

# Annual cruise brings back memories of classic cars

By Nicole Roberts  
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Rusty Baldwin remembers being knee-high when he helped his father work on a classic car in the garage in their backyard. He took up that hobby happily and is now excited to pass the torch on to his children, who were buzzing with energy as they showed dozens of people their project cars Wednesday.

The Baldwins were a few of more than 50 people who drove classic cars and visited various garages around Jefferson City and area communities Wednesday as part of the Mid Mo Old Car Club's annual New Year's Day Cruise.

Twenty-seven classic cars cruised the streets of Mid-Missouri for the 29th annual tour, club president Lyle Rosburg said. Since the club doesn't have an age restriction for the tour, it also featured modern-day cars and trucks.

As part of the cruise, club members visited five garages in Jefferson City, Russellville and near Brazito, one of them being the Baldwins' garage at their home on Route E.

The Baldwins have 15 project cars and completed classic cars, with many of them displayed Wednesday.

For the Baldwins, they are still working on several of their classic cars and can't drive them. The cruise is a great way for club members — and even the public — to see projects and troubleshoot issues, the Baldwins and Rosburg said.

The oldest car the Baldwins have is a standard two-door 1939 Ford Sedan that Rusty is working on. Parked next to the Ford Sedan was a torn-apart 1938 English Ford Prefect, the car Rusty's son, Andy, 21, is putting together.

Up the hill in a separate garage, the newest addition to the collection — a 25th anniversary edition 1990 Ford Mustang LX with 17,000 actual miles — is proudly on display. Nearby, club members admired a 1948 Ford convertible, driven by Rusty's wife, Mica.

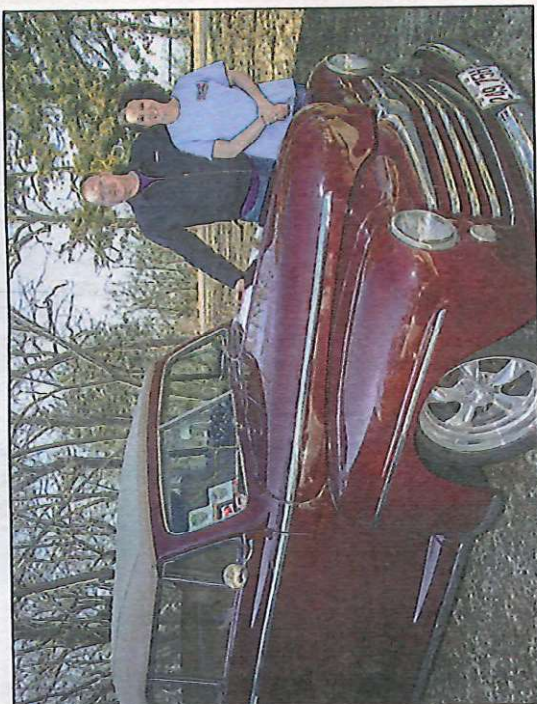
It could take Rusty eight months to a year to build a car, and he does almost all of the work himself, including exhaust, suspension and bodywork.

Rusty and Mica's youngest daughter, Sophie, 14, said she is excited to start working on her 1990 Ford Mustang in the next couple of weeks.

"We're going to go through all of the brakes, fuel system, everything, and she's going to do it all," Rusty said. "She got a manual and all of the parts for Christmas, and she's going to be out there doing the work on it."

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Ken Barnes/News Tribune

Old car enthusiasts Rusty and Mica Baldwin show off their 1948 Ford convertible during the Mid Mo Old Car Club's annual New Year's Day Garage Tour.

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Like his father, Andy shares the same passion for building cars. He remembers working on his 1966 Ford F100 for about five months with his dad when he was 14 years old before driving it hundreds of miles to a car show.

"All of your ideas come out and you get to put it to the test and see what works," Andy said. "Whatever you have in your head, you can put it out in front of you."

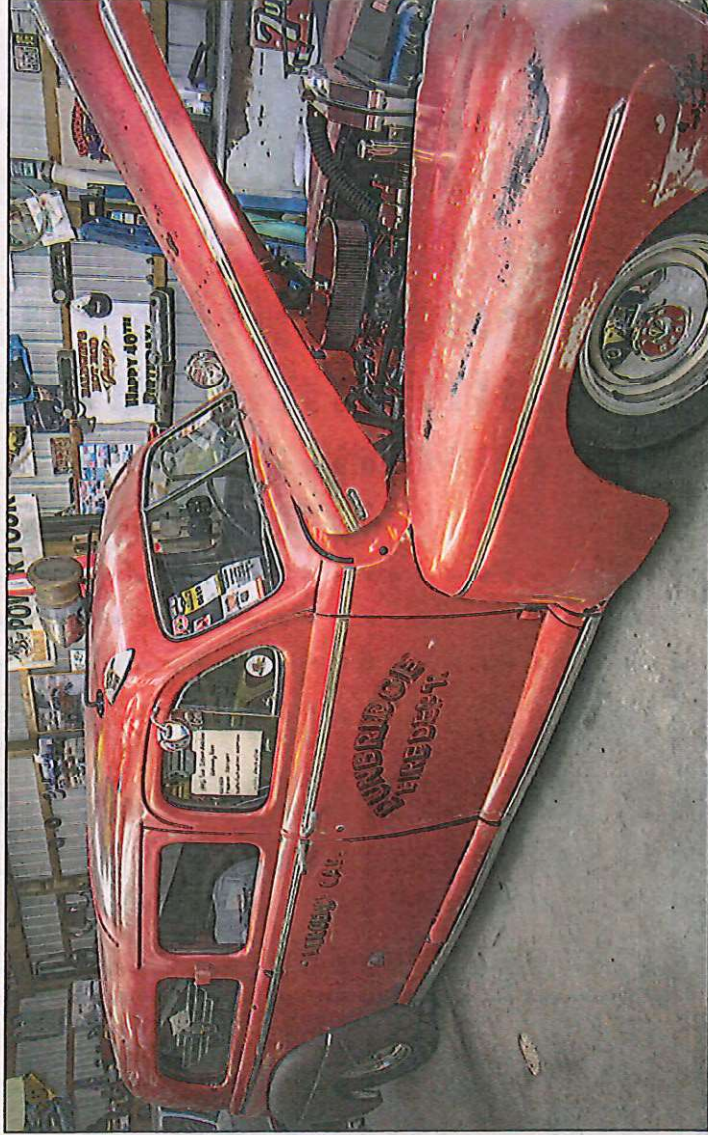
Rusty and Mica said they enjoy watching their children's love for classic cars grow, as well as teaching them valuable skills.

"When a kid builds their own vehicle and works on it, they appreciate it more," Rusty said. "They'll take better care of it, they'll be more aware of where they park it and where they take it and keep it clean and maintained. Whereas if someone went out and bought it for them, the kid doesn't really have that pride and attachment to it versus if they do (the work) themselves."

While the 27 old cars cruised around town Wednesday, it was common for people to wave and honk their horns in appreciation.

The Baldwins can drive eight of their 15 cars, Rusty said, and they will drive to various shows across the nation.

One of the family's favorite cars to drive is a red 1946 Ford ambulance. When it rolled off the line at Ford Motor Company, it was a Ford Sedan Delivery, which "was the rarest car Ford produced in 1946," Rusty said. After doing much research, he added the one the Baldwins have is "the only one of this body



Ken Barnes/News Tribune

Included in the Baldwin's collection is this rare 1946 Ford Siebert Ambulance.

style and year left in the world."

"We'll drive that car and people will be videoing us as we're driving down the highway," Rusty said while laughing. "You can just see people's cellphones hanging out the window filming us as we go by but we just honk and wave and move on. That's what we enjoy just

about as much as anything."

Rosburg said the annual cruise helps keep that nostalgia of cold cars alive.

"If there's not an interest in it, it's going to die or fade away, and we don't want that to happen to old cars," he said.