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PREDICTS AUTO IMPROVEMENTS



Automobiles of the future will be faster, as well as more efficient and more comfortable, but only as improvement in highways and traffic regulation make greater speed possible, in the opinion of Louis Chevrolet, "The Flying Frenchman" and former king of the racing speedway, now a designer and the world's greatest automobile enthusiast, who is in Syracuse today.

Chevrolet Speeds From Rochester to Auto Show

As enthusiastic over automobiles as he was away back in 1900, when he came over here from France to ally himself with the infant automotive industry, Louis Chevrolet, "The Flying Frenchman" of the world's speedways and owner of one of the really great names in the motor world, came to Syracuse Wednesday to see the General Motors show at the state armory and renew acquaintance with old friends in the central New York area.

At 56, he is still a great driver, as well as designer, of automobiles. He proved it by driving his trim sport cabriolet—a Chevrolet, of course—over the winding roads from Rochester in exactly 90 minutes. The speedometer showed a distance of 85 miles, indicating that the average speed was, as "The Grand Old Man" said, himself, "pretty fair going."

Welcomed at the Hotel Syracuse by a group of Chevrolet and General Motors officials, including Pete McCrea, former Orange football captain, Chevrolet stole a few moments to tell The Journal what he thinks of the past, present and future of the industry to which he has devoted his life.

As to the modern cars, he thinks:

"There is not the slightest question about it—people are getting more for the money today than they ever got before or ever will get again. We never dreamed, back in those early days, that we could build automobiles one-tenth as efficient to sell for one-tenth of today's prices. As a matter of fact, I am still unable to see how they do it."

Of the work of men like himself, who pioneered the development of the cars of today, he said:

"The efficiency and safety and comfort of the modern car is the direct results of the experiments that race drivers have been making on the roads and on the speedways for 20 or 30 years. They are responsible for the development of the fast, safe, comfortable cars that you ride in today. In my judgment, all the risks they took, the dangers they risked, were worthwhile."

Coming to this country in 1900, Chevrolet started racing in 1905

and kept at it until 1920—fifteen years of almost daily hazard, of gambling with death, in which his most serious injury was a cracked rib. He brought his brother, Gaston, over here when he got established, and Gaston, too, became a great race driver. He was killed in Los Angeles in 1920—the year in which he had won the great Indianapolis race. Another brother, Arthur, was also a driver, but never attained the fame of his two brothers. He is now living in Indianapolis, connected with the motor trade.

It is hard to avoid infection with the Chevrolet enthusiasm when talking automobiles with the man who knows as much about them as any designer in America.

Asked where he thought further improvements will come, he said:

"I suppose you want to know if cars will be faster.

"They will be, of course. But only when we get better highways.

"When we have highways that will make an average speed of 100 miles an hour safe, we will have automobiles that can travel 120 miles an hour. That's all there is to it."

Asked his opinion of a good highway, the man who has traveled hundreds of thousands of miles of them declared:

"Separation of traffic—that's the answer.

"We need wider highways, with the fast and slow traffic separated and no crossings, whatever. That is, traffic must enter and leave highways on paralleling routes—we want no right-angle intersections.

"New York, New Jersey and California have some splendid modern highways of that type. Around New York City there are a lot of them, with absolutely no crossings at grade. The result is that there are very few accidents there."

"How would you describe the car of the future?"

"It will have a higher average speed because of engine improvement and construction to eliminate wind resistance. That means, of course, further progress in so-called stream-lining. It will be more comfortable, and it will have a greater safety factor, because engineers are always striving to that end. But I wouldn't want to say that it will cost less—because I don't see where that is possible.

"I firmly believe that cars are cheaper today than they will ever be again in my lifetime."

As to the astonishing development of the automobile, he said:

"When we started building Chevrolets in 1912, we turned out 450 cars a year. Nowadays, they turn out 750,000 a year. Why, the Buffalo assembly plant, alone, turns out more cars in a week than we turned out in a year when we started."

Don Smith of Buffalo made the trip from Rochester with Chevrolet. Besides McCrea, who is now a public relations officer for the General Motors organization, those in the group that welcomed the distinguished visitor at the Hotel Syracuse included H. W. Bresee, Jacob Cohen, M. J. Logan, Edward Moyer, W. D. Pidd and G. W. Hunt.