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CLASSIC CAR WEEK

By the light of the silvery Moon

1912 Raceabout gets driven often and at limit of performance

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SPECIAL TO THE CALIFORNIAN

PEBBLE BEACH — Leland F. Powells was a little nervous as the judges approached his 1912 Moon 30 Raceabout — and what car entrant at the 2016 Pebble Beach Concours d' Elegance wouldn't be. Pebble is considered the world's top-ranked concours.

"I'm sort of like that old gunslinger — nervous beforehand and shaky afterwards, but I'm always rocks steady during the big event," Powells said, winking.

A tall imposing figure dressed all in black, complete with a black leather wrapped peg leg and wearing a tweed driving cap and amber goggles that are more than a century old perched atop a flowing mane of shoulder length auburn hair, Powells cuts a dashing figure among a field of car entrants all dressed to match the era of their vehicle entries. Except Powells dresses this way all the time. And unlike many Pebble Beach contestants, who rarely drive their pristine machines and likely have never worked on them themselves, Powells drives his magnificent Moon Raceabout often — and often at the limit.

"This car was built to run, the open road just calls out to it," said Powells, whose history with the car goes back many decades to when his father bought the car when the bulk of the William Harrah Automobile Collection was auctioned off in the mid-'80s.

Leland F. Powells of Cambria can make a far better case than most who would like to claim they have automotive history in their blood. When his son was born, veteran Lincoln collector Thomas Powells named his son Leland to honor automotive pioneer Henry M. Leland, the founder of Cadillac, and later, the Lincoln Motor Company.

Of course, along with the Leland name, the younger Powells also inherited a love of fine early Lincoln motorcars that dates back to the early era of custom coach-built automobiles and when V-12 engines were still offered by many automobile manufacturers.

He keeps coming back to Pebble Beach for the Concours, too — and always



PROVIDED/MICHAEL BRENNER

Leland F. Powells, of Cambria, shows his 1912 Moon 30 Raceabout at the 2016 Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance, held on the lawns of the Del Monte Lodge. Leland's father bought the Moon Raceabout at auction when the world famous Harrah's Automobile Collection was downsized in the '70s.

with an early car. In 2013, Powells won third place in his class with a 1912 Simplex 50 Toy Tonneau his family restored 35 years prior to the show. Powells said he believes in preserving a car that is already in fine shape just the way that it is. Like his Moon: The car may be 104 years young, but it has never been restored, just maintained.

"This car runs great, and the brakes were last done in 1949!" he said, explaining that the Moon might have a few spots

of tarnish, but he is loath to restore any part of it for fear that making any cosmetic improvement might draw him into a full restoration, or otherwise one shiny part or two will look out of place amidst the overall patina.

Powells said, at first, kids often made fun of him at school for being named Leland, but growing up in a household with antique motorcycles and veteran and classic automobiles made it all seem worthwhile when he got a little older.

Even a catastrophic accident suffered some 37 years ago while riding a 1929 Harley hasn't dimmed Powells' love of early automobiles.

"I lost my leg, but that hasn't stopped me," Powells said. Now when the open road calls, he just stretches out a little bit more, and goes and goes. But sometimes now, he lets a friend help out by hand cranking that Moon to life.