



On The Road

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MEET THE MEMBERS

Paul & Cindy Dowding

When asked to write about yourself, and with more than a half century to cover, it's hard to know where to start. But to avoid this being a snore, and following on the heels of the most excellent Glenn and Elizabeth Packard story, I'll cover a little bit about me BC (before Cindy) then cover that ground.

Born and raised in Northwest Illinois, I've been taking things apart, putting them back together, and making them go faster ever since I can remember. From lawn mower engine go carts to chainsaw powered mini-bikes, I was into fast in grade school. A 1970 Roadrunner, purchased new my senior year of high school, was my first real muscle car and launched a long love affair with Chrysler muscle cars of the 60's and early 70's. That car saw a lot of street racing because back then, the high school parking lot must have had 10,000 horsepower sitting in it... and every one loved to race. In fact, late one night, with some yellow paint liberated from the town street department, some guys who shall remain nameless measured out and painted a quarter mile strip outside of town by a wayside. At 2:00 in the morning most nights, you could smell the burnt rubber and racing fuel a mile away.

During a two year stint in the military, I sold that Roadrunner to a pal after I blew the engine. I bought a 69 Roadrunner when I got out of the service and street raced that car for a while before selling it and buying my first Corvette, a 69 427 coupe. I sold that trouble-prone monster in 1979 to buy a partially restored 63 convertible. That car launched my love of, and interest in, repair and restoration of Corvettes. It was the most memorable of all my Corvettes and moved with me when I moved to Chicago and started my career at a Michigan Avenue ad agency.

On New Years Eve, 1981, I had a date and went out with a group of people to eat. There was a very cute red head in the group that was by herself and sat next to me at the table. At midnight, I kissed my date, then leaned over and kissed that redhead. That red head was Cindy and the rest, as they say, is history. Turns out, she was a lady after my own heart... hanging out at gas stations when she was growing up, dating guys with fast cars. She's a closet motor head and exhibits patience and forbearance when I come home and say, "Guess what I bought today honey?"

Anyway, we had a lot of fun in the 63'... camping with our dogs (yes, they loved riding in it), cruising around Chicago with friends, and driving to swap meets and racing events. We moved back to Madison in 1984 and two years later, sold the 63' to raise money to buy a farm. I never got over the sellers remorse on that one. As a car, it wasn't particularly rare or well optioned, but it was reliable, fun to drive, and loaded with memories.

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(continued—"Meet the Members"—Paul & Cindy Dowding)

Cindy and I remained Corvetteless for three or four years until we bought a 1966 427/425 coupe. That car was trouble-prone like the 69' so I sold it. Kids came and we wanted another Corvette but money was tight so I bought a 1970 L46 convertible cheap that needed restoration. That car became known as Yellow Boy and is still in my stable. It took seven years to restore it and was done mostly in my garage. Cindy was very much a partner in that restoration. She attended swap meets, helped me search for parts, and got her hands greasy more than once pulling on a wrench. She could spot a part I needed half a mile away in a bin under a pile of junk, and most importantly, provided sanity and encouragement during periods of wrench-throwing frustration.

If you need any more proof that Cindy is a car gal, consider this. In the 22 years we've been married, we have owned several Corvettes, bought our first and only new Corvette, restored Yellow Boy, grown our stable of collectible cars to five (including the 1970 440, 6-pack, 4-speed Roadrunner I'm currently restoring), built a shop, a house, and a family (nearly in that order). We also recently started riding Harley's. I'd be a single man right now if she didn't have a little motor oil in her veins.

I am blessed to have the wife I do and to have had a successful career in the marketing/advertising/public relations field from which I retired after 30 years. Now I drive a school bus for the Middleton School District, tutor twice a week at a Madison elementary school, and play in my shop. Cindy is the food and nutrition manager at the Waunakee Senior Center, managing in-house dining and the "Meals on Wheels" program. Automobiles have always played an important role in our life and have lead us down some interesting paths and introduced us to so many wonderful people. Here's to continuing the adventure.