

cars startribune.com/carsoup

AUTO SCENE

Ford Falcon Club of America: Members of Northland Chapter keep 'birds' flying

Fifty years ago, Ford released the first Falcon and it soared to the top of the compact sales charts, fueled in part by ads featuring "Peanuts" comic strip characters. More than 2 million Falcons were sold through the 1964 model, but when the Mustang debuted, the Falcon was no longer allowed to have a convertible or a high-performance engine and the nameplate began a decline. Sales dropped precipitously in 1967 and the Falcon dove out of sight after its mid-1970 model with a final sales total of 2.85 million models that include some Rancheros and Econolines.

Falcon production has been grounded now for 40 years, but it still has fans. The eight-year-old Northland Chapter of the Ford Falcon Club of America counts more than 40 family memberships. Chapter president Toni Sullivan says that members help each other with their restored cars and the club is a great social group for its members, mostly married couples. In addition to regular social get-togethers, the club sponsored the national club's show in Bloomington in 2007, hosting 250 Falcons, and sent a 20-Falcon caravan to Dearborn, Mich., for the most recent national meet. The club also hopes to sponsor a local show in the near future.

Sullivan and her husband Mike have two Falcons. They bought their 1963 Tudor sedan "grocery-getter" in 2006 because it was affordable and they liked its looks. It's mostly original, while their

second Falcon, a '64 convertible, boasts a distinctly non-original 302-cubic-inch engine.

Longtime club member Ralph Marquardt owns a unique '63 Falcon Cayuse, one of only two prototypes of the sports model ever made. Ford decided not to produce it, choosing to concentrate instead on the first Mustang. The Cayuse's distinct looks include a functional asymmetrical hood scoop and a rear license plate mounted on the far left. Marquardt also has a '61 Falcon that appeared in a local documentary and was used by the Coen brothers during the local shooting of their film "A Serious Man." You won't see the car in the film, however, because the scenes it appeared in didn't make the final cut.

For more information on the chapter, call 651-437-7029 or 651-459-7940, or visit www.northland-falcons.com.

Car Club Roundup

Beginning on Dec. 17, Auto Scene will list area car, truck and motorcycle clubs in its annual Car Club Roundup. To get in the corral, e-mail club name, vehicle focus and contact information (phone numbers, e-mail/website, etc.) to jamesbohen@yahoo.com.

— *Jim Bohan*
St. Paul freelance writer