



Flatwater News

A publication by and for the members of the
Flatwater Austin-Healey Club of Nebraska and Western Iowa

Events for June 2015

6/28/2015 Sunday 9am set up, 11am Runs

Autocross
Southwest High School
Lincoln, NE

Events for July 2015

7/8/2015 Wednesday 6:30pm

Officers Meeting
Honey Creek Restaurant
Waverly, NE

7/9/2015 Thursday 6:30pm

Pub Night
Sean O'Casey's Pub
2523 S. 140th Ave.
Omaha, NE

7/16/2015 Thursday 12 noon

Lunch
The Eatery
Lincoln, NE

7/16 - 19/2015

Elkhart Vintage Races
Elkhart Lake, WI

7/18/2015 Saturday 9am

Breakfast
Billy's Gretna Café
Gretna, NE

7/19 -24/2015

AHCA Enclave 2015
Gettysburg, PA

7/26/2015 Sunday 9am set up, 11am Runs

Autocross
TBA

7/31/2015 Friday 6:30pm

Fish
TBA

From the Presidential Garage

This is a "Sweet spot" in the driving season. The unpredictability of spring is over, (we hope) and the hot blasts of summer are yet to come. Some of our members have already set off on LBC trips, attended regional shows, or local Flatwater events. Many of us have plans in the near future involving our cars, while others are just enjoying the trip to Home Depot with the top down. In other words, Drive your cars!

Speaking of drives, the Glenwood trip and Williams event was a smash hit. (Read more in this issue) There was even a nice caravan of cars from Lincoln. Organizing such caravans, along with impromptu activities, and general information is about to get much easier as the FAHC website will be getting a complete overhaul. This is exciting, and long overdue. Our thanks go to Gary Lien for taking the lead in the update.

In other news, Elkhart Lake is just around the corner. If you love historic racing cars, beautiful scenery, and bratwurst, put this on your bucket list. If you're wondering, I still don't have a new Presidential Garage. The record setting rains were not kind to my contractor, and I'm forced to wait my turn. Having my cars in the "old" garage is a drag, and there is now way I'll catch Danielson for the "Distance Award". Oh well.....

Enough complaining from me. Happy, safe and frequent travels to all. I'll stop now and pretend to go to the garage.

Autocross Adventures by Greg Lemon

They say a picture is worth a thousand words, and the picture included with this story certainly tells a tale, but let me fill in some of the details. At the June 7 Flatwater Autocross I lost a wheel. I have worked on my own cars since I got my first Sprite in 1977. I have a routine when I am putting together “mission critical” parts, suspension, engine, lug nuts, I tighten them down, then do a final double check of all nuts and fasteners by putting the wrench back on before buttoning it back up and getting back on the road. I admit I didn’t always do this, when I was young and my memory was better, I could specifically remember tightening each nut and bolt down, but after you have done it a few thousand times it all becomes a bit of a blur.



Although I don’t know exactly what happened I do know that the wheel that came off was the same wheel I had off about a week before the accident to check a suspension noise, I do know that I didn’t check lug nut torque immediately before the autocross, as I usually do and should have done this time. The check off sheet asks the question, and it and the other checks are there for a reason, I know I, and maybe we, have gotten a little lax with those pre-drive inspections, and a little accident like mine certainly takes some of the fun out of your day.

The only real damage was the last few threads of my lug nuts as they gave up the ghost, and a bit of brake rotor worn off (I had a spare, just needed to be turned). It certainly could have been worse, had my car or the wheel run into something or somebody. The greatest damage was to my pride, but you guys and gals can take a lesson from my mistake and double check your lug nuts other critical bits on a regular basis. Our cars are old and in some cases also modified with a mix of aftermarket bits (I have alloy wheels, longer studs and spacers on my front wheels), sometimes those new bits don’t play well together.

RMVR Competition Driving School

Part 1 of 2

Joe Guinan

I was sitting at work one night, and I received a text from my friend Terry Davis. “I just found out that RMVR has a scholarship car for driver’s school that no one has spoken up for. Are you interested?” We had been talking about his racing experiences, and he knew being able to race was a dream for me. It took me about two seconds to call back for further details. I was directed to the Rocky Mountain Vintage Racing web site (www.RMVR.com) where I found the club actually has three different scholarship cars; a Formula Vee, a Formula Ford and a Triumph Spitfire. These cars are provided by the club for use by people that are considering becoming members and fielding their own cars. Those of you that don’t know me should understand that I’m a Spitfire owner and I am trying to prepare a Spitfire for track usage. It’s pretty obvious which car I was interested in. I joined the club through their online process, wrote up an application letter and emailed it to the contact persons listed. The fact that I’m already working on a Spitfire must have convinced them that I was the right person, as about a week later I was notified that the Ray Jones Memorial Scholarship Car was mine for the weekend.

Preparation

I've been a fan of road racing for quite awhile already, and have attended several race weekends at different tracks. My first road course experience was a one day performance driving class at Mid-Ohio Sports Car Course. This class introduced me to the basics of road racing; the parts of the corner and "The Racing Line", threshold braking, and maintaining car balance to drive smoothly. We didn't do any passing at speed, as that wasn't the purpose of the class. For more preparation, I also did some reading on competition driving, and watched a few of Terry's YouTube videos.

What I'm preparing to be a part of is "Vintage" racing. This is different than what you'll see in professional racing or in club racing with the SCCA or NASA. Vintage racing is what I describe as "Gentlemen's Racing". That doesn't mean it's only for men. It means that there is a different attitude taken by those participating. There isn't a "take no prisoners" or Rubbin' is Racin' mentality in vintage racing. It is still competitive, but there is a limit to how far you take it. At my age, this attitude really appeals to me. I simply don't want some hot head running me off the track or bashing into my car. When I'm racing, I want to have fun. If I feel a need to get beat up and pissed off, I can go play golf.

Maintaining safety is a major focus of any racing endeavor, and that is no different in vintage racing. Modern helmets are required, as is at least two layers of fire-resistant outerwear; driving suit, gloves, and shoes. I had already purchased a good, used helmet and HANS device (Head And Neck Support), but I didn't have anything else. Fortunately, Speedway Motors is nearby and has a great selection of safety products. I took advantage of their "Garage Sale" listings and bought a one-piece two-layer suit, a pair of gloves, and some shoes. I used an online auction site to get a couple pairs of nomex socks and some arm restraints (required in an open top car), so I had all the necessary personal gear. The cars are required to have appropriate roll-over protection, fire extinguishers, and fuel cells. Racing seat belts with five or six attachment points have to be used and can be no more than five years old. I was assured the car was adequately prepared. I was ready to race.

The Experience

The three day event was held at Pikes Peak International Raceway in Fountain, Colorado. We stayed in nearby Colorado Springs. Terry was signed up to be an instructor for a couple guys in the Fast Precision classes (Street Cars). I rode along with him, towing his Austin Healey Sprite race car on the trailer behind us. Weather for most of the trip out was good, but the closer we got to Colorado Springs, the worse it became. We actually had to fight blizzard conditions for the last 75 miles or so. We got to the motel and checked in with no major problems except finding a place to park his rig.

Day One - We woke early on Friday to prepare for the day. More snow had fallen overnight – not a good omen for a race weekend. However, Friday was only a check-in and check-it-out day for us. As we drove south to Fountain, the snow cover decreased steadily. We arrived at the PPIR early and found a Bondurant School instructor who took us around the track in one of the school's Pontiac G8 sedans, giving us a great head start on understanding the fast way around the track. I really appreciated the guided tour from an experienced driver. The track itself is a one mile banked oval, with a twisty road course consisting of seven turns laid out in the center of the oval. At only 1.3 miles in length and only nine total turns, the track was pretty easy to memorize. It did have some sections that were challenging for a novice, so it was a fantastic venue for this event. After that, we unpacked Terry's Sprite and he took a few laps. Then I geared up and climbed into his passenger seats for a few more laps. I now had the benefit of being shown the track by two different experienced drivers, in two different types of vehicles – a good start for my weekend.



There were approximately 60 participants in this driver's education event. About half were driving high performance street cars; everything from a couple Ferraris, to Porsches, Corvettes, and Vipers, down to hot rod SUVs like an SRT8 Jeep Grand Cherokee. Another group was in open wheel cars – Formula Vees, Formula Fords, etc. The remaining drivers were in "Production Cars". Some of these were Small Bore cars like my Spitfire. There was an MG

Midget, a MGB (race prepped but still street legal), a “Yenko Stinger” Corvair, an Alfa Romeo, a Porsche 914, a Lotus Elan, a Fiat X19, a turbo Miata, a Mini and some others. There were also some Big Bore Cars – Mustangs and Camaros mostly. Each group had an instructor car on track with them, and each student had his/her own dedicated instructor. The instructors were invaluable – offering all sorts of advice and cautions, and just being there to talk things over and make sure new concepts were sinking in. All the corners had a safety crew to run flags and man fire extinguishers. There were tech inspectors, grid workers, and other officials all over the place. It was a very professionally managed event, and I came away quite impressed with the knowledge and dedication of all the RMVR workers. They really made us feel comfortable and treated us like royalty throughout the weekend.

While we were out on track, “Abby” the Spitfire showed up, courtesy of her caretaker Bill Fleming. Bill had a lot of trouble with the snow at his horse ranch, but still managed to get the car transported to the track for me. I found her in the enclosed garage and jumped in to helping get her prepped for the event. The garage tires had to be pulled off and race tires installed. I also needed to do my own inspection and get the seating position and belts set up. Abby was owned and driven by Ray Jones before he passed away. His wife now provides the car to the club for scholarship use. Abby is a minimum prepped race car, basically a stock Spitfire stripped of anything that wasn’t needed. The engine was an early 1296 running on premium pump gas and breathing through a single Weber side draft carburetor and a set of headers. The car had been lowered a bit and a roll over bar was added. A stock Spitfire 4.11 differential with welded spider gears was being used. One matter of concern to me was the car still had stock Spitfire axles. They are a known weak spot, but I was assured they had been used successfully for several years and had been inspected over the winter. After checking everything over, I took the car and my gear to tech inspection. Everything went well, and I had an official “OK” to participate in the track sessions. While we were doing all this, people would stop by and introduce themselves, ask if we needed any help, and offer words of welcome and encouragement. Before we left for the night, we hooked up a battery charger and packed a couple large gas containers in Terry’s SUV to get filled back in town. Then it was off to the motel for dinner and sleep.

Day Two – We were scheduled to have four classroom and four on-track excursions each day. Our first class session was a basic introduction to vintage racing – warnings to keep your car under control, to be safe, and to respect other drivers. Most important was an explanation of “The Vintage Spirit” – the idea that none of us were going to be called up by a Formula One team needing a driver and a reminder that both courteous and careful driving was valued. They weren’t going to allow any monkey business on the track. All they wanted us to do was get used to the cars and the track and start exploring the limits. No passing was going to be allowed in the first couple track sessions unless you were “pointed by”. Since I had the slowest car out there, this meant I learned a lot about pointing other drivers by.

Unfortunately, I didn’t even make one complete lap in the first track session. A bad battery cable connection led to a dead engine and a quick trip back to the garage. I had checked the connection to the battery posts – nice and tight. What I missed was the connection of the cable to the terminal ends. Both screws on each clamp were loose, and when I hit a bump the car would die. I learned a good lesson, but missed an entire driving session.

The second classroom meeting was spent on the basics of car control and understanding the racing line on the track.

There is quite a bit of geometry and physics involved in learning to drive well, and our head instructor did a good job of breaking down the information for us. We worked to the three critical points of a turn; the Turn In Point, the Apex, and the traffic cones cue as we the need to be quite a few corners you negotiate a session went



a lot better – the car ran the entire time and I was able to try some different lines around parts of the track. The track was wet because of some rain, which meant the handling limits of the car were found at lower speeds. This actually helped me to gain confidence as I had more time to react to what was happening. I tried to hit my marks through the infield section but had a great deal of trouble getting the different corners to “flow” together. It’s much harder than it looks – and this was without the pressure of actually racing against other cars. I also found the car under steered quite badly, the front tires lost traction a lot earlier than the rears. We let a couple pounds of air out of the front tires for the next session to try balancing the handling.

Our third classroom session was spent on getting some routine practices ingrained. We were taught that on approaching a corner there was a series of things that needed to be done every time. You check your mirrors for overtaking traffic, look for warning flags, check your mirrors again, find your braking point, find your turn in point, hit the apex, let the car track out, and then check your mirrors again. We were told to use the longer straight sections to check oil pressure and water temp, to relax and take a few calming breaths. You wouldn’t think we would need a reminder to breathe, but I was surprised to find that I was holding my breath during a lot of the infield driving. For the next track session, we were asked to work on memorizing the racing line and to optimize our braking. The “SIFO” concept was emphasized. This is “Slow In, Fast Out”, and the idea is to brake hard entering a corner so that you could get through it smoothly and accelerate hard on the exit. We had another rain event right before the Track Session 3, and again the car handled poorly. I couldn’t get the front tires to stick at all. I practiced as well as I could, but really felt like the car just wouldn’t steer. We dropped front tire pressure another couple of pounds.

The last classroom session on Saturday was spent on discussing the same concepts at a little deeper level. We also talked



about balancing our inputs: steering, braking, accelerating and doing those things in combination. A tire can only achieve 100 per cent of its performance capability, and each input takes a certain percentage of that total. If you are cornering at 100% of the tires capability, you better not add braking or acceleration inputs. The emphasis for the fourth track session was to be on maximizing corner exit speeds. It was “FIFO” now, Fast In and Fast Out. We were asked to be more aggressive with our braking, avoid hitting the apex too early or too late, and to not allow the car to over steer or under steer to excess. This is

when it all came together for me. I started braking later and harder, and was actually feeling the balance of the car shift when I wanted it to. I was still frustrated but the front tires not sticking, but I knew when and where it was going to happen and I was able to deal with it. The session ended way too early. I was just finding a way to flow the infield section smoothly, and I could attack the corners a lot better. When the black flag flew, I actually thought I had done something wrong and was flagged in for an “attitude adjustment” but it was just that the drive was over. We had a nice pot luck dinner at the track with a couple adult beverages and then it was off to bed. I was asleep by 8:00 p.m.

Thanks Joe for the great article. Part 2 will be in next months newsletter.

Southwest Iowa Bash a Hit.

If you missed the Glenwood, IA event, you can start kicking yourself now. Beautifully organized by hostess Kim Williams, the day began with a delightful time of wine tasting, excellent snacks and good friends in downtown Glenwood. We then caravanned to Steve and Kim's nearby acreage for the main event. Since Steve's gorgeous

E-Type was celebrating its big 5-0; it was only fitting to throw a party. Our hosts generously provided BBQ, beans and beverages, and everyone filled out the menu with side dishes and desserts. Everything was delicious, and if you ate yourself silly, it was completely excusable.



After supper the garage tours began, and it's possible even some of the ladies were impressed. Steve's garage and shop is as clean, tidy and well organized as those on a "Dream Garage" TV show. The contents, Jag, Jag, Lotus, vintage bikes, Porsche (!?) were also of "Dream Garage" quality. Many of us have seen the E-Type at the shows, but the work in progress MK VII Saloon is also gong to be a showstopper. The whole operation from storage space to work space is on the basement level, and completely unexpected as you drive up to their house. All in all, it is a masterful piece of design work done by Steve himself. (Along with the rest of their beautiful home)

Flatwater would like to thank Kim for her hard work and generosity, and Steve for opening up his garage to the gawkers. It was truly one of the best events ever, and as a bonus, the rain held off until most of us got home.

Now that's a garage!



Elkhart Lake Vintage Car Races

Coming up on July 16 thru the 18th. I have never had the opportunity to attend myself, but I am told it is a great experience. I believe John Ulrich and some others are planning to attend. If you would like more information about it, I am sure John would not object to you calling him.



You can tour the track in your own car



You can get close to the cars



Jag eats Vette out of Canada Corner

Classified Ads:

For sale: 1954 MG TF. The car is a matching numbers black with red interior. The car is a good daily summer driver with considerable class.

No rust or known problems with the car. Price is \$23,850.

Morris Caudle

402-212-6605 cell

Scott Smith has a few items that he needs to get rid of and may be useful to a club member.

He has two 72 spoke wheels and two 48 spoke wheels for a 59' Healey 100-6.

The price is free or a donation to the Club.

He also has a gas tank for the same car that has some rust, but should be usable . Also free.

Parts Wanted:

Wanted a TR4-250 trunk lid. Doesn't need to be perfect, but not overly bashed in or rusted.

Greg Lemon glemon@neb.rr.com

One Man Bleeder Bottle

Bleeding brake and clutch hydraulics is usually a two person job.

Try the One Man bleeder bottle the next time you need to replace brake fluid or after brake work to expel all air bubbles in the closed system.

Attach the bottle with heavy duty magnet to your axle, frame or brake component. Take silicone line and attach to bleed screw, back off screw and make sure master cylinder stays full of brake fluid. Pump brakes and new fluid will fill system without back up due to built in check valve. Close bleed screw when finished, attach line back onto vent plug. No mess and easy! High quality components.

I am selling this popular unit for \$20, call me at 402-890-0051 or send an email bpkasl@gmail.com for your order.

Brent Kasl FAHC

