

# U.S. Auto Scene

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## MCC Speaker will Talk About Polio in the 1950s

by Gerald Scott  
Editor  
U.S. Auto Scene

Pretty much anybody over the age of 45 remembers when polio was the scourge of modern American health care.

By the thousands, particularly in the 1940s and 1950s, people became infected with the disease and it typically impacted their lives in a negative fashion forever more.

Before a cure for polio was found in the mid-1950s, parents and families feared its dire consequences for their vulnerable children in particular.

This is all relevant because the scourge of polio — and the public health crusade that ultimately defeated it — will be featured “Polio: A Look Back at America’s Most Successful Public Health Crusade, which is part of the ongoing 1950s exhibit at Macomb Community College’s Lorenzo Cultural Center in Clinton Twp.

There, Pulitzer Prize-winning author David M. Ovshinsky will highlight the frantic race to find a polio vaccine, the ethical dilemmas in human testing, and the way the campaign against polio revolutionized philanthropy and medical research in the U.S.

Ovshinsky’s presentation will begin at 7 p.m. on Thursday, March 31, with a special Meet and Greet with the author being held at 5:30 p.m.

Author of several books, Ovshinsky won the Pulitzer in 2006 for “Polio: An American Story,” which is a gripping account of the terror polio inflicted on the populace and the intense effort to find the cure.

Ovshinsky currently holds

the Jack S. Blanton Chair in history at the University of Texas at Austin and is a distinguished scholar-in-residence at New York University.

“Professor Ovshinsky’s insight into the battle against this frightening disease is unparalleled,” said Christine Guarino, director of Cultural Affairs at MCC.

“He is sought out frequently by the New York Times, Washington Post and other national publications for his insights on the event’s of the mid-20th century.

Ovshinsky’s presentation at the Lorenzo is actually the second in an MCC Speaker Series featuring award-winning authors and historians who have insights to share on the impact of the 1950s on American culture and society.

Tickets are \$15, or \$5 for seniors, students and military personnel for Ovshinsky’s talk. Individual tickets to a single presentation that includes the Meet and Greet reception are \$20. Visit the Macomb Center’s Web site for further details on tickets and the remainin speakers following Ovshinsky.

On a coincidental note, this April 12 marks the anniversary of the death of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, himself a polio survivor and founder of the March of Dimes, the big fund-raiser against polio in his era.

When Dr. Jonas Salk announced that the vaccine to immunize against polio was a success, the date of the announcement, held at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, was April 12, 1955 — in honor of ten years to the day of the death of polio-champion FDR.

## R2 Set to Experience Microgravity

INTERNATIONAL SPACE STATION — After being packed in a special shipping crate aboard the Space Shuttle Discovery for more than six months, Robonaut 2 is finally free and ready to get to work.

International Space Station (ISS) flight engineers Cady Coleman and Paolo Nespoli opened the crate and began preparing R2 for his assignment in the Destiny laboratory.

R2 is the first dexterous, humanoid robot to be sent into space.

After several years of development by engineers and scientists from General Motors and the NASA Johnson Space Center in Houston, R2 will get its first experience in microgravity.

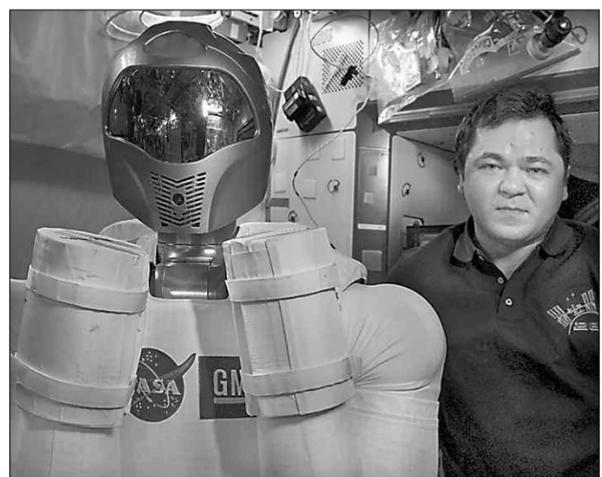
Because R2 consists only of

a torso, head and arms, the robot has been mounted on a pedestal where it will interact with a specially designed task board so that the engineers can calibrate and refine the sensing and control systems.

The R2 evaluation program aboard the ISS will begin sometime in May.

GM’s Research & Development unit in Warren sent a team of GM engineers to Houston earlier on a 29-month project to develop R2, which serves space science functions for NASA and industrial and automotive functions for General Motors.

The robot’s twin was on display at GM R&D’s auditorium late last year — the same robot has also entertained children at the Smithsonian Museum in Washington, D.C.



Russian cosmonaut Oleg Skripochka, Expedition 26 flight engineer, poses with Robonaut 2, the dexterous humanoid astronaut helper built jointly by GM and NASA, in the Destiny laboratory of the International Space Station.

## 4-Cylinder Engines Top Choices in Chevrolet Lineup

DETROIT — Consumer demand for fuel efficiency and advancements in engine technology have moved four-cylinder models to the top of consumers’ shopping lists.

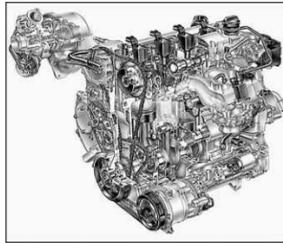
In 2007, four-cylinder models represented 23 percent of Chevrolet retail sales in the United States, less than either V6- or V8-equipped models. So far this year, that number has increased to 46 percent, making fuel-efficient four-cylinder engines the top choice in the Chevrolet lineup.

“Chevrolet’s investment in advanced engine technology is reflected in the increased popularity of our four-cylinder models,” said Rick Scheidt, U.S. vice president, Chevrolet. “These technologies offer the performance and refinement drivers expect from Chevy in smaller engines that deliver the fuel efficiency they want.”

Customers are moving out of V8-powered SUVs into V6-powered crossovers like the Traverse, and from V6-powered cars and crossovers into fuel-efficient four-cylinder models, such as Cruze, Malibu and Equinox, he said.

“The shift in consumer preference evidenced by Chevrolet’s lineup is a great example of how much four-cylinder engines have improved across the industry,” said Bill Visnic, analyst and senior editor for Edmunds AutoObserver.com.

“Four cylinders used to be something to settle for. But advances in engine design and technology have made four-cylinder engines vastly more refined, and power output has increased to where V6 engines



The 2011 GM Ecotec 2.0L, 14, variable-value timing, direct injection engine that powers the Buick Regal CXL.

were just a few years ago.”

Here are three examples of how Chevrolet is applying technology to improve the performance, refinement, and fuel efficiency of its four-cylinder line:

- Turbocharging helps Chevrolet Cruze Eco deliver 42 mpg highway.

The Cruze is available with turbocharged, Ecotec 1.4L, four-cylinder engine that combines the fuel efficiency of a small engine with the power of a much larger engine when needed. The turbocharged engine delivers 138 horsepower and 148 pound feet of torque and up to 42 miles per gallon on the highway for Cruze Eco models — more than any other gasoline-powered car in the United States.

By comparison, the 2009 Chevrolet Cobalt XFE featured a larger 2.2-liter four-cylinder, with nearly identical output at 148 horsepower and 152 lb.-ft. of torque, but five fewer miles per gallon on the highway.

The 1.4L, turbocharged engine will also be used in the

| 46 PERCENT OF CHEVROLET RETAIL SALES ARE 4-CYLINDER MODELS                          |                                      |
|---|--------------------------------------|
|  | CHEVROLET CRUZE ECO<br><b>42 MPG</b> |
|  | CHEVROLET MALIBU<br><b>33 MPG</b>    |
|  | CHEVROLET EQUINOX<br><b>32 MPG</b>   |

EPA-estimated highway mpg

GM points out that almost half of all Chevrolet brand sales are now of vehicles with 4-cylinder engines.

all-new Chevrolet Sonic, which will arrive at U.S. dealers this fall.

- Variable Valve Timing helps Chevrolet Malibu deliver 33 mpg highway.

The Malibu features an Ecotec 2.4L four-cylinder engine, with variable valve timing that precisely adjusts the opening and closing of the engine valves to meet demand. The result improves performance and fuel economy for the Malibu, with 170 horsepower, 160 lb.-ft. of torque, and an EPA estimated 33 miles per gallon on the highway.

Variable valve timing is featured on 12 Chevrolets, including the Camaro, Volt, Cruze and Silverado.

- Direct injection helps Chevrolet Equinox reach 32 mpg highway.

The Equinox also features an Ecotec 2.4L engine, with

both variable valve timing and direct injection. Compared with traditional fuel-injection, direction injection sprays fuel directly into the cylinder — enabling more precise fuel delivery for improved performance, fuel efficiency, and reduced emissions.

In the Equinox, the direct-injection 2.4L Ecotec is rated at 182 horsepower, and 172 lb.-ft. of torque, while delivering an EPA-estimated 32 mpg highway — more than any vehicle in its class, including the Ford Escape Hybrid. By comparison, the previous-generation 2008 Equinox had a 3.4L V6 that delivered a comparable 185 horsepower and 210 lb.-ft. of torque with 24 mpg highway.

Direct injection is also available on the Camaro V6, the Equinox V6, and the Traverse crossover.

## Auto Industry Still Debating Merits of Black Boxes

MARYSVILLE, Wash. (AP) — Cleora Swirtz found out the hard way that there was a data-recording “black box” in her car.

In 2004, Swirtz, 21 at the time, had been in a coma for more than a month after her car ran into a tree on a wet roadway at night east of Marysville.

At some point after she finally regained consciousness, she learned that her boyfriend, Randall Frank, 17, had been killed in the accident.

“I was more or less in shock, I didn’t know what to say or think,” said Swirtz, of Marysville.

Several months after the crash, based partly on the information gleaned from the device in Swirtz’ car, she was charged in Snohomish County Superior Court with vehicular homicide. In 2007, that data helped convict her.

“I had no idea, it was all new to me,” she said.

It’s likely news to many others as well that their cars contain devices that record information about vehicle speed, seat belt use, braking, RPMs and more.

The “black boxes” are more formally called event data recorders, or EDRs.

As of last year, roughly 85 percent of all the cars on the road were fitted with the devices, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

Manufacturers and other proponents say the black boxes record information that is useful for safety and accident analysis.

Privacy advocates, on the other hand, say more laws are needed to protect vehicle owners from how the information is used.

“I think there’s a lot more bad ways how the data can be used for various things,” said Gary Biller, executive director of the National Motorists Association in Madison, Wis.

The boxes were first installed in cars in the early 1990s by General Motors as a way to control deployment of airbags, said Alan Adler, a spokesman for General Motors in Detroit.

Airbags may be controlled by several different types of crash sensors, including EDRs.

The “black box” is separate from the array of microprocessors that control most basic auto functions. The devices are not black but rather a brighter color, such as silver, that makes them easier for investigators to find after an accident, said Det. Joe Goffin, a crash investigator for the Snohomish County Sheriff’s Office.

The devices are about the size of a large matchbox. Where they are installed depends on a vehicle’s make and model, usually behind the dashboard or

under the driver’s seat, Goffin said.

The EDR stores only about the most recent 5 seconds of data. In the event of a crash — when the airbag is deployed — the information in the device is permanently captured. Unlike the black boxes on airplanes, it does not record voices.

There are many different types of EDRs, and some record more information than others. In addition to basics such as speed, braking and airbag deployment, some also store data, for example, on seat belt use and changes in velocity in the seconds leading up to impact.

All EDRs in vehicles manufactured for sale in the United States after Sept. 1, 2012, must record 15 specific functions, as determined by the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration, such as how much the accelerator pedal was being pressed, the vehicle’s speed and specific changes in the vehicle’s velocity either longitudinally — front to back — or laterally, from the side.

But there’s no blanket requirement that EDRs be installed in vehicles.

The National Motorists Association doesn’t have a problem with making EDRs uniform but has a long list of other concerns. The devices can’t be disabled, and in most cases vehicle owners don’t have access to the information inside.

## Florida Bill Favors OEMs in Lawsuits

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (AP) — Auto makers and other manufacturers scored a victory in the Florida Senate on last week as the chamber passed a bill that would make it more difficult for injured parties to win product liability awards in some cases.

The bill would undo a 2001 Florida Supreme Court decision that came in a suit against Ford Motor Co. that says evidence of the primary cause of a crash, such as driver error, cannot be introduced in lawsuits alleging defective products caused additional or more serious injuries.

“This bill requires that the jury hear the whole story,” said Sen. Garrett Richter, a Naples Republican sponsoring the bill. “We should not disrespect a jury. We should put the facts on the table.”

The largely party line vote, 28-12, sent the measure (SB 142) to the House where a similar bill (HB 201) is stalled in committee. Only one Republican, Sen. Thad Altman of Viera, voted against the bill and just one Democrat, Sen. Bill Montford of Tallahassee, voted for it.

Other Democrats argued the bill would shift medical costs

for seriously injured crash victims to taxpayers and that manufacturers should be held accountable for their mistakes.

“What we’re doing today is not just a lot of legalese,” said Sen. Maria Sachs, D-Delray Beach. “We are reversing the Florida Supreme Court decision on this case that involves real people — Floridians.”

The legislation has been the focus of a lobbying duel between businesses interests and trial lawyers who represent injured parties.

In cheering its passage, Associated Industries of Florida president and CEO Barney Bishop said the Supreme Court ruling is not only unfair but is keeping auto makers from locating in the state.

“Just like any individual or business, auto manufacturers are entitled to a level playing field in the courtroom,” Bishop said in a statement. “In these turbulent financial times, we can no longer allow the legal climate to impede efforts to attract businesses to our state.”

The high court ruling came in the case of Karen D’Amario whose son, Clifford Harris, then 15, was badly burned and

lost three limbs when the car in which he was a passenger crashed into a tree and then exploded. The driver, Stanley Liveronno, also 15, was killed.

D’Amario alleged her son’s injuries were due mostly to the explosion caused by a defective relay switch on a fuel pump. The jury sided with Ford, which argued the switch was fine and blamed the fire on the collision because it ruptured the car’s oil pan.

The justices ruled that the jury was confused by evidence that the driver was drunk and speeding instead of focusing on the product liability allegation. The opinion reversed the jury’s verdict and said such evidence should be excluded from future cases that allege enhanced injuries.

Sen. David Simmons, R-Maitland, characterized the bill as a compromise because the Senate last week accepted an amendment he offered that says judges still can exclude evidence if it’s irrelevant or prejudicial such as the fact a driver had been drunk. The difference is judges would make those decisions on a case-by-cases basis instead of the blanket exclusion ordered by the Supreme Court.