

SPARK



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EDITORIAL NOTES

This is it folks. The last issue before our big 10th Anniversary issue of SPARK! Pretty exciting right? Well, April fool early. Maybe it'll be a big, special issue, and maybe it won't. Will we get enough contributions to make it? Will we be able to spend the extra money and time it might take to make it special?

I don't know.

What I do know is that there will be a 10th Anniversary issue of SPARK, and big or small, special or not, it will be as good an issue as I can put together. This has been my mission since returning as the newsletter's editor with Number 20. It's a simple mission. I like things simple.

In fact, that's one of the things I've enjoyed about being a WSAH member for the past 10 years. For the most part we've succeeded and stayed the active society we are by keeping things simple. The only time it seems things didn't work is when we let plans and issues get complicated.

So what's the point?

Well, sometimes it's hard to come up with just the right words to say what you want to. But I'll try. Let's keep it simple. Simple has worked just fine so far. As an individual, take whatever you can out of WSAH, and if you feel like it, put something back in. As a society, let's look at what our capabilities are and do our best with a small, simple set of achievable goals. Let's fix anything that isn't working quite right, let's appreciate

what we have and do that does work. We have an excellent organization.

And since we're on the subject, and it's the holiday season, let's be quiet, and peaceful, and kind, and honest and strong. Ned Comstock, who used to write for me at Old Cars, always ended his letters and phone calls by saying, "Be good and you'll be happy." Good guy.

Happy New Year.

Chris Halla

A LETTER FROM THE AUTOMOTIVE HALL OF FAME

As President of the Automotive Hall of Fame and a member of the Society of Automotive Historians, I would like to discuss something which is important to us as automotive historians--the preservation and documentation of history.

Since 1939, the Automotive Hall of Fame has preserved automotive history through its extensive archive and library and through its awards programs. These awards, the Distinguished Service Citation and the Hall of Fame Award, preserve history by documenting an individual's contribution to the industry. They also focus the attention of their peers on the definition of excellence within their segment of the industry and provide important role models for our young people.

The Awards Committee of the Hall of Fame is actively soliciting nominations for the 1989 Hall of Fame Award. The Committee will meet in January. I am

writing to ask for your assistance in identifying candidates for induction into the Hall of Fame. The SAH Board and President, Ms. Beverly Rae Kimes, have approved this request.

For the past two years an Automotive Historian Advisory Panel comprised of SAH members has participated in the selection process by evaluating the historical significance of the nominees for the Hall of Fame. We think this has enhanced the award.

Forms required to submit nominations are available by writing: Automotive Hall of Fame, P.O. Box 1727, Midland, MI 48641-1727. For additional information call: (517) 631-5760.

I look forward to hearing from you. Your assistance will help ensure that deserving automotive men and women are considered for the most prestigious of automotive industry awards.

Cordially,

Donald N. Richetti
President, Automotive Hall of Fame

AND

Along with his letter, Don Richetti sent a list of AHF inductees from 1967 through 1968. It's an interesting list that all WSAH members are here encouraged to write for. It's an amazing list. Amazing both in who it includes and who it doesn't.

Some personal favorites absent from the list were Ned Jordan, Ken Purdy, Tom McCahill and the founders of Harley-Davidson Motor Company. I'll bet you'll

find a few of your own favorites missing from the list as well. Of course, the only way those folks might get nominated is if you do it. So, what are you waiting for? (Almost anyone with any relationship to the automobile industry is eligible.)

Chris Halla

A LETTER PLUS

The following story first appeared in the Chicago region SCCA Newsletter called Piston Patter in the fall of 1956. I should like to see it included in Spark as I believe it to be of historical importance. Bob Goldich was an enthusiastic racing driver and a good friend. Unfortunately he was killed at Sebring in 1957 driving an Arnolt-Bristol. I was a member of that team from 1957 through 1961.

The winning Mercury was driven by Tim Flock of the southern racing Flock family. The Mercurys were prepared by Bill Stroppe in Long Beach, California. This preparation was thorough and businesslike, typical of what we have come to expect from Bill Stroppe.

I was one of the 37 mentioned in the story who with Bob Goldich walked to various corners so that we might better observe and, I might add, absorb the skillful technique of some of the NASCAR drivers. In addition their sportsmanship was something to behold. For example, some of the cars ran out of fuel out on the circuit, and more often than not, they were pushed to the pits by a competitor. I hope they return to Elkhart Lake someday. It was a terrific show and a lesson.

Bob Gary

ROAD AMERICA 1956: NASCAR & THE MYSTERIOUS 15 SECONDS

By Bob Goldich
Fall 1956

On August 12th most of the hard core of the racing group in the Chicago Region got up to Elkhart Lake to see the "Stockers" run. A large segment (37) did so in the air conditioned and bar-equipped comfort of a BOYNTON-arranged chartered bus giving a particularly good opportunity on the way back for an effective post-mortem on the proceedings.

Threatening weather and a \$4.00 admission, of course, helped to keep the crowd to the smallest number ever, and the lack of flagmen pointed up the way the SCCA's volunteer workers were missed. Still there was an enthusiastic and knowledgeable group of spectators at almost all the good corners, though the 250 mile length of the race, the sameness of the entries (almost all Fords, Mercurys, Chryslers, Dodges, and Chevrolets), coupled with a lack of personal interest in the drivers keep our own interest at a relatively low pitch. The results, too, were disappointing. The two Mercurys that came in 1-2 were definitely not among the five or six fastest or best driven cars, all of which failed to finish. All of this, however, does not conceal the bald fact of those 15 seconds, for after our experts, and we have some good ones, figured that around 3:23 was about the fastest they could go for any length of time, the top drivers during the part of the race that really counted were lapping consistently 15 full seconds faster at an astonishing 3:08! Now 3:23 would still have been a very rapid pace, four seconds faster than a well driven Bristol Ace, six seconds faster than a Porsche Super-Speedster, only

seven seconds slower than an \$8,000 Mercedes with fuel injection, space-frame, light alloy brakes, and an independent rear suspension. This figure, the boys felt, would take into consideration the amount of performance these people have gotten out of stock engines, and the way in which their modifications to springs and shock-absorbers radically improve the handling of automobiles which end up with gutting and installation of roll bars, etc., weighing just about the same as a factory delivered stock sedan. It also tried to allow for the skill of the drivers and their experience at handling these automobiles with which they get so much practice. In spite of this, we were a big 8% off. So where did they get that 15 seconds?

As far as anyone could figure, and a number of us tramped the entire course watching corners, cut off points, and brake lights to find out, is that a full five of it came from our under estimation of the nerve and ability of the drivers. They were right on the edge without being dangerous, took the entire road to make as fast as possible time, particularly on the sweeping bends. A surprising percentage of them obviously did not know how to down-shift. In spite of this the speed with which they got around the corners bore eloquent testimony to their professional touch.

Perhaps another five seconds came from a still unexpected degree of chassis modification and lack of mechanical failure, particularly in the brakes. These drivers used the brakes and used them hard and they stood up; the number of retirements was no greater than in our races. Obviously they learned in practice just how far they could go, and they went precisely that far, straining the mechanical components to the limit, but not so far as to have any real trouble. There was no obvious case

of serious brake fade that we could see, and while some of the drivers were pumping the pedal pretty hard toward the end, they were still cutting off at just about the same places as they had to start with, and most of the cars were running strong at the finish.

Another five seconds came on the hills. In spite of the ability of sports car engines to get tremendous horsepower out of small displacements, they still generally do it by ending up with a high, narrow power curve giving most of the horsepower at the very high, rpm range. These boys had the power every place, and their tremendous torque made mincemeat of the big hills. None of our cars from the fastest on down, looked as good going up under the new foot bridge as these Fords and Dodges, and incidentally they handled the left on top of the hill, and the right just afterwards, simply beautifully. Some places they did not look as good including the gravel pit bend and the sharp turns at the end of long straights, but better than any place at all was the fast sweeping bend coming up under the old bridge. Here the stockers simply roared into that left bend drifting wide and sure, and almost tearing up the pavement with their sheer power.

All this still is not a complete explanation since the similarly prepared Chevrolet Corvettes in the hands of our best drivers were three seconds slower and in a shorter race, and even a modified Corvette with full factory treatment could only beat this time by a couple of seconds. 3:08 is three seconds faster than a stock Jaguar has ever gotten around Elkhart Lake, and only five seconds slower than a three-litre Maserati or a Porsche Spyder, only 16 seconds off the lap record!

It certainly points up the fact that we have the

talent over here to build top grade sports cars some day, and while the people who build them may come indirectly from the NASCAR ranks, those of us with the berets can take plenty of the credit, because without us there would be no Road America and a couple of courses like it to interest Detroit in an automobile that will do something besides turn left.

We hear that the race was a financial flop, and let's hope that doesn't kill the course as an experimental track for Detroit. They may have given Tufte a hard time, they didn't help the stockholders much, and they didn't put on much of a show, but they sure shocked us thoroughly with those great big unbelievable 15 seconds.

SAH AUTOMOTIVE HISTORY AWARDS

Presentation of awards for automotive history highlighted the annual dinner meeting of the Society of Automotive Historians, Inc., held at the Marriott Inn in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania on October 7, 1988. SAH president Beverly Rae Kimes chaired the proceedings. (EDITOR'S NOTE: WSAH members should be aware that our own Matt Joseph heads up the awards committee.)

The Cugnot Award for the best book in the field of automotive history published during 1987 was presented jointly to Christer Olsson for VOLVO: Sixty Years of Truckmaking, published by Forlagshuset Norden AB of Malmo, Sweden, and to the late Andrew J.A. Whyte for JAGUAR: Sports Racing and Works Competition Cars from 1954 published by G.T. Foulis/

Haynes Publishing Group of Sparkford, Somerset, England.

The Carl Benz Award for the best periodical article published during 1987 went to Carl F.W. Larson for "A History of the Automobile in North Dakota to 1911," which appeared in the Fall 1987 issue of North Dakota History: Journal of the Northern Plains, published by the State Historical Society of North Dakota.

The James J. Bradley Distinguished Service Award was presented to the Fondation de L'Automobile Marius Berliet of Lyon, France, in recognition of contributions to the preservation of historic material relating to the motor vehicles of the world. The Bradley Award, presented to deserving libraries and archives, remembers James J. Bradley, the late curator of the National Automotive History Collection at the Detroit Public Library and an avid and eager student of automotive history. The award was accepted for the Berliet Foundation by president Paul Berliet, whose father, Marius Berliet, was one of France's pioneer automobile manufacturers. In 1905 Berliet licensed the American Locomotive Company to build his cars, which were sold as ALCOs until the first world war. The Berliet firm remained a major manufacturer of commercial vehicles until its recent acquisition by Renault. The foundation's primary goals are the preservation and enhancement of the automobile heritage of the Lyons region and the French heritage of lorries, coaches and buses of all makes.

The Society's Friend of Automotive History Award was presented to historian and writer Keith Marvin, one of the most prolific specialists in forgotten and fascinating facets of automotive history. Over the

last four decades, Marvin, a founder member of the Society, has written three books, co-authored four others, and contributed over 700 articles to 50 publications world wide. He is a founder member of the Automobilists of the Upper Hudson Valley, and for many years he has edited its quarterly magazine the Upper Hudson Valley Automobilist, which has showcased innumerable treatises on the lesser known aspects of automotive history and has begun the careers of a number of today's well-known writers. Marvin was a winner of the Society's Carl Benz Award in 1985, and has served as its president, vice president and on the board of directors. The award was presented by former Society president David L. Lewis who called Marvin "the very Sherlock Holmes of our profession" and cited his "lifetime of perceptive and detailed attention to the history of the automobile."

Two Awards of Distinction were announced for books and articles of particular merit published during 1987. The book Award of Distinction was made to Lawrence Dalton for ROLLS ROYCE: The Classic Elegance, published by Dalton Watson in London. The periodical award went to John F. Katz for his article "F.E. and F.O. Stanley: The Challenge from Steam," which appeared in the Spring 1987 issue of Automobile Quarterly.

PRESERVING PHOTOGRAPHS

By Liz Chilsen

(EDITOR'S NOTE: This article is reprinted with permission from the Wisconsin State Historical Society's Exchange. CH.)

From its outset, photography seemed imbued with a spirit of capturing the present. People gasped at views of the world, rendered in minutest detail by the "Pencil of Nature." From this delight in the immediacy of a photograph, it was only a small step to see the potential of photography for preserving information for the future. People soon believed that photographs could make permanent the fleeting passage of time. But this permanence is not guaranteed. If photographs are actually to preserve the information they contain, they must be handled carefully. They require specialized attention from their makers and from those entrusted with their care.

Today's camera derives its name from the camera obscura, or "dark chamber." The camera obscura has had many forms, but was popularly used during the late Renaissance as an optical tool to help artists render scenes in proper perspective. This style of camera obscura projected images through a lens onto a ground glass surface. The artist then traced scenes on paper laid over the glass. In the mid-nineteenth century, people began experimenting with methods that would hold a projected image permanently on a sheet of chemically treated paper.

William Henry Fox Talbot in England, and Louis Daguerre in France each continued experiments with light-sensitive materials begun by others earlier

in the century. Talbot was the first to announce his discoveries when he delivered a paper describing his negative-positive process in January of 1839. Daguerre followed shortly with a public demonstration of the positive Daguerreotype process in September of the same year. Though distinctly different, the Daguerreotype and Fox Talbot's early paper negatives share some characteristics that remain common to most photographic processes. Both, for example, utilized silver particles bonded to a second surface.

From the earliest development of photographic technology, the basic structure of photographs has been that of layers. In most photographic materials, light sensitive silver particles are held together, usually by being suspended in an emulsion of gelatin or other viscous material. The emulsion layer is applied to a base layer. The base supports the soft emulsion, and is therefore relatively stiff. Commonly used base materials in historic photographs are: glass, metal, paper and (more recently) plastic. Sometimes cloth or other materials are used. Emulsion and base materials vary from one type of photograph to another, but the complex, layered structure remains common.

The materials which make up the layers of photographic materials differ physically from one another and respond in unique ways to atmospheric and handling conditions. Conditions which are good for one layer may actually harm another. These contradictions, inherent in the nature of photographic materials, present the caretaker of such collections with the need to develop specialized care and handling procedures. Good photographic conservation practices are adapted to preserve all the layers of a photograph as well as to the bonds between them.

The first step in preserving photographs is providing them with a stable environment. In a broad sense, "environment" for archival materials encompasses many factors, including atmospheric conditions, storage enclosures, handling and organizational schemes, and simple house cleaning procedures.

Atmospheric conditions constitute a first major concern in the preservation environment. Drastic fluctuations in temperature and humidity--which threaten all historic materials--are especially dangerous to photographs. The materials in emulsions and supports respond differently to loss or gain of humidity and rise or fall in temperature. The emulsion absorbs and loses moisture more quickly (is more "hygroscopic") than its base. During a rapid reduction in humidity, the emulsion will dry out and shrink faster than the support. If this change happens too quickly, the emulsion can actually burst, popping free of the base. Dimensional changes resulting from a rapid rise in temperature can have similar effects. Emulsions also are able to absorb a great deal of moisture, and soften as they do so. The softening effect makes them more easily scratched, abraded, and more likely to stick to other surfaces. Photographs are also very susceptible to damage from mold.

To minimize the types of problems noted above, store photographs in areas of moderate temperature and humidity ranges. High humidity areas in many local historical societies include basements or damp storage cellars. An example of an area of dangerously low relative humidity (and high temperatures) is the attic. Avoid both such extremes. A variety of inexpensive temperature and humidity monitors are available to help determine which areas are best for photographic storage. Photographs should ideally be kept in areas maintained at 68°F, or less, with a

fluctuation of no more than $\pm 10^{\circ}\text{F}$. Humidity levels should be kept at 50% with a fluctuation of no more than $\pm 5\%$. In small historical societies, achieving such standards throughout the building may be impossible. Because photographs are especially susceptible to damage from temperature and humidity fluctuations, consider storing them in a separate room that can be controlled with single room air-conditioners, humidifiers and/or dehumidifiers.

Another aspect of providing a good environment for photographs is the selection of safe storage materials. Selecting acid-free storage containers and the use of proper shelving are both important considerations. Photographs also require additional considerations.

Paper selected for the storage of photographs should be acid-free, but non-buffered. Non-buffered papers are neutral. Buffered papers are slightly alkaline, and were created for the storage of acidic documents. Recent evidence suggests that the alkalinity of buffered papers can soften photographic emulsions.

Clear plastic can be a useful storage material for photographic prints. It protects the soft emulsion surface from finger prints, dirt and abrasion, while allowing the print to be viewed easily from both sides. However, not all plastics are safe. Polyethelene, polyester (most commonly known by the trade name "mylar"), and tri-acetate plastics are safe for long-term storage. Many of the least expensive plastic storage materials available in discount stores and bookstores contain chlorides. Strictly avoid such materials. Chlorides release gases which bleach silver, damaging the photographic image. The rule for selecting plastics for long-

term storage is: if you don't know what it is and that it's safe, don't use it.

A major caution accompanies the use of plastic enclosures. They can trap excess moisture, causing the soft photographic emulsion to stick to the plastic surface. This produces shiny, uneven blotches on the emulsion surface; a type of damage called "ferrotyping." If you choose to use plastics for print or negative storage, stable humidity levels in the acceptable range must be carefully maintained. Even in a dry storage area, use plastics cautiously. Plastic can build up a static charge. This charge may lift away pieces of flaking or fragile emulsions. Photographic prints or negatives with loose emulsions should not be placed in plastic enclosures. Copy such photographs and store them in clearly labeled paper envelopes.

For storage of photographic negatives, paper is usually the best material. Negatives should be kept separate from prints, in a place removed from general use. They should only be taken from their envelopes when additional prints are needed, or for other specialized use. Since negatives need to be viewed less frequently, they are not as vulnerable to the dangers of fingerprints and abrasion as prints. Therefore plastic storage enclosures are expensive and unnecessary.

Many photographic labs use a type of tissue paper known as glassene for negative envelopes. This paper is usually acid-free, but very hygroscopic. Because it absorbs moisture readily, it is not recommended for long-term use with photographic materials.

The small size of 35mm negatives poses a special problem to collection caretakers. Archival storage

supplies provide two suitable alternatives. Light Impressions Corporation (131 Gould Street, Rochester, NY 14610) has developed a system of paper and mylar enclosures which they call "Nega-Guard." This system is quite handy and attractive, but may be too costly for small historical agencies. Another solution is a set of plastic enclosures created by PRINT FILE, also available through Light Impressions. These three-ring binder sheets are made of polyethelene and divided into small sections which hold single 35mm strips. In all cases, whether using paper or plastic, store only one negative per enclosure to prevent scratching.

Handling and use represent the third major factor in the environment of photographic collections. Organizational schemes that provide quick easy access to photographic items are essential. They cut down on unnecessary handling and reduce the danger of abrasion to soft photographic emulsions. Remove fragile or extremely valuable photographs from routine handling. Provide researchers with a copy print, or even a photocopy of the original. In this way, you can provide access to the historical document, and store the original in a more stable environment. Incidentally, safe-deposit boxes in banks most often do not provide stable temperature and humidity conditions for valuable historical documents.

Thorough records must be kept when copy negatives and prints are created. These types of records are crucial to maintain access and eliminate duplication of efforts. Carefully note copy negative numbers on the backs of photocopies, prints and originals. To do this, place the photograph face down on a clean, hard surface such as glass or formica. Using a soft, #1 or #2 lead pencil and light pres-

sure, mark the number. Do not use ink. Inks contain chemicals which bleach photographic silver. They can also bleed through to the front of a print over time.

Cleanliness is a final environmental concern for the preservation of photographs. Air often carries pollutants that attack and bleach the silver in photographs. Air-borne particles of dust are highly abrasive to emulsions. Keep windows closed, change furnace filters regularly, and take other precautions to reduce the amount of dust and pollution that reach your collection. This will greatly extend its life.

The least complicated form of cleanliness is an established house cleaning schedule. A neat and clean area enables researchers to work with ease, and promotes an atmosphere of respect for historic items. Users of the collection should be informed of handling rules before they begin work. No pens should be allowed in the use area. Keep a supply of soft pencils on hand for note taking. Inexpensive, white cotton gloves, available at most photographic supply stores or from Light Impressions, can also be provided. These gloves protect the surfaces of photographs from the corrosive damage of skin oils. Encourage users to wash their hands frequently. And finally no food or drink should be allowed in collection areas.