

Bob Woodhouse

by Chris Safranek - October, 2006
(revisions by Patt Buell for 2010)

“If you can’t win, go for crowd appeal.”

During his 26+ years as a member of SCCA, 6 years in Montana and Salt Lake Regions, and after a brief hiatus, over 20 years in Nebraska Region, Bob Woodhouse still epitomizes the best SCCA has to offer - a racer who is competitive and determined, but also fun, friendly and frequent to laugh.

Friends from Great Falls invited Bob to a local autocross, and the proverbial goose was cooked. Bob says this introduction to SCCA was a “life changing experience,” and he tries to continue the tradition by leading a few others astray whenever possible. Montana Region’s activities centered on autocrosses and hill climbs. Once each year during the early 1970s, the club would close Black Otter Trail, a road on the north edge of Billings. Bob competed several times [could this be the origin of the Bob-ism at the beginning of this article?], and briefly held the class record in his 1970 Boss 302. On a road full of switchbacks up the side of the Rim Rocks and corners leading to 200 foot drops with only hay bales to separate the road from the sky, people would come from all over to watch the craziness, until the event was inevitably shut down to pull the scraps of cars left hanging over the edge.

As Bob remembers, the event had your attention for about a week before you actually ran it, and most competitors couldn’t get a swallow past their Adam’s apple thinking about it. After meeting his wife, Louise, and before they had possession of the pink slip to their 1972 Cougar 4V (ah, youth!), they were off running rallies on the snowy, gravel roads of Montana - traveling at speeds not even dreamed of in today’s world, and even crossing the Missouri River without a bridge. [Probably only a little scarier than losing the “guys versus girls” rally dare and, as the leader of the “Lost Boys”, having to eat a little pie smilingly served by the ladies. Wait, there was trickery, wasn’t there?]

After spending time autocrossing with Salt Lake Region, Bob joined up with the Nebraska Region autocrossers. Trips to Salina, Kansas or Osceola, Iowa were common. [Bob failed to mention the practical jokes that went along with these road trips. I remember one event that involved several Mrs. Woodhouses, short-sheeted beds, missing light bulbs, and a late night re-wiring job on a brown van!].

Divisionals were held at Lincoln Air Park in the late 1980s, and Bob became a regular at these events, competing 9 times in a row in his BSP 1972 Pantera against the dominant Corvettes and finishing in the top 5 on 5 of those occasions. One of Bob’s fondest memories is the Solo II Nationals and the appearance of Roger Johnson’s assistant - an inflatable ewe - during the awards ceremony. [If you want a funny sheep story, ask Bob about the plaster sheep that appeared in his tow vehicle on one of his outings.]



photo by Jerry Doctor

Woodhouse continued . . .

Besides the pride of those divisional finishes, Bob has been known to receive (and sometimes give) awards at our annual banquet that are not mentioned in any of the official annals of Nebraska Region, bringing down the house with humorous renditions of just how he (or his victim) qualified for the award in the first place.

There isn't much SCCA has to offer that Bob has missed - officer, rally driver, autocrosser, cheerleader, financial supporter, race car driver - and he comments that this diversity is SCCA's advantage. Comparing SCCA to a large and varied vegetable garden (unlike marque clubs which only plant one item in their gardens), SCCA provides enough different venues and functions that everyone can find their niche. He notes that the positive influences in Nebraska Region are the people he sees giving their heart and souls to the region and its members. Although we may not all agree, SCCA has enough to offer that we can each find what we enjoy and where we belong.

Bob competed his third season of SCCA Pro World Challenge GT (as of this writing in 2006, 5th overall in points with a podium finish in Florida earlier this year). He has also upped his involvement with the first year of the Woodhouse Auto Group 2 car team, partnering his familiar Viper with an SRT-4 Dodge running in Touring.

Bob was our guest speaker at the dinner at the Midwest Division Convention on November 4, 2006, at the Embassy Suites in Omaha, giving us the opportunity to hear more of the stories about which this article has only hinted. It was an evening filled with the true joy of racing, and plenty of racing humor to go with it, a great evening with Bob Woodhouse.

Note: Bob has been written up in Sports Car and in the NRSSCA newsletter, Exhaust Notes. Has won NRSSCA awards and served on the NRSSCA Board. For more on Bob see 'Woodhouse' under the history site alphabet.

2010 Nebraska Auto Racing Hall of Fame Inductee:

Bob Woodhouse *Car Owner/Driver*

By Lee Ackerman

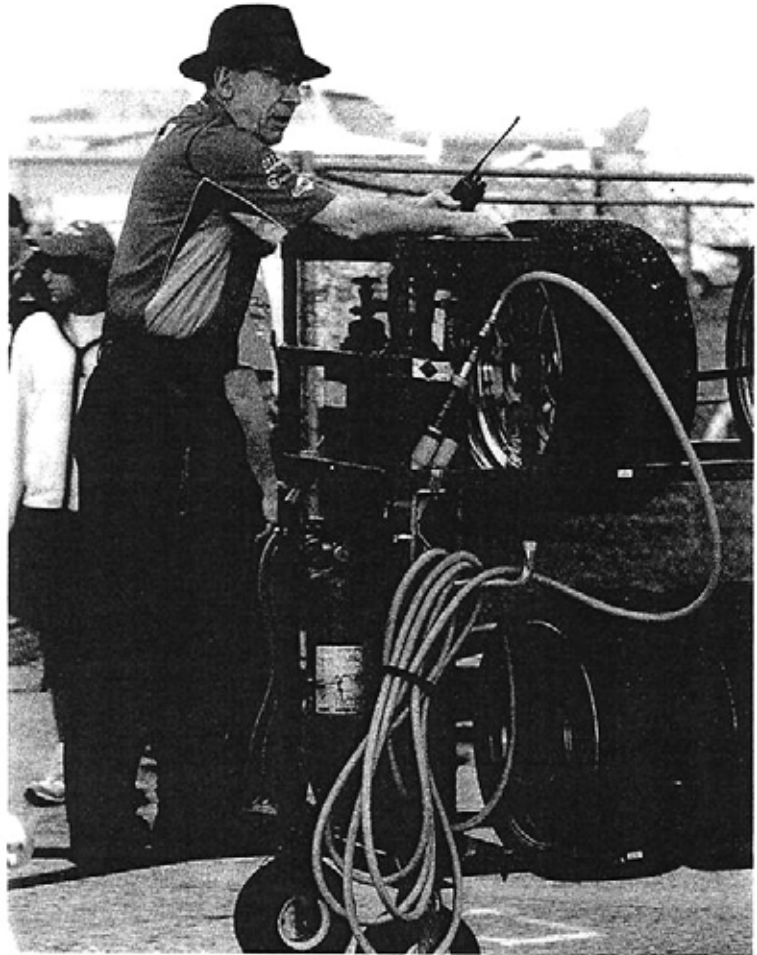
Bob Woodhouse, born February 15, 1946, in Great Falls, Montana, began his love affair with cars in high school. While in school, Bob spent four years working on a car and a week before graduation entered it in a show in Great Falls winning "Best in Show".

Bob nicknamed the car "Cinderella's Coach" because it was a four-door, which was not characteristic of car building in those days. It featured double headlights and Cadillac taillights with a big Chevrolet motor. Winning the award, having the experience and building his own car ignited Woodhouse's passion for cars.

Bob would graduate from Northern Montana College with a teaching degree in industrial arts and a minor in art. He would, also, continue his car building with a drag racing machine powered with a 450HP Chevrolet motor, and followed that with other performance cars, a 1970 Boss 302 Mustang and a 1972 DeTomaso Pantera with a Ford 351 Cleveland placed mid-engine and a body made in Italy. It was a street car he converted into a semi-exotic vehicle.

Despite having a teaching degree, Bob set his sights on Fort Motor Company and worked six and one-half years as a Zone Field Representative. He served as the liaison between Ford and its dealerships. The experience led Bob to have a good understanding of how dealerships worked. This would ultimately lead him to getting into the car business by purchasing the Ford dealership in Blair, Nebraska. Partnering with the Lance Pittack family, he would expand that business to six dealerships and 600 employees before stepping away from the car business in 2007.

While raising a family and running a dealership, Bob was able to pursue his love of cars and racing. In 1974, driving a slightly modified 1970 Boss 302 Mustang, Bob began racing in the Sports Car Club of America (SCCA) Solo II series. Woodhouse continued racing Solo II throughout the 1980s and early '90s, participating in regional and divisional events and picked up several regional and divisional championships. He participated in the National Solo II Championships nine times, and placed in the top



five, five times.

Next, he would go Dodge Viper racing with a national series called Viper Days. In 1996, Woodhouse began this all Viper competition with a stock 1996 Viper and, in 1998, became the overall Champion in the street class. This competition evolved into a full blown wheel to wheel racing series that Woodhouse, then, participated in with a race-prepared 1996 Dodge Viper GTS Coupe from 1999 through 2002. During that same time, the car was raced in a number of SCCA events with good success, establishing track records at Road Atlanta, Heartland Park near Topeka, Kansas and Mid America Motorplex south of Council Bluffs, Iowa in the IT/E class.

Bob went Pro-Racing in the SCCA SPEED World Challenge Series in 2003, running two races. The 2004 and 2005 seasons yielded two ninth-place finishes at Sebring in Florida and Laguna Seca in

California and one sixth-place finish at Sears Point (now called Infineon), also in California. The 2006 season was one of marked improvement, starting with the season opener at Sebring International Raceway where Bob scored his first podium finish. The year continued to be a success with eight top-10 finishes, four top-five finishes and he finished sixth in driver points standings. Bob did this at the ripe old age of 60 while running six dealerships.

In 2007, Bob stepped away from the dealerships and the pro-level driving but retained the racing team, Woodhouse Performance. By this time, Woodhouse had also become the nations leading Viper dealer.

In 2008, the #13 Viper of Woodhouse Performance with veteran road racer Tommy Archer at the wheel would win three poles and pick up three wins in the always tough SPEED World Challenge GT series.

Also, in 2008, Bob lead a group to change the direction of the series. For years, the SCCA Pro Racing World Challenge Series was known as the

“best kept secret in motorsports”. While this was flattering, it posed challenges for competitors trying to cultivate sponsorships. To remedy this problem, Bob Woodhouse and six other racing associates purchased the marketing and licensing rights to the series from SCCA.

The new management group, WC Vision LLC, officially took control of the series in mid-2008, and began developing partnerships with sponsors such as Optima Battery, Race Keeper, and Bondurant Driving School. The new corporation is responsible for marketing and management of the series while SCCA Pro Racing is contracted to sanction and run their races.

In 2010, Woodhouse Racing is running the full season World Challenge schedule with drivers Kuno Wittmer in #13 and Jeff Courtney in # 99 Dodge Viper Competition Coupes. The season outcome is unknown at this writing however both drivers are top ten with Kuno second in Championship points and responsible for a new track record at the 2010 Long Beach Grand Prix.



Photos by Jerry Doctor

photos below by Jerry Doctor
Woodhouse 2010 Award



photo by Candy Gerber

Bob Woodhouse
 MiDiv/DMVR - Aug.1989



Photos below from Bob



**Working
 a Solo
 November
 1995**



Running a Solo May 1998

