



**For immediate release**

Contact: Patrick Keeffe

631-854-5562 – office

keeffe.vanderbiltmuseum@gmail.org

## **Vanderbilt Museum Sells One-of-a Kind 1937 Chrysler Imperial Town Car to Collector and Historian Howard Kroplick**

### *Proceeds Will Endow Care and Maintenance of Museum Collections*

CENTERPORT, NY (February 7, 2012) – The Suffolk County Vanderbilt Museum has sold an extremely rare 1937 Chrysler Imperial Town Car commissioned by Walter P. Chrysler for his daughter, Bernice Chrysler Garbisch. Howard Kroplick of East Hills, NY, outbid several interested buyers and purchased the one-of-a-kind vehicle for \$275,000 in a process supervised by the Vanderbilt Museum Board of Trustees.

Professional appraisals ranged up to \$307,750 and the museum set the minimum bid at \$125,000. The Vanderbilt made a public announcement of the sale in November, advertised the car nationally in *Hemmings Motor News* and issued a call for sealed bids. Inquiries came in from California, Connecticut, Maryland, Massachusetts, Nevada, New Jersey, New York and Washington State.

The car, donated to the Vanderbilt in 1959, was de-accessioned from the museum's collections in 1992. Proceeds will be used to establish an endowment for the care and maintenance of the museum's historic archives, collections and exhibitions.

Kroplick, chairman emeritus of The Impact Group, a Manhattan-based medical communications company, is an author, classic-car collector and a historian of the Vanderbilt Cup Races. He plans to restore the Chrysler to its original condition.



**1937 Chrysler Imperial Town Car  
in Vanderbilt Mansion courtyard, circa 1986**

Lance Reinheimer, executive director of the Vanderbilt Museum, said, "Selling this Art Deco gem will enable us to create an endowment fund to preserve and care for the Vanderbilt collections.

We're thrilled that Howard Kroplick, a passionate automotive historian and collector, is going to meticulously restore this unique piece of American automobile history."

Kroplick said, "I am very excited about the opportunity to restore this unique one-of-one automobile. I have conducted research at the Vanderbilt Museum during the past nine years and am particularly pleased that the proceeds will help maintain the museum's historic archives and collections."

The sale of the car is a two-decade story. Stephanie Gress, the museum's director of curatorial services, said, "The decision to sell a collection piece is never undertaken lightly. Selling the Chrysler is the culmination of a 20-year project. The Vanderbilt's curator and trustees started the process in 1992 by deaccessioning the car and responsibly deferring the sale until a later date. Our current board and curatorial staff brought the disposition of this museum object to its logical conclusion."

Kroplick, 62, chairman emeritus of The Impact Group, a medical communications company, was recently named town historian for North Hempstead. His first book, *The Vanderbilt Cup Races of Long Island* was published in 2008. *The Long Island Motor Parkway*, with co-author Al Velocci, also was published that year. He has created a popular website, [VanderbiltCupRaces.com](http://VanderbiltCupRaces.com), which provides comprehensive information on Long Island's racing history and current automotive events.

Kroplick owns a number of classic cars and is president of the Long Island Motor Parkway Preservation Society. The organization is dedicated to preserving the first American road built exclusively for automobiles, by William K. Vanderbilt II and his business associates. Kroplick serves as a trustee of the Roslyn Landmark Society and is member of the Society of Automotive Historians.

In December 2008, Howard purchased the restored 1909 Alco-6 *Black Beast* racer that won the 1909 and 1910 Vanderbilt Cup Races and raced in the first Indy 500 race in 1911. In celebration of the centennial of the inaugural Indy 500, the *Black Beast* participated with six other race cars in a parade lap at last May's Indy race. Emerson Fittipaldi, a two-time Indy 500 winner, drove the car with Kroplick as the passenger.

### **The Chrysler's History**

The 1937 Chrysler Imperial Town Car, a masterpiece of Art Deco automotive design, is made of hand-worked aluminum (no factory-produced body panels were used) and has Garbisch's initials, BCG, inscribed on its rear doors. The 8,000-pound, seven-passenger car is 19 feet long and has a 130-horsepower, eight-cylinder in-line engine and a three-speed manual transmission. The odometer reads 25,501 miles. The Chrysler has coachwork by LeBaron, leather interior and upholstered seats.

The car was donated to the museum in December 1959 by Harry Gilbert of Huntington, NY. (In that same year, Gilbert also gave the Vanderbilt the 1909 Reo Gentleman's Roadster, which was restored recently and is now on display at the museum.) The Chrysler, which was on display at the Vanderbilt for an undetermined number of years, was later transported to the Long Island Automotive Museum in Southampton, where it remained until June 1992, when it was returned to the Vanderbilt.

The Board of Trustees voted on November 15, 1992, to deaccession the Chrysler from the museum collection since it was neither original property of the Vanderbilt family, nor relevant to the

museum's holdings. In April 1994, after nearly two years at the Vanderbilt Museum, the car was transferred to a Suffolk County garage, where it remained until 2006. The car was then moved back to the museum and has been stored since in a garage on the estate grounds. The condition of the car, which has most of its original parts, has deteriorated because of a lack of environmental control in its various storage environments.

In early 2011, Brandt Rosenbusch, curator at the Chrysler Museum in Detroit, verified that this is the one-of-a-kind automobile built for Bernice Chrysler Garbisch and provided the Vanderbilt with images of the newly fabricated automobile from his museum archives.

The Chrysler has attracted renewed interest and was featured in the July 2011 issue of Hemmings Classic Car magazine in an article by Water Gosden entitled "Custom Chryslers." Gosden is a renowned automobile historian, coachwork expert and widely published author on classic automobiles.