

# *Collectible* **AUTOMOBILE**

## Blended Family: American Motors '55

Perkier Pickups: 1970-71 Ford Ranchero

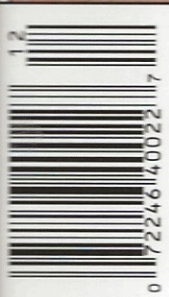
1933-35 Buick: Quest for Relevance



- Omni and Horizon Shake Up the Subcompacts
- Personality Profile: Auto Designer Carl Cameron

1955 Hudson Hornet V-8 Custom Hollywood Hardtop Coupe

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## Photo Feature

### 1960 Kellison J-4X Coupe

**T**he rise of fiberglass helped create a kit-car boom from the Fifties through the Seventies. The material is light, can't rust, and—importantly for a small start-up manufacturer without access to costly stamping dies—relatively easy to shape.

Ambitious entrepreneurs designed sleek sports car bodies that could be mounted on readily available American mechanicals. Articles on kit cars such as the Woodill Wildfire graced the pages of car magazines that also carried advertising for more kit cars. These promised that with a minimum

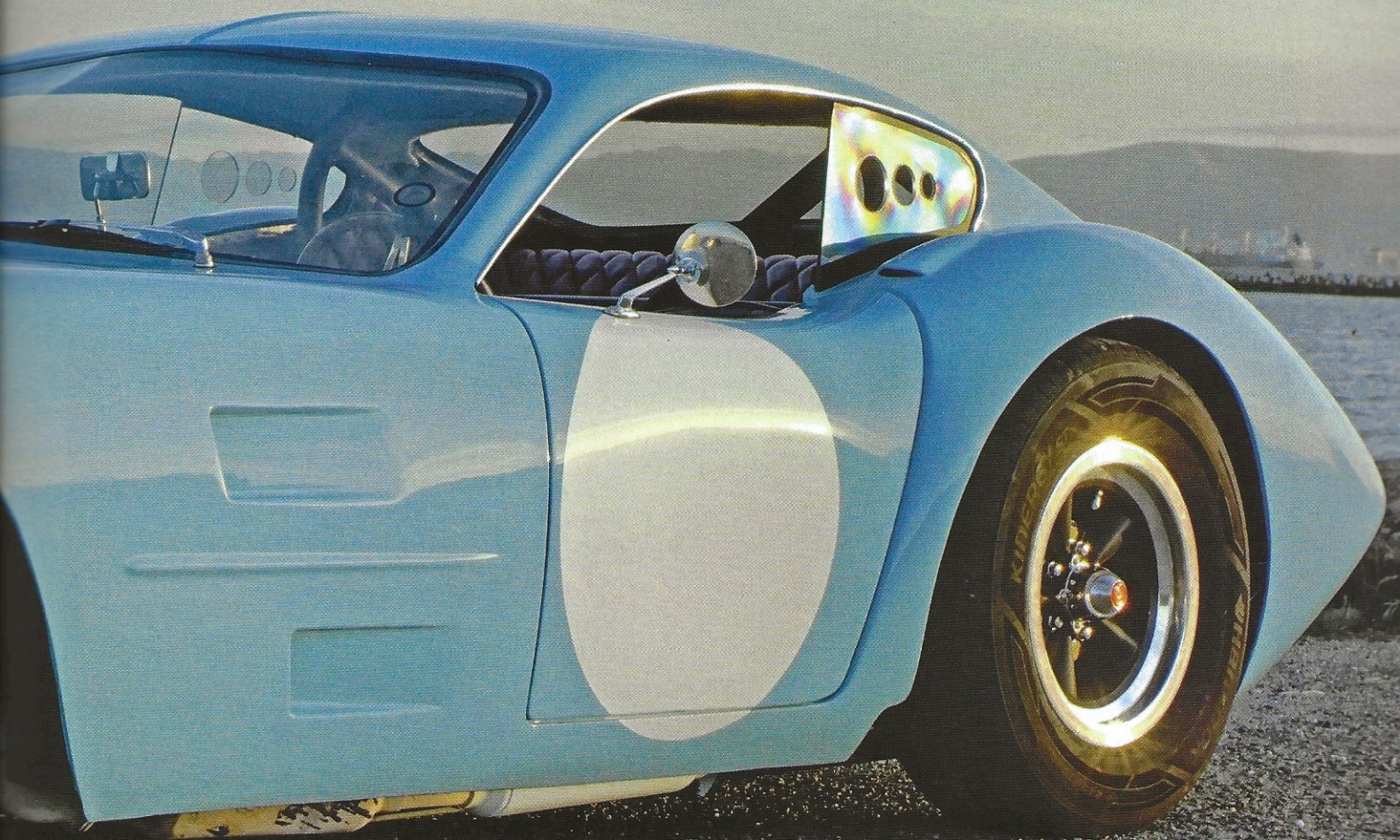
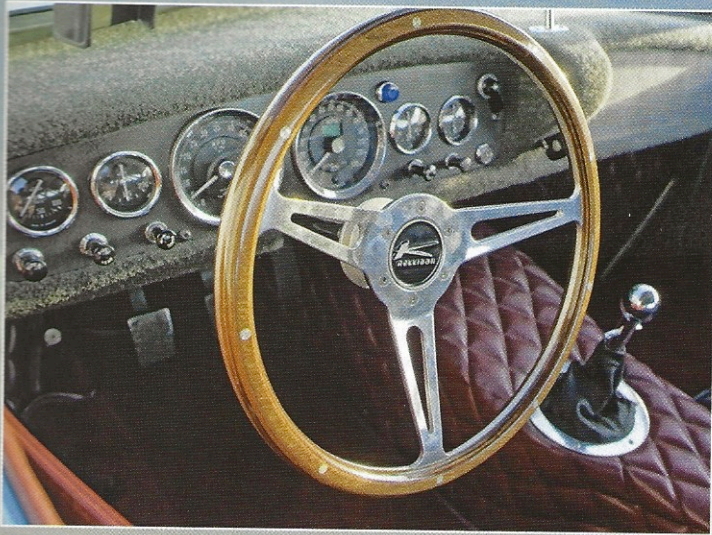
investment and some mechanical know-how, one could own an exciting, European-style GT for a fraction of the cost of the genuine article.

One such kit car was Kellison. Jim Kellison served in the U.S. Air Force and later worked as a civilian at Travis Air Force Base in California. Along the way, Kellison learned how to work with

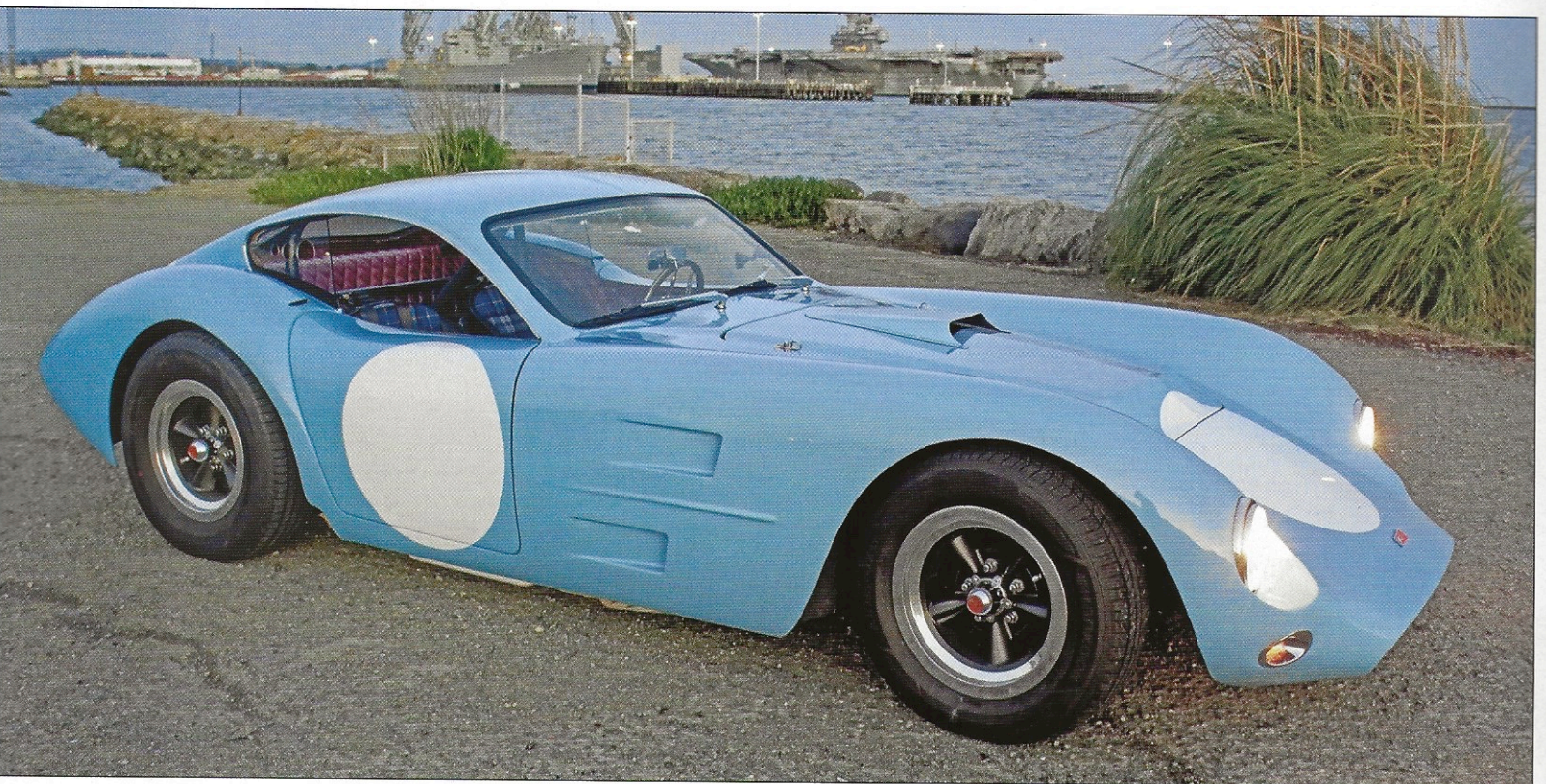
fiberglass. In '58, he began building fiberglass bodies in Folsom, California, and later in Lincoln, California. He offered a dizzying array of coupe and roadster styles that could fit the chassis of Corvette, Austin-Healey, MG, and Porsche. The bodies could be mounted on a shortened American chassis or a frame built by Kellison.



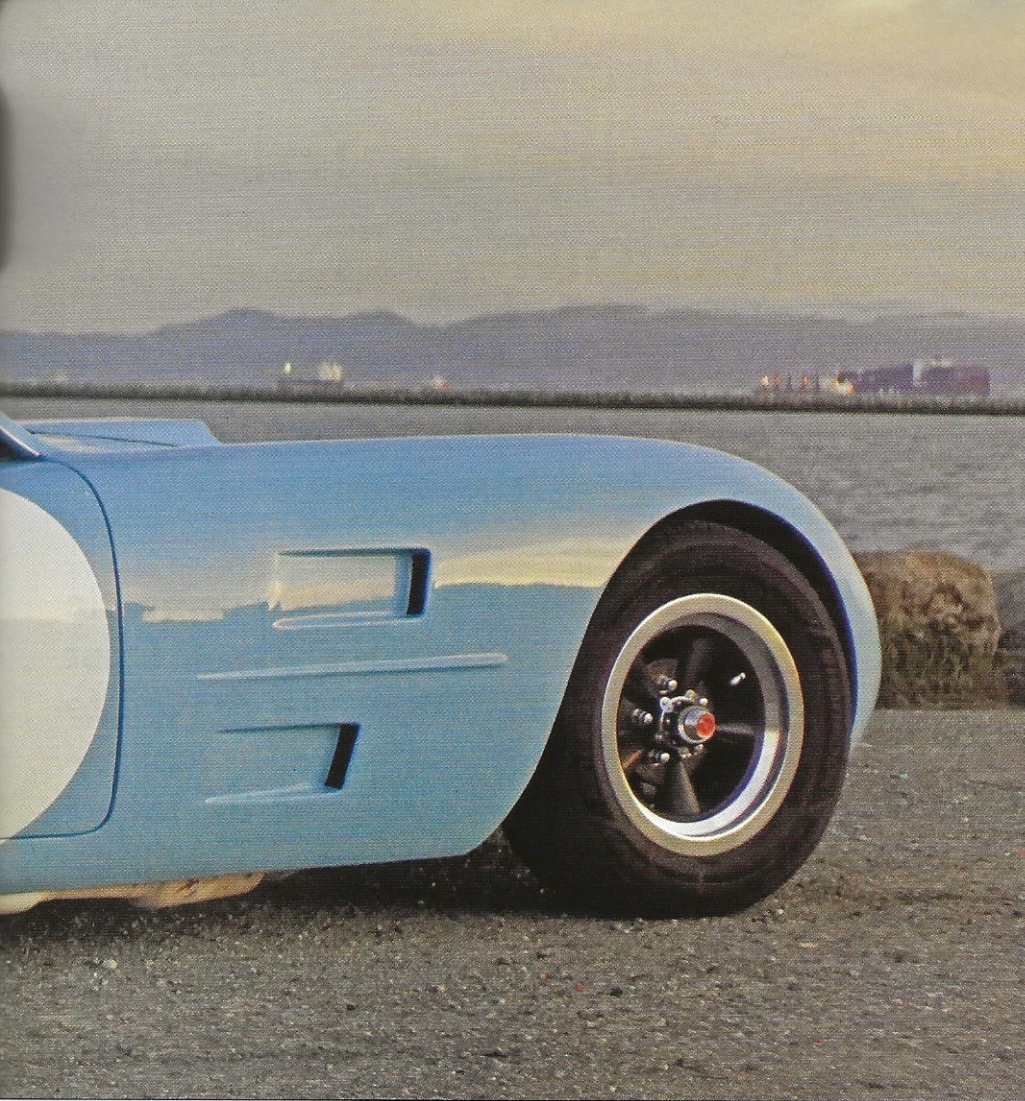












Kellison bodies tended to have thicker, higher-quality fiberglass construction than many other kit cars. In the early Sixties, Kellison entered an agreement with Allied Fiberglass and his designs were also sold under the Astra name. He also expanded into other fiberglass products such as dune buggies, ski boats, and shower stalls. In 1970, Kellison left fiberglass for other pursuits, but returned with the 1978-81 Stallion, a Cobra replica.

This 1960 Kellison J-4X coupe is owned by [redacted]. It was found in a junkyard by Skip Snyder, who got it back into running condition. [redacted] worked almost 10 years to get it in its present condition. The rear of the body wasn't wide enough to accommodate the wheels so Larry Cearly reshaped the fenders. It is only 39 inches high, has limited ground clearance, and lacks side windows. The Cotswold Blue paint is a Jaguar and Triumph color from the early Sixties.

This car has the Kellison frame made of heavy, square tubes. Says [redacted] of the frame, "Crude. It's not like a Maserati 'birdcage.'" The front suspension is Chevrolet independent. The engine is a 283-cid Chevy "small-block" V-8. Although Kellison advertising talked of Corvette components, this engine was traced back to an early Sixties truck. It has been mildly modified along the likely standards of its day; [redacted] doubts if it puts out 200 bhp.

Other components include a 1949-52 Studebaker windshield and Smiths gauges from a Triumph TR2 and MGA Twin Cam. The wheels are original to the car. The J-4X weighs 2200 pounds.

Brochures described the J-4 as a "crowd stopper" and that is even more true today. [redacted] says the Kellison drives better than he thought, considering it's a 60-year-old home-made car. Handling is good, though it can be twitchy and sloppy. There is little rear suspension travel and the ride is hard. Still, he drove it in the New England 1000 vintage rally and found it a good car for the event.

*Jack Stewart*

