

Beach Barons: A decades-long tradition of pride

During the 1950s the Beach Barons Car Club was formed by a bunch of local fellows involved in street racing flat-head Fords, small-block Chevys, and a few Oldsmobile-powered hot rods. The club flourished during its first years. The “Hangout” was Ferguson’s Richfield gas station in Long Beach near the intersection of 8th Street and Pacific Highway.

Memories

Long-time Beach Barons member Duey Ames recalled those early days: it was 1957 and at 16 years he had just been admitted to the club. “The club wouldn’t let me vote until I was 18, but they let me in because they figured I’d be hanging around anyway-and they were right.”

Meetings took place at the service station, and the Barons would plan dances that were held in Ryan Hall above a pharmacy that was located where the Long Beach City Hall parking lot now is.

“I don’t think I ever slept,” Ames says of his teen years. “I went to school, helped my dad cut wood and clean fish, and worked in the oysters during the summer.” Of course he spent all of his spare time tinkering with his 1950 Ford 2-door.

“Right from the start the Beach Barons motto was a pledge to safe driving,” according to Ames. Original members were Al Degenhart, Monty Baker, Bill Morse, Bill and John McNamara, Brian O’Neill, Dave Gradt, Mike Connolly and Jack Mosher. Some were stationed here with the Air Force, serving at the radar station near Naselle. Jim Howerton has sometimes been included in this original group.

In 1962 Ames left to seek his fortune in Alaska, and he says, “About that time the Beach Barons sort of folded.” He returned to the area in 1964.

Back to life

In 1982 the Ocean Park Area Chamber of Commerce looking for ideas to encourage visitors to the north end of our peninsula approached Bob Langendorfer and Max Morehouse, two local car buffs. They came up with the idea of a car show. With Max’s suggestion of “The Rod Run to the End



Duey Ames, one of the original Beach Barons, showed off a 1930 Ford Model A sedan “hot rod” a few years ago.

of the World” as a name, the show was born. A total of 68 custom cars arrived that first year on Labor Day weekend. The following year 120 attended.

With this growing interest someone suggest reforming the old car club using the Beach Barons name. Along with Morehouse and Langendorfer, John Fredrickson, Gene Andrews, Larry and Gary Wirkkala, Dan Gove, Bill Snook, Jay Stayton, Tyler Payne, Stuart Clark and others were key to the revival.

The first few years the event was held on the field across from the Ocean Park School at Roy Sheldon Field. With the growing number of spectators and participants in 1986 the show was moved to the old Klipsan Airport. In 1991 with 700 entries and the first engine raffle, the Beach Barons were faced with finding another location and a lease was signed for the field on “U” Street. Again in 1998 with 1,500 entries the Beach Barons were forced to find a bigger location. They were also asked to move their event to another

weekend due to the number of participants and spectators.

Move to the big field

In 1999 the show was held on the current Wilson Field and on the weekend after Labor Day. On Oct. 27, 2001, Beach Barons gathered at the clubhouse to celebrate the burning of the mortgage papers. The 27-acre Wilson Field was now property of the Beach Barons. The club is one of few in the U.S. that owns its own grounds.

Today the End of the World Rod Run is recognized throughout the Northwest as a premier car show lasting two days hosting over 900 cars.

On Friday night there are slow drags in Ilwaco, Saturday is show and shine with an auto swap meet, brick-it car, and lots of music, and on Sunday more show and shine, music, a poker run, seafood barbecue, and trophy presentations. There is a swap meet, numerous food purveyors and other vendors, and ATMs near the north gate and the souvenir T-shirt booth.

With Langendorfer as its first president, the Beach Barons Car Club was incorporated in 1985 as a non-profit group to promote interest in various forms of street rodding and ownership of a special vehicle is not a requirement for membership. Today’s membership is about 100 individuals and families throughout Washington and Oregon.

The Beach Barons take pride in planning and presenting a show that offers tourists an exciting event — one they look forward to coming back to each year. The club gives an enormous amount of support and recognition to the businesses in the area promoting tourism on the Peninsula and the neighboring cities. They donate funds to local groups and charities, and sponsor higher-education scholarships.

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Beach Barons: In memory

Deceased Beach Barons Members

John Fredericks - 1987
Bob Slagle - 1990
Louis Jaren Andrew - 1997
Wayne Lokkeburg - 1998
Genevieve Caldwell - 1998
Art Alexander - 2000
Bernda Englehart - 2001
Caroline A. Welsh - 2002
Everlyn Walker - 2002
Erv Neff - 2004
Bill Harkins - 2005
Darlene Andrews - 2006
Judy Klingler - 2006
Truman King - 2008
Lance Iiams - 2009
Bobbie Mathews - 2010
Candy Benning - 2011
Larry Wirkkala - 2011
Dee Ellenwood - 2012
Keith Mahoy - 2012
Rich Hall - 2013
Roxy Snook - 2013
Dick Bonney - 2014
Bill Snook - 2014
Don Higdon - 2014
Tracy Davis - 2014
Fred Karthaus - 2014
Sandy Welsh - 2014
Dan Brooks - 2015
Gene Andrews - 2015
Jerry Benning - 2015
Marian Morehouse - 2015
Lee Scheeler - 2015
Jerry Davis - 2016