

Drive TOWARD A CURE

CAR ENTHUSIASTS SEEK TO BEAT PARKINSON'S DISEASE

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PHOTOS COURTESY OF MARK R. DAVIDSON

A caravan of classics
all driving towards
the same goal,
finding a cure.

Two Drives — One Cause. This simple mantra was the driving force behind the delightful and scenic second annual Drive Toward a Cure, California Adventure rally. Northern and Southern California’s car enthusiasts combined, all winding their way in, around and through some of the best back roads that the Golden State has to offer. Deb Pollack is founder of this drive and many others in association with assisting in the research and patient care of Parkinson’s disease - one that has affected her personally. Three days out on the open road with three dozen other cars taught me three things I didn’t know about myself. Let’s talk about just how my trip off the grid in a modern emerging luxury sedan showed me how the car connection changes the lives of many.

The Drive

Genesis Motors is the luxury vehicle division of the South Korean vehicle manufacturer Hyundai Motor Group. Established in 2015, Genesis set out to capture a new audience with their Luxury Evolved mentality. The 2018 Genesis G80 Sport, my ride for the weekend, was a refreshing change in driving experience. Mostly immersed in the classic car world, I’m accustomed to foul smells, erratic gauges and the general ill temperament of a car twenty or thirty years my senior. Drive Shop, a wonderful marketing agency that pairs people with new model cars, dropped off the Genesis prior to the rally. My classic car skepticism kicked in, but



An Acura NSX leads the way for the Northern California group.

I was excited to broaden my horizons and stretch her legs a little bit.

What is this? Comfortable premium leather and heated sport seating? Is that a 9.2” touchscreen with connectable Apple CarPlay and a wireless phone charging pad? Carbon fiber and aluminum trim with a sweet power panoramic sunroof that literally received ‘ooh’s and ahhhh’s’ from my automotive counterparts.

Standard on this model is the 3.3T 8-speed automatic transmission with Shiftronic & paddle shifters, Sport CDC suspension with what they call ‘Intelligent Drive Mode.’ Sitting on attractive 19-inch sport alloy wheels with Pirelli all season tires, no less. Blind spot detection, which I absolutely loved, multi-view cameras, front & rear parking sensors, the driver attention alert, a smart cruise control feature that changes speed with traffic — okay, yes — I was all set for style and peace of mind on this drive. Lesson #1, I have a new appreciation for modern creature comforts.



Staged at the top of the Petersen Museum, the SoCal group is ready to hit the open road.



A Porsche 911 makes its way up, down and around Mulholland’s famous curves.

Middle: This Mercedes 280SL is the perfect touring car, especially on the wine country roads of the Central Coast.

Bottom: Our author's 2018 Genesis G80 Sport looking elegant as it approaches the Alisal Guest Ranch.

NorCal vs. SoCal

Of course, this wasn’t a completion, but rather a spirited jaunt to reach the Alisal Guest Ranch & Resort in Solvang, California - a fantastic retreat location with 73 cottages, 50 miles of horseback trails, a pair of championship golf courses and 100-acre private lake, just to highlight a few of its many attributes.

Southern California drivers met at The Petersen Museum in downtown Los Angeles for a tour of their world-famous car vault. Lunch followed and a tour of automotive rock-star, Bruce Meyer’s private collection overlooking Rodeo Drive in Beverly Hills. Not to be outdone, the Northern California crew congregated in Scotts Valley at Bruce Canepa’s workshop for a museum history lesson along with showroom and restoration tours. Both teams were then briefed on the first leg of their drive to their hotels and receptions that evening.

Being a Monterey, California resident, I represented the NorCal fleet which were a group of very seasoned drivers and co-pilots. Here is where the start of lesson #2 two began — I’m a terrible navigator. Being only a single driver, I struggled to keep directions in order, as there were many signs and trivia questions in the log book. Following a new Acura NSX, Dodge Challenger Hellcat, Maserati GrandTurismo and Lavante, Porsche Cayan and a 1965 Chevrolet Corvette driven by members of the Hagerty DriveShare team, I had to keep my sights on these cars the entire journey, fearing I’d lose the trail, even after switching into sport mode on the twisty roads and straightaways. We reached the Monterey Plaza Hotel & Spa on Cannery Row, right about the same time the SoCal group finished up at the Four Seasons Hotel in Westlake Village.





The Porsche wave!
Always best to say hi
to your fellow classic
car enthusiasts
when you see them
on the road.

The Cause

Day two began early for both teams, but certainly everyone was eager to get on the road. Pulled in by central location, we all began the real drive toward the cause. In 2006, life changed for Deb Pollack when her mother passed away after a battle with Parkinson’s disease. Deb was a long-term executive in the automotive industry, working recently with Maserati North America and currently with Singer Vehicle Design. Her experience began the expedition of creating a non-profit

and making us all aware of how Parkinson’s might affect us in the future.

“I had created an opportunity for America’s First Formula One World Champion Phil Hill, also challenged by Parkinson’s, to celebrate his 80th birthday among automotive media in what unfortunately was to be his last on track experience. With his son Derek at the wheel of a Maserati MC12, Hill’s last drive later became an inspiration to take on the cause at a higher level,” spoke Pollack as she reflected on the drive.

Following Hill’s passing later that year, Deb returned with Derek and Maserati North America to sell passenger hot laps to raise funds in Phil’s name and provide a significant donation to the Parkinson’s Institute in Sunnyvale, Calif., where Phil had been treated. This was the beginning of a near decade of involvement bringing car enthusiasts and Parkinson’s together, and furthering a personal desire to start her own non-profit.

“I had a very personal vision to get involved with supporting Parkinson’s Disease through research and patient care -- and it’s only grown as I’ve met, befriended and supported so many throughout the country that are both aligned with or afflicted by this challenging disease. Everyone you meet seems to have a story or knows someone that Parkinson’s has touched.

My vision of Drive Toward a Cure was really very simple — utilize the passion and emotion of driving, to spread the word and help the cause.”

The Dude Ranch

Alisal Guest Ranch was nothing short of a blessing, which gave us all the opportunity to truly unplug, enjoy nature and group activities in an inviting environment, which our busy lives don’t always allow. Arriving at the ranch after an outstanding full-day drive was a great way to just check out of the grind and tune into our surroundings. Getting a group of more than 50 individuals together for a choice of horseback riding or a hay wagon for a home cooked outdoor breakfast — or enjoying a sunset lake BBQ dinner — offered memories and new friendships not easily found in other programs I’ve been on.

The relaxed nature of the day three trip, coupled with new roads to explore, allowed for guards to be lowered and communities strengthened. This also lead to gratitude and an understanding of what Parkinson’s is about. Lesson #3 — this disease hits closer to home than you realize.

Derek Torry was a member of the NorCal staff, who joined us every step of the way. It wasn’t until we spoke in confidence that I understood how he was affected by ‘young onset’ Parkinson’s. A family man with two kids, who is active in his community while relishing any chance to camp and fish with family and friends — much like myself. I came to understand it’s its like living with the disease and some of the real facts associated.

Parkinson’s disease is a neurodegenerative disease where cells responsible for producing dopamine die off in the substantia nigra area of the brain. Dopamine is essential for movement as it acts as a transmitter for signals from the brain to other parts of the body. Did you know Parkinson’s effects twice as many men as it does women? Or that is costs over \$25 billion in medical costs in the U.S. alone each year? Most importantly, there is no known cure.

“Our goal is not to make a competitive drive, but more of a scenic journey that includes personal interaction. Not only do our events create wonderful networking opportunities, but they bridge an important commonality that our registrants all share — that we are all in this together. Everyone seems to have a ‘reason’ for coming and while they all enjoy the event, they each want to support those they know that are affected by Parkinson’s.

“It’s easy to plan a fun weekend of driving — but we’ve been fortunate that the folks that choose to be with us have a desire to also help others along the way,” said Pollack.

Over \$50,000 was raised over the weekend, with help from Derek Hill emceeing the final night’s dinner and telling great stories of his father. Deb’s biggest goal is to start a movement that will lead to a cure — and build a strong community of like-minded enthusiasts along the way. So check out their website drivetowardacure.org — join one of their multiday rallies or start your own one-day program in support of Parkinson’s. They’re in this to win this — #jointheadventure. !/h



Deb Pollack, founder of Drive Towards a Cure, practices what she preaches, driving her Porsche Speeder enthusiastically.



Bruce Meyers’ loft above Rodeo Drive is the ultimate man cave. Plenty of ‘used cars’ to be found here.