

The Vintage Sports Car Club of America



VSCCA Newsletter, Number 16, July, 2023

Dear VSCCA Members,

Our 2023 season is about two-thirds through the events calendar and it has been an excellent one thus far with well attended events, a very successful return to Wilbraham, a banner year for the school and some terrific racing.

The balance of the season

All of our remaining events are profiled inside. Next up is Mt. Equinox and if you are interested in entering, please contact Scott Fenley. While the event is full at the moment, there usually are some cancellations so best to make sure he knows of your interest now.

The Lime Rock Historics has 57 MGs entered to celebrate the 100th anniversary of its founding and the concours will feature cars from Lawrence Auriana's fantastic collection. For our Fall Finale we will again have The Litchfield Cup pitting England vs the Rest of the World on Friday, a race that proved so popular last year. This year will see the third revival of the Castle Hill Pre-War Hill Climb and it would be great to get some of the Wilbraham entries to this event; it really is a special one.

The driving season concludes with the Nutmeg Rallye and then we close out the year with the AGM and holiday lunches.

Preservation at Fall Finale

Our renewed efforts at Preservation saw about ten cars at the Fall Finale last year and Spring Sprints this year. We appreciate those that came out, but we know we can do better! Surely, we can get 20 cars out for Preservation on Saturday at the Fall Finale. There are so many gems in the garages of VSCCA members – please bring them out to Lime Rock on September 30!

2024 calendar

While our first 2024 event is likely nine months from now the work on the schedule has begun. If you have not read how our annual event calendar comes together you can find it on vscca.org as part of the July, 2022 newsletter. Chances are that the '24 schedule will be very similar to this year's. For our early season gatherings/tech sessions we are looking at a couple of venues in the Boston and New Hampshire areas. At the moment we do not have anything in mind for the "southern" session. If you have any ideas, please let me know.

Insurance

Having covered how the schedule comes together a year ago I thought

this year I would address the second largest cost to the club after track rental, that being insurance. The insurance landscape has changed significantly over the years and considerably in my five seasons in this role. It has changed so much, and so quickly, that earlier this year I recommended to the board we add a role of "Insurance Advisor" to the club's "staff" and we are very fortunate that VSCCA member Chuck Schoendorf accepted this role. Chuck is a retired agency owner with experience in motorsports insurance. He was able to have an immediate and positive impact on a complex situation we were dealing with, thereby saving the club thousands of dollars.

Insurance for our events used to be fairly simple. Prior to each event an application was filled out and sent to the agent. A Certificate of Insurance was provided and we in turn sent that to the venue and we were done. Prior to the 2020 season Sandy and I evaluated our insurance and found that we could save the club about \$6000 annually by switching to the Vintage Motorsports Council (VMC) provider. The VMC is the governing body for vintage racing in the US and Canada. Hill climbs would cost more but track events less, resulting in the aforementioned annual savings. Then Covid hit and the 2020 season

was a question mark. Could we hold events? What were our liabilities? Jeff Sienkiewicz, who is an attorney, helped us navigate those waters from as a legal and liability perspective and we were able to hold three track events that year. We worked with the VMC agent, Heacock, for that season. For the 2021 season Heacock pulled out and Hagerty took their place for '21 and '22. At the end of the '22 season Hagerty pulled out of being the VMC agent and for 2023 we are dealing with the underwriter, American Specialty, directly. 2023 is the last season that American Specialty will be providing any type of motorsports coverage, an announcement they made last fall. They concluded that motorsports insurance was not a viable line of business for them. Their decision had nothing to do with vintage racing, it was other areas of motorsports that became problematic. They were asked "why not continue with vintage racing?". The answer was that it is too small relative to other motorsports categories to be viable. The VMC decided to form a committee to find a new provider for the 2024 season. Chuck Schoendorf was asked to be on this committee and subsequently he was asked to chair the committee, so we can feel confident that our club's interests will be well looked after. Once a new provider is identified it will be the fifth agent we will have worked with in six seasons; illustrating some of the complexity we are dealing with.



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Upcoming V&SCCA Events



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Mt. Equinox Hill Climb: Saturday – Sunday, August 12-13, Arlington, VT **Please contact Scott Fenley if you are interested!**

Now fully repaved, this is the quintessential V&SCCA event, a must if you have not done it! We have a robust entry. If you are interested or if you need to cancel please contact Scott Fenley. If anyone wishes to volunteer (flag), please refer them to the workers registration on motosportreg or contact Jim Bottomley (jimbotmga@gmail.com) Desire Faulkner (racebetty215@gmail.com) or Scott. If anyone would like to join us for Saturday's dinner at the Arlington Inn and has not registered, they need to register ASAP as we are near capacity and we need to get a head count to the Inn. For more information, please contact Event Chair Scott Fenley at 215-901-4324 or at fenleyts@yahoo.com



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Lime Rock Historic Festival 41: Thursday – Monday, August 31 – September 4, Lime Rock Park, CT

MGs will be the featured race group, with 57 entries (across three grids) and Lawrence Auriana will be the featured collector – if you did not see his collection a few years ago this is the opportunity to see some of his incredible cars. Three days of racing, the Sunday in the Park Concours and Gathering of the Marques are just some of the highlights. To enter go to vscca.org or you may write specifically to Jeanette at Historics@limerock.com. For questions please contact Jeanette or EC Chris Turner at ctturner@prestigeops.com.



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Fall Finale - The Litchfield Cup: Friday-Saturday, September 29 – 30- October 1, Lime Rock Park, CT **Early Bird Expires September 15!**

A great way to end your track season will be the Fall Finale where we again will hold the Litchfield Cup featuring England vs. the Rest of the World. If you enter a car in another Fall Finale class your Pre-War entry, made built prior to 1941, will be free! We have a Preservation Group for Saturday. All of our usual entries are welcome, of course, so come and enjoy the glory of the fall colors in the Berkshires. For more information please contact Event Chair Whit Smith at w@fws.nyc or call 847-561-7515.



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Castle Hill Pre-War Hill Climb, Rally Tour and Dinner: Saturday- Sunday, Oct. 14-15, Ipswich, MA

Castle Hill again will see 30 Pre-War cars have the chance to make their way up the same course we ran for eight entries in the late 1990s. Starting below the Inn we go by the Casino, wind our way through the Italiante Gardens and finish in the courtyard where we can enjoy sweeping views of the Atlantic over the Grand Allee! The Hill Climb will be preceded on Saturday with a Rally and dinner in the mansion at the top of the hill. For more information please contact event co-chairs Tom Ellsworth at pfbos@msn.com or 978-768-7000 or Steve Silverstein at milano164@ymail.com or 774-232-2990.



The 26th Nutmeg Rally: Saturday, October 21, Hudson Valley, New York

The 26th edition is being developed as this is written. For more information please contact Jim Donick at 845-635-2373 or whimsey1@earthlink.net or Joan Harmer at joan@harmersinternational.com or call 914-962-2652

Cars seen at V&SCCA events: 1957 MGA “Spankey”

By Mark O'Day, Adapted from an article by David Cathers in “MGA!” Sept./Oct. 2021

The Lime Rock Histories will honor MG's 100th anniversary this year by having the marque being a featured race group. 57 MGs are entered so far. There is one MG, our subject here, that probably has a longer Lime Rock history than any car that will be racing at the event, in fact one that few can match whether they are racing or not. I write of Chris Meyers' '57 MGA affectionately known as “Spankey” after it's first owner, Edwin “Spankey” Smith. He bought the car new in '57 and started racing it pretty much in stock form, including its original Tyrolite Green paint (that can be seen on Jim Warren's MGA). Bob Bucher drove it in its first event, winning the Collier Brothers Memorial Race at Watkins Glen on September 21, 1957, complete with 029 on its flanks and bonnet, just as it is today (Bucher's Jaguars and Allards were always #29). Within a year the car had been rolled in a race and, as a result, acquired the British Racing Green color that still adorns it. For the '58 and '59 seasons the car sported a now required rollover bar – made out of electrical conduit (not much, but better than the roll bar of an MGA competitor's made out of exhaust pipe and attached with exhaust clamps!). On April 26, 1959, with Bucher at the wheel, as always, the car won the last Sunday race ever held at Lime Rock. After the 1959 season Smith retired the car from racing and used it as a street car for the next 26 years, including winters. Spankey Smith passed



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away in 1986 and it's next owner was Joe Tierno, who, in 1957 at eight-years old, had ridden his bike to the nearby dealer in upstate New York specifically to see the Tyrolite Green MGA. 30 years later, after Smith's passing, Joe wrote the family to inquire what was to become of the car and that he “would appreciate the opportunity to buy it”. He soon became the owner and undertook a body-off restoration with the intention of bringing it back to the track, more in 1600 form than 1500, but looking just as it did in the late '50s. For the next 20 years Tierno raced the car all over the east in vintage events and the car won the Collier Cup, again. In 2009 Joe decided to retire and Chris Meyers, head of MG Vintage Racers at the time, became its next steward – only the third. Chris named the car “Spankey”, after its original owner. Chris has campaigned the car for 14 seasons now and has kept intact “the unbe-

lievable collection of stuff” that came with the car – dash plaques, tech stickers, pit passes and various event documents from its history back to the '50s. As Chris liked to say, this car comes “this car comes with a lot of people”. A car with history, appearing as it did in period, coming with virtually all of its artifacts and knowing most of the people that made that history, that is pretty special. You can see Spankey on track and in the historic MG tent at Lime Rock over the Labor Day weekend.

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Another element of all this are the costs. As I mentioned previously, we were able to achieve an annual \$6000 in savings relative to the previous provider. For the 2023 season the rates charged to VMC clubs increased by 20% over 2022 (all clubs pay the same rates) although the total cost of our insurance for 2023 is still less than what we paid for a similar schedule in 2019. What the rates for 2024 are, remain to be seen. Track rental costs and insurance are what drive our event entry rates. We were able to hold steady entry rates for three seasons, '20-22, and for 2023 raised track events \$25 across the board. The hill climbs also saw a modest increases as well. Overall, the club will spend about \$20,000 to insure our events in 2023, about 20% of our track and hill climb event costs.

Insurance is what has also driven changes in how we go about some things. If you have partaken in a track or hill climb event the past couple of years you will have been asked to sign a paper waiver on site despite acknowledging the waiver online or signing on a paper entry. This is an insurance requirement, in fact everyone, entrants, spouses, friends, etc. is supposed to sign a waiver. So far, we have held off the need to require wrist bands to prove waiver compliance that most events have; that day may yet come. Ten or so years ago the VSCCA implemented a medical form approval for drivers in wheel-to-wheel events. That was more of a commonsense decision by the club at the time but now necessary. Expiration dates on helmets, belts, harnesses, etc. are made with safety in mind, first and foremost, but with insurance considerations a very strong element.

Believe it or not, there is a good bit more to this than I have written here, but I will spare you the details. Suffice to say that insurance is a major component of staging our events, both in terms of cost and considerations. We are doing what we can to keep the costs, and the red tape, down, but it is an evolving element of what we love to do. There is no avoiding it and, for some, it may have changed some aspects of the club “the way it used to be” but it is simply a fact of life that we are doing our best to manage with as little impact to members as possible.

Wrapping up

The balance of our season will be promoted via email and social media so look for occasional emails on Sundays at 6PM. Thanks to all who make our events possible – Event Chairs, Marshals, Tech Inspectors and a myriad of other volunteers for various tasks. And thanks for the contributions to our event newsletter and event promotion – Mark Lefferts for his insightful Tech Tips, Lynn Arnold for her proofreading, Mark Sherman for managing the website and sending out the emails, Richard Campbell and Whit Smith for their social media postings, Deb O'Day and Ed Hyman for their photos and Charles Bordin, Kevin Clemens, Ben Bragg and Chris Meyers for volunteering their cars to be profiled this year.

See you at the track!

Best regards,
Mark O'Day

Tech Tip: Trailer Accidents

by Mark O'Day



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One of the most dangerous aspects of our hobby is dealing with the trailer, yet it probably is really an afterthought for most of us – coupling and decoupling, loading, unloading, securing the car. We have all done it so many times we hardly think about it. Whether it is a large rig or a small, enclosed or open trailer for a single car, it matters not. If you have joined the club in the past 19 years, you may not be aware that a member, Charlie Gibson, who was the Event Chairman for the Lime Rock Historics, lost his life in a tragic accident after decoupling his trailer. What has prompted me to write this is that at two of my last three Lime Rock events I have seen nasty trailer accidents take place with my immediate paddock neighbors; in the first instance it was someone relatively new to our events, in the second it was someone who has probably loaded and unloaded his trailer over 200 times. Fortunately, the first resulted in no injuries, the second resulted in some bruising but either one could have been so much worse. At the Fall Finale last year I watched as a car was being driven on the trailer that looked secure but wasn't – the coupler was on the ball but not latched. As soon as the front wheels of the race car were on the trailer the coupler lifted off the ball and the trailer tongue was driven into the rear of the tow vehicle, causing considerable damage. At the recent Empire Cup, I heard blood curdling screams of "Help, help!" and found that the car next to me had rolled off the trailer and pinned the owner between the ramp wire, the ramp, and the car. One wheel of the race car was off the side of the ramp and the owner was partially trapped under the car. It took a jack to lift the car so as to extricate him. Lastly, I will share an incident from several years ago in which your AC was the responsible party. I was unloading my car and thought the trailer was level and the car was in gear. Both were incorrect assumptions. Despite having slack in the front straps, as soon as I undid the second one my car started to roll back. My attempts to hold it back slowed it a bit but off it went. Fortunately, there were no cars or no one walking by the access road to be collected by my runaway car. It rolled across the road and came to a stop. The front wing did get a small chunk of sheet metal carved out as it scraped against the ramp wire. Now, if the ramp wire took a small chunk of sheet metal out of my car, imagine what it could do someone's fingers, hand, or body. Back to the aforementioned incident, the trapped owner was so tightly pinned by the ramp wire you could see a clear indentation as it pressed against his chest. He was incredibly lucky not to have any lacerations or broken bones.



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There are many considerations for trailer safety and I will not provide any check lists here but will share a few lessons learned. One is don't make any assumptions – based on what you think, observe or assume you or somebody else may have done. Check for yourself that everything is ready for the next step. Another is chocking the wheels when the car is on the trailer. I now always chock the driver's side front wheel with a long leash leading to the cockpit, thus preventing any movement while I undo the straps. Then I get in and with my foot on the brake, pull away the chock. In the event the car is not able to run (a not infrequent occurrence for many of us!) I always make sure someone is in the car to control it. Lastly, using "pool noodles" over the ramp wires look like a pretty good idea as a safety cushion.

Safety first!

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Annual General Meeting: Saturday, November 11, GMT Racing, Newtown, CT

This year we will again gather at GMT Racing for our Annual General Meeting. We will review the '22 season, preview our '23 schedule, have our annual awards and more. This is a great opportunity to share your thoughts on the club with the board. A buffet lunch will be included and more details will be emailed in the coming months.

Holiday Luncheons: Sunday, December 3 in Boston and Sunday, December 12 10 in West Point, NY

As always, we will wrap our season with Holiday luncheons in Boston at the Chart House and West Point at the Thayer Hotel. We will send out emails in the fall with more details. Please contact Boston EC Steve Silverstein at milano164@ymail.com or 774-232-2990 and West point EC Joan Harmer at joan@harmersinternational.com or call 914-962-2652

