

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 15, 2009

Contact: Lee Esposito
(614) 421-2701

1906 REO Model A Light Touring Car and Unique 103-Year-Old Working Miniature
“Baby” and “Mama” REO Together at Last at the Arthritis Foundation
Classic Car Show
Worlds First Miniature Car to be on Public Display
Friday & Saturday, July 10 and 11 Dublin Metro Center

DUBLIN, Ohio – “Baby” and “Mama” will have a rare weekend out together at the 27th Annual Arthritis Foundation Classic Auto Show and Cruise-In honoring Len Immke at the Dublin Metro Center July 10 and 11, but the mother and child in question are an extremely rare REO Model A Light Touring Car and its perfect half-scale working miniature model, hand-crafted in 1905 as a promotion for the REO Motor Car Company.

Only one of its kind, the Baby REO is the world’s first miniature car, and, for the first time in decades, it only recently returned with full-size Mama REO to its Lansing, Michigan “birthplace,” after Debbie Stephens, great-granddaughter of Oldsmobile and REO Motor Car Company founder Ransom E. Olds, and her husband Peter managed to win the car in a 2008 auction. The Stephens are residents of Dublin, Ohio.



“Baby and Mama are now in the care of the R. E. Olds Transportation Museum in Lansing,” said Peter Stephens, “but we wanted to help promote the mission of the Arthritis Foundation by asking the museum to put the cars on display here in Dublin at the Classic Auto Show and Cruise-In, one of the organization's biggest fundraising events of the year.”

“It’s also a great way to promote successes and innovations in American automotive history,” said Debbie. “Especially during this troubled time for automakers, it’s nice to remember what wonderful things we've accomplished as a country.”

Baby REO is a working exact half-scale version of Mama REO, from its two-cylinder, two horsepower engine to its miniature crank. Even its headlamps, dashboard dials, and tiny serial number plaque are in perfect scale, which, Debbie says, was a feat of engineering that had not been attempted prior to Baby’s creation. “The craftsmanship on this car is just mind-boggling,” she said.

Debbie has a 1954 photograph of herself as a toddler seated in Baby as well as a 1920 photograph of her father in the car. It became a family tradition to have the family’s youngest member photographed in the Baby REO

After the Model A REO stopped production in 1910, Debbie said, “Baby ran away to join the circus,” when the company leased the miniature car to the Barnum & Bailey circus. Two of the circus’ smallest and most popular performers, Tiny Tim and Tom Thumb, often drove Baby during shows. A 2008 *New York Times* article on Baby and Mama included a rare photograph of the small performers and two companions, posed in the car, next to Jumbo the Elephant and The Welsh Giant, for an interesting perspective of the car’s scale.

Baby’s history after the circus is a bit hazy. The company lost track of the vehicle from the late 1930s until the early 1950s, when REO’s approaching 50th anniversary prompted a search, and it was found in a warehouse of an REO dealership in Altoona, Pennsylvania. Later Baby dropped out of sight again, until a vice president of design for American Motors, Richard Teague, discovered it in the lobby of a Mississippi office building. He bought it, restored it, and paired it with its restored, full-size Mama.

Yet Baby and Mama’s adventure wasn’t over yet. After Teague died in the 1980s, the cars rolled into the garages of a succession of collectors. Finally, in 2008, after several attempts to locate and buy the REOs, the Stephens won them at auction and sent them to the museum.

Baby and Mama’s appearance at the Arthritis Foundation Classic Auto Show will be Ohio car enthusiasts’ only opportunity to see them outside of the Lansing museum. Both cars will be on display in a special secured area.

The 27th Annual Arthritis Foundation Classic Auto Show and Cruise-In honoring Len Immke runs July 10, 10 a.m. to 11 p.m., and July 11, noon to 11 p.m., at the Dublin Metro Center, 555 Metro Place North in Dublin. General admission, which includes live entertainment on Friday and Saturday nights, is \$10, with proceeds going to the Central Ohio Arthritis Foundation. Admission is free for children 12 and under.

About Central Ohio Chapter of the Arthritis Foundation

(<http://www.arthritis.org/chapters/central-ohio/>):

Headquartered in Hilliard, Ohio, the Central Ohio Chapter of the Arthritis Foundation seeks to improve the lives of the area’s 850,000 residents, including 5,000 children, who struggle with more than 100 different forms of arthritis and related diseases. It is part of the Arthritis Foundation (<http://www.arthritis.org>), the leading health organization addressing the needs of some 46 million Americans living with arthritis, one of the nation’s leading causes of disability.

###

Attention Editors: For more information about Baby and Mama REO or to arrange interviews and photo opportunities with the “Baby REO”, contact Lee Esposito at (800) 254-1971 or lee@newsangle.com.