



# Cougar COUNTRY

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## Upcoming Events:

- April 6 The Heights Car Show—The Heights Baptist Church, Richardson, TX
- April 27 The PCHPS Classic & Antique Car Show—Burlison Park, University Park, TX
- May 4 The 29th Dallas Spring Nationals — Sam Pack Museum in Carrollton, TX
- June 8 The North Texas Mustang Club Cracker Barrel Cruise — Lewisville, TX

## LSCC Kicks off 2019 Show Season

### Breakfast at Rockfish

Club President Dan McKeithen rolled out his '68 on a chilly January 5th for a quick trip up to McKinney and Breakfast at Rockfish, an informal gathering of car enthusiasts that happens every Saturday. Out of 20 or so cars, there were a couple of other Cougars in attendance in addition to Dan's—former member Doug Bodensteiner's '73 and prospective members Doug and Jordan Sudberry's recently acquired '70 convertible.



### Darryl Starbird National Rod and Custom Car Show

Mid America Classic Cougars rounded up more than 20 cars for a showing at Darryl Starbird in Tulsa on February 14-17. LSCC members Mike Hogge ('69 convertible) and Chuck Donaldson (the Lethal

Cat—see the story in this issue) were both in attendance. The Lethal Cat won Best Muscle Car All Eras, 1st Place Outstanding Restore/Show Overall, and a special "Fine Nine" Award—the first time a non-custom has been recognized. Also representing the Cougar community were KTL Restorations of Danville, VA (who restored the Lethal Cat). They also picked up 1st Place in the Light Modified Class with a



black '68 XR-7 347 Stroker and 3rd Place Original Restore '60-'69 with their '67 Polar White Standard 390 GT 6.5 Liter. Darren Patras of Critter Creek Cougar Restorations made the trip all the way from Alberta Canada. MACC picked up 10 new members

and also some awards, so the show was a real success.

### DFW Auto Show

LSCC put 9 cars in the Classic Car Corral at the DFW Auto Show, March 27-31 at the KBH Convention Center in



Dallas. Joe Valenti's '69 CJ Convertible and Dan McKeithen's '68 Standard won top 20 awards. Also showing were members Jim Witherow, Alicia & Sydney Slay, David Thompson, Richard Jordan, Dwain Barker, Cope & Pamela Crison, and Barry Rowe. Gene Mullenberg and Dwain manned the display for most of the weekend. There was strong interest in the display and the club. All-in-all a great start to the year!

## Join Fellow Members at Club Events This Year

To allow for members to plan ahead and in an effort to boost attendance, the BOD has identified the following club endorsed events for 2019:

- Heights Car Show (Richardson) - 4/6
- PCHPS Car Show - (SMU) - 4/27
- Sam Pack/Spring Nation-

als - (Carrollton) 5/4

- NTMC Cracker Barrel Cruise - (Lewisville) 6/8
- Irving, TX 4th Parade - 7/4
- Yellow Rose Car Show - (Arlington) 7/12-14
- Warbirds on Parade (Lancaster) - 8/31
- Texas State Fair Opening

Day - (Fair Park) 9/27

- LSCC Picnic - October date & location TBD
- SSG Alex Viola Car Show - (Keller) 11/9
- Irving, TX Christmas Parade - 12/7

Put these events on your calendar and plan to attend with the club!!

## Meet the BOD

No. There's actually no one in the club nicknamed "The Bod" although Gene Mullenberg, your Activities Chair, probably qualifies. In November and December of 2018, as required in the club by-laws, 4 members of the Board of Directors and 2 Chair positions were nominated and elected. They are:

**President**—Dan McKeithen. Dan has been a club member for 6 years. He joined after meeting members at several shows and deciding to reignite his boyhood love for the Hot Wheels Cougar by finding and restoring a real one. It took him 2 years to find a car—a '68 Standard 4-speed—and another 2 1/2 years to rebuild it. He is now restoring former President Alan Easley's '70 convertible which he acquired from the family in 2018.

**Vice President**—Matt Tieken. Matt's been in the club since 2007 and is a lifetime car guy who always favored the brands you don't see as often—Buick, Olds, Pontiac and Mercury (he gets a pass on all the GM stuff). After seeing

"From Dusk 'til Dawn" at 18 he became a Cougar guy. Within 2 years he had his first—a '70 coupe. He says "it broke" but maybe it had something to do with the 20 year old driver? 10 years later and he had another '70 but sold it to cover moving expenses—life always gets in the way. After 10 years away from Dallas in Indiana, he's back and now owns a '68 XR-7 G Hertz looking for a resto (and maybe a new home).

**Secretary**—Barry Rowe. Barry has been a member of the club almost since its inception having joined in 1989. Growing up in San Antonio, Barry's mom worked for Main Lincoln Mercury. His dad drove Comet convertibles, and his high school graduation gift was a Lime Frost '67 with a black vinyl top and a 289 4 bbl. Apparently he was a bit of a test pilot in his younger days and ultimately found the limit on the '67 in the form of a broken crank shaft. He now has another '67 which he drives and shows and a '69 convertible that is still a bit of a project.

**Treasurer**—Dwain Barker. Dwain claims to not really be a car guy, but the first car he ever bought on his own was a '70 Dodge Charger R/T. He admits he kinda still wishes he had that car, but he's been a Cougar guy for the better part of 16 years (which he blames on Gene). His first

was a Lipstick Red '77 he bought in 2003 that was apparently a real trophy winner. In 2010 he bought the '73 XR7 convertible he shows now. It also brings in the hardware at shows around town.

**Activities Chair**—Gene Mullenberg. Gene came out of club leadership retirement to take on this role. He's been a part of the LSCC and its direction since 1995. A car guy from the age of 13, when he started driving, Gene still has his first car (a '52 Merc) and his first Cougar (a '74 blue convertible). Gene's currently doing performance upgrades and cosmetic restoration of a '73 CJ convertible and working hard to help our club grow and flourish.

**Media Chair**—Mike Easley. Mike first joined the club in 2017, but has been a Cougar enthusiast just about since birth. He grew up working on cars, trucks, lawnmowers and anything else with a motor. After seeing "Bullit" and "Gone in 60 Seconds" he became a true car guy, driving a '66 Mustang GT in high school which he still owns. Mike's dad Alan, long time LSCC member and former President, had Mike riding in Cougars from the beginning. Mike now owns 2 — a '67 XR7 and a '69 XR7 — and he is looking for ways to capture and catalog all of the incredible knowledge of our club members.



## 50 Years ago

1969 was tumultuous and eventful year. Following the tragedy and turmoil of 1968, the war in Vietnam raged on, Richard Nixon was inaugurated as President, and the youth culture found its ultimate expression in the 4-day music festival at Woodstock. Man first set foot on the moon, and the Beatles played their last live show.

In the midst of all of this, Mercury restyled the Cougar, its

version of the wildly successful pony car. Maintaining the wheelbase but making the car wider, longer, and heavier, designers changed the grille and tail lights, and the linear rocker character of the earlier models gave way to a crease arcing down from the front fender. A convertible was introduced, and the Eliminator equipment packages replaced the GT-E and XR7-G. Ford also offered perfor-

mance upgrades through dealer parts counters that gave the Cougar claws, but the heavier platform meant competition was tough. Still, just over 100,000 units were sold.

2019 marks the 50th Anniversary of the '69 Cougar and events around the country will recognize this milestone. Keep an eye out on the CCOA website and in LSCC communications for details.

## Restoration Exchange — The Heater Box

Most of us can tough it out in our prized Cougars through the seasons without the environmental comforts of home. But a non-functioning heater core could mean more than just



discomfort and might lead to bigger problems down the road. Whatever the reason, restoring a heater box can be a fairly quick project that improves both the look and function of the car.

Once removed from the car, take the assembly apart being careful to bag and label parts and take plenty of pictures, noting original finishes. The two

halves of the box are held in place with clips — be careful removing these as the 50 year old fiberglass box can be fragile. Remove and evaluate the heater core. Replace it if necessary. Baffles and inner doors can be removed, cleaned and repainted with Rust-oleum “Brilliant Metal Finish” metallic paint. Heavily rusted inner components can be replaced with salvage or reproduction parts.



When maintaining the original finish is not a priority, the box can be lightly bead blasted. If the box is cracked or seams are misshapen, *carefully* use heat to soften the material and

massage it back into shape. For larger cracks, reinforce the interior of the box with fiberglass, then JB Weld the cracks on the exterior. Use of a filling



primer followed by light sanding will give the box a uniform surface for painting.

Finish by painting the rivets with silver, masking and painting brackets and clips with a semi-gloss black, then masking and painting the box itself with Krylon ColorMaster Oil Rubbed Bronze Satin (a near perfect match to the original color). Replace all the gaskets with reproductions that are readily available and reassemble.

See the March 2018 newsletter for details on the Kidde fire extinguisher recall. And be sure to **check your fire extinguishers annually.**

## The “Lethal Cat” is Back

In June of 2014, member Chuck Donaldson experienced every car guy’s worst nightmare—an engine fire at home in the garage. Starting with a fuel leak in the



numbers-matching 428 Cobra Jet engine, the fire grew quickly and Chuck’s older fire extinguisher could only wheeze out a brief puff of dry chemical. Chuck slammed the hood and grabbed a garden hose, but it took firefighters nearly an hour to extinguish the flames and render the car “safe.” First responders have a simple objective in a situation like this, and a fairly blunt approach to achieving it. So Chuck’s Eliminator dream car that he’d owned for 14 years was now a shambles.

After cycling through the stages of shock, disbelief, anger and grief, Chuck was deter-

mined to find a path forward for the car by locating someone who could bring his Cougar back to life. That is where KTL Restorations of Danville, VA came in. Kurt and Crystal Lawrance run one of the premier Cougar restoration shops in the country,

and while the condition of Chuck’s car was pretty bad, Kurt was committed to putting her back on the road.

The damage to the car was two-fold—from the fire and from putting out the fire. Some of the sheet metal and all of the glass was beyond repair and required replacement. The motor and numbers matching drivetrain were rebuilt, including the original 4-speed transmission, and the interior was completely refurbished. Four years after the disaster and following more than 2,000 hours of painstaking work, the car was born again at

KTL. This ’70 Eliminator made its debut at the 2018 SEMA Show in Las Vegas in October. The “Lethal Cat” was well received at SEMA and has earned recognition at other shows around the country, including an Honorable Mention as a Fine Nine contender at the Daryl Starbird show in Tulsa this past February—the first time a non-custom/original restore has been recognized for that award.

The car will soon be back in Chuck’s garage. So maybe you’ll see it at a local show...or leaving you in the dust on some Texas road.



## LONE STAR COUGAR CLUB

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*We're on the Web*  
**LoneStarCougarClub.com**

The Lone Star Cougar Club is a North Texas based organization dedicated to promoting interest in the Mercury Cougar and other Ford/Mercury/Lincoln automobiles. Our members are actively involved in preserving, restoring, modifying and, most of all, driving our cars.

*Mercury Cougar...  
Untamed Elegance*

## Member Profile

Jim Witherow of Aledo, TX joined the LSCC last year, after acquiring his very first Cougar. But the story starts way before then.

Jim grew up back east in D.C. and Richmond where his dad worked in the automobile industry with some of the revered brands that no longer exist, except with enthusiasts. At Packard in parts distribution and later Studebaker as a District Manager, Jim's dad was always driving a pretty nice company car. "The pay wasn't great but the cars were," and his dad was "one of those guys who could take a car apart and put it back together blindfolded."

When the proverbial wheels came off at Studebaker and his dad joined AMC, they asked him to move back to D.C.—a move he wasn't too excited about. One of his dealers, Whitten Bros., had left AMC for Lincoln Mercury, and they asked Jim's dad to join them.

That's where it started. Jim's dad was now driving Mercurys...and so was Jim. In fact,

the Whitten Bros. kids were too young to drive, so Jim took the wheel for all of the local parades showcasing the dealer's cars—including one where he had in the back of the convertible a candidate for Miss Flame, representing the Mechanicsville, VA Fire Department. She didn't win the honor but did win his heart—he later married her!!!



During Jim's senior year in high school, his dad brought home a '69 Eliminator with a dealer-installed Boss 302 (the buyer had failed to take delivery). His dad wasn't all that excited—the family needed a larger car—but Jim was hooked and never forgot that car.

After attending UVA, Jim was a banker in Raleigh, N.C. and then Ft. Worth, got into ranch-

ing on the side once he got to Texas, and was called to the ministry in 2000. He started Faith Presbyterian Church in Aledo, where he is still the pastor today.

Over the years he cycled through other cars and other brands—probably 50 or so between him, his wife, his 2 daughters, and his ranching.

As he approached his 60th birthday he began to think about that Cougar again, and on a trip to Oregon to visit his now grown daughter contacted Don Rush of West Coast Classic Cougar.

Don introduced him to Jim and Elaine Pinkerton, who were selling Elaine's father's car, which had

been concours restored at Cascade Classics in the early 1990's. This F-code automatic has only about 2,000 miles on it since then, but Jim now drives and shows the car regularly.

He still remembers the '69 Eliminator with the Boss 302 and is thinking something like that might finally "scratch the itch."