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1966 Bosley Interstate Mark II

By Mark R. Brinker



There is a certain indescribable thrill associated with the resurrection of a long lost automobile. It's often more than the joy of the find and the journey of returning a special car to its former state of glory through restoration. Sometimes the process includes rediscovery of forgotten history and reassembling individuals who were involved with the car decades before. Other times, it's like your heart is being ripped from your chest in slow motion.

Richard Bosley of Meteor, Ohio, was a sports car aficionado with a passion for automotive design. Although he had no formal automotive training (he was a horticulturist by profession), Bosley believed he could create a sports car that would surpass anything available on the market. In 1953, he built his first prototype, known as the Bosley Mark I. While the chassis and drivetrain were somewhat conventional, the fiberglass coupe body that Bosley penned and hand-laid was a total stunner. The international press instantly took notice and the Mark I was the subject of numerous articles in the United States and abroad.

To the best knowledge available, Bosley drove his Chrysler Hemi-powered Mark I

over 100,000 miles before ultimately trading it for a Corvette in 1957. The chassis from this Corvette served as the platform upon which Bosley built his next automotive creation, the Interstate Mark II. According to Bosley Products company documents, the Bosley Mark II Interstate was designed and built as a grand touring automobile over the course of nine years. Quoting from company documents, "As the name Interstate indicates, it is designed for today's new Interstate highways, having for this purpose excellent mid-range acceleration, extra gasoline capacity (35 gallons) and greater passenger comfort in seating and ventilation." The documents further describe that Bosley handcrafted thousands of special parts in his workshop and had several parts built in Europe. As examples, Reuter of Germany fabricated the front bumper and seats and Sibona-Bisano of Italy produced the side glass and vent glass mechanism. And, of course, there was another astonishing fiberglass coupe body—sharing nothing with the Mark I other than flair and inspiration—the Mark II was pure elegance.

The Corvette that Bosley received in trade for the Mark I was far from ordinary. According to Jon Dega, who has exhaustively researched the history of the Bosley Interstate, the trade was made with Chicago Chevrolet dealer Dick Doane. In exchange for the Mark I, Doane gave Bosley one of the three "Raceway Enterprises" team Corvettes that had competed at the Sebring 12 Hours in 1956. Dega's research

suggests that the Interstate was built upon the chassis from the #6 Corvette that had finished 15th overall at Sebring in '56.

The Mark II was completed in 1966 following an estimated 5,500 man-hours of labor. Finished in candy apple red the car was totally dazzling. It was also quite potent. Born from a chassis with international racing heritage and motivated by a 345 horsepower Pontiac V8 tri-power mill, the Mark II Interstate could leave tire tracks in any gear. It was predictable that the Interstate received favorable period press and was highly regarded throughout the industry. And then it dropped out of sight.

At the present time, the precise chain of ownership of the Bosley Interstate remains obscure. What is known is that the car, minus chassis and engine, was found in an abandoned warehouse in the 1990s by a classic car broker. The car remained in the private collection of this broker until 2014, at which time it was purchased by Stephen Bruno of South Florida.

Bruno said, "When we acquired this car my wife and I were very excited. We knew we had purchased an amazing part of automotive history. Bosley's engineering and design approach was comprehensive—building scale models and testing various mechanical and design configurations to achieve his goals. The list of safety devices he incorporated into the Interstate is impressive; this man was way ahead of his time. Innovations included seat belts, head rests, reclining seats, tempered side windows, a smoke-colored rear window, air horns, superior visibility front and rear, special interior lighting, driving lights, anti-lift windshield wipers and a built-in roll bar. Items like these were rarely available on mid-1960s automobiles."

Bruno continued, "Being the custodian of the Interstate gives us great joy but we know this also comes with great responsibility. The Mark I and II were the defining achievements of Richard Bosley's life; both cars are actually pictured on his gravestone. We therefore knew from the start that we had to restore the Interstate with great love and care. After much contemplation, we shipped the car to a shop that had restored several unique cars for us over the prior seven years. Our goal has always been to reintroduce the Interstate to the automotive world at the Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance. In a stroke of good luck, we learned in August of 2016 that a special class entitled

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'American Dream Cars of the 1960s' was planned for Pebble Beach 2017 and we quickly applied. It seemed that all the stars were beginning to align for us."

The restoration commenced on the car and Bruno and team began researching the car's history. Bruno said, "The Bosley family has contributed greatly to the restoration by providing incredible photographs and video of Richard building the Interstate. They've also shared valuable insight into the evolution of the build. The Bosley family has characterized the Interstate as Richard's 'tour de force'—the car he was most passionate about and proud of. It also seems Bosley felt this car was the one he could manufacture and sell to the public."

In March of 2017, Bruno received his acceptance letter for Pebble Beach 2017. Overjoyed, he shared the news with family, friends, and the Bosley family who made plans to be on the Pebble Beach lawn with the car and the Brunos.

Then things suddenly went south.

Bruno continued, "The shop we hired has worked on a number of my cars over the years and had done three prior total restorations. The quality of their work has always been excellent, but I have had several budget overrun situations with them in the past. So for the Interstate restoration the shop owner and I entered into a Restoration Services Agreement with a total restoration price, which was a relatively large sum of money. Things seemed to be going fine until March of 2017 when I added up the restoration invoices I'd already paid. What I learned was that by March I'd already paid almost the entire budget. Trouble was the car was in need of significantly more work. So I sent the shop manager an email reminding him of our agreement. Several days later I received a terse response from him telling me he needed 50 percent more money than we'd contractually agreed on to finish the car. This was not a good day."

Bruno said, "I tried to reason with the shop owner by email and during a face-to-face meeting, but it was obvious that he would not even consider a compromise. My feeling was that with my singular goal of Pebble Beach rapidly approaching, the shop owner had me over a barrel. However, having spent fortunes with this shop over the years, having already paid a huge sum of restoration invoices on the Interstate, and feeling thoroughly



wronged, I decided I'd had enough. I emailed the shop owner and requested a final invoice so I could pick up my car."

Bruno says he was beyond shocked to receive an email from the owner indicating he was not going to release the car quickly. Bruno said, "He said because I had four cars in his shop, it would take a large effort and time to get them out of his shop and all four cars had to go at once. Further, he wanted me to sign a release before giving me any of the cars and the date that I could get them was over three weeks out. You can't imagine how horrible that felt. To have something you are so passionate about held captive against your wishes. I couldn't sleep. I had trouble focusing on my software business. In a sense, I felt like the long lost Bosley Interstate had gone missing all over again."

With Pebble Beach rapidly approaching and the Interstate needing significantly more work, Bruno reached out to a law firm for help. A Verified Complaint was filed on behalf of Bruno and on May 4, 2017, Bruno had his proverbial day in court and when the gavel came down, he had an order from the judge for the release of his car. With Writ of Replevin in hand and with the assistance of the local sheriff, Bruno, acting as the Recovery Agent, regained physical possession of the Bosley Interstate Mark II.

While researching this article, I reached out to the owner of the restoration shop and he offered the following, "We

take a great deal of pride in our work and care deeply about the projects entrusted to us....especially when a car under our care is to be honored at the most prestigious car show in the world—Pebble Beach. Our efforts are focused on producing results that are as accurate for the historical record as possible, to honor the car and the legacy of the people associated with the car and the beauty of the art form of the automobile. I am deeply saddened that these sentiments and our efforts and our relationship ended in the manner in which it did, yet I continue to be very proud of the work my team puts out and the world class results we achieve for our Clients."

The countdown to Pebble Beach continues and Bruno plans to finish the restoration with help from local talent. Bruno may not be a horticulturist, but he does have a degree in Automotive Engineering from Western Michigan University. That, combined with a limitless determination to get the car done in time for Pebble Beach, might just carry the day.

The Bosley Interstate is a phenomenal machine. It is stylish, powerful and, in period, was built on the chassis of a Sebring racecar. It was lost, found, held, and recaptured. It is now in the hands of a very passionate, very capable collector. Next stop...Pebble Beach? 🏁

Do you know of a Hidden Treasure? If so, send your photos and stories to Mark at mbrinker@vintageracecar.com