

# **Trip Report – Rennfest 2022**

## **Lee Fowler**

### **Prologue**

This tale is more about the Heart O' Dixie attendees than about the event itself. And there's a very good reason for that. Suzanne and I attended the event but didn't do anything. We had planned to enter the Concours. We registered early. We were the tenth registration out of a total of 91. One hundred and sixty-five people were listed in the program as attendees.

We've been attending Rennfest since 2007 and have only missed a couple of them. The 356 and 912 have been taken to the Labor Day weekend Rennfest the last few years so this year we decided to take the Carrera. It's won its class in the Concours previously so getting it ready, while taking a little longer, would not be a major effort. Especially since we have quite a few months to prepare the car.

We had a good turnout of Heart O' Dixie members. A while back I got a call from Jim Farrell wanting to talk about selling his 1964 356SC. I mentioned Rennfest and he said that maybe he and Suzanne would go also. Note: That's a different Suzanne from the one who lives with me. I've been encouraging Joe Still to give up racing and start attending these weekend events and he finally listened and said that he would see if he could get Susan's permission. He and Susan registered. Dave and Ann Schroetter plus Rich and Nancy Corbeille committed to going. Kenny and Debbie Raines are regular attendees. When we got there, we found that Brady and Pamela Rogers were attending. Darrell and Diane Ferguson were listed in the attendee list, but we never encountered them.

Joe has never entered a Concours, so I offered to give him some tips on cleaning his car. I suggested that he take the 1987 "Slantnose" since it is an unusual model. Fast forward a few months and Joe invited me to his Toy Barn to give him some "expert" advice. I've judged the Concours at Rennfest so I guess he believed me when I told him I could help. BTW, my definition of "expert" is: "X" in mathematics is an unknown quantity. "(s)pert" is a drip under pressure.

But I visited the Toy Barn and found Joe working on his 2010 911 Turbo Cab Black over Black over Coffee. I showed him some cleaning products and tools.

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Then I showed him areas that the judges would inspect, some of which are not obvious. Never did find any coffee.

A couple of weeks later Joe asked me to come to the Toy Barn again. By this time, he had switched cars and was taking the 1987 Slantnose Cabriolet as I had suggested. Dave had visited him earlier that day and had gone over the car. Dave is also a Concours judge. The Slantnose uses more oil per mile than gasoline, so Joe had to take his enclosed trailer and massive Ford F350. Joe offered to carry our tools, chairs, and any other paraphernalia that wouldn't fit in our cars.

Fast forward a couple of weeks when Suzanne and I were about to decide to cancel due to some medical issues and upcoming doctor's appointments. We had cancelled last year because of Covid so this would be a gut-wrenching decision we had to make in a short period of time. Rennfest fell between our medical tests and subsequent doctor visits. On the Monday before our planned Thursday departure I said, "Let's go but not participate in any events. We'll just go for the social aspects." After many hours of discussion, we decided to go.

### **Travel to Rennfest**

The Fowlers, Corbeilles, Farrells, and Schroetters agreed to caravan over to Georgia via backroads. Going through Chattanooga is not a lot of fun these days because of the regular miles-long backups. Joe didn't want to travel the backroads because of his miles-long trailer.

We agreed to meet at our usual spot in Scottsboro. Dave had laid out a route that would take us over the mountains through Henagar, Mentone, Summerville, and to Ellijay where we would stop and eat lunch. We stopped at a winery that Dave had scoped out. We all brought a picnic lunch so we could do some wine tasting while we ate on the winery's outdoor patio. I think most of us also bought a bottle or two of their local wine upon leaving.

Well, we didn't "all" stop at the winery. Jim and Suzanne were "no shows" for our 8:30 AM rendezvous in Scottsboro. I called him to see if we should wait. They

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live in Florence so had to get up early to get there at eight-thirty. Jim told me that they were just leaving Huntsville and not to wait for them. Seems they were having problems with their 1995 Carrera coupe. The phone connection was very garbled, and I had a hard time hearing what Jim was saying. Didn't help that Jim talks softer than the hummingbirds outside my window. I thought he said something about DM??? Maybe DMV. So, I told everybody what I'd heard, or thought I'd heard. We got to the hotel and still didn't know their fate even after another garbled phone conversation. I think I had everybody convinced that Jim had some problems with the law.

They finally arrived and we got the real story. On the drive over, their Carrera engine died about 20 miles from Scottsboro. They were able to get to the shoulder of the road and there was a lot of fast traffic rushing by. Jim checked all the wires in the engine compartment by the scientific wiggle method and tried the car again. It fired up for a second and then quit. From this Jim concluded that it was most likely a fuel problem. All the fuses were good, but there was no power getting to the fuel pump fuse.

Jim checked the internet, which said something about the ECM relay (engine control module) which controls the engine electronics and the fuel pump. After locating the relay and pulling off the cover he noticed that the relay controlling the engine electronics was working, but the fuel pump relay was not. He stuck in a wad of paper towel to hold the fuel pump part of the relay closed and drove to Scottsboro where he bought some small jumper cables. He used those to jumper around the bad relay. From then on everything was okay except for the cabin air conditioner fan throwing a blade which caused quite a vibration. They just kept on driving sans air conditioning.

As if that wasn't enough, about dusk one evening Jim turned around in a parking lot and the rear bumper scraped in the dip getting back to the highway. The rear bumper on the 993 car is quite low. But the car made it back home and is now in the garage with the rear bumper off and being repaired. The hood is open, the A/C system has been disassembled and the cabin air fan removed. The ECM relay and the fan are on order.

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Jim figures that's not too bad for a 1995 car which has been driven only about 3000 miles in the last 10 years. When asked how he felt about all those problems he replied, "It gives me something to work on." I'm thinking about inviting him over to my house. I've got plenty of stuff to work on.

He also said that he recalled reading several Porsche articles recommending always carrying a spare ECM relay in the glove box. Not a bad idea! In my defense, "ECM" certainly sounds like "DMV."

### **Rennfest**

This year Rennfest was managed by Bob Kuchenbecker. I suspect that Patti K was also heavily involved. Bob was Rennfest Chairman in 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, and 2021. This is his seventh year at the helm. No wonder it's such a great event. The activities included a Concours, TSD Rally, Tech Quiz, RC Autocross, Autocross, and Self-Guided Tours. Plus, a Welcome Party, Dessert Social, Cocktail Reception, and Dinner/Awards Banquet. A lot to offer in a weekend but well organized.

For us, Thursday was a day to relax and see friends that we only see occasionally. Truth be known we relaxed the entire weekend. Friday was a workday for the Concours entrants. I walked up to the staging area where Dave and Joe were assigned close parking spots. Both were sitting in their chairs while Rich was sitting on the ground cleaning Dave's parking lights and wheels.

Here's a photo of Dave contemplating where to work next on the 928 while Ann and Nancy provide much needed assistance.

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Photo courtesy Rich Corbeille

Since they didn't need my help, I did some sightseeing to look at the other cars. Usually there are only one or two 356 models at Rennfest. This time there were five. And they were all magnificent show cars. Here's four of them. Glad we didn't take ours.



Photos courtesy Joe Still

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The Schroetter's and Still's cars are ready for judging.



Photos courtesy Joe Still

Friday evening, most attendees gathered at the cottages for the Welcome Party. That involved an uphill walk so we didn't participate. Later in the evening some of us HOD folks gathered at the grill on the lower level. I ordered a chicken salad sandwich. The waitress asked if I wanted "peecans" with the salad. I said, "You obviously ain't from around these parts if you talk like that." I told her that it was pronounced "pa cons". She told us that she and her husband had lived in northern California and had gotten fed up with the taxes and cost-of-living. Looked at eastern Tennessee and northern Georgia and to move to Blairsville.

The word a Concours chairman hates to hear most is "rain." But that's what he got Saturday morning. The Concours is normally held on the third level of a three-tiered parking area. It's an uphill hike. I walked up there to watch the judging when the slight sprinkling became actual rain. It was decided to move the cars one at a time down to the Portico for judging. After a few cars were judged the rain abated so the judging was moved back to the parking area.

Saturday evening, we had the Dessert Social, RC Autocross, and Tech Quiz. We did the social part.

The autocross was held Sunday in Franklin, NC but we didn't go to that either. The mountains in that area of Georgia are just beautiful. At one point many years ago, Suzanne and I talked about retiring there. But four of our six grandchildren

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live in Huntsville. Except for the oldest who just transferred from UAH to UA and now lives in Tuscaloosa. ROLL TIDE!

Jim and Suzanne took their 993 out on Sunday for a drive to Franklin, NC to watch the autocross. Why anybody would drive a car through mountainous terrain in those conditions while it's being kept running by a single jumper cable is beyond me. The Fowlers, Corbeilles, Schroetters, and Stills decided to tour the area around Brasstown Bald, the tallest peak in Georgia. Joe and Dave laid out a route. Joe agreed to lead if we didn't complain about oil from the Slantnose being sprayed on the front of our cars. It was a good tour up, down, and around the mountains. We didn't stop at any overlooks because of the low hanging clouds. Wasn't much to see.

Dinner Sunday night was excellent. I had salmon while Suzanne had chicken. Both were delicious. During online registration we select what we want for dinner from a provided list. Our registration packet includes a ticket with our table number and food selection. That enables the servers to quickly bring the proper food to each person. Everybody commented on how a hotel kitchen staff could fix such an amazing meal for so many people. One problem was that the only dessert available was Cheesecake. I don't eat anything that uses the word "cheese." Or smells like cheese. Or looks like cheese.

But the big event is not the eating part. It's the announcement of the winners for each event. Then it hit me. I turned to Suzanne and said, "We ain't gonna hear our names called this year." She replied, "Well, that's what happens when you don't participate in anything!" She left off "Dummy."

Kenny and Debbie Raines took home some trophies. They finished 6<sup>th</sup> in the rally and 2<sup>nd</sup> in their class in the Concours. Debbie finished third in the Ladies Tech Quiz. Dave Schroetter won first in class in the Concours with his 928. On the trip over to Young Harris, one of the shelving doors in Joe's trailer came open and a can fell out. It landed on the right rear fender of his car. The judge told him that he wouldn't have counted off any points if Joe had covered the mark with paint.

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Joe replied that he just didn't think to pack a can of black paint. So, Joe missed out on a trophy.

The other great thing about the dinner is the door prizes. There are a lot of really neat prizes and each one has a jar in which participants put their tickets. Each person gets four tickets. One of the prizes was a Porsche clock. I dropped all four of my tickets in that jar. Members of the audience were selected to draw a ticket from the jars. Jim Farrell was asked to draw from the Porsche clock jar. I thought, "Great! An HOD member is drawing for that item. Maybe I'll luck out and he'll draw one of my tickets." After the winning name was called Joe leaned over and said, "Well, there goes all of my tickets." He had done the same thing that I did. Jim was of no help. Kenny Raines won tickets to Petit Le Mans.

We finally got a chance at the banquet to talk to friends Dick and Carole Kjellsen from Peachstate. This is the first Rennfest we've attended that Dick wasn't the Master of Ceremonies at the banquet. I told Dick that, if he would return to the podium next year, I would laugh at his corny jokes. Hope to see him at the microphone for Rennfest 2023.

Monday, we decided to sleep late and take a leisurely trip back to Huntsville. The HOD group usually doesn't caravan on the return trip. I got a call from Dave when my eyelids were only half open. They had already departed when it started raining and the sunroof wouldn't close. They were back at the hotel parked under the portico. He wanted to know if I had a manual crank for the sunroof, which our car also has. "I don't know Dave, but I'll come down and look." I've never seen the toolkit for the Carrera so I don't know what's in it. I'm not even sure where it is in the car. That's not unusual. I have a five-year-old Toyota truck and there are some switches on the dash that I have no idea what they do. I put it in drive or reverse and it moves. That's all I need to know.

I walked up to where our car was parked, drove down and parked behind Dave under the portico and pulled out the owner's manual. I think maybe for the first time. I couldn't find anything about sunroof tools. But then I had forgotten to bring my reading glasses and maybe I just didn't see it. Much later I remembered



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that I had folding eyeglasses attached to my key ring. By that time Clyde Perry had driven down with his car on a trailer so he stopped. His car has a sunroof and he loaned Dave his sunroof crank. The sunroof almost closed but not completely due to the crank breaking. As I have experienced a number of times over my fifty-six years as a Porsche owner, you're never without help from other members of PCA. In addition to Clyde (Smoky Mountain); Deems Riddle (Tennessee) offered advice. Mike Parker, also of Smoky Mountain Region helped, as did Mark Kredorian from Suncoast.

By this time, I finally got the picture of what transpired. Dave and Ann had already departed Brasstown Resort. It started raining so Dave reached down to the center console to turn on the rear wiper. He pressed the sunroof button instead. He quickly tried to close the sunroof (rainroof) but it wouldn't budge. He tried to open a window and it got stuck also and wouldn't close. They turned around and opened an umbrella inside the car. That didn't stop from collecting a couple of inches of water in the back seat.

He could have asked Ann to work the controls. But she's the one who, when they first got the 928, suggested that they could store luggage in the front trunk also. Not really a lot of room in the front what with the engine being there. Here's what that switch panel looks like. It's easy to see how a person could press the wrong button when you're concentrating on driving in the rain.



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Dave took out the right floor mat and wood firewall panel to reveal a large electronics board with many relays. The wood piece has an electronics schematic attached on the back side. Except this one didn't! It was gone! Dave tried to find a 928 schematic on the Internet. The problem was that the designs changed over different model years. I came up with the idea of calling Jim Farrell after what I'd heard about him fixing his car. Jim answered and said that they were just leaving but would drive down to the Portico to see if he could help. He immediately pulled out his tool bag and he and Dave buried themselves in the interior of the 928, both looking at their iPhones searching for a schematic. Much time went by, but they could not isolate the relays for the sunroof and window.

Finally, while Jim was messing with the relays Dave said, "I hear some clicking sounds from under my seat." Moving the driver's seat revealed a relay box. The one they had been looking for. Jim unplugged it and pulled out a circuit board with six relays. They weren't even covered. The coils and contacts were exposed...and wet. I retrieved a hair dryer from our luggage and Jim took the board inside the hotel to dry it out. He then plugged it back in but no movement of the sunroof or window. So Jim started trying to manually close the contacts while I depressed the switches. Dave watched for movement. Finally, Dave said, "It's moving."

Suzanne Farrell had told me earlier that there is absolutely nothing that Jim can't do or fix. I'm a believer. As Dave was thanking Jim for his rescue, I interjected, "Wait a minute! I'm the one who talked the Farrells into registering for Rennfest. I'm the one who had the idea to call Jim for help. I'm the one who provided the hair dryer to dry off the relays. But I mainly should be thanked for staying out of the way while you and Jim identified and fixed the problem." Dave agreed with my last comment.

We finally departed Brasstown Resort at 3:00 PM. Many hours later than usual. Other than the miles long traffic backup on I24 in Chattanooga the trip home was uneventful.

### **Conclusion**

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There were members from sixteen regions attending Rennfest this year: Peachstate, Carolinas, Heart O' Dixie, Smoky Mountain, Suncoast, North Florida, Tennessee, Palmetto, Gold Coast, Citrus, Three Rivers, Florida Crown, Mid-Ohio, Music Stadt, and Arizona. Two attendees, Leonard and Betty Jo Turner, formerly of Panorama fame, had attended the most Rennfest events. In fact, Len started Rennfest in 1969 and called it "Rebel Rennfest." Too bad they changed the name. That would have fit in with the T-Shirt that I wore on Friday which displayed "Proud Descendent of a Confederate Soldier."

An interesting thing happened for us. We bought our 356 from Jeff and Nancy Frye, formerly of Peachstate Region and now members of Tennessee Region. At these events we get to talk about the car. This weekend one of the attendees was George McMurtry from Palmetto Region. George owned the car before selling it to Jeff. So, we three owners got a chance to meet and talk about the car.

We owe a great deal of thanks to Bob Kuchenbecker and the rest of the Peachstate team for putting on this great Labor Day weekend event. While Dave and Jim were working on the car, Suzanne, Ann, Suzanne, and I sat under the portico and talked. Bob and Patti had packed their cars for their trip back to Atlanta. Patti left and Bob came over and sat for a while. We had a good informal gab session going over the weekend events. But mainly it gave us a chance to personally thank Bob and to ask him to pass on our comments to the rest of his team. God willing and the Creek don't rise, we'll be back next year.