

One Car and a Million Memories

2010 Pebble Beach Concours Hot Rod Class Entrant Embodies Camaraderie of Land Speed Racing

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PEBBLE BEACH, Calif. (May 20, 2010) — In the halcyon days of dry lakes racing, during the years just before and after World War II, young men with little money but remarkable intuitive engineering and a lot of enthusiasm built cars in their backyards that rivaled the performance of the best in the world. Before the term hot rod had been coined, they built some very hot cars.

The Spurgin-Giovanine roadster was such a car. Chuck Spurgin and Bob Giovanine loved working with their hands, building things, making things better. They enjoyed working together and they enjoyed being part of a close knit community. The car they built and raced so successfully was recently discovered intact after four decades parked behind a home in the California desert. This diminutive, hand-built racecar has been painstakingly restored and will be part of the Hot Rod Lakesters and Bonneville Racers class at the 2010 Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance on Aug. 15. Current owner Ernest Nagamatsu has brought the car back to its 1940s racing trim and, even more importantly, back into the families of the men who originally built it.

“Helping to bring this long lost and legendary racecar back into public view has been a terrific experience,” said Dr. Nagamatsu, a dentist from Los Angeles. “But connecting with the families of the men who built and campaigned the car, and giving them a chance to see first-hand what their dads cared so much about, has been magic.”

“This car was a dinner table legend in my family for 60 years,” said Karin Edla-Spurgin, daughter of Chuck Spurgin. “Its resurrection has allowed our families to connect in a remarkable way with the passion that drove our fathers to build something so successful. Ernie and his team share the same camaraderie that my dad and Bob did. No ego, just the pleasure of working on a project and enjoying the fruits of their labor.”

“My earliest memory is pleading with dad to go with him and the car to the races. I wasn’t even in kindergarten,” said Curt Giovanine, son of Bob Giovanine. “A few years later, when the car had been retired and was stored in our garage, I’d bring school friends over. We’d sit in it and pretend we were racing. One friend used to say, ‘This is the fastest car on four wheels!’ It sure seemed like it to us.”

The hot rod, a uniquely American form of automotive enthusiasm, continues to draw appreciation today and around the world, even from those who know little about cars. The form-follows-function design, the cars’ youthful swagger and the historic sense of community that was integral to early hot rod culture all continue to connect powerfully with people.

Many consider 1948 to be the peak for California dry lakes racing because that year saw the most entrants and some of the toughest competition. In 1948, the Spurgin-Giovanine roadster broke the existing world record in its class at the six consecutive Southern California Timing Association meets and was the year's overall High Points Season Champion. It was also "Hot Rod of the Month" and on the cover of the March 1949 issue of Hot Rod magazine. The car was unusual because it was powered by a highly modified four-cylinder Chevrolet engine when virtually all other successful competitors ran Ford or Mercury V8s.

"This car epitomizes hot rod ingenuity, and its story is one of community and family. It's still drawing people together," said Dr. Nagamatsu. "Curt Giovanine discovered he had the original 1948 header for the car, as confirmed by weld marks shown in photographs from the 1948 season. He said to me, 'This header belongs to the car,' and he gave it to me. This reflects the spirit of the project and the car. As one of the most important and significant hot rods ever raced, I'm honored to share it with families of Bob and Chuck and to have it included in this year's Hot Rod Class at the Pebble Beach Concours."

The Hot Rod Lakesters and Bonneville Racers class at this year's Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance will include cars built and raced between 1927 and 1953, the year's when this form of racing developed and flourished. The 60th Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance will also honor the 75th anniversary of Jaguar and the centennial of Alfa Romeo, feature Pierce-Arrow, and showcase Italian designer Ghia. Special classes will focus on the 50th anniversary of the Ferrari 250 GT SWB Berlinetta, the centennial of the Indianapolis 500, and Prewar American Motorcycles.

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