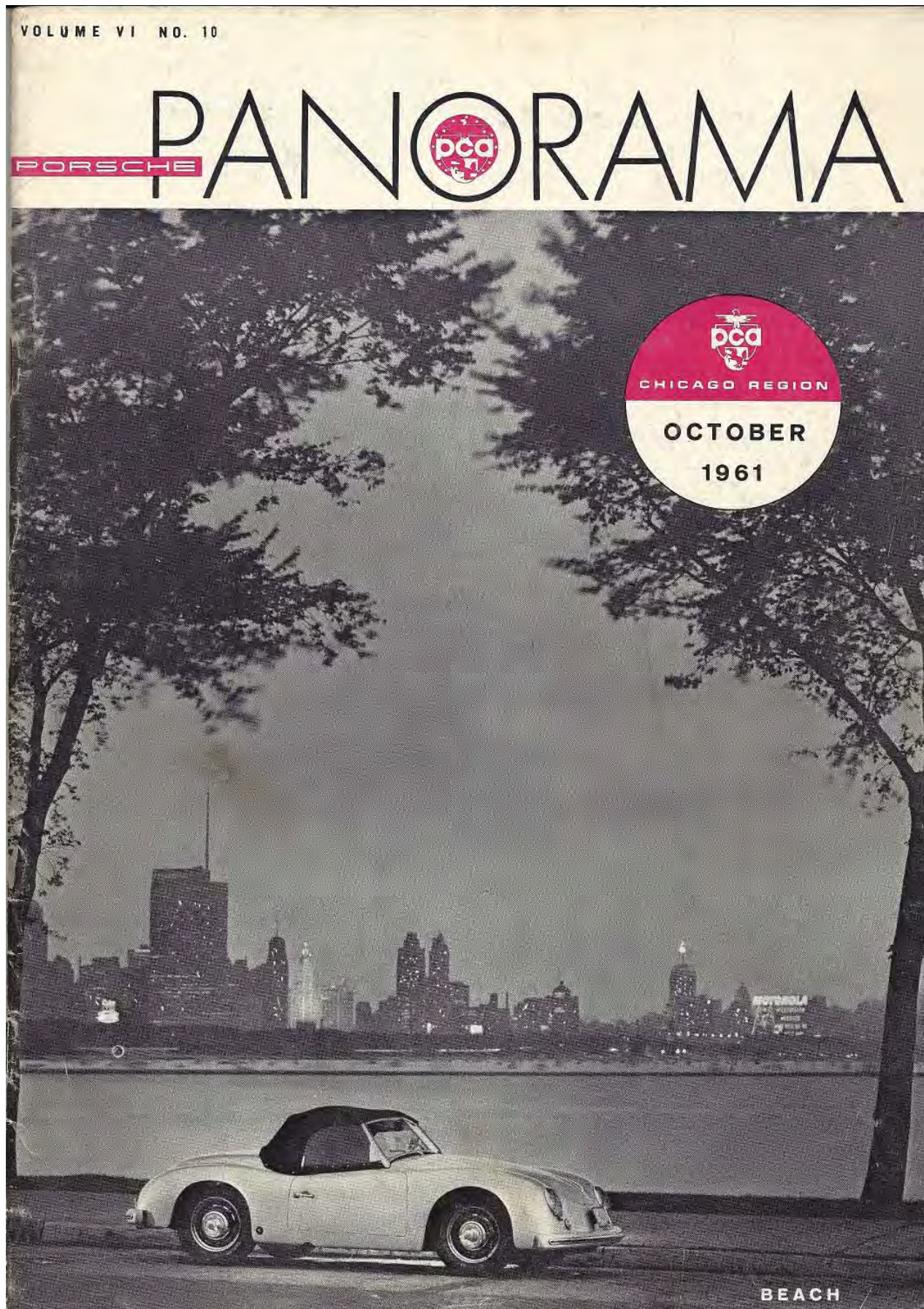


# A Blast from the Past

R. J. Wilmoth, PCA History and Archives





# HISTORY OF THE REGIONS

## CHICAGO REGION

1957 found Winter and nineteen sports car clubs in the Chicago Metropolitan Area. Most Porsche owners belonged to one or more of these clubs but, club member or not, they had a common problem: lack of available parts and a poor service situation. As a result, some Porsche owners congregated frequently to weep, moan, and swap maintenance tips, while enjoying their drinks.

In the Spring, a few owners made contact with PCA and, when news of the 2nd Parade was received, several owners decided to take the trip to Washington: Don Wester, Cal and Linnea Davidson, Paul Fontaine, Don and Lucile Comunale, Bud and Simone Blake, and Jerry Tannenbaum from Milwaukee. At the Parade, people, places and PCA spirit boosted the morale of the Chicagoans and sport, social and technical sessions increased their enthusiasm.

Sympathetic ears and an eye opening ride with Herr Dramm plus a gymkhana with Art Bunker's instruction sent us home confirmed PCA'ers. Back home we were still confronted with the parts-service problem. National suggested that we start a local region. Jim Abbott, Cal Davidson, Gene Bussian, Don Comunale and Bud Blake organized a meeting to determine whether the Porsche owners in the Midwest would be interested in a regional club and it was decided to combine the Chicago-Milwaukee areas for more strength during the first year. Through Bill Sholar we obtained a film, application blanks, copies of Panorama and Christophorus for the meeting. Thirty-four Porsches and twice as many enthusiasts gave their unanimous support to the forming of the region and elected temporary officers. Soon after, the Charter was prepared and signed by Abbott, Davidson, Bussian, Blake, Ash, Cameron, Templeman, Tannenbaum, Wester and Chininis. Program Chairman Gene Bussian, organized our first rally which started from Chicago and Milwaukee simultaneously. By special arrangement with the weatherman, a foot of snow was added to the strange sight of cars approaching a cemetery from opposite directions, navigators diving out to search for some unknown person in an unknown landscape. The fact that Gene was not tarred and feathered indicated the good-natured attitude of the members of this new region and its promising future. Scott Cameron, as Special Technical Chairman, gave his full attention to the major problem of parts and

service. He developed an extensive program which included lists of service places, parts sources, questionnaires and reports to the members. His efforts contributed to alleviate the technical void in the Midwest.

In 1958 the first technical session was held at Le Mans Motors in Maywood, where an eager group watched an engine and clutch removal. It was the first exposure for many to the inner workings of their machine and to technical vernacular. Our tech sessions have continued each year since and are held at VW and Porsche dealers. Oliver Schmidt of Import Motors spoke to the Club at one session assuring us of his continued efforts on behalf of Porsche owners for better parts and service. These sessions have proved to be very popular with demonstrations, movies, coffee 'n doughnuts, and have brought large turnouts of up to 180 people. Most of the owners who come are curious to know more about the function and care of their cars.

Others who come are the do-it-yourself mechanics, but whoever and whatever, our tech sessions are also social events with both sexes represented. In the Chicago Region we are thankful and fortunate to have people like Paul Fontaine and Glen Carroll who have carried the responsibilities for those meetings.

Two things made our Spring meeting in 1958 a success: Wolfgang Raether's talk in front of an "empty" swimming pool and the one-arm gymkhana on the grass airfield. Our hosts, Sally and Wayne Potter, saw to our needs with hot coffee to fight the chilly weather. Each year the Potters have opened their gates and filled the pool for a swarm of cars, people and kids. Yes, this is our "family affair", complete with gymkhana, concourse, etc.; even go-karts were used one year. Informality and picnicking is the order of the day.

August 1958 was memorable indeed. Our first drivers' school, organized by Ed Rinker and Gene Bussian, was held at the SCCA Wilmot Hills Road Course. Memorable for many reasons: Ed Crawford gave a most inspiring drivers' talk emphasizing the non-racing aspects of learning to drive properly and, more importantly, learning to understand and react with your car under any conditions. As an instructor he then put his words into practice. The Drivers' School has become an annual event bringing the new owners, competition drivers, housewives and old timers out to learn, relearn and discover the capabilities and limitations of themselves and their cars.

Ten Chicago members and their wives joined the 1st PCA Treffen in September 1958. They were given a Porsche send-off at O'Hare and again at Idlewild. At their arrival in Stuttgart they took possession of a variety of models and then scattered across the Continent bringing the *real* Chicago story to the natives. The year drew to a close with a "Poet's Rally" by Wayne and Sally Potter.

1959 was our BIG YEAR. Winter and Spring



were spent in developing our muscles for the big exercise—the IV Parade. To quote Dorothy Russler from her history of the RMR: “Aside from the fact that it is the most monumental effort a single region can expend, it was also presumptuous for a region so young to undertake such a project.” This statement could have been applied to the Chicago Region as well. Nevertheless we plunged into the project with vigor, though there were moments of trepidation as the date grew near and registration was low. However, the last minute arrivals swelled the list to 130 cars and the morning of the Parade dawned finally bright and fair. The high points of the IV were the Wisconsin Rally run expertly by Jerry Tannenbaum and crew, the Wilmot Drivers School and Gymkhana by Ray Olson and Elvin Bollet, the Meadowdale trip, cocktail parties, swimming, tech talks, hundreds of door prizes collected by the Bayards, the windup at Elkhart Lakes Road America, and the Porsche Park with the Parade around the course.

July found our Region exhausted from the Parade effort but by August we were back strong at Meadowdale Raceways for a high-speed gymkhana. This tour de force proved such a success that we have held it annually since. More about the Meadowdale Mayhem elsewhere in this issue.

As the 2nd PCA Treffen was leaving Idlewild, the 1st Poor Man’s Treffen (Chicago style) left O’Hare on a tour of the “foreign” sights in and around Chicago. Passports, customs and costumes made the scenes alive with authenticity. Excellent coverage and a two-page spread in the December Issue of Panorama assured the event an annual return.

1960 brought to Chicago the “Press-on-regardless” rally series. Gordon and Barbara Swartz, Dick and Ty Newman gave us the “Southside Caper” followed by the Liautaud’s “St. Valentine’s Massacre” and the “Peon Porsche Pushers.” The objective in having three rallies in succession was to educate and allow novice driver-navigators to get some experience without pressure. Many of the later winners of SCCA and other club rallies began with the PCA series.

The next big event was the Aspen blast with Chicago’s twenty-two car caravan traveling

out West to bring back the President’s Silver. Individual members of the Region also covered themselves with glory at the RMR’s Fifth Parade.

In the Fall, Phil Liautaud and Bud Blake joined the Executive Council as Treasurer and Vice-President respectively, bringing the money and two council votes to the Windy City.

1961 found our Regional membership at 160 having fluctuated over 200 the previous year. The Chicago Region had from its inception serviced the outlying regions, like Milwaukee, Iowa, Indiana and downstate Illinois. By service, we mean regional mailings and the placement of events near tollroads when possible. Milwaukee formed its own region in 1960, Indiana in 1961 and Iowa is about to request a charter.

Twenty-four Chicago Porsches with President Werner Voegeli and Mary snaked East via toll roads leading the way to the Jug End to bring back the President’s Silver again. Car banners prepared by Harry Willwerth supplemented the Chicago badges. Individual members brought back two firsts, one second and three of the top ten overall. Northeastern hospitality, scenery and arrangements made it the event of the year.

**Conclusion:**

The high points of our first year’s history spelled the success and format of the years to come. Bussian’s inaugural rally, LeMans technical session, Potters’ farm gymkhana, Wilmot Drivers’ School, 1st PCA Treffen and the Poet’s Rally—all provided something exciting, interesting and informative for nearly everyone. As we draw toward the close of 1961, we find our membership at 185, our bank account in good condition, morale and esprit de corps high, and a new slate of officers straining at the bit to be elected and to take over the load. Our original local need of parts and service still gets attention but we tend to be more relaxed and enjoy *all* the yearly activities.

Friendly enthusiasm, leadership, participation and a balanced program give the Chicago Region’s members a worthwhile club, not for one meeting alone but for many this year and next.

*Bud Blake, Chicago Region*



*Bud, Paul and Simone*