

Australian **Hot Rodder**

Number Four
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Dedicated to Australia's Hot Rod Heritage



Class A Tub: Bob Bowman's Model A

Warren Wilkie: True to Tradition

Deuce Daze: Peter Leech's '32 Roadster

Hot Rod Heaven: Narrandera Nationals

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CLASS A TUB

Bob Bowman used whatever he had in his shed to build his ultimate hot rod.

*By Graham Smith
Photography by Mark Bean*



What do you do when you find yourself with a shed full of cool bits and pieces accumulated over a lifetime in hot rodding? You could load them all on a trailer and take them to a swap meet, you could sell them on eBay, or, as Bob Bowman did, you could build your ultimate hot rod.

When Bowman looked around his shed he found an old Chevrolet chassis, there was also a fibreglass two-door Model A phaeton body he and Bob Cain had moulded back in the days he ran Street Rod Accessories in Sydney, and a small-block Chevrolet V8 that had once powered the bus he and his team travelled in when on their annual pilgrimage to Lake Gairdner for the salt racing. As well as that he found a genuine Halibrand quick-change rear axle he'd bought on a Valla Rod Run many years earlier, and a set of Kelsey Hayes wire wheels, and heaps more, including a cool old Oldsmobile instrument panel.

Assembled in his mind they formed a picture of a very cool car, one, with the urging of his wife, Sandra, he decided to build.

The picture in his mind's eye was of a '29 Model A Deluxe Phaeton, much like the one Ford had built in 1930, but updated with modern technology and given a 1960s hot rod treatment.

Ford's original '30 Deluxe Phaeton was a sporty two-door model with a touch of luxury. It sported a lower windscreen than the Standard model, and had luxury features like leather upholstery, a folding front seat and a rear bench seat with armrests.

But Bowman's car would have luxuries that Ford never thought of, things like roll-up windows, a heater-demister, and lockable doors that would make his Deluxe Phaeton a comfortable and secure long-distance cruiser with all the amenities of a closed car.

The build began in 2008, but it wasn't until 2011 that he really got cracking on it, and he spent the next two-and-a-half years completing it.

To most weekend hot rodders two-and-a-half years might not seem like a long time to build a car, but Bob says it was one of the slowest he's ever done.

"It was out of the box, different," he explained. "It wasn't straightforward, there was a lot of intricate stuff in it that needed working through."

One of his first steps was to set down the basic parameters of the car. He decided the wheelbase would be 103.5 inches, the same as the Model A, but the proportions would be dramatically different to create a longer, more elegant look befitting a high-class car of the period.

To achieve his desired look he added four inches to the length of the hood, the hood was then the same length as a '32 hood, and he shortened the tub by an equivalent amount and narrowed it two-and-a-half inches at the rear for a smoother, curved shape.

Further, he decided that the doors would be the same length as those of a Model A Tudor.

On Sandra's instructions it had to have the comfort of wind-up windows.

The need for the windows to be able to be wound up and down meant it couldn't have rear wheel arches; they would have impeded the movement of the windows.

Bob's plan at the outset was to use the fibreglass body and a 'glass grille shell he already had. The only steel panel he planned to use was going to be the hood, simply because that had to be made of steel for strength and stiffness.

But modifying the cowl of the 'glass body so it resembled a '32 inside proved difficult and more than a little tiresome, and one thing led to another and before he knew it he'd decided to build the whole thing in steel.

The switch from 'glass to steel began when he bought a smoothed Model A cowl top and sides from Brookville Roadster, he then bought a steel '32 grille shell, and then having those panels in steel it wasn't such a stretch to the decision to build the rest of the body in steel as well. Before he knew it there was a pile of flat sheet steel in his workshop and he was at work forming them into the panels he needed.

There are 36 panels in total, including the hood and the doors, the tub sides and rear, and the belly pan that encloses the underside of the car from the front to the rear.

The elegant proportions and low-slung lines of Bowman's hand-built Deluxe tub are more in tune with the '30s than the '20s when the original Model A was conceived.





TRUE TO TRADITION

With cars like his '36 three-window coupe Warren Wilkie is helping to keep the tradition of hot rodding alive. *By Graham Smith*

In the years that Warren Wilkie has been around hot rodding he's seen plenty of fads come and go, from resto to rat and plenty in between, but for him nothing beats a traditional hot rod.

Warren is today one of Australia's foremost hot rod builders, he's renowned for the cool traditional style hot rods that come out of his Toowoomba shop.

"We've built a lot of traditional hot rods," he told *AHR* when we dropped into his shop, "and that's what I'd like the shop to be known for."

When Warren talks tradition he's talking about the cars built in the '50s, '60s and '70s with lots of genuine early Ford parts, dropped axles, chopped roofs, and flathead, small-block Chevrolet or Hemi engines.

That doesn't mean that he's stuck in the past and building cars the same way they were built back then.

"It has to look right," he says. "The key to that is to select the right parts to start with."

"It also takes skill and passion, and a lot of hard work."

Warren has always had an innate ability to pick the right

parts to make a killer hot rod, as anyone who saw his 1930 Model A roadster at the 1st Street Rod Nationals at Narrandera in 1973 would attest.

By the early 1970s the era of the channelled hot rod was coming to an end and hot rodders were turning their attention to stock-bodied rods. Warren's immaculate Model A was one of the first, and it was stunning.

Not only was it complete with all its fenders, it also had all of its original jewellery, from its stock bumpers and rear luggage rack to its genuine taillights and cowl lamps, there was even an old winged Motometer temperature gauge on the radiator cap.

Such was its impact at the Nationals that Warren left Narrandera weighed down with the prized hardware that came with the Rodders' Choice award for the top hot rod on the run. If that wasn't enough he went back to Narrandera in 1975 for the 2nd Nationals and repeated his success.

"Warren's car was a real game changer," says Peter Leech, the builder of a well known channelled '32 roadster in the 1960s who remembers seeing the roadster at Narrandera.

"Before Warren came along we thought guys who drove full-fendered cars were just too lazy to take the fenders off their hot rods, but he showed us how good a full-fendered car could look."

"It started a new trend and everyone started building full-fendered cars."

From time immemorial hot rodders have mostly learnt about hot rodding through hot rod magazines and Warren was no different. For him it happened in the late-1960s when he was still a teenager attending high school in Toowoomba.

By his own admission he probably spent too much time reading magazines in class.

He would flick through the Australian magazines, but he preferred the American ones, particularly *Rod & Custom*, which featured more of the hot rods he liked.

In particular he remembers a 1929 Model A roadster that was featured on the front cover of the June 1969 issue of *Rod & Custom* and described by the magazine's editors as "the cleanest '29 Ford of them all!"

"It was Candy Red with white walls and Mercury wheel caps," Warren clearly recalls.

So taken with it was he that he decided to build his own hot rod in a similar style.

He was just 16 years old at the time and starting a panel beating apprenticeship at the local Ford dealership in Toowoomba when he saw an advertisement for a 1930 Model A Ford roadster in the local newspaper.

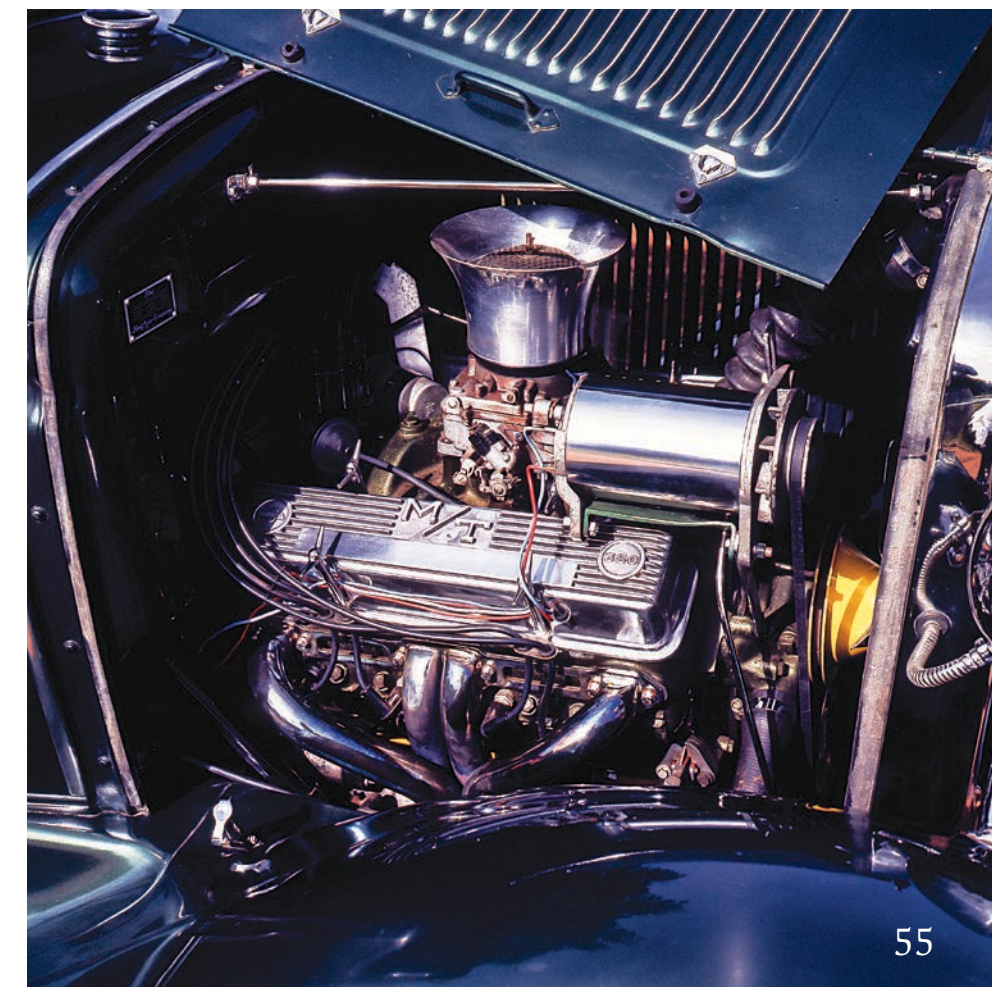
In those days it was common for advertisers to include their address in their advertisements as well as their phone number.

Too young to hold a driver's licence, Warren mounted his bike and pedalled across town to the address in the advertisement, but left disappointed when he found no one was home. When further attempts also proved fruitless he decided he'd probably missed the boat.

But a few weeks later at technical college when telling his good friend Les Winter that he'd missed out on a Model A roadster, Les owned up and told Warren that he'd actually bought the car himself.



Warren Wilkie set the rodding world on fire in the 1970s with his resto-rod styled, small-block Chev-powered '30 Model A Ford.



ROADS TO GLORY

Against the odds a humble Ford V8 beat the best that road racing had to offer in 1934 to win the Victorian Centenary Grand Prix.



By Graham Smith
Thanks to Kevin Oates for his inspiration
and help in researching this story.

It was 1934 and Victoria was in party mode as it celebrated a centenary of European settlement.

Prince Henry, the Duke of Gloucester, dropped in for a look around and was welcomed by a crowd half a million strong, Bairnsdale's Ted Stubenrauch overcame a shattered shoulder and a star-studded field that included the legendary Sir Hubert Opperman to win the 1100-mile Centenary 1000 cycling road race, C.W.A. Scott and T Campbell Black flew for 71 hours from Mildenhall aerodrome near London in England to Melbourne to win the Centenary Air Race in their single-engined de Havilland 88 Comet, 90,000 turned out at Flemington to see Darby Munro ride top-weight Peter Pan to an easy win in the Centenary Melbourne Cup, kids ran and jumped, bands played, choirs sang, and a couple of complete unknowns won the Centenary Grand Prix driving a humble Ford roadster.

The win by rookie racer, Mick Smith, and his best mate, Lindsay Terry, rocked the motor racing establishment of the day to its very core.

Rubbing salt into the wound was the knowledge that it was not only Smith's first ever race, but the roadster was

his parents' regular road and car he'd borrowed for the day.

Just days before the race at Phillip Island on October 27, 1934 the car had been a stock standard 1934 Ford V8 De Luxe roadster like any other.

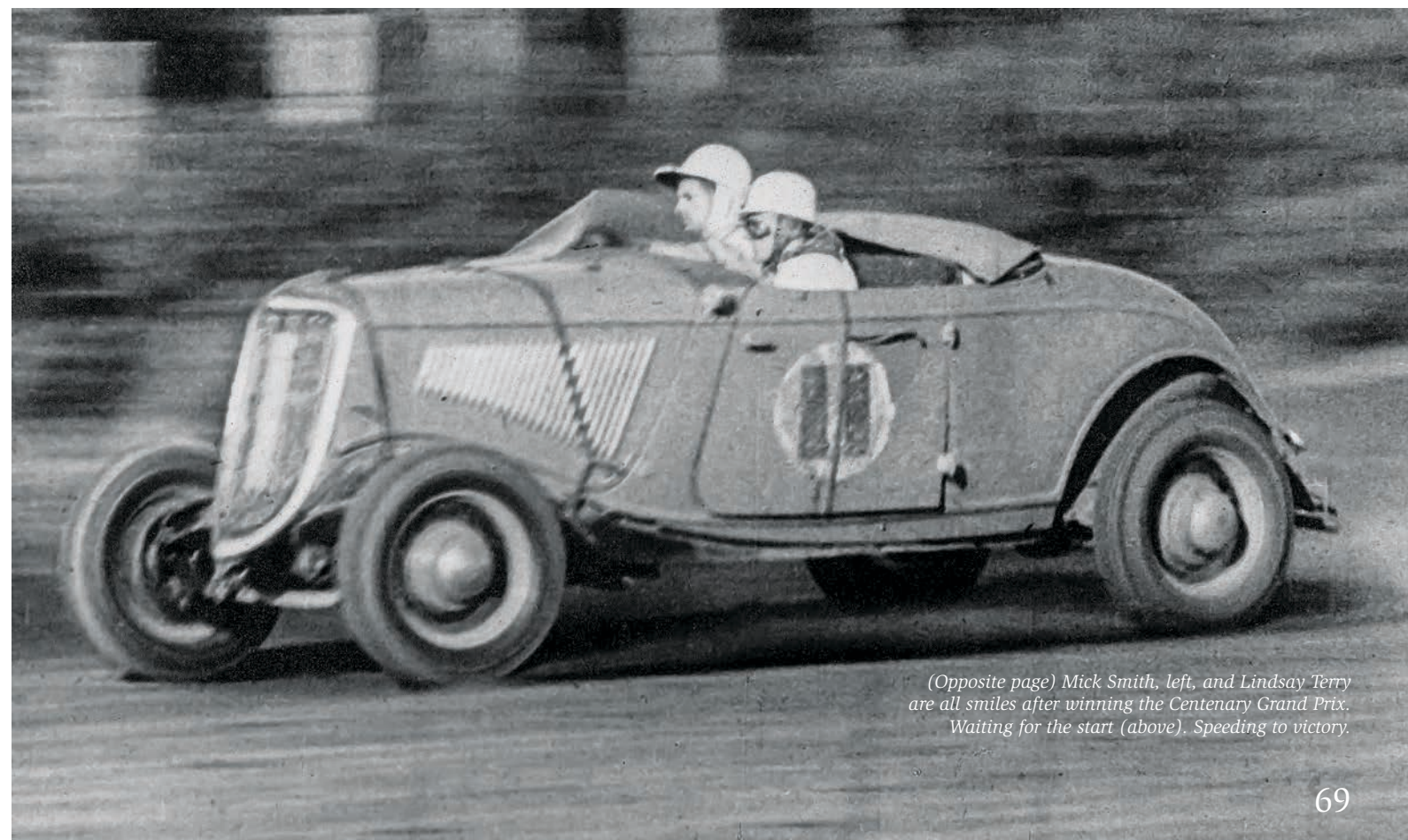
But after being stripped of its mudguards, running boards, windscreen, roof, bumpers, rear-mounted spare wheel, rumble seat, headlights and taillights it was transformed into a race winner.

The Victorian Centenary Grand Prix was an official event on the centenary program commemorating the landing of the Henty family who crossed from Tasmania and settled at Portland in the state's west in 1834 becoming Victoria's first settlers.

It was a one-off race, not to be confused with the Australian Grand Prix, which was an annual race also run at Phillip Island from 1928 to 1935.

Run over 35 laps of the same rough and rutted 6 ½-mile (10.5 km) rectangular public road circuit as the Australian Grand Prix, a total distance of 235 miles (378 km), the race was 35 miles or 5 ½ laps longer than the AGP, which made it the longest and toughest road race in Australia.

The win by Mick Smith and Lindsay Terry rocked the motor racing establishment to its very core.



(Opposite page) Mick Smith, left, and Lindsay Terry are all smiles after winning the Centenary Grand Prix. Waiting for the start (above). Speeding to victory.

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