

Chrysler Museum Exhibit Creates 75 Years of Mopar

by Jim Stickford

Fans of Mopar and classic Chrysler cars should visit the Walter P. Chrysler Museum in Auburn Hills before it becomes closed to the public on Dec. 30, the day before its announced merger with the Chrysler Foundation.

After that, the museum will open for special exhibits only.

Ashley Ray, collections manager of the Walter P. Chrysler Museum said they created a special display dedicated to 75 years of Mopar.

"Most people don't know that 2012 is the 75th anniversary of Mopar," Ray said. "We wanted to commemorate that and, as far as we know, this is the first time Mopar has had its own display."

Ray said Mopar is important to Chrysler because it's the company's parts and service arm. The division has been providing parts and services to Chrysler customers for 75 years, which she said is worth honoring.

But, Ray said, when people hear Mopar they tend to think of muscle cars. While the racing side of Mopar is an important legacy, it's not all there is to Mopar.

"The display at the museum honors both sides of Mopar," Ray said. "The parts and service side and the racing side."

"When I was doing my research on Mopar and was telling people what I was doing, they all asked me about the racing side of things and about Mopar's muscle car tradition."

They didn't ask Ray about what she calls the quiet side of Mopar. Investigating the parts and service side became very important and, she said, fun.

"I was surprised at what I was able to find," Ray said. "I was able to find a bunch of little gems that have been largely ignored."

Among the items Ray dug up were photographs from a Plymouth parts department dealership dating back to the late 1930s or early 1940s. It shows Mopar at its most "meat and potatoes" function. The second photograph was one of Mopar's wholesale parts depot.

What makes the picture interesting, Ray said, is that in the photograph are the fleet of small

delivery vehicles that were used to deliver parts on a daily basis to repair shops and dealerships around metro Detroit.

The photograph was mislabeled, giving a date in the 1920s, when Mopar didn't exist. Ray was able to determine the photo was actually taken in the 1940s, and using Google Maps, she also was able to find the actual building as it stands today at the corner of Cass and Adams in Detroit.

"It creates a visual showing how parts got from warehouse to dealers to people," Ray said. "I know, to many people, how parts get around is not interesting, but when you add a visual to the idea, it becomes interesting."

During her research, Ray was able to contact private collectors who had things like Mopar parts boxes from various years. These items were never meant to last a long time, they were disposable, but people do collect them — people like Wayne and Susan Simonson, who are friends of the museum and lent some of their collection to be put on display.

"I got original Mopar antifreeze from Mark Reynolds, who worked for Mopar for many years until his retirement," Ray said. "When people see these items they will often say they bring back memories of when they worked on cars with their fathers. They remember when dad took a particular item out of its box."



Ashley Ray of The Walter P. Chrysler Museum stands by part of the museum's Mopar 75th anniversary display.

Then there's Mopar's racing side, Ray said. She said she couldn't nail down precisely how Mopar became synonymous with racing and muscle cars. There are a lot of theories, no one definitive explanation.

"I talked with Larry Shepherd who was with the Chrysler Racing Group back in the day and he was able to fill me in on his theories, but they're just theories," said Ray.

Preparing the muscle car side of the Mopar display was its own kind of fun, she said. They were able to again borrow cars and parts from people's private col-

lections to put on display.

"Certainly, during the 1960s and early 1970s, Chrysler subscribed to the notion that when they won races on Sunday people bought their cars on Monday," Ray said.

"Mopar had its 'Direct Connection' program, which provided parts and advised people how they could keep their muscle cars running in an era when the muscle car disappeared."

Ray was able to put on display, in addition to Mopar race cars, Mopar hemis still in the original crates.

"Mopar was a way of life," Ray

said. "There was a saying, 'Mopar or no car,' and the display is meant to reflect that philosophy."

The Walter P. Chrysler Museum is open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday, noon to 5 p.m. on Sunday. It will be closed on Dec. 24 and 25.

"We normally get 30,000 visitors a year," Ray said. "But now we're seeing an uptick because people know we're closing."

"We have some great displays besides the Mopar one. I urge people to come out before it's too late."

GM Reveals '14 Sierra and Silverado

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There will be a V6 and two V8s, each engineered specifically for use in full-size trucks. All three engines will incorporate direct fuel injection, cylinder deactivation and continuously variable valve timing.

This, Luke said, is a combination of advanced technologies not found in the competition's trucks and the engines will switch seamlessly to four-cylinder operation to improve efficiency during light load driving.

The dashboard is designed to be intuitive to use and easy to operate, even while wearing gloves.

Both the Silverado and the Sierra will feature a "cornerstep" bumper combined with handholds that will make it easy for people to climb into the bed.

Reuss said Sierra and Silverado are different brands and the customers are different. The Silverado is a work truck that combines functionality and passion, while the Sierra customer favors premium brands.

This distinction is represented in the Sierra's interior. It features new soft-touch materials and available aluminum trim line for the interior.

"Truck owners want a well-crafted cabin, but also one that

feels like a truck," said Helen Emley, Sierra interior design director. "They want a purposeful interior, not one that's flowing like you'd find in a car or a crossover."

Tony DiSalle, vice president of GMC marketing, said the Sierra sets a new standard for what's expected in a pickup truck's interior.

"Our customers told us how they use their trucks and we listened," DiSalle said. "The combination of comfort, safety, space and technology is unprecedented in the segment."

The new trucks go on sale in the second quarter of next year.

According to stats released, the new 5.3-liter V8 is engineered for more horsepower, more torque and better fuel economy than the current 5.3-liter V8. GM stats indicate the new 6.2-liter V8 is expected to be the most capable engine offered in a light-duty pickup.

This is the first update in the Sierra/Silverado lines in several years. Critics have noted that the pickup market segment is popular and profitable. A Successful launch of the new and improved Sierra/Silverado 1500s would be great for GM's bottom line.

Key competitors for both 1500s are the Ford F-Series, the Ram 1500, the Toyota Tundra and the Nissan Titan.

NAIAS Car/Truck of Year Finalists

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This begins a second round of voting on the three car and three truck/utility finalists. Those ballots also go to Deloitte.

The winners will be announced at a news conference on Monday, Jan. 14, at the North American International Auto Show in Detroit.

While the news conference has always been held at the North American International Auto Show, the show does not give the

awards. This is the 20th year of the awards.

During the past 19 years, domestic automakers have won North American Car of the Year 10 times. European automakers have won 4 times. Japanese automakers have won 3 times. A Korean automaker — Hyundai — has won twice.

Domestic automakers have won North American Truck of the Year 12 times, Japanese automakers 4 times, and European automakers 3 times.

Wrangler Moab Is 4-Wheeler Of the Year

The new 2013 Jeep Wrangler Unlimited Moab Edition is the winner of the "Four Wheeler of the Year" award from the editors of *Four Wheeler* magazine.

Paying homage to Jeep enthusiasts' favorite off-roading destination, the Wrangler Unlimited Moab includes Goodyear Silent Armor off-road tires, winch-capable steel bumpers, and an available locking rear differential for increased capability.

"The Jeep Wrangler Unlimited Moab is an extremely versatile vehicle, and was a hands-down trail favorite of the Four Wheeler judges," said John Cappa, *Four Wheeler* editor.

"The improved interior comfort, amenities, power and overall performance both on- and off-road make it worthy of being our 2013 Four Wheeler of the Year," added Cappa.

The Moab features Chrysler's 3.6L Pentastar engine.



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