

# ACD Club History

## **A brief history of the Auburn Cord Duesenberg Club**

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The year 1952 was an important year both for me and ultimately the city of Auburn since it was the year of the birth of the ACD Club. A simple classified ad in MOTOR TREND by a dairy farmer in the Catskill Mountains of New York spawned the club and eventually the ACD Festival.

I had purchased my first Cord in the summer of 1952 and when I saw the ad in MOTOR TREND, it was nothing short of a miracle. Although I owned a Cord, I knew absolutely nothing about it and I didn't know the whereabouts of any other. Believe me, if you own and drive a Cord you had better know something about its idiosyncrasies and the ACD Club made it possible to obtain needed help and information.

Initially, our founder, Harry Denhard, compiled a monthly mimeographed newsletter, which he mailed to interested parties free of charge and later for \$1.00 a year. After about two years, Harry found it necessary to abandon the club, but a small group of us decided to breathe new life into our club. A self-appointed group of directors took over the various necessary duties and we were back in business with only a one month lapse in the Club Newsletter. There were no rules, regulations, or guidelines for that matter, but we persevered and the Club started to grow.

At the time, I was the Newsletter editor and I thought it was time for some of our members to finally meet face to face. A member named Bob Fabris tried an afternoon get together near Pittsburgh but it only drew 15 members and three cars. I felt that with our widely scattered membership, some kind of attraction would be needed to motivate good attendance. The attraction I came up with was Hoe Sportscars in Westport, Connecticut which was owned by member A.J. "Jim" Hoe. At the time Jim was generally acknowledged as the leading Duesenberg expert in the East and was campaigning a Duesenberg powered special in S.C.C.A. events. He always had two or three Duesenbergs in the shop so I had a great draw and a very successful gathering of 26 members and 12 cars from seven states. This was a chilly October 31st afternoon.

Having had a taste of success, I reasoned a longer meet would make it attractive to more members to travel a greater distance. For the density of our membership, Pennsylvania seemed to be the ideal location and with the help of a member with a small hotel and bar in Avon a weekend meet was held in late April in 1955 and was an outstanding success. With better than 20% of the club membership and 41 cars, we were off and running for even greater events.

Among those present at Avon was a member from Michigan named Joe Knapp who was very impressed by the enthusiasm shown and when a meet was planned for the fall in Avon, he persuaded Gordon Buehrig to attend. Gordon not only attended then but for the remainder of his life attended as many ACD events across the country as possible. With the success of the Avon meets, Joe Knapp had a bigger thing in mind. He would have a meet in Auburn, Indiana at the ACD "Factory" and with Gordon's help invite as many former ACD employees as possible and call it a "Reunion." Bear in mind having a "Reunion" in Auburn in 1956 was nothing like having a "Reunion" in 2002! Local support and enthusiasm were almost nil. The only support Joe could muster came from Don Foust, owner of the Auburn Hotel who wanted to fill his hotel, and a guy named Del Johnson who has played a major role in the annual "Reunion" to this day.

After the first two "Reunions," the Club began using Labor Day weekend to make a longer trip worthwhile. Another interesting thing occurred in 1963. The town of Auburn had still not really embraced the Club and the "Reunion" and some members wanted a change. A change was what they got when the Club moved to Indianapolis for the annual "Reunion." This was a mistake but a wake up call for both the Club and the town of Auburn and they both learned from it. Since that time, cooperation has increased and great strides have been made in all areas. I, for one, am always happy to have the opportunity to attend the Auburn "Reunion" having missed only one. The town should be glad we came because without us there would be no museums, no auction and the Auburn Hotel would be an unnecessary parking lot.

I will be there on Labor Day God willing.