



I have a friend who is a huge fan of Major League Baseball. His sole ambition in life is to see a game at every major league stadium, and he's ticked off about two-thirds of them so far. Similarly, I have an ambition to visit all the significant automotive venues in the country. Auburn, Indiana. The Bonneville Salt Flats in Utah. Talladega, Alabama. Bowling Green, Kentucky. For the last few years, I've been fortunate enough to tick both Hershey, Pennsylvania, and Monterey, California, off my life-list of transportation sites. For a devotee of automotive history, Monterey is a must-see.

Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance

Pebble Beach is the big draw, of course. Set on the Pebble Beach Country Club's 18th hole, the Concours is recognized as one of the most arduously judged vintage car shows in the world. Winning, heck, even placing here can make a restorer or a car owner's reputation for years to come. The Concours was first held here in 1950, as a sideshow to the main event: The Pebble Beach Road Race, which was held on the undulating roads first of the fabulous 17-Mile Drive, then on the roads around the Lodge at Pebble Beach, both on asphalt and loose gravel. The original racing event hosted world-class drivers such as Phil Hill, all battling for the Del Monte Trophy. In 1956, Ernie McAfee died when his 4.4-liter Ferrari left the course and crashed into a tree, ending the race on public roads forever. More on this later.

Over the years, the Pebble Beach Concours

d'Elegance has become as much a social event as a vintage car show. But even if nobody showed up--actually, especially if nobody showed up--Pebble Beach would still be the best vintage car show in the world. The application process is daunting. A car owner must be invited to apply, and then there's no guarantee his car will make the cut. The judging process is exacting, and consists of two parts (see sidebar: The Road to the 18th Green). Because many of the cars are fabulously expensive, and the admission fee for spectators is a preposterous \$175 the day of the show, the event gets a reputation for being only for the elite. Yet Pebble Beach does an amazing service with its Preservation Class, created especially for unrestored cars that have often been the property of owners of less-than-ample means, and in 2006 alone, the Concours d'Elegance donated over \$1 million to a total of 12 charities, including the United Way of Monterey County, and the Boys and Girls Clubs of Monterey County.

At the end of the day, though, it's all about the cars. This year, 202 (worth approximately \$200 million) graced the 18th green, representing 30 states and 12 countries, with cars from as far away as Hong Kong. Aston Martin, one of two featured marques this year, was represented by 38 cars competing in four separate classes. Spend enough time looking at the cars, and you'll find yourself shoulder-to-shoulder with the likes of Emerson Fittipaldi, Dan Gurney, Phil Hill, Parnelli Jones, and Stirling Moss. It is truly the most visually impressive event I've ever attended.

The Road to the 18th Green

You might remember the 1954 Stanguellini 750 Sport Internazionale Racer we featured back in the April 2007 issue. The car was on its way to a complete restoration at the hands of the craftsmen at The Creative Workshop in Dania Beach, Florida. Shop owner Jason Wenig has been taking us through the restoration ever since, and we were dying to see both what the car looked like finished, and how the restoration fared among its classmates. After a hectic week, we talked to Jason about the experience on the grass at the Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance.

Like the Academy Award nominee who says it's an honor just to be nominated, "Your inclination at first is just to get in," said Jason. The research, the late phone calls to Europe, the scrounging for parts for such a special, one-off automobile reaches its culmination when the phone rings and it's someone from Pebble Beach on the other end of the line. "Then, the second you get in, you want an award," Jason laughs. "Then, the second you get an award, you want first."

Jason took us through the entire judging procedure, which consists of a two-part judging process. A class judge--an expert on a specific marque or marques--determines a car's authenticity and quality of preservation or restoration. Honorary judges then rate the cars on their design, styling and elegance, according to the Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance.

At the end of the judging in Class S: Postwar Sports and Racing, Stanguellini chassis number CS04080 achieved a third place class finish. Part of a car's score is based on whether or not the car participated in the Tour d'Elegance, a driving event held before the concours. The Stanguellini didn't compete in the event. The winning car in the class, a 1951 Alfa Romeo 1900 Touring Berlinetta, did. Second place went to a 1953 Siata 208 Spyder.

Jason notes that at the end of the judging, it may have been the decision to chrome-plate the aluminum Borrani wheels that kept the Stanguellini from climbing higher. "One of the judges had commented that chrome wire wheels would never have been used on a race car," he says. "We had talked a lot about what we were going to do with the wheels. In the end, we decided to chrome them, because they had seen a lifetime of abuse, and as far as we know, they're the last available Borrani in the world of this size [15 x 2.75 inches]."

"From a mental perspective," says Jason, "[a third place finish] gives us the drive to work harder and shoot higher. We have two more rungs of the ladder to climb." The next time the car's owner will be eligible to compete at Pebble Beach is 2012.