



BOB KARP/ DAILY RECORD

A DeLorean takes center stage at the DeLorean Mid-Atlantic Club's spring event at Hackettstown Motor Imports. This was the first meeting of the group since John DeLorean, the car's creator, died.

## Enthusiasm remains for DeLorean vehicles

Group meets for first time since creator of gull-winged car died

BY MARIA ARMENTAL

DAILY RECORD

HACKETTSTOWN — Bob Brandys' love affair with the DeLorean started in 1979, well before production on the cars started.

An engineer and car enthusiast from Chicago, Brandys learned of the DeLorean's advanced technology and design through a friend who was helping develop an airbag with General Motors in the 1970s and also helped make the two DeLorean prototypes that featured the added safety measure.

"So, my interest in the DeLorean actually started in 1979, when the car was being designed and tested," said Brandys who owns a DeLorean but didn't bring it to a spring social of car owners that attracted 38 of the gull-winged vehicles to Hackettstown Motor Imports on Saturday.

The get together was the first for the club since DeLorean died on March 20 at the age of 80.

Brandys had his own story about his DeLorean and the man responsible for the car.

In 1992, Brandys was visiting a junkyard in New Orleans looking for car parts when he saw the front of a DeLorean protruding from the wrecked cars. The car, which had been abandoned six years prior, had been painted black and used as an undercover narcotics car. Brandys soon struck a deal and bought the rundown car for \$2,000.

"So, I had a DeLorean that was dirt cheap and I could do whatever I wanted," he said.

He upgraded the engine, installing an overdrive 4-speed automatic transmission, and —

the touch that would captivate the carmaker John DeLorean himself — power windows. The car's gull-winged doors have odd shaped windows and only a small portion of the window can be opened.

DeLorean, Brandys said, went to a show in Cincinnati specifically to see how the power windows worked. His engineers had worked for some two years trying to build the added feature into the car design with no luck. Brandys, however, had figured out how to do it.

"He just drooled over it," Brandys said. "Here is a car maker so frustrated that his engineers couldn't work on that and to have someone else do it ..."

### 'Back to the Future'

The cars were produced in Dunmurry, Ireland, between 1981 and 1983, but fewer than 9,000 were made before the company failed in 1983. The innovative design of the car became classic as the time-travel vehicle in the popular "Back to the Future" films.

"A lot of people my age and younger really were inspired by the movie 'Back to the Future,'" said Kevin Abato, a 31-year-old computer systems engineer from Roxbury and member of the DeLorean Mid-Atlantic Club, who this year organized the club's spring social at Hackettstown Motor Imports, where he services his own DeLorean.

The DeLorean Mid-Atlantic Club, founded in 1992, has more than 100 members worldwide, though its core membership area is the Mid-Atlantic region, from Connecticut to Virginia.

"When was the last time you saw so many DeLoreans in one place?" asked Charles Guerrieri, of Hackettstown, who was riding his motorcycle on Stiger Street.

DeLoreans, which hit the

market in 1981 at \$25,000, now sell between \$8,000 and \$30,000, depending on the condition. Most in the Northeast turn to P.J. Grady in Long Island, an original DeLorean dealership, to buy and fix their cars.

Rob Grady, who owns three DeLoreans — including two of the three produced Legend prototype Twin Turbos — said his family, who owned a Chevrolet dealership at the time, bought rights to sell the DeLorean cars in 1979. When the company failed, the Gradys continued honoring the original warranty of 25 years and to this day, Grady said, he continues working with DeLoreans.

"No matter where you go, it still turns heads," added Gary Gore, the club's vice president who lives in Long Beach Island.

Gore bought his 1981 DeLorean some nine years ago. He was mostly attracted to its design, he said.

"It was a car that was ahead of its time," Gore said. In fact, he said, "it still looks like something that just came out."

And driving it, he said, it's an unforgettable experience. At just six inches above the asphalt, "it feels like you are in a fighter plane," Gore said.

The only problem, he said, is that it can attract so much attention that motorists get real close to the car "and the next thing you know, they are almost running you out (of) the road."

"I know (people) who have a DeLorean and a Ferrari and they get upset because they get more attention for the DeLorean than they get for the Ferrari," said Mike DeLuca, the club's president who lives on Long Island.

Bottom line, DeLuca warns, "if you own a DeLorean, you can't be shy."

Maria Armental can be reached at (973) 989-0652 or [marmental@gannett.com](mailto:marmental@gannett.com).