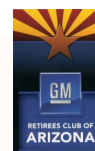


THE CLUB REPORTER

NOVEMBER 11, 2013



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EDITOR'S WELCOME



Well, how did you like last month's article about Nancy Moore and her swims from Alcatraz to San Francisco? What a special lady and what a pleasure it was for her to share her story with us. Her article is now being shared with all GM Retirees on the GM Corporate website www.GMRetiree.com. Log into the website and click on "Community". Check it out.

In this month's issue, we have another EXCEPTIONAL Club Member to write about which I know all of you "car lovers" will thoroughly enjoy. Ron Konopka, GM Design Staff, always knew he was gifted and through hard work and the help and encouragement of mentors starting at a very young age, he was able to develop his skills as a modeler of dioramas (Miniature scenes in three dimensions), artist, designer, sculptor and as a "collector extraordinaire" of cars which became his lifetime passion. This is truly a story of a person who not only was born with artistic talent, but had a dream to achieve what he thought was far beyond his reach as a young man from Detroit, Michigan. Enjoy his story and the pictures of his many hobbies. One thing is for sure, if you could ever visit Ron's home in Harper Woods, Michigan like I did, you would feel the full impact of his artistic ability and view the Dioramas and massive car collections which fueled his love for the advancement of automotive design.

Sincerely, Jim Harshman, Editor and Club Reporter

OF INTEREST:

- Dec. - Turf Paradise
- Jan. - Culinary School
- Feb. - GM Speaker

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Our November GM Club Meeting at the PebbleCreek Theatre was a first. This was the first "LIVE" GM Executive broadcast ever to a GM Retirees Club. Katie McBride discussed some key issues for General Motors since the Bankruptcy and then Bailey O'Shea shared some new product introduction information. There were quite a few good questions that our GM Speakers from Detroit answered fairly candidly.

Since the GM Bankruptcy and change in Executive Leadership, it has become increasingly difficult to schedule GM Executives for Club meetings and presentations as their schedules are even more tight and controlled

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

than ever in the past. We are hoping that occasional GM Executive "LIVE" broadcasts will allow us to still get at least two speakers a year. GM has advised that we are one of only two Clubs that even qualify for multiple speakers in a year. This new format still allowed us to see both the speaker and the videos or slides at the same time while still allowing for the speaker to see our group and respond to real-time questions from our Club members. Currently we are scheduling a live GM Executive speaker to join us for the February meeting in 2014. Let us know what you think of the broadcast format.

Our December meeting will be a "special event" intended to be a fun afternoon planned to celebrate the Holidays. On December 3rd, we will be gathering at the Turf Paradise Horse Racing Track in Phoenix for a Buffet lunch and an afternoon of horse racing. A Special Guest from the North Pole is expected to be passing out gifts for all who attend. Couple a Santa visit with a great meal and some great horse racing and wagering, it doesn't get much better than this. There will not be a formal meeting, but rather fun and fellowship for all. You are welcome to invite guests as well. Please come and join us for some laughs and socializing. Be sure to follow the directions listed on the Acknowledgement Form to the Track's prestigious Turf Club where our event will be held.

Please also mark your calendar for a **GREAT** meeting scheduled for **WEDNESDAY, JAN. 15**. We will be at the Culinary Arts School at the East Valley Technical campus in Mesa. We will enjoy a wonderful four course meal and the presentation from our Special Guest Speaker, Sheriff Joe Arpaio. You will not want to miss this one! Guests are welcome.

As we wrap up another calendar year in December, the Club Board is looking for any volunteers or nominees to join our Board. We are also in the process of identifying the potential Officer Candidates for the 2014 Calendar Year. In the next few weeks you will be receiving an email which will allow you to nominate candidates for a Board or Officer position before the end of December. We are especially looking for female candidates. You may also indicate your nominee on the reservation form for the December Meeting Acknowledgement. Additionally, the Board has confirmed that the Annual Dues for 2014 will remain at the same \$30/couple as in 2013. Please send your check for **\$30** to Jim Irwin along with your December meeting reservation.

Sincerely, KEN WECHSELBERGER, President

MEMORIAL DONATION RECEIVED

In April, 2013, we reported the death of fellow Club Member LEE H. SHINN. Lee, a resident of Sun City West and a longtime loyal member of our club died in February. In 2011, Lee's brother Ken and his son visited Lee and attended one of our monthly luncheon meetings. Ken was also a General Motors retiree working 41 years at assignments in four different divisions; Packard Electric, Ternstedt, Fisher Body and CPC in Warren. Shinn family members are still good friends with current Club members Joe and Arlene Weglarz who Ken says is the best Plant Layout Engineer he ever worked with. Ken wanted to do something special in memory of Lee, so he has made a \$100.00 contribution to the GM Retirees Club of AZ. On behalf of the entire Club membership we would like to thank Ken for his very thoughtful action in memory of his brother. We will use his gift for a good cause.



Date: Tuesday, December 3, 2013

Location: Turf Paradise
Turf Club (3rd Level)
1501 W. Bell Rd.
Phoenix, AZ 85023
Phone: (602) 942-1101

Directions: 1.2 miles East from I-17 and Bell Road
Take W. Bell road to N. 19th Ave and go South.
In 1/3 mile, turn left on W. Turf Paradise Road and
the Turf Club Entrance and parking lot is on the
right. Club Santas will be there to help once you
arrive.

Time: 11:30AM Please No Early Arrivals
12:00PM Server will escort group to buffet
12:30 PM Post Time

Cost: \$24.00 per person

Menu: Buffet

Salads: Tossed Green, Pasta, Fresh Fruit,
Potato and Home made Cole Slaw

**Carved Briskett of Beef and
Roasted Breast of Turkey**

**Sliced Tomatoes, Deli Pickles, Assorted
Cheeses**

Assorted Breads and Rolls

Dessert: Assorted Cobblers, Pies, Cookies
and Brownies

Beverage: Coffee and Iced Tea included

If you sign up for this meeting and find that you are unable to attend, please cancel your reservation with Jim Irwin so we do not pay for meals not served. Phone # (928) 684-2041

There is a seven day advanced cancellation requirement from the Turf Paradise Management, so your cancellation must be received by mid-night, November 26, 2013



Name: _____ **Spouse:** _____

Guest: _____ **Guest:** _____

Nominations for Club Board: 1 _____ 2 _____

**REMINDER: Please include your 2014 Annual Club dues of \$30
with your December Turf Paradise meeting fees. Thank You.**

Please mail checks to:
Jim Irwin
535 Topeka Dr.
Wickenburg, AZ 85390

ALL CHECKS MUST BE RECEIVED BY November 26, 2013

DEATH NOTICE



WILLARD W. GREGG

We were just notified that Club Member Willard W. Gregg of Mesa, AZ passed February 17, 2013 after a sixteen year battle with prostate cancer. He was born on June 15, 1941 in the Philippines and immigrated to the United States at the age of five. Willard grew up in Kansas City, MO and was a proud graduate of the University of Kansas. He had a long career as an engineer in the aerospace and automotive industries, retiring from **General Motors** in 2004. Anxious to escape to a warmer climate in retirement, Willard loved living in Mesa where he was a regular at the Mesa Senior Center and served as an usher for All Savior's Lutheran Church. He is survived by his loving wife Jean of nearly 49 years.

50/50 DRAWING WINNERS—OCTOBER 2013



Jim Irvin

1st Place \$65.00



Jim Harshman

2nd Place \$42.00



Mary Lou Phillips

3d Place \$22.00

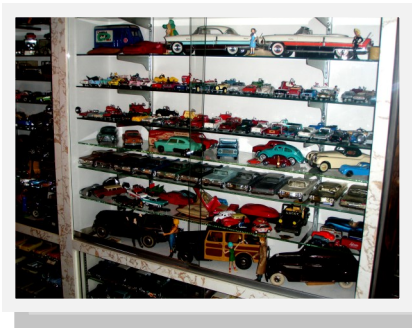
NEW MEMBER—RONALD KONOPKA



Ron was born in Detroit, Michigan into a "middle class" family of eight. and at a very early age realized that he had an artistic aptitude and a strong interest in creating things with his hands. By the time he was in 8th grade, he and his father were creating art projects out of balsa wood. Projects like constructing models of the Christopher Columbus ship the "Santa Maria", a windmill and finally a 2 foot long suspension bridge. These projects sparked an interest in building models that stayed with him for life as you will see later on in this article. As a freshman in high school, the rage at that time for teenage boys, was to build plastic model cars assembled from kits. So, not only did he build models, but he joined craft clubs and began collecting factory assembled and painted 1/25th scale model cars. I mean...hundreds of models of all sizes.

NEW MEMBER—RONALD KONOPKA

The main reason Ron began collecting these scale models was because he was intrigued by how car designs changed from year to year and by collecting them on a yearly basis he could follow the design progression for each model. Ron still owns most of these model cars today and later on in this article we will show you more of his prize possessions. But, like all good parents do when raising their children, they encouraged Ron to focus more on his school work than on model cars until after he graduated from high school.



After graduating from high school, Ron worked for a year before attending college at Highland Park Community College, all the while discreetly continuing to collect all types of model cars from GM direct or through its dealers. Model car collecting shows were big back in the 60's, so Ron's collection grew by leaps and bounds. The largest portion of Ron's collection is mostly in the 1/25th scale, but the larger 1/18th die cast models were also popular. Later on in life, Ron was able to collect even larger size 1/8th scale

styling studio models which are very difficult to collect as the greatest majority of them were destroyed by the various styling studios he worked for.



In June of 1964, Ron was forced to get a summer job in order to continue working his way through college. His first job was at the old historic Dodge Main Plant in Hamtramck as a typist in the Production Control Department including production scheduling, parts procurement, traffic and shipping and receiving. By 1967, he had graduated from Highland Park Community College and Chrysler had promoted Ron to a salary position while he was attending Wayne State University. Now, for all hard working young people, luck plays a big part in the advancement of one's career...being in the right place at the right time is everything. In 1968, Ron began to take "specialized clay modeling classes" in Highland Park in addition to his college classes. As luck would have it, the Detroit News announced that Chrysler was sponsoring a program to teach clay modeling skills because there was a shortage of Modelers at Chrysler. This two year training program taught classes in the making of hand tools, blueprint reading, drafting, automotive rendering and sketching, mold making in plaster and fiberglass, template making and creating 3/8th scale models as well as building a full scale clay model from blueprints. Upon completion, Ron was awarded an Associate Degree in Sculptor, which gave him all the skills to be qualified to work in a styling studio. Now, I ask you, based on what you see from the pictures in this article, was this a dream come true, or what? This was the move that defined Ron's career and passion for the automobile.

The rest of Ron's career is history. Ron's automotive styling career spanned 30 years and they were not always smooth, but you can never say they were dull. He began in 1970 at the Chrysler Highland Park Styling Department and worked on projects such as the 1975 Plymouth B-Body, 1977 Chrysler La Barron, Dodge Diplomat, Aspen, Volare, Cordoba to name just a few. But the 70's were not good years for the Big Three Detroit automakers. The OPEC Oil Embargo took its toll and Ron

NEW MEMBER—RONALD KONOPKA

found himself unemployed for many years. During one of those times Ron was out of work, he was hired by Bill Mitchell, retired V.P. of General Motors Design Staff, to work in his Rochester Hills, MI design studio. His job, create a completely new gondola model for the Goodyear Blimp. His design was accepted and actually worked and was implemented in future blimp builds. A complete complement of pictures are included in the section called RON THE GOODYEAR BLIMP GONDOLA DESIGNER later on in this article.

In 1984 - 2002, Ron was hired by GM Styling located at the GM Tech Center and some of his memorable projects and job assignments included the 1989 Fiero (Cancelled). 1990 APV Chevy Interior Studio, Advanced Design Studio for auto shows and being a mentor for the student intern program.

It should also be noted that during this entire period from 1960 - present, Ron has continued to collect and sell scale model cars and memorabilia at hundreds of shows and events as well as practice his sculpturing talent on "basement projects" in his spare time. The following is a pictorial review of some of Ron's most precious hobbies:

RON THE CAR MODEL COLLECTOR

Most of Ron's collection is with the 1/25th scale model cars as shown earlier in this article, but not all. Here are some of his bigger models:



Shown here is a basement shelf unit display of plaster or fiberglass styling models mostly in 1/8th scale that measure approximately 26 inches in length.



Shown here is a American Motors plaster styling studio of a 1956 Rambler sedan shown with two dealership announcement banners. This model measures 48 inches in length and is mounted on a wood base. Notice the five Hudson plaster styling studio models on the shelf unit. These models are not yet painted and detailed.



A clay styling studio model of what became the 1984 Corvette. This model measures 33 inches in length and was created with the use of hand tools only, no computer assistance.

NEW MEMBER—RONALD KONOPKA



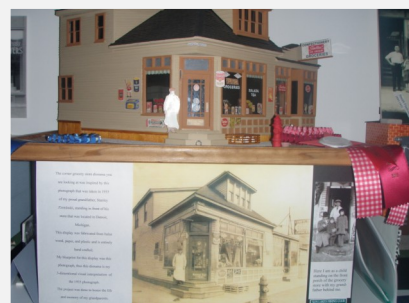
Pictured here is a 1935 Buick Sedan Clay Styling Model that was created by hand using styling tools and without the use of cad-cam technology. What Ron was trying to do was capture the appearance of a styling model as it might have been done during that era. The one advantage Ron had when creating the model was that he was working at GM and had access to automotive styling clay and other necessary materials and information needed to create such a scale model. The model measures 33 inches long and is approximately 1/10th scale. It took 500 hours to complete, but on May 25, 1995 the completed 1935 Buick sedan was part of a back-up display used in a management presentation for the 1998 Buick product line.

One of a kind 1932 Hudson Essex sedan in 1/4 scale which measures nearly 48 inches in length. This highly detailed model also features a detailed interior. It is made in a cast aluminum and weights nearly 125 pounds. Note the two figurines that Ron also made.



RON THE DIORAMA MINIATURIST

The diorama projects shown here were all created in Ron's Arizona home after he retired. His goal was to preserve some of his family history by creating three dimensional models of family businesses. All three have won awards in various craft shows and exhibits. Here is just a sample of three from his collection:



This corner grocery store diorama was inspired by the black and white photo taken in 1935 of his proud Grandfather, Stanley Ziemiński, standing in front of his store. The model was created from balsa wood, paper and plastic and was entirely hand crafted.



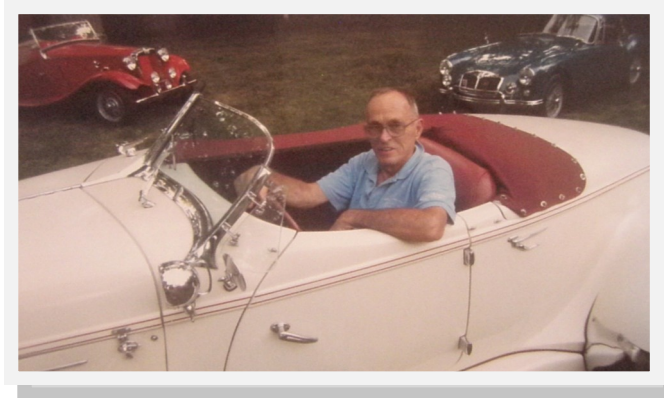
This diorama is of JoAnne's Flower Shop was also inspired by a 1950's photo of Ron's parents store located in Hamtramck, MI.



This diorama is of a Standard Oil Service Station very familiar to all during the 1950s and 1960s. This model was created to capture a typical day in 1959 when the business was active with service attendants, customers and weathered cars being serviced. The uniqueness of this model is that it also has a detailed interior. Note the inclusion of various scale model cars from the 30's, 40's & 50's and the figurines which are shown servicing customers. This is representative of the era where no one but service station personnel pumped your gas. The diorama is currently on display at the Grosse Pointe Park Municipal Building.

NEW MEMBER—RONALD KONOPKA

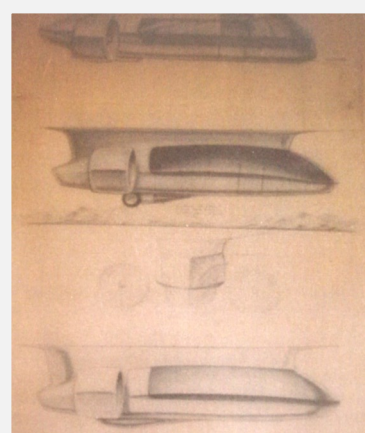
RON THE ANTIQUE CAR COLLECTOR



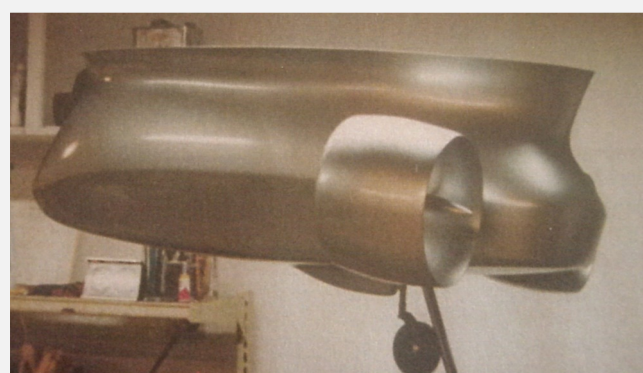
Who would a car enthusiast be without his own antique car collection? Ron refers to his collection by color...Red, White & Blue. Ron has three in his collection, one of which he purchased disassembled. His red 1950 MGTD took him many years to figure out how to assemble and make it drivable. The teal blue 1958 MGA coupe was completely restored in 1958 and has been entered in many local car shows and various touring events. Both cars have seen at least one parade lap of the famed Indianapolis Motor Speedway. His third antique car is a white 1936

Auburn Speedster which is not an authentic car from 1936. It is a California factory assembled car that was built on a 1989 Lincoln frame with a modern Lincoln drive train.

RON THE GOODYEAR BLIMP GONDOLA DESIGNER



Ron's side view renderings for proposed Goodyear blimp gondola.



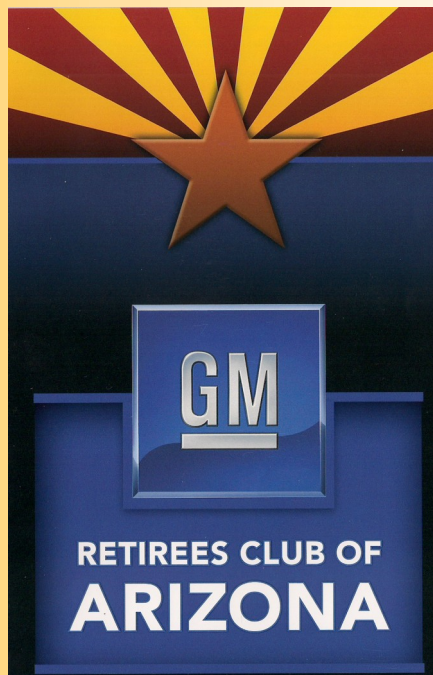
Painted 3/4 side view of gondola. Note turbine fan blades.



In closing, I would like to say...I don't know about you, but I have never seen anything like this and this is only the tip of his collection. Sometimes you see a one dimensional hobby, but never the depth of Ron's collections and creations. Yes, my advice to you is to say hello to Ron and ask to visit his entire collection at his home in Harper Woods or here in Sun Lakes, AZ. You will not be disappointed. It is absolutely incredible!

www.GMRetireesAZ.com

GM RETIREE CLUB



" A G M R E T I R E E S C L U B O F A R I Z O N A P U B L I C A T I O N "

Designed by Diane E. Harshman

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