

In Memoriam

Bobbie'dine Rodda (December 11, 1921-October 27, 2017)



Photo: Helen V. Hutchings

Bobbie'dine Rodda may be remembered for the tens of thousands of collector cars she photographed in the last half-century. Two prints of each were ordered so she could mail one to the owner of the car (not expecting anything in return).

Quick with a heartfelt smile, Bobbie'dine (rhymes with Halloween) not only had a Christmas card list with 5,000 names way back when, but she could easily recognize many times that... and remember what cars they owned.

Even more remarkable is that Bobbie'dine never re-wrote anything. Every note, e-mail or article to be published was simple yet powerful. Her use of the English language came so easily to her that (in my opinion) she took it for granted.

Bobbie'dine also read any collector car magazine she ever saw. At one time that was more than 300 per month covering sports cars, motorcycles, kit cars, antiques, muscle cars and her beloved Classics.

"If you are not doing anything tonight, why not go with me to Monrovia?" she

asked. "Bill Cannon, editor of that fantastic new magazine (*Skinny Knuckles*) wants to organize a chapter of the Society of Automotive Historians."

Bill Cannon was a former mechanical engineer at Ford Motor Company who believed that automobiles were pretty special as they were originally manufactured. His practical no-nonsense approach made him the perfect choice for treasurer of the proposed Southern California Chapter. I became the first president of this organization while Bobbie'dine became the vice-president because she knew everyone.

There were fewer than 20 people at this first meeting, half of which I recognized. None of us knew what the chapter was supposed to do.

"Every newsletter editor in the hobby is a historian," Bobbie'dine firmly stated. "What they write today becomes tomorrow's history. For the next 25 years she never stopped inviting people into the chapter."

I favored a quarterly meeting in automotive museums and specialized libraries

where professionals and serious historians would gather to exchange ideas and resources. Others favored a series of meetings where experts on any aspect of old cars could be explored.

One night in Hollywood, Mark Dees asked if he could bring in *The Miller Dynasty* and give us a chance to buy a copy before it was offered to the hobby.

Bobbie'dine quickly suggested that any other author should do the same. "We can set up card tables around the room if necessary."

Three months later with a room jammed full of automobile books, she said that it should be an annual affair. "I'll ask Briggs Cunningham. He has a big parking lot that's not used Sunday mornings."

And so the SoCal SAH started a long series of highly-successful "Automotive Literature Faire & Exchange" events.

Four years later Bobbie'dine started her *Automotive Calendar of Events*. The SoCal SAH enjoyed plenty of advertising in what hobbyists would come to know as "Miss Information." This often 32-page magazine would be mailed to over 36,000 hobbyists in California, Arizona and Nevada on a rotating basis. Only a small portion of the 12,500 each month were paid subscriptions. In fact, whenever anyone would mail her a donation for the photographs she distributed, she would list them as subscribers. Subtracting the editors who exchanged publications with her, it was difficult to say the magazine would ever be profitable.

Yes, everyone knew about the long hours I spent on the magazine, but few knew how much Bobbie'dine spent of her own money helping her friends in the hobby.

Not long after Clint (her husband) died, "Miss Information" was sold to *Joan Denver*.

Bobbie'dine missed the daily interaction with hobbyists, advertisers and promoters but without Clint she discovered that she was no longer on a "500-mile leash." Bobbie'dine then traveled extensively bringing a basketful of enthusiasm and optimism wherever she went.

By this time however, her hearing had almost completely vanished. She would read lips or just answer something to what she thought someone said... always with a smile.

For Bobbie'dine, the hobby didn't end when she physically couldn't be everywhere. She proofread for a half-dozen quality publications well into her nineties. "You don't know how much it means to me being able to contribute," Bobbie'dine Rodda wrote me each month.

—John C. Meyer III