

Classic and classy: Motor City's best take city's streets

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In the 1950s, Detroit built a hardtop sedan with a retractable roof.

Not a *convertible*. A *hardtop* with the wonderful and evocative name of Ford Fairlane 500 Skyliner.

That's telling the world "Hey, can you do this?" with the in-your-face, brash, chrome-clad and two-tone confident swagger the Motor City had when gas was a quarter a gallon - and someone pumped it for you.

Leroy and Phyllis Truman of Birch Run were in Port Huron on Saturday with their 1959 Fairlane as part of the Friendship Promotional Tour - an offshoot of Flint's Back to the Bricks car cruise in August. About 160 classic cars - and there were some beauties - lined up on Thomas Edison Parkway and cruised stately to parking spots along Huron Avenue, inviting admiration.



Leroy Truman said he enjoys the social aspect of his hobby. "It's just to meet new friends and people with cars," he said.

He said he's had the Fairlane 30 years, and he enjoys showing off the ingenious mechanism that drops the hardtop into the car's trunk.

"I painted this out on the grass on the lawn," he said. "I didn't have a fancy paint booth."

Jim and Cheryl King, of Fenton, brought a traditional ragtop to the parade - a 1972 Oldsmobile Cutlass Supreme.

King said he bought the car in 2007 and had much of the body work redone after it was rear-ended in 2010.



"It's enjoyable," he said about his hobby. "It gets you out of the house."

It gets multiple generations out of the house. Pat Hazel and his sons, Mike and Bert, were driving street rods crafted from bits and pieces of different vehicles - rolling amalgamations of sheet metal.

"They're rat rods," Pat Hazel, who lives in Brown City, said. "It's supposed to be low and loud, made out of everything, and rusty. You don't paint them."

They had three vehicles that started as a 1942 Chevy pickup, a 1946 Ford pickup and a 1950 Ford pickup.

There was some question about whether the '50 Ford might actually be a Chevy, but the Hazels are pretty sure it's a Ford - they think.



"It's a lot of fun traveling around the state of Michigan and there's a lot of cool people," Mike Hazel said. "A lot of fun."

"The idea is to have fun," Pat Hazel said. His sister, Rita, was the group's designated heckler.

"They get a lot of attention," she said. "They're starved for attention." A blazing red 1950 Mercury - chrome accents and massive grill gleaming in the hot sun - had plenty of attention. People stopped to admire the curves of the car, the flames painted on the sides and the hood and that waterfall of a grill on the front.

"It's slightly modified," said owner Greg Marsh with tongue planted firmly in cheek.

Marsh, who is from Swartz Creek, said the paint job was done by a Milford car club. He's had the car 15 years.



"We drive it everywhere," he said. "It's just kind of a hobby. I've been involved with cars since I was a teenager back in the '50s."

His wife, Carleen, doesn't seem to mind the attention the car gets.

"I like it as much as he does," she said.

"If I sold that car, she might follow the owner," her husband said. "She loves that car.

"She wouldn't let me sell it."

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More Car Shows

The Blue Water Cruise Weekend begins with Cruise Night June 24, then continues June 25 with the Keith Peterson Memorial Car Show from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

The Mainstreet Memories car show will take place in downtown Port Huron July 30.