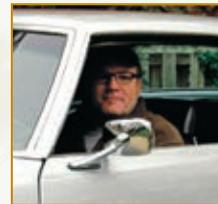




A Concours Profile

By Gary Wollenhaupt

A gear head's delight



A lifelong gear head, Curt Richards had a brush with automotive fame when he found and rescued the prototype of the iconic 1969 Pontiac Trans Am. Richards, owner of Motorsports of Lexington Ltd., has served as chief judge for the Keeneland Concours since the event was first held in 2004.

The Trans Am prototype was one of two spearheaded by John Delorean. With design work by the legendary Gene Winfield, it was later sold to racing legend Jerry Titus, and when he died, his estate sold the car, which changed hands several times over the years. Curt saw the car for sale several times over a few years. The owner, who lived in Simpsonville, Kentucky, thought it was the L.A. Auto Show car, but Curt investigated and found it was actually the prototype for the Trans Am.

Curt bought the car and had it restored based on careful research. He bought just about every auto magazine published in 1969 and found five articles on the car, which helped guide his restoration. The car was sold at the 2015 Barrett-Jackson auction in Scottsdale, Arizona. The restoration process was the subject of a documentary on YouTube, under Trans Am Prototype.

Curt, a native of Louisa, Kentucky, has had a lifelong love affair with cars, spurred by his father. He fell in love with his dad's lime green 1972 240Z, which he gave to Curt for his high school graduation in 1976. Curt raced motocross cycles from his teenage years until he was 37, and today he races his 1991 BMW E30 in historic classes at tracks like Road Atlanta and Mid-Ohio.

For the first Keeneland Concours, Co-Chair Tom Jones recruited Curt to develop a corps of judges. He now manages 52 men and women who judge more than 100 cars using a 600-point system based on originality, fit and finish. Points are deducted if variances are found from what the car's designer originally intended.



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The Prototype 1969 Pontiac Trans Am that Curt restored and sold at the Barrett-Jackson Auction, after he tracked down the original designers and owners.

The judges are required to attend training sessions led by Curt and a marque specialist, as well as to conduct independent research on the specific cars in the classes they will be judging, whether they are classics, muscle cars or racers.

Like Curt, many of the judges are “car fanatics” whose enthusiasm for all things automotive spill over into their eagerness to judge at the highest level of integrity when selecting the winning automobile. Curt is proud of the group he has assembled, many of whom are 10-year and 11-year “veterans.”

NOTE: This is the first in what will be an annual personal profile of key Keeneland Concoeurs d'Elegance volunteers. Our concours has been successful because of countless hours of work by a great team of talented, passionate and dedicated men and women. We think you will find them interesting too.

