

A series on Concours
Part I
Concours Committee History
Roger Moment

This is the first part of a series of article I plan to write discussing the Concours “movement”, some considerations in deciding how “well” to restore a car (whether for Concours or not), car shows, and how our concours “system” works. I hope they will contain information equally of interest to those who just want to drive their cars, as well as the “concours nuts”.

Back in the 1980s, concerns were regularly voiced over inconsistency in judging at Concours events held at Austin-Healey meets around the country. In particular there seemed to be:

1. A lack of agreement between judges as to what was correct
2. Variability on the number of points deducted for an item being wrong
3. Few sources people could turn to for answering questions on originality

In addition, at that time only “place” awards were made – first, second, third – so many fine restorations could end up with no recognition, as only “First Place” attracted attention.

To establish a common set of written judging “standards”, Rick Regan drafted an initial set of originality “standards”, which were first used at a West Coast meet in Oregon in 1989. Soon thereafter, Gary Anderson suggested establishment of an independent concours committee which would operate under its own independent policies and judging guidelines, and proposed that it use a three-tier award system, rather than a competitive one-winner system.

With the assistance of Rich Chrysler and Roger Moment, the concept was proposed to the three major independent clubs -- Austin-Healey Club of America, Austin Healey Club, Pacific Centre (now the Austin-Healey Club USA), and the Austin-Healey Sports and Touring Association. We came into existence as a Committee with members from around the country but with **no** formal association with any single one of the Austin-Healey clubs.

The first “official” set of “standards” developed by Anderson, Moment and Chrysler proposed that:

1. Cars would be granted awards at three levels, depending on how they scored. Gold would require 95 points or more (on a scale of 100), Silver 90-95 points, and Bronze 85-90 points.
2. The “Standards” document formed the basis for the score sheets, but was to be considered only one source for “correctness” information, others being various books, magazines, shop manuals, and parts books that were also available. In

fact, if someone found a totally original car that had never been disassembled (the proverbial “barn find”), they would have *all* the correctness information necessary to make that restored car exactly right. However, this would require much study of minute details, which most fresh owners typically forget to do.

3. Cars would be scored by teams of three judges (preferably), with a lead judge for each team and a head judge at each Concours event.
4. Both *originality* and *condition* would be considered in deciding on point deductions.
5. Maximum point deductions for each item on the score sheets were listed, and these added up to a total of 1000 points. The car’s award level score was reached by dividing its sheet total (1000 minus deductions) by 10. Points assigned to an item were split into “originality” and “condition” categories (60% -- 40%) as we wanted to emphasize the former and also establish further control over how much would be deducted for an item depending on its “shortcomings”.

Gary served as Chairman of the committee, printing and distributing the “Standards” (as they were called back then), receiving new input for them which he then farmed out to the rest of the committee for comment, keeping records of who judged, car scores, and awards presented, etc. Walt Blanck, of AHCA, served as our treasurer and point contact for people to order copies of the Standards from.

The first Concours at which this new system was applied occurred at the AHCA Conclave at Blackhawk Farms in 1990, with 3 cars attaining Gold, 2 Silver, and 2 Bronze.

Subsequently the Concours Committee started to “fine tune” the program, establishing separate subcommittees for maintaining the Big Healey Guidelines (a name change, as “Standards” was not quite appropriate as a descriptor), Sprite Guidelines, and Judging. Many errors in the original Guidelines were found and corrected, and they were expanded to well over double their size, including the addition of photographs. A number of individuals have contributed to this effort over the years, so the current guidelines represent the best of common knowledge about the original manufacturing standards and practices used in producing the big Healeys. This updating is continuing on an annual basis.

We started out with seed funding from both AHCA and AHCUSA, and this has been fully repaid for some years now. The Concours Committee continues to be autonomous, and is not part of any individual club’s organization structure.

There are now three Liaison positions from AHCUSA, AHCA, and AHSTC and these representatives are chosen by those respective clubs. All other Concours Committee positions are selected by the Committee members. There is an upper limit as to the Committee/subcommittee size (so that they don’t become too unwieldy), and membership is selected from those who show interest and are willing to contribute input. We try to have our membership geographically representative of all of North America with a balance in knowledge about the various models (100s, 6-cylinder roadsters, and

convertibles). Membership has changed over the years as some people have lost interest in participating while others have stepped forward to become involved.

Our present organization consists of:

Chairman

Curt Arndt

Advisory Members

AHCUSA Liaison

Roger Moment

AHCA Liaison

Rich Chrysler

AHSTC Liaison

Don Schneider

Subcommittee chm.

Big Healey Guidelines

Alan Alfano (9 additional members)

Sprite Guidelines

Bruce Geams (4 additional members)

Judging

Marion Brantley

Treasurer & Mailing

George Marinos

Registry Secretary

Gary Anderson