

# 2009 Lifetime Achievement Nomination-Bob Rice

Offered by Dave Oliveria & Bill Glickman/NEEAA Chapter Members

## Nomination/Speech/Current Events Article

Bob Rice has truly committed his lifetime toward the advancement of Electric Vehicles. Starting in early childhood while waiting at the Long Island train station for his dad to return from work in the city, Bob would admire and be able to name each electric train engine that passed by. In his late teens, he “created” his own EVs in Asia. In the 60’s, 70’s, 80’s and 90’s, Bob worked with the early EV & battery innovators on new electric cars and battery storage systems. Still later in the prime years of his life, he was driving America’s largest and most powerful EVs– Amtrak’s Acela high speed train. Since retiring, Bob continues his evangelic and enthusiastic support of electric vehicles as President of the New England Electric Auto Association (NEEAA) chapter of EAA. Since those early days of the rebirth of the electric vehicle, our nominee has been an active and a fundamental change agent in advancing electric vehicles through the decades.

### Early Days

Bob served in the US Army in the late 50’s and early 60’s, assigned to Vietnam and Taiwan. During that time, he built his own Jeep EV (unofficially, of course) in his free time while assigned to power turbine generating stations. He even designed and built a “drive-up” charging station for his electric JEEP – no plugs to handle, just drive in, park and “fill ‘er up!”



Bob left the service in the mid ‘60’s and went to work for Robert Aronson of Electric Fuel Propulsion (EFP) Corporation. Aronson was developing the Tri-polar Lead Cobalt Acid battery for electric vehicles. Bob was instrumental in helped set up a chain of charging stations at hotels along the interstate from Chicago to Detroit. He even drove and recharged their electric AMC along the route.

On special EFP assignment, Bob was a vital Support Crew member (and emergency auto mechanic) for the CALTECH VW Van, one of the teams in the 1968 Great Electric Car race between MIT and CALECH. Bob has great stories to tell about coming down to the final 100 miles when the driver of his car drove over a curb and mangled the steering gear. Only Bob could come up with a quick fix to get them back on the road to complete the race!



Later, Bob moved to Florida and worked on the City Car (remember the City Car?). Bob worked for designer Bob Beaumont when he was developing and manufacturing the new electric cars. Among other things, Bob Rice was tasked with designing the car doors and he was only given a week to do it! He soon discovered how much work was involved in creating a fully functioning door, window and latching mechanism!

In the late 90's, Bob drove the chase car for the Solectria's dramatic Sunrise long-distance run from Boston to New York. The trip was done on all battery power without recharging the entire distance. Bob still thinks that the car had enough juice left to drive around town a few miles afterward!



### **National Level**

In the past ten years, Bob has been a very active EV community. He has attended several annual major electric vehicle events (Woodburn, Battery Burnout, Power of DC, Portland International) and knows many of the top people in these groups on a first-name basis. He is very active in NEDRA and was almost elected their Vice President! He is a constant presence on the EVDL and NEDRA discussion lists and offers that innocent, common-sense voice that makes the lists work.



presence in the pilgrimages to Beach Raceway, etc) a first-name

### **Community Level**



It was the late 90's that Bob also converted a white VW Rabbit to electric and commuted to work with it for over seven years. In 2007, Bob retired from his "day job" as engineer for Amtrak's Acela high-speed train, making runs from New Haven to Boston and New York. Totally electric and running at 25,000 volts! I couldn't imagine Bob driving anything else for work! About the same time that he retired, the NEEAA chapter presidency became open and Bob took over as the new chapter president. The chapter has evolved and grown under his learn-by-doing leadership. There is always at least one conversion in progress to see and discuss at the monthly meetings in his home. And every meeting includes a cookout meal, courtesy of Bob. He's even been known to bake a cake for some meetings!



Conversions have included a clean, factory-like VW Jetta conversion for a daily driver to replace his Rabbit, a Nissan Sentra (later sold to a fellow EAA chapter member), a member's Ford Ranger and a recent late-model Sentra conversion (still in-process). Bob also mentored at least eight other members in their conversions by sharing his broad experience and offering his garage of tools and equipment to build battery boxes, solder new battery cables, etc.

Bob is very active locally in spreading the word about EVs. His car has pro EV bumper stickers all over the rear bumper. He takes the time to answer any questions inquiring bystanders ask (he's even been followed a few times until he stops so they can ask about EVs). He participates in weekly summer "Cruise Nights" car show events in Clinton, CT with his EV and proudly displays signs in the car window promoting EAA. He coordinated EV participation in a local 2008 Madison, CT Earth Day Parade and attended the June 2008 Plug In Electric Vehicles conference in Washington DC. He personally bought several copies of Who Killed the Electric Car when it first came out and

distributed them to libraries and individuals to learn more about EVs. He financially and physically supports and promotes Lee Hart's Sunrise II EV efforts, helping acquire and deliver the Sunrise body molds across the country to Lee and donating a motor to the cause.

I'm sure you will agree that Bob Rice is the most deserving recipient of the coveted EAA Lifetime Achievement Award. We can't think of a more deserving member of the EAA, NEDRA and electric vehicle community. Considering all the achievements of his lifetime, from his contributions to promoting the electric vehicle to reducing our environmental footprint on the world, we feel that Bob Rice truly represents the EAA's Lifetime Achievement award.

Sincerely,

Bill Glickman and Dave Oliveria, NEEAA chapter members