

Coker Tire Update

Text and Photos by Lee Dunn

In the last issue of *The Tailfin* Doug put in a short article about my Coker Tire issues.

First I need to correct a portion of the article. Doug wrote "On the way up to the Grand National in Wisconsin the Dunn's stopped by Chattanooga to have one of their *brand new* Coker tires replaced because its *tread had separated*..." Doug went on to explain that he would not have accepted an adjustment in price due to the possibility of *losing a tire at speed* which could cause a lot of damage.

The tire was *not brand new*, it was 5 years from manufacture date and 3 years on the car, having been installed during the 2012 Grand National in St. Augustine. The *tread had not separated*. The white sidewall had developed a separation where it came together, leaving a area of the *not a safety issue lose a tire at* esthetic issue that satisfactory to me going for national apologize to Doug communicating this properly during his garage.



black line at one sidewall. *It was where you would speed.* It was an was not with the car judging. I for not information visit at my

Here is my Coker tires. In our 1957 Cadillac #6239, purchased

Savannah Grand National and to Kentucky Lake for a family reunion. Being totally unhappy with the bias ply tires that came on the car I purchased a set of Coker Classic

experience with 2007 I had driven Series 62 model in 2006, to the



radial P235/75R15 wide whitewall, took them to Weaver Tire where the car was aligned, the tires mounted and balanced. They said they had some trouble getting a good balance due to some out of roundness, partially due to the wheels and partially to the tires. Road testing resulted in, while not as perfect as one may like, a satisfactory result of alignment and balance. There has been some minor balance issues from time to time but these tires now have about 8

years and probably well over 25,000 miles on them. A recent rotation showed some uneven wear. Overall the tires have provided acceptable service.

In January of 2012 Jack Hurley and I purchased a 1976 Cadillac Fleetwood Eldorado convertible at auction in Fletcher (Asheville), NC. It had 12,500 miles on it. The tires

had good tread but were old. During the trip to Florida for the GN the left front tread let loose. I do not recall the tire manufacturer. I did recall that the previous owner at some point had said that he had a full new set of tires that would fit the car. With a phone call I arranged to purchase the tires, had them shipped Orange City, FL,



where we were staying, and mounted at a Firestone store. They were still in the factory wrappers, American Classic (by Coker but a different tire than the Coker Classic tires on the '57) P235/75R15 with 1.6" whitewall. See pages 10-11 of the Coker catalog for American Classic and pages 12-13 for Coker Classic. Note that American Classic are made in the USA. Coker Classic makes no such claim. The tires did not balance well and I took the car back after the first round trip to St. Augustine. Firestone did another balance but future trips did not show much improvement. Upon return to home, I took the car to Cherokee Tire in Canton. They aligned the car and balanced the tires, reporting to me that a couple were somewhat out of round and they could not get a good balance. I didn't purchase the tires from Coker so didn't have them to fall back on. The car was certainly drivable but always had an annoying bounce in the steering wheel.

During final preparations for this year's Grand National I noticed the left front had a black line separation in the white wall area (see first photo). I called and discussed it with them, but they did not have the size in stock. They hoped to have them in on a Monday, the day before we were leaving for Milwaukee. The tire arrived and we pulled into Coker just after they opened on Tuesday.

Coker acknowledged the defect and said that, *even though I was not the original purchaser*, they would honor their Life of Tread Warranty, prorated based on tread depth and cost of the tire at time of purchase. The DOT date of purchase by the previous owner was 2010 and the cost of the tire was \$145. Tread depth was 5/16". I had driven the tires approximately 10,000 miles. Coker credited an amount of \$118.64, or 82% of the original. I have no problem with that. They did not charge for mounting or balancing. So I had driven the car for 3 years on that tire for \$26.36, fair enough.

Back on the road by 11 AM, hit I-24 north and cranked her up to interstate speed. Left hood corner bouncing like a Mexican jumping bean, steering wheel bouncing in your hand. What to do? Behind schedule, had to keep on trucking, so backed it down to 60 MPH where it was reasonably calm and proceeded north.

In Milwaukee there was a Firestone store next to our hotel. Took it in there and had all four balanced with emphasis on the left front, paid my 50 bucks and went back to prepare for judging. It was raining but had to be washed after 800 miles of road grime. See page 11 of the September issue of The Self Starter. Steve didn't know who he

was photographing but it was me and Goldilocks in the rain. It's a good shot of that new left front jumping bean.

Goldilocks placed 2nd in class P24, the largest class at the GN with 12 Eldos '71 – '78,



received a Past Presidents' Preservation Award and received a Long Distance Driving Award, see page 20 of the same issue.



After several days at the GN we were back

on the interstates. The balance was only very slightly better and we reverted to the 60 MPH rule. A few days after arriving home, I noticed a small delamination bubble in the sidewall of the left rear tire. Over the next few days the bubble grew and grew to about a tennis ball size, rendering the car



undriveable. We had an old wheel, purchased a tire from Winch (1979 NOS so not one to go barreling down the road in but good enough to get me to Chattanooga again). I placed a call to Coker and vented on both left side tires, the front that is definitely out of round and the bubble tire. The sales agent took down the information, advised me

that they had no stock of this particular tire (again!), that he would inform the powers to be of my complaints and that Coker would call me when the tire size came in. After a week, I called and still no tire in stock. A few days later with the same result. The next call I was put on hold for a rep but after 9 minutes I had to hang up and go to a doc appointment. I called early on a Friday morning several days later and the rep told me the tires were now in stock. Why was I not called as promised? I professionally made my complaints and dissatisfaction with their service well known. He said he would inform the sales manager and the customer (no) service manager and have them available at 2 PM if I could bring the car in then. I agreed.

I pulled into the office parking lot as instructed. As soon as I stepped out, Michael Morrison, the walk-in sales representative, was out the door, on the steps and instructing me to take the car directly to the service bay, he would meet me there. It was clear my message had been received. He opened the trunk to see the bubbled tire, stepped back and said "OMG, now that's a hernia!" Shortly after seeing that I was comfortable in the CS lounge, with water, snacks, a magazine and TV, he called me to his post. Management had assessed the problems. The rear hernia tire would be replace, mounted and balanced no charge. Remember, this is a 5 year old tire with over 12K miles purchased by someone else. The front jumping bean tire would be taken to their testing lab to check for out of round. If they found it to be out of round and were unable to get it less than 50% of the out of round tolerance, they would replace it at no charge. This tire was new a few weeks earlier, mounted and balanced by them. The industry standard out of round tolerance for a mounted tire is 0.042" (forty two thousands of an inch). The wheel and mounted tire as removed checked out to be 0.068", way out of tolerance and the obvious reason for the jumping bean. Coker has a machine that scans the wheel diameter and the tire diameter. It calculates the optimum location of the tire location to the wheel for minimum out of round. Pretty smart machine if it works, why the hell didn't they use it when they mounted the tire a few weeks ago? They proceeded to mount a specific spot on the tire to a specific spot on the wheel. Result, with the same tire mounted on the same wheel, was 0.018", an improvement of 50 thousands of an inch and well within 50% of the industry standard tolerance of 0.042". "Mr. Dunn, we are very confident that this combination will perform satisfactorily on the road at interstate speeds. If it doesn't, we will replace it with a new tire. Is that agreeable?" It was. I was sent on my way, without so much as a piece of paper to sign, in what had been a completely satisfactory customer service experience. It was handled with the utmost courtesy, professionalism, customer service and made as easy and simple as possible for the customer, falling all over themselves with apologies. A major change from the no customer service phone exchanges.

I drove the car home on I-75 at speeds exceeding what the law will let you get by with. Best drive since purchasing it. No more Mexican jumping bean, hood level and resting nicely in place, To Coker's benefit, they stepped up to the plate and took care of 2 defective tires, purchased by someone else 5 years ago, and corrected their own mounting problem that caused the out of round to start with. The car drives like a dream now.

Now the question. The '57 will soon be needing a new set of rubber. Will I go back to Coker or will I go to a competitor? I respect them for finally taking care of the problems but I am highly concerned that 40% (2 of 5) of their tires on the '76 had manufacturing defects. While some PSCLC members have had good service from their Coker tires and stand by them, there have been numerous complaints by PSCLC members and many have written Coker off and gone elsewhere. I have my own thoughts about what Coker has done to cause many members to be dissatisfied, but I'm not going to put them in print. So that's my story and I'm sticking to it. Here is Goldilocks showing off.



Goldilocks

Ready for judging at the 2015 Cadillac & La Salle Club
Grand National meet in Brookfield (Milwaukee), Wisconsin