

Bricklin is best auto ever built according to developer

By The PHANTOM PHOTOG

"Sometimes being a mouse makes it happen." With this comment Malcolm Bricklin, of Bricklin Canada, began a lecture and followed by a question period which lasted for two hours and 15 minutes Wednesday night. He jumped right into a general story covering the Bricklin from start to now.

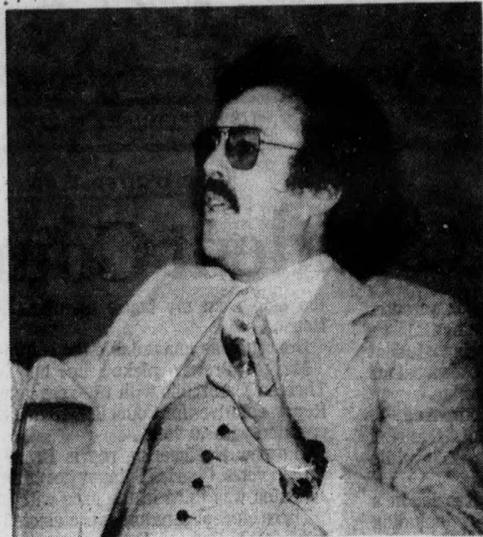
About four years ago Mr. Bricklin was an importer in the U.S. for Subaru. The manufacturer of Subaru Fuji became concerned about changes in the U.S. car market such as safety and other requirements. Then Mr. Bricklin thought why not start from scratch and make a very safe and pretty car. He noticed how displays of experimental models always drew crowds, such as the Corvette and the 240Z. He thought, why not the standard Chevrolet. He concluded that the standard Chev', for example, was to box like in design. Therefore, he decided to build one safe car.

With this in mind he approached Checker, the fifth largest car manufacturer. To start, he hired Bruce Meyers, the famed dune buggy designer. Meyers thus resigned his dune buggy work and devoted his time to the Bricklin. Mr. Bricklin wanted something that looked like a Lamborghini or Ferrari, possibly something in the line of a \$2900, 4-cylinder, sporty model similar to the Mustang II. For several days Meyers tried to come up with a design; however,

all he produced was something that looked like a 240Z. Mr. Bricklin gave him a few days to create something else or he was finished. Mr. Bricklin didn't say what happened except that the car was not designed by Meyers. Mr. Bricklin then hired a man named Marshall and he checked with Chrysler Company. Chrysler told him that he needed a full scale clay model accurate to .0002 of an inch. This model was built, weighing 4000 pounds and taking 10,000 man hours to build, with the hiring of Herb Bress from Ford. The next step was a plastic mold. A problem with plaster is that it shrinks, making maintaining a .0002 inch tolerance difficult. However, the

plaster does not shrink appreciably for the first 24 hours. The mold was made and then stored on computer tape before appreciable shrinkage. In addition to this was a problem of shrink free tools. Still a further problem in this line was that acrylic, of which the cars body is made, shrinks. Therefore, this shrinkage was calculated by computer and a wooden mold made that much larger. This acrylic body is reinforced with epoxy and fiber glass.

Next Bricklin hired, from the big three auto makers, several of the best in safety, etc. and a prototype was built which, according to Mr. Bricklin, worked fine. Mr. Bricklin stated that the car was financed largely by himself and banks. He said that his car was one with many options such as air



Malcolm Bricklin

conditioning and tilt steering wheels. At this time, in an effort to correct money problems, he established contact with St. Bruno, the manufacturers of Renault, and Frank Reece. Reece told him to forget Checker, saying that they couldn't handle it, and to go to St. Bruno. By this time the car was beginning to stir some excitement and Mr. Bricklin was sent to GIC (the General Investment Company of Quebec). The government said that it wanted some control and Mr. Bricklin, believing this to be wrong, said no.

He decided that he had to go to the U.S. at which time he was introduced to Multiplex, a New Brunswick investment company. Mr. Bricklin had never heard of

New Brunswick. He was then introduced to DREE and went to Ottawa. In Ottawa he was told that though they liked his project he couldn't have the grant. He was then sent to Premier Hatfield. Through Hatfield, New Brunswick gave him a loan. Though most of the money came from Hatfield, the First Pennsylvania Bank gave him three million dollars and the Bank of Montreal gave him \$300,000. He said that not much of the money came from Canadian banks. The debt is now close to \$30 million. When asked about leaving New Brunswick Mr. Bricklin said, "How the hell am I going to move it." He said that there are 500 workers, 490 of them Canadians. Five of the ten non-Canadians will be replaced in 6 months. Adding that he turned down a one million dollar offer Mr. Bricklin said, "As long as I have any control over this company at all, and I plan on keeping it for a long time, I'm staying here."

He pointed out several pluses for the province - fame, the fact that he plans to eventually employ 10,000 people, and the fact that Bricklin Canada is doing major work in acrylic technology. Both Japan and General Motors are studying Bricklin with interests in acrylics.

Bricklin complained about bad press concerning labour problems, etc. He said that this has caused trouble with hiring people, obtaining supplies, and financing. He said that the press has the right to spout off, but not daily. He added, though, that things are straightening out.

According to Bricklin in the last couple of months there has been an unlimited supply of dealers. He said that it was not that way at first. He "had to fight" for dealers.

Bricklin Canada has had 4000 applications for dealerships in the U.S. to date. Mr. Bricklin added that due to government regulations, it is easier to obtain dealerships in the U.S. than in Canada. He said there will be three or four dealers in New Brunswick. What Mr. Bricklin looks for in a dealer is adequate facilities, adequate mechanics, and a large inventory.

The engine was originally American Motors but a 351 cubic inch Ford is used now. Bricklin didn't want to switch. However, American Motors did not know if they could handle the supply requirement. The transmission is also Ford while the car has the same rear end as American Motors cars and a modified American Motors front independent suspension.

Bricklin expects to be making a big profit by the end of May. He believes this will be due to the fact that it is not only one of the best looking cars and it has many safety factors which are not required and which others did not think of using, but also the fact that it is not "a piece of shit that you have to take back" to the dealer "every week."

For people wanting a Bricklin, Bricklin said that they would just have to wait. He wants to wait until he has an inventory of 1000 cars. He expressed a desire to increase production, though not at the cost of quality. He also wants to keep a waiting list in existence, one making it possible to sell his cars at \$13,000-\$15,000.

When asked why he opened a plant in Arizona, Bricklin replied that the weather was beautiful. The company also bought a race track in Arizona, which gave it 20 percent ownership to the USAC (United States Automobile Club). The Bricklin was used for the pace car at the last USAC race. Paul Newman and Bobby Unser like the car and wanted to race it around the country. Though Bricklin does not plan to enter racing, he maintains that racing is a good way to learn about safety.

Mr. Bricklin feels that service is very important. Some problems that have occurred with the car are breaking windows due to the cold, leaks in the firewall (dumb, dumb plugs left out), radios not connected, air conditioners not connected. Bricklin believes in fixing problems fast to make good customers. He does not see any change in style. He is confident that the car is of a good design with lasting aesthetic value.

When asked if the oil shortage will affect Bricklin Canada's supply of acrylic Mr. Bricklin pointed out that industry is desirous of the advancement of technology in acrylics. He foresees no parts problems.

When asked about the degree of Ford and General Motors ownership in the company, Bricklin

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