

The Alternative Line

by Joe Holzer for Publication in CNY-PCA Redline Report Copyright 2009 <http://www.holzerent.com>

Thanks a Lot !!

I knew there was a reason I hadn't wanted to go to the HCP/CNY Driver Ed at WGI (Watkins Glen) in July. Right up until the last moment there had been too few entrants to break even. But a funny thing happened in late June which changed my thinking a lot; the 48 Hours was a washout for the first time in many years. And it turned out that my daughter Jess had to be in town the prior weekend for a wedding. So that led to our usual gang of idiots collaborating to attend as atonement. Be careful what you wish for.

Some background; 48 Hours is a "happening". It is actually a three day weekend event, but the Friday is an "Instructors – Only" day, during which we have a National Driver Ed Instructor Workshop and Checkout Session. And we get to play away from the eyes of the eager, but substantially less skilled, students who neglect to acknowledge that fact when they watch us and ask why they are not similarly "free". Not that there are some instructors who stretch the limits of prudence. Frequently and inadvisably. Many of the instructor group, in fact, use those days as "tune up" for their "Club Crashing – er – Racing" activities. So, as one who has no interest in that activity, but who takes DE seriously, I recognize that sometimes they forget they are NOT racing, and we give them certain "latitude" in rules enforcement; ie get out of their way.

The Friday this year had not been bad, but the following two days were dreadful. And Porsche sound systems are not made to be continuously wetted by open windows as required for safety. Add to that the fact that we as a group camp at the inside of turn 11, which turned to mud, and you get the picture. Normally we have a delightful barbeque and sing-song, with anywhere up to forty people in attendance, including my nephews who also drive. And we sure tried again this year, but to no avail.

So the Hunter brothers (except Bob, who turned out to be the wise one), the Hylands, and my daughter Jess and I decided to attend the CNY/HCP inaugural DE in July. Since most of us are instructors, who must pay full shot for 48 Hours like everybody else, but who are free for most mid-week events like the CNY/HCP one, we thought we would try a "do over". Unfortunately, fate had other ideas in mind. The following open letter was sent the next day to the organizers; Chris Whaley who lives here in Baldwinsville but is a longtime HCP guy, and our beloved Joyce Gladle, Region President Emeritus of CNY, married to no-meritus Chuck:

Chris & Joyce;

Thanks for persisting in asking us to attend the CNY/HCP event. I wonder which of you two scheduled all the mechanicals at the Holzer/Hunter/Hyland crowd ;-)

To whit: Jess had a ball joint stem, which had exhibited no problems in the prior 33 years, break on her Targa. Not "the ball came out of the socket" which is the normal failure mode, but warns you by rattling around in the cup first. No warning whatsoever. When we went to try to put it on the trailer, one of the trailer tires was flat. Again, how many years? So we changed that. But our attempt to strap the lower A arm to the shock strut so the tire would not bind, so we could put it on the trailer, failed. But I went downtown and got a U bolt and some band clamps. The U bolt was exactly 1/4 inch too narrow. So we inverted it and bent the tangs outward to span the A arm. Then clamped it in three places, the bottom one beneath the A arm, so the torsion bar spring (it's a '77 mind you) would force the strut to travel with it. But moving it caused the tire to immediately spin both nuts off the U bolt, allowing it to drop free! Thankfully, by then we had it on the trailer. I'll figure a way to get it off, probably by putting another pair of nuts on as jam nuts, since the others were only finger tight, once at the shop.

But while I was downtown getting the parts, after I had parked the rig with the trailer in a hole so the Targa didn't have to climb a ramp, my convex mirror on the driver side of the RV decided to FALL off! What?!?!

As you know, Steve Hunter had his left rear hub break on his 356 coupe. How old is THAT?! And it broke in a clean circle, almost as if someone had INTENDED it!

And Burt Hunter got a puncture in his right rear race slick on his w-i-d-e 914. And Brian Hyland had his clutch give out on the red race Targa.

Needless to say, we Holzer-Hunter-Hyland clan hope you will select somebody else for the bad luck weekend next time. But we are all healthy, if not happy, and I was asked to pass along that we all loved the event. With the group of older cars including the 912's, it was a pleasure to be able to drive them without being overtaken constantly by turbos like 48 Hours. And the weather was certainly better ;-) But the camping was what made it great - getting in on Tuesday evening allowed us to setup at our usual spot even if we had to try out every other spot around the wine tasting spikes and closed garages & gates ;-) I wish we could get Niagara region to allow camping in the track also. As you might know, we get together as a group at 48 Hours each year. But as drivers your event could actually be more inviting for us.

So the guys want to all let you know we'd love to do it again because we'd all get more, and better, track time. We'd all prefer if the Two-By-Two was a whole session, as with the pass & pass drills, because of the missed signals when they ended, but that's a minor gripe. The major one was the mechanical breakages. Let's not do those again, OK?

Joe Holzer Idea Man ;-)
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Just so you know; the silly mechanicals had not stopped there. Upon returning home I discovered that the battery in my sweet '97 Audi A8 (which has the Euro S8 suspension and brakes, and surprises a number of instructors in 944's when I catch and pass them with that big aluminum sedan at the Niagara events when I've run it - delicious car ;-) was "dead'r'n hell" to quote Hans from the Swiss Trip. Next morning so was the RV chassis (engine) battery. Three days later the two year old expensive golf cart batteries with the one year warrantee also crapped, although diagnosing that was nightmarish - I thought I'd lunched the \$1000+ inverter/charger. I need both for quiet operation of my CPAP sleep machine I have used for years now. Meanwhile, Jess had to return to Baltimore with her Subie Outback wagon. Which lunched its alternator in the middle of nowhere in Pennsylvania. What a month July turned out to be. I am glad it is over, finally.

The good news is the Targa was able to be repaired to mostly original condition. We can't find the aluminum wheel arch trim which was ripped off when the wheel rolled the fender edge out, but at least the edge itself was able to be fixed. The wheel, which stopped by jamming itself between the inner fender, shock strut, and pan about halfway around the downhill left hander leading to the "laces" area of the track, has a mighty flat spot on half the width of the tread, and a big gouge opposite that where the fender edge cut it. But it drove home from the shop fine. The repair was capably done by Brewerton Car Care, recently opened by Vince Coates formerly of Burdick Porsche, as he had worked on the Targa when its Motronic box went bad a few years ago, so knew the car. As we discussed, if one ball joint fractured, it was silly not to change them both. And despite no seeming evidence of problem with the brake hoses, they too were originals. So we replaced them. And the swaybar bushings which had two torn. Total bill, including the tire replacement, was about a grand. It could have been a LOT worse had Jess not demonstrated why she is an Instructor Mentor herself, and kept it from hitting anything enroute to parking on the grass on the left of the "laces". You could tell I'm proud of her. ;-)

I've heard from the Hunters and the Hylands and their problems are all being fixed. And despite the scare of his being dizzy from the incident, Steve Hunter is fine now. Don't ask about costs for their repairs nor for the various electrical gremlins - you don't want to know. But like the "Terminator", "we'll be back". Let's hope OUR string of bad luck is all finished. 'Cause the weather was great.

Damn. ;-)

