

85 Years: GM Design Still Rolling Out Winners

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Grand National, the Buick Regals and the 1979 Buick Riviera. He went out of his way to say that no one designer can always take credit for a typical car design, that it's more of a team effort than the public perhaps realizes.

"For example, it's hard for me to take credit for the 1979 Riviera because it had elements from the 1963 Riviera that we repeated, so you have to credit the 1963 design team for what the (latter-day) Riviera looked like," Pasteiner explained.

"There's an expression among designers that unless you 'invented the wheel,' you can't take credit for whatever followed."

But still, any number of great individual car designers made their names within GM Design dating back to its roots as GM Styling in 1927, some of whom even went on to work at rival design staffs.

"When I started there, I could never get over the fact that you were getting paid to do what you loved to do and

that's to draw cars," Pasteiner said.

"And on top of that, you were doing it in Warren, at the ultimate automotive campus, at the ultimate technology center – the GM Tech Center. When I was new, just to see the stainless steel water tower in the reflecting pond (on the original west campus) was an inspiration.

"Then you add those wonderful stairways at both Research and Design (buildings) and now you're talking."

Indeed, although the GM Tech Center is now over five decades old, in many respects and perhaps most respects, the campus still looks as good as the day it opened back in May of 1956, when Dave Garoway, original host of NBC's "Today" show, took viewers on a building-by-building tour of the 300-acre auto campus.

All of which leads back to today's GM Design and those 1,900 employees working around the globe to wow a new generation of customers with stunning designs that have pleasing cues and features.

Recent vehicle introductions that have helped propel GM's resurgence include the Chevrolet Camaro sports car, Malibu midsize sedan and Cruze compact car; the Cadillac CTS coupe, GMC Terrain and the Buick Enclave and LaCrosse.

And that's all not to even mention the hallowed Chevrolet Volt.

The award-winning Volt electric vehicle with extended range went from concept to production in just three years, it might be noted. For that matter, the Volt had a really forward-looking design for the concept vehicle, which debuted at the 2007 Detroit auto show.

But in short order, say, only 29 months, GM Design helped the Volt team to create and implement a more practical design – a car that Chevy dealers could actually sell, as opposed to the spaceship-looking 2007 concept.

Thus, the Volt went from concept car to production vehicle in record time for a modern automobile, certainly an accomplishment that GM de-

signers who worked on the Volt project are now proud of. Welburn and his global design team say that their best work still lies ahead of them.

Tomorrow's classic cars, he said, are on the sketchpads and computers of today's designers. GM Design is at the forefront of an ongoing global product renaissance that will see 70 percent of the GM's current vehicle portfolio replaced in the next three years.

"Our global structure allows us to design more new vehicles and to dedicate more people using the latest technology and tools to bring them to market," GM's Welburn said.

"The diversity of thought, experience, culture and perspective we foster here is unrivaled, and it fuels our creative process.

"Though we have multiple design centers, our mission is clear: Every new product we develop has to be a home run; each one has to be a great vehicle."

GM Design, which originated at New Center, has been in Warren since 1956.

Packard Grill Offers Steaks, Soups And a Taste of Automotive History

by Jennifer Knightstep

When Al Thomas opened the Packard Grill several years ago, he envisioned running a family dining restaurant, so no one is more surprised than he that it's become something more.

The Grill's customers now enjoy their meals at a casual dining establishment that boasts excellent food, top-notch entertainment, and a décor that's thoroughly modern with hints of its automotive industry history.

The tie-ins to the historic Packard Motor Car Company begin with the old Packard parked in front of the restaurant, located just north of the Packard Proving Grounds on Van Dyke Avenue in Shelby Township.

Memorabilia, including dozens of print ads, adorns the walls, and near the hostess stand hangs a gigantic painting, a commissioned reproduction of a scene at the Proving Grounds test track.

Intermixed with the vintage prints are big-screen TVs and

a few tasteful neon beer signs.

"It's a good mix of the old and new," says Thomas, as his niece, waitress Carly Shalhoub, nods in agreement beside him.

"We offer something for everyone," Thomas says. "We have the best steak in town, homemade soups, a friendly staff, sports, and even a karaoke and a psychic a few nights a week.

"Our clients are loyal. Some are families we've served for years, some are just sports fans who want to watch the game, and we even have some people who come in from the Packard days."

Interviewed on the day of the Cars 'R' Stars show at the Packard Proving Grounds, Thomas and Shalhoub said they expected to be busy serving show-goers all day.

It makes perfect sense, really, to continue the show experience at the Packard Grill.

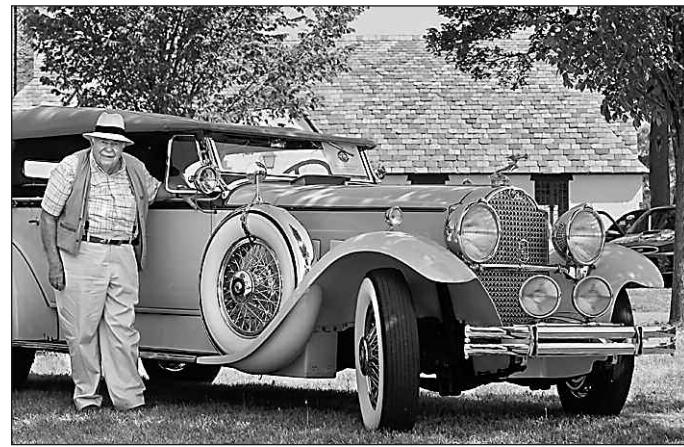
"We love the history, we love our clients, we love the show, and we love the restaurant," says Thomas. "It's a labor of love."



Serena Sluka of Shelby Township with her son's 1969 Mustang Mach 1. Son Shane returns soon from military service in Iraq.



Michael Butcher, age 5, of Shelby Township, gets a close-up view of a handbuilt 1929 Mercedes at the Cars 'R' Stars show.



Cars 'R' Stars car show board member Don Sommer with his elegant 1930 Packard Phaeton.

Car Show Site Has Unique History as Packard Proving Grounds

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of the extras like the timing tower and a series of garages and warehouses that are all in remarkably good shape, given the years and decades.

Note that the one and only Packard Plant on East Grand Boulevard in Detroit had a smaller test track adjacent to the factory, but Packard really couldn't spread its wings until it built and occupied the Shelby Township Proving Grounds, which back in the day was "out in the country" for sure.

Packard even hired noted architect Albert Kahn to design the superintendent's house, which is still there and is open during occasional public functions at the site. Packard car club volunteers

maintain the site and work on never-ending projects to keep the remaining buildings and facilities intact.

During World War II, Packard loaned use of the test track to Chrysler, which ran a series of heavy battle tanks

around the track, which more or less ruined the high quality test results that Packard used to get on its prototype cars.

Veteran Packard employees claimed that the test track was never quite the same following Chrysler's use of tanks

and other armored and tracked vehicles around the precious test-track.

Otherwise, the facility's history says that the great aviator, Charles Lindbergh, once landed his airplane there in the center of track, back when

aviators could actually do that sort of thing. Lindbergh's airplane was stored in one of the old hangars, which is still there, before he went on his way the next day.

Considering that Packard collapsed in the 1955-56 era,

it's hard to find any remaining Packard employees still around these days, but the Proving Grounds, those last surviving 14 acres, sure make a nice, pastoral setting for car club reviews and car shows like Cars 'R' Stars.

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