

Wisconsin Society of Automotive Historians

wisconsin-auto-historians.org

September 2023 Newsletter

Officers

President: Ken Nimocks

Vice-President: Don Gullikson

Secretary: Dan Manola

Treasurer: Gary Koehnke

Directors

Don Chandler

Jim Morris

Jessica Zdanowicz

Autumn meeting/event announcement and details

President's message

Minutes from July 7, 2023 meeting

Reprint of SPARK 1993 President's message

AUTUMN WSAH MEETING, SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 16, 2023 at 1:00 p.m.

Our meeting will be held in conjunction with the 40th Annual Hill & Valley Antique Auto & Americana Show at Baer Park, Church Street, in Cross Plains, just west of Madison. The Wisconsin Capital Model T Ford Club sponsors the show and will provide a canopy, tables, and chairs. Look for our banner on the fence that runs along the third base line of the ball field where show vehicles are parked.

A feature of the Hill & Valley event is a 22 mile tour through (you guessed it) some of the hills and valleys in Southwest Wisconsin's "Driftless Area." The area is the portion of Wisconsin where the last glacier - 10,000 years ago - stopped and retreated, therefore leaving the hills standing. The tour leaves the grounds at 10:15, with Model T's going one way and other vehicles going the opposite, then meeting and passing by each other in the middle. If you arrive well before 10:00, you might get a chance to ride in a Model T or A or another interesting vehicle. Don't be shy...just ask around and see if anyone is taking passengers.

In addition to the tour, there will be antique cars, trucks, and tractors, free spectator admission, free sweet corn, a pancake breakfast, early Americana demonstrations, and a timed Model T assembly demonstration. Vehicle registration is \$10 for the show and tour.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Before anything else, some passings to note: Most of you received my email regarding the death of John "Gunner" Gunnell, a founding and current member of WSAH. He was

the former editor of Old Cars magazine, and wrote numerous automotive books and thousands of articles for a variety of publications. Gunner was well known in the collector vehicle field, with connections across America and abroad, and friends everywhere. He and I met in the 1980s and developed our friendship with our involvement in WSAH, SAH, the Lola Car Show, and other automotive activities. I worked with him as an intern at Old Cars / Krause Publications a couple summers and did some upholstery and convertible top work for him. Currently, member Greg Vanark and I have been doing the interior and top on Gunner's 1952 MGTD, which still sits in my shop. Without making this any more about myself, I only want you to understand why I am so saddened by Gunner's passing: We had a lot in common, including being the same age (76 this year), married and had children at a very young age although both later divorced, an interest in art and, of course, cars and writing. However, he grew up on Staten Island, NY and went to high school in New York City with thousands of students, while I grew up on a small Wisconsin farm and went to high school with a class of less than thirty students. In addition to an obituary, I'm sure there will be many accolades online and there will be a remembrance in Old Cars magazine. Like many, many others, I will miss him.

Thom Petersen was not a WSAH member, but some of you might know of him - if not, you can easily learn about him with an online search, as he was internationally known for his Automotive Fine Art. Thom had a unique way of portraying chrome in many of his paintings, which can be seen if you look closely at, for example, the bumpers on some vehicles in paintings that can be found online (search Thom Petersen artist). Thom was quite a "character" and interesting and fun to be with. I met him at the Lola Car Show in 1991 and we kept in touch right up to his death two months ago at the age of 77 in his home town of Racine. While Thom had his wilder days in his youth, he became a devoted family man and Christian while still having crazy fun. I urge you to check his work online.

Finally, at the Lola Car Show this year I met a person who knew our long-time WSAH member and former secretary, treasurer, and newsletter editor Phil Hall. As I had guessed, the person confirmed that Phil had died. While Phil was very active in WSAH for several years, he became somewhat reclusive later and was not open to contact. I have not been able to find any information on his passing.

In much more pleasant news, I welcome our newest member, Scott Posnanski of Racine. Scott joined WSAH at Lola, but I did not meet him - I hope to get to know him at our meetings. On his Invitation to Join form, Scott lists his interests as his 1929 Auburn and 1989 Mercedes 560 SL.

At lola, some of us took some of the 40th anniversary Car Show books, that were being given away, to donate to libraries in our own areas. I have had very positive feedback from libraries in the Fox Cities area regarding the donations (distributed by Treasurer Gary Koehnke), including a nice letter from Gavin Schmitt at the Kaukauna Public Library, who was formerly employed as a supervisor at an automotive warehouse and whose father bought and sold more than 150 cars as a hobby. Guess I should get busy distributing the books I have!

The last item in this newsletter is a reprint of my President's Message from 30 years ago. I'm certain you will get the point of my including it by the time you get through the first few paragraphs. I have mentioned a few times that after our 2024 lola meeting (and after 35 years), I am through as president and through publishing the newsletter. I will be a member of WSAH for as long as it - or I - exist, but it is time I do some of the things I have wanted to do for a few decades, but have not prioritized over volunteering.

MINUTES from WSAH Summer Meeting, Friday July 7, 2023

Our group met in one of the lola Car Show Special Exhibit Building rooms for our annual Summer meeting. The meeting was called to order at 11:00 a.m. by President Ken Nimocks. Those in attendance were President, Ken Nimocks; Vice President, Don Gullikson; Director, Jim Morris; Treasurer, Gary Koehnke; Director and Webmaster, Jessica Zdanowicz; Secretary, Dan Manola; and the following members: Dan Sharpee, Gene Steinfeldt, and David Tesch.

The Treasurer's report was read and a motion to accept was made by Jessica Zdanowicz and seconded by Dan Sharpee. Minutes of the Spring meeting held at the Wisconsin Automotive Museum were outlined with numerous topics discussed and a motion was made to accept the minutes by Don Gullikson and seconded by Jim Morris. Data was given that thus far our participation at the lola Car show has appeared successful and few if any problems have arisen. In the future due to some no-show participants in the building it was felt we have a better system for insuring those signed up and a quick check of any problems in this area are resolved earlier during set up. A phone call to the owner of a particular signed up car or truck will alert us to get a replacement at an earlier time. There fortunately was a good supply of volunteers on Wednesday to handle the various help needed in capping fuel tanks and disabling batteries along with positioning vehicles.

A particular item of importance was the recruitment of a Newsletter Editor. The group touched on this topic at the last meeting and duties and the job of the Newsletter Editor were discussed. Until the position is filled, could we put something together which might

at least fill the need for future meeting information and let members know of any changes that may take place.

Discussion turned to the suggestion that we somehow eliminate the word Society and replace it with a more fitting description of who we are. It was felt that a word better describing our mission but starting with the letter "S" would allow us to keep the WSAH in our title. A comedic reply by some members suggested we open a dictionary to the S's might help while doing a systematic search of a suitable replacement.

A number of suggestions for our search in recruitment of a Newsletter Editor were taken and various avenues were spoken of with also the thought that we do indeed want more members into our fold. Posting a wanted ad for a Newsletter Editor was also suggested. Notice of our Fall meeting will be posted in the future.

Respectfully submitted, Dan Manola, secretary

SPARK REPRINT

(The following is copied directly from our early WSAH publication, SPARK, Issue 39, Spring 1993. I will do the math for you – that's THIRTY YEARS AGO! You will see that not much has changed since then.)

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I'm going to start right out here and say some things that could easily be misconstrued, so let me set the tone first. To begin, I'm neither bragging or complaining ...just stating the facts from my vantage point and wondering how things should be changed.

Okay, here it is: this is NOT the Ken Nimocks Society of Automotive Historians. It shouldn't be and I don't want it to be. But consider this: I'm on my third (? - I'm not sure) term as President, I have become the central figure for our lola Car Show venture, and now I'm trying to edit and publish SPARK. Remember the tone now...not bragging, not complaining, but seriously thinking this is not the way things should be!

It's mostly my fault. When no one else would be President and I was asked, I said I would, because what would happen to our organization if no one was President? And when no one would publish the SPARK, I said I would, because what would happen to our organization if we didn't have a publication of some sort? lola just sort of gravitated (or do I mean levitated?) to me and I've truly enjoyed all the fun and contact with people, but it has been a lot of work also. Something like 200 hours a year. That's five weeks at a full time job. For free. we But, a lot of it is fun. And if I didn't do it, maybe it wouldn't get done and we wouldn't have that fat treasury, and what would happen to our organization if...Now, let's get REAL serious. What WOULD happen to our

organization if I backed out of a couple of things? I would like to think that others would get right in there and take over and nobody would even miss me. Sure, I have a big enough ego that I don't mind the credit or the publicity that some of these things bring, but believe me, I really don't need it. (I'll get all the fame I can handle when the movie Ashes to Ashes gets national distribution. Ask me about it sometime!)

I don't believe that any organization wants to, or should, have one person doing so much. (This would be a good time to put in a plug for some of the members who are doing some things; Doc, Bob, Duane, John, Don, Dan, and I know there are more. Thanks!) I certainly don't mean to imply that I'm the ONLY one who does anything. My point is that I shouldn't be doing so much, because then it becomes MY organization and that's not what any of us want. But if there are not enough of you that have any interest in keeping this going, then why don't we just disband the whole thing and I'll get back to all my hobbies and for-profit ventures!

That brings up one final point. What ARE we going to do? There have been several suggestions that have generated interest, but ideas without action aren't going to fly. Let me say that I understand as well as anyone out there that we all are involved in too many things. I've heard people say at various times and in various organizations, "Let Joe do it. He's retired (or laid-off, or doesn't have kids, etc.). As if to say Joe has a lot of time on his hands. Ha! You will be hard pressed to find anyone in our group that doesn't have a dozen things going on at one time. So, the question then changes from, "What are we going to do?" to "Does anyone want to do anything at all?" The response to the survey (see the brief report elsewhere in this issue) seems to indicate a willingness to keep something going and maybe considering some fresh ideas to create more interest. There also remains the question of keeping up a formal chapter of SAH, something I have mixed feelings about and which will have to be decided by the membership as a whole.

Whatever direction is taken, at least one thing is certain: it is time for someone else to take over as president. We are due for elections at the next winter meeting, so there is plenty of time to round up a successor. I would like to continue with my Iola Car Show involvement, especially since methods of cutting down on my personal workload for the show have been discussed. Publishing SPARK is something I could do without, but once the format is established and initial steps are taken (as they obviously now are) I could probably handle it. However, anyone who wants the job is welcome to it!

In closing, let me assure you that I am willing to do whatever work it takes for WSAH as long as there is an interest in keeping it alive. I simply don't think it is good to have one person in charge of the organization, the fundraising, and the publication.

Ken Nimocks