

Classic Car and Truck Clubs vs. HP3000 User Groups, A Comparison

**By Paul Edwards
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Introduction

I have been promising others and myself I would write this article for several years. Recent events have finally put this comparison into sharper focus. There are so many parallels between each community that I felt I had to write about the comparisons so that others in the HP3000 world could possibly use this information for their own future.

Background

I have been a member of the HP3000 community since 1976 and an Interex member since 1982. A few years ago, I decided there had to be other hobby interests for me than just computers and at the same time I had quadruple by-pass heart surgery. These events caused me to evaluate my future life direction. I have always been a hands-on person and have enjoyed working with tools in building and repair projects.

So, I acquired a 1971 Chevrolet El Camino truck to initially enable me to haul home improvement materials. It was like the one I bought in 1969 after my return from our Navy squadron's cruise to Vietnam. Then, after attending a few car and truck shows, I got hooked on the classic car and truck hobby. So, I started to finish the restoration of my truck that was mostly completed by the previous owners. I quickly found that any restoration project is never really finished, but is a constant work in progress with continuing cash outflow.

A picture of my El Camino is at the end of the article. I also have a classic 1984 Cadillac El Dorado that I continue to maintain in original, like new, condition.

The classic cars and trucks are like the ones we drove in high school and college during the 1950's, 1960's, and 1970's. They consist of hot rods, convertibles, customs, sedans, wagons, trucks, and sports cars of that era. The "muscle" cars are very popular now and command a high price in a properly restored condition.

I have worked on most HP3000 systems from the Series II to the N-Class and MPE II through MPE/iX 7.5. I currently have an HP3000/928LX in my home office.

Information Exchange

The exchange of information about the HP3000 hardware and the MPE operating system was the primary goal of the HP3000 local user groups that formed in the mid-1970's. It was a critical need because everyone was learning a new computing platform.

We have that same exchange of expertise in the classic car and truck community with people having electrical, structural, engine, bodywork, painting, trim, and interior restoration experience.

With the HP3000 hardware and software support from HP ending after next year, that same expertise exchange that started many years ago is still very important now. Many of the HP3000 users will be homesteading on their systems for years to come and will still need outside support from each other. I discussed the critical homesteading planning requirements in a couple of articles that are on my web site, <http://www.peassoc.com/>.

Conferences

There are national conferences for the classic car and truck community that have vendor displays, car and truck displays with vehicle judging, social activities, technical presentations, and volunteer participation similar to what was at the Interex conferences.

There are various conferences put on by many different organizations in a variety of locations all through the year as compared to an annual Interex conference. The number of attendees is quite large at most national shows and they consist of both exhibitors and spectators.

Local Meetings

The local HP3000 user group meetings were usually monthly and sometimes there were annual regional meetings. We had HP and industry speakers to provide technical information. Most of the user groups in North America have now ceased to exist.

Local classic car and truck gatherings are usually monthly club business meetings. Sometimes there are tech sessions at the meetings and club tours to interesting locations.

There are monthly car and truck cruise nights to show off your vehicles during the spring to fall time frame. The cruise nights are like the ones we used to have on Saturday nights at the local drive-in burger and malt joints. '50s and '60s music is normally provided for the participants and spectators enjoyment.

Social Interaction

Social interaction has always been an important part of the HP3000 meetings and conferences. We had a chance to renew old friendships and make new acquaintances. Important contacts were made for future information exchanges.

The classic car and truck meetings are very social and have a family atmosphere. Spouses and children are encouraged to participate in the many activities. The renewing of friendships and acquiring new contacts are valuable, as well.

Equipment Purchase and Sale

Used HP3000 equipment availability from the many broker companies will continue to be very important to the ongoing hardware support of the homesteading users. Having the ability to patch or rebuild the MPE operating system is the goal of the OpenMPE

organization, <http://www.openmpe.org/>, and it hopes to provide the software support requirements of the users for many years to come. This will depend on the outcome of the announcement by HP, expected by the end of this year, of the final disposition of the MPE source code.

Through a vast array of catalogs for parts purchase, the classic car and truck community can rebuild and repair their favorite vehicle. Many parts are NOS or New Old Stock that was acquired by dealers from the car companies as they emptied their warehouses of obsolete parts. Reproduction parts are also available. You can almost build a new vehicle from all the parts offered in the catalogs for the most popular models.

Technology Changes

The business server technology has changed drastically from the days when HP produced the first HP3000. Applications that companies execute daily on their systems to run their business processes can continue to run far into the future with proper management and planning. The support of the HP3000 hardware and MPE operating system by HP has declined over the last few years as the number of their knowledgeable support engineers has decreased. The HP3000 is a very reliable system and can be maintained by a small internal staff or third party companies.

Automobiles and trucks have had drastic changes in size, style, and technology over the years, too. The classic vehicles are easier for their owner to work on them without sophisticated equipment and expertise. But, it is sometimes difficult to find experienced outside repair facilities and personnel who know how to work on the older vehicles.

National Organization

Interex ceased to exist this year after being victim to lower levels of funding from HP, increased conference costs, a declining membership base, and other factors. The Encompass user group wants the MPE community to join them but I don't feel they have anything to offer the HP3000 user base because of their HP-UX, Linux, and Windows product directions.

The Late Great Chevy organization was purchase recently and we don't know what the final structure will be the result. They provided restoration parts, conferences, a monthly magazine, a web site, and liability insurance for club events.

Publications, Email, and Newsletters

There were several publications produced by Interex over the years. They ended up being merged, reformatted, downsized, and some were eliminated. They did a lot of email blasts for the annual conference activities. Many local user groups, or RUGs distributed their own newsletters.

There are a large number of companies who support the various car and truck manufacturers. A search of the Web will produce many sources of parts most of the popular models and manufacturing years. EBay is a good source for vehicles and parts, too.

Our local chapter of Late Great Chevys of Dallas produces our own monthly newsletter that is distributed mostly by email. I manage our club web site at <http://www.lategreatchevys.org/>.

Talent Pool Issues

The pool of experienced MPE personnel to do systems management, application development, and consulting is shrinking each month. These people are retiring, moving on to other technology, involved in long term contracting projects, and dying away. This should be a concern to the system managers at homesteading sites who should build a list of possible candidates to assist them with ongoing support and future migration projects.

As many of the classic car and truck owners are near retirement age, an effort has to be made to get younger people involved in the hobby for continuity for the local clubs. The expertise loss will make it difficult for people interested in the hobby to get expert help when needed. The loss of members in the local clubs is a real concern to the club officers because of the lack of new blood in the organization.

Summary

In summary, there are many parallels in the two areas I have discussed. There won't be any future in the HP3000 user community unless we all make it stay active. Depending on the interest area you engage in, look at the comparisons discussed above and make proper decisions about your future.

Other interest areas could be social fraternities or sororities, retired military organizations, college alumni clubs, charity groups, trains, planes, museums and local area historical sites, crafts, or other hobby interest clubs. They all have some or all of the topics discussed above in common.



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