

Lehmann-Peterson made bigger better

By Gregg D. Merksamer

Extended-wheelbase limousines with spacious six- or eight-door bodies have been offered by coachbuilders for several decades, with Armbruster & Company of Fort Smith, Arkansas, believed to be the first firm to target such a vehicle at the "band bus" trade in the late 1920s. In the decades that followed, similar cars were built for resorts, airport shuttle services, and funeral homes by the shop of Siebert in Toledo, Ohio; Sayers & Scovill of Cincinnati; National Coaches of Knightstown, Indiana; or the Memphian concern in Tennessee, to cite a few examples. But the "stretch" limousine common today, with four doors and a host of luxury amenities, did not arrive on the American scene until Lehmann-Peterson of Chicago unveiled its first Lincolns in May, 1963.

This pioneering venture got its start when Robert Peterson, a builder of Indianapolis race cars, was asked by fellow racing enthusiast George Lehmann if he would be interested in constructing a prototype limousine.

"I had just rebuilt a Scarab automobile that had broken into three pieces, and he was quite impressed by what I had done on that car," Peterson recalled during an interview published in *Limousine & Chauffeur* magazine's January, 1986, issue. "I had always been fond of the idea of building a limousine, but never had a reason to do it. The final deal we came to was that I would stretch the cars and he would provide the money." The suicide-door Continental was selected for the project simply because Lehmann was fond of Lincolns,

though it turned out that the slab-sided body and admirably restrained ornamentation introduced on 1961 models stretched extremely well.

The first two prototypes built from 1963 sedans had 36-in. wheelbase extensions, while the later cars, taking advantage of the 1964 Lincoln's three-in.-longer, 126-in. wheelbase, had 34-in. center stretches yielding a 160-in. wheelbase and 250.3-in. overall length. In marked contrast to the folding, forward-facing jump seats used in Cadillac's factory-constructed Series Seventy-Five limousines and the Chrysler Crown Imperials, built in Turin, Italy, by carrozzeria Ghia, the interior's chief distinguishing feature was a pair of rear-facing seats flanking a walnut stereo and beverage cabinet mounted on the driveshaft tunnel. A padded leatherette (later vinyl) top with a formal backlight, thick mouton carpeting, and built-in umbrella stowage under the front seat further enhanced the feel of exclusivity.

Good looks and lavish appointments aside, the secret of Lehmann-Peterson's success was that the partners secured Ford Motor Company's official blessing for their project from the beginning. After completing the first prototype, Lehmann and Peterson brought it to Dearborn where Peterson recalled, "they got all of the engineers together and had no less than 60 people looking at the car. They were very cautious about building an automobile that was about 500 pounds heavier than the standard automobile at the time, because they wanted something struc-

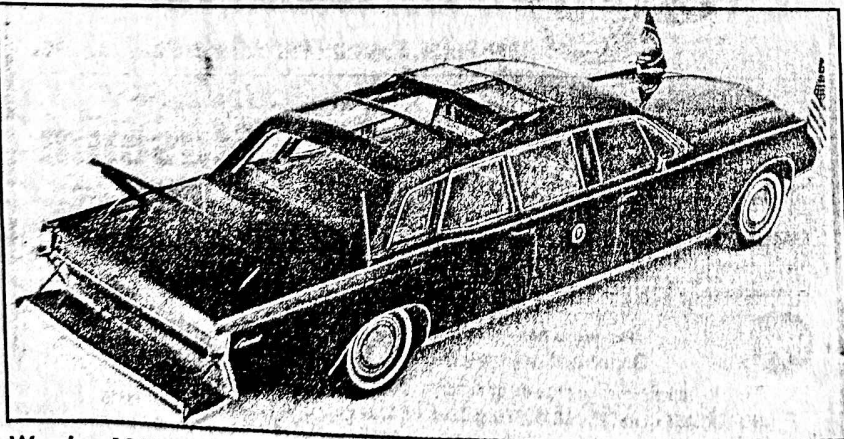
turally safe." The pair were to leave the prototype behind after preliminary testing, and Peterson learned some years later that the department had taken the vehicle and loaded it with as many bumps they could get into it. They drove it into the air, but they were unable to break it." Once a 1964 model limousine prepared in November, 1963, passed a more rigorous and systematic 40,000-mile durability test at the Dearborn proving grounds, the Ford Motor Company agreed to cover Lehmann-Peterson's conversion with the standard Lincoln two-year or 24,000-mile warranty, and to take orders for the cars through Lincoln dealers on an exclusive basis.

"Incidentally," Peterson added, "those limousines tended to have a lower warranty cost than a standard Lincoln. That used to mystify both Ford and ourselves until we realized that we really priced over a limousine when it was finished to find every possible defect and fix it."

One of the first places where a Lehmann-Peterson Lincoln went on public display was the 8th annual International Automobile Show, held at the New York Coliseum April 4-12, 1964. Though the \$15,153.50 base price of a 1964 or 1965 model represented a \$5,000 premium over a Cadillac factory formal limousine and a big boost from the \$13,400 price originally announced in 1963, the limousine, model 53A, found a ready market among customers seeking a slightly cheaper alternative to the conceptually similar \$24,000 Mercedes-Benz 600 Pullman or greater exclusivity than was possible with a Fleetwood Seventy-Five.

"We had what we called a standard model," Peterson remembered, "but, basically, our customers were wealthy people who wanted certain things on their cars," and some of the heavily optioned examples ended up costing closer to \$20,000. As output increased from 15 units in 1964 to 85 in 1965 and 130 in 1966. (Most sources agree that 1966 was the peak year for volume, but offer figures ranging from 104 to 159 vehicles for 1966 production), the Lincoln plant in Wixom, Michigan, began to drop-ship cars in Chicago, where Lehmann-Peterson opened a 16,000-square-foot plant on Armitage Street that could complete four limousines a week. A-list purchasers included Robert F. Kennedy, Jerry Lewis, Sophia Loren, and Aristotle Onassis, while the opening reel of the 1965 James Bond movie *Thunderball* marked the first of several high-profile movie appearances of the car.

It soon became apparent that heads of state felt right at home in the spacious rear compartment. The Dutch Royal family purchased a pair of Lehmann-Petersons, while one of the 1964 models used for Ford's durability testing, upon direct orders from Henry Ford II, was turned into an open-top

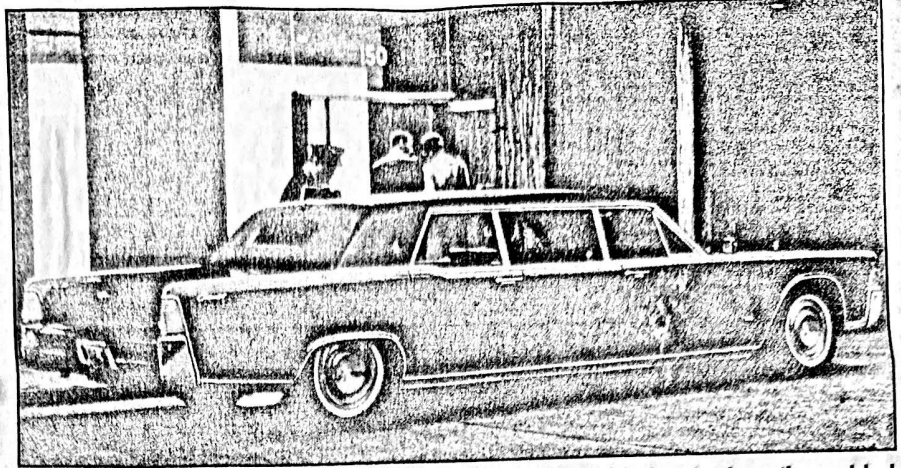


Wearing 1969 exterior trim by the time it entered service in November, 1968, this six-ton, armor-plated 1967 Lehmann-Peterson presidential limousine had a two-inch raised roof with opening glass panels that could be fitted with a vinyl cover to prevent heat build-up when the car was parked. Following its retirement in 1981, it was donated to the Richard Nixon Birthplace and Library in Yorba Linda, California. (Ford Motor Co. photo)

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trade vehicle for Pope Paul VI's October, 1965, visit to New York City. To complete the conversion for the Pope's visit in just nine days, Lehmann-Peterson had as many as eight people working on the car simultaneously, installing side and rear running boards, fluorescent interior lighting, a throne-type rear seat that could be raised 7 in., a loud-speaker system powered by four trunk-mounted 12-volt batteries, and a wraparound Plexiglas windshield that resembled the "flying bridge" on a yacht. Calvin Beauregard, then the transportation manager attached to Ford's New York public relations office, recalled with pride some years later how, after the Pope held mass at Yankee Stadium and climbed into the open car in full public view, portable power drills were used to quickly fit a transparent plastic top in the stadium tunnel, allowing it to emerge onto the street in fully closed form just 18 seconds later! After being used for more parade work in Chicago, the car returned to papal duty in the summer of 1968 when it was shipped to Cartagena, Columbia, aboard Grace Lines' S.S. *Santa Mariana*. Two forklifts were required to maneuver the car safely onto the dock, and afterwards, it was flown 400 miles inland to Bogota aboard a Columbian Air Force C-130 for Paul VI's use at the 39th International Eucharistic Congress. Not only was the engine returned at this time for the 6,000-ft. altitude, the rear console was fit with air conditioning controls and a special compartment for small items that the Pope blessed and passed out as gifts.

Indisputably, the ultimate Lehmann-Peterson Lincoln was the 6-ton, armor-plated presidential limousine delivered to Washington, D.C., in October, 1968,



This rear view of a 1965 Lehmann-Peterson Lincoln highlights the heavily padded vinyl roof with its privacy opera window. The base price of this model, officially designated 53A, was \$15,153.50, though the V-shaped antenna with forward-pointing extensions indicates a center console television was fitted at extra cost. (Richard J. Conjalka collection)

which represented a world record-setting \$500,000 in development and construction costs, even though the Ford Motor Company, recognizing the car's publicity value, leased it to the White House for a token fee of \$1 a year. Sharing its 160-in. wheelbase with other Lehmann-Peterson Lincolns, the car's most distinctive feature was a 2-in. raised roof that was fit with extra rear quarter windows and a six-panel, bulletproof-glass skylight that hinged open so the president could wave to crowds during parades. A vinyl cover could be fit to the top to deter heat build-up when the vehicle was parked.

Other major modifications included a two-way public address system, front fender-mounted flag holders illuminated by three miniature spotlights, a fold-down rear bumper step and a hydraulically retracted trunk rail for the Secret Service agents, and rubber-

edged steel inserts for the 8.90 x 15-in. Firestone tires that afforded 50 mph run-flat capabilities. All in all, this car took so long to build that the base vehicle was a 1967 Continental fit with 1969 model trim by the time it was first used by President-elect Richard Milhous Nixon for a November, 1968, trip from the airport to Walter Reed Army Hospital. Following its retirement in 1981, the Ford Motor Company donated it to the Richard Nixon Birthplace and Library in Yorba Linda, California, in August, 1996; it is also worth noting that Lehmann-Peterson created the Secret Service escort vehicles that inevitably accompanied the limousine on its public appearances.

During the time they were on sale from 1964 to 1970, Lehmann-Peterson's Lincolns also raised the bar with regards to the amenities expected in limousines, introducing the cognoscente

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two-inch raised roof with opening glass panels that could be fitted with a vinyl cover to prevent heat build-up when the car was parked. Following its retirement in 1981, it was donated to the Richard Nixon Birthplace and Library in Yorba Linda, California. (Ford Motor Co. photo)

testing, upon direct orders from Henry Ford II, was turned into an open-top

"L" CARS For Sale

continued

LINCOLN: 1966 Continental convertible, white, black top, maroon interior, everything works, great road car, presentable fun car, must sell, \$6,900. PH: 617-899-3748, MA. (JULY)

LINCOLN: 1966 Continental convertible, reducing collection and moving, new brakes, exhaust, tires, springs, silver & turquoise, all electrics work, excellent driver, \$7,500 obo. 908-832-7610, NJ. (JULY)

LINCOLN: 1966 Continental 4-door convertible, full loaded, low mileage, excellent condition, \$12,900. PH: 702-896-8998, Las Vegas, NV. (AUG)

LINCOLN: 1966 Continental, complete runs, drives good body, \$1,000. PH: 704-321-5213, NC.

CONTINENTAL: 1966 4-dr convertible, 64,000 miles, good running, rust-free Montana car, everything works, \$6,200. Montana Collector Cars, 406-476-3315, 476-3341, MT.

LINCOLN: 1966 Continental convertible sedan, 77,000 miles, in primer, air conditioning, leather, needs paint, \$3,900. Chicago Car Exchange, Lake Bluff, IL 60044. PH: 708-234-1975, FAX: 708-234-1941.

LINCOLN: 1966 Continental 4-door convertible, teal blue w/white top, matching leather interior, one owner, 86,215 original miles, always garaged, ps, pb, pw, meticulously maintained, \$15,000 obo. Mr Kelly, 508-345-4528, MA.

LINCOLN: 1966 Continental conv, excellent orig cond, w/bl drive anywhere, \$8,900. PH: 804-843-2639, 804-843-2643, VA.

LINCOLN: 1966 Continental coupe, 57,000 miles, one owner, beautiful condition, runs superbly, \$4,800, negotiable. 915-833-9451, El Paso, TX. (AUG)

LINCOLN: 1966 Continental convertible, 88,500 miles, charcoal with black interior, very good condition, \$6,000. Chris, 717-274-5745, PA.

LINCOLN: 1967 conv 4-dr, pale yellow, black interior, excellent condition, \$12,900. PH: 201-848-8808, NJ. (AUG)

LINCOLN: 1967 2-door, red, black vinyl top, one owner, immaculate original condition, motor, upholstery exceptional condition, loaded, air, power, photo available, \$5,500. 3120 E 28th St, Tulsa, OK 74114, PH: 918-742-3433. (JULY)

LINCOLN: 1967 4-door convertible, solid straight car with 462 V8, a/c, correct original dark blue leather, finished in correct platinum, 3 owner car with only 64,501 actual miles, last year for this model, \$12,950; call, write or FAX: Duffy's Collectible Cars, 250 Classic Car Ct SW, Cedar Rapids, IA 52404, PH: 319-364-7000, FAX: 319-364-4036.

LINCOLN: 1967 4-door conv, beautiful yellow with new black top, excellent condition, 67,000 miles, \$13,000. Ernie, 614-393-3034, OH.

LINCOLN: 1967 4-door convertible, dark blue, white top, red leather interior, excellent top and body (one dent, left rear door), great engine (462) and drivetrain, good paint, fair interior, 114,000 miles, \$10,500. PH: 510-283-5524, Walnut Creek, CA.

LINCOLN: 1967 Cont, new condition, everything original, includes paint, \$5,800. PH: 908-689-6621, Warren County, NJ. (JULY)

LINCOLN: 1967 Continental, over \$8,000 in restoration, body and mechanical, asking \$6,000. PH: 203-722-9330, 203-228-0127, CT. (JULY)

LINCOLN: 1967 Continental convertible 4-door, white, white/white, southern California car, original rebuilt 300 miles engine, with new carb, water pump, starter, brakes, steering and top, very nice interior, \$8,500. PH: 619-598-8770, CA. (JULY)

LINCOLN: 1967 Continental conv, white with red interior, \$4,500 or best offer. John Keller, 202-362-1795, DC.

LINCOLN: 1967 Continental 4-dr convertible, blue/blue leather, white top, 87,000 miles, all power, everything works, very good condition, \$7,200. PH: 508-823-2525, MA. (JULY)

LINCOLN: 1967 Continental conv, light blue ext, dark blue leather interior, ps, pb, a/c, cruise, AM radio, power seat, windows, vents, everything works, drives beautifully, \$11,000. PH: 414-367-2849 after 3 pm, WI. (AUG)

LINCOLN: 1967 Continental 4-dr convertibles, (3), one daily driver, needs nothing, one needs top installed, interior work and TLC, one for parts with good interior, \$11,000 all three. Tom, 609-723-1452, NJ.

LINCOLN: 1967 Continental 4-dr sedan, silver w/black cloth interior, 34,000 miles, beautiful original car, \$7,500; 1966 Lincoln Continental coupe, green, black vinyl roof and green leather interior, dismantled for restoration, \$800 worth of engine compartment wiring harnesses included, 54,000 miles, \$1,000; 1966 Lincoln Continental 4-dr conv, green, black top and green leather interior, restorable or excellent parts car, \$500; 1972 Lincoln Continental Town Coupe, blue w/white vinyl top, like new blue leather interior, 35,000 miles, \$3,500; 1939 LZ sedan, parts car, \$100. Call Miki Rose, 401-364-3839, M-F 9-5, RI.

LINCOLN: 1967 Lehmann-Peterson limo, only 40,000 miles, specially built for Beer Baron August A. Busch, black with tan int., all options including suicide doors, \$3,998. Daniel Schmitt & Co, 314-291-4441, MO.

LINCOLN: 1968 Continental 4-door, black, top and interior, 105,000 miles, always garaged, inside and out, always garaged, extensive new and NOS parts, maintained for last 10 years by Baker's Auto, \$4,999. Richard, 203-247-3239, CT. (JULY)

LINCOLN: 1968 Continental Limited 462, 88,000 miles, runs, teal, white leather interior; 1969 Continental 460, 100,000 miles, red, red leather interior, both need restoring, \$2,500 for both, obo. Bill, 518-374-7312, 518-393-3220 days, Schenectady, NY. (JULY)

LINCOLN: 1968 Continental, 60,000 miles, needs some work because has not been driven since 1985, was perfect then, first \$1,600 tows it away. Albert, 800-647-4637. (SEPT)

LINCOLN: 1968 Continental, suicide doors, rebuilt motor, new exhaust, tires, total brake system, front end rebuilt, over \$4,000 invested, \$2,500 obo. 906-524-7196, MI.

LEHMANN-PETERSON: 1968 limo, all body work done & repainted orig black, both bumpers rechromed, this is a no rust car that had extra soundproofing installed when stripped, no fluid leaks including exhaust, rear comp is black Chalfonte fabric, front is black leather, power & tilt steering, p brakes, p windows and vents, cruise, p ant, rear window defog and divider, needs vinyl top replaced and few details reattached, asking \$6,900. John Reitz, 241 Lenker Ave, Sunbury, PA 17801, PH: 717-286-5584.

LINCOLN: 1969 Continental suicide door sedan, maroon, black leather interior, roof, high option, rust-free Kentucky car, excellent condition, \$6,950, negotiable or trade. Chip's, 203-878-1994, Milford, CT. (JULY)

LINCOLN: 1969 Continental 4-dr, 70,000 miles, runs well, also 1969 Continental parts car, offers. Gary Palka, 913-648-8520 days, KS. (JULY)

LINCOLN: 1969 Continental Mark III, medium gold with black vinyl top, black leather interior, full power options, Vogue tires, excellent condition, newly detailed, one owner. 816-452-4624, Kansas City, MO.

CONTINENTAL: 1969 four-door, runs great, 94,800 miles, \$900. PH: 801-462-3245 after 6 pm, UT.

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LEHMANN-PETERSON: 1969 limousine, family owned since new, black, silver interior, excellent condition, TV, \$13,000 obo. 913-478-4569, KS. (JULY)

LINCOLN: 1969 Lehmann-Peterson limousine, runs well, always garaged, must sell, asking \$12,900, no reasonable offer refused. 715-834-1941, WI.

LINCOLN: 1969 Mark III, 100% original, show quality, leather, Michelins, original mats, 71,000 miles, aqua

century TV Bar. Dan Schmidt

LINCOLN: 1969 Mark III, white, excellent dark green leather, very good mechanically, 3rd owner, California car, \$2,850. PH: 818-447-1097, CA. (AUG)

LINCOLN: 70 & 71 Mark III's, black, black, black, factory sunroof, \$3,700; red, red w/white, sunroof & headlight dimmer, all original, \$2,500; California registration problems, many parts avail also, body and interior, desperate, losing storage, out of state sale ok. 714-642-8687, CA. (AUG)

LINCOLN: 1970 Mark III, 58,000 original miles, cherry, \$10,750. obo PH: 916-673-6527, CA. (JULY)

LINCOLN: 1970 Mark III, loaded, one owner, 65K original miles, \$6,750 obo. 512-990-2487, Houston, TX.

LINCOLN: 1970 Mark III, excellent rust-free original, very nice paint, great chrome, near perfect original leather, white vinyl top; great mechanics, all options & power everything works, \$4,500. Ken, 614-442-0029; OH.

LINCOLN: 1971 Continental, very clean, 460 engine, 68,000 miles, \$3,500. PH: 708-974-4880, Palos Hills, IL. (JULY)

LINCOLN: 1971 Continental sedan, one owner original, 47,000 miles, very clean, estate, \$3,500 firm. 904-439-7621, FL. (JULY)

LINCOLN: 1971 Continental, nice original, \$1,500; can deliver. 509-921-9475, WA.

LINCOLN: 1971 Mark III, blue-gray, black vinyl top, Cartier edition, black leather interior, one owner, best maintenance, all original; mint condition, 38,000 miles, \$9,500. Ric, 517-631-2067, MI. (SEPT)

LINCOLN: 1971 Mark III, full power, nice driver, rust-free straight Arizona car, \$2,750. Procar, 602-377-9355, AZ.

LINCOLN: 71 Mk III, black on black, 64K original miles, mint interior, new tires, car runs, looks and drives excellent, \$6,000. PH: 203-659-9451 or 203-633-9083, CT.

LINCOLN: 1971 Mark III, white interior and exterior, including top, mint condition, always garaged, best of maintenance, never wrecked, beautiful eye-catching Mark. B Blume, 317-786-2603, IN. (SEPT)

LINCOLN: 1971 Mark III, metallic brown with gold padded roof, body excellent, new tires, driven by minister on Sundays, estate sale, \$3,850. PH: 508-768-7856, Essex, MA.

LINCOLN: 1972 coupe (not Mark IV), moon dust ginger, complete engine overhaul, good condition, \$1,800. Keith Phillips, 910-282-4102, Greensboro, NC. (JULY)

LINCOLN: 1972 Continental 4-dr, 60,000 miles, one owner, excellent, lost storage, best offer. 908-431-2011, NJ. (JULY)

LINCOLN: 1972 Mark IV, triple white with 8,200 original miles, all power with 460 ci engine, sale or trade. 305-782-1744, FL.

LINCOLN: 1973 stretch limo, divider, leather, sunroof, 43,000, \$7,500. PH: 908-291-5240, NJ. (AUG)

LINCOLN: 1973 Continental, 65,000 miles, yellow, sunroof, excellent condition, \$3,750 obo. 314-576-6364, MO. (AUG)

LINCOLN: 1973 Continental Mark IV, mileage: 76,850, one owner, garage kept, light blue exterior, gray leather interior, 460 cubic inch engine (Ford), no rust, contact: Harold J. Sues, 1643 Oakland St, Bethlehem, PA 18017, PH: 610-691-8908.

LINCOLN: 1973 Continental 4-door, 30,000 original miles, rust-free California car, like new, \$2,800. PH: 612-446-1950, MN.

LINCOLN: 1973 Continental Mark IV, indoor storage since 1988, original AZ car, not registered since 1983, \$1,000 obo, lost storage, must sell. Dan, 708-665-7926, no collect please, IL.

LINCOLN: 1973 Continental 4-dr, loaded, very clean inside and outside, new carb, brakes, starter, master cylinder, new tires, 61,000 actual miles, drive anywhere, needs only TLC, easy restoration, \$1,800. PH: 313-922-4429, leave message, MI.

MARK III: 1973, nice orig, \$3,800. PH: 602-883-3641, AZ.

LINCOLN: 1973 Mark IV, 100,000 miles, 2nd owner, good driver, must sell, best offer. 908-431-2011, NJ. (JULY)

LINCOLN: 1973 Mark IV, 56,000 miles, one owner, cream with saddle leather, 460, V8, a/c, climate control, tilt, cruise, p/seats, perfect body, drives excellent, \$4,995 or best offer. 201-827-2207, NJ. (JULY)

**511 Bluff Trail
San Antonio, TX 78216
(210)490-3134**

February 8, 1997

Mr. Brad Luse
P. O. Box 188
Tivoli, NY 12583

Dear Mr. Luse:

This letter is to confirm our conversation today regarding the certification needed for my Lehmann-Peterson. My plans are to show it at the Mid America Meet in Houston, April 1997. It is a 1967 Lincoln, vehicle identification number 7Y80G816437. The only known changes or modifications being the addition of a temperature gauge under the dash and the possible addition of a fan in front of the radiator with a power switch under the steering wheel.

The original owner was Augustus Busch. Martin Hennesy purchased the car from Mr. Busch with twenty thousand miles in 1971. I purchased the car from Mr. Hennesy with forty four thousand miles in 1994.

Enclosed are a couple of photos of my 1967 Lehmann-Peterson. Should you have any additional questions, please call me at my home number listed above.

Sincerely,

John

