

38th International SDC Meet & 150 Years of Studebaker

by Pat Billey

"We have experienced something nobody will ever experience again - seeing that many Studebakers and Studebaker people all at one time in one place . . ."

Those words, submitted by Larry Merhaut of the Potomac Chapter, make all of the hard work of hosting an International SDC Meet "worth it all", and what a Meet it was! I salute all of the Michiana Chapter members who stayed the course for the success of the Meet; it has been my privilege to have worked with each of you.

Guests began arriving Saturday, June 22nd, as we held our final committee meetings and began the preparations for registration, hotel and Convention Center displays and, in general, "moving in for the week". The Atrium of the South Bend Marriott was prepared with a display of Studebakers complimentary to SDC, as well as ASC and AOAI, who held their Meets in conjunction with ours. The display including a beautiful 1931 President, a head-turner 1952 Land Cruiser and a

knock-out 2002 Studebaker Avanti convertible. The Studebaker display continued at the Century Center with a 1925 Studebaker and the York Raffle Car, a 1963 Avanti.

Sunday, as the 38th International Studebaker Drivers Club Meet officially opened, guest arrival became very noticeable and Swap Meet vendors began the meticulous ritual of "set-up" in their appointed areas. This was the largest Swap Meet an international meet has ever enjoyed with over 229 vendor spaces. The parking area at Century Center was included in our negotiated package and was reserved the entire week for Studebaker parking. This reserved area produced a changing display of over 230 Studebakers each day during the week.

The week began with beautiful, but warm, Indiana weather as Monday's schedule of the International SDC Board meeting. Tours and other scheduled meetings were convened. Guests and last minute vendors continued to arrive and get "caught up" on all the news from fellow SDC members.

Another International Meet attraction that has been well received for the past several years is the Memorabilia Room. This year SDC member Bruce Slifer, of Allentown PA, built a replica of a 50s - 60s era Studebaker Parts Department. The display was complete with period correct Studebaker Parts & Accessories, telephone, office equip-

ment and display cases filled with goodies including brand new Promotional Models for \$1.29 each. The only problem was Bruce wouldn't sell them. SDC members Jim Geary, along with Bruce Slifer had a mega display of Studebaker toys and models enjoyed by all of the visitors.



Photo by John Cosby

2002 Avanti Convertible.

The Opening Reception, attended by over 375, provided an opportunity to greet old friends and get acquainted with many new ones. The evening was filled



Photo by Charlene Rulle

(Left) The Opening Reception was attended by over 375.



Photo by John Cosby

The Registration desk.



Photo by John Cosby

The Eggers family from Chile check in on the map of the world.

with good fun, plenty of music and endless supplies of food; I think we still have a couple of the 6' long sub sandwiches in the back of the '54 wagon. Anybody still hungry?

Tuesday continued to produce 95-degree temperatures, more guest arrivals and huge crowds for the Swap Meet vendors. The Streets of South Bend were looking like they did back in the "good old days", with Studebakers everywhere you looked! Our Meet



Photo by Charlene Rule

In the Memorabilia Room, a huge display of models

photographs were taken each morning at the Tippecanoe Restaurant. One SDC member, who shall remain nameless, even experienced a Police escort to the Photo shoot in his open header "Blown Lark". This member exclaimed that it was the first time the police were in front of him rather than behind him . . . just kidding, Mike.

Wednesday provided a new experience for the SDC ladies - our Ladies Style Show & Brunch was sold out to a standing room only crowd. A brief inspection made by this writer concluded that this is an event that should be offered at future International Meets. Thanks to all who attended and our staff who produced the Style Show, it was great. Our full schedule of Tours continued with full buses and more of that great Indiana weather.

Across the street at Century Center, the first of three successful Seminars was taking place. Ted Harbit led a packed house on "High Performance Studebakers". Those who have a need for speed, or just like their Studebakers to respond beneath the throttle, learned the secrets of how to make those Studebakers really run.

"Living Legends", how appropriate for the second Seminar on Wednesday. Those "Living Legends" included Carl Thompson, Elmer Danch, Ray Burnett and Harold Johnson along with guest moderator, Almanac Editor, Dick Quinn. The room was silent as each of these



Photo by Charlene Rule

The Watches competition.



Photos by Charlene Rule

Replica of a '50s-60s Studebaker Parts Department, built by Bruce Slifer.

former Studebaker "Living Legends" recounted over 100 years of combined service to Studebakers. Did you know that at one time Studebaker considered becoming the distributor for Toyota? Or that former President Richard Nixon was being considered for a position with Studebaker?

Most everyone I talked with after this Seminar said they wished it had lasted for a couple of days. If you ever



Photo by Charlene Rule

The beautiful auction quilt.



Photo by Charlene Rule

Many auction items.

have the opportunity to hear some of these "Living Legends" recount the past do not miss it!

Wednesday afternoon was completed with a third dynamic Seminar, "Designs and Designers of the 40s and 50s, presented by author John Bridges. John brought many of the famous designers to life in their own words, accompanied with a slide presentation describing design philosophy, challenges and contributions they made to the automotive industry. John has captured something

that is truly unique as you hear these famous designers sharing their thoughts from design to production of the very cars we enjoy. John Bridges produced the CD used in his "Designs and Designers of the 40s and 50s seminar and does have them available for sale. If you are interested in purchasing a CD, John may be contacted at his home in Nashville, TN.

The General Membership Meeting brought all attendees up to date on the SDC National Board Meeting, new business and results of the national election. It was additionally announced that the 2004 International SDC Meet will be held in Charlotte, NC. Colin Fort was honored for his years of service as Treasurer and Stu Chapman received the distinguished "Travis Trout" award for... well, you had to be there. The crowd grew as the SDC Auction began and SDC members were ready to "bid high and bid often". Lots of great items went home with new owners, including a very unique quilt made of International Meet T-Shirts from many past International SDC Meets. Some other favorites were many of the items donated by Australian SDC member Peter Andriske.

"Concours Day", clear skies, some relief from the heat and the Studebakers just kept coming and coming. The University of Notre Dame, backdrop for the



Photo by John Cosby

The annual meeting of the SDC Board of Directors on Monday.

Concours, was a fabulous location for this event. It appears that just under 800 vehicles were displayed or judged to the overwhelming delight of thousands who enjoyed the sight of seemingly endless Studebakers. There were more Pre-Wars displayed than the 100-plus Avantis. There were Trucks, Modifieds, Champs, Commanders, Hawks, Speedsters, Larks, Presidents and Scotsmans; it was unbelievable! If you missed this Meet,



Photo by Charlene Rule

Hospitality Room stories.



Photo by John Cosby

Zone Coordinators and Regional Managers meet.



Photo by Charlene Rule

The Harry Barnes Memorial Award.



Photo by Charlene Rule

Outdoor swap meet vendors.

stay tuned for "My Classic Cars" with Dennis Gage, for your chance to attend the Concours. Dennis and crew taped most of the day and will produce a segment of an early 2003 show featuring the 38th International SDC Concours.

One of the most moving and emotional events took place at the conclusion of Concours Day. A community parade, led by the South Bend Police Department, brought nearly 360 Studebakers from Notre Dame to the



Photo by John Cosby

Concours day.

heart of South Bend. This parade had been well publicized by the City and the Convention & Visitors Bureau and the City was out in force. Thousands of people lined the nearly 3-1/2 mile parade route cheering and displaying "welcome home" signs as each one of those Studebakers drove past. It was truly a remarkable sight to witness - one I shall never forget.

The Studebaker Band provided attendees with a great concert before Fun Night festivities began, thanks to Brad Kuchan for his work with the SDC Band. Fun Night is traditionally a night to relax and have fun, and boy did we have FUN! After a great meal, we remembered and shared together events of the past year that shook the nation by standing together and singing "I'm proud to be an American". With American flags waving and our overseas guests joining in, it was clear to see the unity of all SDC members. Lots of great music, dancing, visiting, lots of door prizes and just plain FUN.

The highlight of Fun Night was the long awaited drawing for the Studebaker Jr. Wagon. I want to thank all of the SDC members who purchased tickets for this beautiful wagon over the past year; unfortunately, it would be awarded to only one winner. As the appointed hour approached, the winning ticket was drawn and the lucky winner was identified. The winner, who was back at her hotel getting ready to retire for the evening soon arrived back at Fun Night, was introduced and officially took possession of the wagon. Congratulations to Geri Carpenter, of Williston, Vermont, who incidentally purchased her ticket the very afternoon of the drawing; go figure.



Photo by Charlene Rule

Searching for bargains in the Swap Meet.

Friday, a day to relax a bit, take that last Tour, look for that last bargain in the Swap Meet, attend the famous "Cooperator Session" or go to the Studebaker Drag Races. What!!! Drag Races?



Photo by John Cosby

Dennis Gage was in attendance and will feature the meet early in 2003 on his television show "My Classic Car".



Photo by Charlene Rule

The SDC band at their best.

The "Cooperator Session", held each year as an open forum, invites SDC members to interact with the experts on taillights to superchargers. Bob Palma and a host of others provided invaluable information to all who attended. Great job, guys!

And coincidentally, these Studebaker Drag Races, while not officially sanctioned, sponsored, associated, or promoted by the International Meet, just happened to be scheduled to coincide with the last day of the Meet. Since it was nearby anyway, many of our attendees found their way to the world famous Osceola Drag Strip and gave witness to what happens when you get serious with a Studebaker at the Drag Strip. Many of the locals who traditionally practice on Friday afternoons were horror-struck at the sight of Studebakers blowing the doors off Blue Ovals and Bowties.

Friday evening means Awards Banquet and this year at the conclusion of dinner, we celebrated the Studebaker Corporation's birthday complete with a simultaneous indoor pyrotechnic display as a giant birthday cake was prepared for everyone's enjoyment. Head judge Jim Pepper took the podium to complete the task of presenting all of the Awards. Banquet attendees were presented with an official Meet napkin including the familiar embroidered "Meet Logo". SDC Board Member Harry Crosson presented SDC President John Begian with a plaque honoring SDC founder, Harry Barnes. The evening was concluded with farewells and fond memories of a week that ended too fast - but wait, it's not over yet.

Saturday morning, Studebakers were on the road again, escorted by the South Bend Police Department, and heading for the grandeur of the former Studebaker Proving Grounds. If you've never had the privilege of looking out your windshield at the Studebaker Proving Grounds high banked track as it rolled beneath your Studebaker, you have truly missed one of the best experiences there



Photo by Charlene Rule

On the front straightaway at the Proving Grounds.

is, period. This writer is not sure when that will happen again, but, when it does, don't miss it.

As you conclude this summary, please accept our sincere thanks for attending and supporting the 38th International SDC Meet. We enjoyed having you "Back Home in South Bend". I would additionally like to extend my thanks to each member of the Michiana Chapter who made this Meet the success that it was; it has been my privilege to have worked with each one of you and experience the team work and commitment shared by all of the 38th International SDC Meet Committee.



Photo by Charlene Rule

Parade to downtown South Bend.



Photo by John Cosby

"Living Legends" Seminar.



Photo by Charlene Rule

Windshield view of high bank at Proving Grounds.