

REMEMBERING OUR FRIENDS



A LEGACY OF CARS, DESIGN AND DREAMS

Celebrating the Life of J. Heumann

Jules Heumann, a leader of the collector car hobby!

Was it Jewels Human, Jules Hayman? It took me a couple of years to realize the correct spelling and to just call him “J.” Lorin Tryon, another dear friend, was also close to J. The three of us were seemingly as different as choices on a dinner plate. I was 27 years old and green as cabbage, and J. and Lorin were older. I was loud, and I thought they were serious. With time, I realized that was a big misconception. Lorin and J. were fun, both had great knowledge of cars, and they complemented each other like salt and pepper on a meal.

In 1971 the Pebble Beach Concours d’Elegance was struggling to survive; it needed to attract more people. Lorin and J. jumped right in, took control and worked tirelessly to turn everything around. Lorin soon visited me in Santa Monica, California, and told me about this great show in Monterey that “all” the great collectors went to. He told that to everyone in Southern California and beyond. Let’s just say, he had trouble with the truth. J. was spreading the same “truth” in other parts of the hobby. And soon it was the truth.

My first year at the Pebble Beach Concours, in 1972, was fantastic. The weather was perfect! And one of the first people I saw was J., who was then a bearded wonder, pointing to almost everyone he came across and telling them where to park. I didn’t realize he was establishing what would be the foundational layout for the growth of “Pebble.” Not only had Lorin and J. saved the show; they instantly made it the best show in California. In the coming few years they made it “The Show” of the West—and then the world. J. and Lorin were not the biggest talkers, they were just passionate.

J. was particularly passionate about Hispano-Suiza. In fact, he was the head of the club for a long period. Isotta Fraschini, Delahaye—he touched all the great European classics. After he started telling people in France about this great “International Show,” they started to come. In England, the same thing happened.

During this period I was going to Europe and England looking for cars to buy, and Lorin and J. were there looking for collectors and fine cars to invite to Pebble Beach. If the French cars were fantastic, J. would invite them. If they didn’t want to come, then he would ask if their car was for sale. If it was, he told me about it and I made an effort to buy and bring it to the Concours. This was always done as a favor, never for commission.

Lorin and J. also asked well-respected collectors to come over and help judge their specialty. Within 10 years of their takeover, “Pebble” was known around the world as the greatest show in the hobby. You may have won somewhere else, but did you win Pebble? That is still the question today.

J. became a close friend over our 46-year friendship. We liked most of the same cars. And I loved what he and Lorin had done for the show. I haven’t missed one in all these years. I won’t miss this one, either. But, I will miss seeing J. running around, still involved, helping Sandra Button. We all will.

—Don Williams
The Blackhawk Collection



I think my most vivid memory of J. is from the gathering of the six Bugatti Royales in 1985. J. used his design talents to draft a special layout for the six Royales on The Lodge putting green, arranging the cars in such a way as to allow each car to be easily photographed while also making certain the body styles of neighboring cars would complement one another. When it was time for the cars to be placed, which began at 3 a.m. on Concours Sunday, J. carefully supervised the work crew to make sure the display was perfect—and the results were very much to his liking and drew much recognition from the spectators at the show and the entire world motoring press!

This event represented the culmination of 12 months of steady work by J. He never lost hope that all six cars could be assembled. His many contacts in Europe, his gentle but effective persuasion of Tom Oliver of Pebble Beach Company, and his unwillingness to let roadblocks stop the process made this happen. Who would have guessed that a grant of diplomatic immunity would have to

I want to tell you about J. Heumann's express visit to Paris.

This must have been in the first years of the 1980s. I had previously met J. (Jules for the French Hispano gang) and Sally when they visited France in his J12 a few years earlier, as well as a few times in California, which I visited regularly in those days. J. sent me a message saying that he would be visiting northern Italy to purchase CNC machines for his furniture factory, and he could make a stop in Paris if I was available.

So, I picked him up at Charles de Gaulle airport on a Friday afternoon around 2 p.m., and we drove directly to Levallois where Louis Rossigneux, the Hispano master mechanic, had his restoration shop. I was not sure how J. would be received by Louis, who did not have a great respect for "amateurs" who pretended to overhaul their classic cars. But I did not need to worry. Pointing to a shaft Louis was taking apart, J. noted that the operation was difficult and said it had taken him some time to find out how to do it. To my surprise, Louis answered in primitive but very effective English. I was enjoying a lecture on how to disassemble an H6B when I remembered that I had also arranged a visit of the Lecoq Body shop where my grandfather's (Marc Birkigt's) personal

be sought from the Department of State in order to get the two cars from the former Schlumpf Collection in France to U.S. soil!

I also recall vividly J's Sunday Morning Judges Briefings. His manner was such that each of us in that room felt specially welcomed—whether first-timers or long-timers, it made no difference. In his own elegant fashion, J. challenged each of us to do our most careful job on the field and to treat the entrants with the respect and appreciation they deserved. Those early briefings set the tone for Pebble Beach Concours judging that exists to this day.

We also owe to J. our two-tiered system of Honorary and Class Judges, that, coupled with the assembly of judging teams with real expertise in specific marques and eras, assured the most qualified judges for each category of cars. Under J's leadership, Pebble Beach Concours judging became the Standard of the World.

—Chris Bock
Pebble Beach Concours Chief Judge

J12 body was being restored. We were soon back from the visit so J. could continue his shop inspection, carefully registering Louis's comments. After looking over all the Hispanos, we were examining an Alfa Romeo 1750 when Louis suddenly jumped on the telephone to warn his wife that he would be a little late for dinner.

When we were back in my car, I suddenly realized that I had completely forgotten to book a hotel room for J., so I offered him hospitality in my bachelor's apartment. Around nine o'clock we had dinner in a neighboring restaurant, and at one point J. asked some questions about my grandfather's education and I mentioned his *École de Mécanique* first-year notebook. Later, having set up his bed for the night, I finally said "Good night," but J. asked, "What about the notebook?"—which I then left with him.

The next morning when I asked if he had slept well, J's answer was, "I did not sleep much at all, but I studied every page of the notebook and I now understand why Hispanos are Hispanos."

—Bernard Heurteux of Versoix, Switzerland
Grandson of Hispano-Suiza designer Marc Birkigt





I've been attending the Pebble Beach Concours since the late 1970s and began judging at the event in 1983 so, naturally, I knew who Jules was. I'll admit that I was a bit intimidated and awed by his presence for many years, but I began to know him as a friend when I became a member of the Concours executive committee in 1999 and then Chairman in 2000. At the time, it would have been easy for J. to be protective of the position, but instead he welcomed me with open arms and encouragement. The Concours was still his baby, and he enjoyed mentoring Sandra and me.

If you didn't know J. well, you might not realize what a great sense of humor he had. I have a lot of fond memories of J., but one of my favorites is from a trip to Europe in 2000. Bentley expert Peter Hageman and I had traveled to London early to visit a few car collectors before the London to Brighton Run. On one of our stops we visited George Klepp and learned that, aside from his interest in vintage Bentleys, he had a thriving chicken-egg business. We asked George about his enterprise and were told that laying chickens only cost £1 and started paying for themselves rather quickly. After a few glasses of wine, Peter and I decided we would each invest a pound and become partners with Chicken George. When we met up with J. later in the week and told him about our transaction, he decided to purchase a chicken of his own. The three of us had a lot of laughs throughout the rest of the trip, telling everyone about our chickens. Shortly after I returned home, I began receiving letters from the (alleged) attorney for J.'s chicken, accusing my chicken of harassment and claiming that he would take legal action. He threatened to sue my chicken for an undisclosed amount that "wouldn't be chicken feed," but it was determined that he didn't have a very strong case and we eventually settled out of court with a can of chicken soup.

During Concours week, we would meet every afternoon over a glass of wine to talk about the cars and how excited we were for the show on Sunday. This last show, Mary Lynn and I continued the tradition of meeting with J. and Barbara. J. wasn't feeling well and at times he was in great pain, but that wasn't going to stop him from taking in all the week had to offer. He was still that proud parent enjoying and mentoring.

—Glenn Mounger
Pebble Beach Concours Chief Honorary Judge
and former Chairman

What a pleasure it is to have a chance to think back to the times Paul and I had with J. One of my favorite memories is of the time J. and Sally unexpectedly visited us in France in 1981 while touring in their enormous, gorgeous Hispano. Paul and I were living in a very modest guesthouse in Albert Schweitzer's petite hometown village of Gunsbach in Alsace while Paul was writing a book on Schweitzer. J. and Sally were on their way to visit the Schlumpf Auto Museum in Mulhouse. Something went awry with their hotel reservations and they needed a place to stay overnight, preferably with a garage and outside of a city center. They called us. Well, we had a tiny garage of sorts that fronted the village square, and I can still see J. and Sally driving up in a car the likes and length of which our village had never seen! The Hispano managed to get its first half inside the garage, and the rest protruded out. All afternoon everyone in the village found an excuse to stroll by. Paul's and my reputations in the village went up considerably! Hanging around with J. was always a stylish experience!

—Emily Woudenberg
Wife of former Pebble Beach Concours
Announcer Paul Woudenberg

I had the pleasure of first meeting Jules Heumann and his partner, Lorin Tryon, many years ago when I was a photographer and writer for *Coast Car Collector* magazine covering the Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance. I've never stopped taking photographs of the Concours, snapping my shots in recent years from the balcony of J.'s suite with Barbara.

I soon got to know Jules and his lovely wife, Sally, along with Lorin Tryon and his wife, Dolores, and we all became friends. After spending so much time together around great cars, it was natural to get to know each other! Dolores and I raced each other from Blackhawk when we worked there, and the Tryons were my neighbors. Jules and I got to know each other much better after he assisted me with the 1989 memorial service for Gene Babow, who taught me much of what I know and who was a pure car man, known to all. But I also owe much of my time in business to the knowledge and encouragement of J. as well.

Jules loved dogs as I still do, we both had fathers with the same first name (Armand), and we all went to Lowell High School in San Francisco, so the friendship grew. We would go to lunch, taking his dogs with us. I still have images of Gio peaking out of the sunroof of Jules's car. We shared many of the same friends and acquaintances, and once when Jules was visiting a mutual friend and my client, he went to his Tesla S, tossed me the keys and told me to return in a couple of hours.

I was so glad that J. allowed me to visit him three days before he passed on. I will always have him in my heart and will always think of him when I see Sutro Tower (a block from his house) as I drive through San Francisco. He will be missed.

—Rhonda Madden
Automotive Consultant