

THE HUDSON TRIANGLE

Exclusively for members of the Hudson Essex Terraplane Historical Society.

A 501(c)(3) Charitable Organization

Volume 14 Issue 5



**1953 Hudson Hornet
Model 7C Convertible Brougham**

6 Cylinders — 145 Hp

124" W/B

308 CID

Photograph provided by William Lentz

The Starting Line

The fall driving season is here! We finished off the summer with a nice gathering at the Queen Mary, complements of the CIC and Quentin Roberts.



Photo by Jim Cherry

September found many HET members from the California chapters (and Utah and Nevada) at the All-California Meet at San Simeon, just down the road from the Hearst Castle.



The **Hudson Handbook of Facts** is back from the printer. It has been an interesting project. There is a lot to writing a book besides filling pages. Copies are now available - watch the WTN.

Bob

***Dedicated to
Preserving the
History of Hudson Motor Cars***

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Behind the Wheel

With Mike

It must be that we are all having fun. As the saying goes, "Time flies when you're having fun." And boy, time is flying.

The HETHS continues to plan. The Society badly needs a **membership drive** and that is a priority. At the same time the **library** continues to be a concern for a variety of reasons so we will have to take action there as well. And, of course, we still need an official Hudson-Essex-Terraplane **museum**.

There is some exciting news. Bob Ross, your friendly *Triangle* editor, has written and published a book. The ***Hudson-Essex-Terraplane Motor Cars Handbook of Facts*** is available. Bob allowed me an early read of the book. It is an impressive collection of facts about the Hudson Motor Car Company, its cars, people and history. The book is written in such a way that it is not just a collection of facts but reads in a very entertaining style.

If I am correct, Bob's intention was to collect as many facts about the company and its cars as he could and put them in one place. In the beginning he saw the project as that of developing a reference manual. And it is. However it is also a document that is fun to pick up and peruse.

This book will become a staple for members of the **HETHS** and the **HET Club**. And if you are like most of us you will want a copy. Finally, a lot of HMCC facts can be found in one place.

As members of the HETHS, you may be asked to help one of our worthy projects in the near future. When asked, please consider helping. There are many ways to help one of

the projects mentioned above, and money is only one of them. All of the projects, the museum, a membership drive, and the library projects will all get done and it will be so much easier when you decide to help.

In the meantime, the holiday season is coming and I hope all of you have a rewarding and wonderful time!

Mike

HET Motor Cars Handbook of Hudson Facts



200+ pages about HMCC people, products and racers. A compilation of 100's of facts and photos from a literature search of over 160 references including racing records and production figures. Convenient glove compartment-size notebook. \$33 including shipping, Check, MO or PayPal. Bob Ross, 150 South Michillinda Avenue, Sierra Madre, CA 91024

hmcc.handbook@elkay.org

<http://resk.info/webpage/brochure.htm>

The Hudson Story, Part VII: The Merger and the End of the White Triangle

The Last “Real” Hudsons

The very late forties and early fifties were a transition period for the American automotive industry. The pent up demand for new cars, caused by the war years, was coming to a close. The automotive market was, once again, becoming a buyers market. The automakers knew this would happen, and most prepared in their own way.

Hudson had a winner in her “step-down”, and with her outstanding racing background, decided to bet her future on her new entry, the “Fabulous Hudson Hornet”. In 1951, based on her “step-down” design, and using a 308 high-performance inline six, the Hornet made her appearance. First, the outstanding car was introduced at the



Marshall Teague, seen here with his #6 car on Daytona Beach, became synonymous with Hudson performance in the Fifties.

showroom, and then, just as quickly, it was introduced to the American public on the NASCAR circuit. It was a natural at racing. It was fast, with great acceleration, and it had exceptional handling capabilities.

The “Fabulous Hudson Hornet” dominated the NASCAR scene from the time of her introduction in 1951 through 1954. Volumes have been written about those great racing years. The Hudson Hornet was at it’s zenith in ’52. She won 27 out of 34 NASCAR Grand Nationals that year. In ’53, the record was much the same, although she dropped

by 5 races, down to 22 wins. By 1954, her wins were down by another 5, for a total of 17 wins. Still, it was an impressive record by any standards.

But, as impressive as all those wins were, they somehow didn’t translate into sales. Over the decades, when a car manufacturer entered racing, their main purpose was to create publicity in order to bring buyers into the showroom, and ultimately sell cars. Hudson had been a race winner starting back in the ‘teens with her “Super Six”. She was a star performer at Pike’s Peak. She was known for fast cars, even in the thirties. All these times, wins lead to publicity, which lead to volume sales.

But, perhaps, times were changing. It was exciting to see your favorite brand win at the track, and Hudson fans had much to cheer about in the fifties. But, in earlier days, racing played a more important role. Winning not only meant prestige, but reliability and power as well. By the fifties, virtually all cars were reliable, and had enough power for practical family use. Winning a race, even in today’s world, always creates publicity, but may not lead to volume sales, as it did in the automotive world’s early days

While the Fabulous Hornet, was making a name for herself at the track, sales were dropping. Yes, some buyers bought Hudson because of her wins at the track, but not enough volume to put her over the top.

Nothing lasts forever!

What was once Hudson’s greatest asset was quickly becoming her Achilles Heel. At a time when the major auto manufacturers introduced a completely new body style every three years, and in some cases, even less, the buying public was always looking for something entirely new in the showroom. As advanced as the step-down was, unfortunately, it was looking dated. As time

went by, sales began to drop dramatically. In the early days of the step-down, sales were over the 140,000 mark, and some sources tell us that the company could only produce and sell about twenty-five percent of what they could have sold. By '51, sales had dropped to a little over 92,000, and by '52, 79,000, or just slightly over the break even point. To make matters worse, the body was of such a design and style, that it was expensive to redesign.

The "All New Jet": The car that killed Hudson?

By 1952, with sales still sagging, and production just slightly above the break even point, something had to be done. Was it time to move down-market once again? Barit and others in Hudson management had been eyeing the cute little Nash Rambler from its inception. Although the Ramblers sales numbers weren't particularly impressive, could Nash be onto something with their neat little compact car? Not only had Nash introduced the Rambler, but Kaiser had introduced the Henry J. By one source, sales for Kaiser's entry were pretty impressive. The car was even sold through the Sears Roebuck catalog under the Allstate name. Then there was Willys. The company had not built a true passenger car in the fullest sense, since before the war, but they were making inroads with their little Willys Aero.

Barit decided to pull out all stops and build a compact car. By all reports, when the first dealer brochures went out, the dealers fell in love with everything about it, from its size, its beautiful styling, and its technical design. It was to be of Hudson's true "Step-down Monobilt" construction, just like the senior Hudson, and sport a scaled down Hornet engine. What more could you ask for? It appeared to be Hudson's answer to slipping sales numbers.

Hudson's own stylist, Frank Spring, who designed the famed "Step-down" was commissioned, along with his staff, to develop the new entry. Not much has been mentioned in this series about Spring. But Frank Spring was a brilliant and talented designer, certainly ahead of his time. The design of the "Monobilt Step-down" can attest to that. By some sources, it's been reported that Spring did the initial design work for the advanced design as early as 1941. Had Frank Spring been working for one of the majors such as General Motors or Chrysler, suffice it to say his name would have been a household word among



automotive enthusiasts, much like Harley Earl, Virgil Exner, or Raymond Loewy.

But, it's been said that the greatest frustration for a designer, is when management takes the reins and tells the creator how his creation is to look. Sadly, such was the case with the Jet. Spring got his wish as far as the "Step-down" part was concerned, but reportedly, not much else. The new Jet didn't seem to have the same "personality" of the artist's drawings in the brochures originally presented to the dealers. One of the major problems, Barit insisted that the roofline be raised a full two inches. On a small car, that's a major change. The side view had some resemblance to the contemporary Ford, but on a compact, it just didn't seem to fit. The

car was boxy, stubby, and its added height only made things worse. The final result; a design only a mother could love. By at least one source, Spring was broken hearted over the finished product.

That being said, the Jet was actually a good car. From Hudson's inception, the company never deviated from the original goals of performance, service and value. The Jet was all that. It had the same "Monobilt Step-down" design as the senior models, it had a scaled down Hornet engine, and everything about the car was quality. The handling was superb, and performance wise, it could almost keep up with the famed Hornet.

When the Jet was introduced in 1953, it received mixed reviews. Although the handling and performance were superb, the lack luster styling disappointed many buyers. But perhaps most disappointing, was the price. The starting price for a new Jet was well over \$1,800 at a time when a buyer could get a new full size Ford or Chevrolet for not much over \$1,500! What had gone wrong? What was Hudson management thinking? Had they lost sight of their goal of entering the lower-price compact car market? The number one reason for buying a compact was economy, both in initial purchase price and to a lesser degree, fuel costs Hudson had stuck to her original goals, set some forty years earlier, of quality, performance and value, to the point that they had priced themselves right out of the compact car market.

However, despite the unimaginative styling, and the high sticker price, buyers still loved the handling and performance, so the Jet did sell in somewhat limited numbers. In '53, a little over 22,000 Jets found buyers. However, by '54, the sales were less than half that figure. The last Jet rolled off the assembly line on August 23rd, 1954, the shortest-lived production car ever built by Hudson.

Was the Jet the car that killed Hudson?

Absolutely not! It's true that if the Jet had been a success, it could have given Hudson a new lease on life. However, just one car model, failing to reach its expected potential doesn't spell death for a well established and respected car manufacturer. There were many other factors coming into play in the '50s, not only for Hudson, but for all independents. But more about that in a future "The Cars America Lost" article.

About the Merger

Sadly, Hudson lost a grand total of \$10 million in '53. Reportedly, investment in tooling for the new, but ill fated Jet was \$6 million. The once advanced design of the "Step-down", was now aging far beyond usefulness. It would take a minimum of two years to retool for a new body, and only if there was capital available. But the money wasn't in the coffers. Obviously, something had to be done, and had to be done quickly.

Shortly after the end of World War II, the far sighted president of Nash-Kelvinator, George Mason contacted A. E. Barit suggesting a possible merger. The brilliant Mason cited savings in common tooling, in purchasing power, and the advantage of better market penetration. Barit, confident of the future as an independent, turned down the opportunity. After all, it was a seller's market, and Hudson could sell all the cars she could build.

But now, things had changed, and the shoe was on the other foot. Hudson was out of options. Barit contacted Mason, and they agreed to meet at the Book-Cadillac hotel for lunch. During a two hour lunch on June 16th, 1953, the two agreed on a tentative merger. Unfortunately, Barit was not the brilliant business man that his predecessor, Chapin had been, and neither did he hold any aces. In essence, the "Great Hudson Motor Car Company" would be absorbed by Nash-Kelvinator, and the new corporate name would be American Motors.



The Detroit Book-Cadillac Hotel, now a Westin Hotel, where the initial merger agreement was reached over lunch.

On January 14, 1954, the merger was approved by both companies. The last "real" Hudson rolled off the Detroit assembly line October 31st. All future production would be at Nash's Kenosha

Wisconsin plant. Sadly, the tooling for the famous "Step-down" had aged to the point of little value, and was too heavy to move. The Detroit tooling was dismantled and sold for scrap. The old Hudson factory was used for some military contracts over the next few years, but by the late '50s, even the building was demolished, bringing to a close a chapter of history for Detroit, and for Hudson.



'54 Hornet Convertible - One of the last "Real" Hudsons

The Kenosha Hudsons



After the last "real" Hudson rolled off the Detroit assembly line, operations were quickly resumed in Kenosha. Based on the existing Nash platform, and

with some major innovations, the new Hudson was introduced at the showrooms. Perhaps one of the better innovations was the use of cutaway front fenders, affording a wider front tread, thus creating more stable handling than her Nash counterpart. Much of the trim was Hudson, especially the front grille assembly. Also, the all new '55 Hudson

sported both the reliable and powerful Hornet and Wasp engines. Even the Twin H-Power option was available. Also through a production agreement with Studebaker-Packard, the all new Packard V-8 powerplant was optional.

By all accounts, it was a good car. It was roomy, with a comfortable ride, plenty of power, and all the options of the day. But to the Hudson fan, it wasn't a Hudson! What Hudson owners had grown to love, the "Step-Down" design was gone, replaced by a much higher profile body, and with softer suspension. Oh, it might say "Hudson" and might even display the beloved white triangle, but to Hudson fans, it was not a Hudson, it was a "Hash"!

Not surprising, sales were slow. Fortunately



'55 Hudson Hornet

for Hudson dealers, they had been given the popular Rambler to replace the ill fated Jet, and also, the cute little Metropolitan. Both the Rambler and the Metropolitan models were identical to their Nash counterparts except for minor badge changes. Sales of these two models helped keep the dealers going.

By '56, American Motors had developed her own V-8. Not as heavy as the Packard offering, but, unfortunately, not as powerful. Both V-8s were offered, along with the Hudson's reliable six-cylinder Hornet and Wasp offerings. Trim was the primary styling change that year, heavily using the 'V' motif.

Unfortunately, it was not as attractive as the prior model. Predictably, sales were down to just a little over half the prior year's sales.

In '57, American Motors had increased her new V-8 to a potent 327 cid with 255 hp. This would be the only engine offered by Hudson, and only in the Hornet. The Wasp was discontinued. Fortunately, the trim was much improved, creating a more attractive vehicle. But the buying public didn't respond.

The final Hudson rolled off the Kenosha



1957 — Hudson's Final Year, and the end of the White Triangle

assembly line on June 25th, 1957 without any fanfare, because at that point, plans were to continue both the Nash and Hudson names, using a longer wheelbase Rambler.

Unfortunately, both the Hudson and Nash brands had lost money ever since the merger. The only brand that was keeping American Motors afloat was the Rambler. And so it was! The wise and prudent George Romney decided to retire both brands as quickly as possible. Sadly, on that fateful day, America lost not one, but two great automotive names, and Hudson fans not only lost their beloved Hudson, but their "White Triangle" badge that for almost fifty years had always stood for "Performance, Service, and Value".

Next issue: A Tribute to the Great Hudson Motor Car Company

Hollis Rule, a member of the Society of Automotive Historians, is presently a columnist

for "Members' Parade, "monthly magazine of the Hornets Nest Region, AACA, in Charlotte, NC. He is also editor for Tampa's New Florida Region Model A Restorers Club and the Golden Iron Car Club of Clover SC.

Credits: This series originally published in "Members' Parade" monthly magazine of the Hornets Nest Region, AACA, Charlotte, NC , Brooke Davis editor



Hudson Happenings

International Events

- 2013 International Meet - San Mateo, CA, July 22-27
- 2013 Manawatu VCC Veteran Rally - New Zealand, January 5,6
- 2013 Hawkes Bay VCC Art Deco Rally - New Zealand, February 15-17
- 2014 International Meet - French Lick, IN

See the HET Club 'White Triangle News' for details.



Doc Hudson Tour - First Stop

by Sue Figert Kennedy

The HET Historical Society's Doc Hudson was featured at the Children's Tent at the **Auburn Cord Duesenberg Festival** Labor Day weekend in Auburn, Indiana. Doc Hudson arrived early and immediately drew a crowd.

Doc Hudson was a popular attraction with children and adults alike, as many adults also took the opportunity to sit in the driver's seat and feel the steering wheel.

One young child saw the front page story in the local newspaper that the HET Historical Society's replica Doc Hudson was going to appear at the Children's Tent and his parents reported he had talked about Doc Hudson for

three days. This child also wanted Doc's autograph in his Disney Pixar movie book and of course, his request was immediately granted.

By the end of the day, a path was worn in the grass around Doc Hudson. Doc was so popular, that after the Children's Tent closed, a car full of fans followed Doc back to the garage and requested he be pulled out of the garage for more photos!!

It's really hard to say who had more fun that day, the children who were allowed to touch and sit in Doc Hudson or those of us who accompanied Doc Hudson on his first appearance after the Hudson National Meet in Gettysburg.



The HET Historical Society has received the following hand written thank you note from the ACD Festival:

from Larry Kennedy

Dear HET Historical Society,

Thank you so much for putting your "Doc Hudson" at the Kids Art Tent for the ACD Festival. What a huge hit! They all loved it. We are trying to come up with something for the children next year, but we know we won't be able to top that.

Thanks for making the event special.

Auburn Cord Duesenberg Festival, Inc.



Triplets Andrew, Eaton and William Crowl
with big sister Danielle



Doc Hudson Tour - Second Stop

by Aaron Cooper

When does a 1951 Hudson get invited to a Concours d'Elegance? When it was the center of all the little kids attention at the **2012 Salisbury Concours d'Elegance** in Des Moines, IA, on Sunday, September 9th. The **Salisbury House Foundation** asked the Hudson Essex Terraplane Historical Society to bring Doc Hudson to join his buddy, Mater to entertain the kids who attended.

Doc and Mater were given a premier spot overlooking the lower display area. A great spot that could be seen from the main entrance.

The Salisbury *Concours d'Elegance* is an excellent example of what Doc Hudson was constructed to do. Put the Hudson Motor Car brand in front of folks who normally would not be exposed to our favorite car brand.

Parents and kids paraded through Doc and got a short explanation of the car from Evan (Aaron's 12 year old son). Kids just loved the large steering wheel and the gear shift. The four door sedan allowed two sets of parents and kids to sit comfortably and enjoy being "in" Doc.

All proceeds from the Salisbury Concours d'Elegance benefit the educational programs and restoration work of the Salisbury House Foundation.



#120

The 1951-10 Darlington 100 Mile Race - This race was won by Dick Rathmann in his **#120 Walt Chapman Hudson Hornet**. Tim Flock was second, also in a Hudson, with his brother Fonty third in a Oldsmobile. 24 cars started in a order determined by a random draw, with 14 finishing the race. Fireball Roberts led the first 14 laps. Then Buck Baker took over for 15 laps, and then Tim Flock led for 5 laps too. Baker and Rathmann swapped the lead until Baker dropped out with radiator problems. Herb Thomas led for 11 laps before Rathmann came in to win. The average speed was 83.315 mph. 1 car dropped out with radiator issues, 3 with overheating problems and 3 with engine issues, and 1 car each dropped out with fuel line issues, handling problems and tire problems.



Dick Rathmann guns his **#120 Hudson Hornet** off the north turn and onto the paved backstretch at Daytona. He started ninth and finished 12th. Rathmann competed in NASCAR racing from 1951 to 1955, winning 13 of his 128 starts. In 1956, he departed NASCAR and joined the United States Auto Club tour, running stock cars and Indy Cars. Rathmann drove in nine Indy 500s, qualified on the pole once, and posted three top-10 finishes.

T. Walt Chapman was the Pennsylvania Hudson dealer that owned **#120** that Rathmann campaigned with. According to Bill Lentz, "various sources indicate that T. Walt

Chapman's Hudson dealership was said to be located in different PA cities, ranging from Dubois to Strattanville to Shippenville. Walt's Auto Parts letterhead indicates Dubois for that business. The Chapman's lived in Strattanville. Nothing in the file makes note of Shippenville. These towns are separated by 50 miles and I would not be surprised if he had businesses at all of them, including Hudson's."



When T. Walt Chapman retired **#120** from racing, he removed the instruments from that Hudson and had them mounted in his **1953 Hornet 7C convertible Brougham**.



That very rare and beautiful car was owned by Chapman, who took it off the showroom floor and kept it until his death in 1988. **Bill Albright** purchased it from Chapman's widow. To the best of Albright's knowledge, there are only five of these

beauties still existing.

Upon Bill's death, the convertible moved to the garage of Bill Lentz of Colorado. Lentz is in the process of researching T. Walter Chapman.



BOY SCOUTS, CAMPING AND HUDSONS

by Don Mayton

My Father managed to get active in the Boy Scouts for a very unusual reason. Other than the Rusty Williams the Scout Master, Father was one of the few fathers that supplied the transportation to go on camping trips. Father loved the outdoors and enjoyed fishing and hunting so the camping trips for him were just another adventure.

Later as I moved up into the Explorer scouts the trips became more adventurous with canoe trips up to northern Pennsylvania and canoeing on the Allegheny River. Father found a man in the area that was taking Explorer Scouts up to Algonquin in Canada.

Our first trip included Father driving a step down Hudson pulling a box trailer loaded with our camping gear and on top of that a rack holding four canoes. Father always really worked these Hudsons. We arrived in a very small town in the park called "Joe Lake". There we waited for the steam train that pulled up with two box cars, one passenger car and we loaded everything on board. Father talked his way into the steam engine cab and off we went. Finally stopping at a lake, everything was unloaded, and then as the train engineer leaned out of the cab he instructed Father; "Be back here one week from today or you will have to wait another week!". The week went well, but the leaders had planned more meals on caught fish than the fish we managed to catch. Finally Father took some of the older boys and off they went

on a hunt. That evening's meal was fried frog's legs.

Father was smitten with this trip and so were the rest of us. Everyone quickly started looking forward to the next trip. These trips included making camp on a lake shore, canoeing across lakes, portaging to other lakes and other camp sites, and just continuing until we make that days schedule. Often campsites had to be actually made up along the way. Drinking water came straight from the lakes...and no one ever got sick.

We saw lots of game; bear, beaver, deer, moose, loons, kingfishers, mink - and I could go on. One week later, minus a day, we were back waiting for the train. Father had no intention of missing that steam engine and got there a day early with the rest of us.

A subsequent trip had the added adventure of having to have a sea plane fly in to pick up one of the leaders who developed kidney stones. There was no communication at all. To find a telephone two of the oldest scouts had to canoe and portage to a lumber camp who called their main office and they in turn supplied the sea plane.

On a later trip Father was driving a 4 door 1951 Hornet and I was driving one of his used 2 door stepdown sedans as we needed both cars. Father's Hornet blew a head gasket on the aluminum head. He nursed the Hornet to our destination. Then, while we were out in the woods the local garage took the head off, found it was warped and sent it to Toronto for machine work to true up the head and had it shipped back to the garage. When we got out of the woods the Hornet was ready to roll.

Article provided by Dave Stevens



From the HET Historical Society Library



For more information, contact Larry Kennedy, Librarian

Car Theft

An elderly Floridian called 911 on her cell phone to report that her car has been broken into. She is hysterical as she explains her situation to the dispatcher:

"They've stolen the stereo, the steering wheel, the brake pedal and even the accelerator!" she cried.

The dispatcher says, "Stay calm, Ma'am, an officer is on the way." A few minutes later, the officer radios in. "Disregard.", He says. "She got in the back-seat by mistake."



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MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Hudson Essex Terraplane Historical Society



*The Hudson Essex Terraplane Historical Society offers four types of voting memberships along with the ability to accept other donations and bequests of any amount. **All Donations are tax deductible.** They are most welcome and very much appreciated.*

LIFE Membership - A onetime tax-deductible contribution of \$1,000 or more. Recognition will be by Certificate, Gold Lapel Pin and membership card.

CONTRIBUTING Membership - A tax-deductible contribution of \$100 or more per year for ten (10) consecutive years will result in a full LIFE membership. Member will receive Silver Lapel Pin for initial membership and membership card. (Only one pin will be issued until LIFE membership is attained.)

ACTIVE Membership — A tax-deductible contribution of \$40 for one year. This may be renewed as many times as one wishes and will be used to accumulate credit towards Life membership.

Yes, I would like to become a member of the Hudson-Essex-Terraplane Historical Society as indicated:

\$ _____ LIFE Membership \$1,000 or more

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\$ _____ ACTIVE Membership \$40 per year

\$ _____ GIFT in Honor or in Memory of _____

\$ _____ General Donation

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The Hudson Triangle Preference: _____ 6 Electronic (pdf) or _____ 2 Paper Issues

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Please make payment by cash, check, or money order payable to *HET Historical Society, Inc.*, in US Dollars, and mail to:

Carmen LaFlamme, 111 Besaw Road, Richmond, VT 05477



Order your 2013 Hudson - Essex - Terraplane Calendar today!!!!
Makes the Perfect Holiday Gift for the Hudson Enthusiast!

The 2013 edition of the HET Calendar is the second edition of our On The Road series, made up of copies of vintage postcards from around the world - all with a Hudson made automobile prominently displayed. Australia, France, Italy, South Africa, Brazil and of course, the United States are some of the many countries featured in the rare photos of the 2013 Hudson - Essex - Terraplane Calendar.

All profits will go toward a worthy Hudson cause. Last year's edition raised \$2500 for the HETHS Doc Hudson fund and the Bill Albright Award fund.

To order, please send a \$15 check or money order to Mike Cherry - 3 Silver Queen Ct - Park City UT 84060
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