

Corvette Kaleidoscope

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NORTHERN CALIFORNIA CORVETTE ASSOCIATION

J. M. Mannon, Editor

June 1960



PLEASANTON June 12

WINNEMUCCA May 28, 29 & 30

by Johnnie Zeh

By Bob Brennan

Our 4th Annual Corvanna Series of autocrosses began Sunday morning, June 12, 1960. Neil Schraeder was in charge of his first Corvanna and he and his committee handled the event extremely well. "Monza Corvanna" -- a tag we have used before--was a very colorful contest. Flags were flying at intervals all along the fences of the Alameda County Fairgrounds. The early summer sun beat down with a blaze that made any shade available a place of refuge. It was 90 degrees by 9 AM.

Well, dear city, here we are again. This year the NCCA has invaded you with 23 Corvettes, therefore your gaping is understandable, as this is 20 more than last year. You probably realize as do we that our Association represents over 25% of all the sports cars here from 5 states plus?

The first car ran the course about 8:30 AM and the last about 4:30 PM. A total of 190 entries.

Somehow or other, our nucleus left Oakland at dawn on Saturday, even though John & Sig Zeh overslept. Our San Jose gang joined in along the way; the Crosses at Sacramento.

This year we have three classes that Corvettes contest in, other than Class 8- Modified cars. Class 4, for carbureted Corvettes only, 1st place was won by Fred Wetton (our President!). 2nd place, Neil Schraeder (our Activities Chairman!). 3rd, Gary Carlin.

Upon arrival at your city in the early afternoon, and, after the oh so unpleasant job of unloading our cars' contents to our respective rooms, most of us convened in your bars and gaming halls. The air was full of conversations: "...My car won't run worth a d--- in this altitude". "...Is the chevy garage still open?" And so on.

Class 5 (Jags and F.I. Corvettes) 1st, Al Andersen; 2nd, Mike Tsirlis; 3rd, Cliff Valin. Class 7 (Women in Corvettes & Jags) 1st, Mary French; 2nd, Jeanette Cross; 3rd, LaVerne Craven. (Ten women driving Corvettes contested.

Saturday evening, after a few drinks and a leisurely dinner, most of us discovered the pitfalls of your legalized gambling. Does the House always have to win? But, off to bed for tomorrow is large, what with both a gymkhana and a 2 mile high speed autocross.

Only two Jags ran in the Mens' Class-- a far cry from the days when they dominated the Class. Yes, things were quite different in this, the 19th Corvanna.

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LAGUNA SECA June 4 & 5

The Monterey peninsula suffers twice a year from two concurrent diseases: sports cars and artificially raised prices. Your editor, staying at the Highlands Inn, found both in abundant evidence.

The starting line-up on the Fort Ord property included such celebrated NCCA members as Red Faris, Ray Altman, Bill Sherwood, and Sandy Greenblat. Other Corvette pilots were Dan Rafetto, Placerville, and Dennis O'Neill, Fresno.

Saturday's qualifying race saw a furious duel between Altman and Ronnie Bucknum (driving Pellandini's AC Bristol). Not since Bill Love ran on part alky has there been such a hot AC. Bucknum's car won, but not before Bill Sherwood had sheared off an axle at turn 6 (it was a close call--talk to Bill).

Sunday. A 45 minute race. Sherwood is not running. Red Faris must start at the back because of no qualifying Sat. Ray and Sandy up front with Bucknum's AC and Pete Caughlin's 300SL. The green flag goes up, and the mad dash and scramble over and through 1, into turn 2. Altman's black 68 is slipping to second, third, fourth place-- he doesn't make turn 4. The engine is blown. At turn 7, at the bottom of the chutes, the AC Bristol screams through under the marvelous control, with Sandy roaring at his exhaust. Third place belongs to Pete's 300SL, who is already established as a real crowd pleaser-- he almost didn't make turn 6 trying to catch Sandy. And so for the remaining 28 laps that was the order, unvarying, of your first 3 overall winners.

But where is Red Faris? Our lap chart at turn 7 shows a silver number 11 running 14th on lap 2; 8th on lap 5;

7th on lap 10; 6th overall on lap 11, which is where Red remained until the end. Good show, Red!

Class results went this way: Sandy (#95) Pete Caughlin (#27; 300SL) Dennis O'Neill (#110) Red Faris (#11) Dan Rafetto (#72).

Other things happened that weekend. We ran into Bev Spence riding with Barb Eagleson; their respective spouses were not in immediate evidence, so did not stop to talk. Elwin "Woody" Wood rescued our cushion as we were making a quick getaway Sunday.

Sig Zeh got a sunburn; Johnny complained. Bob Bent, former Corvette driver, raced his Sebring Sprite very successfully.

And something NCCA members may not know: The Jaguar owners (unofficially) had a '31 Rolls parked on top of the hill, the big rear trunk laid out with ice, chilled glasses and Champagne. This seems the next best thing to watching your marque win!

WINNEMUCCA (Cont.)

Sunday morning. The ringing of your church bells is pierced by the open exhaust of a corvette "running in" a new set of plugs on a back street. With one sheriff in your county, "What, me worry?" As we arrived at your airport where the events were being set up, as we lined up like a large army at attention along one side of the strip, we could not help but have the feeling that Jack The Giant Killers had arrived.

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WINNEMUCCA (Cont.)

The day went by very normally, with the usual bevy of protests, gripes and all else which contributes to good clean sportsmanship. But all kidding aside, we did appreciate you awarding to our NCCA the overall trophy along with the 12 other individual event awards won by our members! A good show for our members if we do say so ourselves.

Sunday evening. All tensions and nerves are relaxed, for the major events are over. We wish your bartenders would not react with such a shocked expression when one of us may order a Beefeaters on the rocks! Your banquet was quite a success; your M. C. was completely vile. Next year why not place him at turn 2 on the 2 mile race to act as turn marshall? We're sure he would straighten up fast when viewing our elephants head-on!

On Monday morning, after viewing your completely ridiculous one-class Concourse (Is that why you lacked more entries?) we gassed and packed our cars to face the long journey home.

The 400 plus or minus miles gave us time to recall some high-lights of our members, such as Neil Schraeder's calm ride in Johnny Zeh's trunk! Gary Carlen and Mike Tsirlis finding that chasing TR's can be more fun than chasing Corvettes; Sig Zeh's lucky number picking; Dick Erath & Pete Stewart being scarce for reasons (unknown?); Merle Statler's and Bob Bennett's Champagne party; Wil Given along with Cynthia & Skip Matthews piling furniture in front of Bob Brennan's door at 4:30 AM; Andy Montez and turn 2; Cliff Valin and Ron Enos "drifting" the back strips at the airport; disappointed by having no "songs of the occasion" from Don French; Jack Riis helping Ed

McCarroll's car for the concourse thus knocking himself down a notch; Ernie Grabstein and Bob McCarthy showing the outside-of-the-group Corvettes that the older buckets still go; Walt Buckmaster and the gaming tables; Jim Craven diligently following Laverné's orders (yes...no, dear!!) during the Rally portion; Bob and Jeanette Cross's very catching & overwhelming enthusiasm.

Yes, dear city of Winnemucca, it's over for another year. We don't think we'll forget our wonderful time any sooner than you will forget us!

PLEASANTON (Cont.)

Perhaps many of you will find interesting the results of Class 3 (Corvettes and Jags) for the first four Corvannas in 1957.

Rheem Center (Little Monaco) -
Jags took 1st, 2nd, 4th, 5th

Milpitas (Little LeMans) -
Jags took 2nd, 5th.

Richmond (Little Nurburgring) -
Jags walked off with 1st, 2nd, 3rd.

Novato (Little Millie Miglia) -
Jags nailed all first five!

As for the Womens' Class, there was only one, and Lorraine Wood (CHEALEY) pretty much dominated it then as she does now. The first four Corvannas there wasn't a woman Corvette driver in the first 5 places in any of them.

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PLEASANTON (Cont.)

For an NCCA member to go home with a trophy from a Corvanna was cause for much celebration!

Things began to improve somewhat during 1958 season --- and so the demise of the mighty Jag-- even in autocrosses. This 19th Corvanna saw only two Jag drivers, and neither one got close to a trophy.

Allen Andersen's time for the course was only .95 sec.--more than top time of the event over-all winner, Don West in his formidable Porsche Speedster. If you saw the course that Neil designed for this Corvanna, you can appreciate Al's accomplishment with his Corvette.

Bob Brennan drove his F.I. Corvette through first thing in the morning, as did Fred Wetton and Al Andersen, and he placed third at that time. Bob "sweated it out" all day and then the very last car to run was "Mike, the Wild Greek" Tsirlis, and whammo! he turned the sizzling time of 1:43.53 placing 2nd and bumping Cliff Valin to 3rd, and our Bob off into 4th.

In Class 4 (carb. Corvettes) Gary Carlin "sweated" 3rd spot all day, and though many tried very hard to make it, none did. (Third place is the place that changes most often during the running of an event.) Gary, with his trophy, is no longer a tyro, and only six months a Corvette driver!

NCCA trophies seem to be the most difficult of all for Corvette drivers to win. The entries in class are always large, and the courses tight and tricky. Yours truly has only three NCCA awards, two seconds and one third, in 19 Corvannas. 'Nuff said!

Bob Brennan did the timing, with assists from Jim Mannon, Dick Erath (our electronics technician) and Al Andersen.

Andy Anderson handled starting, helped by Jim Craven. You will almost always see Andy starting the sports car races in Northern Calif., the sprint cars--the midgets--the hardtops. He has an array of flags that is most impressive. His starter shirts are a glorious sight to behold. I have worked as starter in the past at Corvannas and it's a mystery to me how Andy performs as he does for such long periods.

I'm sure there will be no complaints heard, re: Technical Inspection. Bill Sherwood and his crew held Tech. with a firm hand! I heard one contestant muttering- "What do they think we are going to run--24 hours at Le Mans?"

All in all, Neil Schraeder, I would say your first Corvanna set an even higher standard for other clubs to try and match. We are still leading the way in autocross events.

DID YOU KNOW...

About our Social-Dinner meeting June 25 in Dublin at the Dublin Correll--\$3 per person. Friends invited. Merle Statler promises a good time. This meeting takes the place of the normal June 21 meeting.

That July 16 is the date for the Bar-B-Q and outdoor play at Woodminster Theatre. See Merle for reservations. (Thank Mary French for this one!)

That Pete Stewart is the one responsible for printing our By-Laws earlier this year. And at what a price!

That Wil Givin has two Corvettes, and wants to sell one? (CL 8-2840)

Our SCCA-NCCA race is scheduled for Cotati, September 10-11. More in the July issue on this.