

The Lincoln Log



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Table of Contents

- 2 From the Director
Joe S. Columbe
- 3 Upcoming LCOC Events
Becky Girffith
- 4 An afternoon at Line Rock Farm
Joe Columbe
- 10 1958-1960 Lincolns- What Went Wrong
Jim & Cheryl Farrell

From the Director By Joe Columbe

It is already mid-August. Some Hoosier Region (HR) members are enjoying themselves at Hickory Corners for the 2024 Homecoming, Aug. 7-11. The Hoosier Region has had events all months except July this year. Except for January and June, the Hoosier Region events have been poorly attended. After my 13 years as the planner, it is time for a member to step up and take over as the Monthly Events Coordinator.

The Hoosier Region has a jam-packed calendar of events for the rest of the year. Please read the details of these fun times in this issue *Lincoln Log*. More information to come. The Lake Shore LCOC Region has

invited the Hoosier Region to a joint mini-meet at Springfield, Illinois. This should be a great time and a chance to meet or continue relationships with nearby LCOC members. The Indiana Region Cadillac & LaSalle Club has invited us to an overnight trip to a fantastic collection in northern Indiana during the week. The list goes on! Join us for all the events that are available to our members.

A Christmas event has not been planned. It can Christmas Party can be planned, but I need to hear from our members on what they would like to do for the party. Let me know! The Bynum event will be held on Saturday, Jan. 4, 2025.

I will see you all soon at all the events that have been planned.

Continently Yours
Joe & Eleanor Columbe

Joe S. Columbe is an LCOC member from Milroy, Indiana.

FRONT COVER Painting by retired Ford designer Bill Moraniac of a 1958 Lincoln Continental Mark III in front of the Dearborn Inn Check out Jim & Cheryl Farrell's take on these unique cars on **page 10**. *Image courtesy of Bill Moraniac.* **BACK COVER** The Lincoln Star shown bright at Lime Rock Farm during the annual picnic. *Photo courtesy of Matt Gerhard.* **LEFT** A spectacular painting of the 1957 Lincoln. This image was shared with the editor by Doug Bailey of the Cadillac & LaSalle Club.



For more on the Lime Rock Farm picnic, turn to page 4. *Photo courtesy of Matt Gerhard,*

Upcoming LCOC Events

September 27-28

Overnight "Mini-Meet" in Springfield, Illinois

Friday: Dinner at a venue to be announced later

Saturday: Lincoln show at Green Lincoln in the morning.

After lunch participating with the Mother Road Organization

Evening: Dinner at the Motorhead Garage

Host hotel – Crowne Plaza, Springfield, Illinois

Rate **\$132 per room, per night plus tax**

Contact Crowne Plaza **800-227-6963**

Group name: **Lincoln and Continental Owners Club**

Group Code: **LOW (0=zero)**

Reservation cut-off date for the Crowne Plaza is Tuesday, August 27.

Saturday, October 12

Ford Fest at Bill Collins Ford, Louisville, Kentucky

Hosted by the Derby City Mustang Club

8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Registration fee: \$20

125 trophies, judged classes, food on site, registration fees donated to Active Heroes, Crusade for Children and JROTC color guard, Free buffet dinner during awards ceremony.

Go to www.derbycitymustangclub, click "Ford Fest" for all needed information

Monday, October 14 and Tuesday, October 15

Overnight Trip to Elkhart

Monday, October 14- Meet at 11:30 a.m. for lunch at The Vine, afterwards visit the JBS Collection of classic cars at 1:30 p.m. This collection has sent several cars to Pebble Beach and has won awards. Other attractions are being planned.

October 23 – 27

Eastern National Meet in Morgantown, Pennsylvania

Type in **LCOC 2024 Eastern National Meet** for all needed information including schedule, host hotel, and registration.

Important: **Cutoff date for rooms is at the host hotel, Holiday Inn, Morgantown, is Oct. 2, 2024.**

November Business Meeting

Information to come

December

Have a Merry Christmas. No meeting planned.

January 4

Bynums Steakhouse House

Information to come



Right Lincolns at Old Cars and Coffee on Aug. 3, in Indianapolis. The Versailles is owned by Greg Martin. Charlie Griffith with "Buttercup," his 1966 Lincoln Continental Coupe. Open to all makes, this event is held on the first Saturday of the month through October, 8:00 a.m. through 11:00 a.m. at the Circle City Industrial Complex, 1125 E. Brookside Ave. in Indianapolis. *Photo by Becky Griffith.*

An Afternoon at Lime Rock Farm

By Joe Columbe

Photos by Matt Gerhard





The 14th annual car club picnic held by Eleanor & Joe S. Columbe was held on Saturday, June 15 at noon. A total of 115 members from eight of the 10 clubs invited started arriving before noon on the perfect mild temperature day.

The three Ford Thunderbird clubs shined the brightest with having brought the most cars to display. Lincoln came in second. The threat of rain all week might have discouraged the other marques from coming out to show.

Many members belong to multiple clubs. There is hardly a stranger at the picnic. Car talk was the theme of the day and there was no lull during the afternoon.

Once again, Linne's Bakery and Cafe of Shelbyville provided the custom ordered box lunch for our group. Several guests could not finish the lunch and took home what was left in their box.

Guests were still enjoying the afternoon past 5 p.m. and the Columbe's enjoyed hosting their event and look forward to hosting the picnic in 2025

Joe Columbe is the Hoosier Region director and lives in Milroy, Indiana.

LEFT Joe's little bit of paradise. After many years of planning and patience, our region director finally has a home for his collection that doubles quite nicely as a place to have the annual picnic.



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE 1977 Lincoln Continental Town Coupe owned by Bob Thomas. 2020 Lincoln Continental owned by Paul Temple. The Madden family's 1967 Lincoln Continental Convertible. John purchased this car over 50 years ago. This the first outing for John to see the car since significant work was done. He was thrilled! 1979 Lincoln Continental Williamsburg Edition owned by Charlie Mullen.







CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE This Lincoln Town Car is owned by Gary Stapleton and Jim Landsbery. Joe and Eleanor Columbe welcomed 115 guests to Lime Rock Farm for lunch! Thunderbirds made a strong showing at the picnic, including this 1966 convertible. “Baby Birds” have been popular since they first landed in show rooms nearly 70 years ago





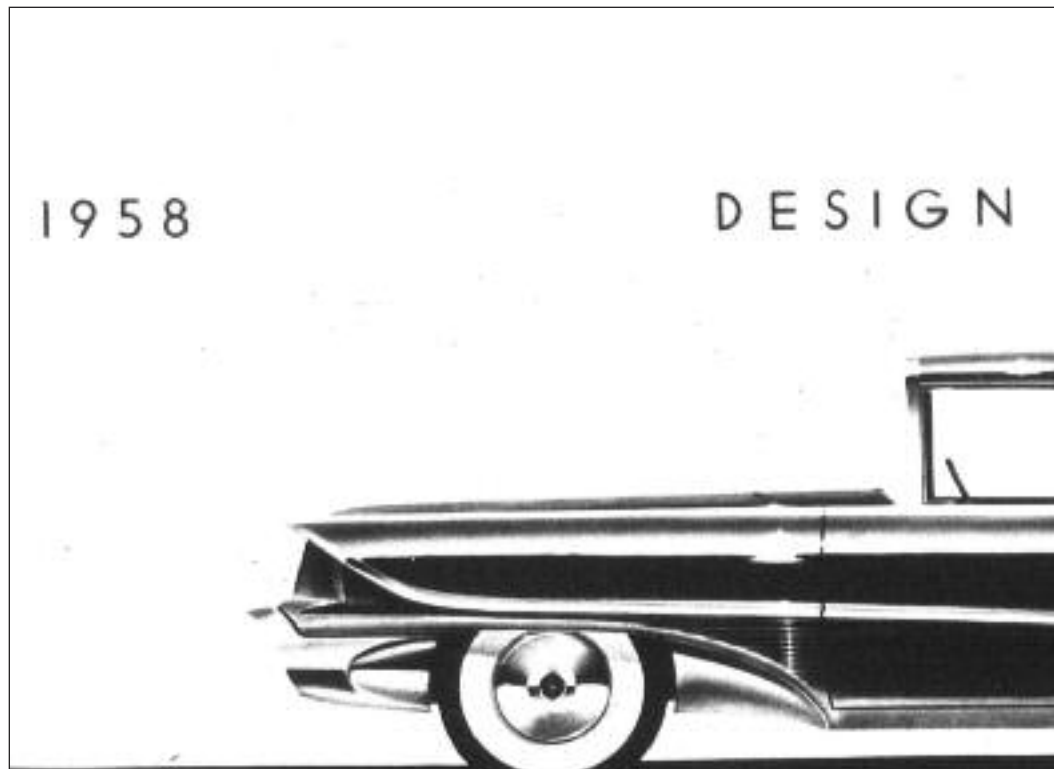
For those who believe the 1958-1960 Lincolns were beautiful and well-built but misunderstood, this article may not be for you. Nineteen-fifty-eight was supposed to be the year Lincoln caught and surpassed Cadillac in sales. Ford Motor Co. spent a lot of money in the belief that would happen, and there are many responsible for the failure of the 1958-60 Lincolns to sell up to expectations. Although some at Ford didn't know it yet, in 1958, they were also in the midst of the Edsel disaster - and Lincoln was a part of it.

In the fall of 1956, Ben Smith replaced James Nance as head of the Lincoln Division, which was soon to become Lincoln-Edsel-Mercury and then Lincoln-Mercury Division. For the disaster, it's easy to blame Smith, who took over as head of Lincoln, and John Najjar, Lincoln's chief designer, who Smith inherited, but that's probably unfair. In 1961, Smith was the one who finally made Lincoln profitable and saved it from being discontinued. Najjar, who had been a Ford designer since 1938, recovered after being dismissed as Lincoln's chief designer and continued with an otherwise stellar career as a Ford designer until his retirement in January 1980.

In May 1955, when George Walker took over as head of Ford's Styling Department, he and his assistant manager, Elwood Engel, chose Najjar to lead the Lincoln design studio because, as they told Najjar, he was loyal to Walker and Engel and would do what they wanted. Although Najjar became head of the studio, according to designers there at the time, Engel and Walker really controlled and directed all aspects of the '58 Lincoln's design. Walker and Engel both preferred space-age designs, and they grossly misread the new-car market.

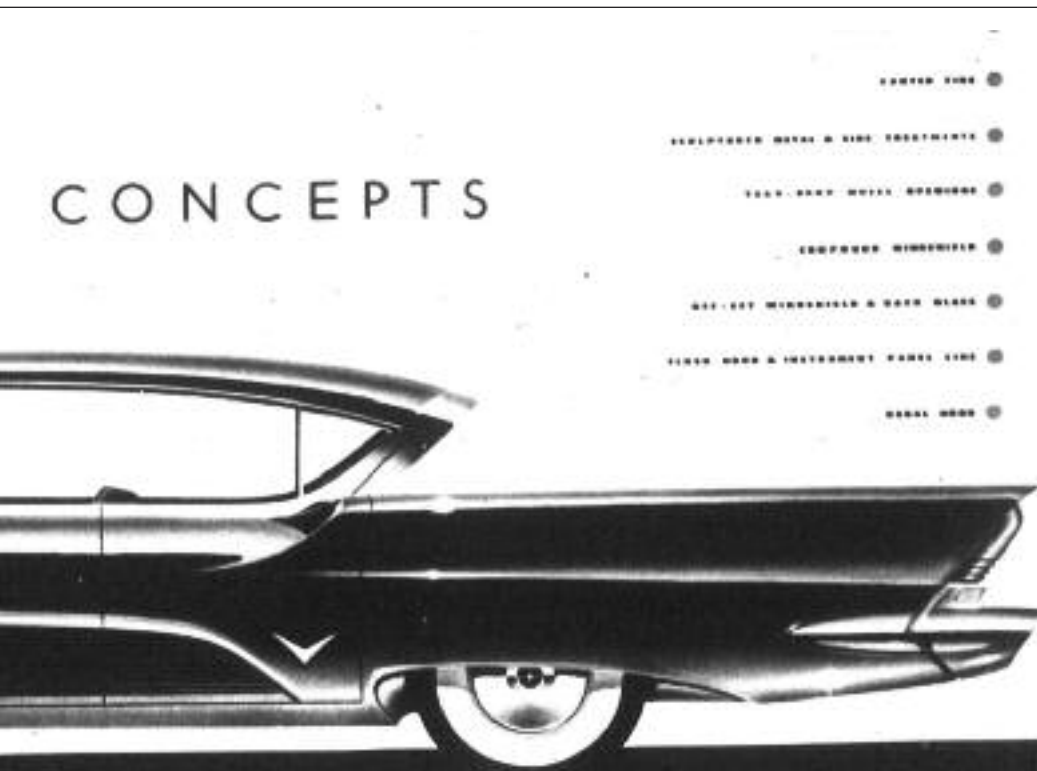
The '56 Lincoln, designed by Bill Schmidt, was planned for a three-year production run with yearly updates. Before he left in early 1955, Schmidt prepared proposals for the '58 Lincoln. Because they were taking a run at Cadillac, Lincoln management decided they wanted an entirely new body style for 1958, not a warmed-over '56 Lincoln. Najjar was told that just as he was starting a redesign of the old body style.

TOP One of Bill Schmidt's early design proposals for the '58 Lincoln was based on the '56 body style before the decision was made to build the '58 Lincoln using an entirely new body. *Photo courtesy of the Ford Archives.*



1958-60 Lincolns: What Went





Wrong. By Jim & Cheryl Farrell



Designers assigned to Najjar's Lincoln studio, in addition to Engel, were Dave Ash (exec), Herb Tod (manager), Bud Kaufman (interiors), Rulo Conrad (preproduction), Art Miller (color and trim), Bob Chieda, Jake Aldrich, Merle Adams, John Orfe, Joe Achor, Dick Schierloh, Bob Marcks Howard Payne and Jim Swanson. Master modelers were Doug McCombs and Henry Klemick.

At first, Najjar and his designers had trouble coming up with a design direction that satisfied Lincoln Division and Walker and Engel. Directions from Lincoln Division were also clear as mud, which didn't help. Engel solved the direction problem when he "drove" one of Alex Tremulis' 3/8-sized motorized models called the La Tosca into the studio, where he told Najjar it would be their design direction for the '58 Lincoln. With little difficulty, Walker sold La Tosca's "X over O" design theme to Nance and Lincoln Division.

After that, the design proceeded quickly. However, when designers couldn't develop an acceptable front-end design, Walker and Engel suggested that Najjar accompany them to the London and Paris auto shows to look for front-end inspiration. At the London show, Walker and Engel were fascinated by the slant-eyed headlights on an English concept car called the Daimler Docker Golden Zebra – and by increasing the number of headlights, it became the front end on the '58 Lincoln.

The 1958 Lincoln was originally planned with a 126-inch wheelbase, the same as in 1956-1957. In the meantime, the '58 Lincoln got the new 430 CID engine, which didn't fit in the 126-inch body without giving the car a front tunnel "big enough to put a saddle on." Engineering's solution was to make the '58 Lincoln longer, so it grew to a 131-inch wheelbase. (Even after he retired, Najjar said the '58 Lincoln was just too big.)

Although he retired in 1957, Ford's chief engineer was Earle MacPherson at the time the '58 Lincoln was being planned. He didn't like designers and didn't get along with Walker. He was still smarting because, in May 1955, design became independent and no longer a part of his Engineering Department.

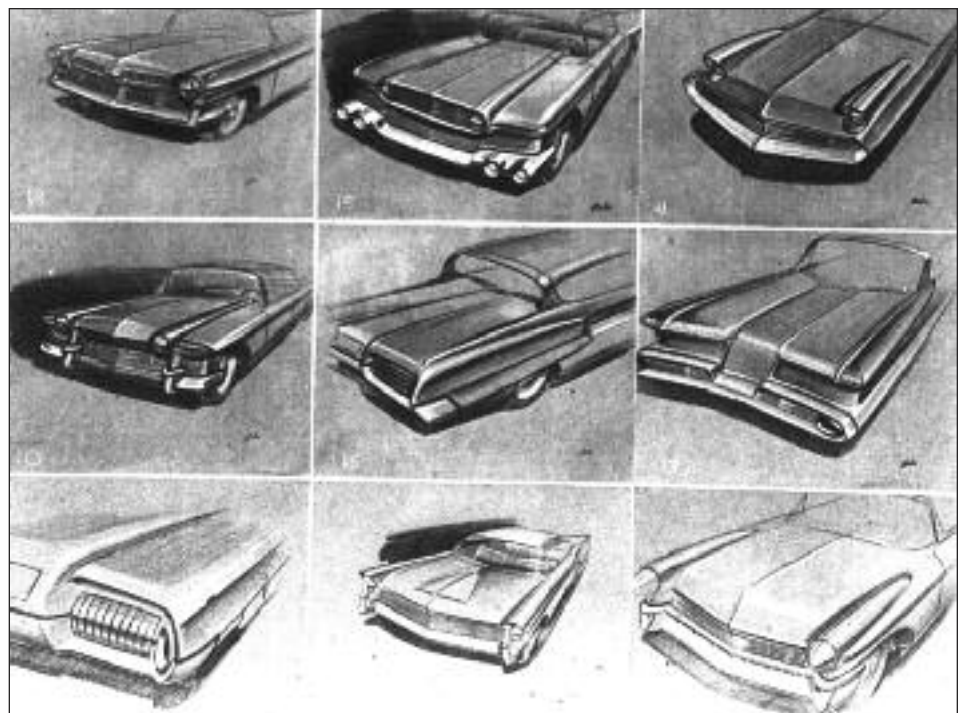
LEFT One of the proposed front ends for the '58 Lincoln before Walker, Engel, and Najjar found their front-end design direction at the London Auto Show. *Photo courtesy of the Ford Archives.*



Early on, MacPherson was told that Bill Ford's Continental Division had avoided lengthening their Mark III, which was also to use the 430 CID engine, by employing an inexpensive double-cardin universal joint to lower the profile at the rear of the engine/transmission. MacPherson did not pass that information on to Lincoln engineers developing the '58 Lincoln.

Problems compounded. After Robert McNamara became head of Ford Division, he decided to turn the Thunderbird into a sporty four-passenger car. McNamara's very successful four-passenger Thunderbird discovered a new personal luxury car market. To get the car as low as McNamara wanted, the '58 Thunderbird had to be unibody. The Thunderbird was slated to be built in Ford's new Wixom assembly plant, but McNamara and MacPherson assumed Thunderbird production would use no more than 1/2 of Wixom's capacity. Their solution was to require that Lincolns use the other half of Wixom's capacity, which, according to MacPherson, meant the '58 Lincoln also had to become unibody. Harley Copp, Lincoln's chief engineer, told MacPherson it was folly to build a Lincoln that big as a unibody car. MacPherson's response to Copp was to do it or quit.

ABOVE Tremulis named this 3/8-sized motorized model LaTosca. It featured an "X over O" design theme and was originally built to show beginning designers in Tremulis' Advanced studio how difficult it was to design an entire car. Later it was "driven" by Elwood Engel into the Lincoln design studio where it became the design inspiration for the '58 Lincoln. **BELOW** Some of the early design proposals for the '58 Lincoln's front end. *Photos courtesy of the Ford Archives.*





ABOVE After the '58 Lincoln design was finalized and a full-sized clay model was finished and approved, a fiberglass model was built in the Ford shops so an accurate representation of the car could be shown to upper management. **BELOW** To make the 1958 Mark III clone look different (and more expensive) than the '58 Lincoln, designers added "gorp" to the '58 Lincoln body. Upper management vetoed this proposal. *Photos courtesy of the Ford Archives.*





When developing their proposed Continental Mark III, Continental Division had already devised an inexpensive way to build body-on-frame vehicles on the same assembly line as unibody vehicles. Continental Division's chief engineer at the time maintained that he had informed MacPherson of that information in a timely manner, but it wasn't passed on to Lincoln Division.

The end result was that when '58 Lincolns first came off the Wixom assembly line, welds broke, and they vibrated severely. On the test track, the '58 Lincoln mechanical prototype actually buckled. Eventually, 200

lbs of gussets and a crash program were instituted to try to fix the car's weld and integrity problems. Copp was right, but by that time, it was too late—or was it?

After Bill Ford's Continental Division and its Mark III proposal were terminated in July 1956, Ford's Executive Committee met at the Styling Center to consider building Continental Division's Mark III proposal as a Lincoln Division Mark III. Ford's executive vice president Ernie Breech, a committee member and still the number two guy at Ford, after viewing both proposals, suggested the better-looking Continental Divi-

sion Mark III become the '58 Lincoln. That suggestion got nowhere after Smith informed committee members that tooling on Lincoln Division's car was already too far along to change. Lincoln Division's '58 Lincoln was produced, as well as a badge-engineered Mark III.

A month after he replaced Nance as head of the Lincoln Division, Smith fired Najjar as Lincoln's chief designer. He felt Najjar was too much under Walker's influence and that Walker had "sold them the wrong bill of goods." Don DeLaRossa replaced Najjar as Lincoln's chief designer, but he could not





ABOVE Another of DeLaRossa's proposals for the '60 Lincoln. It proved challenging to make changes to the unibody car with the development money available. **BELOW** Besides squaring up the '60 body style, the only other changes considered were different trim pieces. Photos courtesy of Howard Payne.



OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP This proposal was also under consideration for the 1958 Mark III. It, too, was rejected. Photo courtesy of the Ford Archive. **OPPOSITE PAGE, LEFT** After Najjar was replaced as Lincoln's head designer, Don DeLaRossa tried to make the unibody 1960 Lincoln as different from 1958-1959 as possible. One of his proposals for the '60 Lincoln is shown here. Photos courtesy of Howard Payne.

make any real changes to the 1959-1960 Lincoln body style because of its unibody structure and because the Edsel mess had dried up development money.

Given the paths not taken, the '58 Lincoln, as produced, became the perfect storm. During 1958-60, Lincoln lost at least \$60 million and half of its already weak market penetration.

Jim and Cheryl Farrell are LCOC members from Roseburg, Oregon.

