

Arthritis Foundation Classic Auto Show and Cruise-In Celebrates Its 25th Silver Anniversary

By Jeffrey R. Brashares

It seems like a long time ago, well I guess to be accurate, it was 25 years ago, when the late Len Immke, local auto dealer and car collector, and Bob Lincoln, then President of the Arthritis Foundation, Central Ohio Chapter, came up with a fabulous event. Hear about the first meeting in Bob's own words:

"It doesn't seem like yesterday --- but it sure doesn't seem like 25 years ago either-- that I sat in Len Immke's office "surrounded" by his two pet Scotties.

Len agreed to talk to me about ways he could help the Arthritis Foundation raise some public awareness about the disease and at the same time raise some money for the Central Ohio Chapter's programs.

It took only about 10 minutes for Len to decide that his private collection of classic cars might be the answer. One phone call to Ron Banfield, set the wheels in motion (no pun intended) for a quarter-century run of the Classic Car Show.

Len's collection was a major attraction from the beginning of the annual event, and encouraged many other classic collectors to enter their automobiles in the show.

Early on, the Auto Show began to attract not only classic car lovers, but also a younger crowd who came for the cars, and stayed to dance to the Rock n Roll rhythms of Phil Dirt and the Dozers. The Stouffer Dublin parking lot was transformed into a wonderful world of beautiful classic cars, muscle cars and even motorcycles. That, coupled with Stouffer food tables set up on the drive, using the "best " silver servers, made for a really memorable annual event."

Len and Bob's meeting 25 years ago was, of course, the first milestone in what has now become the largest collector car event in Central Ohio, raising over \$100,000 a year for the work of the Central Ohio Chapter of the Arthritis Foundation.

The second milestone came from the mind of Jesse Davis. You see, even in Jesse's retirement years (did this guy ever have a REAL job?), his mind is always working.

Jesse called me one day and said, "Jeff, why don't we have a Cruise-In?" I thought this was a terrific idea but a question arose in my mind ... Could we blend this together and make it work with the classic car collector attendees? Remember, the lines between classic cars and street rods were much more defined back then than they are today. One only has to look at the present day success of Concours throughout the United States and their recent (within the last three years) addition of street rod classes to their classic car classes to see how different things are now. But, I thought we had to try.

That first year, it was MORE than 15 years ago, but to be honest, I can't remember how many more, we held the Cruise-In on Saturday with the Classic Auto Show and 75 cruisers were in attendance.

Little did we know at the time what a fortuitous decision we had made, for it wasn't two years later that Jesse said, "Jeff, let's expand the show to TWO days and have the Cruise-In on Friday night." I was a LOT younger then and adding another evening to the show was, literally speaking, no sweat.

We, of course, did add a Friday night Cruise-In and the cruisers support us by attending. And, in 24 years, we only had a one rain out, and we simply moved Mike Albert inside the Crown Plaza (then Wyndham) where he continued his concert.

As I think I already mentioned, Jesse was ALWAYS thinking, and he then came up with the ultimate suggestion, "Jeff, why don't you give out 50 six foot tall trophies? Cruisers love 'em."



Jesse Davis

Well, the rest is history. 50 trophies became 75, and then became 100, and this year, the original 50 will become 125 trophies, one big (six-foot tall, to be exact) tribute to the 25th Anniversary of the Classic Auto Show and Cruise-In.

The Friday Cruise-In attendance has now outgrown the Classic Auto Show attendance by at least two to one. Cruisers have been a tremendous support to the show and the Friday event just keeps on getting bigger and better.

Although unfounded, Jesse DID have one major concern, and that had everything to do with the Good Guys show that often roars into the city the same weekend as our slightly smaller event. However, with or without the Good Guys in town, the cruisers have supported the Arthritis Foundation and for that I am VERY grateful. Y'all have been quite giving to a fun show and a fun event while supporting a great local charity.

Irene Baird, the current President of the Central Ohio Chapter of the Arthritis Foundation, came along 8 years ago to remind us that it IS about our Mission, which is to find relief and a cure from the crippling disease of Arthritis.

David Landow came on the scene four years ago, brought his experienced group of judges with him, and took the Friday Judging responsibilities off my shoulders. Consider that this task lasts from 11am to 7pm, and you can appreciate how much work David and his team does to pick the top cruise-in cars for the awards ceremony.

For those of you who don't know me, (and some say that is a blessing!), this will be my 24th year with the show. That first year, Bob, Len and I hadn't "found" each other yet. Look for the guy in the flame shorts and saw howdy!

I have met so many wonderful people through this hobby and we have a volunteer committee of 50, which expands to over 200 on the Classic Auto Show and Cruise-In weekend that just rocks! It's all about the committee and car owners because without each and every one of you, there would be no show.

This year, the event will be held on Friday, July 6th (Cruise-In) and Saturday, July 7th (Classic Auto Show) at the Metro Center in Dublin, Ohio. You will see from the Pre-Registration form included with this article that we have added extra "Cruiser Classes" for Saturday, since the Good Guys are not in town the same weekend this year. I would encourage you to register to come and spend both days with us as our Silver Anniversary plans have lots of new "twists" added to the show.

As always, Mike Albert and the Big "E" band will join us Friday night for "Memories of Elvis", and Saturday evening, we'll rock out the weekend with an oldies concert by Phil Dirt and the Dozers.

You can visit us at: www.ArthritisAutoShow.com or call 614-876-8200 for more information.

We look forward to seeing you in July and thanks for your support!!