# Snake Bites

Lutz Have a Fall Tour

**Fall Tech Day** 

Elkhart Indiana Color Tour Veterans Day Parade

**Lighthouse Tour 2020** 

**Cruise Nights** 



A Motor City Viper Owners Publication
Fall 2020 ~ Volume 25 Issue 3

#### PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Please note: the club calendar as shown is only tentative at print time.

In my first message to the club, let me thank you for voting for your Executive Board, myself as well as Vice-President Gary Rappaport, Treasurer Rick Reuter and Secretary Rose Klutz. I am extremely confident in our ability to work together. Many thanks go out to these officers and the board of directors that dedicate so much of their time to make this the best car club!

My first act as the new President is to double the salaries of the officers and Board of Directors! Although this means nothing since we are not paid. The best way to pay them back is to thank each of them for their efforts. Please and Thank You go a long way, as many of us were taught in our youth.

Our plan for 2021 is to provide the membership with as many opportunities to enjoy each other's company and actually put a few miles on our Vipers. We also will be increasing the subsidy amount to our events to make up for the many cancelled events of last year.

We also must follow the current CDC guidelines and State mandates as we try to create events and enjoy our club. As you can imagine, this is difficult. If anyone has ideas on safe events or suggestions of venues that can afford us enough room to gather safely, please contact me.

By the end of February, we will update and post our Calendar of Events on the MCVO website. Always check it, as there will be changes, as our restrictions change and other events become available.

While on the website, please review the Code of Conduct, Club By-Laws and Operations Manual. They are located under the Club Information Tab and then under Club Documents. If you have any questions, please call me directly.

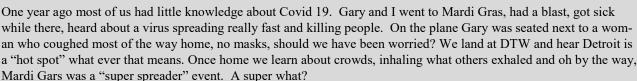
This COVID-19 pandemic has been a nightmare for all of us. No one thought it would continue this long. I am saddened to hear when fellow members speak of friends and/or family who contracted COVID-19 and endure severe sickness or loss of life. My heart goes out to all of you.

All we can do is wait for the vaccine and pray for those affected. Please be patient and stay safe.

Mike Sutton

#### Editor's Message

I believe we all agree it not just Goodbye to 2020, it's Good Riddance!!





Like many we haven't eaten out since then, little socializing, only outside and on a limited basis. We haven't seen our kids, we missed our son's wedding and haven't been able to meet his wife. Still we are fortunate all of us are healthy and employed. I am just now starting to get Covid fatigue and as of this writing it may be well into 2022 before enough people get vaccinated for it to be effective.

In the evening our neighbors bring propane heaters to sit outside visiting and have a drink. <u>I'm talking December and January, in Michigan</u>, it's 30 freaking degrees or less out and these hardy Michiganders are out there, usually every Friday night!

But this is a publication about Vipers. Sadly we attended very few Viper events last year. I'm without much to say on the subject. On a positive note, check out the long list of new members in this issue! Owners who had a similar 2020 and still joined us!

MCVO had some wonderful events last summer, but on the whole, 2020 sucked for Vipers, the club, most members, our neighbors and families, pretty much every human around the world. *Lets hope 2021 is better, WAY better. Stay safe* 

Ann Rappaport

snakebiteseditor@zoho.com

A THUESE CHANGES



#### March

- 4 MCVO Club Meeting
- 24 Cruise Night TBA

#### **April**

- 1 MCVO Club Meeting
- 10/11 GingerMan Track EOI
  - 21 Cruise Night
  - 24 Spring Tech Day

#### April 27-May 1 NVE4 Miami

#### May

- 6 MCVO Club Meeting
- 7 Waterford Hills Track EOI
- 19 Cruise Night

#### Possible additional May events:

Snakes Invade Shelby & High Octane Cars & Coffee

MCVO winter scarves available for purchase! Limited supply.
28"x8" \$15 each
(includes shipping)
Order form will be emailed to members with payment link.





## Motor City Viper Owners

Snail Mail: P.O. Box 311,

Bloomfield Hills, MI. 48303

Email: viper@mcvo.net

#### Officers:

President - Mike Sutton

Vice President - Gary Rappaport

Treasurer - Rick Reuter

Secretary - Rose Klutz

#### **Directors**:

Apparel - Lori Emerling

Club Advisor - Bruce Heckman

Newsletter - Ann Rappaport

Membership - Marty Heitkamp

Motorsports - Tony Smith

Photography - Susan Andring

Social - Diane Cipponeri

Technology - Gary Rappaport

#### **Advisors**

Caravan Cruise Advisor - Bob Swartz

### Important Information-

All events are subject to existing orders and directives from governmental bodies.

Events published here are <u>not</u> guaranteed.

Notification of event status will be sent via email and posted, when appropriate, on social media, as it draws near.

During the driving season often there are more events as well as changes to listed events. For the latest information please reference our club's calendar at www.MCVO.net thank you! Please note: details for club events are emailed to members.

Club Board Meetings are on the 1st Thursday of each month. Please check the website for time and locations. Everyone is welcomed.

Advertising is available in Snake Bites, please send a request for further information.

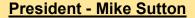
Snake Bites is a Motor City Viper Owners publication. Subscription is included in the membership fee. Editorial contributions are invited, but we are not responsible for the return of unsolicited materials. Submission of materials implies the right to edit and publish all or in part. The opinions and experience of the author, of the article, does not necessarily reflect Stellantis opinion, recommendation or approval. Reproduction whole, in part, or by electronic storage of Snake Bites (printed), Snake Bites Electronic Editions or Snake Update is prohibited without the expressed written consent of the editor and Board.

# New Board members

#### **Motorsports - Tony Smith**

I've been an MCVO member since 2018 after buying Ed Swanson's Viper. After checking car over top to bottom I'm was ready for all the fun events the club has. I've started planning events, although Covid has restricted how we can do them. This is a brief rundown of my interests:

- -Former SCCA / Waterford Hills racer
- -Former Trans Am Mechanic / Toyota Atlantic Crew Chief
- -Automotive History enthusiast
- -Father of 2 (Son at UM, Daughter at MSU because they needed something else to bicker about) My hobbies are:
- -Coaching/watching baseball
- -Chairman of Berkley Dads Club
- -Doing Radio Voice over work (yes, you've heard my voice before)



I'm Mike Sutton your new Executive Board member. In 4 short years I've gone from buying my Viper to President of MCVO and like the car, what a ride!

In 2016 I bought my 1998 red GTS and having some knowledge of how active MCVO was I joined straightway. I've enjoyed assisting other members and started coordinating events like the Lighthouse Tours in 2018 and 2020. I served as Motorsports Director starting in 2018 and continued into 2020, when I was elected MCVO President.

My plans are to work with the exceptional MCVO board to exceed all expectations and continue MCVO's reputation as the "best Viper club around".

I love my career as a CNC Application Engineer, at Fanuc America and have no plans to retire anytime soon. Between my grandkids, family and MCVO I am very busy!



Little Daddy's loves classic cars and has hosted many local clubs with their large parking lot and excellent service. They even offered us inside seating and outside tables, near our cars. We had our own waitress outside, Dawn, who took fantastic care of everyone. 17 Vipers and 30 in members attended. We had a couple of notable "news" items: Paul Choukourian stopped by in his beautiful Ford GT. We also met Jim and Kathy Kos. They saw our FB post and decided to come mingle with the group. We must have been on our best behavior, they joined the Club!

#### Time to renew

#### **Marty Heitkamp**

For those of you that have already renewed for 2021, thank you and I look forward to seeing you at upcoming MCVO events!

For those of you that haven't renewed yet, please consider this a friendly reminder to renew your membership. Please renew by March 15<sup>th</sup>, to ensure you'll continue to receive the Snake Bites newsletter and be able to attend all the events that MCVO will be having in 2021.

For MCVO Associate members, go to mcvo.net and click on membership information under the club information tab for renewal information. For VOA/MCVO members go to driveviper.com and click on the portal tab for renewal information. You'll need your VOA membership number (it is on your membership nametag) to login.

If you have any questions or need any help please contact me at mah48092@aol.com.





#### MCVO extends a warm welcome to these new members:

Bill Adams

Rick Barone

John Bieleniewicz

William Blewett

Carl Block

Vincent Bondy

Dara David

Jon Eckerly

Jason Jordon

Jim Kos

Jason Kotsonas

Jacob Lanyon

Anthony Marcinkowski

Pat Meraw

Greg & Robin Ornazian

Steve Speth

Lisa & Matt Tufts

Clinton Township

Clinton Township

Rochester Hills

Walloon Lake

Fostoria

Flat Rock

Orchard Lake

Whitmore Lake

Vermilion, OH

Oxford

Commerce Township

Commerce Township

Shelby Township

New Baltimore

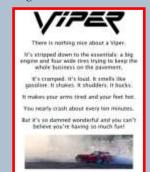
Rochester

West Bloomfield

Fruitport



Special thank you to Tom Beekman for letting me use a copy of the sign he has on his car.





#### October Cruise Night



Luigi's Trattoria Pizzeria, in Livonia. was very accommodating for our group with parking in the rear, our own waitstaff and tables outdoors. Members were given the choice of inside or outside dining. Most opted for dining alfresco. We had 12 Vipers and 23 in attendance.

While the sun was still shining, it was quite pleasant dining outside. Once the sun set, it got a little chilly, but everyone braved the cold and had a great time, enjoying great food and great company.



#### The Board is pleased to share a new volunteer position!

# Caravan Cruise Advisor

The Caravan Cruise Advisor is a resource for members who want to offer a Caravan Cruise in conjunction with an event they are planning. Often planning the "main event" can be involved and there just isn't time left for a coordinator to also plan a scenic and enjoyable drive to a location. Also, local events are a great time to arrange traveling with other members and a good time to reach out to the Caravan Cruise Advisor so that your group can enjoy the drive!

MCVO has an amazing resource, a member who has, through his interest and efforts, become the clubs "go to member" for this need. He is helpful and super flexible. Getting a group of 10 -30 cars through intersections, villages, gas/potty stops and lights goes a lot smoother when Bob Swartz is able to share his expertise.

Bob wanted to pass this along to membership:

If you're planning an event and would like to include a caravan cruise, but don't know some of the steps which need to be taken, please contact me, I can help. As an event coordinator you may have all you can handle with your big event. I'm here to help you have an excellent Viper friendly Caravan Cruise! Call me and I'll either help find a Leader for that portion or cooperate with you and run it as **PART** of **your** event.

That's the way it worked for the "Lutz Have a Fall Color Tour". Event Chair Jon Block and I coordinated closely, I detailed the route and planning, I called Mike Sutton to coordinate the group staging with five excellent caravan leaders to guide the five groups of cars. The spectacular size of this was a challenge but our team found out that we can do these super big caravan cruises!

Call/txt/email Bob at: Bob Swartz 248-882-4301 racerbob@comcast.net





# 2020 Lighthouse Tour Mike Sutton



Overcast skies greeted us Thursday morning as 13 Vipers rolled into the meetup place. At the last minute, two member had mechanical issues, but they still enjoyed the tour in their daily drivers.

Our first stop: a secluded private collection of Carroll Shelby automobiles and memorabilia, in the Jackson Michigan area was unbelievable! So many one-of-one cars, each with a great story from our host. Big thanks to Bob Swartz for setting this visit up.









Next stop: lunch and a visit to the Kalamazoo Air Zoo. Thankfully I found out the original restaurant had permanently closed just the weekend before, but the local police suggested Angelo's Italian Eatery and the food was excellent. The Kalamazoo Air Zoo has a pavilion on their property with seating for approximately 100 people. Perfect for our needs.

Kalamazoo Air Zoo was also a big hit. Unfortunately the "interactive" portions, including rides & simulators, were shut down due to COVID-19. Our flying skills were not tested this time, but a return trip once the pandemic is over would be nice. My personal favorite was the SR-71 Blackbird, which is a tiny bit faster than our snakes.



Friday morning started wet and cool, but by the time we arrived to the South Haven Pierhead lighthouse, the sun was out. We had a wonderful lunch in downtown Holland at the Windmill Restaurant and did a little bit of shopping in the businesses on 8<sup>th</sup> Street. Holland Harbor Lighthouse, aka "Big Red", was next, where we enjoyed a sandy beach and perfect temperatures.

Visiting the USS Silversides Submarine Museum in Muskegon was incredible. She is credited with sinking 23 ships, with tonnage of the ships amounting to 90,080 tons! The quarters were small and movement through this vessel was difficult for some of us. I can only imagine how many times I would hit my head if I need to get out of a submarine in a hurry...









Dinner on Friday evening was at The Deck on the beach next to the Muskegon South Breakwater Light. The restaurant set us up in a secluded outdoor dining area. Fresh air, some live music and the meals were fantastic! The Shoreline Inn Ascend Hotel was a short 15-minute drive from the beach. The view from the rooms was beautiful, overlooking Muskegon Lake.

Saturday morning started with a 30-minute drive to the White River Lighthouse. This lighthouse was the only one we were allowed to climb. We also spoke to a few fishermen on the inlet. No reports from them on "catching the big one".

A 3D Stained Glass replica lamp of the Big Red Lighthouse was created and donated by Sam Milana to be raffled at the next big MCVO event. Thank you-Sam!

Overall, we had a wonderful time, with a great group which made it the best MCVO Lighthouse tour of the year! I believe these Lighthouse tours have converted the attending members to Lighthouse fanatics.

We pray the pandemic will be resolved and our Viper family are all in great health!





Lutz Have a Fall
Tour

Jon Block



Saturday, October 10, 2020, was truly a "10 out of 10" day for the 137 MCVO members that enjoyed a fabulous Fall Color Tour, and then the hospitality of Bob & Terri Lutz to spend the afternoon at the beautiful Lutz Farm! Sunshine and temperatures in the 70's were not even the best part of this memorable Fall day! The Color Tour began near Brighton, and with 72 Vipers participating, all were broken into the 5 Gen Groups. The route was 82 miles of smooth roads, very few traffic lights, and no one got separated or lost!

The best part was arriving at the idyllic Lutz Farm, with acres of manicured grass and landscaping around their pond, complete with ducks and a swan. Bob had his Intermeccanica Italia, Corvettes C8 (just arrived in a stealth blue/gray with stunning camel interior), ZO6, ZR1, and beautiful VL Destino parked outside (you should look this one up!). The Vipers were parked by Gen, with terrific help from staff at The Lutz Farm, including a rare GTS-R whose owner had not driven it in the last 10 years.













After all arrived and were parked we had a pizza and salad lunch, and then Bob spent the rest of the afternoon speaking to all and autographing everything. His books, posters, car parts, and finally a long line of Vipers that wanted an autograph on the engine manifold, glove box lid, and even the dash board!

Mike and Diane Cipponeri put together a commemorative booklet titled, "Snake Bit By Viper," and included articles by Francois Castaing, Jean Mallebay-Vacqueur, Maurice Liang, Roy Sjoberg, Bruce Heckman, Ralph & Doris Gilles, myself and most importantly, a series of **Viper Poems** written years ago by Bob Lutz!





Jon presented Bob with a die cast on which he signed the entire MCVO membership's names, no easy feat to accomplish, thank you Jon

Bob was surprised to see Jean Mallebay-Vacqueur, the then Chrysler Special Projects General Manager, Roy Sjoberg, Chief Engineer of Team Viper also attended (pulling his Viper trailer behind his Gen 1), as well as Mike Cipponeri, Lead Electrical Engineer.

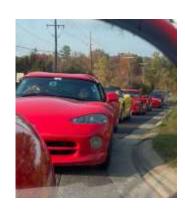
As the event slowed down, Bob's wife, Terri, brought out their 2 potbelly pigs, Rosie (named after WWII Rosie the Riveter) and little Daisy. They really love animals! A U.S. Marine, fluent in 5 languages, can operate a CNC machine, drives at race car speeds on public roads at every opportunity, and with Wall Street finance, manufacturing, production, engineering, design, and certainly marketing expertise beyond compare.

Bob Lutz, "sometimes doubted, seldom wrong, never misunderstood." An inspiration to all, and to whom we thank for our *amazing Vipers!* 









# The Cruise

**Bob Swartz** 



It was a privilege to help put together the Cruise portion of this event. With over 70 cars representing nearly half of the MCVO Region's membership. For me, there were just too many cars to accurately count and still keep myself on task and together.

The Color Cruise part of this treated us to lots of SE Michigan color splendor. The reds and yellows were out in abundance along and near winding country and secondary roads. We could say we went through Hell (MI) and back touring the Irish Hills Region. Hilly and some twisty roads were welcome turf for the Vipers hugging their pavement. There was no need for speed on this run as the open then sometimes intimate scenery filled our senses to the max.



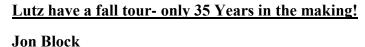
Jon's overall plan required arriving on time so that the pizza would be fresh and hot. To that end the cars were aligned from the start in approximate order of the 5 Generations and arranged into five, separate Cruise Groups, each with their own Leader. Having these smaller groups of 10 to 15 cars made for a pleasant Cruise with way less "accordion effect" also we were able to have a good 'Pit Stop' opportunity in the small hamlet of Brooklyn, MI.

Last was a smooth positioning of the cars at the Saline Community Fairgrounds which allowed us to drive into the Lutz Farm in order of production. Thank you Jon Block and our fantastic Group Leaders: Mike Sutton, Garry Tripp, Mike Prudhomme, Ron Stene, and Wil Thorne.



As editor I chose to print just the basics of Jon's article which was published in the Viper Quarterly. I asked Jon to share how he had met Bob and how he was able to make this day possible. After some emails back and forth it became clear the "how" wasn't a big lift, Bob and Terri were pleased to host MCVO. That left space to share some memories and experiences Jon has had with Bob through the years. Hope you enjoyed them. Ann







I first met Bob Lutz in 1986 at the Meadow Brook Hall Concours d'Elegance, and always was amazed at everything about him, a Marine fighter pilot, a true automotive enthusiast while possessing astounding business skills.

It got even better when in 1993, I was named Chairman of the Concours and Bob was named Honorary Chairman. He immediately invited me to a monthly luncheon meeting with he and Tom Gale at his Chrysler office in Highland Park. I was in 7th heaven! Their discussions would go round and round, "let's see what it would look like with the fender like this, or the bumper like that, or what about a steering wheel looking like this." Design ideas abounded. Bob would talk about Wall Street financing, about trying to hit 150mph daily on public roads, and then how he showed a CNC machine operator a different way to operate his machine, the last time he had gone through a Chrysler Plant.

At the beginning of a Chelsea Proving Grounds meeting, Del Derese, a Chrysler Executive who was also on the Meadow Brook Committee, was telling me of a recent product introduction there, when suddenly Bob slipped away. When he returned, it was in his L-39 FIGHTER JET going 450mph upside down at 150' above the tarmac! Conversations during these meetings were wide ranging and showed the complexity of running one of the "Big Three". I cajoled Bob into then donating a flight in his L-39 to the highest bidder for the charity, and lo and behold, my dear wife Donna kept bidding. That was the first of 7 flights she had with Bob, all through his generous efforts to generate money for charity.

Bob has always said that he really likes to maintain a clean aircraft. Thankfully Donna and her tummy do "upside down" extremely well, whereas my tummy would not fair well at all and so I never tried! Their flights would head out from Willow Run Airport to either Lake Michigan, Lake Erie, or Lake Huron, where after burning off enough fuel through very low runs over the lakes (usually high-speed at 30') Bob would "go high" and proceed to perform military aerobatics. Their last flight over Lake Erie Bob spotted 2 guys on jets skis far ahead, and told Donna, "let's go get'em!" I am certain that was a very memorable moment for the jet ski operators!

I was very pleased when Bob and Terri agreed to host the Fall MCVO event. Knowing there was a huge amount of planning to be done my next reaction was to have a small panic attack! I really wanted everything to go well. Thanks to our membership, Bob & Terri and the staff at the Lutz farm, I believe everyone had a wonderful time.

One could try to name an automotive executive who regularly drives so fast, who know Wall Street, Design, Manufacturing, and certainly Marketing...and with his Marine Corps "command" presence...but you would only have one name on the list....Bob Lutz. And add amazing, extraordinary, generous, and with a great sense of humor...that's Bob!







#### Fall Tech Day at PMD Garage

#### Mike Sutton





On November 7th, 2020 we visited PMD Garage, in Pontiac.

The weather has been unusually warm for the last few days, with highs around 70's. Unfortunately, some of our members had already placed their cars in hibernation, prior to the warmer weather, but a few diehards were looking for a good reason to drive to another event. We had a good turnout with 19 in attendance and 9 Vipers.

Our host, Gordon Heidacker, was a former Executive with Chrysler, and involved in the original development of the Viper. He introduced his team and gave a very informative talk on what PMD is doing today and working on for the future. Projects ranging from advanced Viper engine development to building state of the art electric karts for M1 Concourse, PMD Garage has fascinating development projects that you will never see anywhere else. Gordon also mentioned that they are investigating creating Viper parts that are no longer available to the public. Gordon has a Gen 1 Viper to use for fitting newly engineered parts.

Our members loved the idea and were quick to make suggestions of parts they are unable to find.

After Gordon's talk, members roamed around their very unusual building to see the various classic cars being stored or projects underway.















#### **Elkhart Indiana Color Tour and More**

#### **Bob Swartz**

MCVO was invited to join a group of enthusiastic Viper owners for a color tour and more! Ray Sweers, a long time Viper racer of the Indiana region treated us to a fantastic Color Tour of Elkhart with ALL the trimmings. He opened his business and race shop for everyone to wander around, ask questions, talk about racing, his unique products and all things Viper.



MCVO members Mike Sutton, Marty Heitkamp, Matt & Lisa Tufts, Mike Prudhomme, and I drove down and were treated like Viper Royalty! A wonderful welcome of coffee, juice, and donuts galore started our day. Add in popular, country, oldies & folk music from his guitar picking songster friend and a scrumptious BBQ lunch - with more trimmings. We were impressed and felt very welcomed.

Ray gave a tech presentation about his business, tracking his and our Vipers along with some good personal stories thrown in. Next we toured the building, checking out 23 Vipers, along with a '56 Olds and a recent Aston Martin DB11 007 Edition Cabriolet, some classic MOPAR Muscle, Porsche, and Viper pickups included. A lot of car viewing, pictures, and more chit chat.

Then the driving tour! It was a very pleasant loop around, across, and back over the St Joseph River through town and lovely residential areas into the nearby country setting.

But our day was not done yet! We returned to the shop for more chatter and some photo ops with his racers and towering Transformer replicas made from a mountain of gears, shafts, rods, assemblies, and all kinds of automotive pieces.

Gotta tell you what a beautiful day it was to cruise to Ray's place, a clear fall day with the sun behind us lighting up the full dress trees in all their glory. Coming back did not disappoint, with the sun behind me I took the lesser traveled routes. Shorter, slower nice to sightsee, and about the same drive time. Plus those non-freeway roads are a bit more fun for safely pushing up the speed.

A good time was had by all thanks to a great host in Ray Sweers and our favorite car - VIPER!

Oops! This event STILL isn't over. Come to find out that Ray's insistence on taking our pictures with our car had a plan behind it. We each got a 21"x28" Plexiglas poster featuring that photo! With an inscription of the event/date/ place PLUS an inset showing the field of cars. Ray sure knows how to apply some colorful Viper WOT to everything he does!



#### **Veterans Day Parade**

#### **Ann Rappaport**

MCVO was able to participate in *The Metropolitan Detroit Veterans Coalition* this year, which, as it turned out, wasn't as easy as one might of thought.

Mike Sutton had made the initial contact and set plans in motion, except Covid-19 and the prohibition of large gatherings meant a traditional parade wasn't possible. The organizers chose to create a Virtual Parade, which many organizations are doing for events as a way to carry on with traditions but still remain safe.

There was a limit to total number of people our club could have. An email went out to membership and the response was very positive.



The plan was for each group to "parade", in order, without onlookers and then make the video available on line. As you can see, from these beautiful pictures, appreciation for our local Veterans was not lacking in this celebration. Mike reported that MCVO will most likely be invited back next year, lets hope restrictions are lifted and more members can participate!



















#### A Rewarding and Enjoyable Afternoon

#### Mike Prudhomme

I was proud to represent MCVO and participate in this unique parade! Seven beautiful Vipers dressed in patriotic American flags, added greatly to the festive mood. For those of us that were privileged to attend the event, it was very touching to see all the heroic veterans that were there. They included past war heroes, current servicemen and the Willow Run Rosies Drill Team.

The club had a beautiful Veterans Day banner made thanking our veterans for their service. Although this year's Veterans Day Parade was much shorter than past years, secondary to the pandemic, all who attended enjoyed the energy and spirit of the event.

After the parade, several club members enjoyed lunch together at the well-known Slow's barbecue and then cruised up Woodward Avenue.







