



The Sparkplug



Deep South Region A.A.C.A. Newsletter, Vol. 48, No. 9, September, 2015

September 26 Darrin and Charlotte Dahlenburg would like to host an old fashion ice cream social with maybe a day trip or ride out to Dauphin Island.



An Old Fashioned
ICE CREAM SOCIAL
SO-CAL

Deep South Region members and families
you are invited to an
**OLD FASHION ICE
CREAM SOCIAL**
Saturday, September 26
at 2 O'CLOCK pm
3155 Dog River Road, Theodore
**GET YOUR CARS OUT AND TAKE
THEM FOR A RIDE!**

Please **RSVP** (so we have a head count and will have enough)
to 256-783-2272 • 256-783-2261 • realracegirl@yahoo.com

The poster features a large illustration of a three-layered ice cream sundae with a cherry on top, set against a light blue background with a scalloped border. The text is arranged in a mix of fonts, including a cursive script for the date and a bold, blocky font for the event title.

Message from the DSR President

Last Month's meeting was very refreshing to me. As most of you know it was held at the Henderson Antique Car Museum. (Thank you to Jim & Nancy) One thing it does is bring just about all of our Club Members together for the evening. I want to give a special Thank You to Foy & Judi Bobo along with Walt & Martha Fuller for the refreshments. It was all great. Not to leave out our own John Pendergrass celebrating his 90 years young Birthday.

Everyone remember this month's meeting is September 24th. We are having our Italian Dinner starting at 6:00 pm followed by our 7:00 pm meeting. Look forward to seeing you there.

Beat Regards, Zeno



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The Sparkplug is published by the Deep South Region (DSR) chapter of the Antique Automobiles of America organization. The Sparkplug is non-profit and published for the information of club members and friends. DSR meetings are held every fourth Thursday of each month at 7:00 p.m. at the clubhouse located at 951 Forest Hill Drive in Mobile, Alabama. Membership in the Antique Automobile Club of America is required to be a member of this Region. Annual local dues are \$20.00; AACA national dues are \$35.00. Ownership of an antique vehicle is not a requirement for membership.

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NOTE: The following article was submitted to the newsletter by Patt Paquet. It is a reprint from the Hagerty Classic Cars Magazine, Fall 2015 issue. The magazine was informed of this reprint.

WHISKEY MEN AND WHISKEY MACHINES

By: Jerry Burton

The Evolution Of The Stock Car Began In The Backwoods Of The Southeast And Led All The Way To Today's Nascar Superspeedways



They were dogs. Good ol' Southern boys just trying to scratch out a living. Tom Wolfe even christened one of them — NASCAR prodigy Junior Johnson — as “The Last Great American Hero” back in his now famous 1964 Esquire cover story. Their trade was moonshine, variously called “white lightning,” “mountain dew” or “white whiskey.” The people who produced and transported the stuff and the cars they drove have become cultural heroes, inspiring early stock car racing and, eventually,

NASCAR. Moonshine runners provided one of the first business reasons for a performance car. Your ability to make a living and stay out of jail was directly related to the performance of your car, especially carrying a full load of whiskey.

“Moonshiners put more time, energy, thought and love into their cars than any racers ever will,” said Johnson, quoted by Neal Thompson in *Driving with the Devil*. “Lose on the track and you go home. Lose with a load of whiskey and you go to jail.” Ray Parks of Dawsonville, Georgia, was one of the first to make moonshine running a big business, making runs with a fleet of cars from northern Georgia to the Atlanta area. He became one of the more influential people behind NASCAR, along with Bill France, Sr. While many of the famous old practitioners like Parks, Red Vogt, Red Byron, Roy Hall and Lloyd Seay are now gone, Junior Johnson is still with us.

Johnson, now 83, didn't need Tom Wolfe to put him on the map. He was one of the pioneers of modern NASCAR racing and is credited with the invention of drafting in winning the 1960 Daytona 500 in his Chevy. Even though he never won a championship, he won 50 races before retiring in 1966. He is listed among NASCAR's 50 greatest drivers and later became a championship-winning team owner.

But for Junior, named after his dad, Robert Glenn Johnson, Sr., it all started in the backwoods of North Carolina. Johnson Sr. ran a large-scale whiskey business and Junior worked mainly as a runner. “Where I lived, if you didn't make whiskey, you didn't have bread to put on the table,” Johnson says. “My dad had 10 other families that he provided for.” Junior taught himself how to drive when he was 10 or 11. “My dad gave me a farm truck and I'd just drive it up and down the dirt roads. I just kept driving it so until I got to know what I needed to know. My dad was a real good driver, too.”

Junior played around in a pasture until he learned how to make a car do anything he wanted. “We had little races on the old dirt roads,” Johnson says. “I got myself a ’34 Ford and went over there and ran around in that thing. By the time I was 14, I was pretty talented, learning what the reaction of the car would be to whatever I did. And it stuck with me over the years.”

With Junior’s driving skill proven, Johnson Sr. didn’t hesitate to put him out on the road at night with a full load of whiskey. Like most runners, Junior would run a Ford flathead V-8 in a ’40 Ford with lots of modifications.

“The revenuers didn’t have any fast cars, so they’d do things like block a highway or a bridge,” Johnson says. They’d have these two cars coming at you. You had to figure out some way to turn around in a hurry.”

Johnson modified his cars with a switch to shut off one of the rear brakes so he could do a smooth 180-degree turn on the fly. Once the revenuers gave chase there were a lot of places where he could duck them.

“I tried to figure out how to dodge ’em and run off the road through a driveway or run through somebody’s yard to get by them and not get caught,” Johnson says. They would chicken out sometimes ’cause they didn’t want to get hurt.”

Johnson became an expert in building great liquor cars. Starting with the engines, he began ordering Edelbrock parts through a distributor in North Carolina. “Those parts would



make a car a lot faster than anything on the road,” he says. It was a learning curve for racing. I adapted a lot of the technology from my liquor cars to my race cars and won a lot of races that way. “

When it came to suspensions, Johnson went to heavy-duty pickups for the right components. “A one-ton pickup had heavier wheels and axles, and I would adapt all that stuff over to the Ford car,” he says. “That would give me springs like a loaded truck.” Johnson adds: “It drove as good loaded as it did

empty. It just rode really rough when it was empty because the springs were so strong. But it was a pretty good combination to have the big brakes, big springs, sway bars and wheels.”

Johnson also used eight-ply pickup tires that would carry the heavier loads. “You could adapt those eight-ply tires and you’d have a tire that would carry a load.”



And a load it was. “We carried as much as 120 gallons in half-gallon glass containers. A ’40 Ford coupe would haul 22 cases. That included five cases in the front seat with you. That helped balance the car by getting the weight as close to the front wheels as possible.

“I also had red lights and sirens on my car,” Johnson adds. “I used the siren just to get around traffic. But there were also times that I didn’t need any lights. Sometimes the moon was so bright on the clear nights that you could see just like it was daylight with the lights off.”

Johnson was never caught on the road, but he was eventually arrested during a raid at his dad’s still. “I had just started racing. I raced at Altamont, New York, and drove all night long to get back to North Carolina. My dad needed help to fire up the still before daylight. But that morning, the revenuers had found the still and they had 18 guys surrounding it. I had a shovel of coal and was about to put it into the fire when somebody jumped me. I threw it in his face, but then a bunch of them subdued me. They felt like they had hit the jackpot since they could never catch me on the road.”

Johnson ended up serving two years at a prison in Chillicothe, Ohio, but that wasn’t the end of his whiskey running. “I went back and stayed in it for about 10 to 15 years more,” Johnson says. But this time, he went big-time and transported whole semis of liquor to large cities like Philadelphia.

Johnson eventually got out of moonshining and has been involved in a number of very successful businesses, including Holly Farms Chicken and a legal line of Midnight Moon moonshine. He was pardoned by President Reagan in 1986 and now enjoys special status in any automotive circle.

Ray Evernham also knows a thing or two about building a good whiskey car. A former crew chief for Jeff Gordon during his 1990s championship years with Hendrick Racing, Evernham is now the host of *AmeriCarna* on the Velocity Channel (as well as *HCC*’s newest columnist). He owns an original whiskey-running 1940 Ford, perhaps the car most identified with the trade.

“We found it on a northern Alabama farm near the Georgia border,” Evernham says. It had no running gear and the whole thing had been butchered. The key thing was the whole back of the car was cut out all the way to the front seat so that cases of moonshine would fit easily. We left the car original. We put in a flathead V-8 and a three-speed transmission. It looks like a rat rod.”

According to Evernham, a good whiskey car is the same as a good race car. “It had to have the horsepower, the proper gears, the proper



springs and suspension setup. But unlike a race car, it had to have hidden lights for when you backed up to the stills in the woods and a shutoff switch to turn off the taillights or the brake lights when you were being chased.”

Whiskey cars evolved greatly over the years Evernham says. “Back in the early days, they wanted horsepower, so a lot of them started with flathead Ford V-8s. In the search for more power, they started adding carburetors and manifolds.

“When the more powerful overhead-valve V-8s came out in the late ’40s, the runners started looking at Cadillacs and Buicks,” Evernham says. “Cadillac ambulances were highly sought after. If one of those got junked, the moonshiners would come running.”

“Besides heavy-duty truck tires and wider ambulance tires, they also installed Columbia overdrive two-speed rear ends that could handle both the dirt and the highway.”



Evernham echoes Junior Johnson’s claims about creative suspensions to handle with a heavy load. One of the tricks was to make your whiskey car look as stock as possible. “They needed to put springs in the back, but they couldn’t look all jacked up, too. Some guys installed two sets of springs, the second one called a ‘bootleg spring,’ kind of like a garage door spring. It ran left to right instead of front to back and could be activated when needed.”

While many cars carried whiskey in large mason jars, some of the whiskey men started carrying their cargo in large tanks. The tanks had special cable-operated valves that would allow the driver to empty the tanks on the fly under pursuit by the revenuers. But most people preferred the jars because they were easier to split up upon delivery.

“As time went on in the 1950s,” Evernham says, “the runners started using the big Chryslers with Hemi engines and then big Ford Galaxies and whatnot in the early 1960s. Some guys intentionally ran really plain-looking cars — big four-door Buicks or Chryslers so they would look like traveling salesmen.”

The ongoing battles between the whiskey runners and the revenuers spawned creative solutions. In *Driving with the Devil*, Neal Thompson relates concepts like a pincer that the revenuers used to try to lock onto the rear bumper of a fleeing whiskey car. The runners countered by mounting their rear bumpers with coat hangers that would quickly separate from the cars and become entangled under the front wheels of the revenuers. The revenuers also tried steel battering rams to force a fleeing car off the road. But the runners countered with James Bond tactics like dropping oil or sharp tacks on the road. More often than not, the pure speed of the whiskey cars won out.

So how much of what the moonshiners did really translates to the race track? “Just about 100 percent,” Evernham says. “You’ve got to remember that the bootleggers used to run cars down the highway, but then they decided to run them around dirt ovals so their friends could watch and see who was the best driver and who had the fastest car. We have one of these field-racing cars, which was the missing link between the moonshine cars and early stock cars. So yes,

Check out the Deep South Region Website at:

deepsouth.aaca.com It's New!!!!

<http://local.aaca.org/deepsouth> ...It's Old and Frozen



Also, members should visit our Facebook page.

Club Members

This Thursday September 24th at 6:00 pm, at the Club House, is our Italian Dinner. We are sending an outline of the menu. If you want to bring something different than what's listed, just let us know so we can plan accordingly.

Lasagna

Spaghetti & Meat Sauce with Parmesan Cheese Zeno & Rheba

Pizza

Meatball Sliders Patt & Buddy

SIDES:

Green Beans

Green Salad

Pasta Salad

Garlic Bread

2 Gallons Sweet Tea

1 Gallon Unsweet Tea

Deserts

Please call or Email Zeno what you are going to bring. We encourage bringing guests but let us know so we can plan for them.

Minutes
DSR Monthly Meeting:
August Meeting 8/27/15

The Call to start the meeting was made by Zeno and was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

- I. Old Business
 - a. The Facebook page, set up by Charlotte Dahlenburg, is officially up and running and is being constantly updated.
 - b. Motion to approve the June and July minutes of the Sparkplug was made by Clyde Smith.
 - i. In June's minutes, a correction was made that the 50/50 was won by Amanda Pendergrass who is Robert White's daughter.
 - c. On the 12th of September, there is an open house showcasing the new assembly line by Airbus.
- II.
- III. New Business
 - a. The Lagniappe Chapter sent a letter and DVD describing a Central Division Fall meet in Houma, Louisiana on November 5th through 7th.
 - b. Jim Downing, with antique motorcycles, found a home for his show at the Ohr—O'Keefe Museum of Art on November 15th.
 - c. In regards to an email sent about the Langan Park 5 year plan, there will be a visitor who will come speak at a meeting on the plans for the remodeling of the park.
 - d. The motion to approve the financial report was made by Buddy Paquett and seconded by John Pendergrass.
 - e. The Hershey meet will be November 7th through 9th.
 - f. Veteran's Day Parade invitation was sent to participate on Wednesday, November 11th. A motion to participate was made by Walt Fuller and seconded by Jim Henderson.
 - g. September 17th through 19th is Model A weekend. Everyone is encouraged to go to Hickory Corner's outside of Kalamazoo, Michigan that has the first and last Model A's made.

A motion to adjourn was made by Zeno. There was no 50/50 drawing. *ALSO* don't forget to tell John Pendergrass a big HAPPY 90th BIRTHDAY!!!!!!!!!!!!



Cruise-Ins

Time	Location	Address	For More Info Contact
1 st Monday	Lighthouse Restaurant	Bayou LeBatre	Mobile Bay Mustang Club
1 st Saturday	Edgewater Mall	Hwy 90, Biloxi MS	Jimbo 228-596-0664
1 st Saturday	Po-Boy Cruisin'	Tillman's Square, Hwy 90	Jo Jo Johnson 251-367-6643
1 st Saturday	5 Guys	Airport At University	Brenda Drinkard 675-9226
1 st Thursday	What-A-Burger	Airport & Snow Road	Bubba Blanton 251-610-4032
2 nd Friday	Hooters	Daphne	
2 nd Saturday	Dillard's	Eastern Shore Mall	Eastern Shore Cruisers
3 rd Saturday	Steak 'n Shake	Schillinger Road	Donnie Tanner 649-5397
3 rd Thursday	RPG Paint	I-65 Service Rd & Moffat Rd	Mobile Bay Mustang Club
3 rd Thursday	Beef O'Bradys	Spanish Fort	
4 th Saturday	Burger King	Highway 43 in Saraland	North Side Cruisers
4 th Saturday	Northrop Complex	Pascagoula, MS	Magnolia Classic Cruisers
4 th Saturday	Hooter's Restaurant	Airport Blvd.	Don Benson 251-680-9533
4 th Saturday	TA Truck 'Stop,	Grand Bay I-10 exit	Grand Bay Country Cruiser
Last Saturday	Sonic - Hwy 59 South	Robertsdale, AL	251-747-2022



Bobby Peterson
924 Butler Dr.
Mobile, AL 36693

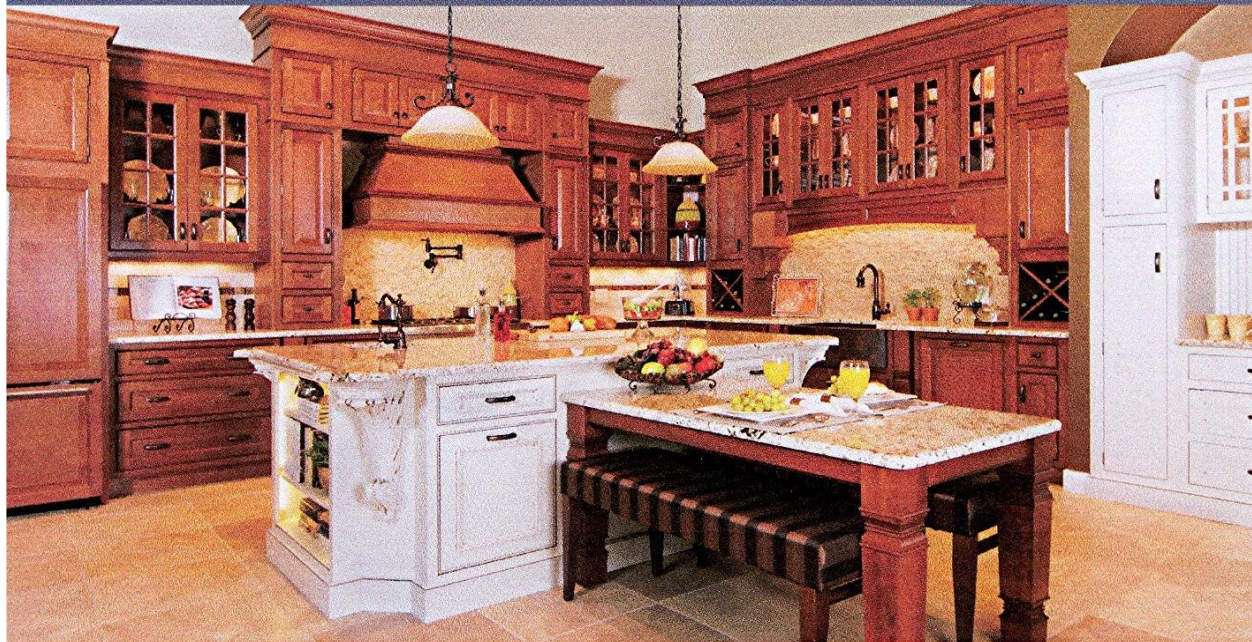
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