

MOGSouth - AN ORIGINAL CONCEPT?

"Originality is nothing but judicious imitation" — Voltaire

This is the story of a small group of fellows and gals from North and South Carolina, Alabama, Georgia and Florida, most of whom first found one another during the Washington, D.C. Morgan club's Fourth of July meetings; this from 1972 and culminating in 1975 as a "get-together" in Pocono, Pennsylvania.

The Pocono Manor hotel was MCCDC headquarters with a wonderful space for their concours; however, this hotel had less than 10 rooms, hardly enough for elected officers and activities chairpersons. So we people "from off" (gosh that's an old Charleston genteel expression) searched out motels nearby. Folks, this was a BIG meeting in 1972 (100+ cars). I had driven my "new 1961 +4 Morgan from Manistee, MI to Palmyra, NY (rewiring the generator enroute); picked up Judy at her parent's home and finished the mount having lost the muffler into a corn field on the way. That's when one finds out quickly a standard muffler shop will have nothing to do with a Morgan.

But I diverge.

Between these 1972-1975 meetings the aforementioned southeast attendees communicated and agreed to stay at one particularly nice motel over the 4th of July in Pocono as a group. And as we talked about having another "get together", not with MCCDC, but just our southeast folks probably in the spring before the Washington MOG meet. Frankly, it was too great a distance to attend one day events and other MCCDC activities (although many of us did go to the Washington area for tech sessions) and I remember finding EZ's home for a business meeting of officers and members while having other interests in Virginia.

Regardless, five of us agreed to possible dates and localities for a second southeast "get-together" in a rather central but interesting place that had things to do.

A number of thoughts and suggestions were made at Pocono: we did not want a bunch of bylaws and rules and regulations; we did not want officers or other yearly responsibilities (most of us had "been there-done that"); we wanted volunteers to make necessary arrangements (this started the "HOST" thinking); and, finally, someone suggested we become MOGSouth I don't know who, but it was magic).

Therefore, just as the MCCDC group was considered the national drawing card for attendance and #'s of cars with a July 4th date secure, having marvelous organization and serious yearly events, we, MOGSOUTH, were to stay low key and flexible depending on a "HOST" to administer the spring "get together".

We agreed I would call key MCCDC members in the above states to "spread the word" and offer suggestions. Perhaps my having a WATS line in my office and a very understanding administrator led to my volunteering as the host of this second meeting in Myrtle Beach.

In February of 1976 I was coming home from a meeting in Washington (can't remember if it was a tech session or business) but just north of busy central Myrtle Beach a large Ramada Inn sign loomed on Rt. 17. This was a quality hotel on the beach close to restaurants, miniature golf, activities of all kinds and probably very expensive rooms.

Oh, well - let's see. The motel looked real nice, well-kept, but — no cars. Were they closed? No, the manager said the gas shortage (remember) claimed his regular driving customers and the place was empty. Aha! What about the rates? He said "Make an offer." We received confirmation for 20 rooms (no penalty for less) for \$16/night for beach front (some semi-suites with fridge and stove) and we could bring Gus (he's a black Great Dane). The dates were April 23 - 25 (Fri, Sat, Sun) and the management secured parking in front (back?) of our rooms, set up a charcoal BBQ stand on the beach with chairs and a table. Saturday night we went to the grocers, bought steaks and bread, etc., and cooked our dinner. Sunday morning was a neat vodka and tonic party with celery sticks.

Something happened that Sunday afternoon that I've never seen before. Four of the organizers (Tom Badger, K.W. Ballentine, John Councill and I) took our cars for a ride. Then we just decided to drive each other's car: Tom's supersport, K.W.'s drophead, John's +4 and my +8. WOW! What a fitting end to the meeting.

Now it seems pertinent to this history to include important happenings. It is doubtful that we could have moved so swiftly had MCCDC not given us full support beginning with President Mort Kuff and Editor Ed Zielinski. Ed always honored our requests to post meeting dates and locations. And, most importantly, printed activities of MOGSouth in full. In fact, he searched out old 70's Rough Rider news of our club and sent this to me for this paper. H j

Mort wrote and Ed printed a 2-page report of this second, but more organized, 1976 Myrtle Beach meeting titled "The South Rises Again or "up the South". Highlights of his report were:

- 1) Five (including Mort and Ed) came by private plane.
- 2) Judy started the Friday night tradition of wine (vintage Gallo) and cheeses in a hospitality room.
- 3) He counted 8 cars (plus a "68 Cobra) and 24-30 people
- 4) Folks also came from Ga., Ala., Fla., and N.C. Mildred Sherer drove from Del Ray Beach in her Plus4Plus,
- 5) Charlie (as host) gathered the group in the Ramada Inn by the Ocean "Activities Room". We had a discussion on "how we got here" — (detailed above) and Where We Go from Here: - ideas, activities, locations discussed, - Paul Ventress, reported on the demise of a short-lived MOGSouth in Tenn. We (our group) hoped that those folks can join us. He may have contacted them.
- 6) Mort presented the club a MCC Flag and flagpole as a token of the association and brothers-under-the-bonnet camaraderie that exists between the Morgan Car Club of

Washington, D.C. and this newer group of devotees of the marque. He also presented us a 2' by 3' Union Jack.

Folks, there is a plethora of attendee adventures either enroute or at this '76 meeting. Jim Solvedt bringing his newly restored yellow +4 four-place (the next year he had a red '74 Dino Ferrari), Gary Zabrycki called he broke down in Georgetown and Ed Z got on the phone with a mechanic there and got him to the meet before too long. Cameron Lindley got part way and limped back to Greenville (this was the third time he'd broken down trying to get to a Morgan meet). John Councilll roared in about midnight — business must have been good. And one couple came in about 4 pm in a neat Morgan roadster, checked in and never left their room until Sunday (hmm). And on, and on, and on!

Regardless, the weather was superb, no one was bored and John Councilll volunteered to be host in '77 at the same Ramada Inn. As an aside, 5 cars came from Richmond that year. KW Ballentine was host in '78 and Tom Badger took over in 1979. By now, folks were getting a bit bored with Myrtle Beach.

So now we had members who, as hosts, moved the venue to newer, interesting areas as was their privilege. Dave and Sarah Chiles became hosts at wonderful High Point — driving through mountains was great. About this time I was in ADA site visit work and about to go to Detroit for 5 years, so Wynell Bruce became the person folks looked to for communication and being the next host. She did a grand job and actually was the first editor supplanting the Rough Rider publication with her own work coining the MOGSouth newsletter *Southern Fours and Eights*; also, Wynell teamed with Homer Deakins in Atlanta, a center really in the south. But by now the roster was growing and it would be only a matter of time that a few "donations" at meets couldn't meet the budget; however, Bob and Wynell moved to the Bahamas and turned over the "administrative" role to Randy Johnson.

Randy is a real business person and volunteered to collect money, kind'a like dues. Can't tell him there's no such thing as dues — he's serious — he helps supplant host's costs (it gets big when 50+ people are involved to help themselves to wine, cheeses, and now beer and hors d'oeuvres). Randy enticed Mark Braunstein to become Editor. Personally, I believe the present newsletter to be one of the best right up there with MCCDC's Rough Rider.

So after 25 years I asked to have the anniversary in Charleston — a place that can't miss. Randy said okay and MOGSouth 25th — Y2K was on. Finances were not a problem with 2 large contributions of \$200 and \$275 — the latter being a non-member wishing to pay for the favors. Even had folks come from Chicago and the MOG — Great Lakes club in Detroit- thanks, Fellows! Okay, again I diverge. This is already too long, but there is a need to say something about our success and roster of over 100. There are 3 main things that will help MOGSouth survive:

First- we are committed to a volunteer system

Second — we have a racing/technical contingent

Third — we are bringing in younger people — children of members, too.

Regarding the volunteer system, we have a coordinator (Randy Johnson) who keeps any errors or misunderstandings to a minimum. Also, as treasurer and host approver, he prevents any failed meets or, at least, minimizes them. He and the Editor are the backbone of progress. The host has the advantage of selecting a meeting environment without interference and does not have the awesome responsibility of working a whole year.

Today's world is changing auto clubs from concourse to include racing and tech knowledge to enhance performance. This I see in our club with a talented woman driver, Stacey Schepens. Her father, Dave Bondon, and Lee Gaskins and Gene McOmer and Jack Poteet and many others fit the category. I know a number of clubs (T-birds, Model A's) having membership problems. Others recognize the needs and do well.

Recruiting younger generation people is tough today with expenses high, but I do see our club bringing in our children.

Will this "loose" system of volunteers work in the future? Well, it has for 35 years even if it is a "judicious imitation".

Charlie King