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## Founding member of Old Car Club celebrates 50th annual car show

by **Emily Cole** Sep. 22 2019 @ 12:05am



Emily Cole/News Tribune  
Donald Weber, second from right, a founding member of the Mid-Mo Old Car Club, restored this 1970 Dodge Challenger with his grandson, 17-year-old Matt Miller, far left. The car has now been in three generations of the family. Also pictured are Donald's wife, Becky, far right, and his daughter, Connie

The year is 1970.

A 17-year-old Donald Weber meets a small group of car enthusiasts in the parking lot of the old Montgomery Ward building on Missouri Boulevard, gathered by a flyer made by a fellow car lover.

He's the youngest person there, but he shows up with his own Ford Model A he spent a year working to pay for and restore. Other attendees show off their own Model A's or Ford Model T's — vintage cars from the 1900s and 1920s.

The informal meeting sparked an interest in forming an official group. Weber gave the organizer his information, and on May 3, 1971, a group of 36 old car fans met.

The Mid-Mo Old Car Club was born.

Flash-forward to 2019, and a 66-year-old Weber, of Lohman, is still active in the MMOCC as one of its last remaining charter members.

Each year since 1970, the group has come together for the annual Mid-Mo Old Car Club Round Up & Show. This year, they will celebrate their 50th show — Weber said they've always counted that 1970 show, even if the club hadn't been formed yet.

Since the first meeting, the club has evolved to include all types of collector cars, from the antique Model T's to muscle cars to hot rods, and now includes approximately 85 members.

From that first Model A when he was a teenager to now, Weber's interest and work with cars has only grown. He's been restoring cars as his full-time hobby and job for more than 30 years.

"I don't know if I know how to do anything else," Weber said.

At his home in Lohman, Weber's garage boasts an impressive number of cars in various states of restoration. With antique vehicles tucked in the back, numerous car parts and vehicle brand signs decorating the walls with a few old family photos dotting between them, the garage is a shrine to car restoration.

Out front, parked in a line in the grass, are three cars. A tan 1934 Ford Roadster, a bright red 1956 Chevrolet convertible and a shiny blue 1970 Dodge Challenger. From how they shine, it's hard to imagine their age.

The 1970 Challenger has an interesting, three-generation history. Weber purchased the car in 1972 from the Riley Chevrolet used car lot when he was 19.

He drove the car as he dated his now-wife Becky and as they went on their honeymoon. It brought their oldest daughter, Connie, home from the hospital and served as the family car until 1978.

When Weber tried to sell the car, he couldn't seem to find a buyer, so he parked it in the woods near their house. It remained there until 1992, when Connie was on her way to turning 16, and Weber decided to restore it for her as a birthday gift.

Connie drove the car until 1998, when it was again put aside — indoors this time.

Then, in 2014, Weber pulled the now twice-restored, 44-year-old car out of storage once again.

Weber worked with his grandson, 17-year-old Matt Miller, to restore the car. Now, Matt drives the car and shows it regularly as one of the youngest members of the MMOCC.

In Weber's garage right now is an even older 1966 Chevrolet Chevelle he's working on with Matt's younger brother, Charlie.

For Weber, it's as much about spending time with his family as it is restoring the cars.

"This has been my hobby and my business for many years. Since we don't go hunting or fishing together, this is about the only thing that I can do to spend a lot of time with them," he said.

He's not intended or expecting to create a lifelong love of restoring cars in the boys, but he hopes they'll at least learn something from their time together — whether it be how to weld or life lessons.

"After doing this from basically the ground up, you don't want to abuse your car or park it in a place where it'll get door dings," Weber said. "You want to keep your possessions in top shape. It teaches a certain respect for taking care of your vehicle."

The process also teaches patience, Weber said, and the realization some things can't be accomplished overnight.

For his part, Matt said he's enjoyed spending time with his grandfather and learning how to fix the car, and the lesson of taking care of the car has clearly landed — Weber said his grandson may take better care of the car than he or his daughter did when they drove it.

As Weber looks forward to the MMOCC's 50th annual car show, in conjunction with Jefferson City's Oktoberfest on Sept. 28, he reflects on his first show and the lasting legacy of the car club he helped create. He credits its longevity to its open doors, saying members don't need to own a certain type of car or even own a car at all.

"The club's always been open to anyone who's interested in collector-type vehicles. We have members that don't own vehicles but have an interest," Weber said, adding that cars owned by members don't have to be anything specific, just "anything that strikes the owner as odd or unique.

"If the owner loves their car, they're welcome."