

Auto Racing Star Of Past Still Has Urge to Try Skill

Louis Chevrolet, Swiss by nativity, French by education, American by choice, automobile designer by vocation and racing driver by preference, was Rochester's guest today.

At 56, he admits he prefers above all other things to sit behind the wheel of a car and determine for himself what it will do.

He has completed 37 years in the automotive industry and says he hopes the end will not be soon. He came to Rochester today to attend the General Motors show and stopped off at the Hotel Seneca to greet Arthur B. Neilson, assistant manager of the show, to whom he had been something of a boyhood idol many years ago.

He came to the United States in 1900 and a few years later arranged to have his brothers come too. He designed and built the first Chevrolet car, but racing attracted most of his attention and in the period from 1905 to 1920 he had an international reputation.

Stayed Out of Flying

"I would have been in aviation, too," he said with a laugh, "but I was married and with family responsibilities when aviation began to develop and decided to remain on the ground."

His fastest race was in Daytona Beach, Florida in January of 1906, when he made a speed of 134 miles an hour. That may appear insignificant in view of the present record of something like 276 miles an hour, but consideration must be given to the fact that it was made with a four-cylinder motor in a car utterly lacking in wind resistance devices and even lacking a dashboard.

The most exciting race, he recalls was at Crown Point, Ind., in June 1909. It was a 400-mile road race with most of the roads in terrible condition. On the first lap he led by 17 minutes. Then a cylinder went haywire and the valve was jammed through the side of the crank case. He made temporary repairs, put in more oil and started the second lap with a loss of 33 minutes.

He won that race on three cylinders, but as he puts it with a reminiscent chuckle, "we used 43 gallons of gas and 36 gallons of oil. They weighed the outfit after the race in accord with the custom of that day and the figures showed my mechanic and I had lost 24 pounds keeping that car going until the end of the race."

Still Likes to Test Skill

He admits, too, that even now the urge comes upon him to find out if he has lost any of the deftness he once had as a racing driver. "The last time I gave way," he added, "was in 1924 at Havana."

"The basic principle of the automobile has not changed in 30 years. We have and will continue to develop safety factors and improve in materials. We have striven and with success to improve motors.

"The racing game is the best test of material. In the old days there was hardly a day's racing without a broken steering knuckle. Now cars run for years without anything like that happening."

Mr. Chevrolet was scheduled for afternoon and evening appearances at the show in Edgerton Park, which will continue through Saturday. Despite the heat of yesterday and today, thousands have gone to the park to see the comprehensive display of General Motors automobiles and varied accessories.