

Perhaps no part of car club membership ignites as much strong feeling as that of judging. Some people could care less about it and some could kill for half a point. How did the concept of judging collector cars begin? Why do we judge them the way we do? Can judging please everyone?

The judging of collector cars sprang from events held in Europe and America almost from the beginning of the horseless carriage. Cars at that time were often bodied by companies other than the chassis manufacturers and some bright soul decided to invite the coachbuilders and fine car manufacturers to display their wares to interested would-be purchasers and chauffeurs. Eventually a judging was held along with the display to elect the most elegant or stylish car. The French coined the term *concours d'elegance* to describe this judging and the word has remained in use to this day in the classic car hobby. The *concours* reached its peak in the late twenties and early thirties and then declined into the type of new car shows we have today, which are really nothing more than advertising promotions to entice the public to view the new models within reach of a pushy sales force. The death of the coachbuilt car which arrived along with the depression is primarily responsible for the demise of the original *concours*.

Then just in the few years before the Second World War car collecting was born. Beginning with the Antique Automobile Club of America in November 1935, car shows of a different kind began to be held. These brought together not new cars but old ones and the members wanted to encourage the restoration of these cars. Therefore the present form of judging was created. The standard or goal was not the style, elegance, or *panache* that was prized by the *concours* judges of yore. Rather, it was the condition of a particular car when it was new. The AACA decided that it would be the condition of a car as

it rolled off the assembly line, plus, perhaps, any authorized accessories added by the dealer before delivery. This standard has been followed by every major car club since.

It seems so simple: judge each car against what it looked like as it drove out of the assembly plant on its way to dealer and customer. The problem is that in many cases we do not know exactly what a particular car looked like in every minor detail. And if a car was manufactured in more than one assembly plant, the problem is compounded. For example, just because the Dearborn plant switched over to the alternator on a certain date doesn't mean that San Jose did. They might have had three more month's worth of generators to use up. . . . By its very nature, judging is an inexact thing. It is made even more inexact due to reasons of the illustrated kind.

Why all this concern? Because of some of the comments we have heard and some of the letters we have received. Most of the members seem satisfied with MCA judging; after all, we do get letters complimenting the judges on their work. But we get the other kind, too. One stated that "a lot of people are very angry and that with a show of the Grand National's caliber, better judges are needed." This individual won a first place himself but felt that he needed to bring these complaints to our attention. It would be almost predictable that this person has never offered to judge, even though he has the knowledge to restore a prize-winning car. This exemplifies another problem with judging: no one wants to be one of the hardworking, argument-starting, non-paid judges.

The Mustang Club of America is a fairly young club, as car clubs go, and can do well to learn from some of the other older clubs. As the present judging rules are formulated, a half-point difference can decide first place from second. The AACA, as an alternative,

gives duplicate awards if the points don't differ by at least five (and if the minimum score qualification is met). This would help by making that one point the judge shouldn't have taken off a little less critical and could probably prevent a few boiling tempers.

We cannot forget that the whole purpose of competitive judging is to foster the restoration of cars. It is not to heap honor upon one's personal car to the benefit of its valuation and desirability. It is not a competition of car against car but rather car against ideal: how closely does the car being judged approach the perfect, original, just-off-the-assembly-line automobile? If the resulting score doesn't happen to be as large as the one garnered by the car next to yours, does it really matter in an ultimate analysis? The real prize is that restored car you have in your garage!

In the editor's opinion, no member has the automatic right to complain about a particular score or judge. Our view is that that right must be earned by acting as a judge. The job isn't any easy one, believe us, and to demand perfection is going a bit too far. Until you've judged twenty or thirty cars in a 100 degree parking lot or in a muddy field in the rain, you have no idea of the difficulty involved. And if all the cars in the assigned class are basically the same model (as is the case at MCA shows) the degree of difficulty rises still further. Walk a mile in his shoes, you know.

Judging probably will remain one of the more controversial segments of car club membership. But with a little less fanaticism on the part of the owners as well as a little more participation by that same group in the judging process, the problem can be minimized. Perhaps the time has come for MCA to begin placing less emphasis on the judging aspect and to start placing more on the fun aspect. We wouldn't recommend eliminating judging altogether but there are a few clubs which have taken this radical step.