



The Day That Pigs Fly

*Frank Mount,
a 1939 MG MGTB Special
and Babe take the podium once
again at PVGP*

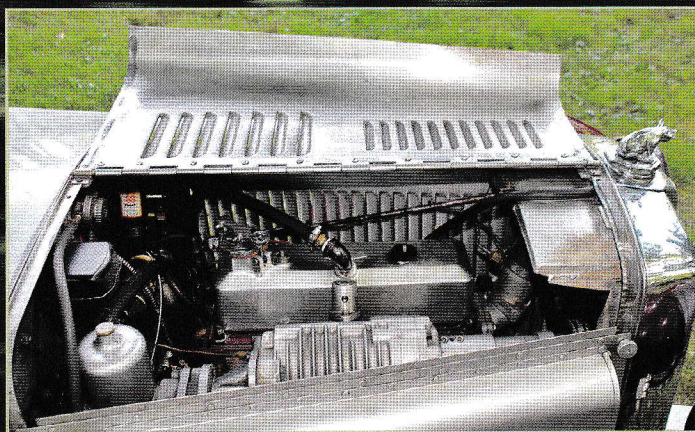
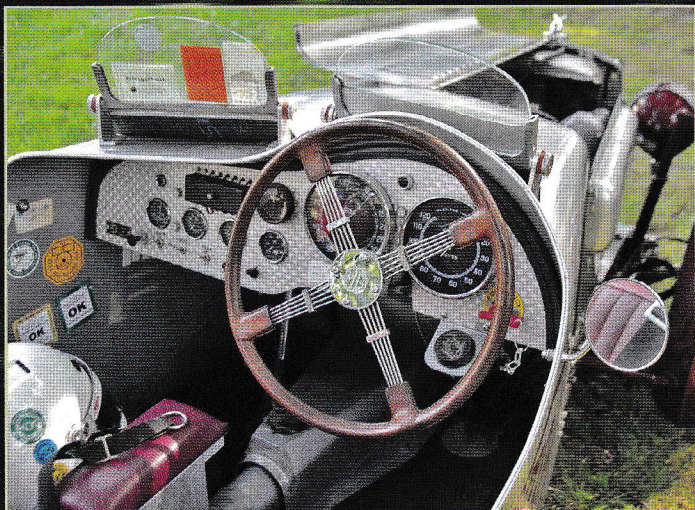


Pittsburgh Vintage Grand Prix 36 years and going strong...

Look at downtown Pittsburgh on your smart phone and you'll see a verdant glob surrounded by colleges, confusing one-way boulevards, museums, a conservatory, and more colleges. Zoom in closer and you'll see that the "glob" is Schenley park: twisty roads, granite curbs, trees, gullies, fountains and a well-tended classic golf course. What the phone won't show you is that this forest, in the middle of a former rust-belt city, has a positive energy about it. It is a setting for the longest running road race in America, a place to test your mettle, and inspire comments that exceed a smiley or thumbs up.

It's a place newbie and veteran racers pit their vintage cars against each other and a challenging track. It's a place to drop a pin on your smart phone, especially if you've been to the top step of the race podium.





In broad strokes, what started as a small fun race to benefit a local charity grew to encompass two weekends and 10 days of automotive events: Historic racing at the Pitt-Race Complex, Vintage racing at Schenley Park, galas and receptions, rally, car show, an estimated 250,000 spectators, thousands of volunteers. These events have generated over \$5 million since 1983 to aid individuals with autism and intellectual/developmental disabilities. The races and activities have spawned hundreds of YouTube uploads and other, more professional, endeavors. Specifically it inspired Manley Ford (an MG racer himself) to write a book for drivers *One Safety Fast Lap of Schenley Park* and donate proceeds to PVGP charities. There was a professional video produced about Alan Patterson Sr., one of the founder of the race, and Brad Kolesar, a racer and a student at Westminster College, created a graduation documentary project *Hitting the Redline*.

The road to the podium

Like all events of this proportion PVGP is made up of individual moments which have been years in the making. In this case the ground work for two consecutive first place finishes (and a total of three podiums) in the Pre-War Class belong to Frank Mount, a 1939 MG TB and a chrome pig perched on a radiator cap.

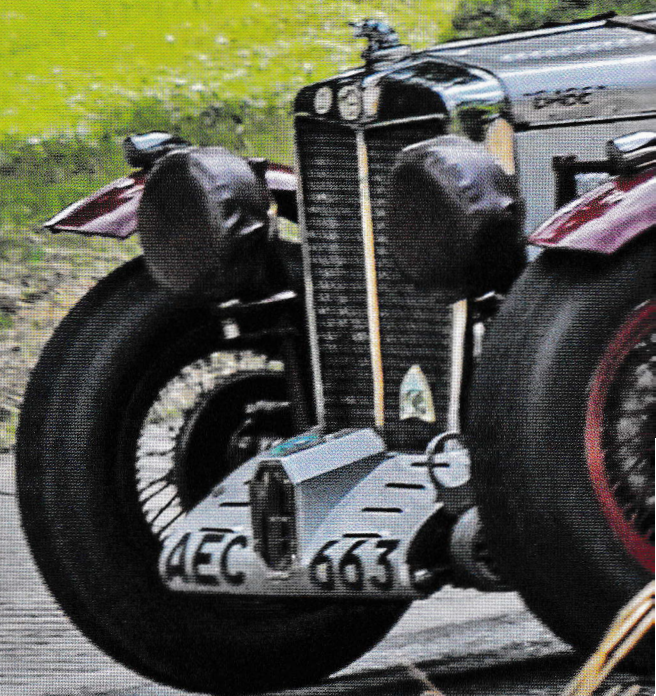
This unlikely combination got its start over 60 years ago. "I always loved British sports cars, and have been driving them since I was old enough (to drive)". In 1958 he first started racing an MG TC #104 on airport fields left over from WW II pilot training in Ontario. All four tracks where he cut his teeth are now defunct (one is a petrochemical plant, and the other a field barely visible on Google earth). He recounts, "The tracks were dead flat, with no hills to contend with but got rougher the longer we used them." Changing with the times he continued to race, now on purpose built tracks such as Mosport, Lime Rock and Watkins Glen, "pilgrimages" he would continue to make year after year. His original pit crew, consisting of a school buddy disbanded and was



replaced by Connie Mount, a childhood sweetheart, who served as pit crew and "all things MG".

Man Beast and Machine

While on a trip to England the Mounts enjoyed looking at cars and meeting with like-minded MG owners. They saw many MGs for sale but none really stood out. As fate would have it, after their return to Caledon Ontario, an MG TB racecar they had seen in passing became available. It had been raced in England and France, and had an eye catching chrome pig on the radiator cap. The history of the pig was relayed to Mount as part of an on-going jest: if the French racers could own-up to being "frogs" then the Brits could embrace being called "pigs". The Mounts acquired the TB made some mechanical and safety upgrades. They also added the number 704, named the mascot Babe, after the movie of the same name, and continued to race, both in North America and overseas. One of their most outstanding trips was to New Zealand in 2007 where they drove at five different tracks. There the TB and the Mounts attracted attention, but it was Babe who stole the show.



The Track at Schenley Park

In 1999, already a seasoned racer with 40 years behind the wheel, Mount had his inaugural race at PVGP. He recalls that it was his first experience with racing on such a unique course. "At Schenley Park there are all sorts of obstacles and unexpected things, you have to have a different approach and (race) with a little more caution." This course is 23 turns in just over two mile. Names like German Hill, Flamingo Turn, Westinghouse Bridge, Panther Hollow are not created like purpose built tracks sporting a keyhole, carousel, and a smooth front/ back straight in front of the spectators. Only the hay bale chicane is set up for the race, and it claims its share of fenders. In addition, since PVGP is only run once a year, dash-cams, books and your vivid recollections are the only way to prepare. The race is made even more challenging by the real





life penalties: miss an apex and there is a granite curb, a stone wall, jersey barrier or even a gully to greet you. It's a place for precision driving. In other words, it was the perfect combination for Mount: a challenging course, July scheduling and a good run groups.

Victory!

The age-old proverb "Rome was not built in a day" applies. Frank Mount has earned the prestigious PVGP "Legends of Schenley Park" designation by racing at Schenley Park for 20 years. He has won first place in the Pre-War class in 2017 and 2018. It's evident by talking to the Mounts that it's not the fleeting moment on the podium, the mini keg of beer awarded by the Hofbräuhaus, but about having pigs fly, about doing something you love-and racing vintage MGs year after year that makes you victorious, and of course, looking forward to the next apex and the next year.

Words *Kat Kurkov* Photos: *Kat Kurkov, Todd Sullivan*
(Podium shot from volunteer Jarred Romesburg)

