

## SIXTY YEARS OF THE MORGAN PLUS 4 CLUB PART 2

*This story of the Morgan Plus 4 Club of Southern California is written after reading fifty year old aged copies of Morgan Plus 4 Club Formats. It is intended for enjoyment with no guarantee of historical perfection. However, I hope you will enjoy reading about our Club History. Carolyn Klein*

Remember the decade of the sixties – feminism, social freedom, Vietnam, Apollo 11 and the walk on the moon, Beatles, Woodstock, 1971 San Fernando Earthquake, 1973 Oil crisis, gas rationing and lava lamps. Do you have fond memories of personal experiences from 1966 to 1975? Well here's the Morgan Club highlights.

This decade had nine impressive Presidents with President Bill Lavender bookended presidencies in 1966 and 1974. The leaders of this Morgan Club include Don Morrill, 1967, Chuck Harris, 1968, Al Miller, 1969, George Parkins, 1970, Jim Belardi, 1971, Gerry Willburn, 1972 Lee DeBrish, 1973, and Fred Klein, 1975.

The club met every second Monday, at Pikes Glen Oaks location until July, 1969. Meetings were then moved to the Mission Tavern to enjoy the Morgan festivities until its destruction with a fire in 1973. The Pizza Palace on Centinela Blvd off the San Diego freeway was next meeting site until too many pizzas and too much noise shifted the Morgan Club to the Velvet Turtle in South Gate in the fall of 1975. Of note, at the Pizza Palace, Mollie Miller introduced a guest, Michael Hattem who had just purchased a 1960 Drophead.

In 1966, the Club By-Law was passed to create strength in the pride of Morgan ownership. If you owned a Morgan you had a vote; no Morgan = no vote/no enacting motion. There were two pearls of wisdom from President Bill Lavender. "A match cannot stand alone, but a bundle bound together stands strong," so the club members bound by the spirit of Morgan stood strong and were successful. Secondly, "Willingness to oppose a person's view is a healthy thing." There is quite a history of energized debates and lively discussions with opposition to almost any Morgan topic throughout the years.

There were too many rallyes and slaloms and competitive driving events to count, and the Morgan drivers all enjoyed fast driving and great racing, which is what a 60's Morgan owner was all about. In the late 60's, there was a real pattern of May Tour where the cars would go for a destination weekend, perhaps the Golden State Grand Prix slalom races in Santa Maria and of course Sky Ranch weekend in the Sierras. The annual trip to Sky Ranch was not complete until there was posted an individual award to each attendee for some personal pleasure or experience from the weekend of shenanigans.

I found it humorous that there was no March Format in 1968, due to lack of input, perhaps the editor was attempting to make a point. The quality of articles submitted varied with very interesting paragraphs written about each club member, and for a few years all the 'out-of-area members' were recognized and correspondence posted. The technical articles were top notch and could make any Morgan owner with some good tools, capable of repairing just about any Morgan mechanical issue. In June 1968, the Spares inventory was printed so

that members could obtain various bits and parts to keep their car running well. Morgan orders were made and shipped from the Morgan factory, which were highly anticipated and certainly appreciated. By 1969, the Club worked on creating a book of all published tech articles, which perhaps may be found in some of your garage workbooks.

In 1969, another By Law change of note was created for the out of area Regular membership status, and this directly impacted the number of members added during this time. The year was filled with races with SCC SCC, slaloms and team Morgan, the challenging rallyes for all and the Vista Del Mar Concours with 20 Morgans in attendance.

In 1970, the Club celebrated the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Morgan automobile, and the Morgan 4/4 Trophy was initiated to recognize the person with 'true Morgan spirit', donated by Dave Grainger. That same year, the Club placed an ad in Auto Week for membership in the Morgan +4 Club; benefits included a monthly paper, tech information, car badge, pins, shop manuals, models, spares, and out of area memberships.

Needless to say, good advertising quadrupled the out of area membership numbers, so the Club had over two hundred members. More good news the Plus 8 Morgan came to the United States for eager Morgan owners. The top SCC SCC points standing from Jan 1959 to Jan 1970, Morgan Winner Winnie Becker with 1,795.1 points, and that's quite a feat!

In 1971, there was the usual three non-competitive events of the May Tour, and why not drive your Morgan to Ensenada Mexico? Later in the year of course, events included the Sierra Sky Ranch weekend, and the December Holiday dinner.

In order to maintain fiscal responsibility, dues needed to be increased to cover the cost of publishing and mailing cost (sound familiar). The Club Regalia was proudly advertised to members in the Format. The racing, rallyes and car concours kept the calendar full, and the backward concours led by Gerry Willburn always provided extra enjoyment for club members.

In July, 1972, there was a By-Law vote, which passed to ensure the initiation fee would be payable only once. This meant that members who allowed their membership to lapse, whatever the reason, could rejoin the Club without paying the \$10 initiation fee again.

It was also noted this year the Club did not put on their own slalom, although there were drivers for the other sanctioned slalom events. It must have been a delightful day, when the Morgans all shine and bright were on display at the Hollywood Bowl for the Le Circle Concours. The May tour was a weekend in Cambria, who knew back then what a tradition the Club would continue with this coastal paradise.

There were many forlorn members when the Mission Tavern was destroyed in 1973, and the fond Morgan member memories of good beer drinking at the bar were to be no more. There was truly a group of dedicated racers in the early seventies, and the Morgan Club ranked in the top ten regularly for the SCC SCC Championships.

The competition was friendly between J. Whelan, B. Howlett, C. Small, J. Belardi, M. Miller, J Small, and S. Howlett. On the SCCA circuit, Toly Arutunoff was racing his Morgan competitively as well. And so the story goes that the Morgan team at the Golden State Grand Prix, truly focused on winning would share one set of mighty fine race tires, which were switched for each Morgan car that raced, to have that competitive edge. And then, the almighty powers had to change the rules and you had to use your own tires. That pretty much summarized the passion for Morgan racing in those days don't you think?

In May of 1973, a lengthy tour in May with a destination of Calaveras County was a fun event. The Club repeated the Concours at the Hollywood Bowl sponsored by Le Circle, as well as a Concours in San Diego on July 22nd which was a great event to enjoy meeting Morgan friends.

Do you remember the gas shortage? Well the Morgan Club sure felt the effects; with a curtailed car calendar and only Saturday events as there were no gas stations open on Sunday. To avoid the May tour long distance designation, a fine wine tour of local wineries was calendared. The diehard racers did not give in however, and there were slaloms, Santa Maria races and Sky Ranch to enjoy in 1974.

There was the initiation of recognition for an outstanding Out of Area member Award, with John Council of Boone N.C. being given this award. He would drive his Morgan with red light and siren to fires as he was the Fire Chief, and a member of Boone V.F.D.

And what is to remember about 1975. The President, in a quest to promote the first Club Concours independent of Le Circle or Lions Club, promised the completion of the 1964 Morgan 4 pass which he and his bride purchased from the Morell's that spring.

Sure enough, on August 30 at Arco Plaza in downtown Los Angeles there was a collection of twenty five Morgans on display organized by Tom McClung, as was the Klein's 4 Pass 'Brownie'.

The Morgan racers were having difficulty finding parking lot locations for slaloms, yet the racers continued, the May tour enjoyed the scenic backdrop of Santa Barbara, and Santa Maria had another Golden State Grand Prix slalom event. It was the last tour to Sky Ranch, and of note, first time ever that no Morgans were driven from Southern California.

The fun and friendships continue today from many of these same Morgan members from the seventies.



*Photo of Dale Barry at speed at Laguna Seca Race Track*