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Aerodynamics, streamlining by design

By Jenny King

06/28/2007 - Automotive design that captures streamlined looks with the slippery quality of aerodynamics was the theme of the mid-June 2007 EyesOn Design show at the Edsel and Eleanor Ford House in Grosse Pointe Shores.

EyesOn Design is a benefit for the not-for-profit Detroit Institute of Ophthalmology. It is the primary source of revenue for the Detroit Institute of Ophthalmology's research, education and support groups and for programs that enhance the independence of the visually impaired.



Dick Forton, right, heads for a chair in the shade behind his hand-built 1927 Ford track roadster.

The 20th anniversary show organizers brought together some breathtaking classics from the late 1920s and early 1930s with more recent sedans and coupes, unique sportscars, hotrods, motor bikes, concept vehicles and, of course, the ultimate aero look of a silver 1936 Stout Scarab owned by Larry Smith of Bloomfield Hills.

As visitors circled the invited vehicles, visually impaired volunteers wearing gloves carefully inspected cars to choose ones they found the smoothest. They eventually selected the 1935 Auburn Speedster Boattail exhibited by Ed Micol of Waterford.

William Mihalic of Rochester was showing his rare red 1959 Alfa Romeo Giulietta Sprint Speciale, a pre-production sportscar with aluminum doors, hood and trunk lid. The low-nosed two-seater, built for racing, weighs less than 1,800 pounds and is powered by a 1300-cc engine, Mihalic said. He guessed there are fewer than 20

extant today.

Grosse Pointe Park resident Dick Forton and family members had, only hours earlier, put Forton's 1927 Ford "track roadster" through its final cleaning and polishing.

Forton, wearing his trademark suspenders, relaxed in a chair in the shade. He was exhausted, he said, but not too tired to talk about the stunning black-and-red '48 Cadillac hotrod owned by Ed and Betty Noble of Metamora. Ed is a longtime Detroit area auto writer and photographer who owns some truly beautiful specialty cars.

Richard Marks' car of the future – an Eco V Electric – represented what the Grosse Pointe Woods resident and former General Motors engineer hopes will be a vehicle of the near-term. Marks, now an independent businessman with a Detroit office, said he is anxious to find investors to launch his product line. His own background includes 25 years at GM, with five of those spent on the EV1 electric vehicle

Marks' brochure suggests an Eco V Electric, with a base price of \$9,995, is capable of traveling up to 40 miles on a 50-cent electric charge. Body configurations could include a four- or six-passenger utility, a two-passenger pickup or conversions into a postal carrier or parking enforcement vehicle.

Royal Oak resident Jeffrey Leestma bought his 1949 Hudson Commodore in Pennsylvania a few years ago. The director of the Automotive Hall of Fame joked about preparing for his EyesOn Design debut in Grosse Pointe by wearing loafers without socks.

Indeed, he fit right in. This was Leestma's first time as an exhibitor at the show. His Commodore was parked beside another "ultimate" in streamlined design, a burgundy-colored 1950 Nash Ambassador owned by Clarence and Nancy Becker.



Photo/Story by Jenny King

2007 Eco V Electric was shown by Richard Marks of Grosse Pointe Woods.