

## Sacramento Valley Region's Early History

### The Beginning

Only several organizational meetings in a North Sacramento elementary school auditorium in early 1962 – each with a following get-together at Gus Sheidel's Restaurant and Hof Brau on Fulton Avenue near Marconi to recap the more important stuff – were needed to convince 35 Sacramento-area Porsche owners to submit paid applications for membership and a petition for a charter to form Sacramento Valley Region (SVR), Porsche Club of America (PCA). Burt Propp, then president of Golden Gate Region, gave us a stirring pep-talk at one of the meetings. The petition for charter was considered during the March 10-11, 1962, PCA board of directors meeting in Pittsburg, PA (as reported in the April 1962 issue of PANORAMA) and approved with a charter-date of May 7, 1962.

### SVR Charter Members\*

Member	Profession
Edward J. Anzore	Lawyer
Marie Brown	State of California
Read Buckman	Porsche Mechanic
Pelham Burnett	USAF Pilot
E.P. Butler	Engineer
John J. Donahue	Pilot
Harold Fandl	Chemical Engineer
Kenneth Fielding	Auto Mechanic
William Ghormley	Porsche Sales Associate
Adlai Goldschmidt	Geologist
Robert Harms	State of California
Stanley Harris	Teacher
Brad Hawkes	Blueprinter
Phil Hawkes	Aerojet
Denis Keith	Architectural Designer
William Maddock	Insurance Adjuster
John Meunier	Engineer
Alan Moscov	Lawyer
Gary Ogg	Personnel Analyst
Richard Pace	Merchant
Peter Posyluzny	Operations Manager
Art Raynor	Supervisor, Pacific Telephone & Telegraph
Robert Shimada	Dentist
Richard Shute	Service manager
Steve Silvers	Loan broker
George Snow	Dentist
Eugene Speicher	Medical Doctor
Robert Tobys	Printer
Alan Travis	Medical Doctor
Al Wagner	Medical Doctor
Aaron D. "Bud" Weygandt	Custodian
Robert Wills	Manger VW agency
Charles Woods	Insurance adjuster

\* Of this group, only Ken and Betty Fielding, of Woodland are still members of the region.

Other "old" SVR members include Oran and Grace Crumley who joined PCA in October 1958 and were charter members of Fresno (now Sequoia) Region, and Larry and Pat Wilson who joined PCA in June 1961 while living in France.

## Local Management

Once the charter was approved, the next order of business for the new region was to elect officers. Elected for the 1962 term were Al Wagner, M.D., President; Bill Woods, Vice President; and Steve Silvers, Secretary-Treasurer. The region's newsletter wasn't created until April 1964. It was called THE PORSCHE DRIFTER (later, the name was shortened to THE DRIFTER), with Peter Posyluzny as the first editor. Pat Wilson was editor the next year. President Wagner drove a green 356A Super Cabriolet with a body by Beutler of Switzerland. A Beutler-Porsche cabriolet was a rare car then (the Count of Wurttemberg had one), even more rare, now. At some point in the early days, John Meunier created the club's logo which included a rendition of his red 356A Speedster. It had the license plate, "OLDSHOE."

## Early Activities

The region's first official activity was (surprise, surprise) a **wine tour** to the D'Agostini Winery near Plymouth. In fact, for a number of years, the region specialized in wine and champagne tours. In May, 1962, SVR conducted its first **autocross** at the old Franklin Airport, the surface of which gave new meaning to the term, abrasive. In November SVR inaugurated its annual **Champagne Tour** to the famed Napa valley. In March 1963, John Meunier staged a photo **rally** through the Sierra foothills, and in May local hot shoes lost more rubber at the Franklin Airport. In March 1964, SVR tried a serious **Time & Distance rally** when Dick and Nadine Shute staged "The Puzzler." Novices Ed and Lorna Nightingale took top honors. In May 1964 the region conducted a successful **driver's school** open to all PCA members at Cotati Raceway. Top SCCA licensed Porsche racers were on hand to serve as instructors including Don Wester (Monterey Bay Region), and Emil Pardee, Wyn Robertson, Paul Ochsner, and Oran Crumley, all of Sacramento Valley Region.

The big event for 1962 was the 7th Porsche Parade, June 28 - July 2, 1962, hosted in Monterey by the Golden Gate Region. 305 cars were registered. Porsche 356 models swept all events! Several top finishing cars in the concours had white-wall tires, tuck-and-roll upholstery in the engine compartment, and chromed engine sheet-metal. Ten SVR entrants to the Parade, listed by car number, were #22 Oran K. Crumley, Jr. & Grace; #77 Alfred W. Wagner, M.D. & Ruth; #131 Larry K. Wilson & Pat; #165 Bud D. Weygandt & Cleo; #196 John E. Meunier & Margot; #220 William G. Ghormley & Mary Jo; #236 Eugene Speicher, M.D. & Connie; #237 Gary Donald Ogg; #250 Art Raynor; and #254 Harold L. "Hal" Fandl. (Note: this list may be incomplete as one sheet of the mimeographed entrant listing was lost.) The Parade featured a "Driver's School" at Salinas Airport with passing only on the straights. Right! Three individual trip-to-the-factory door prizes were won by Ray Scroggins (Golden Gate Region), Forest Young (San Joaquin, now Sequoia Region), and Larry Wilson (Sacramento Valley Region). Larry also won a factory Super 90 compensating spring with small torsion bars for the rear.

## The Times

Sacramento Valley Region was the 52<sup>nd</sup> region chartered in PCA, and the 5<sup>th</sup> in Zone 7 following: Sequoia Region (as Fresno Region) in October 1958, Yosemite Region (as Central Valley Region) December 5, 1959, Golden Gate Region April 30, 1960, and Monterey Bay Region March 10, 1961. The April 1962 PANORAMA reported PCA membership stood at 2,093 with 50 regions, down from 2,980 members the year before. According to the PCA annual financial statement published in the May 1962 PANORAMA for the period January 1, 1961

through December 31, 1961, gross income was \$24,201.34; total expense was \$22,436.37; and net income for the year was \$1,764.97. The year-end balance was \$8,103.78. Annual PCA member dues were \$15.00. The PANORAMA was a 24-page publication, counting the inside and outside covers.

On April 3, 1962 the 50,000<sup>th</sup> Porsche was produced (a 1962 Champagne Yellow, 356B Super Cabriolet). In 1960, the Porsche factory produced 7,598 cars, 8,141 in 1961, and 9,000 were projected for 1962. Employment at the factory in 1962 was 1,260 workers. When Pat and I took our 1961 356B to the factory for the first warranty service, they were making 35 cars per day.

The MART section of the April 1962 issue of PANORAMA had these choice items: 1959 1600N coupe, 25,000 miles, \$2,300; 1957 Carrera engine, 3,000 miles since new, \$1,200; 550 RS Spyder engine, overhauled and tuned, \$2,000; and 1956 550 RS Spyder, zero time on engine rebuild, \$3,000.

### **Some Other Highlights**

In 1971, SVR was named *PCA's Region of the Year* (based on 1970 performance) at the Sun Valley Porsche Parade and the 1970 SVR President, John Isaak, was present to accept the Porsche Memorial Trophy from PCA President, Charlie Kuell.

The CRAB Weekend, March 4 & 5, 1972, was intended, according to Joyce Crow, 1972 DRIFTER editor, as a one-off "occasion to celebrate SVR's tenth anniversary with one of the biggest events in the region's history." Nothing more, nothing less. In her DRIFTER column, Joyce went on to say, "One day last November, Rich Farlinger and Jim Karver went to a road race in Monterey, where they were lucky enough to meet Alan Johnson. Not being the kind to overlook opportunities, they asked Alan if he'd consider coming to SVR and being our guest speaker at a dinner meeting. Alan said yes without hesitation, so Rich and Jim went to work on it. Gary Evans of GGR planted the seed when he suggested an autocross, and rising to the occasion, as usual, Phillip "Goose" Marks not only consented to let us use El Macero Restaurant for our crab feed, but threw in one of his mind-bending rallies as well. From there on in, everything snowballed, and the next thing we knew, CRAB WEEKEND."

At some point between November 1971 and the event date, Ray Johansen signed-on as the third co-chair, and the three-some put on an unbelievable event, with 105 cars registered representing most regions in Zone 7. Yes, it absolutely did snowball. So, in 1973 it became an annual event and Zone 7 PCAers were ready to come to CRAB 2 to the delight of co-chairs Bob Becker and Larry Wilson. April 2006 saw CRAB 32, co-chaired by Kim<sup>2</sup> (Kim Kinder and Kim Nelson). And, the beat goes on.

### **Porsche Dealer History**

The history of Porsche dealers in Sacramento is a little hazy – in those days no one was taking notes. So here's the results of my detective work. Bob Clancy, the original owner of my 1955 356 Speedster, bought the car new from Oxford Motors, 1501 "I" Street, Sacramento (behind the Memorial Auditorium) which was owned and operated by Sammy Weiss. He was the local Porsche dealer in 1955; perhaps the first in Sacramento. Oxford Motors also was the dealer for most British cars. Sammy was a big-time successful racer, and on the west coast did most of his events initially in a Porsche 550 RS Spyder and then a Porsche RSK Spyder.

At about the same time, in 1954, 19 year-old George Grinzewitsch, Sr. arrived in Sacramento fresh from Germany, with no inkling that he would someday own one of Sacramento's most successful automotive ventures, the Von Housen Automotive Group. Despite the fact that he spoke little English and knew little about cars,

Grinzewitsch managed to talk his way into a job as a mechanic and later as a service manager for Oxford Motors. While working for Weiss, Grinzewitsch also developed an interest in road racing and became a top-ranked professional driver, winning several North American driving titles. In late 1958, Grinzewitsch left Oxford Motors and opened his own auto parts and repair shop named Von Housen, which in German means "from the better house." Completing the "racer's shop" stamp on Oxford Motors was Gordon Glyer, Sammy's chief salesman who was also a successful Ferrari road racing driver.

Sammy kept the Porsche franchise until late 1959 when he put up the RSK Spyder for sale in MotoRacing, a southern California sports car racing publication. To explain the sale Sammy said in the ad, "The reason for the sale is the withdrawal of the Porsche Franchise." At the same time, Porsche Cars Pacific was formed, with Reynold C. Johnson president, to be the Porsche distributor to eight dealers in Northern California. Sadly, the next year, June 4, 1960, Sammy was killed in a Cooper Monaco during practice at Laguna Seca at the old Turn 4, now Turn 6 (left turn to go up the hill to the corkscrew).

In 1962 (perhaps since 1960), the Volkswagen-Porsche dealer in Sacramento was Haines Motors at 2241 Fulton Avenue. Established originally as the first VW dealership in Sacramento by Bob and Charlie Haines in about 1954 and located in North Sacramento across the street from Wyn Robertson's Continental Auto Service, the business was expanded to include Porsche and moved to the Fulton Avenue location. After I arrived home from France in late December 1961, I took my 1961 356B coupe to Haines at the Fulton address for warranty work. Also in 1962, Wes Lasher and Richard "Dick" Niello were partners in the Lasher-Niello Company, a VW-Porsche dealership at 1701 "K" Street, Sacramento. Both were early VW dealers in Sacramento, Niello started in 1954 and Lasher in 1955.

When Bob Haines died, his widow, Irene Haines, continued to manage the VW-Porsche dealership for awhile, then sold the Fulton avenue facility to Dick Niello, ending the Lasher-Niello partnership with each becoming a separate Porsche dealer. This might have happened in March 1963 (a receipt I have dated March 29, 1963 is printed with Haines Motors across the top that is lined out with "R.L. Niello Co." penciled in its place). Regardless, Wes Lasher eventually got out of the Porsche business leaving Dick Niello (now his son, "Rick" Niello) as the sole Porsche dealer for the Sacramento area.