



Tech Articles

Are We Ruining Our Hobby???

by Christopher Sass

As members of NIFE, we are a diverse group who are members for a variety of reasons. Likewise, we use our Fieros for various purposes. Some of us like to race; others attend car shows; some enjoy modifying their cars; some drive their cars and want to maintain them just as they are; others want nothing more than to own their Fiero and visit it in storage. Whatever you do with your Fiero is acceptable to the club. I like to attend car shows with my Fiero, but in doing so, I have noticed a change in the way car shows, particularly Fiero shows, are being run, which I believe will ruin the hobby.

First lets decide why anyone would sponsor a car show. If the sponsor is a club, a show could contribute funds to the club, bring awareness to the club resulting in publicity and increased membership, promote the image within the community that old cars and cars in general have an implicit value in our society, and provide a friendly venue for people with a common interest. If a sponsor is a business or organization, the reasons are often similar. Shows are particularly useful for charities or charitable causes. These sponsors not only can raise money from the participants but also from non-participants with an interest in cars.

Now, why would a car owner choose to participate in a car show? You might participate to support your club and hobby, to help raise money for a club or charity, to spend time with friends who share a similar interest, or to compete in a friendly manner with others in your hobby. This last reason is important. It may not be the most important, but it is important none-the-less. Unfortunately, the competition aspect of car shows is being diluted. For reasons I will discuss, more shows are adopting the attitude that everybody who participates must be awarded a trophy, plaque, ribbon, or certificate. I believe this is the purpose of the dash plaque; it says that you participated in the event. By awarding every participant a trophy, organizers are eliminating competition and, I feel, in effect ruining the hobby. It is equivalent to entering a race and receiving a trophy no matter how you placed in the finish. No one would accept that as a condition of racing...not even the drivers who did not cross the finish line first. What is an award worth if everyone who participated received one? I feel cheated when I receive an award along with every other participant; or receive a third place award in a class that contains only three cars.

I believe this condition has come about for two reasons. One, the sponsor may have ulterior motives in increasing participation other than the interest of promoting the hobby, believing participation can be increased by making everyone happy; but you can't please all of the people all of the time. Second, organizers have been bombarded with complaints by participants because they are dissatisfied with the outcome. From the sponsors, we participants must demand competitiveness and fairness. From the participants, we must demand a mature attitude towards competitiveness and fairness.

For those of you who don't know me and are thinking that I can make such statements because I have a pristine car, you should know that my car is on the edge of not being

competitive. In half of the shows I attend, I leave without a trophy. I have come to realize that my car needs work to stay competitive, and this is the same realization everyone who participates should have. If you have a first place car this year, everyone in your class should be striving to improve their cars to be better than your car, next year. Unfortunately an attitude of complacency is taking over. This attitude is one of not striving to be better; not striving to be the best because you'll be awarded a trophy anyway. Consequently we are making the hobby less challenging. We also may not have Fiero's worth owning in ten or fifteen years if fewer owners are maintaining their cars to be something to value. I believe what should be happening is if someone takes second place this year, that person should strive to make improvements to their car so that when someone looks at your car and the one next to it, your car has an edge, and maybe the car owner that lost out to your car will strive to make his car better than yours and beat you at the next show. If everyone is rewarded equally, there is no incentive for participants to improve their cars.

These comments do not apply to the NIFE Fierorama because the purpose of the Fierorama is maximum participation of daily driven Fiero's. All Fiero owners are encouraged to participate regardless of the condition of the car.

I have some suggestions for alternate, competitive car show rules. First, classes should have a minimum number of entries. If a class only has three entries, only two trophies should be given. If a class only has two entries, only one trophy should be given out for that class.

Secondly, for shows which are strictly Fiero shows, we could establish criteria for awards. For instance, a car could meet the prescribed criteria for being awarded a bronze, silver and gold trophy. This would allow owners to have a known goal to work towards and allow organizers to give out awards to more than first, second, and third, but not be required to give every car an award. The criteria would need to be written so as not to restrict creativity, but also require equality of judging. A good example would be to require the exterior, interior, engine bay, and underhood area to be restored or detailed to be awarded a gold trophy. This would eliminate a car which only has an immaculate exterior from ranking higher than a car which is very clean in all of the above mentioned areas. It also levels the playing field when base cars, sport coupes, and SE's are competing against Indy Pace cars, Formulas, and GT's.

I don't mean to imply that car shows become cut throat competitions, and I am not directing my comments to any individual or organization. I am talking to all groups inside and outside of NIFE that make up the hobby. If the only reason you are participating is to take home a trophy, the point has been missed. Car shows should be and often are about more than winning a trophy; however competition has always been a part of car shows and it should always remain so, otherwise we will witness less interest, less participation, and the ruin of a hobby which is so important to keeping our Fiero's alive.