

Antique car buffs show wares at Meadow Brook

By MIKE SCANLON

There are cars. And then there is history on wheels.

For John Sullivan, that means a 1934 V-12 Packard 1107 Club Sedan, for Mike Weiner, it's a 1937 supercharged Cord convertible, for Terence Adderley, a 1935 Auburn supercharged boattail speedster, and for Ken Weller it's a 1937 Horch Cabriolet.

These four men have what you might

call a disease. You begin to suspect that perhaps Sullivan has the worst case when he has to stop and think just how many cars he has parked at his Livonia home. When the answer comes, it's "six or seven of them, something like that."

But Sullivan looks positively healthy next to Weller, who figures he owns about 50 other cars besides the Horch.

To find the symptoms of the disease that afflicts these men, all you need do

is ask about their cars.

Mike Weiner, for instance. One recent morning, Weiner was in Bill Bizer's restoration-specialty garage surrounded by Cords in various stages of disrepair. On his face was the kind of grin you usually see on teenagers holding hands and staring, soulfully, into one another's eyes.

But in Weiner's case, he was staring deeply into the hand-rubbed, deep maroon, nitrocellulose lacquer finish of his pride and joy, that 1937 Cord with the supercharged Lyncmington engine.

He liked what he saw. "When I look at that car, it's like looking at a beautiful diamond. That's how it always appears to me. I get, not obsessed — what's the word I'm looking for? — mesmerized. I get mesmerized."

WEINER WAS exaggerating, of course. His car is not even faintly like a diamond. After all, it's maroon.

It's more like a ruby. In any event, Weiner has good reason to grin. When he bought the car, "it was in bushel baskets, literally, in a guy's basement." It took Bizer four years to complete the restoration.

Weiner turned down a purchase offer six weeks ago, and anytime you can go eyeball-to-eyeball with \$90,000 and say "No, you deserve a grin."

The Cord and the others are some of the 100 antique and classic cars expected to be displayed Sunday at the second annual Concours D'Elegance car show at Rochester's Meadow Brook Hall.

For auto enthusiasts, the show is nothing less than mind-boggling. Consider Duesenbergs cheek-by-jowl with Bugattis, Marmons coying up to Auburns, Delinners next to Pierce Arrows. And makes only true diehards even know how to pronounce: Isotta-Fraschini, Ruxton, Talbot, Delahaye, Lagonda and Minerva.

What the cars all have in common is their status. They are all luxury cars, and most contain significant, sometimes even revolutionary developments in automotive technology.

Especially that Cord. The first car with front-wheel drive — and, for more than 30 years, the only car with front-wheel drive — the first with built-in turn signals, the first with windshield wipers.

The Cord has concealed headlights, but Sullivan's Packard has headlights

that turn in the same direction as the wheels. Weller's Horch has built-in jacks. Adderley also owns a Duesenberg that took a first-place at last year's Concours and lubricates its chassis automatically every 75 miles.

And in addition to their innovations and their luxury, there's also performance to consider. The four-cylinder Model A had a top speed of about 55 mph. The show cars were the fastest things on the road in their day.

SOME OF THEM may still be — their owners tend to be a little coy on just how fast they can go.

For instance, Weller believes his single four-barrel carbureted Horch produces 400-500 horsepower, compared to as little as 50 in today's tiny smog wagons.

"It has so much bore and stroke, when I put it into overdrive at 70 I don't think it's turning 2,100, 2,200 rpm," said Weller.

That may sound like gibberish to you, but it boils down to a top speed potential of well more than 100 mph.

Weller said the Horch gets "just about six miles to the gallon, but who cares?"

He can't prove it because most factory records were destroyed in World War II, but Weller believes the car was originally ordered by Adolf Hitler for Heinrich Himmler, the "dreaded chief of the SS," as Weller describes him.

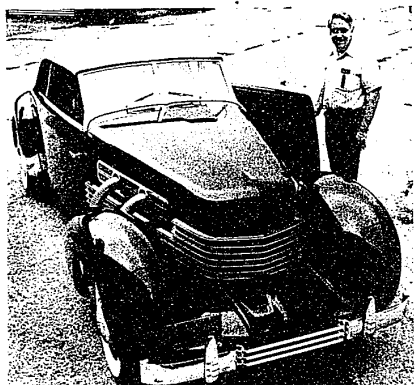
Weller estimated the Horch is worth "\$75,000, minimum." If you're curious, it bears a strong resemblance to the Mercedes-Benz 540K.

Terence Adderley, of Bloomfield Hills, owns five old cars including the Auburn he'll enter Sunday.

"The Auburn Company, which was in its day one of the leading auto manufacturers, built about 2,000 of these boattails and they sold one for about \$2,200 and even at that price they lost money. They were sold as attention-getters," Adderley said.

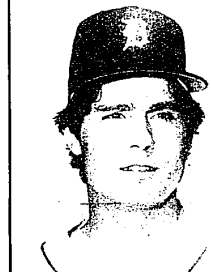
"In those days, they didn't throw things out. The '35 Auburn was built using an awful lot of parts from the '33."

The Auburn, the Cord and the Duesenberg, incidentally, have something more in common than just being old and classic — they were all designed by the same man, Gordon Buehrig, who now lives in Grosse Pointe.



That's owner Mike Weiner about to get inside his 1937 Cord. It's something he doesn't do very often — in three years, the car's accumulated a total of 106 miles, mainly getting into and out of an enclosed trailer. (Staff photo by Bill Bresler)

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