

The *ROCKET FUEL* Newsletter



Greetings from the President

Busy, Busy, Busy. These are the words that come to mind as the holiday season approaches. It also reminds me how much work is still left to do on the 2008 Nationals. Remember folks, it's only 9 more months till the big show.

Thank you to those who have done so much of the preliminary work. You know who you are. Putting on an event of this size takes an enormous commitment. In addition to your work schedules and your family activities, you have contributed countless hours to this effort and I truly appreciate it. For those of you whose committees will soon be up and running, get ready to work. For those of you who said you would volunteer for one of the committees, send your name to Greg Carriere, our volunteer coordinator. He will keep a running list and schedule all workers. If you're not sure what committee you would like to be a part of, don't worry. We will match you according to your interest or area of expertise.

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Greetings con't

As things progress and we get closer to the actual event, there may be times when nerves get frazzled and patience runs thin. If this happens, give me a call. Everything can be worked out and we're all here to help. Sometimes you only need to step back and take a big breath. Remember we're all in this together and together as a team, we'll put on a great show.

Despite the huge amount of time that will be spent on the Nationals, regular club activities will go on as usual. I don't want anyone to think that the club will suffer as a result of this big time commitment.

Steve Apking

NOV 2007						
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
28	29	30	31	1	2	3 Dinner Cruise PAPA VINO.S ITALIAN KITCHEN Pontiac, MI
4	5	6	7 Martha Pregler	8	9	10
11	12 Tom Bejma	13	14	15	16 Jack Tokie	17 MCR/OCA MEETING Hyatt Hotel Thomas Room
18	19	20	21 Michelle Brochu	22 Thanksgiving	23	24
25	26 Greg Carriere	27	28	29	30	1

UPCOMING EVENTS: "DEC 15 CHRISTMAS PARTY: TBD

Editor's Notes

Some of you may notice club members' names on the calendar included in our newsletter. Their names are there to mark their birthdays. Shortly after Kelly and I took over the newsletter, we asked you to supply your birth date if you wanted to be included. Many of you responded. If you didn't, you still can. Just e-mail me (s442apking@aol.com) or write me with your name and the month and date of your birthday. Don't worry, we're not asking for the year. Also another reminder about raffle and goodie bags items for the Nationals: if you, your friends or your employer can supply anything for our use, we will certainly appreciate it. And another reminder: we are always in need of articles tech tips, recipes, etc.

Sue Apking & Kelly Ferry

DID YOU KNOW?

People can thank Ransom E. Olds, of the Oldsmobile car fame, for making a Saturday afternoon job easier. He's the inventor of the power lawn mower, a little gizmo he came up with in 1915. Submitted by Pat Macaluso

LADIES

The holidays are fast approaching and baking always play a big part. Try this web site(www.northpole.com/kitchen/cookbook) for some recipes and for some fun ideas. You will find an array of cookies, cakes and pastries. When you see something that sounds good, simply click on it and the recipe will appear. Have fun.





October MCR/OCA Meeting Minutes

The October meeting of the Motor City Rockets was held on Oct. 20, 2008 in the THOMAS room at the Hyatt Regency. President Steve Apking called the meeting to order at 9:15 am. Twenty members were present. Our treasurer and secretary were unable to attend so there were no reports from them. Steve briefly recapped the past summer events and we all agreed that the summer season was a fun and busy one for our club.

Upcoming activities for November will be a dinner cruise on Saturday, Nov. 3 and our next meeting on Saturday, Nov. 17 in the THOMAS room at the hotel. Look for e-mail and check web site for details. For December, there will not be a dinner cruise. We all decided that December weekends get filled quickly. However, our annual Christmas party will be held on Saturday, December 15. Look for separate e-mail and check our web site for time and place.

Other business discussed was officer nominations. Last year at the October 2006 meeting, there was a motion that the current officers would remain to work through the Nationals and the rest of 2008. It was voted on and passed. That was reaffirmed at this meeting. Next year, nominations will go out for new officers. Those who are interested, please keep this in mind. There was also a call for nominations for the "spirit award". This is a symbolic award that is to go to a member or members who best display the traits of enthusiasm, commitment, hard work and most of all, a sense of fun to our club. It was created last year in honor of Bill and Mary Szelag for all they contributed to our club. If you would like to nominate someone, send that person or persons' name or names and the reason why you chose them in an e-mail to Steve Apking (s442apking@aol.com). We will reveal the recipient at the Christmas party. Merchandise was also discussed. We now have key fobs but are still in need of pins. Cindy suggested a smaller, softer embroidered logo especially for sweatshirts for more comfort.

With no new business items to discuss, we immediately went on with 2008 Nationals meeting. Pat Macaluso explained about the hotel situation and the reason for the date change. All present agreed the date change is for the better to allow most OCA registrants to stay at the host hotel. As we went down each committee, it appeared that the off site group needed to nail down exact times for tours and guarantee bus schedules. Most of this is in place however there was some discussion about adding a couple new tours. Most days are set but there are still questions about Wednesday's tours. Ken and Bill will check this out and get back to us. When this becomes final we can complete our registration form. It is almost finished except for some date changes and the possible addition of extra tours. There will be a separate registration area for our guests away from the regular hotel registration desk. There was some talk about how to familiarize guests with the hotel so they can get about comfortably from that area to the Great Lakes Center, which will be our hub of activity. Many good ideas were brought up and a walk-through was suggested. Other committee heads present reported on their progress to date. It was also brought up that several chapters have volunteered to help us: RE Olds: Allegheny Rockets: Music City Rockets. They will be contacted and a list of those interested will be supplied to Greg Carriere, our volunteer coordinator. The meeting ended; we held a small raffle; then headed to lunch.

Submitted by Sue Apking



**A Brief History of
The First 100 Years of the Automobile Industry
in the United States**

Chapter 9 - UAW born amid sitdowns and the battle of the overpass

On May 26, 1937, one of the most famous incidents in American labor history took place.

Walter Reuther, a former Ford employe fired for union activities, an executive board member of the fledgling United Auto Workers, and three colleagues were passing out union handbills on the pedestrian overpass near Gate 4 at the Ford Rouge plant.

They were seeking to organize Ford Motor Co., the auto industry's last citadel of resistance to the unions. With Reuther were Richard Frankenstein, a UAW vice-president, and two other union organizers, Robert Kanter and J.J. Kennedy.

They were approached on the overpass by several toughs, employees of Ford Motor Co. who worked for Harry Bennett, Ford's mysterious and sinister labor relations manager.

"This is Ford property," one of them informed the unionists. "Get the hell off here."

The four began to head for another stairway when the Ford men grabbed them and beat them bloody. Press photographers were there and got it all on film.

The incident became a cause celebre and entered the folklore of the labor movement. Frankenstein later ran unsuccessfully for mayor of Detroit. Reuther later successfully built the UAW into one of the most powerful unions in the world.

But "the battle of the overpass" didn't really have much effect on things. Ford would not be organized for another four years. And the most important strike in the organization of the auto industry had already taken place.

It wasn't supposed to happen the way it did. The UAW had carefully prepared its assault on General Motors, by 1936 the largest auto maker in the world. It planned to strike in Flint. But it started in Cleveland.

Workers at GM's Fisher Body plant in Cleveland were angered when the plant manager refused to discuss reductions in the piece work rate. On Dec. 28, their representative walked down the line that made bodies for the nation's biggest-selling car, banging on the machines with a wrench and what he shouted would shock GM and the world before it was over: "Sit down! Sit down!"

The workers shut off the machines and sat down. They would not leave.



Two days later, members of the Flint UAW local seized the giant Fisher No. 1 and Fisher No. 2 plants. Within a week, GM was out of the auto-making business.

The strike was not rancorous. In fact, workers in Cleveland left the plant after GM promised not to try to reopen it until the strike in Flint was settled.

Early in 1937, GM went to court and asked for and received an injunction ordering the workers out of the plant and the pickets removed. But the union discovered that the judge owned \$200,000 worth of GM stock. Embarrassed, GM dropped its request.

On Jan. 11, an uneasy truce which had prevailed in Flint was shattered when plant guards barred delivery of evening meals to the 100 men occupying Fisher No. 2 and a GM official turned off the heat in the plant.

Both sides called in reinforcements. Union toughs from Detroit -- many recruited by the president of the Kelsey-Hayes UAW local, Walter Reuther, from Jimmy Hoffa's Teamsters local -- headed for Flint. The Flint police headed for the plant.

Strikers seized the gate and police fired tear gas. The wind shifted and the police retreated under a hail of parts and debris thrown by the strikers. A few police drew their pistols and fired. Several workers were wounded, one seriously.

Michigan Gov. Frank Murphy, a liberal Democrat, ordered the National Guard into Flint, not to break the strike but to keep the peace. Hostilities ceased, the workers agreed to leave the plant, GM promised not to try to break the strike and not to try to resume production. Except for one hitch, collective bargaining had come to GM.

The hitch was a telegram William Knudsen sent to the Flint Alliance, an anti-strike group organized by GM officials, assuring that GM was ready to talk to "any group of employees" about any issues. He did it because he wanted so badly to get everyone back to work. But the union interpreted it as a double-cross and the workers stayed in the plant.

GM went to court again and got an injunction ordering the workers out. In response, workers seized the Chevrolet engine plant in Flint. Since there were no car bodies being made anyway, the action was purely symbolic, but it had the desired effect of raising worker morale and infuriating GM.

GM's rivals were building cars, GM was not. So GM agreed to negotiate and within a week, agreement was reached.

The strike, which lasted 44 days, was over. Fewer than 2,000 workers, acting in concert and quite illegally, had shut down GM and idled more than 150,000 other workers. The contract did not give the workers much. But the UAW was established.

In 1933, President Roosevelt signed the National Industrial Recovery Act, which ordered industries to work out standards governing operation, production levels, prices and working con-

ditions. Henry Ford, calling the program's symbolic Blue Eagle "Roosevelt's buzzard," refused to sign the code, although most other auto makers did.

Henry's son, Edsel, president of Ford Motor Co., wanted to sign the code, but the old man refused. It was one of many conflicts between the father and son. Edsel had been president of Ford Motor Co. since 1919, but there was no question that Henry ran the show.

It is not easy, they say, to be a great man's son, and Edsel was also a top Ford executive, a difficult role that few men played for long. William Knudsen, Harold Wills and Norval Hawkins were gone, all strong executives who found it impossible to work long for Henry Ford.

It fell to Edsel to convince the old man that the day of the Model T was over. The Model A, which replaced it, was a smashing success, but Henry never really forgave Edsel.

Henry Ford's view of his workers was paternalistic. After all, he had initiated the \$5 day. But he did not really know what it was like to work in one of his auto factories. Edsel tried to tell him and Henry did not like it. He withdrew more and more from his son.

Edsel accomplished much at Ford despite this. He made Lincoln important in the luxury-car market and was the driving force in the elegant styling that marked Ford cars in the '30s and in development of the Mercury line of cars.

As the gap between father and son widened, Henry came to rely more on Harry Bennett. He was fascinated with this ex-prize fighter's bizarre lifestyle and underworld connections.

Ford assigned Bennett to "mold" Edsel, to "toughen him up." (He didn't.) Edsel was stunned when Bennett was named labor relations manager and very nearly resigned from the company. (He didn't.)

The late '30s and early '40s were a difficult time for GM Chairman Alfred P. Sloan. The sitdown strikes of '36 and '37 disturbed him deeply. So did the Roosevelt administration -- not only for what it did, of which Sloan greatly disapproved, but because it doggedly refused to heed his advice.

There were charges that high GM officials were sympathetic to the Nazis. Absurd now, in light of GM's outstanding contribution to the war effort, but disturbing then.

In a lawsuit brought by minority stockholders challenging the corporation's bonus plan, Sloan and other top administrators were ordered to forfeit millions of dollars. But what really galled Sloan was the judge's implication (erroneous) that nothing was done at GM without J.P. Morgan's approval.

In 1940, Nazi Germany invaded Denmark, thereby infuriating William Knudsen. Against Sloan's wishes, Knudsen resigned as president of GM to go to war against the Germans as chairman of the National Defense Council.

And in 1940, one of Sloan's closest friends, Walter P. Chrysler, died.



The UAW organized Ford in 1941. Again, it was not planned. On April 2, 1941, eight workers were fired at the Ford Rouge plant and 50,000 workers walked out in a wildcat strike. Workers blocked all entrances to the Rouge plant with an automobile caravan. They used Fords to shut down Ford.

A week later, Ford agreed to a National Labor Relations Board election. Henry Ford was deeply hurt when 97 percent of his workers voted for the union. In June, a contract was drawn up. Ford read it, thought about it and refused to sign it.

The Ford organizing strikes had been violent, with battles between strikers and Bennett's men, and between picketers and scabs. Henry's wife, Clara, was sick of the violence and envisioned more. She talked her husband into signing.

Henry Ford later explained to Charles Sorensen, the top executive who stayed with him the longest (40 years, until 1944, when he left to run Willys-Overland):

"I'm sure now she was right. The whole thing was not worth the trouble it would make. I felt her vision and judgment were better than mine. I'm glad that I did see it her way."

Through all this strife, cars continued to be changed and improved. In 1937, Pontiac moved the gearshift from the floor where it had always been to the steering column, a complicated change. (In the '60s, it would be moved back onto the floor in certain sporty models at extra cost.)

With the '38 models, Studebaker offered windshield washers and Buick introduced directional signals.

Ford introduced a whole new line of cars with the '39 models, the Mercury. Sealed-beam headlights first appeared on cars in '39, as did pushbutton radios. For the '40 model year, Oldsmobile introduced the automatic transmission, Nash introduced the first mass-produced unitized body and Chrysler Corp. unveiled the safety-rim wheel. Packard offered the first air conditioner.

And in 1941, Chrysler became the first company in the world to mass-produce tanks, Ford built combat vehicles, GM turned out machine guns and anti-aircraft guns, Studebaker accepted a contract for aircraft engines and Willys began delivering a quarter-ton four-wheel-drive vehicle to the Army which had been developed by American Bantam and would enter American popular culture as the "Jeep."

The nation was deeply divided on Dec. 7, 1941. After 12 years of depression, high unemployment and labor strife, it was divided between haves and have-nots, rich and poor, labor and management. And it was deeply split on whether the United States should get involved in the war spreading throughout the world.

The Japanese healed those divisions in minutes with an air attack on Pearl Harbor, which united this nation as it never had been before (or has been since).



On Dec. 8, all thought turned to the war effort. Conversion of the auto industry's industrial might to war production, already under way, intensified.

On Feb. 9, 1942, the last passenger car for the duration of the war rolled off the line.

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