

It's All About the NUMBERS.....

By Judy Badgley

You have probably all heard the reference to 1-of-a-kind or 1-off. How do these phrases relate to a Hurst/Olds? All of our H/O cars are special. When individual auto manufacturers are building thousands of cars annually (millions in the 70's), that makes our cars rare and highly collectible, but what about 1-of-a-kind?

Specialty cars go by many different names. They may be referred to as prototypes, proposal cars, promotional cars, or concept vehicles. Some were jokingly called "wannabe's", meaning they wanted to be a Hurst/Olds. I'm sure there are other names, too. Many of these cars are a 1-off car.

Hurst Performance and Oldsmobile were a great team before they built production / streetable cars. Exhibition or promotional cars were a BIG attention grabber at the racetrack. Hurst Performance used Oldsmobiles among others to promote their racing products. The 1966 Hurst Hairy Olds was a prime example of a unique 1-of-a-kind car. It had twin engines, 4-wheel drive and was a real eye catcher when it "smoked" the tires down the track. This car was updated in 1967 to look like the new Olds 442 models, by changing the front-end assembly. The H/OCA owns a replica of this unique car. Member Dennis Mothershed and MANY other workers spearheaded the revitalizing of this car. It is currently on display in the R. E. Olds Museum in Lansing, MI. The H/OCA sells a print of this car in 3 sizes (see ad). The Hurst Hairy Olds propelled both Hurst and Oldsmobile into the limelight.

Print for sale

Hurst "Hairy" Olds

At Minnesota Dragways, 1966

Artist's print, suitable for framing



1. 8 x 10 \$10 + \$5 shipping
2. 14 x 17 \$20 + \$7 shipping
3. 18 x 24 limited edition,
numbered and signed by the
artist \$40 + \$10 shipping

Send check payable to H/OCA:

304 S. Clippert St.
Lansing, MI 48912

Before cars like the Hurst/Olds are put into production, many months are spent on designs, planning, engineering and proposals. When 2 manufacturers decide to team up there is a lot of red tape! 1968 was the first time in automotive history 2 independent companies combined and used both names on the production car.

Oldsmobile provided Hurst with cars to design and plan a conversion. They would both review the proposal and make changes and suggestions. These cars are usually scrapped when they are no longer needed, as they were built for looks rather than practical use. Prototype or proposal cars were built in nearly every year from 1967-1987. In 1967 a proposal car was made with many options that were not put on the production car. The hide-away headlights and mechanical spoiler were just too problematic.

The first Hurst/Olds is

considered to be a 1968, 4-speed car built for John Demmer. This car looked like the production 68's, but had a few racing items added to enhance the performance. This car convinced Olds to build a 500-car production run of Hurst/Olds. Although the literature for the 68 H/O's shows the 4-speed as an option, Demmer's car was the only ONE factory built that way. The Demmer family still owns this car.

Another unique 1968 H/O was ONE of the production run cars. Although all 515 68's were available with nearly any option also available on the 442 or Cutlass, they were all to have the same Peruvian Silver paint scheme and black interior. California racing enthusiast, Briggs Cunningham, made a special request. Because of the excessive California heat, he wanted ONE with a white interior. His request was met and this 1-of-a-kind car was built. In 1983 this car was at the organizational meet of the H/OCA in Lansing. It is now back in California and cared for by member Al Denicola. Al is planning to bring the car to Flagstaff and to do a story on this special car

68 Hurst/Olds with white interior



Following the success of the 68 H/O, a 69 version would be a sure winner. The prototype for this car featured an “elephant tusk” design rear spoiler and bold graphics. The production version was toned down and was very successful. We believe the prototype “add-on’s” were removed from the test car and the car was probably eventually scrapped.

1970 saw a change in styles and Hurst and Olds did not agree. Olds went on to build the bright yellow Rallye 350, dubbed as the “Hurst/Olds that never was”. There were still those that wanted a Hurst/Olds. An example of this was pictured in the last *Thunder and Lightning*. Somebody contacted Hurst Performance and persuaded the company to do a conversion on their Olds. The result was a ONE-of-a-kind, 1970 Hurst Olds. Member Larry Simpson recognized the background in the photo and identified the track as the York US30 Raceway.

Hurst and Olds management stayed in touch and when the opportunity to pace the 1972 Indy 500 came about, (A horrible accident at the 1971 Indy race made auto companies wary of the Pacing duties.) proposals went into high gear. The outrageous stripe design (paisley) and sail panel extensions were typical of the seventies, but a more cost-effective design was used. Again the proposal cars (including a Delta 88) were lost. H/OCA Editor, Jon Wessel built a replica tribute of the 72 prototype a few years ago. Maybe this car will reappear for all to enjoy.

Production H/O’s were built every year from 1973-1975 and prototype cars were also built. The 73 prototype was owned and restored by a former H/OCA

member. It hasn’t been seen in several years. To our knowledge, the 74 and 75 cars no longer exist.

The success and popularity of the Oldsmobile Cutlass caused Olds to decide they didn’t need Hurst Performance to sell their cars. Proposal cars were built in 1976, 1977 and 1978, but no production cars resulted. Hurst/Olds enthusiasts have helped preserve automotive history by saving these unique cars or building a replica of them. Members John Rogers, Bob Schiely, Glen Katterson and Tommy Wright have all preserved prototype cars from this era. These H/O cars are an important part of our heritage.



1977 Hurst/Olds prototype

The 1979 Hurst/Olds went into production in spite of itself! After several weeks of bickering, the project went forward. All 2499 of these cars became a 1-of-a-kind because they are the only H/O’s that were built completely at the Olds assembly plant. OK, I know what you are thinking, “you can’t say 2499 cars are 1-of-a-kind”! Well, I guess that is taking “literary license”!

1980 found Olds racecar driver Dick Fortman winning at the track with his 1980 Hurst/Olds. This car was a spin-off of the 1979, similar to the

updating that was done on the Hurst Hairy Olds. This car was also the only ONE.

1980 also found Hurst experimenting with some modifications on the Olds Toronado model. Again, this is ONE Oldsmobile that Hurst Performance converted. This car was at the 2007 St Ignace car show and is registered for the Oldsmobile Homecoming show. The owners have all of the paperwork from the modifications done by Hurst Performance, then owned by Cars and Concepts.

1981 was the beginning of a 7 year production run of the most popular Cutlass style in Oldsmobile history. Hurst Performance converted ONE of

these cars as a proposal for Olds, but Olds again declined. This car was very similar to the 83 H/O design but was blue with a gray bottom and red stripe. This car was seen in the Lansing area for many years, but hasn’t been seen recently.

Hurst converted a special white 1982 Cutlass for promotional use to be used by Linda Vaughn. This car had her signature on the front fender, as well as a Hurst/Olds decal. Linda used this car at the track and racing events all year. At the end of the year, Olds took the car back and crushed it. This car as well as Linda are ONE-of-a-kind.

Linda’s 1982 Promotional Hurst/ Olds



The 83 and 84 H/O's saw the end of the manufacturing team that made history. These cars were a huge success for both companies, but Olds engineers were already preparing to convert the popular Cutlass to a front-wheel drive car. Many attempts were made to keep the H/O going, but they were not successful.

In 1985, a design referred to as the "Darth Vader" car was built. This was a combined effort of Olds and Hurst, but it was not ever put into production. Member Angelo Valenti has this car and has done a lot of research to document its history. This car has been seen at our events and many other car shows. It is actually called the FE3X model and is also ONE unique car.

Doc Watson tried diligently to convince Olds to produce a "Last Hurrah" Hurst/Olds in 1988. This was the last year for the rear-wheel drive Cutlass. This did not happen as a joint venture. Doc and his company, Hurst Special Vehicles (the current Hurst Performance) created a kit that could be installed by Cutlass owners, dealerships and body shops. These cars are also ONE-of-a-kind cars in that they reflect the desires of the individual owners. Color choices were no longer restricted. Additionally these kits fit on all Cutlass bodies from 1981-1988. For this reason there are Hurst/Olds cars from that era that are known as Hurst/Olds Aero cars.

Remember back at the beginning of this story I mentioned the many different types of 1-off H/O's? Hurst was always a big presence at the racetracks. This was important to the sale of their racing products. They frequently used Oldsmobiles as parade and promotional vehicles. The most noteworthy of these were the 68

and 69 Hurst/Olds convertibles. Linda just didn't look the same sitting inside a hardtop car as she did waving from a convertible. We believe there were 4) 68 H/O convertibles and 3) 69 H/O convertibles. It is not easy to determine how many of these cars there were because it was not uncommon for Hurst to take a car home from the track and repaint it differently before the next weekend's race. Some of these cars have appeared at our National Meets throughout the years as well.



Linda on a 1968 Hurst/Olds convertible

There are several important things to remember about a Hurst/Olds. Just because you don't recognize it as ONE of the cars in all the books and magazines doesn't mean it is not a Hurst/Olds. If ONE of these unusual cars comes to a show take the opportunity to learn about it from those that bring it to the show. You might be surprised at what you can learn. Whether it is ONE of the original specialty cars or ONE that someone built as tribute to a car they saw and loved enough to build a replica, these people have brought it out to enjoy. If you are looking at buying ONE of these different

cars and you are only interested in an original ONE-of-a-kind, look for documentation. That is the only "proof" you will have of originality.

Now I hope you haven't been overwhelmed with information and will take time this summer to get your special car out and enjoy it. Remember to respect the special cars of others so they can enjoy their car, too. We all have ONE goal. Enjoying our ride.