

# Thomas

By Harold Coker / Photos by West Peterson



## 1907 Flyer 60HP

Owner: Harold & Lillian Coker

**M**y first encounter with a Thomas Flyer was in 1961 in Altoona, Pennsylvania at the Eastern Spring meet. Since that time I have grown to appreciate the marque each year. After seeing Mahlon Patton's 1910 K670 Thomas at the Altoona event we searched for seven years before we found one to buy. After finishing its restoration, we showed it at the Eastern Fall Meet in Hershey in 1972, the year I was AACA President.

Later on, a friend talked me into selling it to him and I regretted the decision as it was leaving our driveway. I purposed to have another and began another search. We were fortunate to find and buy the remains of a 70HP car at the Harrah's collection, but by this time parts were beginning to dry up and it took approximately 12 years to complete its restoration. I say "we," because my wonderful wife, Lillian, is a great part of this story. She found the first Thomas for us and her maiden name is Thomas. We met lots of other Thomas collectors while searching for parts. From a dear friend, Ote Corriher, I bought a 1910 640, and later, after Ote's passing, I bought the only 1904 known, which is a three-cylinder car.

I also developed a great friendship with Wolfgang Gawor, who had moved to the U.S. from Germany and was buying every Thomas that he could find. He later moved to Guernsey in the Chanel Islands taking six or eight Thomases with him. By then, I was restoring additional Thomases so Wolfgang and I often traded parts and literature. Wolfgang called one day and asked when Lill and I planned to come to Europe. He said he had a couple of Thomases that he wanted to sell me. We had no such trip planned but upon hearing of the possibility of adding another Thomas to the collection, we went. Wolfgang's only son that liked cars had died and he was cutting back on the hobby. We were able to tour his restoration facility where three Thomases were being restored – a 1910 M6 40HP, a 1910 90HP Flyabout, and the 1907 Flyer 60HP car pictured here. I



fell in love with the car, but knew that I could never own it.

Fast forward a couple of years. My friend Wolfgang died and his widow knew how much I liked the car. The rest is history. We took delivery December 2004. As custodians of several Thomases, we are especially proud of this car as it is a sister car to the winner of the New York-to-Paris around-the-world race. In celebration of the 100th anniversary of that race, both that car and ours will be on display at the Amelia Island Concours in March 2008. In fact, there may be more Thomas Flyers together at one time than since the bankruptcy auction in 1914. 



