

When a Legendary Car Meets a Legendary House

By Judy Szablak

Some stories begin at the closing table. Others begin with a handshake.

This one began on an ordinary afternoon with the owner of an extraordinary car.

I was out driving with my friend Chuck Schoendorf—one of those friends whose definition of a "special vehicle" isn't a luxury badge or a high-performance trim level, but something far more rarefied.

We were talking cars, as we always do, when he casually mentioned something that made me hit the brakes—not literally, thank goodness, but figuratively hard enough that my brain fishtailed.

Knowing that I am a REALTOR® specializing in upper end properties in Fairfield County CT, he said, "You know, Briggs Cunningham's house is on the market."

The house where the legend lived. 92 Beachside Avenue in Westport, CT. The place where ideas were drawn, engines were tuned, and dreams were quite literally engineered. The place where the idea was born for his C-3.

For those who aren't aware of these automobiles, just 36 were built, 35 are still in existence and eight of those were built as race cars. Twenty-five chassis were sent by vessel to Italy and finished in the Vignale shop in Turin. His 1952 C-3 is rarer yet, as there were only five cabriolets. A true preservationist, this car has never been rebuilt or glamorized.

THE Briggs Cunningham—the American sportsman, racing driver, entrepreneur, and visionary who built those improbable, beautiful, roaring machines my friend loves more than some people love their children.

I felt my eyebrows rise.

My friend kept talking, probably assuming this was just another item of car-world trivia conversations. But my mind was already shifting into gear.

"Well," I said, almost offhandedly, "let me see if I can get you in there."

I don't know why I said it.

Actually, I do.

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So while he talked about chassis numbers and race histories, I was already drafting a plan. I knew the listing agent, Cyd Hamer of William Pitt Sotheby's in Westport. I knew the significance for Chuck and understood the marketing boost that this could give the listing agent. And I knew what an opportunity for me as a connector of both the cultured car world and the luxury real estate sphere could mean to my business, and future clients.

After all, how often does a Cunningham owner get the chance to stand inside the home of the man who created them? And to enter through the gated driveway and park his Cunningham in front of the house? Not often.

Maybe not ever.

And I knew I could make it happen.

The Call That Started Everything

The moment I got home, I called Cyd. She picked up—professional, polite and curious, probably expecting a routine showing request.

That is not what she got.

I said, "I'd like to show the property... and let me tell you why."



Then I told her about my friend: not just a collector, but a Cunningham car historian and authority, even nicknamed by collector car Hagerty Insurance as "The Patron Saint of Cunninghams". Schoendorf is someone who understands the legacy at a depth few could match. I told her he wanted to see the house not just as a piece of real estate, but as a piece of the story.

You could almost hear her eyes widen through the phone.

Real estate agents see a lot—enthusiasts, architects, investors, tire-kickers, dreamers. But a man arriving with one of Briggs Cunningham's own cars? That doesn't come along every day.

She said yes.

Enthusiastically.

In about two seconds flat.

And then I mentioned, "This would be an incredible marketing opportunity for you and the house." She agreed.

But more importantly—it was a moment of connection. A way to honor legacy. A way to put history in motion.

Bringing the Car to the House

We set the appointment on Monday for the upcoming Friday. In the midst of a cold December, we had to be careful. One snowfall, and any salt on the roads would have crushed everyone's hopes to re-unite the house and the car. And then, I saw the dreaded forecast of snow on Friday. That would have been a dealbreaker. I called the agent with concern, as I knew that once it snowed, there would be sodium chloride on the roads and then this would be an impossibility. Thankfully, the forecast changed and we were good to go!

The day of the reunification arrived and the climate was crisp and cold, and slightly overcast, but as many a photographer will tell you, a sunny day would cast shadows where an overcast day wouldn't. Perfect for a few photos! My friend pulled up in his Cunningham—truly a work of art on wheels—and if the house could have recognized its long-lost counterpart, it would've grinned ear to ear.

Cyd, the listing agent came out to greet us, and you could see her excitement spike the moment she saw the car. The scene looked staged, cinematic, and just too perfect to be accidental: a living piece of automotive history rolling up to the home of its creator, as though time had folded in on itself.

We first took a very gracious and well guided tour of the 7,700 square foot manor, a 1926 Tudor with 200 feet of waterfront on 3.55 acres of magnificent grounds. She was a walking encyclopedia of knowledge about the home, and it was more than obvious that she had done extensive research on the property—enough to point out interesting tidbits about its storied history, prior owner and the house itself.

Inside the house, something shifted. My friend didn't view it like a potential buyer. He walked it like a curator—like someone reading a chapter of a book he'd studied for decades.

Among other parts of the home, he thoroughly enjoyed Briggs' study—a magical room that was crafted out of sailing ship which was imported from England, and pays homage to his love of sailing and yacht Columbia that won the first post-war America's Cup race in 1958.

And watching my friend stand there, looking around with a mix of reverence and joy, I realized something:

This wasn't a showing.

This was a reunion.

The car, the history, the house, the present moment—somehow it all braided together. And I got to be the one who tied the ends.

The Quiet Role of a Connector

Some jobs you choose.

Others choose you.

I've always been "the Realtor with Drive"—part humor, part branding, part acknowledgment of my lifelong love of cars, as well as my passion for real estate. I market homes with horsepower and houses with storylines. I can talk square footage or carburetors with equal fluency, but this moment clarified something for me:

I'm not just selling properties.

I'm connecting passions.

There's a unique category of clients—collectors, preservationists, automotive historians, people whose relationship to their cars is emotional, intellectual, and generational. These clients don't just buy houses. They buy chapters of their own story.

And because I live in both worlds—real estate and car culture—I understand how to match the structure to the soul.

A rare car deserves a home worthy of it.

A collector deserves spaces that honor their legacy.

And sometimes, if you're lucky, a house and a car meet each other again after decades apart.

That's what this day was, and I was honored to be a part of it.

Why This Story Matters

In real estate, we often talk about numbers—square footage, days on market, comps, cap rates, upgrades. But behind every home is a human story waiting to be honored. Behind every collector car is a lifetime of admiration, mechanics, memories, and pride.

When those worlds intersect, something rare happens.

Something that can't be captured on an MLS sheet.

You can make history feel alive again.

You can summon the past into the present.

You can give someone a moment they didn't even know they needed.

And sometimes, you can make a legendary car feel—just for a second—like it found its way home.

Many Thanks to Cyd Hamer of William Pitt Sotheby's in Westport and the Sellers of this magnificent property.



Submitted by Judy Szablak, Realtor® and unapologetic automotive aficionado.