

Nov. 1995

Sparkplug

NEWSLETTER OF THE
DEEP SOUTH REGION

A.A.C.A.



Vol. 28

No. 79

EDITOR: Patt Paquet

661-4009

1995 OFFICERS

PRESIDENT:	Frank DeCrease	666-9393
VICE PRESIDENT:	Brenda Reid	666-3761
SECRETARY:	Jane Bruton	666-4150
TREASURER:	Frances Whigham	626-4255
ACTIVITY COORDINATORS:	Melvin & Betty Neese	649-3038
MEMBER AT LARGE	Raymond Cochran	626-5744

2nd Annual Hooters Car Show Without Gremlins or Goblins

Cool temperatures and gray skies greeted the members who arrived at 6:30 AM to get the parking area and registration tent set up. However, when the competitors started arriving, the sun came with them and it could not have been a more beautiful fall day with only a slight breeze.

There were 172 cars registered with only three "no shows". A few of the vehicles registered were for display only and the two judging teams finished their work quickly. The ladies tallying the figures worked diligently and the scores were completed so that trophies were presented on time.

There was a variety of entertainment provided which competitors and visitors alike seem to enjoy. The young women from Hooters were on hand to pose for pictures with your car, help with ticket sales for the Peoples Choice trophy and T-shirts, promote the 50/50 pot and assist in any other way they could.

Show chairman **John Reid** said the only disappointment of the event was that we did not collect nearly as many items for the Bay Area Food Bank as had been hoped for but a number of people did make monetary contributions to the food bank's container that was at the registration table.

A financial report will be available at the **November 16 meeting** and we will know how much money we can contribute to United Cerebral Palsy which is the Hooter's charity of choice.

Last, but far from least, a big **THANK YOU** to all who worked before, during and after the show.

DSR Automobiles a Big Hit in Theodore Pecan Festival Parade

"I must just be crazy to be out early on the coldest morning of the year getting these cars lined up for this parade" is what I was thinking to myself as the wind whipped around the parking lot. But with the cooperation of **2 Brutons, 1 Collins, 1 DeCrease, 1 Henderson, 1 Lunsford, 1 Lyles, 1 McDonnell, 2 (Dale)McLaneys, 2 Neeses, 2 Nelsons, 2 Nettles, 2 Paquets, and 2 Whites** it was all sorted out and we rolled out only about 15 minutes behind schedule. Unfortunately, one of the dignitaries locked the keys in the car and could not get the throws out until a spare key arrived and another of the riders went to the school rather than the meeting place and had to be brought over to where the parade formed.

Arriving at the old Theodore High School, the riders were introduced to those on the street as they left the vehicles. The cars were parked at the Theodore Middle School across the street and a lot of people stopped to look and ask questions. Most of the members gathered on the grounds to visit for a bit and have a look around before going on about their Saturday chores or to work. Thanks to all of you who helped out and made us look good.

Editors Note:

The Sparkplug is coming out a week early due to our **November meeting being held one week early**. It is a bigger issue than usual because I thought November would be a slow month and the ideal time to publish the article on license plates. So much for that idea!

MINUTES

DEEP SOUTH REGION AACA GENERAL MEETING

The October 26, 1995, meeting of the DSR was called to order at 7:40 by Frank DeCrease, president. The meeting was held at the DSR clubhouse. The invocation was given by Ernie Youens. There were 36 members and one guest present.

OLD BUSINESS

*Frank DeCrease presented two applications for membership. Larry Collins and Russell Coker were accepted into the club by acclamation.

*The September Minutes were accepted as printed on a motion from Buddy Paquet and second by Ross Sloan.

*Melvin Neese, activities coordinator, presented two events for club outings. The members voted to participate in the Theodore Pecan Festival (11/4/95) and the Veteran's Day Parade (11/11/95) on a motion from Charlie Lyles and second from Floyd Jordan.

*Frank asked that the "Clubhouse Expansion Survey Form" be returned as soon as possible. The information is needed to reach a consensus about how the interior of the clubhouse will be finished.

*The Hooter's Show update was given by Patt Paquet. There were 77 vehicles registered to date.

NEW BUSINESS

*A copy of the October treasurer's report was distributed and accepted as presented on a motion from Ross Sloan with second from Larry Nelson.

*The Christmas party will be held at the Mobile Greyhound Dog Track. A menu was distributed and people wishing to attend should fill out the order and return it to Melvin with payment by the next meeting (11/16/95).

*A Thanksgiving covered dish will be held at the club house on November 18, at 1 PM. Eating will begin at 2 PM and a television will be available for football fans.

*Patt Paquet, chairperson, announced the nominating committee's slate of officers for the year 1996. Nominations include: John Reid, president; Al White, vice president; Greg McDonnell, secretary; Lucille Nettles, treasurer; Patt Paquet, editor; Jim Martin, member at large; Jerry Finley, car show chair; and Buddy Paquet, activities coordinator. Elections will be held at the November meeting. No guests will be allowed at the November meeting. Note that the meeting will be held one week early for the month of November due to Thanksgiving conflict.

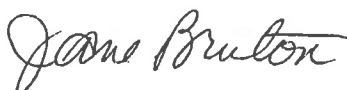
ANNOUNCEMENTS

*The 50/50 pot was won by Ed Lunsford.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:10 PM on a motion by Buddy Paquet and second by Bob Gechjian.

Respectfully submitted,



Alabama License Plates Have a Colorful History

By Patt Paquet

The code of Alabama of 1907 contained the first Alabama law regarding motor vehicle registration. This act, passed in 1903, required that motor vehicle owners register their motor vehicles with the probate judge of the county in which the owner lived. The judge was to issue a certificate of registration to the owner and this code set up a speed limit of 7 miles per hour.

On April 22, 1911, Act Number 452, known as the "Motor Vehicle Law" was approved by the Legislature and provided for the annual issuance of license plates beginning Oct. 1, 1911 from the Secretary of State. The first license plates were issued on Oct. 1, 1911 and expired Sept. 30, 1912. To simplify matters, this plate is listed as 1912. The plates were issued by the Secretary of State upon completion of an application which required a brief description of the vehicle including the name of the manufacture, the style, type, factory number, the character of the motor power and the amount of such motor power stated in terms of horse power. The cost of the plate depended upon the horse power of the vehicle:

Less than 20 hp	\$ 7.50
20 - 30 hp	12.50
30 - 40 hp	17.50
More than 40 hp	20.00
Electric cars	12.50
Steam cars	15.00

Section 10 of the law provided for the tag to be conspicuously displayed on rear of the vehicle and the "rays of the rear lamp shall shine upon the number plate in such a manner as to render the numeral thereon visible at least fifty feet in the direction in which the motor vehicle is proceeding." Section 12 stated that the plate "shall be an enameled plate or placard of metal, four and one-half inches wide and not more than twelve inches in length, in the upper left hand corner of which there shall be the word "Ala." and to the right of which word there shall be the distinctive number assigned to the vehicle set forth in numerals three inches long, each stroke of which shall be at least one-half inch in width..."

It is interesting that some cities in Alabama issued license plates prior to the state beginning to do so. The City of Mobile had porcelain plates for 1909, 1910 and 1911 that were black on green the first year then white on black for the following two years. As far as can be determined, the City of Montgomery had its license plate for one year only, 1909, which was white on green. It is reported that the City of Birmingham also had a license plate in 1908 that was metal but this has not been substantiated. The porcelain plates used in 1909 in that city were white on blue then changed to black on white in 1910. The colors went back to blue on white again in 1911. It is rumored that the City of Decatur had license plates but no details are available. In 1910 and 1911 the City of Tuscaloosa had aluminum numbers attached to a patent leather base. The state of Alabama used undated porcelain plates for 1912, 1913, 1914 and 1915 but the undated metal plates which were used in 1916 are thought to be the rarest of all Alabama license tags. Many of the porcelain plates were made by Baltimore Stamp & Novelty Company.

The very first state-issued license tag in Alabama, which was # 1, went to Leak Funeral Home in Montgomery and was issued on October 1, 1911. Believe it or not, this company is still in business today. Early records reveal that in 1914 there were 9,108 tags issued in Alabama, which according to the census of 1910 had a population of 2,138,093. This calculates to be approximately one vehicle per 234,000 persons. (In 1914 a Model T Roadster with 22 horsepower sold for \$440. The license tag fee was 3.52% of the vehicle's cost.) The population of the state on the 1990 census was 4,040,587 with 3,914,108 permanent tags registered in 1994. The word "private" was used for pleasure passenger car plates from 1922 through 1926. In 1955 an Act was passed requiring the words "Heart of Dixie" and the outline of a heart appear on Alabama plates which is still there up to the present time.

(Continued on Page 4)

Who is responsible for choosing the colors and design of Alabama license plates? The 1911 law providing for the first use of tags designated the Secretary of State as the official responsible for choosing the colors. Later laws changed this giving the Revenue Commissioner power to adopt rules and regulations, with the consent of the governor, concerning the type of tag and its design to be used, along with its size and method of placement on vehicles.

Front and rear license plates were used on vehicles from 1912 through 1915 but from 1916 through 1936 only single plates were used and affixed to the rear of the vehicle. Starting again in 1937 owners were required to display both back and front plates. The only year that tags had the word "front" on them was 1937. In 1962 an Act was passed which designated the use of rear tags only with 1961 being the last year for dual license plates. During WW II, to conserve metal usage, a decal, or windshield sticker was used along with the 1942 license plate. Beginning in 1953 and continuing to the present, tags for passenger cars are sold at a flat rate, \$3.00 plus 75 cents; previous tags were sold by automobile weight. The first year to comply with National Standards of size, 6 inches by 12 inches was 1956. Alabama experimented with reflectorized tags in 1959 for trucks only but it proved to be too costly at that time and was abandoned. Fully reflectorized tags went on sale in 1969. In preceding years, either the background or the numerals were reflectorized but it was hoped the totally reflectorized tags, used in many other states, would reduce nighttime, rear-end accidents.

A new program announced on September 10, 1974 revealed that 1975 would be the first year for mail-out tags in Montgomery. The only persons able to buy tags by mail were those who received a special computer form listing the vehicle owned and the amount of tax assessed plus the charge for the new tag. There was also a \$1.00 handling fee tacked on to get a tag by mail. Other cities followed this practice but some still used the old "come in person" method of obtaining a new license tag.

The first year for state, county and municipal tags to be permanent was 1972. The colors were the same shade of green used for all cars in 1971 and had black letters and numbers. The tags did not have the year stamped on them and were used for the life of the vehicle. As new vehicles were bought, new tags were issued. Various government agencies paid \$1.00 each for the tags. L.D. Bryan of the State Revenue Department said at that time there were about 25,000 government vehicles in Alabama meaning that in 1975 at least \$25,000.00 would be saved if the vehicles were kept. That was on top of what it cost to make and mail the tags. The Department of Public Safety had its own color tag for 1975, gray with dark blue "DPS" letters. However, someone at the tag plant at Atmore Prison goofed with the DPS tags and stamped 1975 on them. The trooper tags had to be replaced in 1976 with tags that had no date and then became permanent. Privately owned passenger cars and trucks had black on bright yellow. This color combination was picked because State Troopers said it was easy to identify, especially at night.

Alabama was the first state to issue distinctive or personalized plates. In 1953 a "Amateur Radio" plate was issued. In 1975 the legislature passed a law providing for new personalized, or "vanity" tags at an extra cost of \$50.00 with the revenue from the special tags earmarked for the prisons. But the present law prohibited the use of highway money, including proceeds from the sale of license tags for anything but highway needs. Therefore, a constitutional amendment was required which was ratified by voters in the November 2, 1976 election and the tags became available in 1977. In addition the specialized plates for 1977, the tags were drastically different. The red, white and blue tags no longer contained the traditional numerical identification for counties. Instead, each tag bore three letters followed by three numerals which ranged from 001-999 before the series of letters changed. The county name appeared on the tag, along with the State Capitol dome, state flag, National Bicentennial emblem and the traditional "Heart of Dixie".

(Continued on Page 5)

Some motorists had trouble with the paste-on county name on the new 1977 tags. A State Trooper stopped one man whose county sticker was over the capitol emblem. He had let his eight-year-old son apply the sticker.

In April 1977, the U.S. Supreme Court, in a 7-2 majority ruling held that no state could constitutionally require an individual to participate in the dissemination of an ideological message. The Supreme Court did not say states could not put their mottoes on tags but only that motorists did not have to display them and could cover them with tape. In Alabama it was a state law that citizens had to display a heart and the words "Heart of Dixie" on car tags. If the slogan was covered, it was considered a misdemeanor and a motorist could be arrested. Col. E. C. Dothard, Director of the Department of Public Safety at that time, said he did not know where the state stood as far as enforcing the law if someone were to contest the Alabama tag motto. There have been many considerations for mottoes on Alabama license tags but some were met with much dislike. So much so in fact that in 1957, a petition addressed to State Commissioner of Revenue Larue Horn, which was signed by nearly 100 Jefferson County Court House employees said: "It is our urgent request that the State Department of Revenue not inscribe the words 'Y'All Come' on 1957 license tags."

The five-year tag program, initiated by Legislative Act 524, went into effect with the 1977 tag issuing season. The plan was designed to save some money for the state by cutting down on the cost of buying metal to make new tags each year. Instead, it more likely resulted in a loss of revenue due to drivers not renewing their tag annually. The annual sticker was difficult to spot. It is possible, according to figures in the Criminal Justice Information Systems, that 373,000 vehicles did not have their 1978 tags renewed. This was an estimated \$ 4 million of lost money. In late June 1979, legislation was introduced to continue the five-year tags with an increase in the issuance fee from 75 cents to \$1.25. This increase was to provide issuing authorities' money for additional personnel for the staggered registration that was to

go into effect October 1, 1980. Under the new system, tag distribution would occur throughout the year based on the first letter of a person's last name. Each month had assigned certain letters. The tag design changed with a return to numbers to designate counties such as "1" for Jefferson and "2" for Mobile, eliminating the need for a county decal and the one for renewal was three times bigger than the ones that were currently in use.

After the Commissioner of Revenue selects or approves the design for a new tag, a sample or prototype tag is produced. These tags normally have all zeros or the word "SAMPLE" on them. Only a few of these are made with one being retained by the Revenue Department's Motor Vehicle Division and one by the Alabama Department of Correction's tag plant. If you are in the right place at the right time, you can occasionally pick up one of these tags. There is no estimate on their value, only how much the person who has one values it.

You might be aware that license plates are currently made by the tag plant located in Holman Prison near Atmore but did you know that the Alabama Department of Corrections has been making tags since the twenties? It all began in late 1928 or early 1929 at Kilby Prison just outside Montgomery. It continued there until the prison was closed in 1968 and Holman was opened. The equipment was moved to the new plant and is in use today. The license tag on your vehicle weighs .445 pounds and begins life as a piece of sheet metal in a giant roll. It is run through a hot water bath to clean it of any oil, dirt or other residue. Next the sheet metal goes in a press/dryer combination which will straighten and dry it. The third step is the application of reflectorized coating that is a 3-M product which has the design (excluding the letters and numbers) on it. Following this the metal is cut by machine into individual tags and attaching holes are punched at the same time. This machine was one of those moved. It can cut and punch 1,000-1,200 tags per hour and is in remarkably good condition for its age. A new machine they have in the plant produces only about 700 tags per hour. The letters and numbers are stamped by (Continued on Page 6)

machine with the numbers being changed manually after each tag is stamped. The letters are changed on an "as needed" basis. This machine is also one of the older ones but still in use. After each tag is stamped it is removed and put into a storage bin and from there the tags to a paint area for the raised letters and numbers are machine-painted. They are then put on drying racks which are on a conveyor belt that goes through a kiln to dry and takes approximately 30 minutes. The tags are then put in numerical order and sleeved in clear plastic which is how your tag appears when you buy it. The numerical order is check again before the tags being boxed and placed in a warehouse. They are delivered by Alabama Corrections Industries trucks

to the issuing agencies. Small amounts such as one box are sent by UPS. The plant runs a normal 8-hour day with 50-60 inmates working on tag production. In late September, they have already produced the tags for Jefferson and Mobile counties and are working on the others for 1997 which will go on sale January 1, 1997. The new tag is three colors; a pale blue across the top fading to a large white portion where black letters and numbers will be. The white then blends into a soft red with in a bolder red across the bottom is the word "Alabama" appears. Our traditional "Heart of Dixie" is at the top in blue with a red heart directly behind the word "of". It is a good-looking tag and a welcome change.

Alabama has used almost every conceivable combination of colors but there was only one year in which the color ivory was used and no one seems to know why. The following shows the various combinations:

1912 - White on Blue	1940 - Yellow on Black	1967 - Yellow on Blue
1913 - Black on Red	1941 - Black on Yellow	1968 - White on Red
1914 - Black on White	1942 - Yellow on Black	1969 - Green on White
1915 - White on Green	1943 - 1942 Plate with a	1970 - Blue on White
1916 - Black on Yellow	Windshield Sticker	1971 - Black on Yellow
1917 - Red on White	1944 - Black on Yellow	1972 - Black on Green
1918 - Blue on Gray	1945 - Yellow on Black	1973 - Red on White
1919 - White on Dark Green	1946 - White on Black	1974 - Black on White
1920 - Black on White	1947 - Black on Silver	1975 - Black on Yellow
1921 - Red on White	1948 - Deep Yellow on Black	1976 - Blue on White
1922 - Black on Deep Yellow	1949 - Black on Deep Yellow	1977 - Blue on Red & White
1923 - White on Dark Blue	1950 - Yellow on Black	(First 5 Year Plate)
1924 - Brown on Cream	1951 - Black on Yellow	1978 - White on Blue (Sticker)
1925 - White on Red	1952 - White on Blue	1979 - Black on White (Sticker)
1926 - White on Green	1953 - Blue on White	1980 - Black on Yellow (Sticker)
1927 - Ivory on Black	1954 - White on Blue	1981 - White on Red (Sticker)
1928 - Black on Yellow	1955 - White on Green	1982 - Blue & Red on White
1929 - Yellow on Black	1956 - Black on Deep Yellow	(Second 5 Year Plate)
1930 - White on Red	1957 - Deep Yellow on Black	1983 - White on Red (Sticker)
1931 - Yellow-orange on Green	1958 - White on Blue	1984 - 1986 - Red & Blue on
1932 - Black on White	1959 - Blue on White	White (Sticker)
1933 - White on Light Blue	1960 - White on Blue	1987 - 1991 - Red & Blue on
1934 - Black on Orange	1961 - White on Black	White (Third 5 Year Plate)
1935 - White on Green	1962 - White on Green	1992 - 1996 - Red & Blue on
1936 - Red on White	1963 - White on Blue	White (Fourth 5 Year)
1937 - Purple on White	1964 - White on Crimson	1997 - Black on Blue, White & Red
1938 - Red on Blue-purple	1965 - Orange on Blue	
1939 - Black on Silver	1966 - White on Black	

My thanks to the Alabama Archives & History: Gene Giles, Administrative Assistant with The Alabama Department of Corrections, Charles Bodiford, Public Information Officer, for the Alabama Department of Corrections, David Tillery, Metal Shop Supervisor and Bennie Harrelson, Warehouse Supervisor with the Alabama Correctional Industries; and Johnny Newman, IRP Supervisor, Department of Motor Vehicles, License Plate Collector Paul M. Majerick and Charles Gambrell with the Research Division of Mobile Public Library.

1996 Officers to be Elected at November Meeting

The slate of officers for the coming year was presented at the October meeting. Nominations can be made from the floor at the November meeting but you must have the permission of the person(s) you are nominating for office. The following are those who are willing to give of their time and energy:

President.....John Reid
Vice President.....Al White
Secretary.....Greg McDonnell
Treasurer.....Lucille Nettles
Editor.....Patt Paquet
Activities Coordinator.....Buddy Paquet
Member at Large.....Jim Martin

This is one of the most important meetings of the year to you as a member but please remember that no guests are permitted to attend this month.

Early Payment of Dues is Encouraged

Thanks to all of you have already paid your 1996 dues. It is a tremendous help, not only for the financial aspect of the club, but in getting the new Membership Roster completed to meet AACA deadlines. If you are one of those who have not yet paid your national and local dues, Frances Whigham will be collecting both at the November meeting and will take care of the national portion for you.

Members Under Restoration

Bernie Cammon was hospitalized Oct. 19-26 after having stepped a giant-size nail but was at the Hooters show using a crutch....**Jim Martin** had galbladder surgery Oct. 27...**Leon & Aileen Hunt** have both been under the weather...**Elven Few** has not yet completely recovered from foot surgery in September....**Eugenia Youens** hopes to see some better days ahead after complications from her surgery in September...**Lloyd Crowdus** is not feeling well these days....**Linda Nelson** wishes her "tennis elbow" would get better...anyone else ill ?

DSR Welcomes Two New Members to the Hobby and our Club

Although he moved to Fort Walton, Florida at the tender age of three months, **Russell Coker** says he always felt Mobile was his home. He became interested in horticulture as a child and joined a bonsai club at the age of 12. The opportunity to study as an apprentice of this art form presented itself and he spent three years in Kanuma, Japan before returning to get a degree in Landscape Architecture from Mississippi State in 1992. Working summers and holidays while in school for Renaissance Landscaping he became a partner after graduation. Russell has lectured on bonsai at conventions in Atlanta, Austin, Orlando and other cities. His collection of bonsai is large and some of his prized specimens are older than he is. A newly acquired **1964 T-Bird** is now taking up some of his time in order to be ready for next show season

Larry Collins is a native Mobilian having been born at Brookley AFB Hospital and the proud owner of a 1957 Chevy which he has had for 18 months. He is in the process of restoring the car and the seatcovers were installed just in time for the Hooters show. The car was picked at 9:00 PM on Friday evening and he stayed up the rest of the night getting it cleaned up. Larry has three daughters, one of whom has made him a grandfather, and the other two are ages 15 and 12. Besides enjoying old cars, he is a "pool shark" playing on a 5-person team for the Alabama All Stars League. They are good enough that they go to Las Vegas for a tournament each year. Larry works for Link Distributions, a wholesaler of automatic door and gate openers.

The Sparkplug is non-profit and published for the information of our members and friends. DEEP SOUTH REGION meetings are held the fourth Thursday of each month at 7:30 PM in the clubhouse at 951 Forest Hill Dr. Membership in the Antique Automobile Club of America is a requirement to be a member of this region. Annual local dues are \$15 and AACA national dues are \$24 single/\$26 joint. Views expressed in the Sparkplug are not necessarily those of the Region officers or AACA.

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*Happy
Thanksgiving!*



Nov. 95