



Ambassador Jeffrey L. Bleich – World Bar Conference

**Remarks of Ambassador Bleich
at the Queanbeyan Council Chambers, Queanbeyan
Meeting of the American Car Club of Australia**

(As prepared for delivery – April 2, 2011)

Thank you Mayor Overall, Mrs. Overall, Deputy Mayor Whelan, members of the Queanbeyan City Council, my friend Mr. Chris Smith from the American Car Club, our friends from Costco, Shannons Insurance, and other insurers, the entire American Car Club. I'm honored to be here with my wife Becky and our friend Jim Jusko, who as the Mayor noted, is a fellow gear-head along with being the Executive Producer of "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition."

Just listening to the remarks already, it is clear what a great association we have between the United States and the people of Queanbeyan. From the American-Australian marriages, to the dual citizens, to Costco (Derek on behalf of all Americans here, thank you for bringing big boxes to the ACT). To the Deputy Mayor renewing her vows in the Chapel of Elvis – by the way, we did the same thing. I've vowed that I would always love Becky tender, not be cruel, never be a hound dog, and always be her lovin' Teddy bear. Good to know I'm not the only person in the room.

Probably every person in this room can tell you the first car they loved and the first car they had. My first love was a quintessential American car. The 1961 Ford Thunderbird. It led the Inaugural Parade for President Kennedy. It was the pace car that year in the Indianapolis 500. When I turned 16, the first thing I did was go out and buy a Thunderbird. It wasn't a 1961 (which was old by that time). My Thunderbird was a later model 1971 that had the sorts of issues that you'd expect from a car that a 16-year-old could afford to buy with his summer job money. I needed to spray ether in the distributor to get it to spark and turn over. The manifold had a nasty habit of falling off. But I loved that car and put every dime I had into restoring her. But I loved that car. And long after I can't remember the addresses of places where I lived for years as a student, or the plots of good books I've read, I can still remember every detail of that car.

Why do we love our cars? We love them because – at their best -- they represent what is best in us. As people we all want to create things beyond themselves – things that can transport you though life further, better, more elegantly, with more joy, with more style, and in a way that makes the journey as meaningful as the destination. The cars that



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inspire us to seek new experience and challenge ourselves to be more than we have been are the cars we remember.

Like the rest of us, writers can be inspired by cars. If you don't mind, I'd like to share a brief quote from two of my favorite writers, Robert Penn Warren and Paul Bowles, about cars.

Robert Penn Warren wrote about the effect of that special hum of an engine: "There is only the flow of the motor under your foot spinning that frail thread of sound out of its metal gut like a spider, that filament, that nexus, which isn't really there, between the you which you have just left in one place and the you which you will be when you get to the other place."

And Paul Bowles wrote about how we find ourselves on the open road: "Whenever he was en route from one place to another, he was able to look at his life with a little more objectivity than usual. It was often on trips that he thought more clearly, and made decisions that he could not reach when he was stationary"

Few cars have provided this sense of clarity, of transcendence, better than some of the cars we will see tomorrow. For over 20 years, the American Car Club here has preserved this heritage. We were honored to show these cars off at our 2010 Independence Day Celebration and we look forward to making that a tradition as well.

So I look forward to joining all of you tomorrow to see these amazing cars. I thank you for the rare and humbling honor of awarding a special Ambassador's trophy at the Car Show. So I'm thinking that I may need to take some time to make such an important decision, possibly test-drive some of the finalists . . . for a few months. So watch out if I select your car tomorrow!

Thank you and see you tomorrow.