Sometimes, when you anticipate or plan for an event for a long time, the excitement builds as it finally arrives! We were very excited about the results of this year’s Powertrain Expo; in fact, the only thing we’re left with contemplating is how we’re ever going to live up to this year’s success for next year!

Of course, we had a bit of help: This was the first of our two-year cycle at Las Vegas. And, as anyone who’s been there can tell you, Vegas is tough to beat. The glitter, the glitz, the shows and the gambling all combine to turn Expo into a must-attend event. But that’s only part of the story, because for many, Expo begins on the golf course.

Big Winners at Golf
Golf story By Wendy Ritz, Seal Aftermarket Products

This year’s Expo had an inordinate number of winners, with more than $2500 in cash and prizes awarded at the 4th Annual Red Girdley Memorial Golf Tournament. The cosponsors of this event, ATRA and Parker’s Seal Aftermarket Products, deemed the event a success based on the rave reviews from the participants. The Aliente Golf Club course is a particularly long, tight course, which challenges golfers to remain on the fairway.

Fifteen teams took advantage of the cool Nevada morning and our industry’s unique camaraderie to compete in the 18-hole shotgun tournament. The first place team consisted of Don Mercer, Tom Bracamonte, Mike Avila and Kirk Wilson. Just three strokes separated the first- and second-place teams: The second place team consisted of Robert Thompson, Rich Tilden, Kenny Hester and Troy Eakins.

Hector Gonzalez, Jr. was thrilled to receive a $225 cash prize for his Closest-to-the-Pin award; Gonzalez drove the green on a 210-yard par three, and placed the ball just three feet from the hole. Harry Brown and Mike Avila won the other Closest-to-the-Pin awards. Several door prizes were handed out after the luncheon and most participants went home with something from the tournament. The
grand door prize was for a Callaway FT-i Square Monster Driver. The door prizes were provided by loyal sponsors such as Amorim, Beaver Falls Gaskets Division of InterFace Solutions, Rostra Precision Controls, and SPX Filtran.

Relaxing before Powertrain is what this tournament is all about and was epitomized by the Most Honest Golfer award winners, Robert Brunner, Bonnie Brunner, Tim Goleman and Gary Fell.

The 5th Annual Red Girdley tournament is open to all Expo attendees,
A Look Back at ATRA’s Powertrain Expo 2007

and you can send your application in when you sign up for the show. The ATRA staff does a great job in processing the individual golfers and designated teams. Toledo Trans Kit is Parker’s premier kit brand, and Toledo Trans Kit has been a sponsor of the tournament for over ten years. Parker is proud to be able to sponsor this golf tournament in conjunction with ATRA.

If you want to be sure to come home from Vegas a winner, send Diane Bland an email at dbland@atra.com and have her put you on the list for next year’s golf tourney.

Management Track a Resounding Success

For the first time in Expo’s long and storied history, the seminar program began early Thursday morning. And it was divided into two separate tracks: Technical and Management. One of the more exciting pieces of news going into Expo was there were nearly 300 shop owners and managers signed up for the new Management Track. Of course, because of the early start, you could
hardly expect many people to make it for the first few seminars.

But they did.

Thursday morning’s management seminar played to a full house. Nearly all of the shop owners and managers who signed up made it for the early Thursday introductory seminar: *What’s Working*, hosted by GEARS Managing Editor Rodger Bland. And most made their way back to the afternoon program: *Making It Work*, hosted by ATRA’s CEO Dennis Madden.

Follow-up seminars were offered by Bob Spitz, Bob Cooper, Thom Tschetter, Maylan Newton. The result was four days of intense management training that most attendees could take home and put to work right away in their shops.

Special thanks to ATRA’s special advisory panel: Panel Members-L to R: Mark Schwartzman, Dean Kuhn, Jeff Johnson, Kit Lindsay, Laura Wilson. These highly successful shop owners were on the hot seat for the entire four days of the seminar program, offering their time and experience to help other shop owners learn more and earn more.
A Look Back at ATRA’s Powertrain Expo 2007

Of course, no Expo would be complete without offering world-class technical training, and this year was no exception. The technical seminars began early Thursday morning, and went on until Sunday. And a little eavesdropping during the breaks revealed that the tech seminars were a big hit with the technical crowd.

Friday’s Luncheon by Raybestos

By now the Friday kickoff luncheon sponsored by Raybestos has become an institution at Expo. A terrific meal, seasoned with a gift from our hosts, and capped off with some amazing entertainment, just before the ribbon-cutting ceremony to open the trade show floor.

But this year may be a tough one to follow; a sumptuous feast, with a floor show starring Reba McEntire! Well, not really Reba, but she sure looked and sounded like her. And if that wasn’t enough, Reba was followed by Jake and Elwood: The Blues Brothers. The way they sang and danced, you’d swear it was Akroyd and Belushi on stage. When they asked for requests, someone called for “Rawhide.” Of course they did it… even if Elwood didn’t have a whip for the effect.

The performances were so good that no one was all that interested in leaving, until Dennis Madden announced that it was time to open the show floor.

ATRA President Jim Rodd cut the

The Blues Bros. & Reba McIntyre kick-off the 2007 Expo’s Festivities.

ATRA President Jim Rodd cut the traditional ribbon, with a little help from his granddaughter.

Attendees try their luck on the green… on the show floor.

Ipod Giveaway! The winners are: Teresa Roup, Mike’s Auto Repair, Lockhart, Texas, Mario Pina, Trans-D-Max II Inc, Cicero, Illinois, Steve Hager, Camargo, Transmission Repair, Mount Sterling, Kentucky, Jose Mejia, Banner Transmission Center LLC, Merced, California, Jerry Fondi, Northfield Transmissions, Northfield, New Jersey, Jason Gibson, AJ Transmission & Auto Repairs, South Vancouver, British Columbia, Pat Walsh, Quality Transmission Service, St. Louis, Missouri, Randy Leland, AAMCO Transmissions, American Fork, Utah, Bernhard Fieck, Robf Trading AG, Lipsch, Switzerland, Daren Keeney, Oregon Converter Co, Creswell, Oregon.
Your Show of Shows

For many, Expo is all about the “The Best in the West” R&R contest, winner: Tom “Cool” Oldfield of Paul’s Transmission Service, Canton, IL (Yes, he’s the one with the red boa) Tom takes home a Big Screen 32” TV and bragging rights.

A REAL Transmission Grill was silent auctioned off by Transtar. Proceeds benefitting United Way!

traditional ribbon, with a little help from his granddaughter, Cammeron.

For many, Expo is all about the
A Look Back at ATRA’s Powertrain Expo 2007

Trade Show. They could hardly be disappointed with this year’s show. Over 100 vendors graced the show floor, with new products and specials from virtually every area of the transmission industry. And let’s face it: What can be more fun than checking out all the new tools and parts that are being introduced to the industry?

Maybe a game of poker? Well, waddaya know: We had a Poker Run on the show floor, too! Dozens of attendees participated in ATRA’s Poker Run. Two winners made the rounds: one for best hand, and one for the worst:

Best Hand: Bruce Becker, of Cloquet Automotive Inc, Cloquet, MN, with three Jacks. For his big win, Bruce received the grand prize of $500!

Worst Hand: Cheryl Harrison, of JM Transmission, Odessa, TX, with, well, garbage. Looks like a 2, 3, 5, 6 and 7; sort of a straight with a stutter. For her complete lack of anything approaching a poker hand, Cheryl won $250.

If that wasn’t enough, we also saw an impromptu Joe Rivera Lookalike Contest. The finalists were ATRA’s Lance Wiggins and Damon Poliakian from Transtar. The winners received (drum roll, please) their pictures in GEARS Magazine!

ATRA Board Members and their wives: Jim Rodd, Ed Doyle, Jim Lyons, Hennie Lyons and Marion Rodd

Monte Ahuja, Transtar Chairman and CEO

ATRA Winners! They won a full day experience at a racing school!

Don Mercer - Pictured at right, of DOT Trans, Edmonton, AB Canada

And the other winner (not pictured): Jeremy Koppubery, Dirks Trans Service, Oroville, CA. Congratulations!
The Big Reception

After a full day of seminars, a luncheon and a visit to the show floor, nothing caps the day like the annual reception sponsored by Transtar. A chance to catch up with old friends and make new ones over a drink and hors d’oeuvres, with a band playing in the background.

And what a band it was: a big band, playing hits from the ’30s, ’40s and ’50s. But as good as they were, probably the highlight of the musical interlude came when Transtar’s own Stephanie Newport added her vocal talents to a version of New York, New York. What a set of pipes! If she ever gets tired of hawking trans parts, she’d be a shoe-in on American Idol.

With all that beautiful music, it was only a matter of time before someone stepped onto the dance floor. The first one’s to put on their dancing shoes were ATRA’s own Rodger and Diane Bland. They were soon followed by
A Look Back at ATRA’s Powertrain Expo 2007

Regina Diehl and Marcus Stevens from Newco, and Thom Tschetter and Eileen Kelley.

A long and busy weekend, filled with new ideas, new products, and fun. It was hard to go back to the regular grind, but hey; there’s always next year’s Expo to look forward to!