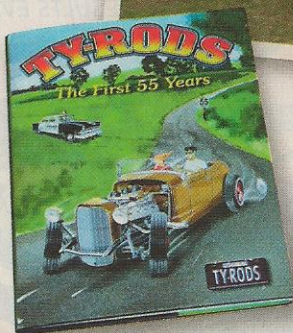


By Tara Baukus Mello

The Ty-Rods Car Club of Massachusetts is one of the longest-standing car clubs in the U.S. Their annual rod run, the Old Timers Reunion, currently draws about 1,000 cars and their owners, as well as 3,000 spectators. Like many car clubs, the Ty-Rods generously give to local charities—in its case five food pantries benefit from its efforts. To get an up-close look at the club, we sat down with Bob Parker, the current Chairman of the Reunion, a two-time past club president and a Ty-Rod member since 1956.

Ty-Rods began in 1953 when a group of friends who were



The Ty-Rods published a book chronicling their first 55 years. To order, send a check for \$42

(includes shipping) to Ty-Rods, P.O. Box 326, Hebron, ME, 04238. All proceeds benefit charity.

established mandatory weekly meetings and decided to limit the club to 28 members—simply because that was the number of lines in the treasurer's notebook. Ty-Rods quickly joined the New England Hot Rod Council, a group of clubs focused on the safety of rodding, and most

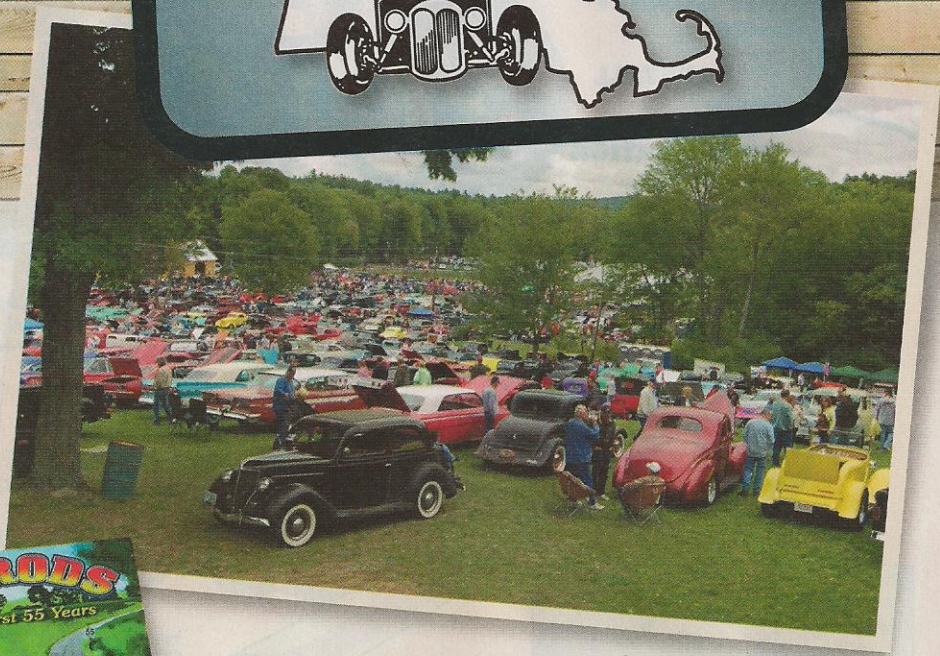
Ty-Rod members drove their rods during the week

and raced them at organized drag races on Sundays at Sanford, Maine, and other New England dragstrips.

In 1956, Bob was invited to join Ty-Rods (you had to be invited by a current club member) by his high school friend Bill Lightfoot. "I was building a '36 Ford convertible with a Caddy engine at the time, but it was actually my second rod—my first, a '40 Ford club coupe, I never got to drive because I built it before I was old enough to drive," remembers Bob.

Joining the Ty-Rods was

A little snow on the ground didn't stop these Ty-Rods from getting together back in 1959.



Bob (on the ladder) has been the long-time unofficial club photographer, shown here capturing some cars at one of the first Old Timers' Reunions.

in their late teens and early twenties wanted to formalize their love of rods. They



somewhat complicated and time-consuming, at that time. "You needed a letter from the police chief and a few letters of recommendation. They wanted to know you weren't going to give the club a bad rap," says Bob. "Those who were accepted had to go to the weekly meetings for months before you were voted in."

As the Ty-Rods members

August 12, 1953  
MINUTES OF THE MEETING

The weekly meeting of the Massachusetts Ty-Rods was held on Wednesday, August 12, 1953, at Carlton Carpenter's garage. The meeting was called to order by President Robert Tabor at 8:15 P.M. The minutes were read and accepted. Dan didn't bring his painted plaque. Bob brought in a sample which the club accepted and he agreed to bring 7 plates for our trip to Newburyport.

The members that were supposed to go were Ed, Clayton, Bob, Carlton, Mick, Bob, Dan. Clayton got a letter from the Cam Snappers about the date, time, etc., on our trip to Newburyport.

Paul Deewick passed around to the members pictures on the Bridgehampton event.

Dues were collected by Treasurer Richard Nicoli.

Members who are going to Newburyport will be here at 3:00 and leave at 4:00 Sunday.

Dan Curley has entered Joseph Gould's name for entrance to the club.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:45 P.M.

**While members may have been in their late teens and early twenties, the TY-Rods were a serious club from the start, with meeting minutes and dues.**

grew older, got married and had families, they continued to meet and attend rod runs together, though some members moved to other parts of the country, including Bob, who moved to Southern California. "When I was on the West Coast I would call in every Monday to the meetings so I could attend, but it was really just a way for me to talk to all the guys," says Bob. Eventually to accommodate the ever-expanding group, they changed the membership requirements to attending just four meetings a year to remain an "active" member.

"In the mid-'70s, the Ty-Rods

decided to create an activity which would give them an opportunity to see some of the original members they had such fun with back in the '50s. "We decided to host a get-together called the 'Old Timers Reunion,' named as a way to draw the 'old timers,' the longest-standing members back for some reminiscing," says Bob.

The first Old Timers Reunion took place in Littleton, Massachusetts, in the VFW parking lot in 1976 with less than 20 cars and old club members invited to attend. Over the years, the Ty-Rods show has continued to grow—held in

Ty Rods Dues		Nov 52	Nov 53	Oct 54	Oct 55
Amable	25				
Deewick	25				
Carpenter	25				
Cowell	50				
Crosby	25				
Curley	25				
Deewick	25				
Hedges	25				
Housman	50				
Interrant	25				
Kelly	25				
King	25				
Loving	25				
Nicoli	25				
Phillips	25				
Reagan	25				
Robinson	25				
Sleeper	25				
Smith	25				
Steele	25				
Stevens	25				
Tabor	50				
Waltkus	25				
Wingate	25				
Total		850	200	750	

three locations before moving to the Bolton Fairgrounds in Lancaster, Massachusetts, in 2008.

"It's funny how our little get-together has grown. Over the years it got to be so popular that for many years we had people lined up for hours waiting to get in," says Bob. The Ty-Rods organized a pre-registration for the Reunion and would fill all the spaces within a couple of weeks of opening



**Bob built this '28 Ford roadster to race in New England and plans to take it to Bonneville in 2012**

pre-registration when the event was at the Elks in Hudson, Massachusetts. Still, that didn't help the lines of cars on the day of the show.

"We used to hold it on the second Monday of September, because that was our regular meeting night, but we had to switch it to the second Sunday because there were so many people lined up on the streets—literally for miles—waiting to get in it caused traffic problems when the event was in Hudson, Massachusetts," he remembers.

Now, the Bolton Fairgrounds holds 1,200 cars easily and the

**A '70s photo of the Ty-Rods members and their wives who went on a cruise as a group vacation.**



Ty-Rods no longer have to turn anyone away (at least not yet) and there are no traffic problems. "There are so many beautiful places to park I think the sense of urgency to get there at sunrise is gone," says Bob. The size of the event is a boom to the five food pantries it benefits, though it makes it hard to find lost friends who are members, so now they host a separate Old Timers' Night as a way to reconnect with just Ty-Rods' former and present members.

Another members-only event the Ty-Rods host is the fall foliage Reliability Run, which began in the '80s. Participants receive a set of directions that require you to discover answers along the route driving the posted speed limits. Penalties are assessed for being too slow or too fast, as well as for wrong answers. Bob and fellow member Frank Cutting are

frequent winners (often one beating out the other only slightly), which means their names get engraved on a perpetual trophy and the winner has the duty of creating the instructions for the next year's run (and therefore can't win that year).

With all his years as an active

on various projects. He currently owns a '32 Ford roadster he completed three years ago, a '28 Ford Land Speed roadster he completed last year he's racing and a '56 Ford pickup, that's currently in progress. Since photography is another hobby, he's also the unofficial club photographer.

While he's served Ty-Rods as its president twice, as the Reunion Chairman twice and as vice president twice, Bob remains as dedicated as ever to this group. He says, "The Ty-Rods have been such a terrific source of great friendships and good times. It truly is a group of great people who share a common bond in cars."

This year's Old Timers' Reunion will be September 11, 2011, at the Bolton Fairgrounds in Lancaster,

Massachusetts. For more information on the event, visit [www.ty-rods.org](http://www.ty-rods.org).



**Ty-Rods set a cap at 55 members, "Mostly because we don't have a location big enough for any more people," says Bob. They usually meet in a member's garage or business.**

Ty-Rods club member, Bob's passion is cars and he spends much of his retired days working

**Another members-only event the Ty-Rods host is the fall foliage Reliability Run, which began in the '80s.**

