

Automotive News

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2020-2021 Automotive Hall Of Fame inductees

A diverse group of pioneers were celebrated in Detroit for their lasting impact on the industry.

RICHARD TRUETT □ □

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Mong-Koo Chung

"Today, as the group's honorary chairman, he continues to provide the heart, the soul and the wisdom that drives us to greater heights."

-- Euisun Chung, chairman, Hyundai Motor Group



Take a drive in a Hyundai Nexu. Then you will realize how far and how fast the Korean automaker has traveled since its humble beginnings in 1968, when its first car was a Ford Cortina knockoff. The hydrogen fuel cell-powered Nexu, a technological tour de force, is one of the world's most advanced automobiles. It would not exist, nor would the successful

Genesis luxury brand, were it not for former Chairman Mong-Koo Chung's relentless focus on product quality, continuous investment in technology and commitment to satisfying customers. Hyundai Motor Group, now one of the world's largest automaker, has plants in 10 countries. Chung, son of the founder of Hyundai, joined the company in 1970 and became CEO in 1998. He retired last year.

Tom Gallagher

"I feel extremely fortunate to work with such a great company and such a great industry. ... I'm pleased and proud to represent all of my GPC associates tonight."

-- Tom Gallagher



You may not recognize the name General Parts Co. But surely you know of NAPA, the international chain of auto parts stores operated by General Parts Co. Tom Gallagher helped build NAPA into a behemoth during his 25-year management career, including the last 12 as CEO.

Gallagher was a champion for the consumer by working to make it easier for drivers to choose where they could get their vehicles fixed. Gallagher was instrumental in helping form the Coalition for Auto Repair Equality. The group played a key role in crafting the right to repair legislation that forced automakers to provide access to tools and repair data.

Jay Leno

"I very humbly accept this. ... I'm really proud because ... I love promoting American-made products."

-- Jay Leno



Jay Leno's passion for automobiles and motorcycles may be unrivaled in the world of entertainers. His massive car collection sports everything from immaculate brass-era antiques, one-off specials and European sports cars to American muscle cars and everything in between. Leno even has vehicles he can't easily fit into, such as an MG Midget. After his tenure hosting "The Tonight Show" ended in 2013, Leno opened the doors to "Jay Leno's Garage" on YouTube, where he weaves in anecdotes and jokes while talking about the history of interesting cars. He also gives viewers a sense of what it is like to drive rare and interesting vehicles, such as his Mazda Cosmo and his steam-powered cars.

Charles Richard Patterson and Frederick Patterson

"On behalf of the Patterson family, I would like to thank the [Automotive Hall of Fame] for this great honor."

-- Richard Patterson, Frederick Patterson's grandson



C.R. Patterson, left, once enslaved on a Virginia plantation, planted the seeds of what became America's first Black-owned automobile company. Patterson became a blacksmith in Ohio and then, with a partner, opened a carriage-building company. His son, Frederick, took over the business in 1910 when C.R. died and then turned to making automobiles. About

150 cars were made before the company pivoted to making bodies for buses, trucks and other heavy-duty vehicles under the name Greenfield Bus Body Co. The company did not survive the Depression and closed in 1939.

Helene Rother Ackernecht

"I am so excited that the foundation that she laid will continue to open doors for me and aspiring designers in the years to come."

-- Crystal Windham, director of design, Cadillac Interiors



In the 1940s, you could count on one hand all the women working for automakers in key design roles. Helene Rother Ackernecht was educated in Leipzig at the Royal Academy of Graphic and Book Arts. She fled Nazi-occupied Europe and landed in New York in 1941. The next year, she responded to a newspaper ad placed by General Motors looking for a "designer of fashioned materials." GM design legend Harley Earl put

her to work in the automaker's Art & Colour Section, responsible for fabrics, colors, lighting, door hardware and seat construction. Rother parlayed her successful run at GM into a

consulting job at Nash, where she was instrumental in elevating the quality and style of the Nash and Rambler cars. She also is credited with being the first woman to address a meeting of the Society of Automotive Engineers. Rother died in 1999.

Charles Wiggins

"If he was here in person, I would probably look at him and I would say, 'Uncle Charlie, you made it!'"

-- *Angie Rogers, niece*



African American drivers could not compete in most racing events in the 1920s and '30s, which led to the establishment of the Colored Speedway Association. Charles Wiggins, a mechanic from Indianapolis, owned an auto repair business. In the early 1920s, he built a race car, which he drove competitively for the first time in 1925. Wiggins won the Colored Speedway Association's version of the Indy 500, the Gold and Glory

Sweepstakes, a 100-mile race on a dirt track, four times through 1936. That year Wiggins' career ended because of an accident in which he lost a leg and an eye. Until the end of his life in 1979, Wiggins stayed active, mentoring drivers and working to open doors for Black race car drivers.

Inline Play

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