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## Inaugural Ventura Farms Concours Invitational 2013

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All the makings of an annual event right out of the gate . . .



Think about your freshman year. Everything was new. There was excitement mixed with a little anxiety. But it was not until your Junior or Senior years that you started to really get a hang of things and put your best efforts forward – at least for most of us.

That was the thought rolling through my head as I piloted the Mercedes AMG E63 S Estate over the Malibu Mountains on my way to the Inaugural Ventura Farms Concours Invitational this past Sunday.

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One thing was for certain: We had a stunning day on hand – but as many car show and Concours veterans know, how was the rest of the day going to unfold? Before we answer that question, we need to step back a couple of months.



*Mean Gene with the 1930 Stutz Monte Carlo Weymann Fabric Body from our home, The Automobile Driving Museum*

Many of you know Eugene O'Hara, the Director of Restorations at our home, The Automobile Driving Museum. Better known on the show as 'Mean Gene', Gene is the man that connected us with a couple of very generous Rolls Royce collectors over the summer. They were kind enough to loan us their cars for the Ghost episode you will see very shortly. It was one of those collectors, Nick Lemieux, that came to the museum a couple of months ago with the idea for a Concours on St Patrick's Day.

Now those of you that have planned corporate events, important birthdays or even a wedding can appreciate the concept of planning a large garden party has the potential to be challenging. Throw in the prospect of talking friends, friends of friends and so on into bring their priceless cars all on the same day and we are closer to negotiating mid east peace rather than a car event.



*1968 Toyota 2000 GT with 5,000 original miles*

Well, Nick did just that – and did it well. He was able to get cars ranging from a 1967 Toyota 2000 GT and fitting for St Patty's Day, a VERY green 1947 Delahaye 135 MS. We threw in four of our own cars – our Eleanor Roosevelt Plymouth, our Stalin Packard our Fabric Bodied Stutz and our Packard Factory Speedster.





*Mean Gene in his best St Patrick's Day duds in front of the 1937 Delahaye 135 MS*



*Curator Earl and Docent Andrew in front of Eleanor Roosevelt's 1932 Plymouth Brewster Town Car from our home, The Automobile Driving Museum*

One part down, two to go. On to Vendors and Sponsors. That is where the other part of the Ventura Farms Freshman team comes in: Kameron Nesen and Morgan Evans. Both have had a lot of experience in event planning. Kameron does it professionally for the Four Seasons and Morgan runs fundraising and outreach for the show's charity beneficiary, the Westlake Village YMCA.

In setting up the event, the concept was more Quail than Pebble. A one-price ticket gets you in the door and plies you with a mix of drinks and enough food to choke a mule. They had everything from a brilliant local place called Zin Bistro to Wolf Creek Brewery to Pinkberry!

Now the hard part: The venue. If you really think about any car show or Concours you have been to, you really don't pay much attention to the venue. Well, actually, you do if it is less than an optimal choice. We all know Pebble Beach and Villa d'Este are stunners. But do you remember Barrett Jackson back in the mid 90s? WAY before Craig Jackson strong-armed the City of Scottsdale to make it the facility it is today? Not a one car **not** covered with a layer of Arizona dust.

Here is where Nick, Kameron and Morgan really had an ace up their sleeve: David Murdock. David is the self-made guy that went from a US\$1,200.00 loan to transforming Dole Food Company into the largest producer of fruits and vegetables. Well let me tell ya, David's got a crib.



*Grand Allee at Ventura Farms*

This is where the show takes its name: Ventura Farms is an estate that is almost tailor made for an intimate Concours event. Located in Hidden Valley, California across from Lake Sherwood, the grounds have things you can imagine and things you can't. There is a Great lawn, a Conservatory and of course, a Rose Garden. But that is not what makes this place. It's the 'Grand Allee' of Thai Sculptural Boulders. Translated: Huge rocks that were found and transported from Thailand then curated around the property. Remember *Man with the Golden Gun*? Think pint sized replicas of Scaramanga's Island and you get the idea. It was amongst these Boulders that Nick and his crew arranged Mean Gene's favorite, a 1936 Rolls Royce P3 to one of my show favorites, a Rudge Wheel Mercedes 300 SL to one of the most honestly restored 1959 Porsche 356A's I have ever seen.





*Porsche plaid from the 1959 Porsche 356A Convertible D with coachwork by Drauz*

Even I got in on the action – that very same Mercedes E63 S Estate I was driving was part of the show – in the new car area nestled between two of the aforementioned boulders and just in front of the, what else, the Chinese Scholar House. My neighbor was a 1973 Ferrari Daytona Convertible.



*2013 Mercedes Benz E63 S (P30 Package) Estate in the new car display*

There was more on offer at the venue. A Japanese Tea house set over a small pond filled with Koi, a vegetable garden, an English garden – let's just say you needn't be a car guy to get lost here.





*Entrance to the Japanese Tea House - Guarded by the Lions . . .*



*Traditional Japanese Walking Bridge*



*Koi Pond of the Ventura Farms Japanese Tea House*

So back to the actual day and my early morning expectations. Me and the AMG were set up on the lawn courtesy of Nick's brother in minutes. Most of our cars from the museum were set up on the lawn in the same manner – granted some of them were a little stage fright and didn't want to start that morning. Nick, Kameron and Morgan had 40 people staffing the event so most every other car owner had the same experience positioning the cars. The event was scheduled to kick off at 11:00 AM but we were all ready to go and more importantly, relaxed, by 10:00 AM.





*A casually dressed Barbershop Quartet performing in the Ventura Farms Conservatory*

The rest of the day was spent as car events like this should be, catching up with old friends in the car hobby and meeting new ones. There was even some surprises on offer for non car people. Celtic Entertainment, a Barbershop quartet but the best by far was America's Teaching Zoo at Moorpark College. They brought an Owl and a Red Tail Hawk. You know, for those times when you need Birds of Prey to mix and mingle with the crowd..



*He was all excited to fly but when he saw a Wild Red Tail Hawk he decided to stay with his Girlfriend*

All that aside, the freshman edition of this event was never intended to be a full on judged Concours d'Elegance. The entire goal was to introduce the car hobby, collectors and the people of LA to the show and it's unique selling proposition: an incredible venue.

The plan for next year and beyond is to drop the 'Invitational' from the title and introduce judging to the show. From what myself and the rest of the community saw from the Host and the people behind the Inaugural Ventura Farms Concours Invitational, their Freshman effort looked and felt more like they are already Seniors at this game.





1937 Mercedes Benz 540 K Sport Cabriolet A

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