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Visitors

Business

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☆ home > city hall > press releases

Rods and Rails Wows the Crowds with Nostalgia



City Hall

Perris Mayor Daryl Busch peers under the hood of a classic car during the 17th annual Rods and Rails Festival June 11 at the Orange Empire Railway Museum.

The 17th annual Rods and Rails Festival put on by the City of Perris offered something for everyone.

There were 180 cars and motorcycles—classics from the 1920s to 70s, hot-rods, muscle cars, coupes and station wagons, Harley Davidsons and Indians, many polished to a dazzling shine.

For rail lovers, the day offered an assortment of rides on historic trolleys, street cars and trains.

There was music to please every taste, with the show headliners Lowrider Band, who thrilled the audience as they played the hit songs they recorded as the 1970s mega-group War.

The Perris Valley's agricultural history was celebrated during a ceremony which recalled the days when potato farming helped established the region as an economic juggernaut.

For the kids, the day offered laser tag, jumpers and face-painting.

The stars of the June show rolled in on two and four-wheels, from Perris and surrounding communities and all the way from Lake Havasu. The weather was ideal: overcast but without any rain and not too warm.



City Councilwoman Tonya Burke chats with John Alvidrez, a motorcycle owner who called Rods and Rails the best car and motorcycle show in Riverside County.

John Alvidrez of Romoland attended with his son, John Jr., and grand-daughter, Erika, 12. Alvidrez called Rods and Rails the best car and motorcycle show in Riverside County.

"No question about it," he said. "This is the top of the line. It's got more people, more things to do. You can't beat it."

He entered his thunderbird blue 1997 Harley Davidson Sportster trike and trailer at this year's Rods and Rails. The motorcycle features a 1200 cc motor, an AM/FM stereo, goldand-silver trim, Hooker pipes and a matching trailer. Like most participants, Alvidrez has attended Rods and Rails for years and always marks the date on his calendar.



Perris City Councilman David Starr Rabb peers under the hood of the 1969 Z/28 Camaro owned by Hemet resident Mike Landino during the Rods and Rails Festival.

Perris officials delighted

Such sentiments pleased Perris Mayor Daryl Busch and his colleagues on the City Council. He praised the City's partnerships with the Orange Empire Railroad Museum and the Perris Valley Chamber of Commerce for making the event a continuing smashing success.

"This event just keeps getting better and better," he said. "The weather is really good—the June gloom is working in our favor. I am so glad that people come to Perris to see the rails and see the automobiles and motorcycles. If they like this show, they will return. If they don't, you don't have a show."

City Councilwoman Tonya Burke said she anticipates Rods and Rails "will keep on getting bigger and bigger."

"This is a treat I always look forward to," she said. "It's a great family event. We're going to keep doing this event and doing it right!"

Burke chatted with several car owners and looked over a couple of classic Ford Mustangs. She said her family is committed to Fords.





Perris City Councilman Mark Yarbrough with a 1956 Volvo P1900, a fiberglass prototype never mass produced.

City Councilman David Starr Rabb said Rods and Rails attracts participants and visitors from a wide area—in the process putting the City of Perris on display.

"This is a very big deal," Rabb said. "You've got something for every age group. It's a great event for residents of our City and for the visitors who come to witness the festivities."

City Councilman Mark Yarbrough entered his 1956 P1900 Volvo, a prototype vehicle that never went into mass production. Only 68 were built; 6 are registered in the U.S. He said he participates and supports Rods and Rails because it represents an "unbelievably unique" experience found nowhere else.

"We have a lot of really cool things in Perris and this is one of our best," he said. "This is a great place to show off your car or motorcycle, ride a trolley car or train and listen to great music. It doesn't get much better than this."



Riverside's Jim Rosenberger with his 1956 Chevy 210 "Handyman Wagon."

All about nostalgia

Jim Rosenberger or Riverside brought his 1956 Chevrolet 210 station wagon to Rods and Rails. It's the ultimate blue-collar car, he said, pointing out that the vehicle had lots of room to store tools, paint, lumber and other supplies but little in the way of comfort. The "handyman wagon," as it was known, sported only a radio and heater. Even a second seat was optional.

Rosenberger upgraded the 210 with a bigger 250-cubic inch V-8 engine, power steering and brakes, air-conditioning and a stereo. He said he feels a special bond with the 210 because "my first car was a 1956 Chevy." As for Rods and Rails, he said he appreciates that the show welcomes classic cars, low-riders and motorcycles.

"It's nice to see a wide variety of vehicles," he said. "There's a great atmosphere and the City of Perris is great to work with."

Hemet's Mike Landino fell in love with a 1969 Z/28 Camaro that was owned by a neighbor who lived just down the block. When the car went up for sale in 1973, Landino, then 19, shelled out \$2,200 to purchase it. It's a decision he's never regretted.

Landino said he drives the "strato-blue" Camaro several times a week and gets lots of compliments. He's always pleased to show off the car at Rods and Rails, which he calls "a great show."

"I love it," he said. "It's very well organized."





George Cameron Jr. with his 1959 Chevy Corvette, which he restored about three years ago.

George Cameron Jr. of Chino Hills called Rods and Rails "one of the best car shows I've been to." He brought his 1959 Roman red Corvette, a vehicle he restored to its original condition about three years ago. The car features a 283-cubic inch engine, dual carburetors, a 4-speed transmission and no air-conditioning. It's an all fiberglass body. Originally, the Corvette sold for about \$3,000.

Cameron said it's fun to drive around in a classic because it brings back a lot of good memories.

"It's nostalgia," he said. "Everybody is into old cars today."

Perris resident Robin Monette didn't enter a vehicle into the show. She came only as a spectator but she liked what she saw. She walked down rows of cars, taking in the chrome, the engines, the hood ornaments and the polish.

"It's awesome," she said. "I enjoy myself and meet new people. The City does a great job. It's a great event."



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