

Press Release

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Two Volvo Legends Celebrate Milestones

The P1800, a Swedish Style Icon, Turns 50;
Irv Gordon, an Automotive Pioneer, Passes 2.9 Million Miles

ROCKLEIGH, N.J. (June 15, 2011) - Two automotive celebrities are commemorating milestones in 2011. Recently, Irv Gordon, a retired science teacher from East Patchogue, N.Y., passed 2.9 million miles in his 1966 Volvo P1800. Volvo's legendary P1800 model also is marking its 50th anniversary.

The stunning two-door Volvo P1800, for decades Volvo's most internationally renowned model, reached showrooms in 1961 after four years of careful planning and development and remained in production for the next 12 years.

Gordon is celebrating the Volvo P1800's half-century milestone by reaching 2.9 million miles in his own P1800, and by making several appearances on behalf of Volvo and the P1800. In March, he attended the TechnoClassica show, the world's largest indoor classic car show, in Essen, Germany, and in September, he will travel to Australia to celebrate the car's golden anniversary. Gordon has also restated his goal to hit three million miles.

Gordon Aims to Turn Three Million Miles

"In honor of the P1800's 50th anniversary, I'd like to reaffirm my goal of reaching three million miles within the next two years," said Gordon. "Recently my P1800 has been through some terrible weather, and never complained once. What a great automobile! Hitting 2.9 million miles is a true testament to Volvo and those who designed it."

Gordon purchased his Volvo in June 1966, and immediately fell in love, driving 1,500 miles in the first 48 hours. With a 125-mile round-trip daily commute, a fanatical dedication to vehicle maintenance and a passion for driving, Gordon logged 500,000 miles in 10 years.

In 1998 with 1.69 million miles, he made the Guinness Book of World Records for most miles driven by a single owner in a non-commercial vehicle. In 2002, he drove the car's two-millionth mile down Times Square to international media attention.

Today, Gordon breaks his own record every time he drives, whether it's to Cincinnati for coffee, Rolla, Mo., for lunch or Green River, Wyo., for dinner. Gordon - like any mighty record-holder at the top of his game - is mindful of his legacy, as well as setting a record no one can beat.

Volvo P1800 (1961-2011)

It was truly an international star having been planned in Sweden, designed in Italy, unveiled at a car show in Belgium and built in Britain. And, it was a huge success in the United States. The Volvo P1800 is Volvo's most famous model and the one that arouses the most emotions.

The Volvo P1800 was born to attract the attention of passersby to Volvo's display windows and to increase what today is known as "floor traffic" so that people who entered the showroom left it in a new Volvo.

Then-Volvo President Gunnar Engellau ordered design proposals from Italy, where Volvo consultant Helmer Petterson - who was deeply involved in the planning of the new car - had gotten his son Pelle a job at Pietro Frua thanks to Pelle's fresh degree in industrial design from the Pratt Institute in New York.

When the time came to unveil the four proposals to Volvo's board in 1957, Helmer snuck in his son Pelle's fifth design - and that was the one that everyone picked. Engellau, in particular, liked it since he had very definite views about not wanting an Italian-designed car. That of course is precisely what he did get, but it was penned by a 25-year-old native of Gothenburg, Sweden, who would later make his mark as a boat designer and win Olympic medals in yacht racing.

Eventually, however, the truth behind the winning design proposal emerged. The choleric Engellau blew his top, felt he had been hoodwinked and promised that Pelle would never be acknowledged as the car's designer. And indeed many years went by before the truth was made known and Pelle Petterson received the credit he was due for penning one of the world's most attractive sports coupes.

The new sports car had a fixed roof, a steel body, a lot of the mechanical components lifted straight from the Volvo Amazon and the newly developed B18 engine in its 100 hp sports version when it eventually arrived in the showrooms. Three prototypes were built by Frua in Turin in 1957-1958 on Amazon underpinnings. These cars were used for a variety of purposes, for instance, as templates for the production of press tools, in a range of tests, at shows, for press work and advertising photo shoots and much else. All three have survived and are still on the road.

Cult Car for The Saint

In 1971, however, a new body variant was presented - the 1800 ES - a sporting hatchback with an extended roofline and an estate car rear featuring a large glass tailgate. A GT and estate car combined. The ES was designed in Gothenburg and attracted considerable attention, but it also divided opinion into two camps. It has nonetheless achieved cult status along with its coupe sister and many have survived to this day. Volvo's 1800 models are very sought-after by enthusiasts - there are several clubs serving the model - and they were for many years relatively inexpensive to buy, although in recent years their prices have started to rise on the classic-car market.

Just ask Roger Moore, who was fortunate enough to drive a P1800 in his role as debonair crime-fighter Simon Templar, a sort of modern-day Robin Hood, in the British TV drama series based on Leslie Charteris's "The Saint." The TV production company was looking for an attractive sports car that would suit a gentleman of independent means, and after being turned down by Jaguar approached Volvo to ask for the P1800. Volvo was quick to oblige. It was a brilliant PR move for the new Volvo model and the car became etched firmly in the minds of everyone at the time. To this day the P1800 is still often referred to as "The Saint's car."

Timeless 50-Year-Old

The Volvo P1800, this alert 50-year-old, was never intended to be a mass-produced car. It was and still is a niche product, the top of the model range, yet at the same time viable enough to be within the reach of ordinary people who wanted a car that looked like a Ferrari but cost and functioned like a Volvo: pleasant, reliable and economical. It appealed to people even before it arrived in the showrooms in 1961 and its design has been shown to stand the test of time: it is timeless, classic and sporty in a well-balanced way.

P1800 owners owe a debt of gratitude to Gunnar Engellau and Helmer Petterson who pushed for Volvo to build the car, to Pelle Petterson who designed it, to Volvo who kept the model going in good times and bad over a period of 12 years.

About Volvo

Volvo Cars of North America, LLC, (www.volvocars.com/us) is a subsidiary of Volvo Car Corporation of Gothenburg, Sweden. VCNA provides marketing, sales, parts, service, technology and training support to Volvo automobile retailers in the United States, and oversees Volvo operations in Canada. For more information please refer to the VCNA media website at: <http://www.volvocars-pr.com/>, and follow Volvo's blog at: <http://www.volvoblog.us/>.

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Media: Photographs of Gordon and the P1800 are available for download at <http://www.volvocars-pr.com/>; search "Irv Gordon" and "P1800"

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