

Created by: Debra C. Argen

## Madison Avenue Sports Car Driving and Chowder Society

The **Madison Avenue Sports Car Driving and Chowder Society** provides sports car enthusiasts with the opportunity to mix, mingle, and most importantly, talk about cars.



Sometimes a voice is just as much a part of a sport as the actual players, Johnny Most was "the voice" for Celtic fans; for car-racing fans, Chris Economaki is "the voice." Walking into the Madison Avenue Sports Car Driving and Chowder Society at Sardi's in New York on September 12, 2006, I first heard rather than saw the legendary racing announcer. Instantly voice recognizable, Chris was regaling the MASCDCS members with racing anecdotes while signing his new biography, *LET 'EM ALL GO!* I knew then that I was in for a fun afternoon.

The Madison Avenue Sports Car Driving and Chowder Society formed in March 1957, meets the second Tuesday of the month at Sardi's in New York, and provides the perfect vehicle for people involved in the automotive industry, either as a profession, or simply because they are passionate about sports cars. Hosted by Co-Directors Bruce and Genia Wennerstrom, (Co-Chairmen of [Greenwich Concours d'Elegance](#)), this is the place where the "Chowderheads," as the society calls its members, talk shop, learn car news, swap stories, plan races, and have a few laughs.



Bruce Wennerstrom welcomed members and guests to the luncheon, and introduced featured speakers Corky Coker and Chris Economaki. Corky Coker is the President of Coker Tire Company, a company that makes reproduction tires for vintage cars, important for car collectors looking to restore cars long out of production. In the 1950s and 1960s, you could not restore a car if you could not get the tires. He travels the world in search of original molds to add to his collection of over 800 tire molds for vintage motorcycles, airplanes, and cars. He encouraged the audience to "Bring back the Sunday drive, stop watching golf, stop watching football, and get out a take a drive."

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When Bruce introduced motor-racing legend Chris Economaki, the two volleyed repartee faster than racecar drivers coming down the backstretch towards the finish line. They shared a few racing memories, including how the American Driver Dan Gurney started the now famous tradition of spraying the crowd with champagne after the Le Mans race in 1967.

Chris Economaki is approaching his 86th birthday, likes to be around racing guys, and told his doctor that he needed a lower gear, because he does not come around the corners the way he used to, but believe me, the man gets around just fine. He also knows his way around the racing circuit, and the stories never end. One day he was at the Indy 500 and it was a terrible weather day, spitting weather, and one of the Indy 500 drivers would not practice, when teased the driver replied, "What, and catch a cold?"

In the early days, racing became popular because they were an important aspect of the state agriculture fairs; now racing is popular through the television medium. He feels that racing is different today; drivers no longer win the race, the car wins the race.

Years ago when Chris was a track announcer, he said that when he had to decide which driver to watch, he would watch the driver that was broke, because the driver would earn money by passing; now with million dollar salaries, commercials, and endorsements, things are a lot different in the racing world.

The first races that he attended were in New Jersey, where the admission was .40, but no one had .40 in 1933, so he would go under the fence or over the fence, but he would get in and see the race. No one traveled in 1934 and 1935, but Chris traveled to Philadelphia to watch a race, where he had quite an education about Pennsylvania-Dutch food and culture. He said that he was curious, although he added that some said nosy, and he learned about the tracks, got to know the drivers, and then became a track announcer. As they say, the rest is history, which Chris shares in his biography, *LET 'EM ALL GO!*



It was a very pleasant afternoon at Sardi's, and I cannot wait until the next meeting, as you never know who will show up to share a few of their stories!

For information on the Madison Avenue Sports Car Driving and Chowder Society or the [Greenwich Concours d'Elegance](#), please contact Bruce Wennerstrom at 203-661-1669.

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