Hines cruise brings out crowds to see classics, hot rods

Sue Mason *2:44 p.m. EDT August 26, 2014*

(Photo: Sue Mason)

Ask people what they don't want to see at a car cruise and they say mini vans. But that doesn't put off Gary and Joyce Swain.

The Westland couple sat under an awning along Hines Drive Sunday with their 1992 Chevy Lumina minivan which they've named Westland's Largest Hot Wheels. And the blue and gray minivan does like an oversized kid's toy with flames covering the front end.

"I was at Toys R Us and heard a kid tell his parents that it looked like a big Hot Wheels, that's where I got the idea," said Gary Swain.

The Swains were among thousands of cruisers and spectators who converged on Hines Drive Sunday for the fourth annual Cruisin' Hines. Spectators and cars lined the roadway from Outer Drive in Dearborn to Ann Arbor Trail in Westland to see and be seen in a cruise that has become a popular event from car buffs.

"We love the Hines cruise," said Ron Wahl of Grosse Ile who was there with his wife Sheila and Larry and Mary Ligenza of Farmington Hills. "You can actually cruise and not get jammed up in traffic."

"This year we came in off of Ford Road. I don't know who thought of that, but it was great," said Ligenza. "I waited on Merriman Road to get in last year."

Ron and Sheila Wahl of Grosse Ile (left) and Larry and Mary Ligenza of Farmington Hills parked their cars by Nankin Mills to watch the cruise. *(Photo: Photo By Sue Mason)*

The two couples staked out a spot near Nankin Mills to show offer their vehicles – Wahls' 1964 Ford Fairlane 500 and Ligenza's 1969 Ford Mustang Mach 1 – and watch the car show.

"We do as many cruises as we can," said Ligenza. "We did the Woodward Dream Cruise and a Mustang cruise last weekend and the weekend after Labor Day we'll do the Frankenmuth cruise."

Grandfather's car

Wahl was a senior in high school when his grandfather bought the Fairlane. When he passed away in 1968, his grandmother drove it for a few years then parked it in a garage in Texas. In 1974, she came to visit at Christmas and gave him the title as a present.

"He bought a car with a small block V-8 engine and a stick shift," said Wahl. "My wife and I dated in that car."

"He likes to say 'same care, same gal,' " said his wife.

Ligenza's care wasn't quite as clean.

"It was a mess," he said. "The original owner drove it for 20 years and I don't think he ever washed it. He bought it right out of the showroom and drove it. He was in a carpool and a guy bought it for his son who had it one month and got in trouble, so he sold it. We got it in 1992."

Further down the road, the Klassic Haulers we watching the show with their pickup trucks lined up beside them. The club draws in members from throughout southeast Michigan and uses Rotary Park in Livonia as its meeting spot.

"We're about Ford trucks 25 years and older, specifically the 1948-1956 trucks," said Mark Laskosky of South Lyon.

Joining him were Buck and Sue Sobolewski of Livonia, Randy Bastion of Canton, Bob Mroz of Livonia and Gary Michalak and his son Kevin of South Lyon. They started at Ford Road in the morning and decided to park for awhile near Nankin Mills.

"After lunch, we'll go cruise back and forth," Laskosky said.

Taking a walk

Gene and Fran Lucier of Westland had parked their 1985 Corvette and were walking along the parkway to see the other cars.

"We enjoy seeing the old cars here," said Fran Lucier. "This is the only place you see the nice cars. At the other cruises you have to wait seven-eight cars before you see a nice one."

Gary and Joyce Swain of Westland brought their Hot Wheels-like Chevy Lumina minivan to the Cruisin' Hines. *(Photo: Sue Mason)*

In 1985, the Luciers couldn't afford a Corvette, they were busy raising five children, but eight years ago Lucier brought the Corvette. It surprised their sons.

"When he bought it, we had a picnic and my one son came up he asked who owned the Corvette," said Fran Lucier. "Our other son said dad and he replied, 'No, I'm serious. Whose is it?' "

The cruise weekend started on Saturday at Crosswinds Church in Wayne which hosted the pre-cruise kick-off party as part of its Family Day. More than 500 cars showed up for the event.

"We went to look at the cars," Gene Lucier said. "It was really good."

Matt and Julie Burns and their three children used their bikes to get around the park to see the cars. Son Brandon rode his own bike, while sons Shawn, 6, and Zachary, 3, rode in a pull-along cart.

"We come every year, I enjoy it," said Matt Burns.

"He loves it, it's in his blood," added his wife. When he smells that smell, he has to come. He and his dad go to cruises and car shows."

Matt and Julie Burns of Westland and their children Brandon (right), Shawn and Zachary used their bicycles to get to the cruise. (Photo: Sue Mason)

Matt Burns had a 1973 Camaro, but sold it years ago.

"I was young and didn't realize its value," he said. "It's like everyone says, I wish I hadn't."

Spectators and cruisers alike picked took photos of the cars and the crowd. And some even had video cameras set up along the road to record the event.

"This is going to be the best cruise ever," said Gary Swain. "It's slow enough you can see the cars and cut across the road."

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