

FEATURE ARTICLE *by Katy Nelson*

# Brought Together by Cars, Kept Together by Friendships

In 1985, long-time local cruisers Bob Schmiechel, Ron Roe, Roger Malcomb, Bob Schriever, Ron Tisdal, Dennis Heidebrink, Larry Staffaucher, Elmer Christians and Ed Benson, along with several other car enthusiasts, got together and decided to organize a club for the upcoming 1986 National Street Rod Association's Mid-America Nationals. The men formed the Great Plains Street Rodders as one of the host clubs for the event, held then at the W.H. Lyon Fairgrounds.

The club guys met for years at Sherman Park, cruised together to events, and helped each other with hotrod builds. Then, on a hot summer night in the early 1990s, President Roger Malcomb held a meeting so the guys could discuss how to grow the club, expand events and have more fun.

Attending the meeting were Allen Alby and Shirley, his outspoken, always laughing, cruise-loving wife. Shirley always says she was not about to let Allen have all the fun, and she spoke up at the meeting, telling the men that they needed to get their wives more involved.

She knew many of the wives enjoyed the cars and the friendships that would grow from relationships formed within the club. Now, for over 15 years, the Great Plains Street Rodders have had as many active women cruisers in the club as men.

Shirley was right. The women refer to themselves as the strength of the club, and the guys agree that the family atmosphere makes the hobby

even more enjoyable. The common interest in cool cars brings the club together, and the friendships that grow from that interest keep the club together. Their website, monthly newsletter with feature car section and an email network keep them informed and in touch. The monthly feature car owner is presented an original painting of their car, accompanied by an article. To date, there are more than sixty original feature car articles and watercolor paintings by Bob Schmiechel. Club members often say that although there's plenty of experienced builders and cruisers, many times "car-stuff" is not the main topic of conversation. It's more about family. Over the years, the focus has remained on spending time together, having fun, cruising and showing cars.

Originally, the Great Plains Street Rodders club was exclusive to pre-1949 hot rods. In 1998, the club's bylaws were revised to match qualifying autos of MSRA's nearby "Back to the 50's" show. Members cruised with many friends to the Minnesota State Fairgrounds in cars manufactured after 1949, so membership was expanded to include these new friends' different cars.

The club's membership continued to increase and car enthusiasts' choices of hot rods expanded and changed. Many members have multiple hot rods, representing many eras of automobile history. And the Great Plains Street Rodders' goal as a social club of car enthusiasts recently expanded even more, as qualifying members currently include



Photo by Craig Lee



A Sunday afternoon cruise



Picnic at Sherman Park

all car enthusiasts who share their common interests. The current list of member-autos ranges from 1923 T-buckets to 2011 Supercharged Pony Cars. While there are still over 50 true pre-'49 street rods and around 30 fifties cruisers, the muscle cars from the sixties and early seventies are the most popular.

Years ago, some members realized they missed the kinship of car shows and cruises during the long Dakota winters, and about 50 members began getting together during the off-season at a "meet-'n'-eat" Wednesday evening social club. These winter meetings helped keep friends connected and has been a strength of the club ever since. The annual Christmas Party follows a morning of visits to charitable organizations and is capped off by dinner and a gift exchange game. Members often travel and tour as a group in the wintertime also. Some members have friendships so strong they enjoy their winters together in southern warmer areas.

Continued on page 50



Gary Bockorny and his '23 Ford T-Bucket



Allen & Shirley Alby and their '46 Ford



Betty Heidebrink and her '51 Olds Rocket 88



Cheryl Van Noort and her '56 Nash Metropolitan





Kent Reilly and his '37 Dodge Coupe



Marilyn & Jules Haper and their '23 Dodge Sedan



Ron & Karen Roe and their '61 Chevy Impala



L: Bones & Candi Hanson's '39 Chevy Master Deluxe  
R: Ike & Doreen Wiese's '35 Chevy



L: Bill & Lana Kullander's '47 Ford Coupe  
R: Dale & Pat Kiebach's '67 Pontiac GTO

#### *Continued from page 49*

Current membership has grown to over 180 men and women who still enjoy organizing their own cruises, poker runs and picnics. Member participation at local, regional and national shows continues to be as strong now as it was over 25 years ago. The club boasts a long history of membership by the area's prominent car builders and enthusiasts. Many of the original members and current members have served as club officers.

Past presidents include: Bob Schmeichel, Larry Stauffacher, Jeff Meendering, Ron Roe, Ed Benson, Roger Malcomb, Bob Hardy, Randy Hanson, Brad Goebel, Dale Bruining, Doug Walker and Kevin Kappenman. Currently doing his best to keep the group having fun, cruising and enjoying their time together is President Clay Seachris with the help of supporting officers, Bob Schmeichel, Jayne DeBoer and Marilyn Haper. Other organizers like Kevin Kappenman, Lori Paulson, Terry Peterson, Derrick Stokes, Ron Roe, Roger Van Noort, Candi Hanson and several more great volunteers are always willing to lend a hand. Through the years the club, with its have-fun priority, has also maintained high levels of volunteer efforts as a major participating club in the Siouxland Car Council's events and charitable fundraising.

TMM



Sandy & Terry Peterson and their '72 Dodge Charger



Terry & Nancy Jellis and their '32 Ford Roadster



Lori & Mike Paulson and their '65 Chevy Chevelle



Audrey & Gary Jorgenson and their '57 Chevy Belair



Derrick & Sarah Stokes and their '63 Pontiac Bonneville



Dean Gough and his '40 Ford Sedan

