

Once Upon A Wire Wheel

by Bernie and Norm Koglin

This is the first in a series of articles recalling a few highlights from the fifty year history of the Chicago Region SCCA. Most of the information in this article is found in a history of the Club's early years written by Fred Wacker some years ago. We also wish to thank Burdie Martin for the loan of his copies of the very earliest issues of PISTON PATTTER which are an invaluable source.

In the Beginning.....

1948 - 1954

The term "sports car" would have meant very little to a vast majority of Americans in the years right after World War II. Then, MG TC's began arriving in the U.S. and a few people started to take notice. Among them was Fred Wacker, who purchased one of the first little British cars in early 1948.

In May of that year, Fred and Bud Seaverns drove the MG to Indiana-polis for the 500. After the race they were caught in the usual traffic jam, and came across Bill Spear and Sam Bailey, a couple of New Yorkers, in a Bentley. A mutual interest in their respective cars led to introductions, and in due course Fred and Bud heard of the "Sports Car Club of America" for the first time.

Ownership of a "sports car" was an SCCA membership requirement at that time. Since Fred qualified in that respect, Bill and Sam suggested he become a member of the Club.

After joining, Fred discovered there was no Chicago Region. He contacted D. Cameron Peck of Evanston, Illinois who was Secretary of SCCA at the time. When Fred asked him why there was no Chicago Region, he said no one had gotten around to it, and suggested Fred start one.

Milwaukee Region was already in existence, and their RE, Carl Mueller, agreed to bring down a group from Milwaukee to pass along some ideas regarding organization. Several Milwaukee members and a number of people from the Chicago area, recruited by Fred, got together for a dinner meeting in late Fall of 1948. And thus was founded the Chicago Region, SCCA.

Fred Wacker became our first RE and served in that role for two years.

The very first event was a gymkhana of sorts, held in conjunction with the Milwaukee Region on a farm in Wisconsin. Similar events were held at the Lake County Fairgrounds and Larry Whiting's Lake Geneva property.

While road racing was a dream, few believed it would ever become a reality. Nevertheless, the reality began to take shape when Jim Kimberly, Fred Wacker, Dave Garroway and Carl Brocken chartered an airplane to scout the Wisconsin countryside for a suitable road race site. Elkhart Lake looked good so they put down in Plymouth, bummed a ride to Elkhart Lake, and convinced some prominent local businessmen to allow the Region to organize a race.

The course layout ran down the main street, around the Lake and back through town.

In 1950, the first race took place and was an unqualified success. Jim Kimberly won, Fred Wacker was second and Sally Ann Chapin was the ladies race winner. There were 1500 spectators.

The Chicago Region and Elkhart Lake had begun a very special relationship.

The results sheet of the "Main Race" in 1951 includes the names of many legendary road racing figures. John Fitch won in a Cunningham, Phil Hill came in third in a Jaguar XK 120 Special, Bill Spear finished fourth in a Ferrari, Briggs Cunningham in another of his own cars was sixth, Jim Kimberly's Ferrari America lost its clutch, Chicago Region's Larry Whiting finished third in the MG class, while Bud Seaverns' MGTC was a DNF.

1952 saw an expanded schedule of three events, based on engine displacement. Drivers from all over the U.S. participated, it was another Who's Who of early road racing names, and included most of those that had competed in 1951.

Some things never change department, from the August, 1951 Piston Patter.

HELP! HELP!

We need more stories and photos. P.P. will be only as interesting as you make it. Send them by mail or phone.

Corwith Hamill, Ed.

Good news from the
April, 1953 Piston Patter

WILMOT – THE ALL YEAR
SPORTS CENTER

The most exciting news we've got this month is that plans are well underway for a 2-mile permanent circuit at Wilmot, Wisconsin. As every ski-bum knows, this is on the west bank of the Fox river a few miles or so north of the Illinois line near Antioch...

And bad news in the
June 1953 issue:

ROAD RACING KAPUT?

Back in the halcyon days when motoring was a sport for the economic nobility, road racing was the King of sports but it died out as its own popularity resulted in too many fatalities. The same problem plagues SCCA. The problems of staging road races are becoming almost too complicated for volunteer committees and the amateur set-up precludes professional organizers on account of cost.

Legal difficulties have put the kibosh on Elkhart Lake. A certain adamant landowner threatens to prevent the races by injunction if necessary and no one wants to devote months of preparation to that dismal conclusion. There was considerable enthusiasm for a private course on a gravelly hillside on the outskirts of town, but there was some doubt as to whether the considerable investment would pay out.

Good thing Cliff Tufte had no doubts!

The April, 1953 Piston Patter noted only that plans were underway for a race circuit at Wilmot. It is remarkable that the Region was able to conduct a short-schedule race in July and a full schedule of events in September of the same year. It was slightly less than a mile long, and a lot of fun.

July, 1953 membership was 224.

During the five-year period high-lighted in this article, members were often active in every type of driving activity. The 1954 Cook County 120 was a fine example of this broad-based participation and socializing. On Saturday, 39 cars completed the rally and a rally car concours; a separate concours for non-rally cars attracted about 20 entrants. Sunday offered a hill climb and several of the rallyists were among the 33 contestants in that activity.

As 1954 drew to a close, a solid partnering relationship was developing between Road America and the Region. Dates and events were being finalized, and as 1955 dawned Road America was becoming a reality.

A very different era was about to begin.

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The Road America Era Begins •1955 – 1960

Road racing was catching on. Spectator interest was increasing, and more and faster cars were appearing at every event. In the early '50's several race-related spectator injuries occurred at public-road races (not Elkhart Lake). This soon resulted in a U.S. moratorium on street racing that continued for about twenty years. Racing continued on a few closed circuits and on airport courses. Air Force General Curtis LeMay should be remembered for making a number of air bases available for races during this difficult time.

No matter how improbable, in 1955 a four-mile road race course was completed in a small Wisconsin resort town. This was almost entirely due to the efforts of one man. Clif Tufte was a resident of Elkhart Lake and the owner of a gravel pit business outside of town. Envisioning the potential of road racing, he gained the support of the community, local business people, and the *Chicago Region*. With only about one-half the necessary funding in hand, he began construction in 1954 and the facility was completed in time for a September 9, 1955 National race.

Following is an excerpt from a letter that appeared in the June, 1955 Piston Patter, to the *Chicago Region* R.E. Chuck West, from Ben Harris, a Club member who had been invited to be starter for the inaugural races:

"I was in Elkhart Lake on May 26th, before going to Iowa City..."

I saw Clif Tufte and bought some stock and Clif took me all over the course and the property. Like Roy Kramer, I was thrilled and couldn't believe the amount of work Clif had done nor the excellence or beauty of the circuit. There won't be anything in this country to touch it, and not many in Europe."

An "ELKHART PROGRESS REPORT" appeared in the August issue of Piston Patter and included the following:

"We attended a stockholders' meeting recently and looked over the Road America course. By this time it is a safe guess that the course is completely paved. The paving that we drove over is superb – not as slick as most blacktop highways and not as rough as most airports. A fine surface with good traction, without too much friction.

The Race Committee also attended this meeting; and, among other things, measured the track with the fifth wheel (accurate). The one lap distance according to F.I.A. specifications is four (4) miles right on the nose."

Today's race workers might be interested in the following segment of the worker recruiting article that also appeared in the August issue

"...The officials have realized that since the program is so big, the fair and pleasant thing to do is work up a watch and station bill.

What this amounts to is that a volunteer will have a certain specified time for work, and an equal time for relaxing and spectating ..."

In these early years it was not unusual for racers to travel great distances to participate in the few premier race events at better courses such as Road America and *Watkins Glen*. So it is not surprising to read that Briggs Cunningham intended to bring five cars to the Road America inaugural and that John Von Neumann planned to come from California.

Suffice it to say that the race was a success.

But do not be led to believe that Road America was the only interest and activity of the Region and its members during 1955. There were races and a drivers' school at *Wilmot Raceway*. Several rallies were scheduled, including one combined with a picnic, a loop rally and the two-day, 1000 mile, *Lake Michigan Miglia* rally. This grueling, around-the-lake event was won by a then-new member named Dave Morrell, driving a VW Beetle. Dave went on to become one of our more illustrious members. He held any number of Chicago Region positions, including RE. Later, he became Chairman of the Board of SCCA, and before his untimely death, he was awarded the Woolf Barnato trophy, the highest honor SCCA can bestow.

In the June, 1955 Piston Patter, it was noted that the membership was more than 250.

Wilmot was not on the schedule in 1956, but in addition to the June National races, a Road America weekend of endurance races was included. Jim Kimberly won the four-hour Saturday enduro, co-driving an Osca with Carrol Shelby. Jim, a Chicago Region member, was elected national president of SCCA at the annual meeting of the Club in February, 1956. Other drivers of note on Saturday included Lance Reventlow co-driving with Ritchie Ginther. On Sunday a six-hour race was won by J.A. Kilbourn, driving a Ferrari. He finished ahead of the Briggs Cunningham/John Fitch D Jaguar, the Paul O'Shea/Phil Hill Mercedes Benz, and (not to mention) the Paul Antwerpen/Bud Seaverns Mercedes Benz. The *Cook County 120* again included a rally and hill climb, with a number of entrants competing in both events. 77 teams entered and ran the 1956 *Michigan Miglia*. At the SCCA annual meeting Chicago received the Regional Achievement Award for 1955, with Chuck West, RE.

The status of Road America/Chicago Region events during this era was extraordinary. For example the *Concours d'Elegance* conducted as part of the 1957 June Road America race weekend (and for several years thereafter) included awards such as "Her Britannic Majesty's Government Medal" presented in person by the British Consul General. There were also German, French and Italian government trophies presented by representatives of those nations. *Jaguar North America* and *Saks Fifth Avenue* presented awards as well. Janet Pilgrim, the first *Playboy* centerfold, participated in trophy presentations throughout the weekend.

Most events planned in 1957 were similar to the previous year's events, except the September race was scheduled as the initial Road America 500. Phil Hill won and Carrol Shelby was second. This was the year that *Wilmot Hills Road Racing Association* was organized and the course rebuilt. In late fall, a drivers' school and low-key race were the first of many Wilmot events put on over a period of fifteen years.

In 1958 Wilmot appears on the schedule with a drivers' school and three race events. Most of the activities of recent years were also on the calendar at that time. And then there was Meadowdale. On State Route 31, outside of Dundee, the developer of the sub-division across the road constructed a three-mile race course. On September 13 – 14, 1958, the Chicago Region conducted the inaugural event, a Regional race. Seeding of the grounds was unsatisfactory or had not been done, and dust enveloped everything and everyone. Earth embankments lined much of the course and several turns did not offer escape roads. The weekend was tragically marred by a fatal accident during Race Three. Certainly one of the Region's least memorable events. Chicago Region began a period of discussions and negotiations with the course owner regarding needed modifications and improvements. One of the advertised "features" of the track was an asphalt-paved, steep banked "Monsa Wall". It turned out that the asphalt kept sliding down the inclined surface during the heat of a Midwest summer and constant repaving was required. Ultimately the "wall" was leveled and converted to a flat corner.

The specter of professionalism had been appearing on the SCCA scene for a couple of years. By 1958 it was apparent that survival of private, closed-circuit race courses would demand the spectator revenue that only racing for money could generate. Resistance to this reality was strong, and debate heated. In any case the "good old days" were coming to an end.

Calendars for 1959 and 1960 included almost all of the 1958 events. Considering the conditions encountered in 1958, it is not surprising that there were no races scheduled for *Meadowdale*. 1960 was the year that SCCA began classifying production cars on the basis of performance potential, rather than displacement.

As one might expect, drivers whose cars had been superior under the displacement system were not enthusiastic about the

change. Nevertheless, the classifications held up pretty well through the years, some still do to this day.

As the *Region* entered the 60's, professional road racing was on the horizon. In addition, changing the car classification system made more cars competitive. This would generate more classes and open the way for more members to become drivers.

Many changes were on the way.

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The Times They Were A Changin’

The cover of the January, 1961 PISTON PATTERN was graced with a photo of a 540K Mercedes Benz roadster with the Chicago Water Tower in the background. This elegant, low-slung, wire wheeled vintage automobile epitomized the ideals of early SCCA members. But, in 1961 automotive design was entering a new era, and so was the Club. On the other hand members continued to participate regularly in a variety of activities. The 1961 calendar included four races at Wilmot, the June Sprints, the Road America 500 and five Regional Rallies. We also put on the Land of Lincoln National Rally and more than 97 Chicago Region members turned out to WORK the rally.

One real advocate of active participation was Al Russell, who wrote his “You know me, AL” PISTON PATTERN column for years. He was an active member, director of the Region and a wonderful writer. Al did not confine himself to a theme. He wrote about people he met, his view of events and anything else he thought interesting or curious. Al is now in his 90’s, and keeps in touch with several of his old friends in the club.

In this bygone era, road racing celebrities were much more accessible. For example, Sterling Moss was the speaker at one of the 1961 membership meetings. The following day, the Region had organized a “drivers’ school” at Meadowdale Raceway, with Sterling instructing various members, for a fee, in their own cars.

Newer members may not know that Chicago Region’s Jim Kimberly was a co-sponsor of the “car that changed everything” at the 1961 Indy 500 – a rear engine Cooper Climax F1 car. The driver was Jack Brabham, F1 World Champion, and he finished in 9th place. A remarkable performance for a car that had been changed little from its European road race configuration.

Following is an excerpt from an article about the 1961 RA 500 in the October, 1961 issue of SPORTS CAR DIGEST. It was reprinted in PISTON PATTERN and gives some indication of the degree of international status and admiration that the Chicago Region and Road America had achieved:

“Road America, in case anyone can’t tell from the accompanying report, has swept us completely off our feet. Mexico City’s Autodromo is a beautiful course, but it is evidently man-made. Elkhart though, is racing somehow as it is meant to be – on a road that almost seems to lead somewhere. Of course we tend to wax eloquent at the sight of a tree (according to rumor, there’s a tree located within 516 miles of our West Texas editorial offices, but we haven’t found it yet). The setting, anyway, is truly beautiful, the town friendly, the food good, the prices reasonable, the organization marvelous – everything about it was right when we were there, except the weather which was hot.

As local yokels watching the big time, we were flabbergasted at the quality of organization achieved by the Chicago Region for this race. Without exception, this was the smoothest, least confused, best run racing event we’ve ever attended. Tech inspection is rapid and complete, course access is good, crowd control is excellent, and all the attendant, niggly-naggle, distressing details of putting on a race with 200 entries and 35,000 spectators were smoothed over. The organization cannot be faulted. And there is a great lesson from these people, however in the world they do it. For one thing, the layout and physical facilities could well serve as a model for race courses everywhere.”

While there were only about 650 Chicago Region members at the time, the level of participation was obviously very high.

Chicago was the host Region for the 1963 SCCA National Convention. This was a major undertaking in that era because the host region was responsible for organizing the entire event. The Pick-Congress Hotel was convention headquarters, and we managed to procure an up-and-coming night club comic as banquet speaker – Jonathan Winters.

SCCA took a step in the direction of pro racing in 1963 with the U.S. Road Racing Championship (USRRC) series. In conjunction with ACCUS, the U.S. representative to the F.I.A., SCCA worked out an arrangement for over- and under-2-liter sportscars. Both F.I.A. Appendix “C” and SCCA “modified” cars were eligible, and an over-2-liter Manufacturers Championship for GT cars was incorporated as well. Promoter-invited, non-SCCA, F.I.A.

pro drivers were allowed to compete along with SCCA license holders. As might be expected, the Chicago Region – Road America 500 (now converted to 500 Kilometers) was included in the series. Bill Wuesthoff and Augie Pabst won, in an under-2-liter Elva-Porsche. Followed by a very fast, but fuel hungry, Shelby Team Cobra, driven by Ken Miles.

From the end of April through October 1964, six drivers’ schools and 28 races were scheduled in CenDiv. Included among the scheduled races was a USRRC at Meadowdale International Raceway. Track management had requested a sanction for the race and submitted a proposal to Chicago Region. After a period of negotiation an agreement was reached, and the race took place over the weekend of August 8-9. American V-8’s were the big winners, with a Chevrolet in a Chaparral and a Ford in a Shelby Cobra.

Five weeks after the Meadowdale event, we ran the Road America 500 USRRC. A crowd of 38,000 saw Walt Hansgen and Augie Pabst win in a John Mecom-owned, Ferrari 250 LM. Exotic engines were still dominant in longer races.

A planned July 4, 1965 USRRC at Meadowdale was cancelled when it became apparent that track management was not about to commit enough money to make required improvements. Once again, the Region had tried to establish a Meadowdale relationship with unhappy results. Things were wonderful at Road America however, with record attendance at the June Sprints. Jim Hall and Hap Sharp were first overall at the RA 500 USRRC, but George Follmer garnered the same number of points by winning the under-2-liter class with his Elva-Porsche. As a result, George became the overall USRRC champion. In subsequent years, there were over- and under-2-liter USRRC winners crowned, to insure that an overall winning, big-bore car would be declared champion. But it sure was fun to see George Follmer, the giant killer, win it all.

By 1966 the calendar was getting pretty crowded.

There were six drivers’ schools, 36 race events and 2 hillclimbs in the Central Division. There were far fewer SCCA members than today, but races were adequately staffed. It would seem that the percentage of regularly participating workers relative to total membership must have been higher than at present.

Among the factors that unified the members of the Chicago Region in the early years was Wilmot race course. The Region leased the site from the property owners and our members financed the paving of the course. Each Spring volunteers installed removable fencing and guard rails (which would have been a hazard to skiers if left in place). While it was only about 0.7 mile long, it incorporated a quarter-mile main straight to an uphill right hander, followed by downhill esses, onto a shorter straight, and then a decreasing radius (or two radius) turn, which returned one to the main straight. In 1966 we ran four regional races and a drivers’ school at that track, which was a pretty typical year. From almost any place on the property one could see most of the course, and just about everyone on the grounds. The annual “Wilmot Cleanup Days” each spring, were a great social opportunity, and helped everyone get “fired-up” for the upcoming season. It was relatively primitive compared to modern courses, particularly in regard to barriers. Nevertheless, to the best of our knowledge there never was a serious injury at an SCCA event, and certainly in the fifteen years or so of its existence there was never a fatality.

As we headed into the later 60’s, more and more members were becoming totally absorbed in working and organizing races. Many others were committed exclusively to race driving and crewing for race teams. Interest was fading in the varied activities enjoyed by the all-around, occasional racer, rallyist, socially-oriented member.

Too bad, but for the new, typical club member, excitement loomed. Around the corner, with the USRRC as precursor, and big, noisy V8's in modern chassis, were the most glorious days SCCA has ever seen, spelled CanAm and TransAm.

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THE GREAT RACE ERA BEGINS ... 1967 – 1971

On January 25, 1967 The Chicago Region sponsored the premiere of the movie GRAND PRIX for the benefit of the Illinois Epilepsy League (IEL). A black-tie dinner preceded the film showing, and at the theater some of our region officials and several IEL people were interviewed by television and radio news personalities. Good publicity for the Charity and for the Region.

Next we were invited to participate in the Chicago Automobile Show. Jim Cain, an active member, racecar driver and regular Piston Patter contributor, chaired this activity. Jim, Bert Eisenhower and others rounded-up an impressive array of cars including the Meister-Brauser Scarab, a McKee Mk. VI, an Elva McClaren Ford, a 427 Cobra and more. It is probably safe to say this would be a worthy display today.

A number of complications developed while organizing and setting-up the Region's display. For one thing, prior to the show date the original McCormick Place burned to the ground and everything needed to be rearranged to set-up in the old Chicago Amphitheater. Then on the night of February 23, 1967, while Jim Cain and Bert Eisenhower were placing cars in our display, the "GREAT CHICAGO BLIZZARD" struck and dumped something like 24 inches of snow on the Chicago area in less than 24 hours. Jim and Bert spent the night in the Amphitheater. Talk about dedication.

That June, it was reported in Piston Patter that our membership had reached 700.

Between 30 and 40 cars were turning out for each of our four rallies. Along with four club race weekends, a USRRC, the new Can-Am, and other activities, we were a busy bunch.

In July, Chuck Parsons and Jerry Hansen – driving similar Simoniz McLaren Mk. III's – finished one/two in the Road America 500. The race was the last USRRC at RA, and 1967 was the last year of the series.

On September 1, 1967, with a record Road America crowd of 53,000 cheering, the green flag dropped and 32 drivers put the pedal to the metal to start a Can-Am at the "Greatest Natural Road Course in America" for the first time. Denny Hulme won in a McLaren Mk VI Chevrolet. One and one-half minutes later Mark Donahue's Sunoco Lola Chevrolet finished and 24 seconds after Mark, John Surtees crossed the line in another Lola Chevy. The innovative Chapparral G2, with a driver-adjustable rear wing about five feet up in the air, driven by its developer and owner Jim Hall, was fourth, one lap down.

A "Concours-winning" Mercedes Benz 300 SL was offered by Clarke Cooper in the September Piston Patter for \$3,750.00. (if only I had...!)

A regional race on the weekend of September 30, 1967 wound-up the Chicago Region's relationship with Wilmot Ski Hills. The October-November issue of Piston Patter included a picture of Paul Pierce flagging the last Wilmot race at corner 1, the same corner he had flagged the first race at the track 14 years earlier. This marked the end of a truly wonderful Chicago Region era.

In February 1968 Chicago Region was awarded the 1967 SCCA Regional Achievement Award at the National SCCA Convention.

Since we were no longer able to race at Wilmot, the Region negotiated an agreement with Meadowdale Raceways. In 1968 we scheduled a drivers' school, four Regionals and a Trans Am. With considerable difficulty

we were able to convince the track owners to make certain essential alterations and improvements, but eventually their interest waned and the facility was no longer maintained. After a few years racing ceased.

Spring of 1968 found a bunch of our members at Road America involved in filming a segment of the motion picture WINNING, which starred Paul Newman and Joanne Woodward. We advised in regard to race procedures, performed various race worker and official roles and joined other "extras" in crowd scenes. All of us were impressed with the professional, competent and friendly people from Universal Studios. Paul Newman got his first taste of race driving during the filming of WINNING, and obviously became infected with the "drive a race car virus." It was a lot of fun for everyone.

After a publicity blitz, a reasonable number of spectators came out for the 1968 Meadowdale Trans Am. They were treated to Mark Donahue's victory in the Sunoco Camaro. Following Donahue was Peter Revson in a Javelin (how many know what that was?) with Sam Posey next. At that time an under-two-liter class, dominated by Porsches, was included in the series. Tony Adamowicz won in a 911.

On Saturday, July 27th, Jerry Hansen won the Road America Badger 200 (Km) race for SCCA FA, FB and FC, in a Lola T-140. On Sunday, Chuck Parsons' and Skip Scott's Lola crossed the finish line first, ahead of the field to win the "500".

In 1968 Road America again hosted the first race of the Can-Am season. Hulme led everyone across the finish line again, followed by his boss, Bruce McLaren. Both were in all new Mk 8 McLarens powered by light alloy, 427 C.I. Chevy engines producing something like 640 HP.

During the five-year period covered by this installment of Chicago Region history, the McLaren team would win 34 of 43 Can-Am races. Bruce McLaren was Can-Am Champion in 1967 and 1969, and Denny Hulme, the other team driver was series champ in '68 and '70. After Bruce was killed in a testing accident in 1970, Peter Revson replaced him as a team driver, and in 1971 he became series Champion for Team McLaren.

We started 1969 with hopes of racing at Meadowdale and in January/ February Piston Patter tentatively listed a number of events at the track. Unfortunately, SCCA and the Region were unable to work things out with the owners of the facility, and the April/May calendar did not include any Meadowdale races.

Sometimes things just fall in place however, and Tito Nappi's race course, Blackhawk Farms Raceway (BFR), near Rockton, Illinois was just completed. Chicago Region was able to schedule several dates in '69. This was the start of a relationship with BFR that continues today.

The weather cooperated so we had a good turnout for a mid-winter carnival at Twin Lakes, Wisconsin. All sorts of competitions were included, such as figure skating, ice gymkhanas, tobogganing, etc. A very social, fun time for all.

Once again the Region rallyists planned, organized and conducted the Land 'O Lincoln national rally. It took quite a few members to work the event, but as usual everybody pitched in, and the rally was a success.

In 1970 we ran the usual, successful race events at BFR and Road America. The July spectator event at RA consisted of a Trans Am, a series that was really gaining momentum, and a Continental Championship race.

The 1970 Bastille Day at Blackhawk Farms Raceway was a blast. Porsche Club was invited to join us, and about 54 vehicles entered the various events. One contest required the driver to navigate a serpentine course with a loaf of French bread under each arm, while the navigator held a tray with two water-filled champagne glasses. Spilling water was a point deduction. Another trial involved stopping at several points where the navigator got out to pick up various items and dashed back into the vehicle. At the last stop a few grapes were pressed to make "wine". Scoring was based on time elapsed and amount of "wine" produced. Bob Anderson, later boss of the SCCA Pro Racing staff, was the navigator for a motorhome entered in the above described event. After picking up his grapes, he dashed back to the vehicle, leaped for the doorway as the motorhome started up and the screen door slammed shut. Bob bounced back and the vehicle ran over him. While he suffered no serious physical injury, we understand his derriere had major tire tread marks. His pride of course suffered the most damage.

The calendar of events for 1971 pretty much indicates what were all about. We started with the Region's display at the Chicago Auto Show, four general membership meetings, a drivers' school, two regional races at BFR and one at Road America, the June Sprints National Race, a Trans Am/Continental race at RA in July and the Can-Am in August. This was all done with less than 800 members.

Norma White and her team put on a fantastic women's and men's fashion show at our April membership meeting. One of the first members of the Region and renowned Race Steward, Bud Seaverns, was known to be rather intimidating when chastising drivers for bad behavior on the race track. After one of his lectures drivers were occasionally heard to mumble "who does he think he is, God?". The nickname stuck, and Bud with staff in hand, a long white beard and modeling a long white robe was the hit of the fashion runway.

This was the year that Clif Tufte, President of Road America, offered the Region use of the track and waived the fee, so that we could put on an end of season, worker and driver appreciation weekend. All participants were invited to a free chicken dinner.

More and more members were finding themselves totally involved in racing as drivers, crew members or race workers in specific areas. Sports car racing had become a lot more sophisticated and competitive.

The future was just about here.

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The Pros Are Here, But The Sprints Are Alive • 1972 – 1976

As the five-year period covered by this installment got under way, professional sports car racing in the U.S. had become the domain of SCCA. No series in the World could compare to the Can-Am. The competing drivers included world and national champions, and the cars had become the most sophisticated, noisy, fast and just plain exciting sports cars ever developed. For those that were there, no series has yet achieved the same status. Just ask anyone that had the opportunity to watch a Mk8 McLaren, a UOP Shadow and a 917 Porsche, nose to tail and side by side, blasting through corner eleven.

During this era the June Sprints were drawing plenty of entries and good crowds of paying spectators.

In the January/February, 1972 issue of PISTON PATTERN there was an advertisement for John Weinberger's Continental Motors, and it is interesting to note that the multiple Continental dealerships of today do not include any of the five cars listed in the ad. Of course, Triumph, MG/Austin and Jensen do not exist anymore, and Fiat is not imported at present. On the other hand, John would probably not object to still having Jaguar on his letterhead.

The July Road America pro race weekend again featured Trans Am cars on Saturday and Formula Continental (F 5000) on Sunday. Both hotly contested events were gaining more and more attention from racing fans as well as the Press.

Saturday of the Can-Am weekend that year was wet. That is to say Road America was inundated. Can-Am races earlier in the year had made it clear that a new presence was on the scene. The Panzer Porsches had arrived! And arrived with a bang. Due to a prior commitments, George Follmer, driver of the Penske 917 10K Porsche, had missed the good weather qualifying on Friday, as had McLaren team driver Peter Revson. In the rain on Saturday Follmer qualified 13th and Revson 25th. Denny Hulme, in another Team McLaren, had set a new qualifying lap record on Friday, in the dry. Sunday the weather cleared and the Can-Am was off to a dry start with everyone anticipating a tight race. Never mind. Follmer charged through the field into first place. Desperately trying to stay with the exotic, turbocharged, 12 cylinder Porsche both Team McLarens broke, Denny on lap twelve and Revson on lap 22. And thus the McLaren domination of the Can-Am at Road America ended. Francois Cevert, in a non-team McLaren finished 2nd.

As might be expected, the 1972 Chicago Region Fashion Show was a great success. One male member even bid on a skimpy bikini ... as occupied.

A contingent of rallyists was working at firing up interest in that activity, but seemed to be paddling upstream. Fun rallies were still attracting some that enjoyed the social aspect, but technical rallying was not getting much support.

Another area of Club activity was coming along at a great rate. In 1971, Team Carrera, an autocross/solo racing club, was dissolved and our Board of Directors arranged to absorb the members of that group who wished to join the Chicago Region. Since they were real enthusiasts they got right down to business and began showing us how to conduct a top-notch Solo II program. Many of these folks were and are active in all aspects of Region activities, and several have served as Regional Executive, including both Ed and Cindy Pomeroy, Kim Breitenbach, Claire Ball and his wife Peg Ball, our current R.E.

Star of the 1973 fashion show was a professional belly dancer. She was terrific and received a tremendous ovation. This, the fourth show, was undoubtedly the best. Norma White and her helpers had become very

professional. John Napier Hill, a native of Scotland modeling an authentic kilt, drew many whistles from the ladies, but refused to answer the standard question.

There were 405 cars entered for the June Sprints, and they put on a great bunch of races for a crowd of over 25,000 spectators. Seven or eight competitive races, great brats and a beautiful course winding through the Wisconsin countryside remained an attractive way to spend a weekend for many folks.

In July we put on another Road America pro weekend for Trans Am and Formula 5000. John Greenwood won the Trans Am in a Corvette, followed by Warren Agor's Camaro. On Sunday, qualifying for the Formula 5000 race consisted of two qualifying races followed by a 100-mile race. It was a day of great, competitive racing with Brian Redman the eventual winner. Brian was required to hold off Jody Scheckter who trailed him by only 11/2 seconds at the finish.

When Mark Donahue qualified for the 1973 Road America Can-Am behind the wheel of a Penske Sunoco Porsche 917 30KL, he immediately proceeded to break Denny Hulme's 1972 RA absolute track record by almost 7 seconds! The race was run in two heats and Donahue crossed the finish line ahead of Jody Scheckter by 22 seconds in the first heat and by 28 in the second heat. Scheckter piloted one of Vasek Polak's 917 10K's and George Follmer followed him in the RC Cola 917 10K. McLaren did not develop a new car for '73, but Mk 8F's finished 4th and 5th. First place was no contest. All racing took place behind Mark, who dominated the season and became Can-Am champion.

The superiority of the Porsches seemed to recall the winning ways of the McLaren team in prior years. Donahue, in the new 917 30K, won the last seven 1973 races going away, and one year old Porsches won the first two events. However, smaller racecar builders could not match the money and resources that large manufacturers such as Porsche could invest in development. Trouble was around the corner for Can-Am; spectators still came to see the magnificent Sunoco Porsche, and the incomparable Mark Donahue, but no competition was on the horizon.

Under the direction of RE Emmett Stains, the Chicago Region organized a spectacular testimonial dinner for Clif Tufte, on January 25, 1974. This was the man that had had the vision, then implemented and finally managed Road America for over twenty years.

Jerry Hansen won the FA and BSR races at the '74 June Sprints. Most of us must have been working the event, because not one Chicago Region driver won a race.

Production V8's still seemed to lack the staying power of the well setup Porsches. In 1974 this gave Peter Gregg the Trans Am victory over Warren Agor's Camaro, which needed a stop for oil. The next day the F-5000 race was won by Mario Andretti with Brian Redman less than a second back. Several turbocharged Indy cars made a stab at running this event, but needed more testing to properly set up the cars to be competitive with the larger displacement F/5000 cars.

By reducing the fuel tank capacity for the 1974 Can-Am, SCCA had hoped to equalize the cars. Don Nichols, designer of the Universal Oil Products (UOP) Shadows, put together a car to meet this specification. Smaller and lighter than the Porsches and using less fuel, the Shadow DN4 with Jackie Oliver behind the wheel, lost only one of the five races that year. Scooter Patrick won the last REAL Can-Am ever run, anywhere, in a Mk20 McLaren at ... you guessed it ... Road America. In November SCCA announced that the great Can-Am series was dead. Car constructors could not assure participation so race promoters would not schedule events.

Almost 500 entrants and 55,000 spectators attended the 1975 June Sprints. Club racing was really alive! By the way, Jerry Hansen won three races, AP, ASR and FA.

Trans Am was going through growing pains and with few of the factory sponsored cars entered, Jerry Hansen easily won the 1975 race. This guy owned Road America – a fine driver.

Formula 5000 was now the premier SCCA pro series, and in 1975 Mario Andretti won again at Road America, followed by Jackie Oliver's UOP Shadow F/5000 car.

In August, looking for an event to replace the defunct Can-Am, Road America and the Region put on a pro weekend that featured a handicap race. Four separate grids were established and each grid was started on a handicap basis with slower grids starting well before the faster grids. The faster cars gradually gobbled-up the slower cars, but 3rd group pole sitter Vern Schuppan in a 3.0 liter Gulf Mirage ultimately won, coming in ahead of the faster group 4 cars.

We conducted another successful Land O' Lincoln National rally in 1975, which is surprising considering the apparent lack of interest in this activity by the Region.

A number of our members, driving vintage and contemporary cars, participated in a tour that approximated the first U.S. auto race. The original race took place in 1895 and the route went from Jackson Park to Evanston and Back to Jackson Park.

Fathers' Day weekend saw 60,000 spectators on hand for another great June Sprints in 1976. Guess who won the ASR race in a three year old Lola and broke his own lap record in the process? Need we say more than J.H.?

Carl Schafer in a 454 cu. in. Camaro won the Trans Am this year holding off George Follmer in a Turbo Carrera. Things were looking up for the big-bore contingent.

The July 1976 F/5000 race was a duel between Jackie Oliver and Al Unser (the elder) with Oliver in the Shadow holding on for the win.

The 1976 August Pro Weekend at RA included another F/5000 race, won by Brian Redman ahead of Danny Ongais. This gave Brian the Series Championship. On Sunday Vern Schuppan driving a car that was low on power the previous day during the F/5000 race, ran well enough to give him his second successive handicap race win.

No Can-Am, but things were going well for the Sprints and the Trans Am was gaining momentum.

Once Upon A Wire Wheel

by Bernie and Norm Koglin

This is the sixth in a series recalling a few highlights from the fifty-year history of the Chicago Region SCCA. Many thanks to Fred Wacker, Bud Seaverns, Burdie Martin and too many others to mention for their input and recollections.

The June Sprints® Reign •1977 – 1981

With the demise of the Can-Am at the end of the 1974 season, SCCA scrambled to come up with a replacement for that most successful series. For several years the Formula 5000 races had been gaining a following, and a number of “name” drivers had competed. Mario Andretti, Al Unser (Sr.), Brian Redman, Vern Schuppan and Jackie Oliver were among those that had been F5000 race winners. So SCCA determined that the “new” Can-Am cars would be single seat F5000 cars with full, wheel-covered bodywork. An under 2 liter class was included to increase the number of race entries. The races were often close and no team or manufacturer really dominated, but fields tended to be sparse. Simply said, the “New” Can-Am never generated in sponsors, spectators or promoters the interest in, or excitement of, the original series.

As this five year period began, there were forces actively campaigning for auto racing noise regulation. Chicago Region, led by our own Dr. Tom Cronin, was in the forefront of the opposition, which led to the defeat of such legislation. It should be noted that the limits of sound emission recommended by some anti-racing people (how about 85 decibels at fifty feet?) could have ended motor racing as we know it.

Activities in 1977 opened with a winter carnival. 14 cars participated in a rally to the carnival site and 71 cars competed in four ice gymkhana classes. Bonnie Gladish, our present Region office manager, barely bested Linda Breitenbach to take 2nd place in the bubblegum bubble-blowing contest. Gwen Bruno won, and carrying the banner for all men, Rick Ruth came in 4th.

Claire Ball and Ed Pomeroy were co-chairmen for another of the Region’s terrific Chicago Auto Show display.

The Region conducted two rallies as part of the Tri-State Sports Car Conference championship. Of the 25 cars that competed in the March event only 6 were Chicago Region. TSD Rallying was not gaining ground.

In the May issue of Piston Patter an article described, and displayed model photos of a new Can-Am car under construction by McKee Engineering, directed by Chicago Region Member Bob McKee. Sponsored by Doug Schultz, the car was to be called a Schkee . Tom Klausler was test driver. It was a really slick aerodynamic coupe, and Doug, Bob and Tom all contributed to the design and development. With Tom driving, the car won its first race, the St. Jovite Can-Am. How about that!

Terry Jesk, who had been racing since the early 60’s, won the EP race at the June Sprints. He’s still at it today in his SRF, and will probably continue until his grandchildren are too old to help him into the cockpit.

The sadly derelict state of Meadowdale International Raceway, after eight years of non-use, was the subject of a photo essay in July Piston Patter.

A Lola driven by Britisher Peter Gethin, won the revived Can-Am at RA, but Tom Klausler in a Doug Schultz Schkee had led for much of the race, until being punted off the course by a slower car.

The Michigan Miglia Rally circled Lake Michigan in two days (and nights) of brisk driving. A traditional Chicago Region event in the past, it had been on the calendar every few years. In the days of little radar and more liberal speed limits it was one heck of an exciting and popular activity. In 1977 it was put on for the first time in 14 years. 33 cars participated in the rally, which included regularity runs on the Road America course.

Piston Patter, with John Napier Hill the editor, was awarded the 1977 Regional Publication Award at the SCCA National Convention.

During 1978, Piston Patter regularly ran informative articles about specific race specialties. Not a bad way to help race staff recruiting today.

An ice race in January, 1978 included a modified LeMans start, in which a runner for each car was to run across the course and tag the car before it could start. It seems that Sandy Darroch slipped and fell as she ran, and stood up to face eight cars bearing down on her. The typically skilled Chicago Region drivers got past her Ok ... all but her driver, who was still waiting for the tap.

What a June Sprints! 550 entries and nearly 60,000 paying spectators. Drivers appeared from California, Florida and just about every place in between. Probably the largest field of cars entered in any race in history, until then.

With the painful memories of the fuel crisis earlier in the 70's in mind, SCCA and the U.S. Department of Energy had arranged to sanction a series of economy runs. Competitors attempted to beat the DOE MPG rating for their specific cars. Winners had the highest percentage improvement. Class winners included: John and Trudy Sutton, + 135.6%; Glenn and Barb Grossklags, + 132.5%; Rick Angelica and Sherri Smith, + 133.0%. A VW diesel managed 69 MPG, and the overall winner, in a Dodge Aspen, achieved 30 MPG which was 167% better than the DOE rating for that car.

A Schkee, with Tom Spalding behind the wheel, finished a creditable 10th in the 1978 Can-Am. Alan Jones won, seven seconds ahead of George Follmer.

While it was not the sophisticated series of today, Trans Am racing was competitive and the cars put on a good show. Greg Pickett won followed by Tuck Thomas. Trans Am was the feature event, but as usual a bunch of races filled-out the program. A race for CSR and S2000 cars ended with Chuck Witz in his Bobsy CSR 1st overall, and John Cahill 2nd overall and 1st in S2000. The drive of the day had Bill O'Connor starting at the back of the grid, due to a last minute repair, and finishing less than a car length behind John for 2nd in S2000.

John Napier Hill and Foster Sturdevant were co-Chairmen of the 1979 SCCA National Convention, hosted by the Chicago Region. As might be expected it was a smashing success. More recent members may not know that in this era the SCCA national office provided only basic program guidelines for conventions. The host region was responsible for all planning, organization and activities. A heck of a lot of work for a dedicated bunch of Chicago members. Our own Dave Morrell won the 1979 Woolf Barnato trophy, the highest SCCA award, and during the convention his fellow SCCA directors elected him Chairman of the Board as well. Well-deserved honors.

Another great Sprints weekend – huge entry and large crowd.

Of the 5 top finishers in the 1979 Trans Am 4 were Porsches. Peter Gregg's was first and Ludwig Heimrath in another turbo-panzer followed. SCCA was fiddling with the series trying to find a successful formula. This year there were 2 categories one (sort of) stock and one (somewhat) exotic. Rick Dittman was 8th in the "sort of" category.

The '79 Can-Am took place on Sunday of the same weekend. Jackie Ickx in the Carl Haas/Jim Hall Lola won. Bobby Rahal had another bad luck RA weekend. He retired while running third. Ickx would go on to win the Can-Am championship, the third in succession for the Haas/Hall team.

We had a fun winter weekend in 1980, which included Saturday and Sunday Rallies, Ice Gymkhanas and Ice Races. Try it, you might like it.

1980 was also the year of our first experience with AMA motorcycle racing. All the fears that gangs of black leather clad thugs would rampage through central Wisconsin proved groundless. An orderly crowd saw some great racing.

Tom Cronin, GT4; Dave Frellsen, GT2; Bruce Nesbit, GT3; Peter Heckman, FC; Bill O'Connor, S2000; all Chicago Region/all June Sprints winners in '80.

Monte Shelton's Porsche outlasted a gaggle of fast Corvettes to win the Trans Am and Al Holbert finished first in the Can-Am.

Did you know that Jim Swintal the CART IndyCar starter is also a prominent auto racing artist? During the years when Jim was an active Chicago Region member he furnished the artwork for a number of outstanding Piston Patter covers and articles.

John Paul and J.P. Jr. won the IMSA pro weekend feature. Uncle Sam had not locked in on their source of funds yet.

From November 1980 through January 1981, five members of the Chicago Region died. They had all contributed mightily to the success of the Chicago Region and SCCA. Dave Davies, active rallyist and Region official; Bob Lyon, Board member and race car driver; Dave Morrell, starter, steward, race car driver, Chicago Region R.E., National director, National Chairman of SCCA, winner of the highest award bestowed by SCCA, and among the outstanding Region members of all time; Corky Vance, who began streamlining our race registration procedures, leading up to a system that is today a model for all of SCCA; and finally Clif Tufte, the man with the vision and drive to build the finest race course in the U.S. near a small Wisconsin town. We all owe a great debt to the memory of this gracious man, who thought of and dealt with the Region as a true partner.

TSD rallying might not have been very popular, but in 1981 the more casual, fun events still could draw entrants. Witness the 35 cars entered in the March event, Al Lien and Linda Brodin were rallymasters.

The June Sprints were still pulling in large crowds of paying spectators and the largest entries in the history of National races.

Danny Sullivan could have won the '81 Can-Am but his crew did not bring him in for a quick fuel stop, and while in the lead he ran out at corner 10, giving the win to Geoff Brabham.

And (yawn) a 930 Porsche won the Trans Am again. Monte Shelton driving.

The Region's Solo group hosted the 1981 CenDiv Solo II Championships at Great America. Claire Ball, Dick Bianchi and Dan Tondu were co-Chairmen of the event, which drew 281 entries. Claire also won the B Prepared class.

Second place in the 1981 IMSA main event gave Brian Redman the championship. Stommelen and Grohs, a couple of Germans driving a Porsche were first. This sort of presaged the Porsche IMSA dominance.

As 1981 came to a close, an event was shaping up that would lead to changes in the emphasis, character and appearance of Road America that few, if any, anticipated or predicted:

C.A.R.T. WAS COMING!

Once Upon A Wire Wheel

by Bernie and Norm Koglin

This is the seventh and last in a series recalling a few highlights from the fifty-year history of the Chicago Region SCCA. Many thanks to Fred Wacker, Bud Seaverns, Burdie Martin and too many others to mention for their input and recollections.

The Future is Almost Here •1982 - 1989

In 1949 a small group of relatively affluent men that had discovered “sports cars” founded the Chicago Region. Their purpose was to organize activities that provided opportunities to enjoy the characteristics of their cars, which at that time offered handling and performance far superior to the post-World War II products offered by U.S. auto manufacturers. Region members were bound together by their mutual interest, which generated a strong social component to the Region’s activities. Everyone participated in autocrosses, rallies, concours, hill climbs, and acceleration runs, followed by dinners, picnics and other social gatherings. Soon, wheel to wheel racing appeared on the events schedule, and subtle changes began to take place. More and more out-of-Region people became involved in our races, large numbers of staff were necessary, and putting on races was considerably more complex than the earlier low-key events.

By the time we entered the 1980’s high performance cars abounded, but new equivalents of MG’s, XK Jaguars, Porsche Speedsters, Triumphs, etc. did not exist. The sense of camaraderie that came from waving at the driver of another “sports car” was gone. (Honda drivers seldom greet oncoming Preludes.) Traffic on our public roads had increased dramatically, and Radar detection added another, undesirable element to rallying. There seems to be little enthusiasm to toothpick and cotton swab detail a mass produced car for a Concours d’ elegance. Furthermore, the organization and conduct of races had become much more involved and required a new level of participation and experience. Every specialty starting with Race Chairmen through Paddock Control required better-trained and capable personnel. Within the limits of time available to many members, these activities had become the extent of their participation.

Enter 1982, and the calendar of Club events this year was to be similar for all of the 80’s: a drivers’ school; regionals at Blackhawk Farms and Road America; and the June Sprints. Once again, the June Sprints was the premier National Race, with a huge number of entries, (including Paul Newman) and a nice spectator turnout. A vintage race July 4th weekend featured a fine turnout of cars, a “cookoff” by 10 count ‘em 10 chefs and 30 cases of wine supplied by Nicolas Wine Company. Al Holbert won the Can-Am, followed 20 seconds later by Danny Sullivan. The ‘82 Trans Am began to take on the look we have come to expect from this series, and after setting a new Trans Am race lap record, Jerry Hansen drove his Corvette to a win. John Fitzpatrick and David Hobbs in a Porsche Turbo won the IMSA Camel GT Pabst 500 (MILES!), one lap and 57.85 seconds ahead of 2nd place. Chicago Region hosted the Solo II Nationals at GREAT AMERICA, with Claire Ball and Dan Tondu serving as co-Chairmen. Over 600 drivers competed for 34 National titles, an example of the enthusiasm and strength of the Region’s Solo organization.

And now the CART IndyCar World Series appears at Road America for the first time. It is unlikely that many of us predicted the impact this series would have on Road America, and to some extent, on the Chicago Region. CART was a big bucks, pro organization, different from anything we had been involved with previously. Their operating personnel were not comfortable relying on our corner reports. After all, on ovals they could see everything . We, on the other hand, were new to the way CART operated. As can be imagined, the atmosphere in the Control Room was incredibly intense during on-course incidents, but the process of learning how to work together had begun. Working together would be essential, since the large spectator turnout was a clear indicator that this was going to be a popular and financially important event for Road America. 1982 was Chicago Region member Bobby Rahal’s rookie year in CART. Since he had won the CART Cleveland 500 Km. race and had qualified second to Rick Mears at Road America, hopes were high for him. Mears only needed a 6th place finish to win the CART championship and paced himself accordingly to finished 5th. Bobby led toward the end of the race, but ran out of fuel at corner 12, turning the lead over to a surprised Al Unser, Jr. Little Al in turn came to a stop at corner 5 on the last lap, suffering the same problem as Bobby. Hector Rebaque, another rookie, started 9th,

drove in the top 5 for the entire race, and inherited a deserved win when Al Jr. parked. Bobby refueled, went back out, and finished 4th.

Al and John Sutton were rallymasters for another “Suttons’ October Safari” tour rally. A terrific two-day event that attracted a good entry. Events such as this bring back that old-time “fun with your car” spirit.

In 1983 we mourned the passing of another long-time, devoted member of the Region. Justin T. “Maj” McCarthy had been in charge of the pits at our events for as long as most could remember.

Ron Tambourine in his Mazda RX3 was the only Chicago Region June Sprints® race winner in 1983, and in one of his remarkable efforts, Jerry Hansen won SSGT, GT-2 and F-Atlantic. Paul Newman drove a heck of a race during the ‘83 Trans Am, running a close 2nd to eventual winner David Hobbs until his engine went, late in the race. John Fitzpatrick won the Can-Am in a Porsche 956, followed by Gilles Villeneuve, father of the current Williams F1 driver. Mario Andretti won the CART Provimi Veal 200, his first CART win since 1980, and Bobby Rahal ran out of fuel – again while leading. Ford entered two radically designed cars in the IMSA Budweiser 500. They were four cylinder, 600 hp, turbocharged cars that proceeded to finish 1st and 2nd. Ludwig/Coconis won followed by the Rahal/Brabham car. This was a heavily promoted, major effort and many presumed it was the kick-off for an other Ford assault on road racing, but that was not the case. Too bad!

And so on go the ‘80s. The resur-rected Can-Am just didn’t make it and disappeared from the schedule in 1983. Each successive year Road America’s CART race attracted more spectators, ultimately surpassing the crowds of the original, great Can-Am. Super TV coverage was a major factor, but great racing and name drivers certainly helped. Trans Am evolved into the series we know today. Spec-tator attendance at IMSA events continued to be disappointing, not-withstanding fields that included the latest version Porsche turbos. AMA motorcycle events continued to be successful at Road America, drawing large crowds and turning substantial profits for the Track. Sports Renault made its debut in 1985, and would become a roaring success. And then Renault pulled out, which required an SCCA scramble to reestablish the Class as Spec Racer Ford. Pinewood Derbies were put on by the Region a few times, and were quite competitive. While it continued to attract more entrants than any other regular season race, SCCA’s premier National, the Chicago Region June Sprints, began to lose ground in the competition for RA spectators. A choice of many Road America events, TV exposure of pro racing, and only token Sprints advertising efforts, all contributed to the decline. Vastly improved pits and paddock appropriate for a top-notch professional race course came at an expense – the loss of the old Pagoda and with it much of the historical charm of Road America. Charm that the new VIP/Press/Control building somehow does not offer, to say the least.

By the end of the decade our mem-bership was in the neighborhood of 2000, and Chicago is arguably the most capable region in SCCA at putting on races. But the concentration of effort and time expended on races seems to have taken away the energy to organize, promote and conduct much informal auto-related and social activity for our members. Surely there are among our 2000-plus members some that are interested, and ready to participate in such activities. They should let the Region’s leadership know of their interest. A good example is the Solo Group that continues to successfully organize and run its events under the auspices of the Region.

As we approach the millennium much change is in the wind. The next fifty years could be mighty interesting. ●

If you don’t know where you’re going, you’ll end up someplace else.
Yogi Berra