

Exhibit highlights auto's 100th anniversary

By Janice Brunson
special writer

"It'll never run."
"Don't scare the horses."
"Wouldn't it be easier to walk?"
These comments and others passed among auto executives, members of the press and the curious who gathered recently at Henry Ford Museum in Greenfield Village to watch a demonstration drive of a replica of the first automobile to ever receive a patent.

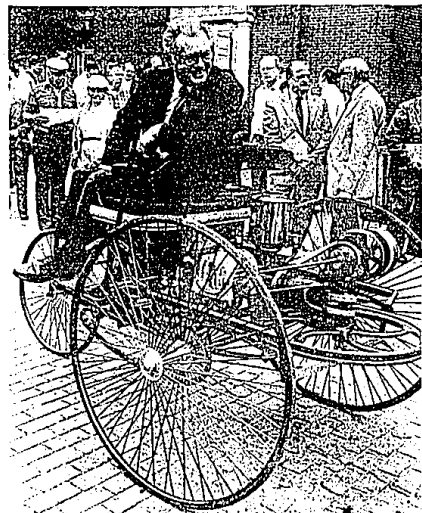
It was called the "Motor Wagon" and it was built by Karl Benz of Germany.
The crowd was quick to transport itself back into time with good-humored, spontaneous comments, no doubt echoing similar comments from 1886 when the three-wheeled automobile made its debut in Mannheim, Germany.
Mechanic Gunther Ficht turned the huge fly wheel and the engine — designed by inventor Benz — sprang

to life. It sounded like a faulty chainsaw.
Walter Bodak, president of Mercedes-Benz of North America, jumped aboard. He looked decidedly out of character, perched atop the rattling contraption, dressed in a contemporary suit and wingtip shoes. He took off down Village Road in Greenfield Village.
"Don't lug the engine," someone from the crowd called.
The first part of the two-block drive was slow but toward the end of return straightaway the auto gained speed. The crowd confirmed the fact with comments of, "Jeez, look at the wind blow his hair" and "It's really going now."
Gunther said maximum speed on a good straightaway is nine to 10 miles per hour.
Bodak carefully parked the car and the crowd pushed closer but was met with a distinct odor. Those nearest commented, "Pleew" and "It's got an oil leak."
Gunther explained the odor is a result of the 57 octane gasoline required by the engine, the type of fuel commonly used in camping stoves or lanterns.
The "oil leak," he said, is actually

water created by the combustion engine.
Still, the once immaculate green lacquer and brass contraption looked slightly the worse for wear following the strenuous two-block journey over the cobbled street.
A moment more of touching and questions, then Gunther pushed the machine away, akin to an image of a prized race horse being led back to the paddock after a brief public display.
The Motor Wagon is actually a replica built by Daimler-Benz apprentices who used exact specifications and materials that were used a century ago. They labored nearly two years to reproduce the replica.
The original is on display at the German Museum in Munich, West Germany.
The Motor Wagon replica, a full-size working replica of the world's first gasoline-powered motorcycle, the 1885 Daimler four-wheel coach are the center of a new exhibit at the Ford Museum called "The First Century."
The exhibit, sponsored by Mercedes-Benz, highlights the 100th anniversary of the automobile,

featuring cars and lifestyles of the past century.
The exhibit contains more than 350 historic photographs, depicting six eras of transportation and lifestyles. They are mounted on 72 panels and feature political and economic events, popular culture, sports, technology and automobiles of the times.
The six eras covered are:
• 1901-1920, when more than 3,000 American automakers offered a wide variety of cars. The invention of the airplane and Einstein's theory of relativity were major technical advancements in this period.
• 1921-1930, when sport road-

sters were much in fashion. Prohibition changed social habits.
• 1931-1945, when the automobile provided basic transportation for most families. Movie cowboys were kings and World War II closed this era.
• 1946-1964 when chrome fins and horsepower characterized the automotive trend. The baby boom, the rise of suburbia and two-car families reflected this era.
• 1965-1986 covers the automotive shift to small, imported cars and the 55-mph speed limit. Man walked on the moon.
The exhibit opened this month and will continue through Aug. 18.



Walter Bodak, president of Mercedes-Benz of North America, took a spin on a replica of the Motor Wagon down cobbled Village Road at Greenfield Village at the breathtaking speed of 10 miles an hour.

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