



PIT SIGNALS



LATE BRAKING NEWS FOR VARAC VINTAGE RACERS - AUGUST, 2018 - JEREMY SALE



The Honda Series!

By John DeMaria.

In this issue; the Pittsburgh Vintage Grand Prix by Dave Good...Waterford Hills report by Ivan Samila and Nick Pratt. Roger Peart retires...Memories of Craig Fisher...Frank Mount and John Sambrook duly recognized...



There are two British cars that can make almost anyone smile, the Mini of course, and the Bugeye Sprite. 2018 is the 60th Anniversary of this iconic sports car so we rounded up some opinions...

Ross de St. Croix

Back in the day Ross drove everything, from MGAs to Lolas to McLarens, ultimately winning the Canadian Championship in 1967. Some memories inside...



Pittsburgh Vintage Grand Prix– 2018

By Dave Good.

Photo below by Mike Matune.

The 36th running of the Pittsburgh Vintage Grand Prix was held July 14/15 -this event is staged in Schenley Park , an older park in Pittsburgh, certain park roads are closed and a race circuit is created -the circuit is lined with curbs, poles, hydrants, stone walls, (as at right), and has a very distinct crown-very challenging - one of the only true street circuits for vintage racing in North America.



The race at Schenley is actually part of a 10 day vintage car 'celebration/ festival" in the Pittsburgh area including another race at Pitt Race the week before as well as car shows, rallies, tours,etc. A great week to be in the area for car fans. The event is actually a charity event-proceeds go to two local charities supporting the fight against autism and developmental disabilities, Over 5MM\$ raised over the events history!

This year the featured mark /car was the BMW 2002-approx 40 were on hand. It was pretty cool seeing all these Beemers put on a show!

This is a huge spectator event -lots of people and families walking the paddock with excited kids getting in the cars-big crowds on the hills surrounding the course- very cool! As usual, a few of us VARAC MG racers participated- David Holmes in his MGA 137, Frank Mount in his 1939 MGTB Special and myself in my trusty MGA 37. John Burgess (the MGA "Chief") came down and crewed for us.

As is typical-the weather was hot and humid-over 30 C-so lots of hot cars and hot drivers!

...Pittsburgh Vintage Grand Prix– 2018

Below; David Holmes leads Dave Good. Bill Stoler photo.

Friday night is a tour/parade with the race cars through the local suburb, Squirrel Hill, to a downtown area where the cars are parked and on display for the public- a very cool and popular event, David and I were in a small group that got separated from the main the main group and had to make our way unescorted through the downtown--so, our cars got a little more exposure to the public than planned!

All our cars ran well. David runs this course very well and climbed up through the pack over the course of the weekend. Frank got bumped and suffered a crease in the rear fairing -he shook it off and took a podium in the preservation group feature race-Congrats Frank! Lots of fun- a great, worthwhile event! D.G.



Photo by Mike Matune



Frank Mount (in the above photo by Mike Matune) send us this on PVGP.

“The Pittsburgh race through Schenley Park has been run for 36 years and is run entirely by volunteers with the full support of the city. I believe that it is the only real street race still running. We have competed there annually for 19 years. The first five years we ran TC 104 prior to purchasing “Babe” the prewar 1939 MG TB Special. I have finished 1st in the prewar class three times including this year. The track surface has become very rough in recent years, particularly for a Prewar car, but the unique experience it provides makes it worth it. Where else would you get to race around stone walls and over bridges?”

“You might also be interested in hearing about the new race track in the White Mountains of Tamworth New Hampshire. We attended the Inaugural White Mountain Vintage Grand Prix, which was held by the VSCCA and was the first race ever held at the track. The owner of this track is Club Motor Sports. Members sign up for various levels of membership allowing them to participate in lapping sessions on weekends. The track is also used for vehicle and tire testing etc. to pay the bills. The track itself is like nothing I have ever driven on. It has about 12 sweeping corners with huge paved run off areas. I think only one corner is level. Because of the large elevation changes the rest of the corners sweep up hill or down hill. It is a most interesting lap to say the least. The facilities that have been built are top quality but lots of finishing is still required. It is worth a look on the internet.”

clubmotorsports.com

Waterford Hills Turns 60!



Mark Windecker photos.

Yes, it's true, this year Waterford Hills turns 60 years old! Fittingly they celebrated a couple of other 60 year olds, the Bug Eye Sprite and the Volvo PV series. Nick Pratt was there and sends this report for Pit Signals.

Sharleen and I tried something a little different this year to avoid the lengthy delays at the Blue Water Bridge on Thursdays. We stayed Thursday night in Sarnia/Point Edward at the Hampton Inn, just steps from the bridge. It's within walking distance of the water with some nice pubs en route. Friday morning, we were off before 7am and breezed through the bridge toll and US Customs. So a definite yes for next year's itinerary!

We also discovered that a Clarkston town councillor has insisted engines not be started until noon on Friday so I had bags of time to get set up teched and attend the driver's meeting. The Midget's front tires were destroyed at Shannonville (the rears being marginally better) so my strategy was to run the first two practice sessions on the old stuff and use the last one to bed in a new set of fronts for the following day. Then I'd do the Saturday Quali and Race on the old rears and use the Sunday morning emergency practice to scrub in a new set for the morning and afternoon feature race.The best laid plans.....!!



Brian Atkinson above, Larry Coste, below.



Sean Gibson and I were chasing each other around during the second practice and I got a tad deep going into Corner 7. The car refused to turn in at all so I went sailing off onto the grass heading for a tire wall (thankfully some distance away) when I was quickly beached by a very deep gravel trap. A straightforward tow out and I was able to drive back to the pits none the worse for wear. That was the good news. The bad was that every nook and cranny in my engine bay was covered in gravel. I even had to scrounge around for a Shop Vac to try and get the stuff out of the more awkward places.

Friday night after the practice ending beer and wine social in various paddock spots, we all met in the Clubhouse for the perennial fish fry. A delicious feast, including fried chicken for \$8.50 per person!

I kept my Quali session short on Saturday morning, not wishing to use up any more of my rears than absolutely necessary and placed 3rd behind Sean in the Bug Eye (ex Brian Hunt) and Doug Elcomb in the Mini Marcos. There was also a fairly quick Bug Eye with a 1275 making up the pointy end of the grid. I suffered massive oversteer during the race – just couldn't get the power down where it mattered with the rears - and at one point was laying fourth but managed to finish 3rd when said black Bug Eye decided to head off for an agricultural excursion going around Swamp Turn. [Bugeye chases VARAC!](#)



Sean Gibson (above in Mark Windecker photo) won the race handily and with his daughter in the passenger “seat”, drove around the course with the checkered for a very well deserved win. It turned out that Dad Colin had raced the same car some thirty odd years earlier at Waterford in a ding dong race to take the win. So he got his day in the sun again by being allowed to do six or seven solo laps of the circuit on Saturday. That's what makes Waterford Hills special! Honourable mention was made of this by Joel at the banquet Saturday night and Sean gave a lovely speech about this very special moment for each of them. Terrific!

The banquet – and it truly was in every sense of the word – was superb and continued a Waterford tradition of excellence. We even had the chef out to introduce the meal prior to being served. What a class act! Joel did his usual stellar MC job as trophies were handed out for class winners.



Waterford warriors; John Greenwood (above) Shane Viccary (middle).
Below, Ivan Samilla, pushing hard, goes all agricultural on us....
(Mark Windecker photos)



Sunday was a different story for me. With the new rears, the car was like night and day from Saturday. I got a great start and managed to get in between Doug and Sean going into one and then got Sean on the outside. I wondered in passing (no pun intended) if the car would hold its line on this decreasing radius turn but it was flawless and I was off to hold the lead until the end. See YouTube video for an edited version of that race – basically the beginning and the end. [Waterford 2018](#)

I was able to repeat my win for the afternoon race. Unfortunately, Doug had a failed wheel bearing in the Marcos so missed the feature but still had the Dreossi to race in the open wheel grid. Where he gets his energy beats the hell out of me. To top off a perfect Sunday, Gidget didn't break anything, the first time I've gotten through a full weekend since the 2017 Festival so I was a very happy camper heading home.

PS from Ivan Samila

“What can I say...it was another great event! Great in many ways...no rain or tornadoes, not too hot, not too cold, big grids and last but not least, great camaraderie.

As for the racing; once we sorted out the run groups they had myself and Brian Atkinson in his Daimler SP250 in Group 5 with the Camaros and Corvettes, which for me was not going to work, so I was moved to Group 3 with the other three Lotus 7s. There was quite a gaggle of Lotus 7s, four in Group 3 and John Greenwood in Group 2. Brian escaped the Group 5 monsters and joined myself and Fred Samson (Lotus Elan) in Group 3 for the Sunday races. VARAC was very well represented in V/H with I think a total of 9 entries and we put on a great spectacle as usual! Nick Pratt, Sean Gibson and Doug Elcomb stole the show with their battles for the lead in Group 2. Nick ended up taking the checkered flag, with Doug hot on his tail. The Minis on the other hand didn't fare too well; Dave Morgan and Larry Coste had engine problems on the Friday test day that sidelined them for the weekend.”

Check the first few laps of the video below, the rest is less exciting...

[Nick makes big move and Sean goes Savardian on lap one.](#)



Frank Mount,

A racer from day one...

VARAC acknowledges the contribution and loyalty of members by presenting them with the coveted
“Lifetime Membership Award”...

This award recognizes individuals who have exhibited “The Spirit of Vintage Racing” through their involvement with and contribution to VARAC and Vintage Racing over an extended period of time and may include Drivers with a long term history in vintage racing and especially VARAC, also Workers who have significantly contributed to VARAC and Crew members who always seem ready to help others.

“We presented an Honorary Lifetime Membership Award to Frank based on his long history of participation and contribution to sportscar racing,” Dave Good says. “One of Frank’s claims to fame is “ racing in seven decades” beginning in the late 50’s in MG T cars and MGA’s at such tracks as Harewood, Edenvale & Green Acres as well as hill climbs at Hockley, Rattlesnake Point and Rockwood.”

“He competed in the first days of Mosport in the early 60’s. Frank was well known in the CASC Improved Production class for putting a V8 in an MGA! The story goes that he and his team didn’t quite figure out the 4 barrel carburetor and therefore collected more than a few hay bales at Harewood when the throttle stuck open. In fact the legend goes on that during practice he and Ludwig Heimrath raced together up the back straight and afterwards Ludwig told Frank in a





in a somewhat negative tone; “Do you know how fast you were going – 150 miles an hour!”

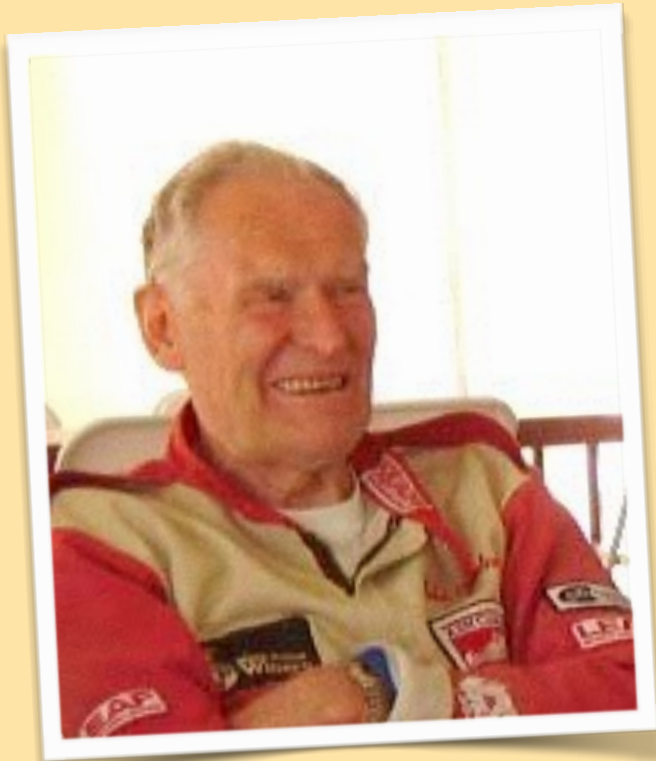
Frank’s more recent participation is with an MGTC known as “Clatter” and a prewar supercharged MGTB Special, known as “Babe”.

Chris Meyers, Editor of the MG Vintage Racers’ Newsletter adds; “Nobody deserves this award more than Frank. He has been a stalwart supporter of sportscar racing and vintage sportscar racing. He made a lasting impression on me in 2005 when I first raced at PVGP. He was in his trailer, machining a part for a fellow racer in 90 degrees F + temps...in coveralls! I won’t forget his taking time to say ‘hi’ to the rookie PVGP racer who showed up with an MGA. And kudos to Connie Mount for her steady support of Frank’s vintage race virus. Frank is a key driver in keeping the MG T series cars active and racing - and the reason we had 9 T cars at the VGP this year. Congrats, Frank-well deserved.”



JOHN SAMBROOK,

ONE OF EIGHT INDUCTEES INTO 2018 CANADIAN
MOTORSPORT HALL OF
FAME. (CMHF)



83 year old Sambrook, a Westmount QC resident has been an active racer since 1959, with multiple class wins in different cars over the period. A fellow inductee with Sambrook is Jacques Villeneuve, the ex F1 World Champion. They, with Lance Stroll in 2015, are the only Quebec road racers inducted into the CMHF since 2014. Of the over 220 inductees since inception 25 years ago only 18 road racers have been Quebecers. The induction

ceremony will be held in October in Toronto.

Sambrook is also renowned for his success in operating the Opimian Society, a Canada wide wine club he founded in 1973. He is also a life member of the International Wine Clubs Assoc whose member clubs combined annual revenues have grossed \$2 billion on occasion. He founded Wine Tidings magazine (now Quench) in 1974 and was publisher until 2003. His current commercial activities include founder and board member of Black Prince Winery in Prince Edward County ON and Director of American Wine Secrets in California.

He keeps fit by playing squash, competing at the international level as a doubles player in the senior categories and currently races a Ginetta G15.

ROGER PEART

Following the Canadian Grand Prix I always keep a special eye out for the awarding of the third place trophy. Why? Well, because it is presented by a founding member of VARAC!

At right is "our" Roger Peart, who this year presented the award to Max Verstappen.

Following is from an FIA press release.



Over the weekend of the 2018 Formula 1 Canadian Grand Prix, the FIA paid tribute to ASN Canada President Roger Peart who is stepping down from his role as a Formula 1 race steward after 38 years of service. Roger's passion for motorsport was ignited at early age when he worked as race mechanic between 1949 and 1953, while he was still at school. After emigrating from the UK to Canada Roger became even more deeply involved in motor sport, this time as a competitor, driving in the Canadian Rally Championship until 1963 and also taking part in numerous ice races. He continued to compete in circuit racing until 1976. In 1967 he became involved in the organisation of Canadian motor sport and was instrumental in getting the Circuit Gilles Villeneuve onto the F1 calendar. A trained civil engineer, Roger later applied his expertise to the task of designing the Île de Notre Dame circuit that in 1982 was rechristened the Circuit Gilles Villeneuve in honour of the F1 legend who died 1982.

His role in motor sport organisation led to him becoming President of the Quebec motor sport sanctioning body and then President of ASN Canada, the country's FIA-appointed national sporting authority. He became a member of the FIA's Circuit and in 1991 became the Commission's President, spending two decades travelling the world to inspect circuits for the FIA. Regarding Roger's six decades and more in motor sport, Paul Cooke, Vice-President of ASN Canada said: "Roger and I met at the new Mont Tremblant race circuit when the track opened in 1964. Fifty-four years later we are still working together heading up the FIA sanctioning body for Canada. Roger also has a special place in his heart for vintage cars and was a founding member of the Vintage Automobile Racing Association of Canada, having owned a 1930 4.5 litre Bentley roadster."

The Late Great Craig Fisher...

Photos courtesy of Canadian Motorsport Hall of Fame Archives and
Steve Stevens/R. Kielbiski collection

Craig Fisher was one of the top sedan drivers in North America in the 60's and early 70's, winning several CASC and SCCA class and overall sedan championships. A former member of the Canadian Comstock Racing Team, Craig and the late Mark Donohue finished 1-2 in the 12 Hours of Sebring in Roger Penske Trans-Am Camaros in 1968. He became the first Canadian to win a Trans-Am when he teamed with Donohue at Marlboro, Maryland in 1968. He was the first driver to score Trans-Am points for both Chevrolet and Pontiac divisions. Craig drove everything from Chevrolet, Abarth-Simca, Pontiac, Sunbeam, DKW, Fiat-Abarth, Shelby, Mazda, to Ford, Ferrari and Lola.

In the late 60's at tracks like Harewood and Green Acres while working for Ornstein British Motors he raced a DKW, moving on later to a Jaguar, Pontiac Catalina, and Fiat-Abarth. In 1964 he drove a Sunbeam Alpine for Rootes Motors, competing with Eppie Wietzes.

In 1966 he drove with Wietzes at Sebring in the Comstock GT40. The team withdrew after the fatal accident to Bob McLean's sister GT40.





Fisher was driving a Trans-Am Camaro in 1966 for Terry Godsall when his success brought him to the attention of Roger Penske, who teamed him with Mark Donohue. They won together at Marlboro. Fisher also placed second at Daytona and fourth at Seattle finishing the Trans-Am

season sixth in points. The following season he was fourth in points, then went back to Godsall in a Pontiac Firebird that he says was actually a Camaro in disguise. His career began to wind down after this though he drove Fiat-Abarths for Al Cosentino, frequently showing up bigger cars with more horsepower. "Craig could hustle a race car without breaking a sweat," said Gary Magwood. "He could be lapping at record speed and never look busy. He was an invaluable resource for me when developing the Labatt Road Scholarship back in the late 80s. Then he stepped up to help me develop DrivAbility. His shy image would break down occasionally when we went out for dinner and a few beers..."

From an interview by John Wright:

"The 1962 Pontiac came through Terry Godsall and the boys...an American 'wide track' Pontiac, which had a 400 series HO Pontiac engine and four-speed and it was prepared well although it suffered from oil cavitation problems. It won several overall placings, much to the astonishment of the establishment that the big Detroit iron could go around a track like Mosport or Green Acres.

By the way, I was always chased around the track by a horde of Minis and in later events by a Pontiac GTO! We were faster on the 'Big Bore' straights but highly modified Minis like Bill Brack's were faster in the corners! We became known in the motoring press as 'David and Goliath.'"



Walt MacKay: "Craig was a very quiet, unassuming person with a dry sense of humour. We both started racing at Harewood in 1957. Craig had a DKW and I had an MGTC. We were Comstock team mates in 1965 driving their Shelby 350GT Mustangs.

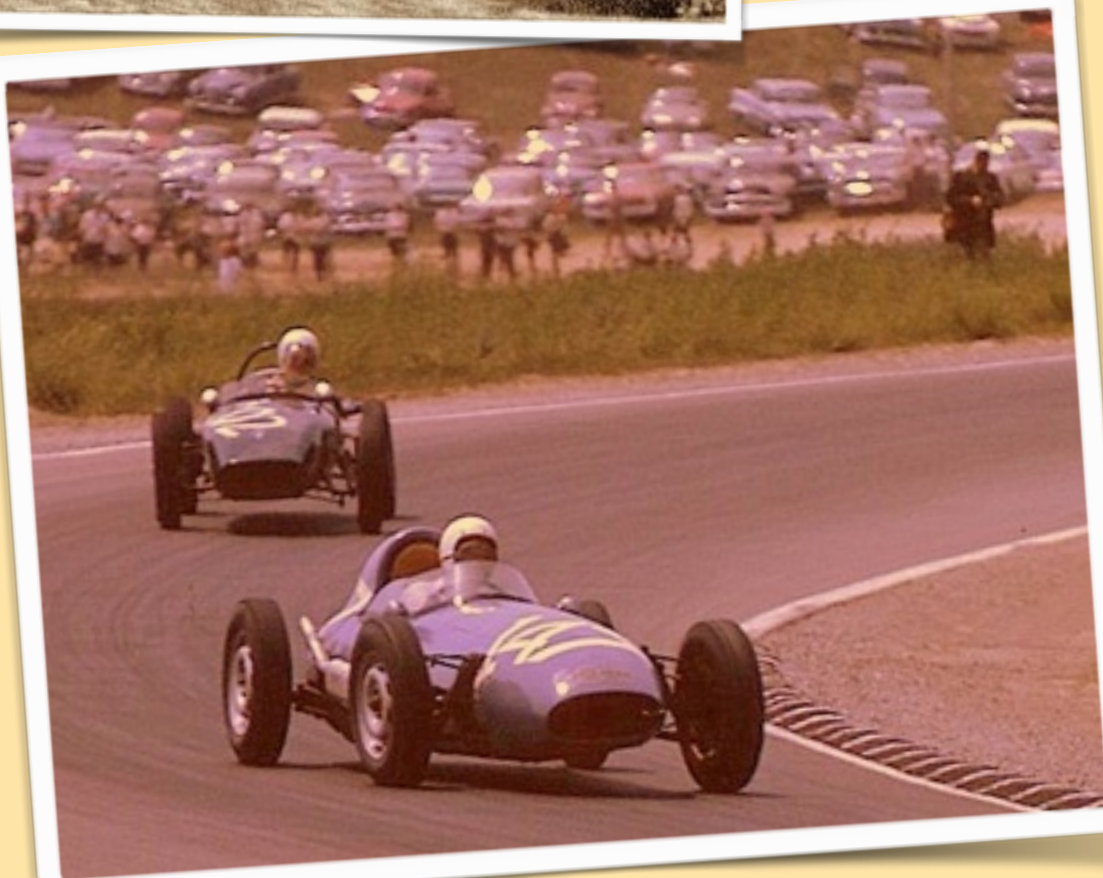
Craig was a very steady driver who had a distinct feel for the handling of the many types of cars he drove, and was able to extract the maximum without being overly aggressive. I don't recall him ever making a mistake or having an off track excursion."

Check out: [Craig Fisher by Norris MacDonald and John Wright](#)



Left: At Harewood with the notorious hay bales and the Gunnery Tower...

Below: DKW-Fergusson at 1962 Players 200.





Above: 1962 Pontiac Catalina wins 1963 Players 200 support race. Below: Craig Fisher and Eppie Wietzes check out the new Comstock Mustang.



The Late Great Honda Series...

Photos by
*Gridwork and
Ron Kielbiski*



"Digging through my snapshots for the last Pit Signals I found the shot above from the '80s, when I competed in the Honda Michelin Series. It was a realistic opportunity for wannabes like me to actually get out on a race track!"

Jeremy Sale

The series was launched by Ralph Luciw, (left). Luciw, now a member of the Canadian Motorsport Hall of Fame, working with Honda Canada, produced one of the most successful and longest race series in the country, the Honda/Michelin Challenge Series. While he was involved with the Can-Am, Bulova/Formula Ford, and Rothmans Porsche series, as well as the Canadian Grand Prix when it was held at Canadian Tire Motorsport Park (Mosport), Luciw was the heart and soul of the Honda/Michelin Series. Using showroom stock Honda Civics, this series began in 1975 and had a 17-year run with an estimated 400 sportsman racers during its tenure. The series was a stepping-stone for some road circuit stars in Canada, including Frank Allers, Marc Dancose, Richard Spenard, and Jacques Villeneuve Sr.

A number of VARAC members raced in the series, including John DeMaria. On the next few pages John writes about his experiences...

The Honda/BF Goodrich Series...



By John DeMaria

... Much like driving a Bug-Eye, the Honda's didn't tolerate the slightest error. So under powered, it was all about momentum and maintaining speed. Anything that scrubbed off speed added 2-3 seconds to the lap time!

*Photos by
Gridwork and
Ron Kielbiski*

The Honda/BF Goodrich Series

By John DeMaria

I saw my first Honda/ BFGoodrich race in early 1977. Grids in Ontario were small, larger in Quebec. By 1978 the grids had grown significantly. At the time, I was racing an SRT built, 1293cc Mini Cooper S. On a good day, lap times at Mosport in the Mini were around 1:46. The early style race Civics were the base model, around 38 hp, and were fitted with window clips, window net, comp. seat belts, single roll hoop and a straight pipe that replaced the rear mounted muffler. "Racer Price" was about \$3,200 and included the race kit from CSC Products. Engines were sealed by the dealers and in theory, totally stock. VARAC was in its formative years, and I actually bought a 1959 Giulietta Sprint and started prepping it for Vintage Racing.

Then, in 1978, VARAC members Richard Poxon and Roger Fountain bought themselves a pair of red Civics. I watched their progress, helped repair the cars that got damaged very regularly, and became intrigued. I was permanently broke at the time, but the series had just announced an annual \$20,000 Prize Fund! For that year, the "Sundown Grand Prix" was resurrected and exclusively for the Honda Series. I got to co-drive Dick's car that weekend and was hooked.

With no funds, I needed help. My good friend Terry DiFrancesco's brother in law had just landed a job as the Service Manager at a new Honda dealership in Woodbridge Ontario. The first few years of the Ontario Series had been dominated by Dalt's Honda. Team driver's Geoff and Tony Foster, and Peter Christianson pretty much took every podium place in those early years. The owner of NUMBER 7 HONDA was tired of hearing the

results and seeing all the free press. Much to our surprise, he decided to “loan” Terry and I two, new, 1979 Honda Civics for the coming season. We really scrambled and had one car beautifully painted and striped in Dealership colours and lettering, for Christmas 1979.



John DeMaria

As none of the new series decals were available, we had a sign painter do them all by hand. The car was really lovely (unraced) and Honda Canada invited Number 7 to display it at the 1980 International Auto Show, on their stand. Dalt's was furious and the game was on!

Terry and I got to an early test session at Shannonville in April. We probably did 100 laps each (cars were indestructible) and thought we were ready. The schedule included several regional race weekends, support races at every major Mosport event (we still had Trams AM and Can-Am races there!), GP of Trois Rivières and the Canadian GP in Montreal.

Our first race at Mosport was a supporting race. I remember qualifying on Friday in the pouring rain. It was torrential and somehow, I ended up third on the grid, behind Peter C. and Roger Fountain. On Sunday morning we headed up to the grid and I realized I had yet to complete a dry lap at Mosport in a Civic. Roger gridded with four large swivel casters screwed to the corners of his roof..... I decided to try and keep up and see what these guys did. Monkey see - Monkey do? I will never forget that first lap. We came to the flag (my first rolling start) with about 30 cars, all touching, bumper to bumper. Let the games begin! Crowds were huge and really, we were the entertainment. I tucked in behind Roger and we were flat out through corner one. The straight tail pipes gave a real bark when you lifted off, so I thought "I'll wait till I hear it". We flew over the top of Two, inches apart, cars everywhere, and no one ever lifted. Holy S@\$! Up the back straight was like being in a NASCAR race. Cars nose to tail, doors rubbing and drafting like crazy. I survived for 2-3 laps and then at the top of TWO someone got inside me, I stepped out, on the wet grass. Remember the concrete wall at the bottom of two? I just caught the end of it, rolled end over end, down into the swamp. The car ended up upside down, air filter poking through the dash, 6" of water in the ceiling.....

Somehow, we fixed the car, made it to the next race and finished the season. I rolled it one more time in Moss's, but drove back to the paddock, kicked out the windshield, and then drove it home! Montreal GP was the last series race of the year. In those days only a few Ontario competitors went there. The racing was insane, probably 45 car grid and all winter to make repairs. One year another car bounced upside down, over Jeff Bateman's car, leaving scratches on his roof, BEFORE the starters tower (the green was waving). I loved it.

Over the winter we licked our wounds and schemed for "next year". Honda introduced a new body style for 1980. Terry and I tested a pre-production model at Mosport in late November. With no one there, no safety equipment, no belts, we did the first ever, under 2 minute lap for a Honda. Honda's Ralph Luciw pulled us out of the cars and sent us home! We sold the '79s and NUMBER 7 lent us two 1980's. One went

to the Auto Show and that tradition began. We did 5 shows in a row. Much like driving a bug-eye, the Honda's didn't tolerate the slightest error. So under powered, it was all about momentum and maintaining speed. Anything that scrubbed off speed added 2-3 seconds to the lap time and moved you back 10 positions. If you screwed up the bottom of corner one or two at Mosport, and had to add a little steering lock, you killed the exit speed. Three cars would draft by before the next corner. Absolute precision and consistency were rewarded.

We ran the early BFGoodrich GT200 Tires at 40-50 psi (to stop rolling them off the rims) and buffed them down until they were complete slicks. To get through scrutineering, if a steel belt was starting to show, we'd turn them on the rims and cover with black silicone! Insane, but it worked. The cars really moved around on those little tires. They were 175 X 12". Only later did we start using BFGoodrich TA's (huge, heavy tires on a 13" wheel) and then Michelin's came on board with the even bigger metric tire, on a mag wheel that was almost 14" in diameter. The cars actually went slower and stuck too well. A rear sway bar helped, but these made the racing even closer!

In 1981 Terry and I went to 17 race weekends. All over Ontario and Quebec we hit 11 different circuits, including trips to Nova Scotia and Gimli Manitoba (two weeks before the "Gimli Glider"). In addition to winning four championships, I won CASC's President's Cup for "the most successful racing driver in Canada", three years running. We raced in so MANY races that we just overwhelmed anyone else on sheer volume. At the time, the main competition was Scott Goodyear. We tied one year,

but he was in the USA so I grabbed the cup and never let him see it!



Left: Ron Lauzon, 24, tries to hold off Gaetan St-Louis.

We travelled like a circus, Terry built a long, open trailer that carried both Civics and one of our sponsors (DS Towing Services) gave us a an old Chevy Camper van they found by the side of the road. We painted it to match the cars. We always looked like a big team, but I can tell you we were always broke. We hauled parts from the dealership to the track and sold them for profit. Another sponsor (SEARS CRAFTSMAN) had no budget for us. They gave me boxes and boxes of tool “samples” that I took them to the track. One torque wrench = a meal for the entire team. Terry and I stretched our VISA cards to the limit, relying on the Prize Fund to pay them down before Christmas. That was actually part of our “business plan”. Any work we did on our own cars was “warranty work”.



Above: Ian Stewart, 83 gets inside #7, Mark Balean.

Below: John Sherk, #7, puts #33, Des Hockley in a Honda sandwich...



Although envisioned to be a place for new racers to start, it was actually a place for just about anyone. A few Montreal dealers used to hire drivers like Richard Spenard to show up and “create spectacle”. He always did.

No one will ever forget “the Pink Panther” ...



One of my favourites was Quebec Champion, Gaetan St.Louis. (above) He raced for years in an outrageous car from a Lombardi Honda in Montreal. No one will ever forget “the PINK PANTHER”. No mechanical skills of any kind, but could he drive! One year, at the Grand Prix du Trois Rivières, he was really disappointed to have only finished third. I was 4th, right behind him, with Terry glued to my bumper. We had actually parked our trailer outside the track, so we could drive out from the cool down lap and load quickly. I was still in my driver’s suit when we started the 7-8 hour trip home.

Late Sunday Gaetan called me in Toronto (no cell phones then). The first place finisher had failed post race inspection, instantly. When they opened the hood, they discovered a 1500 cc CVCC motor, only available in the station wagon at that time! The next guy had a 5 speed gearbox (vs. the 4-speed in the standard car). So Terry and I had actually finished 2nd and 3rd, but by the time the trophies were handed out, we were West of Montreal!

One of the highlights of my Honda career came at three major Mosport events in 1981 or '81. The series had really gained momentum and we were now racing on Sundays, just before the main event. Grids often exceeded 45-50 cars. Driver introductions, trophy presentations right under the tower, interviews, the whole deal. Harvey Hudes added to the excitement by offering \$1000 to the Honda Driver with the lowest cumulative time in the three features. I was still wearing my "Les Leston" Protex driver's suit, that cost me \$70, twelve years earlier. My new Bell Star helmet was \$100, my driving shoes were actually bowling shoes someone gave me. This was BIG prize money!

In those days, we ran a full 20 laps. With pace laps and the usual incidents, even a clean race took 45 minutes. Red flags could mean a long time in the car. At the first event, Terry and I both turned the first sub two minutes laps at Mosport and occupied the front row of the grid. I was on the pole and he was along side. "The Pink Panther" was right behind me, in third, as I lead the field up the back straight for the second time. We took the green and the games began. Flat out all the way to corner three and then imagine trying to slow down with half the grid firmly pushing firmly on your rear bumper. Bump drafting up the back straight was the norm.



Terry tucked in behind me and never stepped out for the entire race. Along with Gaetan, we three slowly eased out a few car lengths on the rest of the field, by running line astern, no messing around. This was common practice,

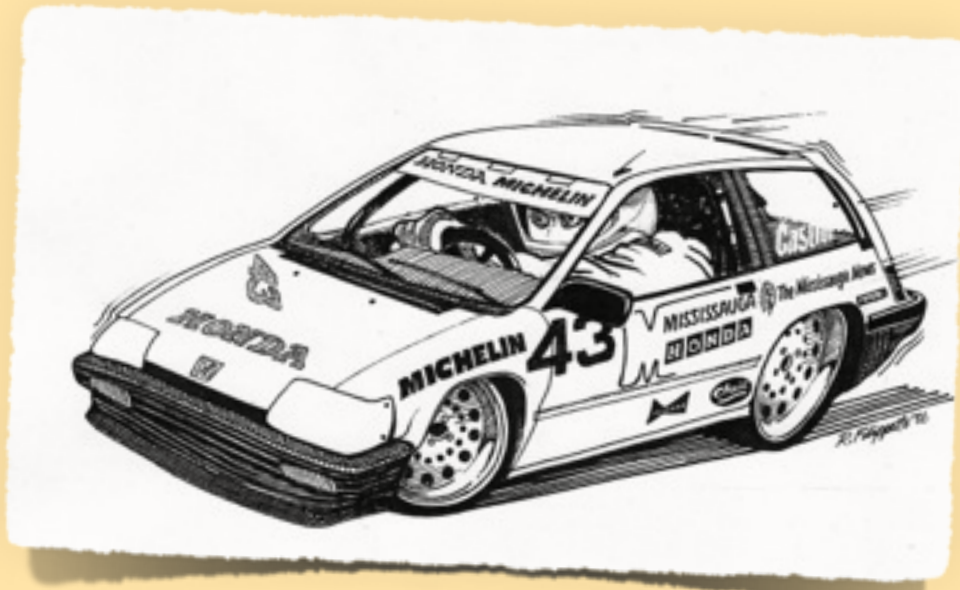
until the last few laps. Last lap, corner 8, Gaetan got his bumper inside Terry. We bounced and banged (no Driver's Committee here) through nine and ten. I won, the pink car second, Terry was third. We crossed the line in the space of two cars. Long story short, Gaetan won the second event, I won the last. For the overall 60 lap race (three events combined), I won by 0.3seconds. We had a really big party!



When I started in the first Honda, I had been “racing” for almost 10 years. What I discovered was that I’d never been racing at all! Watch the BTCC Ginetta Cup. That’s real racing. After 5 seasons (over 70 weekends all over Canada) I was a bit worn out. I’d had enough and walked away. Terry found another partner, Geoff Chandler, who won the ‘85 Championship. I joined the General Tire Motorsports Team and drove two Honda CRXs. One was a Showroom Stock Racer and the other a full on GT2 car. I also started racing my own Elva Mk.6 sports racer with VARAC. But that’s another story..... cheers, John D.



PS. My first Honda race was nearly my last...Jeremy Sale.



"I freely admit that my first Honda race (above) was frankly terrifying. I hadn't practiced or qualified and it was my first race ever! I had to wait for someone I won't name to get to the track and sign off on my licence. (Which I had on the basis of having taken a driving school a couple of years before. Yes, I was a good talker and things were very different then!) So they just put me at the back of the field. No problem...I was young and foolish and I figured I would just follow the slowest guy. Yeah, sure! Well, I followed them for about two hundred yards, then they all disappeared! Minutes later I saw blue flags being waved frantically. Looking in my mirror I saw a horde of Hondas, three abreast, bumping each other, and coming up fast behind me. OMG! I actually put my turn signal on, moved way over to the edge of the track and tried to be about two feet wide. As Lonesome George Gobel said "Did you ever feel the world's a tuxedo, and you're a pair of brown shoes..."? Yes, it was quite humiliating. I'm not sure how many times I was lapped...I was this close to quitting...

The next race was to be the support race for the Canadian Grand Prix in Montreal. I heard other drivers talking about "qualifying" and I thought to myself, "I don't want to drive all the way to Montreal and not qualify..." I was such a newbie I didn't realize that *everyone* qualified. So I didn't go... Something I have kicked myself for ever since! Well, at least I didn't quit!"

Back in the Day: A Vintage Tale

By Cam McRae

I was inspired to recount this little saga by two recent posts on the VARAC chat. The first was my own. I gave a shout-out to the wonderful folks at CTMP's MedCentre. I paid a brief visit during the CHGP and recalled that I hadn't had the pleasure since the early 'seventies. Then, later, Joe Lightfoot posted his dismay at seeing a useable Datsun 510 heading for the shredder. At that, the memories came flooding back.

In 1971, Dave Butler and I built up his 510 four-door for the "B Sedan" class. We had the basic suspension mods, good tires and a lovely engine that pulled from 3500 all the way to eight grand. The BRE exhaust exited just behind the driver's door and it was deliciously loud. On the weekend in question, the car also sported a racy looking new dash. A wide flat panel with the requisite gauges, all in crinkle black.

In the morning's race, I took off like a happy rabbit, glorying in the wide power band. Things were going particularly well until about the third lap. I stormed up the sharp rise to five, prepared to turn-in and downshift to second. And the engine quit. A wire had fallen off behind the new dash panel.

Totally unnerved by the sudden silence, I hit the brakes (wrong!) and commenced a hair-raising slide across the tarmac. Now, in those days there weren't any wimpy run-off areas. Instead, the outside of Moss was bounded by a substantial dirt berm. I hit it with a hell of a whomp and sent up a big cloud of beige dust. It was like I'd driven into a Manila envelope.



The car went back on the hook and I rode back in the ambulance. Thus, my first visit to the MedCentre. I was quickly pronounced OK (although I did develop some belt bruises) and I rushed over to our paddock. There, I found Butler and our crew scratching their heads at a very bent left front McPherson strut. Just as it started to rain.

And here's where the back story gets interesting. At the time, Dave was working as a service coordinator for a west end Toronto Datsun dealer. The Service Manager was highly skilled mechanic named Glen Sherman who just happened to be a member of a major motorcycle gang. He was our "crew".

Picture Leon Russell with steel grey hair - hair down to his shoulders, beard down onto his chest, with Paul Newman blue eyes glowing out of the middle of it all. His fellow motorcycle enthusiasts were well known to the local constabulary. Let's just say that they were a group of young men for whom socialization was strictly ad hoc, something you made up as you went along.

Glen scanned the surrounding area, zeroing in on a powder blue 510 parked against the fence, just outside the paddock. He grabbed a tire iron, scissors jack and some miscellaneous wrenches and leapt (yes, leapt!) over the fence. Lying in a convenient ditch, with the rainwater flowing past his black leather jacket, he proceeded to remove the left front strut from the spectator's car! Butler and I stood and gaped.

My afternoon race was uneventful. I, not surprisingly, was a little tentative. We finished somewhere in the top third and the strut was quickly returned to its rightful owner.

While we were packing up, the blue donor car disappeared. We never saw its owner. Dave harbored the theory that any driver of a baby blue 510 had to be a lovely young girl. He fantasized about going over to her, admitting the whole thing, initiating a lively conversation and starting a beautiful relationship.

Back in the day...



The Bugeye turns 60!

By Jeremy Sale

This year marks the 60th anniversary of a well-loved British sports car. On May 20, 1958 the Austin-Healey Sprite was introduced to the public. This was the second Donald Healey partnership with BMC, the first being the Austin-Healey 100. Using various parts from BMC, then comprised of Austin, Morris, MG, Riley and Wolseley, the Sprite was expressly designed to be maximum fun at lowest cost. The 948cc engine was from the Austin A35 and Morris Minor. The rack and pinion steering was derived from the Morris Minor 1000 and the front suspension from the Austin A35. The headlights were originally designed to be retractable, but this was shelved to keep costs down and thus the distinctive Bugeye or Frogeye was born. 46,967 Sprites were made between 1958 and 1961 with a price tag of \$1,795. With a top speed of almost 83 mph and 0-60 in over 20 seconds performance was hardly electrifying, but various speed shops, Sprinzel, Speedwell and others, as well as the BMC competition department, improved things and the Sprite competed in races and rallies, driven by the likes of Stirling and Pat Moss, Roy Salvadori, Paddy Hopkirk, Pedro Rodriguez, Graham Hill, Bruce McLaren and many others. Even the King of Cool, Steve McQueen, drove one!

In March 1959, the BMC Competition Department entered three Austin-Healey Sprites in the Sebring 12 Hours Grand Prix d'Endurance. The cars were fitted with a prototype Dunlop disc brake on all four wheels as well as wire wheels. Larger twin SU carburetors boosted performance and special twin-plate racing clutches took the drive to straight-cut close-ratio gearboxes. The cars were raced by Canadians Hugh Sutherland, Fred

Hayes and Ed Leavens, as well as Phil Stiles, Dr Hardol Kunz, John Christy and John Colgate, Jr. The Sprites finished first, second and third in their class, valuable publicity for BMC in the important North American market. Sixty years on, the Bugeye has become an inexpensive way to get into vintage racing. Well, that's if you believe there is an "inexpensive" way to get into vintage racing. The car is simple to maintain and fun to drive. Without excessive horsepower momentum is the key, so it teaches the driver to be as smooth as possible. Ragged corners translate to less speed on the straights. So one learns to drive according to Newton's theory; objects in motion want to stay in motion and all that.

So why are Sprites such fun to drive? Ted Michalos; "They're under powered and over-weight! The one thing they have going for them is they handle VERY well. So if you have the nerve not to use the brakes too often they make an excellent little race car."

John DeMaria; "Such a giant killer! Absolute go-cart like handling and brakes. Totally about maintaining highest possible corner entry and exit speeds (there is no horsepower to cover any errors in judgment or execution). A well-driven Bug Eye can really annoy other competitors. Such fun! (John raced a Bugeye a while ago and commented as follows): "I rebuilt all the front suspension and John Dodd built Brian Hunt and I a pair of new engines and gearboxes (after I scattered Brian's at Celebration the year before). They had steel cranks, beautifully prepped heads and all the latest tricks. Both were 998cc's and totally legal. I remember I built a neat, adjustable front sway bar and did a little work on the rear suspension. The corner weights were perfect with me in the car. I left the car looking just as Bob Mason had it, from the

Brian Hunt leads Craig DeShane and Brian McEachern



© Marc Cormier Photo

outside. David Clubine sold me a set of gold FF Superlight mag wheels and we had just started using the FF front Dunlop Tires. The combination was amazing. At the Festival that year, Brian and I were doing 1.46 second laps, and miles ahead of all the other Bug Eyes. Brian beat me at one race at Shannonville (he was really ON FORM) but other than that, I won my class every single outing, over three years. One of my favourites was at Pittsburg when all the other Bug Eye drivers scoffed at my 948 (all seven of them had 1275cc engines fitted). I "sand bagged" through all the practices as I'd forgotten my spare 1/2 shafts. In the Sunday feature race I lapped them all and finished 1st O/A. Great weekend! I remember Dave Morgan won his race too. It was fun!

On a good, sunny day, Mosport was flat out, in top gear, from the starters bridge to the entry to corner three. We never really hit the inside apex's anywhere. The trick was to turn in as little as possible, because any extra wheel angle just scrubbed off speed. Always just enough to hit the exit curbs perfectly. Corner three was third gear, after very little braking. Corner four was flat too and the cars usually arrived mid track at Moss's no matter what we did! Corner 5 was all about exit speed, slowing a bit extra for 5A but really coming hard out of 5B. On a good day, Brian and I would arrive at corner 8 at about 73-7400 rpm in top (4.55 diff) and tell people we were flat out there too. It was a lie. You had to lift about 1/2 way out of the throttle at the first turn in point, then nail it back down. The cars scrubbed off so much speed around 8 that a tap on the brakes and a downshift to third gear was all you needed for corner nine. Getting out of the pit entrance and back across the track for corner 10 was always a challenge! In corner 10, the trick was to get the throttle wide open early, and hold it there. Exit speed was critical, and what we carried all the way to the starter's bridge. I always shifted up early to top gear, to have the car well balanced for the turn in to Corner One (and both hands on the steering wheel). My best lap at Mosport was with the help of Joe Lightfoot, at a late Fall race. He had his video camera running and almost every lap I would be under his rear bumper when we left Moss's. What a TOW! When we arrived at corner 8 he would gracefully pull to the inside and let me howl by on the left. The lap times were the best I ever did! I loved that little car. It was so much fun.

Cheers, John D



Above, June and Van Worsdale with Dick Baker, Stephen Burnett photo. Below, Mike Jennings.





Above; Howie Freeman
three wheels it at Mosport.
Left; Back in the day at
Harewood Acres.
Below; A trio of Michalos
Sprites makes everyone
smile...



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Back In The Day with Ross de St Croix

With Jeremy Sale

Ross de St. Croix was inducted into the Canadian Motorsport Hall of Fame in 1994. He was the 1967 Canadian Driver's Champion, driving a McLaren Elva Mk II. In addition to his racing career he was president of the Canadian Automobile Sports Club and the Montreal Motor Racing Club, and long-time president of the Montreal MG Car Club. Ross de St. Croix talks to Pit Signals about racing in the 50's and 60's.

Ross, what cars did you start in?

“Early on I had a couple of MG TDs. I used these in International winter rallies with my rally partner, navigator, Denis Johnson. We had some success including sponsored sedans through George Henderson, president of Cooke Toledo Motors. “

Then you went racing in an MGA...

“Yes, when the new MGA was introduced, Henderson asked if I would like to race one.

Well, yes!! The deal was, I would buy the car at cost, he would pay the racing bills and I would use the car for personal and race use.



A race track was opening at the old WWII airport in St. Eugene and BMC, through Cooke Toledo Motors, wanted some racing done in Quebec area.”

Racing was a bit more basic back in the day...

“Yes, I would drive the car to the track, tape on a number and tape up the front of the car to protect it. After racing, just remove the number and the tape, drive it home and on Monday use the car to work as a sales rep for Alexander Tools! I must mention that through all of this period and before our marriage a big part of my success was because of my wife and true partner, Mary, (at right). She was always a big part of the team as a timer, secretary, transport driver, race car cosmetics and with her checkered pant suit one of the more attractive contributors of the social aspects of racing!”



You did well with the MGA...

“We had a couple of firsts in early MGA history. One because I raced a coupe and not a roadster. I chose the coupe because I thought it might be a stiffer car for a small increase in weight

and the extra stiffness would give me a better handling car. That proved to be correct and we had many podiums against better-prepared cars. I also created a lot of attention because it was a coupe and there weren't that many around.

That first year twice the coupe stood out. Our first race was at St. Eugene in the rain. We got first place..... Photos show the win, but if I could see the tires in the photo, I could be 100% sure. You see, we raced the car with the tires that came with the car. Later on, we used Michelin X tires which were a new technology and worked well until real racing tires came along.

Second time that year was my first race at Watkins Glen, against Sherman Decker and Bob Boucher, both in open MGAs. They were considered both terrors and real winners on the track, and here came this Canadian with the unusual car. First time out against these guys I followed them to a third place after damaging his right rear taillight in a late braking moment on my part. But we became good friends after that and I picked up three podiums in that series over the years. In fact, about 10 years ago I took three trophies down to the Watkins Glen historical museum to show them some old stuff. One of the curators came out, looked at the trophies and said, "I remember you. You had the blue MGA coupe!"

After that there was a MGA twin cam, a good car. We had the new engine, which we had dismantled and blued everything before reassembly for the race season. All under the watchful eye of Steve Weid, a great race mechanic."

...What came next?

“For the next two years there was the Lola 1100. My first real race car. This was the previous “Miss Whiz” driven by Francis Bradley. It



was the only car I had a crash in.

Then on to a really nice factory stock MGB.

Properly race

prepared and towed to the track. It was factory stock but with all the best race parts that were available from BMC.

Next was a sponsored Daimler SP250 sportscar owned by Budd and Dyer of Montreal, some sedan racing in the Midtown Motors Pontiac Beaumont, and driving for other people in various cars that became available. Then came the McLaren.

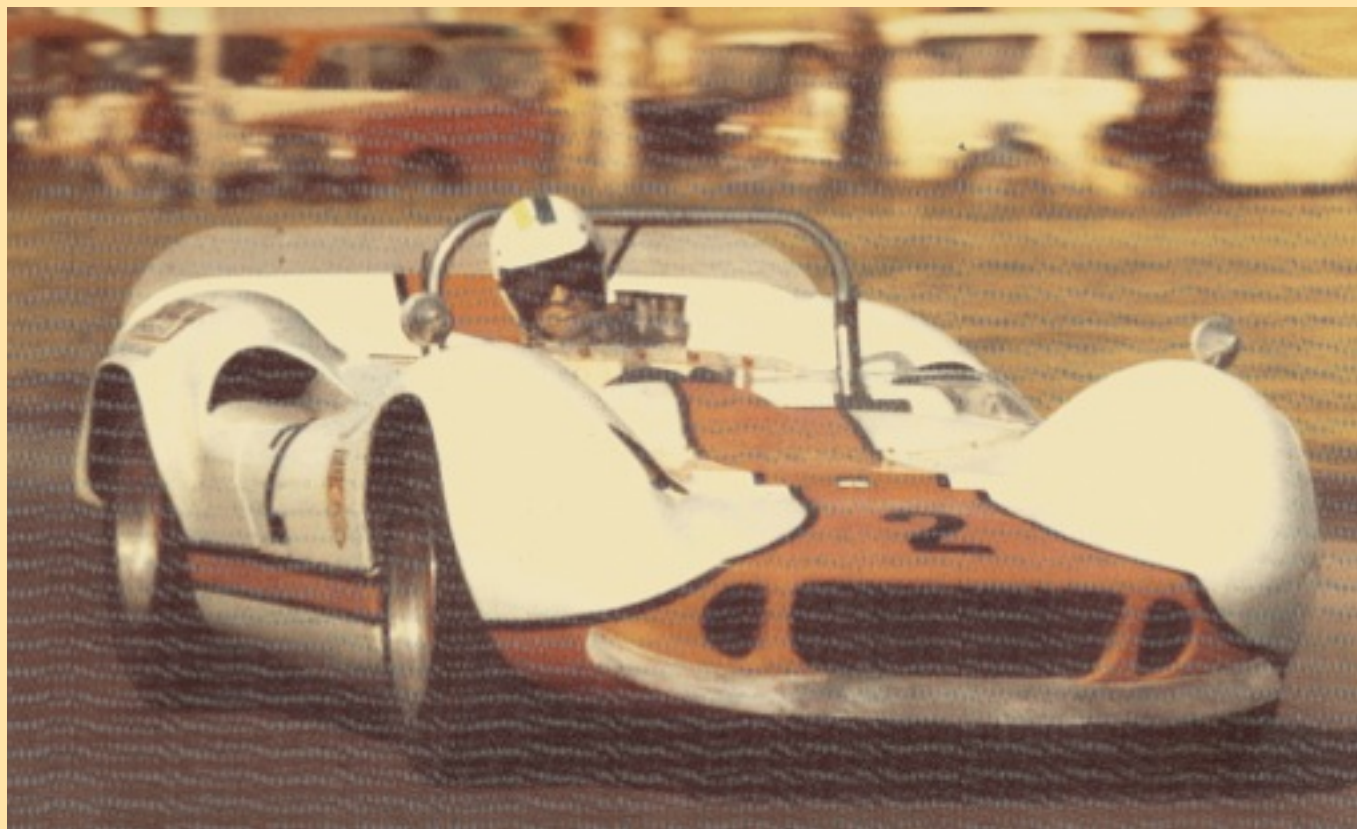
Do you have a few trophies from your racing days?

“Yes. I was going through some old stuff the other day and came across this tiny little trophy. It really needed cleaning and when I did so, wow! There it was, from my last and most important race.

“Ross de St Croix, 1st overall, Westwood Fall Invitational Race, 1967”. A nice trophy, all 8" of it! Anyway, now it's all cleaned up and on the shelf with the Players Championship Tray.”

So that trophy was from your very last race?

“Yes, my last race was at Westwood, British Columbia, back in 1967. I was driving a McLaren Mark1B for Soucy Racing.”



“I almost didn't do the race because the day previous I had a rather foolish accident! I was racing across the paddock on a Honda Monkey pit bike, remember them? It was very small and I am 6' 3" so there I was, all arms and legs with this little bitty bike under me. Anyway, there was a downhill entry to the paddock that had a deep ditch at the lower right side that was full of rocks. Unfortunately I lost control and ended up in the rock pile! I had major bruises and a lot of skin removal on my leg and butt. It bled quite a bit and overnight formed rather two large scabs. It was darned uncomfortable, to say the least! But I kept quiet because

the thing was, if I didn't complete the race and Eppie Weitzes finished third or better, he would have won the championship. So I had to bite my lip and get on with things."

What about the race itself?

"Well, I remember it was a two-heat race and that it was held in the worst conditions I ever raced in! The funny thing was the rain helped the injuries, I was soaking wet and the scabs and everything softened up, so there was little discomfort or distraction during the race! Funny how you forget some things when you get behind the wheel. Any way an important factor in the race win was the tires we had. We had used Firestone Indy Tires all year but due to a strike at the factory we had a hard time getting tires, let alone rain tires. However, Goodyear was at the track and the previous day, with rain in the forecast, I had talked Mr. Soucy into buying the only set of rain tires Goodyear had in stock! Good thing, because in the race it rained so hard that going down the back straight, even while out front, I couldn't see because of the fog and rain. I had to count the seconds going down the straight to time the first braking marker, so as to slow enough to take the turn.



The rain was so bad that another McLaren spun under the tower. It was a crumpled mess, it probably hydroplaned on the wet track. It worked out well; I drove my last race at Westwood to win the Canadian Championship and The Players Trophy for Canada's Centennial Year.

*What
made you
decide to
retire?*

After Westwood, I started to think of what next in my racing career and my life. I had raced the McLaren nine times.



Above; Victory lap, Mary and Ross in the McLaren at Westwood in 1967.

In 1967 I had concentrated on the Canadian Championship. I actually had given up the opportunity to run our McLaren in the second year of the Can-Am Series. I couldn't take the time off work to run the series seriously and I realized I really didn't want to become a professional race driver. Our twin boys were 2-1/2 years old. I had a job that I loved and made more money than many professional drivers of the day did. Some young drivers in Formula 1 and elsewhere were successful in their early twenties. I was now 33 and I had enjoyed 12 really great years of racing in the beginning of the exciting growth of motorsport in Eastern Canada and the Northeastern USA. I felt that it was a good time to hang it up.

It was the right time for you to make that decision?

Yes. Years later I was talking with Scott Goodyear after his retirement and I asked him how did he decide to retire. He said, "You just know when it's time." I felt the same way. No regrets at all!

What's on TV for Race Fans?

by George Webster

So, you are getting ready for the weekend and you want to know what races are on TV. Or, you are going to be away from home and want to record some of the weekend's races. What do you do? You check out George's Race Fan TV Listings. These listings provide a comprehensive listing of all the major races available on television in Canada. Each full listing includes the broadcaster, the time of the broadcast, the event (series, event name, venue, date of the event if it is not live) – a lot more information than you will get from other places.

There are many sources of TV listings available; why use George's? Because they list everything and they are the most accurate – and they only have listings for broadcasts that might be of interest to race fans. Over the years, I have published these listings in a variety of ways, starting with the old CompuServe Motorsports Forum in the 1990s. I did have a dedicated website for a number of years. They have been available in recent years on the IGNITION magazine website. This year, I persuaded Tim Rutledge, the publisher to reactivate the PRN Motorsports Magazine website (<http://www.prnmag.com/>) and it has been up and running in its new form since mid-April.

One of my faithful readers had some difficulty finding the listings on the new website, so here are step-by-step Instructions:

- \$ Go to the website: <http://www.prnmag.com/>
- \$ Click on TV LISTINGS at the top of the page
- \$ When you get to the listings page, scroll until you see the choices
- \$ Click on either 'Highlights' or 'Complete'
- \$ The listings will come up in a PDF format which you can view or print out.
- \$ Enjoy!

By the way, the PRN website includes race reports and other features of interest to race fans.

Continued....

.....what's on TV for Race Fans?

Why do I spend the time each week to update these listings? I'm retired. My wife sits and does the crossword puzzle or plays games on her iPad every day. My recreation is the exercise compiling the listings each week. Given the detail that I add to each major listing, it is an exercise in research to find all the information. Of course, the Internet makes this checking possible without too much work. I tried stopping a couple of times but I had to accept that I find the effort of compiling the TV listings a rewarding activity in itself.

I know that I do make some errors but I try hard to find them and correct them. I publish the listings weekly for the next two-week period. The first week may be a bit more accurate and complete than the second – but I provide the second week so you can set your recorder if you are going away for a longer time. Normally, I don't publish listings for a more than two-week time period because it is hard to find and confirm complete listings information that far ahead.

Another thing. Given that I take a basic listing like "F1, France" and convert that into "Formula 1 *Pirelli Grand Prix De France*, Circuit Paul Ricard, Le Castellet, F, L" I may misidentify a broadcast occasionally, but my position is that I'm better to provide more information than not – even if the price is an occasional bit of misinformation.

My goal is to publish updated listings mid-week each week during the racing season. This will work better now that I am able to post the listings directly to the website as soon as I have them ready. If, for some reason, I am going to be unable to update the listings some week, I will produce listings that extend an additional week - they may not be quite so accurate or comprehensive but it is better than nothing.

I hope you enjoy George's Race Fan TV Listings and find them useful! G.W.

Thanks George, we do find the listings useful, please keep it up! Pit Signals.

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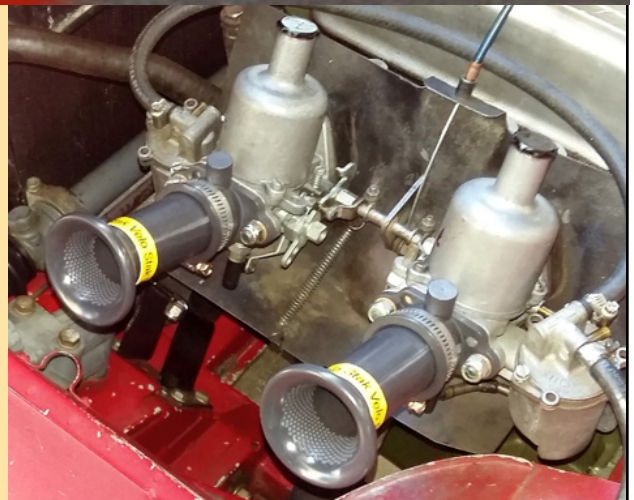
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