

As always seems to be the case, this editorial is being written as the very last thing before the magazine goes to the printer. All the rest of the book is set and unchangeable so we can't put in all the things that we'd like about the 1981 Eastern National at Columbia. We'll just have to tell you a bit about it, and our experiences there, and hope that you'll still be on the roster next month when we bring you some of the more than 250 photographs we took.

Due to vocational commitments, we were unable to leave for Columbia until about ten-thirty Friday night and therefore rolled bleary-eyed into the also-sleepy South Carolina town about seven-thirty Saturday morning. If the town was still dozing, the show field was not as myriad vendors and exhibitors both polished their goods at the mall. The weather was an enigma at this show, predicted to be bad and yet ending up nearly perfect. The clouds alternating with brief periods of sunshine made it difficult only for the photographers! We'll blame it for the somewhat disappointingly modest attendance at the National.

The first thing that we noticed about this show was the incredibly high quality of the cars. If we may backtrack for a minute, we've been attending old car shows and national meets for over ten years, primarily those sanctioned by Antique Automobile Club of America clubs. We're used to seeing unrestored and ratty cars at a show. But at Columbia, there were very, very few cars that we would even call "used." Perhaps the members of MCA do not possess the big-bucks that a lot of the old car restorers do (this was one member's

view expressed to us at Columbia) but it is obvious that MCA members put enormous amounts of time and energy into their cars.

This is exciting because we believe that a major part of the old car hobby is the fun of working on your own car. Those people who either do not have the time or the inclination to do all or part of their own work just seem not to enjoy the hobby as much as those who do. Of course, there is the very real advantage of this approach: you usually get better work than you can buy, the quality of mechanics being what, on the average, it is.

Another fact that struck us rather heavily was that the majority of these cars were trailered to the site. We feel that the most important part of the car collecting hobby, be it Mustangs or Model Ts, is that the cars be driven. Disregard the fact that a car *has* to be driven if all those intricate parts and close tolerances are to be kept in well-oiled harmony. Forget our personal view that the government will take our right to drive them away if we don't *continue* to exercise it. Remember one thing: we collect cars because of the way they drive more than anything else. They may look pretty in the driveway, but the audience we get as we drive is the real ego trip part of that. It is the sensual input of driving that really makes a car what it is and isn't. If we confine our polished and pampered beauties to the trailers to the point of permanently flat-spotting the tires, we've forgotten our very reason for doing all of this. And we are losing out on most of the fun of collecting cars. If the street rodders can put together

some of the marvels of craftsmanship that they do and then drive them everywhere, so can the restorers if they want to, we feel.

The thing we enjoyed most about the show was meeting many of the people we had written and talked to over the past six months or so. In one instance, we had been talking to a couple at the banquet table waiting to get in line for that thoroughly excellent food. Later we discovered that we had been talking to the gentleman long distance for several months! (We are doing a piece for the *Times* on Richard Pittman's tale of finding his first car-love again after it had been stolen, stripped, and relegated to a junkyard! Look for it soon.) We spoke to one or two of the vendors and apologize for not seeing more. It seems that many were too busy hawking parts for us to get a word in edgewise! If it wasn't a banner day for the commercial side, a lot of them seemed to be selling parts on Saturday. We will show you some of their nicely-done parts displays next month.

All in all, we were very impressed with the 1981 Eastern National at Columbia, South Carolina. If this was Craig Zion and the Central South Carolina Regional Group's first venture at organizing and running a National meet, then it's this writer's opinion that they did one heck of a job, despite leader Zion's protestations to the contrary on the awards podium. Of course, we could be wrong because this is also our first MCA National show and we've heard you had some real humdinger events in the past. We'd still have to argue that they couldn't get much better than Columbia.