



20th S.D.C. INTERNATIONAL MEET

(A View From The Side)

My name is Frank Ambrogio, I live in Casselberry, Florida, just on the Northeast edge of Orlando, and I am President of the Orlando Area Chapter. I would like to share with you some of my experiences at the 20th International S.D.C. Meet held just south of Orlando at the Hyatt Hotel in Kissimmee, Florida.

The 20th International S.D.C. Meet was the third one my wife Anita and I have attended and because of its close proximity, there was quite a difference from this one and the previous two. Reflecting back on that first week in July, I realize that a meet of this magnitude is so much more than cars and trophies. Renewing acquaintances, making new friends, helping those who need a hand, and rubbing elbows with some of the people behind the names I've read about in Turning Wheels, helped make this meet a most enjoyable one for me.

I would like to take you through the week as it happened to me on a daily basis. I am not going to be telling you about cars, parts, and trophies but rather events, experiences, and people. This meet issue will have all the pictures of the trophy winning cars and their happy owners.

Sunday Evening July 1

We went to the hospitality room where we were greeted by meet co-chairpersons Linda Sinclair and John Ernst. We had first met Linda and John at the 18th International Meet in Seattle (our first meet) and after a brief exchange of hellos we decided to get out of their way and let them attend to their many chores.

Several of our Orlando Area Chapter members arrived a short time later including our entire Board of Directors. We were almost ready to sit down and have a chapter meeting, but fortunately, cooler heads prevailed and we tabled that till a later date. Our Board, like so many new clubs, consisted entirely of husband and wife teams. Anita is our Secretary, Fred and Ruth Wilcoxson are our Vice-President and Editor, Dwight and Carolyn Swanson are our Activities and Membership Directors, and Richard and Lucille Green acts as our Treasurers.

While we were all standing around talking, S.D.C.

President George D. Krem came over and started talking to me. He complimented me on the Chapter name tag I was wearing and asked me if we had received our Chapter Charter, probably knowing full well that it would be presented as a surprise at the awards banquet. I had met George in Seattle when he was introduced to Anita and me by John Ernst. I was certain he didn't remember me as we had only said hello and then left him and John to continue their conversation.

He did remember the letter I had written to him before our Club was formed, and that it, along with his reply, was printed in the February issue of Turning Wheels. We talked for about 15 minutes before parting and I thought it was very considerate of him to seek me out. It left me with the feeling that the officers of S.D.C., including the President, were just ordinary guys and were within reach of the average member. In short, he made me feel like I belonged.

Monday July 2

We worked half a day on Monday, then after lunch we were off to the Hyatt to check out the new Studebaker arrivals. After a quick walk around the parking lot, we went to the hospitality room.

I had to go back to the car for something and upon my return I saw Anita and a stranger walking toward me. She introduced the young man as Len Doriean from Melbourne, Australia. He had made arrangements for a rental car and needed a ride to International Drive (about 10 miles away) to pick up the car. She had already told him what a great guy her husband was and that he would be "only too happy" to oblige. Since I was already committed, I decided to provide the taxi service for Len.

We engaged in some Studebaker talk and he told me about his GT Hawk back home. I don't remember if he bought his car in America and had to have it converted to right hand drive or if he was just telling me that American cars had to be converted, at the purchaser's expense, before they could be driven in Australia. He was very easy to talk to and although I had only just met him, it seemed like I had known him for a long time. We discussed some of the differences in the way of life in our countries and the value of the Australian dollar in terms of a USA dollar (\$1.90). He was interesting to listen to and easy to understand even though he spoke a foreign language (English). I remember making some comment about his accent

and he pointed out that actually I was the one with the accent. I guess we really weren't so different once I accepted the fact that what I called "really nice" was to him a "truly fine motor car."

When we returned to the Hyatt, Len bought me a beer and we celebrated our accomplishment of negotiating the Orlando traffic before going back to the hospitality room. He introduced Anita and me to two acquaintances of his from the Melbourne area, Jim Quigley and Ian Mackie, and the five of us had a nice visit together.

Len works for Pan Am and was able to sneak into Orlando but had to go back home on Wednesday so we didn't get a chance to say good bye. I'd like to take this opportunity to say "good luck, Len, hope to see you in Springfield."

Tuesday July 3

We worked half a day on Tuesday and then repeated our lunch and parking lot tour ritual before settling down in the hospitality room again. Anita worked the whole week in the hospitality room helping Dave Burton and his gang with registrations. Before the week ended I would get to know quite a few people from the Sunshine and Central Florida Chapters who were giving a lot of their time to get everyone registered and settled in.

Among the people I met were John Sinclair, Phil Griswold, Helen Fletcher, Charlotte Zorn, Landis and Betty Kitner, Myra Smith, and Roberta Johnson.

Phil must have had some spare time, or he just couldn't sleep at night, because he bought a model car kit, put it together, painted it, entered it in the model car judging, and won an award. A pretty neat trick in my book.

Other people working in the hospitality room included Keith Rolleston and our Chapter's Marion White. I am sure there were others and I apologize if I omitted your name.

A short while later a young man came in, introduced himself as Rob Braden from Cornwells Heights, Pennsylvania, and we had a conversation that lasted about two hours. Rob is a life member in S.D.C. and during the course of the conversation he explained that he had once lived in Orlando but was originally from my home town, Detroit, Michigan.

All the time we were talking, I felt more and more certain that I had known him from somewhere before. I finally remembered who he reminded me of and after some fine



detective work and some searching way back into my memory, I remembered the name Bill Braden. Bill, it turns out, is Rob's brother with whom I had worked in Detroit back in 1966. I was a computer operator for the Government, and Bill was a site representative for RCA, the company that supplied our computers. I still can't believe I remembered Bill because I only worked with him for about six months. I wonder if Rob told his brother about me and if Bill remembers me.

While I was talking to Bill, our Chapter Treasurer's wife, Lucille Green, broke in and left me with a box of our Chapter shirts and caps to sell. I have to admit that I really didn't believe that anyone would want to buy shirts from another Chapter, but I sold a few including one to Mr. Ostheller of Puyallup, Washington, who bought one for his daughter Staci. By Thursday we sold all but one of the shirts and most of the caps, including some to a couple of visitors from Canada.

I attended the tail end of the Editors Meeting where I met Rich Holcomb and Larry Swanson. I learned quite a bit from the short time I was there and I know our Editor Ruth Wilcoxson got quite a few useful tips and information. Ruth passed around a sheet for any of the other Editors to sign if they wanted to exchange newsletters. It is a great way to obtain material for your Chapter newsletter. If any of you Chapter Editors out there would like to exchange newsletters with us, please write to Ruth at P. O. Box 13980, Orlando, FL 32859. As was stated in the meeting, the newsletter is the heart and soul of the Chapter and exchanging newsletters is a super way to improve it.

After the Editors Meeting I stayed on for the Chapter Presidents Meeting where I learned that even though a Chapter may have been around for a long time, it still has some of the same problems that a new one like ours has. The biggest problems seemed to be finding the money to keep the newsletter going, and to get more members involved in the activities. I felt pretty good after that meeting and left thinking that our Chapter was in good shape for the future.

Wednesday July 4

We took the rest of the week off from work and got a room at the Hyatt through Saturday. That drive through Orlando each night took about an hour and we were looking forward to avoiding that trip for the next few days.

That evening brought car trouble to our Treasurer

Richard Green, and at 9:30 p.m. I found myself driving Richard to the home of members Russell and Dottie Thomas in Casselberry to pick up a voltage regulator. The Thomas's live about two miles from my house so I still ended up making that trip I thought I was done with. We sat and talked with Dottie for about an hour and then it was all the way back to the Hyatt where our Activities Director Dwight Swanson and member Jerry Shelton got the 1953 Land Cruiser (ha) back on the road. By 2:00 a.m. I was in bed wondering how I was going to get up at 6:00 a.m. to help our Vice-President Fred Wilcoxson with the placement of the cars on the show field. It is funny how being tired and having to help a friend with car trouble can still be fun when it involves Studebakers.

Thursday July 5

I managed to wake up on time and get myself over to the field where Fred sent me down to the entrance to direct cars onto the field. I am the guy who directed you between the two trees at the edge of the field. After you entered the field you were then in the capable hands of the traffic controllers such as Bob Lytle, Jerry Nowicki, and Gary Johnson.

When I first volunteered for that job I thought I wouldn't get to do much looking at the cars, but actually I got to see every one that entered the field that day. After all the parking was done I was free to take a closer look at some of the ones that were of special interest to me.

Some of the people involved in the judging were Linda Seebach, who gave you your points sheet, Sam Fletcher, Roger Miller, Herman Krueger, Jeff Elliott, and a few others whose names escape me.

In case you are wondering how we kept abreast of what was happening in the judging hall from way out on the field, we did it with the walkie talkies supplied by Fred Wilcoxson and the Orlando Police Department.

After the judging was over, a gang of about twenty of us from our Chapter decided to have dinner at the Hyatt before going on to the hall for Fun Night. We had a good meal and an even better time, with the entertainers acknowledging our presence and joking around with us.

Later in the evening after leaving the Fun Night hall, we ran into Bill and Donna Moffett of Tulsa, Oklahoma, whom we had originally met at the 18th International Meet in Seattle while waiting in line to go up in the Space Needle.

Bill is the President of the Northeast Oklahoma Chapter, and it has become an annual event for us to meet and chat. We look forward to seeing them each year. The Moffetts finished second with their beautiful 1962 GT Hawk the last two years and I was happy to see them finally win 1st with the 1964 GT they now have. Their old 62 also won a 1st for its new Texas owner.

After leaving Bill and Donna, we immediately ran into Don Beckwith, a member from our former Cowford Classic Chapter in Jacksonville, Florida. Don introduced us to Chuck Naugle, the chief judge of the pocket watch competition. Chuck and Don used to be neighbors in Arizona and were probably reliving the old days. Chuck drove his big brown Studebaker truck all the way from Arizona and the four of us conversed over a drink (maybe two) at the Hyatt lounge.

Friday July 6

I attended the literature swap and naturally overspent my allowance but of course it was worth it. I met Bob Bourke, the designer of my favorite car (1953 Starliner), and John Bridges, author of "Bob Bourke Designs For Studebaker." They both chatted amicably with me as they each autographed my copy of the book. I actually enjoyed spending the \$20.00 and felt good about saving those pesky shipping costs.

After returning to the hospitality room, suddenly Wayne Bennett of Orlando's Channel 6 WCPX TV entered. He saw my badge with Orlando and President on it and started asking me to arrange a special showing of cars for him and his cameraman to tape for airing on the 6 O'Clock News. That was probably the easiest task I've ever had to do in my life. I think all I did was say "Studebakers, field, 5 minutes, TELEVISION."

Before not too many minutes passed, we had about 30 Studebakers and even more enthusiasts trying to get on TV. Wayne (we're on a first name basis now, of course) interviewed several people and then used one of the cars for his wrap-up (as we TV people call it) while wearing one of our Chapter caps. Fred Wilcoxson obtained the edited version of the tape as shown on TV and we showed it at our next Chapter meeting.

In the early evening we stopped by the hall to see how things were shaping up for the banquet and before I knew what was happening, we were put to work helping set up the

trophies. In spite of the fact that I did a lot more work at this meet, I really enjoyed doing it and had a good time meeting some really nice people. Although our Chapter was not officially a sponsor of the 20th S.D.C. International Meet, many of our members are also members of the two chapters that did put on the meet. I want to congratulate both the Sunshine and Central Florida Chapters for the great job they did. Thank you for bringing the International Meet to Florida.

That evening at the banquet I was taken completely by surprise when our Chapter Charter was presented to me by newly elected S.D.C. President Stu Chapman. Going up to the podium to receive our Charter was a real thrill and it was truly fitting that it happened right here at home. I wasn't nervous, honest! The Charter had come to our Chapter mailing address and our Activities Director Dwight Swanson (via Carolyn Swanson) had it framed and arranged to have it presented at the banquet. All I can say Dwight is that I WILL get even. When you least expect it, EXPECT IT.

I was sitting right in front of the trophies that night and I still can't forget the sight of S.D.C. Secretary Cindy Brown bouncing back, forth, up, and down from the raised deck to the floor level to pick up the trophies for the winners. If that had been me doing all that running around, I would have spent the next week in the close company of Ben Gay. I am sorry, Cindy, that I didn't offer to hand the 3rd place trophies up to you, but you must be keeping up with your body conditioning, because you did a great job.

Saturday July 7

We had breakfast with members Larry and Barbara Ann Golub. Larry let me drive his 1976 Avanti II. He said he doesn't worry about that car (it has 100,000+ miles) but he seemed to be as jittery as I am when somebody is driving my car. I did pretty well. I didn't hit anything or anybody and I didn't scuff the whitewalls. That was the first Avanti (II or otherwise) I have ever been in, and I'm ready to buy one (as soon as I explain the economics of a second mortgage to Anita).

After breakfast the four of us made one last trip around the Hyatt parking lot and it was then that I began to get that empty feeling as I realized that it was all over for another year. Watching everyone packing up their belongings and hitting the road is always a bit nostalgic for me. The week goes by so quickly and suddenly it is time to leave Studebaker heaven and return to the world of cutting grass, paying bills, and going to work. I didn't get the chance to talk to Ken Bondurant of Cleveland, Missouri, or Dale F. Meese, Sr. of Salisbury, Pennsylvania, who, along with Dan Girvan of Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada, all own 1956 doeskin and mocha Golden Hawks just like ours. (Well, like ours is supposed to look.) I didn't take any pictures this year for the first time. Next year I'm going to make a list of all the things I want to do and stick to it. (Maybe.)

Anita says I am a different person when I get around Studebakers. That is probably true, but at least she seems to like both of us (me).

See you in Springfield?

Frank J. Ambrogio

We wish to thank Crabtree Photographic for the center panoramic picture of the field of cars taken with a special camera. Full size full color copies are available for \$20. They are 12x48, a full one foot high by four feet long! Write directly to 751 Liberty Street, Morgantown, WV 26505, or you may call them at 304-598-0726. The scene was taken during the middle of the day, so about a fifth of the cars were over at the indoor judging hall being judged.



Your Editor had camera problems indoors, ruining the photos of the meetings. Thank goodness John Ernst took this picture of your Board at work.



So far as we can determine, a new record was established for the most trophies won in a national meet. Meet Co-chairman John Ernst lived close enough to bring over six vehicles, all in such nice condition that five won trophies. Above, the fleet (including his rare Dodge Big Horn CNT 950 truck-hauler); below, the trophies.



The First Studebaker

Watch Concours



Some of the entrants in the first Studebaker Watch Concours which was organized and run by Chuck Naugle.



Carroll Studebaker of Ohio brought an entire collection of Studebaker watches to display.