pany under contract with the Alken Corporation.

Instead of producing the D-2 body, the Alken Corporation plans to devote its time and energies to further development, in the field of replacement auto bodies as well as other industrial fields.

Plans are now underway to produce the D—2 body, under a licensing agreement in South America and Europe. Negotiations are underway with firms in Sweden and Brazil at this moment. Upon the conclusion of these talks an announcement will be made.

The Alken Corporation was formed by Alan and Kenneth White. The firm name is a contraction of the first names of the two brothers Alan White is president.

ALAN WHITE, D.D.S. -- Dr. White is a Los Angeles dental surgeon: lives in Pacific Palisades, is married and the father of

three children. He has long had an interest in sports cars and custom automobiles. After the close of World War II, Dr. White was among the first to import French automobiles into the U.S. From this interest in automobiles came the selection of the D-2 as the first project for the newly formed Alken Corp.

JOHN MACNAMARA Mr. -- Macnamara is chief engineer and general manager if the Alken Corporation. It has been his job to translate the D-2 designs into reality, see the D-2 through development stages, test it and plan for production. Mr. Macnamara, Irish by birth, studied engineering at England's Royal Navy Engineering College at Keyham, Devonport, England. He has served tours of duty with the British Navy and the British Army before coming to the United States. He is a U.S. citizen.

WILLIAM FRIEDAUER -- William L. Friedauer, a popular Southern California sports car driver and sales engineer, is sales manager of the Alken Corporation. Friedauer has held similar positions with other Southern California automotive firms, has been an ardent amateur sports car driver for nine years and is a member of the Southern California Sports Car Club. He is 38, married and lives in Glendale.

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TECHNICAL DATA: ALKEN D-2

BODY DESIGN:

The high fashion styling of the Alken D-2 is a blend of European and U.S. styling concepts, a union that is in keeping with the international flavor of the car (German Volkswagen chassis and engine engineering coupled with U. S. styled and produced body.)

The D-2 was designed by California Industrial designer, Bill Pierson. The body is modern, following the currently popular scu1ptured lines without copying previous U.S. or European automotive designs. The lines of the D-2 are low and long with a comfort and roominess inside previously unknown in plastic replacement sports car bodies.

BODY CONSTRUCTION:

Inside the body shell is a network of 16 bulkheads which make the Alken D--2 the strongest fiberglass body in the world. The bulkheads criss-cross fender and body sections to re—lieve body racking and twisting. In recent factory tests, the D-2 was found to be stronger than most metal bodied sedans. It

is expected that exclusive inner bulkhead system will increase the life of the Alken D—2 200 per cent, eliminating the common tendency toward cracking and chipping, making it possible for Alken owners to keep the body in top shape with less effort.

INSTALLATION:

The Alken D—2 has been engineered to fit the Volkswagen chassis like a glove. The under-body runners have been contoured to fit only the V-W chassis. The process for installation is this:

Disconnect the steering from the dash and the wiring from the chassis. Remove the metal V-W body from the standard V-W chassis by removing 36 chassis bolts. Remove the instruments.

Modify the front suspension, (see separate sheet for techni—cal details on this), change the fuel tank go that the f111er neck is centered and drop the body on the chassis. Paint the body before installation.

The chassis will fit without cutting. No welding or manipulation is needed. With the body on the chassis, replace the 36 chassis bolts. Install the wiring. Remove headlights and taillights from the metal body and fit them into the body.

Connect the wiring. Install the instruments and seats. That is all there is to it. In factory tests the procedure takes less than 20 hours.

PRICES AND SHIPPING:

The Alken D-2 Fiberglass body comprises body shell with integral instrument panel and instrument hood, door posts and sills, drip channels, fender rolls, headlight flanges and bumpers. The following parts are bonded to the shell: Front and rear wheel well panels (4), splash panels (8), gas tank, spare tire and battery tray, front cockpit liner, cockpit liners with access panels (2), engine compartment panel, storage compartment floor panel, and heater duct outlets (2). The body also includes windshield frame with securing bolts in place (designed to accept British Ford Consul or Zephyr 1952 thru 55 glass, rubber and chrome), 2 doors (inner door and outer skin — not assembled), and front and rear decklids.

Price, fob Venice, including Federal Excise Tax and crating $1,295.00

At buyer's request the body can be supplied with doors assembled and hung, and decklids hinged and mounted. (Hardware includes 4 Chevrolet dogleg hinges, 2 Ford rotary latches and striker plates, hinges, pins and locks.) for . . . .$ 100.00

Optional Accessories available:

Fiberglass buckets with specially designed polyurethane seat and squab cushions (not upholstered), seat support box and hinge, designed to mount direct to V-W seat rails using V-W adjustment rod (when ordering seat support box, specify year of chassis).

Price — $65.50 per pair.

Removable hardtop with wrap—around rear window estimated. $195.00

Plexiglass sidescreens — per pair — estimated . . $ 45.00

Doors with wind-up windows per pair as original equipment . . . . . $ 95.00

Lock-up storage compartment according to size . . $ 25.00 up

Cross seat for third passenger. . . . . $ 45.00

SUSPENSION:

The Alken body 300 pounds lighter than standard metal bodies. Because of this difference in weights it is necessary to lower the standard V-W suspension, front and rear, to allow the body to sit at proper height.

The rear suspension is lowered by turning the torsion bar at the wheel. Remove the torsion bar housing and cap screws. Remove enough of the bar to allow it to move on the spline. Move the bar to zero camber (this should be done with the body on the car and with proper weight say two passengers in the car) Replace the bars and re—assemble the torsion housing.

The front suspension is lowered by cutting the torsion tube and turning the central portion 21 degrees or 1/2 inch. The photographs enclosed show how this is accomplished … to remove the tube: the wheels, backing plates and spindles should be first removed as a unit, leaving only the trailing arms.

Remove the torsion tube from the ear as a unit. Remove the upper torsion bars from the tube. At points 1-1/2 inch on

each side of the central locking nut (which holds the bar) make two scribed lines; one to mark the distance around the bar, the other across the first line for reference. Cut the tube on the first line. Rotate the scribed line on the central portion of the tube - part having the locking nut in it 1/2 inch or 21 degrees. Reweld the tube and reassemble. Relocate the jacking point. The car will be lowered properly for the D-2 body.

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PICTURE INFORMATION - ALKEN D-2

(1) Front view of the body: There is room under the locked hood for a conventional V-W gas tank, battery, spare tire and luggage the body designed by Bill Pierson, Los Angeles industrial designer. Head lights are stock V-W units.

(2) Side view: The sculptured lines of the D-2 flow from the swept rear fins to the sculptured front fenders in an easy rhythmic pattern.

(3) Rear view: The body has been designed to make full use of stock V-W components, to reduce costs and retain V-W identity. In the rear, V-W tail lights mount, without change, to the body. The body—mounted bumpers, front and rear, have heavy duty laminate to assure full protection.

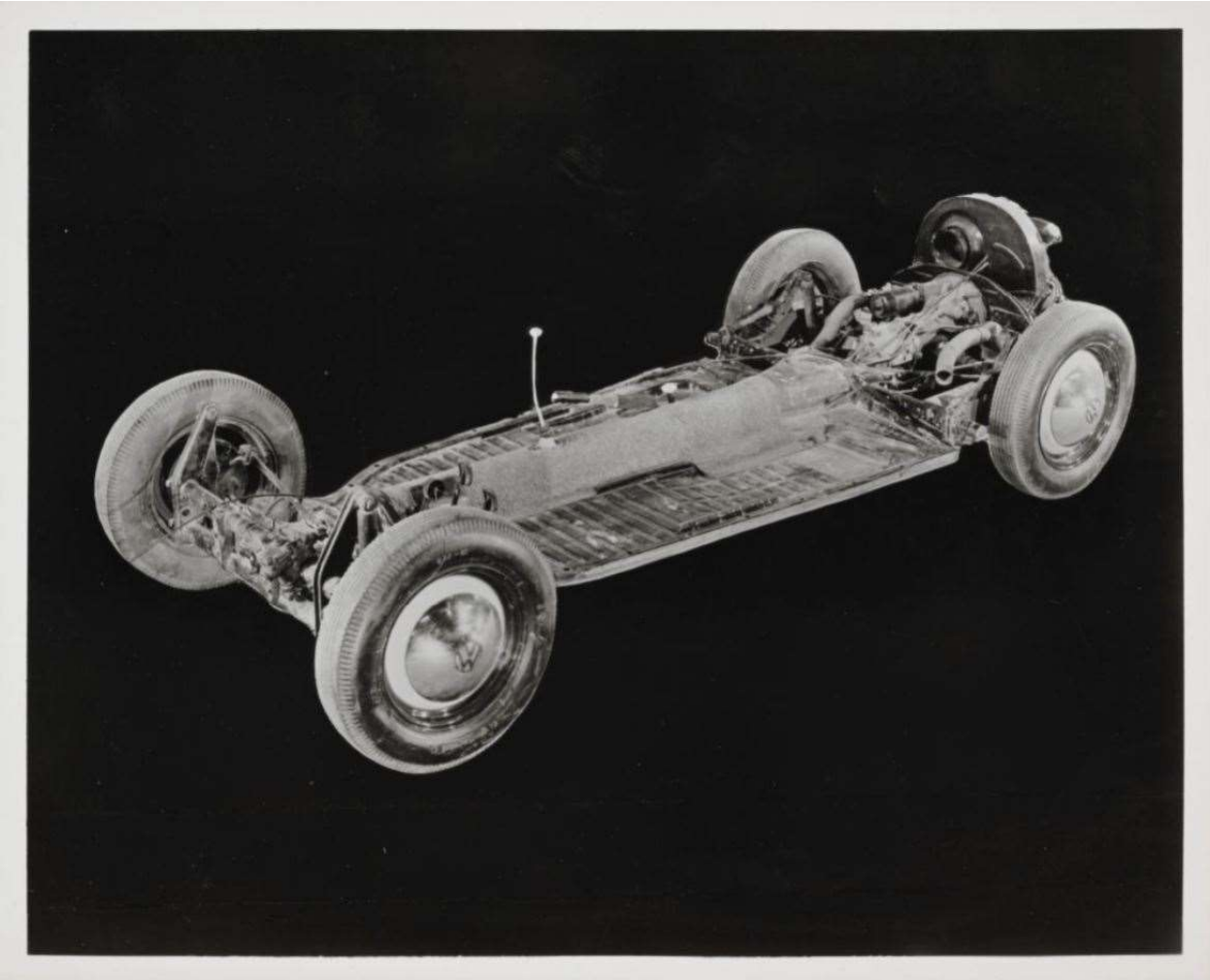
(4) Sandra, well known Los Angeles fashion model is shown with the Alken D-2. Sandra is wearing an exclusive afternoon coat dress designed by internationally famous designer Germaine Galzin. The dress was inspired by the D—2. Miss Glazin's gowns are featured at such shops ae Nieman-Marcus and I. Magnin.

(5) Hard top: The D-2 is available with a custom designed removable hard top. The top features a wrap-around, full vision rear window, with weather and protection. It is light weight and easily removed.

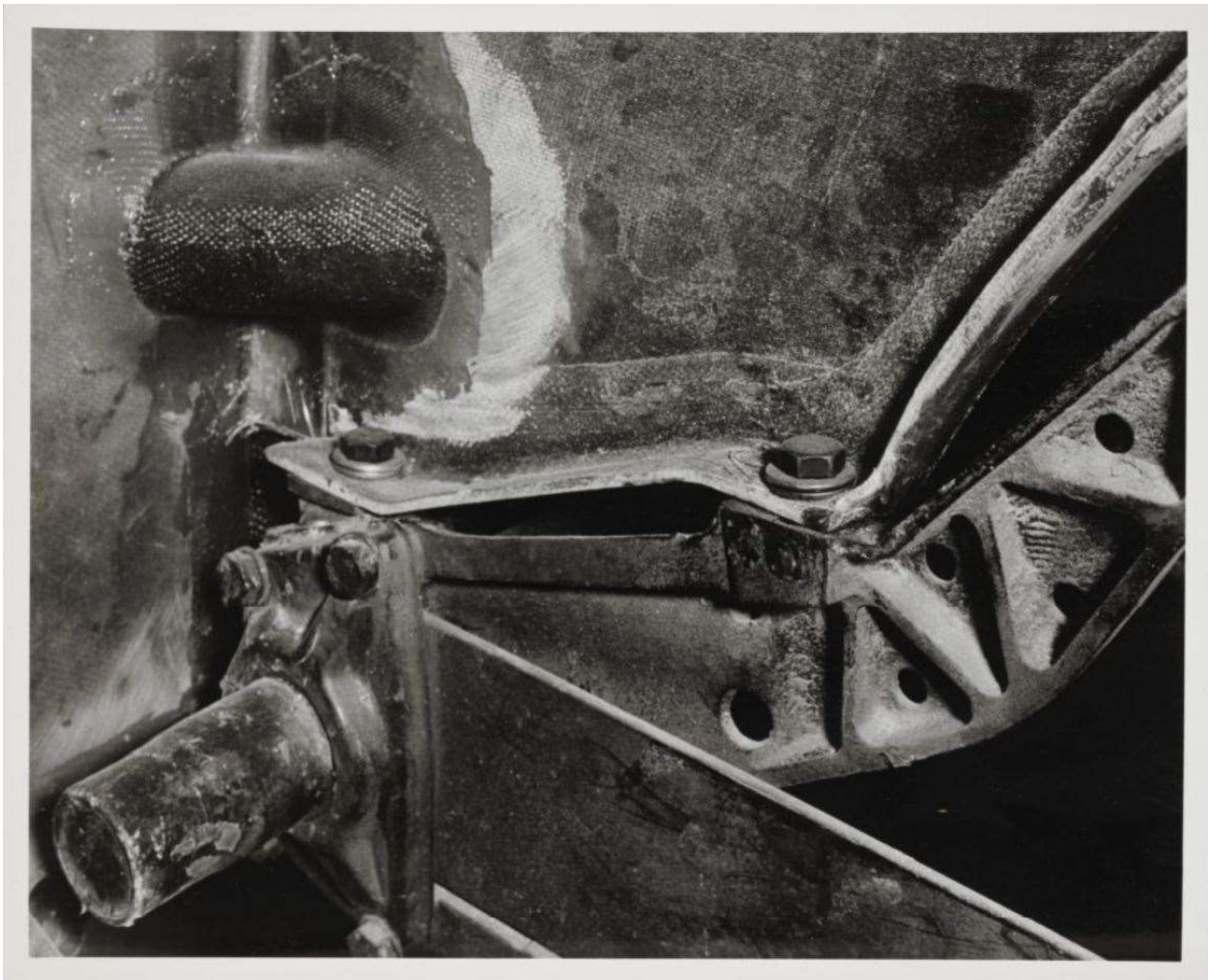
(6) The roomy, modern cockpit combines luxury with comfort. It has full wind and weather protection. There is room behind the seats for luggage or extra passengers. Instrumentation is stock V—W, another planned Alken feature to reduce the change over costs.

(7) Comfortable, custom seats are available for the D—2. They are of the bucket type with a special foam plastic over a strong fiberglass liner.

(8) Underneath the Alken body is the true economy champion, the German Volkswagen. Nothing has been changed but the styling and handling. The Alken fits the chassis without alteration to wheel base or tread width. The Important changes: The D-2 is lower, lovelier and lighter.

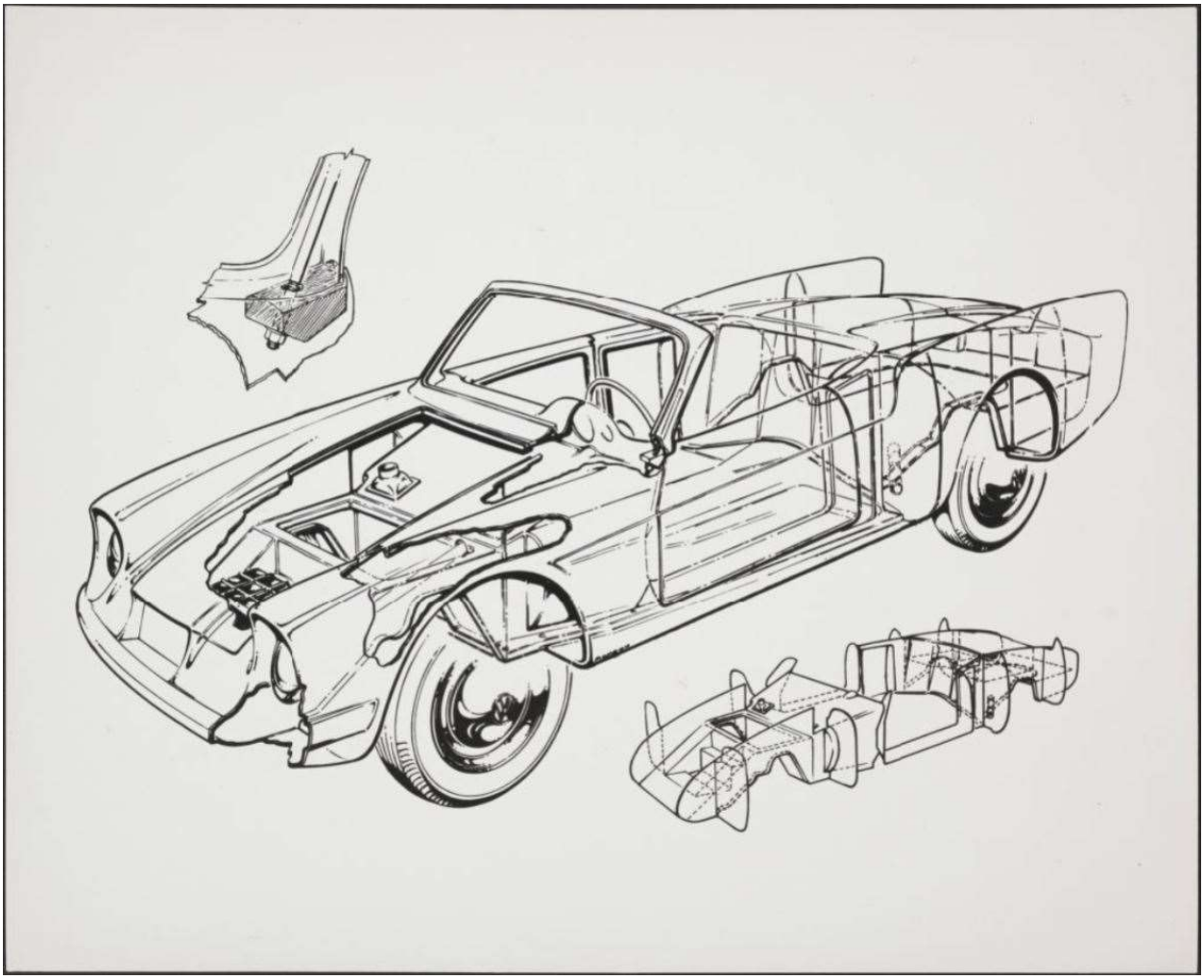


(9) An important exclusive feature of the body is the network of 16 inner bulkheads. Made of light weight fiberglass, they make the body strong, long lasting, without adding cumbersome weight. The Alken is stronger than many metal sedans, yet is 300 pounds lighter than the stock-bodied Volkswagen. This has been certified by comparison tests at public scales.



(10) The Alken D-2 is produced by hand lay up from fiberglass molds, the modern method for plastic production. The body shell is formed in two sections, placed on the production line, joined and fitted with the inner bulkheads before shipping.

(11) The Alken D-2 is a well planned, carefully constructed replacement body designed to fit only the Volkswagen chassis. This drawing illustrates the details of the body from the integral inner bulkheads systems to the doors and windows.



(12) The Alken body is easy to install. It fits this chassis without alteration to either the chassis or the D-2 body.

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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NEWEST IDEA FOR VOLKSWAGEN
ALKEN D-2: "BOLT-ON" SPORTS CAR

Although storm warnings are up throughout the American automotive scene, there is one segment of the car business booming bigger than ever: exclusively designed to “bolt—on” car bodies designed to replace the stamped out versions of big manufacturers.

The bolt—on or replacement car body, generally built from durable, accident resisting reinforced fiberglass plastic, is the newest part of the car business. Less than six years old, the idea has caught on in Europe and the U.S. and the industry is reaching major proportions.

In most ways, the replacement business differs from Detroit's traditional concepts. Builders do not create complete cars. Instead, the replacement body more closely resembles the earlier custom car body trends of the early twenties. Replace—ment builders do not construct entire cars, but instead create body designs which will adapt to the chassis and engine combln-ations built by the world's major automotive companies.

This month a new U.S. form entered the field. The company: The Alken Corporation of Venice, California. Their entry: the Alken D-2 sports car body built exclusively for the Volkswagen chassis.

In a field too new for standards, the Alken D-2 may set the mark others must shoot for. In many ways the D-2 is not only impressive, but unique. Alken is the only U.S. firm to build a body for one chassis, in this case the popular German Volks—wagen, instead of a body adaptable to many and fitted to none.

Unlike most replacement bodies which are marketed as hollow body shells and require long hours of specialized construc—tion plus hundreds of dollars in hidden costs for interior frames and general chassis chopping, the Alken D-2 is sold assembled and ready for installation.

The comfortable convertible body is shipped with remove-able hard top, roll-up windows, factory fitted heaters, wind—shield, luggage lockers and custom bucket seats. Because it is designed exclusively for the V-W chassis, there are fewer alterations, although as with any replacement body, some are necessary.

To install the Alken D—2, V-W front and rear suspension must be lowered and jacking points relocated because the D-2 body is 300 pounds lighter than the conventional metal V-W sedan body. The steering column must be pivoted downward, but not altered, because body lines are lower on the D—2. The V-W fuel tank must be modified by centering the filler opening. These are the only modifications: unlike other models, there is no internal framing. No chassis outriggers or supports required.

Another factor in favor of Alken's success is the decreased curb weight of the assembled car. In unofficial tests the lighter

(by 300 pounds) D-2 out—performed the factory sedan with better handling, more acceleration and increased fuel economy.

The styling of the body is also favorable. Modern, with the currently popular sculptured look of both European and American designs, it copies neither school. The body lines are low and long and inside the cockpit is a roominess not associated with small European cars. There is room behind the special seats for a one passenger jump seat or weekend luggage for two.

Alken engineers have kept the problems of body installation and change—over in mind as they designed the D—2. No extra parts — with the exception of the windshield glass which is built from '51 to '55 Ford Consul or Zephyr glass - are required. All V-W components such as headlights, tall lights and speedometer fit to the Alken body. Equipment, chassis mounted, such as brakes, clutch and hand brake are not touched. This gives the D-2 a distinctive V-W look which enhances the "equal to any U.S. car" value.

Structurally, the D-2 is well designed. Beneath the rigidly—laminated body shell is a honeycomb of longitudinal and latitudinal bulkheads to strengthen the body and improve its bolt—on union with the chassis. These are mounted to the body at the factory, eliminating anything more than a simple bolt-on project for the buyer. The elimination of inner frame modifica—tion makes the body so simple it can be installed at home in a few hours.

The body, which had its world premiere at the First Canadian

Sports, Boat and Vacations Show in Trail, British Columbia recently, sells for $1,295. Public acceptance in Canada, may or may not be comparable to U.S. interest, but it has given credence to Alken's hopes for the D—2.

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IMEDIATE RELEASE

FIBERGLASS CARS NOW IMPORTANT

PART OF U. S. AUTO MARKET

Truly inexpensive sports cars might never have been produced had not the introduction of reinforced plastic made the replacement “bolt—on" car body possible. Early custom bodied cars were more costly than exclusive: the average price $20,000.

Today, thanks to plastics and the newest automotive industry in the U.S., anyone may own a customized low production sports car for less than $1500. First in the field were U.S. producers of racing car bodies, builders of super light weight body shells with few of the comforts of Detroit—produced machines. It has only been in recent months that comfort has entered the replacement car body field.

Unlike the hand—crafted cars of the twenties, the latest post war custom bodies are a blend, and that is part of their growing charm. The bodies are not one-of-a-kind customs. They are built on production lines with quotas of four to six a week, designed to be mounted on Detroit or European—made chassis, powered by the latest engines developed by major automotive builders.

In the six years since the industry began, it has grown into a good-sized business. Builders must choose the chassis

and engine such auto bodies will fit with care, making absolutely certain that public acceptance for the chassis and engine is high. Generally, builders solve this problem by building a 'universal body' which adapt to a variety of chassis lengths. The styling of these bodies and the quality of these bolt—ons must be either several cuts above average or competitively engineered to appeal to the buyers who put price first. For the most part, price has sold the plastic bolt—ons.

This month a new U.S. builder entered the field with a new concept for plastic replacement bodies: full highway comfort. Instead of producing a light weight body suited only for all out racing competition, the latest entry is a comfortable convertible with all of the luxuries of the finest cars in Europe or the U.S. The car, the Alken D—2, produced by the Alken Corporation of Venice, California exclusively for the German Volkswagen chassis, features roll—up windows, removeable hard top, spacious luggage lockers, custom bucket seats and a rear passenger jump seat.

The body had been designed for one only: the Volks—wagen. Chassis modification, bugaboo of all other U.S. produced bodies, was mimimized.

Inside the body is a series of 16 transverse and length-wise bulkheads which honey—comb the inner body areas to stiffen the body. In testing the body was found to be stronger than the factory body. These bulkheads fit the V—W chassis and the body mounts to chassis with the original 32 bolts.

The styling of the Alken D—2 is favorable. Modern, with

the popular sculptured feel of European cars it is a blend of U.S. and European styling, yet copies neither. The body lines are low, and inside the cockpit is a roominess not normally associated with European cars. There are two specially designed bucket seats up front for passengers and room behind these seats for a jump seat or a weekend supply of luggage.

Alken builders have kept the problems of the car to a minimum. Change-over is easy. No extra parts are needed, with the exception of the windshield — which uses glass from to ’51 to ‘56 Ford Council. The Alken windshield posts are designed to accept the Council glass without any alterations. In other areas, stock V-W parts fit directly to the body without change. For example, the stock headlights mount in the D-2 nacelles as simply as changing a light bulb. The tail lights are stock V-W and bolt in exactly as they do on factory models. Chassis units, such as brake and clutch pedals, hand brake and even the heater control, are not changed.

In recent tests unexperienced auto enthusiasts installed an Alken on a V-W chassis in 11 hours; the total time from start of the removal of the metal body to the final wiring of the D-2 was 19 hours and 5 minutes. Truly then, Alken D-2 seems to be a weekend sports car.

The body had its world premiere recently at the First Canadian Sports, Boat and Vacations show. Public acceptance in Canada seemed excellent and Alken's builders now hope for good response in the U.S. Plans call for the establishment of European builders under either a contract or lease agreement and within a year Alken owners expect to produce the body in Europe and South America.

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July 3, 1958

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NEW VOLKSWAGEN SPORTS CAR BODY

SLATED FOR U.S. INTRODUCTION

JULY 28 AFTER SUCCESSFUL TESTS
****

LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA . . . A new and dramatically different Volkswagen sports car body will be introduced in the United States July 28th. It was announced here today by Alan White, president of the Alken Corporation, builders of the Alken D-2 Volkswagen replacement body.

The announcement came at the conclusion of successful tests conducted at the International Raceway in Riverside, California last weekend. The Riverside tests were the final step prior to full scale production and concluded a year long testing program designed to prove the Alken before public introduction. At Riverside, engineers concentrated on testing the Alken D-2's exclusive inner network of 16 rigid bulkheads under the rugged pressure of competition driving.

"The Alken D-2 is a full comfort convertible sports car body, and not a sports car," White said, "but under road racing conditions we were able to accelerate our testing program immeasurably. The is 300 pounds lighter than conventional metal Volkswagen

bodies. This gives the D-2 Volkswagen more acceleration and fuel economy and better handling than heavier models. These were important factors in the D-2's amazing exhibition at Riverside."

At the International Raceway, amid a large field of custom-built race cars, the D-2 circled the 3.127 mile course In 3.09 minutes only seconds behind winner Jack MacAfee at the helm of a costly, professional racing car.

The Alken is the only U. S. produced sports car body built exclusively for the Volkswagen. It retails at $1295 complete and may be fitted to any model Volkswagen in a few hours. It will be offered to U.S. buyers through a network of special custom sports car shops as well as selected Volkswagen dealers. Before the car reaches dealers' showrooms it will tour the country.

-o-

PICTURES:

Enclosed are two photos made during the final testing at Riverside International Raceway. One picture shows the car at the starting line. The other shows the car flashing across the finish line.

This was found on-line as a record of the race the Alken was in.

Racing Sports Cars

RSC Home > Cars > Alken > D2 > Archive (settings) | Login

Complete Archive of Alken D2

Riverside [FM+GM+HM] 29.6.1958

90

Photo Not Available
(contribution appreciated)

Alken D2 - vw FM

Driven by: Bill Friedauer (USA)

Result: 14th
Grid:

Sponsors: unknown

Colours: unknown

Tyres: unknown

Photo Gallery
Full Archive
Results

General figures:

Data covers years:	1958
Number of events:	1
Total entries:	1 (contains 1 finish and 0 retirement, finishing ratio: 100%)
Photos in Gallery:	no photos available

Achievements:

Wins:	0	Additional class wins	0
Second place finishes:	0	Top 3 finishes	0
Third place finishes:	0	Races finished on podium	0
Best result (count):	14th (1x)	Pole positions	0

Notes of interest:

Most frequent drivers:	Bill Friedauer (1)
Most frequent tracks:	Riverside (1)
Most frequent countries:	USA (1)

Racing Sports Cars

Event:

Track: **Riverside International Raceway (United States)**, 5.271 kms

Date: **29.6.1958**

Organiser: California Sports Car Club

Riverside [FM+GM+HM]

Pacific Coast Championship (round 9)

No.	Drivers	Make	Type	Model	Engine	Gr.
1	Walker Edmiston	Crosley			Crosley	
8	Dusty Miller	Maserati	150S		Maserati	FM
24	Ed Barker	Moretti				HM
25	Jim Chaffee	MG	Special		MG	
40	John Davis	Porsche	550		Porsche	FM
44	Frank Monise	Lotus	Eleven		Climax	GM
46	Jim Starbuck	Moretti				HM
50	Ken Miles	Porsche	550	RS	Porsche	FM
66	Bill Molle	Fairchild	Special		Panhard	HM
73	Perry Peron	Abarth	Zagato			HM
83	William de Creeft	Wilment				
88	Jack McAfee	Porsche	550	RS	Porsche	FM
90	Bill Friedauer	Alken	D2		VW	FM
102	Jack Nethercutt	Lotus			Climax	GM
104	Bill Wheeler	D.B.			Panhard	GM
114	Chuck Schroeder	Lotus	Eleven		Climax	GM
119	Robert Plass	Osca	MT4		Osca	FM
131	Jim Parkinson	Ferry	750 Sport		Renault	
136	John Biehl	Cooper			Climax	GM
152	Bill Evans	Lotus			Fiat	HM
160	Chuck Daigh	Cooper				FM
196	Harold Dean	Panhard	Special		Panhard	GM
221	John McLaughlin	Cooper				FII

Time Line and Notes:

Dr. Allan White was President of the Alken Corp

John McNamara was the engineer at the Alken Corp

2100 Zeno Place, Venice, CA was the address of the Alken factory

William F. Pierson, designed the body and filed the patent

John A Wills, famous with fiberglass at the time, designed the construction and molds

Ray Beggs buys an Alken in 1958 and it is used for the Brochure

Bill Friedauer races an Alken at Riverside on June 29, 1958 for promotional reasons

Bob D'Olivo takes B&W photos for Motor Trend in 1958

Wayne Thoms is sitting in the Alken and was the editor for the Motor Trend article

Los Angeles 31st Pomona fair Sep 12-28, 1958 - Alken is shown to the public

Nov 58 R&T my Alken is used for the pictures, red at the time – B&W photos included

White and McNamara used my Alken for photos and promotions and then sold it to NicLSilver as one of their two Alken electric test mules, the Pioneer Electric

George Lippincott bought two Alkens to help start his electric car business at NicLSilver

NicLSilver wanted their own line of cars so they got with Kurtis and Victress to make the chassis and body (both top notch groups at the time). There were 3 electric cars sold as a lot from NicLSilver/FDI so it is likely this "Pioneer Electric" still exists.

Frank Kurtis was responsible for the chassis & Victress was responsible for the body

Merrill Powell was at Victress who designed the Pioneer Electric, I talked with him too!

Bill Quirk - at Victress supplied additional Pioneer Electric car photos

Victress Mfg. 11823 Sherman Way, North Hollywood, CA

Los Angeles 32nd Pomona fair Sep 18-Oct 4, 1959 - Pioneer Electric is shown

NicLSilver sells out to FDI in about 1966

FDI sells the electric cars from storage in 1978 – later we buy one of these cars

B&W Photos from Getty Images R&T and Motor Trend Photo Shoot – these are all of our restored 1958 Alken D2.


NPE 567
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The Enthusiast Network
155882219


CALIFORNIA
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The Enthusiast Network
155882217


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The Enthusiast Network
NPE 567
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NFE 567
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The Enthusiast Network
155882221


CALIFORNIA
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The Enthusiast Network
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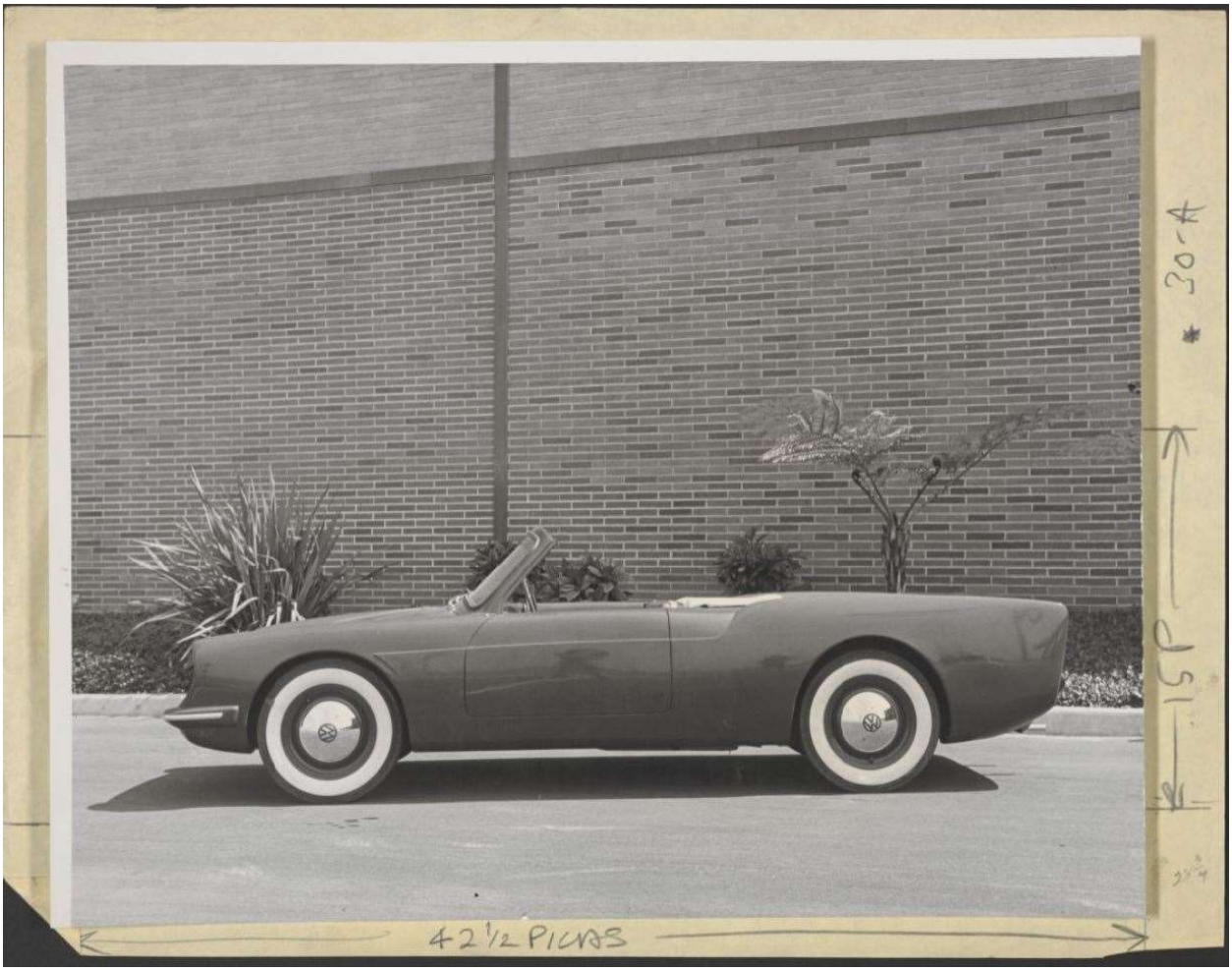

42½ PICAS


NPE 567
15P
20½P
30-E

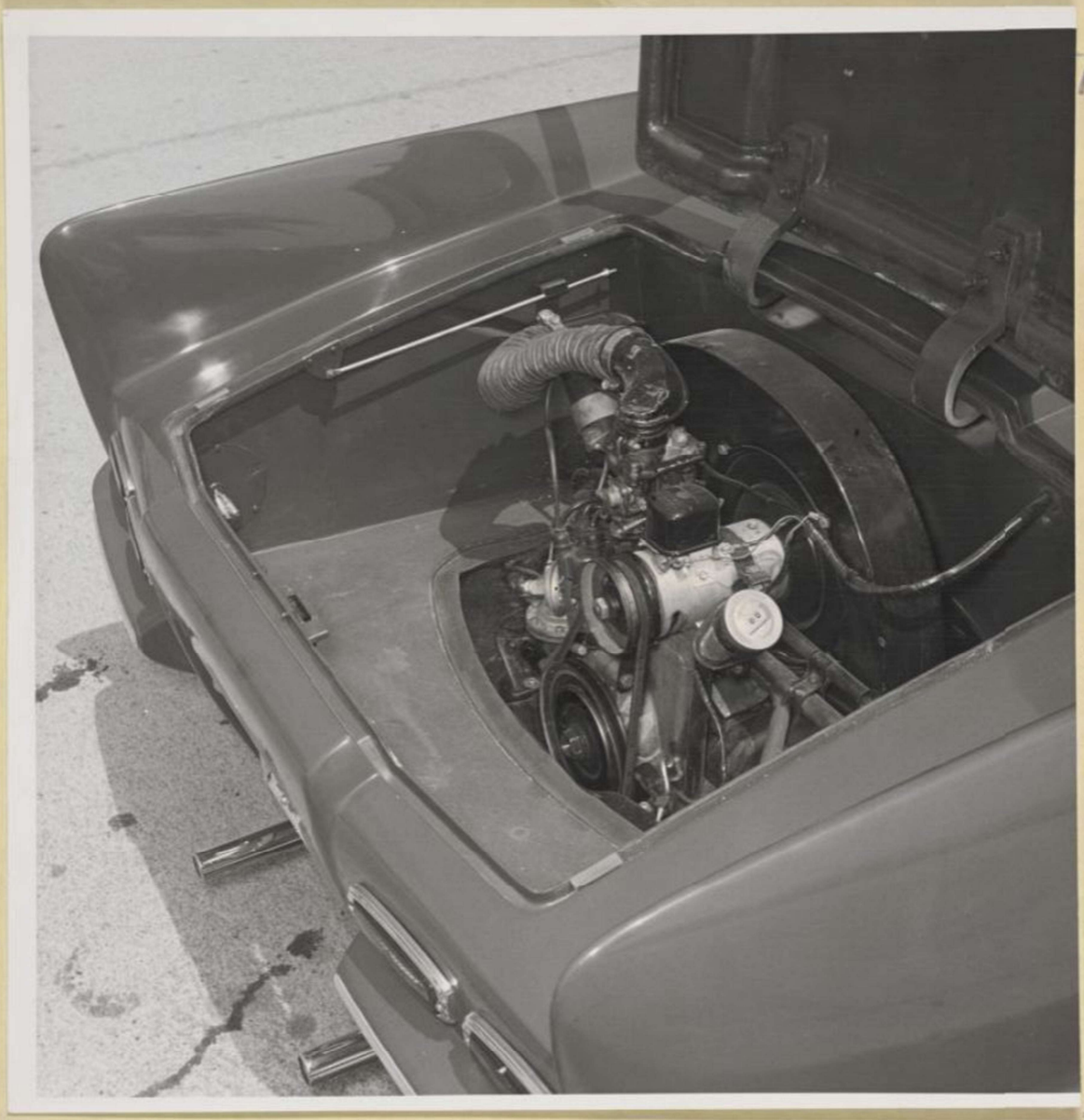

21P
20 1/2 P
30D

30-C

21P

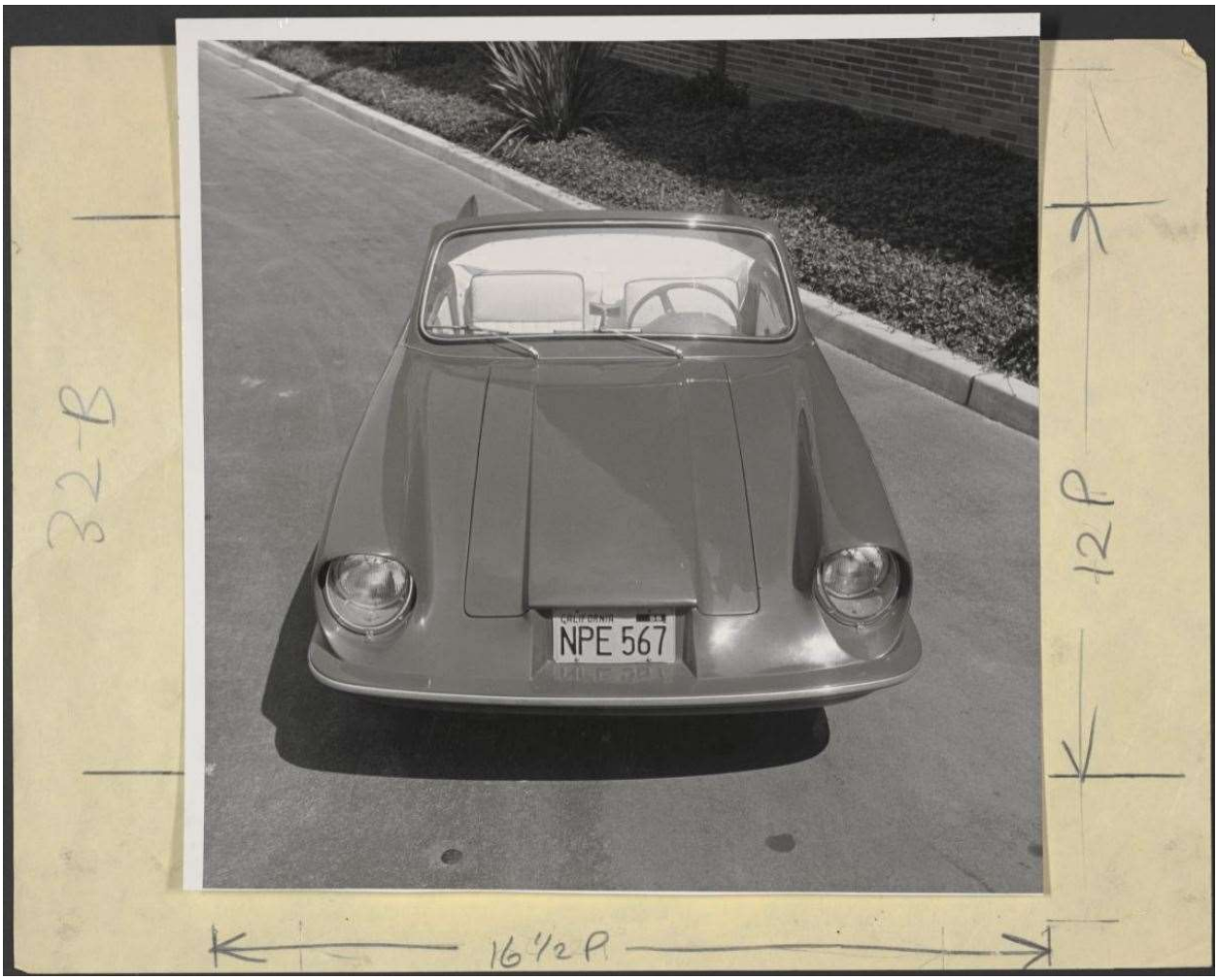
20½P

30-B



21P

20½P


NPE 567
32-B
12P
16½P

R&T test Data - hand written notes

date - 7-23-58

$1.96 gas
4.25 lunch

Alken VW - odom 6756

			indicated		corr. use
3	30.6	29.4	5.5		5.8
4	23.1	39.0	8.8	8.7	9.8
5	18.8	47.9	14.3		14.8
6	15.6	57.6		21.0	22.3
7	13.1	(68.6) use 67.4		37.8	45.0
			22.2	21.8	

hs = 7.7 = 12.4 = 72.6
ng = 7.2 = 67.6
mean = 70.1
use 70.8

tank - 3/8 full on test

Biel F = 185

Wts - Bill F. aboard

ft = 670
rear 810
1480
total = 1540
185
1355 curb
-25
test wt 1330
185 Bill
140 JB
10 kit
2(1665
.8325 tons

tank full
added 5.7 gals
= 1.97

Topology

			use
1st	440 at 20	450 at 20	450 at 16
2nd	330 / 340 at 30	355 at 34	360 at 25
3rd	230 / 240 at 36	250 at 36	250 at 33
4	155 at 40	155 at 42	150 at 40
coast = 120 +		110-115	

~~w/ 6~~ drag = 117 × .83 = 97#

155
620
3100
930
96100

2(72.7
36.35

252
2
3.04/12 = .4195' = 5960

1728 × 2925
.8325 =

361
810
3610
2888
292410

Recheck on Alken — 8-12-58 (JRB

1st 500
2d - 410
3d - 240 v at 35
4th 150 at 40

0-30 = 5.4
40 = 9.0
60 = 22.8
55 1/2 = 22.4

ROAD & TRACK

THE MOTOR ENTHUSIASTS' MAGAZINE

TWIN-CAM MG-A

TESTS:
FIAT-ZAGATO,
VW SPORTS,
FORD TAUNUS

November 1958

50¢ the copy

ROAD & TRACK

THE MOTOR ENTHUSIASTS' MAGAZINE

VOLUME 10, NO. 3 NOVEMBER 1958

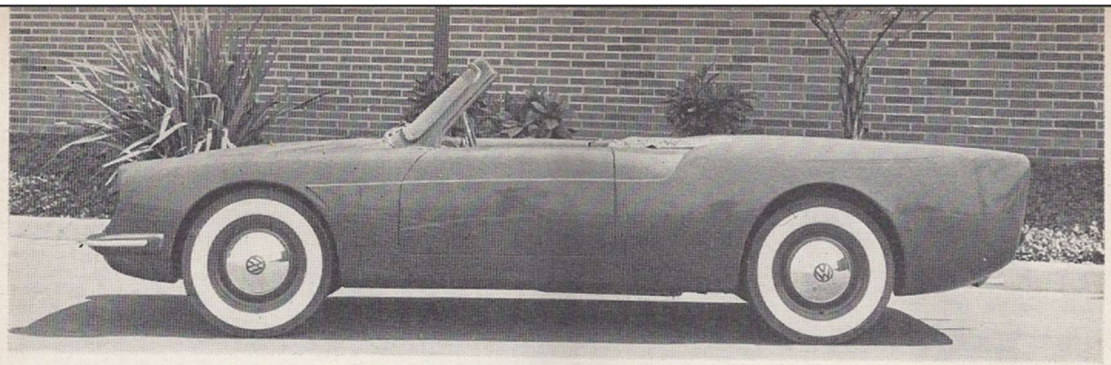
PUBLISHER & TECHNICAL EDITOR JOHN R. BOND **EDITOR** PETE MOLSON
ASSOCIATE EDITOR DEAN BATCHELOR **EASTERN EDITOR** HARVEY B. JANES
EDITORIAL ASSISTANT BARBARA HAWKINS **ART DIRECTOR** JOSEPH C. PARKHURST
ADVERTISING MANAGER DAVID E DAVIS JR. **EASTERN ADV. MGR.** MARGARET ALTON
BUSINESS MANAGER ELAINE BOND **CIRCULATION MANAGER** BETTY J. PARKHURST

THE COVER

The long-awaited double overhead-camshaft MG engine is shown here in its natural setting. The exterior of the car, except for the knock-off disc wheels and the words "twin-cam" just ahead of the air vent, gives no clue to its dual personality. Ektachrome by Ralph Poole.

AUDITED PAID CIRCULATION ABC

EUROPEAN REPRESENTATIVE Bernard Cahier, 7 Rue Guynemer, St. Mande, Seine, France
LONDON OFFICE, Peter D. Sheridan-Young, 114 Wigmore St., London W. 1, England
MAIN ADVERTISING OFFICE, 8244 VISTA DEL MAR, PLAYA DEL REY, CALIF. PHONE EXMONT 1-5221 (SEE SRDS).
EASTERN ADVERTISING OFFICE, 51 E. 42ND ST., NEW YORK 17, N. Y. PHONE MURRAY HILL 7-6669.
MIDWEST ADVERTISING, PRENDERGAST AND MINAHAN, 185 N. WABASH AVENUE, CHICAGO 1, ILL. PHONE FINANCIAL 6-0993.



Because of its extreme lowness, the Alken body will seldom be seen from this angle.

ROAD TEST

ALKEN-VW

SEVERAL YEARS AGO we expressed the thought that Volkswagen should offer an open two-seater roadster for the American market. The new Ghia-Karmann convertible is of course a close approach, though expensive. We also said that VW might be astonished by the size of the untapped market for such a semi sports-type body. Now we have proof, for the Alken firm, of Venice, Calif., has received over 4000 dealer inquiries and *over 40,000* requests for more information on its new roadster body.

Forty thousand inquiries doesn't mean that many sales, but it certainly shows tremendous interest. Accordingly, we elected to give one of these cars a complete road test, even though we have tested over a dozen VW's in various forms.

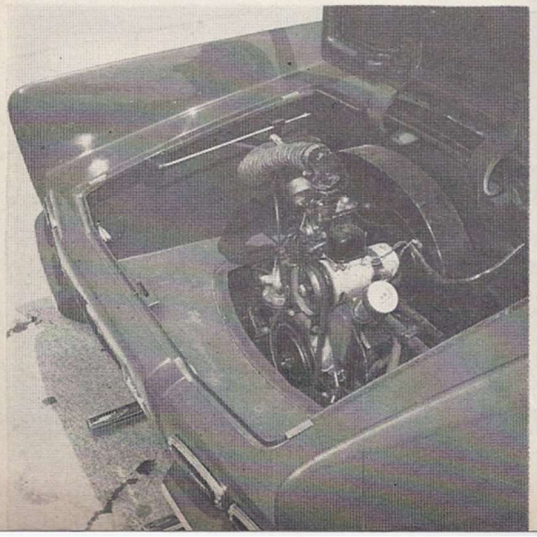
The Alken version accelerates to the various standard speeds much quicker than a standard sedan or Ghia-Karmann coupe, as would be expected, for the Alken body weighs very nearly 200 pounds less than a stock sedan. The car was tested with top up, our usual procedure, and with no top, which is not usual. The open cockpit tends to reduce the performance figures slightly, particularly in the upper speed ranges. However, the Tapley meter drag figures show that the air resistance factor is virtually identical to that of the sedan. This is reflected in the timed top speed: at a fraction over 70 miles per hour, it is identical to that of a VW sedan. Comparative figures look like this:

	ALKEN	SEDAN
Timed top speed	70.8	70.2
Acceleration		
0-30 mph	5.8	6.9
0-40 mph	9.8	11.9
0-50 mph	14.8	18.0
0-60 mph	22.3	28.0
0-70 mph	45.0	66.0
ss ¼ mile	21.8	23.2
Drag factor, lb	97	100

Pulling power, or grade ability, is increased in all gears by an average of just under 10 per cent, by virtue of the 11% saving in weight. Fuel economy as well as tire life will also improve in nearly the same ratio, but 65-70 mph cruising takes the same horsepower (drag factor is similar).

In other pertinent characteristics, the roadster's and the sedan's performance are identical in every way. Ride, steering, braking, etc.—all are the same. The lighter body

The long tail gives plenty of room around the engine.



PHOTOGRAPHY: POOLE

The plunging nose gives no room around the spare and tank.

Squared, finned rear suggests the VW components beneath.

under the spreading body a sturdy Volkswagen stands

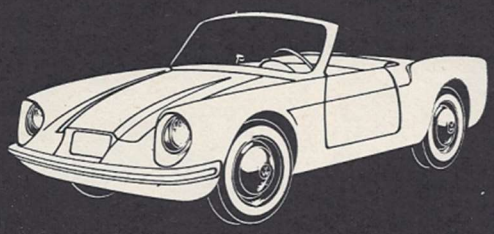
betters fore and aft weight distribution from 43/57 to 45/55. The roadster handles fractionally but noticeably better, though oversteer is still there. But because of less rear-end weight (with no rear seat), it becomes even more feasible to decamber the rear wheels. About 2° negative camber at the rear and a Ghia-Karmann anti-roll bar in front should make the Alken roadster handle with near-neutral steering—a tremendous advantage, in our opinion. As for technicalities, the Alken body is without a doubt the best-engineered piece of fiberglass we have ever seen. It should be: it took a year to develop it, plus a six-figure investment before a single body could be sold. The net result is a price which does not appear cheap in comparison to the various racing shells offered for specials, but the results are well worth while. There are many extras:

Doors and deck lids hung	$100, with hinges, etc.
Two special seats	66, not upholstered
Plexiglass side curtains	45, estimated
Doors with wind-up glass	95, with body
Cross seat for third passenger	45, useful too

Even without the options, buying an Alken is civilized, for

Interior trim shows no rough corners or obvious errors.

ROAD & TRACK ROAD TEST 188



ALKEN-VW SPORTS

SPECIFICATIONS

List price (body)	$1295
Curb weight	1355
Test weight	1665
distribution, %	45/55
Dimensions, length	162
width	59
height	48
Wheelbase	94.5
Tread, f and r	50.8/49.2
Tire size	5.60-15
Brake lining area	96
Steering, turns	2.7
turning circle	33
Engine type	flat 4, ohv
Bore & stroke	3.03 x 2.52
Displacement, cu in.	72.7
cc	1192
Compression ratio	6.60
Bhp @ rpm	36 @ 3700
equivalent mph	76.0
Torque, lb-ft	56 @ 2000
equivalent mph	41.0

PERFORMANCE

Top speed (4th), mph	70.8
best timed run	72.6
3rd (4500)	61
2nd (4500)	40
1st (4500)	21

FUEL CONSUMPTION

Normal range, mpg 30-/35

ACCELERATION

0-30 mph, sec	5.8
0-40 mph	9.8
0-50 mph	14.8
0-60 mph	22.3
0-70 mph	45.0
0-80 mph	
0-90 mph	
0-100 mph	
Standing ¼ mile	21.8
speed at end, mph	59

GEAR RATIOS

O/d (n.a.), overall	
4th (.815)	3.61
3rd (1.23)	5.45
2nd (1.88)	8.35
1st (3.60)	15.9

TAPLEY DATA

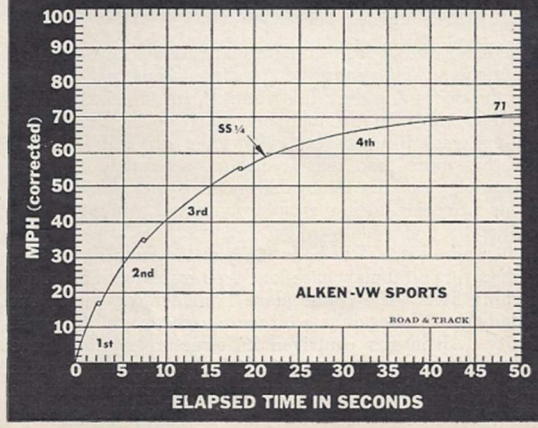
4th, lb/ton @ mph	150 @ 40
3rd	250 @ 33
2nd	370 @ 25
1st	480 @ 16
Total drag at 60 mph, lb	97

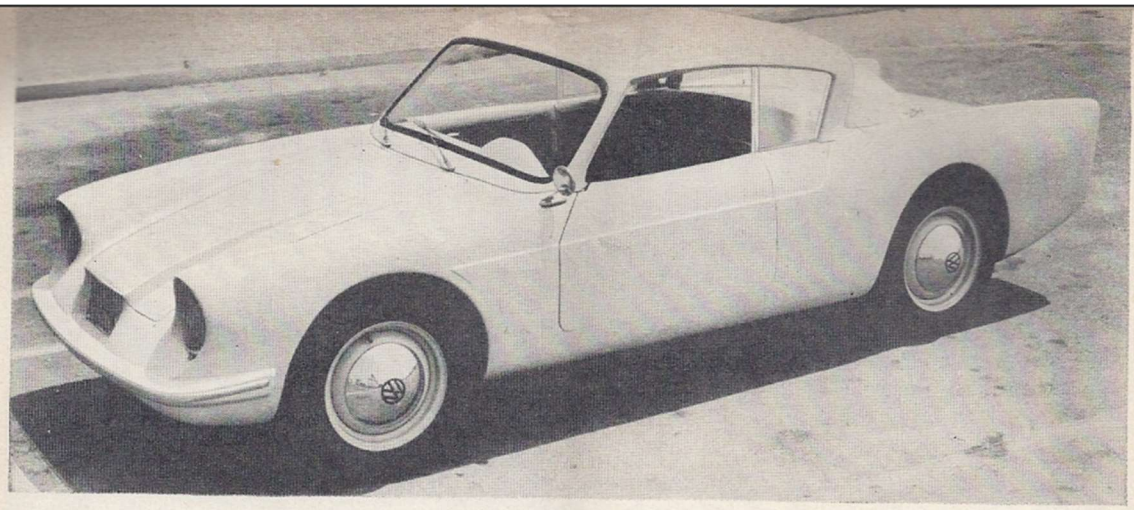
CALCULATED DATA

Lb/hp (test wt)	46.3
Cu ft/ton mile	74.0
Mph/1000 rpm (4th)	20.5
Engine revs/mile	2925
Piston travel, ft/mile	1225
Rpm @ 2500 ft/min	5960
equivalent mph	122
R&T wear index	35.9

SPEEDOMETER ERROR

30 mph	actual 29.4
40 mph	39.0
50 mph	47.9
60 mph	57.6
70 mph	67.4
77 mph	72.6
90 mph	
100 mph	





A hardtop, also in fiberglass, was carefully shaped as a complement to the body rather than as an afterthought. It will cost about $195. Head room over the optional rear seat, which faces sideways, was adequate in the prototype. The squarish look of the car's rear (page 31) grows naturally from the front design, which is more successful (except for the hooded lights) because fewer elements had to be worked in.

the "body complete" is ready to drop on a standard VW chassis, and it includes at least a dozen clever, built-in parts which are not usually supplied with shells. Among those often overlooked bits and pieces are:

1. Integral, hooded instrument panel
2. Door posts and sills
3. Drip channels and fender rolls
4. Headlight mounting flanges
5. Front and rear bumpers
6. Integral wheel wells and splash panels
7. Gas tank and battery mountings
8. Engine compartment panels
9. Integral interior panels and cockpit liners
10. Separate windshield frame (no glass)
11. Heater duct outlets

The doors and deck lids use standard American car hinges and latches. These must be purchased separately if you hang the doors and deck lids yourself, but are included in the $100 extra charge for having Alken do it. Doors with wind-up glass windows cost $95 when ordered with the body, but more than that if ordered separately or later. The prototype of the removable hardtop was shown to us, and its price includes a wrap-around rear window, as in the photo.

When an all-steel VW body is separated from its chassis, one discovers a tubular, backbone-type frame with 32 body-attaching bolts. The frame alone is moderately rigid, but the body contributes quite a bit more to the overall torsional rigidity. Alken has contrived its structure so that huge fiberglass box sections (about 6 x 6 inches) act as body sills along the underside of the usually weak section under the doors (we are referring to an open body, with no roof structure to act as a space frame). The multiple VW body-mounting points serve admirably to tie fiberglass beams and a steel backbone (with welded-on floor pan) into a completely satisfactory structure. We drove the car for three days over all types of surfaces, and no rattles or shakes of any kind developed. The structure is, in fact, considerably more rigid than most open sports cars, though we believe it not quite so rigid as that of the stock VW sedan.

Throughout the design, the results of a year's development are apparent. Unavoidably it was proven necessary to perform a simple rework on the front suspension in order to retain the stock static loaded height with less weight. Full instructions for this and for relocating the VW gas filler neck are supplied, of course. It is also necessary to purchase and install a Ford Consul/Zephyr windshield (1951 through 1955 model) in the frame supplied. All the rest is easy, for stock VW components merely bolt in place —even such items as seat adjusters, instruments, headlights and tail lights. In a trial run, Alken demonstrated that inexperienced help could remove a stock VW body and install the roadster body, complete including rewiring, in 19 hours.

As for the styling treatment, most people like it, once they realize that the long tail effect was unavoidable on a stock VW chassis. Frankly, we think the body has a lot of character. It is the work of industrial designer Bill Pierson. Also, we think the going price of a VW chassis ($500 to $750, used) is going to suffer from a bit of inflation before long.

United States Patent Office

Des. 184,889
Patented Apr. 14, 1959

184,889

ROADSTER CAR

William F. Pierson, Canoga Park, Calif., assignor to Alken Corporation, Venice, Calif., a corporation of California

Application September 12, 1958, Serial No. 52,623

Term of patent 14 years

(Cl. D14—3)

Fig. 1

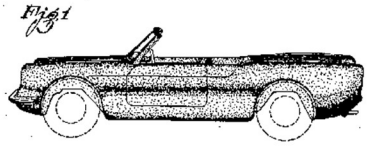


Fig. 2

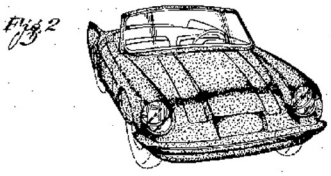


Fig. 3

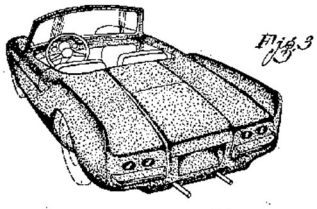


Fig. 1 is a side view of a roadster car, showing my new design;

Fig. 2 is a front perspective view thereof; and

Fig. 3 is a rear perspective view thereof.

The dominant features of my design reside in the portions shown in full lines.

I claim:

The ornamental design for a roadster car, substantially as shown and described.

References Cited in the file of this patent

UNITED STATES PATENTS

D. 176,277 Nallinger et al. ..... Dec. 6, 1955

OTHER REFERENCES

Motor Trend, April 1957, p. 40, Darrin Mark II DKW.

Motor Trend, May 1957, p. 49, Frua Convertible.


NPE 567

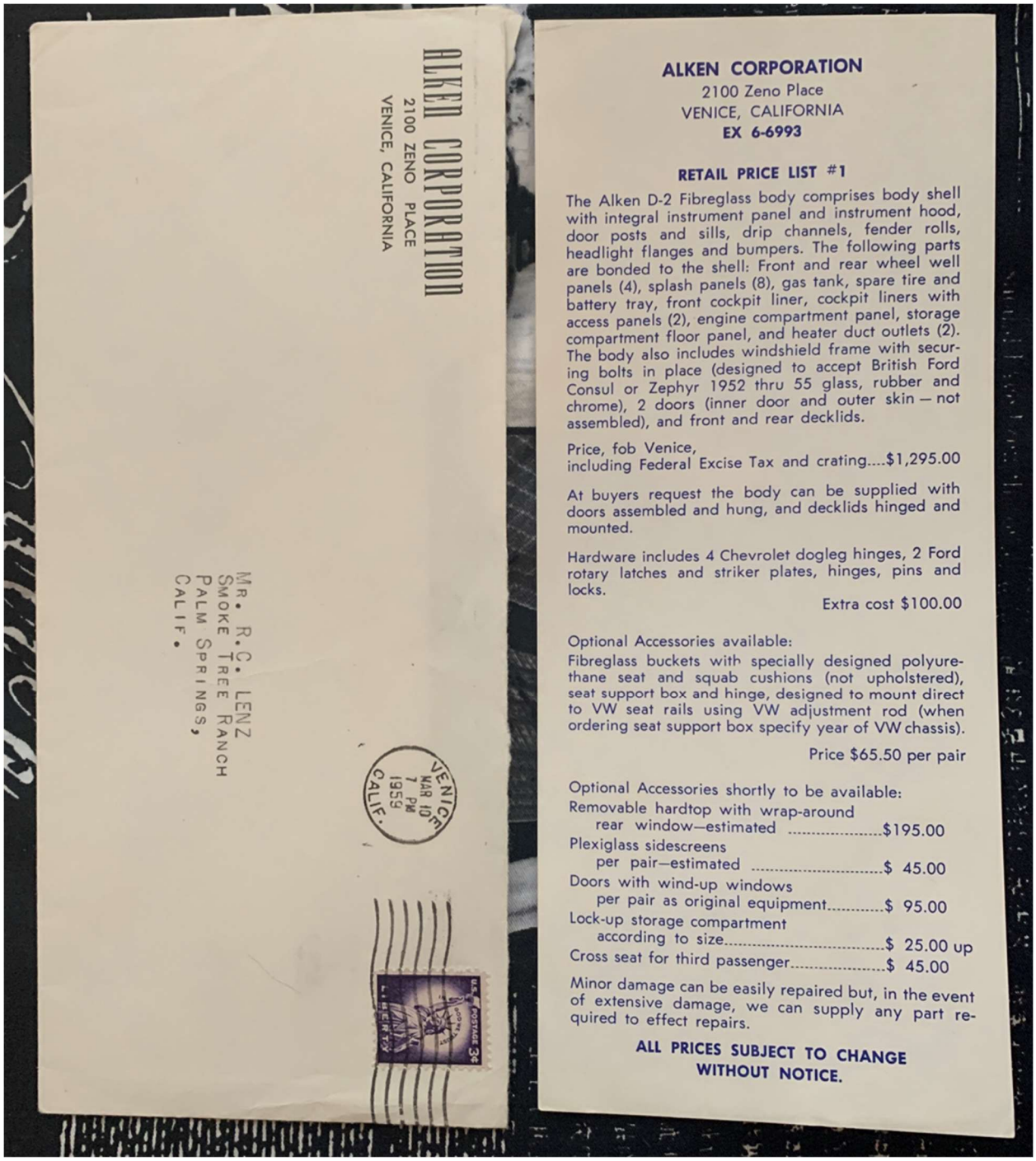

NPE 567


NPE 567


NPE 567


NPE 567


CALIFORNIA
NPE 567



ALKEN CORPORATION
2100 ZENO PLACE
VENICE, CALIFORNIA

MR. R. C. LENZ
SMOKE TREE RANCH
PALM SPRINGS,
CALIF.

VENICE
MAR 10
7 PM
1959
CALIF.

U.S. POSTAGE 3¢

ALKEN CORPORATION
2100 Zeno Place
VENICE, CALIFORNIA
EX 6-6993

RETAIL PRICE LIST #1

The Alken D-2 Fibreglass body comprises body shell with integral instrument panel and instrument hood, door posts and sills, drip channels, fender rolls, headlight flanges and bumpers. The following parts are bonded to the shell: Front and rear wheel well panels (4), splash panels (8), gas tank, spare tire and battery tray, front cockpit liner, cockpit liners with access panels (2), engine compartment panel, storage compartment floor panel, and heater duct outlets (2). The body also includes windshield frame with securing bolts in place (designed to accept British Ford Consul or Zephyr 1952 thru 55 glass, rubber and chrome), 2 doors (inner door and outer skin — not assembled), and front and rear decklids.

Price, fob Venice,
including Federal Excise Tax and crating....$1,295.00

At buyers request the body can be supplied with doors assembled and hung, and decklids hinged and mounted.

Hardware includes 4 Chevrolet dogleg hinges, 2 Ford rotary latches and striker plates, hinges, pins and locks.

Extra cost $100.00

Optional Accessories available:
Fibreglass buckets with specially designed polyurethane seat and squab cushions (not upholstered), seat support box and hinge, designed to mount direct to VW seat rails using VW adjustment rod (when ordering seat support box specify year of VW chassis).

Price $65.50 per pair

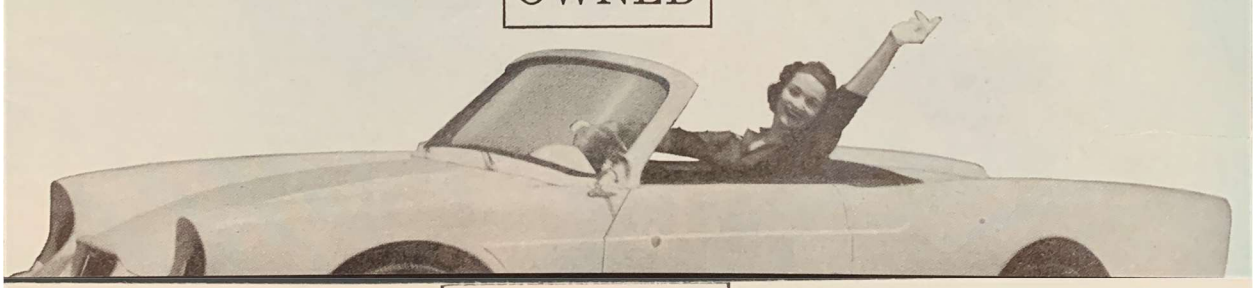
Optional Accessories shortly to be available:

Removable hardtop with wrap-around rear window—estimated	$195.00
Plexiglass sidescreens per pair—estimated	$ 45.00
Doors with wind-up windows per pair as original equipment	$ 95.00
Lock-up storage compartment according to size	$ 25.00 up
Cross seat for third passenger	$ 45.00

Minor damage can be easily repaired but, in the event of extensive damage, we can supply any part required to effect repairs.

ALL PRICES SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT NOTICE.

YOU'VE NEVER SEEN DRIVEN OWNED A LIKE IT!



IMPORTANT NEW FEATURES

Alken is lower and 300 pounds lighter than closed model V-W sedans. Improved aerodynamics and decreased weight mean faster acceleration, more power, better fuel economy. Compare these figures with factory specifications.

Wheelbase.....94½ inches (stock)
Tread.....50.8/49.2 inches (stock)
Curb weight.....1320 pounds
(more than 300 pounds less)
Overall length.....162 inches
Height, at door.....32½ inches
Width, at cockpit...59 inches

From any comparison, the long, low, modern Alken D-2 is a luxury design for the small car champion of the world. Bold and exciting, it is the one styling that is in good taste any time, any place.

59'

(The Quality Combination)

Alken D-2

CHASSIS

BEGGS MOTOR SALES
&
711 LINCOLN
VENICE,
CALIF.

SOME QUESTIONS ANSWERED

1. Does the V-W chassis have to be modified to take the Alken D-2 body?
Because the D-2 is more than 300 pounds lighter, the suspension, front and rear, must be lowered and the jacking points re-located.

2. Are there any other modifications?
Only three. The steering column must be adjusted, the gas tank modified and the carburetor air cleaner replaced by a V-W Kombi air cleaner.

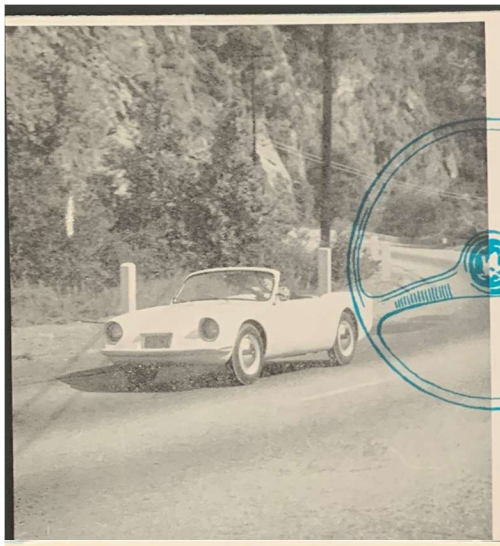
3. What facilities are required for installation?
The D-2 can be installed at home, by any body shop or Alken dealer. It is the easiest custom body to install.

4. How is the body shipped?
The body is finished in fiberglass primer coat, packaged in a protective wood crate, and shipped by truck or rail.

5. Where can I buy the Alken D-2?
From any Alken dealer, or if there is no dealer in your area, direct from the factory.

The Alken D-2 is a product of

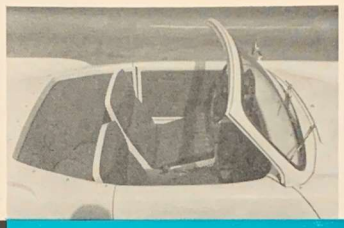
Alken Corporation
Research-Development
2100 Zeno Place
Venice, California

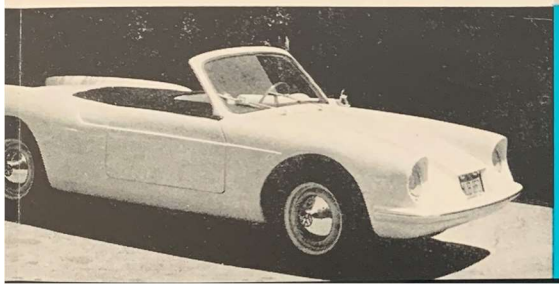


YOU'VE NEVER SEEN DRIVEN OWNED ANYTHING LIKE THIS!

Alken spanned the Atlantic to combine the automotive know-how of two continents into one superb sports car. For the first time brilliant German engineering has been successfully united with dramatic American styling. From any angle, the long, low, modern lines of the Alken D-2 Volkswagen are in good taste—and the best company.

Alken's distinctive design—with better visibility and more storage—is lighter, longer, lower. Exclusively styled for Volkswagen, Alken D-2 makes Germany's "car that is built like a sports car" look and handle like a sports car.

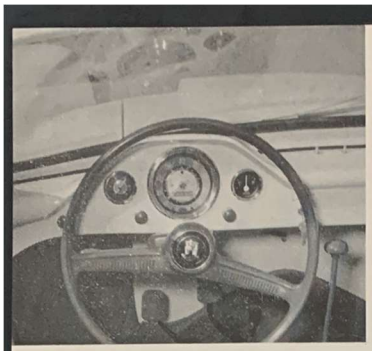


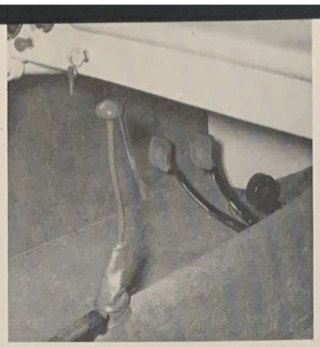


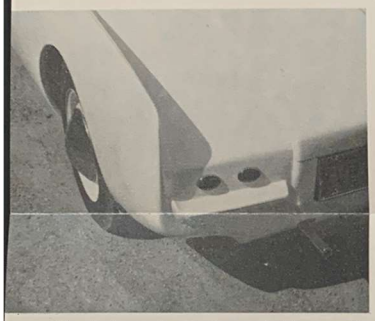
Full-measure protection is assured with the revolutionary unitized bumpers fore and aft. For the week-ender there's room under the locked hood for tire, battery, gas, tools and luggage.

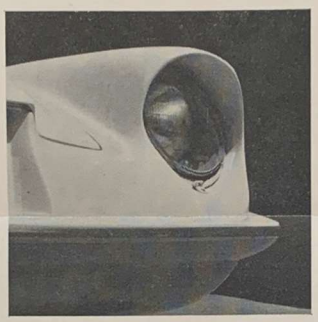
In the rear, Alken styles for tomorrow with upswept tail fins and modern, angular deck line.

The cockpit, roomy and modern, combines luxurious comfort with wind and weather protection. There is plenty of room behind the specially engineered bucket seats for luggage, packages or passengers.









The stock speedometer is mounted in an easily visible position on the high-styled dash, with room for radio controls and special VDO instruments—if you want them.

The stock V-W tail lights mount to Alken in a new, exciting manner.

Steering, brake and clutch pedals and the emergency brake are untouched. Even the heater controls remain in factory position.

Factory headlights fit the D-2 without tiresome, prolonged conversion. Installation is as easy as changing a light bulb.

Every inch of the D-2 is built to the exacting specifications of factory-made models. It proudly wears Volkswagen identification. Alken's use of V-W headlights, tail lights, instruments and controls means distinctive Volkswagen identity, easy replacement and the lowest possible change-over cost.

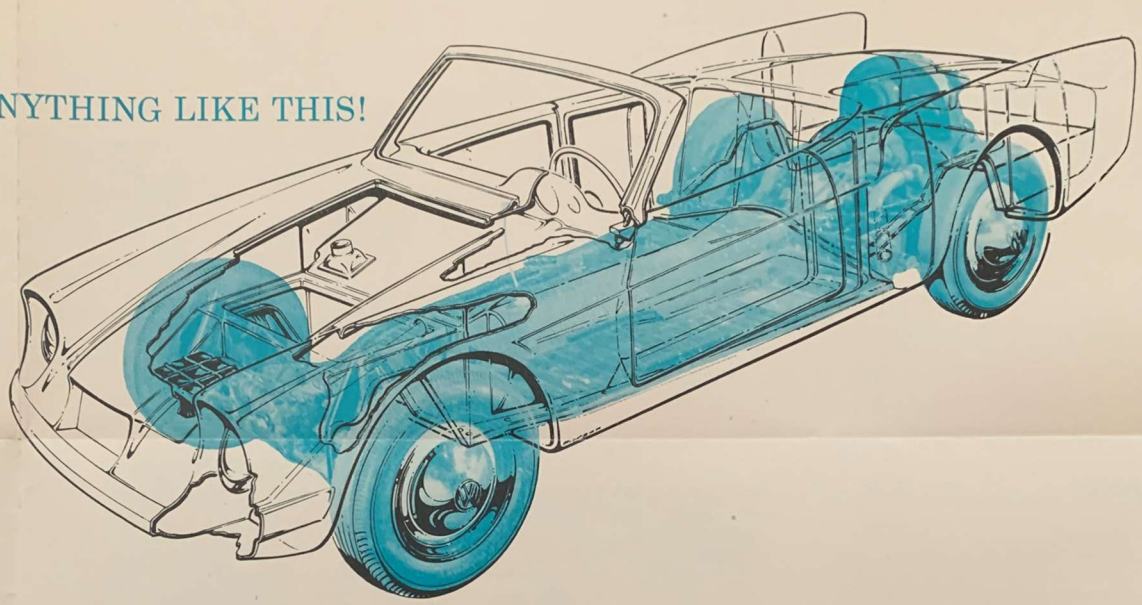
SEEN DRIVEN YOU'VE NEVER OWNED

Exciting design is only part of the Alken story. The body has been engineered to meet the rugged demands of sports car owners yet to provide the fullest comfort of an American convertible. A special system of 16 transverse and cross internal bulkheads make the Alken strong, as strong as the factory sedans, yet Alken engineers have made a body that's 300 pounds lighter than metal versions. This means the Alken D-2 handles better, goes faster, lasts longer and uses less gas.

Alken's D-2 is the only completely engineered Fiberglass sports car body designed exclusively for the Volkswagen. Because of this special-

N

D ANYTHING LIKE THIS!



ization all body supports and stiffners are tailor-made for the V-W and molded into the body at the factory. There is nothing else to buy—no special framing to engineer, no last minute cutting or fitting. Alken fits like a glove—is as easy to install as speed equipment.

The precision-engineered system of bulkheads makes the Alken D-2 long lived. The bulkheads resist racking. There's never a cracking or alignment problem. The D-2 stays showroom new: worth more when you buy—or sell.

AVAILABLE EXTRAS

Alken is an all-weather sports car.
Your dealer can supply a variety of optional equipment, in any combination.

Removable hardtop—
custom-made to fit the D-2.
Roll-up windows—
for the best protection against wind and rain.
Plexiglass side curtains—
weather protection plus roadster styling.
Custom bucket seats—
engineered to body contour, down soft.
Spacious luggage compartments—
between cockpit and engine.

NIC L SILVER
BATTERY COMPANY
P. O. BOX 1811
600 TERMINAL ST. SANTA ANA, CALIF.

SANTA ANA CALIF. DEC 28 '59 U.S. POSTAGE 04 P.B. 361772

NIC L SILVER
BATTERY COMPANY

MINERS AND PRODUCERS OF
LEAD AND SILVER

FACTORIES

MAIN OFFICE & HEADQUARTERS
600 TERMINAL STREET
P. O. BOX 1811
SANTA ANA, CALIF.

597 EIGHTY-FIFTH AVE.
OAKLAND 21, CALIF.

P. O. BOX 155
SHERWOOD, OREGON

December 28, 1959

R/ C. Lenz
Smoke Tree Ranch
Palm Springs, California

Dear Sir:

Thanks for your letter, and herewith sending you available information regarding our electric cars.

In all fairness to you and the general public, I first should explain that we are not yet into production of these cars, and until the steel strike is settled, it is difficult to put on a starting date.

We first developed several different cars in an attempt to prove the practicability of the electric car for the purpose which it was intended, that is, local driving. Due to the limited operating range, it is not yet available for cross country traveling. We were very greatly surprised and encouraged by the tremendous response and interest shown in this car by people who want just a car for local driving, and I feel sure that we will tap a large market.

At the present time, our prices are $1,995.00, however, I feel sure that in the future, as soon as mass production facilities can be put in, we can reduce this price considerably, as the cost now involved is due to too much hand labor and not enough mass production methods.

We will advise you as soon as possible regarding our progress, and thanks so very much for your interest.

Sincerely yours,

NIC-L-SILVER BATTERY COMPANY

George Lippincott

George Lippincott
President

Branches: Albuquerque, Bakersfield, Bellingham, El Centro, Eugene, Fresno, Los Angeles, Medford, Oakland, Olympia, Pasco, Phoenix, Portland, Reno, Salinas, San Diego, San Francisco, Seattle, Spokane, Stockton, Tacoma, Tucson, Yakima

1959

ROADSTER

HARDTOP CONVERTIBLE

STATION WAGON

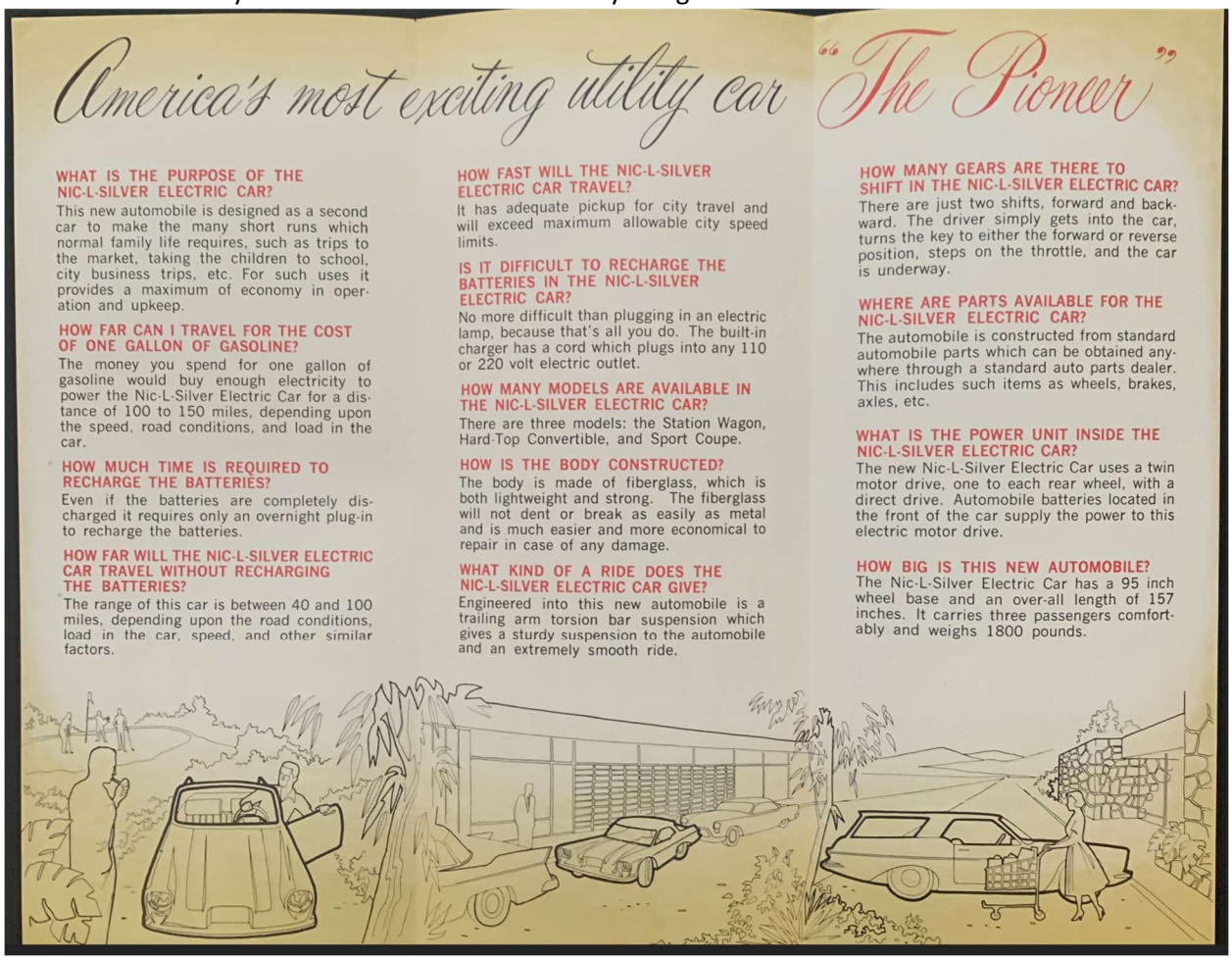
NIC-L-SILVER ELECTRIC CAR

PIONEER MODELS

Wheel base: 95"
Overall length: 157"
Passengers: 3
Weight: 1800 lbs.
Body Material: Fiberglass
Battery powered, equipped with built-in charger that plugs into any 110 volt or 220 volt outlet

NIC-L-SILVER
BATTERY COMPANY
606 TERMINAL, SANTA ANA, CALIFORNIA

Note the Alken body used in the brochure while they designed their own car



WHY THE "PIONEER"?

In recent years there has been an increasing need for a second car which the average family can afford. Recognizing this need, the engineers of the Nic-L-Silver Battery Company set to work to design just such a car. The basic requirements for the car were that it be compact, low in cost, economical to operate, large enough to do a utility job for the average family, and fast enough to be able to operate on modern highways.

The engineering work has been completed and the results are embodied in the Nic-L-Silver Car. The company which has grown to be the largest independent manufacturer of automobile batteries in the world is now introducing a new concept in motoring—a family utility car. Because the new Nic-L-Silver Electric Car has created such interest, many questions have been asked about it. The most commonly asked questions, and their answers, are listed here for your information.

MAKERS OF THESE FAMOUS PRODUCTS

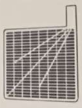
EL DORADO—12 Volt Battery

Truck & Tractor Batteries

6 Volt Batteries

12 Volt Batteries

MARINE PAC



SILVER ALLOY GRID

NIC-L-SILVER®

BATTERY COMPANY

Main Office and Factory
606 Terminal Street
Santa Ana, California

California Factory Branch Warehouses

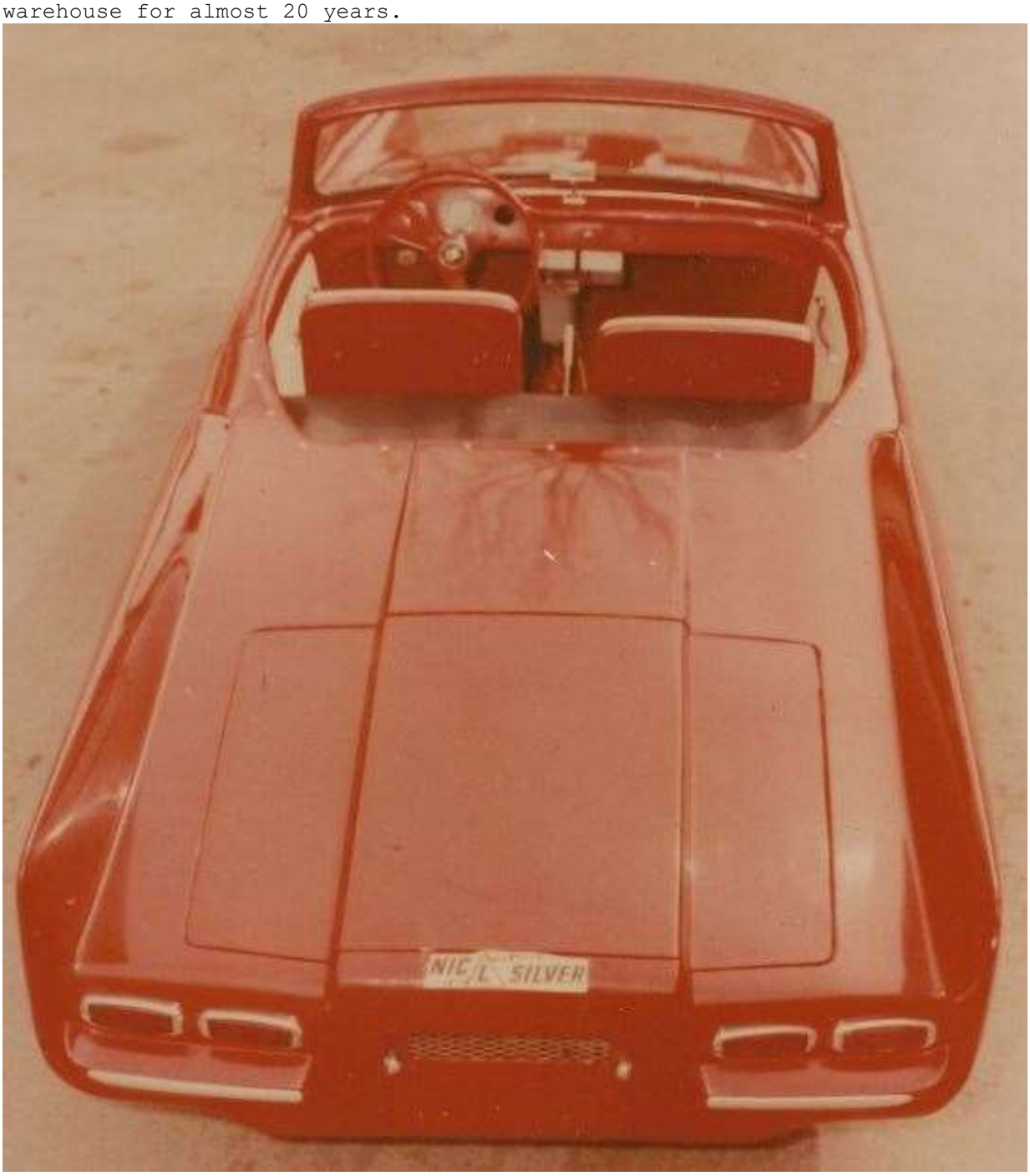
Bakersfield—1309 Chester Ave.	FAirview 5-9707
Fresno—1650 "H" Street	ADams 3-4261
Los Angeles—1060 Macy	CApitol 5-2247
Salinas—280 Market Street	HArrison 2-3851
San Diego—3615 India Street	CYpress 8-1186
Pasadena—26 North Hill	SYcamore 5-8061
Van Nuys—15164 Oxnard	STate 2-5930
Long Beach—1605 W. Anaheim	HEmlock 2-0447
Oakland—597 Eighty-fifth Avenue	NEptune 8-8376

Battery Company

Nic-L-Silver

new electric utility car by

A picture of our Alken from the Lippincott family, note the logo they had at the rear. Not long after this photo the Alkens would get placed in a warehouse for almost 20 years.



A-12—INDEPENDENT-PRESS-TELEGRAM
Long Beach, Calif., Sunday, March 22, 1959

His Car Runs on Batteries

By BOB GEIVET

SANTA ANA—A modern-day version of the electric car is due to go into production here April 6 as George Lippincott's answer to the smog-producing propensities of gasoline-driven automobiles.

The battery manufacturer and his son Dick devised a two-seat open small car not unlike in design some of the better known foreign makes.

It is powered with four specially-built batteries, capable of ranging at least 120 miles at speeds up to 50 miles per hour.

★ ★ ★

BY THE TIME "a few bugs are ironed out," Lippincott said, the car he calls the Pioneer will be powered with heavier batteries, capable of delivering more mileage, and have a built-in recharger.

Lippincott designed his Pioneer as a second car for the family. He claimed its operation cost is only an eighth of a cent a mile.

He said its range of about 120 miles per charge of batteries would be satisfactory for day-to-day driving. The batteries can be recharged while the car is parked in the family garage overnight, he explained.

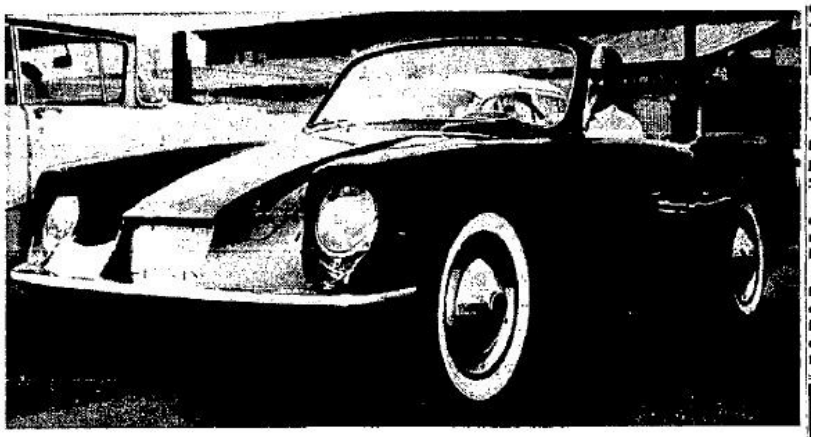
Parking lots could recharge the car while Milady shops the stores, he added, thus keeping the power plant at full capacity.

★ ★ ★

CONTROLS OF his Pioneer, a shiny red job, are conventional in that it has the traditional foot throttle and brake pedal. He said it handles much like any other car —but of course noiselessly. Its body is of fiberglas.

The four batteries put out 24 volts and this output can be stepped up to 48 volts at flick of a switch—for more power on the highways.

Lippincott has been a battery manufacturer here for 25 years. His plant at 606 Terminal St. will make the batteries. Lippincott said they will be rented for $10 per month and that the car operation will be about $7 per month. It will sell for about $1,600, according to present production plans.



JUST CHARGE IT!

Smog-proof electric car designed by George Lippincott of Santa Ana and his son, Dick, is displayed by the younger Lippincott. It is powered with four special batteries.—(Staff photo.)

Synagogue's Mortgage to Be Burned

The congregation of Beth-El Synagogue, 127 W. Anaheim St., will hold a mortgage-burning celebration at 4 p.m. next Sunday in the synagogue building.

Among participants will be Rabbi M. Schwartz of Temple Beth Sholom, Rabbi W. Kaelter of Temple Israel, Cantor Morris Greenfield of Temple Sinai and Dr. Harry S. May.

The program will include

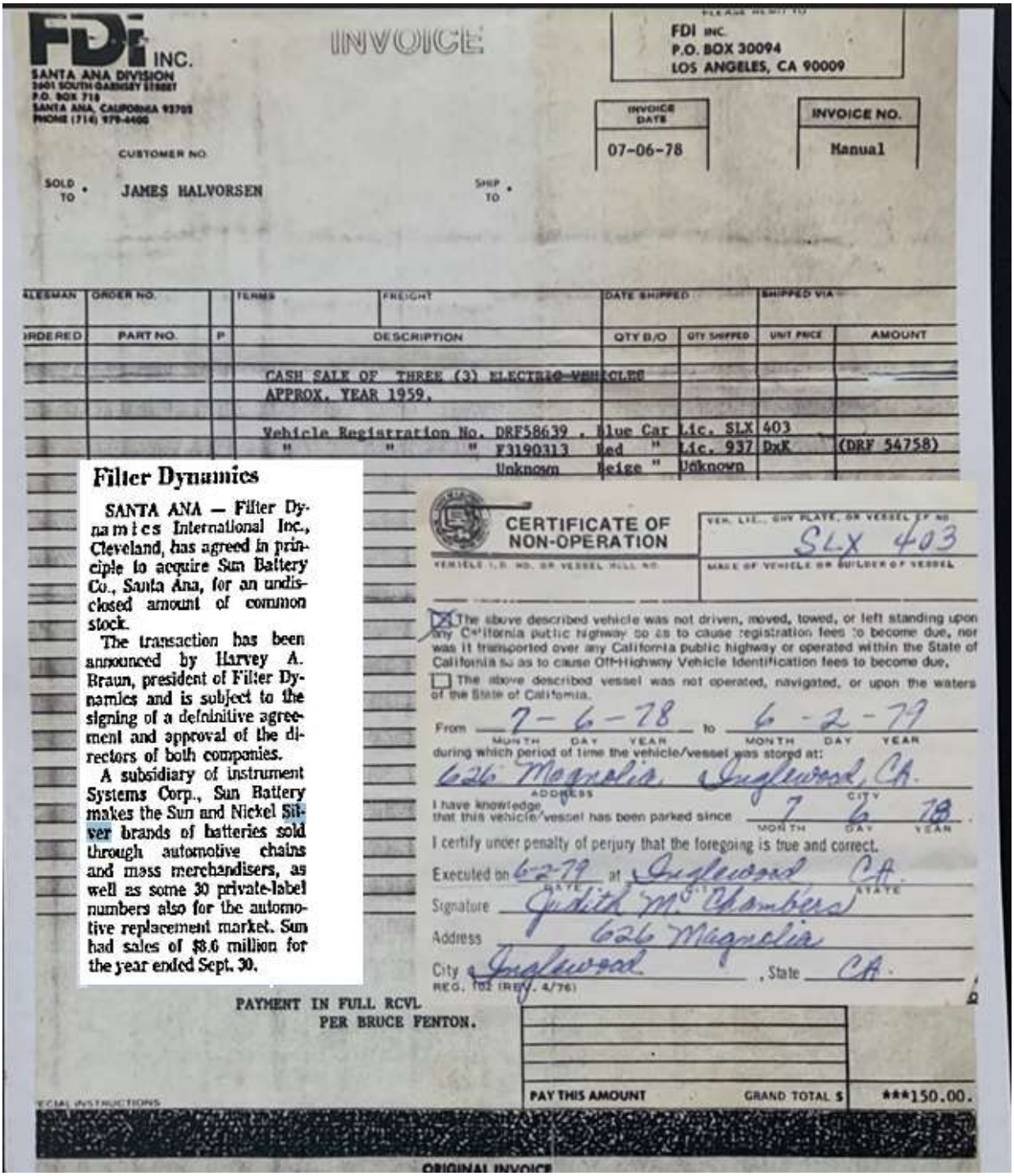
The final Pioneer Electric Design – maybe it still exists, notice the VW axle


UNIT 22

Here the 2-Alkens and 1-Pioneer electric are sold from a warehouse. FDI was a parts supplier like Pep Boys and the went under. FDI purchase Nic-L-Silver. Notice below says the sale of 3 electric vehicles.

You can see the two license number for the Alkens – SLX403 and 937DXK

We do not know who James Halvorsen is, he purchased the Alkens in 7/6/78 breaking them from a 18 year slumber in a warehouse.



FDI INC.
SANTA ANA DIVISION
3601 SOUTH GARNSEY STREET
P.O. BOX 718
SANTA ANA, CALIFORNIA 92702
PHONE (714) 979-4400

INVOICE

FDI INC.
P.O. BOX 30094
LOS ANGELES, CA 90009

INVOICE DATE: 07-06-78
INVOICE NO.: Manual

CUSTOMER NO.

SOLD TO: JAMES HALVORSEN

SHIP TO:

SALESMAN	ORDER NO.		TERMS	FREIGHT	DATE SHIPPED	SHIPPED VIA

ORDERED	PART NO.	P	DESCRIPTION	QTY B/O	QTY SHIPPED	UNIT PRICE	AMOUNT
			CASH SALE OF THREE (3) ELECTRIC VEHICLES APPROX. YEAR 1959.				
			Vehicle Registration No. DRF58639 , Blue Car Lic. SLX 403				
			" " " F3190313 Red " Lic. 937 DxK				(DRF 54758)
			Unknown Beige " Unknown				

Filter Dynamics

SANTA ANA — Filter Dynamics International Inc., Cleveland, has agreed in principle to acquire Sun Battery Co., Santa Ana, for an undisclosed amount of common stock.

The transaction has been announced by Harvey A. Braun, president of Filter Dynamics and is subject to the signing of a definitive agreement and approval of the directors of both companies.

A subsidiary of Instrument Systems Corp., Sun Battery makes the Sun and Nickel Silver brands of batteries sold through automotive chains and mass merchandisers, as well as some 30 private-label numbers also for the automotive replacement market. Sun had sales of $8.6 million for the year ended Sept. 30.

CERTIFICATE OF NON-OPERATION

VEH. LIC., SHIP PLATE, OR VESSEL I.D. NO.: SLX 403

VEHICLE I.D. NO. OR VESSEL HULL NO.

MAKE OF VEHICLE OR BUILDER OF VESSEL

☒ The above described vehicle was not driven, moved, towed, or left standing upon any California public highway so as to cause registration fees to become due, nor was it transported over any California public highway or operated within the State of California so as to cause Off-Highway Vehicle Identification fees to become due.

☐ The above described vessel was not operated, navigated, or upon the waters of the State of California.

From 7-6-78 (MONTH DAY YEAR) to 6-2-79 (MONTH DAY YEAR)

during which period of time the vehicle/vessel was stored at:

626 Magnolia (ADDRESS) Inglewood (CITY) CA.

I have knowledge that this vehicle/vessel has been parked since 7 (MONTH) 6 (DAY) 78 (YEAR).

I certify under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.

Executed on 6-2-79 (DATE) at Inglewood (CITY) CA. (STATE)

Signature Judith M. Chambers

Address 626 Magnolia

City Inglewood, State CA.

REG. 102 (REV. 4/76)

PAYMENT IN FULL RCVL
PER BRUCE FENTON.

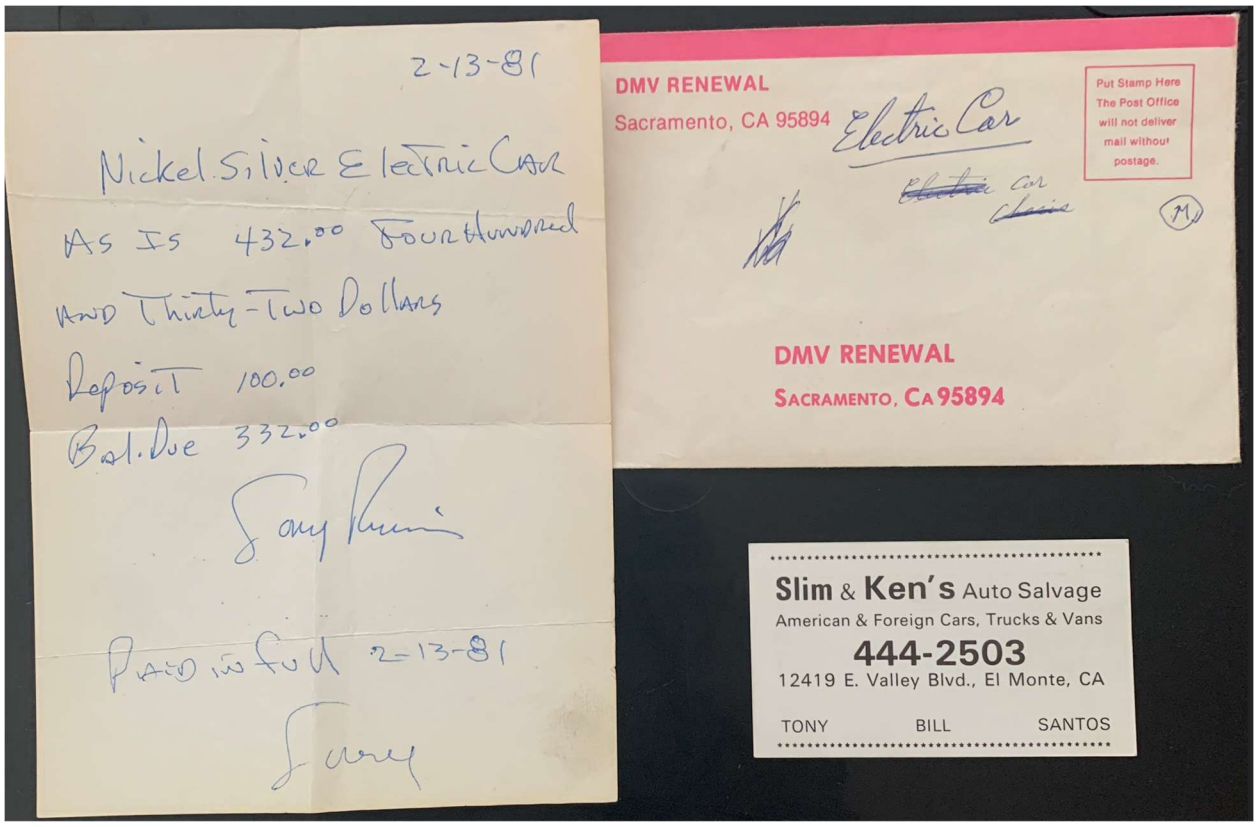
PAY THIS AMOUNT GRAND TOTAL $ ***150.00.

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS

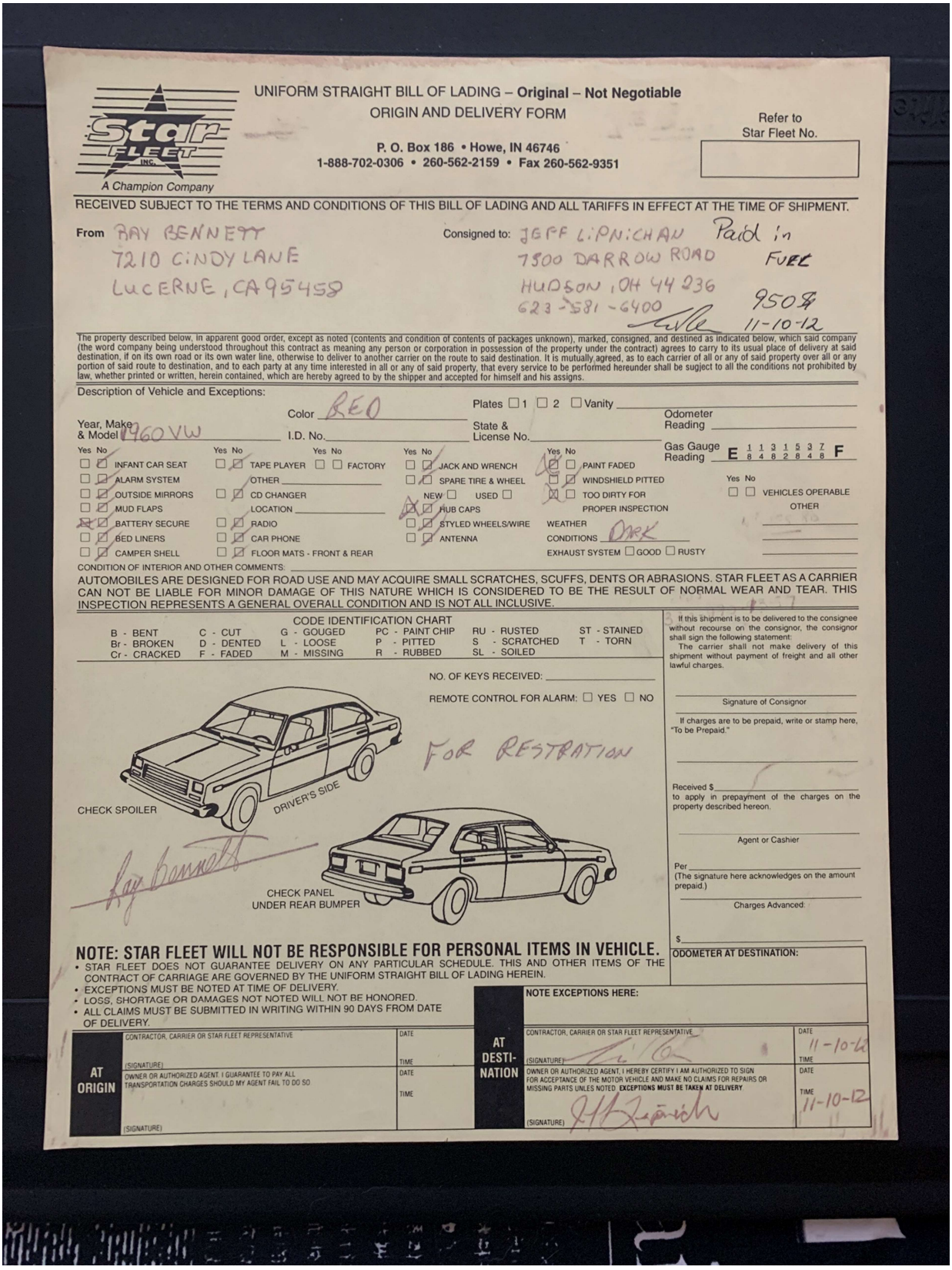
ORIGINAL INVOICE

Continuing to follow the Alken, Ray buys it from an Auto salvage company that likely bought the cars from the FDI sale in 2/13/81. Ray holds onto the Alken for 30 years before I buy it. The second Alken from Nic-L-Silver also survives today. The Pioneer Electric likley never had a motor and drive train so for it to survive would be a miracle.

It looks like Tony signed the bill of sale.



This is the shipping document from California to Ohio when I purchased it from Ray Bennett in 11/10/2012.



Star FLEET INC.
A Champion Company

UNIFORM STRAIGHT BILL OF LADING – **Original** – **Not Negotiable**
ORIGIN AND DELIVERY FORM

P. O. Box 186 • Howe, IN 46746
1-888-702-0306 • 260-562-2159 • Fax 260-562-9351

Refer to Star Fleet No.

RECEIVED SUBJECT TO THE TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF THIS BILL OF LADING AND ALL TARIFFS IN EFFECT AT THE TIME OF SHIPMENT.

From RAY BENNETT
7210 CINDY LANE
LUCERNE, CA 95458

Consigned to: JEFF LIPNICHAN
7500 DARROW ROAD
HUDSON, OH 44236
623-581-6400

Paid in FUEL
950$
11-10-12

The property described below, in apparent good order, except as noted (contents and condition of contents of packages unknown), marked, consigned, and destined as indicated below, which said company (the word company being understood throughout this contract as meaning any person or corporation in possession of the property under the contract) agrees to carry to its usual place of delivery at said destination, if on its own road or its own water line, otherwise to deliver to another carrier on the route to said destination. It is mutually agreed, as to each carrier of all or any of said property over all or any portion of said route to destination, and to each party at any time interested in all or any of said property, that every service to be performed hereunder shall be suglect to all the conditions not prohibited by law, whether printed or written, herein contained, which are hereby agreed to by the shipper and accepted for himself and his assigns.

Description of Vehicle and Exceptions:

Year, Make & Model 1960 VW
Color RED
I.D. No.
Plates ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ Vanity
State & License No.
Odometer Reading
Gas Gauge Reading E 1/8 1/4 3/8 1/2 5/8 3/4 7/8 F

Yes	No		Yes	No		Yes	No		Yes	No		Yes	No	
☐	☒	INFANT CAR SEAT	☐	☒	TAPE PLAYER	☐	☐	FACTORY	☐	☒	JACK AND WRENCH	☒	☐	PAINT FADED
☐	☒	ALARM SYSTEM			OTHER				☐	☒	SPARE TIRE & WHEEL	☐	☒	WINDSHIELD PITTED
☐	☒	OUTSIDE MIRRORS	☐	☒	CD CHANGER						NEW ☐ USED ☐	☒	☐	TOO DIRTY FOR PROPER INSPECTION
☐	☒	MUD FLAPS			LOCATION				☒	☐	HUB CAPS			
☒	☐	BATTERY SECURE	☐	☒	RADIO				☐	☒	STYLED WHEELS/WIRE			
☐	☒	BED LINERS	☐	☒	CAR PHONE				☐	☒	ANTENNA			
☐	☒	CAMPER SHELL	☐	☒	FLOOR MATS - FRONT & REAR									

WEATHER
CONDITIONS DARK
EXHAUST SYSTEM ☐ GOOD ☐ RUSTY

Yes ☐ No ☐ VEHICLES OPERABLE
OTHER

CONDITION OF INTERIOR AND OTHER COMMENTS:

AUTOMOBILES ARE DESIGNED FOR ROAD USE AND MAY ACQUIRE SMALL SCRATCHES, SCUFFS, DENTS OR ABRASIONS. STAR FLEET AS A CARRIER CAN NOT BE LIABLE FOR MINOR DAMAGE OF THIS NATURE WHICH IS CONSIDERED TO BE THE RESULT OF NORMAL WEAR AND TEAR. THIS INSPECTION REPRESENTS A GENERAL OVERALL CONDITION AND IS NOT ALL INCLUSIVE.

CODE IDENTIFICATION CHART

B - BENT	C - CUT	G - GOUGED	PC - PAINT CHIP	RU - RUSTED	ST - STAINED
Br - BROKEN	D - DENTED	L - LOOSE	P - PITTED	S - SCRATCHED	T - TORN
Cr - CRACKED	F - FADED	M - MISSING	R - RUBBED	SL - SOILED	

NO. OF KEYS RECEIVED:
REMOTE CONTROL FOR ALARM: ☐ YES ☐ NO

FOR RESTRATION

Ray Bennett

If this shipment is to be delivered to the consignee without recourse on the consignor, the consignor shall sign the following statement:
The carrier shall not make delivery of this shipment without payment of freight and all other lawful charges.

Signature of Consignor

If charges are to be prepaid, write or stamp here, "To be Prepaid."

Received $ to apply in prepayment of the charges on the property described hereon.

Agent or Cashier

Per (The signature here acknowledges on the amount prepaid.)

Charges Advanced:
$

ODOMETER AT DESTINATION:

NOTE: STAR FLEET WILL NOT BE RESPONSIBLE FOR PERSONAL ITEMS IN VEHICLE.

- STAR FLEET DOES NOT GUARANTEE DELIVERY ON ANY PARTICULAR SCHEDULE. THIS AND OTHER ITEMS OF THE CONTRACT OF CARRIAGE ARE GOVERNED BY THE UNIFORM STRAIGHT BILL OF LADING HEREIN.
- EXCEPTIONS MUST BE NOTED AT TIME OF DELIVERY.
- LOSS, SHORTAGE OR DAMAGES NOT NOTED WILL NOT BE HONORED.
- ALL CLAIMS MUST BE SUBMITTED IN WRITING WITHIN 90 DAYS FROM DATE OF DELIVERY.

AT ORIGIN	CONTRACTOR, CARRIER OR STAR FLEET REPRESENTATIVE (SIGNATURE)	DATE / TIME	AT DESTINATION	NOTE EXCEPTIONS HERE:	
	OWNER OR AUTHORIZED AGENT. I GUARANTEE TO PAY ALL TRANSPORTATION CHARGES SHOULD MY AGENT FAIL TO DO SO. (SIGNATURE)	DATE / TIME		CONTRACTOR, CARRIER OR STAR FLEET REPRESENTATIVE (SIGNATURE)	DATE 11-10-12 / TIME
				OWNER OR AUTHORIZED AGENT. I HEREBY CERTIFY I AM AUTHORIZED TO SIGN FOR ACCEPTANCE OF THE MOTOR VEHICLE AND MAKE NO CLAIMS FOR REPAIRS OR MISSING PARTS UNLES NOTED. **EXCEPTIONS MUST BE TAKEN AT DELIVERY.** (SIGNATURE)	DATE / TIME 11-10-12

60 Years after the R&T article the Alken is seen again in Volksworld Nov 2018

1958 ALKEN D-2

ALKENLY BEAUTIFUL

Venice, California; roller skating capital, Mecca for muscle bound exhibitionists and the birthplace of one of the prettiest VW-based fibreglass Beetle body conversions ever. Meet the Alken D-2...

Words Ian Cushway **Photos** Jeff Lipnichan

1958 ALKEN D-2

"Weighing 200lb less than a Beetle, inevitably it was quicker"

Back in the mid-1950s there was a huge appetite for open topped two-seaters, especially in the States. The Americans simply couldn't get enough of them. And it was something that didn't go unnoticed by Volkswagen, which is why Ghia's Luigi Segre hurriedly penned a design for coachbuilders Karmann to make a new, sportier version of the Beetle in 1955. The thing is, the Karmann Ghia was a bit too heavy to be particularly 'sporty', and it was also pretty expensive.

That left a window of opportunity which small companies specialising in fibreglass bodies, able to be bolted atop a Bug floorpan, were quick to exploit.

One such company was California-based Alken with its spectacularly beautiful D-2, designed by Bill Pierson, an example of which you can see here.

Weighing 200lb less than a Beetle, inevitably it was quicker – but more than that, it was also lovely to look at with its plunging 911-esque front end and squared, scalpel sharp finned rump.

The body, which retailed at $1295 was supplied ready to drop on a standard VW chassis and included an integral bonded-in instrument panel, conventional door posts, front and rear bumpers, arch liners, and even ducts for a heating system. Buyers were provided with the necessary windscreen surround but needed to source a 1951-'53 Ford Consul/Zephyr windscreen to go in it. Torsional rigidity was courtesy of 16 huge fibreglass aircraft-style box sections which fitted integrally within the body. It worked well, obviously, with *Road & Track* magazine noting that it was "considerably more rigid than most open sports cars, with no rattles or shakes," when they drove it for three days over a variety of road surfaces for a roadtest that appeared in its November 1958 issue.

Items like the seats, instruments and lighting simply bolted straight in. In fact, so easy was the installation that Alken reckoned that even the inexperienced could remove the stock VW 'shell and install the roadster body, complete with all the necessary rewiring, in 19 hours. There was even a spot on the fabric hood where the Wolfsburg crest could be located.

And it wasn't just *Road & Track* who thought it was "the best engineered fibreglass body" they'd seen. *Motor Trend* paid it the ultimate compliment when it said it "Feels more like a Porsche than a Volkswagen."

Rare survivor

Normally, underneath that svelte fibreglass body you would find stock VW underpinnings which, according to *Road & Track*, provided the Alken with an improved fore and aft weight distribution, as well as noticeably better handling. But, given the period, and the usual quest for more power, it's unlikely many of those eager speed-hungry owners kept things too factory. Which brings us neatly to the '58 Alken you see here belonging to Jeff Lipnichan, which, being Porsche-powered, fits that profile perfectly.

^ Shot in July 1958 for *Motor Trend* magazine, the original caption for this photo touted the Alken as having better visibility, more storage and being lighter, longer and lower than the Beetle. The body, it said, "Made Germany's car that was built like a sports car look and handle like a sports car"

Photo Getty Images

< Jeff fell in love with the idea of one day owning an Alken three decades ago. Since then he's become an Alken aficionado

> Jeff made special mounts for those fibreglass 356 bucket seats before covering them in leather. He also made the tonneau cover

Jeff, from Scranton in Pennsylvania, fell in love with the idea of buying an Alken when he spotted a picture in a VW book. "I guess about 30 years ago or more, I was thumbing through a copy of Dan Post's *Nine Lives Later* when I spotted the car, became hooked, and decided I had to have one," he explained.

"In Dan's book, it says there might have been 50 made, but I put the figure at a couple of dozen, so I knew I would have a bit of a search on my hands finding one for sale," he says.

After discovering lots of articles on the car, he set about tracing the four Alkens (a blue, red, white and yellow car) that he'd seen featured. "People didn't know what they were," he explains, "but when I started asking questions, I was told about a red one in upper California. I called the owner, and asked him to keep a note of my details should he ever want to sell it. About five years later, when his wife passed, he started to sell stuff and I bought the Alken.

"It's a pretty rare car," confirms Jeff. "In fact, it's only one of four remaining bodies. In 1958, the kit was actually as pricey as the KG, which is probably why it never caught on."

THE BUILD

The rare Alken sat abandoned since 1978 when Jeff acquired it

The original chassis was too far gone, so Jeff got hold of a '58 pair instead, transferring period 356 Porsche parts in the process

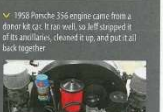
Thanks to its box sections, the Alken's fibreglass shell is incredibly rigid and has lasted well. That said, Jeff had to learn a variety of fibreglass laying skills to carry out repairs

Jeff made new panels in the engine bay to accommodate the 356 Porsche engine as well as panels to create a new luggage area

Original fuel tank had rusted, so Jeff modified a '56 Beetle tank with a central filler instead

These bespoke Alken script badges were made especially for Jeff by a 3D specialist, based on original advertising material

The body was trial fitted to the chassis so Jeff could get the ride height exactly how he wanted

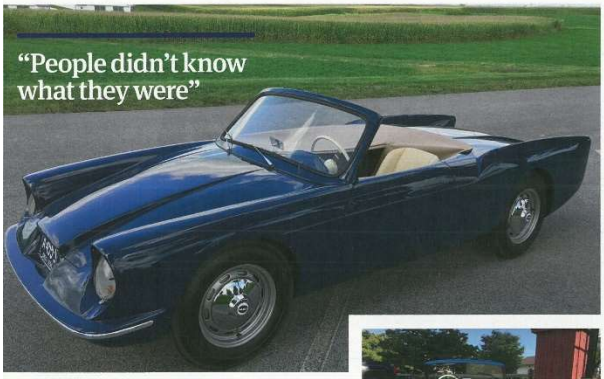


1958 Porsche 356 engine came from a donor kit car. It ran well, so Jeff stripped it of its ancillaries, cleaned it up, and put it all back together

A filler primer was used to get the perfect finish prior to the final respray

Finally, it was time to put the gleaming Azure Blue painted body back on the fully prepared floorpan

"People didn't know what they were"



^ Jeff was sent this image of his car from a descendent of the company, Nic-L-Silver, that converted it to electric power back in 1958

Digging the details

Jeff's managed to discover an enormous amount about the car's history – as well as make contact with other Alken owners from the past. Not only that, but he's done most of the restoration work himself. As he puts it, modestly: "I have two engineering degrees and just love the mechanical aspects of old cars."

Said Jeff: "When I got it the '57 chassis was still with it and the car had never been repainted. The grey in the early pictures is where the original red paint had worn off." But get this, he reckons it was indeed his car that appeared in that 1958 *Road & Track* article mentioned earlier. "It's the dark coloured car. It was built by the Alken Corporation and put together the way they wanted with shaved door handles, tonneau cover, door panels, mirror and several other items – all of which match the car in the pictures."

Jeff discovered that his Alken, built for the 1957 Los Angeles Fair, was actually converted to battery power by the Nic-L-Silver battery company in 1958. "When I got it, all the original electrics were stripped out and a Fiat rear axle was installed so the chassis, having been modified, wasn't usable. The front axle was changed at some point, too, when it was converted to balljoints and disc brakes. Wheel adaptors had been custom made for the wide-5 rims at the rear to allow them to bolt up to the Fiat disc brakes."

Apparently, the car subsequently sat abandoned in the Nic-L-Silver warehouse when the company went bust in 1978 at which point it was sold for scrap.

Donor card

Needless to say, having stood so long, the vehicle was in a pretty sorry state. But with the body mostly intact, for Jeff, the first priority would be to sort out the chassis and running gear.

"I picked up a Bradley GT from a VW friend which had been modified to run Porsche running gear. The previous owner had bought a 1958 356 new, then, when it had become too rusty in the early '70s, moved all the parts over. It was ideal because it has the 356 brakes, transmission and 1600N engine, and while I hated the idea of pulling apart the Bradley, all the parts were period correct for the Alken build. It was all fitted up to a '58 floorpan that had new pan halves and framehead fitted."

The body was sent off for soda blasting, and while this was being done, Jeff got busy finding various other parts. He sent away a speedometer from his '57 Ghia to North Hollywood Speedometer, who also cut and lengthened the '57 wiper mechanism so it would fit under the dash. The original speedo in there was a Stewart-Warner 'survey speedometer' which was accurate up to 1/100 of a mile. It was obviously fitted when it was running on electricity so every inch was crucial.

Eager to check the health of the engine, he rebuilt the carbs and fuel pump and got it running, having "done some stuff" to loosen it up a little first. Many of the Porsche parts came from Stoddards in Ohio.

TECH INFO

BODY
1958 Alken D-2 sat on a '58 Beetle floorpan; painted Porsche Azure Blue; Bakelite turn signal relay converted to 12v; original 1958 Ohio licence plates; tail lights from 1948 Chevy; number plate lights from '58 Ford Country Squire

ENGINE
1958 Porsche 356A 1600N; Zenith 32NDIX carbs, Knecht round wire mesh air filters; Bosch blue coil; 12v Porsche 912 generator; Harley-Davidson exhaust tailpipes trimmed to fit stock system

TRANSMISSION
1958 356A transmission with modified nose mount for 1958 Beetle chassis

INTERIOR
356 fibreglass bucket seats and door panels trimmed in Texas cowhide; square weave carpet; Haartz stayfast canvas tonneau cover; 356 banjo steering wheel from Flat 4; 356 ignition and key; custom matched three-gauge facia; St Christopher shift knob; Alken D-2 script lettering; bomber style seatbelts; '58 Ghia dome light under dash; door pulls from 1950s Shoebox Ford; door hinges from '57 Chevy; door latches from '57 T-Bird; front and rear hood latches from 356 rear deck lid

SUSPENSION
Stock chassis lowered a few notches at the rear with Avis front beam adjusters; 1958 Karmann Ghia Pitman arm and anti-roll bar; Empi shocks

BRAKES
1958 aluminium 356A drum brakes

WHEELS AND TYRES
Stock Porsche 356 steel wheels (4.5in); Goodrich BF tyres (5.90x15); Empi logo hubcaps

V Lots of the running gear is from a 1958 Porsche 356, including the 1600N engine

Height of the moment

Before trial fitting the body, Jeff took his time getting the ride height and tyre choice right. "The lighter body meant it sat too high so I used Avis adjusters with an internal lock at the front and lowered the rear a few notches. Originally, they would have 'cut and turned' the axle tubes, but I wasn't confident that I'd get that bit right. The steering column angle is lower than the Beetle, so I used a Karmann Ghia Pitman arm to make it fit, and also a Ghia anti-roll bar. As for tyre choice, I went for vintage BF Goodrich tyres, sandblasted the 356 rims and painted the wheels silver before fitting them."

With the chassis and wheels sorted, Jeff turned his attention to the body. "I had to spend time learning how to make fibreglass laminated panels so I could carry out repairs and make a new engine tray to fit around the Porsche engine as well as making a floor for the luggage area.

The interior provided the next challenge. Alken made their own custom fibreglass bucket seats, but these had long gone so Jeff decided to fit suitably narrow fibreglass Speedster type seats and fit them on Summit Racing bases welded onto the 'pan.

Other jobs inside included finishing off the facia, adding a dash mounted mirror, fitting a banjo steering wheel and obtaining the various latches for the doors, bonnet and boot. Oh, and it needed fresh wiring which involved Jeff modifying a new loom meant for a '56/ '57 Beetle.

Alken fascination

By now you'll no doubt appreciate that the Alken was well and truly under Jeff's skin, and his interest extended way beyond the actual rebuild. Indeed, in between jobs, he was continuing his research and gathering archive photos, all the

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V Suicide rear hinged doors were an Alken idiosyncrasy

time adding to his forensic knowledge of the company and the handful of cars it produced.

One particular line of investigation, involved a 'for sale' ad for an Alken in a 1960 edition of *Road & Track* which usefully included the vendor's name and their address in Pacific Palisades, not far from where the Alken was made. Said Jeff, "After some research online I discovered they were still living at the same address, and incredibly I got through to the 81 year-old original vendor. We had a great conversation that lasted 20 minutes. He told me it was his car in the brochure and a few days later I received the original copy he'd got in the post. How cool was that, he'd kept it for all that time and then passed it on to me."

Finish line

Back to the restoration. Jeff primered the body with Transtart polyester quick fill primer, a body dolly proving useful to access the underside, then got Automotive Excellence in Eau Claire, PA to apply a fresh coat of 1953-era Porsche Azure Blue. Following that, it was just a few finishing touches, including upholstering the interior, getting the loom operational and the calling upon of a skilled 3D printer to create script badges for the dash. And ahem, believe it or not, a 3D model of Jeff's car in miniature.

So, after a long three years, and three decades after his interest was initially pricked, Jeff's Alken is finally finished. It's not only been a journey of discovery for Jeff, and an opportunity to learn new skills, but also a chance to create the ultimate version of what Alken originally intended. Down to the last latch bolt, engine detail and brake drum... ■

Read the complete story of Jeff's Alken build, (search '57/58 Alken Fiberglass Coachbuilt Project) at *www.thesamba.com*

"it was indeed his car that appeared in the original 1958 *Road & Track* article"

< The Alken offered plenty of glamour and saw lots of track action in the late 1950s/early '60s

> The Alken was made in California, the idea being that the average Joe could swap over all the bits from a Beetle in as little as 19 hours


FERRARI ③
MERCEDES ④
1958 ALKEN D2