



*From the Vice President's Desk...*

OK, we know VTCI's International Conventions bring together the best Thunderbirds and the friendliest of people to share "The VTCI Experience" on an annual basis. Several dozen T-Birds populating a sun-drenched show field is a remarkable sight.

But to be honest, unless you take home the "best-of-show" trophy, the icing on the cake is usually the local tours designed to highlight the attractions offered by the host city. Throw in a well-stocked Hospitality Room, some tasty meals, a nice hotel room at a great price and you may have achieved a true Thunderbird feast. 2024 will offer VTCI members exactly that.!

The Board of Directors (BOD) has organized a [2024 International Convention](#) which provides a home for the best of our Thunderbirds from [August 7-11, 2024, in Grand Rapids, Michigan](#), at the DoubleTree Airport Hotel. Located within a comfortable day's drive for about one-third of the VTCI's membership, [Grand Rapids 2024](#) offers everything members have come to expect from the VTCI.

Conveniently located near the airport and I-96, the DoubleTree offers a great location to serve as host for the coming events. Upon arrival,



your first stop will be the Registration and Hospitality Room located just off the lobby. After picking up your Registration Packet you can proceed to the Concourse Field and park your T-Bird in your assigned spot or do so later.

The BOD negotiated an extraordinary [room rate of \\$105 per night](#); leaving attendees the optional choice of breakfast at the hotel restaurant, Ganders, or a short hop to one of the numerous restaurants along 28th Street. Of course, the Hospitality Room will offer a range of snacks and treats, as well as beverages throughout the run of the convention.

[Wednesday, August 7th](#) will kick-start Grand Rapids 2024 with the first of our tours to the [Gerald R Ford Presidential Museum](#). This tour offers the historians among us a chance to revisit some of the events we've experienced, as seen through the lives of two of America's leading political figures, Gerald and Betty Ford. Regardless of your politics, this is an opportunity to illuminate the political, cultural and social factors which shaped their lives – and ours.

[Thursday, August 8th](#) serves up perhaps the highlight of Grand Rapids 2024 with a tour to the [Gilmore Car Museum](#), one of America's most prestigious automotive attractions. This is an all-day event, so bring your walking shoes and your appetites, as the Gilmore offers a chance to step back into time with a "blue-plate special" at a 1950's diner. Or perhaps you'd prefer a ride in a classic car other than your own?

[Friday, August 9th](#) is both a working day and a "get-away" day. The BOD will hold their [Annual Meeting](#) in the morning; providing members with a chance to review the VTCL's activities over the past year, and in the [General Session](#), question the BOD with comments and queries on future activities.

The afternoon offers a tough choice. For some, it provides a chance to get ahead of the game by starting the Operations portion of Concourse Judging. Our Concourse Director may adjust the schedule as he sees fit. But for those more inclined to pursue the beauty in life, a tour is scheduled to visit the [Frederik Meijer Gardens and Sculpture Park](#). This combination of formal gardens and modern sculpture is world-famous and well worth the visit.

[Saturday, August 10th](#) is of course the highlight of the event for many T-Bird owners as they compete within the Primary Division, chasing the elusive 300-point Thunderbird. After the morning's Judges and Owners Meetings, it's "rags down" at 9:00 AM and [Judgement Day](#) begins. Those in the Tally Room may lack a "jumbotron" to provide ongoing scores, but their work will be highlighted at the Annual Awards Banquet later that evening.

Speaking of food, the BOD is working with the DoubleTree's catering staff to create four (4) wonderful meal options for your dining pleasure. Wednesday will feature the BOD's [Welcome Reception](#), while Thursday and Friday will offer themed buffet dinners; if weather permits, taking advantage of the hotel's courtyard to allow for a pleasant evening under the stars. With Grand Rapids being well known in craft beer circles for its numerous local brews, perhaps an evening of "[Birds, Brews and BBQ](#)" lies in store?

Sunday is of course the saddest day of all – "[Bon Voyage Day.](#)" The good times and memories are packed away and the road home beckons. But for the BOD, it's on to our next challenge, with both location and experiences to be determined for 2025. But there are already whispers of a very special VTCl Experience being prepared for 2026 celebrating a truly American icon's existence. Maybe you'll be able to make plans in your calendar for both years in advance? You'll have to attend Grand Rapids 2024 to find out!

See'ya next August at [Grand Rapids 2024!](#)

Bob McNeill

## Tentative Schedule

Wednesday	Afternoon	Tour: Gerald R Ford Presidential Museum
	Evening	Event: Welcome Reception
Thursday	Morning	Tour: Gilmore Car Museum
	Evening	Event: Birds, BBQ and Beer (Patio)
Friday	Morning	Meeting: VTCI Board of Directors / General Meeting
	Late Morning	Owners Meeting: Operations Begin (?)
	Afternoon	Tour: Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park
	Evening	Event: Friday Night Social
Saturday	Judgment Day	Judges Meeting (?)
		9:00 AM: Concours Judging
	Evening	Event: Awards Banquet
Sunday	Bon Voyage ... Have a Safe Trip Home	

## Proposed Tours



### Gerald R Ford Presidential Museum

... whatever your politics, the opportunity to explore the role one man played in American history for over 50 years. There's also a chance to explore the "woman behind the power" as Betty Ford's contribution to history and our culture is emphasized.  
... *and no, that oval office is not Rod Wake's*



### Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park

... our love for Mother Nature may equal the way VTCI members treasure their T-Birds, but appreciation for the beauty of a formal garden is brought together with the art of sculpture in one of Michigan's most popular attractions ... *sorry, no T-Bird sculpture to be found!*



### Gilmore Car Museum

... OK automobile enthusiasts, there may not be a bevy of T-Birds located in one of America's most prestigious auto museums, but there still plenty to enjoy over a day's visit – including the opportunity to ride in some of these older treasures – *unfortunately, none meet Paul Prokop's high standards for concours udging!*