
The President's Letter

We have the antidote for what's been going on, and on, and on this spring. You're holding it in your hands. Please enjoy the May-June issue of AM Spirit. That you have it is something of a feat. It has been produced, and mailed, during this pandemic. If by chance you're reading this electronically, that was Plan B -- email the proofs to everyone with an e-mail address, if the print shop was closed (and if wanted, get your hard-copies later).

The big news, in this issue, may not surprise you: Rambler-Rama will not be held in June. This makes it official. We are looking at holding it later in the year, IF POSSIBLE. We know you understand, what with the Covid-19 pandemic.

We expect things to keep changing at Concorde speed (the jet plane with the "e," and not a base Concord with a 232 six), and advise checking our website, northernramblersclub.com, or our Facebook page, for updates.

On the bright side, so optimistic are we that Rambler-Rama will happen (when the time is right) that we are, though now more tentatively, seeking volunteers to help at the gate, at the sign-in table, with photography, greeting and gofer-ing. Email me at alfredholden@gmail.com

These are easy jobs, and you never know who you'll meet, or what you'll learn. Last year club member Ernie Regehr, a former American Motors engineer, came up to the sign-in desk with donations for the club archive. Among them were lapel pins with the initials "BJC" on them. This winter, with safe telephone distance between us, I called up Ernie to ask about that, and a tale was told.

In the 1980s our Ernie was head of quality control at American Motors' pioneering Beijing Jeep joint venture in China. It was a different universe then, travel to China was limited and something like Covid-19 unthinkable.

Known to some is the role that American Motors played in one of China's "great leaps." Beijing Jeep was the initiative that, if it didn't make AMC the world's biggest automaker, launched China there, by ramping up the billion-consumer country from two wheels (bicycles) to four.

We'll have more from my interview with Ernie in future AM Spirits. Here's a teaser: I asked Ernie, now 90, if he thought, back then, that China would become the world's largest producer of automobiles. No and yes, he said. In the still-primitive China of the 1980s, it seemed impossible. By his account it was almost impossible to make Brampton-quality Jeeps there. But AMC did it, and by the time Regehr returned to Canada, around the period of the Chrysler takeover, he had in his mind's eye the future for cars in China that has indeed come to pass, Covid or not.

At a safe distance from each other, your club executive continues its work. Ron Morrison makes and polishes AM Spirit at home as usual. Treasurer Roman Bratasiuk has arranged for the Northern Ramblers to accept Paypal and e-transfers (email payments) in payment for joining the club and for renewing memberships. On the website, northernramblersclub.com, click on "join-renew" and the three options come up. Click the one you like and follow the routine. If you aren't already using e-transfers, you will need to do set-up with your bank (be safe if you go to one). If you have questions about any of this, call Roman at 416 231-8362, or email zekeroman6@gmail.com. You can still join or renew the old way using a printed form or the one we mail (now with a car on it, always).

Meanwhile, have you had your car out? Until told otherwise I will be driving mine around. I am still using up last year's gasoline, and the Ambassador has its own air (air was standard equipment). This winter and spring a remarkable predicament for our planet and species has been unfolding. An analogy to the evolution of cars comes to mind. With inventiveness, safety once believed impossible came along. If everyone does their part, Covid 19 too will be tamed.

-ALF

