

Part of City's Past Contributes to Future

The Villa Capri was a restaurant on Moosic Street, where Flannery's Beer Distributors now exists. '50s and '60s parents didn't want their teens-aged sons and daughters to go there. But they did.

They talked, they listened to Elvis, they flirted and — most of all — they compared cars — muscle machines with 300 horsepower that went 0 to 60 miles per hour in 7 seconds or less and they set up drag races.

Those former teens, now parents, some even grandparents themselves, some still driving '50s cars, are trying to relive the era and make the '90s a better time to live in.

A mainly word-of-mouth reunion of Villa veterans drew an estimated 10,000 persons to the area around the restaurant last Labor Day, according to Tom Maroon, one of the organizers of a new club of Villa fans.

That interest gave birth to the Villa Capri Cruisers — a club formed to revere the good-old days and contribute to the future.

A number of the organizers met Sunday at the pavilion at Nay Aug Park to map their plans. The results were ambitious, Maroon said.

The club's first labor this summer will be a benefit for Nay

Aug Park. It will be conducted on June 18 at the park, which will be filled with the chrome-laden cars from the '50s and '60s with Elvis — in the form of an impersonator — and other music from the era.

Whatever the club makes will go to a fund dedicated to park improvements. Whenever money is needed for a special project, Maroon said, the club can be approached for funding and manpower.

Work is the main requirement for joining, the former food distributor said. Anyone who joins can expect to toil alongside such luminaries as Fire Chief Richard Pica and Assistant Police Chief James Klee — two Villa regulars who only wink when "dragging" is mentioned.

The club also plans another Labor Day gathering at the restaurant site, this time including a dinner-dance on Friday right up the street at the Ramada Inn on Meadow Avenue.

Maroon sees a bright future for the club, because so many hung out at the Villa. He also predicts a boom market in the cars that drew them together.

"We're all in our late 40s and 50s with the kids getting out of college, so they're in a position to buy what they used to own," he said.

Villa Capri Cruisers return

By Ray Flanagan
TRIBUNE STAFF WRITER

It was once a place for growing up in Scranton. Now it may become a source of enhancing the city's future.

That might surprise some, because the Villa Capri, in its heyday in the late 1950s, was a place where kids were told not to go. But the teens went anyway to the restaurant on Moosic Street, where Flannery's Beer Distributors now exists.

They talked, they listened to Elvis, they flirted and — most of all — they compared cars — muscle machines with 300 horsepower that went 0 to 60 miles per hour in 7 seconds or less.

The car comparisons consisted of more than boasting. The crowd at the Villa made drag racing — the bane of parents and police because of its inherent danger — an art form as it often closed off a quarter-mile section of Route 307 for contests that could be compared to Wild West shootouts.

For those who lived it, it was a time never forgotten.

Now, many are trying to relive it — minus the racing, of course — not only for the memories, but also to show that the world was once a gentler place.

Apparently, the magic is still there, because a mainly word-of-mouth reunion of Villa veterans drew an estimated 10,000 persons to the area around the restaurant last Labor Day, said Tom Maroon, one of the organizers of a new club of Villa fans.

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JOHNSON BACHMAN

Tom Maroon, right, shows off his newly bought 1960 Chevrolet Impala to Paul Bröwer on Sunday after a meeting of the Villa Capri Cruisers to plan a benefit for Nay Aug Park and other summer activities.



RICH BANICK / THE SUNDAY TIMES

The Villa Capri Cruisers gather in the McDonald's parking lot in South Side in preparation for next Sunday's car jamboree. Front row, from left: Will Hill, Rich Pica, Ed Frable. Standing, Paul Brower, Seymore Jurzell, and Tom Maroon.

Car Jamboree To Kick Off Nay Aug's 100th Anniversary

BY THOMAS K. STAFF
THE SUNDAY TIMES

The observance of the 100th anniversary of Nay Aug Park will begin next Sunday with a car jamboree sponsored by the Villa Capri Cruisers.

More than 300 antique, classic and specialty cars and trucks are expected to be displayed at the show, which is scheduled to open at 8:30 a.m.

The show will also feature live entertainment and a flea market.

A \$1 admission fee will be charged with proceeds going to improve the park.

"Many of the club members remember when the park was a big attraction in the city and we would like to help return it to that condition," said Richard Pica, a club member.

Pica, the city's fire chief, will present one of 10 trophies to be awarded in various categories.

Car owners from all over the northeastern United States are planning to display their vehicles, Pica said.

Crews from the Departments of Recreation and Public Works have been getting the park ready for the show.

An area formerly used as a training ground for firefighters has been cleared and will be available for parking after the park lots are filled.

Club member Ed Frable said all of the

entrants, who will pay a \$6 registration fee, will be presented with a wall plaque.

"We had 300 plaques made but if the weather cooperates we expect to have 400 or more cars," he said.

The show will also feature a model car contest with trophies presented in three age categories.

The trophies to be presented to car owners and the sponsors are: the mayor's trophy, Bill Butler Sunoco, Clark's Summit; the fire chief's trophy, Paul Gronski Enterprises, Moosic; the police chief's trophy, Tom Oleski Auto, Scranton; best GM, Manasek Auto Parts, Dickson City; best Ford, Charge's Family Restaurant, Old Forge; best Mopar, Providence Motors, Scranton; best truck, Joe Carnethan; longest distance, 50's Roadhouse, Hamlin; the hardship award, Electric City Harley Davidson, and the people's choice, Richard's Automotive, Shavertown.

Entertainment will include Cascades of Cards, a barber shop quartet; Rapid Transit, a rock and roll group, and Jack Churilla with a tribute to Elvis Presley.

Frable said the jamboree will coincide with the opening of the park's swimming complex.

Another attraction open that day will be the dinosaur display at the Everhart Museum.

40 years later, hot rodders still hanging out

Villa Capri Cruisers hold annual show

By Rich Mateo
TRIBUNE STAFF WRITER

Some things have changed since Tom Maroon and his pals hung out at the Villa Capri on Moosic Street and drag-raced on a quarter-mile stretch of Route 307 near Lake Scranton. The guys have put on a few pounds and abandoned slicked-back hairstyles, and the Villa Capri and its car hops are history.

But nearly 40 years after their nightly ritual began, they still hang out together, and they still have their hot rods.

The club had its fourth-annual car show Sunday at Nay Aug Park, attracting dozens of vehicles from throughout the region and other states.

The show and other club activities are geared to raise money for charity.

Ed Bolus, a club officer, said the club gave away \$18,000 last year to Ronald McDonald House, to seriously ill children and to the playground at Nay Aug Park.

"Seven days a week we hung out there. That's where we grew up," Mr. Maroon, Villa Capri president, said of the park.

About five years ago, Mr. Maroon and former Scranton Fire Chief Richard Pica rounded up their old pals from the Villa Capri and started the Villa Capri Cruisers.

"It's a very unique club because 95 percent of the guys in



ED LYNETT / TRIBUNE STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Wayne Turner and Sharon Lazevnick stroll along with Dana Rose as they check out some of the cars at the Villa Capri Cruisers' car show at Nay Aug Park.

the club, like Jimmy Klee and Ed Bolus, we've hung around for 40 years," Mr. Maroon added.

"If anything goes wrong, you have 70 guys who will come running like a magnet," Mr. Bolus,

who owns a trucking company in the Keyser Valley, said. "Like the old days, we still meet every Monday night at the Waffle Shoppe at 8 o'clock for coffee."

Acting Scranton Police Chief Jim Klee still has the first car

he ever owned, a white 1941 Chevy convertible he bought in 1954.

While many of the Villa Capri Cruisers still have classic or antique cars or street rods, it's not a membership requirement.

"There's a couple of guys who didn't have a car in 1955 and still don't have a car," Mr. Bolus said. "If you don't have the means, we don't care, you're still a friend. We'll come and get you."



Festival opens Thursday

The 22nd annual Nativity Summer Festival will be held Thursday, Friday and Saturday on parish grounds, 633 Orchard Street, South Scranton. The Villa Capri Cruisers will be featured Saturday evening. Pictured standing, at left, are: Bob Casey, co-chairman; Tom Maroon, Villa Capri Cruisers; Barbara Blasi-Lance, co-chairwoman; Cathy Durkin, festival committee; and Robert Casey Jr. Kneeling, from left, are: Seymour Kurzweil, Jack Costa and Jim Mulherin, all members of the Villa Capri Cruisers.



EDWARD PIKULSKI / THE SCRANTON TIMES

Villa Capri Cruisers Donation

The Villa Capri Cruisers donate \$2,000 in dry goods and food to the Ronald McDonald House in Scranton. From left, Seymour Kurzwell, a Cruiser; Mary Gastinger, McDonald House director;

Tom Maroon, Cruisers president; Ed Frable, Cruisers secretary; Paul Brower, Cruisers VP Ann Reilly, community relations director for McDonald's; Jim Talerico, McDonald's manager.



Villa Capri Cruisers lend hand to four-legged friends at Griffin Pond shelter

The Villa Capri Cruisers recently donated items to the Griffin Pond Animal Shelter. The group donated 10 cases of paper towels, 21 bags of dog food and 60 bags of cat litter, collected at a car show at Nay Aug Park in Scranton. Helping with the delivery to the animal shelter, from left, were Joe Carra, Tommy Maroon, Len Ashman with Serge, Tony Veno, Dave Thomas and Shawn Carnathan with Kimmy.



Cruisers gather

Villa Capri Cruisers will hold their 11th annual reunion Sunday at Nay Aug Park. The event, which will feature race cars, rods, antiques, muscle cars and more, will be held rain or shine. From left are Jeff Talcott, president, and Joseph E. Verastro Jr., secretary, in front of a 1965 Divco milk truck.



Villa Capri Cruisers will have a three-day show featuring Corvettes and hotrods, June 15-17. Events for the weekend include a dance June 15 at St. Mary's Center, Mifflin Avenue, — tickets, \$10; proceeds benefit local charities — and a Father's Day car show June 17 at Nay Aug Park. Gates open at

8:30 a.m. for the car show and the first 300 cars will receive gift bags. Trophies and prizes will be awarded throughout the day. From left are members of the Cruisers, Dave Thomas, president; Joe Verastro, Tom Maroon, Barney Comparetta and Mike Greenstine.



Hot Day, Hot Cars

More than 300 antique, classic and specialty cars and trucks from throughout the northeastern United States were displayed in Nay Aug Park on a sweltering June 18 during a jamboree sponsored by the Villa Capri Cruisers.

The Cruisers is a local car club that consists of men who used to park their hot rods outside the old Villa Capri Diner on Moosic Street through the 1950s.

Many of the club's members still possess the vehicles of their youth, now well-polished classics.

Last month's show drew several thousand car enthusiasts and raised much-needed funds to help improve Nay Aug.

Trophies were awarded in 10 categories.

Entertainment was provided by the barbershop quartet Cascade of Cards, the rock-and-roll band Rapid Transit and Elvis imitator Jack Churilla.

On Aug. 11, the Villa Capri Cruisers will sponsor a car show in the parking lot of the South Side Shopping Complex, South Washington Avenue.



ABOVE: Mike Novatnak, from Hawley, polishes his 1962 Chevy Impala SS before the judges make their rounds. LEFT: A lineup of classic Hot Rods greets visitors. TOP PHOTO: Car buffs flock to see Raptor, a 1995 Dodge Ram Pickup "Monster Truck," built by Sam and Jill Marino of Jessup. The truck has won national awards.



PHOTOGRAPHED BY
JOHNSON BACHMAN/
THE SCRANTON TIMES

LEFT: Stan Striefsky and his son Colin from Jermy, check out a 1967 Chevy Nova and a green 1954 Chevy. RIGHT: Fuzzy dice hang from the mirror of Rick Gscheidle's 1960 Pontiac convertible.



Father's Day car show



Villa Capri Cruisers will hold its 12th annual Father's Day car show at Nay Aug Park June 18 beginning at 8 a.m. Showing a few of the classic cars that will be at the show are, from left, John and Jim Pendlebury, Dave Thomas and Tom Maroon. Proceeds benefit the Ronald McDonald House.