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Մինաս Սրկ. Մալուան
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Սիրելի Մինաս Սարկաւազ,

Ստացած ենք նոյեմբեր 6, 1986 թուակիր ձեր նամակը եւ թերթի ներփակ-
եալ կտրոնը:

Ուրախաւի, եւ ինչպէս կ'ըսէք հարապատեցիչ, երեւոյթ է որ ամերիկեան
թերթ մը այդքան ընդարձակ սեղ տուած է հայու մը՝ այս պարագային ձեր գա-
լակին յիշըրաին:

Ուրախ ենք նաեւ որ մեր նանչցած մանուկները այսօր տէրն են իրենց
նակատագրին:

Շնորհակալութիւն ձեզի, ձեր ազնիւ փիկնոջ, ձեր զուակներուն եւ ա-
նոնց պարագաներուն: Կ'աղօթենք որ Տէրը իր շնորհներով զարդարէ ձեր բա-
լորին կեանքի օրերը:

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His car hobby keeps flying on carpet money

By Al Haas
Inquirer Staff Writer

Richard Maloumian is a third-generation Oriental rug merchant — and an extremely successful one.

The business he and his brother, Royden, run in Chestnut Hill is one of the nation's major purveyors of Oriental rugs. Fueled by their rug-buying trips to the Middle East, and the output of their factory in China (a unique joint venture with that communist country's government), it generates annual sales in excess of \$5 million.

That kind of success exacts a price, a price that is paid in long, hard trips into the hinterland of Third World countries, and long, hard hours back at the stand on Germantown Avenue.

Those six- and seven-day weeks remind Richard Maloumian that man does not live by hand-made rugs alone. He needs some sort of diversion, something that will, as Maloumian puts it, "strike a balance with my business life."

For Maloumian, that balance has always been automobiles. He has loved them since he was a kid. At 48, he is what he always was and always will be: Hooked on wheels.

Maloumian strides across the floor of what was once, symbolically enough, an automobile showroom and is now devoted to islands of stacked Oriental rugs.

He navigates through this brightly dyed archipelago, enters his office and extracts a packet of color photographs from a desk drawer.

The photographs are of the 15 or so vintage convertibles, coupes and sports cars that he and his brother have restored over the years. At the height of their restoration days, "before we just got up to our eyeballs in the rug business," they had their own garage and employed a full-time mechanic and body man.

Each of the pictures begs an anecdote.

"There is an interesting story to this car," says Maloumian, tapping his fingers on a picture of a beautifully restored 1937 Buick Roadmaster convertible. "I saw it in the Sunday paper on a Saturday night," like most car buffs, Maloumian reads the Sun-



Richard Maloumian
Cars are his passion

day classifieds early and religiously. "I said to my wife, 'Gee, that car sounds interesting. I'm going to run up there tomorrow morning and take a look at it.' She said, 'No, you're not. You're going to take your wife and children to church.'"

"So, after church, I called the guy, he lived up in Trappe, and then I made a beeline up there. I walked in and told the guy it was sold [for \$3,000] before I even had a chance to look it over closely. . . . As it turned out, the car had quite a history. It was once owned by the City of New York, which used it for parades. A lot of famous people had ridden in it."

Like most of the other cars the Maloumians have restored over the years, the Buick didn't stay in the stable that long. The fun, it seems, is in finding the restorable car, finding replacements for its missing or broken parts at antique-car flea markets, and then renovating it to that incredibly impeccable state called "show condition." After it reaches that



Rug merchant Richard Maloumian sits in the front seat of his '38 Ford station wagon in front of his family's Chestnut Hill store.

point, and wins a couple prizes, the blush comes off its cheeks for Maloumian. The car, for him, becomes just a storage and deterioration problem.

"After you have them in that condition, it's all down hill," Maloumian contends. "You might as well let someone else have them. Otherwise, you just stand around worrying that someone will back into them with a screwdriver in his pocket."

In addition to his passion for classic-car restoration, Maloumian has always loved performance. In fact, he and his brother sponsored two Porsches in the Camel GT sports-car racing circuit before the pressures of their expanding rug business forced them to give up that as well as cut back on their restoration projects.

In recent years, his love of fast cars has manifested itself in a 1984 Corvette, his present 1985 Porsche, and his latest and most unusual automotive project — a big, heavy 1982 Chevrolet Caprice sedan that looks fat and slow, but regularly embar-

rases Corvettes and Porsches at Stenton Avenue stoplights.

The improbable, two-ton performance machine grew out of Maloumian's attempt to find a large, comfortable family sedan that would also handle and accelerate like a sports car.

Dissatisfied with what he found in the marketplace, and knowing that Chevrolet had a lot of over-the-counter performance equipment that would fit the big non-performance Caprice, he set out to build himself a particularly vicious wolf in sheep's clothing.

"The idea of building this car, of using my knowledge of what was available and what could be done, struck me as a challenge," he recalls.

Maloumian started by buying a very clean, light blue Caprice with all the options for \$5,500. Utilizing stock parts available from Chevrolet, he replaced the relatively mushy stock springs with stiffer ones, in-

stalled heavier sway bars and gas shock absorbers, larger wheels, and those super-wide Goodyear Gatorbacks used on Corvettes.

The result of these suspension modifications is an automobile that corners extremely well for its size, yet retains a remarkably comfortable ride.

Next, he took out the mild-mannered, original V-6 engine and replaced it with a 350-cubic-inch Chevrolet V-8 that had been souped up in a speed shop to produce 425 horsepower. This engine was coupled to a four-speed automatic transmission built with high-performance innards, and an extremely strong station wagon rear axle with a limited-slip differential (for better traction) and low, 4.10:1 gearing (for faster acceleration).

For the icing on this cake, Maloumian installed a nitrous oxide system, which allows the engine to OD on oxygen when a valve is opened.

"This gives the engine an extra 175

horses," in addition to the 425 horsepower, Maloumian says. "But you can only keep it on for about 10 seconds unless you want to melt the pistons."

The reward for this drivetrain diddling is nothing short of awesome. Driving the Heavy Chevy leaves no doubt in your mind that Maloumian does indeed "chew up" Corvettes, Porsches and assorted other expensive stallions.

"And I built this for about \$16,000, which isn't a lot for a car that provides this much comfort and performance," he observes.

Maloumian is proud of his creation and loves to drive it. But he is a ready getting restless. He has met the challenge, built the machine, and now it is time to move on to a new project.

"I might buy this '63 Corvette I've been looking at. The guy bought it new, drove it for a year and then stored it. It only has 6,000 miles on it.

"If I get it, I would probably have the engine disassembled and . . ."

The Philadelphia Inquirer / KENDALL WILKINSON