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Classic cars featured at MBH Concours d'Elegance

By **Jeff Samoray**, OU Web Writer

The **23rd Annual Concours d'Elegance**, hosted by **Meadow Brook Hall**, on Sunday, August 5, will feature more than 200 classic and vintage automobiles representing many makes, models and eras.

The automobiles will be displayed at the hall on the campus of Oakland University from 9 a.m.-4:30 p.m., with award presentations starting at 11:30 a.m.

This year's Concours will pay tribute to Streamliner automobiles and American-engineered sports cars, including an extremely rare 1937 Delahaye Type 135 Competition Coupé and a 1938 Bentley 4.5 Liter, one of the fastest road cars of its time. The show also features classic Mercedes-Benz vehicles on loan from the Mercedes-Benz Museum in Stuttgart, Germany, to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the marque. Attendees can see a 1953 Mercedes-Benz 300 S Cabriolet, one of only 500 produced that year. Other intriguing cars are a 1954 Hudson Hornet Convertible in lipstick red, and a 1947 Chrysler Town and Country Sedan once owned by Bing Crosby.

At last year's Concours, more than 20,000 people viewed cars valued on average between \$300,000 to \$400,000, and some worth well more than \$1 million.

Two cars representing the variety of those on display are a 1934 Pierce-Arrow 12 convertible coup, owned by Fred Smith of Rochester, Mich., and a 1971 Plymouth 426 Hemi Cuda, owned by Harold Sullivan of West Bloomfield.

Smith has been involved with various Concours committees over the past 18 years, and bought the Pierce-Arrow 12 last year at the **RM Classic Car Auction**, held in conjunction with the Concours. The fully restored vehicle will make its first Concours appearance this year.

"My wife is actually the one who got me interested in this car," Smith said of the Pierce-Arrow 12. "She saw it at the auction and said, 'You have got to have this car.' And she's never said that about any of the 30 other cars I've owned. It's just a beautiful classic car. It's a two-passenger with a rumble seat. But it's pretty darn large at 6,000 pounds. It has a V-12 motor with hydraulic lifters, which was way before its time."

Smith estimated the car is worth between \$180,000 and \$190,000, partly due to its rarity.

"It's a pretty rare vehicle," said Smith, who's been interested in cars since he worked at a gas station as a kid. "I know there's only four registered with the Pierce-Arrow society."

Sullivan has shown vehicles at seven previous Concours. He said his '71 Plymouth 426 Hemi Cuda is one of the more sought after muscle cars.

"It's one of only 108 built that year, which was the last year for the 426 semi-hemi. It's valuable for its engine and rarity. I'd say about 50-60 are known to be still out there."

Sullivan bought the vehicle five years ago in upstate New York in rust-free condition requiring minimal restoration.

"It's got about 17,000 original miles and was stored very well," he said. "It was basically raced a lot and stored in the winter months. The interior was just about perfect, though I replaced the carpeting and headliner. It's worth between \$80,000 and \$100,000."

Sullivan said the most enjoyable part of showing vehicles at the Concours is talking with show attendees.

"The crowds are great," Sullivan said. "Everyone's really friendly and they all respect the vehicles and ask the owners lots of questions. They appreciate the hard work we put into the cars. The show itself is just fantastic."

Admission to the Concours is \$20 for adults and includes a souvenir program. Teen-agers, ages 13-17, are \$10. Children, ages 12-under, are free. Free parking and shuttle bus transportation is provided.

Revenue generated from the event supports the preservation and interpretation of Meadow Brook Hall. The Concours raises an average of \$500,000 annually. In the past, monies have helped restore the hall's Parducci ceiling and supported the elementary school educational programs.

The Concours also features many **related events**, including a fashion show, a **vintage automobile race**, a display on the **Dodge Brothers Motor Cars**, an art auction and reception, and more. For more information on the Concours d'Elegance or other associated events, call (248) 370-3140 or visit the **Concours d'Elegance** Web site.

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