

A LIFE OF LOVE & PASSION

*Celebrating Jules "J." Heumann*

January 27, 1924 - December 16, 2017



The Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance and the whole of the collector car community is mourning the loss of one of its guiding lights. Jules Heumann, who led this Concours for decades, passed away Saturday at the age of 93.

Jules—known more simply as “J.” to his many friends throughout the automotive world—worked passionately throughout his life to save and celebrate great cars.



“J. was not only my mentor, he was my friend—and a friend to so many others,” said Concours Chairman Sandra Button. “He was hugely inclusive of anyone who wanted to be part of the car hobby. He loved classic cars—Hispano-Suizas in particular—yet he took great delight in the fact that guys who built hot rods could work on his engines. He would talk cars with anyone who would listen. And he did everything he could to stoke their passion.

“J.’s passing marks the end of an era. J. was at the forefront of the group of great automotive enthusiasts who saved many of the interesting cars of this world. They preserved and restored cars, and then they took their passion for cars and worked to share it not only with their neighbors but with the world. J. and his generation of car lovers taught us how to truly care for and celebrate cars.”



J. and Lorin Tryon served together as Co-Chairmen of the Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance from 1972 through 1998, elevating the event to its premier status. They sought to showcase only the very best automobiles here and to judge them with true expertise as well as an eye to elegance.



"J. 'got it' in terms of judging cars," says Concours Chief Judge Chris Bock. "He reached out to marque experts and others with great knowledge and experience, and he established the two-tiered judging system that we still use today—the system that has become the standard of the world."



J.'s passion for cars began in early childhood. As a toddler, his parents would silence his cries by handing him a small tin toy automobile. "'Bile! 'bile! 'bile!" he would shout when he wanted it—an exclamation his brother Syl would forever tease him about. And J. was fed from a child's porridge bowl with a little red car at the bottom, a car that could be seen only if he ate all that was offered to him. At the age of nine or ten, he amused family and friends by naming the types of passing cars sight unseen; he could distinguish them by their sound.

J. soon demonstrated a strong mechanical bent. As a young adult, when he desired a sports car, he built one himself from salvaged parts. And throughout his life, when restoring cars, he did most of his own restoration work. When asked about his approach to such projects, he offered this simple advice: "You buy some books, you talk with other people, you start to work with your hands, and eventually you figure things out."

J. loved the way automobiles marry form and function. Other objects do that, too, as J. knew well; he was, until his retirement, the chief designer and co-owner of the Metropolitan Furniture Corporation. But his true passion was for cars.

J. eventually traded the sports car he built for a 1948 Jaguar Mark IV Drophead that won First in Class at the Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance in 1958. Several cars and a few years later, he won his class again with a 1939 Bentley 4¼ Litre four-door Cabriolet.

In 1963, he purchased his first Hispano-Suiza—the marque he later preferred above all others, serving faithfully as president of the society that honored it for decades. In 1972, his 1922 H6B Labourdette Skiff/Torpedo won Best of Show at Pebble Beach. And in 1978, his 1933 J12 Van Vooren Faux Cabriolet was named Most Elegant Car. The latter award was presented to J. by Charles A. Chayne. J. liked to describe how Chayne, who had once owned the car, greeted it lovingly on the Concours awards ramp, kissing the tips of his fingers and gently touching them to the stork mascot.

J.'s participation and success at various rallies, tours, and concours, soon led to his ongoing official involvement at many such events. Perhaps most notably, he and fellow automotive enthusiast Lorin Tryon were involved in organizing the Peacock Gap Concours d'Elegance, later called the Silverado



Concours d'Elegance. He would also eventually help found and serve as first president of The Candy Store.

Gwenn Graham, who had helped to organize the Pebble Beach Concours, died in the late 1960s, and when the event struggled, J. and Lorin jumped at the chance to save it. They were named Co-Chairmen in 1972, and they continued together in that capacity for twenty-seven years.

From the start, they sought to focus their efforts on two primary goals: they were determined to seek out and invite only the very best cars to Pebble Beach, and they wanted to establish a judging system that was beyond reproach. To accomplish the former, they mined their growing network of automotive contacts. For the latter, they set up separate panels of class and honorary judges, and they invited only the most knowledgeable experts to serve on these panels. Class judges focused on determining the authenticity of a car and the quality of its restoration or preservation, and only class winners could be considered when the votes for Best of Show were cast.

Over time, the quality of both the cars and the judging improved dramatically and the reputation of the Pebble Beach Concours recovered fully. To add interest and spice, featured marques and special exhibits were also introduced on a regular basis. When Chris Bock suggested almost in jest that J. and Lorin should attempt to gather the only six Bugatti Royales in existence, they dared to believe it could be done. That gathering in 1985, which came to fruition through the extensive efforts of many people, marked a clear turning point. Thereafter, the Pebble Beach Concours was widely recognized as the top event of its kind in the world.

“J.’s business was design, and he used that talent to perfect the art of the automotive display,” said Bock. “His attention to detail in the layout of the cars, grouping them together and marrying them to their spectacular surroundings, was a major factor in the impact of the show. I recall the incredible amount of effort he put into designing the layout of the six Royales on the practice putting green so that each car could be photographed individually and the styles of each example complemented the neighboring Royales.”

On another occasion, when Bentleys took to the stage, Margaret Bentley, the widow of W. O., was on hand. J. and his beloved wife Sally gave Margaret a tour of the area in a Hispano. Despite the fact that she was 87, she urged J. to great speed—and he gleefully obliged. The Concours has also paired Briggs Cunningham with his early American sports cars, Nuccio Bertone with his three B.A.T.s, and Sergio Pininfarina, Sergio Scaglietti, and Giorgetto Giugiaro with their special coachwork.



“J. was a doer,” says Button. “He thought past all obstacles to make the impossible happen, and we owe many of our greatest exhibits to his tenacity. At times, he could be a bit gruff; in all honesty, I was initially a bit afraid of him. But I soon came to realize that he simply wanted everything to be the best that it could be.”

In 1998, at the urging of Craig Davis and others, J. and Lorin agreed to host the Pebble Beach Tour d'Elegance, the driving event that now precedes the Concours each year. A sizzling display of Hot Rods took to the Concours field that same year. And soon minicars and transporters were spotted there. Yes, J. and Lorin were devoted to the classics, but they also liked to push the boundaries a bit, to help people revise their expectations.

Lorin died in 1999, and J. served as sole Chairman of the Concours that year. He then retired, and the well-deserved word Emeritus was added to his title, but he remained an active advisor, and he continued to do all that he could to share his love of cars with others.

Over the past two years, J. once again put his design talents to use for the Concours, creating a scale model of our perpetual Best of Show trophy that winners can now take home with them. “He took great

joy in that project—in working with several teams of artisans to create something of great beauty,” said Button. He was on the awards ramp this past summer, to mark the trophy’s first presentation.



The aggregate numbers speak volumes: J. guided the Pebble Beach Concours d’Elegance for well over three decades. Under his watchful eye, about five thousand of the most beautiful cars in the world pulled to their appointed places on the patch of green that doubles as the famed eighteenth fairway of Pebble Beach Golf Links. Hundreds of respected automotive experts from around the globe served under him to judge those beauties. Tens of thousands of Pebble Beach staff members and local volunteers worked together with him to support the endeavor. And this past summer, the event announced that it had raised over \$25 million for charity—a number that truly delighted J.



J. passed away surrounded by family and friends, including his daughters, Leslie and Jann, and his companion, Barbara. His wife, Sally, and his brother Syl preceded him in death.

Godspeed, J. We remember and celebrate your life—a life filled to the brim with love and passion, family and friends.

**WE WILL MISS YOU, J.**  
*Thank you for everything.*



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