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### EDITORIAL NOTES

With any luck, this issue of the SPARK has found its way to your hands before you were packed and ready to leave for Iola. Why Iola? If you have to ask, you've been missing one of the most massive and, to midwesterners, most important car shows and swap meets in the country. And even more than that, you've been missing the annual summer meeting of the Wisconsin Society of Automotive Historians; a small event, as events go, but one that you should be a part of nonetheless.

As has been the practice of WSAH since its founding, the annual business meeting will once again be held on Saturday (July 13) afternoon on the Krause Publications grounds. This year's meeting will be held at 2 pm in the big Krause garage, near the middle of the grounds. Our "official space" from Friday (July 12) morning through Sunday afternoon will be in Manufacturer's Row west of the tower and south of the showcars. Bob Gary is hoping to have a motorhome on hand, and the space should be well marked. Stop in early. Volunteer to man the booth. Drop off items you wish to donate for our fund raising automobilia sale. Or just visit. But do come. These meetings are the one chance we all have to get together and talk things over as a group. Hope to see you there.

Chris Halla

OF SATURN AND BUNKUM: SPECULATIONS ON THE  
MAKING OF AUTOMOTIVE HISTORY

By Matt Joseph

Occasionally some bit of automotive fact siezes the collective imagination of the American public and reverberates through the media to the point of tedium. The bombast and bunkum surrounding the choice of a site for General Motors' Saturn production facility is a case study in this genre.

In January I was asked by Wisconsin Public Radio --for whom I do some automotive commentary--if the Governor's delegation to Detroit stood any good chance to bring Project Saturn home. I timidly replied that I thought the chances of success to be minimal and besides, I was not at all sure that the Saturn facility would be the unmitigated blessing that Earl's band of Saturn-aunts was seeking. Remember Lordstown?

The next day, a pleasant woman from the Janesville radio station called for an interview. It focused on discerning what possible basis my comments could have had the day before. When I pointed out that there were more than fifty known Saturn siting contenders and that, if all other things were equal, each would have, by virtue of simple mathematics, a 2% chance of actually getting Saturn, she was somewhat mollified. I went on to point out that Michigan had made a tremendous pitch, Indiana and Ohio had equally good logistical situations as those in Michigan, and Illinois had offered the best tax incentive program. Even Texas and two other southern locations were said to be excellent prospects because of logistical

and labor considerations. Wisconsin and Janesville just didn't seem to fit into the "cluster" planning that is presently the rage in the industry. I suspect that anyone who knows anything about the realities of siting major industrial complexes would have to agree with my assessment and conclude that Wisconsin's chances for this brass ring are few, at best.

However, public figures continue to abound with optimism. Governor Earl suggested that because of his unsuccessful mission to GM last year to save light truck production at Janesville, he now feels that GM realizes that they owe us one. Charming, but doubtful in the context of Saturn siting. Mr. LeSage of Forward Wisconsin and assorted community leaders continue to make optimistic statements which show more spirit than realism. Even the DNR assessment that a Saturn site in southeast Wisconsin would push air pollution in the area beyond allowable limits caused only a momentary pause in all of this optimistic boosting.

Of course, Wisconsin is hardly alone in either its frenzy to acquire Saturn or the misplaced optimism of its industrial leaders regarding the chances of doing so. A succession of leaders from other states has made equally unrealistic appraisals of their states' chances of getting Saturn. A March 9 headline in Madison's Capital Times proclaimed, "Pitch for GM's Saturn plant planned by Madison officials." And Madison is another state of mind. This particular article noted the advantages of Madison with particular reference to the UW and MATC campuses and proximity to several major urban areas. It failed to note the almost complete absence of an industrial base, the existence of an unrelenting local environmental lobby that opposes

almost everything, and the lack of a viable rail system--to name only a few adverse factors.

All of this leads one to speculate on the business of proportion and perspective. Take for example, the fact that Madison will almost certainly lose between one and two thousand good jobs when Oscar Meyer ceases operations here--something that seems inevitable in the next decade. Or what about the State's decision to phase out most of the capacity--and jobs--at its Centers for the Developmentally Disabled? That decision will cost Madison thirteen hundred nice, middle class jobs, with similar dislocations at Northern Colony and Southern Colony Hospitals. Not one public official has gone on record opposing these decisions, and there is some chance that such opposition could mitigate them.

As I said, Saturn has seized the collective imagination of the American public. It amounts to a huge public relations coup for GM and one only hopes that their car is, in fact, competitive enough to find a market for the half million cars per year that they project in the first few years of production. That point may be worth thinking about. GM's record with new-import-fighting-introductions has been dismal at best. The Corvair, Vega and J-Car come to mind. Chairman Smith opines that the Fremont/Toyota experience has given GM the background to introduce a successful Saturn in '87 or '88. I doubt it. If you ask, 'What are the Japanese doing,' and then copy it three years later, it is likely that success will be elusive. What the Japanese are doing now is what they planned to do three to five years ago. Maybe much more. To compete with them, or the Koreans, or the Formosans you must ask, 'What will these people be doing in

five years, in ten years?' That is the proper perspective for successful industrial competition. You never get the right answers by asking the wrong questions. The Japanese are successful largely because they make detail improvements in their cars every year and major conceptual redesigns every three or four years.

Then there is the matter of Japanese management technology. Its the rage. Remember when everyone in Europe wanted to buy into the management concepts of IBM and Coca Cola? You haven't heard that line of thought lately. Recently the Mayor of Madison memorandized the Governor of Wisconsin to the effect that the state should employ the services of Ralph Joiner & Associates to help bring the benefits of industrial prosperity to us all. Joiner, a disciple of W. Edwards Deming, would in this scheme spread Japanese management style from Beloit to Superior, and Wisconsin would become the object of intense industrial development. To achieve this end, Mr. Joiner and his associates would have only to be put on the road to spread the Deming gospel to Wisconsin state workers and their management. Private industry would surely follow the example. Then every manufacturing and service concern in America would seek to locate here and share the benefits. It would be a veritable "productivity rush." The Governor adopted the idea as if it was his own.

Now I don't mean to sound like penicillin at a germ picnic, but the idea of spreading Deming management style in Wisconsin seems unlikely, at best. Japan is, after all, a highly regimented society and Wisconsin is not. In any case, the basis of Deming's concepts is, in large part, absolute trust between labor and management--a social compact, of sorts.

It takes years to build this compact and the facts of the thing do not seem to square with a social and economic structure that stresses mobility over discipline. In any case, a few weeks after the memorandized Governor had adopted the Deming faith, he allowed the Legislature to renege on a substantial health insurance rebate (not "bonus" as the press was inclined to call it) to state workers because despite several assurances from him that the rebate would occur, the state employee unions had failed to "get it in writing." Without arguing the merits and equity of this promised rebate, the Governor's abandonment of it does not seem to portend well for the mutual trust that is a mainstay of Japanese style worker-management relations.

What I have been talking about here is what used to be called "fads." Saturn and the hoopla surrounding it is a fad--what Daniel Boorstin perceptively called a "pseudo event." All of the speculation about W. Edwards Deming and the application of his principles to contemporary American production is mostly uninformed and always unrealistic. Deming's work is mostly concerned with the abstruse issues of statistical quality control. It does not transform a nation from the world's schlock factory to the world's good factory overnight, or ever, if several other factors are not in place.

Omigod, Ford still has to find a site to build the Taurus and Sable, don't they?

(Editor's Note: A great deal has happened since this brief essay was authored. Readers should watch for a follow-up in a future issue of the SPARK. CH.)

WISCONSIN SOCIETY OF AUTOMOTIVE HISTORIANS  
MINUTES OF MEETING  
Pecatonica, Illinois--April 27, 1985

Members Present were: Bill Cameron, Bob Gary, Larry Daum, Don Luebke, Wally Wray, Matt Joseph (& sons), Chris Halla, Ken Nimocks (& wife), Ray Scroggins (& son), John Gunnell (speaker). Meeting was called to order at 2:05 pm.

Ken Nimocks was welcomed to the Board. An election was held to replace Associate Director Bob Lichty and Nimocks was elected unanimously.

The group went on record as complimenting Chris Halla for an excellent job on SPARK 22. As a membership campaign, Halla has printed extra copies of the last issue of SPARK. These were sent with letters to previous members and to Wisconsin residents who belong only to the National SAH, urging them to also join WSAH. A different letter was sent to Wisconsin residents who have written letters to Old Cars Weekly, thus indicating both an interest and some initiative to get involved in automotive history.

The meeting was interrupted to hear from speaker John Gunnell, editor of OCW, who had to return to other duties connected with covering the auction event. Gunnell reported on the development of the Standard Catalog of American Cars 1805-1942, the newest volume from Krause Publications. The concept for this and the already issued postwar catalog was initiated by Chet Krause and Dave Brownell. Work on both books began in 1980, with Krause farming out the writing of the postwar

catalog to various marque specialists. When issued 2½ years ago, 30,000 copies were printed. A re-run was made when the initial printing ran out, but since only a few minor changes were made, it was not considered a second edition. The newest book was the combined work of 11 people, spear-headed by Bev Kimes and Austie Clark. A run of 20,000 was printed, and any errors discovered will be corrected at the next printing. Krause bought some 14,000 photos for use in the two books, according to Gunnell. He ended his talk by donating a copy of the new prewar book to the WSAH for the start of a chapter library.

Plans for the next WSAH meeting at Iola were discussed. John Gunnell said he would approve our request for a booth in the commercial area. A sale of auto related books, publications or other automobilia is planned. Members were urged to donate duplicate or unneeded automotive books, magazines and similar items. Matt Joseph pointed out that all proceeds would have to go to WSAH, rather than the 50-50 split proposed earlier, to retain our tax-exempt status as a non-profit organization.

Bob Gary reviewed the treasurer's report, which was unanimously approved. He pointed out that about \$75.00 to \$100.00 per issue is required to sponsor the SPARK. Chet Krause and Tom Warth (Classic Motorbooks) have each agreed to sponsor one issue. Two more sponsors are needed, and suggestions were requested. A membership inventory will be sent to all members to survey their interests and areas of expertise. Dues for 1985-1986 will be due at the Iola meeting. In order to help build the treasury, members were asked to pay early if possible.

Wally Wray suggested selling portrait plates, with car or other photos on porcelain souvenir plates, as a money raising idea for Iola. Scroggins pointed out the problems of carrying an inventory and suggested a sample plate combined with taking orders. Wray is to check out the possibilities.

Bill Cameron suggested buying gift subscriptions to SPARK at \$5 each and sending them to interested friends or relatives. Interested members are to send the money to Bob Gary who will forward the recipient's name and address to Chris Halla.

Chris Halla continues to accept articles for future issues of SPARK. Those who promised to write something included Ken Nimocks, Bill Cameron, Wally Wray and Bob Gary.

Films for a showing at Iola were discussed. Ken Nimocks and his wife will get a projector and some films. Scroggins passed along an offer for use of a free Jaguar racing film, and Wally Wray will check on other films available. Nimocks and Wray were appointed an ad hoc committee of two to handle film arrangements for Iola.

The next meeting will be held at Iola, on Saturday, July 13 at 2 pm. Location will be the Krause garage.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 3:20 pm.

Submitted by Ray Scroggins

BOOK REVIEW

STANDARD CATALOGUE OF AMERICAN CARS 1805-1942

One of the latest contributions to the mystery, lore and history of the motorcar is the Standard Catalogue of American Cars 1805-1942 by Beverly Rae Kimes, Henry Austin Clark, Jr. and others. Compared to previous compilations of this type the Standard Catalogue outdistances by far all other attempts to record and describe each and every make of automobile, whether produced in quantity, in limited numbers, in one, twos or threes, or just publicized, but never made, even to the extent of listing some fakes, the result of some fraudulent money raising scheme or other type of scam.

In addition to sheer numbers--over five thousand names listed--we never before have had as much detail. Wherever possible the text includes not only mechanical details, but the personalities behind the enterprise, the company structure, serial number data and, where available, current values based upon the well-known five-level condition code made popular by Krause's Price Guide and auction reports.

To me one of the greatest contributions is Beverly Rae Kime's breezy, often humorous way, of describing a marque's entry into the world, its successes, its failures and, except in a few instances, its tragic end. Humor is closely associated with pathos and the Standard Catalogue contains thousands of examples of shattered dreams, financial disasters, struggles against all odds, slips on the banana peels of fate made somehow

laughable by the author historian.

Physically, the Standard Catalogue is heavier, larger, has more pages and a great deal more information than the other two standard references. For instance Georgano's New Encyclopedia of Motor Cars 1885 to the Present has 688 pages, about 25% listing and describing cars of foreign makes and, of the total, well over 20% were built after 1942, the cutoff date of the present Standard Catalogue. Similarly Automobile Quarterly's The American Car Since 1775 has 504 pages compared with the present 1536 in the Standard Catalogue.

Not only to the dedicated automotive historian, collector, restorer or devotee, but to anyone even remotely interested in the beginning of America's most important industry, the Standard Catalogue of American Cars 1805-1942 is an absolute must--and a tremendous buy at less than \$30.

Bill Cameron

BOOK NOTICE

EXCALIBUR 1952-1981

Excalibur. One of the few cars on the road that continues to retain the sweeping fenders and flowing lines of days gone by. This new book from Brooklands is the only one available on the open road Wisconsin classic.

Few Excaliburs are seen on the road and many consider them a mystery. Excalibur 1952-1981 covers

the whole story from the Corvette powertrain to comments on performance and handling. Included are fully illustrated articles from the likes of Road & Track, Motor Trend, Auto Sport and many others. Articles cover road/performance tests, new models, driving impressions and technical data.

The book is available from Motorbooks International, P.O. Box 2, Osceola, WI 54020. The price is \$8.95. Order directly by calling 1-800-826-6600.

Submitted by Rita Cederholm

#### CLASSIC MOTORBOOKS 20th ANNIVERSARY and WHEELS & WINGS

The celebration starts at 9 am on Saturday, September 7 in Osceola, Wisconsin. In addition to the collector vehicle and airplane show, there will be a half price sale on hurt and overstock books and fifteen percent off all other stock. The warehouse will be open to browsers and buyers alike.

Under a marquee Motorbooks will be hosting a party attended by many of the automotive and aviation publishers and authors whose work you've been enjoying for years. The publishers of Hemmings, Road & Track, Cars & Parts, Car Collector and Old Cars will be on hand as well as representatives of Haynes, Crestline, Brooklands Books, Autocourse,

Osprey, Automobile Quarterly, Bookman Dan and Evergreen Press. This is a great chance to chat, mingle and share ideas and information with individuals who share an interest in cars (and planes).

A free pancake breakfast will be given away to drivers of interesting vehicles. Free coffee and other refreshments will be served, and a free shuttle bus will run between the airport, Motorbooks and various community events. Other scheduled events include steam train rides (tentative), tractor pull, new car display, boat rides on the St. Croix River, arts & crafts show, rides & amusements and a pancake breakfast. For additional information write: Classic Motorbooks, P.O. Box 1, Osceola, WI 54020.

#### VINTAGE RACING WEEKEND

On July 20 and 21 Chicago Historic Races will sponsor its annual Vintage Racing Weekend at Elkhart Lake's Road America. As most Badger state auto enthusiasts are aware, Road America is one of the longest, most beautiful and most exciting road race courses in the world. Vintage Racing Weekend is an excellent opportunity to experience this great track and see some equally great cars from the past in action once again.

Those who have not been to Road America in a couple of years will be pleasantly surprised to



see a number of major improvements including new viewing areas and an all new media center.

Additional information may be obtained from: Chicago Historic Races Ltd., 825 W. Erie, Chicago, IL 60622; or call (312) 829-7066. For information on other events at Road America write: Road America, Elkhart Lake, WI 53020; or call (414) 876-3366.

