

EXECLIFE

INSIDE | *The Circuit* | *Opinion* | *Closing Bell*

Dream Station

Calling all cruisers. Report back to headquarters. **BY R.J. KING** |
PHOTOGRAPHS BY DAVID LEWINSKI

The Detroit region has car collectors, car clubs, and car museums. But there's never been a single location that melds all three groups. Until now.

Welcome to the Woodward Warehouse. It's a place where owners of classic cars, muscle cars, hotrods, cruisers, and motorcycles can buff, detail, and socialize over everything metal. Founding members say the 14,000-square-foot club — located in Royal Oak, along a railroad track in an industrial park one mile east of Woodward near Normandy — serves as a daily habitat for Dream Cruise believers.

» **GLORY DAYS** The classic cars at the Woodward Warehouse in Royal Oak include a 1940 Ford Opera Coupe with a 1958 Cadillac V-8 big block engine with dual quads (front), and the rear view of a 1954 Chevrolet Corvette Roadster (left), both owned by Joe Polito.



"I have 11 cars, and my wife and family were getting a little tired of having me store my vehicles in their garages," says Joe Polito, who needed a way to fill his free time following a 37-year career as an environmental attorney and partner at Honigman Miller in Detroit. "So I came up with the Woodward Warehouse."

Polito and a group of founding members, including Ronald M. Pruette, first vice president of investments at the Peninsula Wealth Management Group in downtown Birmingham, acquired the former multi-use facility out of foreclosure. Even the bank that held the note failed. No matter. "I've got all kinds of experience in real estate, so it was just a matter of dealing with the bank that acquired the failed bank's assets," Polito says. "We also had to replace the roof."

Pruette describes the association, which opened in April, as a "yacht club for cars." There are two membership offerings: \$250 a month provides for year-round storage of a car, while a social membership runs \$150 a month. All members have 24-hour access to the club, which includes a conference room, lockers, a kitchen, large-screen TVs, a cigar room, a lounge, two full baths, and a recreation room offering a pool table, board games, and two vintage pinball machines ("Big Brave" and "JokerZ").

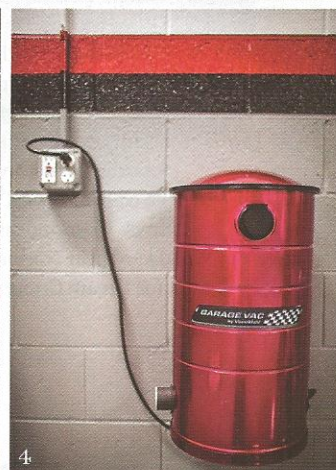
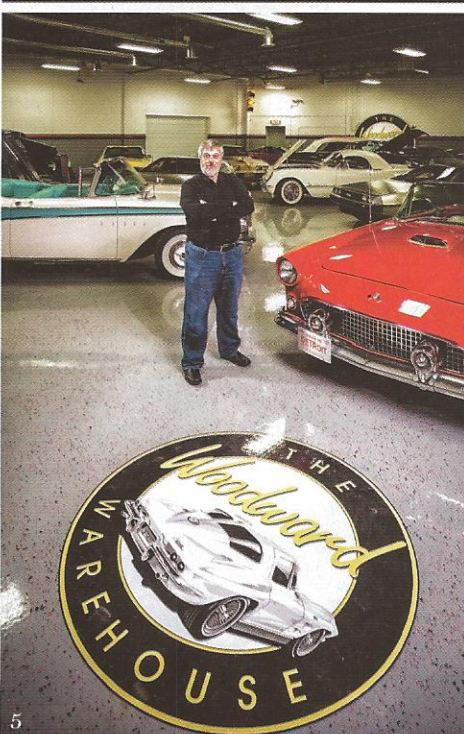
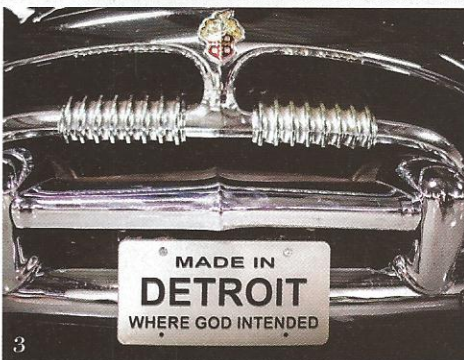
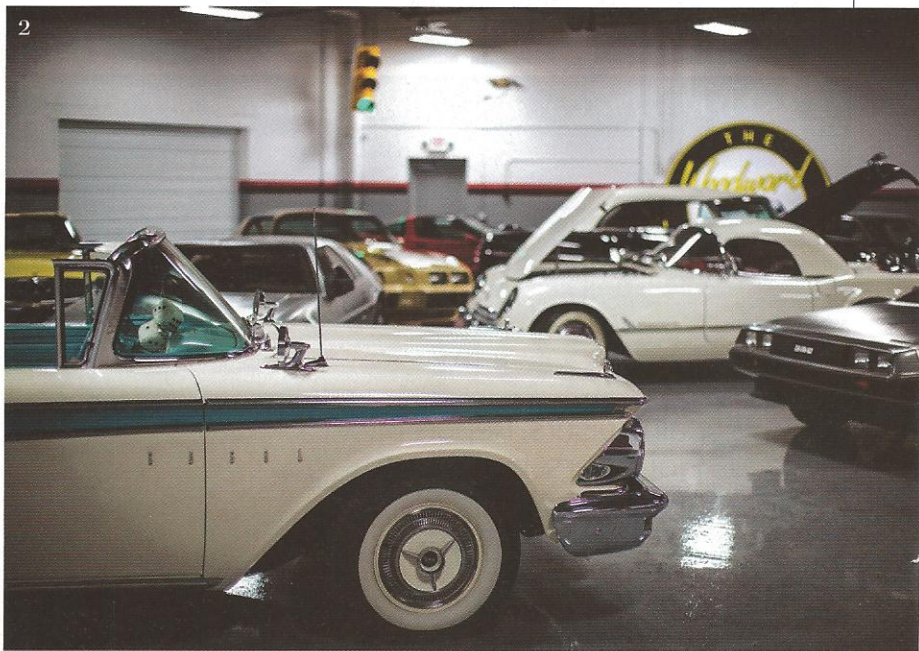
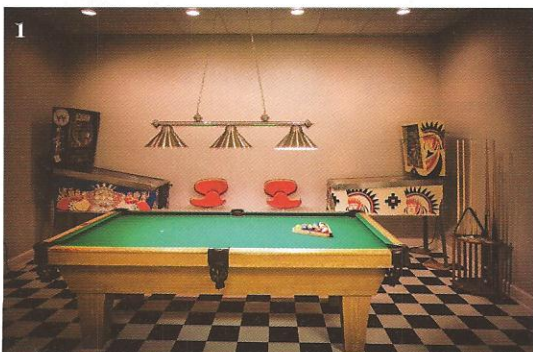
The décor features historic gas pumps, car lifts, framed automotive posters, and other auto-related memorabilia. For an extra fee, members can store car parts or utilize concierge and valet services. Discounts are offered for minor repairs such as an oil change, dent removal, a tire change, or parts. More extensive repairs are referred to private, offsite facilities.

Tapping digital perks, members can view their car from offsite with a smart phone, via 16 surveillance cameras. A dehumidifying system, meanwhile, helps preserve vehicle interiors.

"The big thing here is the social offerings," Pruette says. "We'll have car and coffee events on Saturday mornings, a taco food truck night during the week, and various presentations. We can even help you buy or sell a car."

One noticeably absent feature is a wet bar.

"Drinking and driving don't mix," Polito says. "But we will rent the facility out to charitable groups, and if the caterer has a liquor license, we can serve drinks. We do have a dry bar, and members are welcome to bring food here or have it delivered. Basically, it's a giant fraternity for car freaks." **db**



» **ROUND UP** (1) The game room at the Woodward Warehouse includes two pinball machines, "JokerZ" and "Big Brave;" (2) a 1959 Ford Edsel Corsair Convertible (foreground, and going clockwise), a 1981 DeLorean DMC-12, a 1954 Chevrolet Corvette Roadster, and a 1982 DeLorean DMC-12; (3) a 1953 Packard Convertible with a straight V-8; (4) a vacuum machine; (5) Joe Polito, a former environmental lawyer for Honigman Miller in Detroit, and a founding member of the Woodward Warehouse, with part of his classic car collection, including to his left, a 1955 Ford Thunderbird Convertible.