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18th Annual Orinda Classic Car Show focuses on trucks; supports Seniors Around Town

By Sora O'Doherty



Theme, Keep On Trucking, entry, 1948 Diamond T one-ton pickup truck owned by Lawrence and Sarah Siegel of Orinda. Photo Sora O'Doherty

died, and his son needed money for college. Siegel bought the Diamond T for \$35,000, and reckons that he has invested that much and more in completing the restoration, although, he notes, restoration of a vintage vehicle is always ongoing.

Siegel and his wife own and run Cuesta Antiques in Lafayette, and you can often find the Diamond T parked near Whole Foods. Siegel says the truck attracts a lot of business for the shop. Siegel has always had a vintage vehicle of some type. He's participated in many car shows, including every one that has been held in Orinda. "We like to participate in the community," he said. Siegel and his wife have lived in Orinda for 35 years.

The truck stays pretty close to home. The farthest Siegel has driven it was to Napa to work on the truck's unique bed made of wine barrel slats, which he installed over the original steel bed. The bed is made of French oak, while the wooden sides are Sapele Mahogany from Brazil.

Siegel kept the original commercial license plates on the Iowa farm truck. While Ford and Chevrolet had pickup trucks back in the day that carried loads of a half or three-quarters of a ton, the Diamond T hauled an amazing one ton. To cope with that heavy load, the truck originally had springs so firm, Siegel says, "your teeth would chatter." He made adjustments to soften the ride. He was able to find original Coker replica tires, and restored the original wheel rims and hub caps. The Diamond T now has a 1995 Chevy Corvette engine, which replaced the original Hercules engine. It runs on premium 91 octane gasoline, and the tank holds 15 gallons.

Siegel loves the art deco appearance of the truck, which is, he says proudly, "a chick magnet!" Really, the truck is a people magnet, with folks always stopping to admire the handsome truck. Most don't recall Diamond T trucks. Siegel's model 4116 was manufactured between 1939 and 1948. The company was later bought by Freightliner in 1969.

Diamond Ts were farm trucks, and so are rare in California. Siegel says there are perhaps 15 or 20 in good condition in the U.S. He's had offers, but isn't ready to part with his Diamond T, "the Cadillac of trucks," as it was known. The T in the name of the truck is for its designer, the founder of the Chicago company, C.A. Tilt.

Most of the trucks were painted fire-engine red, but Siegel's truck had the California option, which features paint in moleskin (tan) and Rootbeer (brown). Siegel, who for many years had a successful luggage business, crafted a leather valise that he has attached to the running board of the truck for extra storage. It fits with the look of the truck perfectly. The old truck has some unique features no longer found on modern vehicles. For example, the split windshield opens for ventilation, in addition to side vents.

Siegel grew up in Piedmont and met his wife Sarah at Piedmont High. Sarah is an artist, specializing in the plein air style. When he was young, Siegel and his friend would go to Emeryville and look at all the truck dealerships. "I saw the Diamond T there," he says, "and I thought it was the best-looking truck of all."

The car show is the Orinda Association's primary fundraiser for Orinda Seniors Around Town, which provides

B.C. Forbes once said, "There is more credit and satisfaction in being a first-rate truck driver than a tenth-rate executive." Fortunately, Lawrence Siegel doesn't have to choose, being the very satisfied owner of a business, Cuesta Antiques, and a vintage truck: his prized Diamond T. If you missed it in Orinda's 2022 Fourth of July parade, you'll have another chance to view this elegant truck in the 18th Orinda Classic Car Show on Saturday, Sept. 10 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. The show will feature vintage pickup trucks (stock and custom or resto-mod). There will also be all other types of vehicles, including some exotic, electric vehicles.

This year's theme, "Keep On Truckin'!" is well embodied by Siegel's lovingly restored vintage vehicle. Siegel acquired his truck about a decade ago. At the time, he saw it advertised in Hemmings auto trade vintage book. The truck, which was located in Glenwood Springs, Colorado, was about 60% restored, but had no wood and no hubcaps. The man who had begun the restoration had

a variety of services for Orinda's senior citizens. The show also raises funds for other local charities, in aid of local seniors and the broader community. Funds come from the entry fees for vehicles, as well as by donations. Even if you do not enter your vehicle in the Orinda Classic Car Show, you can support the work of the "Seniors Around Town" program by making a donation.

More details about the car show, including how to donate, can be found on the car show website: www.orindacarshow.com

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