

# A RARE 1956 CONTINENTAL IS RETURNED TO IT'S FORMER GLORY



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The year was 1956. Elvis was on the charts, the post-war baby boom was booming, and a white Continental Mark II was cruising the streets of southern California.

The Mark II model technically wasn't a Lincoln because it came from the Continental Division, which was separate from Ford Motor's Ford, Mercury and Lincoln divisions. This new division, initially called the "Special Product Operations" was housed in sumptuous quarters and had a star-studded lineup of designers and engineers.

Only 3000 of these were made. Powering this elegant automobile was a 368 cubic inch V-8 engine generating 285 horsepower. This limited-production two-door coupe was largely hand-built under the direction of Henry Ford II's younger brother William Clay Ford.

This beautiful car is a rarity, as it was produced for only a few years starting in June 1955. This was a car for those with money – costing \$10,000; it was the price of a house at that time, and

the most expensive American car. A convertible model was considered and two prototypes were developed, but at a cost of \$18,000, Ford decided not to pursue production, and the convertible idea was moved over to lower end models with higher production like the Ford Skyliner. Convertible technology at that time wasn't quite good enough to lend itself to the Continental nameplate.

Ford Motor Company went public in 1958, and shareholders decided to stop the production of limited-run cars or models that only the rich and famous could afford. The company listened, and production of the Mark II was stopped shortly after so resources could be focused on more affordable vehicles.

Gary and Jeff Staniloff have always been interested in classic cars. Their father had purchased a 1956 Thunderbird, but it just didn't captivate them, and as they had no ties to it, it was sold to a

family friend and they decided to start looking for another classic to replace it.

The brothers currently own a gorgeous black 1970 Lincoln Continental Mark III, so when through an Internet search they discovered this beautiful white Mark II, they knew right away they wanted it. As Jeff elaborates, "One of our younger brothers thought we were a bit crazy to buy this old car, but we knew it was special, as we hadn't

seen anything like it at any of the car shows we had attended over the years, and with its white paint, it complemented our current Lincoln."

It had been sitting in a car museum

in Salt Lake City with 192 other cars, residing in a quonset hut for twenty years without moving. Every car in the museum needed work, including the Continental, but that didn't deter them. One of the features that caught their eye was that this car had air condition-

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ing – a rarity in 1956, and only 20% of this model had it, so in July 2012, Jeff bought a plane ticket and went down to have a look at it.

Purchasing the car and having it shipped to its new home in Calgary turned out to be the easier part of the restoration process. Several things needed work, so they made their list and decided to get started.

First item to be tackled was the interior. Having the car reupholstered proved to be frustrating – a word which doesn't really cover the depth of the ordeal. The first place it was taken to let it sit for four months without doing any work, so a new company was sought out, but it

proved to be an exercise in futility, as the upholstery wasn't worked on for another year. In the meantime, some other work was accomplished, as the car was taken to a shop in Black Diamond and was painted a beautiful creamy white.

The transmission was in need of repair, so the car was taken apart to fix it, as well as electrical issues, engine work, suspension, and the radiator. All this took six months before the Continental was running.

Two scrapbooks document this beautiful car's history and restoration, and a page with some recognizable names pops up. Gary flips through the pages and points out the famous people who

have owned one. "Frank Sinatra, Elizabeth Taylor, Mike Todd, Louis Prima, Henry J. Kaiser, Shah of Iran, the Saudi Royal Family (they had four), President Dwight Eisenhower and his brother Milton, and Elvis Presley". Page after page lists very familiar names that were owners of this unique brand of car.

After a total of four years, it was finally operational and ready to drive, and made its debut at this year's Black Diamond car show on July 24.

Rare, beautiful, and elegant, this Continental has become an attraction over the summer both in and out of town. If you see it around, be sure to take a closer look. And bring your camera.

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