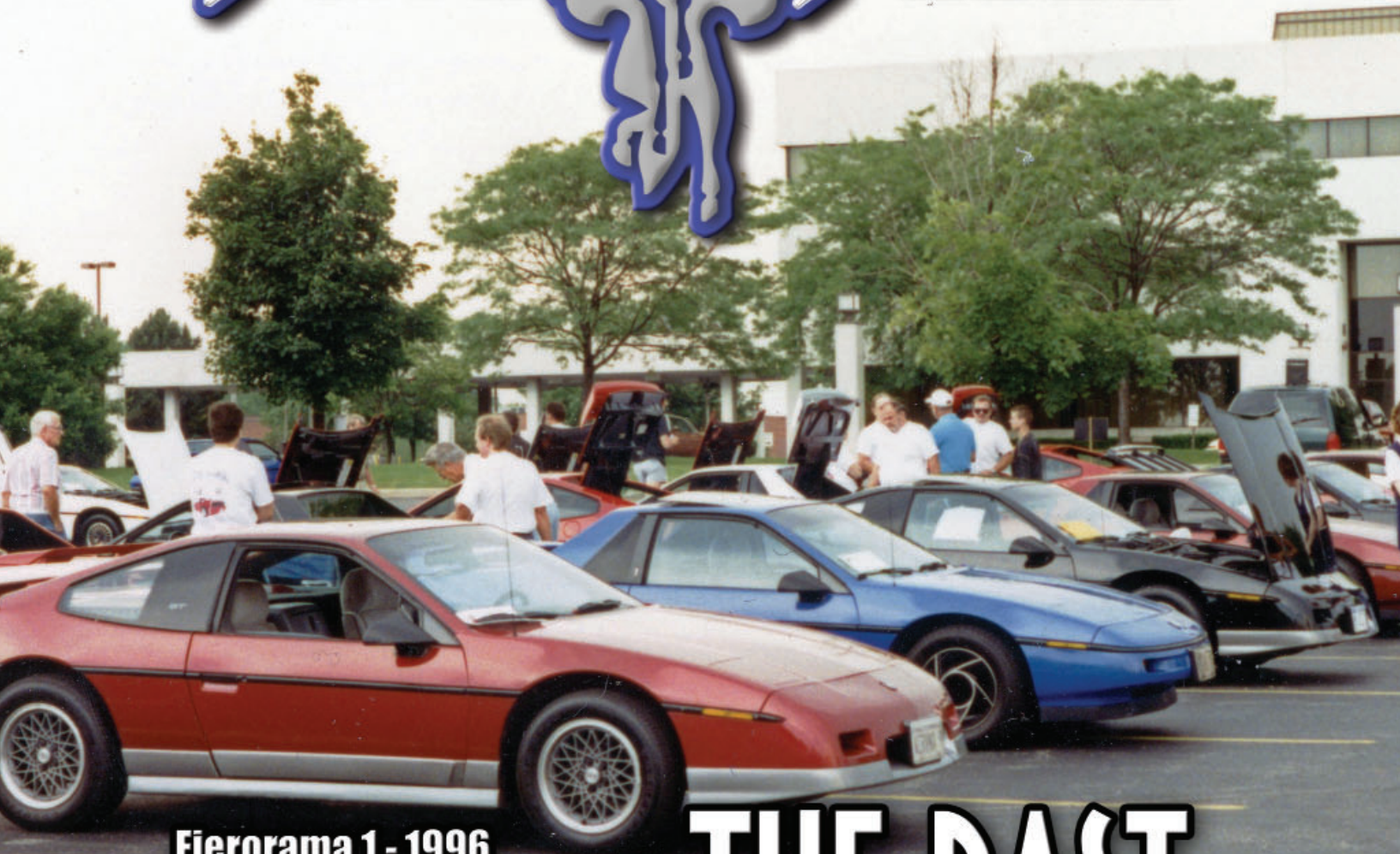


Fiero Focus

A large, stylized eagle logo in blue and grey, with its wings spread wide, positioned behind the 'Fiero Focus' text.

**Fierorama 1 - 1996
Home Run Inn Pizza
Darien, Illinois**

THE PAST ...



Everything YOU Wanted to Know About Fierorama But Were Afraid to Ask

The Evolution of Fierorama – A Celebration 25 Years in the Making.

Over the twenty-five-year history of the Fiero community's phenomenon known as "Fierorama", there have been a total of 2,232 registered cars resulting in an average of 93 cars per event. So, what was the genesis for Fierorama? According to NIFE Founder and President, Jim Hallman, Fierorama was conceived at the 1995 NIFE Christmas party, which was held at a club member's house in Naperville, IL. At one of the subsequent NIFE board meetings, member Paul Vargyas suggested calling the show "Fierorama" after GM's "Motorama" shows of the 1950s (Image 1). The original intention of Fierorama was to honor daily driven Fieros. Additionally, NIFE wanted to see just how many Fieros they could get in one place at one time. NIFE will be celebrating the 25th Fierorama from Friday, September 10 through Sunday, September 12, 2021.

Contrary to popular opinion, the original goal of Fierorama was not to award the most pristine cars. Rather, the goal was to reward the owners who didn't consider their Fiero a show car

because they drove it every day. Ideally, NIFE wanted to award the "best looking Fiero with the highest mileage." Awards have since evolved to include various classes based upon body style and modifications—yet still with a focus on mileage.

1996 Highlights

The inaugural Fierorama took place on June 23, 1996, at the Chestnut Court shopping center in Darien, IL. NIFE was looking for a highly visible location to attract a crowd of onlookers. The Homerun Inn Pizza Restaurant provided food and restroom needs for show attendees and guests. A total of 66 Fieros were registered for the first event, which,

according to NIFE Board Member Mark Soeldner, was only open to NIFE Members "so that we could get our feet wet with learning how to put on a successful car show". For the inaugural show, Fieros were divided into twelve classes based on year, model, and mileage, and this was the

only Fierorama to take place in June.

1997 Highlights

The second Fierorama was held on September 14, 1997, at the same location in Darien, IL, but was open to the entire Fiero community. The number of registered cars jumped 73 percent to 114! Remarkably, Fiero owners from seven states were in attendance. Highlights included the debut of Rich Warber's "chop top" Fiero that won the "People's Choice" award, and former NIFE Member Elmer Schild's "naked Fiero" (the body panel skins were removed from the spaceframe).

1998 Highlights

The 1998 Fierorama had a couple of "firsts". It was the first show to offer dash plaques instead of an 8½" x 11" commemorative poster, and the first time the event was videotaped. Jim Hallman offered to make copies of the recording as long as you sent him a blank VHS tape (as Betamax was already ancient history by then). Nineteen-ninety-eight was the first year Fierorama took place in Oak Brook, IL (and remained there through 2005). The location was an office

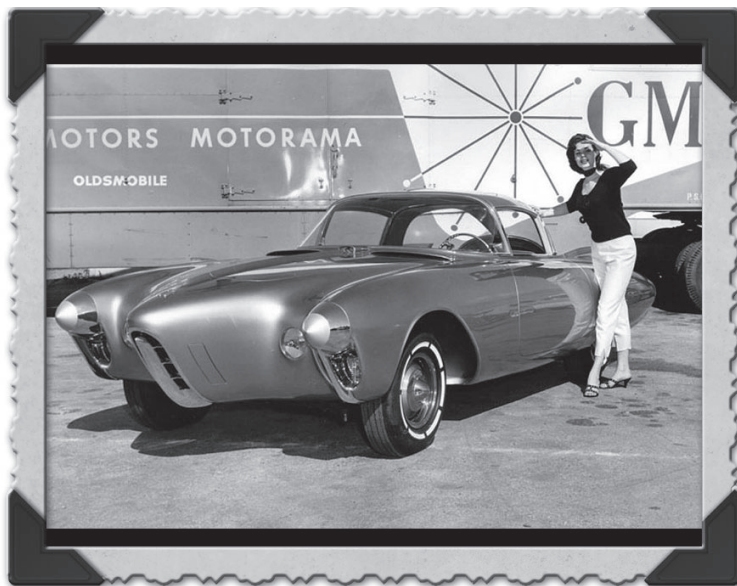


Image 1: GM's Motorama annual events were used to introduce new prototypes, concept vehicles and new technology to the public.



Image 2: NIFE Member Fred Bartemeyer, Jr. enjoying the ride in Indy Pace Car #2!



Image 3: The State of Illinois' Special Events License Plate Program.

building parking lot near the corner of 22nd Street and Midwest Road. At the time, the Cruisin' Tigers GTO Club was using that same location for their annual "Indian Uprising" All Pontiac show. A McDonald's Restaurant located on the edge of the parking lot provided food and restroom accommodations.

1999 Highlights

For 1999 Fierorama, a DJ was added to the lineup, and it was the first time that a Cadillac Northstar engine swap was on the show field. It was owned by Chris Moore of Auburn, IN and earned three awards: People's Choice, Best of Class Custom/Rebody, and the Ronald McDonald's Choice Award. But perhaps the biggest addition to Fierorama in 1999 was the world's first Fiero raffle. Five hundred tickets at \$10 each were sold over the course of 60 days. Former NIFE Member Gene Keenan won the grand prize—a red '86 GT!

2000 Highlights

In 2000, the "Fierorama Key Sponsor" program was implemented to enhance the value for participants. Sponsors were asked to contribute funds and merchandise in exchange for publicizing their business. Long time sponsors have included: The Fiero Store and V8 Archie (both since 2002), Meguiar's, Village Pontiac/GMC, Performance Powder Coatings, Woody Buick/GMC, and Mr. Mike's Leathers, among many others. Additionally, a Fierorama video was created by Mike Kroyer and Paul Vargyas

who interviewed each and every attendee on the show field.

2001 Highlights

The 2001 Fierorama, held just two days before the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the U.S., should have been called "Raffle-Rama" as it was a record year for raffle prizes. This second Fiero raffle was won by former NIFE Member Carl

Anderson. The prize? An '88 GT with T-tops. Second prize was a \$1,400 Mr. Mike's leather package that went to former NIFE Member Chuck Rudolph, and third prize was a \$500 gift certificate for The Fiero Store that went to Fiero owner Dave Gray. Fourth prize was a set of steak knives © (see the "Glengarry Glen Ross" movie based on the 1984 Pulitzer Prize winning play of the same name). Bill Wildt of the popular cable TV show, "Motorsports Unlimited", recorded an episode at this Fierorama. Bill called the Fiero, "the hot rod for the next millennium". Every attendee who entered the show field was photographed and the photos were later published on our website. There was also at least one "first" and "last" this year: it was the first Fierorama attended by Fred Bartemeyer, Jr. and the last one to include "goodie bags".

2002 Highlights

The terminology "Viewable Modifications" was coined to describe any changes made to a stock Fiero that are viewable to the eye. We use this terminology to differentiate between the class descriptions

so Fieros with similar quantities of viewable modifications are competing against each other. This was the first year that V8 Archie hosted a dinner for out-of-town guests at a local Pizza Hut Restaurant, to encourage Fiero owners to come early on Saturday and stay over the night before Sunday's show. We presented an award for the most Fieros at the show from one family, which was given to the Heins family of central Illinois—Helen, Heather, Amanda, and Bob (former NIFE Members). They brought a total of four Fieros to Fierorama.

2003 Highlights

At Fierorama in 2003, the Highest Mileage Fiero Award was presented to original owner, Al Wagner, whose '84 Sport Coupe topped out at 305,000 miles on the original 4-cylinder engine. Actual trophies for awards were given out for the first time in lieu of paper certificates, and Bill Wildt of "Motorsports Unlimited" returned to record a second episode at Fierorama.

2004 Highlights

This year, the Midwest Fiero Clubs (MWFC) "Best in the Midwest" competitions were introduced to honor the 20-year anniversary celebrations for each model year. Winners from each of the Fiero shows in Wisconsin, Minnesota, Missouri, Michigan, Iowa, Pennsylvania, and Fierorama, compete to be selected as the Best In The Midwest, which is awarded at Fierorama, the final show of the MWFC season. The Saturday night pizza



Image 4: 2008 was the final year for V8 Archie's open house event.



Image 5: Fierorama 2013's Best Display winner, Nilmar Mendoza.

party tradition began at Barone's of Lisle, IL. V8 Archie's GT4T Fiero rebody made its Fierorama debut during V8 Archie's open house on Saturday.

2005 Highlights

This year marked the 10th Fierorama. To celebrate this special occasion, NIFE worked with Fred Bartemeyer, Jr. to have GM bring the five Fiero prototypes to our event. These cars included: the Indy Pace Car #2 (Image 2), the Blue PPG Pace Car, the first Fiero ever built, the turbo charged "Porsche Eater", and the '90 GTA prototype. This year, we raffled off a V8 Archie installation kit. Tickets cost only \$5 each and NIFE's Creative/Social Media Director, Mike Kroyer was the winner. The "People's Choice Award" was named in honor of the late Rich Warber for his contributions to the Fiero community. Rich was the innovator of the popular Fiero chop top and the "Warber



Image 6: President Jim Hallman during the awards ceremony at Fierorama in 2013.

Hood". Additionally, one attendee drove 2,422 miles from San Diego, CA to attend this year's event; the longest distance to date that anyone has driven to attend Fierorama.

2006 Highlights

Fierorama 2006 moved to its current location, Pottawatomie Park along the Fox River in beautiful St. Charles, IL. Former NIFE Member, Vince Badali, had a contact on the St.

Charles Park District's board of directors who helped us obtain the location. It was also the first Fierorama with a live web-cast from the show field. Fierorama was marketed as "Fierorama Weekend" for the first time. Saturday's events included a group breakfast followed by a cruise to V8 Archie's open house for lunch and a "chop top reunion." This was followed by dinner at Salerno's on the Fox Restaurant in St. Charles, IL, where we held a surprise 40th birthday party for Fred Bartemeyer, Jr. This year, yet another attendee drove 2,400 miles from San Diego, CA to attend.

2007 Highlights

Fierorama 2007 marked the first time we created special event license plates so Illinois owners could purchase a set to celebrate our event (Image 3). The third Fiero raffle for a Quad 4 powered '85 SE created by NIFE Member Gerry Goodwin took place. Former NIFE Member Kurt Krutsch walked away with keys to this prize. Fiero owner Tom Goddard took home the second prize by putting \$1,000 of cold hard cash into his pocket.

2008 Highlights

There was a Las Vegas theme at Fierorama 2008, which celebrated our

"Lucky 13" edition! Plastic poker chips replaced paper door prize tickets, and everyone was given a set of "lucky" fuzzy dice to hang from their rearview mirror to celebrate! The poker chips were printed with the NIFE logo on one side and the Fierorama event logo on the second side with a sequenced number; these numbers were randomly called out to award the door prizes. All good things must come to an end and for 2008, we held our last open house at V8 Archie's shop located near Rockford, IL; Archie later moved out to Las Vegas to continue his business and be closer to family (Image 4).

2009 Highlights

The "Park 4 Fun" class made its debut. Cars in this category were not judged and provided for "easy in, easy out" access to the show. This allowed owners to participate in the Fierorama experience without committing to participate for the entire day. Of special note, Fred Bartemeyer, Jr. conducted a Fiero memorabilia presentation on Saturday afternoon.

2010 & 2011 Highlights

Fierorama 15 in 2010 and Fierorama 16 in 2011 were held in the parking lot of the event's host hotel, the Holiday Inn Express in St. Charles, IL, due to some planned pool construction at Pottawatomie Park. Saturday's event included a cruise to the Antique Automobile Club of America's fall meet which took place in Oak Brook, IL. The first ever Fierorama Poker Run was held in 2010. Extra special this year were hand-made, engraved aluminum "Best Of Show" awards that were graciously created by NIFE Member Chuck Itzenthaler. With the passing of our club member and former Club Secretary, Ken Campbell, we renamed the Fierorama 201 Long Distance award the "Long Hauler Award" in his honor, as he enjoyed participating in the Hot Rod Magazine's Power Tours.

2012 Highlights

"Tech Tables" debuted to help club members learn more about their Fieros. "Tech Tables" are demonstrations conducted by technical experts during the show. The NIFE Board Members introduced this idea to offer attendees the opportunity to learn more about main-

taining and upgrading their Fiero. This year, a second Poker Run was held. With the passing of then Club Secretary, Larry Hall, in August of 2012, we reserved an empty parking space on the show field in his honor for his '86 GT.

2013 Highlights

In 2013, the theme was "Fierorama Goes to the Movies" (Image 5), during which the highest and lowest VIN number (only the last six digits) awards were introduced. Why the highest and lowest VINs? The highest VIN is technically the "youngest" Fiero on the show field, most likely a Fiero from the 1988 model year. The lowest VIN is then the "oldest" Fiero on the show field, most likely from the 1984 model year. This was indeed your author's favorite Fierorama to date as it was the first one where I brought both my '84 SE Indy Pace Car replica and my low mileage '85 GT, which ended up winning the "Best Of Show - Stock" award. I drove the Pace Car and my wife drove the GT for the first time. Seeing she is a bit vertically challenged, she needed to sit on a patio cushion to see over the dashboard! This is definitely one of my best Fierorama memories. Jim Hallman presented the awards on a red carpet in a signature tuxedo T-shirt (Image 6). The Best In Class trophies were modeled after Oscar statues.

2014 Highlights

This '80's themed Fierorama saw the expansion to include Friday night activities, but rain hampered our attendance



Just one example of the many different modified engines you will see at Fierorama in either the Non-V8, or V8 Engine Swap Classes.

at the Wheaton (IL) Cruise Night. On Saturday morning, we participated in "Cars & Coffee" at Iron Gate Motor Condos in Naperville, IL with many of us drooling over several of the pristine rides on display. Later that day, we caravanned to Cantigny Park in Wheaton, IL before the traditional pizza party. Trophies featured a Hot Wheels Fiero, an image of the Hall & Oates concert poster featuring the Fiero, a Rubik's Cube, and a cassette tape, all mounted to a VHS tape.

2015 Highlights

This year, the NIFE "Enthusiasm Award" went to Ray Dyreson, who had attended all *twenty* Fieroramas since 1996. An unusual "Hard Luck Award" was presented to NIFE Member Ken Smith, original owner of an '84 Coupe, which was out of commission and unable to be driven to Fierorama. Because of this, Ken hopped the Metra train out of Chicago, then rode his bicycle from the local train station in Geneva, IL to Pottawatomie Park! Fred Bartemeyer, Jr. brought his red '88 GT prototype and Nick DiMonte earned NIFE's "Gold Certificate" award for his '88 GT after the completion of an eight-year restoration project. The "Gold Certificate" is awarded by the NIFE Board Members to the Fiero or person most representative of "Preserving Excitement".

2016 Highlights

Jersey Mike's of St. Charles, IL begins providing food for participants and guests. The NIFE "Enthusiasm Award" this year honored



The Stock Notchback Class Coupe Class at Fierorama is broken down into two mileage brackets - 50K to 100K miles and over 100K miles.

our club's charter members: Jim and Jenni Hallman, Rich and Carol Benanti, and Paul and Dolly Ketterer in honor of NIFE's 25th anniversary. The "Gold Certificate" award this year went to Kimberly Reck with her '87 lime green electric-powered Fiero Sports Coupe.

2017 Highlights

For the first time, the Saturday night pizza party was held in the meeting room of the Quality Inn as the Gino's East Pizzeria located across the street from the host hotel closed its doors! This year, a new judged award for "Best Craftmanship" was added to the awards line up. A special award, "NIFE Member of the Year", was bestowed upon Ken Smith for his countless hours recording club meetings, his framed artwork offered as Fierorama door prizes and auctions, along with his Fiero Focus cover design that appeared on the November/December 2014 issue. NIFE Members from across the country were well-represented this year as we hosted cars from Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Kentucky, Florida, and of course Illinois. We also had participants join us from Canada!

2018 Highlights

John Cafaro, then Executive Director for Global Chevrolet, was in attendance at Fierorama in 2018. Back in the days of the Fiero, John was the Assistant Chief Designer of the Fiero and penned the design for the Fiero GT fastback body. To honor this special guest, we asked

John to select his top five favorite Fieros from the show. John's selected winners included:

- Ken Brown's '88 white Formula
- Ed Huculak's '85 black SE
- Eric Dyreson's '87 silver GT
- Shannon Fowley's '88 black Formula
- Greg and Mary Dauterman's '88 yellow GT

2019 Highlights

The theme for Fierorama in 2019 was "A Salute to Veterans", and as such, the show field included a display from the local chapter of the Military Vehicle Preservation Society, and the Kane County Color Guard was incorporated into the opening ceremony. Following the presentation of the flags, the Star-Spangled Banner was sung by Joel Stombres of the classic arena rock band Voyage. Joel is the brother of NIFE Member Jim Stombres and uncle of NIFE Member Austin Stombres. The St. Charles Fire Department brought out a ladder truck to display the American flag and Jerry Christopher's "Flags of Honor/True Patriots Care" display was present.

2020 Highlights

"Fiero Day 2020" replaced Fierorama 25 because of restrictions put into place due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. It was indeed a difficult decision to postpone Fierorama, but out of an abundance of caution, the NIFE Board determined it was in everyone's best interest to offer a scaled down, one-day event in lieu of a celebratory 25th Fierorama. At this event, digital voting was offered for the first time. Upon registering, participants received a link to the ballot via text for voting for their top 10 favorite Fieros at the show. Anyone without a cellphone was still able to use a paper ballot, available at the DJ booth.

Countdown to Fierorama 25: Behind the Scenes

How long does it take to plan for our favorite Fiero show? Here is rough guideline of a typical year:

September - Board members meet to recap/debrief last Fierorama and develop a list of improvement ideas for the next show.

January - Availability of dates is confirmed with the St. Charles Park District; soliciting Key Sponsors begins for the

upcoming show.

February/
March - Board members meet to flesh out ideas for Fierorama's theme and reviews improvement ideas from the prior year.

May - Board members finalize theme and logo. The event's flyer needs to be made available for distribution at the annual Dells Run event in late May/early June. Mike Kroyer has been creating the artwork for the Fierorama logos since the early 2000s.

June-August - The call for volunteers begins! Did you know that a typical Fierorama requires over 40 volunteers who put in a combined, estimated 450 "person-hours"? The summer is also when Mike Kroyer and the rest of the NIFE Board Members create the dash plaques and awards. Additionally, the final event flyers are sent out to all club members, preregistration opens, parking lot layout is determined, and the volunteer schedule is finalized.

Thursday before Fierorama - The "final assembly meeting" takes place for board members. At this meeting, the entry packets are put together, the award certificates are put into picture frames and the ballots are prepared to be handed out. Further, tents, duct tape, strap ties, and a host of other supplies are gathered to load up so they can be brought for show day.

Sunday, Fierorama show day is finally here! The curtain call for volunteers and all NIFE Board Members is 7:00am sharp. Cars begin arriving as early as 9:00am and the show officially opens at 12 noon. Peer judging takes place from 1:00pm to 2:30pm. The awards ceremony kicks off with the door prize and 50/50 drawings. In recent years, because of the generosity of our sponsors and several NIFE Members, there have been auction items. Once the auction closes, the awards ceremony begins! Special awards for highest and lowest VINs are given out as well as awards for the most miles driven to Fierorama in a Fiero. Plus, one (un)lucky participant will win the not so coveted,



Image 7: Fierorama doesn't end at the close of the show on Sunday. Join us at Portillo's for a farewell dinner before you head home; Fierorama 2007 shown here.

"Hard Luck Award". Hopefully this won't be you!

As the final awards are given out, class winners are invited to take a group photo. Afterwards, volunteers will begin the task of breaking down the show as members fire up their Fieros and head out. The final event for Fierorama weekend is a closing dinner, geared for out-of-towners who may be driving home later that evening or staying over one more night, though it's often joined by local members (Image 7).

Speaking of awards, we have a complete listing of each and every Fierorama Best Of Show winner on our website (fierofocus.com) under the Fierorama tab; click on the Fierorama Hall of Champions link, then click on the trophy case to expand for viewing.

For a complete listing of Fierorama dates, themes, locations, and number of cars registered visit our website (fierofocus.com) under the Fierorama tab and click on History.

As we approach Fierorama 25, why not take some time to reflect on the Fieroramas that you've attended? Which one(s) was your favorite and why? Did you make new friends or win an award?

Hope to see you on September 12th! 🍷

Tim ("TJ") Panfil, NIFE Member

Image Source(s): Jim Hallman, Mike Kroyer, Image 1 credit: <https://www.rkmotors.com/blog/GM%27s-Motorama>