

ARIZONA DRIVER

THE ENTHUSIAST'S GUIDE TO LIFE BEHIND THE WHEEL

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SPECIAL EVENTS COPPERSTATE 1000 | MUDFEST 2013
EQUIPMENT GOODYEAR EAGLE SPORT ALL-SEASON
GREEN TECHNOLOGY BRIDGESTONE ARIZONA BIORUBBER PLANT
VEHICLE LAUNCHES FIAT 500L | KIA CADENZA | LEXUS IS
VEHICLE DRIVES GMC | HYUNDAI | MAZDA | NISSAN | TOYOTA

23rd Annual
Bell Lexus
Copperstate 1000
Field of Dreams

1000 MILES, 1000 TALES

STORY AND PHOTOS BY LARRY EDSALL



Rick and Nancy Rome's "spare" 1931 Chrysler CM-6 sport roadster

If you are of a certain age, you may remember a television series entitled, *The Naked City*. On the air from 1958-63, the program used a docudrama format—commonplace now, groundbreaking then—to follow the work of a group of supposedly fictional New York City police detectives.

Car guys and gals may be interested to discover that the same production and writing team behind *The Naked City* also was responsible for the *Route 66* television series that aired from 1960-64.

We share such television nostalgia and TV trivia because we want to share the line that ended each episode of those *Naked City* telecasts—an anonymous voice telling us, "There are eight million stories in the *Naked City*. This has been one of them."

We use that line, and the tie between *The Naked City* and *Route 66*, to inform you that a record 94 cars participated in the Copperstate 1000 vintage sports car rally this year, the 23rd annual mille miglia tour of Arizona highways and byways, and that each of those cars—and its driver and co-driver—came home with a story, more than one of which we share below.

FLYING DOWN THE HIGHWAY

John and Peg Leshinski of Scottsdale are Copperstate regulars who this year decided to do the drive in a 1951 Allard K-2, one of only 35 such open-cockpit roadsters built by British racing driver and sports car constructor Sydney Allard still known to exist. This particular Allard was purchased new by Al Unser Sr., who raced it up Pikes Peak (and who later would win the Indianapolis 500 four times).

Because the Allard not only has an open cockpit but only a pair of very small wind deflectors instead of a true windshield, John Leshinski wanted Peg to be both as comfortable and as protected as possible, so he decided they should wear period-correct helmets on the rally.

He found a French company that makes just such helmets, and with clear and full-face wind visors. "They looked like what Phil Hill wore," John Leshinski said in reference to the only native-born American ever to win the world Grand Prix driving championship, in 1961.

This year, the Copperstate route included not only Arizona roads, but a stretch of northbound pavement across the Mojave



Desert in California. It was on that stretch that a big southbound semi and its trailer created turbulence so strong it dislodged the Allard's hood, which broke the leather strap across the bonnet (the British term for a car hood), and the loose hood slammed back over the passenger compartment, smacking John and Peg Leshinski in their heads, or, more accurately, on their helmets.

Peg compared the impact to being "hit by a railroad tie."

Somehow, John got the car stopped safely, neither of them was injured, so, with help from others who stopped, they removed what remained of the hood and continued on along the route.

GOOD THING THEY HAD A SPARE

Each year, the Copperstate 1000 launches from Tempe Diablo Stadium, spring training home of baseball's Los Angeles Angels. To celebrate the Copperstate, a

(No. 26 at top, engine exposed below and on the road at bottom) John & Peg Leshinski's 1951 Allard K-2 that finished the event with its hood blown off. (No. 15 above and No. 18 at left) Rick and Nancy Rome's 1959 Devis SS and the 1931 Chrysler CM-6 sport roadster they were fortunate to have on hand when the Devin was unable to continue.



KEEP RIGHT >>



Scott Morris and Rochelle Jensen in a 1973 Ferrari 365 GTS/4 Daytona Spider follow Trent and Jen Abbott in their 1971 Porsche 911E as the Copperstate contingent follows 89A on its way to Jerome.

Field of Dreams car show is staged, with the Copperstate cars parked on the out-field grass and the warning track around the infield of the baseball field, and with cars from area car clubs in the parking lots on either side of the stadium.

One of the cars in the stadium this year was a 1959 Devin SS, purchased last summer by Rick and Nancy Rome of Dallas at the Russo and Steele classic car auction in Monterey, California.

The Romes' SS was the last of these 18 sports racers built by Bill Devin, an Oklahoma native who created the first engine with belt-driven overhead camshafts (though he didn't patent his invention). Devin's desire was to build American cars that could compete with Europe's best on the race track. He started by building racing-style bodies for various chassis, and then complete cars such as the SS.

The Romes had traveled only a few miles from the stadium when the engine in their car imploded. The Copperstate is sponsored by the Bell Lexus dealership, and part of the sponsorship package has the dealership supplying several new sedans that Copperstate entrants can use should their cars become disabled.

Such a car was made available to the Romes, but instead of using it to continue along the route, they drove it back to the stadium, where another car they'd recently acquired (at the Bonhams auction in Scottsdale in January) had been parked (awaiting the Devin's return and both cars' transport to Dallas).

That car was a 1931 Chrysler CM-6 sport roadster, just like the Chryslers that raced at Le Mans and in the famed Italian Mille Miglia. Back at the stadium, the Romes climbed aboard, took a shortcut across the desert and caught up with the Copperstate contingent in Laughlin, Nevada, and then completed the full route without further incident, and while driving the oldest car in the rally.

A CORVETTE WITH ITALIAN FLAIR

Gordon Kelly is remembered in the industrial design community for creating



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the ubiquitous shell-backed plastic lawn chair and for designing toilets (hey, someone had to do it) for Kohler. But Kelly's passion was automobile design, and for several years he was head of transportation product design at Brooks Stevens Associates, a world-famous styling studio in Milwaukee. It was Kelly who was responsible for the stunning lines of the 1962 Studebaker Gran Turismo Hawk.

While attending European auto shows, Kelly realized that what he wanted to drive was a car that had the style of an early 1950s Italian coupe, but the mechanical components of a modern American car, namely the Chevrolet Corvette. So he designed such a car, built a scale model and carried that model to Europe, where he visited all the leading coachbuilders before agreeing that Carrozzeria Vignale should turn his drawings and model into a full-scale automobile, and thus the 1961 Kelly Vignale Corvette, a car that was a star of auto shows from Paris (in 1961) to Pebble Beach (in 1994).

Kelly became ill during that Pebble Beach show, and would die a few months later. Several years after that, John Breslow of Scottsdale would buy the Italian-bodied car from Kelly's family, would commission a book about Kelly and his car (*Driven by a Dream*, written by the author of this article), and would reintroduce the car by driving it on the full 1111.1-mile route of the 2013 Copperstate 1000.

FOLLOWING IN DAD'S TIRE TREADS

Remember the earlier mention in this article of Phil Hill? Well, his son, Derek, was part of the Copperstate contingent this year.

Chris Andrews of Fort Worth, Texas, brought two cars to the event. He and Jennifer Moore drove Andrews' 1962 Shelby Cobra 289 while his 1962 Aston Martin DB4 was assigned to Wayne Carini and Hill. Carini is a car restoration specialist and host of the *Chasing Classic Cars* television show. Hill is an auto racer and was the driver in those Cadillac commercials that sent an ATS to challenge some of the world's most spectacular stretches of pavement, for which Hill and the Cadillac film crew traveled from Monaco to Morocco and from China to Patagonia.

We must mention again that Derek Hill is the son of Phil Hill.

We also must mention that the first car Phil Hill drove and raced in Europe was a 1953 Ferrari 340 MM Le Mans Spyder.

And guess what? The very 1953 Ferrari 340 MM Le Mans Spyder that Phil Hill drove and raced in Europe is now owned by Michael and Katharina Leventhal of Chicago. Not only are the Leventhals regulars on the Copperstate, but they regularly drive the route in the 340 MM. On the second day of the Copperstate this year, they asked Derek Hill if he'd like to drive his Dad's car.

"That was very special," Derek Hill said

after the drive, "driving the very same car that was the first car my Dad drove and raced in Europe."

AND THE AWARDS GO TO...

Several awards are given to Copperstate 1000 participants at the conclusion of the rally. For example, the Leshinskis received the "Condolence" award, and John Breslow received the "Immaculate Presentation" award because of his car's clean appearance and mechanical consistency through the four-day drive.

The "Director's" award, presented by Phoenix Art Museum director James Ballinger to the "best sculpture on wheels," went to a 1961 Lister Jaguar Knobbly owned by Colin Comer of Milwaukee while the "Participants" award, decided in a vote of the participants in response to the question "Which car on the rally would you most like to take home?" went to a 1955 Aston Martin DB3S owned by Scott and Jody Rosen of North Salem, New York.

The "Good Samaritan" award went to John Standifer and Jason Henderson, who were on the rally as mechanics working for Chris Andrews, but who also worked not only on other Copperstate cars in need of help but even a non-rally motorist whose car was stalled by an ailing fuel pump. Standifer and Henderson not only fixed the problem, but gave the motorist an extra fuel pump they had just in case it might be needed farther down the road.

The "MAC" award, given by the Men's Arts Council that organizes the rally, went to Arizona DPS Sgt. Shane McFarland, who had much with which to deal on the rally route this year. The eight DPS officers who accompany the rally also give an award; this year it went to Copperstate rookies Mike and Kathleen Christodolou of Fountain Hills, and only in part for the fact they came to the aid of one of the DPS officers after his motorcycle was struck by a car (not a car in the rally). The officer sustained injuries severe enough he had to be flown from Sedona to the intensive care unit of a hospital in Phoenix, where he was expected to make a complete recovery.

That recuperation figured to be aided by the 10-90 Copperstate Foundation, started a couple of years ago by Copperstate participants to provide direct aid to DPS officers and families in just such cases (10-90 is the radio code for "officer needs assistance").

In recognition for his work in helping start the foundation, a special award was given to Bennett Dorrance of Paradise Valley.

The Copperstate's annual top award—the Louis E. Laflin III Spirit Award, named in honor of and given in the memory of the rally's founder—went to Scottsdale resident Gordon Apker, a long-time Copperstate participant who, through the years, has recruited many of his friends to join the rally and its effort to raise money for the Phoenix Art Museum and for the rally's police benevolence causes. ■



(No. 61, top and below) John and Sonia Breslow's 1961 Chevrolet Corvette by Vignale. (No. 11 and No. 48 above) Chris Andrews and Jennifer Moore's 1962 Shelby Cobra 289 and their 1962 Aston Martin DB4 to be driven by Wayne Carini and Derek Hill. (Left) Michael and Katharina Leventhal's 1953 Ferrari 340 MM Le Mans Spyder (also below), being driven by Derek Hill.

