

IN SEARCH OF: DIRECTION

by Brad Bowling

Now, I'm not bad-mouthing the Mustang Club of America or anything like that, but, guys, we're getting bad marks in the area of "club growth". The MCA has some of the nicest people in the world with some of the best-looking cars you'd care to see.

We just seem to be a few thousand people short. And I don't know why. I've heard that a lot of people just drop out of the hobby from burnout. That's to be expected with any big-buck pas-time like car collecting but where are those darn new people we ordered when we accepted the 74-present Mustangs?

What do we have to offer the young individual or family that has only one or two Mustangs? I'd say "plenty". We've got local chapters near just about anybody. These chapters are storehouses of Mustang knowledge that would be helpful to any owner. We've got local and national shows that no self-respecting enthusiast could miss. The club itself is practically an information network that can bring together owners and hard-to-find parts or restorers and information/advice. We've got the *Mustang Times* which every month attempts to bring together a world of Mustang material between two four-color covers.

But we all know this already so I'll get to the point. We need a direction for this "club growth" business.

Recently, I talked to Royce Branch of the Mazda RX-7 Club of America about the success that that club has enjoyed over the past seven years. I had been laboring under the idea that the RX-7 club was just a small group of enthusiasts that basked under the financial glow of Mazda support. Wrong on both counts. Very wrong.

Mr. Branch tells me that the club has 87,000 members. You heard me. That's 87,000 enthusiastic, \$30-a-year-club-dues-paying, honest-to-gosh members.

Also, they get no outright financial support from Mazda. No big checks come in to pay for the club's driving schools or shows or races. All the money comes from the club itself. Their quarterly newsletter, *Rotary Rocket*, is four-color slick from cover to cover and makes money for the club through its national advertisers that include B.F. Goodrich, Mazda, Escort radar detectors, and Goodyear, just to name a few.

The history of the club is fascinating and is only vaguely reminiscent of the MCA founding. Founder Curtis May started the club at the birth of the RX-7 back in 1978 and it has prospered under his direction since then.

I think that most people can see the differences between a club based on showroom-new cars and restored cars so I won't be going into that. There is still much we can learn from other clubs and that's why I got in touch with Mr. Branch.

One thing that I found helpful and possibly useful to our club is that the RX-7 club buys a list of new-RX-7 buyers from Mazda and then proceeds to send them one full year of the *Rotary Rocket* newsletter which is, of course, full of articles about the club and their activities. This, of course, is going to lead to a large percentage of those people joining the club. This is just one idea that I thought would be food for thought.

The *Rotary Rocket* also does a very comprehensive reader/owner survey that Mr. Branch tells me is also used by Mazda because it is so detailed. This survey, by the way, is what the *Rocket* uses to compile its demographic tables that national advertisers like to look at before they buy ad space.

At the end of our conversation I congratulated Mr. Branch on his club and magazine and Mr. Branch (an ex-Ford racer himself) wished the Mustang club well. After talking to him I couldn't help but be fired up by what his club has done and what ours could do. MT

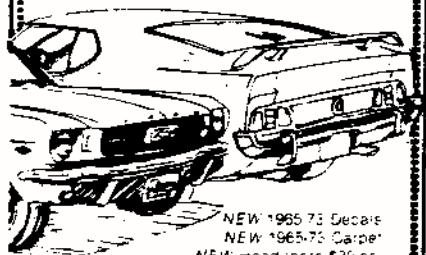
1988 NATIONAL SHOWS

If your regional group has discussed the possibility of hosting an MCA National show in 1988, now is the time to make preparations. For information and show request forms, contact Teresa Vickery, National Show Coordinator, c/o MCA, P.O. Box 447, Lithonia, GA 30058.



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