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## Four Drivers “Luck Out” in 2015

### “Central Division” Team Pantera Converges on SORC

Four Italian race cars were lined up all in a row on Arnold's Main Street at last Friday afternoon's Sandhills Open Road Challenge car show. The vintage cars were drawing a lot of attention, with some spectators wondering out loud exactly what kind of car they were.

“People think Panteras are Lamborghinis or Ferraris,” said Bob Radefeld, who with the other three members of the Central Division of Team Pantera Racing, called it “a dream come true” last week when all four entered the SORC at the same time.

“This year is unique for our team in the fact that the four of us have never in the past been able to be lucky enough to be accepted into this event in the same year,” said Radefeld.

The four racers - Bob Radefeld from Topeka, Kansas; Eldon Hower from Whiting, Kansas; Frank Cirrincione from Hendersonville, Tennessee; and Mark Skwarek from East Haddam, Connecticut - are known as the “Central Division” team, since they are mainly located in the Midwest and East Coast areas. The bulk of other Pantera racers are located in the

western U.S., with their headquarters in Los Angeles, California. In order to be a member of the club, Pantera owners need to have participated in at least one open road challenge event.

Panteras (Italian for “Panther”) were only sold in the U.S. from 1971 to 1974 at Lincoln-Mercury dealerships. During that time period, approximately 5,000 were imported and sold. The Panteras owned by these four gentlemen are 40-plus years old and classified as “antique.”

“We contend that we are the only team that runs in open road challenge events in the U.S. with cars that are vintage automobiles,” said Radefeld. “As of yet, no other team in any of the four open road challenge events run in the U.S. annually can claim this title.”

The Pantera was a joint venture between Ford & DeTomaso Automobili of Italy. DeTomaso designed, engineered and built the car at Chia Coachworks (later, body production was performed by Vignale) and the DeTomaso plant in Modena, Italy. Ford supplied engines, development and production financing and established a



A car show spectator checks out the engine of Bob Radefeld's 1973 Pantera during Friday afternoon's SORC car show. Four of the fairly rare vehicles in one location drew a lot of attention. (Janet Larreau photo)

dealer network through its Lincoln-Mercury division. After Ford pulled out of the project in 1974, DeTomaso continued to build and sell the car in the European market through 1992.

Besides the low U.S. production numbers, the car was unique in the fact that it contained features not normally found in cars of that era, including its unique design, four-wheel disc brakes, four-wheel independent suspension, light weight magnesium wheels, standard power brakes, air conditioning and full instrumentation at no extra cost. It had a top speed of approximately 155 mph and a showroom cost of \$9,995.00 when introduced in 1971.

“All Pantera owners consider themselves lucky to own such an exciting, fast and unique automobile,” said Radefeld. “Driving this car ANYWHERE

draws a crowd! It is in essence a parade in and of itself and most people find it unbelievable that it is actually a 40-plus year old automobile.”

Radefeld, age 70, found his 1973 Pantera Luxury model in Derby, Kansas, just south of Wichita. Its owner was an accountant for Boeing aircraft. Radefeld has raced his Pantera for nine years in the SORC.

Hower, age 72, drives a 1972 Pantera, and has driven in the SORC six years; Skwarek, age 71, drives a 1973 Pantera L and has raced in Arnold five years. Cirrincione, age 69, has entered the race nine years, but has never brought his Pantera.

Cirrincione's Pantera has been under restoration for 15-plus years. As a school administrator and owner of various rental properties in Nashville, Tennessee, he was unable to spend much time on his car be-

fore retirement. He has done a total restoration on the car, and this involves a lot of work.

Joking, Radefeld said, “Being a perfectionist at heart, Frank's work progresses at a very slow pace.”

Cirrincione trailered his car for the trip to Arnold, as it is yet untested from its restoration. Radefeld said Skwarek always trailers his car for the trip, as his is more set up as a race car than his teammates' street cars.

Radefeld entered the SORC in the 90 mph class, Hower and Cirrincione in the 95 mph class, and Skwarek in the 120.

Skwarek was happy to place 5th in the 95 mph division of the Loup to Loup Challenge, noting that he didn't have a working speedometer.

“I just drove by the seat of my pants,” said Skwarek.

Continued on page 2.

## SORC's 15th Year Marks Some Great Moments



The Arnold City Park filled up once again for the annual SORC barbecue and awards program on Saturday night. The program featured an auction and results of the Loup to Loup, Shoot-Out and Open Road Challenge. (Janet Larreau photo)

There were some great moments and quite a few “firsts” last week, as the Sandhills Open Road Challenge celebrated its 15th year.

Driving a Lamborghini, Mark Capener of Idaho Falls, Idaho, broke a record in the Mile Shootout Unlimited division on Friday morning, with a top speed of 228.4 mph. Capener's three-run average was 227.53. The previous record was 224.7 mph set in 2009. Capener said he purchased the car for 70K, put a big computer on it and big turbos. “We did our homework, what was winning and put our money on it,” he said.

Placing second in the Unlimited Mile was John Sandahl, of Wakefield, Nebraska, who was the first to break 200 mph in a Corvette. John said the car came stock at 638.70 hp and has been beefed up to 1400 hp.

Driving a Corvette, 91-year-old Bobbie Smith of Arnold entered the One-Half-Mile Street division, driving an average speed of 139.70 mph., with a top speed of 140.5 mph. Smith, who placed second out of a field of 16 cars, said he wasn't able to enter Saturday's Open Road Challenge this year because son Robbi took his keys away.

Another entrant in the Shoot-Out worth mentioning was female driver Melissa Grantski

(referred to as “Super Woman”), who raced a Cobra in the Unlimited division of the One-Half-Mile, clocking an average speed of 122.93 mph, with a top speed of 127.7 mph.

Todd Grantski of Utica, Nebraska, was the very first Mustang driver to enter the 120 mph class of Saturday's open road challenge and finish the race. All others have either blown up or crashed. Grantski, with navigator Dylon Grantski, ended up in 7th place and was 06.503 off perfect speed. Grantski said four generations of his family were represented at SORC, with he and his father driving, his daughter and son navigating and a grandson volunteering.

For the first time, Mustangs ruled several classes over Corvettes. One placed second in the 95 mph, losing first to an Audi R8, two Mustangs won first and second in the 90 mph class, two finished first and second in the 100 mph class, and one placed first in the 110.

A Tesla Electric Roadster placed in the top three in the 90 mph class. Driven by Don Cox, of Lincoln, with Shawn Peterson as navigator, the car was 0.940 from perfect. A Tahoe, driven by Charlie Friend of New Mexico, won the 80 mph class, beating out two Corvettes for the top spot.

All events held during the three-day SORC ran smoothly; so smoothly, in fact, that results of the race were available at the earliest time ever in SORC's his-

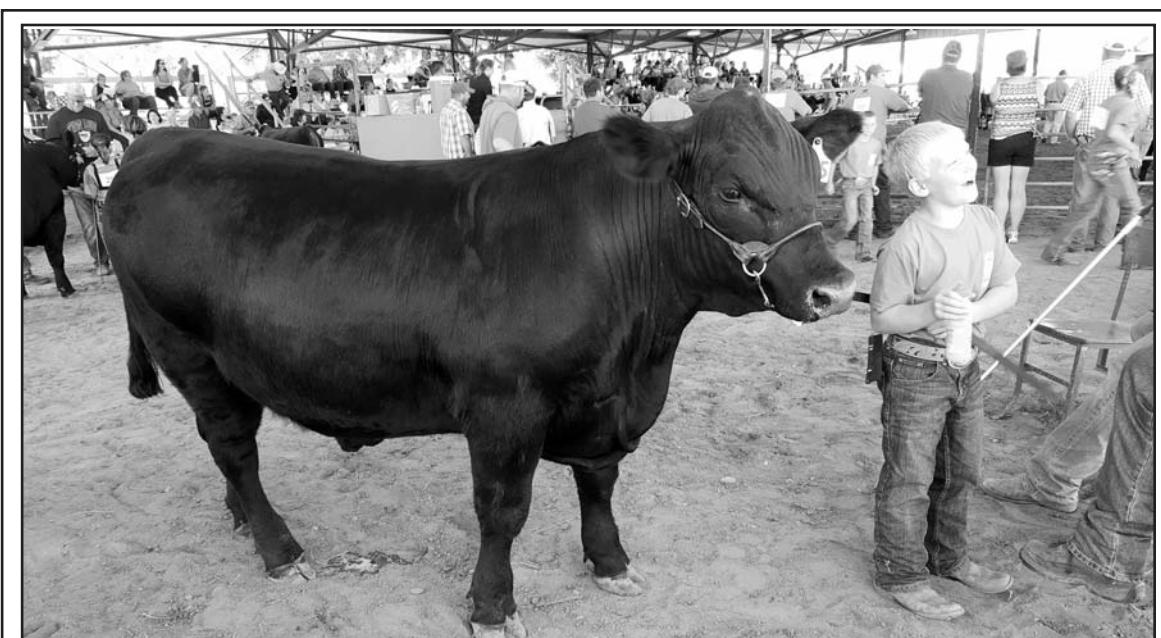
tory. Good rains came and went, giving farmers a needed break, but leaving the courses dry by race time. The auction to benefit SORC and awards cere-

mony started early at the city park, after drivers, volunteers and spectators enjoyed a barbecue meal provided by Great Plains Communications, Inc., with proceeds going to Arnold Chamber.

For the last several years, SORC has auctioned off a banner that hangs underneath the Optima balloon at the starting line. The buyer is guaranteed a slot in next year's race and can give an entry of his or her choice to someone else. Last year's highest bidder paid \$1,300.00. This year, the bidding stopped at \$2,100.00.

During the awards presentations, both drivers and volunteers were recognized for their years of being involved with the SORC. Drivers who have entered the challenge all 15 years were presented a gift.

“SORC has come a long way,” said board member Shane Cool. “We appreciate the volunteers who are willing to come back. Eighty-five percent came back this year. These (drivers) have been here every year, and that is a big accomplishment. They have made a heck of a commitment to SORC.”



## County Fair Tradition Lives On

Nine-year-old Trey Connell shows excitement, as he wins a purple ribbon on his Beef Showmanship entry in his first try at competition at the recent Custer County Fair. A member of the Tail Twisters 4-H Club, Trey's mom, Leta, said it was a fun, but emotional time for Trey, as he later sold the steer that he had become attached to at the Fair's annual auction. Trey, his two brothers and numerous 4-Hers from Arnold, came home with many ribbons and plaques after a week of competing in most all divisions. Many of the kids are following in their parents' and grandparents' footsteps, as they learn and grow character through 4-H. Results and photos can be found on page 4 and 5 of this issue. (Courtesy photo)