

## **Enter the Pontiac**

### **By Jim Lucas AKA Chief Right Wing**

It was a 1941 Pontiac convertible. It had a new paint job and four new wide white wall tires, and it was loaded with J.C. Whitney "goodies": chrome twin spotlights, fog lights, backup lights and side view mirrors. It even had turn indicators and fender skirts!

Who could find fault with such a car? My wife, Ida, that's who: Oh, sure it was beautiful, but it was windy, when the top was down. Yes, people waved and honked when we drove by, but the wind whistled when the top was up. Of course, it was fun to ride around when the top was down in town, but when it rained it leaked, even when the top was up. All of this was true and she only mentioned it to keep me from guessing that, by and large, she felt that this car was OK for an "old car."

The Pontiac did a good job paying for its board and room: we always received two tickets to Disneyland, Knotts Berry Farm or other such places when they would use it for display. In addition to free game tickets, I'd usually get some expense money for driving the Homecoming Queen around the stadium during half time at football games.

However, the real gravy train came with professional jobs. The going rate was often \$50. an hour for 4 or less hours and total of \$400. for a full days work, which could be 10 or 12 hours. It was used in a traffic drive by scene in one movie and featured in a cigarette ad in a magazine and as a cover on a record album.

The shoot for the album took place deep in the Mojave desert, and the photographer wanted to start about sunrise. This meant I had to leave home about 4:30 AM to get to the place on time. He took several shots from many angles until about 11 o'clock. Then we drove about 20 miles to a small town to have lunch. The job was finished about two hours after lunch.

Suddenly, the producer had an idea: he wanted a sunset shot so that he could use the sunrise shot for the front of the album and a sunset one for the back of it. In order to get my money, I had to stay until the job was finished. By the time I got home, it was around 1 AM! Money well earned that day.

About the same time I was doing all of this, I learned that I could pick up "spending" money by writing articles for car magazines. This was good because I used the money from this and the Pontiac jobs to buy spare parts and fix things for it, without using household funds! When one of the magazines ("Antique Motor News") offered me 12 cents per word to write a monthly column, I was in high clover. However, when I got my first check, I found that I was only paid for the first 280 words! After that, I made sure to never go over that amount of words.

By now our children had "flown the coop" and we discovered that the "Empty nest" thing wasn't really bad and that we were not only free but had some extra time and money to use as we pleased! We had been making regular short trips with So-Cal and other near by regions, and Ida seemed to be enjoying them. Now was the time to make a bold move, so I suggested that we take the Pontiac on a safari through the California "Gold Country"! When she said that it sounded like fun and that we should do it, I was surprised and delighted!