



PIT SIGNALS



LATE BRAKING NEWS FOR THE VARAC VINTAGE RACER - September 2016 - JEREMY SALE



INSIDE: VARAC Film Festival! Lights, camera, action! We have the stars and talking cars! Recent film celebrity Chris Rupnik is featured while Ed Luce's Lotus (yes, really!) tells us why "The Cars Really Are The Stars!"

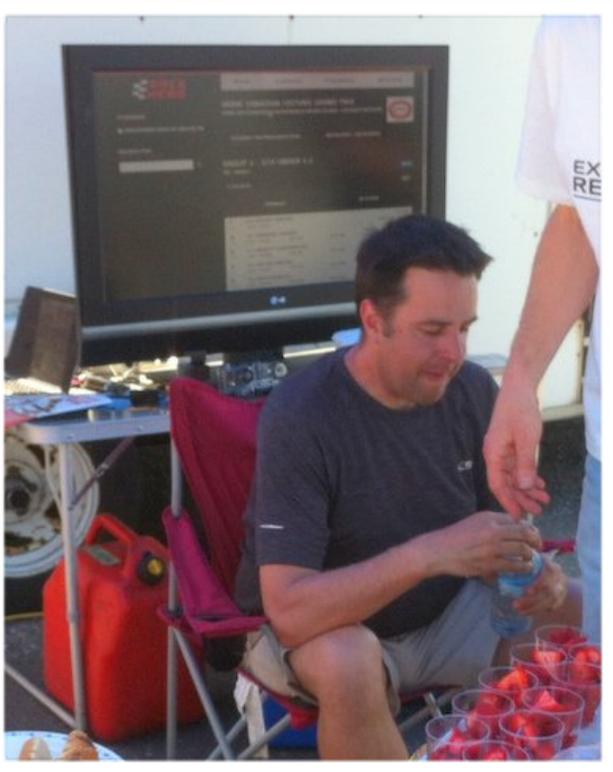
Plus Waterford, the Pittsburgh Vintage Grand Prix, Calabogie, Jack "Crash" Boxstrom and more!



★★ DAN GURNEY★★
VARAC PIT SIGNALS CANDIDATE
FOR PRESIDENT

PARTICIPANT FIRST ANNUAL
V.A.R.A.C.
SHANNONVILLE
MOTORSPORT PARK
VINTAGE FESTIVAL 1979

Chris Rupnik, on how to watch Le Mans AND race at the CHGP!



Chris takes a break from Le Mans for a snack....

“This year the CHGP fell the same weekend as the 24 Heures du Mans, a race that I desperately wanted to watch. Thinking through what I needed, I proceeded to pack up the the kids TV. "But Dad - how are we going to play XBOX this weekend? Dunno kids - Bye bye" and loaded it in the trailer. Thanks to some mobile Wifi and my laptop- we were able to stream the entire race - and as a bonus watch the F1 race too! We were also able to keep track of all the local racing by following the racehero.io app - or by actually standing up and looking away from the TV in our new spot near the restaurant, where we had a great view of the approach to Corner 2.”

“Jason, David, Dan, Robert and I were selected to participate in a French TV5 TV show about racing that will have a segment on Vintage Racing. We hammed it up for the cameras and it was very ego boosting to watch the film crews literally DASH to you as you came in after a race for an interview. We had lots of fun with that and put in a good show for the cameras.”



At right: Chris explains to the film crew what it was like out there...

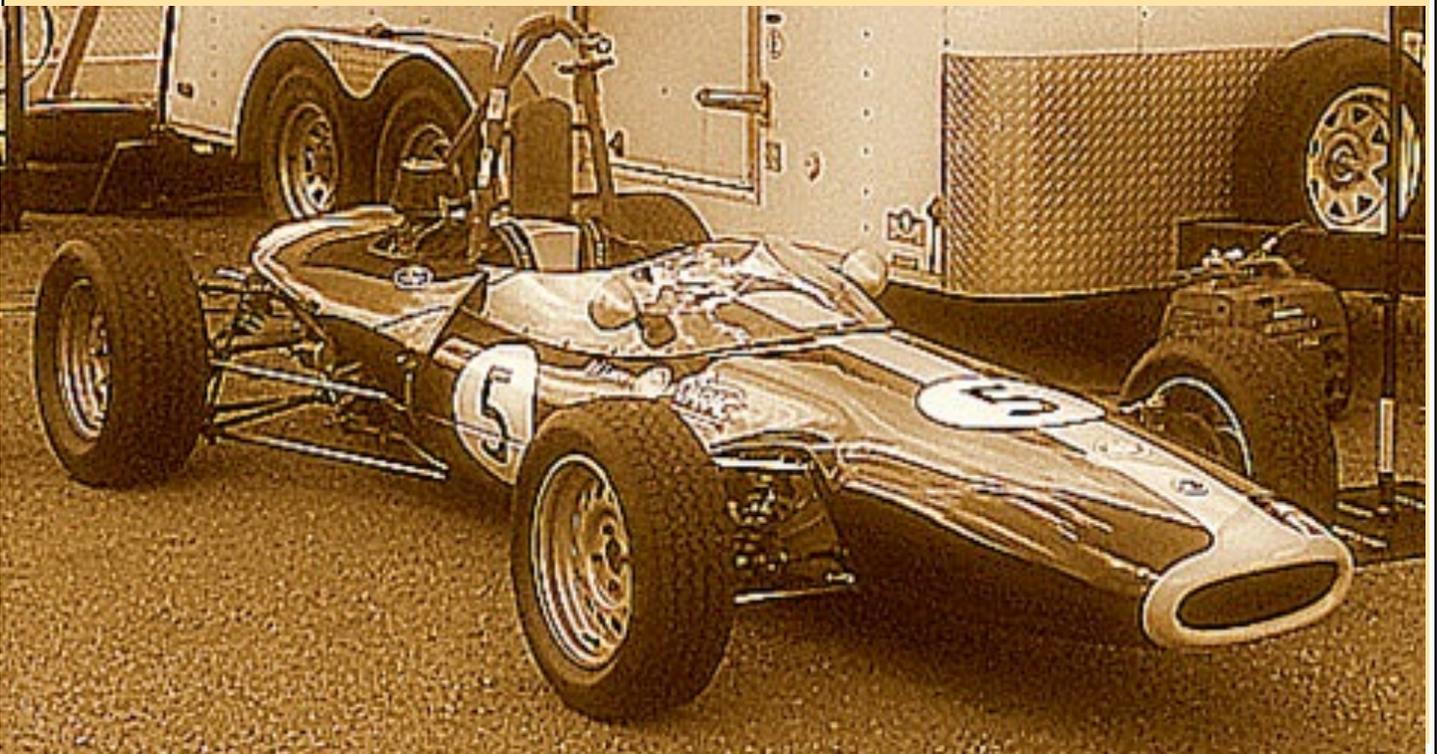
“My experience as a TV star, “ by Ed Luce’s 1968 Lotus 51A Formula Ford

You know how they always say “the car is the star” in vintage racing, right? Well, this summer I had a chance to be a star off the race track for a change!

No sooner had we returned to Kingston from the double race weekends in Pittsburgh, than Ed Luce (my driver) was contacted by Ted Michalos, who had been in touch with a set decorator who needed to source a ‘vintage F1 race car’ for a commercial being filmed in a week’s time. As if one of those high-maintenance divas could have pulled this off. You know that type, all big noise and fast moves – real ‘Broadway musical’ - while this was going to require some restraint and subtlety for the small screen.

Unfortunately for the set decorator, the weekend scheduled for filming was also the BARC race weekend at Mosport and most of the more local cars were thus unavailable or uninterested. As we weren’t going to be competing that weekend, Ted wondered if we might be interested in appearing in a TV commercial!

After a lot of next-to-last-minute calls, it was decided that we would go to Toronto for a two-day ‘shoot’, where I was to be driven by a professional driver in a Nissan commercial. (You know how the fine print under those TV commercial scenes always says ‘professional driver on closed course’? Well, this was one of those scenarios.) I was to lead a parade of unusual vehicles up a suburban street, where a new Nissan would avoid backing into us thanks to its ‘driver assistance’ aids...



Of course, I'm no F1 race car but, as I said, a high-strung performer like that would not have suited this task at all. Fortunately, at a glance I look a lot like pretty much every other competition car that Lotus made in the mid 60's, and I can idle along as low as 20 mph.

I spent a couple of days in make-up, first having my usual suite of CASC-OR, VARAC, etc. decals removed and my badges covered. (When making a commercial they don't like having any other company's logo's, trademarks, names, etc. in shot. I suppose it's a combination of not having license to use those insignia and not wanting to give anyone else free advertising.) Then I had a 'flame job' applied to accentuate my nose – already one of my best features.



Ed's concerns about the noise levels of my un-muffled exhaust were rendered moot by the appearance on-set of an immense Peterbilt 389, a '34 Chevy rat rod with straight pipes, and an honest to goodness M60-A3 'Patton' main battle tank. 12 cylinders of barely muffled, air-cooled, twin turbo Detroit diesel make quite a racket on a city street. But a little three-wheeled Italian 'Piaggio Ape' delivery scooter probably made the most noise/bhp of anybody there. How can a single-cylinder air-cooled engine make so much noise? By revving flat-out to keep up with the blistering 29 mph (top speed!) pace dictated by the M60, that's how.

The low speed of the filmed parade was a problem, as expected. By the end of a few takes, my fluid temperatures were soaring due to a lack of air through my heat exchangers, and my clutch was aching from being slipped pretty much constantly to keep speeds down so that the tank could keep up. Thanks goodness for my relatively high ground clearance, as there was construction on the route around the block and we had to maneuver over some of those 1-1/2" steel plates they use to cover open tank traps in the street. (The tank just backed down the set after each take anyway. Those babies don't corner well!)

The film crew did camera shots from the front, camera shots from the rear, camera shots from on top of the tank, camera shots from down low on a golf cart driving up the sidewalk beside us, and camera shots from the perspective of the stunt kitten playing in the street. We must have stampeded up the street over a dozen times each day before the director was happy.

In between takes, every little kid in the neighborhood wanted to sit in the driver's seat and have their picture taken. Lots of happy locals may have helped to smooth things over and make up for the noise and dust. And Ed got to talk to quite a few people about VARAC, vintage racing, how wonderful Formula Fords are, etc.



“Aaaaand – ACTION!”

As part of the crew for this experience my driver Ed got to learn a bit, helping with what my regular crew Dorothy does routinely - helping the driver into the car, steering wheel on, belts on, connect battery (wait for the director to say “camera rolling” to start my engine), switch over to internal battery. Then grab the starting battery and run into the bushes or down a driveway to get the heck out of shot while we stampeded up the street on cue.

After two days of shooting, it was back into my trailer (every film star has a trailer, don't ya know). While this was all fun, I can't wait until the next race weekend for a chance to blow the carbon out of my cylinders and to stretch my legs!

Pittsburgh Double-Header

By Ed Luce



Each year I try to get to at least one race event outside the 'comfort zone' of our regional races. This year's odyssey was to Pittsburgh, PA for the double-header of a three-day event at Pitt Race followed the next weekend by the renowned vintage race event in Pittsburgh's downtown Schenley Park.

The Pittsburgh International Race Complex, formerly known as Beaverun, is located northwest of the city in beautiful Beaver County (in a location older than New Beaver, smaller than Big Beaver,

and just upstream of Beaver Falls). The facility has recently been expanded, with a new south track connected to the original north track, giving a 2.8 mile course with 19 corners.

19 is a lot of corners. I spent a lot of time studying the track layout and watching in-car video on YouTube to try to memorize which corner lead to what and where. I suppose that helped, but there's no substitute for getting into the car and driving to sort out what the camber is like, which corners are blind apexes when sitting in a car as low as the Lotus, etc. The track has a long technical back stretch with 7 of the 19 corners making up a string of esses, all taken in second gear. Hard to find a rhythm through there, though after a few sessions a couple of them started to come together for me. After the esses, a sharp, uphill, first-gear right-hander leads into a series of bends that can be taken with the right foot firmly on the floor. Woo Hoo! About 0.65 miles later, the second of the track's tight hairpins leads onto the front straight. Turn One is a bugger - braking is done after the crest of a small rise, and the turn's apex is hidden. I don't think I managed to carry the right amount of speed around that first corner in a single lap all weekend. But I did manage to carry too much once in practice on Friday, and had a small, controlled 'off' into the grass runoff rather than spin the Lotus. More practice required!

A small group of VARAC members were in attendance. Dave Good and David Holmes were there with their MGA's, and there may have been others present that I did not meet.

I saw the ex-Stefan Weisen Elva there as well, still with a VARAC sticker on the rear decklid.

Turns out that Stefan stickered the car, then had it clear-coated over top! The current owner has had to put tape over Stefan's name, 'cause it can't be removed! Saw the car again at PVGP (above).



A second Lotus type 51 (a later model 51C) was also there and we had a good time inspiring one another to turn better lap times. Still at the back of the pack, but having fun nonetheless.

On race day, the organizers honoured our small group of foreigners by playing 'Oh Canada' before 'The Star-Spangled Banner'. (No idea how the lone Englishman present felt about all of this.)

Aside from the large number of corners to figure out, the heat and humidity were major issues all weekend. We were told that it wasn't even particularly hot, but it was as much as we could cope with. Glad to have a nice air-conditioned hotel to collapse in at the end of each day. I don't know how the campers do it!

One odd feature of the race weekend was the field of 'modern historics' - everything from a 2014 Chevrolet SS to a 2007 Porsche 904 re-imagining to a '79 Mustang. Muy extraño.

The less said about my performance in the feature race the better, as I qualified well but fell well off the pace as I lost sight of the faster cars that I was chasing. All good fun though!On to Schenley Park!

PVGP at Schenley Park!

After four days of playing tourist in Pittsburgh (and doing quite a few exploratory laps of the downtown circuit in my Jeep Grand Cherokee tow vehicle), it was time to go camping in bucolic Schenley Park. Surely the nicest paddock anywhere, as it is under spreading oak trees, well shaded and breezy. The Davids, Good and Holmes, were there again and we were joined by John Greenwood. I had the pleasure of giving John and Joan a tour of the circuit in the Jeep, during which John shared his tips for driving there. There are surely few circuits in the world where the crown of the road, and more so the drainage ditches, are as important in finding your way around at speed.

The exploratory laps were about as much use as YouTube videos, as the sight lines from way up there in the Jeep were nothing like the sight lines from the elevation of the Lotus. Open corners became quite blind! Low stone walls became tall, up-close, and personal, see below!



Low stone walls became tall!

"Matthew Little Photography"

I was fairly happy with qualifying on Saturday, as I fell mid-pack amongst some more experienced racers. As speeds picked up, I did find a spot where the Lotus experienced a ground strike if I didn't take it easy. Lap times may have suffered a bit from soft pedaling it, but better than suffering a bent crank as a result of hitting the asphalt with the flywheel! The type 51 doesn't turn in well, especially at low speeds, so the 'serpentine' section of the course leading onto the front straight was a bit frustrating. However, the experience of nailing the throttle coming out of the chicane and drifting flat out through the next series of city corners, past STOP signs and across into the oncoming traffic lanes (and parking lanes!) was an absolute blast. Woo Hoo again! Put this event on your 'bucket list'.



"Matthew Little Photography"

Formula Fords were allowed to run this year as a 'demonstration' group at the Schenley Park event. We were under strict orders not to hit anything, but to give the assembled masses a good show. Something like 300,000 people were said have attended this event, though only a fraction are apparently interested in the racing, judging by what I saw on the hills overlooking the course. There are at least four car shows ongoing at the same time as the races, with many picnickers enjoying the park. Still, there were more folks wandering through the paddock than we are used to. The Formula Ford race was the weekend's feature event, right after lunch on Sunday. We choreographed (as much as you can choreograph a bunch of determined racers) a bit of passing and re-passing for the first four laps to give the crowd a show, then it was every man and woman for him/herself. The fastest car (Lotus 69F) set a new track record, apparently, so the Formula Fords are evidently happy on the circuit. No yellow flags for our session, so I guess the organizers were happy too.

It was an 11 hour trip, in high heat, to get home. But since there is a Tim Hortons in every other rest area along Interstate 90, we didn't lack for 'Iced Cap's' to keep the eyelids propped open and the core temperature down. *Ed Luce.*

More from the Pittsburgh Vintage Grand Prix....



“Pittsburg as always was a terrific event. The course is so challenging with its uneven asphalt, winding stone walls and telephone poles, just finishing is an accomplishment! Number 137 (above) ran real well and I finished not too far off the heels of the fast cars.” *David Holmes.*

Dave Good (right).
Frank Mount (below)



"Matthew Little Photography"



MG's at Waterford!

Back in 1996 the MG Vintage Racers started their "Focus Event" (FE) tradition of designating one special vintage racing venue each year - at different tracks - where all MG racers would be encouraged to come. MGVR would work with the sanctioning race body to get "all MG races" included in it, and MGVR began the tradition of including their own socials and awards at these events. Their first "Focus Event" was at Waterford Hills, Michigan in 1996, and 20 years later, over 35 MG racers came back to celebrate the 20th anniversary FE at the very same track!

Gary Allen won The Doff of the Cap Award-(right) given "to the MGB Racers who are dedicated to preserving the period race heritage of the iconic MGB, honouring John Targett." Gary gave due credit to John Dodd, who prepared the car.



The Gods didn't want me to make the trip to Waterford Hills!

By Joe Lightfoot



To get to Michigan, the logical thing for me to do would be to head west from Picton and stop in Consecon for supper with Cheryl. We have a tradition of wings and beer on Wednesday night at the local pub. It's called Cascades as it was an old mill on the creek (river in spring). But the problem was, the motorhome was completely out of propane and so instead of heading west I had to go east to Napanee where they have the Flying J service centre. It started raining a bit as I neared the 401 and the skies looked a bit dark. Upon arrival at the Flying J I am informed that they can't pump propane with the threat of lightning present. Are you friggin' kidding me? I've driven at least an hour out of my way and can't buy propane. On top of that the stuff in my fridge is not going to stay cold for long in this heat. It was suggested that I could stop and eat and wait out the storm. Well, I wasn't hungry and this storm could settle in for hours so I opted for hitting the road and hope that I could find another facility, somewhere.

As I approached Trenton I saw a sign that read "Left lane closed 10km ahead, expect delays". How bad could it be, there isn't that much traffic. Well, just a couple kms later, as I got to the "EnRoute" at Trenton the traffic came to a screeching halt. I just had enough time to whip into the service centre....

Now what? I'm not tired enough to take a nap, I'm not hungry, I guess I could go for a walk. Guess I'll have pee and think about this. That's when I discovered that the water pump isn't working and the coach batteries seem flat. Is God trying to tell me something? Maybe I wasn't meant to go racing. Fortunately I discovered a loose battery connection.

And guess what else, I'm not completely out of propane. Yeah, the fridge works! Well just as I was tying things up, I look out and realize that the very sparse traffic on the 401 is out there flying by! Maybe they've shut down the construction and opened up the second lane. So I jump in the motorhome and tear out of there just in case they change their mind. So I'm going down the on ramp behind this bloody transport from Quebec that seems to think that getting up to speed is a ridiculous idea. So as soon as possible I floor the old motorhome and whip out into the passing lane (not a damn car in sight) and go by. As I look up, just a km up the road there is all the traffic at a stand still. Oh for God sake are you kidding me. I just left a nice spot to wait it out now I'm on the 401 with no where to go. I'm in no mood for this shit so I pull off to side of the highway and shut er' down.

I was walking back to the service centre when I got the idea of going down into the ditch and over the fence into the woods because I'm sure there is a trail in there. And sure enough there was, I could see it just as the fence tore a hole in my brand new shorts....
(continued on next page)



Well, at least John Greenwood enjoyed Waterford!

(Meanwhile Joe continues his journey....)

“...I walked the trail for a while and then doubled back when I heard the traffic on the 401 at speed again. By the time I got back to the motorhome it was basically down to a crawl again but I decided I had no choice but to join the party. Well for about 15 minutes I drove at about 4 to 10km an hour steady so as to not be constantly coming to a stop. Course you know that if you leave a gap some asshole will want to fill it. Now I could see that a pair of transports way up ahead were side by side holding everyone up even though there was nothing in front of them. I had had enough so I pulled off again. I tried to lay down but after two minutes I got up and thought about playing on the computer. As I looked through the windshield, once again, all the traffic had disappeared, vanished, how the hell can it do that? Back on the road and a couple minutes later I'm back behind a pair of transports running side by side determined that they have the right to control what the rest of us do. The problem ended just before Brighton. It had been four hours since I left Picton and I was now an hour from home. I very seriously thought about turning off at Brighton and heading home.

For the next four hours things went relatively well. As I approached London I saw a sign for another Flying J (that wasn't in my GPS) so I got off and pulled up to the propane filling station. Picked up the phone.....and was informed that the propane pump man had just gone home, it was midnight, #&%@!

About an hour from the border I was getting really tired so when I reached the border I went into the duty free then went back to the motorhome and slept for an hour. I arrived at the track at 4:30am. I should have been there by 12:30 am. It is now 4pm the next day and I don't go on track till tomorrow. Here's hoping I have nothing else to write about this weekend.

It's now Monday night and I'm back home...

Well, other than the bloody heat and humidity which was sapping all my strength and was killing me, the weekends racing went amazing for me. I was fastest MG for the weekend, got a number of trophies, didn't run into anybody, the car ran well and even loaded back into the trailer under its own power at the end of the weekend. The food and general attitude of the organizing club is second to none. Just an excellent time. But the most beautiful and humbling part of the weekend was that I became the first ever recipient of a new annual commemorative award/trophy. It was a huge trophy (I don't get to keep it but my name gets engraved on it and I get a keeper). The trophy was presented to me by the daughter of the man who originally won the trophy driving a championship "E class" Porsche 356.

Now I was so shocked that I can not remember what the criteria for winning the award was. Suffice it to say that when a driver of an MG gets a trophy that was owned by a guy who won it driving a Porsche then I must have met some very high standard. I was pretty choked up and humbled, and I'm not easily humbled.”



MORE FROM WATERFORD

Above: Gary Allen won a nice award for his MGB.

Below: two reasons for using this photo, the obvious one and...
..... I just like Sunbeam Alpines...

Thanks to Dan Sheehan for the photographs.

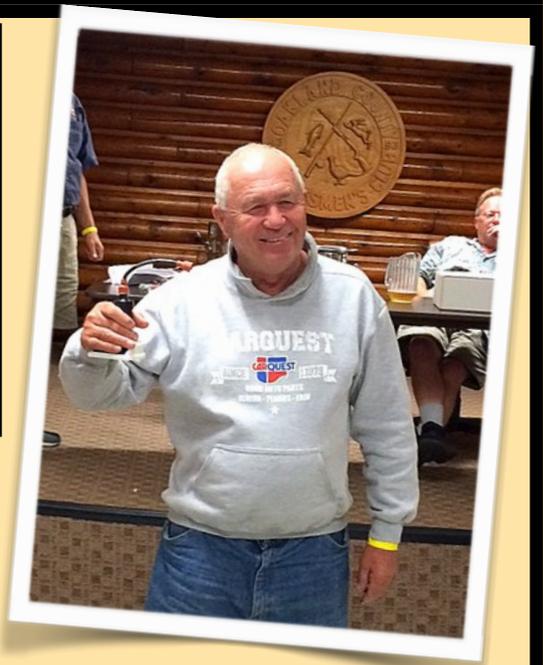


Brits On The Lake Classic Motoring Revival,
Port Perry, August 7th, 2016.



David Holmes got First In the Race Car Class and Best In Show. According to Bob DeShane, "David had the greatest number of votes of all entrants by a country mile, which is why he also won Best in Show with his Tommy Hoan MG TC."

Dave Good informs us that David Holmes (right) "was the proud recipient of the MGVR inaugural Crimson & Clover trophy at the Waterford Hills MG Focus event. Awarded for putting his "Crimson" MGA into the "clover" at corner 1 after a failed but courageous passing manoeuvre!"



At left: Ted Michalos's daughter Katie was sent to the podium for Ted's 1st place trophy in VH2. Richard Poxon (far left) says "Ted drove well on a wet track, I spun at Corner one trying to catch him. Ted had to get his other car ready for the Classic Vintage race following - hence his absence."



“ACCIDENT”: Mishap, usually causing injury or death: Collins Dictionary
By Jack Boxstrom.

CRASH

On Saturday, September 18, 2015, my 1969 Porsche slid off-track and hit the cement wall at Mosport's Corner # 8. My speed at the time of the 45° double impact – right front and rear, was likely 120 kph. 120 kph in a millisecond tends to re-arrange a lot of body parts – both of the driver and the car! The impact knocked me out cold for a moment, as I could not breathe; the shoulder belts having forced all of the air from my lungs. The paramedic in the ambulance that rushed me to the local hospital measured my systolic blood pressure at 220, instead of the normal 120. “Hope your heart is healthy, my friend”, he intoned.

POST CRASH

Lady Luck was definitely my co-pilot for this wild ride. After multiple hip, lower spine and rib cage X-rays, I was discharged from the hospital with the diagnosis of comprehensive tissue contusions and bone bruising. Now, seven weeks after my own crash, body parts having returned to their normal colors, I began to think about my personal racing accident statistics: I began racing at Mosport in 1961. (Now thanks to sponsorship funding called “Canadian



Tire Motorsport Park”) in a 1959 Morris Minor 1000, above. 1961 was actually Mosport’s first full season of operation. Since then, I have competed here for some 54 years, logging an average of seven 60-lap events per year. That makes 22,680 laps or about 66,000 miles of Mosport driving over 54 years in a variety of machines. This includes open wheel single seaters, production-based GT cars, sports racing or Can-AM and more recently Vintage and Historic automobiles.

In that time period, I have had only three serious crashes – by serious, I mean car write-offs or at least with comprehensive body damage. The first occurred in 1965 when my home-made Can-Am car’s rear suspension broke at the top of Mosport’s downhill corner # 4 at well over 100 mph. After hitting the Armco guardrail, it launched itself so high in the sky that I remember the flag marshals far below looking like white ants rushing to and fro! A good helmet and six-point racing harness saved my ass – the only injuries being severe body bruising. The engine and transmission was saved but the rest of the car was scrapped.

Crash # 2 took place 23 years later in the 1988 Mosport round of the infamous “CORVETTE CHALLENGE” Series. GM built approximately 50 street legal but modified Corvettes for this single marque 10 race championship promising \$ 1,000,000 in prize money and held at nearly all of North America’s most well-known racing circuits. Sanctioned by the SCCA and contested by a host of professional pilots, many of them “young lions” looking to prove their racing credentials plus a few amateurs like yours truly, the Corvette Challenge became notorious for the wheel-banging and sometimes destructive racing. (Big prize money, big egos and lots at stake!)

In the race, on lap # 2 on Mosport's front straight, a race car lost it, causing mayhem at the beginning of the field. I was in the middle of the pack, but saw a clear lane ahead, so I goosed it. However one gyrating Challenge car, driven by Olympian athlete Bruce Jenner rolled into my path, having forgotten to jam on his brakes – a cardinal sin of racing and my perfect Corvette T-boned Jenner in the driver's door! I can still see his eyes as big as saucers at the moment of impact (Yes, that Bruce Jenner, but now known as Caitlyn Jenner after her recent sex change!) Perhaps as a result of this impact, driver door intrusion bars became mandatory in the Corvette Challenge Series for the 1989 season.

Crash # 3 is of course, the MORE recent Porsche panic described at the beginning of this piece. Three big ones in 54 years ain't bad, especially since only one, the last one described, was actually 100 % driver error. The fact that it was raining hard at that time is not really an excuse since the water was soaking the other thirty cars too – but I was the only one to scrap his car.

Racing drivers in general exist in a perpetual state of self-delusion. We KNOW that we won't get hurt – it's always the other guy on the grid is going to get it – otherwise we would not participate in the first place!



Ted Powell Races at Calabogie!

Dougies Fish Fry draws a crowd at Calabogie....

Tracey Lok, Peter Lambrinos, Doug Kurtin and Sandra Hunter feed the grateful multitudes after a hard days racing.



Below: Happy drivers picking up their silverware.



Photos courtesy of Calabogie Motorsports Park...



Photos courtesy of Calabogie Motorsports Park...



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