

Canadian-made Bricklin sought-after rarity

They're two of a kind — a significant part of Canadian automotive history.

That's how Stouffville's Mike Paterson describes his Bricklin gems, one a 1975 and the other a 1976.

The cars, two of 2,854 produced at an assembly plant in St. John, New Brunswick, are now considered classics with 1,500 registered in the United States and 200 in Canada.

Mike, 54, a resident of Whitby before moving to Stouffville, describes his interest in cars as a boyhood passion inherited from his father. It was Mr. Paterson Sr. who purchased a Bricklin at a Rotary Club auction, igniting a spark that has long burned within his son.

"I drove the car a few times," Mike admits, "but my father didn't know it."

'It was in rough shape. Weeds were growing through the front seat.'

Four years ago, while searching online, Mike located a 1975 Bricklin in Tempe, Arizona. Without seeing it, he had the vehicle transported from Tempe to Stouffville.

"It's what I'd always wanted," he says. The purchase price was \$12,000. Today, he places the value at \$20,000.

What makes Mike's Bricklin authentic is an acrylic exterior bonded to fibreglass. However, it's gull-wing doors that set it apart from other North American cars. Fully electric, they open automatically with the push of a button.

Is the car for sale?

"If someone wants to talk, I'll listen," Mike says. Should it be sold, he'll insist it go to a good home.

The '75 treasure is powered by an AMC V-8 engine. It cruises nicely at posted highway speeds, Mike says. "But I never push it. After all, it's 39 years old." He admits it's a little bit noisy and bumpy "but that's what I like about it."

In July, he and wife Debbi plan to attend an International Bricklin rally in London, Ont. In 2014, Mike plans to trailer it to a 40th



Roaming Around

with Jim Thomas

anniversary reunion back in New Brunswick. Only 771 models of this period were produced.

Mike says the car attracts attention wherever he goes. "People honk and wave," he

says. "Stopping off at a gas station can be a 15-minute experience," he notes.

The 1976 Bricklin remains a work in progress. Mike discovered it at the rear of a body shop in Markham.

"It was in rough shape," he says, "weeds were growing through the front seat."

The white paint, however, caught Mike's eye. He recognized it as one of a kind. The asking price was \$3,500.

Today, it's thought to be worth \$100,000. He plans to do much of the restoration himself. Parts are still available. The motor's a standard Ford V-8.

The inventor of this exceptional car was automotive entrepreneur Malcolm Bricklin.

Although born in Pennsylvania, to realize his dream, he planned to utilize a vacant plant in Saint Bruno, Quebec. But provincial officials weren't interested due in part to his loan request of several million dollars. So the auto designer turned to New Brunswick and reached an agreement with officials there.

His goal was to produce 10,000 vehicles the first year. However, only 780 were built in 1974; 2,062 in 1975 and 12 in 1976.

The initial price tag was placed at \$4,000 but soared to \$7,490 and later, \$9,990. That's when the company went into receivership.

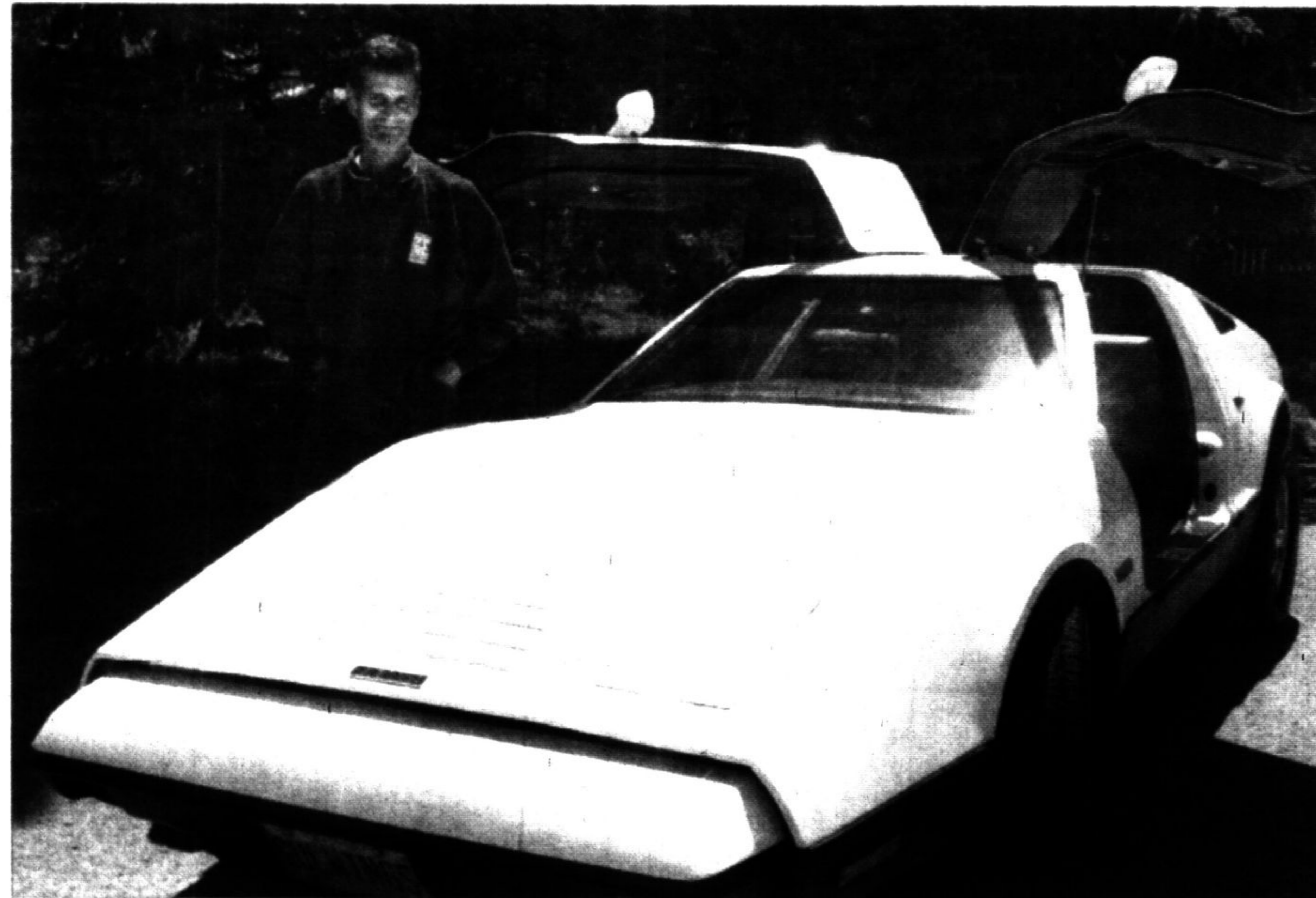
In addition to the gull-wing doors, the Bricklin was distinctive in other areas including automatic transmissions, air conditioning and power disc brakes.

However, performance failed to meet expectations due to excess weight and low engine power.

But times change.

Today, it's now a sought-after collector car with quality vehicles bringing as much as \$35,000. From 1974 to 1976, only 2,854 Bricklins were built. Stouffville's Mike Paterson has two.

Jim Thomas is a Stouffville resident who has written for area newspapers for more than 60 years.



STAFF PHOTO/STEVE SOMERVILLE

Proud Bricklin owner Mike Paterson poses next to the gull-wing, 1970s-era sports car. From 1974 to 1976, only 2,854 of the cars were built. Mr. Paterson plans to showcase one of the rare cars at a rally in London, Ont. this summer.

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