

## THE HISTORY OF DEVEREAUX-KAISER *by Tom Kaiser*

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I met Maurice Devereaux in 1966 when he came to the Bank I ran looking for a short term loan. He pulled into the bank parking lot in his '29 Steams Knight Sedan, and of course he was promptly assured of the line of credit he was seeking. That began a long-term friendship which only ended with his death at the age of 100 (almost 101) on August 4, 2009.

In 1970 Florida Region Classic Car Club wanted a place to hold their annual meeting. Maurice Devereaux offered his home for the annual meeting. He prepared a huge pot of baked beans, and a large ham. Others brought various dishes to share on the long table in Maurice Devereaux's garage. The Annual meeting was held on the back porch. It was then established that the Devereaux show would be held each January, on the last Sunday.

The first year attendance was; 7 Classics, Maurice Devereaux's '30 Packard and '29 Steams Knight, Tom Kaiser's '36 Packard 12 Coupe Roadster, Robert Word's, '30 Pierce Arrow Touring, Hovey brothers', Rolls Royce, and Phil Belote's, '30 Marmon big 8. Subsequent years saw people attracted by the display of cars in the front yard, and they began to show up with their collector cars as well as Classics. One year, a family pulled their camper truck in to view the show but they also partook of the pot luck food which left some of the participants without anything to eat. Maurice Devereaux was so angry he discontinued the pot luck and the local Rotary Club, to which I belonged, took on the project of cooking food for the show. That continued until I moved the show in 1981, when the local Lupus Society took on the project and did it until they disbanded around 1983 when a local Mennonite Church took it on and has continued to provide wonderful food ever since.

One year Maurice decided to have judging (against my protest) and we awarded 1st to a '29 Pierce Arrow coupe, 2nd and 3rd to others. There were so many complaints about the judging, that Maurice Devereaux decided to have "people choice" judging the next year. When the tabulating had been completed, a '57 MG roadster had the most "votes" and upon closer inspection, it was discovered that the same handwriting was evident on ALL votes for that particular car. It seems that a daughter of a Sarasota attorney decided she should have the win, so packed the ballot box. Maurice Devereaux got so angry with that, he decided there would never ever be any judging again! Thus was the tradition established that this would always be a free show and the theme became "Show Up and Show Off"

The show grew to 126 cars in his yard in 1980 when he held the last meet there since he had sold his home. I decided that it had become too popular to discontinue, so arranged with the airport to have the show in an area called "the Pavilion" - some nicknamed it "the snake pit" since it was partially marshland. It was held there until about 1985 when it had to be moved to a "go cart track" on old US 301 East of the airport. In 1991 local AACA region approached me to take it on and the last show I did produced 537 cars.

Sunshine Region AACA renamed it the Devereaux/Kaiser Collector Car show, and subsequently moved it to the Mall in South Sarasota where it had been held ever since with the exception of three years. One year it was rained out and that was the only year it had been "officially" canceled. Three of us stationed ourselves at the site to inform arrivals that it had been rained out. So many showed up that we diverted them to a vacant shopping center for an impromptu "unofficial" show.

One other year the shopping mall thought it was a bother, so the show was moved to The County fairgrounds, and another year it was moved to the Ed Smith Stadium grounds. The Shopping Center merchants decided that the show brought in lots of business, so agreed to have it return. Arne Berns had been the leader in establishing it at the Westfield Shopping Mall for many years, he "retired" in 2013, and Ed Smith took it on. He has arranged to move it to Lakewood Ranch which claims to want the show on a permanent basis.

I am the only person who has attended every one of the gatherings since 1970. In 1972 I lived in Naples, and drove up just for the meet and slept on a mat on the floor of a home I had for sale in Sarasota.

Maurice Devereaux missed one meet in 1996 due to a ruptured appendix. Jim Greenwald had the honor of having the car that attended the most meets being his '29 Rolls Royce sedan, probably about 32 of the meets until his death in 2008! The show has grown over the years to the point that attendance is now in excess of 2000 cars, and thousands of spectators. It remains free for display cars 25 years old or older. There has been a "Car Corral" established for cars for sale. There is a \$25.00 charge to display in the car corral, and that is very reasonable for the great exposure received.

The Mennonite church continues to provide food at reasonable prices, and dash plaques and water are sold by the AACA Region to generate some funds to offset the expenses of putting on such a show. Because there is no entry fee, and no judging, cars are displayed at this show that are not displayed anywhere else. It has been said that this is probably the largest show in the state, certainly the largest FREE show!

Come and enjoy this show every year on the Last Sunday of January!

Tom Kaiser

