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## Kissel car show also a family reunion

By ZAK MAZUR - GM Today Staff

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HARTFORD - The 100th anniversary of the founding of the Kissel Motor Car Co. served as a family reunion at the Wisconsin Automotive Museum.

More than 30 descendants of Louis Kissel and his two sons, William and George, showed up as 96 Kissel owners, family members and friends came from around the country and France for the weekend celebration of the car made by the Hartford-based manufacturer until 1931.

Betsy Kissel-Reeder reminisced about her grandfather, William Kissel.

"He was a very interesting man," said Kissel-Reeder, who was born in Green Bay and lives in Memphis, Tenn. "Small in stature and amazingly intelligent, he traveled all over the world and just knew so many things."

Kissel-Reeder met many fellow Kissels for the first time Saturday.

"This ties the family together," she said. "This is a combination family reunion and car show."

Indeed, a number of Kissel owners who were present at the celebration had some sort of familial or social relationship with a Kissel, somewhere, somehow. In some cases the relation is what spurred their interest in the cars in the first place.

"I am possibly a distant relative" of the Kissel family of Hartford, said Lynn Kissel of Livermore, Calif., who bought a 1924 Kissel Speedster Model 65 after his son bought him a picture of a Kissel that he "fell in love with."



Zak Mazur

**Lynn Kissel of Livermore, Calif. - who is "possibly" related to the Kissel family of Hartford - described his 1924 Kissel Speedster Model 6-55 to an onlooker.**



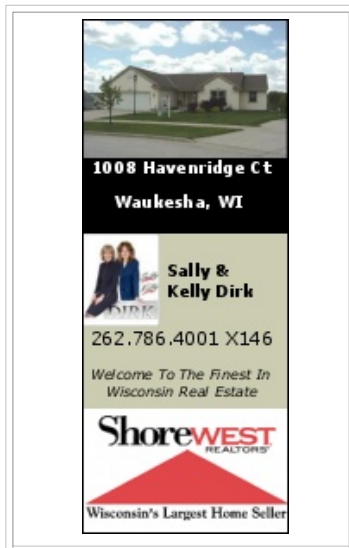
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**Kissel enthusiasts from all over the country converged on the Wisconsin Automotive Museum in Hartford on Saturday to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Kissel Motor Car Co.**

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Kissel said his interest in Kissel cars was the reason for his passion, which he admitted he was "obsessive" about; hence hauling his chassis-less Kissel all the way from California.

Woodland Park, Colo. resident George Carr also has a relation to a person who may or may



not be a descendent of the Hartford Kissel's.

"I married a Kissel, and since my last name is 'Carr,' we just had to have a Kissel car," he said.

"I knew a little bit about the Kissel cars, but then my friend bought one because he went to school with the grandson of a Kissel," said Dale Unruh of Peoria, Ill. when asked what brought him to Hartford on Saturday. "It's a neat old car, it really is."

Frank Bristig of San Dimas, Calif. has owned a Kissel for four years. He saw his first Kissel, which is believed to have belonged at one time to a member of the Kissel family, while participating in a classic car tour group.

It is not an easy task to purchase a Kissel.

"It took me six months to track down a Kissel," said Bristig, who finally found a person who had owned the car for 40 years.

Lynn Kissel said his Kissel came all the way from Australia.

"I found it over the Internet," he said. "I bought it after I had some people in Australia look it over."

Carr searched for months before locating a Kissel for sale in Stoughton in 1994.

"I bought it several months after it came out of an estate sale in Chicago," he said. "It was known about but gone for 20 years. It was through the efforts of Dale Anderson (director of the Wisconsin Automotive Museum) that I was able to get in touch with the guy."

It takes a lot of work to keep a Kissel operational.

"I just finished overhauling the engine," said Bristig. "It runs pretty smoothly at about 40 to 45 miles per hour. It doesn't stop worth a damn, but it runs well."

Owing to his involvement with the classical car tour group, Bristig said he puts about 2,500 miles per year on his Kissel.

Lynn Kissel said when his car is in operational order, "it runs like a truck," but that he's gotten it up to 50 miles per hour. Like Bristig, he said it doesn't stop well.

The 10 Kissel cars on display outside of the museum drew a fair amount of attention from passers-by.

Slinger residents Scott Bevers and his son Brett were on their way to the Hartford Recreation Center but it was closed and so they stopped to check out the Kissel cars.

"This is wild, with this seat on the outside of the car," said Scott, who said he was only slightly aware of the Kissel car history.

His son Brett said he thought the Kissel cars looked "pretty cool."

LLorel Baker from Cedarburg said she's been interested in Kissel cars for 20 years.

"I like the unique headlights and the hood ornaments," she said. "I also like the sportster models."

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