



The Fabulous Fifties

NEWSLETTER

November 2012

ANNUAL BANQUET

Since we are having a sit-down dinner **Saturday, December 1** at a new location, we have some special instructions this year. You must have your check for \$65 per person made out to Alice Hanks and in her hands by **November 21**. You must also specify either Chicken Breast or Prime Rib. Mail to: Alice Hanks, 17766 Tramanto Dr., Pacific Palisades, CA 90272. If you wish to reserve your own table of either 8 or 10 you must send in the check(s) all at once and list the names of all your guests along with their preferences for Chicken Breast or Prime Rib. Use the reservation form in this newsletter. Because this is a served meal, we cannot be as casual with reservations as we have been in the past, so get your reservations in NOW. Do not delay!

The banquet starts at 6 p.m. with no-host cocktails with hors d'oeuvres included with the price of the dinner. Dinner will be served at 7 p.m. with the program starting at 8 p.m. There will be our usual live auction plus a silent one.

The Proud Bird is located at 11022 Aviation Blvd., Los Angeles 90045, just south of the south LAX runway. From the 405 Fwy go west on the 105 (Century Fwy) to Exit 2A towards La Cienega/Aviation. Left onto Imperial Hwy and Right on Aviation. There will be free and very handy parking. Come early as there are many historic airplanes on display and the Proud Bird interior is an aviation museum of sorts with historic photos everywhere.

OUR BANQUET

by Bill Pollack

Art Evans, this year's recipient of the Lindley Bothwell Lifetime Achievement Award, is a man of many faces. Most of you know Art as the man who produces our newsletter, but there is more to him than that. There is Art the photographer, there is Art the author of many books on drivers and racing in general, there is Art the producer of educational films, there is Art the racecar driver, and there is Art the man who helped develop the Devin racecar and last but certainly not least, there is Art one of the founders of the Fabulous Fifties non-club.

There are a few more faces of Art Evans that you will simply have to come to the Proud Bird on December 1 and find out for yourself. We have assembled a rather unique group of experts in a variety of fields and talents who will bring to life and expose these

faces. Some of those people on this rather exclusive list are, Bob Bondurant, George Rosenthal, Ann Bothwell, Alice Hanks, Mary Davis, Jerry Aarons, Bruce Kessler and me. In addition, Steve Johnson has prepared a pictorial display.

BACK HOME AGAIN

By Bill Pollack

For many of you The Petersen Automotive Museum is the home of the Fabulous Fifties non-organization. This is not the case. We have to go back almost 50 years to remember what actually transpired and eventually became this organization. I was looking for ways to raise funds for a drug rehab program to treat young people with serious problems. Art Evans was busy producing educational films for the industry. Phil Hill was busy learning how to take cars apart and put them together and learn the intricacies of racing. All of us, had one thing in common; we loved cars. This love prompted us to get together along with one or two others and have lunch at, of all places, The Proud Bird. We choose it because it was pretty much centrally located for all of us. When the subject of how to raise funds came up Phil mentioned that he had some films of early races that he would be happy to bring to any kind of an event and narrate. I said that I had a mailing list not too big but I thought it might be helpful as a start. Art Evans said he had a mailing list that we could combine and maybe get a pretty good crowd. Art also suggested that the Elks club in Redondo Beach might be a good location for such an event.

Our first event was a success and I don't remember how much money we got but it was pretty nice. What the event did produce was more people that wanted to get together on a monthly basis and just talk about cars. Most of us had either wives or girlfriends who would have heard all of our racing stories so many times that they could probably tell them better than we could. The meeting place was always The Proud Bird. These meetings got larger and larger until finally the people at the Proud Bird decided that we needed our own dining room, which was fine.

The new dining room worked out just fine until a good friend, fine driver, Richie Ginther, passed away and we had our first really large meeting at the upstairs bar of the Bird. That was the beginning of the Fabulous Fifties Non-Club.

Finally, I complained that of all the airplanes on display in and around the Proud Bird, they do not have one of the three air-

craft that I flew during one of those wars. I didn't understand why they couldn't put a B-29 or a B-24 up on a pylon in the driveway along with all the other little fighting planes. Management said that they would look into it and see if they could find one of those aircraft for sale at the local used airplane lot. I offered to compromise and said if one of those planes are too big to display, I also flew a B-26 which only has 2 engines and should fit nicely back there where the DC 3 is sitting. My plane was much more exciting than the Goony Bird.

Anyhow, I look forward to seeing all of you at our Christmas party and welcome back to our original home.

Note from Art: Actually, the first gathering of what would become the Fabulous Fifties took place in 1973. A number of us had lunch now and then at Rudy Cleye's Blarney Castle. One day I was having lunch with OCee Ritch and Jack McAfee. Rudy came by and sat with us for a while. The conversation got around to those we knew during the fifties and what were they doing now. Rudy offered to host a cocktail party in a special room at the Castle. Rudy, OCee and Jack sent me the names and addresses each had and I combined them with mine. As I recall, quite a number showed up to drink and snack with us. I don't think Bill Pollack was there, but I could be wrong. The list I used to send invitations is the one Bill referred to. By the way, the one thing I remember about the cocktail party for Richie was that Pete Lovely came all the way from Tacoma, Washington!

RACING JOURNALIST CHRIS ECONOMAKI

By Leo Levine

Whoever you are, wherever you are, take a moment to think of [Chris Economaki](#). Make it your personal tribute, however brief, to this grand old man of auto racing journalists because he left us late Thursday, Sept. 27 at age 91, and he left a hole in the motorsports firmament that can never be filled. Whether you have ever read *National Speed Sport News* before or are a longtime subscriber, whether you realize it or not, a portion of your outlook regarding automobile racing has been formed by his weekly column. It was required reading for any serious racing journalist in this country, and his opinions invariably had some influence on all of us. We knew that he knew. He may have been a pedestrian writer, but as a reporter, commentator and interpreter of events, he had no peer.

AL MOSS SERVICE

There will be a "Celebration of Life" for Al Moss on November 3 at 1 p.m. It will be held at the Santa Ynez Valley Presbyterian Church located at 1825 Alamo Pintado Road in Solvang, California.

E. Alan Moss, who established the company that became the largest supplier of classic and sports car parts, died on September 25. When many older cars would have to be scrapped without spare parts, Moss came to the rescue. Al bought an MGTC in 1948 and opened a shop in Los Angeles specializing in MGs. In 1950, he became the first Allard distributor on the West Coast. In 1963 he moved to Santa Barbara, sold the shop and devoted all his time and effort to the parts business. Al sold Moss Motors in 1977 and moved to Sedona, Arizona in 1997.

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

We now have a total of 1,231 non-members. We still send 423 (down from 432) newsletters plus 15 overseas via snail-mail. Thanks to those who sent us your email address. If you have an email address, **please let us know** so we can stop sending you snail mail. Email to Art Evans: agevans@yahoo.com.

DONATIONS (reported by Alice Hanks): Robert Barrett M.D., Paul Reinhart, Steve Luckman, Tenny Fairchild, Michael Sharp, Dick Van de Veere, Augie Pabst.

NEW MEMBERS (Sponsors in parenthesis): George Jerome Jr. (Art Evans), Kay Presto of Upland CA (Ginny & John Dixon), Mike Flaherty of Glendale CA (Ginny & John Dixon), Christopher Garner of Mont Sur Rolle, Switzerland (Alan Markelson), Martin Spetz of Largo FL, Sam Mudie of Los Angeles, Rayne Sherman of Ranch Palos Verdes CA (Tom Pawlak), Bill Ullrich of Green Oak IL (Carl Goodwin).

RETURNED EMAILS: Gary Ford, Harvey Gordon, Scott Mattern, Chip Connor, Allen Bishop, Matt Burch, Trevor Stanley, Grahame Smith, Matt DeLorenzo, Jane Barrett.

LOST (Snail-mail returned by the USPS): Dan Parkinson formerly of Canyon Country CA, Steven E. Young formerly of Los Angeles.

ABSENT FRIENDS: Chris Economaki reported by *National Speed Sport News*, Steele Therkleson reported by Bill Watkins, Frederick Knoop Jr. reported in the press, Hal Ullrich reported by David Seielstad, Linda Scott reported by Ruth Levy

GEORGE FOLLMER

On Thursday, November 8, 2012, the Petersen Automotive Museum will honor George Follmer as one of their "Legends of Motorsports." Sponsored by the museum and the Checkered Flag 200 Group, a special "Tribute to George Follmer" program will be held. The evening begins with cocktails at 6 p.m. followed by dinner for all those who

join with prominent guests as well as George's friend and colleagues. The festivities will include a gallery display of George Follmer-centric race cars and memorabilia.

The tribute will be full of stories about George. Forty years ago, Trans-Am Champion Follmer, subbing for Mark Donahue was under pressure going into Mid-Ohio's Can-Am race to drive Roger Penske's 5.4-liter twin-turbo Porsche 917/10, when the car's L&M sponsor coined a promotional button, "Let George Do It." The mantra stuck. George won the race and media scribes branded him, "George Am." He finished 1972 winning both the Trans-Am and the Can-Am series, the only driver to ever win both in the same season.

These were only a few of the accolades and triumphs garnered by George. Parnelli Jones remarked that "He's won about everything he's been in at one time or another." Regarding the evening, George said, "I would like it to be a good time for everybody, because there aren't too many times at this point in our lives that we're all going to be together."

To join in the evening, call Sarah Hill at 323-964 6325 or Paul Moritz at 323-954-6359. Tickets are \$125 for museum members or \$150 for non members. Tickets may also be purchased at www.Petersen.org.

FRED KNOOP

(From the San Francisco Chronicle.) Frederick George Knoop, Jr. of Carmel, California, died on September 12 due to pancreatic cancer. He was 83. He was not only an excellent horseman but also a "fearless" racecar driver. His racecar passion began on the Monterey Peninsula in the early fifties. He left his mark on the racecourse through the Del Monte Forest until the races were moved to Laguna Seca in 1957. He participated at Laguna Seca in the Historic races every summer that he could, with his last lap on the track this past January in the Knoop-Mann Special. Fred was recently honored by the racing community on the first Sunday of the Rolex Monterey Motorsports Reunion on August 19, 2012.

Note from Art: Looking through my book, *Pebble Beach Remembered*, I found that he entered Pebble Beach in 1956 driving his Austin Healey 100S. He ran in but did not finish the Main Event. Then he entered the famous Huffaker-Knoop Special in the Main Event at the first race at Laguna Seca in 1957, but also failed to finish. The text noted that the special was powered by a modified Corvette engine and clothed with a Devin body. He was among the front-runners and outran Shelby in the Maserati out of Turn 9. Knoop had recurring trouble with the engine.

STEELE THERKLESON (1929-2012)

by John & Ginny Dixon



Every successful racing enterprise usually has an unsung genius or two. Steele Therkleson filled that position at several operations and on several continents during his eventful lifetime. On October 1, 2012 we lost this "unsung genius." He was born on October 27, 1929 in New Plymouth, New Zealand. After one year of high school and at age 15 he went to work as an apprentice in an engineering/machine shop. His ambition was to be a first class tool and die maker. After a long five year apprenticeship he received his certificate as a fitter, turner and toolmaker.

Steele had always been enamored of motorbikes and in 1951 bought his first bike, a Velocette 350. He had the racing bug and raced bikes and traveled all over New Zealand. He realized a future wasn't going to be lucrative racing motorbikes and decided to become a full-time first-class racing mechanic.

In 1959 Jack Brabham was racing in New Zealand and Steele expressed his desire to work in a racing shop in England. It so happened that Jack was opening a new racing shop in Chessington (near The Cooper Works) and offered to hire him temporarily until he found other work through Jack's connections. At that time Brabham had a small operation and was not in need of Steele's services long term.

Steele took a slow boat to England but when he arrived Brabham wasn't ready for him so he went to Italy to the Maserati factory where he worked on 4cylinder 200S type engines used in the Cooper. Shortly Brabham was ready and put him to work balancing engines. At that time Brabham was working with Cooper. The job for Brabham lasted from September, 1959 until June, 1962.

Steele then worked for Ian Walker's brand new Lotus team - two 22's and two 23's. Walker's shop was on the north side of London and Steele lived on the south side. The drive was terrible so in 1963 he opted to work for John Willment's official Ford team which was located just five miles from his home. He traveled with this team.

In 1964 Steele met Carroll Shelby at the Goodwood Tourist Trophy. Steele invited Shelby's shop manager, a fellow New Zealander, John Ohlsen, for dinner and during the course of the evening Ohlsen fished three paychecks from his wallet. The three represented more money than Steele had ever seen. Right then he decided the future was in the U.S. and working for Shelby. The Shelby team was working out of Willment's shop on the Cobra coupe at the time and Steele befriended Jack Hoare, who worked in Shelby's engine shop. Hoare was impressed with some improvements Steele had made to the 289 cylinder heads and a year later a letter came from the Shelby organization asking him to join them at Le Mans.

Because of the extensive immigration paperwork that took 14 months to complete it was surprising that Shelby kept the job open. However, in 1965 he did indeed join the Shelby team at Le Mans to begin a five-year adventure with Shelby American. They told him there was no sense in flying to the U.S. simply to turn around and fly back to Europe. The following month they went to the Reims 12-Hour. The team worked out of Alan Mann's shop for five weeks prepping the cars. Steele actually signed on at Shelby's as an engine mechanic but when they found out he was a toolmaker by trade, Phil Remington put him in the machine shop. He ended up working as engine mechanic, machinist and race mechanic. After finally making it to the competition department at Shelby American he was mainly involved with the 427 engine. The factory delivered "race prepared" 427s were short lived and subject to failure until Steele completely disassembled and detailed one of them.

After leaving Shelby's when they lost the Ford contract, Steele started a business partnership with a machine shop in Carson making bits and pieces for race engines. When his business partner married and moved from the area. Steele's shop became

"Racing Services West."

In 1972 Steele met Bob Sutherland (1943-1999) a very involved vintage racer from Denver. Along with taking care of all of Bob's vintage race cars, Steele began a "love of his life" project restoring a 1923 Delage V12 engine for Bob. It was shipped in from Santiago, Chile in pieces. Hundreds of parts had to be machine made and the overall project took 8 1/2 years. Steele considered this his greatest engineering adventure and his most satisfying achievement.

Bill Watkins, an original Fabulous 50er, introduced Steele to Tom Hollfelder, another avid race car collector and racer, for whom Steele worked on several projects for Tom's "Tiger Racing Team". Perhaps the biggest was helping to design and install Formula One-type hand controls on a street Ferrari which was raced by Tom's daughter, Carol.

Tom Hollfelder has a love for the magnificent creations of yesteryear and also a lasting respect for their creators. He was a staunch supporter of Steele until his passing.

"Steele" was an appropriate given name but he was made of much more exotic metal.

LETTERS

Hi Ginny, What a grand letter----better & better. Please add as a new non-member my host, Christopher Garner. Thank you. It will bring back many memories -----restoring vintage cars here in Geneva is his life. He has very, very rare & beautiful vintage cars such as a 1954 Ferrari 375 plus, a 4.9 rocket that was the biggest sports car Enzo ever built. I hope to get it on the track next year. Also a 1955 Ferrari F-625 Monoposto. It just finished being detailed in Denver, so I'll be racing her in your neighborhood. He also is finishing a ten-year restoration on two, one of a kind jobs, a Talbot-Lago convertible, a/k/a "The Teardrop." The second is a Delage convertible; to die for.

Last weekend I had a chance to fill in any

open slot in the Goodwood Revival "Shelby Cup." They said, "Come along; someone

always no-shows." Sure enough, only 27 Cobras started—not 30—ha! It is a long slog from Miami Beach to Chichester---on a maybe-sooooo, I took, instead, a French offer to run at the Circuit d'Angouleme---through the streets and up & down the side of a small mountain. I recommend it---very exhilarating! Ciao, Allen Markelson

Ginny, Thank you for the current edition of the Fab Fifties. I look forward to each edition. AND the picture on the last page this time is FANTASTIC. So glad to see YOU and ladies from my past: Ann, Ginny, Mary and Alice. Glad to see that they are still as pretty as I remember them!!!!!! Hugs to you all, Nancy Widgren Mackey

P.S. Why didn't Norma Jordan show up for the picture, too? Include her in the hugs. As a Brit Car Racer (AH Sprite and Elva Formula/Sprite engine) in the late 50's and 60's-----this made me very sad-----BUT happy that some one (Art) wrote about AI and it was printed. Many Thanks. Nancy Mackey

Hi Dixy, Thanks for the, as always, interesting Newsletter (Fall 2012). We are wondering whether any of the "Fabulous Fifties" members might have any information on Steele Therckleson -- a New Zealander (and thus we have some New Zealand friends also anxious to know how he is doing) who used to have a vintage car repair facility in the Los Angeles area. His wife, Rosemarie, passed away several years ago. In checking online, someone was trying to get hold of Steele back in 2006. In January 2012 a person responded that he had "heard from Steele's nephew that he is not so good these days." Steele was (is) a great character. Best regards. Peter and Judy Giddings

Dear Peter and Judy, Sorry to tell you that Steele recently passed. —Art

RESERVATION FOR THE FABULOUS FIFTIES ANNUAL BANQUET at the Proud Bird 6 p.m., Saturday, December 1, 2012

Name _____ I plan to attend and will bring _____ guests

The cost is \$65 per person. **You must make a reservation.** It includes a served dinner. To reserve a table of 8, send a check for \$520, for 10, \$650. Please enclose a check **made out to Alice Hanks** and mail it, along with this coupon, to Alice Hanks, 17766 Tramanto Drive, Pacific Palisades, CA 90272. Your check should arrive **before Wednesday, November 21. Attach a list with the names of all your guests along with the number of preferences for Chicken _____ or Beef _____.** Please print clearly.