



TECHNICAL SIDEBAR

New Mexico Corvette Association

FUNKHANA --- SAY WHAT???

Mention the word “funkhana” (fun-khan-a) to a car enthusiast and you’ll probably get one of the following two responses: Most will answer with a question, such as “Huh?” or “Could you spell that?” Others will grin, chuckle, laugh, grimace, moan – or a medley of the above – and then begin sharing about a particular funkhana event, possibly from 20 years ago. That’s because funkhanas are incredibly memorable.

Funkhanas have been called “the Rodney Dangerfield of motorsports.” Admittedly, the funkhana gets “no respect” when compared to high-speed racing. And that’s fine, because funkhanas satisfy the competitive appetite of a fun-loving niche of car nuts, participants and spectators alike.

If you are not familiar with “Funkhana”, think of it as a parking lot game for Corvettes.

It was probably in the 1950s that a driver — realizing that he or she lacked the skill or equipment to excel in the one-car-at-a-time gymkhana races — decided to add unusual obstacles, slow down the pace to low gear, make the competition less serious, and call it a funkhana. The name and concept caught on and soon sports car clubs began conducting funkhanas, which evolved into an automotive social function of sorts that was fun for the whole family.

The word funkhana is derived in part from gymkhana, a term referring to a race over a defined circuit with obstacles at the wheel of a sports car. The British favor the word gymkhana for events often conducted on a grass field, while the American equivalent called autocross consists of a course delineated by orange safety cones over the expanse of a parking lot. There are other spellings for this pastime, such as funkana or even funcana, but most people include the “h” to signify the derivation from gymkhana.

In the past several years, some of our members have participated in funkhanas. With this in mind, we are considering including this type event at the Southwest Invitational for exposure – not to mention participants who don’t wish to autocross but might have some fun with this.

Not just another autocross with a few distracting activities slowing you down. It’s a good test of drivers’ and navigators’ skill and sense of humor navigating a special course of wacky activities based

on unique aspects of life or whatever; meet the challenging tasks of saving the environment, driving like a Querque, and more.

It is a low-speed, light-hearted competition. Each team, composed of a driver and passenger, must complete tasks — centered around a theme — that involve car handling, teamwork and especially a sense of humor. The event is good-natured, and not hard on the cars.

Funkhana challenges range from sophisticated to silly. Funkhanas usually involve a test of very low-speed driving skills such as backing, maneuvering thru cones, turning a 360 degree circle around a cone, parallel parking, etc. They often also include gimmick activities such as ring toss, putt-putt type golf, hula-hoop, hop-scotch, bean-bag toss, scrabble, puzzles, etc. — basically driver and/or navigator teamwork. Teams are graded by a combination of time, accuracy, and points. By including an element of luck, everyone has a good chance of winning... or screwing up.

Each team, composed of a driver and passenger, must complete tasks — often centered around a theme — that involve car handling, teamwork and especially a sense of humor. There are no official rules, the only requirements being that the event is good-natured, low-speed, safe and not hard on the cars.

These events are timed, usually with stop-watches. Funkhanas can be held car-less (no car at all) while others might have you start in a car and the rest of the event is done without a car, up until the finish. Most events involve driving your car to stop points or “stations” where the driver and/or navigator will get out to perform the activity. Successful completion of an activity usually adds points or reduces the overall runtime of the participants.

Scoring is a combination of elapsed time, and accuracy in performing tasks. Horsepower is not a factor as speed is not critical in earning a good score. You can even have an event where the car is pushed around a course.

Funkhana Rules

Funkhana's are supposed to be fun. Safety can easily be overlooked. Without discouraging any clever ideas for funkhana's, a few guidelines are in order. Keep safety and common sense at the top of your list!

- All drivers and navigators should stay in the car while the engine is running.
- Driver at least, should be wearing a seat belt (if the car is equipped).
- Same age limits for drivers as gymkhana's (must have driver's license, be 18 or older).
- Keep spectators back at a safe distance.
- Paper bags over the driver's head are not allowed.
- The driver's vision shall not be impaired in any manor at any time that the car is in motion and the engine is running.

- Navigators must remain in their seats while the car is in motion; violators should be disqualified.
- If driver exits car during event, car must shut off.

Example: Honey-Do Funkhana

The Honey-Do is a catch-all theme for any domestic chore — in the house or out in the yard – that can be adapted for funkhana purposes. Some possibilities are: clearing the dining table, doing dishes, folding or hanging laundry, taking out the trash, preparing or “cooking” a meal, cleaning something, repairing the plumbing, raking leaves, cleaning gutters, etc. The primary Honey-Do task featured on this page is called “doing the dishes” which requires picking up plastic plates with a plunger.



Object. A dozen plastic dinner plates are positioned throughout a parking lot, including several locations in corners or along curbs that required the driver to back up or otherwise maneuver the car. The object is for the passenger to collect each plate and return to the finish line in the least amount of time. There is no prescribed route, so the team must plan an efficient order and angle of attack. There is also a “taking out the trash” mission for the driver that is explained below.

The equalizer. In order to make the funkhana inviting to as many participants as possible, there should be a component where luck is a key factor. An equalizer is intended to thwart the success of the fastest car or most athletic team, thereby giving just about anyone a chance to finish with a good score. “Taking out the trash” requires the driver to successfully toss a bottle cap into a small waste can after stopping the car no closer than an established chalk line. Only one cap can be thrown at a time and once making a successful toss or making 10 failed tosses, the car can proceed.



The parking lot reserved for the event can be of any size as long as it is large enough to allow maneuvering including start and stop, forward and backward. A funkhana can take place in an area measuring only 50 x 100 feet if planned properly.