The East Coast Timing Association (ECTA) got a letter recently that could possibly signal the end of land speed racing in the eastern part of the USA.

After 13 successful years of time trials at the Laurinburg-Maxton Airport, the master lease holder Gryphon Security Solutions informed the ECTA that its operations were expanding and after 2011 the racers would no longer be able to use its leased portion as a pit area.

Gryphon provides specialized combat training to U.S. Military Units and Federal Agencies, and in this case, it serves Fort Bragg located about an hour northeast of the airport.

Led by a former Marine, Michael K. Vaden, founder and Chief Executive Officer of Gryphon Group Security Solutions; he has a couple decades of special operations, personal security, and advanced special operations tactics experience.

Roger that. I get it. Training troops is serious business. Security is nothing to trifle with. But when the work week is done, even the tough get going for some fun. Seems to me a weekend of land speed racing in the summer seems a mighty fine diversion.

The ecting of weekend racing is especially puzzling when you discover that Gryphon doesn’t operate on the weekends. The bone of contention seems to be centered on Fridays – the day the ECTA uses to tech and safety check entered vehicles. Gryphon either cannot, or will not find five Fridays a year to allow the ECTA to continue its racing series.

Not wanting to appear greedy, and obvious the normally Chinned guy had been thrown into the doldrums trying to figure out what to do next. He recounted how the racers came to town: “Since the first work weekend, Maxton volunteers have continually strived to hold off the decay of the runway built in 1942. Thousands of dollars and volunteer hours from ECTA members have been spent on repairs and updates. The money is not the point - it is a labor of love - the "Spirit of Maxton."

The ECTA was founded by John Beckett and Tom Sarda and starting in Georgia, then moved in and quickly out, of South Carolina before finding its home in North Carolina in the summer of 1995.

The place was a dump - literally. Undaunted, the volunteer work crews began removing 600 tons of debris, including three full-grown trees to reveal the surface the ECTA participants now race on.

What started with a handful of competitors grew to a five-event points championship by 1999. Sarda bowed out and by 2004 Joe Timney and Keith Turk purchased the ECTA from John Beckett, expanding the season to six annual events. Publicity in various magazines, websites and other media outlets boosted entries from 60 to a 120 per speed meet.

“All of the extra income was spent on track improvements as well as a new timing tower,” said Timney who starts each event asking for a prayer and thanking the volunteers acknowledging that without them - “We are nothing!”

Indeed. According to Cory Hughes, Executive Director Scotland County Tourist Development Authority, the ECTA is an exemplar attraction.

“The ECTA are incredibly responsible,” he told me, “The racers leave the airport better than they found it. They have been part of our community for 16 years. We don’t have a lake, a mountain or a Liberty Bell, so we appreciate the help the ECTA has provided to bring visitors into our community. We are the smallest county in North Carolina and yet we have one of the most unique events in the entire state."

Hughes added that it is in everyone’s best interest to have both parties present and operating at the airport as both bring revenue to the local community.

“Turbines can move forward together and that they exhaust every opportunity to work things out.” He concluded, “We really hope they figure things out that works for both sides.”

Without cooperation from Gryphon Security Solutions to use a portion of their leased runway area that includes the ECTA repaired and maintained track, land speed racing at the airport is doomed.

Not only is this a blow to the land speed racing family, but the economically depressed area of Laurinburg/Maxton will suffer a considerable financial loss.

“When the ECTA is in town, motel rooms are filled, restaurants overflow and tourist attendance will be a great loss to SCTA/BNI because they drum so much participation from the eastern part of the United States,” explained SCTA President Don Ferguson III, “If racers couldn’t shake-down their race cars in advance, they might think twice about traveling a couple thousand miles to find out.”

Hugh Coltharp, founding member and Treasurer of the Utah Salt Flats Racing Association (USFRA) echoed the same sentiments: “That would be a real blow to the sport if the ECTA shut down there would be one-fourth less land speed racing events in the nation. At least a third of the ECTA members come out to write...
our World of Speed event."  

Land speed racers from the eastern US are very concerned about the situation because they have come to rely on Maxton for just regional time trials.  

"If the ECTA doesn't find another track, we will be forced to travel 2,000 miles to Bonneville just to discover a problem," said Cleveland, Ohio racer Joe Lofdor who runs a '32 Roadster, "Maxton would be sorely missed. Think about all the people who can't afford to go to the salt, they will lose their sport entirely."  

Wayne Jesel from Mooresville, NC, the owner and driver of a 2005 Dodge Quad pickup truck and '32 Ford Street roadster that both ran in excess of 200MPH at Maxton felt the same way.  

"Maxton is a valuable racing tool for us. Every year, for the past six years, we have been successful at Bonneville because we were able to test and tune at Maxton," he explained, "We can break-in new drivers, get them partially licensed, sort out safety and mechanical issues and then go with confidence to Bonneville. It's hard to believe that there are not two Fridays available in the whole year."  

Mark Sotomayor President and founding member of the newest land speed racing venue, the Loring Timing Association in Maine pointed out that the publicity from ECTA events has brought national exposure to the entire area.  

"When you say Maxton, it is synonymous with land speed racing in the east," he observed, "The ECTA has brought a lot to the local community as well as the sport of land speed racing. I don't understand why the master lease holder can't find a solution to co-exist, especially in these trying economic times. If the ECTA had to pull out of Maxton the local community would surely suffer."  

What do the local folk think about all this? Most don't even know it is happening. I contacted the local newspaper editor at The Laurinburg Exchange and he had no idea the ECTA was getting booted. Ditto for the sports editor and further inquiries revealed that many other locals were similarly surprised at the development.  

From where I sit, here's what can be done: speak up and out about the ECTA as well as the eastern fraternity of land speed racing. Without question, the most effective way to be heard is to write a letter to the folks listed below and let them know (be nice) that land speed racing matters, that it is an American tradition that crosses to families, amateurs, the common folk seeking some unique entertainment.  

Explain it is a great way for kids to learn about science technology, engineering and math. By the way, the ECTA admits all military free-of-charge to every event. The goal is to encourage the Gryphon folks to find at least two Fridays a year to let the ECTA continue their positive impact on the local community. Make it easy on yourself, but helpful to your racers-in-arms: write one letter and send it to everyone listed below. I did.  

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NOTE: Photojournalist Louise Ann Noeth is the author of the award-winning book, *Bonneville: The Fastest Place on Earth*, a complete historical review of the first 50 years of land speed racing. After 11 years in print less than 20 of the author's special autographed edition remain. For more details and to order, go to: www.landspeedproductions.biz.  

Bangin' The Gears  
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ahead of him and by the time we hit the next light I was a full length ahead.  
I slowed to collect his money, but needless to say, I wasn't going to get it... funny, I knew that going in...figured he'd run...and he did, cut out at the alleyway, tail between his legs and not about to face me.  

Kenny wanted me to go after him, teach him a lesson but I said it wasn't worth the trouble, besides, he'd never understand the lesson. Never did run across him any time later...don't even know if he was from Denver...maybe not. Or he simply chose to avoid us after that. We headed north on Federal Boulevard, planning on cruising through The Scottchman, see if we could find another race, but didn't have any luck with that. Besides, the beer was getting warm and we still hadn't made it downtown to cruise 16th Street a couple of times...the night was still young.  

JOURNEY BACK TO THE 1960’s!  
Roger's first two books: *Bangin' Gears & Buttin' Heads and Fast Cars, 4-speeds & Fitt-fights* tell tales of car craziness like "rat-racing" on gravel roads, illegal drags on state highways, high school fist-fights and racing with trains. *Revolution Rogers & Fast and Easy* tells the youthful stories of eleven well known men in the hot rod world. The latest: *Accidents & Incidents*, is rod running stories. To order each or a package deal on all four, visit www.RAJetter.com  

upgraded to a nine bearing configuration, the Studebaker President's model won the Pike's Peak hill-climb of that year while also being successful at the Indy 500 for a few years as it always finished in the top ten. History books state that no other car of its era was as successful in motor sports competition as was Studebaker, with it holding 114 records, 35 of which would still stand 35 years later.  

So, from chariots, to covered wagon racing, to today's hot rods...which ones have really inspired complete, and more fulfillment and true happiness above all others? Daniel Gilbert, a Harvard psychologist professor recently gave his just-completed report where he expounded on his findings. Gilbert said, "We overestimate the intensity and the duration of our emotional reactions" to an event of any type. In other words, we might believe that a new hot rod or even a new Mercedes will make life lean more "perfect" side. However, Gilbert says, "But it will almost certainly be less exciting than we anticipated, nor will it excite us for as long as we predicted."  
At the same time, one of Gilbert's associates, George Loewenstein said, "In the same way that our eye adapts to different levels of illumination, we're designed to...go back to our happiness set point. Our brains are not trying to be happy. Our brains are trying to regulate us." C.S. Lewis in his book *First and Second Things: Essays on Theology and Ethics*, wrote, "You can't get second things by putting them first; you can get second things only by putting first things first."  
Might it just be that is exactly what the words of Matthew 6:33 are attempting to teach us? That if we seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, all the other things will be added to us." Thinking about those words, I think I'll walk down to the lower garage and 'massage' the '46, and tell her' again how content I am that 'she's mine and I'm satisfied to have 'her'.  

Are you interested in either sending your son/grandson, age 16 – 19 to a CRA Hot Rod Camp in '11? Perhaps you would like to sponsor a young guy? Call CRA for more info: CRA, PO Box 309, Valley Springs, CA 95252; 209-786-0524; cra@integrity.com.  

Flash Back  
Continued from Page 203  

is, measure vacuum. I drove from my house to Gresham, a small town about 15 miles away, keeping the needle straight up as much as I could. There were so few stop lights and so little traffic I did not need to stop often. Perhaps that alone explains the pleasure of driving with a Mile-O-Meter in those times. It certainly explains how one could drive down the road and stare at a needle moving against a complex background without running into another vehicle.  

Good guys Truck of the Year - Early  
Continued from Page 49  

and knobs were used throughout. A Diamond T dash insert was fitted with customized Classic gauges and bezels CNC'd by Rad Rides by Troy.  

Speaking of Rad Rides, they were chosen to execute the paint job, machining, and final assembly of the truck. Brian worked with them closely during the process, and the combination of the two shops was a success. Rad Rides employee Moose gets the "patience award" for polishing the many louveres found throughout the truck. The Lotus Green pickup made its debut at the 2010 Grand National Roadster Show with huge success.  

To the uninformed, the truck seems ostentatious. Undoubtedly, a book could be filled with descriptions of each part and how it was made. However, to those familiar with high end, coach built cars of the '20s and Miller's renowned dedication to creating mechanical works of art, it is befitting, and surely Harry would approve of the finely crafted Miller Hauler Special.