

St. Louis – The Studebaker Scene in 2015

by Lew Shucart and Don Hart

Nearly 1,000 registered members attended the 51st International Meet of the Studebaker Drivers Club in St. Louis, and the August meet had something for everyone. SDC members were joined at the Westport Plaza complex by those in the Avanti Owners Association and the Antique Studebaker Club.

Those who attended this Studebaker meet were not disappointed! There was so much eye candy for old car lovers you could have spent the entire week at the host hotel, the Westport Sheraton Chalet, as well as the alternate, Sheraton Plaza, in the same complex and you would not be bored. In fact, with everything meet related at one site, you could have parked your Studebaker—or Brand X—at the hotel lot and not have had to move your vehicle until the meet was over and you were ready to drive home. Registration, hospitality rooms, all seminars, meetings and events, including

the vendor parts swap, were all on one location. The Thursday Concours d'Elegance also took place on the Westport complex parking lot, creating a mini Studebaker city for event goers and Westport Plaza office workers alike.

Most members were pleasantly surprised at the convenience of the meet location, with both hotels situated among a vast number of restaurants, bars and shopping venues. SDC, AOAI and ASC members essentially filled all 299 rooms of the Sheraton Lakeside Chalet for the week, and nearly half of the 200 rooms in the Sheraton Plaza Hotel, a two-minute walk across the plaza. Others were booked at the overflow Doubletree Hilton, less than a mile from the Westport Plaza complex.

If we were given the challenge to pick your favorite to take home with you, it would have been a difficult task indeed, for there were scores of choice “Studies”





photo by John Cosby

Wally Kreutz and Thomas Gipe, two of the friendly and helpful host chapter volunteers who were eager to assist and answer questions.

on display, including an abundance of Hawks and Avantis. Another pleasant surprise was the number of Studebaker trucks on display, including a shiny 1927 fire engine.

Final totals saw 523 registrations, 991 attendees, and over 200 Studebakers of all types on Thursday's Concours d'Elegance field. The AOAII judging the day earlier saw 31 Avantis judged. On the Thursday Concours, there were 21 Avantis judged and 20 for SDC display.

We had vendors from both coasts in addition to many Midwest vendors. If your reason for attending the meet was in search of parts, you would not have been disappointed. The 2015 SDC/AOAII International Meet was a huge success from the vending point of view. We had 68 pre-registered vendors and 11 walk-ins. We had vendors in two ballrooms, in the underground garage and outside. One of the challenges we faced was making buyers of parts aware of the four vending areas and getting them flowing through them all. We think we were successful with this effort after some trial and error and lots of signs.

Most of the vendors we spoke to seemed happy with the results of our efforts. They said the St. Louis folks were all friendly and helpful and indicated that sales were as expected. We heard more than once that this was the largest swap meet area seen in years. Vending is definitely one of the many successes of the meet.

We tried something new this year and it was a huge success. Local member Gary Krautmann brought some Boy Scouts to Westport Plaza on Sunday to help the vendors unload. The vendors treated them well financially and were very grateful for their services. We were asked multiple times on Friday as vendors were packing



photo by John Cosby

Welcome Night featured ice cream with lots of toppings.



photo by Ann Turner

Chip Dayton and Jane Ash, of the Ocean Bay Chapter SDC were on hand with meet shirts and to answer questions about next year's SDC International Meet in Warwick, Rhode Island.

up where the Scouts were." Unfortunately they were in school on Friday. Thanks to Gary for making this happen!

We had extra spaces in the garage which we ended up renting to folks to park their cars in the threat of bad



photo by John Cosby

Larry Swanson speaking at the Chapter Newsletter Editors' meeting.



photo by Lew Shucart

The Studebaker Band (above), led by Glenn Shull, performed prior to the start of the annual SDC Auction shown below. Richard Dormois was the auctioneer and was assisted by several volunteers.

photo by Ann Turner



photo by John Cosby

At the General Membership Meeting on Tuesday, Edward Burriss was honored for his many continuous years of serving as Director for the Southeast Zone of SDC. He is retiring at the end of the current term.

weather. We rented 15 spaces this way that otherwise would not have been used. They paid the same as the vendors did for the spaces. Folks kept their cars dry and we rented empty spaces without impacting the vendors. This was a win-win for all.

“Thanks to all who helped make vending in 2015 a success,” said Vending Chairman Milt Yoder. Special thanks to those whom came in on Saturday and Sunday mornings to mark off the spaces and then again on Sunday afternoon to avoid chaos when the vendors were unloading.

The meet got started on Sunday, August 16, when many mem-



photo by John Cosby

The car wash was busy all week.



photo by John Cosby

photo by Evan Severson



bers began arriving at the host hotel. After checking in on Sunday, vending opened from 2 to 5 p.m. for early-bird shopping, the first of five days of parts swapping.

Monday saw more members arrive as the SDC National Board meeting got underway in the meet hotel's Alpine Room. Nine hours were set aside for the annual gathering, but thanks to frequent online meetings throughout the year, board members wrapped up business by early afternoon. Welcome Night began at 7 p.m. across the plaza in the Sheraton Plaza East Ballroom, when nearly 400 members gathered for introductions and ice cream with all the fixings. Welcome Ambassador, Jeanne Keirle from the St. Louis Convention and Visitors Commission, held everyone's attention while introducing members to the area attractions. We have since heard from a number of attendees who took her advice and visited attractions around the area, including the Japanese Lantern Festival at the Missouri Botanical Garden, as well as petting



photo by Evan Severson

Meet Co-chairs Lew Shucart and Don Hart.

Some of the Swap Meet areas were indoors (below), with overflow in the underground garage (upper right).

photo by Evan Severson





photo by Ann Turner

Co-Operator Seminar: Left to right: Ingvar Vik, Jon Myer, Dwain Grindinger, Bob Palma, Randy Rundle, Herman Thoms, Jim Pepper, and Buzz Beckman. All the advisors were kept very busy answering many questions and offering technical advice for a large crowd (below).

photo by Ann Turner



zoos at Grant's Farm, the former home of President Ulysses S. Grant.

The first of three tours got underway at dawn on Tuesday, with nearly 70 guests boarding two luxury motor coaches for a three hour excursion to visit SDC member Don Armacost's private Studebaker Museum, which included a catered lunch on site in Don's 1950s diner recreation.

Tuesday was also meeting day, which saw annual meetings for the Avanti Owners Association, and SDC Printed and Electronic Newsletter Meeting with tips and comparisons for chapter editors.

Chapter presidents met that afternoon, while Studebaker band members gathered in the Matterhorn Room for the first of two practice sessions. SDC judges were trained Tuesday morning, and AOAI members were introduced to an early presentation of a forthcoming Avanti authenticity manual of nearly 300 color pages. A new event this year was organized by SDC member Richard Dormois concerning estate and family planning.

An overflow crowd gathered Tuesday evening for the Annual General Membership Meeting with outgoing president Carl Thomason, who introduced incoming president, Tom Curtis. Members heard news about the SDC and updates from Jane Ash about next summer's International Meet in Rhode Island, before a presentation by Becky



photo by Duane Miller

Stump the Experts Seminar: Left to right: George Krem, Richard Quinn, Loren Pennington, Andrew Beckman, John Hull, Brad Bez (not present for this photo), and Jon Myer.

(10-12/15)

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Bonham and Andy Beckman from the Studebaker National Museum.

More parts vending continued on Wednesday, while the Antique Studebaker Club met for their annual board meeting. A packed motor coach left Westport Plaza Wednesday morning to take guests to tour the Gateway Arch, a



Nolan McCowan, grandson of meet co-chair Don Hart, was in attendance all week at his very first SDC International meet, along with his parents and grandparents. See his official Studebaker "tattoo".

part of the Jefferson National Parks Association, celebrating its 50th anniversary this year. After venturing to the top of the 630-foot-tall monument, Arch goers were treated to lunch on the historic Laclede's Landing on the Mississippi riverfront, which is undergoing extensive renovations through the end of this year. After lunch, tour members ended the day at the historic United States headquarters of Anheuser-Busch/Inbev for lessons in brewing beer and a chance to see one of the company's original Studebaker beer wagons that is stored at the brewery stables. The tour always ends in the brewery's tap room where visitors are treated to free Anheuser-Busch samples!

Overflow crowds filled both Alpine Rooms for the morning "Stump the Studebaker Experts" seminar, following by the AOAI Past Presidents' seminar and the Co-Operators' tech session. The Studebaker Band performed the first of two concerts Wednesday evening before the successful National SDC Auction, while AOAI members held their annual awards banquet in the Sheraton Plaza East Ballroom, where longtime member and former Studebaker executive Richard Vaux was honored with the Association's Lifetime Achievement Award.

Thursday began bright and early for Gateway Chapter members at 5 a.m. when we cleared the lot and set up division signs and picnic tables for judges where the Concours d'Elegance was held. New for this year had judging held under four large canopies, where the judges could be shielding from the hot sun as cars and trucks were brought under each canopy by division. Also new was fully electronic judging using iPad tablets this year for Division 6 only—the Avanti division. The software was built by Pennsylvania-based eJudged,, and generally went pretty well. A few bugs were fixed within minutes, and other improvements



photo by Evan Severson

International Studebaker friends. Left to right: Larry and Taffy Metz, Canada; Riet and Paul Dammes, Netherlands; Warren and Susan Thompson, Australia.

will be made to the software before electronic judging is scheduled to be used for all divisions next year in Rhode Island. Tops among the improvements will be quick and

(10-12/15)

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easy printing of all results, as well as automatic emailing of results to vehicle owners.

Over 200 Studebakers were on the field for both judging and display, but many more were scattered throughout the perimeter and also on both hotel parking lots. The final Studebaker Band concert began in the noon hour at the Concours field, which also brought out many Westport Plaza office workers and visitors on their lunch break, introducing many of them to the world of Studebakers.

A respite from the Thursday Concours was Fun Night in the Sheraton Plaza Ballroom. An overflow crowd turned out to feast from a St. Louis-themed Italian menu – pizza, salad, ravioli, and other Italian specialties. We ran out of table seats at the beginning, but for those who persevered, the flow of food and drinks was never ending. Many visited or danced the night

away to the music of The Calhouns, a husband and wife duo from Nebraska, who include Studebaker and South Bend-themed songs as part of their repertoire.

Running throughout the week inside the hotel was probably one of the largest collections of Studebaker memorabilia at a national meet. The room was staffed at all times, thanks to Chairman Don Lindner, and featured an eclectic mix of model cars and trucks, toys, literature and Studebaker pocket watches. Another week long “event” was the Hospitality Room, successfully stocked and staffed by the Regnas, Pratts and Langs. The daily fresh fruit available in the Hospitality Room was especially welcome.

For the last day, Friday’s motor coach was again packed for the Planes, Trains and Automobiles tour to the National Museum of Transportation that features one of the largest train collections in the nation, including a Raymond Loewy designed S1 locomotive. Following a catered lunch at the museum, visitors ended the day at the Historic Aircraft Restoration Museum where they also joined the visiting members and cars from the Antique Studebaker Club.

The day ended with crowd of 310 attending the SDC Annual Awards Banquet. As awards were announced and



winning vehicles were flashed on a video screen, members retrieved their unique trophies, made from the actual tram cables used to bring the tram cars up each leg of the Gateway Arch.

In celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Gateway Arch, part of the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial, The Missouri/Illinois Gateway Chapters of SDC and the Avanti Owners Association, in a break from past procedures, decided to provide all the car show trophies at this year’s meet. Members whose Studebaker or Avanti were judged and won a trophy actually took home a little piece of the Arch! It stands approximately 8-3/4 inches wide by 8-1/8 inches tall including the wooden base. Those vehicles who won a best in their respective divisions will receive a slightly larger cable arch trophy that measures 10-3/8 inches wide by 9-1/2 inches tall

including the wooden base. All cable arch trophies included a special plaque on the wood base and red, white and blue ribbon with a gold, silver or bronze medallion, depending on the vehicle’s point score. We hope that these meaningful trophies will remind those members winning their Studebaker award of the effort and hospitality put forth by the Gateway Chapters of the Missouri and Illinois Studebaker Drivers Club and Avanti Owners Association.

An International Meet cannot be a success without the “feet on the street”; the local chapter members who selflessly give of their time and talents. Our thanks to Gateway SDC and AOAI Chapter members who worked to make the 51st International SDC Meet a success. Our thanks also to our ASC liaison, Ford Stoecker. A special thanks and appreciation to the IMC Chairman, Denny Foust, who answered questions any time, night or day and assisted at the Meet and also to his wife Cindi who trained and then worked with our pre-registration volunteers the entire Meet.

A final thanks to those SDC, AOAI and ASC members who decided that St. Louis WAS the Studebaker Scene in 2015!

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Meet Coffee Mugs Still Available

Extra SDC and AOAI meet coffee mugs and dash plaques are available for those who were not able to attend the August show and meeting, or for those who attended and received a coffee mug in their registration packet and wish to add more to your collection.

Coffee mugs price is \$5.00 each. Please specify either SDC or AOAI coffee mug, or both. Postage per package for coffee mugs is \$10 per package.



SDC - front



SDC - back



AOAI - front



AOAI - back

Extra dash plaques are also available. Dash plaques are for the SDC 2015 meet are \$1.00, including postage.

Order online from the Gateway Chapter website at: clubs.hemmings.com/gatewaysdc or by mail by sending a check payable to:

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