



Pacific Tiger Club Newsletter

ROOTES OF THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST



The Friends, the Sights, the Celebrities . . .and the Cars too!

story and photos by Dick Sanders

My journey from Seattle included extra sightseeing in the Grand Tetons and Yellowstone, totaling approximately 1,700 miles over three days, leaving me bone-tired and walking like a zombie when I arrived at the Marriott in Colorado Springs late Monday night, the opening-night BBQ having long closed up. Scheduling the concours on Tuesday, the first full day of SUNI VI, was therefore a blessing to those like myself who are content to rinse off the bugs and road grime and call it good before entering the afternoon show.

Those who toiled at length before displaying their Sunbeams put on a superb show for the rest of us in the hotel parking lot. Some of the concours standouts among the 70 Sunbeams and Hillmans in the Marriott's parking lot belonged to Rex Funk and our own Max

Pahmeier, with exquisite stock restorations of, respectively, Series III GT and Series I Alpines. Most unusual Rootes products on hand were a Hillman Estate Wagon converted to Tiger drive train, a "chopped" 1953 Sunbeam Alpine, and a pre-production Series V Alpine. Well-known Tiger restorer Dale Akuszewski displayed his black beauty of a Tiger, shod with 17" rims, a full Weber setup, plus a myriad of other personalizations. Speaking of personalized

Western Washington All British Field Meet

Saturday, July 26th
Saint Edward State Park, Kirkland, Wash.

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Tigers, it would good to see that the tide has not entirely turned towards stock restorations. Flares, oversize-wheels, side-pipes, a Mk II "Sunbeam" script mounted in the middle of a Mk I hood were just a few of the customizations sprinkled around the parking lot.



Author Graham Robson and friend enjoy the concours

Besides looking at cars, the concours also proved the perfect time for me to finally meet at least half-a-dozen of the regular posters to the Sunbeam Alpine Owners Club of America (SAOCA) message board, and put names and faces together with the 'handles' we use on the popular forum.

Wednesday was the day I drove my Alpine 3,300+ miles over a 10-day period for: 63.997 seconds of glory dodging orange cones on a large parking lot. Pikes Peak International Raceway provided not only the parking lot for the autocross, but a tour of the PPIR racecourse at faster-than-normal parade-lap speeds, plus a great photo-op in front of the grandstand.



Bill Blue hangs in out in his Series V Alpine

The sprawling, long-legged course had been used just two weeks prior for an SCCA national tour event, and was great fun for old pros and novices alike. One big benefit that anyone who's ever autocrossed will love: the local club

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putting on the autocross had their own course worker in a golf cart assigned to shag all downed cones. No standing for hours at turn stations. What luxury!

Lap times by the top modified Tiger drivers steadily dropped during the morning, with Mike Wood finally claiming top time of the day. (Long-time Sunbeamers might remember a Sunbeam Northwest staged near Bend, Oregon where the same Mike Wood went out on the very first run of the day and set a top time that would not be matched over the next five hours.). To the relief of those in Modified



Dale Akuszewski's Tiger doesn't just look fast. It *is* fast!

Tiger class, Oregon's Gary Haslip brought his *second-best* autocrossing Tiger, a red Mk II, and cleaned up in Personalized class. He then loaned his Tiger to Brian Faerge of Whistler, BC, who also placed high on the list. Yours truly tried his best to uphold the honor of the Rootes-powered cars, killing a few traffic cones in the process before getting in one clean trophy run in my Alpine.

Wednesday evening featured an evening with author Graham Robson, plus an English-themed dinner of bangers 'n mash, all while playing a room-wide game of Clue.

After two days of cool-ish, overcast weather, the area returned to its usual hot temps on Thursday for the TSD/Poker rally, which took us far into the mountains to the mining towns of Cripple Creek and Victor. Colorado Springs is most notable for the geography surrounding it. You don't even have to go outside the city limits to visit the Garden of the Gods, a spectacular bounty of colorful and unusual rock formations. The SUNI organizers wisely had us drive through this large park several times as part of the TSD rally and the tour to Pikes Peak.

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Spokane's Jerry Logan must have rolled snake-eyes while visiting Bronco Billy's Casino in Cripple Creek to pick up more rally poker cards, for he returned to the parking lot to find his Harrington LeMans' engine bay smoldering. The Prince of Darkness took his revenge



"What the heck is it?" seemed to be on the firemen's minds after Jerry Logan's Harrington LeMans tried to catch on fire during a stop in Cripple Creek.

this time via a stuck regulator, releasing copious amounts of black smoke from several wires. The fire department arrived but initially were mystified by the strange little car. Luckily, several other Sunbeamers quickly stepped in to disconnect the battery and prevent more harm.



A wandering burro in downtown Cripple Creek

Despite sharp navigating by Rex Funk and myself, those darn directions(!) (plus a detour to visit with my brother-in-law Gary and his wife Martha in the gold-mining town of Victor), got us lost often enough that our only hope of winning anything that day was turning three queens into four of a kind, or drawing to a full house with the final poker card back at the hotel. Oh, well.

On Thursday evening, our celebrity guests, ex-Rootes rally driver Rosemary Smith and automotive author Graham Robson en-

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gaged us with an hour of playful banter and a 50-year-removed perspective on rallying and racing for Rootes in the mid-'60s. Rosemary told up bluntly that the Sunbeam Rapier sedan, her first rallye car, "was a horrible car, too high a center of gravity, balanced completely wrong." Compared to the then-new Lotus Cortina, she was probably right, though it had been just a couple of years since other factory Rapier drivers had had such tremendous success against all comers. The two shared incredible tales of surviving rallyes in a far less-developed Africa and parts of the Middle East.

SUNI VI's final day featured a group tour up the 17-mile highway to Pikes Peak. Since Wednesday evening, my Alpine had been making an increasingly scary clanking sound from somewhere in the front suspension, so the group left at 9am with me still under the Alpine looking for what I hoped would be something minor. Great relief followed upon finding just that: a sway bar bushing that had migrated out from under a clamp while autocrossing. I hurried to try to catch the pack, but the car started to overheat while waiting in line to pay the entrance fee at the park. No problem, I thought. I'm sure there'll be a few miles of flat or gradual incline to start with where the Alpine can 'catch its breath' and cool off. Dumb! Dumb! Dumb! Within a few miles the gauge had almost pegged and I pulled off. Gurgle, hiss, gurgle, drip, drip – for twenty minutes.



My Alpine, failing to live up to its name climbing Pikes Peak

Finally restarting, the Alpine had mild vapor lock which I managed to work through.

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But three miles later I was on the verge of overheating again, and luckily found a rare wide shoulder on this very narrow road. It cooled off, but vapor lock wouldn't allow it to start. Starting fluid was ineffective. After a half-hour of futility I took a chance, using a gravity-fed Y-turn in neutral, backing across the road during a lull in traffic - without going over the edge into the abyss on the opposite side. I managed to get rolling forward downhill on my own side of the road just as traffic came up around the corner. It took several hundred feet running downhill in third gear to get fuel moving again and the Alpine lurched to life.

I should have called it quits for the day, but the sight of several Sunbeamers now returning from a successful ascent was simply too embarrassing. I pulled a U-turn and headed back up. I finally got smart and pulled off at a ranger station for a planned cool-off period. How unrelentingly steep was the road? At this station, all downhill traffic had to come to a complete stop, where the ranger would then aim a laser temperature gun at your front brakes. If the reading came back over 300 degrees, you had to pull off into the parking lot and let the brakes cool off before descending again. Despite mostly using 2nd gear to keep my speed down, my brakes still read 255.

On the final assault to the 14,110-ft summit, dominated by hairpin switchbacks and even fewer shoulders to pull off onto, I had a wide variety of thoughts running through my head, ranging from Walter Mitty-like bravado, to children's stories: "I *think* I can! I *think* I can!" A wonderful thing happened on the final ascent: the air temperature dropped by 20 degrees. The needle still climbed but not as fast. At last, the summit was in sight, but so was a backed-up line of 4th of July holiday traffic waiting for parking to open up. As the needle neared critical, the line parted, parking appeared, and *The Little (British) Engine that Could* – survived.

The final event was Friday night's awards banquet. For an event whose central theme was celebrating the 50th anniversary of the launching of the Sunbeam Tiger, the folks in attendance instead spent much more time

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making new acquaintances or catching up on what was currently going on in their lives. The oft-told tales of the Tiger's birth: measuring engine compartments in the dealers' showrooms with a yardstick, Lord Rootes driving the prototype with the emergency brake on, etc, were not re-hashed at any of the ceremonial dinners, despite having on hand one of the greatest chroniclers of not just Rootes, but all of automotive history during the last half century: author Graham Robson. This banquet, and the event itself, was more about living in the moment, enjoying our cars and our friendships with fellow enthusiasts to the fullest. Whether or not there's enough enthusiasm to mount another SUNI remains to be seen, but SUNI VI seemed to leave everyone satisfied. PTC

Side Trips

by Dick Sanders

I don't mind the 70-mph speed limit. The Alpine has just enough gears to keep up. But 75? 80? From the time I hit the Idaho border and the limit went up to 75, I passed precisely one vehicle, and it took more than a mile to do it:



On the final day of my journey to SUNI VI, I stopped at a McDonald's drive-thru in Thermopolis, Wyoming. When I picked up my order, one of the two girls at the window looked at my bright yellow Alpine and said excitedly, "We saw you come in the parking lot on the monitor!" The other girl exclaimed, "That's not a car, it's a *banana!*" PTC

(SUNI banner photo by Bob Bennion)

President's Corner



Everyone is most likely back from SUNI VI now and hopefully you all made it safely with no mishaps or breakdowns. The weather was mostly overcast which was probably a good thing since it can be in the 90's

this time of year. Max did a wonderful job again of organizing the various events. The welcome barbeque on Monday night had us all under a large tent in the parking lot where we were treated to good old fashioned hamburgers, hot dogs and potato salad. The next day the concourse was held in the parking lot of the hotel which made it convenient for the both participants and spectators. I believe the total number of cars exceeded 70 so there were a good variety of Rootes vehicles to peruse.

Next up on Tuesday was the autocross which was 25 miles down the highway at Pikes Peak International Raceway. The large parking lot was used for the event allowing the course to be spread out. From my vantage point it looked like everyone was enjoying themselves and were able to get some speed throughout their runs. On Wednesday night we were in the hotel banquet room for an "English Dinner" of bangers and mash. The dinner wrapped up with one of the featured quests, Graham Robson, describing his early career as a rallye driver and then by the 70's he had migrated towards freelance writing. Over the ensuing years he wrote over 150 books, quite an accomplishment I would say.

I returned home on Thursday and so was not able to witness the Rallye or the closing banquet, but am sure they went well. Many thanks to Max for heading this gathering up for the sixth time and to Glenda and Bill Clemans, who played key roles in registration and keeping everything on track. Thank you to all those who volunteered for various duties throughout the event, there is always so much more that goes

on behind the scenes to put these events on so we appreciate all the help.

Our June meeting was hosted once again by Dan and Cindy Kuenzi at their home on Camano Island. Dan led a tour of cars on a scenic drive around part of the island before ending up at their home. Their "car corral" was set up with chairs and tables with a great variety of food for all to consume. Dan and Cindy have a nice selection of Sunbeam, muscle cars and a few other personally symbolic cars in their collection. Thank you, Dan and Cindy, for your gracious hospitality.

Coming up next is the All British Field Meet on July 26 at Saint Edward Park in Kenmore. This is a new site for the event and should be a much more enjoyable location. Be sure to pre-register for the event so you can be parked with the other Rootes vehicles. If you show up the day of the event and register you most likely will be parked in a different area.

Dunn for now

Members are asked to send all membership checks and correspondence to:

*Dan Kuenzi
370 N. East Camano Dr.
STE #5, PMB #36
Camano Island, WA 98282*

Annual Membership Dues: \$32.00 US/35.00 for foreign members. Make checks payable to: PacificTiger Club.

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Activities: Volunteer *still* needed!



Before the autocross at Pikes Peak Int'l Raceway. In the foreground is Ramon Spontelli's Series II Alpine.
Dick Sanders photo

Mark Your Calendar!

PTC Club Events

July 26 - Western Washington ABFM Bring your Rootesmobile down to the grassy lawns of an all-new venue: Saint Edward State Park in Kirkland, Wash. ABFM.com for details.

Aug 16 – PTC Tour to Snohomish. Starting from the Target Store parking lot just east of the end of the 520 freeway in Redmond, Kevin Jewell will lead us on a scenic route he designed as we tour the twisty backroads to the town of Snohomish. Meet at 10am, leave about 10:30.

Nov 15 – 11am Tour of Britsport auto repair shop. Located in the industrial area of Seattle's Magnolia neighborhood, this is one of the few local shops catering to British car owners. 4214 24th Ave W.

Other Sunbeam Events

July 25-27 – Hillman Gathering III
PTC's Craig Burlingame is organizing the latest Hillman Gathering, which will be held partly in conjunction with the Western Washington ABFM (see above). Contact Craig at: MightyMinx@comcast.net for registration information.

British Iron

Aug 30-Sept 1 Portland ABFM, Portland Int'l Raceway. 800+ entries, plus SOVREN vintage racing taking place just a stone's throw behind you on the PIR race track.
<http://www.abfm-pdx.com/2014>

Vintage Racing Action

Aug 30-31 Columbia River Classic - PIR
Sept 27-28 Fall Finale – Pacific Raceways
Oct 4-6 Maryhill Loops Hill Climb and Car Show – Goldendale, WA
Check SOVREN.org for more info

SUNI VI GALLERY



Former Rootes rallyist Rosemary Smith and Jeff Mang swap Sunbeam stories at the concours. - Budd Bennion photo



What do you do with a black primer Tiger? Hand out chalk!

Dick Sanders photo



A long row of Tigers at the concours

Dave Dunn photo



A sea of bonnets.

Bob Bennion photo



SUNI VI chairman Max Pahmeier strolls through the concours. Another job well done, Max!

Dave Dunn photo



A group shot at Pike's Peak Int'l Raceway.

photo by Dick Sanders



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