

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

ANSWER

Dear Ken:

This is in answer to George Duvall's question on page 24 of February '61 Pano.

Metric threads on spark-plugs are not used for any engineering reason, but are the result of one Frenchman on the entire spark-plug industry. The metric system of measurement is used by all industry and science in France and most other countries.

Prior to 1910, most U. W. cars used plugs having a $\frac{7}{8}$ "-18 thread, except Model T Ford, which used $\frac{1}{2}$ " Briggs Pipe Thread right up to 1927. A Parisian, Albert Champion, had been a successful motorcycle and auto race-driver in the early years of the century. He entered the spark-plug industry in France, and his produce must have been well received, for, by 1908, a branch plant of the Albert Champion Co. had been established in Boston, Mass. This factory had expanded and moved to Toledo, Ohio by 1911 and the corporate name changed to "Champion Spark Plug Co.", which has continued to prosper until today it is the world's largest maker of spark plugs.

In the meantime another "Champion" company was established at Flint, Michigan. This was about 1914 or '15, and the company name was "The Champion Ignition Co." Their product was given the name "AC" which is the initials of the same Albert Champion. This company is now a division of General Motors Corp. and is a close second to Champion in volume of product.

I regret that I have been unable to find a complete biography of Champion. It might be quite a story. The snatches that I have read indicate that he was a homeless orphan who volunteered to drive a race when the professional driver failed to show up. He won the race and went on to get his name or initials on about ninety percent of the world's automobiles, motorcycles, and airplanes.

Very truly yours,
Clarence Rutbell

GETTING SOFT?

Dear Editor:

I have become increasingly concerned with a growing tendency to soften competitive events. For example, I overheard numerous complaints that the rally held at the Aspen Porsche Parade last year was "too tough." Apparently many people felt that the road over Independence Pass and the one to Toklat should not have been used. I say to the organizers, "Thanks for an interesting and challenging rally." According to ad-

vance information, the rally at the VI Parade in the Berkshires is to be a fun type rally. I sincerely hope that this is not true, and that a truly competitive event will be held.

I would also like to comment on the concours situation. I enjoy examining the cars at a concours and am often amazed at the painstaking care with which some of the owners have prepared their entries. I think, however, many of these people have missed the foremost precept behind any automobile's manufacture; that is, to be driven. This is probably more true of a Porsche than of any other marque. The greatest pleasure from owning a Porsche should be derived from driving it. Those who hesitate to drive their Porsche under all conditions have not begun to appreciate the utmost in automotive design.

We may now be entering the "tow to the concours" era. Is a concours to consist of cleanliness for cleanliness' sake, or should there be a combination of cleanliness, current usage, age, performance, and, the remainder of the name of the event, elegance? Mileage is generally considered in judging a concours but this does not always provide the answer. Take an extreme situation. An older, fully restored car has covered 100,000 miles, with only a few thousand in the past few months. A second car, a newer model, is not quite as clean, but has been driven 50,000 miles in the past year. Which of these gets the nod? A formula that properly correlates current usage with overall mileage and/or age would equalize these two cars.

If events are to be tailored to suit those who only drive their cars on turnpikes and on bright, sunny days, then any award would lose its significance. Fun rallies, fun gymkhanas and cocktail parties may be entertaining, but for overall competition let us have events that will make any winner justifiably proud.

Mike Robbins
Central Indiana Region

L.A. REVS

The Los Angeles Region had a very full schedule for April: a dealer visit, a rally and an antique car display.

The regular meeting night was deferred to make a visit to the agency of Vasek Polak, "Porsche Racing Service". Members were treated to a line up of three types of Spyderys while Mr. Polak traced the development of the racing model through a super powered 550, and RS, and an RSK. For the later improvements, we were shown an RS 61 gearbox. Normals, Supers and GTs were around the floor and on grease racks for all to examine. In the overhaul department were five engine stands. There the differences



between an old Super, early Carrera, late Carrera, late Spyder and 1600 Normal were illustrated.

The parts department was a joy to see with rack after rack of everything, from a row of Spyder engines to a shelf full of Weber carbs. Then after drooling over all this, Mrs. Polak hosted a wonderful buffet, and Dietrich Kutschbach showed pictures of the new flat-8 engine. Everyone was grateful for the enjoyable evening. Mr. Polak truly has a business built on service.

The April rally was a short Monte Carlo type put on by Rosemary and Floyd Robbins. It covered some scenic roads in the mountains north of Los Angeles and was won by Dale Boyd.

After lunch at the Steak Ranch, everyone caravanned to El Rancho Rinconada, the home of Lindley Bothwell and about one hundred antique autos. There were barns full of cars of all kinds from one cylinder engines on buckboards to an enormous Panhard and the Rolls Royce owned by the last Czar of Russia. Many cars of the collection are historically famous racing machines. Dr. Porsche's efforts were there in the form of Mercedes Benz. The latest acquisitions were two single seat cars—a Chandler and a Hudson. Purchased from a local movie studio, they have taken little more than tires, paint and clean up to be restored to useable condition. All appreciated Mr. Bothwell giving free access to his private collection.

*John Case
L. A. Region*

PORSCHE IN COMPETITION

The Porsche factory teams continue to encounter black days as the Nurburgring report comes in.

Porsche could do no better than sixth against the Maserati and Ferrari onslaught, this with a GT Carrera. The Barth/Herrman car had to give up in the second lap due to engine trouble. Bonnier/Gurney had ignition trouble, while the Camerodi RS61 driven by Moss/Hill encountered engine trouble.

If you can combine cc's with terrific handling as Ferrari has done, our little giant killers must grow bigger muscles.

On the Stateside scene, Bob Holbert is on a hot streak, having won the Daytona, Marlboro and recently the Cumberland Nationals. Holbert, the thinking man, watched Roger Penske blow up his "tweedy Bird Cage" and then romped on to victory as the Porsche gang shook the rock pile with their cheers.

In the B production trophy dash at Cumberland, Bruce Jennings got knocked from Corvette to Corvette on the first turn. Seems the big bad Corvette drivers had threatened to get Bruce on the first turn and so they did. Bruce worked up to a third place at the finish of the race. It was a pretty disgusting exhibition of sportsmanship from the "squirrel" Corvette drivers. They just can't stand being beaten by a little old Porsche Carrera.

Sacramento, California race results show PCAers knock 'em off. Walt Davis and Don Wester finished first and second in the B production dash, while Emil Pardee, who has shifted from Spyderys to a Super 90, won C production.

Hillclimb competition reports have PCA President Charlie Beidler winning two seconds at Duryea Drive, Reading, Pennsylvania, with a 1300 Super and a Super 90.

By the time you read this, PCAer Bob Holbert will receive a well earned factory team ride at LeMans. He will co-drive with Masten Gregory.

*Quincy Brown
Sports Touring Club of the Congo*

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