

I was fortunate to receive approval from my wife, McCall, to drive our 1958 Coupe to Mount Dora this past Saturday. You see, McCall and I are expecting our first child, a baby girl within the next 4 weeks. I was surprised at the last minute Friday night and encouraged by her to stay Saturday night for the dinner and awards banquet.

“The Gathering of the Faithful” event and annual meeting was hosted by The Florida Owners Group (FOG) of the 356 Registry. The event’s niche spans the early years of Porsche production from 1948 to 1965. The host event site was the award winning historic Lakeside Inn, opened in 1883 and is situated on a hill overlooking Lake Dora. If you have never been to Mount Dora or stayed at the Lakeside Inn I highly recommend taking a weekend to do so. Oh, and don’t forget to drive the Porsche, there are some great two lane roads to explore. The 356’s were placed on the gentle lawn sloping towards the lake and faced up the hill towards the spacious wrap around Verandah. Some of my most relaxing moments of the weekend were spent sitting in one of the many rocking chairs overlooking the Porsches, the lake and enjoying the sunset.

Saturday was busy and included a swap meet, tech quiz, people’s choice Concours, a road tour and an awards banquet. There were about 25 356’s on the lawn for the people’s choice Concours, not a bad turn out considering the foreboding forecast of thunderstorms. All in all we estimate 70-75 F.O.G. members attended Saturday. If my mind serves me correctly there were 4 highly desirable speedsters, 1 Convertible D, 3 ‘A’ coupes, 1 B Roadster, 3 B Cabriolets, 3 B Coupes, 4 C Cabriolets, 5 C Coupes and a rare, low production 4 Cam Carrera 2 Coupe. The oldest cars in attendance were from 1956, one Coupe and one Speedster. Personally, I am a fan of the Peoples Choice format for an event. To me it is more relaxed and the winners are chosen by your peers. It shows the amount of respect we have for the award winner’s cars. I wanted to mention two names for those who still own their Porsche bought new from the dealer. There were two original owners present. They have owned their 356’s an impressive 50+ years. The first was Bob Dewey and he bought his 1958 Speedster new while living in Germany. The second person was Tom Pletcher who acquired his 1959 Coupe new from the dealer in Beverly Hills. Both still own these cars and both *drove* them to the event. WOW!

That afternoon 20+ 356’s left the Lakeside Inn for a 53 mile tour of the central Florida hill and lake country. One of the highlights was driving to and experiencing the views from Sugarloaf Mountain. Sugarloaf Mountain is peninsular Florida’s highest elevation point, 312ft above sea level. We enjoyed many great curves and elevation changes, not overly common in peninsular Florida. Next stop was the Yalaha bakery for some tasty genuine German breads, old world tortes, pastries and potent German Bier. May I recommend the Paulaner bier? MMMmm. The tour route will be posted on the F.O.G. website (www.356FOG.com) for others to enjoy if they are ever in the area.

Upon returning to the Lakeside Inn, everyone freshened up, changed for supper and met on the Verandah for some good ‘ole rocking chair racing. Once dinner was announced we moved to the Alexander Room and continued our conversations. Being a good Jaguar football fan, I darted back and forth between the bar and dinner to keep track of the game. Damn shame about the 2nd half. Anyways, there were several highlights during dinner. Bob Dewey, an original owner of a 1958 Speedster shared his memories of purchasing it while stationed in Germany. Interesting enough the ’58 he bought new was already his 3rd Speedster! While the awards were announced I enjoyed keeping track of how many of my personal votes fared against the eventual winners. I started 3 for 3 and ended up voting for 3 of the 6 class winners. Two 356’s that stood out to me were Mike Owen’s 1956 Speedster and a 1962 4 Cam Carrera 2 owned by Harry Bopp. The tech quiz winners were announced next and F.O.G. President John Reker awarded the women entrants first and the male participants next. The quiz was quite challenging and mindfully tricky. Here is one of the questions:

On May 16th, 1952, Porsche was awarded a contract to design a new car for which American automaker?

-GM? Ford? Studebaker? Chrysler? Answer: Studebaker

My favorite part of supper, besides the food, was the announcement of the “Drive Those Cars” contest. The premise behind the contest was to encourage 356 owners to actually drive and enjoy their cars instead of trailering or even leaving your 356 at home in the garage (avoiding rain, rock chips or wear and tear). The top 10 drivers were recognized and the most miles driven award went to Mike Owen and his show quality and multiple award winning black 1956 Speedster. It was a close race and in 2nd place, Glen Getchell, was a mere 4 miles shy of Mike. Both owners enjoyed their 356's for over 6000+ miles in the 10 months of the contest. Congrats guys! As the evening came to a close I returned to the Gatsbyesque Tremains Lounge to witness a disappointing loss of the Jaguars to the undefeated New England Patriots.

As the sun rose Sunday morning I returned to the Verandah, laptop in hand and continued to download, resize and post pictures of the event via the Lakeside Inn's Wi-Fi connection. I had the pleasure to continue conversations from last evening as others joined me for an early morning session on the rocking chairs. The event closed with the Annual Trustee meeting of the past, present and future plans/ events for the F.O.G. group. As I prepared to pack the Coupe for the 130 mile drive home I felt the barometric air pressure change as the rain clouds move in. Not intimidated by the impending rain I took off through downtown Mount Dora and traveled home to Jacksonville via the scenic route. I traveled the two lane roads of US 19, straight through the Ocala National Forest, crossed the St. Johns River in Palatka, turned NE to Saint Augustine and cruised A1A back to Neptune Beach. Despite the occasional downpours, I was “keeping the faith” (KTF a long term 356 saying) and taking the roads less traveled. In closing I wanted to thank Mike and Debbie Owen, John and Jan Reker and everyone else involved in making this event memorable.

Drive 'Em!

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1958 Coupe
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Note: If you are interested in learning more about Porsche's first generation of air cooled cars (the 356) I encourage you to attend one of the many F.O.G. events held throughout the state. Most regions throughout the state have a local monthly breakfast. More information can be found at www.356FOG.com