

Remembering Frank Beddor, Jr.



Twenty+ year Nord Stern member Frank Beddor, Jr. passed away on Saturday, November 10th at the age of 83. These were indeed 83 very full years. On behalf of all of Nord Stern, I'd like to extend my condolences to his son Steve, who many of you know, and the rest of the Beddor family. There are many wonderful eulogies available elsewhere as Frank was quite a guy and touched many, many, people, so I thought I would pass on how Frank touched Nord Stern and myself.

Most of you probably have heard of Frank, but did not meet the man. He was not a very active member of Nord Stern in the sense of attending events, but his impact on our Region is significant and lives on.

I first met Frank and his sons, Steve and David, at the Last Fling in, I believe, 1983. I was the Co-eventmaster and I remember checking out the long wheelbase Audi Quattro coupes they were driving. The next spring I received a call from Dick Roe asking if I knew Frank Beddor. I responded that I had met him at an earlier event, but couldn't say I really knew him. Dick went on to explain that Frank wanted to rent the track. He was pretty careful who he rented to and ended the conversation with "I'll tell him he has to hire some Porsche Club instructors" and thus Nord Stern's relationship with Frank began.

The first few events were relatively small with just a few of us and not particularly noteworthy. Then in 1986 things ratcheted up big time. Frank started the Quattro Club USA which is now the Audi Club, basically single-handedly. I've often wondered what the executives of Audi of America really thought about this enthusiast who was doing so much to promote their brand. Recall that at that time Audi was

just working their way out of the “unintended acceleration” debacle sparked by **60 Minutes** as well as just starting to build some good cars after a run of some significant quality issues. Audi was doing very well on the world rally circuit and had some awesome cars driven by John Buffum and Michelle Mouton. Frank bought a handful of the homologation special “Sport Quattros” and had them federalized by Porsche tuner, Andial. The events went from a few friends driving relatively slow cars to large events and the cars were getting much faster.

With more participants, we needed many more instructors, and quickly. At that time Nord Stern’s schools were sort of loosely organized and there really wasn’t an established criterion for becoming an instructor. When the current group of instructors noticed that you were doing a good job both on and off the track, someone tapped you on the shoulder and asked if you wanted to be an instructor. We needed a lot of instructors, fast. Consequently a lot of people became instructors that were simply unqualified. Availability was their prime qualification.

This led to lengthy discussions regarding instructor qualifications, training, and performance. We struggled with this for a couple of years and in 1990 put together the first formal instructor training. By this time, our own Teresa Vickery was the Executive Director of the Quattro Club and took a lead role in making some changes happen. We worked with Kathy Rude (recovered from a near fatal crash at BIR in a 935 in 1983) and her husband, Indy car driver Ludwig Heimrath, Jr., and the first instructor training was held in 1990. Both the Audi Club and Nord Stern have continued and expanded on that early effort and have highly organized schools today. Frank was always very supportive. Basically if it made for a better event, he was for it and often funded it.

All that was learned through this effort was not only applied to the Nord Stern schools but we now had a large number of very good instructors. Instead of doing one or two schools a year, we were doing many events a year which moved the program along at a much faster pace than would have been possible without Frank’s events. Nord Stern built on its program and it only got better over the years. There were also quite a number of us that got a considerable amount of track time in those years and really honed our driving skills. When Club Racing came along in 1993, Nord Stern had a real nucleus of very qualified drivers who stepped into racing and were very successful immediately on a national level.

I credit Frank Beddor, Jr. for much of this success.

The buildings in the paddock are an example of Frank’s legacy that we enjoy today. In the mid-80’s there were no garages we could use in the paddock and much of the paddock was unpaved. Frank wanted a place to work on the cars so he worked with the track and built the Quattro garage. This led to a group from various clubs going together and forming the Autobahn group and funding the construction of the A and B garages. This would not have happened if Frank had not built the first garage.

I met a lot of interesting people through my association with Frank and many famous drivers. There would often be a celebrity driver at these events. John Buffem, Hurley Haywood, and Bobby Unser, to name a few. I’ve kept my time sheets from those events, highlighting my faster times. Of course they were driving a 4-door sedans and I was driving a 911, but no one needs to know that part. I now have

friendships with Joe Ruz (Road & Track and Panorama) and Alois Ruf (Ruf Automobiles) and others that I certainly would not have had if not for Frank's passion for our sport.

There are a lot of very entertaining Frank Beddor and early Quattro Club stories. At the next event, lets raise a pint to Frank and re-live some of those wonderful memories of a great man and great times.



Photo:

On steps: Kathy Rude, Steve Fong, Kathy Johnson, Brad Krohn, Gerry Willems, David Lasage, Ludwig Heimrath, Jr., Mike Lesage, Pat Beddor, Mike Doperalski.

Center row: Dick Engebretson, Ron Draper, Dave Fishbaine, Gordon Doering, Mark Hartmann, Teresa Vickery, Neal Nelson, Justin Draper, Roger Johnson, Ed Jacobson, Peter Vickery.

Front row: Kent Anderson, Jim Bruce, Dennis Guentzel

Taken August 1st, 1990 The building in the background no longer exists...