

3rd Generation '29 Roadster to be Feted

by Jennifer Knightstep
Special Writer

On Good Friday in 1948, Scott Pieknik's grandfather, Frank, spotted a 1929 Ford Roadster on a small lot as he drove down 8 Mile Road in Detroit – and that day, he bought it.

It's been in the family ever since, handed down from father to son for three generations, gradually transformed into the award-winning, show-stopping roadster it is today.

The restoration has been a painstaking labor of love, recognized this year with the coveted Autorama Presentation Award.

Though the roadster itself hasn't appeared at Autorama for decades, it's become something of a local legend, admired by metro Detroit hot rodders and nominated especially for the 60th anniversary of the Autorama show.

The award, sponsored by Steele Rubber Products, will be presented Saturday morning, Feb. 25 at Cobo Center during the Circle of Champions Brunch at Meguiar's Detroit Autorama.

"It's such an honor," says Scott Pieknik, of Clinton Township, whose father, Jack, handed the car down to him just a few years ago.

"Only one car is selected for this award every year, and I've heard that the people who nominated the coupe were waiting for the Autorama anniversary to make it really special."

Pieknik adds that his entire family, including his three sons, aged 13, 10, and 5, have been helping prepare the roadster for Autorama, and it's been quite an experience.

"Everyone wants the (roadster) to be perfect, and we're

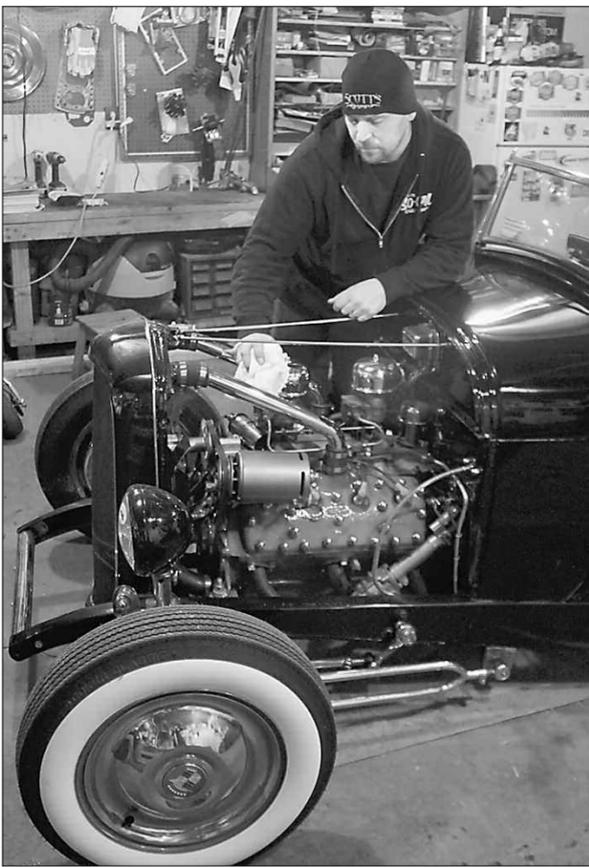


PHOTO: JENNIFER KNIGHTSTEP

Current owner, Scott Pieknik, of Clinton Township. He inherited the car from his father Jack, who says the Presentation Award from Autorama is an honor that would have made his own father, Frank, extremely proud.

counting down the days," he says, testing out the newly-installed upholstery on the seats.

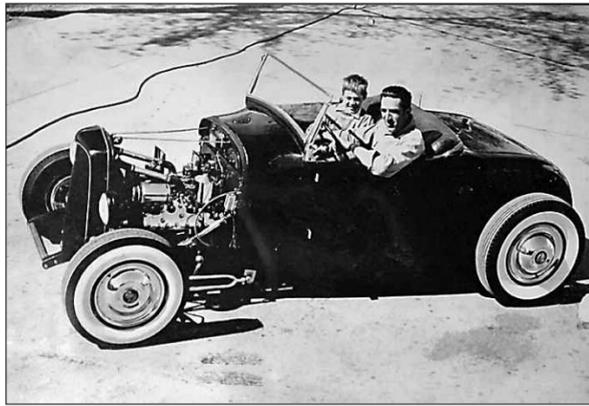
The Presentation Award is reserved for the most flawlessly restored vehicle, and from every angle, the roadster is impressive, from its intricate chrome grille in front to the personalized license plate at the back that reads,

"3RDGN8N."

Which begs the question, of course – which of his three sons will inherit the prized Coupe, changing the plate to say, "4THGN8N"?

"It depends," says Pieknik with a grin, "which one of them is most into cars."

Overall, the 2012 Autorama runs from Feb. 24-26 at Cobo Center in Detroit.



Frank Pieknik and his 9-year-old son, Jack, who would become the second generation Pieknik to own, and love, the 1929 Ford Roadster that will be given an honor at this year's Autorama.



Frank Pieknik was the original owner of this 1929 Ford Roadster, which has been owned by three generations of the local family. The car will be honored at 2012 Autorama at Cobo Center.

Butter, Eggs and World War II Led to Passion For Model A Car

By KELLY GOOCH
Tyler Morning Telegraph

ARP, Texas (AP) – Bud Calicutt's passion for restoring Model A cars is displayed throughout his garage.

A 1940s hot rod sits near his work bench, ready to be worked on.

In the back room, Calicutt points to a 1931 four-door Deluxe Sedan, which still has the original upholstery. He also identifies a 1931 Standard Coupe that he's fixing up for a college student, as well as a car that belongs to his wife Nita.

"I just love the Model A's running," he said before cranking one up.

His love for Model A cars extends to photographs in the garage, including a picture of what Arp looked like when such vehicles were parked downtown.

It's these surroundings that provide the 68-year-old Arp native with a place to practice his hobby, make a small profit, and give back to other East Texans. He said he sometimes repairs vehicles for friends at no cost, but he normally charges the cost of parts plus 15 percent for handling. Repairs can take 4 to 10 weeks, and he typically does 8 to 10 cars each year. Calicutt said he also enjoys working on his own vehicles.

His fascination with Model A cars began during World War II, when his mother sold enough butter and eggs to purchase a Model A Cooper.

Calicutt said he became attached to the car and was practically "raised in the back of it."

Therefore, when his father bought a new car in 1953, he begged him to keep the Model A, he said. However, his father had to sell it because of the economy.

While attending Arp High School, Calicutt, a former football player, bought Model A cars and got them running again, he said. He bought his first Model A from Rex Wood, who still lives in Arp.

After high school, Calicutt went into the Navy Reserve, where he served more than two years, and he later went to work for various construction companies.

The retiree is happy to spend time in his body shop, where he finds company in his dog and his longtime friend, Bill Parish, who helps him with his repair work.

Parish said he enjoys looking at old cars, and Calicutt's garage is a good place for him to have something to do.

Calicutt, who served as president of the Tyler Model A club for three years, said his favorite cars to work on are 1930 and 1931 Coupes and Roadsters.

Here's the Story of How 'Big Daddy' Don Garlits Got his Colorful Name

by Dewey Ketner
Special Writer

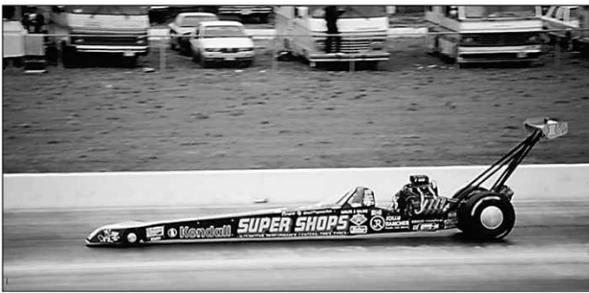
The roar of alligators in Florida was a quiet whisper compared with what was heard more than 50 years ago, when out of a one-man shop came a fire-belching car engine, launching a home-made tube frame with skinny little wheels and tires in front and huge, threadless tires on the rear.

From out of the watery Everglades came a humble young man driving this Hemipowered Rail, mastering the drag racing strips of yesteryear to earn the unkindly nickname, "Swamp Rat."

Back in the early 1960s, the name stuck and Don Garlits became known as the name to try to beat in the Top Dragster class. The "Swamp Rat" took so many huge bites out of the competition that some rail owners refused to race against him.

You might beat him once, but not likely two out of three, as we used to race those odds in match racing in the heyday of the national drag racing circuit.

When you are ingrained with the need for speed, your every minute of every hour is a rush to find an answer to guide you to build an even



'Big Daddy' Don Garlits' Swamp Rat XXX racer on a dragway in Texas in 1987.

faster machine.

Next came a huge step up in design: install the engine behind the driver for maximum weight setback, greatly increasing the traction bite, quicker launches, less slippage of the rubber, now getting the monster engine to maximum horsepower, sooner, and oh yes, at much greater speeds.

Except for once, Garlits was without "the Engine" to make this innovation successful.

With a borrowed engine from a friend in Chicago, Garlits took his new car to California to match race against "the best in the West."

With a carbureted engine, he won his fair share of races against supercharged cars. His new rear engine chassis proved to be a winning combi-

nation against the more powerful "blown" cars.

But the handwriting on the wall said, supercharge it, Don, if you want to beat the best on any drag strip, anywhere.

Garlits took the challenge, bolting on a GMC blower with injection and took on all comers who wanted to beat the Swamp Rat.

As his track prowess grew, the rest became proverbial history as the Florida-based "Swamp Rat" went on to be known as "Big Daddy" Garlits – the king of the drag strip.

His record still stands today as the winningest top fuel driver of all time with an astounding number – adding up to 30 percent of wins in all of his competitions – in the Top Fuel competition meets.

So that's why his nickname



PHOTO: GERALD SCOTT

Drag racing legend "Big Daddy" Don Garlits at the Mopar 75th anniversary party in Center Line recently.

morphed over time from Swamp Rat to Big Daddy – he was the Florida fuel dragster builder / driver who revolutionized top fuel competition for all time and gave us the ultra-exciting 300-mph-plus speeds.

'Nuff said.
Dewey Ketner is a Grass Lake, Mich. freelance auto writer who, earlier in his career, was the owner and manager of the Onondaga, Mich. Dragway. Contact Ketner at dewey.ketner@yahoo.com.

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