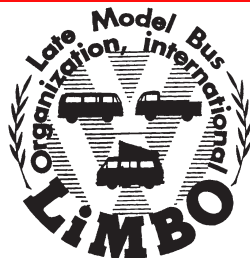


# The Transporter

## HAPPY

### CHRISTMAHANUAKAKWANZAKADOLICE

This amalgamation of the holidays was created by my daughter Angela.



The official newsletter of the Late Model Bus Organization, international- LiMBO

November- December

[www.LiMBObus.org](http://www.LiMBObus.org)

You have a copy of volume 20, issue #6 of *The Transporter*, which is published 6 times per year by the Late Model Bus Organization, International inc. Deadline for next issue:

**January 15th 2008**

The Late Model Bus Organization, international is dedicated to the maintenance, restoration, and improvement of post-'67 VW Type II's including Vanagons & Eurovans! The only prerequisite to joining is enthusiasm for these great vehicles.

Membership in LiMBO (which includes a subscription to *The Transporter*) is \$25 per year (\$30 US funds from US bank for non-US members), 2 years is only \$48 (\$58). Make checks payable to LiMBO. PLEASE direct correspondence to the appropriate address listed below:

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Back issues of *The Transporter* are \$4.00 per copy. Some issues are available as photocopies only. Also some more recent issues available on line [www.LiMBObus.org](http://www.LiMBObus.org) for 2 dollars per issue.

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**Views through the Windshield**

Hi Gang,

Welcome to another issue of *The Transporter*.

I have to start this issue with a correction. Over the last couple of issues I've been running a story from David Knoderer AKA 'Letterfly' about his experience in his first bus. Well, last issue a major snafu slipped past me. If you notice on page seven this paragraph starts off- "Clumps of mature sumac, maple and oak took a stand along these boundaries initiating a windbreak and able and simple wood crafting. This lone workman had a steady pace that would, like the tortoise, get him to the finish line by the time the circus opened in the spring." Endre J. Algovver eMailed me (see Endre's letter page 3) and pointed out the error. After looking it over and contacting David, I must have a corrupted copy of the story because there is quite a bit missing. Enough in fact to take up three more pages before David gets to the circus. I had considered printing the missing pages, but thought it might get to confusing. So, if anyone would like a complete copy of the article from start to finish eMail me: <[MrLiMBO@LiMBObus.org](mailto:MrLiMBO@LiMBObus.org)> and I'll send it to you. This issue we'll pick up were it left off last issue and finish the story.

Long time LiMBO member and friend Fred Williams sent me an article clipped out of the July issue of Business week about VW and it's plans for the future. I wanted to reprint that article here, so in my research of the Business week archives, I found a couple of others that I thought were of interest as well. You'll find them sprinkled here and there inside this issue. Some of them you might have read already. But its good reading just the same and one article titled *RX for VW USA* has some real valid points that I've had for a long time.

A few of the fine LiMBO Volks have decided to have a holiday party. Tom Power, Linda Manion and John and Carolyn Jordan have planned a nice party at John and Carolyn's home in Northboro, Mass on December 2nd. We're hoping that you can attend. See the info in the coming events section on page 10. If you can make it please let them know as soon as possible.

The LiMBO annual meeting is coming up January 20th. Its at a new location, John and Carolyn Jordan's home in Northboro. Its just down the street from Dale Ward's house, AKA the LiMBO clubhouse. I've said this before and I'll say it again, this is your club so get involved. If you can't make it, you can still make yourself be heard. Drop us a line via eMail: [MrLiMBO@LiMBObus.org](mailto:MrLiMBO@LiMBObus.org) or good old fashion snail mail.

Continued page 9...

LiMBO Letters  
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Jim:

I just went through the new issue of *The Transporter* and I am very very disappointed at what appears to be a formatting error in Dave Knoderer's article On to Pikeville. There's apparently a very large lump of text missing, making for a glitch in the story conceptually and chronologically. It may not be formatting, but the error's too big to be called a typo, so there ya go.

You'll find this at the top of page 7, where our storyteller is on his way to Knoxville to deliver a sign to the circus, he has just found oil rapidly exiting his bus engine, and he is observing the surrounding fields while waiting for a car to hitchhike for help. That's where it ends with "... and simple wood crafting." Then the author is apparently suddenly walking, or maybe travelling somewhere else entirely, because the next sentence says "This lone workman had a steady pace that would, like the tortoise, get him to the finish line by the time the circus opened in the spring." ??? What happened to Knoxville? Worse, the next paragraph begins apparently in a barn of some sort, maybe already at Knoxville: "Among the plethora of interesting items stored in this vast hall was a Cinderella float." Hey wait a minute — I wanted to find out what the problem was with the engine and how it was fixed! And I wanted to hear about the rest of the drive before he got to Knoxville!

This is all related not as criticism but to help you find the incongruities in the story. I've enjoyed reading Knoderer's story as related so far in the prior issue, and in this one I would really like to get the next installment in its complete, rational form. Can you reprint the article in its complete form? Or if that's not possible, can it be sent to me via e-mail? Thanks for anything you can do.

Regards,  
Endre  
Endre J. Algover

## Volkswagen to decide on U.S. site by June

Reuters - Sunday, November 4

FRANKFURT, Nov 3 - Volkswagen, the world's fourth largest carmaker, will decide on whether to build a new assembly plant in the United States by June, the head of group production told German magazine *Auto Motor und Sport*.

"A plant in the USA is an important statement for our sales strategy. A decision has however not been made yet - this should happen in the first half of 2008," Jochem Heizmann said in an interview.

"If we build on a green field as would be the case in the USA it would take us about three years."

VW's production chief added that a deal with Malaysian carmaker Proton to jointly build small cars for the southeast Asian market could also come in the first half of next year.

Heizmann said that production capacities in the VW plants were essentially fully utilized at more than 90 percent since the company wants to have some breathing space to account for seasonal patterns and the lifecycles of its products.

"We calculate this based on 236 working days a year with a three-shift operation. Were we to use Toyota's method based on 250 days and a two-shift operation, then our utilization rate would be clearly above 100 percent," he said.

Manufacturing depth of VW plants were between 30 and 40 percent depending on the site or the brand of model produced.

Heizmann also said that the company had decided to insource production of front axle modules, reversing earlier plans after an examination of the costs found that it was actually cheaper to build the systems in its high-wage western German plants.

"Instead of being purchased externally, in the future these will be manufactured in our plant in Braunschweig," he said.



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# Destinations

## Golden Eagle Country

by Rod Durkin

In June of 1955, two friends from Columbia drove out to Denver in my 1948 flathead V8 coupe. The partition between the trunk was cut out to allow for a bed. One reason for my going was to visit the Golden Eagle Country with Jack Moyer, a friend from my hawk and owl days.



In addition to the overall excitement for an Easterners first trip was driving into this beautiful wild high plain desert country with its rugged mesas, buttes, canyons, wildlife and wild flowers.

I was listening on the radio to 'The Ride through the Abyss' from Gounod's Faust I came around (there were



no roads) and saw a seven foot nest with an eagle on it. Though I had never seen a Golden Eagle or its nest, I immediately recognized it. Excitedly I free climbed up to the

nest only to have the 10 week old eagle jump and glide 200 yards to a crash landing. I returned him to the nest. Over the years I make it a point to get back whenever I can.

In the early 60's I made a documentary movie of the Golden Eagle Country with my hand-wound 8MM Bolex. Its been transferred to VHS if anyone wants to see it.

This May I returned and the same thing took place. While much has changed in the world and with me, I still felt the same adolescent passion and wild excitement. That was in and of itself a very good feeling.

Enclosed are photos of my '71 camper and the same seven foot eagles nest with one young. I did not get too close for fear he would jump. I have spent too many days returning birds only to have them jump again.

In 2002, in the same place, my VW was in the immediate vicinity of nests for two eagles, Prairie Falcons and Sparrowhawks (now called Kestrels for PR reasons).

Fortunately from this spot you can't see the urban sprawl with its light pollution encroaching to the north from Greeley. Speaking of change, either the cliff has greatly eroded or my definition of what is safe to climb has changed.



The Golden Eagle Country lies south of Cheyenne, WY in northern Colorado and is formed by Oligocene escarpments running from the foothills of the Rockies east to Nebraska just south of the Wyoming line. All along the unconformity between the red sandstone and the underlying chalk are numerous overhangs, caves and potholes often used for nests.

It's worth the visit.



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## Thousands Gather to Salute the VW Bus

A three-day festival in Germany celebrating the vehicle's 60th anniversary features 5,000 of the Volkswagen minibuses on display

It has been the preferred vehicle for postal workers, policemen, camping enthusiasts and, of course, members of the "Flower Power" generation. Over the weekend, 60,000 people came to Hanover for a three-day festival saluting 60 years of the vehicle that revolutionized the world.



The German name for the bus was "Bulli," short for "Bus und Lieferwagen" (bus and delivery vehicle). Other names include the "Transporter" and "Kombi," short for Kombinationskraftwagen, or "combined-use vehicle."

While the van-like version of the vehicle is perhaps best-known, numerous versions have existed. The first camping version appeared in 1951. The vehicle has sold over 10 million models and has been a favorite of the police, military, post office and countless others, whether with a flatbed or enclosed back.



In the 1960s and '70s, the bus was very popular with the hippies in particular because it was fuel-efficient, robust and offered enough room to sleep comfortably inside. Unfortunately, the minivans and SUVs it would later inspire don't share its gas savings.

The buses have been produced in Hanover since 1956. VW's commercial vehicle production plants there are the city's largest employer, with 15,000 workers.

The festivities kicked off on Friday with a parade of 150 historical mini-buses through Hanover's city center. In total, over 5,000 examples of the vehicle from all five "generations" convened from 21 countries for the event. Of the 11,000 owners who attended, the one to travel the farthest was a man who came 2,800 kilometers (1,740) from Russia.



Saturday saw thousands gather on the festival grounds visiting

over 30 stands and making the rounds to admire the vehicle in all its permutations. That evening saw 44,000 gather for a performance by the British rock band, The Who.

The vehicle's original name was the T2, short for Type 2. Type 1 was Volkswagen's so-called "Beetle." In 1947, Dutch auto importer Ben Pon visited a VW production facility in Wolfsburg and saw Beetle chasses being used to transport heavier objects. His sketches for a bus prototype would come to life three years later when the first buses rolled off the production line: they had 25 horsepower, could reach a top speed of 100 kilometers (62 miles) per hour and cost 5,850 deutsche marks.



## THE FIRST VW The Final chapter

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### PEGASIS

The drive to another horse destination through the concentrated suburbs was brief. Luxury and opulence was in evidence the whole way. The trotting center was an even more sophisticated horse facility with neat rows of barns, spaciousness and several large oval tracks where the daily training took place. Young horses were started here. They would have a racing career pulling a "bike" or two-wheel cart at any number of trotting tracks across the country and Canada. Other horses were here recuperating and undergoing therapy so at some point hopefully their career could resume.

The bikes were painted with stable colors, the color scheme that was on all the equipment and the driver's silk uniform. The nicer bikes had pinstripes that ran along the length of the shafts and the occasional track mishap or close call would scuff some of this paint off. This is where Letterfly the signpainting guy fit in. Not only would I letter the stable name on the tack trunks, truck doors and director's chairs but also, I could repair the damaged paintwork on these bikes.

Now at the trotting center with plenty of lettering and paintwork to do, I set up shop under an overhanging roof of one of the stable barns. I had fashioned a fold up drawing table that neatly tucked away in the bus. With this worktable arrangement I was ready for business. The bus was parked under the comfort of a shady tree nearby. In the midst of the ongoing pace of daily horse training activity, Superdog and Letterfly thrived.

At night all was quiet. With no lights on any of the barns, the only illumination came from the billions of stars that commanded the skies. The darkness provided a comfortable place to contemplate the vastness of God's splendor, dream up creative solutions for the steady stream of artistic requests that came all day long and unwind with Superdog, prior to bedtime.

It was on one such peaceful night that an exciting occurrence took place. Suddenly, the thundering of horse hooves dominated the darkness. My heart quickened. My first thought was to get out of the way but in the darkness I was unable to see where the loose horse was. How could a collision be avoided? Evidently, a young horse with a daily racing regimen that made him strong, fast and restless had managed to get out of his stall. Now loose, he enjoyed his freedom and expressed his joy the only way a horse knows to and that is to RUN! An accurate description of what this majestic beast is so capably made for is "To fly without wings".

While I sat terrified in the darkness, not knowing where the wild horse was going next, I was inspired. Still developing my new moniker, I realized how appropriate the horse was. Grabbing my sketchbook I designed a logo that contained a winged horse and my new name. Horses are a big part of my life, so naturally the image of a horse would best exemplify all that as an artist, I

stood for. This image validated my love and when I added wings, the logo began to work. Several versions of Pegasus later and I had what I wanted. My new image successfully communicated the scope of my interests, suggested proficiency and the concept of what I stand for. It also implies that my service provides propulsion for my clients to rocket forward. So this is how Pegasus was adopted and remains the icon that best describes Letterfly the artist/horseman/entertainer/visionary and promoter of good will.

My time at the trotting center remained productive until finally, it was spring and time to return to the circus winterquarters to assume my role as decorator of the fleet. I bid farewell to my many horsey friends and headed north.

### THE CIRCUS

The affluent nature of my South Florida suburban surroundings softened as I entered central Florida and once again enjoyed great oak hammocks, older cracker homes and gentle rolling hills. The circus winterquarters had a completely different energy this time when I returned, starting with when we pulled through the gate. Billy was on the job standing in front of the office truck with his

trademark bottle of coke in his hand, all duded up in a suit and a tie. Edna, the first lady of the show, was inside at her desk attending to the many duties that surround running a circus of this size.

Superdog again knew he was home and could hardly contain his excitement I opened the bus door before coming to a stop and he leapt outside. The main barn had one of the long flatbed trailers without its load, parked inside and workers were giving it a fresh coat of red paint. Far from adept, the mismatched crew were more dabblers than painters and I then realized how the spillage on the floor I had noticed during my previous visit had been created.

Once the bus was parked, I had a better opportunity to see how the industry was going on in all the departments across the grounds. I met with the busy manager and he showed me the various projects underway and as we walked, he filled me in on how I would get the monumental task of decorating the fleet accomplished. I could have as many of his men help with the painting of each truck and trailer, as I wanted. They would also help with the moving of each unit into the main barn to work on except the office, which had to remain out front with the phone line intact.

The first order of business was to get acquainted with the crew and tune up the painters that were coating the trailers with red paint. Slightly thinned, the strategy was to paint over the decades of accumulated lettering underneath and let them remain slightly visible. By teaching a couple of good natured, wiry and animated men the finer aspects of efficiently covering large areas with a roller and paint, a steady stream of ready to letter trailers began.

Next, the teaching of two select, clever guys to wield a two-inch brush to fill in the large yellow letters that span the length of each trailer insured productivity. Some talent existed in another couple of guys and with their help. I was able to introduce a shadow effect. They followed the painters of yellow letters and



added blue shadows to create visual impact. With all of this work taking place I was freed up to create the unit numbers on large interesting shapes, flourishes and the outlining of the completed letters. A half inch black line around the other men's work not only cleaned up any ragged edges but it gave the yellow on red some punch. Although each semi had signwork consistent with the rest of the fleet, the flourishes I designed were individual. I put a quartet of band instruments surrounding the unit number on the musician's sleeper. Little elephant heads went in the top corners of the bull trailers, art nouveau Fluor d'leis, jungle foliage, bamboo borders, funny hats, lightning bolts, confections of all kinds and images of tickets all served to add interest to the variety of loads in the large fleet.

The weeks went by and in an effort to not only keep the crew moving and create my own painted imagery, the trail I blazed through winterquarters each day with a yardstick, rolled up paper patterns, a variety of colored paints and brushes began to make Superdog's daily rounds of the place wax pale in comparison.

The weather cooperated nicely with working outdoors and having many of the semi trailers in various stages of completion all around the grounds facilitated rapid progress. We worked on them where they were parked instead of having to pull them through the large main barn in order to stay inside and dry. Towards the end of the project the remaining major masterpiece to undertake was perhaps the most important of them all. That was the office.

Torrential weather began and required that this truck be moved into the main barn out of the rain, despite the rigid original plan to not move this unit under any circumstances. The marketing department had come up with an image for me to recreate and although the logo had, in my opinion, some design flaws, they insisted it be replicated on the office truck. When this project was complete, the monumental task of lettering and decorating a forty-unit fleet finally came to a close. Each unit had a fresh coat of decorative paint and the gesture of good luck, the moniker "Letterfly" was in each corner.

Edna told me that Mister McClosky, the owner, said to go ahead and paint the other two shows: King Bros. Circus and Sells and Gray Circus but I had to go. One circus was enough. I now had enough money and a lead on an old Fruehauf moving van in Wisconsin that was for sale. With this trailer I could load my six-pony liberty act and manège horse inside and hit the road once again. I would have to hurry with getting the horse trailer ready and making the preparations in order to return and assume the job I had secured as horseman and entertainer on the soon to open King Bros. Circus.

I had plenty to do. So I bid adieu to Billy and the others. They would be long gone and on the road with this major circus by the time I returned to open with The King Show.

As I maneuvered the bus out through the entrance gates for the last time and headed north, reflection began in regards to acquiring this bus and making this career move. Soon the majestic oak trees with Spanish moss gently swaying from the boughs disappeared and tall pine trees hovered over the bare red earth lined with dry needles that flanked the highway. The road imitated a roller coaster as I traversed Mississippi. I thought about my decision to leave home during high school and join the circus. Then climbing to the top in that industry only to turn my back on it and make a decision to pursue an unknown. I found freedom, independence, self sufficiency, and a creative outlet in another trade that provided excitement and challenges all along the way. The artistic learning curve facilitated unstoppable growth for a young sign painter and an endless stream of visual delights were created for a steady stream of customers. I had found a future and

was encouraged yet my role as a performer with horses was not yet over. Now was the time to resume this vocation and thanks to the trade I was developing, I had found the means to do so.

A long flat highway with regular heaves in the seams of the concrete roadbed made crossing southern Arkansas very rhythmic. I looked forward to going home. My dad would want to hear the stories about the adventures I had found and would display amazement at the level of skill with a brush I had developed.

As the trek continued northwest the roads took on a very different look from any I had been on all summer. Long grades alongside sheer drop offs afforded breathtaking scenery and the hairpin turns and curvy roads took me up and down through the spectacular Ozarks countryside that had impressed me a few years prior when performing with the circus through here.

The excitement of the last few miles of the trip imitated the building of an emotional crescendo. The ticker tape parade that New York City threw for World Class adventurer Charles Lindbergh seemed puny in comparison to the welcome I received from my Mom and Dad when I arrived at their house.

My beloved VW bus would get some rest now as I outfitted the newly acquired moving van to carry the horse acts and hit the road once again with the help of a single axle White semi tractor. The VW with its collection of handpainted artwork, although now destined to collect dust in their backyard would remain an art gallery and a testimony of the years adventure, patiently waiting for the time I would return and once again pursue the challenge and seek the promise and propel myself and the magic bus unstoppably forward.

If I had been in the habit of naming my vehicles, as I am now, I think I would have named this bus "Gulliver".

### Daryl Christensen

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LiMBO has acquired the complete repair and part number manual for the Dometic Westfalia Refrigerator, 26 photo copied pages and spiral bound. This 'unofficial' VW dealer version covers lighting propane, operation, service and troubleshooting with fully detailed pictures. Complete resource to complete all repairs. Also includes VW tech bulletins updates. Price: \$13.00 (includes shipping)

#### Eurovan Winnebago Repair Manual

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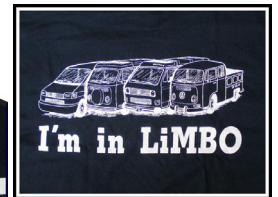
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Mike machines these out of .125" green tinted plexiglass on a hi-speed computer controlled profiler from side profile photos we have supplied of the 4 bus versions.

Here is the selling prices.

- (1) Small Suncatcher (any version) \$6.00 + \$2.00 shipping by First Class Mail.
- Set of (4) Small Suncatchers (4 versions) \$20.00 + \$3.00 shipping by First Class Mail.
- (1) Large Suncatcher (any version) \$10.00+ \$2.00 shipping by First Class Mail.
- Set of (4) Large Suncatchers (4 versions) \$34.00+ \$3.00 shipping by First Class Mail.
- (1) 4" Diameter LiMBO Logo \$10.00 + \$2.00 shipping by First Class Mail.

Shipping will done in standard 6" X 9" Bubble Pac Envelopes.

These are truly a unique collector's items for all Bus, Van and Camper owners and enthusiasts. Hang a small one from the rear view mirror of your Bus, hang a set of either the small or large ones from your side awning or hang them in a sunlit window in your home. Hang 'em anywhere. You might even fashion a pendant necklace for your favorite lady. They are guaranteed to brighten your day!

For more info or to purchase, contact Nevin Lescher at the address on page 8. -Nevin Lescher.



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Official printing company of LiMBO ....

----- **A LiMBOmart Holiday Special** -----

**Celebrate the 2007 Holiday Season with decorations from the LiMBOmart.**

**A set of four of our small Bus Suncatchers (T-1, T-2, T-3 & T-4) plus the 4" diameter LiMBO logo Suncatcher. All for \$25.00 plus \$4.00 Shipping**

**They're really neat behind mini-lights or in a sunlit window. (Limited quantities available)**

**Don't forget the logoed 16oz Tankards, LiMBOclox's, LiMBO Polar Coolers and the new style LiMBO Tees as Holiday gifts or your favorite Bus Driver.**

**Other LiMBO Tees in Ash Gray and Oceana Green are also available at reduced prices in limited quantities & sizes.**

Let us know what you think, good or bad, we want to hear it. Feel free to call the LiMBO line 413-743-1814 or Dale Ward is available late into the night at 774-275-0218. He drives truck overnights, so he'll be happy to talk to you.

At the meeting we'll be discussing ways to improve membership, review our financial statement, look for ways to cut costs, elect officers, plan events and consider sponsorship applications. If anyone is considering putting on an event, please let us know ASAP so that we can include your event in our events calendar and if you would like a monetary contribution from LiMBO, this would be the best time to contact the officers for consideration.

We are looking for some new faces to help out with the club. Many of us have been volunteering with LiMBO for years and we're looking for some new blood. If you would be interested in volunteering let's here from you. You don't have to live in New England, (many of our volunteers don't). I'm also going to put out the call again for a volunteer to take over editing this newsletter. I've been at the helm doing this for most of the past 10 years. I think its time for some new blood. Publishing experience a plus but not necessary. If you're interested in trying your hand at editing *The Transporter*, give me a call. 413-743-1814 or drop me an eMail: [MrLiMBO@LiMBObus.org](mailto:MrLiMBO@LiMBObus.org).

Well, I'm out of space for this issue. Hopefully, we'll see you at the Holiday Party or the annual meeting. Have a safe and warm Holiday talk to you next year.

Keep on Busin' - Jim D.

# COMING EVENTS

**Coming Events** is the place to get your bus or VW related event listed! Please send the vital stats: date, time, location, activities, costs, and contact person/phone number or address. Plan ahead and list your event **early** for maximum participation. For more information on any event, please contact Tom & Linda, the event coordinators, at [volkswagenri@cox.net](mailto:volkswagenri@cox.net) or 401-762-2448.

**Send to: *Coming Events*,**  
**c/o Linda Manion**  
**286 Fourth Avenue**  
**Woonsocket, RI 02895**

**BEST: [events@limbobus.org](mailto:events@limbobus.org)**

Remember, participation in any LiMBO event or activity is strictly voluntary and at one's own risk.

more info contact [MrLiMBO@LiMBObus.org](mailto:MrLiMBO@LiMBObus.org) or call 413-743-1814. Feel free to call Dale Ward well into the night during the week: 774-274-0218, he drives truck overnight and will be happy to discuss LiMBO with you. For directions to the meeting contact John and Carolyn at 401-762-2448

Dec.2, 2007 (Sunday) Northboro, MA - First Annual LiMBO Members Christmas Party. NEW EVENT for LiMBO members, their families and guests. Carolyn and John Jordan have graciously volunteered to hold this event at their lovely new home. Tom Power and Linda Manion, your humble events coordinators, are organizing the party. The party starts at noon. Come and enjoy an afternoon of holiday cheer and socialize with other VW lovers. This is a BYOB event, and all attendees are asked to bring an "easy-to-eat" appetizer or side dish. (We don't want to be TOO messy since we're hoping to be invited back again sometime!!) Non-alcoholic drinks will be provided. PLEASE RSVP RIGHT AWAY to Tom and Linda, and let them know what you're bringing. You can email to [volkswagenri@cox.net](mailto:volkswagenri@cox.net) or call 401-762-2448 evenings before 9 PM. They can answer any questions and give you directions.

## 2008

January

Sunday January 20th. Northboro, MA- **LiMBO annual meeting.** Yes, its that time of year again for the LiMBO annual meet. Its at a new location this year, John and Carolyn Jordan's home in Northboro. Its about 2 miles away from the LiMBO club house AKA Dale Ward's in Shrewsbury, so it will be easy to get to. We say this every year, this is your club so get involved. If you can't make it, you can still make yourself heard, send us an eMail or write a letter. Even if its just to say we're doing a fine job, we want to hear from you. We'll be planning the summer events, looking for new ways to improve membership, elect officers and consider sponsorship applications. For

## Welcome New Members!

by Steve Paine

**Gary Anderson**, Attleboro, MA ('85 Westy)

**Janis Bisordi**, Mount Vernon, NY ('76 Camper)

**Patrick Daley**, Ronkonkoma, NY

**Bryan Feddish**, Phoenixville, PA

**Jon Grosjean**, Hancock, NH

**William Johnston**, Punta Gorda, FL

**Jack Leary**, Bridgewater, MA

**Gerry Lepage**, Azilda, Ontario

**Jeff Lincoln**, Pt. Huron, MI (3 Vanagons, '78 Bay)

**Mark Lund**, Rochester, NY ('84 Westfalia - Tikibus)

**Robert Menegio**, Santa Fe, NM ('03 Jetta Wagon)

**Beth Moonstone**, Amherst, MA

**Robert Moore**, Carleton Place, Ontario

**Tim Valbracht**, Pincourt, Quebec, Pres., Montreal Vanhaven Group

## Rx for VW USA

### **VW is failing badly in the U.S. But does the company understand what its North American customers want?**

by David Kiley

Volkswagen of America CEO Stefan Jacoby will start his new job on Sept. 1. But he flew into Volkswagen's Auburn Hills (Mich.) headquarters the week of July 9 to meet with the senior management team he is inheriting.

It's no wonder he's in a hurry to start work. Volkswagen lost almost \$900 million last year in the U.S., and around the same the year before. This year, sales of Volkswagens are flat, the U.S. dollar is a little weaker than it was last year against the euro, and VW has had a heck of a time finding more fixed costs to cut in its American operation. That is going to make it awfully difficult to reach new Volkswagen Chairman Martin Winterkorn's target of breakeven in the U.S. by 2009.

Jacoby, 49, in the late 1980s briefly worked for Volkswagen in the U.S., but he is no expert on the hardscrabble U.S. automotive market. Most of his experience has been in Europe, for both Volkswagen and Mitsubishi, as well as Asia where he has had senior posts for VW.

Volkswagen sales are up 2.7% this year, but that's misleading. Sales are off by more than 100,000 units a year from 2003. Sales of the Jetta are off 6.3%, and Passat sales are off 30%. Touareg sales are down 28%. The New Beetle is down 20%. Incentive spending on those four models by Volkswagen exceeds the average spending for each of those segments, according to Edmunds.com. That's anathema to Volkswagen, which has historically discouraged incentive spending to maintain brand integrity and resale values.

What's propping up sales even 2%? The addition of the Eos, which VW didn't sell last year, as well as an 80% boost in Rabbit sales (see BusinessWeek.com, 11/28/06, "The Dawn of the VW Eos"). Ironically, ad agency Crispin Porter & Bogusky's idea of renaming the old Golf the "Rabbit," the name it carried in the 1970s and the early 1980s, was controversial inside and outside of VW (see BusinessWeek.com, 10/23/06, "VW's Rabbit Redux"). But it seems to have paid off. VW brought a new Golf/Rabbit to the U.S. last year, but it had already been on sale in Europe for two years and so there was no buzz on the car in America until it was renamed.

Volkswagen's problems in the U.S. are difficult, and could take years to solve—more than the two years Winterkorn is giving Jacoby to erase nearly \$1 billion in annual losses. Here are the problems he's facing and some possible solutions.

### **High Costs**

Volkswagen is heavily dependent on high-cost European manufacturing. Experts say the weak dollar relative to the euro is a long-term condition companies should get used to. Even VW's Mexican plant, which makes Jettas, New Beetles, and commercial vehicles, relies on 40% European-made parts that cost too much after currency conversions. Jacoby is said to be on a mission to determine if VW needs a U.S.-based plant. That seems like an overly ambitious idea. Instead, he should work with his German bosses on a plan to make better use of the Mexican plant and complement the cars made there with more Latin American- and U.S.-made parts.

### **Wrong Products**

VW has had the wrong mix of products in the U.S. The new Jetta and Passat designs, VW's two highest-volume models, were styled too conservatively. They look more like an amalgam of Japanese and Korean designs than anything uniquely German or uniquely Volkswagen. The New Beetle is the only iconic design in the showroom, and it's almost a decade old. The Touareg, a luxury SUV costing around \$50,000 when properly equipped, was never the right product for VW. The Rabbit, formerly the Golf, has picked up some steam, but hatchbacks remain a limited niche in the U.S.

New products are on the way, but only one looks like a clear winner. And that's only if VW does everything right with the marketing launch and packaging of the SUV. The Tiguan compact SUV, which will be priced under \$30,000, will arrive in 2008 and fills a hole in the VW showroom that has existed for a decade since Toyota (TM) launched the RAV4 and Honda (HMC) brought out the CR-V. Minivan lovers had hoped the Tiguan would be based on the Microbus show car that wowed so many VW enthusiasts five years ago, but that popular prototype will be launched as a re-packaged Chrysler minivan, the result of a deal VW made with the American carmaker. As a result, anticipation has cooled somewhat. On the upside, the recently launched Eos convertible is selling around 1,000 units per month.

VW says it needs a car priced below the Rabbit in the \$13,000-to-\$17,000 range. I disagree. It's crazy to compete with Korea, and soon the Chinese, at the low end of sticker prices. Sales volumes can come back for the Jetta and the Passat in the next redesign if the pricing is made reasonable, and the designs reflect a bit of VW whimsy and funkiness that American VW enthusiasts look for and that Japanese and Korean companies have difficulty producing.

A full-size crossover SUV that would compete against the Mazda CX-7 and Honda Pilot, for example, that embodies that same German, slightly funky design aesthetic would be on my wish list for the German parent.

Continued page 12....

... Continued from page 11

The brand needs a piece of showroom excitement that draws on VW's history to enliven the brand and juice up VW enthusiasts. The Microbus would have been the right design. The new Eos makes it difficult to do a modern interpretation of the 1960s-to-'70s Karmann Ghia coupe. One idea could be to put a new model in the Mexico plant to replace the New Beetle line, and let the New Beetle go away. Then, bring a new New Beetle back after people have had time to miss it.

### **Poor Packaging**

Volkswagen has one of the youngest buyer profiles in the auto industry. Dealers have been complaining, though, that the tire-and-wheel packages VW puts on Jettas and Rabbits, and even GTIs, are closer to European tastes than American.

Having to spend up to get the wheel packages young people want adds cost that takes the vehicles out of competitive pricing with Asian cars. Interiors in VWs are sharp and clean, considered among the best in the business in terms of looks. But complaints about how durable they are have hurt VW's overall quality scores. Europeans tend to baby their cars, and they don't do a lot of eating in their vehicles the way Americans do. VW needs to address these issues for what it says is its most important export market.

### **Brand Image and Advertising**

Volkswagen got off to an interesting and promising start resuscitating its advertising in 2006 with agency Crispin Porter & Bogusky. A controversial ad campaign for the GTI, for example, featured a blonde dominatrix named Helga and an effete engineer named Wolfgang. Another campaign for the Jetta featured arresting TV commercials showing real-time crashes with people emerging unscathed from crumpled cars. Another campaign, though, featuring heavy-metal guitarist Slash offering an electric guitar with a new VW purchase seemed too niche for all the media spending it received. Some of the ads were attention-grabbing but they were all over the lot, offering no clear idea in the marketplace around VW.

VW's German parent has not been happy with the direction of the advertising and is beginning to push for a more coherent campaign. Crispin said over a year ago that it would replace the "Drivers wanted" theme with a new idea, but we have yet to see it.

In the 1990s, VW brought itself back from the dead through product excitement ignited by the New Beetle and a string of memorable, outstanding ad campaigns centered on a single idea: "Drivers wanted." The further VW got away from ads linking products with emotion and the feeling VW owners have for their cars, the worse sales got and the less memorable the ads became.

There needs to be a new beginning for VW in the ad department. But that doesn't necessarily mean a new ad agency. Crispin has created some of the most memorable and buzzworthy marketing in the industry in the last five years. With a stable client operating with clear direction, I suspect Crispin can ring the bell again. But VW, under Jacoby, has to be sure what VW aims to be in the U.S., listen to dealers and consumers about what that is, and stick to it. If a brand positioning is dictated to Jacoby from Wolfsburg, Germany, by Winterkorn or supervisory board chairman Ferdinand Piech, it will surely fail. American VW customers and enthusiasts are not the same as European customers. Example: The U.S. embraced the New Beetle and wanted the new Microbus, while Europe couldn't have cared less about either one.

### **Fix the Cars**

As much love as Volkswagen fans have had for the brand, since 2000 owners have become more vociferous on the Internet about their problems. They are increasingly less willing to put up with bad service and problems that land their cars in the shop.

I have heard VW executives jokingly refer to glitchy vehicles as "Monday cars," which are cars built by workers on Monday morning after a weekend of revelry. I have never heard Toyota or Honda speak of Monday cars. In any case, the problem is worse than that. VW ranks in the bottom fifth of J.D. Power's rankings for initial quality (first three months), vehicle dependability (first three years of ownership), and sales satisfaction (service). (Like BusinessWeek, J.D. Power is a unit of The McGraw-Hill Companies (MHP).)

Other VW executives who have come before Jacoby have tried to fix this problem, and focus the organization on engineering higher-quality vehicles. And scores on those rankings have improved. The problem is that everyone else is improving, too. VW needs to overachieve on fixing quality or risk losing more sales in the U.S.

VW has undergone a huge change in management and ownership in the last nine months. There is a new chairman in Winterkorn. And Porsche now holds a controlling stake in VW, which gives it a lot of say at the board level on policy and product investments. Jacoby's strength, besides having turned around VW's brand in parts of Europe, is that he has enormous credibility with VW's decision-makers back home. In other words, he is supposed to be able to get what he needs to fix the U.S. part of the business. The question will be whether this German executive will ask for things Americans value most.

David Kiley is a senior correspondent in BusinessWeek's Detroit bureau.

# Midwest Scene

Harsh Winters VW Club produced a show of some 80 cars on the weekend following a week of HARSH summer storms here in Chicagoland. As many people around here had flooded basements, loss of electric power, and other tree and storm damage, it was a pleasant surprise that so many came out this dog days of August season show. The grounds of the Pom Pom's Restaurant in the near "downtown" of Plainfield, Illinois, were not flooded, the host was not without cooking power, and the club members were not lacking in their energy to staff the workings of the show.

Though most of the cars were beetles of various years, styles, and conditions (most were quite elegant), there were many Ghias, Buggies, Buses, and New Beetles, and some others like Type III, Type IV, Rabbit, and special interest. The cars were participant judged to pick the top 15 cars, plus best engine, interior, paint, sound, muffler, best worst car, and 2 best of show (club member and not). Through the day, door prizes and raffle winners were awarded while swappers did their trading. A DJ provided music, kids were occupied with games, a beetle was colorfully painted, and other shenanigans occurred. At award time, winners received individualized trophies made with a picture of their car, a tradition of the Harsh Winters VW Club.

The goody bag was full, the eye candy of cars was plentiful, the conversations were substantial, and it did not rain!

Support those local shows, far and near. -Jerry Spellman



## LOCAL REPRESENTATIVES AND SPECIALISTS

### Attention LiMBO members:

Local reps are out there to gather articles and input from other club members in their area, organize local get-togethers, meets, caravans, and recruit new members from their part of the world. LiMBO is here to support them any way we can and there by strengthen the club. Remember this is your club too!!

If you see a local rep for your area, or a specialist you would like to contact, please feel free to get in touch with them. If you don't see a local rep for your area and would like to become one, or to become a specialist, let me know at my address on page 2. Thanks

-Tom Power

#### **Brad Johnson**

645 "E" St. SE  
Washington, DC 20003-2716  
202-543-4123

EuroVan Specialist

#### **Jim DiGennaro**

34 Summer St  
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(Grumpy after 10pm)

#### **Steve Paine**

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508-362-9877

#### **Glen Smith**

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#### **Todd Olson**

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# The Swap Area

Club members may submit as many Available or Wanted ads as they would like for no charge. All entries must be written out as you would like them to appear in the newsletter and re-submitted for each issue they will appear in. **Repeat ads** are subject to editorial considerations and are not recommended. Include a name, state, address or telephone number. Remember, there's probably someone out there who has what you want or wants what you have! Please limit ads to less than 100 words.

Submit ads TO:  
LiMBO Classifieds  
34 Summer St.  
Adams, MA 01220  
editor@limbobus.org

Submit ads Via the Internet:  
<http://www.limbobus.org>

**AVAILABLE:** Space for your classified Ad. Send it in via our webpage. <[www.LiMBObus.org](http://www.LiMBObus.org)> eMail: editor@limbobus.org or the old fashion way, snail Mail: Transporter Classifieds 34 Summer St., Adams, MA 01220. Classifieds are free to members.

**WANTED: Newsletter Editor.** Its time for some new blood. I've been doing this on and off for 10 years now. I'd like someone else to give it a shot. Graphic design experience not necessary, but helpful. I'm self taught. If I can do it, so can you. We have a printer and distribution process in place, we just need an editor. If you can spare a few hours every other month, we want to hear from you.: Contact: Jim Di-Gennaro 413-743-1814 or eMail: editor@limbobus.org. (MA)

**AVAILABLE:** 5 original 14" steel wheels for bus/vanagon in good shape-straight, no damage-with 5 Vredestein 185/14 Comtrac highway tires-about 10K left on them and 4 original '85 type VW Vanagon wheel covers. Pick up only. Call Bob 970-884-5170 (CO)

**AVAILABLE: 1980 VW rabbit convertible** project car, the first year if the rag top rabbit, it does runand drive, gas engine and has a five speed trans! 1st \$500 takes it. Call Tom: 802-228-8768 (VT)

**AVAILABLE:** New and used parts for your Transporter, pick-up, or Microbus. Contact John's Car Corner in beautiful uptown Westminster, Vermont on US Rte 5 (just follow the signs)....or call (802) 722-3180. VWs since 1974. (VT)

## Available or Wanted submission:

As a member of LiMBO you are entitled to a free classified ad each month. Try to make it 100 words or less, written legibly with any abbreviations that can be made (i.e. 147k mi., trans., Westy, PS, PB, A/C, etc.) Include a price if possible, your name, phone #, e-mail (if appl.) and state and be sure to mail it in time a for the next newsletter submission deadline indicated on page 2 of this issue.

Send to: **Transporter Classifieds, 34 Summer St., Adams, MA 01220** eMail: [editor@LiMBObus.org](mailto:editor@LiMBObus.org)  
or via the Web: <http://www.limbobus.org>

Name

State or (optional) address

Phone ( )

E-mail

Submit your classifieds on line @  
[www.LiMBObus.org](http://www.LiMBObus.org)  
**Classifieds are free to Members!!**

## Submissions wanted!!

We're looking for newsletter material!! No matter how trivial you think it is, its worth considering for newsletter submission. Travel story? Technical concern. Found a new place to camp? We want to know! No article too small, no submissions rejected. Submission is as easy as an email or Type it up on your 1945 Underwood, no material rejected. **If you take the time to write it, I'll print it.** This is your club, so get involved. Send material to: **LiMBO 34 Summer St., Adams, MA 01220** or Email: **Editor@LiMBObus.org**

# View's from across the pond.

Courtesy of our friend Max in Finland



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