

talk to the judge

With OCA Chief Judge Mike Pruitt.

Looking Back, To Look Forward Part 1

In the next two issues, former OCA Chief Judge and President Greg Childs will share the beginnings of the OCA Judging Program. These articles will be followed by current Chief Judge Mike Pruitt sharing how the program has evolved in the last few years, and where it is heading in the near future.

We hope with this series members gain a better understanding of the Judging Program, its goals and how the OCA truly strives to make its judging the best in the hobby.



This is the first of a four part series on how the OCA's Judging Program evolved and where it is now.

I have been asked by our editor to reach back over thirty years and pen, some memories of the program's inception.

I suppose it really had its development around 1980, when my new wife Debbie and I (that is us, shown above) found a striking 1963 red Oldsmobile convertible at a flea-market in San Mateo, California. Shortly after its acquisition, we found the Northern California Olds Club, and became active members. At the time, the Chapter was holding an annual Car Show at a local dealership, and of course we participated. After proudly displaying our "pretty girl" –at our first attendance- I was deflated to learn I had not won a "First Place" in my class. Never mind the engine compartment had not been touched since 1963! *"Oh, the engine compartment is judged also?"*

In the following years, I volunteered to be a judge at the local show, and that evolved into becoming the Head Judge. During this time, I noted that the judging forms and classes were different each year. So I, along with a fellow club member, consulted and settled on some basic guidelines, forms and classes to be used in ensuing years.

About this same time, I apprenticed myself to a local restoration shop. It was very low-key operation. I'm not sure it even had a name). However, the owner was a wonderful guy and happy to take me under his wing. He taught me the basics of restoration and painting. When I say "low-key" it is nothing like we see on television today. The most advanced piece of equipment "Hal" had in his shop was a wire welder and a dual action sander. Yet, he did produce some amazing results. My apprenticeship then led to participating as a Junior Judge in several Concourse 'de Elegance shows, in the San Francisco Bay area.

In 1985, the Northern and Southern California Chapters agreed to host a first ever OCA West Coast National Meet in 1986. And who do you supposed was appointed the Chief Judge? Yes, that is right, it was me. In order to get some experience we attended the National Meet, held in Minnesota, in 1985. Of course, I introduced myself to the Head Judge and asked a number of questions.

From that, I learned that just like old Nor-Cal early days, there were no set of forms, rules, guidelines or classes in the Oldsmobile Club of America. Every National Head Judge simply set their own. I also learned that no one had ever kept any sort of records from any of the National Meets (the OCA began having National Meets in 1972).

During my introduction to then OCA President Steve DeNovi, I voiced some concerns about the lack of continuity. Steve suggested that I Chair a committee (he provided names of other qualified members for the committee) and develop some standards. The Oldsmobile Club of America Judging Committee was birthed.

In those days, there were no computers, no emails and no fax machines. Everything was done on a typewriter (some committee members even had ELECTRIC typewriters) or written in long hand, and mailed to each committee member. With the multiple changes and suggestions, the process was laborious to say the least. After a final Judging Form was drawn up and agreed upon, it was taken to a draftsman to ensure its presentation was "professional".

Proudly, it was presented to the OCA Board of Directors at the 1986 Board Meeting in California. While the board was responsive and encouraging, a motion was made to effectively "table" the project until such time in which it could gain some exposure to our members. I then emphasized just how much work the committee had put into this project, and that all of the parts of it were subject to recommended changes by the committee. President DeNovi, sensing my frustration, then encouraged the board to adopt the offerings, noting the fact everything was subject to amendments. To my great relief, the first ever National Judging Rules and Classes were adopted! The project was announced in the August 1986 *Journey with Olds*.



Above; The judging field at the 1987 OCA National Meet