

Vox Temporis—*Letters to the Editor*

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Car Clocks in Their Dashboards

Tacoma, WA, has two major car museums: America's Car Museum and the LeMay Family Collection. Both originated from the collecting passion of Harold E. "Lucky" LeMay (1919-2000), who was recorded in 1998 in the *Guinness Book of World Records* for "Largest Antique & Vintage Vehicle Collection."

While the reasons for the split into two major museums are controversial, it created a double opportunity to view hundreds and hundreds of classic motorized vehicles in downtown Tacoma and on the city's outskirts. I was invited to speak at the Pacific Northwest Regional in Tacoma in May, and I was encouraged to visit these museums if I had extra time. I did, and I did.

Many horology collectors also admire classic cars and sometimes collect them. My interest in cars began as a teenager, and although nothing exciting is in my garage these days, as a younger man I owned cars made by MG, Austin Healey, Jaguar, Mercedes, and Alfa Romeo. While most of the cars in the two museums are American-made, some foreign marques are represented there, too.

I first visited America's Car Museum. As I entered the modern multilevel building, I made it my mission to seek out and photograph as many car clocks as possible. I realized that, although we in the NAWCC regularly see old car clocks at auctions and at marts, we rarely see them where they originated—in dashboards where they were an integral part of the car's interior designs viewed by every driver. In two articles on the subject—Mel Kaye's "The Most Wonderful Automobile Parts," *NAWCC Bulletin*, No. 337 (April 2002): 167-176 and Ray Brown's "Time Travelers: A History of Electric Clocks for the American Automobile," *Watch & Clock Bulletin*, No. 416 (July/August 2015): 307-322—we may view many clock examples, but only one in place.

During my hours at that museum, I spent time in its library with Debbie Kray, education manager, who told me that nobody else had ever asked about car clocks, and there was nothing specifically about them in the library. We looked in many books, including owner's and repair manuals, but found very little of relevance. She is interested now, she has the *Bulletin* references, and she has ordered a copy of *Dashboards*, a 1994 picture book by David Holland, which I bought via Amazon after returning home, and recommended.



The next day, I drove to the second museum on the 100-acre grounds of the former Marymount Military Academy. Far less fancy and far more crowded with cars in large outbuildings, this facility has ongoing LeMay family involvement. I requested a guide who could help with my mission and was grateful for a volunteer who opened doors and allowed me to slide in for better camera angles. He, too, said I was the first with a car clock focus.

These photos are a sampling of the many I captured. I confess that these high-style and old high-tech dashboards are as appealing to me as timepieces with Willard and Howard on their dials.

For more information about the museums, please visit www.americascarmuseum.org and www.lemaymarymount.org.

—Bob Frishman, FNAWCC (MA)

