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## Rods & Rails Roars to Life



The 18th annual Rods & Rails Festival attracted all sorts of classic rides.

The City of Perris's annual Rods & Rails festival provided a trip down memory lane for classic car and motorcycle owners and visitors, a celebration of muscle machines and hot rods and chopped rides and models that disappeared decades ago.

Nearly 200 classic cars and cycles rolled into the Orange Empire Railway Museum for the 18th Annual Rods & Rails fest. Many vehicle owners said the Perris festival is a highlight of the year, a chance to get behind-the-wheel of their custom rides and take it for a spin.

The day dawned cool and cloudy but later the sun broke through, creating a brilliant display of polished chrome and shined-to-mirror-perfection custom paint jobs.

In addition to the cars and motorcycles to admire, the day also featured train and trolley rides, music from the groups Tierra and the Satinettes, a Wild West show including a gunfight, fun and games for children, and raffle prizes.



Moreno Valley resident Oscar Rodriguez brought his classic 1958 Chevy Impala to Rods & Rails, calling the event "a great show for the family in a great City."

Vehicles owners were universal in their praise for the venue and the City's commitment to creating a first-class show for participants and guests.

"I love this show," said Oscar Rodriguez of Moreno Valley, who attended with his Sierra gold 1958 Chevy Impala. "It's a great show in a great City. I'm glad it's here--Rods & Rails is one of the highlights of the year."

Like many classic car owners, Rodriguez drives his ride a handful of times a year. The original came with bench seats front and back, air conditioning, a 348 cubic inch engine and a powerglide transmission. In an era of 25 cent a gallon gasoline, the Impala got between 12 and 15 miles per gallon. On those rare occasions that Rodriguez takes it on the road, the Impala is a head-turner.

"Everybody looks at it," he said.



Murrieta man Ron Adler with his 1965 Volkswagen Crew Cab. "The setting is perfect!"

Ron Adler attended Rods & Rails with one of the rarest vehicles in the show—a 1965 Volkswagen three-door crew cab pickup. It's been in the family for 40 years, first owned by his dad who used it to haul wood. The vehicle came with a 4-speed manual transmission, averaged about 25 miles per gallon, and included an AM radio but no radiator, no seatbelts and no air conditioning.

"Mother Nature provided that," Adler said.

Echoing sentiments of other participants, Adler praised the location and layout of Rods & Rails, noting the railway museum provided plenty of space and shade for each entry, while offering visitors the opportunity to learn about and ride trains, trolleys and street cars.



Perris Mayor Michael Vargas at the throttle of a locomotive at the Orange Empire Railway Museum, home of the annual Rods & Rails Festival. "This is a powerful machine," Vargas said.

### Trains and Tierra

Perris Mayor Michael Vargas used Rods & Rails to take the throttle of a locomotive while grandsons Anthony and Alfonso beamed while coming along for the ride.

Later on Vargas inspected all the entries in the show and presented the first Rods & Rails "Mayor's Choice Award." He also took in some of the musical performances of the featured group, Los Angeles rhythm and blues legends "Tierra" and introduced them to the crowd.

Vargas described his time at the train controls as "fabulous." He drove the train a short distance before returning it to the railway museum. It was long enough to feel the power at his fingertips.

"You just can't stop this locomotive on a dime," he said. "This is a powerful machine."

Vargas said he was delighted with the turnout and the knowledge that Rods & Rails drew participants from throughout Southern California.

"This is a fantastic community engagement event," he said. "To have it in our backyard in Perris is great. It's a great event for families and children and fantastic feeling that we are doing good things in the City of Perris."



Perris Mayor Pro Tem David Starr Rabb shares a laugh with City Manager Richard Belmudez during the Rods & Rails Festival. Rabb said he appreciates all the efforts that go into making it one of the City's signature events.

Mayor Pro Tem David Starr Rabb and City Councilmembers Tonya Burke and Malcolm Corona also attended.

Rabb said he appreciated the hard work put in by Perris City staff to make the show a smashing success.

"It not only brings out residents from our City but from surrounding communities," he said. "Great things are happening in Perris. I appreciate that we are getting noticed."



Perris City Councilwoman Tonya Burke with her daughter, Jaylyn, at the June 10 Rods & Rails Festival. Burke said the festival raises the profile of Perris throughout Southern California.

Burke attended with her daughter, Jaylyn, a member of the City's Youth Advisory Committee.

"Rods & Rails is a great way to bring out the community," Burke said. "It's a great opportunity to learn about the history and culture of our City. The train museum provides an absolutely immaculate and beautiful setting for this event. We are a City that is dedicated to engage our community and the regions around it."

Corona brought his wife, Mila, and son, Malcolm, to see the festivities.

"I could not imagine a nicer day in the City of Perris for this great event," Corona said. "It's a beautiful day with beautiful cars and beautiful people. It's a celebration of what the City of Perris has to offer."



Perris City Councilman Malcolm Corona said the Rods & Rails Festival brings out "great cars and great people." He attended with his wife and son.

### Motorcycles and ministry

About 15 members of the Christian Motorcycle Ministry from Free Indeed Christian Fellowship in Perris brought their bikes to Rods & Rails.

The riders are part of an outreach group that ministers to the motorcycling community. But on this day, members like Solomon Saunders were just as interested in talking about their bikes as they were in saving souls. Saunders rides a 2016 Harley-Davidson. Like many cyclists, he values the freedom of riding on the open road. He says riding his Harley provides him much greater vision that would be available in any car.

"You don't realize how much doors restrict your vision," he said. "You have more control of your own safety on a motorcycle."

Saunders said the church ministry plans all year to take part in Rods & Rails.

"The City of Perris is amazing," he said. "I don't know of another city that hosts this kind of festival."

Rods & Rails ended with the presentation to Murrieta resident Dan Bowers of the categories of cars and motorcycle. The inaugural Mayor's Choice Award went to Murrieta resident Dan Bowers of the Axle Draggers Car Club for his 1957 Chevy Bel Air.



R&B legends Tierra performed before an enthusiastic audience June 10 at the annual Rods & Rails Festival.

### Media Contact

Joe Vargo  
Public Information Officer  
951-943-6100  
jvargo@cityofperris.org



Perris City Hall  
101 N. D Street  
Perris, CA 92570

Hours: Mon. - Fri. 8 am - 6pm

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