

History of Desert Renegades POCI #65

Prior to 1993, there was only one Pontiac club in Arizona recognized by the Pontiac Oakland Club International. That was Arizona Chapter #29. We would meet halfway for some meetings, others in Tucson. Our activities involved tours/caravans to Southern Arizona (Tombstone etc.), including Coolidge the Pima Air Museum, Pontiac Day in Reid Park, to name a few.

Late in 1991, an all Pontiac Show was hosted by our chapter at Culver Pontiac in Phoenix and was really the beginning of Chapter #65. For the next year and a half or so the local Pontiakeers recruited and held some Phoenix-based events as well as continuing the Tucson journey. The decision was made at that point to start a new POCI chapter in the Phoenix area.

In 1993, 15 members of Chapter #29 signed the original Charter request to start a POCI chapter in Phoenix. That request was granted in 1993 at the POCI National Convention in Irvine, Calif. and the Desert Renegades became Chapter #65. This could not have happened without the help and support of our Tucson POCI friends Thom Sherwood and Ross Whitehead.



Kurt Weber was our first President, Pete Orlando was VP, Joe Sarginger was Treasurer and Miles and Rita Wilttrout were editors for our newsletter, called *Sand Tracks*. Original club members also included Gary and Mary Sundberg, Murray Nevin, Charles Bolten, Bill and Pat Ruminer, Mike Bramer, Mike Dykstra and Ed Steinke. At this time we are lucky to still have Kurt, Mary, Murray, Charles and Mike Bramer still involved.

Our Chapter hosted two regional POCI shows in those early years, one in Lake Havasu and one in Prescott. This was during a time when West Coast clubs rotated mini-conventions, hence Western Regionals. All were well attended with a lot of fun and a lot of hard work!

Early activities with Chapter #65 also included caravans/tours to Wiseman's Salvage, Tortilla Flats, Progressive Dinners, Pavilions, Pasta in the Pines, Cruise on Central, Steak Fry's, Chili Cook-offs, breakfast cruises, Christmas Parties at members home then at commercial locations (Deer Valley Airport/ Martin Auto Museum), monthly Pavilions Pontiac Row cruises, usually rotated areas and usually involved pizza.

A Pontiac only show in 1996 led to the first of the annual Buick-Olds-Pontiac shows in 1997 which hosted 130 Cars. Today, we have included Cadillacs for our BOPC Show. In 2023, we celebrated our 25th Anniversary.

A special shout out to Mary Sundberg, Kurt Weber, Murray Nevin, Dave Bertram, Stu Schindler, Charles Bolten, Walter Buerkle, Sunny Carnivale and Mike Szymanski who have attended all the BOP shows since 1997.

Community involvement over the years has included membership in the Arizona Automobile Hobbyist Council, Toys for Tots, food drives, families adopted at Christmas and later the involvement with the Cactus GTO Club on their Adopt-A-Highway clean-up.

Some key club dates for Desert Renegades Chapter #65

- The bylaws and Constitution were adapted in 2005.

- POCI National Awards: 2004 at annual conventions in Joplin, Missouri and in 2018 at Wisconsin Dells
- Chapter of the Year, Senior Division at POCI/Wisconsin Dells in 2018
- POCI Newsletter award: 2003
- POCI Chapter display awards: 2003 & 2006
- Member elected to POCI National Board in 1997: Gary Sundberg

As of 2022, we have some 80 members and do joint events with the Cactus GTOs in Phoenix and an annual trip to Tucson for the Chapter #29's all Pontiac Show. The last couple years pre Covid we did a Rt 66 weekend trip to Flagstaff, Williams to Kingman, AA and 7 of us attended the 2019 Bandit Run sponsored by Dave Hall and Restore a Muscle Car from Dallas to Kansas City

If anyone is vacationing in Arizona during those winter months, please look us up. The Second Saturday of every month from Sept-May is Pontiac Night with a dedicated row at The McDonalds, Pavilions location in Scottsdale, the longest running weekly car show in the country.

A special thanks to Mary Sundberg and Kurt Weber for their input into reconstructing this timeline.

– *By Tom Knecht*