

# Homeward Bound

DRIVING 3,000 WINTRY MILES TO DETROIT IN THREE COLLECTOR CARS



Derek Klein

Thanks, Michelin tires! The 1966 Ford Mustang rips down the highway with the aid of some solid rubber

by Chad Tyson

For a “Snapshots” piece in ACC #23, Editor Jim Pickering and I headed up Interstate 5 to LeMay—America’s Car Museum in Tacoma, WA, for a chat with museum CEO David Madeira. Not only did we come away impressed with the museum’s efforts to engage their community and youth, but Madeira also shared a plan we both thought was a little nuts — driving classic cars across the country right after Christmas.

The plan was to caravan with a 1957 Chevy Nomad, a ’61 Chrysler 300G and a 1966 Ford Mustang coupe across the Rockies, through the Great Plains, and ending in The Motor City at the North American International Auto Show. Of course, all this was to take place in the dead of winter.

Cars in a museum are not much different from pieces of art. Sure, they’re bigger, can be used as transportation, and leak (more) oil. But sitting in a museum, there isn’t much useable difference between the actual car and a really accurate painting of the car.

And cars should be used. Madeira, via his day-to-day blog of “The Drive Home,” agrees: “I argue that while driving vintage cars may put them at ‘risk,’ not driving them makes their ‘death’ certain.”

## Collectibles become cars again

Now, it wasn’t as if Madeira and crew just hit the road after pulling three random cars long held in the museum’s depths. ACM Technical Specialist Dale Wickell was the man for the task. A last-moment repair Wickell made on the Nomad’s clutch pedal probably saved that car’s trip. The sponsors pulled their weight too, with Michelin providing winter tires for each of the cars. (Anyone following Madeira’s blog knows he sang the praises of those tires at every opportunity.)

After the driving party kicked off in Tacoma, their first stop heading down I-5 was at ACC/SCM World Headquarters in Portland, OR. It was a taste of what the traveling

crew would do at nearly every stop. Enthusiasts showed up in their cars to support the endeavor. Local (and even some foreign at later stops) news brought cameras and reporters to spill ink and pixels. A magnum of “The Drive Home” wine was presented to the host.

## Earned dirt

Adding to the authenticity of the journey was that the cars were accepted, celebrated even, inside Club Auto Colorado on New Year’s Eve and at the NAIAS in all their dirty-snowy-icy-used goodness. There was no room for toothbrush-on-wire-wheels cleanliness here — the dirt and grime was hard-earned.

Madeira’s drive behind this trip was not only to promote the ACM nationally and grow their supporter base, but also to collaborate with other museums, sponsors and influential auto enthusiasts. He hit a home run for those goals. See their stops at ACC/SCM, Auto Club Colorado, Kansas City Auto Museum, Hyman Ltd. Classic Cars and the Pontiac-Oakland Museum as evidence — as well as the long list of sponsors.

“The Drive Home” took the crew 11 days and over 3,000 miles to trek from Tacoma to Detroit. The final stop at NAIAS was proof that despite the age of the cars and the age of the technology in them, classic American iron can still perform just as it was made to, even on a long drive home. 🚗



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The 1961 Chrysler 300G glides past snow-dusted trees



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The ’57 Chevy Nomad shines in a spot of sun