

## VIXEN OWNERS ASSOCIATION

c/o Ferdic, Inc.  
P.O. Box 848  
Morgantown, WV 26507-0848  
(304) 291-6691 -- FAX: (304) 291-6698



### FROM NEAR ASHES, VIXEN RISES

The unexpected closure of the Vixen Motor Company in February and the auction of its tangible assets June 27-28 is opening a new and promising era for owners.

Not only will special-order parts continue to be available through the Vixen Owners Association and other sources, but technical know-how will continue to be developed and to proliferate as never before.

The designer and former president/CEO of Vixen, William T. Collins, has promised us generous and continuing technical advice and other help.

We are also aware of possible efforts by unidentified parties (believed to include Japanese auto interests) who were at the Vixen auction and purchased options on all Vixen design plans and start-up toolings.

*Therefore, hang on to your Vixens and drive them openly every chance you get, to enhance interest in them. They are likely to become valuable "niche" vehicles like the GMC motorhomes that appreciated in value until many are worth more today than when they were built in 1976.*

To stay in touch with all the new and exciting developments, join the Vixen Owners Association immediately. The first issue of our monthly newsletter, **VIXENEWS**, will be mailed to members only in mid-July. **VIXENEWS** will contain Vixen designer Bill Collins' practical monthly column, "Designer Notes," an interview with him, parts availability news, the story of the Vixen closing, rally and repair information, problem-solvers, letters to Vixen, and member news.

Pending establishment, inaugural memberships will cost \$45 to cover newsletter costs to Active members. To get started, please mail the coupon and your subscription payment today.

### VIXENEWS

**In Florida, Bob and Skip do a terrific job on Vixens**  
If you're anywhere near Noxomil, Florida (that's just outside Venice on the northern Gulf coast) and need work on your Vixen, the best place to go is Bob's Auto Parts (904-484-2612). Bob and Skip are real Vixen aficionados, and even keep a Vixen wreck out the back that was written off after a mysterious engine fire burned out the hood while the former owner was driving along the interstate.

Skip has one neat special: He removes the gear selector cable from the front to the rear transfer eliminating bind and making gear-changes as smooth as butter.

That's a \$150 job, plus cable (around \$150 when we had him done). Another special: Skip's working on a special switch that will automatically cause the alternator and the shore-line inverter switch to charge whichever battery is still low. As Vixens were manufactured, the charging stops whenever any battery is fully charged.

**Where to get Webasto heater replacements and parts**  
Diesel-powered Vixens have hard-to-service Webasto heaters. Owners may contact Webasto USA directly at 1455 East Lincoln, Madison Heights, MI 48071 (313-545-0700). Part manager is Tim Thomas.

**State of Michigan played a sorry role in Vixen auction**  
In an effort to gain permanent access to a reliable nationwide supply of Vixen parts and service, the Vixen Owners Association in June petitioned the Michigan Attorney-General to in-

**WHERE TO GET ALIGNMENTS?**  
Vixens aren't fit in most wheel alignment shops. They will, however, in Vixen parts and service shops. Vixen parts and service shops are located in the following states: Alabama, Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and Wyoming.

Our previous documents, dated June 18, 1989, was addressed to the Office of the Attorney General, 525 West Ottawa, Law Building, 7th Floor, Lansing, MI 48913, and read as follows:

The undersigned citizens of the United States, acting for himself and for all others similarly situated, states as follows:

(1) That he is the owner of a Vixen 21 Motor Home manufactured by the Vixen Motor Company at 1 Silverdome Industrial Park, Pontiac, Michigan, between December 1985 and March 1989.

(2) That to the best of his knowledge the Motor Vixens and other vehicles manufactured by the Vixen Motor Company were built and marketed throughout the United States between December 1985 and March 1989 with funds advanced, lent, or otherwise provided by the State of Michigan, together with other funds.

(3) That the Vixen Motor Company ceased business and closed its doors without notice to the Petitioner or to all others similarly situated on or about March 1989, and we have been unable to repair or service our vehicles since March 1989.

(4) That the Vixen Motor Company, its creditors and successors, and other responsible agents temporarily in charge of its assets and

# VIXEN NEWS

The official newsletter of the Vixen Owners Association. Copyright ©1989 Ferdic Inc.,  
P.O. Box 848, Morgantown, WV 26507-0848. Tel. 304-291-6690 JULY-AUGUST, 1989



## WE'RE ON OUR WAY!

The first organizational meeting of the Vixen Owners Association was held in Alexandria, Va., on Saturday, July 8, and it was agreed to put the following concepts to all Vixen owners by this mailing, prior to a final organizational meeting in the next few weeks, at a place and time to be decided and notified to members:

1. Initial membership in the Association costs \$45 and includes only *volunteer* services and the monthly newsletter, *VIXEN NEWS*, which will consist of a combined, 8-page July-August issue with content as described in the previous announcement. *VIXEN NEWS* then will consist of monthly four-page issues. Want ads and sale items will be featured at \$60 per column inch (five printed lines), otherwise the newsletter will concentrate mainly on parts directories and availability listings, qualified service center locations, technical information on repairs, modifications and special applications, and rally news. Telephone numbers of members with special expertise and who are willing to help other members will be regularly published.

2. For a preview of just one of the stories from our first issue, see overleaf.

3. We seek owner/member input on an expanded service category of membership, thought likely to cost about \$200-300 a year depending on total enrollments (the more joiners, the lower the fee). This would entitle such

members and their garage mechanics to telephone consultations with former Vixen service chief Mike Cameron (he has agreed to provide us 20 hours dedicated consultation per week for a retainer yet to be negotiated), individualized help with special applications, and access to special-order Vixen parts acquired/ manufactured for and stocked by the Vixen Owners Association (e.g., Valeo clutches, replacement brake and gear selector cables, transaxle drive input shafts, windshields). In addition, this class of membership will provide on-demand referral to parts sources/service and repairs.

4. The last 70 Vixen Valeo clutch sets in the world are now available through the Owners Association for \$600 each (pressure plates and disks, minus throw-out bearings which are directly obtainable from Valeo). We also have direct access to windshields at \$500 a side. We recommend that pending Association efforts to find custom manufacturers for such rare items (a process that could take at least six months, and possibly 12), members should purchase to hold in reserve in their own garages one each of these items. **Orders are being accepted NOW, by certified check only.**

5. Owners who have already paid their \$45 basic dues are urged to complete only the right side of the coupon below. All others are asked to complete both sides.

### VIXEN OWNERS ASSOCIATION

P.O. Box 848

Morgantown, WV 26507-0848

Please enroll me in the all-volunteer Association for one year. I enclose \$45 annual dues, which includes my subscription to the monthly *VIXEN NEWS*

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

VIXEN VIN (from dash, left side - *VERY IMPORTANT*):

# \_\_\_\_\_

### EXPANDED SERVICES MEMBERSHIP

(*NOT a solicitation - please do not send money*)

I would/would not (strike one) be willing to pay up to \$\_\_\_\_\_ for membership in an Expanded Services category as described above, providing consultations with Mike Cameron, access to low-cost parts from a special Vixen Buying Group, and other daily and emergency services.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

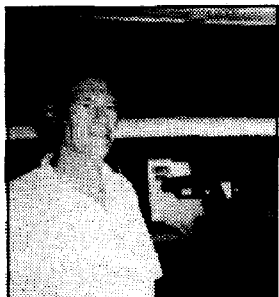
CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

☐ \$600 certified check enclosed for Valeo clutch set ☐ \$500 enclosed for each LEFT/RIGHT windshield



<b>In this issue:</b>	
<b>Designer Notes, by Bill Collins .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Vixen auction left vehicle owners in cold .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Vixen service notes from Bill Collins .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Parts available (Classifieds) .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Mike Cameron willing to be our consultant ....</b>	<b>8</b>

It was more than nine years ago that William Collins scratched out his idea of a retirement home for himself and his wife, Nina. As direc-



# designer notes

with Bill Collins

It seems appropriate to start this column with the very basics... the inspiration for what would become in time the VIXEN 21.

1) We had enjoyed a very pleasant, two week vacation in 1973 in a 26 ft. GMC Motorhome. This trip, with our three teenagers, took us through Yellowstone and Aspen and hooked us on this mode of traveling.

2) I have always wanted a boat large enough for cruising but my dear wife, Nina, gets deathly sea sick.

3) After five years of helping to put the DeLorean sports car enterprise together, being Director of Product Planning at AMC lacked the challenge and freedom I had enjoyed with John DeLorean.

On the Fourth of July weekend, 1980, the beginning of the VIXEN 21 popped into my head and the first sketch was made of a rear engine, garageable motorhome, featuring 30 MPG and a \$40,000 price.

The rear engine configuration was chosen as the only way to keep the height low enough to fit in a garage... one of my important parameters. My colleagues at AMC would have thought that I was crazy. Many evenings when I had a front wheel drive Renault R-30 or R-18 home for appraisal, I could be seen sitting on the hood with a measuring tape trying to determine how high a motorhome might be with FWD. The same configuration as the old GMC...one of my favorites.

FWD just wasn't going to make it, so I opted for the use of a FWD power train, but placed in the rear under a permanent double bed. The VIXEN 21 TD & XC transaxle is a Renault UN-1 unit similar to that used in the R-30 but with the ring gear on the opposite side of the pinion so that the engine is to the rear for better servicing of the engine driven accessories.

Renault promised a new automatic transmission, that would fit in the same spot as the manual 5 speed, but unfortunately it never happened.

tor of product planning for American Motors Corp., after stints with General Motors Corp. and De Lorean Motor Co., it was only natural that his retirement would be on wheels.

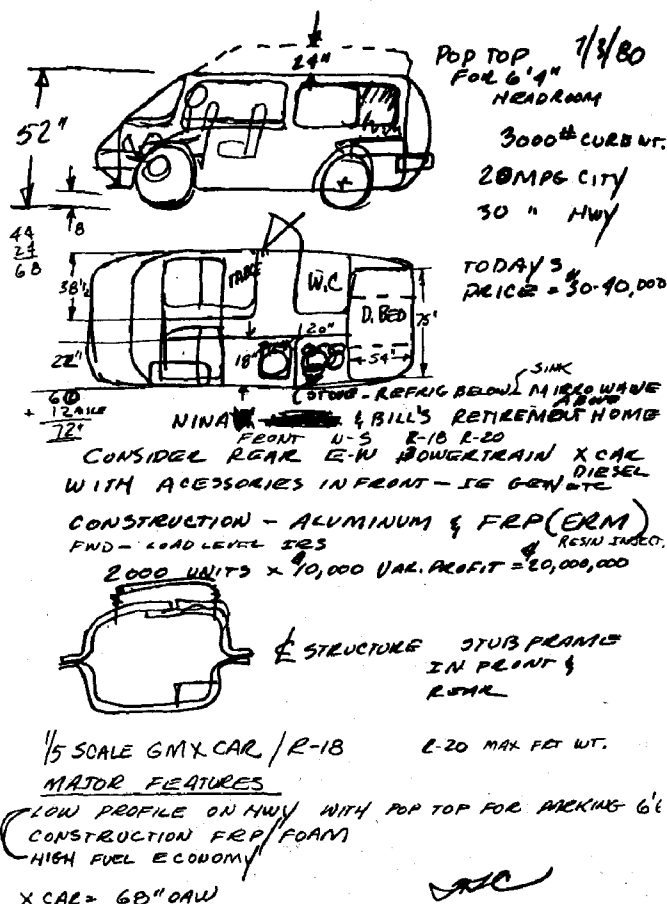
But retirement was still years away, and Collins was looking for a vehicle, so to speak, to take him there. He enlisted the help of Robert Dewey, another auto industry executive, and the idea of a fuel-efficient, less expensive motor home was born.

## the right time ...

It was the right time. Gas prices were expected to sky-rocket, and the Vixen would become a vehicle for first-time motor home buyers concerned about their travel budget. The founders enlisted the financial support of the state and Detroit police and fire pension funds, and the city of Pontiac agreed to be the company's home.

When it was over, the three together would have invested more than \$35 million in the company. Pontiac was hurting because of the recession and its profound effect on the auto

Bill Collins' first rough sketch of the Vixen: July 3, 1980



industry, and Vixen's market studies looked good to all who viewed them. In September 1982, company officials said Vixen would employ 200 people when production got under way two years later.

They would hire up to 400 workers within two years, and the first year's production in the new Silverdome Industrial Park would be 1,000 units.

In two years of official production, which didn't start until 1986, 574 vehicles were built, of which about a third were recalled for a safety-related defect.

Even before one Vixen was built, city officials expanded the size of the plant by 25,000 square feet to 135,000 square feet because the market studies looked so good.

*Right from the start, it appeared money was no object with this idea.*

"There were several phases in company history that had problems," Collins said last week in his Vixen, parked outside the shuttered plant. "We believed all the (independent) marketing studies that showed we'd be at the break-even mark with 1,500 units. And we were spending money like that's what we were going to sell. It should have been 250 units a year."

#### quality problems ...

By 1986, with gasoline selling for less than a \$1 a gallon, fuel economy was relatively unimportant, Collins admitted. And happy campers were not interested in shifting the five-speed manual transmission. And the company was overstaffed. And the quality wasn't up to his standards.

"I don't know what we could have done differently," said Paul Carleton, a Pontiac economic development official who witnessed the birth and death of Vixen, as well as the rise of two industrial parks made possible by federal grants to aid the company's start.

"They started with a good premise, but things went wrong that were largely beyond their con-



*Vixen designer Bill Collins outside the auction-gutted Vixen plant at 1 Silverdome Industrial Park, Pontiac. His personal Vixen is white, with a startling black and red stripe trim. Oakland Press picture.*

trol. Nobody expected gas prices to do what they did. We got blindsided."

The company won two prestigious design awards, but by November 1986, Vixen had reached its peak of 145 workers. Already, layoffs were occurring for short periods as a result of production problems. The original Vixen 21 sold for \$34,900 and 150 were sold in the company's first fiscal year of production.

#### embarrassed ...

Besides not measuring up to sales forecasts, Vixen was further embarrassed when one of its vehicles broke down during the 1986 "One Lap of America" cross-country auto race. "The Vixen was not a motor home. It was for going to football games or cross-country travel, staying in a motel at night."

*To meet that kind of demand, an XC model was designed, described by company officials as a "land-bound corporate aircraft."*

By mid-1987, just 52 dealers in 28 states had signed on, making it a double adventure for travelers who might not be able to locate parts or service in the event of a breakdown.

In August 1987, the plant closed for slow sales and the vehicle was redesigned. The newly designed vehicle, the Spirit Edition, along with its more modest business plan and change in management — Collins retired as chairman but stayed on as a director — convinced Detroit

and state officials to invest another \$2.5 million, on top of the \$28 million they already had spent on behalf of the company.

#### new management ...

"We felt it would be easier to get the loan if there was new management," Collins said. The investors attached stringent production guidelines to the money, including the provision that Vixen's 247 suppliers accept a debt-to-stock conversion. Many were reluctant, but gambled the company was putting on a new face.

"At the onset, everything was peachy," said Jackie Graham, president of Al-Craft Industries Inc., of Troy, which supplied latch mechanisms and television brackets. "In the latter stages, they were not as prompt (with payments) and it became quite evident they weren't going to make it." Her company lost \$31,000 of the \$100,000 in parts delivered to Vixen.

The new design proved fatal. The vehicle cost from \$46,000 to \$54,000, putting it in the price range of larger mobile homes. In addition, it no longer fit in most standard garages and fuel economy was lower. The company further restricted its market.

#### deep pockets ...

Although employment reached 88 workers in the second round, company officials were secretly looking for a deep-pockets company with which to merge. Production ceased for good in December so officials could work full-time at saving the company, and the skeleton crew was laid off. Concerned about the possibility of liability and warranty problems, potential buyers were scared away. Finally, the investors had had enough. McTevia was brought in to deal the company, and failing that, its assets.

*"We wanted to keep the burn rate to a minimum," state Treasurer Robert Bowman said last week.*

"The guidelines were admittedly stringent, but when they did not meet them..." Detroit pension officials declined comment. A Troy-based investment firm signed a letter of intent earlier this year, but later backed out for lack of financing. And after the liquidation auction was set, an eleventh-hour bid from Collins and a Beverly Hills, Calif., businessman was rejected

by the investors. Now that the dust has cleared, the only winners were the liquidation companies that feasted on Vixen's remains, gobbling up leftover parts for future sale at inflated prices. And, possibly the city of Pontiac, which has a modern factory and two industrial parks, but plenty of vacant space.

Everyone else, including suppliers owed more than \$2 million, lost. "Start ups are the toughest business in town," Bowman said. "Everyone feels Vixen is one of the greatest 'could-a-beens.' Who knows, maybe it will some day." In the meantime, Collins likens himself to Preston Tucker, the man of automobile infamy. "He said, 'I told them I'd build 50 vehicles and I did.' Well, I did too. It's something that will stick with me the rest of my life. But life goes on."

### **Vixen Motor auction sale left vehicle owners in cold**

*By Scott Simons, Oakland Business Writer*

When the remaining parts, tools and equipment of Vixen Motor Co. went on the auction block two weeks ago, not one Vixen owner was notified. Yet the nearly 600 people who bought the ill-fated recreational vehicle have nearly as much to lose as the many suppliers and investors who received just cents on each dollar they invested.

Vixen owners got a taste of the company's desperate situation during the last few months when calling the company to locate parts for repairs. With the company's plant in Pontiac at a stand-still, they were told to wait. But the company went out of business when it could not find anyone to take over the reins, and owners now are measuring the risks of holding on to their vehicles — hoping they can find parts and service — or selling them at a loss.

*The liquidation auction proved to be a buyer's dream. Pieces of the company were picked up at a fraction of their worth.*

And some companies took advantage of the situation by buying plenty, in the hope of instantly increasing prices for the parts. Jim Dickinson, a Vixen owner in Morgantown, W.Va.,

## The hot, hot tale of one TD's A/C condenser fan

It was, naturally, one of those typical 92-degree, 98% humidity Washington summer days when our TD's dash air conditioning decided to quit. With no friendly Vixen dealers in the area any more, and no way to get quick relief, other than retreat to the cool seduction of a shopping mall, we were miserable. But we Vixen owners are built of tougher stuff, so I began the process of elimination.

The dash ducts were blowing hot air when parked, the silver cylinder in the front compartment was warm, and the compressor clutch was clicking on and off rhythmically in the rear, and the condenser fan beside it was stationary. Previous adventures (when there had been a couple of freon leaks in the lines) had taught me that low freon levels will stop the compressor — maybe it would also stop the condenser fan? But the system, I found, was fully charged.

Back to Square 1: the 30-amp fuse that really controls the condenser fan. I took it out and pried off the yellow (hot) lead at the top tab, and briefly touched the bottom (hot) tab. There was no spark. So the hot lead was cold! That could mean a couple of things, including a broken ground connection between the fan and the chassis (very feasible, since unfamiliar mechanics had a few days before replaced the transaxle, and might have been careless with the wires and cables), or a burned out fan motor (which my neighborhood, non-Vixen, auto mechanic was speculating when I called him on the phone).

A quick phone call to Vixen consultant Mike Cameron, however, found him skeptical about this theory; he had only even seen two bad condenser fan motors; it was more likely a broken ground or a faulty relay switch, Mike thought. I decided to check out the fan motor first, and used a screwdriver to pry off the single plastic side clamp holding the connecting plug for the two-wire lead to the fan motor (it's hidden on the left side of the fan motor housing, inside the vented cover under the left tail-light).

*Application of a cheap electric tester with the motor running and the air conditioning on at the dash showed no juice.*

Back to the wiring itself. Above No. 5 fuse in the rear fuse panel, to the right, are two relay switches. The bottom one controls the condenser fan's thermostat mechanism. Making sure the engine and the A/C were both off, I unplugged the switch from its wire harness, and ran a lead with two alligator clamps between the fuse side of the harness and its counterpart on the relay switch. Then I used my tester with the system on max and the engine running again — it was live on the fuse side, but testing the other switch terminal showed it to be dead on the fan side. So with the engine and A/C off again, I hot-wired the harness with a short piece of insulated 10-gauge wire from the fuse side to the fan side, thereby completely bypassing the relay; turning on the air again, I was delighted to see the fan blowing merrily away again!

Since it was now 5:00 PM on a Saturday, and my local auto parts stores said this relay switch was a GM dealer-only part (Part No. 463468) I had to wait till Monday to complete the repair. At least, by hot-wiring it, I cheated some mechanic of an expensive, lucrative fan replacement job on his way to finding the relay switch problem!



learned of the auction when he called the plant about where to locate a part.

**terms withheld ...**

He was able to attend the sale, along with a handful of other owners, but because he had difficulty learning the terms of the sale, was not able to bid on items. "Clutches were selling for \$30. We're used to paying \$200, but now the asking price is \$600," Dickinson complained. "This is being repeated across the board." Clutches are especially important to owners of the original Vixen, which featured a five-speed manual transmission.

Nathan Barrett, a technician for Action Oldsmobile Inc. of Livonia, a former Vixen dealer, confirmed the report. Barrett wouldn't name the New Jersey supplier he dealt with, but said the charge was \$300, but only if he resold it for \$500. He accepted the terms. Barrett said he was able to procure air conditioning hoses, power steering lines and shift cables at the auction, enough parts to warrant a semi-trailer to haul them from the plant.

*The haul was worth \$250,000. Barrett and his boss, former Vixen Chairman Robert Gil-  
low, paid only \$400 for it.\**

Don Solomon of Ben's Truck Parts of Toledo, Ohio, a company liquidator, spent a reported \$149,000 at the auction, but he declined comment on his plans for the purchase. "What we're trying to do now is get a copy of the bidder's list," Dickinson said. "The whole thing is laughable, it's outrageous. My estimate is that they could have brought in \$3 million at the auction if the owners were notified."

**a mere \$565,000 ...**

Instead, the assets generated a mere \$565,000, including \$33,000 the city of Pontiac paid for large air compressors and portable offices. Dickinson now is forming the Vixen Owners Association to help others find parts and technical expertise to keep their vehicles rolling.

Vixen designer and founder William Collins has agreed to help the association, and already has put Dickinson in touch with the French clutch supplier, which has agreed to a special

\* EDITOR'S NOTE: Bill Collins told us since this was published in Pontiac that he thinks the \$250,000 estimate is vastly overstated.

## **FINDING THOSE PARTS!**

July 14, 1989

Doug Camittia, Pepper, Hamilton and Scheetz,  
100 Renaissance Center, 36th Floor Detroit, MI  
48243

Dear Mr. Camittia:

The Vixen Owners Association is grateful to have your clients' agreement to disclose the identities of successful bidders at the Vixen auction, with respect to lots in which we had a vital interest, but were not enabled to bid either individually or collectively. Many of our members are, frankly, desperate for essential parts, and the Association wishes to immediately locate whatever parts remain, and to place special orders for new manufacture of parts that are no longer in existence.

Accordingly, we are anxious to know the successful bidders on the following lots:

Sub-bulk #1 (insofar as parts specifications and designs are concerned, to enable new manufacture to our order).

Lots 1210 thru 1260, 1323 thru 1335, 1728 and 1729, 1790 thru 1792, 1796 thru 1802, 1805 and 1806, 1868, 1897 thru 1905, 1974 thru 2051, 2090 thru 2093, 2117 thru 2120, 2126 thru 2128, 2136, 2138, 2143 thru 2150, 2163 thru 2168, 2173, 2209 thru 2534, 2625 thru 2649, 2728 thru 3092, 3232 thru 3245, 3353 thru 3379, 3385, 3387 thru 3394, 3403 thru 3410.

I realize that it may take a little time to get these together for us, but in view of the fact that our members were not even invited to the auction, and their needs have in many cases been both desperate and on hold since last February, we trust you will be able to respond expeditiously.

Sincerely,

James G. Dickinson, President Pro Tem,  
VIXEN OWNERS ASSOCIATION

cc: All Members

run if the association can put together a 100-piece order. "These people are passionately in love with the vehicle," Dickinson said. "They've stayed with them, and now, having come this far, don't want to give them up. It's a space-age type vehicle. It's very attractive, but it arrived before its time."

## **State of Michigan played a sorry role in Vixen auction**

In an effort to gain permanent access to a reliable nationwide supply of Vixen parts and service, the Vixen Owners Association in June petitioned the Michigan Attorney-General to in-



tervene in a creditors' auction of the Vixen Motor Company's assets. Our petition document, dated June 18, 1989, was addressed to the Office of the Attorney General, 525 West Ottawa, Law Building, 7th Floor, Lansing, MI 48913, and read as follows:

The undersigned citizen of the United States, acting for himself and for all others similarly situated, states as follows:

(1) That he is the owner of a Vixen 21 Motor Home manufactured by the Vixen Motor Company at 1 Silverdome Industrial Park, Pontiac, Michigan, between December 1985 and March 1989;

(2) That to the best of his knowledge the Motor Homes and other vehicles manufactured by the Vixen Motor Company were built and marketed throughout the United States between December 1985 and March 1989 with funds advanced, lent, or otherwise provided by the State of Michigan, together with other funds.

(3) That the Vixen Motor Company ceased business and closed its doors without notice to the Petitioner or to all others similarly situated on or about March 1989, and we have been unable to repair or service our vehicles since March 1989.

(4) That the Vixen Motor Company, its creditors and successors, and other responsible agents temporarily in charge of its assets and liabilities have refused to sell or provide when asked or demanded any parts or information regarding access to and installation of parts (to wit, technical mechanical service manuals and mechanical data), for Vixen Motor Homes to the undersigned Petitioner, such parts being essential to the continued operation and use of inoperative Vixen Motor Homes throughout the United States.

(5) That to the best knowledge of the undersigned Petitioner, the assets and liabilities of the Vixen Motor Company, including Vixen parts and documents containing information about Vixen parts (to wit, technical mechanical service manuals and mechanical data), are to be auctioned by persons unknown to other persons unknown at the premises of the Vixen Motor Company at 1 Silverdome Industrial Park, Pontiac, Michigan, on June 27 and June 28.

Therefore, the undersigned citizen petitions the Attorney General to intervene in the said auction for the purpose of securing our rights to parts and to all information about the access to and the installation of parts (to wit, technical mechanical service manuals and lists of original suppliers of parts) to Vixen motor homes.

The undersigned citizen further petitions the attorney general to secure for the owners of all Vixen motor vehicles a complete list of all authorized Vixen distributors and service centers throughout the United States, so that all owners may have access to repairs wherever they may travel with their vehicles (such access having been denied to them heretofore).

## WHERE TO GET ALIGNMENTS?

Vixens won't fit in most wheel alignment service bays. They will, however, fit in truck bays, and Goodyear truck service centers are usually worth checking out. In the D.C. area, we recommend Donald Rice Goodyear at 909 East Street, Frederick (301-393-5895). Ask for John.

Members with other recommendations are invited to share them by dropping us a line or calling Jim Dickinson at 304-291-6690.

The undersigned citizen further petitions the Attorney General to obtain and provide as complete a list as may exist of all Vixen owners, their names and their addresses, so that the undersigned may communicate with them and inform them of their rights and continued access to parts and service.

(signed)

James G. Dickinson, Vixen Owners Association

The petition has not been answered.

## Vixen service notes from Bill Collins — all models

### SE Owners:

Early SE's were built with the oil cooler hanging down below the engine. In this location it can be damaged by stones and other road debris, resulting in a complete loss of engine oil and engine failure. The cooler should be relocated above the right rear wheel house or other cooler area up higher.

If engine and engine compartment temperatures are a problem in city traffic or at idle, it is suggested that cooling blowers be installed to suck cool air from outside and, directed with a duct, to blow on the exhaust manifolds. High-volume, marine, engine compartment ventilating blowers can be tried. Ideally, these would operate from a thermostatic switch at 150-200° F, or with a manual switch.

### TD and XC Owners:

Vehicles subject to overloading and very rough useage may develop cracks in the rear suspension upper crossmember where it joins the rear frame side rails. A kit is being developed to provide a top and bottom 1/4" plate with 2 long bolts to straddle, on a 45° angle, the crossmember and side rail.

Until this is developed and tooled, this area should be carefully inspected and rough operation avoided. It can be welded but it is a dif-

# CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS

Rate for ads is \$60 per column inch (5 lines), payable in advance. Write Ferdic Inc., P.O. Box 848, Morgantown, WV 26507-0848.

## VIXEN PARTS

I purchased the entire inventory of Vixen body parts at the Vixen Auction. Plus thousands of miscellaneous Vixen parts. They're available to Vixen owners at or below Vixen dealer costs.

### BODY PARTS

- All Models
- All new original fiberglass panels
- New aluminum wheels
- New bumpers
- Raised roofs
- 1/4 and 1/2 body sections

### ELECTRICAL PARTS

- Complete dash or parts
- New Diesel brains (carry a spare)
- Wiring harness
- Cruise control module

### MISCELLANEOUS ENGINE PARTS

- 1 COMPLETE NEW DIESEL CHASSIS
- COMPLETE NEW BODY KITS
- MISCELLANEOUS TRIM PARTS — HANDLES-LATCHES
- LOTS MORE — CALL OR WRITE:

**BLANCHARD COMPANY**

**2944 WATERVIEW DRIVE**

**ROCHESTER HILLS, MI 48309**

**(313) 853-9790**

**VIXEN TD FOR SALE, 1986. Excellent condition.** Driven only 9,500 miles. Write Dean P. Fowler, P.O. Box 573, 20 Mulholland Drive, Ipswich, MA 01938. Phone (508) 356-2041.

**VIXEN PARTS. Renault transaxles \$800. BMW engines. Truckload of Vixen glass — front, side and back windows. Interior parts. Control panels (over counter). Idler pulleys and assorted items. Tobey's Auto, Howell, MI (517) 546-8858.**

**2 VIXEN TD's FOR SALE. Brand-new 86 models with diesel, raised roofs. One has 400 miles, other 2,000. Tom Harrigan Olds-Nissan, Dayton, Ohio. (513) 854-4000.**

**VIXEN SERVICE. High-top conversion of TD's a specialty. Expert mechanic, 3 years with Vixen Motor Co. Pontiac, MI. Ask for Joe Madison, Fred Boyd's RV Travel Center, North Charleston, SC (803) 552-2066.**

**VALEO CLUTCH SETS \$600. Windshields \$500 a side. Buyers agent: Vixen Assn (304) 291-6690.**

difficult area and could result in damage to lines, hoses or wiring. It is the intention of the Vixen Owners Association to make these parts available, with instructions, at a nominal cost as soon as possible.

## The hot, hot tale of one TD's A/C condenser fan

It was, naturally, one of those typical 92-degree, 98% humidity Washington summer days when our TD's dash air conditioning decided to quit. With no friendly Vixen dealers in the area any more, and no way to get quick relief, other than retreat to the cool seduction of a shopping mall, we were miserable. But we Vixen owners are built of tougher stuff, so I began the process of elimination.

The dash ducts were blowing hot air when parked, the silver cylinder in the front compartment was warm, and the compressor clutch was clicking on and off rhythmically in the rear, and the condenser fan beside it was stationary. Pre-

vious adventures (when there had been a couple of freon leaks in the lines) had taught me that low freon levels will stop the compressor — maybe it would also stop the condenser fan? But the system, I found, was fully charged.

Back to Square 1: the 30-amp fuse that really controls the condenser fan. I took it out and pried off the yellow (hot) lead at the top tab, and briefly touched the bottom (hot) tab. There was no spark. So the hot lead was cold! That could mean a couple of things, including a broken ground connection between the fan and the chassis (very feasible, since unfamiliar mechanics had a few days before replaced the transaxle, and might have been careless with the wires and cables), or a burned out fan motor (which my neighborhood, non-Vixen, auto mechanic was speculating when I called him on the phone).

A quick phone call to Vixen consultant Mike Cameron, however, found him skeptical about this theory; he had only ever seen two bad condenser fan motors; it was more likely a broken

ground or a faulty relay switch, Mike thought. I decided to check out the fan motor first, and used a screwdriver to pry off the single plastic side clamp holding the connecting plug for the two-wire lead to the fan motor (it's hidden on the left side of the fan motor housing, inside the vented cover under the left tail-light).

Application of a cheap electric tester with the motor running and the air conditioning on at the dash showed no juice.

#### the relay switch ...

Back to the wiring itself. Above No. 5 fuse in the rear fuse panel, to the right, are two relay switches. The bottom one controls the condenser fan's thermostat mechanism. Making sure the engine and the A/C were both off, I unplugged the switch from its wire harness, and ran a lead with two alligator clamps between the fuse side of the harness and its counterpart on the relay switch. Then I used my tester with the system on max and the engine running again — it was live on the fuse side, dead on the fan side. So with the engine and A/C off again, I hot-wired the harness with a short piece of insulated 10-gauge wire from the fuse side to the fan side, thereby completely bypassing the relay; turning on the air again, I was delighted to see the fan blowing merrily away!

Since it was now 5:00 PM on a Saturday, and my local auto parts stores said this relay switch was a GM dealer-only part (Part No. 463468) I had to wait till Monday to complete the repair.

## **Mike Cameron is willing to be our consultant**

Former Vixen engineering and service manager Mike Cameron has agreed to become the Vixen Owners Association's exclusive technical consultant. Association members at our August 5 meeting will decide whether to support such an expanded member service (*see p. 1*).

## **In Florida, Bob and Skip do a terrific job on Vixens**

If you're anywhere near Nokomis, Florida (that's just outside Venice, on the northern Gulf coast) and need work on your Vixen, the best place to go is Bob's Auto Parts (813-488-2612). Bob and Skip are real Vixen aficionados, and are even renovating a Vixen wreck out the back that was written off after a mysterious engine fire burned out the bedroom while the former owner had left it at the curb to buy a candy bar.

*Skip has one neat specialty. He reroutes TD gear selector cables from the front to the rear transaxle, eliminating kinks and making gear-changes as smooth as butter.*

That's a \$160 job, plus cable (around \$150 when we had ours done). Another specialty Skip's working on is a special switch that will automatically cause the alternator and the shoreline-inverter switch to charge whichever battery is still low. As Vixens were shipped, charging stops when either battery is charged.