



Bob Mueller's 1931 Ford 5 Window Coupe | GSTA's 1st Car Show



Gopher State Timing Association

50 Years of Hot Rods Custom Car Shows and Drag Racing



TOM ERICKSON

Ed Belkengren's 1932 Ford 5 Window HiBoy Coupe | GSTA's 49th Car Show

GSTA HISTORY

Reprinted from **The Timer** August 10, 1957

In 1954, spurred by Captain Bailey of the Northside Police precinct, the Road Knights, Throttle Jammers, Piston Slappers, Dualeers, Accelerators, Lakesters, Bumper Buddies, Rod Nuts, Cogs, Pied Pipers, Road Ghosts, Potters, Road Ramblers, Road Runners, Cam Snappers, Stokers, Road Angels, Universals, Road Busters, Gear Grinders, Drag-N-Wheels, Kustom Kings, Black Jacks, King Pins, and Dragons. Got together and tried to form a lasting organization for the betterment of Minnesota Hot Rodders. The first meetings were held at the Northside precinct itself, in quarters arranged for by Captain Bailey. One man at these meetings, made so much sense in every suggestion, that when the first elections were held, he was voted President, and has been re-elected ever since then. That man is **John Foster**, without whose help and prodding, the association would not be where it is today. The other elected officials at this election were **Keith Rogerine**, Vice President, **Don Niles**, Secretary and **Dave Sohlin**, Treasurer.

After the first few meetings, **Bob Palmer**, a kind of gentleman, who was one of the many advisors in the first meetings, said he was able to procure room for meetings, rent free, in the *James Ballentine V.F.W.* at Lake St. and Lyndale. The meetings have been held there ever since. As word of the association spread, other clubs came seeking membership, and before very long the size of the organization had doubled, over its original charter membership. A constitution was drawn up, and amended, and amended until was finally as much to everyone's liking as possible, and the copies printed black spaces where the organizations name should be, as the name was not decided on for about four months. There became more and more talk of a drag strip for the organization, but it was felt that to hurry was a folly, for there had been attempts earlier towards a drag strip and they had ended in failure. It was also decided that a sponsor would be necessary for it would take too long for the association to raise the money on its own. So, the next logical step was to inform Mr. John Q. Public of intentions and merits of the true hot-rod-der.

Late in the year of 1955, the question was raised whether or not the association should join a nationwide organization. As a result of this, the director of the "Automobile Timing Ass'n. of America, **James**

Lamona, was present at one the meetings, and it was decided that the association should join this organization. The membership was completely enrolled in February of 1956, and the association is completely satisfied with ATAA.



On September 16, 1956, the Gopher State Timing Association held its first Car Show. The location was the Red Owl parking lot on Lake Street and 21st Avenue South. There were cars present from as far away as Chicago, and they drew a terrific crowd. That particular Sunday, the weatherman was just as cooperatively as he could be, and the people just flocked around the area.

There was ample parking, and the association saw all of its members there. Some of the cars were **Eryln Carlson**, of Fargo, North Dakota who took three trophies with this gorgeous 1952 Merc. Custom, **Nobby Wesps**, Olds, and many other fine Rod and Customs.

As this point I would like to give you all, a slight bit of background, on the man who made the association what it is today, by his never ending toil in al our behalf. **John Foster**, a native of LeMars, Iowa, moved to Florida, and came to Minnesota in 1946. He joined the Stokers in 1954, as an advisor, and has continued in this capacity ever since, John has had time between all of his official duties, to assemble the most sanitary Merc in this part of the country, as you can see if you will find it here at the show. He has been the spark-plug of the association ever since its birth, and all the members owe him a terrific debt for the time he has spent in getting our Drag Strip. It was

announced about a month ago, that the land has been located, and the plans were being dreamt up for our Drag Strip. The backers of the strip, the Optimist Club, are building the strip with a dual purpose in mind. The first is that the Hot Rodders of our area will have a place to race their cars against the clocks, under strict safety supervision. The second purpose is, after the strip is a paying propositions, the proceeds will go to the Optimist Youth Work. The location of the installation is about four miles north of Anoka, and is to be running by Labor Day. There will be parking facilities for about two thousand spectators' cars, and pit area large to accommodate many, many competitors.

Well, you have read the story of a group of young fellow, who had their heart set on a drag strip, and how they got it. We think it is a swell story, how about you? 🍌

"He has been the spark-plug of the association ever since its birth, and all the members owe him a terrific debt for the time he has spent in getting our Drag Strip."

QUEEN CONTESTS

by Connie Englert

The first Miss GSTA Queen Contest was started in 1957. Each club was to have a representative for the contest. The girls were judged in semi-casual outfits on Friday and swimsuits on Saturday evening. The crowning of the queen and two princesses was on Sunday evening before car show trophies were given out. The girls wore evening gowns for this. A queen's tea was held the weekend before the contest to introduce the girls and answer questions.



1973 Queen Patti Niznick with Princess's Cindy Foy and Jackie Eilek

Miss G.S.A and her princesses represented the Association in many parades and at race tracks, even presenting trophies at BIR. Eventually they joined in the Aquatennial parade and, festivities and their queen contest.

In 1969 our queen, **Sue Theis**, was crowned as one of the Aquatennial princesses.

Through the years of the Miss GSTA Queen Contests, which ran from 1957 through 1978, many gopher members gave numerous hours preparing for contests, building floats, participating in parades and chaperoning the girls to various activities. In return for the hours donated they were able to get acquainted with many wonderful young ladies. ✨



1977 Queen Dawn Van Pelp

GSTA Queen History 1957-1978

1957-58 Lee Younkin	1969 Kathy Zimmerman
1959 Sandy Hogan	1970 Terri Setterlund
1960 Jolee Sachs	1971 Mary Ellen Zubulake
1961 Judy Darwin	1972 Kathy Kiefier
1962 Sue Bubiltz	1973 Pattie Niznick
1963 Judy Strommen	1974 Patti Pomeroy & Chris Maciazka
1964 Laura Bolstad	1975 Sue Guttman
1965 Shirley Moses	1976 Margie Klas
1966 Sharon Exstrom	1977 Dawn Van Pelp
1967 Carol Kozak	1978 Judy Theis
1968 Jackie Schiel	
1969 Sue Theis (Princess of the Lakes)	

Lee Younkin GSTA's 1st Queen

The following article appeared in **The Timer** Vol.1 No. 7 October 1957



"Lee Younkin, is one terrific good sport!" These words were spoken by John Foster, at the last Gopher State meeting, and his reasons for making this statement are many. Lee was, as most of you know, selected as Miss GSTA at the car show, and was therefore our contestant in the "Miss World Series" contest at Cordova Ill. during the World Series of Drag Racing. She did not win, although she had the eventual winner, a local beauty, far out pointed. This is not an exclusive opinion, but one that was reiterated many times, by varied speed contestants, and one or two official's. Not one time, during her stay at the drags was Lee heard to say anything which was less than completely agreeable, and this took no little amount of patience and even temperness. I can honestly say that if I were Lee, I would have blacked a few eyes, as she took a good deal of abuse all the way around, as far as the contest was concerned.

Lee has lived in Minneapolis for only three years, hailing from Monrovia, Calif., where our lovely was Monrovia High's "Homecoming Queen" in 1953. Besides being a doll, she is also somewhat of a hot rodder at heart, having attended the drags at Pomona, Calif.. as often as was possible. When asked if she would like to have a roadster or coupe she said she would love it, but she knew nothing about building one. Lee was "Miss Edina" of 1956, and says she really enjoys being in these contests. Her years have been split up between the "U of M" and her hobbies, which include swimming, dancing, skiing, and horseback riding. Lee lives with her parents, at 4901 Maple Road, Edina, and works part-time at Clancy Drugs on West 50th. One of the things that is most impressive about our queen, is that she acts more mature than most 20 year olds, and all I can say is she was a perfect choice.

THE 1950'S

by Ed Smith

Hot-rodding in the Twin Cities was working its way eastward from California by the late 40s and 50s. Although circle track racing with various types of cars had been popular in the area for years, street-driven modified cars were still a rarity. The arrival of the small size magazines (*Honk* and *Rod & Custom*) on newsstands allowed the youth of the day to be made aware of what was happening elsewhere. I grew up in south Minneapolis in the 50s and can recall a few modified cars in my neighborhood that caught the attention of those of us riding bicycles: a '36 Ford coupe with fade-away running boards and LaSalle grill, a very nice '50 Ford convert, a '49 or '50 Chev sedan delivery and a '40 Buick coupe come to mind.



Boyd Harland's 1940 Olds shown at the 1st GSTA Show

By 1953 there was an attempt to get the various clubs (*Cogs*, *Combustion Cousins*, *Rod Nuts*, etc.) organized into a master group. The first group that I am aware of was the *Gofur Timing Association*. This group organized – and held – drag races on an abandoned stretch of road south of Highway 10, between Elk River and Big Lake. This was a very narrow piece of road with a curve in the shutdown portion. Timing was primitive, using a stopwatch (at the finish line) that was started by hand when the starter's flag dropped. Races were conducted fairly regularly during 1953, but were stopped when a fast '36 Ford coupe rolled while



Roger Dahl's 1949 Merc shown at the 2nd GSTA Show

trying to stop. Another factor in ending the races was the Highway Patrol objecting to the cars parked on the overpass to watch the races. The drag racing moved to the old University of Minnesota airport which was

across Highway 8 from Twin City Speedway in Lexington. Racing continued there until the University found out what was going on and sent the University police to end it. There was speculation that the owner of the speedway may have alerted them.

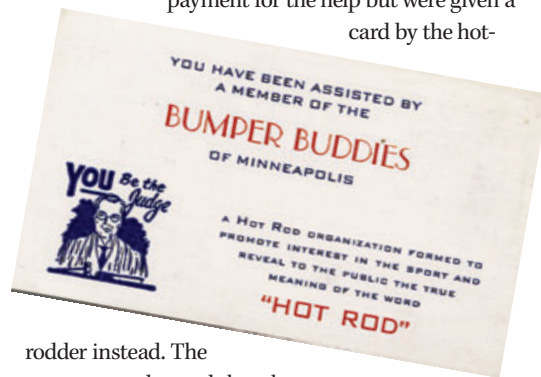


1950 scalloped Chev owned by Randy Pearson from the 3rd GSTA Show in 1959

The group that followed the *Gofur Timing Association* was the *Twin City Timing Association*, which started with 15 clubs. Little is known about this organization other than an article in the June 1953 issue of *Racing Wheels* magazine. Most clubs of the era were interested in improving the public image of hot-rodders. Just about all the clubs had "courtesy cards" which



were given out whenever a club member helped a motorist in distress. Many such motorists offered payment for the help but were given a card by the hot-

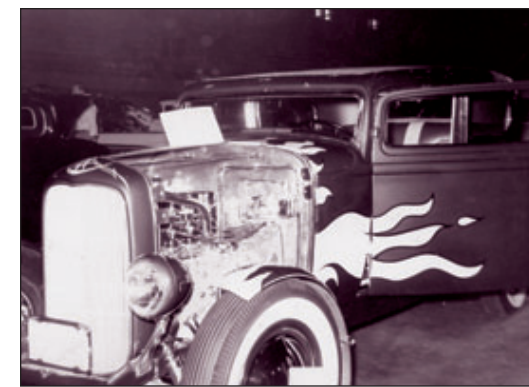


rodder instead. The courtesy card stated that the person had just been assisted by a hot-rodder.

The association held many events such as reliability runs, poker runs, and treasure hunts with prizes and trophies for the winners and clubs. Blood donations and donations to telethons also took place.

THE 1950'S

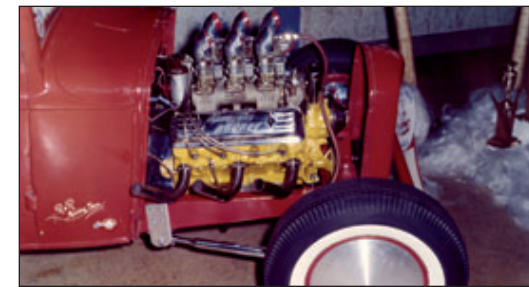
In 1954 the Minneapolis Police Department's Captain Bailey held an organizational meeting for car clubs in the area. The result of that meeting was the Gopher State Timing Association that we know today. It was incorporated in early 1955. GSTA continued many of the positive things that the previous Associations had started. Member clubs continued the many varied and fun activities they had done before. A couple of the clubs started an ice racing event on a small pond near Prior Lake. Using junker cars without studded tires, it was pure fun. A very small admission was charged one Sunday with all proceeds going to the Heart Association, since it was Heart Sunday.



Henry Orfield's 1932 Ford CoBest of Show in 1957

In the late '50s a shop teacher at Vocational High School, Clarence (Shorty) Booth, arranged for GSTA and the Minneapolis Optimist Club to meet, with the ultimate result being Minnesota Dragways, "The Fastest Piece of Real Estate in Minnesota". The dragstrip opened for racing in 1959. GSTA, through income from its car shows, bought bonds to help finance the building of the strip.

In 1956 GSTA held its first car show at what was then a



The Rythmn Rods, R&R Racings, 1932 Ford Olds Rocket Powered Comp Sedan shown at 2nd GSTA Show in 1957

Red Owl store parking lot on 22nd Avenue and Lake Street. This show had many rods and customs, an antique and a Tucker. Trophies were solicited from local merchants. No admission was charged and attendance was good. The next show was in the Minneapolis Armory in 1957 and featured the first GSTA Queen Contest in addition to many fine cars. There was no show in 1958, but a Spectacular has been held every year since, starting in 1959. 🍁



Big Wheel ad from The Timer circa 1957

One of the prime car-related activities of the car-crazy youth was cruising. Popular streets for this in Minneapolis were Lake Street from the Flat Top drive-in near the river to Porkey's near Lake Calhoun. Another, for the North side, was the Sun Drive-In on



Allan Fehn's 50 Mercury shown at 1st GSTA Show

Central Avenue. I understand the popular St. Paul cruising street was University Avenue in the area of Porkey's drive-in. Unfortunately, this cruising activity often led to impromptu street races to see whose car was best, or fastest. The one-way streets that crossed Lake Street, Portland and Park were the best because they were wide, with no oncoming traffic – you had to watch the cross streets carefully though.



1933 Plymouth 3 Window Coupe shown at 1st GSTA Show

THE 1960'S

by Charlie Johnson

The 60s, ah yes, I remember them well – duck tails, flat tops, poodle skirts, penny loafers, engineer boots, and GSTA events.



1932 Ford 5 Window Coupe The SCAG at the 4th GSTA Show in 1960

Drag racing at Minnesota Dragways and Twin City Speedway was great. There were several people that campaigned the gas GSTA dragster. At one time there were two dragsters and two crews. In addition to winning many races home and away, the dragster crew won "Best Appearing Crew" at the nationals at Indy. Much work went into the car and uniforms – a real team effort.



Trendero 1959 Ford Ranchero, built by John Malik and Dave Puhl at Trend Custom Shop near Chicago was shown at our 7th GSTA Show in 1963

Many individuals also drag raced. One local mom (9 months pregnant) won the powder puff drag race two weeks before the delivery of her first-born son (see sidebar).

GSTA built and entered parade floats. In the Minneapolis Aquatennial 1966 parade, the float won the "Governor's Award". Many floats and many local parades leave us great memories, i.e., Rasberry Festival and '49er Days.

Wife Finds Racing Isn't a Drag

Mrs. Charles Johnson knew when she got married three years ago that her husband was a car enthusiast interested in drag racing. Her lack of interest in the sport didn't last long. It couldn't. It was her husband's hobby, and the Sunday schedule in their home read 7:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. – Minnesota

Dragways, Coon Rapids. "So I decided if you can't fight it, join it," said the attractive blonde.

And join she did. Mrs. Johnson, 22, became so involved in racing in the Sunday powder puff derbies that the pending arrival of their first child did not slow her down.

Won First Trophy

She won her first trophy of the season two weeks before the expected birth of their baby (the first week of June). "The doctor knew I was racing and didn't say anything against it, so I told my husband I would do it as long as I could fit behind the steering wheel." She explained that drag racing in the powder puff derby involves only two cars and it is a straight track, no curves. "It's based on your acceleration for a quarter mile," she added. "You are timed for miles-per-hour and elapsed time." She said that the race a week and a half ago will probably be her last one of the season since she will have a baby to care for.

Her interest in cars and drag racing came gradually, she said. "My husband didn't push me into it. He let me go to the dragways when I wanted to and let me work on the car." When the powder puff derby was set up at the dragways, her husband encouraged her to enter.

'All for the Sport'

"Once I was driving and out on the strip, I was all for the sport," she said. And she added she no longer objects to money spent on the car, the one they use for both their personal use and racing. Their home is also a meeting place for the 3-Two's Club, which her husband organized when he was 15 years old. The car club is a member of the Gopher State Timing Association and several of its trophies are in the Johnson home, 4033 Chicago Av. They have other trophies too. Her husband, and industrial spray painter for Control Data, has won between 15 and 20 trophies racing cars. And she has three trophies from last year in addition to the one she won this season. She gives credit to her husband for the pointers he has given to her in driving. "He taught me how to line up the car, watch the lights and where to shift," she explained.

This Article first appeared in The Minneapolis Star Wednesday, May 21, 1967



Mrs. Charles Johnson, 4033 Chicago Av. Won racing trophy two weeks before baby due.

THE 1960'S



Bob Truchinski's 1955 Buick OMEGA 3 shown at the 4th GSTA Show in 1960 – look at all that angel hair! WOW!!



Marlyn Englert's 1956 Chev Convertible at the 4th GSTA Show in 1960

GSTA is an association of clubs. To encourage clubs to do good things beyond drag racing, there was a points committee formed to honor good works, positive deeds, and fun events. Clubs submitted reports on such things as drag racing, road runs, blood drives, and community service projects. Each year at the annual GSTA banquet, clubs were honored for their accomplishments. For our entertainment at the annual banquet we had guest speakers such as Don Garlits, Tony Fox (of Sno Pony Snowmobiles & Pollution Packer fame), Jerry Stahl and Craig Breedlove (from the land speed record attempts at Salt Lake). The banquets usually averaged 200 attendees.



Ray Heinen's Champion Auto 1932 Austin Altered at the 8th GSTA Show 1964

Each year GSTA has produced a car show. The first one was outdoors at the Hi-Lake Shopping Center. The Minneapolis Armory became the first indoor venue. The program each night was hosted by local radio or TV personalities. Roundhouse Rodney was my favorite. Each night, Queen candidates from each club were interviewed on stage and in private by the Queen committee. On Sunday night Miss GSTA was crowned. Miss GSTA was allowed to participate in the Aquatennial "Queen of the Lakes" event, but not to become Queen of the Lakes. The Queen and princesses represented GSTA on parade floats and other events including races at Minnesota Dragways.



1932 Ford D/Altered owned by Dave Kelley of Albert Lea at the 7th GSTA Show in 1963

At the GSTA Rod & Custom Spectaculars in the '60s, cars came from Canada, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, and Iowa. Many came through adverse weather conditions and more than once the "Minnesota Boys High School State basketball storm". Weather in March was a threat for travelers and patrons.

The 60s were great for street rods, drag cars, and custom cars of all makes. Some came back year after year, but never like the previous year. Fred Romo and Marlyn Englert were always up for a better car. Lots of work by owners and local custom shops; Jon Kosmoski spent many sleepless nights the week before the show. Who would have known GSTA would have a Golden Anniversary Rod and Custom Spectacular in 2006? 🏆

THE 1970'S

by Pat Bonnett

There can never be too many colors on a car! Or can there? This seemed to be the theme of the experimental seventies. With wild paint and colors galore, it seemed that the more colors a vehicle had, the cooler it was.



If there was a way to get an idea from the painter's imagination thru the spray gun and on to the car, it was tried and done. Sometimes those paint schemes worked, and other times people stated "What in the

world was he thinking?" With painters and body shops opening in everyone's garage, there were a lot of ideas and schemes out there.



We had lace patterns (which really did use lace that was purchased at the fabric stores), webbing designs, free flowing lines, shell patterns, fogged edges, smoke soot from an acetylene torch, isometric designs, air bubbles, water bubbles, and the deep rich Kandy Kolors were gaining popularity. There was even some talk of rubber bands being used in a multi-colored Kandy dragster that belonged to Vic (Super Swede) Anderson and his wife Cheryl.



This is a sample of panel painting on a '67 Camaro done by Jon Kosmoski in 1969-70. The owner said only that he wanted a wild paint job. \$450.00 dollars later this is a portion of what he got!

To go with the ever popular flames and scallops, there was even actual ground glass being used to give some paint schemes that fine sparkle effect. And of course we always had the multi-colored metal flakes. Jon

Kosmoski even developed a paint called *Vreeble*. This paint was sprayed over a high metallic base color and then after a short time it separated and cracked open to reveal the base color below.



Tom Erickson and Ron Braun discussing how he controls all the equipment it takes to run the show.

It was called **Tom Erickson's Multi-Media Rod and Kustom Screen Extravaganza**, and for 5 years between 1976 and 1980 you could go up the third floor of the Armory during the GSTA Car Show and for 25 cents see a 22-minute mind-blowing movie shown every hour during the Car Show.

The Screen Extravaganza was projected onto a ten-by-thirty foot screen using 18 ektagraphic slide projectors, 8 dissolve units, and one 8mm and two 16mm film projectors. Quadraphonic sound equipment was also used in the presentation to mirror all the glitter and chrome of the car show.

A press release issued to the Twin Cities media also said, "He (Tom) draws his influence from the rod and custom car world, overwhelmingly evident in his production: One does not have to be a car freak to enjoy this show. Even though I use images from the Rod & Custom car world, the Customs themselves are art forms rolling down the street." So witness the phantasmagorical universe of Custom Cars through the vehicle of multi-media.

In 1981 the GSTA Rod and Custom Show moved to the Coliseum on the State Fair Grounds. Unfortunately space limitations forced the end of one exciting experience.



NO ONE DOES IT TO YOU LIKE TOM ERICKSON!

THE 1970'S

Paint Jargon

Candy, candy apple: A transparent paint, tinted in any Kool-aid color, that is applied over a reflective base coat (usually gold or silver) to produce a deep, rich hue

Fade, fadeaway: A paint job that blends one color or shade into another without a maskoff line.

Flames, flamed: A paint scheme of stylized, usually undulating, flames that cover the nose, hood and/or sides of a car.

Gloss coat: The final coat of paint that is sprayed on smooth and glossy, and which gets rubbed out on a custom; apposed to a base coat.

Metalflake, flake: A kind of custom paint job

consisting of candy paint sprayed over tiny aluminum foil squares, like glitter, usually silver but in other colors, too.

Pearl, pearlescent: A custom paint said to have been originally made from ground fish scales (this may or may not be true). It is now made from mica particles. Mixed into, or applied over, any color of paint, it makes the color shimmer like the iridescent surface of a pearl or abalone shell.

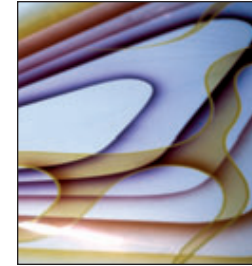
Scallops: A paint design of long, usually thin tapered spears, either flowing backwards from the nose of a car or intertwined throughout the body panels.



Waaaay cool! With the development of all these new patterns and design ideas it was common to have paint jobs approaching 20, 30, or even 40 coats of paint.

Thus the longevity of these works of art was some times short lived. A number of these paint jobs even cracked before they were finished, the cure, **more clear**. These

paint schemes and application techniques carried over to the drag racing scene with even more schemes and color combinations, due to the vast number of cars and



Shagadelic Man!

To go with the street rods and customs, one of the largest areas of painting innovation was with the growing community of van owners. From murals to other customizations, this group led the way in tricking out the plainest vehicles on the road. They started with a plain jane box, and ended up with a van with bubble top windows, a bed in the back, and a mural of a unicorn on the side. Unfortunately due to the gas shortages and leap in prices, the era of the Customized Van would be a short lived one. The depth and vastness of the colors and techniques led to the largest era of design, innovation, and creativity in the world of hot rod painting. 🙄



"Killer Vette" painted by Pat Bonnett donned panel paint, fish scales, and 10 colors & shades of candys over a silver metalflake base.



In 1979 Bob Peterson showed his wild 74 Olds Cutlass at our 23rd Show.



Van Mural from around 1976 fantasy themes where big.

THE DRAGSTERS OF GSTA

by Dave Smith

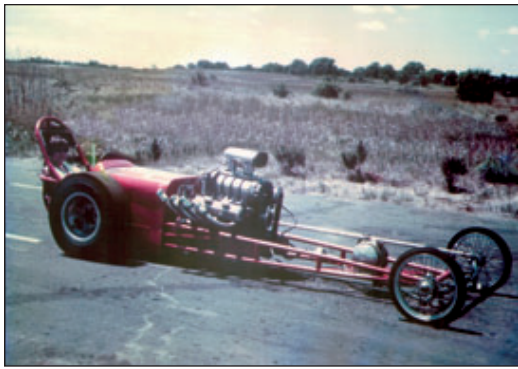
Once Minnesota Dragways opened, it changed the face of GSTA. In January 1963, **Larry Johnson** of the Cogs brought up the idea for GSTA to buy a AA dragster. On March 7th, based on information from **John Foster**, **Dave Anderson** made a motion to buy **Jack Moss'** AA Chev dragster for \$3000. This was



GSTAs 1st Dragster-The Jack Moss AA Chev with Ray Ruettiman driving.

seconded by **Lynn Woodward** and passed unanimously.

The "Little One" became GSTA's first race car. **John Foster**, **Dave Anderson** and **Ron Braun** made the first three runs in the car. **Jack Loza**, **Vern Smith**, **Bob Johnson**, **Ray Ruettiman**, **Doug Ondeck**, **Don Williams**, and **Dick Murry** rounded out the 10 drivers



GSTAs 2nd Dragster-The Hoover Dragmaster AA/D. with GSTA winning Division 5 Top Gas.

in 1963. Best time: 8.80, top speed: 176 MPH.

In 1964, **Tom Hoover's** Dragmaster became GSTA's second car and the Crossmembers bought the Little One. The performance of the two AA/D cars and the many drivers that year resulted in GSTA winning the Division 5 Top Gas Champion title. **Darrell Zimmerman** said, "This is a really great group of guys. GSTA runs Minnesota Dragways at Minneapolis. The hat of west central is off to GSTA for winning the central divisional points contest and a big congratulations to you all."



GSTAs 3rd Dragster-The Rod Stuckey AA/D Dragster. GSTA won Division 5 Top Gas in 1966.

In 1965 GSTA took another of **Tom Hoover's** hand me downs. This time it was a full bodied **Rod Stuckey** car. The car did the job as GSTA was the 1966 Division 5 Top Gas Champion again! GSTA continued to campaign this car until 1976.

In February 1967, GSTA ordered its fourth, but first NEW, dragster from Race Car Specialties (RCS). This car became known as the #1 car and the Stuckey car was the #2 car. The #1 car was crewed primarily by **Ron Braun**, **Ray Ruettiman**, **Terry Gageby** and **Marlyn Englert**. The several outstanding paint jobs by **Jon Kosmoski** won Best Appearing car awards at many meets. GSTA tied for Division 5 Top Gas Champions in 1968. In 1969, GSTA won the Can-Am Top gas Championship in Winnipeg. The #1 crew



GSTAs 4th Dragster-Race Car Specialties AA/Gas Dragster. Pictured above at the NHRA National Championship in Indianapolis. **Ron Braun**, one of GSTA's top drivers, on a quick trip in GSTA's number one car.

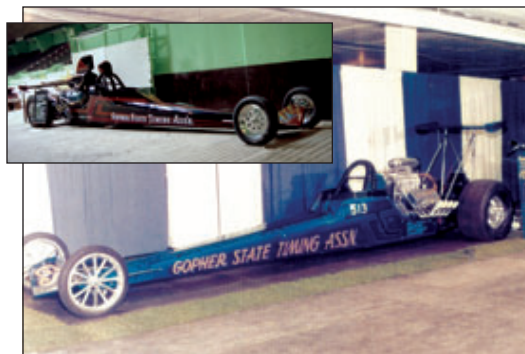
Minnesota's Fastest Piece of Real Estate



opened Sunday March 16 and the strip will run each Sunday, and all holidays each week throughout the summer. Located 3 miles east of Anoka, Minnesota, on Highway 242, Minnesota Dragways is only a 20 minute drive from the metropolitan area.

America's finest Drag Strip owned and operated by the Twin City Optimist Clubs Timing Association. An Ultra-modern racing plant which features the finest facilities for fast and safe drag racing. The 1969 competitive season

opened Sunday March 16 and the strip will run each Sunday, and all holidays each week throughout the summer. Located 3 miles east of Anoka, Minnesota, on Highway 242, Minnesota Dragways is only a 20 minute drive from the metropolitan area.



GSTAs 6th Dragster-George Wepplo AA/Gas Rear engine Dragster. The car first ran a 417 Donovan motor and finally a big block Chevrolet. **Pat Bonnett** painted both cars.

THE DRAGSTERS OF GSTA



GSTAs 5th Dragster-The George Wepplo Minnesota Custom Fabrication AA/D "Gopher Twin". This car has campaigned at major drag racing meets all over the country and is always a hard charging, good looking entry.

also earned the Best Appearing Crew award at the US Nationals in Indy in 1969.

In March, 1970 **Ron Braun** and **Marlyn Englert** pitched the idea of the #1 and #2 crews to put the spare motor in front of the other one and run a twin engine dragster. This idea led to the building of the Gopher Twin by **George Wepplo** at Minnesota Custom Fabrication. The car made it to the semi-finals at the US Nationals at Indy and came away with Best Appearing Car. Crew members **Phil Bubar** and **Roger Kern** were added to the Twin crew. The Twin ran

through 1973 and made Best Time of 7.33 and Top Speed of 200 MPH with its two 392 Chrysler hemi engines.

In 1973 GSTA made the switch from front engine to rear engine dragsters. **George Wepplo** again was the builder and **Pat Bonnett** painted the car. The car first ran a 417 Donovan motor and finally a big block Chevrolet. This car ran a Best Time of 7.31. The car was finally sold in 1987 after several seasons of limited use.



GSTAs 7th 1964 Dragster- The Yellow Car.

In 1997 the racing bug bit again, however, and the search began for a new race car. A 1964 dragster, very similar to the Stuckey car, was found and purchased in Ohio. The car was rebuilt and updated. The seventh GSTA dragster has had 5 drivers so far and been worked on by over 40 different members. Best Time is 8.2 and top speed 162 MPH. In 2004 the "Yellow Car" failed to be recertified by NHRA for sub-10-second speeds. It is still being run as a training car.



GSTAs 8th Dragster- The powerplant is an all aluminum, alcohol injected 414" Rodeck tall block

A new 225 in. dragster was started by **Stubby Abraham** in 2004. The car will campaign during the 2006 season with anticipated times for GSTA's 8th dragster in the mid-7's and speeds over 175 MPH! 🏆

THE 1980'S



GSTAs 23rd Annual Rod and Custom Spectacular. The year was 1979 and in 1981 we would be moving.

by Russ Peterson

By 1981 we had a new location in the State Fair Coliseum. It was our 25th Silver Anniversary year. Forced to move because the National Guard brought in two forty foot trailers and screwed them down into the hardwood basketball court! The Armory was history.



We may have had Porky from the "Little Rascals" at our car show, but "Porkys" Drive-In was the place to be in the 80s.



Keith Nybo's 1977 Ford Van shown in 1980 or 24th annual show.

The queen contests had been discontinued and we had sold our dragster. (Note: GSTA would be without a race car for ten years from 1987 till 1997)



Our new "digs" the Coliseum on the Minnesota State fair grounds. Shown above was our 31st annual 1987 show.



Loren Richards 1927 Ford powered Ford a trend that was just taking hold shown at our 22th annual show.

when we bought our 7th dragster) Our main focus now was the Rod & Custom show held in the spring of the year. The custom van and muscle car era had come to a close and the custom car movement was coming around again.

We were seeing radical customs built by **Marlyn Englert**, **Don Milinkovich**, which were impact cars and received national attention. Marlyn had a large display titled **Marlyn's Toy Box** with several of his newly finished projects. We had an **Elvis Collection** at one



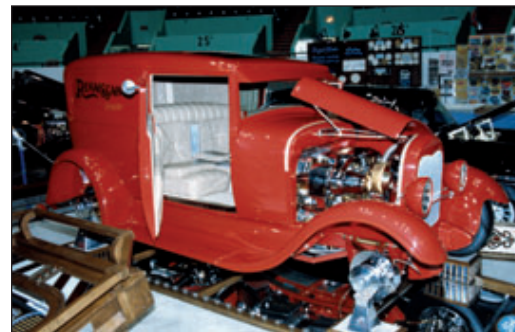
Dennis Stedman 1931 Pontiac 4Dr. Sedan shown in 1981

THE 1980'S



The dash in Gene Sonnen's 1940 Ford with classic Dave Bell pinstriping the year 1981.

of the shows in the 80's and drew huge crowds and Elvis may even have been there in spirit. A number of hydraulic lowriders participated in the shows in the 80's. **Bob Peterson** would show *Sneaky Pete* for the last time in 1979 and his wife, **Joey** would show a custom Ford pickup with a chopped top also. **Fred Romo** would also show his latest creations and **Rick Schnell** would show his custom Mercury called *Misty Blue* around 1990. **Jon Kosmoski** brought back his custom 58 Ford pickup and some custom Harleys also in the 90's. **Ron Brown** teamed up with **Dennis Heapy** and together, they had several top quality street rods in the shows and **Ron Gorrell** was coming of age and doing some great quality body and paint work for several entrants and getting a lot of recognition. **Bill Michaelson** also created a wild 54 Ford that looked like it came right out of the little pages of a custom car magazine 40 years before and **John Schleicher** was starting to turn out some great customs also. We can't overlook **Mark Moriarity** with his passion for Ed Roth customs.



1929 Ford Sedan delivery "Renaissance" at our 1987 31st annual show.

MSRA always had great support for GSTA and the street rod of the year and custom were always at our show. The Twin City Roadsters also had nice displays.

Drag racing at Minnesota Dragways and Twin City Speedway was only a fond memory and we had to carry on and endured without them. GSTA was up for the challenge and is still a very strong organization today and this will continue into the future. 🍷

The Car Clubs of GSTA

- | | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| ACCELERATORS | PACE SETTERS |
| AMBLERS | PERFORMANCE ASSOCIATES |
| AQUA CITY TIMERS | PHAROHS |
| BARONS | PIED PIPERS |
| BEATER BOYS | PIPERS |
| BLACK JACKS | PISTON PILOTS |
| BOLTIN' BISHOPS | PISTON SLAPPERS |
| BRAVADOS | POTTERS |
| BUMPER BUDDIES | QUADS |
| CABROLETS | RAM RODS |
| CAM SNAPPERS | RELICS |
| CLUTCHMEN | RENEGADES |
| COACHMEN | ROAD ANGELS |
| COGS | ROAD CRUISERS |
| COMPETITION INC. | ROADUALERS |
| CORSAIRS | ROAD GENTS |
| CROSSMEMBERS | ROAD GHOSTS |
| DIFFERENTIALS | ROAD KINGS |
| DRAG LINKS | ROAD KNIGHTS |
| DRAG-N-WHEELS | ROAD RAMBLERS |
| DRAGONS | ROAD REBELS |
| DROVERS | ROAD RUNNERS |
| DUALERS | ROAD TOPPERS OF DULUTH |
| DUALEERS | ROD BUSTERS |
| DUST DEVILS | ROD NUTS |
| ESCORTS | RUMBLERS |
| FLYING CLUTCHMEN | RHYTHM RODS |
| FLYWHEELERS | SPARTANS |
| GEAR GRINDERS | SPINNERS |
| GEAR JAMMERS | STOCK BLOCKS |
| GOLDEN RODS | STREET CUSTOMS |
| GOVERNORS | STROKERS |
| GUARDSMEN | TAPPETS |
| HEADERS | THREE-TWOS |
| HIBBING TIMING ASSOC | THROTTLE JAMMERS |
| HIGHWAY SAINTS | TIMERS |
| HIGHWAYMEN | TOPPERS OF ANOKA |
| IDLE WILDS | TOPPERS OF FARGO |
| IGNITORS | TORQUERS |
| KING PINS | TRENDSETTERS |
| KUSTOM KINGS | TWIN CITY KNIGHTS |
| LAKESTERS | UNIVERSALS |
| LONG LAKE ROADSTERS | VAGABONDS |
| MELODY MUFFLERS | VENTURIES |
| NOMADS | |
| OVERHEADS | |

THE 1990'S

by Dave Smith

Few would have thought back in 1956, in that Red Owl parking lot on Lake Street in Minneapolis that GSTA would be going strong in its fourth decade of car shows in the 1990's. The "Gopher Show" had been born in the "Club" years of the 1950's, grown in the "Drag Racing" years of the 1960's, survived the "Psychedelic Paint Job" years of the 1970's, toured it's way through the "Street Rod" years of the 1980's, and was now entering the "Nostalgia" years of the 1990's.



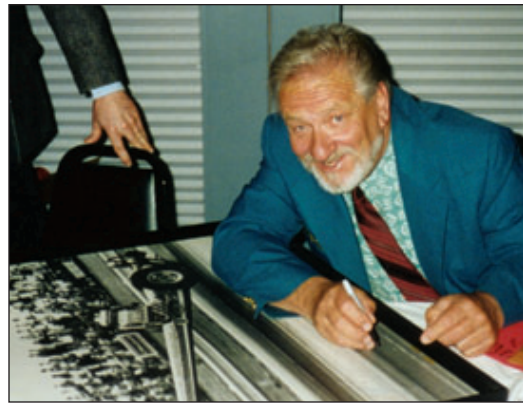
Talk about Nostalgia Kurt Senescall's 1932 Ford is dead on. Kurt showed this beauty in 1994 at our 38th show.

GSTA had been at the forefront of bringing the latest hot rod and custom feature cars to Minnesota. In 1962 at the 6th Annual Car Show we premiered Mickey Thompson's Challenger. It brought the highest attendance to any GSTA show ever in our 50 year history! Five years later we brought the hottest car from TV to the Armory, the Batmobile. Also at this 11th Annual show we had Roundhouse Rodney making appearances. In 1973 Tony Fox brought the Proud American sonic car to town for our 17th Annual show. In 1977 we had one of the best fuel funny cars in the country, the home town favorite Tom Hoover's Showtime on display. And around 1988 we had the Elvis Presley display.



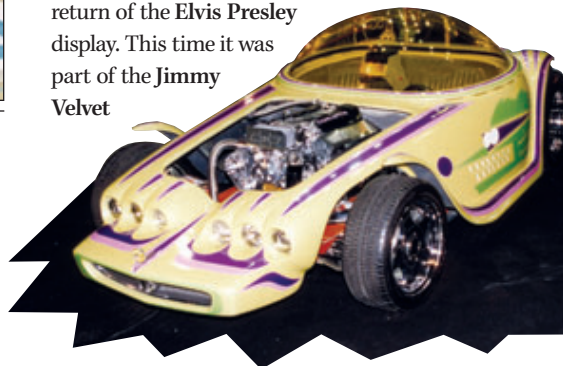
Our best of show in 1997 was Gordy Jacobson's radical 1955 Ford F-100 Pickup here at our 1998 show. Starting in the 90's it became a tradition to invite the best of show back the next year.

Those were some tough acts to follow but GSTA gave it a run and here are some of the highlights from the 1990's Rod & Custom Spectaculars:



Ed Roth showed his "Outlaw" at our show in 1967 only to return in 1996 to be our guest of honor and show the "Beatnik Bandit 2" below at our 40th show.

1990 kicked off the decade with a return of the Elvis Presley display. This time it was part of the Jimmy Velvet



"Superstars On Tour" display, which included Evel Kneivel's Harley Davidson, the Rocky III motorcycle and Herbie the Love Bug.

1991 was the 35th Annual Show and it was "One Hot Number!" We did things up big in '91. We had Eclipse, a 1932 Ford PU, and the Hirohata Merc clone. We presented several bands, including Johnny Holm's Traveling Fun Show, Lamont Cranston, High Noon

and the Rockin' Hollywoods, all in the freezing Poultry Building across from the Coliseum. We had our first swap meet this year. Governor Arne Carlson proclaimed April 20th, 1991 as GSTA Day in Minnesota.

THE 1990'S

In memory of John & Margie Foster



by Bill Bissonett

Those of us who are actively interested in the sport of NHRA drag racing in the Minnesota area are in deep debt to John and Margie Foster.

It goes without saying that they have had a very positive impact on that great sport in this area. Until they came on the scene in the 1950's the sport was running under very loose safety rules, even on public streets in many cases. Johnnie and a few other guys with his viewpoint on safety started a car club called The Stokers, a club which is still active. He then found several other area hot rod clubs and convinced them that together they could be a much more effective group in trying to accomplish the goal of a new safe NHRA dragstrip in the Twin Cities area.

With Johnnie's leadership they formed The Gopher State Timing Association, one of the most successful and well know hot rodding groups in the history of the sport of organized drag racing. They then convinced the Twin Cities Optimists clubs that a new first-class, safe dragstrip in this area would contribute greatly, to the overall safety of our streets and highways.

Johnnie and Margie became the managers and operators of Minnesota Dragways in Coon Rapids when it opened in 1958. Over the many years that they managed that very fine facility, Johnnie earned a reputation as an innovator and a tough disciplinarian when it came to enforcing safety rules. I don't think there are any among us active NHRA racers who did not at some time or another have a disagreement with Johnnie on how those rules should be applied to us. When you looked into Johnnie's eyes during a dispute, it was obvious that his view was going to prevail. No physical force was required, just Johnnie's determined look, and the argument was over. But without exception, I'm certain that anyone who may have disagreed with him would say today that they respected him and appreciated what he did for our sport.

In an effort to make the sport more fair to all, John came up with the idea of handicap bracket racing. Johnnie's wife, soul-mate and workmate, Margie, was with him always, and was loved by all. When the dictionary people defined the term "classy," I'm certain that Margie was their example. No question about it, they really were the "godfather and godmother" of drag racing in Minnesota.

I thank them for the memories that they gave us all, and I thank God for allowing us to walk with them on part of their journeys through life. May God bless them and give them eternal peace and happiness.



David Alfred's 1966 Nova Shown in 1996 at our 40th Show.

This was also the year we gave Anniversary Jackets to any member who worked 10 hours or more at the show. We gave away a lot of jackets and lost a lot of money that year as our eyes were bigger than our wallet but everybody sure had fun!

In 1992 the red ink was still wet so we scaled back and only presented KITN's Car Crash Theater and the 2nd Annual swap meet.

1993 was our last 3-day car show. In 1994 we decided to "Gopher It" and had the Make-A-Wish Jr Dragster and His Honor



Mark Moriarity brought the Ed Roth built "ROTAR" to our 40th annual show in 1996.

Jesse Ventura's motorcycle. In 1995 we had "More Horsepower Under One Roof Than You Could Handle" with a Monster Truck crushing two cars on the ice rink floor!

1996 was the 40th Annual, which we celebrated with a reunion banquet where we inducted the first 11 members into the GSTA Hall of Fame. Our guest was Big Daddy Ed Roth, "The Rat Is Back!" with his Beatnik Bandit II. We also catered to those nostalgia cravings by having Casey Jones, T.N. Tatters, Clancy the Cop, Willie Ketchum and Carmen the Nurse make appearances.

In 1997 we tried to create future nostalgia for the kids by having the Pinewood Derby Drags! We'd been "Grinding Gears for Forty Two Years" by 1998 and we celebrated by bringing up Norm Grabowski, Father of the T-Bucket and his Kookie II.

We closed out the '90's by asking "Got Speed?" While The Little Rascal's Porky didn't, Rick Schnell's flathead dragster, the Flatlanders Speed Society roadster and the Street Rodder Street Rod of the Year, built by Kurt Senescal and owned by Ken Bentz, sure did. 🍷

THE 2000'S

by Steve Andersen

Ushering GSTA into the twenty first century brought along with it the advent of the senior era. Many of our members became legally capable of ordering from the back page senior citizen menu at Perkins. Although most of us possibly still secretly consider ourselves just past our teenage years, we've indeed passed through having been beatniks, or hippies, then yuppies, spent a short hiatus as an adult and now are becoming "abbies"... aging baby boomers. Odd as it may seem, many of us still believe that we'll likely die before we grow old. As members of the generation that vowed to stay forever young, we all began, perhaps reluctantly at first, to consider exactly to whom we might pass the baton.

Knowing that procrastination in dealing with this issue would surely spell the end of this great association, one of the first major efforts we made was to reach out to a car club made up exclusively of young members. In 2003 the suggestion was made to the Ignitors Car Club to consider joining the association. In 2004 they made application and



1939 Chevrolet Convertible Best of Show in 2002 GSTAs 46th Annual. Owners Al and Linda Lucas

nations oldest car club associations and active racing clubs. Since GSTA's largest annual public venue is our Rod & Custom show, an event which would follow in two short years, the decision was made to reserve the celebration for the 2006 spectacular. Our half century mark was thus limited to a picnic for members and held without a great deal of fanfare.

The annual GSTA Rod & Custom show has over many years made extraordinary efforts to only exhibit the highest quality hot rods, custom and race cars with a strong focus on the most traditional ideas that have governed this sport. We have gone to great lengths to try to avoid showing cars that are trendy or that in some way wander too far from what we all respect are the roots of hot rodding. We've also managed to continue this show over the years without having to depend on the need to bring in current celebrities from outside the car community (i.e. pinup girls, Movie personalities, sports heroes, etc.) As a result we have attained great respect as well as a loyal following that depend on this annual show as an oasis of tradition.

In 2004 we did return to the idea of bringing in a guest dignitary from within the sport and were honored to have the now legendary **Chip Foose** for both days, and was in fact at our show on the Saturday evening that debuted the first scheduled showing of **Overhaulin'**. In addition to signing an autograph for everyone that wanted one, each of which was accompanied by a sketch of a car, **Chip** also managed to visit the shops of a couple of the leading local professional car builders.



Best of Show in 2004 at our 48th Show-Ron Browns 1932 Highboy Roadster.

were unanimously voted in as our current eleventh club, marking the beginning of the extended effort to grow into the next and hopefully future generations of hot rod and drag racing enthusiasts. The 2000's also brought us another new club with the addition of the **Long Lake Roadsters**.

Perhaps the greatest milestone was accomplished in 2004 when GSTA turned 50, making us one of the



"The Lowsmobile" owned by John Pazik 1950 Oldsmobile Fastback Best of Show in 2003 GSTAs 47th Annual.

THE 2000'S



"Salsa Verde" owned by Robert & Erma Wolf 1948 Buick Special Best of Show in 2005 at GSTAs 49th Annual.

In 2005 we hosted **Zane Cullen** from Creative Concepts in Santa Rosa, CA, the Goodguys 2004 Trendsetter of the Year award winner and Grand National Roadster Show Builder of the year. He also brought his beautiful award winning board track racer styled Ford roadster "Full Speed Ahead". **Zane** also signed auto graphs and visited a few shop in town during his stay. We are also very pleased to have him and one of his current cars here for the 50th anniversary show.

The racing division of GSTA saw a change in the form of creating an official position of Crew Chief, an elected member to oversee and manage the race car and crew. Entering the 21st century the club car was a beautifully restored full bodied 155" nostalgia front engine dragster, powered by a 500+ hp alcohol injected small block Chevy motor. Originally built in the mid '60s the car and club suffered a major setback in 2003 when the NHRA certification was pulled due to tubing wall dimensions falling below the current upgraded minimum requirements. Faced with the choice of either placing the car into full retirement or running the car in a much slower category, the membership voted to keep the car as a training vehicle for potentially up and coming younger



2001 GSTA 46th Annual Best of Show. Owner Dana Hallberg 1967 Chev Pickup

members. In 2005 several of the newly inducted Ignitors took official possession of the car and before year end managed to launch a very successful racing program that will continue on into 2006.

A proposal was made in late 2003 to build a new nostalgia front engine dragster. After discussing budget's and having firm commitments from the crew chief as well as a variety of contractors, the proposal to build a new car was passed unanimously and construction began in 2004. The new car has a 225 in. Sterling design chassis built by **Stubby Abraham Race Cars** and was just certified to run 6.30 et, making it a legal nostalgia top fuel dragster. The motor is a fully reconditioned all aluminum, alcohol injected 414" Rodeck tall block capable of generating approximately 850hp. This car will be making it's debut this year on the nostalgia circuit as an A/Fuel dragster and will compete in the Nostalgia I class. Although still in the final stages of completion at this writing, we're all hoping to have the finished car in this years 50 Anniversary show. 🏆



"Full Speed Ahead" a board track racer styled Ford roadster owned by Zane Cullen. Our feature car from 2005.

CREDITS

I would like to thank the following people for their support and help in putting this magazine together.

Lets start with the writers, Bill Bissonett, Connie Englert, Ed Smith, Charlie Johnson, Dave Smith, Pat Bonnett, Russ Peterson, Steve Andersen and a big thank you to Rosemary Bonnett for compiling all the names of show entries for the last 50 years.

The Photographers over the years whose work shows up in these pages are Jim Gallop, Richard Erickson, John Foster, Pat Bonnett, Tom Erickson, Dave Andersen, Ed Smith, Dave Smith, Bruce Danielson, Reyes/Callaway and a bunch more I'm sure I missed. For that I am sorry.

My two daughters Molly and Emily who help retype articles for this magazine and for putting up with me for the last 3 months while I ignored them.

Also a BIG thank you to Michael Keene, Sandy Doody, and John Foster Jr. at John Roberts Printing Inc. for coming through and helping us print and make this magazine look fantastic.

Last but not least all the Rod and Custom car owners and builders whose, what I like to call them, "their rolling works of art" filled out the entry blanks for the Gopher Show over the last fifty years and sent them in to make all this possible. Thanks to you all.

-Tom Erickson

