

Stuart Zukrow

Biography

When I was a kid (and some say I'm still a kid), I really didn't care much about cars. Who cares what a car looks like? A good car was any car that got you where you needed to go. I couldn't understand why anyone would spend extra money for a car that looked good.

As I got older and started driving, my attitude started to change. By the time I reached my early twenties, I started to want my own snazzy car. I'd been working full time for a few years and still living at home. Although I did pay rent, I was able to save a lot of money. Sponging off my parents had its advantages. I lost my full time job and had to settle for working part time at a pharmacy until I could find something. That wasn't going to stop me from looking for that special car. After all, I still had a lot of money saved up. But what kind of car?



I wanted something very different. Something people wouldn't recognize if they saw it going down the street. Corvettes are great looking cars and I love them but they don't fit the bill as far as being unusual. I settled on two choices: some kind of kit car (Bradley, Cimbria) or a DeLorean. I should point out that this was back in the early 1980's. The *Back to the Future* movies hadn't been created and the late John Z. DeLorean had not yet made headlines getting busted at LAX with a suitcase full of cocaine in tow. Few people had heard of his car yet.

I wound up ruling out a DeLorean after hearing about various electrical problems and a few other things. Knowing what I know now, I'm glad I didn't buy a DeLorean. I'm still fond of the car but the movies, John's arrest and trial combined to make the car recognizable. This was the last thing I wanted.

I regularly looked through the classified ads looking for anything unusual. One day, I saw an ad for a Bricklin. "What's a Bricklin?" I asked a friend. "I think it's some kind of weird sports car." was the response. Good enough for me. I called the guy and made an appointment to check it out.

I didn't even know what a Bricklin looked like. But I knew it must be unusual because I hadn't seen one advertised during the weeks I was looking. Before going to see the car, I made a trip to the library to learn about the Bricklin. I liked the look and was willing to live with some of its shortcomings. I don't smoke so I didn't mind having a car with no ashtray. I wasn't planning on using it as an everyday car so the lack of a spare tire and glove box wouldn't be a problem. But, ooh, those gull wing doors.

I made the hour drive to Delafield, Wisconsin and saw my first Bricklin. VIN 0824 was a red 1975. The owner gave me a ride and he had me, hook, line and sinker. I had the money and I wanted that car.

But I had one little problem. Two of them, actually. Parents. I have already mentioned that I was still living at home so I had to play by their rules. They didn't like the idea of me buying this car when I didn't have a real job. Working part time as a clerk in a drug store was not considered a real job. I was informed that if I could afford the car then I could afford to live on my own. My parents are great and I love them but they're not perfect. In this case, they were absolutely wrong. I could not afford to move out and buy the car. One or the other, but not both.

So, what should I do? If I wait until I find a job, some other clod might buy the car. If I bought the car, I'd probably end up living in it. I came up with a risky solution. I bought the car without their knowledge. Now I had it. 0824 was mine. But I couldn't drive it. If anyone who knew me saw me driving such a conspicuous car, it would surely get back to my parents and there'd be hell to pay. I rented a garage and drove it straight from the seller's house into storage. It was December 1982 in Milwaukee so it would have been stored even if I wasn't trying to hide my purchase.

It didn't take long to learn my first tidbit about having a Bricklin. Insurance companies are not lining up to insure 23-year-old single males who buy exotic sports cars. Who would have thought? I eventually ended up with a policy from Condon and Skelly.

Within a few months, I got a real job working full time as a computer programmer. And, lo and behold, within a couple of weeks, I took the car out of storage and showed my parents the Bricklin I had "just" bought. Little did they know. To this day, they don't know when I really got the car and I'm trusting everyone reading this to keep my little secret.

My Bricklin was originally owned by Joseph F. DeLorenzo. For those of you not familiar with that name, Joseph ran the Organization of Bricklin Owners (OBO). Joseph sold the car to the guy I bought it from and included some of his club's literature and membership forms. The forms made their way to me and I decided to join.

I attended an OBO meet in Columbus, Ohio in 1984. It was my first Bricklin meet. My car was one of only eight Bricklins in attendance. I got to meet Joseph DeLorenzo and Richard Haines. We toured the warehouse (since razed) containing all the parts purchased by George Byers, Junior and got to meet George and see his Bricklin collection. One of the attendees mentioned that there was a larger Bricklin organization called Bricklin International. I got more information and ended up joining. In 1985, I attended the Central meet in Merrillville, Indiana.

I attended a few Chicago area get-togethers but I couldn't make the 1986 meet for several reasons. The main one happened on May 10, 1986. It was a sad day for Stuart and his Bricklin. I was driving north along a busy street and, all of a sudden, bam. I was suddenly going west. I had collided with a 1981 Pinto containing two ugly young ladies with mustaches. The Pinto was totaled and my Bricklin nearly was too. It was flat-bedded 250 miles to the Hoffman Hospital in Walled Lake, Michigan where Robert spent five months and \$7,000 putting it back together. When I picked it up, it was as if it had never been hit.

A job change sent me to live in northern Wisconsin. I went into Bricklin hiatus. I was too far away to get to the meets and rarely drove my car. I let my club memberships lapse. One spring, the car didn't start and wound up sitting undriven for three years. I thought there was no point in having the car if I wasn't going to drive it. I was deciding between selling it and getting it fixed. I opted for the latter. I'm no do-it-yourselfer so I had it towed to an exotic car place which got it running again and I drove it to a storage facility near my new home in Elkhart, Indiana.

I was wondering what ever happened to Bricklin International. Was it still around? Did they still hold annual meets? I had not contacted anyone from the club in so long, I had no idea. I hopped on the computer and found the club did have a web site but it contained no meet information. The 1997 web site was crude in comparison to the comprehensive web site the club currently operates. But I did glean one critical piece of usable information: an email address to John Blair. He promptly replied with information about the 1997 meet in Canton, Ohio.

There were some stunned people when I ended my hiatus and arrived at the meet. Those that remembered me thought I had dropped from the face of the earth. After a twelve-year gap, I was back and I have been attending the meets regularly ever since. Within a few years, I felt it was time to give back to the club that had given me so much enjoyment. I wanted to become more involved than just a participant.

I started small by creating a new Bricklin poster (see Brickline volume 26 #1, January 2001) and writing a few articles for the magazine. A couple of years later, with the help of Michael Mitchell, I was the meet co-director for the meet in Cleveland. Two years ago, Daniel Heikkinen got sick of being Bricklinalia director and I took over, a position I still hold.