

THE KOA SOUTHERN LEADSLED

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anyone can deny that it was eastern enthusiasts who not only adopted kustomizing with a passion, but adapted it to their own ideas of just what this having fun with modified cars thing is all about.

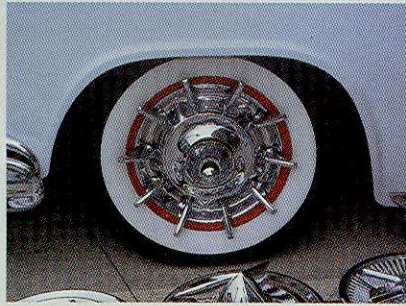
It is for these folks that the Kustoms of America hosts the "Southern Leadsled." Pigeon Forge has become (as you probably know) the sight of quite a few automotive venues in recent years. And aside from the almost constant bumper-to-bumper tourist traffic, how could you help from having fun? There's everything from the burgeoning celebrity dinner theater industry, to bungee jumping, go kart racing, Dollywood, and Alan Johnson's new restaurant—all at your hotel doorstep (or just down the street). It was at Alan Johnson's, after Friday evening's Gatlinburg cruise, that Kevin Wilson and his dad Kenny treated KOA celebrity guest John D'Agostino and me to dinner. We broke bread together to the strains of, "Gonna buy me a Mer-cu-ry . . ." "Hey, it all dovetails, 'cause Kevin does indeed have a Mercury, one that I gave a *CRM Top 10* award to at Indy (see our January issue). Kevin and his dad also altered their travel schedule to drive me back to the airport in Knoxville on Sunday — thanks guys, I appreciate it more than you know.

As for Knoxville, I had landed there on Thursday evening, after a connector flight delay of several hours (something that seems to have become standard operating procedure with most airlines these days), to be met by a stretched limo sent by the KOA. Now this is something that hasn't become standard operating procedure—but was very cool nonetheless. Unfortunately automotive artist Steve Stanford (who was also scheduled as a celebrity guest) was unable to attend and couldn't share the experience. NorCal custom entrepreneur John D'Agostino did (as mentioned) attend, and was mobbed by fellow custom owners and enthusiasts alike, staying busy signing autographs until his Sharpie ran out of ink.

The Southern Leadsled also has such things as a flame thrower contest, which although amazing to observe (from a safe distance), isn't exactly nostalgic—from a native SoCal boy's point of view anyway. But hey, that's what traveling to shows across the country is all about—experiencing both regional differences and national similarities in this great hobby of ours.

One of the many highlights of Saturday evening was my drawing the name for the KOA

Larry Shelton was one of those parked on the grass in front of the hotel. His flamed 'n' whacked '50 shoebox from Illinois was quite the tourist attraction, letting everyone know just exactly what kind of event was going on.



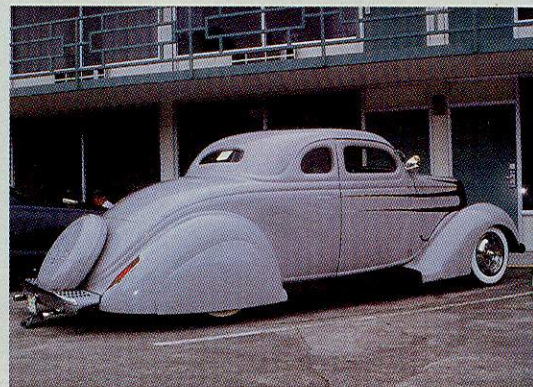
Kustoms of America Chaplain Jack Hughes not only had his ever present array of fantastic kustom hubcap creations on display, but many nostalgic goodies displayed around his ever-in-suede Olds as well. How 'bout a genuine fox tail?



I was knocked over by the mods on Gary Moore's '35 Ford Cabriolet from Melbourne, Florida. Everything from the filled hood top, custom "V" emblem, king-sized portholes pierced by a chrome spear, and frenched hinges, was innovative, yet within the parameters of kustom tradition.



We've run a couple of letters in Rodder Mail dealing with Steven Carter's in-progress Comet hardtop from Brentwood, Tennessee. Well, here it is—finished at last. And it's a beauty too, well sorth the wait.



The '35-'36 Ford seems to be the car of choice when it comes to building early-style kustoms. Note the differences in build style between Howard Henry's '36 roadster from Florida and Ed Hennrich's New York-based '36 five-window. It was Ed's LaSalle-grilled tail-dragger that contributed the spotlight-with-a-pastie photo for last issues Cruisin' The Time Barrier column.