

# The Alternative Line

by Joe Holzer for CNY-PCA Redline Report Copyright 2011 <http://www.holzerent.com>

## Ramble On

Those of you who are my age may recall the heading as the title of a Led Zeppelin song from their "II" album. Those of you who are too young to recall that, but have been reading the Redline recently may associate it with the "non-Porsche" mea culpas of a few of our other contributors. Or you might think it describes MY writing style.

Logically, all would be correct. Seemingly, however, there are others who would appear to do the same when it comes to complaining about anything "non-Porsche" in our regional club newsletter. As an author who has certainly been guilty of such divergence from the absolute purity of the marquee, I must now prostrate myself and beg your forgiveness for that divergence. But I also wish to ask whether you feel my by-line would look better, or somehow miss something were I to be so sterilized in my writing? The best news is that you have the right to put your issue down without bothering to read my, or any other author's, such deviation from the relative purity such as you might find in another publication all you readers receive – Panorama.

Please understand that my comments are not intended to criticize Pano, nor its editor Betty Jo Turner. One need only look at the relative quality of that magazine compared with any other regular publication available out there. Clearly, even if you consider the readers to be a "captive audience", the advertisers must certainly view it favorably if by no more measurement than the benefit THEY derive from its content, which leads to readers seeing their ads and responding with their bucks.

But that is precisely the point of my missive; that the only reason for the survival of any publication is its provision of information or entertainment which is sufficiently attractive to the audience to make it a worthy place for advertisers to present their wares in hopes of also getting their interest. Some comparisons might be in order. Magazines like Autoweek, Automobile, Road & Track, Excellence, Car & Driver, and Motor Trend each approach what is essentially a similar subject, yet with sufficient uniqueness to make their specific readership fairly well defined as a demographic group. I mean no slight to anyone in my limited descriptions, and I assure you that there are huge overlaps – how could I possibly know unless I was sufficiently intimate with each to make such a comment? But you may be sure that advertisers recognize those distinctions. Think about the ads you see in Pano, for example. While it is not impossible to find a Ferrari pictured there, it is extremely unlikely you will see a NASCAR ad. Yet your region President is clearly a fan, as I am sure are many of you. That I MIGHT be able to name as many as five current NASCAR drivers should show you the yawn it brings to me. But I would be an idiot to deny it has a HUGE following in the USA, while most people you might ask on the street would be hard pressed to tell me anything about F1, which I follow religiously. Even more than I follow Porsche racing. Gasp!!

Is there a single reader of this who has the slightest doubt that the term "fan", which is based on "fanatic", is totally inadequate in describing my relationship with Porsche? The Ayatollah should have such zealots. Yet you readers who have not just landed from another planet are well aware of the breadth of my subject matter contained in my similar articles. That I don't write much about Ramblers (the cars, not the people like me ;-) has more to do with my lack of personal experience therewith than any other factor.

Those who have followed my writings (are there any who would truthfully claim to do so? ;-) would hopefully attest to my attempts, at the very least, to produce entertaining and informative copy, whether butchering the JFK inaugural, singing the praises of a proud papa watching his daughter become a PCA track junkie like myself, or explaining what is sometimes needed but generally is left unsaid. Like this. The "trigger" for my writing is less important than the subject and intent of the message I hope to portray. And I hope if you personally have any guilty feelings once read, or perhaps the opposite, then you must at least recognize that my purpose has been achieved. The simple fact is that most of you readers are beneficiaries of largesse by the various contributors to Redline, and especially that of its Editors throughout the years. You are similarly benefitting as you have from the work by those who take on responsibility on behalf of the region, as well as PCA National, almost all of whom do so entirely as volunteers. YOU try remembering to write something to get Skip off your back for every issue ;-) Please. I am serious.

How many of you readers recognize that CNY PCA was the third region formed in PCA? Like a hybrid plant we have spawned many other regions, which partly explains the spaghetti-like shape for our region. Our most recent spinoff was Finger Lakes region. In fact, by geographic location, our region President and our Editor are both located in another region's borders. But old habits die hard, so loyalties often have little to do with physical boundaries, and much to do with our personal relationships with other personalities in the region. It is very likely for personal reasons that I will soon be moving to the HVR region. But I expect, as much as I am able, to continue my CNY affiliation, not because I have no friends in HVR – quite the contrary – but because my soul is so fused to the CNY region. I started here in 1981, just over thirty years ago, and have held every post in the region. It is a sad fact that there was one point when I was the ONLY active person in the region, and but for my perseverance (stupidity some might say), CNY might not even exist today. Look at the history of PCA. Lots of regions have shutdown because there were simply an inadequate cadre of those who cared enough to keep them alive. So in a meaningful way I see the region as it is today as a vindication of that perseverance.

So I hope you can appreciate why I was dismayed to hear of the negative comments about the fact of Ramblers being highlighted, and even pictured, in our “Porsche” newsletter. Both because of my awareness of our history and because I recognize the overlap of enthusiasms for all those automotive magazines, I ask that you readers consider that it is only by knowing what has been done wrong that we can hope to recognize what a tremendous engineering marvel a Porsche really is. There is a reason Cars 2 has as antagonists the “Lemons”, which includes at least three Ramblers. As I suspect almost all of you know, Excellence is a magazine whose original name was “Porsche” until Porsche AG forced them to change the name for trademark infringement. I wonder how many of you know that Porsche AG also refused PCA the right to use the Porsche trademarks unfettered? If you go to a Parade you will see a lot of Porsche stuff. But none of it will fit me because Porsche AG has no clue that people like me exist, and they won't allow those who do to use the Porsche crest or logotype. Dick Jeffers and others have written here their frustration that Pano reflects no negatives about Porsche, like the M96 engine issues with IMS bearings and RMS seals. Let me assure you that you can find similarly “skewed” reporting in every automotive magazine. Excellence beats Pano hands down for telling it like it really is with Porsches, but you would be hard pressed to find positive press there about Porsche competitors who beat Porsche on a level playing field, whether racing or commercially. Autoweek, which I have loved since the “Satch Carlson” days, seems to go out of their way to avoid excessive singing of the Zuffenhausen praises, just as Jeremy Clarkson of Top Gear thinks Porsche design must be the least expensive part of their cars. Motor Trend leans toward NASCAR and domestics (there is no such thing today – a Honda or Nissan might have more US sourced parts than a Ford) while Car & Driver and Automobile seem almost incapable of giving admiration unless it came from the eastern side of the Atlantic ocean. For a techie like me, Road & Track seems the most balanced, but if you read an article there about exactly the same car as reported in a Consumer Reports, you would think they came from different parallel universes.

Therein is my point, about Ramblers or anything else our writers think is worthy of the membership. Will we always be right? Of course not. But unless YOU are writing the article, why should the author not be able to write about whatever they want, within the rational limits imposed by the Editor? Not happy with that? Then YOU write better articles and follow the “market” approach – if it is better, that author will be displaced by your missives. Skip only has so many pages, and I have certainly seen some of my diatribes condensed to the Readers' Digest version ;-). But he also has that many pages to fill ever issue. He could use YOUR help.

Ramble on. You might be surprised to find it is fun. And thanks for listening all this time.

