

## **S.E. STREET MACHINES- HOW IT ALL STARTED**

Well its 38 Years now since a few young guys started this club and has it progressed exceptionally well over the years, but while most people are roughly aware of when it started not many know how or why it started in the first place, so to tell you the whole story, I have to go back in time a little further.

Mount Gambier has always been a town full of car nuts, at least as far back as the early 1950's, with many notable and respected business men of today having been regarded as larrikins at the time (today they would have had their cars impounded and lengthy license losses, back then the laws and the Police were much more lenient).

I was interested in cars from about the time I was old enough to walk, I had two brothers who were mechanics and had a variety of hot cars, so what hope did I have? I bought my first car when I was 15, a fairly well modified 48 Series Holden, which I promptly destroyed (a mate and I were almost destroyed along with it), from there I progressed through a variety of cars, mostly modified in some way.

The guys that I knocked around with back then all had modified cars, as did nearly all of the young guys at that time; some of these guys are still around and still modifying cars now, some met an early end in their cars. Locally there were no clubs as such for modified cars, the only car club around was the S.E. Automobile Club, which was only for Car Rally's, Trials, Hill-climbs and the odd Dirt Drags which were held at Struan near Naracoorte.

Most guys hung around in their own groups, not really gangs (although there was a suggestion around that the group that Tony Whitehead and I were with weren't to be messed with, I don't know where they got that idea, probably Tony's reputation as a peacemaker.)

In the Capital cities and some larger country towns Street Rod Clubs had formed and although technically they were supposed to be for pre-48 and full-chassied Customs, in those days they accepted virtually any modified cars.

Back in 1973 quite a few local guys were becoming interested in Street Rods as well as late model modified cars. A local Customizer and Custom Painter, Fred Bishop founded The Lake City Rod & Custom Club in 1974 and a lot of the local guys joined up, myself included.

In those times just about every club member that was building a Street Rod also had, or was building some form of pretty nifty modified street car. The Australian Street Rod Federation at that time basically turned a blind eye to any late model modified vehicle. I was building a 34 Chevy Sedan and had started to build a modified HQ Monaro, my drive hack was a 327 GTS Monaro that I picked up for \$600 (read and weep).

The registration authorities in most states began to clamp down heavily on late model modified cars from about 1975 and by 1976 they were really making life difficult, particularly in Queensland and NSW, which also had at that time a high number of pre-48 Street Rods. The Australian Street Rod Federation had done a lot of good work in each state to ensure that the Street Rods were not too heavily penalised, implementing Technical Advisory Committees to work with the government.

The various State Governments of the time had differing opinions about modifying late model (non-chassis) cars, what was ok in Victoria was not ok in Qld, what was ok here in SA was not ok in NSW (not much has changed there).

Faced with this scenario The ASRF Council, in consultation with it's members (the majority of which were in Qld, NSW and Vic) decided that late model modified cars were too hard to deal with, so they began to enforce a rule, which had always been in place, but not rigidly adhered to, in late 1976 effectively eliminating all non-chassis vehicles made after 1948, but allowing what they called Custom Classics (Customline's, '55 & '57 Chevy's etc.) and Customs pre-1964 which were heavily customized cars that had little resemblance to the original vehicle to remain. Early model Holdens and Falcons that were in this category were accepted, those which were lightly modified in the bodywork but heavily modified mechanically were excluded.

This had repercussions throughout Australia, as suddenly late model modified car owners (1964 onwards and pre-1964 Chassis-less vehicles) had no representation with Registration Authorities and no governing body to help them. Locally about one third of the members had cars in the 1964 onwards and pre-1964 Chassis-less vehicles and another one-third had a long way to go to finish their Street Rods but were driving cars in the aforementioned categories.

There was some dissention in the Rod Club as to whether or not late models were or were not to be accepted; eventually the club decided that as they were an ASRF affiliated club they had no option but to follow the Federation line. This left quite a number of members in a quandary, as quite a few of us, myself included had decided to modify late model cars and build a rod much later (due to many of us just having gotten married, new kids coming etc.).

Whilst reading through a Custom Rodder Magazine, I came across an article on a very much mechanically modified V8 powered FC Holden, owned by the late Alan Hale. The article mentioned that Alan was President of the recently formed Victorian Street Machine Association, catering for post 1948 modified vehicles. I contacted Alan seeking more information and a copy of the VSMA Constitution which he duly sent to me.

I then contacted Bill Scott; who like me had been a Street Rod Club Member, but was not at that time building a Rod. Bill had been a long time Rodder and car customizer in Melbourne and had set up a business in Mount Gambier I suggested to him that we should form a Street Machine Club locally.

We then contacted Buggo King, Bill Bowman and Doug Cram who were all Rod club members with Rods under construction who also had modified street cars and put forward a suggestion about forming a Street Machine Club to them. They agreed whole-heartedly.

The above group and a couple of others (Coogee, then known as Young Jeffery, his brother Johnny, plus some whose names escape me) held a get-together at The South Eastern Hotel, in March 1977, where after much discussion it was agreed that we would form a Street Machine Club.

I was nominated as the interim President and a full meeting was scheduled to be held at the Park Hotel on the first Tuesday in April 1977.

About seventy guys turned up to the meeting and there was an overwhelming show of support for the formation of the club. Membership fees were agreed on, a committee was voted in with me as President, Bill Scott as Treasurer and Vice President, later Doug Cram became Treasurer, Bill Bowman was the Secretary. It was agreed that we should become a member club of the VSMA and work under their constitution, while our committee drafted a new one based on the VSMA constitution. Of the seventy people in attendance about forty joined up on the night. Some of the guys that were there then are still around some have moved on. Those that I remember are; Bill Scott, Buggo King, a very young Jeffry (Coogee) VandenHoogen (about 17 years old?), his brother John, Peter Ransom, Garry Larkin, Tony Whitehead, Kevin Hollis, Peter Sitkei, Paul Marshall, Craig Bulhmann, Peter Jellesma, Graham McDonald, Trevor Holland, George Haskas, Attilo (John) Agostin, Gary Foster, Gary Turner, Jack Jennings, , Allan Grieg, Bruce Potter, Roman Tos, Mark Vaughn, Kym Vaughn, Shane Vaughn, Konrad Tos, Brian Podgorski, Jim Garner, Doug Cram, Bill Bowman, Gary Turner, Wayne Ackerley, Wayne McNally, Tony Nicholls, Ricky Nicholls, Frank Amoroso, John and Ian Cutting, Ron Axelby, Jeff ?????, Andrew Buchalka, Lyndsey Beare, Graeme Holland, Trevor Pettingill, Peter Winterfield, Bruce Potter, Bill Teasdale, Tony Wishci, most of the others names I can't remember, but some of them joined later, whilst some others dropped out early.

Anyway the club had started, several names were bandied about, I suggested South East Street Machines, Bill Scott added the suggestion of Unlimited so that it was known that we would cater for all modified cars, everyone agreed on the name, so South East Street Machines Unlimited, **South Australia's first official Street Machine Club** was formed on the first Tuesday of April 1977.

Within a couple of months we had registered the name, (having to drop the Unlimited from the title for incorporation purposes) drafted a constitution and had a planning process under way for two important events, the first club run and the first Show'n Shine.

There was no friction between us and The Lake City Rod and Custom Club, while they were disappointed in losing some members (some stayed on with dual membership of both clubs, some decided they could only afford to build one car and that was going to be a Street Machine so they left the Rod Club) the Rod Club understood our reasons for the new club and they offered their support in any way that they could. They entered vehicles in our first show, with their President's car taking top custom. This rapport has continued until the present day.

When we first started the club, we hoped that it would continue for quite some time, I don't think I ever thought it would be this big and still going so strong after 38 years.....I also didn't think it would take 25 years before I actually got a car to a show but I finally did.

Although I guess it was my idea to start the club, it could not have been a reality without the input of others:-

The efforts of the late Alan Hale; in ensuring that we had as much help and information in getting it underway (what else could you expect from a guy who drove a black FC with a fuel injected 350 Chev). Alan's family still has this car and intend to keep it after his sudden passing. He brought the same car back to our 25<sup>th</sup> show, virtually unaltered from its original condition.

Bill Scott; for his huge effort in almost single-handedly organising the first Show 'n Shine. Despite having cancer at the time, requiring quite a bit of treatment and time off work he put in a huge effort. He was assisted by others at the actual Show 'n Shine but using his contacts and ability to persuade people to participate in a country show conducted by a never heard of club he managed to get a good number of entrants.

Coogee; for keeping the club going during its lean years in the early 80's when memberships dropped and for his input to the club ever since, who could ever forget Coogee Tours and his renditions of Day-oh.

Mars; one of our longest serving presidents and longest running show manager, who has made massive personal contributions in getting the clubrooms up and running and to keeping the club going smoothly during his time as President.

Tony; who was here from the beginning of the club but had a bit of a break because of personal reasons, despite his physical handicaps he did whatever he could to assist and for all of the years the Show 'n Shine was held indoors he always set up or assisted in the set up of the floor plans. He was also the instigator of the club using its funds to develop a clubroom.

Our Current President Dave who has pushed the club along with the development of the Autofest/SESM alliance, the Petrolhead's Picnic and generally promoting the club.

And lastly...but by no means least, all of you members, committee members and Presidents, past and present who by your input whatever it may have been have contributed to the continual evolution and strengthening of the club, you should all be proud, I know I am

Neil Morrison