

# U.S. Auto Scene

— First Published in 1993 —

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AD DEADLINE: Thursday 5:00 p.m. for the next edition  
Ads@SpringerPublishing.com 586-939-5850 Fax - SPC Warren

William L. Springer II, Publisher  
Hal Watts, Local News Editor  
Debra Joswick, Ad Design  
Chris Zawislinski, Circulation

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31201 Chicago Road South  
Warren, Michigan 48093  
586-939-6800

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## HF Library Hosts Lecture

The Henry Ford Centennial Library in Dearborn is hosting a free lecture about state railroad depot history on Tuesday, April 5 at 7 p.m.

Friends of the Library-Dearborn present "Railroad Depots of Michigan" with David Mrozek. Michigan, it seems, has a rich railroad history.

Visit the library for an in-

formative presentation of railroad stations in Michigan, past and present. Author Mrozek is a retired financial analyst, and has been interested in trains and railroad stations since the mid-1960s, when he was a teenager growing up in Dearborn.

The event is open to the public.



PHOTO: GERALD SCOTT

Arthur Siirila of the U.S. Army Contracting Command at TACOM hosted the NDIA meeting at the GM Heritage Center last week.

## GM Heritage Center Cars Impress NDIA Visitors

by Gerald Scott  
Editor  
U.S. Auto Scene

The GM Heritage Center continues to hold its own as one of Macomb County's premier auto industry vehicle showcases.

Such was the case last week when it hosted a quarterly networking meeting of the Michigan Chapter of the NDIA, which is the National Defense Industrial Assn.

Hundreds turned out and for many it was the first time inside of the GM Heritage Center, where GM stores and displays its legacy classic car and truck fleet.

A GM official pointed out that GM stores some 440 classic cars these days and at any given time, there are about 180 or so on the show floor at the Heritage Center, which is located in an industrial park in Sterling Heights.

It's not a public facility, it might be noted, but select automotive, military and industrial organizations are allowed to rent it out for evenings such as the big NDIA meeting.

"It's a wonderful venue," declared Arthur Siirila, Director, Combat Support Contracting at TACOM in Warren, who is a board member for NDIA - Michigan Chapter as well.

"This night is for you, this is kind of our way of thanking you - membership appreciation. Your continued support to our events allows us to do what we do.

"We have over 2,500 (chapter) members and this is a really good turnout. All of us on the board are volunteers, but we think we've developed a reputation for putting on first-class events that are responsive to the needs of the local defense community."

The national NDIA is based in Arlington, Va., and the larger organization's roots date back to 1919 with the formation of the Army Ordnance Assn., which was later renamed the American Defense Preparedness Assn.

With the merger of the AD-

PA and the National Security Industrial Assn. in 1997, the newly named NDIA then became America's leading defense industrial association promoting national security.

The non-profit NDIA says its mission is to advocate for cutting-edge technology and superior weapons, equipment, training and support for U.S. warfighters and domestic first-responders alike.

"One of the neat things about working with this group is that it's a very close-knit, very collaborative group," Siirila said.

"Just as an aside, last Friday (March 25) there was a defense / small business summit in downtown Detroit at Cobo Hall.

"The White House and the Secretary of Defense's office threw this whole thing together in about three weeks, so it was just amazing to have over 600 people (attend that function)."

The Michigan Chapter of NDIA participated there at Cobo and it has a whole host of activities its supporting throughout the rest of this year.

Highlights include an ROTC Awards Banquet at the Dearborn Inn on April 15 followed by the Michigan Defense Industrial Base Expo at Macomb College's Sports and Expo Center in Warren on May 18-19.

One of its bigger annual events will be the Ground Vehicle System Engineering & Technology Symposium scheduled for Aug. 9-11 at the Hyatt Regency in Dearborn.

Otherwise, a grand time was had by all at the GM Heritage Center, where the GM Motorama cars from the 1950s turned heads, as did the 1932 Buick Y-Job concept car and a 1992 GM Design Staff ultralight experimental car that many visitors insisted on having their pictures taken in front of.

For more information and updates about the NDIA Michigan Chapter's most recent business and military initiatives, visit its corresponding Web site online

## Chrysler CEOs Happy with Automaker's Progress

By COLLEEN BARRY  
Associated Press

TURIN, Italy - Fiat and Chrysler CEO Sergio Marchionne suggested last week that Chrysler may delay its initial public offering depending on the cash needs of the U.S. automaker and the autoworkers union trust fund.

Marchionne has previously hinted that an IPO could happen by the end of the year.

He said a decision on whether and when to take Chrysler public would depend on how much the automaker itself and the United Auto Workers health care trust, which pays health benefits for retirees and holds a 63.5 percent share in Chrysler, need liquidity.

"If those two needs are not there, then the IPO of Chrysler may or may not become relevant," he told reporters after a Fiat shareholders meeting.

But Marchionne added: "It is rational, maybe reasonable,

to expect that there will be an IPO. It can't be done very quickly. We just filed with the SEC, we're still working our way through the comments. We have to get ready to be a public company again, and issuing securities takes time. We should do it properly."

Fiat SpA, which took over management of Chrysler Group LLC 21 months ago, increased its stake in the once-bankrupt automaker, Detroit's third largest, to 25 percent this year. Marchionne confirmed that Fiat expects to raise it to 35 percent by the end of the year.

At that point, it could go even further and raise its stake to a majority 51 percent if Chrysler repays loans to the U.S. and Canadian governments.

Marchionne is talking to banks about refinancing.

"Our goal remains to achieve a stake of more than 51 percent within the year," Marchionne said.

At that point, Chrysler

could launch an IPO. Fiat, he said, had other options for further increasing its stake beyond 51 percent - including the possibility of acquiring 8 percent of the U.S. Treasury's stake in Chrysler, he said. The Canadian government owns another 2.3 percent.

Marchionne told shareholders earlier that the two automakers could generate combined revenues of 100 billion euros (\$141 billion) by 2014.

He expects Fiat's revenues alone to nearly double from 35.8 billion (\$50.5 billion) in 2010 to 64 billion, a target previously announced. That would leave the once-bankrupt Chrysler to contribute more than 36 billion (\$50.7 billion).

Fiat SpA, which got an initial 20 percent stake in the automaker in return for small-car technology and management know-how, is in the process of relaunching Chrysler with new models, including the Fiat-badged re-



Sergio Marchionne

make of the iconic 500 city car. "I am very happy with the progress the American company is making," Marchionne said. "It has taken great strides in the last four months."

Post-bankruptcy Chrysler has dramatically narrowed losses in 2010 and forecasts net income of \$200 million to \$500 million for 2011.

## Chrysler Museum Lecture Series Starts April 16

The Walter P. Chrysler Museum in Auburn Hills, Mich., has announced its complete 2011 Lecture/Workshop Series, which is composed of six sessions highlighting a wide range of topics for die-hard auto enthusiasts as well as novice car owners.

The series kicks off Saturday, April 16, with "The Art of the Auction," featuring RM Auctions and Auctions America by RM.

Rounding out the 2011 series is:

- Non-Destructive Paint Repair Techniques, Saturday, May 21
- 70 Years of Jeep Heritage, Saturday, July 16
- Maintaining Today's Cars, Saturday, Sept. 24
- From Chrysler's Vintage Master Tech Files, Wednesday, Oct. 26
- Model Train Clinic, Saturday, Dec. 3.

"The Art of the Auction" - 10 a.m.-noon Saturday, April 16. \$15 per person advance, \$17 at the door (museum members \$13 and \$15, respectively).

Car specialists from RM Auctions and its new subsidiary, Auctions America by RM, will lead "The Art of the Auction" on April 16, offering expert advice and an inside look at the collector hobby.

The interactive session - in

the Museum's second floor theater - will explore an overview of the car collecting pastime and the market, as well as a forecast for the upcoming summer auction season (including recommendations on what to buy, hold and sell).

The interactive session also features collector cars as "alternative investments," tips for buying and selling at auction, and behind-the-scenes accounts from such prestigious RM-hosted annual auctions as Arizona, Amelia Island, Michigan (formerly Meadow Brook), and Monterey, as well as from Auctions America by RM's debut Auburn Fall sale.

"Non-Destructive Paint Repair Techniques" - 9:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m. Saturday, May 21. \$55 per person advance, \$60 door (museum members \$50 and \$55, respectively).

Chrysler Academy School of Technical Training instructors will detail do-it-yourself techniques for repairing general paint finish imperfections such as dirt and bugs, light scratches and maintenance on both new and vintage vehicles. Instruction will be held in the museum's theater throughout the morning, followed by small group demonstrations within the labs of the nearby training facility in

the afternoon. (Includes lunch in the museum's exhibition galleries. Space is limited.)

"70 Years of Jeep Heritage" - 9:30 a.m.-noon Saturday, July 16. \$13 per person advance, \$15 door (museum members \$11 and \$13, respectively).

Celebrate the Jeep Brand's 70th anniversary by joining avid Jeep history buff and Chrysler retiree Larry Johnson for a look at the iconic vehicle's evolutionary rise from military reconnaissance use to the transportation of choice in navigating all manner of terrain for millions of adventure-seekers.

"Maintaining Today's Cars" - 10 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 24. \$10 per person advance, \$12 per person door (museum members \$8 and \$10, respectively).

If you're a first-time vehicle owner or have a new driver in the family, this session is for you. Protect your investment and avoid getting stranded by learning about required maintenance, including checking the oil, safely filling the fuel tank and changing a flat tire.

Learn what dashboard warning lights indicate and how to handle roadside emergencies. Tips and techniques presented in the session's first half will be reinforced via hands-on demonstrations in the second half.

"From Chrysler's Vintage Master Tech Files" - 6:00-8:00 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 26. \$13 per person advance, \$15 per person door (museum members \$11 and \$13, respectively).

For more than 60 years, Chrysler dealership technicians have learned in-depth diagnostics and service procedures through a monthly training program that's believed to be the longest running of its kind. Master Tech courses - which are Web-based today - have advanced as much as the vehicles they highlight.

Join Steve Shugg, retired Director of Mopar Sales and Training and Field Operations, for an entertainingly nostalgic look back at the then cutting-edge training from Master Tech's earliest days via delightfully antiquated original filmstrips.

"Model Train Clinic" - 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 3. \$2 per person ages 5 and up with regular museum admission (\$1 for museum members). Celebrate the season with a stroll through the museum's Cars, Trees & Traditions exhibition and delight in a variety of trains running through elaborate landscapes on an oval track in Boss Chrysler's Garage every holiday weekend.

## Panelists Plug in Their Ideas at Green Conference

by Christine Snyder  
Staff Reporter  
Tech Center News

Kristin Zimmerman, project manager of the Chevrolet Volt, didn't arrive early enough to the "All Things Green Conference & Expo" at the Electrical Industry Training Center in Warren on March 30 to snag one of its two electric vehicle (EV) charge stations. Other Chevy Volt drivers beat her to it.

Zimmerman secured a time to charge in the afternoon with one of the three other GM employees/Volt drivers and the discussion evolved to work charging station etiquette and issues. Are drivers obligated to move their cars after their cars are charged? How can we be alerted when there is an open spot?

Negotiating for charge time and jockeying for a station are just some of the new developments in the new world of electric vehicles.

Aptly, Zimmerman was part of a conference panel entitled, "Plugging In: Electric Vehicles & Incentives."

While there was little data to share as far as the Volt's presence in Michigan - as it just reached showrooms earlier in the month - Zimmerman, said it was "on target." There have been 286 Volts ordered in Michigan and 85 of those have been delivered.

"It's been pretty much on a made-to-order basis," said Zimmerman. "Demand is outstripping supply, which is a good problem to have."

Stuart Irwin, regional sales manager, ClipperCreek - a company that installs charge stations - said the adoption of EV technology is very exciting.

"When we see customers sitting in the vehicles like the Volt, they are of course

thrilled about the car . . . but they are also thrilled about the idea of getting off gasoline," said Irwin.

Zimmerman said for EVs to work in society, utilities, OEM and contractors have to work together. "We are all interdependent, we need each other and can't do it alone."

Tom Bowes, assistant training director at the Electrical Industry Training Center, said he is training people to install EV charge stations and wants to aid GM and other EV manufacturers in making sure EV drivers find the entire experience positive.

"A lot of what goes into EV installation is traditional electrical (work). The (focus) is on increasing professionalism.

"Customer satisfaction is the overall element. If EV owners have a headache getting the charge station installation done, it skews the deal.

We look at this as a team effort to get this done."

As part of that team effort, GM is helping utilities with the critical piece of information they need: when EV owners will appear on the grid.

"So every 2-3 weeks I email (electric companies) and share the address of the customer," said Zimmerman who said electric companies can then study when and how people are charging.

"It's working well and it's unique to GM to go into (that amount of detail)," said Zimmerman.

For its part, DTE Energy is getting ready, said Hawk Asgerisson, manager, power systems technologies, DTE Energy.

DTE has established a less expensive off-peak rate for customers to avoid system overload.

Peak hours, 3-8 p.m., are the most expensive times to

charge, while the rest of the times are considered off-peak, said Asgerisson.

Asgerisson said DTE also has an experimental flat-rate plan for 250 of its EV-driving customers to study how people charge if not worried about rates.

Zimmerman said Michigan is ahead of the curve for plug-in EV (PEV) readiness, thanks in part to the Michigan Public Service Commission's PEV Taskforce, which looked at barriers and how Michigan can lead in readiness for this technology.

"We see a seamless transition for PEV," said Zimmerman. "Everyone thinks of California as being way in the lead, but Michigan, on many metrics, is in the lead for plug-in readiness."

The city of Warren, home to GM's Tech Center, has been position itself as a green-friendly city.



PHOTO: CHRISTINE SNYDER

From left, Craig Duprey, facility area manager, GM Tech Center; Kristin Zimmerman, project manager, Chevrolet Volt; David Aspen, environmental manager, GM Tech Center and Larry Bannasch, GM facilities area manager drove their Chevy Volts to the "All Things Green Conference" in Warren.