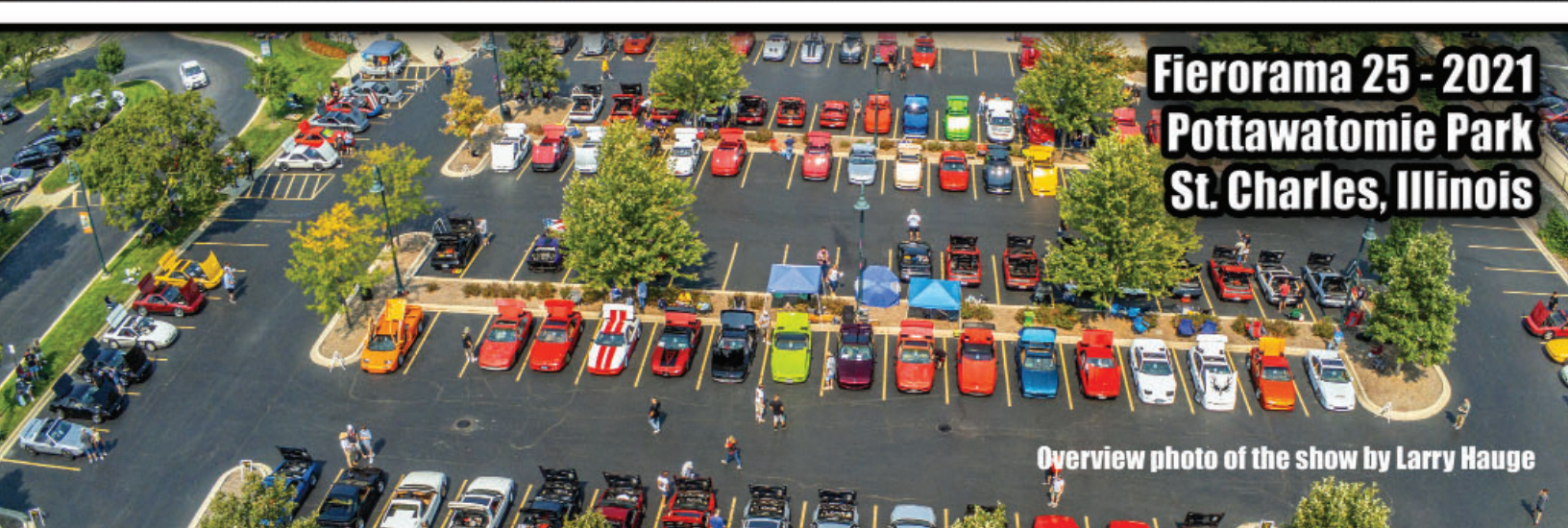


Fiero Focus



**Fierorama 25 - 2021
Pottawatomie Park
St. Charles, Illinois**

Overview photo of the show by Larry Hauge

Fierorama's Silver Anniversary: Soaring to New Heights



Meet some of the authors for this issue's feature article: Eric White, Doug Rose, Tim Panfil, Jestin Pickardt, and Paul Vargyas. Not pictured: Mike Valentine, Jon Revelle.

For this year's Fierorama review, we will enjoy the perspectives of several club members that attended, each sharing what Fierorama 25 was like for them!

Fierorama Friday's Event

As I laid in bed anticipating the drive to Chicago, IL from Sioux Falls, SD, many things ran through my head and kept me from sleep. I have never taken this car on a long journey. Would the cammed LS4 run okay for hours on end? Would it stay cool? Would the A/C work? Would I end up with a nail in a tire and no spare? The car was clean, checked over and ready for the road, and I built the engine myself and it runs great, so what was I worried about?

Finally, 7:00am rolled around. I sent the kids off to school and gave my wife a



Awaiting departure as we soar to new heights! Fierorama Friday finally arrived as we await the 5:30pm lift off to head to our first event of Fierorama 25!

kiss. With an average speed of 78 mph and 24 mpg, stopping twice for fuel and coffee, I arrived at the Quality Inn in St. Charles, IL right at 4:00pm, completing the 553-mile outbound trip. I immediately ran into NIFE member Wayne Geib, the friend I had

met in Carlisle, PA that had told me about Fierorama. We agreed to meet up again in the parking lot, and this was the spot! It was amazing to see so many Fieros, and even more amazing talking to individuals who had the same love and passion for their unique ride as I had for

mine. Some of the cars were astoundingly beautiful, some works in progress, but each with a great story to be told.

Wayne and I rode to Wahlburgers Restaurant together, which was the first event of Fierorama weekend on Friday evening, September 10, 2021. He stated it was his first time in a V8 Fiero. I was nervous because his car is about perfect—what would his thoughts be of mine? As we sat enjoying a burger and chicken sandwich, we were approached by NIFE President Jim Hallman, who stated that my car had won! I had to ask what he was talking about. Jim explained that an employee of Wahlburgers chose their favorite Fiero in the parking lot, and it was mine. I was floored!



The line of Fieros assembled lead by Mike Kaser of Indiana in his recently purchased '85 red and white GT!



My car is special to me for many reasons, but I never thought it was award-worthy. I'm not sure if it was the first car the employee saw, or if they really liked

World War II vintage to modern day. The show started off with skydivers delivering the Stars and Stripes, and one skydiver

We arrived at Wahlburgers Restaurant after a short "flight" through downtown St. Charles, IL. While NIFE President Jim Hallman was filled with fear at hearing the restaurant staff was not aware of our reservations for 30 people that night, we were served quickly and efficiently!

Airport. It was the perfect day for an air show with warm temperatures and fair skies, and we were treated to great variety of aircraft performances, from

a T-6, the iconic WWII trainer, an L-19 observation plane, a T-28, a post WWII trainer, and an A-1 Skyraider.

Several earlier jets were also present and performed, including a T-33, T-37, F-86, and the newer A-4. A group of Czech L39's also flew in formation. In addition to the military-types, we got to see several excellent aerobatic demonstrations with single aircraft and formation aerobatic flying by the Phillips 66 Aerobatics Team.

Not everything flew; there was a jet-powered fire truck built from a '40 Ford



Fierorama Saturday's event "flew" us to the Waukegan Airport. It was a HOT day for an air show, but cloudless skies made for a perfect day as the planes soared high and low!

it, but the award puts a smile on my face even as I write this! To have a "non-Fiero-biased" person choose *my* Fiero as their favorite car is pretty darn special. The car may never again win an award, and if so, that's okay. I built the car to be driven, and it did its job amazingly well. To me, this award was a culmination of hard work, time, money, and a vision. The car is complete (or at least for now!), and hopefully will make the drive again next year to meet more of the amazing people keeping the Fiero alive. Thank you!

Eric White, NIFE member

Fierorama Saturday's Event

On Saturday, September 11, 2021, the Fierorama crew headed to the Northern Illinois Air Show at the Waukegan

with a 9-11 memorial flag. The WWII aircraft included a TMB Avenger—the type flown by President George Bush—and a Corsair, both with functional folding wings. The Corsair had the marking "Glenview", which references Glenview Naval Air Station, where all the WWII carrier pilots trained. The aircraft flew out over Lake Michigan to one of two lake steamers that were converted to flat tops, smaller than the real aircraft carriers. Ten landings and takeoffs were needed to qualify as a carrier pilot. Other vintage war birds included

pick-up truck with over 6,000 horsepower and 6,000 pounds of thrust! The show concluded with a legacy flight featuring the Corsair and A-4. It sure was an enjoyable afternoon!

Doug Rose, NIFE member



Fiero owners younger than the cars were enjoying the day too; Mason Kroyer (NIFE Creative/Social Media Director Mike Kroyer's son) exploring his photographic skills.



The Corsair showing off its functional folding wings.

It's Showtime!

History was made on Sunday, September 12, 2021, as NIFE hosted its 25th edition of Fierorama. Originally scheduled for September 13, 2020, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic put plans for the silver anniversary event on hold. The Fierorama show was held at Pottawatomie Park in St. Charles, IL, where Fiero owners began arriving at 9:00am. Participants were directed to their respective class position on the show field, continuing to arrive until judging began at 1:00pm; all in all, the official count was 102 Fieros on the show field. Was it pent up demand because of the pandemic, or perhaps a desire to participate in the 25th anniversary show? Either way, Fiero owners traveled from near and far to attend, arriving from 19 different states!

The show officially opened with Jim Stombres, father of NIFE member Austin Stombres, playing the *Star Bangled Banner* on his trumpet, followed by *Taps* in honor of the 20th anniversary of September 11, 2001 the day prior. Our master of ceremonies, NIFE president Jim Hallman, kicked off Fierorama 25 with announcements and the schedule of activities for the sun-filled afternoon.

Once again, Fierorama attendees were able to stop by a "Tech Table" from 2:00pm until 3:00pm. This year, NIFE member Stephen Bungert of YouTube's "Garageless" fame discussed future plans

for his 431 hp (535 lb/ft of torque at 16psi) 3800 V6 turbo-charged '86 Fiero GT, and answered many questions about the current progress.

Meet Some Owners

Fierorama gives members the chance to meet and interact with other Fiero enthusiasts, many from out of state, who share their love for these tiny "two-seat commuter cars", as GM dubbed them



NIFE First Lady, Jenni Hallman (L) serving NIFE member Tom Schmidt (R) in the waiting line for pizza at the traditional Fierorama pizza party on Saturday night. Sixty-three hungry Fiero owners gathered to socialize.

(wink, wink). Whether you prefer stock versus modified, notchback or fastback, it always amazes me to see them spread out across the show field, like taking a step back into the 1980s. During the show this year, I conducted a dozen or so random, "micro interviews" with Fierorama participants, and what a cast of characters! I enjoyed getting to know each owner and hope to keep the conversations going in the future. Following is what some of the Fiero enthusiasts attending Fierorama 25 had to say.

First up was Vince Amato of Crestwood, IL, who brought his 77,900-mile black '86 GT with automatic transmission. He's owned his GT since

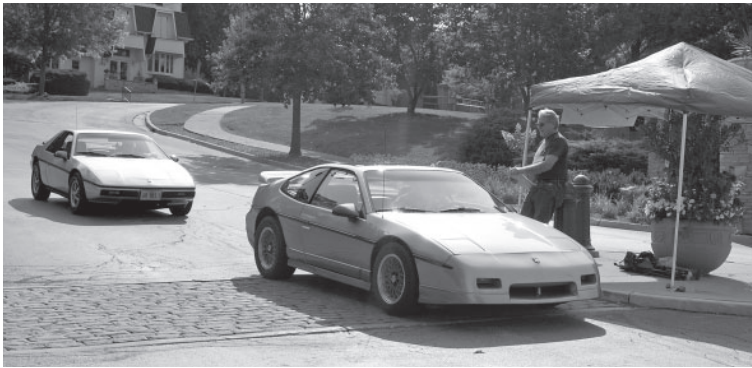
1990 and has kept it all original. Now a retired professional horse jockey who raced ponies around the country, Vince has attended between six and ten Fieroramas. His favorite show was in 2019, "A Salute to Our Veterans", and has been a class winner three times.

Next up was Chad Brown of Colgate, WI who brought out his 20,000-mile '88 GT with CJB T-tops. Chad's family is the first, third, and fourth owner of this particular Fiero. His father bought it "new" in 1989 as a GM executive-driven vehicle. It was later sold to John Podziemski of the Fiero Fanatics of Wisconsin, who owned it for 20 years until selling it back to Chad's father. Two months ago, Chad bought it from his father. This was Chad's first Fierorama and he commented on how well organized the entire weekend was.

Perhaps two of the most familiar faces at Fierorama are the father and son team of Ray and Eric Dyreson. Eric lives in Loves Park, IL and showed his silver '87 GT, which was his high school graduation present to himself. Eric has attended over a dozen Fieroramas and his favorite memory was winning the "best display" award at Fierorama 22, the famed "Deuces Wild" show. Father Ray, who lives in Winnebago, IL, brought his white, '88 GT with 130,000 miles. He's owned this car for 15 years, along with around 20 others in his lifetime. At the 20th anniversary show, Ray was recognized for having attended all twenty Fieroramas. With Fierorama 25,



The 25th celebration festivities continued with dessert after pizza with a delicious sheet cake.



*Fierorama show day arrived on Sunday, September 12, 2021!
Fieros began lining up to be classified for the show just after 9:00am!*

that number has increased to 25. Yes, Ray has been a part of every Fierorama since the inaugural event in 1996! His favorite show memories include seeing the GM prototypes and Fred Bartemeyer, Jr's Indy Pace Car. His favorite show was in 2013, "Fierorama Goes to the Movies", as he vividly remembers the red carpet that was rolled out for the awards ceremony and the Best-in-Class trophies that looked like miniature Oscar statues.

Yet another familiar face at Fierorama 25 was Johnny Parypinski of Berwyn, IL. Johnny brought his white '88 GT that he's owned since 2011. This is his second Fiero, both of which were purchased from NIFE Member At Large, Paul Vargyas. He's attended between 16 and 20 Fieroramas and noted that his favorites included the "Deuces Wild" show in 2017 and the "Back to the 80's" show in 2014. Johnny commented that "every year keeps getting better" and thanked the NIFE board and all the volunteers who make Fierorama a top-notch event.

Tony Raia of Cresthill, IL brought out his silver, '86 Sport Coupe with a manual transmission and just 29,000 miles. This is Tony's first Fiero, purchased six months ago, and his first Fierorama. Also attending his first Fierorama was Mike Kaser of Acron, IN. Lucky for him, Mike owns 13 Fieros (all in running condition!), and chose to bring his '85 GT with automatic transmission and 3800 supercharged motor to Fierorama 25. He's owned this beauty since June 2021 where he saw it at the Dells Run.

that was his first car. A little known but interesting factoid about Earl is that he's been a two-time World Pogo Sticking Champion. Yes, that actually exists, as well as "Pogo-Palooza". Don't believe me? Just search "Earl Pote pogo sticking" on YouTube!

On the show field, my next-door neighbor in the Fierorama low-mileage class was Tony Griffin from Chicago, IL. He brought his '84 Indy Pace Car replica, which has 31,000 miles, an automatic transmission, and enhanced brake system. This was Tony's second Fierorama, having also been to the show in 2019. We reminisced how many times we had to

Yet another Fierorama first timer was Earl Pote of Oak Forest, IL. Earl brought his incredible red, '88 Formula with just 13,000 miles on the odometer. He's owned three Fieros, including an '85 GT

cuit, including Kristina Kahn of Milford, MI and her boyfriend Paul Kolbus of Cleveland, OH.

Kristina's '88 GT with a Northstar engine swap was selected by the Michigan Fiero Club this past summer as the best Fiero with an owner younger than their car. She bought the car with a '93 Northstar motor, but had to junk it, and proceeded to find and completely rebuild a '96 Northstar—with help from her boyfriend Paul, who frequently makes the weekend trip from Ohio to Michigan to assist. All in all, the build took three years to complete. In addition to her '88 GT, Kristina owns two '87 GTs, but noted that her '88 is her favorite. This was her third Fierorama.

Boyfriend Paul Kobus currently owns four Fieros and brought his '86 Coupe with a 3800-engine swap to the show this year. The car was purchased as a rolling chassis with 65,000 miles on it. While only 21 years old, he's already owned ten Fieros! Like the saying goes, "You can never own too many Fieros." Hats off to all of our Fiero owners younger than their cars. You are the future of NIFE and will help to preserve the excitement for generations to come!

Tim Panfil, NIFE member



Annette Bartemeyer checking out the Fierorama Stock Fastback GT Class as the sun reflects off the paint.

wipe down our cars between light rain showers all day long that year, while this year's weather couldn't have been better. Thank you, Mother Nature!

My final interviews were conducted with some of the owners younger than their Fieros, the theme for this year's Midwest Fiero Clubs (MWFC) show cir-

Fierorama's Longest Distance Traveled Winner

I wanted to make it to one show this year, and it just so happened I needed to get my daily driver '88 GT back to Denver from Alabama. I made the decision to take a detour and drive up to Chicago for Fierorama. Denver to Alabama is around 1,250 miles and Alabama to Fierorama was exactly 600 miles, so in essence, I drove a total of 1,850 miles on the trip. That said, I was in Alabama for several weeks before driving up to Chicago and only drove 600 miles to get to the show. The drive back to Denver after the show was 980 miles!

As for my impressions of the show; this was my third Fierorama, and I enjoy myself each time I attend. I like the variety of cars that show up as well as the



A small representation of the over 100 Fieros on the show field at Fierorama 25.

since I last attended a Fierorama, and a few people came up to me and started talking as if we last spoke a week prior. That has less to do with Fierorama than the nature of the greater Fiero community,

but it is still something I enjoyed about this year's show.

Mike Valentine, NIFE member

numbers; there's something for everyone!

The one thing that fascinates and heartens me about this year's Fierorama was the number of younger people in attendance. I was in high school for most of the Fiero's production run and bought my first Fiero (an '88 GT) in 1990, long before most of these young people at the show were even born! I talked to a few "under 30" attendees and saw myself in them when I was their age. It definitely makes me less worried about the future of the Fiero as us older members get, well...older.

I also enjoy catching up with old friends. I think it's been four or five years



Fierorama parking lot volunteers performing their duties to ensure a wonderful presentation of the Pontiac Fiero for participants to enjoy.

Midwest Fiero Club's (MWFC) Best in the Midwest Winner #1

Winning MWFC Best in the Midwest was a huge achievement for not only myself, but for my dad, who had a huge role in building this car. My Fiero was my first car, and it was not the best looking. It was beat up and needed a lot of love. We got it running well enough and I drove it that way for a couple years, but I wasn't happy with it. I wanted more, so we started to restore it. Once we started to restore it, we got the crazy idea to do an LS V8 swap on it, and I went even crazier and turbocharged it.

Now that it went fast, it had to stop, so we upgraded the brakes. Now that it stopped well, it had to handle better, so we did front and rear coilovers with upper and lower control arms. The only

thing left was the paint, so we rushed to get it painted a month before the big event. There isn't a single thing that hasn't been touched on this car and I am so fortunate to have been able to build my dream car and to show it off at Fierorama. I wasn't expecting to win the Best in the Midwest competition; I merely wanted people to see what I believe is my masterpiece. To me, it's a work of art. It's what I built based on the ideas I had in my mind and

brought to life.

My favorite part of the Fiero commu-



A view of the Fierorama awards ceremony from NIFE President Jim Hallman's vantage point - Fiero enthusiasts everywhere!



Special appearance of the soon to be restored 1990 Low Rider Magazine Fiero. Check out the Fierocast episode to hear about this unique car.

nity is that everyone has their own taste, and there isn't a great divide between keeping these cars original or modifying them. We all have respect for people's builds whether they want to modify them or restore them. We build what we want

you for this opportunity and everyone that has helped me or supported me with this car.

Jestin Pickardt, NIFE member



Fierorama 25's Best of Show winners – both blue Fieros this year! (L to R) Jen Goss with the non-stock Blue Demon and Jeff Jones with a low-mileage, stock '87 blue GT; each worthy of this prestigious award!



The two winners in this year's Midwest Fiero Clubs competition for the Best Fiero Owned by Someone Younger Than Their Car (L to R): Jon Revelle and Jestin Pickardt with Jen Goss on hand for added moral support!

to build, and we restore what we want to restore. I give a huge congratulations to NIFE member Jon Revelle on winning this award as well with his beautiful, original '88 white Formula. If you ask me, I proudly say that we are the future of how these cars are going to be preserved. We have two completely different cars but the same passion for the Fiero.

I would like to thank you for this opportunity and everyone that has helped me or supported me with this car.

Midwest Fiero Club's (MWFC) Best in the Midwest Winner #2

The result of 2021's MWFC competition for the best Fiero owned by someone younger than their car delivered a unique and surprising opportunity to honor both those building the Fiero's future and preserving the Fiero's past. This brought a downright *hard* competition between owners of broad knowledge and backgrounds, and cars showcasing their owners' unlimited visions. "Enthusiasm" was on full display at Fierorama 25 in the form of rolling time capsules, ultramodern aesthetics, passion projects, works in progress, and home-brewed engineering marvels in pursuit of extreme performance.

Personally, I'm honored to have been in the game at all, let alone to share the award with one of the most stunning modern Fiero builds in recent memory. On a

broader scale, though, I'm thrilled to see appreciation for our cars growing into the next generation of the Fiero cult.

Jon Revelle, NIFE member

Fierorama From Someone Who Has Attended Them All!

After purchasing my first Fiero in September of 1993, I joined NIFE as member #71. At the NIFE club Christmas party in 1995, the idea of having our own Fiero car show was born. Named "Fierorama" and promoted as an event "in the honor of the daily driven Fiero", the idea was to get Fiero owners together to display their cars and swap Fiero stories. The first year, 66 Fieros attended, and that was the beginning of 25 years of Fierorama. I have attended all 25! For nine straight years (1997-2005), we welcomed over 100 Fieros every year, mostly at our venue in Oak Brook, IL.

My favorite years were the Fiero car raffles (1999, 2001, 2007) when we sold \$10.00 raffle tickets all across the U.S. for a Fiero that would be given away at Fierorama. In 1999 it was a red '86 GT. In 2001 it was a red '88 GT T-top. Then in 2007, it was a '84 Quad 4 powered Fiero built by NIFE member Gerry Goodwin. Gerry is still an active NIFE member! There was a lot of interest and excitement that went along with those raffle promotions.

Another Fierorama favorite of mine was in 2005, when we had GM's five Fiero prototype cars delivered to our Oak Brook, IL show field, compliments of GM, which proved to be the biggest turnout in Fierorama history with 141 cars.

Having been in charge of registration at Fierorama for most of the 25 years of shows, I've met hundreds of participants from numerous states. Many Fiero enthusiasts have participated in 25 years of Fierorama, and everyone involved has shown a passion and excitement for the Fiero. NIFE has been proud to present these many years of Fierorama, and they have brought me many great memories to treasure! 🍷

Paul Vargyas, NIFE Member at Large

Image Source(s): Jim Hallman, Ken Nagel, Eric White, Doug Rose, Tim Panfil, Mike Valentine, Jestin Pickardt, Paul Vargyas