

# The Formation of the Manitoba Pontiac Association

by  
Wade Weber

**I** was informed of the possibility of a Pontiac Club starting up by John Dyck (Corvette Club of Manitoba) in the summer of 1991. I was picking up some Liquid Glass (a small “plug” for John) and he informed me that some people were getting together at the K-Mart shopping mall lot on Portage Avenue West one Sunday night. That is where we all used to meet back then.

John informed me that I should call Rena Stieben, a mutual friend of John and Bev Dyck, to see what was happening. I called Rena and Danny Stieben and in the conversation I found out that they had a 1974 Formula 455. I wanted to go just to see this car. It turned out that Rena and a couple of other people were key in the original formation/meeting on this particular Sunday. I hope I don't miss anyone, but I recall these people being the key persons: Rena and Danny Stieben, Corinne and Geoff Sandhurst, and Gil Desautels.

Gale (my girlfriend at the time) and I met these people that night. A couple of “gear heads”, friends of Gil, were also there: Larry and Barb Clement. It was a great meeting for me. My car (1976 Firebird) was relatively as you see it today but the paint was only two years old. You can imagine how it looked back then.

Gil immediately jumped out of his car and rushed over to see mine. What a feeling. That had never happened before. I had to be a part of people like that. Gil had a jet black 1972 GTO 455 H.O. What a beast! The only problem for him that night was that he had no reverse! Gil had numerous problems with his car from the get go. That is why he wanted to start a club, so no one else had to go through what he did, from wrong body men, to bad painters and choice of paint. Then the engine parts and sourcing of parts. Gil had it rough for a couple of years but what a car it was once completed.

Later that Sunday night we all agreed that we should meet up next week, cruise for a while, and start this club on its way. We met at the McDonald's on Grant Avenue the next week. At that time we cruised, and in general discussions Larry Clement offered to be the President, Geoff Sandhurst Vice President, Rena Stieben Secretary, Barb Clement Treasurer and Corinne Sandhurst was Newsletter Editor. Gale and myself waited a little while to get seriously involved. It didn't take too long before a couple of key members talked me into Vice President in year two and the President in year three.

Looking back it seemed to be a lifetime, until key members André Lemoine, Tom Groot, and Rick Johnson joined to relieve me of my position for some rest and relaxation. In all, I believe I was in and out of the executive for 10 of our 13 years.

Anyways, back to the beginning. The Club's first official meeting was on July 27, 1991, and it was a little rocky. Some members wanted the Club to be a meet and greet with no direction. Some just wanted to meet, talk about their cars and race on the streets. Some wanted no membership fees to be a member, and some did. After some heated discussions, it was quickly addressed by some of the older members and it was decided that the Club was to be called *The Manitoba Pontiac Association*.

Our club was to be run with clear guidelines and have purpose and not be a club to be mocked at or said that we were a bunch of people you did not want to be associated with. Rick Penko was able to draw up our first Constitution, which is still the one we use today. We used that Constitution to derive what we see today. An executive assembly was developed, with guidelines and rules to help guide us in the right directions.

We were then holding our meeting at Birchwood Motors at the corner of Portage and Moray. When I became Vice President, I addressed the Club with a suggestion to move our meeting place. Birchwood was not willing to do some of the things we would have liked to do as a Club, so I approached Ron Dveris of Park Pontiac Buick GMC. He was so excited that I had contacted him, he not only accepted the Club but also stated that they would be our official home and sponsor. He then took Larry and myself for a wild ride in his Trans Am Indy Pace Car. WOW!!! I believe we have now been associated with Park Pontiac for 12 years now.

Year two was our "Let all know what The Manitoba Pontiac Association is all about" launch. We hit the World of Wheels in April of 1992 with our new club jackets, four quality cars and a sweep in the winning of Best Display. We have not looked back since and have always been the Club to chase. This was the time when key people joined the Club to make it what it is today. I hope I do not forget anyone, but if I do, please do not take it personally; my memory is going with my hairline.

Brian and Amelia Humeny, John and Verna Rohde, Ted and Marilyn Bowditch, Ed and Grace Greschuck, Bill and Sylvia Uskoski, to mention a few you might recognize, and the original people who started the Club, all had a major impact on what our Club is today. No matter how big or small a club is there is always only a handful of people that are willing to do the work. These people are not in it for the glory or acclamations. They are people who want what is best for their club, and will not complain that some members are doing more or less than others. Things need to be done in order for this Club to succeed, and some people are willing to do the work needed for all to enjoy this fantastic organization.

**This is true today as much as it was back in the beginning. I think we need to realize this and re-evaluate the point system that we are currently trying to make happen, but that is a topic for another time though.**

**Year three brought us our first Parking Lot Party, August 1993, held at Park Pontiac Buick GMC. Once again, we set a standard for all others to follow, and I believe that it was done in a good way, and not a sarcastic or arrogant way. We also saw all the other clubs start to be more relaxed with the old ways and were actually speaking to other clubs in any and all events. Our Car Pull event was a first and to this day, I still hear what a great event it was.**

**The following years had more members join and some leave. The Club's events and functions to this day are all based on what was developed in the initial three to four years. It wasn't until we were able to relax our members' minds and invite Buick and Oldsmobile owners into our organization in 1997 that subtle changes in our club were noticed. Most noticeable was the signing up of new members. Rick and Debbie Johnson were the first.**

**Unfortunately, as new members came, some went. There are some members that decided that the "club scene" was not for them, and we have not seen them since. In 1993, after many years of personal problems, Gil Desautels had taken his own life. He was once again hoping that his action would stop others from having to go through what he had to. Some members have re-joined, and sadly, there are some that were taken away from us much too early.**

**On March 31, 1997, we had Cheryl Bodner taken from us. Later the same year, on August 31, we had our founding member Rena Stieben taken from us. Cheryl's was a quiet funeral and it was very cold that day. The Club was there for Ron in his time of need. The funeral for Rena, although much warmer, was also a somber occasion. Ted Bowditch and myself were honored when Danny Stieben asked us to be paul bearers. I thought that we should send off Rena in a fashion we were in control of.**

**I contacted Danny and asked him if it was okay if I picked him up for the ride to Starbuck, Manitoba (where the funeral was to take place). He was very happy that I would ask such a thing, and agreed. I then told him what I had planned. Many of the members were going to attend the funeral, and I could not think of a more meaningful way to say good-bye to our Club founder. I arranged to have a procession of Pontiac cars and members cruise to Starbuck. Danny was obviously in a state of loss, but he was the first to mention how happy this would have made Rena. I cannot say what it meant to me to be able to lead the funeral procession to the cemetery.**

**You might be asking yourself why I am telling you about this stuff. Well, I was asked to tell all of you how this Club was formed and what kind of people were in it. This simply states that this is a car club, but it is the people that make it the association that it is, not the cars.**

**I am so proud to say that I am a member of *The Manitoba Pontiac Association incorporating Buick and Oldsmobile*. The people in this Club are like family in many cases. A lot of the members you will hear say, “I am comfortable leaving my kids with anyone in this organization.” Some people will not say that of their own families. In this organization, you will see people come together when it is least expected. What an excellent feeling it is to be part of something like that.**

**Today, we see many new people checking out this Club and joining. New members bring new ideas and friendships.**

**Providing you with this little bit of nostalgia for me has brought back many memories. I cannot emphasize enough what it means to be a part of this Club.**

**For all the new members, and even the old ones, if you have any questions or concerns, my phone number is always available to you. Please come on out to the Club events. Meet the members. Create friendships. Ask questions. Make comments.**

**By participating you are creating memories you will be proud of later.**

**Wade Weber  
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