

BATTERY POST



POSITIVELY GROUNDED IN THE OLD CAR HOBBY

July 2020

A Note from the President



It was great seeing everyone on the 4th of July. What a fantastic turnout! It was wonderful to see folks enjoying themselves and the club reboot with such enthusiasm. Hopefully, the rest of the 4th was just as good for all. Tonya and I had a backyard

supper with one of our sons and his girlfriend before heading over to Prairie Meadows for fireworks.



The Board met on July 7 and discussed the next few months for the club. As you'll see in this Battery Post, most of what was planned has been postponed. However, the consensus was to continue to provide opportunities to have fun together. It was also concluded that the rest of the year will be fluid in regard

to planning. We will have to adjust as the environment around us changes. The difficulty this creates is providing all of you an Event Calendar with a lot of detail. We will do our best, but also rely more heavily on email and phone calls to communicate that information out.

As outlined in the Event Calendar, our new activities will take us to the southwest side of town, the northside and then Des Moines itself. Having a tour on the southwest side will allow those that couldn't make it to the eastside on the 4th an opportunity to get their cars out. And then the Corn Feed in Luther is always a popular event so the Board thought having our own in place of the BBQ would be a good idea. And finally with the Concours being cancelled, a visit to the Art Center would be a fun replacement for that and an added element of diversity in activities.

I had planned to have a story to share for this Battery Post but have used up much of my space already. The story about Barney Christiansen from Gerald (Chris) and Julie continues in this newsletter, so enjoy that. Its always great to hear about things like this, so if you have stories to share, please bring them forward. Something I've learned since being in my current role is that this club has a lot of history. I'm currently reading some old AACA magazines Gerald gave me from when the club hosted national meets. While a lot of work, I bet these were much fun. Hearing stories like that or just anything that interests you would be fun. So, don't be afraid to share.

All the best,

Scott

Mission Statement

The Des Moines Region of the Antique Automobile Club of America is an organization whose members have an interest in antique vehicles 25 years or older that are devoted to the preservation and restoration of original condition of all makes of their antique vehicles.

2020 Event Calendar

CANCELLED EVENTS:

July 25: Luther event with Tall Corn club

August 1: Calvin Community Car Show.

August 8: Art Center tour

August 23: BBQ at Saylorville with Tall Corn Club (*see the update on this event below*)

September 13th: The Des Moines Concours d'Elegance

Mark these events on your calendar!

Saturday, July 25: Norwalk to Winterset Driving Tour. Meet at Fareway grocery store in Norwalk (1711 Sunset Drive, Norwalk, IA 50211) at 1 pm and meander our way to Winterset where we'll end at the ice cream shop in Winterset. Scott has the route all on rural asphalt roads.

Sunday, August 23: AACA-DM Corn Feed (minus the Tall Corn Club). The board is finalizing the location and time.

Saturday, September 12: Tour of the Des Moines Art Center. Details are being ironed out but we will either have lunch at the center or do a driving tour.

Club Shirts For Sale

Jack McWilliams has 3 AACA Des Moines Region shirts left to sell. Two are from the most recent order; one is from a previous order. All are Mediums. They are \$20/each. Contact Jack if you are interested!



July Birthdays

7/2 - Bill Mally

7/3 - Brent Isenberger

7/10 - Peter Hemken

7/14 - Gerald Christiansen

7/22 - Betty Emehiser

7/30 - Jon Christensen

July Anniversaries

7/15 - Brent Isenberger & Julie West

7/16 - Gerald & Dixie Christiansen

7/30 - Dean & Betty Bibler

7/30 - David & Bonnie Libby

August Birthdays

8/3 - Kenneth "Buck" Borst

8/11 - Paul Johnson

August Anniversaries

8/9 - Peter & Pam Hemken

8/19 - Paul & Linda Wold

If you don't see your birthday or anniversary in the Battery Post, be sure to email Julie and let her know.

2020-2021 Board



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 **Financials**

As of 6/11/2020 - \$2,338.56

Are you on Facebook?
Be sure to "like" our page
at **DesMoinesAACA**

Website: aaca-dsm.org
Email: aacadmregion@gmail.com

Part 2: Gerald's personal story about his father, Barney Christiansen, Inventor

(This is Gerald's narrative he shared with us. Part 1 was featured in the May Battery Post.)

The Crazy Norwegian by Gerald Christiansen

Yeah, crazy Norwegian. All the neighbors kind of stuck that name on him for all the projects that he tried to develop and worked with over many years.



Barney and his son Gerald

The first one I remember I was about five years old. He had this old Jewett, I think from the 1920s. Just the chassis – the body wasn't on it. And I don't think there was an engine in it either, just a chassis.

And he put a wooden propeller like from an airplane and put a stanchion on the back of the steel like a frame and mounted it on a turbine; that was a generator for railroad cars back years and years ago to generate electricity. And he put that on there and I'm not too sure about how he supplied the air to it, or the pressure. It was so heavy it didn't move very good but the propeller did spin. But it was good as a fan, that's about all. I was about four or five.

Then over the years after that, up until I was about eight years old, we moved to another house that had a basement garage. And he worked on the car every weekend, it seemed like. He had the same chassis. He had a Stone Star four engine in the front part. And then he sawed a Model T engine in half with a hacksaw and created a compressor that he attached to the Star four engine. And then he mounted a Stanley Steamer engine on the rear end case, the transfer case, and made all the castings to attach it. It just laid right because they're long engines and narrow thin, two cylinders, high long stroke and they go horizontally. They don't go up and down like it normally meant for them to go; they laid flat in the car. So it doesn't protrude up into the floorboard. I think there were probably four steel drainpipes, each I think about six inches in diameter and three-foot-long, that he cut in three foot lengths and welded plates in the ends and then piped them together so they would hold air pressure; storage pipes is what they were.

He piped them all together for air pressure to go through. After a lot of work, he needed a body for the car.

My aunt and uncle lived on a farm down south in Indianola by the fairgrounds. And there was a sports car of some kind that had gotten into a bad wreck from a nearby racetrack. And it was dumped in my uncle's yard and they just left

it. My uncle called up my dad and said "Barney, I've got something that I think you'd like down here." And dad went down there and took the body off of it and put it on the chassis of the turbine car.

And it had no hood or anything on it, and no trunk. Just a seat and a cowl. Of course, he had a steering wheel and all that and on the dashboard he had a big gauge, giving the temperature and then a lever. And another lever was reverse or forward. Just a wire that changed the direction of the air. No transmission; you don't need it. Just direct drive you know, and then it would run.

He would start the Star Four up, and then it would start compressing air with the two-cylinder compressor. And he made an overhead valve head for it by himself. It was the normal head on it - just a flat head with two cylinders. But he made an overhead valve, with the valves vertical in the head. They were in the block normally, and he raised them up and built a head for it out of cast iron and made his own pocket valves instead of spring and everything. And then that would start the engine and have it start compressing. Then it would go through a pipe, back to the original gas tank on the Jewett, which was in the back, a big tank right across the back. And he had modified the tank filter with some kind of material for filtering – I don't know what it was – to clean up that air from the exhaust; obviously, his idea anyway. And then that went from there to the tanks. And at that point, the pressure would build up to a certain point on his dashboard to tell you what he had, and when it got to a certain point he pulled the lever and then it would move. And he just moved it back and forth in the basement, a little bit. He didn't venture out with it yet.

And then it was a Sunday afternoon. He said this is the day – it is the coming out party. And the neighbors all knew he was gonna do it and they all congregated outside the garage door in the basement, where it was located. You come out of the garage and come up to the yard. And these people are standing all around there, you know, and dad right ran it for quite a while to get that pressure up to maximum. And he said, in his Norwegian accent, "Get the hell out of my vay! I'm coming out!" He pulled that lever and he peeled rubber right there in the basement. And he flew on out there and people were scattering all over the place. Remember, the people had been calling him the crazy Norwegian because of all of his experiments.

So, he was having his day.

And then he started driving around the house. My mother started chasing him, yelling at him to stop tearing up the

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Barney Christiansen, Inventor

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yard. And he did stop. And then says, "Jerry get in the car with me." (My dad called me Jerry.) And I got in the car with him and we took off up Ovid and up to Merle Hay Road. And then it stopped. The pressure was below a certain point. So, we just sat there and he let it run for a little while, to build the pressure - then boom! We took off and drove up and down Ovid. And then he drove it down to the basement. That's the last time he ever drove it.

He changed jobs so we moved. Wasn't long after that he went to the Highland garage. That was in '36. And then he kept it in Highland garage for many years from '36 until '43 when we moved and he quit the garage

business during the war. The car went to our backyard for several years under a tarp. I don't know who got the engine. The engine had to be valuable; that Stanley Steamer engine had to be valued, or something anyway. But it was kind of junked out during the war.



Barney Christiansen, young inventor and mechanic

The first part of the war, I was in junior high school in mechanical drawing class. And dad asked me if I'd make some drawings of his plan, his invention. And I said, Yeah. He says, Well, they're asking for ideas for the war effort. Asking if anyone has ideas on how to save fuel and gain power, to improve things. And he says, I think maybe they might be interested. So, I worked on the drawing during eighth and ninth grade at Woodrow Wilson Junior High. The instructor, Mr Ahresman, helped me. I gave it to my dad and then he sent it to Washington.

This was in the early part of the war. And I don't how long it was but later on, he got a letter back from Washington DC thanking him for his efforts. And he said that they said that

it was probably more than they wanted to handle "because it was pretty complicated, but it deserves a lot of thought. Good luck." I mean that was basically what it said. I don't remember what happened to the letter. That'd be fun to see if we could find it in some historical file. ❖

A few photos from the July 4th tour

