



PIT SIGNALS

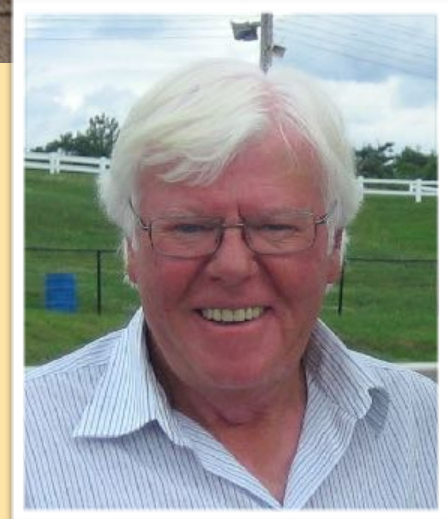


LATE BRAKING NEWS FOR VARAC VINTAGE RACERS - JULY, 2020 - JEREMY SALE



Eppie Wietzes

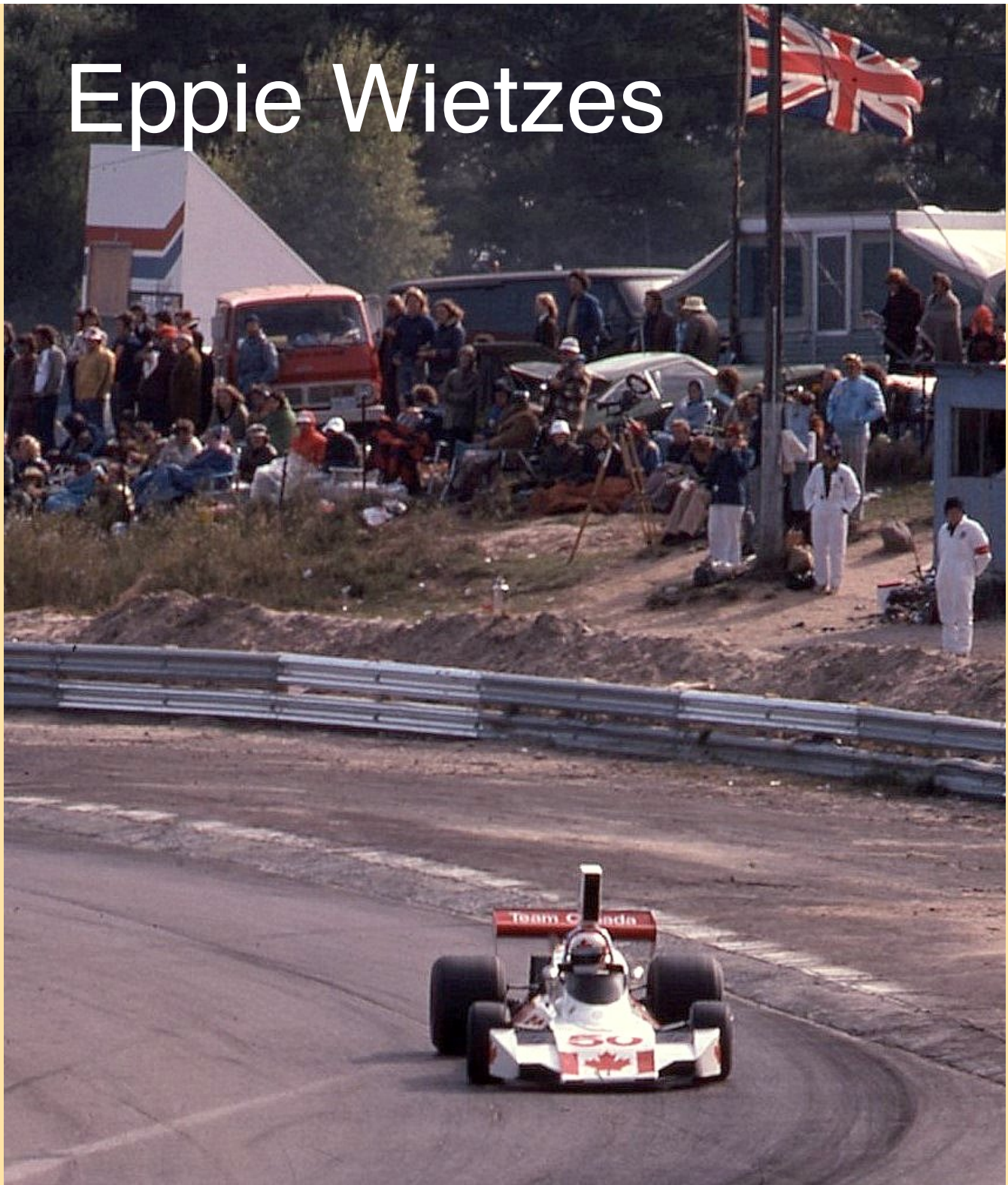
One of Canada's top racing drivers died recently. Eppie Wietzes had a long and successful career in many different cars. John Wright's story is in this issue, with photos from Ron Kielbiski, Paul Madder, Tom Flaherty, Jr., John Cross, R. Campbell, and the Canadian Motorsport Hall of Fame.



Yeah! VARAC's back on track! We have reports from Mosport and Calabogie!

Photos by John Walker, with reports by the usual suspects, all the race news that fits....

Eppie Wietzes



Eppie Wietzes raced everything from a Morris Minor to a Formula One Lotus 49, a Brabham Formula One car (above) and various Lola and McLaren Formula 5000 racecars. Inducted into the Canadian Motorsports Hall of Fame in 1993 the board recognized Eppie's outstanding contribution to racing not only in Canada but also around North America. The following is condensed from an interview by John Wright. Photos by Paul Madder,

Eppie Wietzes. May 1939-June 2020

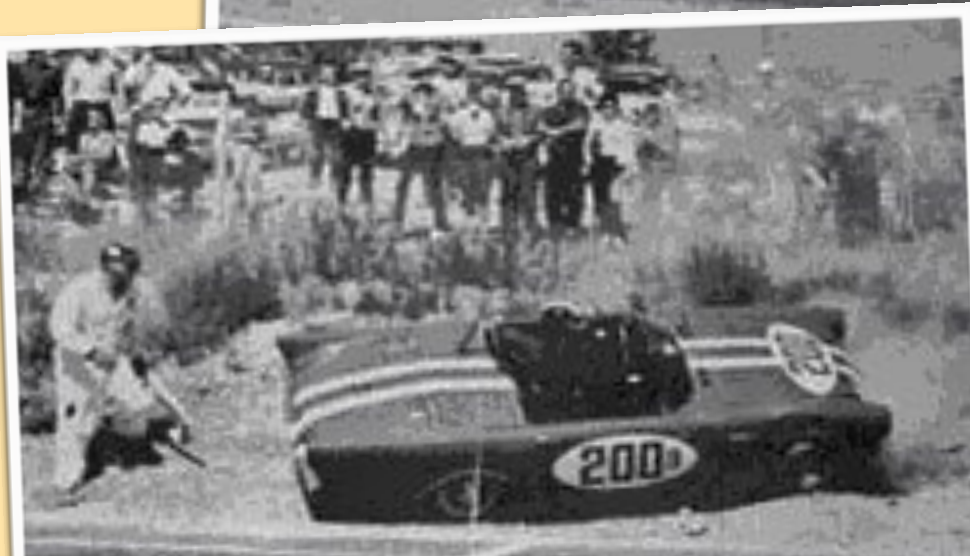
Eppie Wietzes was born in Holland, his father brought the family to Canada and opened up a gas station. "I left school in Grade Seven because I had become the breadwinner, as my Dad was ill. So, at about age 17 I was running the gas station on Eglinton."

Wietzes later bought a Morris Minor to race. "It was a second hand car I bought for \$100. I decided to put in an Austin A40 engine of 1240cc displacement. You could do that in the Improved Production class at that time. A year or so later we put in a 1000 cc Sprite engine with 1-½ inch SU carburetors. We did well in that car, taking class wins. However, when the Morris Mini Minors came out the old Morris had had it!"

"Later on we got the Sunbeam dealership and we started running the Alpine in 1961. We got a brand new car and prepared it. Later when Sunbeam was running a works car for Denny Coad we had the factory people going all over our car to see what we had done to make it so successful! (Wietzes #14, Coad #200 below)



“We were winners in the Alpine in 1961 and in 1962. In one race at Mosport, Denny Coad (#200) and I (#14) were fighting for the lead right up to the last lap. Coming into Corners Eight, Nine and Ten, we were banging doors, then coming out of Corner Ten, he spun me out, but he spun too, and ended up on the banking coming onto the pit straight. Both our cars had stalled, but I got mine started first and crossed the line to take the chequered flag!”



Weitzes car was later raced by Diana Carter (below) and then briefly by George Eaton...



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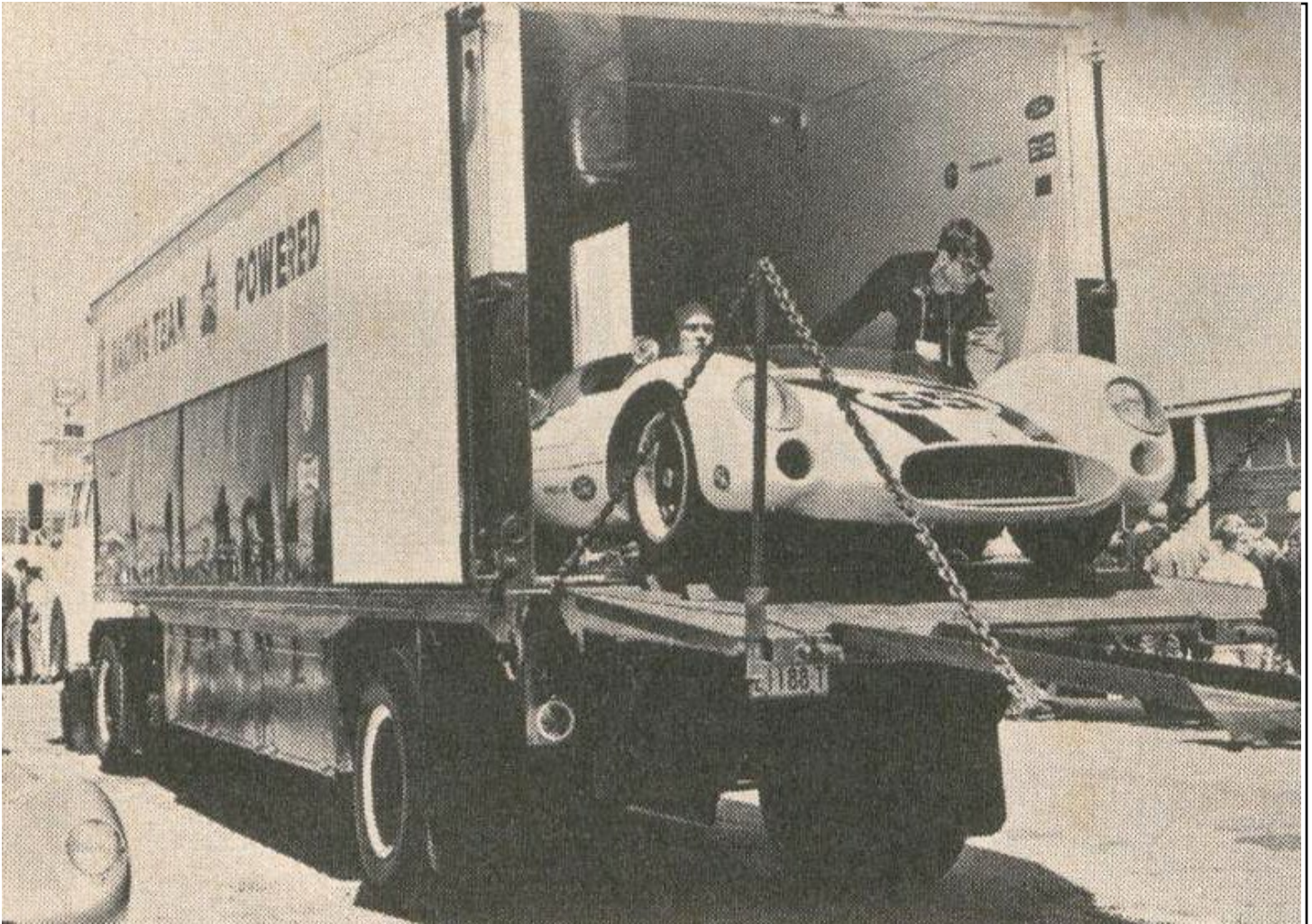


“By mid-season I was in the Comstock Cobra. (above) Paul Cooke, who became team manager for Comstock, took over the Alpine for the last few races. I was teamed up with John Cannon, Craig Fisher, Walt MacKay, Danny Shaw, Grant Clark and Ludwig Heimrath. Craig Fisher, John Cannon and I were friends, as we lived close to each other in Don Mills. We raced together in Formula Junior and the team Cobra.”



Wietzes and Heimrath also drove the King Cobras, which Comstock Racing had purchased from Carroll Shelby. “We took our King Cobra to Mosport for testing and I just couldn’t drive it. There was too much tension on the rack of the rack and pinion steering. That was it for testing but we fixed that.

The next time I was in the car was at the Westwood circuit in British Columbia. Something broke, I don’t know what, and the car went off the track at Deer’s Leap where there was no guardrail. The car went down a steep slope, hit a huge rock, flipped and went into a tree on the left side. Fortunately the car had right hand steering and all the damage to me was on my left leg, which was broken in two places. I was in a cast for nine months and that wiped out my 1964 season.



Above: The Comstock team was an impressive sight, here unloading the King Cobra.
Below: Wietzes finished ahead of Ken Miles, 1-2 in the GT class in the 1963 Player's 200.



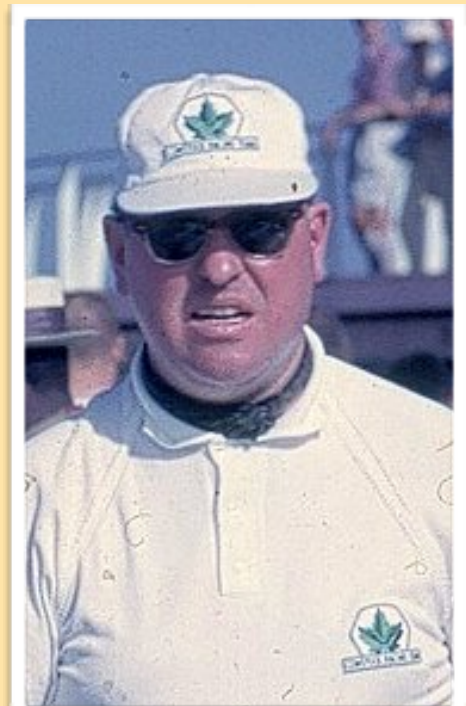
“Chuck Rathgeb got two Ford GT40s plus a third with wire wheels for a show car. In 1966 we went to the Sebring 12 Hour race.”



“Bob McLean was one of our drivers. He was a nice guy and he really knew how to drive. There were two GT40s, Craig Fisher and myself in #17 and Bob McLean and Jean Ouillet from Rimouski, Quebec in the other one. I had just passed Bob, then on the next lap I saw the car after the accident and Rathgeb gave me the sign to come in. (*McLean died in the accident. He had won the Canadian Driving Championship title in 1965.*)

“Later I continued as the sole driver in the GT40 and did the Canadian circuits, plus Watkins Glen. From 1963 to 1967 Paul Cooke was the manager of the team. Comstock Racing had a large shop. When Bruce McLaren came to race, he’d use our shop. I got close to Bruce and Denny Hulme. I planned on purchasing a new McLaren sports racing car to race in 1968 but it never did happen. Ford called it quits. Rathgeb (*right*) said that’s it for me.

I continued to run the GT 40. I had been running it in 1966 and 1967 at Mosport and finished sixth overall in one race.”



In 1967 Wietzes drove for team Lotus drive at the first Canadian F1 GP. "That was the first time I had ever driven a single seater car. Harvey Hudes (Mosport's legendary manager) arranged it. The car seemed fine but I only did a few laps in the car. Jimmy Clark crashed the car in Turn One and wouldn't drive the repaired car. The next day, it rained and rained. The conditions for driving the Lotus '49 were completely different, the Cosworth had no torque like the Ford engine in the GT40. You had to wring it out. With the rain, I had to drive it with the steering wheel and the accelerator pedal. Everyone was all over the road. Colin Chapman just said "Watch your mirrors and stay out of the way!" Canadian Al Pease was in the ex-Dan Gurney Eagle Climax. "We were all in the back of the field. Al's battery died and he ran all the way to the pits to get another one. About three quarters through the race my ignition was drowned out at Moss Corner. So did Jimmy's, his quit in the pit area, the mechanics helped and he was disqualified."

"I raced a variety of cars in 1968, an Elva and a Can-Am race at Mount Tremblant in a car of Roger McCaig's. "

In 1969 Wietzes turned to Formula A/5000. "We went to the English racing show with Jim and Joan Clayton and purchased a brand new Lola T142 at the same time Horst Kroll purchased his. Al Pease had a Lola T140 as well. You know we did every thing out of our house and the attached garage. It wasn't until 1970 when we had a proper shop."

Wietzes had a successful 1969 season, winning the Canadian Championship against Horst Kroll, Bill Brack, Al Pease and others in Formula 5000 cars. He then moved to a McLaren M10B with Jim and Joan Clayton instrumental in supporting his racing.

"Corner Two is named after Jim Clayton and that indicates I think the influence they had on Canadian racing in general. They were very helpful – Joan in organizing the team. She would organize parts, make the phone calls do the entry forms. They would both work in the pits. The Claytons helped with the new shop too. Joan paid for one half of the shop and Wietzes Motors bought the other side. Now we didn't have to work out of my garage at my house!"

“Everything changed in 1971. Formula 5000 was finished in Canada and so everyone went to the US series, the Formula Continental, I think it was. We went to England to purchase a McLaren M18, it was a dud, but we finally figured it out and were consistent enough to finish in the top six. For the 1972 season we purchased a Lola T300 and it was competitive. We ran up front and never lower than sixth for a couple of years at least. I think that we were fourth overall that year in the series. The season went really quick at Laguna Seca, Riverside, Road America and the Glen. There were nine races in all in the series.”

“There were many excellent drivers all in variants of the Lola F5000 cars as well as various others. There was Donohue, Regazzoni, David Hobbs, Brett Lunger, Brian Redman of course, Sam Posey, Danny Ongais, who bought my Lola T332, Mario Andretti in a Lola T400, Skip Barber in an ex-F1 car, Tony Adamowicz, Bobby and Al Unser in their Eagles, George Follmer, Jackie Oliver in the Don Nichols’ Shadows, The fields were very competitive and the racing was tight. There was the 1974 F5000 race at Mosport where we had the T332 at the track and I had a good scrap with Mario Andretti and Brian Redman. You know we all got along so well. We didn’t drive the way they drive today, bumping and banging. We had more respect for each other. “



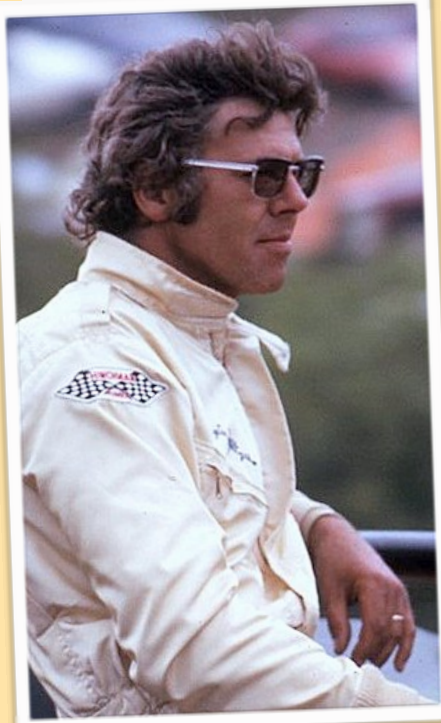


Brabham Formula One at Mosport

“For the 1974 Canadian GP I raced a Brabham BT 43. The car was not a good one. The suspension was suspect and in the race the engine blew. There was a radius rod heim joint where the hole to mount the heim joint was elongated. No wonder the suspension was moving around. That car had not qualified in four F1 GPs, but we got it into the race. Bernie Ecclestone owned the car and that tells you something! You’re in a rental car, stay out of the way was what I was told.

The upshot of the race weekend was when they took the gears out of my car and put them in Carlos Reutemann’s car. We lost second and third gear and had to drive it around the track that way!

The end came in 1975. I did one race at Mosport with a motor which gave up, so I rented a spare motor from Jim Hall. The car I raced was re-bodied as a CanAm car and Horst Kroll bought it.”



Wietzes at VARAC Festival in 2018

“From 1975 to 1980 I didn’t race, then we put together a Trans-Am Corvette in my garage, a Corvette which had seen some extensive racing. Our first race was at Charlotte, George Follmer won but then he was given a 15 second penalty we won by .630 seconds. We won two other races and had top finishes, enough to win the 1981 SCCA TransAm Championship.”

Wietzes also drove a Lola T600 Chev prototype in the 1981 Mosport Six Hour race, partnering with Brian Redman to come second. Wietzes finished racing in 1993, 49th in all time earnings list, the two wins in Trans-Am putting him equal to Peter Revson and Paul Newman. He was nominated and entered the Canadian Motorsports Hall of Fame in 1993.



Back on Track! At Mosport...

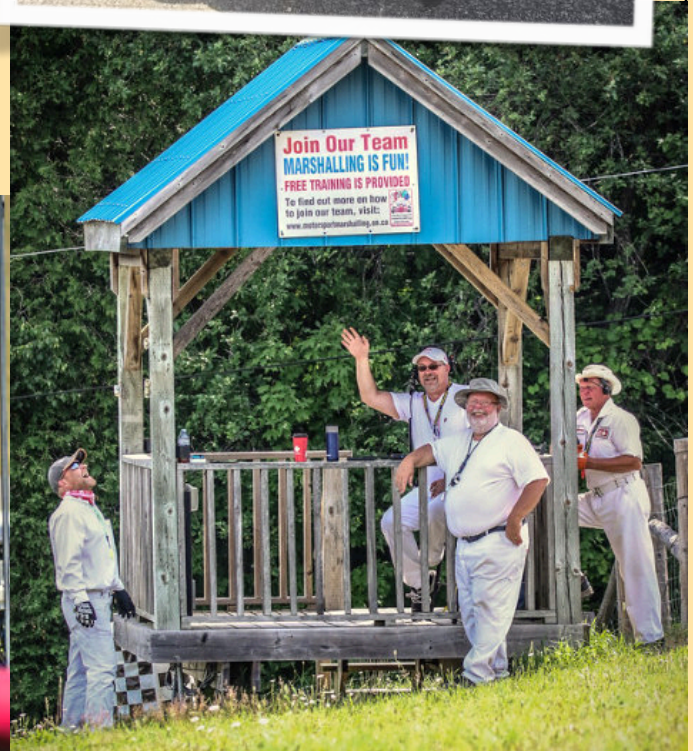


JOHN HAWKES: “At long last a chance to get out on the track! The Merlyn had the engine out and a couple of other small odds and sods done so I was keen to see how the new motor would perform. I rolled up to the gate on Thursday night at 4:30 pm only to be told that I couldn’t go in or stay in the parking lot or park on the road for another hour!. However, I eventually got in and registered for the test day quickly and effortlessly. Just for a change I was all prepared with everything printed, including the COVID declaration form for the med staff. For the test day and for the race weekend proper they only allowed two people in the reg office at a time and got the line moving pretty quickly. Tech was a longer affair for some but fortunately I had been to the Michalos Tech Day and was cleared quickly.

Masks were everywhere to be seen and it was noticeable that most teams kept to themselves. Obviously not quite as convivial an affair as we would normally experience but folks still toured the paddock at night and checked in on the new cars or upgrades. The event featured very few incidents, a number of break outs in Classic and a few reports of inattentive driving . Unfortunately for my weekend out of the three car issues I had, I solved two at the track with able assistance from the Samila crew, but the third required gears (I think) that I didn’t have in the trailer, so Sunday was ditched. Can’t wait to get back out for BARC in a week or two! For those who were feeling tentative about coming out it really was very well run. Ray Arlauskas did several paddock tours enforcing the six foot rule; even in the washrooms everyone was very courteous and careful.. so come out! We need bigger fields.”

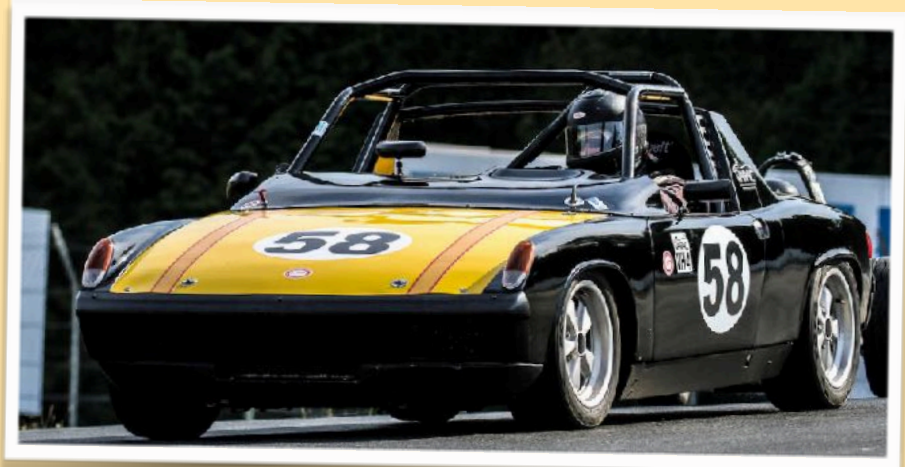
Boyz n the Hood...

“What a great weekend! Great, clean racing-very well organized-everything on schedule. CASC had very solid COVID- 19 regs that were well followed. All involved, from my perspective, demonstrated very good practices with regard to distancing and masks. (the new “normal “ pictured here). Felt very comfortable. The only “ downside” was every time I checked my mirrors, all I saw was a huge Volvo grille!” **Dave Good, MGA 37.**



GAVIN IVORY “Not everyone would describe being surrounded by the sights, sounds, and smells of familiar race cars as a step towards post-pandemic normalcy, but for the 40 plus VARAC members attending the highly successful first race weekend at CTMP it felt that way. “If they had scheduled the event in the Yukon, we would have gone”, one happy racer said.

Extensive COVID-19 event protocols were sensibly stitched into what otherwise was an entirely normal regional event, and compliance seemed generally widespread. While overall attendance was somewhat light (about



100 entered), the constrained number of races resulted in mostly full grids, which concluded early both days – a merciful benefit given the oppressive temperatures. The VH grid was bulked-up by the FV group who have become accustomed to sharing the track with sight-line impaired larger car drivers, making the race experience for both groups less anxious than earlier combined grids. The slimmer Classic grid rolled into Sunday with unfortunately high mechanically induced attrition, perhaps partly due to normal bugs with new engines and other major car renovations.

But the happiest surprise for most was the extensive repaving of the track. Like the results of an effective personal training program, a lot of unwanted bulges have disappeared. Most notably, corner two is smooth top to bottom. Gone is the curbside bump that has been habitually incorporated into driving patterns for decades. Does it mean faster lap times for all? There were a few Classic breakouts, but an incomplete and unscientific look at racer lap times broadly seems to suggest that that outcome is still in prospect. Perhaps we were suitably conscious of being well behaved under the unusual circumstances, as there was only one reportable incident to the Conduct Committee all weekend - a highly commendable event safety outcome for VARAC. “





Formula F1600 had a healthy grid...Megan Gilkes (right) finished second in all three of her F1600 races, lapping in the 1:29's...Oh these kids today..





Nice weekend for a drive in the country...



Yes, it was hot...
But some people are
always cool...
Below; Mark Brown's
cool TVR.



Colleen Samila at Mosport...

“This past weekend, July 4 & 5 was amazing to finally get back out at the track again. I do believe everyone has been waiting for racing to start. The safety measures that were put in place were followed by everyone; 6ft distancing at all times (which I have to admit was, at times, made it hard to hear some conversations), and those working on cars together or within the 6ft distance, always had their masks on. Dorothy Agnew, Ed Luce’s wonderful spouse, had made masks with various car colours (green/yellow for Lotus, checker flag etc. and also included drivers numbers on some) – these were proudly worn at all times! Safety was first and foremost, which inevitably shows respect for those around you – well done racers and crew!



As the wife of a VH Driver, I have to admit that my desire to go racing is a bit selfish, as it allows me some downtime to read, do some needlework and relax! Ivan always enjoys prepping the car and making sure everything is running smoothly. And of course this weekend didn’t disappoint, the little Lotus 7 S4 was as excited to get out on the track as Ivan was. All in all a great weekend, wonderful to see everyone again! Thank goodness for the new little RV which allows us to stay at the track, adding to that wonderful bliss of downtime! Good food, great friends, good weather, what else could one ask for? Looking forward to the next race weekend!”

Ivan Samila: “Covid did not hamper our enjoyment of the weekend. Yes, social distancing and mask wearing took a bit of getting used to, but for the most part, aside from the mask being uncomfortably hot at times, all was good! Racers, crew and track workers seemed to all comply to the new rules without issue. As always, registration and the track and grid workers were a pleasure to be around....their spirits didn’t seem to be dampened by the “new norm” , even though they were the most affected, having to be masked all day in the blistering sun. We are grateful for their dedication. Without them, we would not be racing.” (*Thanks, Vic!*)



2020 VARAC Racing Schedule – as at July 6, 2020

Dates	Event	Track	VH	CL	FC
Jul 25-26	BARC	CTMP	XM	G	XM
Aug 15-16	CASC Regional Event	Shannonville	XM	G	XM
Aug 22-23	Grand Bend Festival of Speed	Grand Bend	G		G
Aug 28-30	Calabogie Cup Race Weekend	Calabogie	XM		XM
Sep 19-20	Indian Summer Trophy Races	CTMP	XM	G	XM
Sep 25-27	Fall Classic	le Circuit	G	G	
Oct 3-4	Celebration of Motorsport	CTMP	G	G	G

X – denotes a point race for the championship

XM – denotes a mixed run group for VH and FC at this event

G – denotes a non-points run group at the event



Calabogie Summer Invitational July 5, 2020

Ted Michalos: "It was certainly a beautiful day when I rolled into the Calabogie Motorsports Park at 6:00 am on Sunday July 5. Shortly thereafter Doug Durrell arrived and that meant that all 7 VARAC members were present and accounted for. The track distributed Drivers' Meeting notes in advance, but still decided to hold an actual meeting – a bit unusual with us all standing a good 6 feet apart and most wearing masks. The brave new world in which we currently reside..."

VARAC was first on track at 9 am and all 7 cars made it to the grid for the combined 30 minutes Practice – Qualifying session. Grid positions for Race 1 used the best qualifying time, while gridding for Race 2 used the second best qualifying time. (It didn't actually matter with such a small field but it was something different they were trying out).



Race 1 ran for 20 minutes – the excitement was at the front with Ed Luce's

Lotus 51 and Russ Bond's RX3 battling it out. I understand Ed took Russ in the final corner, but had to lift to avoid an incident, spun and that was all she wrote...

In Race 2 (another 20 minutes) the fun battle was between myself in my 356 and Phil Cooper in his MGB. Phil kept close to me during Race 1, but couldn't close the deal. In Race 2 I developed a misfire (cracked rotor) and no matter how hard I tried I couldn't get around the B. I hope someone got a picture of us side by side from corner 9 thru to corner 12. Excellent driving Phil.

Chris Rupnik with his Fiat 124, Claude Gagne in his Lotus Elan, and Doug Durrell in his Bobsy FV all came off smiling. In fact all 7 cars ran all three sessions. A bit too much heat, a bit too little socializing (due to Covid), but not a bad start for most of the drivers' 2020 season.

What it's like to drive in the year of the COVID-Chris Rupnik

"I had committed to attending Calabogie as soon as it was announced - as I wanted to not only get back on the track but also support the clubs and tracks that I know have been financially affected by all the cancelled events.

Everything possible has been done to avoid any physical contact, which means that the forms and waivers are filled in advance. Now this might sound like a lot of trouble, but it sure makes for a smooth arrival when you get to the track. Just say your name at the gate - they confirm you are on the list and in you drive. There was lots of room to set up in our VH little area and so just parked. As it was a 1-day event, I didn't even setup the canopy!



Russ Bond and crew member Christie Marks

Tech was simple - it was a thorough visual inspection as in other years, and then away you go. My thanks to Sean McConomy who did a great job even though the main CASC trailer was at Mosport. Being socially distant meant that we were all in our little "contact bubbles" but it was still great to see everyone!

Race day started off with a quick drivers meeting to go over anything not already covered in all the information already emailed out. For that ever-important question - yes,

washrooms were open to general public - just two at a time. Marshalls had their own dedicated washrooms so there was never any problem.

And the racing was very laid back. We had seven participants of the original group that had committed to the event. I was delighted to see that we were going to race the full track, as I know that has a significant volunteer Marshall requirement. I greatly appreciate the work that they did out in the sun to allow us to have our fun!

The first session at 9am was a combined Practice Qualifying, with a twist. The fastest qualifying time would set the time for Race 1 - whereas the second fastest time would set the qualifying position for Race 2 - not the finishing position of race 1! It did make a difference for me!

I managed to qualify 5th of 7 overall - and first in class. Or maybe last in class - as I was the only one in my class. In fact, of the 7 participants, we were each in our own class. Ha!

The results were posted on race monitor, so it was easy to look that up after the session. Also fun - it was the first F1 race of the year so between Qualifying and Race 1 I get up to date on what was happening in Austria. Lots of DNFs - contrary to what was happening on our grid where everyone finished!

Race 1 was before lunch - so a short recovery after qualifying. Fortunately weather wise it was overcast and so the sun wasn't much of an issue. I was a little tardy to the false grid so I started in 7th, but figured I would be a good challenge to start the season. I was able to get past Claude Gagne in his lovely green Lotus - but Doug in the FV had fixed his shifter and was posing more of a challenge, he got by me on the last lap and held on to win.

The afternoon race unfolded with the positions maintained - and best of all was that everyone finished! We finished packing - took a distanced group picture - and each drove off in our separate directions. An extra bonus was seeing Bob Eagleson on the 417 heading back from Mosport and waving. How nice to see you Bob!

So in short, while it is different - it certainly is a very relaxed atmosphere. I think during these times everyone knows that this is just for fun - and for a while we are all in our hobby bubble - where the outside world issues can take a "back seat". Chris Rupnik.





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1967 Mini Cooper S with Longman engine (30)

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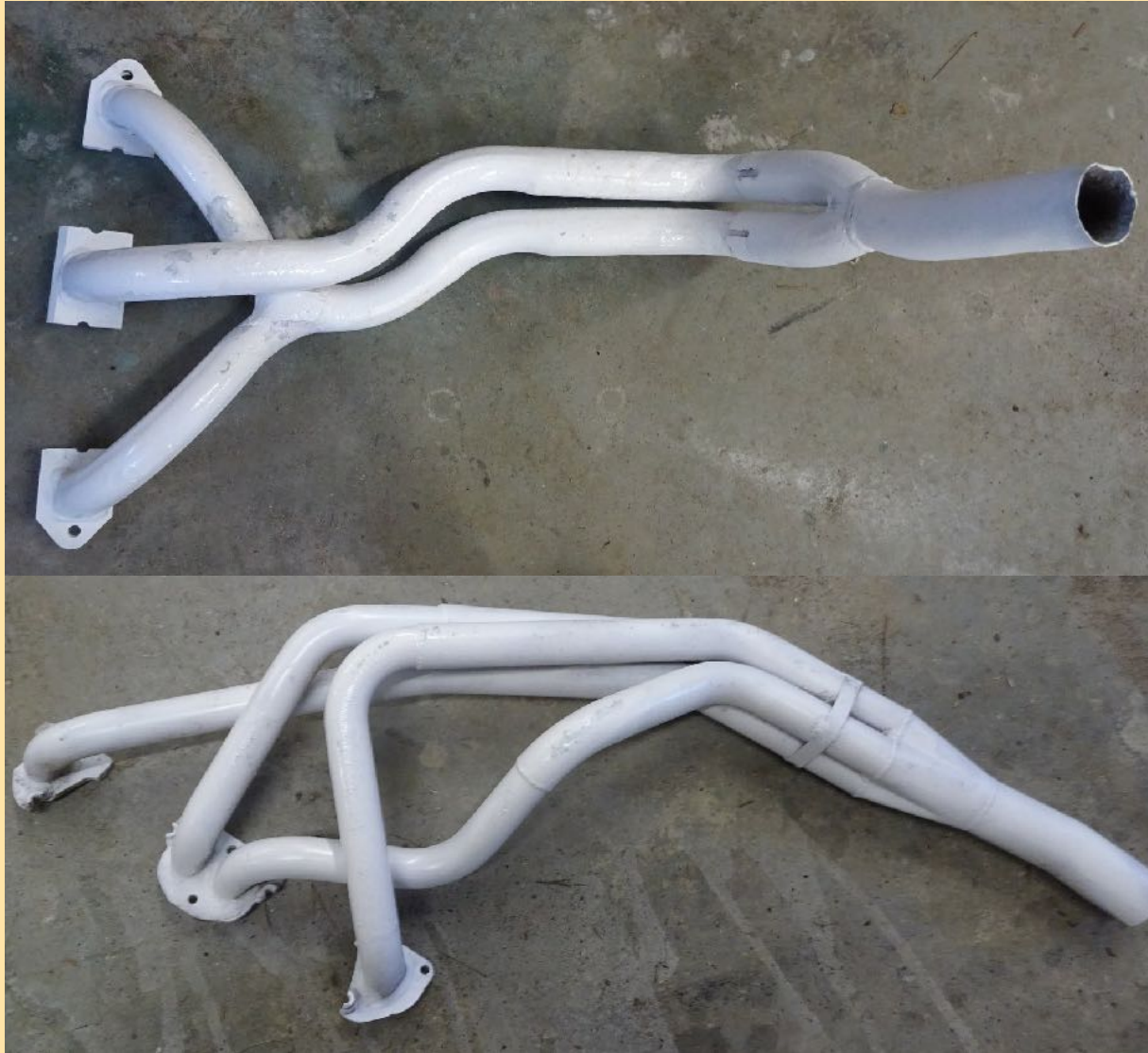
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