

## Fuel For Thought

with "Landspeed Louise" Ann Noeth

### What an Honor!

For years I made my living by test-driving new cars, trucks and motorcycles. It was a wondrous thing to me that someone would let me have a brand spanking new whatever for a couple weeks to do with as I chose, and my only responsibility was to write up my impressions about the wheeled adventure. What's more, I got paid to do it. Sweet!

In the beginning I figured that this was too good to be true, that it had to end. It didn't, and 20 years rolled by as I penned reviews for magazines and newspapers throughout the world. Then I went to Bonneville and it signaled the beginning of the end. Enraptured by the speed, desire, passion and quality racing, I slowly moved away from new car reviews. Now I find that form of journalism almost as tortuous as photographing a wedding.

Don't get me wrong, it was a great ride while it held my attention. There were press junkets that would combine the adventure with another event, say a trip to the Grand Canyon, or the Pikes Peak Race to the Clouds, Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, and my favorite was a several hundred mile jaunt north from Rome just to have lunch at a fancy-schmancy hotel on Lake Como. Oh, but what I wouldn't do for some homemade Italian risotto.

Strange as it sounds, it got boring after awhile. On some trips the place and entertainment were more worthy of editorial than the vehicle being touted. When that happens on a regular basis it is time to get out and find something new to fire-up the grey matter. Land speed racing to the rescue!

*"The news came in a plain white envelope..."*

This passion has fueled many an article and piles of appreciated kudos, and recently there was some very sweet icing added to the top of my journalistic cake.

The news came in a plain white envelope with the logo of the Society of Automotive Historians of Southern California in the upper, left hand corner. I figured it was a dues reminder, and put it on the bottom of the mail pile. It was 30 minutes later when I opened it up and the words, "Congratulations! You are the winner of the SAH SoCal Valentine Award for 2005." jumped up and poked me in the eyeballs. Had to read it twice, I did. This honor - for "Excellence in Automotive Historical Research" - had

already come to me once before, in 2002, for my book, Bonneville Salt Flats, so I immediately figured it was a mistake and paused.

Good thing I finished reading the letter because it added "This makes you our second two-timer winner, and the first to win in separate categories." That rung the bell in my head - this was recognition for my November 2004 Fuel For Thought column in Goodguys, the one where I unmercifully berated the FIA about treating land speed racers like dirt, yet eagerly taking their money.

Wow. I was bowled over not so much about the writing award; sure I was humbled by the news, but what got me totally revved up were the judges who had recognized the significance of the message, that a significant wrong needed to be put right.

Bob Ewing, the SAH chair of the writing competition, said he had never heard of the Goodguys before my column was entered, but has since been "educated". Even more profound is that the column won with such an esoteric subject, the consciousness has been raised ladies and gentlemen and for that I am eternally grateful.

The Valentine Award is named for the late J.H. Valentine, at one time the recognized authority of automobiles built in Los Angeles. Always a strong supporter of the Southern California Chapter SAH, Valentine devoted his life to accurately compiling nearly

insignificant data on early automobiles one by one. With no chance of personal wealth, he ensured that future historians would have a large quantity of priceless material. The Valentine Award guidelines favor books, magazines or manuscripts with a Southern California slant, but do not preclude significant historical milestones anywhere in the world.

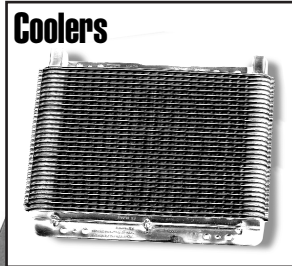
The SoCal group is part of a larger organization simply known as The Society of Automotive Historians. Founded in 1969, they have more than 900 members in 45 of the United States and more than 20 countries. Members come from all walks of life and include authors who write books and articles about automotive history as well as people who simply enjoy reading and researching it.

Members of the Society encourage research, preservation, recording, compilation, and publication of historical material of every type. They monitor the worldwide development of the automobile and related items, from their inception to the present. What's really nice is that they help each other in obtaining historical information and material.

I accept this award on behalf of land speed racers everywhere and it gives me great satisfaction that my scribbling about this marvelous, pure form of motorsports is making an impact off the salt! 🏎️

Louise

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