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This is part of an occasional series by the Sanpete Country Travel and Utah Heritage Highway 89 Alliance on the people and places along U.S. Highway 89.

Open House Honors Life of 'Big Daddy' Roth

The Fourth Annual Big Daddy Roth Open House, which honors the life and work of renowned artist/car designer Ed Roth, will be held April 20 to 24 in Manti.

The event is held each year at the museum that Ed Roth's wife, Ilene, created to showcase her late husband's art and memorabilia. The museum, which is an addition on the Roth home, is located at 404 East 300 North, Manti.

After Ed Roth's death in April 2001 at age 69, Ilene Roth decided she needed to find a way for people who loved and respected her late husband and his work to honor his memory. She came up with the idea for the open house and it is now an annual event.

Roth, who was also known as "Big Daddy Roth," was famous for designing and building hotrod cars and for creating the cartoon characters the Beatnik Bandit and "Rat Fink" in the 1960s.

This year's open house will include the touring "Rat Fink Statue Display," which includes more than 40 depictions of the character Rat Fink painted by artists from all over the United States and Japan. The collection was recently on display in Austin, Texas, and will be going on to the Peterson Museum in California following the weekend's events. The museum that Ilene Roth created to honor her late husband, which includes displays of Ed Roth's art work and other memorabilia, will also be open during the reunion and is open to the public year-round by appointment.

Other highlights of the event include a Friday night fundraising barbecue at 6:30 p.m. and an 8 p.m. showing of Tales of the Rat Fink, a new documentary by Canadian film maker Ron Mann. The movie stars John Goodman as Big Daddy Roth. It's a combination biography/cultural commentary on Roth. Goodman narrates the film from heaven, playing Roth as he looks down on Earth with fond memories. The film also includes the voices of Jay Leno, the Smothers Brothers, Matt Groening and Paul Lemat. The real Ed Roth is included in the film in archival footage and new interviews.

Ilene Roth has said she is delighted about the film. Both she and her late husband met with Mann in 2000 when he came to Utah to discuss the movie. She said her husband was very excited about having a movie produced to spotlight his creations with Rat Fink and fiberglass cars.

On Saturday, there will be a 1 p.m. lunch and a 5 p.m. parade of cars down Main Street. The parade will feature both hotrod and antique cars. Roth was known for building one-



of-a-kind show cars and is famous for his "plaster and fiberglass" creation method. The movie, Tales of the Rat Fink, will be shown again at 8 p.m.

In addition, two of Ed Roth's creations will be on display during the Open House, a Stealth he built in 1999 and his "Rat Fink," constructed in 1963.

The open house will also include musical performances, videos and slide presentations, displays of show cars, food, and professional car "stripers."

An avid hotrod enthusiast from the age of 12, Ed Roth started out by fixing up old cars in his garage. He then moved on to building cars from scratch and quickly became known as an artist rather than a mechanic, with his creations earning the title "sculptures on wheels." He financed his passion by making cartoons and T-shirts, including drawings of cars and monsters driving cars. His most famous cartoon character was a rodent named Rat Fink, which became very popular in the 1960s and was featured on posters, T-shirts and more.

Ilene Roth met her husband after he moved to Manti from California in 1987.

For more information about the Ed "Big Daddy" Roth Open House, contact Ilene Roth at (435) 835-2142.

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