

small TIMES

Volume 9 Issue 1Official Publication of the H MOD - Over-the-Hill-Gang Spring 1998

Why Does The Panhard Engine Sound So Bad And Go So Fast?

H MOD CALENDAR

SOAPBOX COMMENTS

Le Petite' Galleria

Accurately Remembering The Past

Upcoming Race Events
VSCCA, Lime Rock, CT.
June 5 & 6
VARA, TUSTIN
THUNDER, Tustin, CA.
June 12 Through 14

My Begra Experience by Charles Christ, Sr.

My objective in writing about H Modified is to keep the faith with my efforts to recall experiences accurately. In the book, "Big Drivers In Little Cars" this idea was within every statement made by myself and those who contributed to the making of the book.

As we get older some things seem to get changed because the mind is so crowded with information or because of creeping senility. Fortunately, H Modified was such an important part of my life that other information was dumped in favor of my time behind the wheel. The book has resulted in many comments such as, "I remember that race perfectly... Thanks for the memories."

If there is anything that we "Original H Mod drivers" owe todays Vintage Racers it is to tell it like it was and not to elaborate on history. Why do I try to make a point of this? It is because of an obligation we old timers have to the cars we once raced so desperately. Many of todays Vintage Racers seem more caught up with the competition than the history and therefore the golden years are simply forgotten. In Vintage racing these days we race against many larger displacement cars and some people chose to attempt to be competitive where they wouldn't ordinarily be competitive. The alternative is to increase their own cars displacement beyond that of the original classification of 750-850cc.

We can still be competitive without losing our perspective and in effect, losing sight of history.

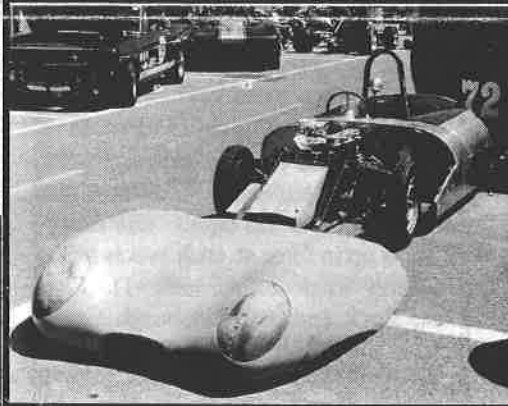
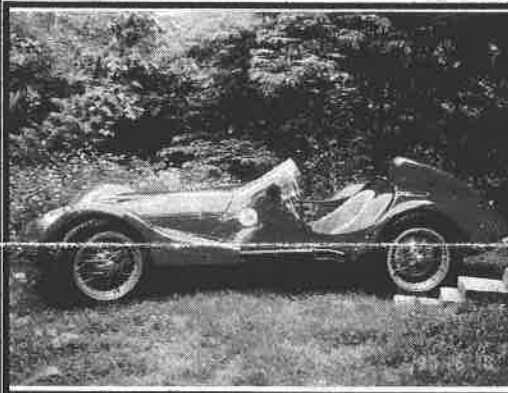


Photo above - Scotty Knox now owns the Bogus-Lotus Crosley, here shown at Las Vegas.

Photo below - New member Jack Reuter owns this outstanding example of a twin cam Bandini (#358)



This story goes back to the early 60's and my remembering a small wooden dowel toy. Little did I know, that this was a scale model of an Elva Mk 6 chassis. As time passed, a big version of the Elva appeared in dad's garage.

A serious accident on the way to Ice racing totalled our Saab 750 GT Ice Racer. It was the ice-racer's demise that yielded a drivetrain, brakes, and rear suspension. Shortly after, a racecar without a body arrived. Yet another tragedy needed
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Remembering The Past

My Begra Experience

Las Vegas Preview

Technical Tip By Kip Fjeld

Letters, Area Reports, And Photos

small TIMES IS THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE H MOD-OVER-THE HILL-GANG. IT IS A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER PUBLISHED SOLELY FOR THE MEMBERSHIP. THE ASSOCIATION IS A NOT-FOR-PROFIT SOCIAL, HISTORICAL AND RACING ORGANIZATION.

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H Mod Car Authentication Continues

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Editorially yours Joe Puckett

This newsletter is a little late in coming because I lost my main Caregiver and have been forced to spend my time bedridden which I hate. Hopefully the problem has gone away and we can get back to business.

The H Modified Gang is back racing for the 1998 Season with more cars and more vigor. You can expect "Our Gang" to show up in force at such events as the Monterey Historics, Tustin Thunder, Lime Rock and The Pittsburgh Grand Prix.

Contained in this issue is a Eulogy to the late Bill Cunningham who was one of the originals who passed away recently. He is gone but certainly not forgotten. John Donaldson has scribed the Eulogy as only he can.

Here is a brief update of the book sales and commentary. We have sold over 63 copies to date and continue to sell copies almost daily. It is amazing that some of the members who have not purchased their copy yet may find its going to be sold out soon! As far as the commentary I suggest that you read the letters to the Editor section. It's enough to bring tears to these old eyes and a blush to my cheeks!

You should continue to write letters about your cars and we will certainly do our part to publish them. The H Modified Group is now over 150 members strong and we are still growing.

As we put together this issue we must reflect on the fact that we have been going at it since November 1989. It does my heart good to see that H Mod is back and it looks like we are here to stay!

Joe Puckett, Editor.

(Continued from page one)

to finish this car. The Begra-Saab was destroyed in an accident at Weatherly hill Climb in Pennsylvania, reducing the Begra body to small pieces in cardboard boxes. My father purchased the shattered remains and began literally gluing the nose section together piece by piece in our basement garage. Boy, did our house stink like fiberglass! With some wheel opening modifications to accommodate Saab 15" wheels and relocating the headlights inboard to the enlarged grille opening, the Begra shell was mated to the Elva's copied frame.

In 1960's advertising, everyone compared their product to brand "X", so Dad decided that this was to be the the name of our new car.

After 2 years as a 'Pennsylvania Hillclimb Association" car, in class Modified I, my Dad sold the car the fall of 1969. That was the last time I saw Brand X until about 3 years ago. For 20 some years I searched for Brand X, carrying a dogeared Polaroid photo from the day it left on its special trailer with its new owner. Event after event I carried the dogeared photo asking any and everyone I met "have you seen this car?". I was searching for a piece of my childhood, you see, my father gave me a 2 or 3 mile test ride in this car which I NEVER forgot. Not only was that an indellible memory, but the Begra shape was in my mind, a very beautiful shape, and I wanted it back!

Enter Mr. Barry Levan. At fall Hershey I had just finished an exhibition run in my restored H/P Bugeye Sprite when I was motioned to come to the fence by a man who said he had my father's old sports racer. Arrangements were made to view the car, described as remains, more properly. Little of the original car was left after years as a D sports racer. But lured by a dream and a lot of stupidity, the search for the missing Saab 750 GT driveline and related parts was on! Saab experts Frank Stark, (who originally owned the Begra Saab from which our body came from), Tom Cox, Wendell-
(continued page 3 column 1)

(continued from page 2)

Francis, Bud Clark, and Robert Fairbanks, to name a few from all across America helped locate vintage Saab parts too numerous to list. My heartfelt thanks goes out to all of them and Berga historian Barry Levan who graciously consented to sell my father's car's remains back to me.

As of this writing, I have taken a 1 to 2 mile test drive of the newly restored chassis, waiting to be reunited with its Berga body. I plan to show this H mod with the AACAA (Antique Automobile Club of America) in class 24-B. I am a member of the vintage race car certification committee for Road Race, Hill Climb and Autocross vehicles. Also in 1 to 2 years I expect to drive my father's car with SVRA in group 1 and do some SCCA Solo 1 events with the PHA, just like my dad!

Bob Fairbanks awarded coveted James Broadwell Trophy

For 1998 Bob Fairbanks who drives the Jabro Saab 850cc was awarded the James Broadwell trophy. Bob received this coveted award because of his contribution to the H modified Over the Hill Gang. Bob drove his Jabro in 1997 at the Pittsburgh Vintage Grand Prix. He did a great job driving, but better still, he was an outstanding promoter of H modified, even though he calls his team Back Marker Racing.

Bob Fairbanks has raced a Mini Cooper in the East for several years, earning a reputation as a good driver and fierce competitor. Bob should change the team name to something besides Back Marker Racing!

We wish to thank Jerry Greaves for purchasing the plaque and mailing the trophy to Bob. Jerry will receive this year's dues as a freebee to offset his expenditure. Jerry won the trophy in 1997. Both of these gentlemen were truly deserving of the award.

Joe Puckett

North West Report by Bob Thulander

I just sold all my Sprite stuff so the Jubilee H mod will run again next season. Bill Mc Cann is finishing the body now. It's amazing to me that aluminum bodies need to be skinned in Bondo to become smooth. I had an Osca at one time and the only difference was that the Bondo was green!

Bill tells me that the other Jubilee is owned by Jerry Pachaco, and is being restored. Bill has worked on that body also. It's a mid engined Saab.

I have a nice Bosch Saab 3 cyl. starter for sale for \$75.00 (503) 895-4551.

On the topic of Randall Crosley Blocks. I have a brochure on those aluminum blocks. They came out in the 1960's for \$495.00! The late Bob Graham and I tried to trace them in the mid 80's with no luck. Bob had built a cross flow engine by then with poor results, so when it lost a piston pin keeper and scored the block, he lost interest in the 8 port Crosley block. For some reason, Crosleys have always lost these piston pin keepers alot, so we use teflon buttons and save the iron.

Bob Graham always did research on these engines, so we spent alot of time. He had a dyno, flow bench, vertical mill, blind boring bar, etc. We learned much from the Sprite engine. It has 2 intake ports and 3 exhaust. Much work has been done on this engine. Do you know that the intake manifold, adapter plate and clutch assembly will all fit Crosley easily? (Yes we know...ed.)

Regarding wheels, we used to reverse Crosley wheels and also used Halibrand midget mags and Eaton Starbuck 3-piece wheels. This was it as far as wheels went in the SF region around 1960. (We used FIAT 500 wheels too...ed.) A nice, cheap fairly wide 12" wheel can be had from any boat trailer dealer if you want an original look.

Also, the Sprite wheel fits the Crosley bolt pattern, but is 13" in diameter.

There seems to be a dislike in Vintage racing for the specials arising up here in the North Pacific region, mostly because some are too fast.

P.S. The time has come to share some Crosley reliability mods. What do you think, Joe?

Technical Tips: by: Kip Fjeld

Goodyear-Hawley Spot brakes, also known as hesitators, can be improved using modern friction linings. I have been having good results with the carbon-kevlar material sold by Porterfield Enterprises, 1767 Placentia Ave, Costa Mesa, CA 92627 (714)548-4470. This material stops a flying H mod, doesn't fade and is easy on the cast iron rotors.

They sold me a 4 by 6 by half inch thick slab of raw carbon-kevlar material from which I fabricated the 8 circular pads. They said that the compound was easily cut on a band-saw. That may be true, but make sure you borrow your neighbor's band-saw, because this stuff will dull the blade in a hurry! I found that the belt sander proved to be the most useful tool to form the round pads that our cars require.

After forming the circular blanks, regular twist drills can be used to drill and countersink the central rivet hole. Steel pop rivets with their center pins removed, peened over by hand, are a good substitute if the stock brass rivets are hard to find.

If you are having brake fade problems with your drum brake H mod, no matter what the make, Porterfield can bond carbon Kevlar to your brake shoes.

Happy braking!

Kip Fjeld



WE GET LETTERS

Dear Joe,

Jerry Greaves called me early this week to inform me that I was the 1998 James Broadwell "Spirit of H modified" award winner, and shortly thereafter, the new trophy arrived; mine to gloat over for a year. You and Jake Jacobson, Jerry Greaves, and so many others involved in this hobby have treated me fairly and shown such genuine unabashed enthusiasm, for not only racing, but pursuing the history of the sport as well.

I promise you all that I will carry on the spirit- and that's an easy promise to keep because there's so very little that's not enjoyable about this hobby. Thank you all.

From the back of the pack,

Bob Fairbanks
'57 Jabro

Congratulations, Bob, it is obvious that we don't think that you are at the back of the pack, however, I must suggest that H mod is not a hobby, but a way of life.

Editor

Dear Joe,

I received your book today. What a wonderful book it is. It is really a work of pure dedication.

Joe, it brings back all the wonderful memories of good times and good friends. There is nothing better than that.

You know more about Don's cars than anyone. I think you have better "tracked them" than even Don did. You know, he just built a car, drove it, sold it, and built another one. He loved doing that and he happened to be good at it.

I graciously accept the book you sent me. The enclosed check is for a book for our daughter, Linda. She is really anxious to see it.

Aloha,
Ruth Miller

Dear Ruth,

Your words were very flattering but only Don really knew his cars completely. I am just a big fan. I'm glad that you liked the book because you were there.

Love,
Joe

Dear Mr. Puckett -

I have the good fortune to be Don & Ruth Miller's daughter. What terrific parents!! As you know, my mom is still going strong. She keeps me posted. Back in 1993 she told me of your article about my dad in Vintage Motorsport and I was able to buy the magazine. She called last Monday, the day she received "Big Drivers in Little Cars"—She was just thrilled with your book. She had you send one to me, which I received yesterday. I spent all night reading it over and over.

Your book is a wonderful recollection of H-Modified racing. As a kid growing up, I remember my dad building cars in the garage; meeting "Pop" Siefied, Manny Betes and the yellow Panhard for the first time; Chuck Gounis and John Donaldson seemed always around; and my favorite races (Santa Barbara was the best—great course for drivers and viewers and dinner at the San Roque Inn steak house after). Your book really brought back memories. I actually met you at a Santa Barbara race— although it was years ago.

My dad was so special—and your articles show he was special to others, too. I've enclosed a copy of my eulogy for him—you sound like a person who would appreciate it.

I see ads for vintage races in Reno, Laguna Seca, Sears Point—I'm really going to try and take one in.

My heartfelt thanks for chronicling the history of H-Modified racing.

Sincerely,
Linda Miller Franz

Dear Linda,

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Your dad was and still is a legend. He built over 42 H-Modified cars and he always raced them the first time himself. Although I never owned his cars until I bought one at a garage sale in 1989, we remained friends throughout his life. Your mother and Don represent the true spirit of H-Mod.

Sincerely,
Joe Puckett

Dear Joe,

Enclosed find check for \$86, to cover (1) copy of "Big Drivers in Little Cars," and \$14 for this year's dues.

I'm looking forward to the book, especially in light of Dr. Bill Molle's glowing review. Considering that on his best days he was a bit of a curmudgeon whom time had not mellowed much the last time I saw him, the book must be a doozy!

Given the title of the book, I could be the West Coast poster boy. Dr. Bill had me on height, but for sheer tonnage (235 on the hoof), I was probably the biggest driver ever to strap on an H-Mod. Rebutals from anyone? Let me rephrase that last sentence. Contradictions from anyone?

I'm also enclosing an article on a Stanley Steamer, and a Eulogy for Bill Cunningham. Use both as you see fit.

Best Regards,
John D.

EULOGY FOR A FRIEND

The H-Modified world has lost one of us. Last February Bill Cunningham passed away after a short illness.

I met Bill in 1959, when we both worked for North American Aviation. We were car nuts, me just out of school and Bill well established at NAA. Bill had a '53 (or so) DeSoto that he called The Blob, and a TR-2 with 120,000 miles on it. He also had an H-Modified Moretti that gave him more grief than a boil.

[continued on page 5, column 1]

[continued from page 4]

Bill also campaigned an H-Modified car that I believe was unique. He acquired an NSU Prinz coupe, hacksawed the top off, strengthened the body, and went racing. He gave away 500 pounds, 250 cc's, and ten years of technology to race that Prinz, but he had fun with it.

Bill was active in all phases of sportive automobilism back then. He rallied, he slalomed, he drew cartoons, he wrote about cars. And despite his occasional bellyaching, he enjoyed every minute. He stayed involved in the sport long after I left it.

Bill contributed common sense and serenity to a sport that at the time needed a lot of both.

His sense of humor was without equal. More than once he pulled me out of towering snits with some carefully chosen words. I'd be vowing to destroy my race car one minute, and laughing helplessly at his comments the next.

Bill and I sparred in print on these very pages. He would remember things about me that I swear weren't so, but he usually had the truth and his lovely wife Nancy on his side.

To say that Bill was generous is a huge understatement. He was always ready to help on your car, no matter the circumstances, the hour or the grubbiness of the task. His generosity extended to things non-automotive also. I remember wanting to impress a young lady, but my only transportation was a grungy pickup truck. I asked Bill to borrow The Blob for the evening; Bill offered his TR-2, saying that it would be more difficult to wrap it around a tree than The Blob.

We all had our dragons to slay. Whatever dragons Bill had to slay,

he slew them before I met him. He was laid back in the most positive sense of the phrase. Not that he was a doormat. He rose to many occasions, but only if the occasions warranted rising to.

Bill had more integrity in one minute than most people have in their entire lives. If Bill gave you his word, nothing further was necessary.

We miss Bill, and we're going to for a long time. Our thoughts and prayers go to his wife Nancy and family. Bill was one of a kind. We are poorer for his passing, but richer for having known him.

John and Molly Donaldson

The photo below shows a large selection of Crosley exhaust systems. Obviously there were many alternatives but also obviously no two were alike.

The Crosley engine was unique because of the Siamesed ports. Therefore the exhaust system type was always a question for argument and interpretation. You can take a choice from the photo below or make up your own.
Good luck.

[Letters continued]

Howdy Joe et al.

The book is superb, thanks for the tremendous effort!

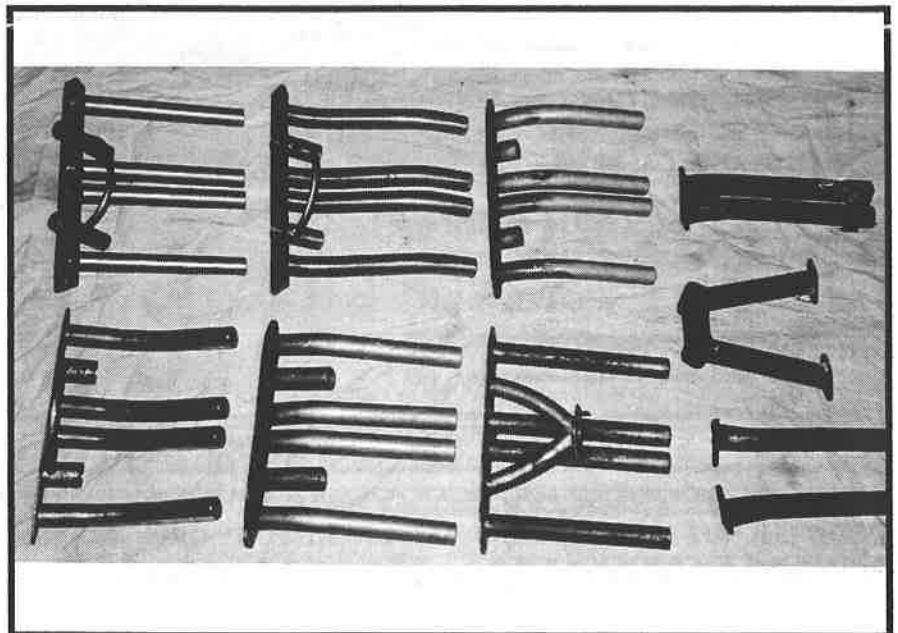
Reference the 2 pictures on page 6 of Small Times, volume 8, issue 6.

My guess is, don't know what the top picture is, but it sure looks like a Begra to me. The bottom picture is definitely a Bobsy! And if I were a betting man, I'd almost make a small wager that it was my car and crew at Watkins Glen. I'd further guess that it's my wife Sue on the right, Bill Hensen and myself on the left. The two in the middle, I don't know. I'd sure like to see the full size picture, and then I'd know I was wrong again!

Lots of fun still teaching for Skip Barber and getting "Blue Ribbons" racing my Bobsy SR3 with its 850 cc Saab in the Southeast and Midwest.

Best to you all,
Duck Waddle

P.S. Joe, sorry I forgot the 3x5 card, but actively racing my Bobsy SR3 Saab and nearing completion of my



[Letters continued from page 5, col. 3]

other Bobsy SR2/3 Fiat 850. When you have a Bobsy you really need twins and I have them. Both were raced by me years ago. Great to have the "kids" back home!

Dear Duck,

Always good to hear from you. It seems like you have made a real impression on the racers in the Southeast. Now I know what H-Mod is!

Regards,
Joe

Dear Joe,

Your book is really neat. The car on the back of issue volume 8 #4 is Pete Sherman's #51 HM car, which I now own and hope to have done for Pittsburgh.

John Jacobson

Dear John,

I guess your comment finally clears up the question of identifying those cars in that issue. Your cars are really featured in the book.

Thanks,
Joe

Trail Braking News

Las Vegas... Gene Leasure, driving his Tanner T-5 was the winner at the April, 18 running of the Las Vegas VARA event. Bud Clark was second in the Phoenix Saab, as he was suffering from gas pick up problems. Kip Fjeld ran on Monday for the practice, but the Miller had distributor problems, eliminating him from the race. Other members attending were Scotty Knox, returning home with his newly purchased Bogus- Lotus Crosley. Also at Vegas was Willy Mueller, with lots of good advice.

Dear members, this issue was painfully developed by Kip Fjeld, Bud Clark, and Sandy Schanamen. Joe has been stuck in bed as he changed caregivers and this issue was delayed, but as usual, the club membership came through and this is the result.

New cars... John Jacobsen is preparing his BMW special for Pittsburgh. Scotty Knox and Glenn Reynolds have cars that are almost ready to race. Mike Nickels has the Unicorn Crosley ready to go. Bob Thulander has his H Mod special nearly finished. Things are really happening these days.

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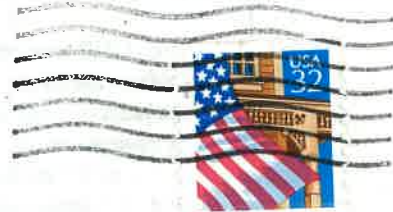
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