



# A show of **MUSCLE**

THE MUSCLE CAR AND CORVETTE NATIONALS TEAM WANTED  
“THE SHOW TO END ALL SHOWS”



Al Rogers

This year's Muscle Car and Corvette Nationals featured a display of more than 60 Yenkos, from Corvairs to Camaros

**F**or many years, the Fall Chevy Vettefest in Chicago was a must-attend event for Midwest car guys. But unfortunately, for a variety of reasons, the show lost its magic. After the fall event in 2008, its owner, Championship Auto Shows, pulled the plug.

Hearing this news, a small group of collectors, myself included, decided it was time to build the all-makes American car show we had always wanted to see. The Chicago venue was available, with roughly 400,000 square feet of indoor space just a stone's throw from O'Hare airport. And the vacated November dates wouldn't interfere with any other shows — a rarity in the car show world.

## Go big or go home

Two problems stared us in the face: Nobody knew how to run a show, and at the time, not one of us knew just how crazy the idea of building a world-class, 500-plus car show in under 12 months would be. But as they say, if you're going to be a bear, might as well be a Grizzly. Our group of nine collectors decided to go for it anyway.

The first order of business was to snag Bob Ashton, the hard-working former Vettefest manager. Bob knew the venue, the logistics,

the people, the hobby, and the ins and outs of running a really good show. He became the 10th member of the newly formed Muscle Car and Corvette Nationals show (MCACN).

While 90% of our members knew next to nothing about running a show, we sure knew a lot about going to shows and what we did and did not like. Lists were compiled and votes taken. The end result was we all wanted “the show to end all shows” — a Pebble Beach for muscle car and Corvette guys.

We invited the best of the best in cars and car people. And they showed up! By the end of our 2009 show, the common consensus was that it could never be duplicated. But we weren't done. Not nearly. This year's event, held November 17 and 18, marked the fourth year of the MCACN show, and it's still growing.

## Rarest of the rare

Beyond this year's 533 show cars on display, plus a swapmeet, car corral and great vendors, what sets MCACN apart? First, there are cars you'll never see anywhere else. Our special showcases for 2012 included the perennial favorite Shelby Snakepit, with eight hand-picked special Shelbys, including Bobby Rahal and his 1965



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**Serious muscle as far as the eye can see**

GT350. This year's show also featured the 1969 Trans Am convertible showcase, with six of the eight produced on display; the "Meet the Mean Ones" Yenko display with over 60 Yenkos, from Corvairs to Camaros; the Class of 1962 and Class of 1972 displays, and the "Aero Warriors" display, with 42 of the winged wonders stretching almost the length of the building.

We also had numerous unveilings of special cars fresh out of restoration, including the 1969 Hurst Olds Convertible Pace Car with the famous nine-foot-tall gold Hurst shifter on the trunk. The even-more-famous Linda Vaughn was there to stand with that shifter. There was also a "Muscle Bikes" concours for vintage 1960s and 1970s bicycles—something to which all of us of a certain age can relate.

**Judging**


MCACN offers concours judging as well as more than 10 non-concours classes to recognize significant cars of all types. MCACN's expert team of judges, fluent in all makes, is led by Bill Braun, a noted

collector as well as NCRS Chapter Chairman and the former Vettefest Judging Chairman for 22 years. For the Corvette guys, MCACN offers the coveted Triple Diamond concours judging for Corvettes that have already achieved NCRS Top Flight and Bloomington Gold Certification within the past five years.

Beyond the MCACN Concours Stock judging, where cars are judged against a 1,000 point scale representing exact "as delivered" condition, there is also the unique Day 2 concours judging. Here, period-correct and documented accessories and modifications are allowed with no point deductions. This Day 2 judging recognizes this emerging trend to restore (and show) muscle cars as they were "back in the day," with headers, Cragar mags, Thrush mufflers, Sun Tachs and the like.

One of my favorite features at MCACN is the Vintage Certification program for original, unrestored cars. This incredibly intense judging and documentation process is only available for six to eight cars per year, and all are rigorously pre-qualified. Owners must submit an application that includes a written record of the car's history along with supporting documentation and photographs.

Four levels of Vintage Certification are offered to suit original cars from absolute time-capsule, untouched preservation-level cars down to cars that may have had limited restoration but still have areas that can offer invaluable references on factory finishes and processes. It is the goal of Vintage Certification to provide recognition and appreciation for unrestored cars while documenting them for historical reference. If we can save even a few cars that shouldn't be restored from the knife, we've done our job.

So with all of this, what does MCACN mean to the hobby? Judging by the nearly 20,000 people through the gate over the two-day show, including visitors from Sweden, England, France, and Canada, it has become the one not-to-miss show for American car enthusiasts worldwide. Famed collector and the creator of the original muscle car museum Floyd Garrett summed up MCACN by saying, "I'm going to tell all of my friends that they don't need to go to any other show during the year. THIS is the one to see!" I couldn't have said it better myself. 



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**Linda Vaughn and one of three 1969 Hurst Olds convertible pace cars**