

The Convention is for Drivers Too
February 2005

It's Monday morning and I'm leaving at 2:00AM tomorrow for the SCCA Annual Convention and Board of Directors meeting; I live a long way from the airport. At least enough of the snow has melted that I can see patches of dirt, a very good sign. By the time you read this, the convention will be history but at this point, it is only a plan, and what a plan it is.

Used to be, the convention was just for the club politicians but in the last few years, both the Divisional and National conventions have been offering more and more activities directed squarely at competitors in all of our three principal areas, Race, Solo, and Rally. This year promises to continue movement in that direction and I, for one, certainly applaud the National Staff and our President, Steve Johnson, for leading us in that direction.

Last year's Safety Symposium, now available from the SCCA Foundation in DVD form with special thanks to Dodge Motorsports, Kumho Tires, and Chicago Region, was an eye-opener for many of us. We heard real experts in the field describe to us in quantitative terms just how the various elements of our safety gear protect us from specific injuries and how we could improve the crash survivability of our race cars and ourselves through the application of tested and proven restraint techniques.

This year, we will focus more on the heat and driver himself and not so much on impact absorption.. Again, the Club has an impressive line up of experts on tap. Arnie Kuhns of the SFI Foundation will address fire suppression. Arnie promises to educate us about how the chemicals used for fire suppression actually work. Also on the subject of fire protection, Dr. Norfleet Smith of the Du Pont corporation, inventors of Nomex® and numerous other high tech fibers, will enlighten us as to how space age materials protect against injury, especially regarding layering and elements of fire suit technology and Rich Shafer, who helped design the heat-protective gear used in the Space Program, will explain both qualitative and quantitative effects of heat on the human body under various conditions.

Finally, a very timely presentation will be offered by Dr. Robert Cantu on mental and physical fitness of drivers and workers as related to safety.

All this, without leaving any stone unturned in the more traditional topics of volunteer relations and Region management and administration, will certainly make this the very best National Convention ever.

I hope to see you there, and at the race track.

Gary Pitts