

WEBERS WANDERINGS

LARRY MILLER'S PACKARD COLLECTION, 2/11/07

The all-night rain on Saturday and into Sunday morning, Feb. 11 made the tour to Larry Miller's Packard collection look a bit iffy, but it was billed as a rain or shine meet. It turned out that the rain quit and the day turned quite lovely, with big puffy clouds and not too cool temperatures in Chatsworth.

The forecast weather may have turned off a few members, but we still had a pretty good turn-out, if not many AEVs. Gary & Lu Weber led the VVV group from the Ross' parking lot in the 1970 Datsun 510 with Hoady Holst as passenger, followed by Stan Birchall driving Sid Gordon in the '57 Ford 9-passenger Country Sedan and Joe Jones in his bright red '63 Nova SS convertible. Driving Brands X were Ray & Marie Chaplar and Dick Leu.

Coming from other directions, Coastal Valleys Director Andrea 'Enthal drove her '60 Edsel Ranger tudor sedan and Bob & Tom Thornton drove a Brand X. We were also joined by fourteen members from the Southlanders Edsel Owners Club.

We all made our way through the two security gates into the Millers' very nice neighborhood and gathered in front of their estate by 11 AM and were welcomed by our congenial host Larry and his wife Lillian.

Our first stop was a visit to a side room to the first of the garages, which was packed with automotive memorabilia. We had to squeeze around to enjoy it all.

Then we went into the first garage, where we met a fine '32 Packard coach, a "poor" cousin to the classic '32 Packard Twin-six dual cowl phaeton.

Next there was a '37 Packard Twin-six fordor sedan, with the hood open so we could admire its twelve cylinder work of art powerplant. It would truly be a shame to hide this gorgeous engine under a big piece of decorative plastic as is done in modern cars.

Next to this Twin-six was one of the ladies' favorites, a red Series 120 rumble seat convertible coupe. There were other fine post-war Packards - a '49 fast-back, a couple of lovely Caribbeans, and some very nice early '50 and '56 models. In between the two garage blocks was a pretty '47 sedan which was very close to being completed.

The second garage building also housed a couple of huge front wheel drive Cadillac Eldos, both very nice. It also featured a table with coffee urn and some delicious little home-made cup-cakes. Mr. Miller had a picture wall in this garage, and he explained to an interested group how he managed to finance this lovely palace and collection. He had been in the construction business, and invented some gizmos that were a popular improvement to backhoes and trenching machines. They obviously paid off very well.

After we finished noshing and talking we went down to the partial basement "play room" which was probably as big as our little house. Here was much more memorabilia, including a number of his winning trophies from various concours d' elegance.

Larry is also a model train buff, and has a quite large layout under development. He gave us a demonstration run of a large freight train of tank cars, pulled by one of the "Big Boy" locomotives, the king of the steam era. He operates this with a radio from the center of his layout. When he finally brought the big loco to a final stop, it made all of the proper noises of a big steam engine coming to rest.

It took some serious effort to drag the folks away from all of these neat toys, but we were on the verge of being late for our lunch reservations at the near-by Lamp Lighter Restaurant, where the Coastal Valleys Region had been enjoying their monthly dinner meetings for the past couple of years. The Millers joined us for lunch, and they are truly delightful folks.

Many thanks, Larry & Lillian Miller. It was a great day.

Gary Weber



