

## WinterFest 2020

By Lee Fowler

Photos by Regan Carlile

I've been trying to encourage Heart O' Dixie (HOD) members to attend out-of-region weekend events ever since we started going to them back 'bout 14 years ago. But we still get the same responses. "I don't run Rallies and I'm certainly not going to enter any stupid Concours. I drive my car, not show it." Well, it's not about those activities. It's all about getting together with other "Porsche Pushers" from around the area. This year, Winterfest attendees came from Heart O' Dixie, Peachstate, Tennessee, Smoky Mountain, and Alabama regions. At every one we attend, Suzanne gets the opportunity to see old friends and make new ones. This Curmudgeon doesn't mix well socially.

Last year it was us, Dave and Ann Schroetter, and first-timers Rich and Nancy Corbeille. This year we saw the same six, plus Regan and Beth Carlile, head northeast to Chattanooga and the VW assembly plant. The Schroetters took their 2011 Boxster Spyder, the Corbeilles their 2017 Turbo S, the Carliles their 2013 911 C2S, and the Fowlers their 1967 912. Dave suggested that we caravan up to Chattanooga for a six-car parade. How six? Suzanne and I always take an extra car and this year, so did the Schroetters. The hotel is a few miles away from the VW plant and we don't like the inconvenience of relying on a shuttle. Also, some of those aforementioned persons drive Porsches with canvas tops that take up a lot of storage room. It helps to have a car with space for the luggage and cleaning equipment. Heck, not just equipment. At Rennfest a couple years ago, Ann went on a shopping spree and I had to haul the goods back to Huntsville.

We all agreed to meet in Scottsboro and form up for the trip. The Huddle House seemed to be a good spot to meet since Suzanne and I had planned to eat breakfast there. Also, Ann had to drop off their dog at a friend's house close by. Getting ready to depart, Dave said to me, "Why don't you lead since you've got the slowest car?" Well, he didn't exactly say that last part, but it was implied. I have to constantly remind folks that our little one-hundred-and-two horsepower four-banger can keep up with any of their turbo monsters. Just takes us a little longer to get up to speed.

We left almost on time. Had to wait for Ann to come from the dog sitter. Dave led, followed by the Corbeilles, Carliles, and myself. Suzanne in the Subaru and Ann in her Ford brought up the rear. As we pulled out onto Highway 72, everybody made it through the traffic light except the 912, Subaru, and Ford. I'm thinking, "Darn! Gonna have to play catch-up right from the gitgo!" While waiting for the light to change, a silver Carrera went by. Couldn't see who was driving. When we caught up to the caravan, I saw that the Carrera had joined the group, so I slid in behind him. Didn't know who it was but figured they were headed the same place as us. Found out later it was Clint Cosper.

I had spent about five hours max cleaning the 912 for the Concours. Rich said that he spent the last two weeks on his car. Don't know about Dave, Ann, Regan and Beth but they indicated that they had put in a fair amount of time cleaning their cars. Last year Nancy took her Boxster and came very, very close to taking home a trophy. Just a tenth or two away from an award. This year Rich wanted to show that his car could show well also. We even took the Subaru through the car wash so it would fit in with all those clean Porsches. The weather forecast called for only a 20 percent chance of rain. Well, we found that 20 percent. It was lurking up around the Tennessee line and it followed us all the way to the other side of Chattanooga. I was behind Clint and he kept driving towards the right side of the lane. That put his left tires right on the center portion of the road that still had standing water on it. That spray from his tires had my wipers working overtime.

The Caravan got broken up on I24 due to all the traffic plus our leader's penchant for arriving right on time. I wanted to remind him that a Ford was the last car in the group. The doors to the VW facility would be open for us at 11:00 AM and we arrived about 7 minutes after that. Fortunately, we



Talking to Dave about leaving us behind.

were able to regroup right as we got to the Volkswagen Drive exit, so we were able to pull all the HOD cars into the facility at the same time. The building is very large with a high ceiling and a mezzanine running around three of the sides. They

use that for the food and drinks plus it provides a great photo-op location. The lights cover the entire visible spectrum which gives the effect of natural light. Great for cleaning cars. Suzanne and Ann have to park outside.

They had us, the Schroetters, Corbeilles, and Clint Cosper on one side and the Carliles on the other. I had hoped they would park us all together. Naturally, the first thing we do is unload our chairs and equipment and start cleaning. Yep, we all cleaned our cars before we left, and the rain didn't do too much damage.

But it's not all labor. There's a lot of talking and socializing going on at the same time. Probably more of that than working on the cars. And interestingly enough, everybody helps each other, even those in the same judging class. Dave and Ann have been through enough Concours events



**Taking a break from cleaning.**

to know where and how to clean the car. Several years ago, Ann took walks or went shopping while Dave cleaned. Now it's a family affair and I've got pictures to prove it. Rich and Nancy showed her Boxster last year, so they were pretty familiar with what needed to be done. This was a first time for Regan and Beth so we gave them a lot of pointers. Suzanne and I have both attended Concours Judging Schools so have a pretty good idea of what the judges would look for. The fact is, any place a judge can get his or her hand will be checked. Clint had also never been to a Concours and since he was parked next to us, we could give him a lot of pointers. He said, "When are they going to look at my car?" "Tomorrow morning", I replied. "Gosh, I can't stay for that. I just came up to Chattanooga to see my mother. Saw all the Porsches heading north on 72 and figured they were heading to Chattanooga, too. So, I joined the line." After lunch, Clint left for his visit. Maybe next year he can stay for the whole weekend.

By the end of the day, we all agreed that the cars were ready. We crammed all of us plus I think a few more into the support cars and headed for the hotel. The hotel breakfast buffet opened at 7:30 AM. The VW facility would also be opened at 7:30. That would give us about an hour and a half for final touchup on the cars.

The eight of us are standing in the hotel lobby having a discussion about Saturday morning. Somebody said, “Why don’t we all meet down here at 7:30 for breakfast then head over to the Concours site?” Dave countered, “I want to be back over there when the door opens.” “Me too!” says I. Everybody then voiced their opinion with most wanting to have breakfast at 7:30. Rich, Nancy, Regan, and Beth all said that their cars were ready and didn’t need much more cleaning. I didn’t say anything. Dave looked at me and said, “Are you wimping out on me?” “No sir!” I answered meekly. “I want to be there when it opens also.” So Dave volunteered Ann to drive the two of us over to the VW plant then come back and eat breakfast. They would all join us later.

The thing about cleaning for a Concours is that you never stop. There’s always that nagging little bug in your brain asking, “Are you sure you checked everywhere?” The answer is always “Yes,” but you go back and clean again. And again. And



**Beth is smiling. She’s ready for the judges.**

again. Sounds laborious but it really is a lot of fun. It becomes a challenge. Can you outwit the judges? They’re going to try to find something to deduct points for. The challenge is to make sure they don’t.

There were twenty-two cars in the Concours. Most times there are two classes...Full and Street. For Winterfest, all of the cars would be judged in the Street class. That means only the interior and exterior will be judged. There were four judging teams, and all were people we’ve known for years. Doesn’t help a bit. Danny Saxton from Peachstate region was one of the judges. He judged the 912 at Rennfest a couple of years ago where we entered the Full class. He found dried grass under the spare tire. I told him that it was German grass and had come that way from the factory. Friend or no friend, he deducted points for that.

Each team is made up of two judges and a timer. One judges the interior and the other covers the exterior. The judges have a fixed time to look at the car and the timer lets them know when to stop. Our judges were Tennessee region's Alan Clark, exterior; and Peachstate region's Dan De Riemer for the interior.



**Dave spot-checking Rich's car.**

The first step in the judging is for the entrant to tell them something about the car. Then one of them will walk around the car for a general look-see. Dave told me later that the reason the Concours was running late was because I was talking too much. Heck, I was trying to schmooze them to get the best score possible.

Anyway, then we're asked to open the doors and every inside compartment. For the 912 that would be the glovebox and ashtray. Our car has soft elastic full width door "pockets". Also, there are two small storage pockets on either side just ahead of the door. The reason the compartments have to be opened is because there can be nothing in the car that didn't come from the factory. That usually means only the owner's manual. Dan reached in that front pocket, just as I had, and came out with a business card. It was Mike Immarino's of Montville, Ohio. He apparently put it in there after he finished restoring the 912. It must have been there two years ago at Winterfest and the judges didn't find it. I didn't either when I checked that pocket Saturday morning. But Dan found it!

Near the start of the judging, I spotted a place on the rear seat that needed cleaning. I got my bottle of Griot's Interior Cleaner, pulled off the clear plastic cap, sprayed and cleaned the spot. Then I couldn't find the top of the bottle. That's typical of the geriatric set. Put something down and immediately forget where you put it. Looked all through the car and couldn't find it. Looked in both equipment bags several times. Looked on the chairs, on the floor, in my pockets...several times. Must have searched the car four or five times for that plastic cap. I resigned myself to the notion that the judge would find it for sure. Thankfully, he didn't!

But after the timer went off, Dave walked up to Dan with a plastic cap and suggested that he search the car again for one of those. Too late! Judging was over. Dave put the plastic cap back on his bottle and I still haven't found mine. That's how serious we aren't. Just out there to have a good time.

The score sheets are given out after the banquet on Saturday evening. But the judges will usually let you know what they found. That's when you start kicking yourself for missing something so obvious. I asked Rich and he said that they didn't do too well. I think he was hoping that his car would do better than Nancy's Boxster performance last year. I didn't have to ask Regan. He came up to me and said, "You didn't tell me to clean the back of the brake pedal!" He won't miss that area next time. But that's the way it is with Concours. Every time you show the car you learn something new.

Following the Concours most entrants went on a tour. The eldest of the HOD crowd went back to the hotel and took a nap.

At the banquet, all the HOD folks wound up at the same table and we talked about (read: "complained about") the things we missed on the cars. Then we talked about how Regan and Beth were going to get home. After they pulled into the VW facility and turned off the engine the battery died. They were able to put a charger on it but were uncertain as to whether or not it would start Sunday morning. Fortunately, it did.

HOD did pretty good with two of the cars receiving trophies. The maximum points awarded are 140. The judges deduct percentages of a point for each problem found. Dave and Ann's Boxster Spyder interior had dried water droplets on the driver's window and a smudge in the corner of the right mirror. On the exterior the Judges found a nick on the driver's door, a chip on the right door handle, and dust on the top. In all fairness we were getting a lot of dust from the ventilation system. They scored a 139.5 out of 140 for a 1<sup>st</sup> in Class trophy.

Regan and Beth had a few more problems...lint in the driver and passenger side door pockets, lint in the driver and passenger side carpeting, and dirt on the brake pedal backside. On the exterior the judge found lint on the roof, light window

smudges, and light dirt on the spoiler. Their overall score was 138.9 out of 140. Not enough for a trophy but pretty darn good for a first time Concours.

The Corbeilles did all right also. The exterior judge found wax on the door near the mirror. Also found “greasy dirt.” There’s a difference between “clean grease” and “dirty grease.” Dirt was found on the inside air intakes on both sides. The interior should have fared much better with minor lint in two places. But the judge found a garage door opener in the center console. Rich and Nancy were parked next to Dave and Ann. When I asked Rich how they did, his response was, “The judge found Dave's garage remote in my center console. Can't understand how it got there.” When he saw that I wasn’t buying that he switched to suggesting that Nancy was responsible for the interior. That didn’t fly either. Their final score was 139.2 out of 140. Not bad at all.

For the Fowlers 1967 912, the exterior judge got a slight smudge on his hand after rubbing the left rear tire. I cleaned those tires at least a half dozen times. We wound up with an overall score of 139.9 out of 140 which gave us a 1<sup>st</sup> in class. We were also awarded the Judges Choice trophy. I don’t think any other single region took home that many trophies. HOD did good! I’ll bet that next year the Corbeilles and Carliles will go back to the Concours instead of eating breakfast. The People’s Choice trophy went to a 1951 356...well deserved. It came in on a trailer. Twelve of those 1951 model year cars were manufactured in 1950 and only seven survive.

I think everybody had a good time and we encourage others from HOD to sign up for Winterfest next year.