

100th Issue of Fiero Focus Celebration

(Is this the history of Fiero Focus or the history of computers in the home?)

The farthest thing on my mind at the founding meeting of the Northern Illinois Fiero Enthusiasts back on Saturday, October 19th, 1991 was assembling the 100th issue of Fiero Focus. On that crisp autumn day, fourteen people gathered at the home of Jim and Sylvia Corbin – car collectors themselves with two Fieros of their own at the time (and three more on the way). Jim Corbin was past President of the Auburn/Cord/Duesenburg Club, the largest automobile club in the world. It was Jim's wisdom that laid the foundation of Fiero Focus. As Jim once stated to me, "the only thing that really holds a club together is its newsletter. Club meetings only have a select number of its members attend, but the newsletter gets sent out to each and every club member." With that in mind, the importance of Fiero Focus became quite evident to me and the diligent path was laid.

Founding club member Bruce Chlevin, owning three Fieros at the time, coined the title of our newsletter. You see, Bruce was a professional photographer and photographers by trade 'focus' for a living. Thus, the name Fiero Focus was born at our founding meeting. The first several issues of Fiero Focus consisted of two sheets or so of type written local Fiero news (remember typewriters?) and mailed out to each of the fourteen founding members (and growing!).

The first member to hold the position of Secretary, who at the time also functioned as Newsletter Editor, was Greg Kocialkowski. Unfortunately, due to a heavy work schedule (and no email to correspond with at the time), Greg assembled only one issue before leaving the position. I recall one issue where my wife, Jenni, and I were on dueling typewriters in her college dorm room typing away to meet a deadline for a club meeting announcement; we each took a page to type and then merged them together. Luckily only about 20 copies needed to be mailed back in those days!

Our next club member who accepted the responsibilities of Newsletter Editor was Gary Smith, who owned two Fieros at the time. Gary brought word processing to Fiero Focus. In the early days (still before email), hand written notes were mailed and later faxed to Gary who typed my notes and then mailed out each Fiero Focus. Gary began assembling with the March 1992 issue and continued his responsibilities until August of 1993. During his tenure, Fiero Focus evolved with some graphics inserted via the cut and paste method to add some spice to the publication.

After Gary's resignation, I assembled Fiero Focus using an original issue Apple computer with a green computer screen and a dot matrix printer. The interesting thing about this moment in time was that all of the text was in capital letters – the early computer word processors must have only been able to handle capital letters.

As membership continued to grow, new talents were brought into the fold who helped Fiero Focus mature. Club Member Byron Daugherty called me one day and offered to help Fiero Focus move forward, away from the 'capital letter' series. Beginning with the May 1994 issue, Byron brought WordPerfect software into the fold. During these years, I recall taking home a rather large and heavy company laptop and typing up segments for Fiero Focus and saving them to floppy disks using Microsoft Word. I also recall my employer viewing this laptop usage as 'learning how to use PCs', as I was the only one in the company that was not afraid of what PCs could do, having taken a course on the early Apple computers back in high school.

What an accomplishment! Fiero Focus earned our first publicly announced award back in 1995. Each year Old Cars Weekly Magazine picks their winners of the best car club newsletters across the nation. Looking for editorial content, layout, and overall appearance, the editors pick their Golden Quill Award winners when car clubs mail their editors copies of each issue of the club's newsletter. This Golden Quill Award was the first in what would become a string of awards earned by Fiero Focus and those involved with its direction.

An interesting side bar to all of this is that working with Fiero Focus helps hone the computer skills of all who are involved with it. Back then, we were in the early stages of home computers and what better way to learn how to use them than to have the opportunity to have a purpose to work on them. Personally, I have learned so much about using Word and Excel just because of my work on Fiero Focus (however, I will not admit how much time I personally spend on our computer for the betterment of the club!). Many others

who have associated themselves with Fiero Focus have had their computer skills and knowledge expand greatly as well.

During Byron Daugherty's tenure, Paul Vargyas, NIFE Membership Director, and I would meet at Byron's house which was luckily not too far from our own homes where I would bring my floppy disk of files that would be utilized for the content in the upcoming issue; we just never knew what was going to be on the cover of these issues...

One of the highlights of Byron's tenure was The Try It Before You Buy It wheel issue published in May of 1995. This issue was one of the most famous, and was even referenced by a national magazine. In exchange for the lower prices on wheels for NIFE Members, Byron presented the idea of being able to visualize your car by cutting and pasting different wheel options prior to your purchase to The Tire Rack (as they requested), which then became the creation of their online wheel visualization. In a way, Fiero Focus changed the way people purchased aftermarket wheels for their cars. As a result of this national notoriety, membership increased both at the local, national, and, for the first time, international levels.

Also in the May 1995 Fiero Focus, NIFE's first International member was featured in its pages; a member from Australia named Tony Andrew.

With the popularity of the Internet in its infancy, Byron created Fiero Focus Online, our official website back in March of 1996. Various past articles were made available on our site to assist Fiero owners across the world, wherever they lived, positioning Fiero Focus as a source of information for *any* Fiero owner who had access to the Internet. Fiero Focus Online was also the first club online newsletter companion to offer downloads of Fieros made for popular computer games, such as the "Need For Speed" series.

In the September 1997 issue of Fiero Focus, Byron announced that this issue was going to be his last one as Newsletter Editor. Without much time to spend searching for a Newsletter Editor, Paul Vargyas tried his hand with one issue, November 1997. Paul and I spent many hours learning new software and gained a solid understanding of just how much actually goes into assembling each issue. The issue was mailed, on time, and was quite an accomplishment for the both of us.

As more Fiero owners were brought into the fold though club expansion, I recalled meeting a club member who was deeply involved with the Chicagoland Corvair Enthusiasts Club. Harry Jensen, a newer member at the time, had mentioned to me at a club event of his involvement in the assembly and production of the Corvair newsletter. (As Club President, you learn to keep important information like this in your long-term memory because you never know when you may need it in the future.) A phone call resulted in a joint meeting between Paul, Harry, and I. Harry agreed to help Fiero Focus evolve into an even higher class, upscale newsletter.

Beginning with the January 1998 issue, Harry Jensen's work debuted with a whole new look, sporting heavier paper stock and glossy pages. During the early issues, I recall first mailing floppy disks to Harry along with 3"x5" color pictures I had taken at club events to accompany the article text. Later, with the advent of email and the Internet, I was able to email the Word documents needed for the issue, yet still having to mail the color pictures for Harry to scan.

Harry's polished layouts helped Fiero Focus become a multi-award winning publication. Honing my computer skills with Harry's assistance, we continuously tweaked each issue to add something new and different. The results of our efforts were again recognized first by Old Cars Weekly Magazine's Golden Quill Award in 1999 and later by the International Automotive Media Awards. During Harry's tenure, our accomplishments included:

Golden Quill Awards

- 1999 - Non-Affiliated Clubs
- 2000 - Full Size Club
- 2001 - Regional Club • Full Size
- 2002 - Regional Club • Luxury Class
- 2003 - Regional Club • Mid-Range
- 2004 - Regional • Luxury
- 2005 - Regional • Luxury

International Automotive Media Award

- 2003 - Silver Award - Newsletter, more than 8 pages

2004 – Silver Award - Newsletter, 16 pages or less

2005 – Silver Award - Newsletter: 16 pages or less

Color first appeared on the cover of Fiero Focus in the March 1998 issue. Since we found that it would be expensive to print an all color issue, we decided to begin with one additional color and some shading to give the visual impression that more colors were used. Color covers evolved from just these two colors to a full four color process in the January/February 2000 issue. Later, we added color to the back page and moved the Meet A Member feature to that page, allowing us to also print the pictures in color at no additional printing cost. Speaking of the Meet A Member feature, this feature is the only one that has actually appeared in almost every issue. I was featured in the premier issue in February 1992 as a young, single, 24 year old! Each and every issue since February 1992 has had this feature highlighting club members with their Fiero(s) included.

The four color front and back covers really made an impact with club members. Needless to say, Fiero Focus was evolving with each issue into more of a magazine and away from a 'plain old' car club's newsletter. More and more time was involved with getting each issue ready to print; articles needed to be written and images needed to be gathered. More work existed than could be handled by just one person. So on November 10, 2002, the Fiero Focus Magazine Team was born consisting of: Wayne and Marsha Dzien, Magazine Editors; Christian and Allison Sass, Art Direction and Magazine Editor, respectively; Mike Kroyer, Article Author; and Frank Krawczyk, NIFE Photographer. This team joined Harry Jensen and me to revamp Fiero Focus and divide up all of the numerous responsibilities to make the jobs manageable for each of us.

Beginning with the January/February 2003 issue, the fruits of the Magazine Team's labor began to take shape and the melding of the team was underway! New ideas were brought to fruition, more color was added on the Meet A Member page and a more 'magazine' feel was added; a complete overhaul of the interior graphics took place with much fanfare received by NIFE members.

Throughout the next issues, coordination and guidelines were established for greater efficiency flow among the team members. Due to time constraints, Mike Kroyer, also holding responsibilities as one of our Activity Directors, needed to withdraw from his Article Author post, which was then absorbed by Marsha and Wayne Dzien. With more members teaming together, a common "electronic pot" was needed to place all of our upcoming issue's ingredients and so a file transfer protocol (FTP) site was developed. We are continually refining the process as technology evolves, but the gears are meshing well within our team.

In 2004 Harry indicated to me that his tenure with Fiero Focus was going to draw to a close. His workload of producing a publication for the local Corvair club and the national Corvair club was consuming much of his time and it was in his best interest for him to move on. About the same time, we were working on the Enthusiasts Guide To The Pontiac Fiero when my nephew, Steve Kappel, expressed an interest in helping out our club with graphics and layout. (Again, keeping important bits of information in long-term memory can be your key to success.)

In 2005, Harry confirmed that the January/February 2006 issue would be his last; Steve accepted the role of Magazine Layout specialist, becoming the sixth person to hold this position. As it turned out, Steve was baptized by fire when Harry was departing on vacation at the same time we would be finalizing the layout for the January/February 2006 issue. Steve and I worked together for several evenings to help him understand our process. Success again was achieved when it was announced that Fiero Focus earned Silver in the International Automotive Media Awards for 2006!

Our seventh person has now been initiated into the Magazine Layout position at the start of 2007. Mike Kroyer has moved from an NIFE Activity Director to become NIFE Graphic Artist and Magazine Layout Designer upon Steve's resignation at the end of 2006. I cannot even attempt to guess what the next 100 issues have in store for us, but I am sure that they will be enjoyable. Can you imagine what our Fiero world will be like in 2024?

Mailing Envelopes

As Fiero Focus has evolved through the years, so has the envelope used to mail each issue. Initially, Fiero Focus was folded in half and stapled or taped closed. Later, a one color, black graphic of a Fastback GT, then later a Notchback Coupe, was preprinted with a return address on a white, 9"x12" envelope.

As the cover of Fiero Focus evolved to four color graphics, our envelopes evolved in a similar fashion. In 2005, the NIFE board approved the cost for printing the Best Original 1985 Fiero In The Midwest owned by Mark Duford of Michigan on the envelope in full color. Continuing our current theme for 2006 and 2007, our envelope portrays the Best Original 1986 Fiero In The Midwest owned by Kris and Eric Turner of Wisconsin. Highlighting these "Best Original" Fieros only seems an appropriate honor, which we will plan to continue at least for the near future...

Printers

As the magazine feel of Fiero Focus moved to a higher level, higher quality printing requirements were needed to match that magazine feel. From a simple office copy machine to two separate full-service printers, we have run close to the full gamut on the printing spectrum. Our current printer, who we have been using since 1998, is Thrift N Swift in Franklin Park, IL. Our contact, Bill Denton (847-455-1350) has consistently been able to turn Fiero Focus around in about 3 days, which has been very helpful in meeting our deadline needs.

Back in January of 2007, many of the Fiero Focus Magazine team members went over to visit Bill at his shop just to see what it takes to print out a publication like Fiero Focus. Needless to say, we were all impressed with all of the separate stages it takes to reach the finished project – from one color printing, to four color printing, to cutting and stapling.

What does it take to assemble each issue of Fiero Focus?

Normally about a week or so after you receive your Fiero Focus in the mail, Magazine Editor, Marsha Dzien, sends out emails to all of the normal contributing features of Fiero Focus (Membership Update, Meet A Member, etc.) around the 15th of the month (say for example, July 15th). During this same time, Magazine Editor, Wayne Dzien, diligently works on the Feature Article for the upcoming issue. The deadline for these contributions is the first of the next month (in this example August 1st).

Come the first of the month (August 1st), Marsha begins formatting the articles, applying the fonts and styles, and using her creativity to come up with catchy article call outs (extracting text that appears within the article and highlighting it in a larger font to entice you to read the article) that can be used in the final layout for each of the articles. The beauty of email and advances in technology become evident in this whole process with continuous correspondence among all of us on the Magazine Team. By the 10th of the month, all of the articles and images are gathered up and placed on the Magazine Team's FTP site. Then, I draft a master layout spreadsheet, which indicates article priorities, image counts, and article word counts.

Come the 12th of the month, all members of the Magazine Team meet at the home of Christian and Allison Sass. At this meeting we discuss what we envision this next issue of Fiero Focus will look like, what articles are priority for the next issue, what images we have to work with, and then brainstorm ideas for upcoming issues. We depart this meeting with all of the articles in the hands of Allison Sass, Magazine Editorial Staff member, who will begin the grammatical proofing of each of the articles and place all of the images in the hands of Christian Sass, who is in charge of Art Direction, and who will develop the cover.

Where do the images used in Fiero Focus come from? A lot of the images used in each issue are taken through the camera lens of Frank Krawczyk, NIFE Photographer. Frank attends as many club events as his schedule allows and places all of his pictures on the FTP site for later use in Fiero Focus. Images taken by other club members attending specific events are used as well.

Around the 20th of the month (August 20th in our example), all of the articles have now been proofed and are ready to be placed in the Fiero Focus layout template. The next team player to step up to the plate is Mike Kroyer, NIFE Graphic Artist and Fiero Focus Magazine Designer, who takes all of our proofed, formatted articles and images and assembles them into the final magazine you receive in the mail. Mike uses Adobe InDesign to almost magically create the final layouts. As Mike is finishing the layout, Christian is finalizing the issue's cover so both segments can be married prior to being sent to our printer for the final print.

Then, early the next month (September 5th in our example), the magazines are ready to be mailed. As we approach the final stretch, Paul Vargyas (Membership Director) prints out all of the mailing labels, copies any inserts that are needed for the mailing, and gathers the envelopes and stamps. After dinner one night, Paul, Barb Vargyas (Paul's wife), Jenni Hallman (my wife) and myself insert, glue, apply the address labels,

stamps and mail all 400 plus copies of Fiero Focus to arrive a few days later in your mailbox.

Hard copy vs. emailed copy of Fiero Focus?

Several times in the past the NIFE board members have addressed the topic of offering a two-tier structure of membership – one for members who want an emailed copy of Fiero Focus and others who want a hard copy issue. Time and time again, we ask ourselves, how many good things do you get in your mailbox each day? Bills and junk mail fill our mailboxes daily. Isn't it nice to see your Fiero Focus amongst the rest of the mail you receive? You can take it wherever you want to go; read it wherever you want to and enjoy it wherever you want to. I am sure this topic will come up again at a board meeting, but for now, we hope you enjoy receiving Fiero Focus as much as we enjoy assembling it and mailing it to you.

Efficient? Yes. A lot of coordination? You bet. Teamwork? Couldn't be done without it! Each person working on Fiero Focus has to play their part when they step up to the plate. The next step cannot be finished until the prior steps are completed. For volunteers, I acknowledge that NIFE has nothing but the best! Dedicated people who make it happen six times a year is what it takes, and I am so thankful to be surrounded by supportive volunteers who enjoy what they are doing for the good of the Northern Illinois Fiero Enthusiasts! So next time you are reading your issue of Fiero Focus, remember that it takes about six weeks of volunteer labor by ten NIFE members for you to receive what you now have in your hands...

Jim Hallman, NIFE President