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The car show must go on, but it is now a tour

By Sora O'Doherty



For the past 15 years, the Orinda Classic Car Show has been a big attraction in the autumn, and a big fundraiser for the Orinda Association and the main fundraiser for the Seniors Around Town program. This year, organizer John Vanek of Orinda Motors says that, although the car show cannot go on during the COVID-19 pandemic, he is excited about the new 29.4-mile classic car tour. On Saturday, Sept. 12, the tour will feature up to 100 classic cars. The route will take them through Orinda, Moraga, Lafayette and even the Berkeley hills. However, because entries are limited to 100 this year and there will not be any show attendees, they are expecting a shortfall of \$15,000 in critical funding for Seniors Around

Neil Cunningham with his 1968 Ford Mustang Photo Sora O'Doherty

Among the 100 cars participating in the tour will be a classic 1968 Ford Mustang GT. Neil Cunningham acquired the classic car, which is almost identical to the car driven by Steve McQueen in the iconic movie, "Bullitt." That

vehicle was sold at auction last January for \$3.74 million, making it the most expensive car in the world. Cunningham was absolutely amazed when he was able to secure a black California license plate for his car reading JJZ I09. The plate in the movie was JJZ 109, so the substitution of the roman numeral I is as close as Cunningham could possibly get. His car is painted the same Highland Green as in the movie. Cunningham, a retired San Francisco police officer, is a huge fan of all things Steve McQueen, and McQueen's son Chad McQueen has even autographed the dash of Cunningham's car.

Vanek has put a lot of work into the classic car tour. He wanted to maintain continuity and have people show their classic cars. He also wanted to keep the sponsors and the charities, and to generally make people feel better during the pandemic, without having thousands of people showing up in Orinda. The participants will meet at the same place outside Orinda Motors, but they won't congregate. The cars will leave on the tour in groups of about 20.

The tour will also take advantage of technology that is available, including Zoom. Vanek says that there will be a team of photographers, including a drone, throughout the course. Steve Harwood, known locally as "The Voice of Orinda," will serve as the Master of Ceremonies for the event, which will be hosted on Zoom live. The video of the event will continue to be available on the website.

Donations to Seniors Around Town can be made directly to the Orinda Association at www.orindaassociation.org.

The route and other information about the classic car tour is available at www.orindacarshow.com/2020-16th-annual-orinda-classic-car-show-underway/

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