

SWANKS NEWS

Back to the 50's – Special Edition 2023

Words: Ron Dahley Photos: Johnny Rocket Nustad, Kevin Dahley, Ron Dahley



A day at the Saint Paul Fairgrounds during the Minnesota Street Rods' Associations Back to the 50's weekend,

The Back to the 50's weekend attracts over 125,000 spectators and between 10,000 and 12,000 cars making it easily the largest three day car show of its kind in the world. It is a show, no competition, just the love of

The Minnesota Street Rod Association's Back to the 50's weekend was held on June 23, 24 and 25. The Swanks began the cruise on Thursday June 22 with 8 cars. It has become a tradition to stop for lunch in Staples we mostly even stop at the same service stations along the way for fuel. We check in to the motel and then head for the registration hotel to pick up our registration packets and then out to the parking lot for the amazing mini car show before the car show. The parking lot is full of cool customs and rods, great music playing and lots of people in lawn chairs or just milling around looking at cars and talking to friends. Later in the evening we head back to our motel where we may spend a little time in the parking lot sharing plans for the weekend, then off to bed for a little shut eye before the big show.

Friday morning, we head out to the St. Paul Fairgrounds for the big weekend. We don't necessarily head out at the same time because we know where we will meet up, Gary Spoerl Hill is our spot named after Swanks Vice President and one of the founding members of the Swanks Casselton. Gary directed us to this spot many years ago and introduced us to friends from the cities who set up next to us. Cars are parked, canopies are erected, coolers are unpacked, and greetings are shared with our neighbors.

Now it is time for some of us to get a little walking in to see some of the 10,000 plus hot rods in the fairgrounds. Other members hang out at Gary Spoerl Hill to visit and watch the cars cruise by. A familiar voice is heard as we check out cars, it is D J Wings Kalahan, who has been playing rock "n" roll ever since I started to attend the 50's. We stop at our favorite food vendors, check out the rod specialty vendors, then in the evening we might attend the live music concert on stage in the park before heading back to the motel for a little rest before Saturday. Saturday will have many more visitors and a few more rods who could not make it on Friday.

Saturday begins earlier and the crowds of people increase greatly, the lines to vendors get longer, the pin up contest is featured today, kids' games are featured today the car auction is underway today and the day passes too quickly, again live music is featured on stage in the park, and we get back to the motel a little later, tired and a little sun-burned.

Sunday morning finds us moving a little slower, but we must not be late as Sunday features the swap meet. People pulling wagons for of parts, others with arms full of auto treasures finding a new home. So many items for sale from bolts to complete barn finds. After the swap meet there is time to check out some more hot rods or pick up that t shirt or other souvenirs before beginning to think about packing up for the cruise home.

Attending Back to the 50's is a tradition for many car people across the US and other countries. It has certainly become a tradition for many Swanks members if you want to check out the fun visit with one of your brothers or sisters and it might become a tradition for you too.













