

Attorney Marshall Miller is driven to collect the best

By Cindy Hoedel

Attorney Marshall Miller of Kansas City founded the Art of the Car Concours, ArtOfTheCarConcours.com. The show features more than 200 classic cars from eight states and benefits the Kansas City Art Institute's scholarship fund. Hours are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. today on the KCAI campus. This conversation took place at Miller's office in midtown and on a walking tour of the garage where he stores his collection of classic cars.



Marshall Miller with his 1931 Ford Model A.

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Tell us about these pedal cars in your office.

This is a restored version of the Pierce-Arrow that is noted because of these headlights. This is an unrestored Italian-made pedal car based on the Lotus that won the Indianapolis 500 in 1965 — very cute. Over here is a 1957 Italian pedal car, unrestored. A Maserati 250F. It is the same car as in the poster on the wall. The first American to win a car race in Europe was Kansas City's own Masten Gregory, driving a car like that one.

How many pedal cars will be in the concours?

About 10 from different collectors in Kansas City and St. Louis. I just bought a Bugatti on eBay. I could never afford a real one, so a rusty pedal car version is going to be just fine. There will also be a lot of car-related artwork on display at the show.

What is this pedal car with the battery?

It's actually an electric car, a 1955 Thunderbird convertible. When that car came out, Ford Motor Company had these made and every dealer had one in the showroom. This one came out of Rudy Fick Ford, which used to be where Crown Center is today.

You founded the concours in Kansas City seven years ago. Why?

There is nothing like this in our part of the country. These things are very popular on the East Coast and the West Coast. The three big ones are Amelia Island, Florida, Detroit and the big global one is Pebble Beach, California. There's nothing like that in Chicago, in Denver, in St. Louis or in Dallas. I had been going to the big classic car shows my whole life with my father, who is now deceased, and my brother. It was a way of connecting, to go see these old cars and meet the people who work on them. I decided I would try putting one on in Kansas City but do it in a completely different way.

How is the Kansas City concours different?

Amelia Island has 100 judges. Just organizing 100 judges and managing 100 judges and paying them and paying for their airfare and their hotels is an incredible undertaking and expense and then everybody just gets mad about the judging. So why have judging? We don't have any judging. I tried to eliminate the things that were big expenses to keep ticket prices down. At Amelia Island, the ticket price is \$75. Detroit is \$95. Pebble Beach is \$150 to \$500. Our tickets are \$15 and kids 10 and under are free. Last year we had 147 kids 10 and under that came with their parents or grandparents.

How many classic cars do you own?

Sixteen. Didn't mean to. There was no intention for any of them, but there is a story behind each one of them.

I've never seen a car that looks like this blue one.

And you won't. They only made 28 of them. It's called an AC Aceca. In 1957 when I was a kid, my dad bought me a copy of Road & Track magazine and that car was on the cover. I kept that magazine. I still have it. Last year, I was at Amelia Island at an auction and I saw this car. I talked to the owner beforehand. He had spent years restoring the beautiful stainless steel bumpers and the wood on the inside. But at the auction nobody was bidding on it. And I thought, "I've got to do this."

What was the first classic car you bought?

This 1931 Ford Model A Coupe was the one that started it all. I bought it for my father. From age 14 to 18, he played a trumpet in jazz bands and saved his money and in 1931, he paid \$450 for that car. So I found the same make and model car and gave it to him for his 80th birthday and he drove it at least once a week from age 80 to age 93.

What is one of the more unusual cars in your collection?

The Clementine is an electric car made by the Detroit Electric Car Company. They made electric cars from the early 1900s until 1939. This one had been sitting in a garage for 60 years when I bought it. A lot of women drove electric cars in the '30s and '40s because you could just get in and drive away. Gasoline-powered cars still had to be cranked.

The interior seating area has a very high ceiling.

It's so women could wear big fancy hats while they drove.

There are glass vases mounted to the inside walls.

For fresh flowers. And did you notice, there is no steering wheel? There is a tiller — you steer by pushing it forward and back.

This red car looks like every man's fantasy.

It is. It is a 1963 Lotus Elite. It is a very small, very, very fast car. They only made 1,000 of them. The engine is called a Coventry Climax.

Of course. What is the most pedigreed car you own?

Probably this 1941 Lincoln Continental Town Car. It was designed by Edsel Ford. Ten of these were built for the Ford family. This one purportedly belonged to Henry Ford. All the trim is gold, and the seats are upholstered in the

finest fabric, and there is a fur lap blanket in the rear compartment. I bought it at an auction in Pebble Beach a couple of years ago. It was early and no one in the room cared.

Is there a car in this year's show that isn't yours that you are excited about?

We are going to have the car that Masten Gregory of Kansas City drove to win the 24 Hours of Le Mans in 1965, a Ferrari 250 LM. That was the last time Ferrari has won that race.