



Road Angels Tailpipes

Monthly Newsletter of Who, What, Where & When

From the Prez



As always, welcome to this month's issue of the Tailpipes.

We will be having Cruise Nights once again in 2026 beginning in April. They will be at the Dublin Volunteer Fire Company. Check for start times on page 7. As usual, we will have a DJ, Club Members selling 50/50 tickets and the Fire Company will once again be selling hot dogs, hamburgers, steak sandwiches, etc. We look forward to seeing you there.

Spring is here. Temperatures are moderating and we will be out soon so get those cars ready. In 2025, I wrote a little article for Shifting Gears to help. Since that is a recent rerun, there is an additional article in page 2.

Thank you to all of our Car Show Sponsors in 2025. As a result of our 2025 Car Show, our Club was able to donate \$10,000 to local charities and organizations. Our members will be out soon to acquire more sponsorships which are important to the success of our show and do allow the Club to continue the legacy of community support. Many of our sponsors are shown at the end of the newsletter. Please consider supporting them.

We are accepting early registrations for our 2026 Car Show. The registration form is in the back of the Newsletter. Hope to see you in July at the Dublin Volunteer Fire Company.

The Club agreed to bring a canned food good to our meetings each month to be donated to the Food Larder at the New Britain Food Larder. This month, we collected **65 pounds of food with a goal of 1,500 lbs. collected for the year.** Way to go Road Angels and THANK YOU!

Thank you for your continued interest in the Road Angels of Doylestown and, of course, your support as we strive to support local non-profit organizations. Due to yours and our sponsors support, this year the Club was able to donate approximately \$10,000 to several local charities and organizations

As a great hot rodder once said:

***I may be getting older,
but I ain't growing up!***

Bringing your Car Out of Hibernation

Spring is springing, Daylight Savings Time has just begun and robins have arrived. Show season is on the horizon. Not so fast though as there may still be residual salt on the roads. Warming weather is on the way so, now is the time to prep your ride for a new show season. Here are the tasks to be performed.

- Inspect underside of car appropriately torquing bolts
- Check for fluid leaks such as transmission pan and tighten as needed
- Change the oil as necessary with new oil filter
- Lubricate the car
- Check all fluid levels
- Check battery for proper charge
- Check plugs for condition and gap as necessary
- Check timing etc.
- Torque wheels
- Put car on floor
- Inspect hoses and belts
- Wash and polish the car
- Clean the interior
- Check all lights for proper operation
- Check tires for proper inflation
- Take the car for a ride
- Enjoy your ride and upcoming shows!

The Man Who Killed Edsel Even Before It Failed

[Ronnie Schreiber](#)

27 February 2026

Hagerty Media

One of the quirks of branding and trademarks is that, while you want your brand to succeed to the point that the brand becomes synonymous with the product's function, like Xerox and Kleenex, you don't want it to become a victim of "genericide." That's when a once-protected trademark becomes so widely associated with a category of products or services that it becomes a generic term and loses trademark protection. That's why ad copy from Xerox carefully uses the word "photocopying," not "xeroxing" and Kimberly-Clark judiciously promotes "Kleenex brand tissues," and not just "kleenex."

Even worse than your brand becoming generic, though, is your brand becoming a synonym for failure. Think "New Coke." Now, few things are more common in the automobile industry than failure. Literally thousands of car and truck companies have gone out of business since that industry began. The Grok AI app says a conservative estimate is 3000 to 4000 failed automotive ventures worldwide since 1890. Countless individual vehicle nameplates have also failed to meet sales projections and no longer exist in the market. In that context, for a failure to be really notable, it has to be a significant flop. There is one nameplate that stands above, or perhaps below, every other failed automotive brand, a sales disaster so Brobdingnagian that it has become the watchword for failure in general, well beyond the automotive world.

That car, of course, is the Edsel. Our colleague Don Sherman has pointed out [the many significant reasons why the Edsel could have failed](#), and it indeed faced a perfect storm of issues from the get-go. But ultimately, the Edsel's fate rests at the feet of one man.

Ford Motor Company spent over a quarter-billion mid-1950s dollars developing the Edsel and creating an entirely new division to sell it, yielding sales of just 116,000 units over three model years. That resulted in the loss of an estimated \$350 million, about \$4 billion in 2025 currency. As an aside, Ford just wrote off almost five times that amount, \$19.5 billion, in 2025 losses associated with the deflating EV bubble. One wonders if "EV" will ever have the stigma of "Edsel."

In case you are wondering about the name, Edsel Ford, Henry and Clara Ford's only child, was named after his father's lifelong friend, Edsel Ruddiman. Considered by many to be the father of American automotive styling, the younger Ford was a patron of the arts and commissioned the famous [Detroit Industry murals by Diego Rivera](#). Edsel Ford had an important role at Ford Motor Company from the time he was a teenager, when the Model T was being developed. From 1919 to his death from stomach cancer in 1943, Edsel was president of FoMoCo and generally in charge of the company's operations, though he worked under the thumb of his father, who would often overrule him, sometimes publicly.

The original concept behind the Edsel car, though, wasn't intended to memorialize Edsel, the person. The Ford family actually had objections to naming it Edsel, even if the project was code-named the E-car. As a matter of fact, the project was well underway and heavily publicized before a brand name was chosen. As part of the overall publicity campaign, Ford even solicited the public for suggestions. Ford executive Robert Young invited Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Marianne Moore to provide creative input, and she came up with some decidedly eccentric and poetic names, including "Utopian Turtletop," "The Intelligent Whale," and "Mongoose Civique." Ford politely declined.

In the mid-1950s, based on market research that failed to notice changing consumer preferences, Ford executives were convinced there was a market for cars priced between the Ford line, sometimes marketed as one of the "low-priced three" along with Chevrolet and Plymouth, and the more upscale Mercury lineup. They believed there was a strong demand for a completely new FoMoCo brand in the mid-priced market segment to compete with the likes of GM's Buick, Oldsmobile, and Pontiac, along with Chrysler's Dodge and DeSoto (which itself did not last beyond 1960). Market research had indicated that customers wanted more premium features without luxury prices. To meet that demand, Ford created an entirely new Edsel Division in 1956, based on a project that had already been percolating. Unfortunately for the new enterprise, the research was outdated, and by the time the Edsel was launched in September 1957, the mid-priced segment was shrinking, with buyers favoring either economy or luxury brands. Additionally, while the company relied on what turned out to be flawed market research, perhaps due to the secrecy surrounding the project, they actually did no consumer test marketing at all. The Edsel had no clear audience.

Another factor was the Edsel's controversial styling. To complement the Edsel's innovative features like the rotating "dome" speedometer, steering wheel-mounted "Teletouch" push-button automatic transmission selector, what enthusiasts would later call "idiot lights" on the dashboard, and self-adjusting brakes, designer Roy Brown

Continued page 3

aimed for what was then considered a futuristic look, with a prominent "horse-collar" grille and contoured body panels. That grille, though, became the butt of comedians' jokes, and was unflatteringly compared to "an Oldsmobile sucking a lemon," a toilet seat, or even a woman's private parts. Compared to Chrysler's sleek, aircraft-inspired "Forward Look" cars, first introduced in 1955 and updated with the attractive 1957 models that were famously promoted with the "Suddenly, It's 1960," tagline, many thought that the Edsel looked overstyled, clumsy, and dated when it was brand new.

One factor beyond the control of the Edsel team was the economy. In August of 1957, just a month before the launch of the Edsel, the U.S. economy went into a steep recession, which lasted into the following year. From 1957 to 1958, U.S. car sales dropped by 31%, and in just three years, unit sales for the industry sagged from nearly 8 million in 1955 to just 4.3 million in 1958. The mid-priced segment was hit hardest, as budget-conscious customers opted for "the low-priced three" or new-to-the-market, fuel-efficient European imports like the Volkswagen Beetle and the Renault Dauphine (which sold over 100,000 units by 1960). At the same time, the affluent could still afford luxury cars. This downturn in the mid-tier market was a factor in the eventual demise of DeSoto, Hudson, Nash, Packard, and Studebaker.

The Edsel brand was also damaged by marketing hype that raised expectations beyond what could be delivered. Ford spent millions of dollars building mystery about a car that was going to revolutionize driving, and then launched with a highly publicized TV special hosted by singer Bing Crosby and filled with celebrities. But when the Edsel was revealed, consumers treated it more like a rebadged Ford or Mercury, rather than a groundbreaking automobile. Public perception quickly changed from excitement to mockery. Essentially, consumers saw the Edsel as redundant, not revolutionary.

Despite the original concept of carving out a piece of the mid-priced market, the Edsel pricing in fact overlapped with Ford and Mercury models, with sometimes as little as \$136 (about \$1500 in today's currency) separating the brands. That pricing made things difficult for Edsel dealers and confusing for consumers. Options were also relatively expensive, making the Edsel seem like a poor value when compared to loaded-up Fords or base-trim Mercurys.

Additionally, as Edsel had its own division and dealers, it offered a full range of cars, seven distinct models that were either larger, Mercury-based "senior" models, or smaller, Ford-based "junior" lines, including three station wagons. The models were:

Ranger (entry-level junior, available in sedans, hardtops, etc.)

Pacer (mid-level junior line, including a convertible)

Corsair (upper-level senior line, hardtops, sedans, and convertibles)

Citation (top-tier senior line, including convertibles and hardtops)

Roundup (two-door station wagon)

Villager (four-door station wagon)

Bermuda (premium four-door station wagon, with faux wood trim)

Between the curious pricing strategy and the panoply of models, consumers must have been confused.

Edsel's dealer network, 1187 exclusive Edsel stores at the time of launch, was also a problem. Many of them were independent, with the dealers' principals not already holding Ford, Mercury, or Lincoln franchises, with shaky finances, and less than ideal operating conditions. Some lacked specialized tools and struggled with repairs, generating poor word-of-mouth among consumers.

Perhaps the factors that harmed the Edsel's reputation the most after it was launched were quality control and reliability. While the Edsels were based on Ford and Mercury platforms, they were sufficiently different that introducing a new product on shared production lines with Ford and Mercury products led to poor QC at the outset. Cars arrived at dealers with missing parts, bad welds, water leaks, and power steering failures. The push-button transmission had wiring problems, downshifting issues on hills, and even accidental shifts when hitting the horn ring on the steering wheel. Problems with major components, like the engine and transmission, compounded the Edsel's rapidly metastasizing poor reputation. More than half of the 63,110 1958 model-year Edsels sold were bought in the first four months they were for sale. Sales dropped to 44,891 the following model year, an almost 30% decline.

As you can see, there were sufficient reasons for the Edsel to fail. Any one of those factors alone could have been fatal to something as ambitious as the Edsel. Taken together, the Edsel was probably doomed in any case. However, the historical truth is that corporate politics likely killed the Edsel before it even had a chance to fail. Perhaps more accurately, it was one corporate politician who killed the Edsel.

When Edsel Ford died in 1943, Henry Ford reasserted operational control of Ford Motor Company. Henry was always a bit cantankerous, but by 1943, he was 80 years old and people around him actively questioned his decisions. There were rumors that he wanted to put the Model T back into production. It was in the middle of World War II, and FoMoCo was a strategically critical supplier of GPW jeeps, B-24 bombers, and military gliders. The U.S. government could simply not afford to have Ford run by an eccentric. Ford's grandson, Henry Ford II,

Continued page 4

He joined Ford management a few weeks later as a vice president/executive. His grandfather, though, wouldn't yield complete operational control of FoMoCo to Henry the Deuce until his wife Clara and Edsel's widow Eleanor threatened to sell the 51% of the car company that they owned. (After Ford lost the landmark Dodge v. Ford Motor Company lawsuit and bought out all non-family investors, in 1919 Henry Ford reorganized Ford Motor Company and assigned 48% of the stock shares to Edsel and 3% to his wife Clara, keeping 49% himself, perhaps not realizing he was effectively giving her the leverage to years later effect change in the control of the company.)

When a 28-year-old Henry Ford II finally took control of Ford Motor Company in September 1945, the automaker was an organizational nightmare. His grandfather had run Ford much like a medieval fiefdom. What Henry wanted, Henry got, regardless of whether it made business sense or was profitable. There were few operational or financial controls. Pet projects of Henry's, like his Alberta, Michigan lumber mill and factory town, or his Village Industries network of tiny factories intended to employ farmers out of season, rarely engaged in profit/loss tracking. Today, we assume they lost money, but we don't really know if they turned a profit or not because records simply were not kept. The junior Ford implemented modern corporate governance and brought in two groups of experts to help turn the company around: the so-called Whiz Kids, and what was sometimes referred to as "the old guard," automotive industry veterans, many of them hired away from General Motors.

The "Whiz Kids" were a group of 10 relatively young veterans of the U.S. Army Air Forces' Office of Statistical Control during the Second World War. Henry Ford II hired them as a team to literally rescue the company. While the Ford family fortune was massive, their car company was nearing bankruptcy due to the first Henry's disorganization. From their wartime experience, the Whiz Kids brought data-driven management to Ford, focusing on cost accounting, operations research, systems analysis, and quantitative controls; after all, what you can't measure, you can't improve. They emphasized metrics and efficiency over tradition and intuition. The most famous of the Whiz Kids was Robert McNamara, who quickly climbed Ford's corporate ladder, eventually becoming Ford Motor Company president in 1960. In 1963, he became the United States' Secretary of Defense in the Kennedy administration, where he had a controversial role managing (some say mismanaging) the growing military conflict in Vietnam. Other notable members of the Whiz Kids were Arjay Miller (also later Ford president), J. Edward Lundy (longtime Ford CFO), and Charles "Tex" Thornton (who left Ford to start up Litton Industries).

The "old guard" consisted primarily of General Motors veterans. They had operational and hands-on expertise and tended to favor engineering priorities, practical manufacturing experience, long-term brand building based on product intuition, and decentralized divisional structures modeled on Alfred Sloan's system at GM. At the head of the old guard was Ernest Breech, hired from Bendix Aviation and a former GM executive. Many regard him as the actual "savior" of the postwar Ford organization. He oversaw the development and launch of the landmark 1949 Ford. Lewis Crusoe, another GM veteran, was a finance and operations expert who pushed for modern controls, renovation of Ford's outdated factories, better quality, and rigorous cost accounting, actually implementing cost controls typically credited to the Whiz Kids. A car guy's car guy, he was passionate about product development. After clashes with Thornton, who initially headed the Whiz Kids, and McNamara, Crusoe retired for his health in the mid-1950s. James Nance, who had previously headed Packard before its merger with Studebaker, joined Ford in 1956 as vice president of marketing. In January 1958, he was named president and general manager of the newly formed Mercury-Edsel-Lincoln division, putting all three of Ford's premium brands under one umbrella.

The two groups frequently clashed, and in the end, it seems that the Whiz Kids won out. Being a product of the old guard, the Edsel was a casualty of that conflict. Just months before "E-Day," the planned launch of the Edsel on September 4, 1957, McNamara was named executive vice president of Ford Motor Company. Thomas E. Bonsall, in his book *Disaster in Dearborn: The Story of the Edsel* portrays McNamara as an early and forceful opponent of the Edsel program, viewing it as unnecessary and wasteful. Bonsall argues that McNamara's cost-cutting, political maneuvering, and lack of support undermined the Edsel brand almost from the beginning. In *The Edsel Affair... What Went Wrong* (1980, Pro West) C. Gayle Warnock, the Edsel's public relations and marketing team director, called McNamara the Edsel's "most formidable nemesis" and that he was never enthusiastic about the project, putting his full weight behind ending the brand as soon as possible, sabotaging it with budget cuts. Warnock indicates that McNamara's rise to power after Lewis Crusoe's departure tolled the death knell for the Edsel before the first car was ever sold.

In December 1957, just three months after the Edsel was launched, McNamara announced a body interchangeability plan for the 1960-61 model year that pretty much turned the originally unique Edsel into a slightly higher trim Ford, effectively dooming long-term brand building.

Bonsall says that Robert McNamara didn't even wait until the Edsel was launched to kill it. At a pre-launch dinner dance in Dearborn for the entire Edsel team, including its ad agency, Foote, Cone & Belding, McNamara, who was then general manager of Ford's car and truck divisions, reportedly told the agency's managing partner Fairfax M. Cone something very much like, "Of course, you realize you're going to have to let all of these people go. We've decided to discontinue the Edsel."

Continued page 5

Normally, one might consider this a Detroit legend or an exaggeration, but Bonsall claims to have verified it with two independent sources, one from the ad agency and another from a Ford insider. Some critics of Bonsall's claim do say that the story is apocryphal and stems from a 1980 interview with FCB employees following Cone's 1977 death, where they claimed that he related it privately to them after the dinner. McNamara himself bluntly denied making such a statement in a 1984 interview. Cone's own 1969 memoir, *With All Its Faults*, describes a more subtle, non-verbal response from McNamara, a head shake and silence when asked about the project's future.

Whatever the actual truth about the incident was, and whatever actual flaws the Edsel and its launch had, with hindsight, it's now clear that it was not a lack of beauty that killed the Edsel, but rather one man, Robert McNamara.

Upcoming Car Events

First Annual Classic Car Show
May 16, 2026
Saturday, 10:00 AM – 3:00 PM
BSA Troops 541 & 542
Supplee Presbyterian Church
855 Welsh Rd.
Maple Glen, PA

Saturday, May 9, 2026
Saturday, 12:00 AM – 4:00 PM
Modifiers Penndel Classic
300 Hulmeville Ave.
Penndel PA

June 5 – 7, 2026
51st NSRA Street Rod Nationals
York Fairgrounds Expo Center
334 Carlisle Ave., York PA

SAVE THE DATE!

J U L Y 26, 2026

"Road Angels Car Show"

Location...

Dublin Vol. Fire Company, Dublin PA

Want to volunteer for Show Setup on July 25? Or Help on Day of Show? Call Al Tursi at 267-893-9796 or email altursi@gmail.com

Become a Road Angel

Benefits of Joining THE Road Angels Club

- ***Our Club is a great way to connect with like-minded enthusiasts***
- ***Our Club helps charities on a group level; sponsorships***
- ***Your social life will improve immeasurably through group events and socials***
- ***You'll have an incentive to look after your car***
- ***Community involvements***
- ***Going to other car shows as a Club, with friends / families***
- ***You will be part of our Annual "Run with The Angels" Car Show***

So much more: camaraderie; family socials; road trips!!

For more info please contact our President, Al Tursi, at altursi@gmail.com or 267-893-9796

"We will be looking forward to meeting you!"



**Road Angels Members
Chris Spuler's 1932 Ford Coup**

**Road Angels Member
Wally Stronski's 1957 Ford
Thunderbird**



Celebrations



Concetta Ford – March 5
Al Tursi – March 6
Brad Sanders – March 10
Bill Ford – March 11
Gail Broughton – March 14
Marguerite Duke – March 26
Grace Kelly – March 29
Jean Perry – March 30

Roslyn Rumpf – April 6
Greg Palermo – April 16
Larry Flagler – April 18



Joe & Jean Bernstein – March 27

Larry & Jaimie Flagler – April 12
Mitch & Katy Meyerson – April 14
Bob & Marguerite Duke – April 29

Mark Your Calendars

~ 2026 Cruise Nights ~

The Road Angels had a very successful Cruise Night season for 2025 hosted by the Dublin Volunteer Fire Company. Thank you Dublin Volunteer Fire Company. The following are dates for the Cruise Nights in 2026 all located at the Dublin Volunteer Fire Company, 194 N. Main St., Dublin, PA:

April 10 – 4:00 – 7:00 PM

May 8 – 5:00 – 8:00 PM

June 12 – 5:00 – 8:00 PM

August 7 – 5:00 – 8:00 PM

September 11 – 4:00 – 7:00 PM

October 9 – 4:00 – 7:00 PM

Food, as always, will be provided by the Dublin Volunteer Fire Company. We look forward to seeing you there. As always, thanks for your continued support.

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Road Angels Car Show

Swap meet spaces available. Contact Jim at jimserafine@yahoo.com for more info.

Bring a non-perishable food item for entry into a \$50 drawing.

No bicycles or alcoholic beverages.

Benefits Doylestown area food banks.

July 26, 2026

Dublin Fire Company,

194 N. Main St., Dublin, PA 18917

www.roadangelsdoylestown.com

Vehicles must be 1989 or earlier

Trophy selection begins at 11 am.

Please clean up after pets and they must be kept on a leash at all times.



Must be at showgrounds to be eligible for prizes and awards.

Oldies music provided by "Crowd Pleasers" DJ

Only legally registered and street legal, with the exception of race cars, are eligible for trophies.

Bring your own canopy!

Swap Meet / Vendor area

7:00AM Gates Open
9:00AM Show Begins
2:00PM Trophies Drawings Cash Prizes
3:30PM Show Ends



**Doylestown, Pa.
Est. 1954**

Registration Fee:
\$15 (Before July 1st)
\$20 (Day Of Show)
Spectator Fee:
\$5 Per Person

No fee for kids under 12

2026 CAR SHOW - REGISTRATION FORM

Name: _____ Club: _____ Email: _____
Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
Make of Car: _____ Type: _____ Year: _____

The Road Angels of Doylestown reserves the right to cancel the event due to inclement weather by 4:00 AM on the day of the event. Information will be on our website and Facebook notifying registrants if cancellation is necessary. Fees will be credited to the following year's event.

Liability: Entrants and participants, by execution of this form, release and discharge the Road Angels of Doylestown, PA, Inc., their officers, directors, employees, volunteers and anyone else connected with the presentation of this car show from any and all unknown damages, injuries, losses, judgments, and any causes whatsoever that may be suffered by any entrants or participants to his/her person or property.

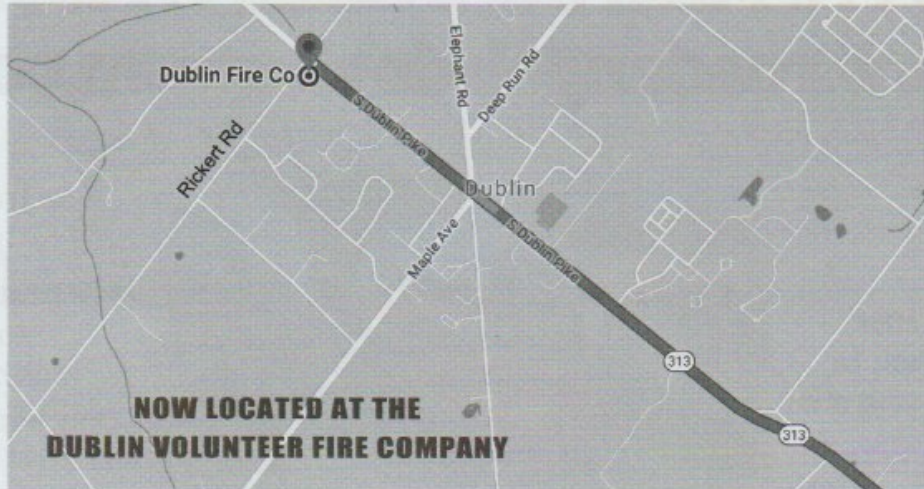
In consideration of this entry, car owner, entrant, and spouse or guest agree to permit the Road Angels of Doylestown to use their names and pictures of the car for publicity and advertising before, during, and after the event and do hereby relinquish any rights whatsoever to any photos taken in connection with the event and give permission to publish or otherwise dispose of said photos to the Road Angels of Doylestown.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Make Checks Payable to: Road Angels of Doylestown
Mail to: Road Angels of Doylestown, P.O. Box 12
Plumsteadville, PA 18949

Please, no bicycles or alcoholic beverages on the grounds.

A portion of the proceeds benefit local charities. For further information, contact club president at 267-893-9796.
www.roadangelsdoylestown.com



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