

Our Early Days of Autocrossing

by
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I'm going to attempt to go back into those unused portions of my mind and try to give you an idea of what auto crossing was like in the early seventies.

Then as now, sites were hard to get, but people were more tolerant of noise and automobiles. My first event was the 1972 Plaza II autocross at the Shasta Plaza in Klamath Falls, Oregon. I drove a 1969 Mustang Fastback with a 305 V8 and an automatic. I have no idea how I placed, but I loved it.

My next event was the 1972 Chargers autocross, at the same site. Little did I know, Bonnie Bergstrom was participating in her new 1972 Pinto 2-liter hatchback. I don't remember how either of us did. I didn't even know who Bonnie was.

Well later that summer I did meet Bonnie, and because our club, Sports and Imports of Klamath Falls was going to Eureka, California for an event, she asked if she could tag along. Of course, I said yes. They had a great site, Somoa airport, which they still use. I actually drove Dan McKennie's Gremlin X, which was a V8 powered beast. That car would smoke my Mustang and outhandle it as well.

This was actually Bonnie and I's first date. (I guess that worked out!) Winter came and went and the next spring we started racing again. I traded in the Mustang for a Ford Courier pickup, because I knew in June I would be marrying Bonnie with her Pinto.

We were always looking for more sites. We had one site that wrapped around Payless Drug Store. Part of the course was on one side, and the delivery access road connected it to the other side. Not super safe, but we had no problems. The stores even remained open for business!

Another site was the snowmobile parking lot near Lake of The Woods. Small but it did have some nice drop offs on three sides.

Then in 1974 something wonderful happened. Jackson County built a sports park, which included the go kart track that they still use today. We were at the first event there. The pits were on the opposite side towards the hill. We had a barbeque and slept in our sleeping bags on the ground. (Although if I had known there were rattlesnakes, that would not have been an option.)

I graduated in 1973, but Bonnie was going to college at Oregon Institute of Technology in Klamath Falls, but being frugal with our money(not) we bought a 1974 Porsche 914 in 1975. We autocrossed it for a few years. In one of my great regrets, we traded it in on a Honda Civic to go road racing.

Bonnie graduated (during the ceremony the Blazers won the championship.) and we moved to Eugene to continue our saga with Via Curris, now Emerald Empire Sports car club, but that is a story for another time.