

Nostalgic cars, music just make you feel good

by Mark Pavilons

The sentiment "what's old is new again" is never more obvious than during summer car shows.

During this perfect weather, collectors and car enthusiasts swarm to car shows and fortunately, there are plenty of opportunities to enjoy many classic and vintage automobiles.

Canada Day in Caledon included a car show that drew more than 200 vehicles, from a rare 1964 Porsche 356, to Model As and various muscle cars of the 1970s.

The annual Let's Rock 'n Roll MS Away car show was another great success in Schomberg recently, drawing great crowds and car owners. The success of this show almost always depends on the weather, and you couldn't have asked for a better day June 23.

Just down the road, Allstone Quarry Products hosted about two dozen members of the York Region branch of the Historical Automobile Society of Canada. Local resident Peter van Dyk helped organize the tour and was proud to show off his 1931 Ford Model A Deluxe Coupe.

As I watched the cars roll into Allstone's parking lot, one thing struck me. All of the owners "argely seniors, husbands and wives" were smiling ear to ear. I thought to myself, what better way to spend a sunny afternoon than driving around with your spouse, in a vintage automobile. It's joy, pure and simple.

While talking with car owners, you quickly discover their passion, and love for cars. One thing today stands out, however. Most owners of these impeccable beauties are seniors. It's an expensive hobby today, and it's not one for the faint of heart or slimmest of wallet.

Restored vintage cars, with high-powered modern engines, hover in the \$50,000 to well over \$100,000 range. Often, the owners never recoup the amount they've pumped into these projects.

I always get a chuckle when I see a nice 1957 Chevy, complete with a serving tray containing burgers and drinks, attached to the car door. While it was before my time, there was an era when rollerskating waitresses would come to your car at fast food places and drive-ins.

I still kick myself for selling my 1970 and 1/2 Camaro RS. Had I kept it in a barn and restored it, I'd have a decent investment on my hands today. I have a fondness for two unique cars - a VW Karmann Ghia and a Porsche 914. In the day, these were relatively inexpensive and abundant. Today, you're hard-pressed to find one under \$15,000.

While I have no means to afford one, I regularly scan the pages of kijiji or autotrader for vintage cars. I just love them. Looking at these classics this time of year makes me grin from ear to ear.

You don't really have to be a history buff to enjoy antiques, but it does help. Automobiles, like anything else produced in North America generations ago, have always had a certain allure. These were finely crafted cherished machines. They were "daily drivers" but also showpieces, status symbols and forms of modern technology at its best.

Back in the day, and you can say this for every decade since, things were made to last. I truly believe that car designers and engineers chose style over form and function. The detail, and amount of chrome and metal accents, made these aesthetic beauties stand out.

Driving, especially taking that Sunday drive to church or just around the block, was a pleasure. It was an experience. It drew people together and like early pioneers and explorers, it really opened up parts of the country that were previously inaccessible.

Summer is also the time of outdoor music concerts. Tens of thousands flocked to Burl's Creek to catch a glimpse of The Rolling Stones and frontman Mick Jagger. Classic rock seems to have had a rebirth in recent years, and it now appeals to Millennials as much as the Boomers. Venues like the casinos in Niagara Falls and Rama have some amazing lineups to check out.

A couple of years ago, we took my in-laws to Rama to see Styx. It was their first concert and they loved rocking away to some classic chart-toppers.

Stone me if you will, but I was never a fan of the Stones or even the Beatles. That's not to say I don't appreciate their talent or place in rock and roll history. I much prefer Styx, Foreigner, Billy Joel and of course Queen and Elton John. I know the recent Oscar-winning Bohemian Rhapsody rekindled a lot of interest in Queen. The new Elton biopic is undoubtedly attracting some younger fans, too.

To me, summer isn't summer without classic cars and classic music. During my back yard BBQ stints, the portable radio is set to Boom 97.3 FM, playing 70s, 80s and 90s music, from U2 and Bon Jovi to Bob Marley and Michael Jackson. Timeless.

The kids are starting to come around, and no longer refer to these hits as 'dad's music.'

They not only recognized the songs, but actually enjoy them!

With the rise of classic rock and classic cars, maybe there's hope for me yet. Maybe I will regain popularity as a 'classic dad!'

We can't relive the past, but we can appreciate the legacies left behind.