



AMERICA'S CAR MUSEUM®



David Madeira

President / CEO, America's Car Museum

David Madeira, (65), is not your typical sit-behind-the-desk CEO.

The man who has served as President and CEO of LeMay – America's Car Museum since 2002 has ridden his motorcycle across 25 countries, ranging from Spain, Sardinia, Corsica, Canada, India and Italy, to Mexico, Monaco, Vietnam, Turkey, Brazil and Bhutan. Of all the journeys, though, the adventure from Lhasa, Tibet to Katmandu, Nepal was the real doozey.

Madeira is not your typical lawyer.

After graduating Cum Laude from the University of Indiana School of Law, David opted to work for Messiah College, a small Brethren-founded liberal arts school in Pennsylvania.

“I'd actually worked there as a dean before law school,” he says. “The school president told me that after I graduated I'd have a guaranteed job as vice president for advancement and legal counsel. This is how my career in higher education began and it's become a driving force behind assuring our Museum will feature a thriving educational facility.”

Madeira is not your typical fundraiser.

After leaving the “idyllic life” at the “beautiful little school” tucked away in central PA, David received a job offer from the University of Illinois at Chicago. He became vice president for advancement, overseeing the development of alumni, public relations, marketing and international relations. He also became a vice president for the University of Illinois Foundation where he helped Illinois become the first public university to raise \$1 billion.

After the eight-year campaign for Illinois, he decided to travel for a year.

So how does this lead to a CEO gig with a then-struggling car museum in the Pacific Northwest?

“I picked up a Wall St. Journal one day and there was a story about the death of Harold LeMay. The story said he had the world’s largest collection of automobiles and his family and a small group of Tacoma business leaders wanted to save this collection. I was making some good consulting money, but I was bored. So, on a whim, I applied and got the job. Suddenly, Lynda and I were moving 2,500 miles (from Chicago) to a small town on Puget Sound to try doing this crazy thing with the Museum.

David jumped into action. He conducted a situation analysis, “not a feasibility study, which all consultants recommend,” he says. The result was creating the name “America’s Car Museum” because of the nature of the collection and because the Museum would need to be embraced by people across the country to be sustainable. That was the easy part of the project.

The study’s big-picture vision was to preserve American automotive history, partner with automotive institutions and corporations locally and nationally, serve the hometown community, be an educational force and build a large board to promote the Museum throughout the U.S. And one other thing: The Museum would be built and operated until it opened based 100 percent on philanthropy.

“We decided to create a destination where people would return to, not just a museum building,” he says. “We needed to make this fun; have an ever-changing environment. We needed a show field to host everything from Porsche Parades to jazz festivals. We needed to do drive-in movies that project off the side of the Museum walls. We needed an auto-related café, an area where people could store their vehicles and ‘hang out,’ and, foremost, we wanted to be known as the group that’s promoting the automotive enthusiasts’ interests; the group that’s preserving history and is at the heart of the world’s automotive culture.”

David Madeira the fundraiser was progressing toward a \$60 million target and then the 2008 recession hit. “You can sit on the sidelines and complain, or you can step up to the plate and get the job done,” he says. “With support from a great board, we reached our goal despite the disastrous economy. We’ve built a world-class Museum (which began construction in 2010) when nearly everybody said couldn’t be done. USA Today called the Grand Opening “one of the top 8 cultural attractions to open in the world in 2012! I’m proud of that—and the public loves it!”