

SAAH Journal



ISSUE 287
JULY / AUGUST 2017

\$5.00 US

Contents

- 3 DRIVING ON THE RIGHT
- 4 BOOK REVIEW

Billboard

SAH Annual Meeting of Members & Gala Awards Banquet:

The annual meeting and gala awards banquet will take place on Friday, October 6th, in the Traditions Dining Room at the Hershey Country Club in Hershey, Pennsylvania (that's during the annual AACA "Hershey" Fall Meet). For details and how to register, please go to the SAH website: autohistory.org. *Thank you!*

SAH Tent & Authors' Book Signing at Hershey:

Vince Wright, Book Signing Event Committee Coordinator, is pleased to announce an authors' book signing, artists and publishers event on Thursday, October 5th, 2017, from 12:30 P.M., until 3:00 P.M., in the SAH Hospitality Tent which will be located in the Orange

Field at OBB 17- 19. The venue will be the Annual Fall Meet of the Antique Automobile Club of America in Hershey, Pennsylvania.

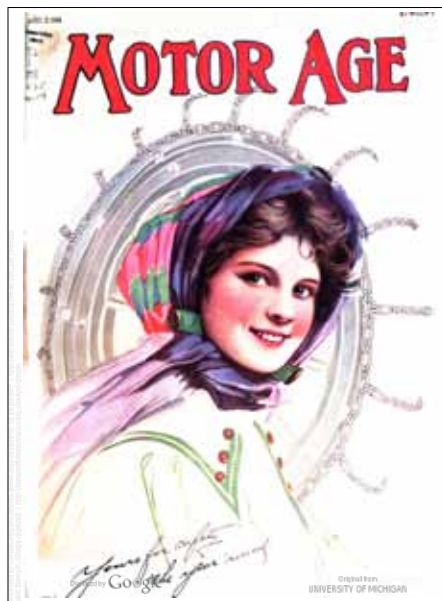
You are welcome to bring any titles, recent or not. Each author will be provided a name place card and table space to exhibit and sign their books.

The Society will provide Credit Card customer purchases processing to you at no charge. For any questions, please contact him at: wrightfilms@me.com. To participate, please send him a short description of the books, along with website, and social media links.

SAH in Paris XXIII European Meeting Update:

The target date for the 23rd annual meeting of SAH members and guests in Paris is Thursday evening, February 8, 2018, during Rétromobile.

Front cover: Sourced from the cover of the April 2, 1914 issue of *Motor Age*, published by the Class Journal Company, 910 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois. The message under the lady and the chained tire reads: "Yours for safety the year 'round." We are entering an exciting era for automotive history research and publication, as material from the early decades of automobile production comes to light; and also, published material continues to come into the public domain. Even more exciting: there are initiatives across various institutions to digitize material and make it available for wide availability to the public. One such project is the source for our cover: the HathiTrust Digital Library, "a partnership of major research institutions and libraries working to ensure that the cultural record is preserved and accessible long into the future." (See hathitrust.org.) This particular example comes from the collection of the University of Michigan, and the digitization was done by Google. The HathiTrust has more than 120 partners in this project, and collaboration is open to entities around the world.



Submission Deadlines:

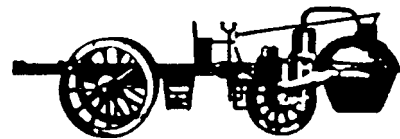
Deadline:	12/1	2/1	4/1	6/1	8/1	10/1
Issue:	Jan/Feb	Mar/Apr	May/June	Jul/Aug	Sep/Oct	Nov/Dec
Mailed:	1/31	3/31	5/31	7/31	9/30	11/30

Note: the SAH Journal is a bimonthly publication (printed 6 times a year) and there is a two-month horizon for submitted material before it is mailed (e.g., material submitted by February 1st appears in the Mar/Apr issue and is mailed on or before 3/31.) All letters, manuscripts, and advertisement submissions and inquiries go to the editor.

SAH Journal

ISSUE 287 • July/August 2017

THE SOCIETY OF AUTOMOTIVE HISTORIANS, INC.
An Affiliate of the American Historical Association



Officers

Andrew Beckman	President
Edward Garten	Vice President
Robert R. Ebert	Secretary
Rubén L. Verdés	Treasurer

Board of Directors

John Heitmann (ex-officio) †
Robert G. Barr Δ
H. Donald Capps #
Robert Casey †
Donald J. Keefe Δ
Louis F. Fourie #
Carla R. Lesh †
John A. Marino #
Matthew Short Δ
Vince Wright †

Terms through October (#) 2017, (†) 2018, and (Δ) 2019

Editor

Rubén L. Verdés
7491 N. Federal Hwy., Ste C5337
Boca Raton, FL 33487-1625 USA
journal@autohistory.org
sahjournal@live.com
tel: +1.561.866.5010

Publications Committee

Thomas S. Jakups, Chair
Patricia E. Chappell
Louis F. Fourie
Christopher G. Foster
Donald J. Keefe
Rubén L. Verdés
Steve Wilson

SAH Journal (ISSN 1057-1973)
is published six times a year by The Society of Automotive Historians, Inc.
Subscription is by membership in the Society.

Membership dues are \$50 per year (\$60 per year outside North America & Mexico); digital membership dues are \$20.

Dues and changes of address go to:

Society of Automotive Historians, Inc.
c/o Cornerstone Registration Ltd.
P.O. Box 1715
Maple Grove, MN 55311-6715 USA

©2017

The Society of Automotive Historians, Inc.

www.autohistory.org

Join, renew and more right on-line!

Why We Drive on the Right of the Road

HOW many American drivers, to whom keeping to the right is second nature, know the reason for the custom? Behind this familiar rule of the road lies an interesting and little-known story. Early colonists of British origin rode on the left of a highway as their forebears had. The British custom, which is still observed in England, was originally a protection against banditry. Travelers kept to the left so that the right, or sword, hand would be free to deal with highwaymen. With the development of wagons and coaches, practices diverged. British drivers continued keeping to the left so that the coachman, sitting at the right of his seat to obtain free play for his whip, could see that the wheels of his coach did not collide with those of passing vehicles. Other European countries, however, adopted the postillion system of driving, in which the driver or



The Conestoga wagon, historic vehicle of frontier days, is responsible for present American driving customs

postillion rode one of the wheel horses, naturally choosing the left one so that he might wield his whip to best advantage. To obtain a clear view of other vehicles from this position, it was necessary to keep to the right. The same system was adopted by drivers when the distinctively American vehicle, known as the Conestoga wagon, came into use in the United

States early in the last century. Built like a boat so that it could be floated across frontier streams, it offered no interior accommodations for a driver. Consequently he rode the left wheel horse, or the "lazy seat," on the left side of the wagon, and drove on the right side of the road. Other vehicles had to follow the deep ruts cut in the road by these heavy pioneer wagons.

Source: Popular Science Monthly, Vol. 126, No. 1 - January 1935, p. 37

A PERIOD PERSPECTIVE: LHD AND DRIVING ON THE RIGHT OF THE ROAD

Editor's Note: The full story of how left-hand drive and driving on the right of the road became dominant in the USA is more complicated than many would suspect. One perspective comes from consulting literature on the subject; but—as with any subject—consulting period literature can be eye-opening. The above account comes from the January 1935 issue of Popular Science Monthly—a time where the subject was settled; but a quarter-century earlier it was an evolving subject. The following accounts come from issues of Motor Age from 1909 through 1913. These are drops from a large pool of articles, editorials, and advertisements where the subject of left-hand drive was prominent. The editorial forum in Motor Age was called "The Readers' Clearing House"—the editor provided this note:

"In this department Motor Age answers free of charge questions regarding motor problems, and invites the discussion of pertinent subjects. Correspondence is solicited from subscribers and others. All communications must be properly signed, and should the writer not wish his name to appear, he may use any nom de plume desired."

Each of the following quotes is cited with their source issue and section.

September 9, 1909—Vol. XVI, No. 11
The Readers' Clearing House, p. 25:

LEFT-HAND CONTROL

Washington, D.C.—Editor Motor Age—Will Motor Age give me the names and addresses of the manufacturers who make left-hand-drive cars, not runabouts, costing from \$1,500 to \$2,000?—A.H. Staples.

The Ford company has used left-hand control on its models for the past year, and for 1910 the Reo will utilize it. The Brush Runabout Co. also is an advocate of this system, while several years ago the Electric Vehicle Co. put out the Columbia model, using left-hand control. Nearly all electric cars are guided from that side also.

February 17, 1910—Vol. XVII, No. 7
The Readers' Clearing House, p. 24:

CRITICIZES LEFT-HAND DRIVE

Gary, Ind.—Editor Motor Age—Kindly advise me through the Readers' Clearing House regarding the left-hand drive. On Saturday at the show I noticed that with possibly one exception only the low-priced runabout gasoline cars were left-hand drive. If seating the driver on that side is such a good thing why don't the makers in general

adopt it? I also would like to know if the prospects are that next year cars around \$1,500 will use the left-hand drive. I am very much in doubt as to what to do. I don't want to get a car this year that will be a curiosity next year, or the exception to the usual car seen.—Subscriber.

Motor Age hardly agrees with you that only low-priced runabouts have left-hand control, because had you noted carefully you would have seen the model 29 Peerless which sells at \$4,500 fitted with left-hand control. The new Owen car which sells over the \$4,000 mark also is provided with left-hand control. For city work the left-hand control has a great many merits and an equal number for country driving, although from certain sections of the country there come complaints that they want right-hand control due to trouble to getting past slower-moving vehicles traveling in the same direction. The left-hand control is logical for America and you will find it increasing in use right along. The highest-priced makes of taxicabs are using it today. You will realize the value of left-hand control if you have driven cars in the city and are following a street car which you have to pass at the left side. You readily can see if the course is clear, whereas with right-hand control this is very difficult.

February 8, 1912—Vol. XXI, No. 6
*Chicago Commercial Car Show at the
Coliseum and Armory*
p. 4:

CHICAGO COMMERCIAL CAR SHOW

Studying the trend of the show, it is apparent that left-hand drive has won many advocates during the past year, for at least 45 per cent of the machines on view has [sic] the steering wheel placed on the left, and in nearly every instance where the wheel is so placed the gearshift is located in the center. The smaller vehicles nearly all use left-hand control. It also is noted that oftentimes where center gearshift control is used that the emergency brake is placed on the left.

February 29, 1912—Vol. XVI, No. 9
The Readers' Clearing House
p. 28:

ADVOCATES LEFT-HAND STEER

West La Fayette, Ind.—Editor Motor Age—It is becoming more necessary every year for the motor car owner to have a car with left-hand drive and center-control levers, if for no other reason than that the laws of nearly every city require a driver to stop at the curb with the right side of his car to the curb. If a woman is riding with a driver in a roadster, or front seat of a touring car with right-hand drive, and wishes to go to the sidewalk she is compelled to step out into the mud of the street, where she is in more danger from passing vehicles. Whereas, with the left-hand drive and center control, the woman riding with the driver could step out directly onto the curb, avoiding the dangers and the mud.

I am glad to see so many manufacturers changing to left-hand drive and

center control, and it is my hope that these manufacturers will sell every car they can build that way, and that every manufacturer will soon see the owner needs this kind of control.—A Subscriber.

September 18, 1913—Vol. XXIV, No. 12
1914 for the Owner-Driver
p. 12:

LEFT-HAND drive, which a few years ago was disputed by not a few of our leading companies, has gained enormously in the 1914 announcements that have been made to date. Some of the concerns that were most rigid in their opposition to placing the steering column on the left have seen the folly of their course and lost no time in getting into the band wagon. Hand in hand with left-side steering wheel is that of mounting the control levers in the center.



Tony Bettenhausen & Sons: An American Racing Family Album

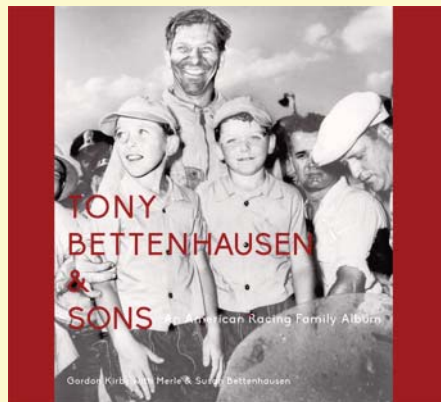
by Gordon Kirby
Racemaker Press (2016)
racemaker.com/ 617-723-6533
225 pages, 9.1" x 6.6" hardcover
350 b/w & color images
List Price: \$59.95
ISBN-10: 1935240129
ISBN-13: 978-1935240129

"I remember one night my father sat down with us and he was very frustrated over something. He had tears in his eyes and he looked at us and said, 'Don't you understand that we're doing this for you guys?' With my father's leadership we became a team and a corporation when we were high school kids."

—daughter Susan

Tears from arch disciplinarian "Tunney Bettenhausen" (after heavyweight boxing champion Gene Tunney and only later changed to Tony) are hard to picture. He ruled his roost—including wife Valerie, from

whom he got divorced only to marry her a second time two years later—with firm ideas about what's what; in fact you could pluck a quote from pretty much any page of this book and it would preach the same sermon: do it right or not at all, discipline, courage, honesty, resilience.



Whether nature (i.e. innate ability) or nurture (i.e. the qualities above plus, of course, growing up on race tracks), the fact is that all his three sons became racers, like dad, and successful, like dad. When Tony Sr. (1916–1961) took up racing in 1937 it clearly was innate ability, fueled by an all-around wild streak but leavened with a willingness to take advice from mentors and to learn by doing and watching.

Two generations do make a dynasty; that there isn't another one is one of the reasons the Bettenhausens' story is a bit differ-

ent from others: only middle son Merle (the kid on the right on the book cover) survived his racing days, and even he sacrificed an arm to the track (1972) and suffered severe burns to his face. He and sister Sue collaborated with author Kirby on this fine book, which means this new tribute can cover quite a bit of new ground since the last biography, Carl Hungness' *GO! The Bettenhausen Story, The Race Against a Dream* from 1982 which is still easily found and definitely worth seeking out.

Each of the four drivers is covered in his own chapter which begins with biographical notes and reminiscences, is followed by a lengthy photo section, and concludes with a racing record in table form. The meat of the story is conveyed mainly in the thoroughly captioned photos, many of which are new to the printed record (color photos appear as early as 1954).

American open-wheel racing is a quite specific affair in regards to its industry and protagonists. As volume 4 in this publisher's "American Racing" series the book adds much colorful and relatable personal history and consolidates race details and results. Vol. 5, also by Kirby, *Penske's Maestro: Karl Kainhofer and the History of Penske Racing* is next.

—Sabu Advani

This review appears courtesy of speedreaders.info where it was first published in substantially similar form.