

# SPEEDSTER REUNION

LINCOLN, NEBRASKA  
AUGUST 1-5, 2005

PHOTOS BY ROBB WOLFF AND JAY KLEINFOTH



This first annual Speedster Reunion, held in Lincoln, Nebraska, was co-hosted by the Smith Collection Museum and the Model T Ford Club of America.

The purpose of this event was to bring together enthusiasts of Ford speedsters and racing machines developed during the Model T era and to share information on their history, restoration, maintenance and construction. Enthusiasts were encouraged to bring their T era speedsters, racers, and speed/accessory equipment. Using a regular touring format, along with an outstanding program for the ladies, this event was particularly designed for all those regular Model T folks who are restoring a speedster or plan to do so in the future. All four-cylin-



*Frontenac Model T race car is on display in the Smith Collection*



*1917 Laurel Speedster with Roof Type A 16-valve head is owned by Fred Houston*

der speedsters and racers were invited and several Model A speedsters and racers were on hand, along with a Chevrolet speedster.

Organizers of this event were Fred and Lavina Houston, Mike and Brenda Bender, Larry and Sue Young and Larry and Bobbi Sigworth, all from the Model T Ford Club of Tulsa.

The Smith Collection Museum could not have been a more perfect venue. "Speedy" Bill Smith and his wife Joyce have established one of the world's finest museums with 100,000 square feet of automotive and racing memorabilia. The museum houses

the largest known collection of antique racing engines. Since we last visited the Smith Collection (see March-April 2000 issue), the museum has been moved to a new and larger facility. The exhibit is magnificent.

On Monday evening, the event kicked off with a welcoming banquet. The primary activity of the evening was the announcement and establishment by the MTFCA of its Model T Ford Speedster/Racer Hall of Fame, which will reside in the Smith Collection. This entire subject is covered beginning on page 36.

On Tuesday, a Model T tour departed from the Country Inn and Suites hotel in



*An original Craig-Hunt race car being readied for display in the Smith Collection*



Lincoln and traveled to Nebraska City for lunch. The tour encountered a little rain on occasion and somehow, several people lost their way. However, all ultimately returned safely.

On Wednesday and Thursday seminars were held in the Smith Collection Museum.

- *Model T Speed – A Historical Overview* was presented by Larry Sigworth. Larry explained how the speedster originally evolved from racing cars produced by automobile manufacturers. Then, with the advent of the Model T, a speedster-styled car could be constructed inexpensively and “hopped up.” A whole new industry was created.
- *The Genius of Ed Winfield* and the restoration of the 1927 “Two Up and Two Down Racing Machine” was presented by Howard Genrich. The original crankshaft and other original parts from the car were on display.
- *Mercury Speedster Story* was presented by Jarvis Erickson. Jarvis discussed the Mercury company’s history and provided a detailed review of the body styles and changes over the years. Several original Mercurys were on display. The national meeting of the Mercury Speedster Club occurred during the Speedster Reunion.
- *Ruckstell, the Man* and his two-speed axle was presented by Glen Chaffin. On display were Perfecto and Ruckstell axles, new Ruckstell parts and other speed equipment from Chaffin’s Garage.



*Betty Kerbs Abel, grandson Josh, and Fred Houston with what is believed to be the first DOHC Model T engine ever raced (during 1921 season). This dual overhead cam Craig-Hunt head was developed by Leonard Kerbs and his machinist, John Schoeber, three years before the DO Fronty. This engine is now part of the Smith Collection.*



*Roof DOHC Model C head engine in the Smith Collection*

- *The Chevrolet Brothers and their Frontenac Speed Equipment Company* was presented by Larry Sigworth and Rick Linder. On display was Rick’s fabulous re-creation of the Fronty Ford Barber-Warnock race car, Number 27, which raced in the 1924 Indianapolis 500.
- *The Paco Speedster*. Larry Sigworth, the author of the Paco article that appeared in the March-April 2005 issue of the *Vintage Ford*, was the presenter. Included was history on the company and restoration of his Paco speedsters. Original Paco speedsters were on display.
- *The ABC Speedster* was Larry Young’s topic. He provided history on the company and its models. He also discussed the restoration of his ABC speedster. Larry’s original ABC speedster was on display.





Gary Lefever's Straight Eight Model T speedster is shown (above) and Rajo BB speedster (below)



This "in process" Morton & Brett-bodied racer was brought to the Reunion by Keith Kruse and Richard Staadt

- The *Rajo and Gallivan Heads* were covered by Larry Sigworth. Many of the Rajo heads were on display, as well as a Gallivan engine.
  - Dave Dunlavy gave a *Tribute to Murray Fahnestock*. For several decades the technical editor of the *Ford Owner & Dealer* magazine, Murray's contributions to repairing and maintaining the Model T Ford, along with ads from the magazines, formed the basis for three different books published by Dan Post in the 1950s.
  - Fred Houston recalled *Noel Bullock's Astonishing Victory* with his Rajo Ford racing machine at the 1922 Pikes Peak Hill Climb. Noel's daughter, Lorma Linda Bullock Goble, was present.
  - *Robert M Roof — the Man and his Machines* was presented by Fred Houston and Jim Roof (grandson of Robert Roof). A restored 1917 Laurel speedster with Roof Type A 16-valve head was on display. Other Roof heads on display were Type B, Type BB, Type C and several varieties of 8-valve Roof heads.
  - *Leonard Kerbs, the Kansas Cyclone and his 1921 DOHC Craig Hunt Head* was presented by Fred Houston and Betty Kerbs Abel (daughter of Leonard Kerbs). This was likely the first DOHC Model T engine raced. One of the DO Craig Hunt engines originally raced by Leonard was on display.
- Technical "How To" and "Show and Tell" displays and presentations included:
- A closer look at the Model T Ford magneto by Steve Coniff.
  - Converting a Model T era distributor to electronic ignition was demonstrated by John Rogne.
  - Gary Lefever had two cars on display: His Straight Eight Model T speedster, and his Rajo BB speedster in which he won the Tulsa Chandler Park Hill Climb seven times. Gary discussed both cars and answered questions on the Straight Eight car's history and the history of the Tulsa Hill Climb.



*Rossie Morris of Albuquerque, New Mexico brought the single-seat racer he drove in the Great Race*

- Model T Ford cam design and display of Stipe cams by Larry Young, Steve Coniff, and Bill Stipe
- The Montana 500 – A really nice display with discussions by Dave Huson, Dennis Dakan (2005 Montana 500 winner), Steve Coniff, Nick Nicholas and others. Trophies were presented to Karen and Dennis Dakan and the Montana 500 Association in honor of Dakan's 2005 victory and the Montana 500 Association's contribution to the hobby.
- Members of the Northwest Vintage Speedsters were present with a display about their activities
- KC Warford transmission by Elmer Layne
- High-Tech speed equipment and hemi head by Kirk Wright
- Ruckstell parts and speed equipment from Chaffin's Garage
- And many, many more items

The seminars and discussions were held in a large meeting room in the Smith Collection Museum. The participants toured the Smith Collection during their "free time."

Friday, there was a tour to the Strategic Air Command Museum hosted by the Nebraskaland Chapter of the MTFCA and that evening a closing banquet was held with Ed Archer as the guest speaker.

The event was well received and well attended and a lot of information was exchanged, making us all more knowledgeable and appreciative of Model T racers and speedsters. The date for next year's Speedster Reunion has not been set—however, watch for an announcement in the *Vintage Ford*. □