Fifth Avenue logs more Great Race success

The 2012 Great Race started in Traverse City, Mich., on June 23 and ended 2,300 miles later on July 1 at the Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn, Mich. Fifth Avenue Antique Auto Parts had three customers finish in the top ten including: Jim and Louise Feeney from New York finishing in 4th place driving a 1936 Ford police car; Howard Sharp and his son Douglas, also from New York, finishing in 7th place driving a 1916 Hudson Indy Speedster; and John Hudson and his 16-year-old grandson Scott finishing 8th place driving a 1940 Chevrolet.

There were 84 teams entered in the 2012 Great Race.



Howard and Douglas Sharp win the 2011 Great Race driving the 100-year-old 1911 Velie, collecting $30,000 in prize money.

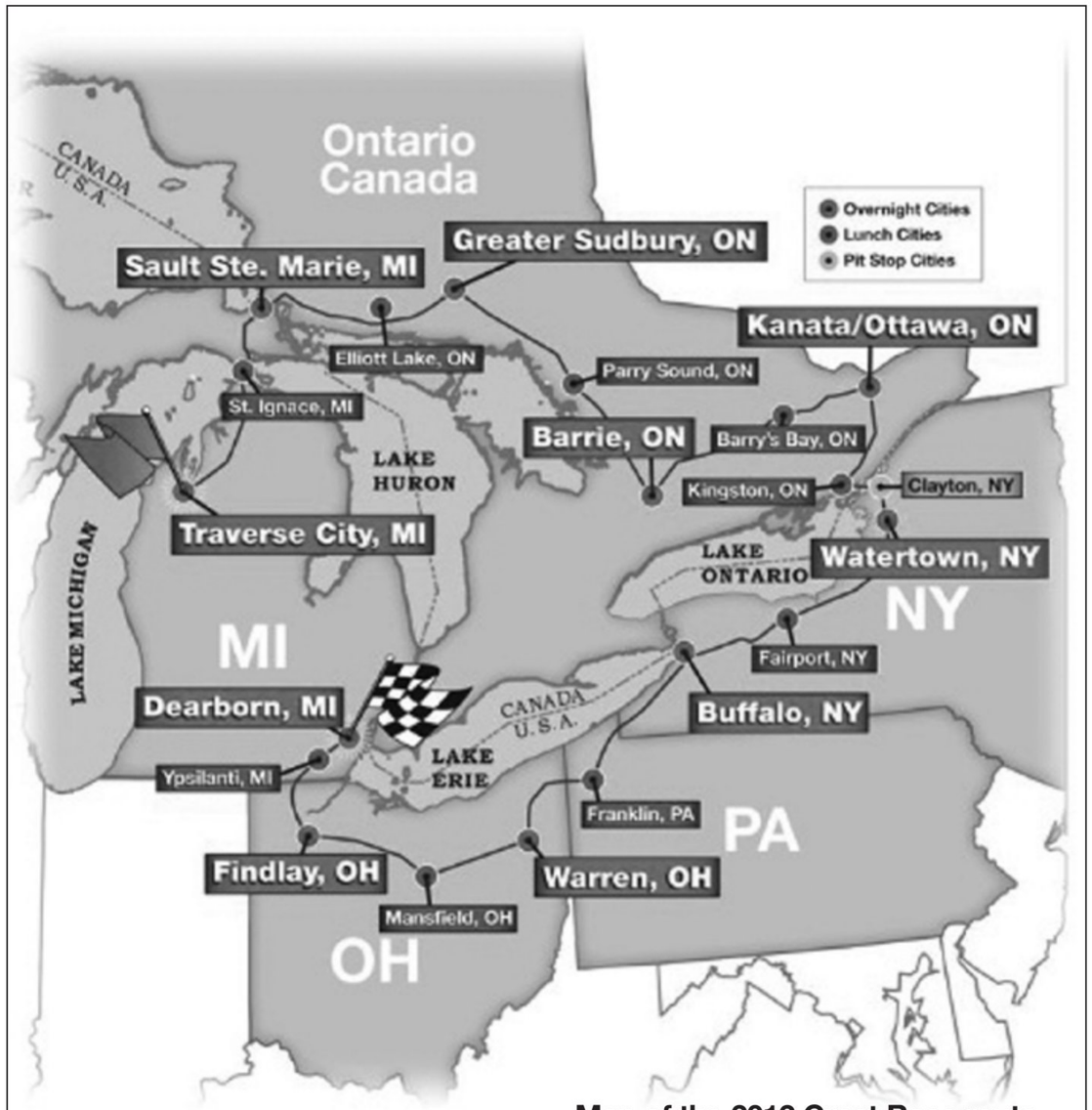
Fifth Avenue is well-known among the Great Race entrants for their ability to make antique vehicles reliable. "The Great Race is a way for Fifth Avenue to prove the reliability of their products and help attract new customers who may own a vehicle just like the one entered in the race. Seeing firsthand Fifth Avenue's products on the cars entered in the Great Race and talking to the car owners makes the buying decision pretty easy for the customer," said Randy Rundle, owner of Fifth Avenue Antique Auto Parts.

Fifth Avenue has sponsored Howard Sharp of Fairport, New York, in the Great Race every year since 1991. In 1993, he won the Great Race driving a 1929 Dodge Sport Roadster—one of only 1,200 made. Sharp won again in 2011 driving his 1911 Velie, the oldest car entered in the race.

Sharp retired the 100-year-old Velie after the 2011 Great Race and bought a 1916 Hudson Indy Speedster. He finished seventh in the 2012 race, which is considered an almost impossible feat. Normally it takes three years to "learn" a car and know how fast it will accelerate, turn and stop under Great Race driving conditions.

Sharp moved up mid-race from 47th place to 7th place in a span of just three days.

"Finally we figured out the right combination and the car started working for us. The learning curve is very steep with these old cars and the only way to figure things out is drive it. This 1916 Hudson is a totally different car to drive compared to the Velie," said Sharp.



Map of the 2012 Great Race route.

"My job today is the same as when I started in 1989," said Rundle, "and that is to make the cars entered in the Great Race as reliable as possible so the teams can concentrate on the driving and the navigation.

"I have been through navigation school and I have scored these cars at checkpoints during the race and I know what these teams are up against. These teams are scoring down to a tenth of a second for eight hours a day for eight days straight driving 60-plus-year-old cars. They are doing that with no calculators, no maps, no odometer, and no GPS. That is a monumental task in itself."

Rundle said when a car breaks down during the race it is up to the driver and navigator to fix the car with no outside help. They also must keep track of the time they spent fixing the car and add that to all of the other corrections they are



John Hudson, his Grandson Scott, and their 1940 Chevy.



Jim and Louise Feeney in their 1936 Ford police car.

keeping track of, specific to their car.

Even something as simple as a flat tire (which they have to fix with a tube patch kit and a hand pump) can eat up 15 minutes of time that they must make up. Have you ever tried to remove a tire, pull the tube, patch it, replace it without pinching it, air it up using a hand pump, and put it back on the car in 15 minutes?

The teams will put on about 10,000 miles before each Great Race driving in two and three day practice rallies, polishing their driving, navigation, and the changing of flat tires using only hand tools.

"Every year is a new challenge for me because I am working on different cars," said Rundle. "But what I learn from working on Great Race cars can be applied to all types of antique vehicles to make them more reliable and fun to drive. Part of my benefit to working on these cars is I get to drive them. Until you have driven Howard's 1911 Velie at highway speeds then 'made arrangements' to slow down to turn a corner, you haven't lived."

For more on Fifth Avenue Auto Parts' exciting adventures with the Great Race or in the movie-making business, go to fifthaveinternetgarage.com.

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