

***SO, JUST HOW DID KEYSTONE REGION (CHAPTER) GET ITS START?
READ ON, AND LEARN OF OUR PAST!***



This year marks the 50th year since our founding at RB Winter State Park on September 29, 1968, and we thought it might be an appropriate time to look back on the history of the Chapter. Red below and enjoy the founding of the chapter.

Keystone Region began as a dream in the minds of a handful of Studebaker enthusiasts and continues today with great visions of *future* accomplishments. East McKeesport, Pa. was the site of the third annual meeting of the Studebaker Drivers Club, a small but struggling auto club devoted to the preservation and enjoyment of Studebaker vehicles. The year was 1967, and public sentiment related to Studebaker and its automobiles was at low ebb. "Studies", especially Post War models, were readily available at low cost, and, to many experts, it seemed that these automobiles would never be worth much more than junk prices. Yet with this as a backdrop, New York resident **Harry Barnes** and some of his fellow Studebaker fanatics were able to build a fire that still warms the hearts of Studebaker enthusiasts, especially in Central Pennsylvania.

The late Lee Reish, a resident of Milton, Pa. and a former employee of Hassinger Bros Studebaker garage, returned home from the 1967 National meet with enthusiasm and approached several Studebaker owners and drivers with thoughts relating to a club in the Central Pennsylvania area. Of course, some folks were hesitant and others were just wearing their cars out with no thoughts or interests in preservation. However, after much thought and consultation with other auto buffs, **Ed Smeltz**, a public school teacher and Studebaker activist from Lewisburg, Pa. wrote a letter to **Harry Barnes**, the founder and then President of the National Club, expressing interest in forming a Regional club. In response, a "**Presidential Newsletter**", as the club publication was then called, was returned and inside the front cover were these words; "**Greetings and thanks for your fine letter. Approve of your area chapter. Will call or write you soon, Best regards, Harry Barnes.**" **Keystone Region** as the local club was then known, was off and running.

Subsequent contacts with **Harry Barnes** not only confirmed the fact that we had a recognized region but that Ed Smeltz was the Regional Director as well. Ed can well remember the day that "bomb" was dropped. His reaction was "**What have I gotten myself into" or Where do I go from here**". Fortunately he had available to him a wealth of experience and counsel from a lot of individuals, namely **George Domer** from Milton, Pa., a veteran enthusiast and club organizer, the late **Bob Foust**, then living in Centre Hall, a tireless worker and Studebaker advocate, and Ed's father, the late **Luke E. Smeltz**, a faithful supporter of club activities and quite probably the source of his own Studebaker interests.

Keystone Region's first meet was held on September 29, 1968 at the R.B. Winter State Park (Halfway Dam) in Union County, Pa. with 42 cars and trucks and nearly 100 Studebaker fans attending the activity. As you might imagine, everyone was elated at the results, and all fears of a Studebaker Club failing for lack of support were put to rest. A subsequent meet held on Sunday afternoon of the October Hershey AACA meet stirred a lot of interest and enthusiasm and gained a lot of friends for **Keystone Region**.

With the realization that communication plays a vital role in the life of any organization, **Keystone Region** initiated a newsletter following the organizational meets in the fall of 1968. Entitled "**Keystone Keynotes**", it was a low budget flier printed on a ditto machine in Ed's school office. It was quite a far cry from today's "**Keystone Keynotes**", but it was a beginning. Many evenings were spent till midnight and beyond folding, inserting, addressing, and stamping newsletters. Certainly, Ed's wife and other family members deserve a great deal of credit for their help and sacrifice during those early times. In 1971, **Ron Strapel** came to the rescue and offered to assist Keystone with the newsletter publication. He subsequently enlisted **Bob Dudeck** (a student at Penn State University at the time) for artwork, and **Keystone Keynotes** was on its way toward the award winning stature it has gained through the efforts of **Max Corkins**, **Pete Wilson**, the late **Will Goss** and (many) others.

Keystone Region's early years were a time of building. Membership recruitment, club activities designed for the family, trips to South Bend for National Meets and needed parts; all these combined to cement friendships and club loyalty. The club blossomed in membership from about a dozen and a half in 1968 to almost 200 dues paying members in 1972. With the realization that continued growth and activity would be possible only as club members became actively involved in leadership, the first **Regional Director** of Keystone Region, **Ed Smeltz** notified the membership that he would not be a candidate for another term of office. After almost 4 years as director, Ed stepped aside and **Vince Habel**, elected by Keystone members, became director for 1973.

During Vince's term as Regional Director, Keystone stabilized and matured and a strong backbone of supporters and workers were formed. Membership hovered just below the 200 mark and even dropped for a time. Several notable things that happened during this period, as Keystone won the **Minnie Barnes Award** for work with a Children's Hospital. **Keystone** held two Atlantic Zone Meets in '73 and later in '76. But most important, a small seed was planted. This "seed" was in the form of a small informal "swap" meet held in the paint shop of the Swab Wagon Co., Elizabethville, PA. The meet was the brainchild of **Mike Margerum** and was held for three years in this location. This was the humble beginning of the Keystone National Swap Meet as every SDC'er knows of today. It was in the back of **Max Corkins'** camper during '75 Fall Hershey Meet that Mike and Max got their heads together and came up with a new and much larger site for the swap meet. It was a giant step that involved considerable risk, but the gamble paid off and made Reedsville (and, subsequently, York) a household word among Studebaker collectors everywhere!

Still another giant step would take place during the year of 1976. Several Keystone Members suggested, and pushed to hold A Raffle Car Project. The Club purchased a 1956 President with club funds in order to hold a raffle. Still another huge gamble, but still another that paid off handsomely. Today, everyone in SDC has either seen or purchased a chance on one of Keystone's Raffle Cars. To date, besides the '56 President, a '62 G.T. Hawk, '63 Daytona Conv., '64 Commander and a '58 Silver Hawk have been given away (through 1980). All of the cars have been either super nice originals or nicely-restored examples that any SDC Member would be proud of. The funds from these projects help support the **Keystone Keynotes** and other club projects such as prizes at Chapter Meets.

Keystone also took a local boys home under their wing and had them as guests at a meet every year. The proceeds from Keystone's Raffle Car project help many organizations within Pennsylvania.

Mike Margerum replaced Vince as Keystone's Regional Director for the year of 1977. It was to be still another very active year..... to say the least! Keystone applied for, and received its Charter from the National club. (Remember the message on **Harry Barnes'** Newsletter earlier??) We were now an official part of SDC. Of course, this was done to "protect our turf" from other groups moving in! This move however made Mike's position invalid, so another election was held to elect him as Chapter President. Mike shook and rattled the cage and really got things moving for Keystone. We had a new set of By-laws and were running by-the-book for the first time in years.

Jim Nice followed Mike as Chapter President in 1978. It was during this year that interest began to grow for Keystone to host a National Meet. It seemed the next step as the Club had been through most everything else, so why not?? The first talk of hosting a National came from the mouths of **Denny Foust, Ted Engle and Ron Strapel**. The same three had briefly considered the idea a year or so earlier and had even contacted the people at Hershey Estates to host the event there, but things went astray. Their second effort, with Gettysburg as the site, gained more and more interest and after initial contact was made with the Gettysburg Travel Council in March 1978, the area seemed like a natural! In July 1978, **Denny Foust, Mike Margerum and Harry Crosson** made a presentation for Gettysburg to the National Board of Directors of SDC. The rest is history.

Harry Crosson was to be our next Chapter President. Harry appointed the same people who dreamed up the Gettysburg site as National Meet Chairmen (that should teach you!!) Much hoopla was made that summer at Long Beach promoting the meet at Gettysburg. Everyone knew that Keystone was there!

TO THE PRESENT.....

The author of what you've read so far is unknown. But what has followed in the ensuing years bears repeating. Since 1980, Keystone Region Chapter has remained strong with a current membership of over 250 families, give or take a few! **Keystone Region Chapter** is family as much as it is club.

The Raffle Car effort that we put forth each year has delivered some very nice cars to some very surprised people. In past years, members **Jim Shoul, Mary Moses, and Dianne Schlott** handled a lot of the work behind this effort. When they retired from this activity, a new Raffle Car committee was formed, and the raffle procedure was brought into the 21st century by limiting the number of tickets sold and thus giving the buyer definite odds of winning. This new committee comprised of **Gordon F, Kertzel III, Ray Albert, Tom Ehrhart, Don Mallory, Stan Richard, and Jeff Sheaffer**, continue to locate and offer superior automobiles at the annual raffle. The proceeds from this annual event have allowed Keystone Region Chapter, in recent years, to make substantial contributions to the Studebaker National Museum, the Studebaker National Foundation, U.S. Troops in both Iraq and Afghanistan, and other civic and charitable causes. This event supplemented the **Studebaker York Swap Meet**, which was in York, Pa for over 30 years. The swap meet has had a number of Chairmen, including **Frank McCarthy** who was been in that position for over 13 years. He was assisted by an able team of veteran Studebaker nuts whose names are still involved with the chapter. The Studebaker York Swap Meet was always admission free, and a service to Studebaker owners everywhere.

As proof of the stability of our chapter, many of the names you see listed above from 1980 are still members of Keystone Region Chapter. Our membership roster reveals many people who have been members since the start of the club in 1968. Along the way, interest in **Keystone Region Chapter** has grown and we remain nearly approximately 250+ members strong, with people from all across the U.S.; and we are still growing. A dedicated core of members made the **2008 International Meet in Lancaster, Pa.** possible. Their contribution was invaluable and we thank them for their contributions.

In 2011 Keystone Region Chapter hosted the **Atlantic Zone Meet**, held in conjunction with AOAI as their International Meet. **Denny Foust, Don Jones** and many of the hard working, dedicated club members whose names you see listed above presented a **"Return to Gettysburg"**.

That brings us to current times. Many members of Keystone are still involved in its activities. The Keystone Raffle Car is still a part of our existence. The winning ticket for the car this year (2018) was drawn at the **AACA Museum, in Hershey Pa**, and a small but growing number of people participated there in a Studebaker Swap Meet held from the trunks and back of vehicles parked around the Museum. This activity will be held again in **2019 at the AACA Museum on April 6, 2019**

We at Keystone Region Chapter invite and encourage you to join our membership and fellowship. Remember these things:

- You do **NOT** have to own a Studebaker to be a member. We just want you to have an interest in the marque and enjoy having fun.
- You do **NOT** have to be a Pennsylvania resident. MANY of our members reside outside the state and are scattered from coast to coast.
- Our Award winning and nationally recognized news letter (more of a magazine) **KEYSTONE KEYNOTES**, is well worth the annual dues of \$20.00.

Our chapter's 50th Anniversary Celebration takes us back to the place of our first meeting - - **R. B. Winter State Park**, also known as **Halfway Dam**. Why here? Because it's where Keystone Region (Chapter) began! We are planning a very special two-day event for Friday, September 28th and Saturday, September 29th. Read the particulars else in Keynotes for the particulars of this celebration!

Text by Denny Foust