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## EVENT HISTORY

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In 1997, an innovative idea was formed – the idea to combine a racing event with an event to pay tribute to the nation’s military, and additionally get more exposure for the Navy within the community of San Diego. Larry Blumberg, Gina and Rug Cunningham and Jeff Phillion merged creative minds and presented this idea to the Navy, specifically Admiral Bowman, the current Executive Officer at Naval Air Station North Island, the naval base located in Coronado, a community of San Diego.

All involved agreed: the event was a perfect match for the community of Coronado. Not only is it the home base for Naval Air Station North Island, the home port of two aircraft carriers and the birthplace of naval aviation, but a perfect “getaway” for San Diegans and out-of-towners alike, a community nestled across the Coronado Bridge and just minutes from downtown San Diego.

The event would be called the Coronado Speed Festival, and vintage cars from around the country would race at Naval Air Station North Island, on a track that was created in days – a spectator-friendly 1.6 mile course, constructed on the runways and taxiways of the military base. Over the course of two days, race fans, San Diegans and other interested parties would watch eight different race groups zoom around the track, all while stepping back in time to enjoy auto racing’s rich history, with tours of the racecar pits and the ability to speak with the drivers of these unique machines.

The next step was to find a race producer, and the best person for the job was the “granddaddy” of all vintage racing, Steve Earle. Not only does his reputation speak volumes, but he is the best race producer for this type of racing. In addition, his race insurance fit the Navy’s needs for proper protection since the event does occur on the Navy’s territory.

With Larry, Gina, Rug and Jim on board with the Navy, the group then approached the Holiday Bowl, a non-profit organization whose mission is to generate tourism, exposure, economic benefit and civic pride for San Diego and its citizens by producing the nation’s most exciting bowl game and festival of events. The partnership seemed to be a perfect fit, not only in that the group and the organization’s mission were similar, but all four individuals were on the Holiday Bowl committee.

Once everyone was signed up and on board with the idea, the event was pulled together and within a span of five months, the first event took place in October of 1997. The first year went off without much of a hitch – except for the fact that the track was horrible and by the end of the weekend, not only was the track a mess, but so were the cars. But, the Navy enjoyed the event and was pleased with the results of their first open house, as well as the event please its visitors.

The event remained in association with the Holiday Bowl until 2004, when the organization launched a second bowl game, the Poinsettia Bowl. The event then transitioned to be part of Fleet Week San Diego. It seemed to all involved at that time to be a great fit as Fleet Week San Diego has a direct connection to the military, and the Coronado Speed Festival is an event to pay tribute and honor the military. The event is still housed under Fleet Week San Diego, and is the signature event of the month-long activities.

Today, the event has grown in leaps and bounds, and over 20,000 people flock to Coronado annually to not only see racing at its best, but to enjoy the Navy's only open house on the West Coast. Over two hundred of the world's most unique and pedigreed machines all congregate on one of the most distinctive racecar locations, and the automobiles that race are chosen to compete on the basis of their historical significance and certified authenticity.

The Coronado Speed Festival is produced by San Diego Fleet Week Foundation and hosted by the Naval Base Coronado and the Morale, Welfare and Recreation Program (MWR) which benefits military personnel and their families. They in turn provide positive support for the active duty military community and their families through Quality of Life Programs including single Sailor Recreation Centers, Fitness and Aquatic Facilities and the Base Theatre Free Movies. The Southern California community is given this unbelievable opportunity to thank the men and women defending our freedom in person.