**HISTORY OF SPARKY’S ROCKABILLY ROUNDUP**

**(FORMERLY KNOWN AS THE OLD SKOOL ROUNDUP)**

In 1999 Syracuse, NY hosted the Good Guys at the NYS Fairgrounds. Bob O'Connor attended this show and he and some of his friends decided that they could put on a show similar to this one. In 2000 the 1st annual Syracuse Nationals was introduced to Syracuse, NY. Bob didn't think he'd have any sort of big turn out...but, fortunately, he was proved wrong! The first show brought in over a 1000 cars!  He even ended up directing traffic on 690 so everyone could get in and enjoy the 3 day show!

There were vendors, manufacturer reps, special guests and bands. There was even a hillybilly truck from the Midwest present. Our grandson, Michael, was picked out of the huge crowd to pick names at the main stage for prizes. He was 9 and dressed in his 50's outfit...and fit right in to the surroundings!

My husband, my grandson Michael, and I attended this first show. When my husband saw the hillybilly truck, he had a moment of inspiration and decided he could build one of these trucks himself and take it to car shows. He was able to purchase a 1940's Willy's Jeep from the former caretaker of the cemetery in Central Square, NY. This Jeep last saw duty in Korea.

We somehow towed the truck home with my Dodge van and he and neighbors, friends and family helped build a metal frame and base and the wooden frame for what became known as Sparky. Everything on the truck had an alternate meaning. A friend painted a canvas to cover all of the "junk" on the truck so it wouldn't fall off while we towed the truck to car shows, parades, county fairs, and even in the 6 pm nightly parade at the NYS Fair for 3 years and the Syracuse Nationals for 4 years.

People loved Sparky and were drawn to my husband as he transformed from an everyday Joe into this hillybilly character. After some time it became difficult to differentiate who was who! People would come from all over to sign Sparky and would came back year after year to show their friends where they had signed! There were close to 10,000 signatures all over that truck! Even State Troopers and the director of the Fair signed Sparky!

Jimmy used to stop in just about daily at the Right Coast office and entertain Bob, his son Rob, Bob's wife Muriel, Keith and whomever else was present in the office that day with his stories and update them on his antics with Sparky. It became a ritual and he was always greeted with a smile and outstretched arms from Bob!

In 2002 Jimmy and Sparky were at the Nationals on Friday and asked Bob why there were no Rat Rods or Old Skool cars in this enormous show. If there were any, they were almost being shunned and kept at a distance or hidden on side streets or behind buildings where they were hard to find. Jimmy loved these cars and we had both taken an interest in them and their owners at multiple shows throughout our many weekend trips in New York, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Vermont, New Hampshire and Canada.

Bob told Jimmy that if he could round up some of these kind of cars, which Bob also greatly appreciated as he was a racer at heart, then he could give us a spot behind a restaurant near the front gate for Saturday. He would even throw in some trophies he could have made overnight by staff at the office and he would find us a band. Jimmy was so excited at the prospect and he and a friend, Cliff Canfield, decided to call the show Old Skool Roundup. Clifford and his wife, Bonnie, didn't get involved with the show, but gave us some great ideas, some of which are still implemented today.

There were about 40 cars present and we had a great band of young kids from Rochester who came on stage in prom outfits! We didn't know what to expect...until those clothes snapped off to show 50's clothes underneath!  The surrounding crowd was being drawn into our little show...and loving the band and the cars! We had a raffle and awards. We gave our first Badass Award to Justin, a member of a local car club who still has the award. It means so much to him to know he was the inaugural winner. The only rule with Badass is the winner of the current year has to make the award for next year’s show. We have had some great and creative awards every year.

Bob was so happy and pleased with our success in pulling the show together in less than 24 hours. When we asked if he had anywhere we could move the show to for Sunday he told us we could go to the Beef Cattle Barn at Gate 6. This will be the 15th year there. We are a fixture of the Nationals and I and my grandson now carry on the name and tradition my husband began. He passed away March 10, 2019.  Bob followed in December 2019. We all imagine what these two are up to now! Such great friends.

In the fall of 2006 Jimmy sold Sparky to a junkyard in the Midwest. We've been told it sits on the top of a very high pole to bring customers in to the junkyard! He was sad to see it go. It had become his persona...so now he took on the name of Sparky to carry it proudly. The show was still called Old Skool Roundup and we were now at 3 days of continuous live music, a professional DJ, a good sized flea market,  a barn find backyard buildoff, lots of homemade awards and plaques from Right Coast, one of the largest pin up contest in the North East originated by Rosie and the Parlor City Dolls, and, of course, cars cars, cars.

It is so wonderful seeing old friends year after year and catching up. Gene Winfield always comes to the flea market at least twice during the week and makes presentations at the unveiling of the Backyard Buildoff. We have attendees that come to the Nationals just for our show and spend Thursday - Sunday in our building listening to music and carousing the flea market. Our house band is Krypton 88 from Rochester, NY. They have been with us since 2006.

In 2017 Sparky, Bob and Rob wanted to freshen up the show, so it wouldn't become stale and repetitive. A decision was made at that time to rename the show Sparkys Rockabilly Roundup. The response was positive and overwhelming. The show goes on and all of the traditions continue. We are always looking for sponsors, fresh ideas, and magazine coverage. Sparky was in more car magazine articles than can be named.  He loved it!

He was on the cover of the final edition of the Syracuse New Times and loved being the face of the Roundup and having his picture and his rat rod featured. The newspaper gave away so many free papers that they had to do a 2nd printing. First time in their history. Sparky signed his name so much that weekend...and every time it was with a huge grin and posing for pictures! He was in his element that year!

Michael has a copy of the edition framed in his garage office. This show was never about him, or us. It has always been for the rat rod and old skool car owners and enthusiasts. In 2017 he was presented the King of the Hill award by friends from the Albany-Schenectady area. He was so proud of that award and it is now in my grandsons garage. He loved all of the people involved in this show and his wish was that it continue for as long as it can.