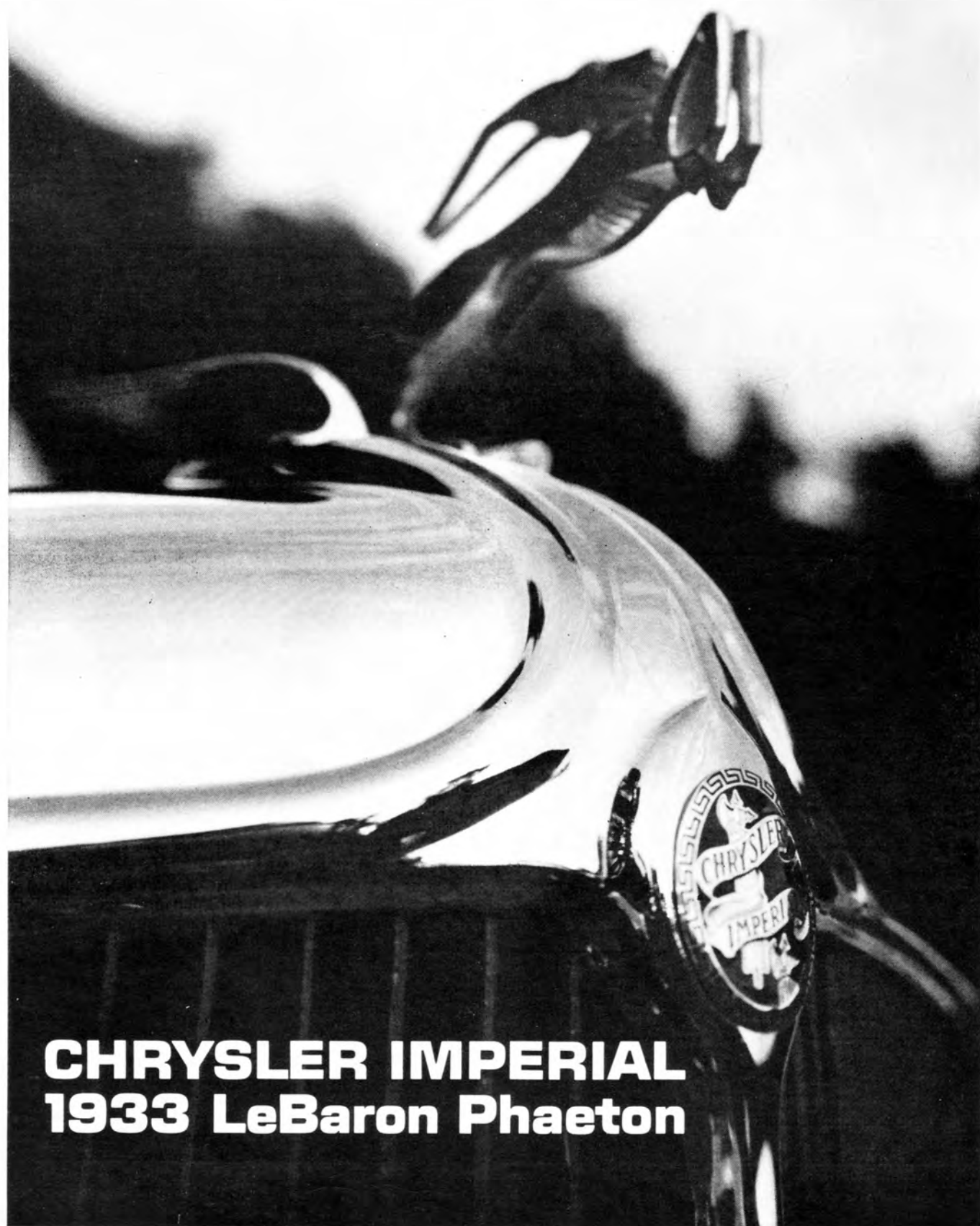


**CAR LIFE CLASSIC**



**CHRYSLER IMPERIAL  
1933 LeBaron Phaeton**

**M**ASSIVE, A monarch among more mundane motorcars, the 1933 Chrysler Imperial Eight Custom LeBaron Phaeton was fit transportation for a maharajah, to say the least. However, the example shown on these pages was specially built—not for a king but for a Chrysler executive.

Now owned and maintained in an immaculate state of preservation by Harry McIntosh of Fresno, Calif., the Imperial dual cowl phaeton was something of an anomaly in the depression era year of its birth. Some manufacturers were attempting to remain solvent during the black days of the economic slump by selling automobiles for well under \$1000, even for as little as \$400. Others, manufacturers of \$20,000 luxury cars, were fast fading from the scene. Nonetheless, Walter P. Chrysler decided his corporation should remain in the luxury car market with the Imperial. Luxury car it was, though the Imperial's base price was \$2895.

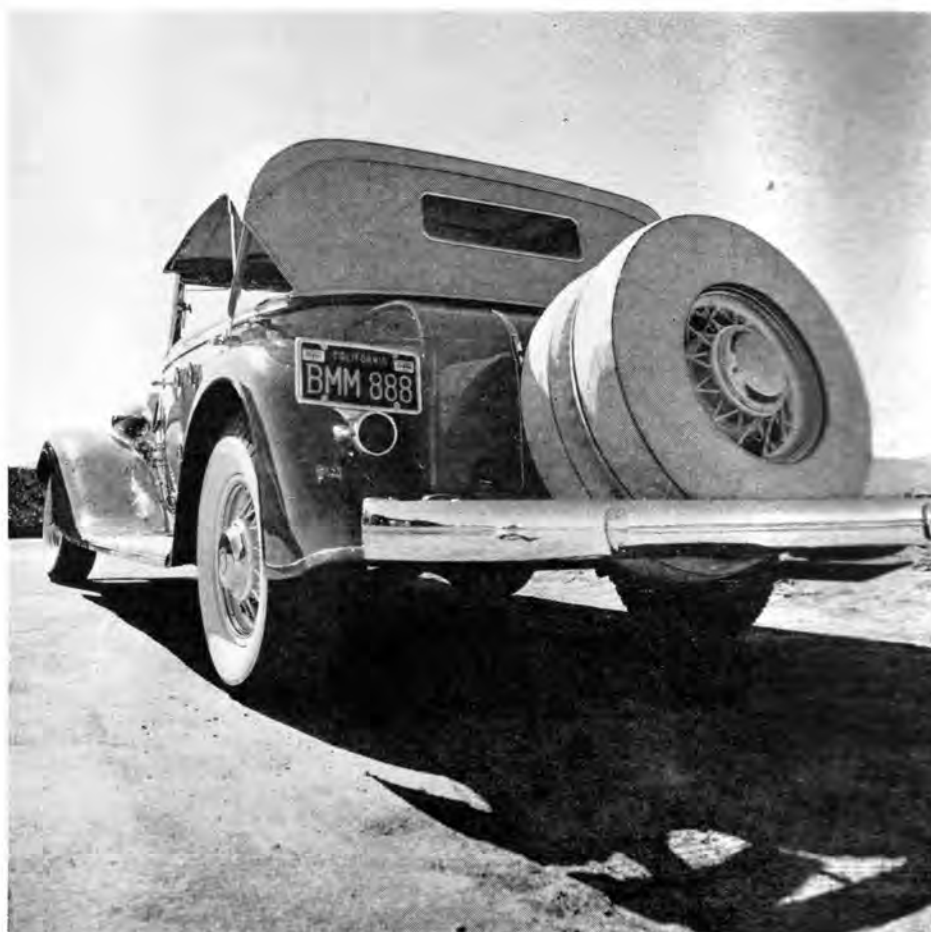
The Custom Eight's bore and stroke, 3.5 x 5 in., respectively, in the 9-main bearing L-head engine, gave 384.8 cu. in. of piston displacement. With 5.8:1 compression ratio, the "Red Head" engine was rated at 135 bhp at 3200 rpm. Pistons of Nelson Bohnalite carried Invar struts. Bearings were of steel-backed babbitt. Carburetion was through a dual downdraft Stromberg unit with 1.5-in. barrels.

McIntosh reports the car will "stay with freeway traffic" today and that top speed approaches 100 mph. The latter is supported by a 1932 newspaper account of one Ohioan's attempt, with a similar Imperial, to travel from his home town to an Indiana village some 50 miles distant at an average speed of 100 mph. Observers attested: "He would have made it, except for the train at the grade crossing."

**T**HE IMPERIAL'S 4-speed transmission, perhaps the most complex non-automatic gearbox ever built, carried ratios of 3.63 in first, 2.48 in second, 1.38 in third and 1.00 in top. The rear axle ratio was 4.10. The shift lever pattern followed the H of the standard 3-speed case, with first gear of "Heavy Duty Range" to the far left and rearward, gated out by a heavy spring. First gear ordinarily was not used for normal driving.

The transmission was driven through a single-disc, Bendix vacuum operated Borg & Beck clutch, 9.875 in. in diameter. The free-wheeling differential was manufactured by the New Process Gear Co., a Chrysler Corporation subsidiary.

Suspension was through four longitudinal 8-leaf semi-elliptic springs, ▶



# IMPERIAL

two supporting the solid I-beam front axle and two carrying the live rear axle. Steering was by worm and roller. Lockheed hydraulic brakes, with a Bendix-BK vacuum booster were fitted. Original equipment included a set of 7.50-17 tires and "Triple Beam" headlamps.

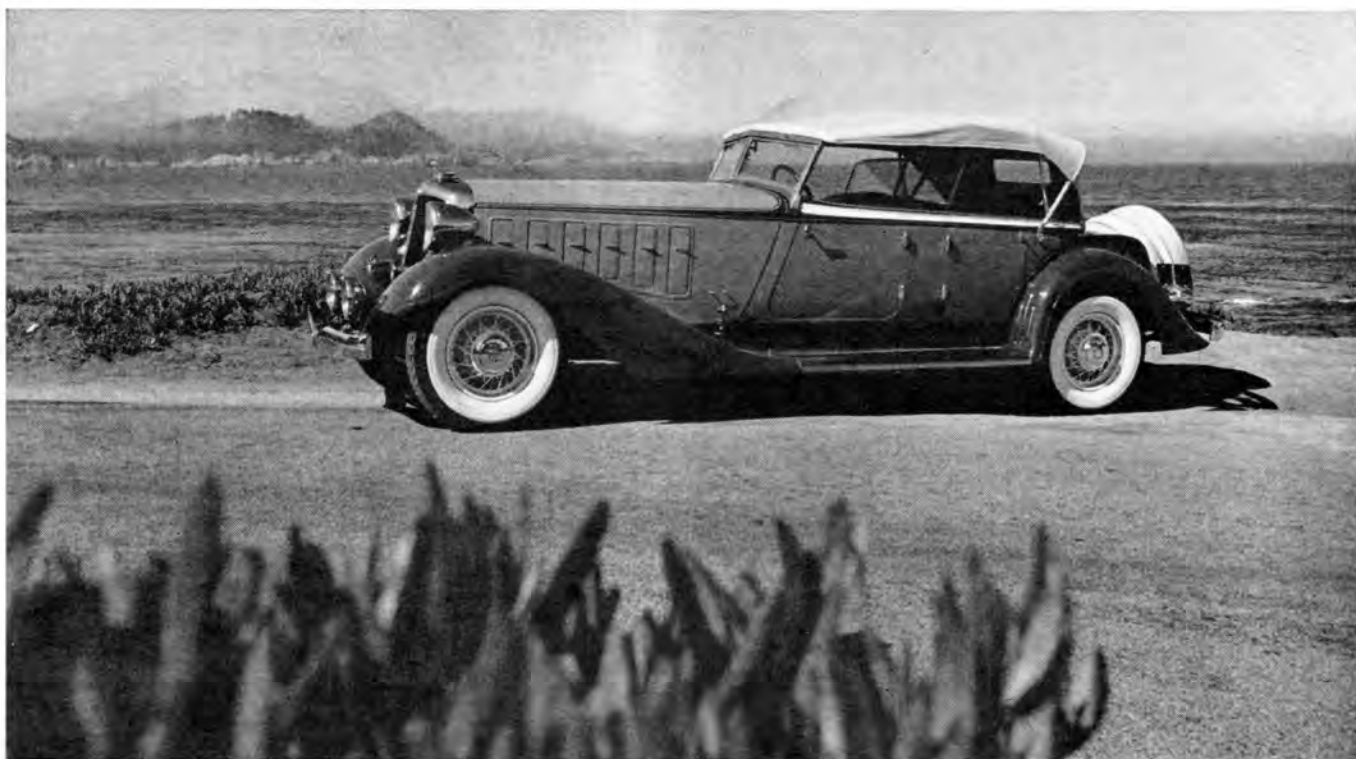
Though it might be expected that the sturdy cruciform frame would provide a rigid platform for the phaeton body, the consensus of those who have driven the Imperial is that the 146-in.

wheelbase length permits the frame to flex and thereby induce a measure of front-end shake—a condition not uncommon to the larger touring cars of that era.

The custom-built phaeton body was installed on the 146-in. wheelbase Imperial Custom chassis by the Detroit LeBaron shop at the behest of the executive-owner. Cowhide upholstery—as smooth and supple today as it was when it was fitted 33 years ago—was specified. The Chrysler executive also ordered special storage compartments in back of the front seats and the special twin spare wheels. The original color scheme of the car was black

body with burnished aluminum hood. McIntosh has had the car body painted a light sky blue and the fenders tinted a slightly darker blue.

The original Imperial was announced in 1925. Its engine was a side-valve Six with bore and stroke of 3.5 x 5 in. When the engine became an L-head Eight, these dimensions were retained, and valves, bearings and other fittings were interchangeable between 6- and 8-cyl. engines. The Imperial 8-cyl. powerplant, though superseded in the late 1930s by more modern engines, was continued by Chrysler Corp. as a marine engine until shortly before World War II. ■



MARVIN LYONS PHOTOS