

RETROMOTIVE

VOLUME FOUR



BRABHAM BT7A



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PUBLISHER
Nathan Duff

PHOTOGRAPHY
Nathan Duff
Isamu Sawa
Shaun Maluga

WORDS
Nathan Duff
Justin Jacky
Bruce McMahon
Isamu Sawa
Shaun Maluga

ART DIRECTION & DESIGN
Nathan Duff

SPECIAL THANKS
Julie Leake

CONTACT
contact@retromotive.co
PO Box 3403 Victoria Point West QLD, 4165

SOCIAL
www.facebook.com/Retromotivecomau
www.instagram.com/retromotive

SUBSCRIPTIONS
www.retromotive.co

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FRONT END

GREETINGS! You may have noticed a difference in the first few pages of Volume 4. Ads. Yes, a lot of people had commented on the lack of ads in the previous volumes and it has always been my intention to get some support from advertisers to fund the magazine, but honestly, I was too busy doing my 'day' job and putting the magazine together. Add in a normal everyday suburban family life and well, you'd be surprised how fast a how a day goes by! Now the magazine has found its own rhythm and the audience and awareness of Retromotive is growing, you will start to see a little more advertising in the magazine. The content and aesthetics will remain the same.

The magazine has survived its first year and it has come a long way since volume one. As a freelance photographer, I had always worked on the other side of magazines. I'd get a call or an email from an editor to go and shoot a story. I'd hand in the photos – job done. Wasn't too much to think about. Design, word count, paper stocks, distribution and printing were never on my radar. While the Retromotive team is small, I'm extremely proud of what everyone contributes to the magazine and the feedback from subscribers and people who stumble across the magazine has been tremendous and keeps me motivated to raise the quality with every volume that is produced.

Retromotive started as a blog / website in mid 2017. I started playing around with a magazine style layout from the images I had shot for the blog and had only ever really intended to make a one-off magazine as photography promo to send out to prospective clients. I got a little addicted to discovering and learning new skills, and pretty soon I had an 88-page magazine – all I needed to do was get it printed. Unfortunately, there isn't enough space here to tell you about the headaches of printing – suffice to say, it's not all sunshine and unicorns. There were plenty

of times I wanted to give up and thought it was just never going to happen – I'd experienced this before trying to build a business as a freelance automotive photographer. 'If it were easy, then everyone would be doing it.' I have no idea who or where that saying comes from, it's just one of those things that keeps on popping into my head. I think everyone's got something like that that reminds them to get over the next hurdle and move on.

We have started pulling our family's project car down for restoration. So far so good. It's in surprisingly good condition and being a series III Land Rover, it's a pretty basic thing to work on. At present, it's the Christmas school holidays and my eldest son is always there pushing me to do more work on the Landy. We have stripped out most of the interior and will soon start restoring it piece by piece. I certainly don't have all the skill or the know-how for something like this. What I do have is YouTube, a Haynes workshop manual and a son that is a little addicted to discovering and learning new things.

Hopefully you might discover something or someone you didn't know about in the following pages. Sue Maher's re-creation of Antarctica I sent me down the rabbit hole - her father achieved some amazing feats in a humble VW that also played its own part in Australian history. Ron Gaudion played an integral part in what would become a definitive experience in not only his life, but in motorsport history too. Both people I had never heard of, but thoroughly enjoyed discovering.

I welcome any feedback or correspondence in relation to the articles or the magazine. You can get in touch via our social accounts or email me at contact@retromotive.co.

Thanks for supporting independent publishing and being part of the Retromotive family.

Cheers, Nathan.



NATHAN DUFF

Nathan Duff is an Australian freelance automotive photographer. To see more of Nathan's work go to www.nathanduffphotography.com.au or follow him on instagram @retromotive_editor

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Photo: ©Shaun Maluga



SHAUN MALUGA

Shaun Maluga is an Australian born, New York City based Photographer with a penchant for automotive photography. When not shooting cars, he is happy photographing everything from the streets of NYC to portraits, weddings, events and travel. You can follow his work at [instagram.com/shaunmaluga](https://www.instagram.com/shaunmaluga) and [instagram.com/fujifilmxpro2](https://www.instagram.com/fujifilmxpro2)

IT ALL STARTED WHEN...

IF you've been around the world of classic cars, chances are you've come across Courtney Cutchen-Frisk's photography. Courtney has forged a name for herself with honest and sharp imagery. To stand out from the crowd and create meaningful work, you can't just be a mere tourist, you must have a passion for the subject you shoot. For Courtney, that passion comes in many forms but most notably in the form of a car close to her heart (and to mine), the Datsun 240z.

It all started when Courtney took an auto shop class in high school. If it wasn't for this class, her life would probably look vastly different now. It wasn't a burning desire or interest in cars that made her take the class, rather a request from a best friend who didn't want to take it by herself. To begin with, Courtney was happy sitting in the corner drawing but her teacher Mr Woodworth, like all great teachers, was able to encourage her to participate and engage with the class.

At the time, Courtney was driving a 1992 Cadillac Deville handed down to her by her grandmother. One day in class, while trying to remove a stubborn brake drum, she yelled out to another student for help and that help came from her now husband, Dustin. This class and connection undoubtedly fostered a common interest in automotive culture that has continued to be instrumental in their lives and relationship.

At the behest of her family, the next few cars Courtney owned were larger and more modern. Safety was such a significant concern for them that when Courtney finally purchased a classic car, she hid it from her grandma until many years later! In around 2012, Courtney began taking an interest in the modern Nissan 350z. Her husband suggested that she check out the original Z, the Datsun 240z. After a Google image search, Courtney immediately fell hard for the 240z and admits the initial attraction was purely aesthetic. "The one thing that struck me about the Z is the lovely balance of its profile. Its top line is this sweeping, romantic flow that just cannot disappoint you. There's truly not a single bad angle of the car." Courtney found a 240z for sale on Craigslist in Medford Oregon. Dustin, knowing the longing his wife had for the car, sold his beloved second-generation Toyota pickup to help her purchase the Z. "If you knew how much he loved

that truck, you'd understand the guilt that I still carry to this day," Courtney remarks.

What was expected to be an easy drive home, quickly became a much more expensive, multi-day ordeal involving numerous tow trucks. Despite the dramas and expense, Courtney now has the car of her dreams in the original 918 orange paint that she so desired.

"The cab smells like fuel. The doors need to be shut with decent force. You sink in just a bit when you sit in the seat. The stock steering wheel is big, but not cumbersome. The throttle is feather-light and the shifting is direct. When you put your foot in it, the L24 lets out the most beautiful sound. There is not a single thing I don't enjoy about this car. I had a gut feeling the first time I saw one, and that gut feeling ended up being right: this is the car I need to have in my life, forever."

"There's something that's very honest about a Datsun. These cars weren't meant to be the flashiest, most expensive sports cars on the market. You left that title to Porsche, BMW, and Jaguar. Datsuns' represent one of the true purposes of Japanese engineering: be simple yet effective."

While this love and appreciation for classic cars was developing, so too was Courtney's interest and aptitude for photography which began with photographing Dustin's NB Miata as a hobby. "As I learned more about cars, I felt compelled to document them in newer and better ways than I had before."

Today, Courtney's photographic style is perfectly suited to the classic cars she shoots. There is an authenticity to the images where the details and imperfections are celebrated rather than ignored or concealed. What Courtney does best is capture a car at its very finest, as it exists in the real world. Panels with rust don't need to be photoshopped out or stone chips removed. All these little details help tell the story, the history, the personality of the cars and their owners. They are a time capsule of experiences, of what once was.

People often mistakenly focus on the gear used to create the images but it's Courtney's eye, her vision, the emotional connection to her subject and attention to detail that all combine to tell a visual story. Something that can only come from a true classic car enthusiast.



Photo: © Isamu Sawa



ISAMU SAWA

Born in Japan and raised in Australia, Isamu Sawa, or Issey to his friends, is a commercial photographer and a watch collector. He enjoys connecting with other like-minded enthusiasts (read “obsessives”) sharing their passion and watch stories...

You can follow his work at Instagram [@analogwrist](#)



I met Justin Reed, a Porsche enthusiast, at a monthly car meet in Melbourne. (@wilsoncarsandcoffee on Instagram).

After a few pleasantries about what wheels we have driven to the event, the conversation soon turns to watches – specifically, an original vintage Breitling chronograph that belonged to his late father, Brian.

“The watch was always kind of special. It was kept in a drawer and I can remember being fascinated with it when I was younger. I just associate it with a great period in my father’s life and can imagine him driving around with it on in the 356 that he purchased new in 1961 - which we still own today.”

The Swiss watch brand Breitling is commonly known for their association with the aviation industry, and their pilot watches, but it has a connection to automobiles dating back to the early years of the twentieth century. According to the company’s website: ‘In 1905, Breitling founder, Leon Breitling, applied for a Swiss patent for the first chronograph specifically designed to measure the speeds of racing cars.’

Justin’s watch is a 1960s Breitling Top Time 810 Mk I.I. First released in 1964, the ‘Top Time’ was a new series of entry-level sports chronograph timepieces that the company designed to appeal to the new young and active professionals.

The Top Time was manufactured in many dial colour combinations as well as variations in sub-dials (bi-compax and tri-compax, panda and reverse panda). It was produced for around 10 years. Its initial release, the Mk I.I, was built between 1964 – 1967 in a (large for its time) 38mm monocoque case powered by the Venus cal. 178 – a hand-wound mechanical movement that is now considered iconic by many watch collectors.

“I think Dad had it (the Breitling) because it was unique, and it fit in with his personality and interests. It was like the 356 of chronographs of that period.”

Justin says that his father was initially sceptical of Porsche cars but a ‘sliding door moment’ changed everything. A sales manager offered to give him a ride in the 356a demonstration car and from that moment, he was hooked.

To save for his 356, Justin’s father - who worked for Qantas at the time - went abroad to Cocos Island (a refuelling stop between Australia and South Africa) to work as an aircraft loader. He packed his bags in

June 1960 for a year’s isolation to buy the ‘car of his dreams’.

“He ordered it while he was there,” Justin says. “It was roughly the cost of a house on the lower North Shore of Sydney at the time. It’s driven my parents away from their wedding, brought me home as a newborn and turned 100,000 miles the week my younger brother Emerson (named after Emerson Fittipaldi) was born. So, it’s fair to say the car is a family member.”

“My Dad was into racing generally but sports cars in particular. During the Tasman series of 1967/68 my Mum and Dad met racing drivers, Jim Clark and Pedro Rodriguez.”

There is an ongoing debate amongst both watch enthusiasts and Breitling experts whether or not Jim Clark wore, and/or owned a Breitling Top Time 810, based on a blurry black and white photograph (although most people believe it was an Enicar Sherpa Graph). There is no debating, however, that in the 1965 James Bond movie, Thunderball, Sean Connery wore a Breitling Top Time that also functioned as a Geiger counter. The original prop – a Top Time ref 2002 modified for the film - was found in 2013. It was bought for \$30 and subsequently sold at Christie’s Auction for over US\$160,000. “He may have bought it (the Breitling) because of Jim Clark, but I can’t really be sure. I think Jim Clark would have really resonated with him. Dad strikes me as quite similar in many respects - he was confident and extroverted in some situations, but rather introverted in others.”

There’s an intrinsic connection between automobiles and wristwatches that is hard to define. Meet any hard-core car enthusiasts (like Justin), and they are likely to have an affinity with wristwatches. “I love the aesthetics and the variety of them. Plus, a lot of my Porsche and classic car friends also like them. Black dialled chronographs with red hands always remind me of the speedometers in 911s.”

“The passion for cars was definitely gained from my parents, and my Dad liked watches, and I always admired him,” says Justin.

“I like to wear Dad’s watch as often as I can, but I am conscious of its age and significance. I wear it on any significant car-related or life-changing moment. It’s my way of recognising the influence Dad has had on my life and honouring that. I feel like he’s with me.”

I look Justin up on Instagram - his bio reads: ‘Enthusiast. Born and raised in a Porsche-enthusiast family. And I continue the tradition...’



Photo: Nathan Duff



BRUCE McMAHON

Bruce McMahon started out with a '49 Riley Roadster before moving on to 911s, Range Rovers, Fiats, Alfas and utes. He's also spent time as a motoring and motorsport writer, including Land Rover adventures in Jordan, Utah and up the Tanami Track.

IDLE TORQUE

ARTHUR Goddard, humble author of a major chapter of automotive history, is a tallish bloke with a deep-chested laugh. Still an astute old bugger at 96.

This is the ex-Englishman who was chief engineer behind the first Land Rover, the man who turned the vision of Rover's technical director Maurice Wilks into a road-going, paddock-bashing four-wheel drive. In ten months.

Today Arthur credits the speed of the project - Wilks' concept was a vehicle to chase defence contracts plus replace his farm's Jeep - to Solihull factory teamwork, prompt decision-making and an array of Rover car bits to pilfer. "And I could pick people to do the jobs," says the modest Arthur. "I didn't have to be all that good myself because I had a suspension man I could pull over (from the Rover car line), a steering man and so forth." But this Land Rover chassis was all new. "The chassis made it possible. You haven't got a complete body but you want a frame on which to mount everything. That was the engineering problem...what does that frame look like...looks like nothing you've ever seen before."

Credit for that first chassis and aluminium bodywork went to engineers Gordon Bashford and Olaf Poppe for the rare box section, galvanised chassis with upright pieces below the A-pillars.

In 1948, Arthur headed off in a square-jawed Land Rover for its debut at the Amsterdam Motor Show. He was snowed under with orders and worldwide demand continued through to January 2016 when production of the Series One's successor, the Defender, closed down; more than two million of the iconic Series Land Rovers were sold.

"We gave people what they wanted. It's pleased a lot of people and it kept on pleasing people," says Arthur. "We met a need. I must say some of the needs we met we didn't know were there. On the other hand, some of the stuff we thought would be an absolute winner was an absolute woof," he chuckles.

Maurice Wilks and his brother, Rover managing

director, Spencer Wilks were looking for a go-anywhere, do-anything vehicle. "So, it had to meet all the army requirements and it had to be a useful vehicle on the farm where you could go off down the road to do a bit of shopping or you could take a bale of hay across a snow-bound field or whatever. And a much more useful combination than your tractor," says Arthur.

Maurice wanted power take-offs, wanted a drive up the centre because he saw the possibilities for industrial applications, arc welders and more.

"I said 'how many vehicles is this?'" Arthur wondered. As Rover's chief development engineer, he knew something about army vehicles. "But who the hell knew about tractors who was working in the automobile industry in the UK?" Here Arthur was grateful for help from the British Ministry of Agriculture.

"Maurice knew, or appeared to know, what people would buy, I hadn't got that. But I knew how to get it made."

He says it was 'a bloody miracle' that Wilks, who wanted the job complete inside 12 months, got that first Land Rover in ten. He's still proud of the teamwork and admits the biggest mistake was not adding eight inches (20.3cm) to the original wheelbase of 80 inches (2.03m).

The ever-pragmatic Arthur Goddard moved on from Rover in 1955 and took up positions with other automotive concerns, including one in Australia in 1972. He liked the place, liked the lifestyle and bought the small Brisbane engineering company Vehicle Components as a 'hobby' and a stake in the ground.

Then, at 62, Arthur took early retirement from Lucas Girling to spend time with his own little outfit. Vehicle Components is now, with the aid of engineer son Chris and Arthur's grandson Andrew, a leading designer and manufacturer of trailer suspensions and couplings.

Is there anything he misses about England? "The weather. I miss the weather," and Arthur laughs a sneaky laugh.





BRABHAM

BT7A



“WE NEED TO PRESERVE THE HERITAGE. THAT’S
IMPORTANT FOR ME AND FOR ALL THOSE
PEOPLE INTERESTED IN MOTORSPORT.”



FUEL pump on. Hit the starter button...chirr...chirr...
chirr...chirr...and now the engine stut..stut...stutt...
stutters to life with fuel-blown bark. Belches exhaust
flame. Settles down to a deep menace of mechanical
rhythms. Little wonder Australia's Black Jack Brabham
ended up with hearing issues, laid back just ahead of the
likes of this racer's motor through a storied career.

From speedway cars to Formula One, Sir Jack Brabham
was a talented driver and intuitive engineer, claiming
three F1 driver's titles 1959, 1960 and 1966 - plus two
F1 Constructors' championships with partner Ron
Tauranac in 1966 and 1967.

This gleaming race car idling here, this green and gold
open wheeler, is a rare BT7A; the seventh design from
that Brabham-Tauranac collaboration. Built in England,
this particular 2.5 litre formula car raced in the feted
Tasman Series from 1964 and with this car Jack Brabham
won the Australian Grand Prix at Sandown in February,
1964; hence number one adorns the fibreglass bodywork.
Jack and the Repco-Brabham won again at Warwick Farm
in Sydney and Queensland's Lakeside that year before he
returned to England and the car was sold. But it kept
racing here under succeeding owners - in 1967 Denny
Hulme drove it in the New Zealand Grand Prix, running
third until a stub axle failed - before the Brabham made
its way to England where race results are sketchy.

Ten years ago the BT7A's current custodian Peter
Harburg brought it back to Australia. "For a good bag
of gold," says Peter, a businessman and part-time racer
who's long understood the attraction of classics with a
pedigree - and was also mates with the late Sir Jack.

Since then the car has been given a full restoration. It
is today a svelte, sweet-looking machine, a credit to

Adam Harris who worked part-time on rebuilding this Brabham for close to two years.

A mechanic by trade, Adam's sideline passion is refurbishing classic cars, racers in particular, in his home garage on the Sunshine Coast.

This one, he says, gave him a real buzz and a chance to meet Sir Jack who, on seeing the completed restoration, said: "It never looked that good when I had it."

For Adam the biggest challenge was the twin Weber-fed Coventry Climax - "the type of engine added complexity" - plus the likes of re-making custom-made instruments from the 1960s.

According to Peter, Sir Jack's cars can be told from client's cars by the inclusion of a water temperature and water pressure gauge - the champion maintained he could tell much about his engine from the water pressure. "Jack was famous as a great driver and also famous for not putting his hands in his pockets when he didn't have to. And it probably cost another 50c, or \$1, for a gauge with two readouts so customers' cars didn't have that (pressure readout)," Peter says.

Sir Jack's cars also had two pickup points, rather than one, for the rear's trailing arms.

The basis of the BTA7A was there for Adam to work with yet there were a number of missing parts to the mechanical jigsaw when he took over the project.

"The chassis was loaded onto a trailer with a whole lot of odds and ends," he says. "Then we roughly assembled it to see what we had and didn't have, then started on the journey of re-building with restored and custom-made parts. There was an enormous amount of fabrication."

Care was taken to maintain the originality of the car and the end result is a meticulous Repco-Brabham BT7A, looking as it did on the grids of 1964. If a tad more polished in the paintwork.

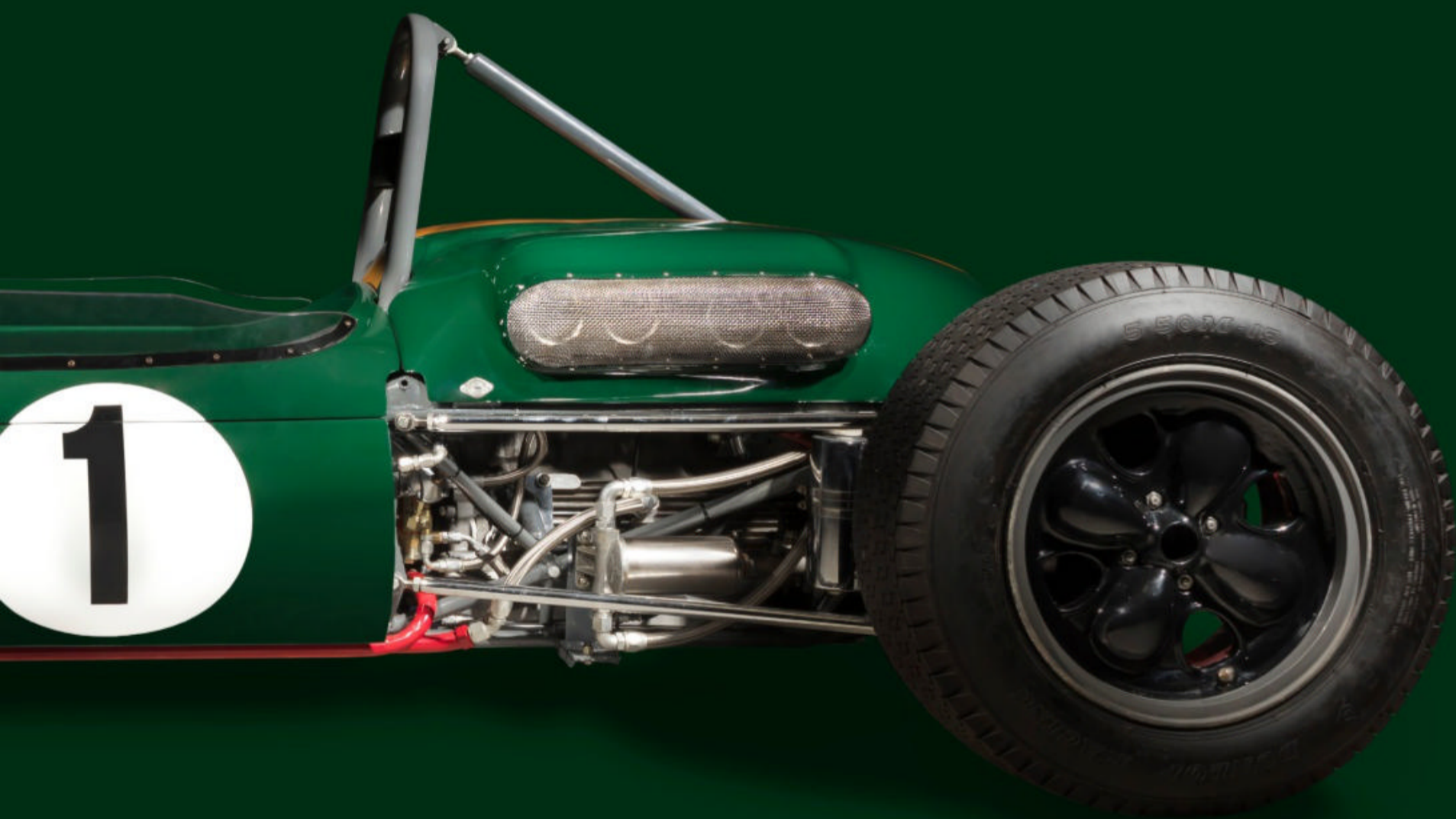


"THE 1950S TO THE MID-1960S - THAT WAS
MOTORSPORT TO JACK. THIS CAR
WAS PART OF HIS HEYDAY."



“EVERYONE WANTED TO BE HIS FRIEND BUT
THE ONLY THING THAT JACK KNEW,
OR WANTED TO TALK ABOUT,
WAS CAR RACING.”









FROM SPEEDWAY CARS TO FORMULA ONE,
SIR JACK BRABHAM WAS A TALENTED
DRIVER AND INTUITIVE ENGINEER.



Sir Jack and Tauranac built two BT7As in their Surrey, England workshops for the Tasman and Intercontinental series. The multi-tubular space frame car, with a 2.3 metre wheelbase, weighed in around 470 kilograms; the four-cylinder Climax reputedly putting out 176kW and mated to a five-speed Hewland gearbox.

Two BT7s - with 1.5 litre Climax V8 aboard - were built for Brabham and Dan Gurney to race in the 1963 and 1964 Formula One championships. Two years later, Jack won his third F1 title in a Repco-Brabham BT19, becoming the only driver to win the world championship in one of his own cars.

Sir Jack retired from F1 in 1970 and the Brabham race team was sold to Bernie Ecclestone in 1972 - this was the foundation for Ecclestone's rise to ultimate control of F1 through until 2017.

Back in Australia Sir Jack resettled on the Gold Coast and struck up a friendship with Brisbane businessman Peter Harburg.

"Everyone wanted to be his friend but the only thing that Jack knew, or wanted to talk about, was car racing," Peter recalls. "There was no-one around from the 1960s who knew anything about racing. I did, because I was involved back then."

The pair often met for coffee or lunch and Sir Jack launched Peter's yachts - called Black Jack.

So Peter, who also owns a Repco-Brabham BT11 run in historics, is very mindful of his friend's talents, his place among motorsport legends and this special car's history.

"We need to preserve the heritage. That's important for me and for all those people interested in motorsport. And this period - the 1950s to the mid-1960s - that was motorsport to Jack. This car was part of his heyday."



THE RARE BT7A IS THE SEVENTH DESIGN FROM
THAT BRABHAM-TAURANAC COLLABORATION.







ANTARTICA 1

A DAUGHTERS TRIBUTE



WORDS **NATHAN DUFF** ★ PHOTOS **NATHAN DUFF & SUE MAHER**

S

ue Maher was raised in a household with an everchanging landscape of automotive influence. Her father, Ray Christie, set Australian records behind the wheel of a humble VW 1200 and was a champion rally driver. Sue doesn't consider herself a car enthusiast but found herself creating a replica of Antarctica 1 - a car that played a role in Australian history as well her own families.

A 1962, ½ Ruby Red VW Beetle was the first ever production car to traverse the icy terrain of Antarctica. Surprisingly, it wasn't a publicity stunt initiated by the manufacturer – it was chosen by the 1963 ANARE (Australian National Arctic Research Expedition) team leader, Ray McMahon.

Other modes of transport were in use at the Antarctic base, but they all had their limitations. Dog sleighs were cumbersome and required a specialist. Tracked vehicles were slow and heavy on fuel and motorbikes couldn't really transport large loads. Ray McMahon

**A 1962, ½ RUBY RED VW BEETLE WAS THE FIRST
EVER PRODUCTION CAR TO TRAVERSE THE
ICY TERRAIN OF ANTARCTICA.**









THE SCIENTISTS LOVED THE LITTLE BEETLE AND
AFFECTIONATELY GAVE IT THE NICK NAME
'RED TERROR'





theorised the air-cooled Beetle would be ideal for the harsh conditions.

Coincidentally, word from the VW's German head office at the time was to push the Artic capabilities of the Beetle. So, when McMahon approached VW Australia about his idea, the timing was perfect for everyone.

A Ruby Red Beetle (so it would stand out against snow) was plucked from the Australian assembly line at random. It wasn't specially built for the task, but it did require doing a standard 'winterising' service to the vehicle. This wasn't anything new and was common practice in Nordic countries, but there was obviously no call for this type of service in Australia.

The modifications applied to the Beetle consisted of wrapping the exhaust manifolds in asbestos insulation to help retain heat after initial start-up and installing winter-spec crankshaft bearings.

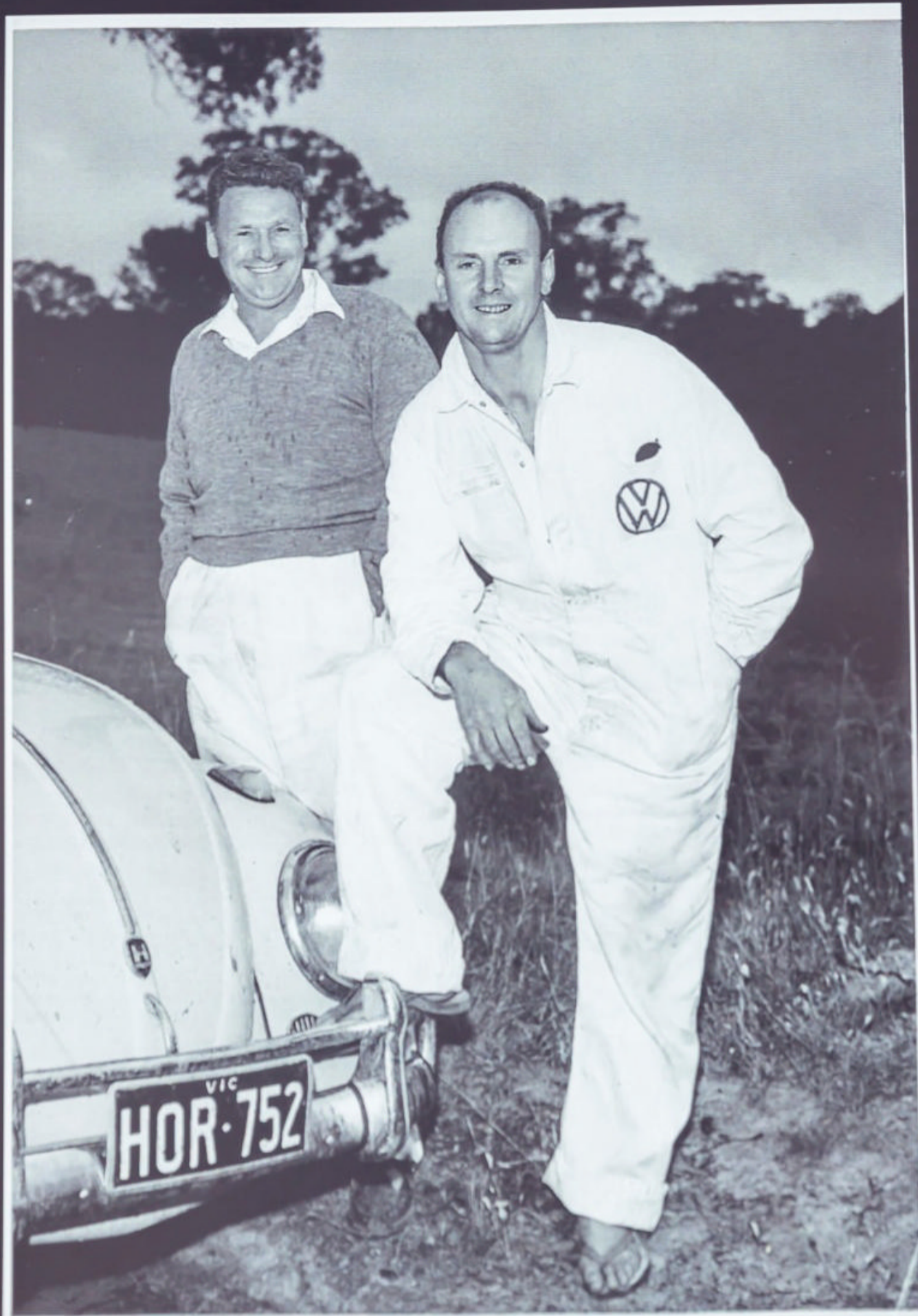
Standard tyres were kept up front with Dunlop 'Wintertread' tyres on the rear. A special winter-grade lithium grease was used on the front wheel bearings and torsion bars too.

Other additions included a rear tow bar, sump guard, storage rack and removable aluminium blanking plate fitted over the air intakes to keep snow when parked up.


The only alterations to the interior were an ammeter and oil pressure gauge.

Antarctica 1 was loaded onto the supply ship, 'Nella Dan', with an array of spares as well as snow chains. It set sail from the port of Melbourne and made its 3800km journey to start work as part of the team at Mawson base, Antarctica. By all accounts, the Beetle performed without any major issues. 10W/30 oil was used initially, but proved to be too thick for the sub-zero conditions. Mechanics on the base used 5-ZZ, which is said to have a similar consistency to kerosene. With the new oil, Antarctica 1 had no issues starting at temperatures as low as -40°C .

Antarctica 1 endured relentless 200km gale force winds, driving snow, icy rutted "roads" and potholes that could literally swallow it whole. The scientists loved the little Beetle and affectionately gave it the nick name 'Red Terror'. VW Australia footed the bill for the Beetle, but the return on investment was unquantifiable. Images of Antarctica 1



Leason Photographs



“DRIVING IT NOW MAKES ME APPRECIATE
THE ABILITY YOU WOULD HAVE TO OF
HAD TO DRIVE THEM AT THE LEVEL
THAT DAD DID BACK IN THE DAY.”



were used in advertisements worldwide to promote the robust and reliable “go anywhere” nature of the Beetle. Antarctica 1 returned to Australia triumphant and unscathed once its service was complete. It would be 3 months later that Ray Christie would slide in behind the wheel to push the limits of the Beetle once again. This time the environment would be just as harsh and the terrain just as demanding.

Ray Christie was born January 15, 1926, in Richmond, Melbourne. He began his career at age 13 as a panel beater. “He had a lot of cars come and go,” remembers Sue. “He ended up being more of a car dealer than a panel beater.”

His passion, however, was cycling and he competed professionally until a knee injury forced him out of the sport.

He dabbled in track racing initially and entered the first Armstrong 500 piloting a Simca Aronde that he had rebuilt from a wreck. His result wasn't encouraging and trackwork proved to be a little too monotonous for Ray. The Armstrong 500 race later moved from Philip Island to a small NSW town called Bathurst.

Ray began working with VW in 1957 after he and his navigator had come to the attention of VW with their success in rallies. They nipped out a sponsorship deal and Ray was soon VW's go-to-guy for endurance driving and testing.

In 1962, VW was keen to promote their new VW 1200 Standard and approached Ray about tackling the around-Australia record with navigator, Joe Dunlop. The current record was nine days, 6 hours set by Evan Green in an Austin Freeway. Ray was confident he could beat it.

The VW announcement stated, “We have just made Australia two days smaller.”

Ray and Joe smashed the record doing the lap in 7 days, 6 hours and 9 minutes, averaging 60 miles an hour and driving 24 hours a day. Most of the roads were still unsealed and the only issue they experienced with the

car were two flat tyres. The only modification was an additional fuel tank fitted to the back seat area.

VW wanted to put Antarctica 1 to work in the 1964 BP rally. Ray and Joe got the call to drive and happily obliged. The plucky little Beetle barely had time to rest and still had the Antarctica stickers and vanity plate attached. In a field of 42 cars over 4 days and 3,500 km of some of the most challenging terrain Victoria had to offer – Ray and Joe did the unthinkable and became the outright winners. The team only had two single nights of sleep with 36-hour stints in between each run. 1964 also marked Volkswagen's highest sales year ever in Australia during the air-cooled era - 22,293 Beetles and 31,419 VWs altogether.

Ray and Antarctica 1 parted ways after the rally when he dropped it off at a Chadstone shopping centre for yet another publicity tour.

Just over 3 months later, VW again put the challenge to Ray to break his own around-Australia record. Ray delivered again, this time in a VW 1500 sedan. 12,950.8 km in 5 days, 22 hours 17 minutes: averaging 91.0 km/h and less than 5 hours sleep.

Ray's daughter, Sue Maher, pulls out a carefully curated album with clippings and photos of her father's achievements. The press ads advertising Ray's around-Australia records, numerous rally wins and candid period photos that captured his spirit and character.

“He was always on the road – he just loved travelling. We spent a lot of time in the car during school holidays.” Sue recounts the time they made it all the way to Kalgoorlie, WA only for Ray to change his mind and turn around and take the family to Uluru instead.

“Of course, we did all of that in two weeks because I had to be back at school,” laughs Sue.

“Well, I was never late for school, that's for sure. There was a revolving door of cars – I'd never know what car Dad would be in. One afternoon I jumped in the wrong car at school pick up,” she laughs. “I couldn't get out of that car quick enough!”





After the 1964 BP rally, Antarctica 1 did somewhat of a celebrity press tour around the country and ended up in Seymour, Victoria. The last known sighting of it was at the BP petrol station on Emily St, North Seymour. The site was redeveloped in 1970 and it's thought that a number of VWs were buried on the site. It could well be the final resting place of Antarctica 1.

"I don't know why, it just popped into my head to try and track the old car down. We have so many old pictures of Dad and the car - I just wanted to see where it was today and who owned it." That was back in early 2017. "I remember the original car being on our back yard, there is a photo of me hanging out the window of it. I must have been about 5 years old at the time."

Sue tried to track down the original car, as did Bill Moore and Steve Muller in 2002. All to no avail. It's said that Ray McMahon, after hearing of its likely demise of Antarctica 1, regretted not trying to secure the car for prosperity.

Not long after coming up empty handed with her search, Sue came across a Red '62 Beetle at a car show and as luck would have it – it was for sale. "I thought – I just have to

have this car."

The Beetle was a little rough and needed some work. The paintwork was re-done and as well as a tidy up in the interior. At the time, Sue never set out to make a replica but after starting the process and some encouragement from her daughter, Sue re-created the version her father drove in the BP rally.

"Once I put the stickers on - I was amazed at how the interest in the car and its history took off. Something just clicked with this one."

"Dad was really puzzled when I first bought it - he couldn't understand why I wanted one. But once I had it done, he thought it was amazing."

"Driving it now makes me appreciate the ability you would have to of had to drive them at the level that Dad did back in the day, it's amazing to think what he achieved in a car like this."

Sadly, Ray passed away about month after Sue had finished the car. "I'd love for him to see how popular it has become. I feel so proud of his achievements – I wish it was him here talking to you about it."







MERCURY

CYCLONE SPOILER II



WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY **NATHAN DUFF**

A

ny muscle car fan worth his mullet knows the story of the ‘Winged Warriors’ from the 1969 and 1970 season of NASCAR racing. The Super Bird was the poster child of the era, but that doesn’t mean that the other cars that competed don’t have their own unique story to tell.

The Mercury Cyclone Spoiler II didn’t win a championship but was no slouch when it came to winning races either. The Cyclone Spoiler II won eight Grand National races during the 1969 and 1970 NASCAR seasons, equalling the total number of wins by the 1970 Plymouth Super Bird.

“They’re a unique car but they only appeal to a small amount of people,” concedes Greg. “They aren’t as well known as the Daytona or the Super Bird, but they were still an amazing car.”

Greg fell in love with 60’s American-styling as a young fella sitting on the fence outside his parents’ house in Melbourne’s northern suburbs. Eyes

THE MERCURY CYCLONE SPOILER II DIDN’T WIN A
CHAMPIONSHIP BUT WAS NO SLOUCH WHEN IT
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CYCLONE SPOILER



THE MERCURY CYCLONE SPOILER II IS A RARE BEAST
INDEED AND DESERVES RECOGNITION ALONGSIDE
ITS MORE FAMOUS WINGED BREATHARIAN.







transfixed on his neighbours Cape Cod styled house complete with a white picket fence and a crushed white gravel driveway. But it what was parked beside the house that got him truly hooked - a brand new '66 Mustang. "There was something wrong with me from when I was a bout 5 years old," he laughs. "I used to just sit on our fence and look at the Mustang for hours."

Greg has his own collection of American muscle to lose hours with now. Mustang, Cougar, Torino, Galaxie and some rare and obscure examples like an R Code Cobrajet and GT Comet. "There probably isn't much left that I'd go out of my way for now."

"I still love Aussie muscle cars though. I started off with GT Falcons when I was getting into cars with my mates."

Greg had four GTs before his first trip to the States. "Once I went to America and seen what was available, I got rid of them, unfortunately." He winces a little. "I should have held on to them."

Travelling to America for the first time in 1986, Greg was 23 years old and 'had no idea what I was doing.' But still, he managed to buy his first American car on that trip. A

1961 Thunderbird, which he still has today.

"I turned up at this house and they had two cars in the garage - the Thunderbird and a Lincoln. I didn't meet Patty, the owner, that first time as she was in hospital. So, I dealt with her husband, Marlin, a big Dutch truckie. He had bought the car brand new as a birthday present for Patty many years ago. I gave him a deposit and went back a week later to pick up the car. I don't know how it happened, but I was so bloody excited to pick up the car I had an extra \$500 with me but I just handed over all my cash and said, 'don't worry it's all there'. I was leaving the next day and I was on my way to the wharf when I realised what I had done."

"That was back well before the days of mobile phones. They were top people and were in a bit of a panic about getting the money back to me. We got it all sorted and managed to stay in touch afterwards."

Patty's husband died suddenly the next year, so Greg would drop in and see her whenever he was over there. "Over the years, Patty and I became great mates, she sort of became like a second mum. She would even chat with



my Mum on the phone occasionally. I'd crash on her couch during my frequent trips to the States to buy cars. She was a bit of drinker and a little recluse, but first and foremost, she was a Texan and as tough as fucking nails," he laughs.

Patty sadly passed away but left Greg the Lincoln that shared garage space with the old Thunderbird he bought on his first trip. "The people you meet along the way," he pauses to find the right words, but they don't come.

It's been 30 years of buying, selling and collecting for Greg. It started with that T-Bird, which became a hobby for him, then grew into a business. Greg can't put a number on the number of cars he has bought in over the last 30 years, "Mate, 1000's."

"People tend to buy what they know – Mustangs and Camaros. But once you get past that, there are 100's of American cars that are amazing and unique. American cars are actually cheaper than a lot of Australian cars these days, so it makes a lot of sense." As his collection grew, Greg started hunting down rarer models that may have slipped under the radar. He first saw the Mercury Cyclone Spoiler II for sale about 12 years ago. Timing wasn't right and the car went on to another owner. Four years later it came up for sale again and this time it wasn't going anywhere other than into Greg's collection.

"I wouldn't have bought one of these cars that had the standard 'W' front end – it'd mean nothing to me."

To make sense of the last sentence – a little background.

At the time, NASCAR required manufactures to produce 500 road going versions of any car they wanted to enter into competition.

The 'II' in, Mercury Cyclone Spoiler II, designates

it as the homologated NASCAR version.

Modifications included cutting and extending the front guards by 6 inch's and an extended tapered nose. The 'W' style grill was removed, and a flush mounted grill was fitted. Under the grill, the bumper is actually a rear bumper from a 68 or 69 Torino that has been re-engineered for the front. It's a snug fit with the fenders catching less air and acting like a spoiler.

The Mercury Cyclone Spoiler II beared a very strong resemblance to the Ford Talladega of the same time, but the Cyclone was actually longer and more aerodynamic. The Cyclone has steeply raked front fenders and the Cyclones nose is not only longer but it is also built at a steeper angle than the Talladega's.

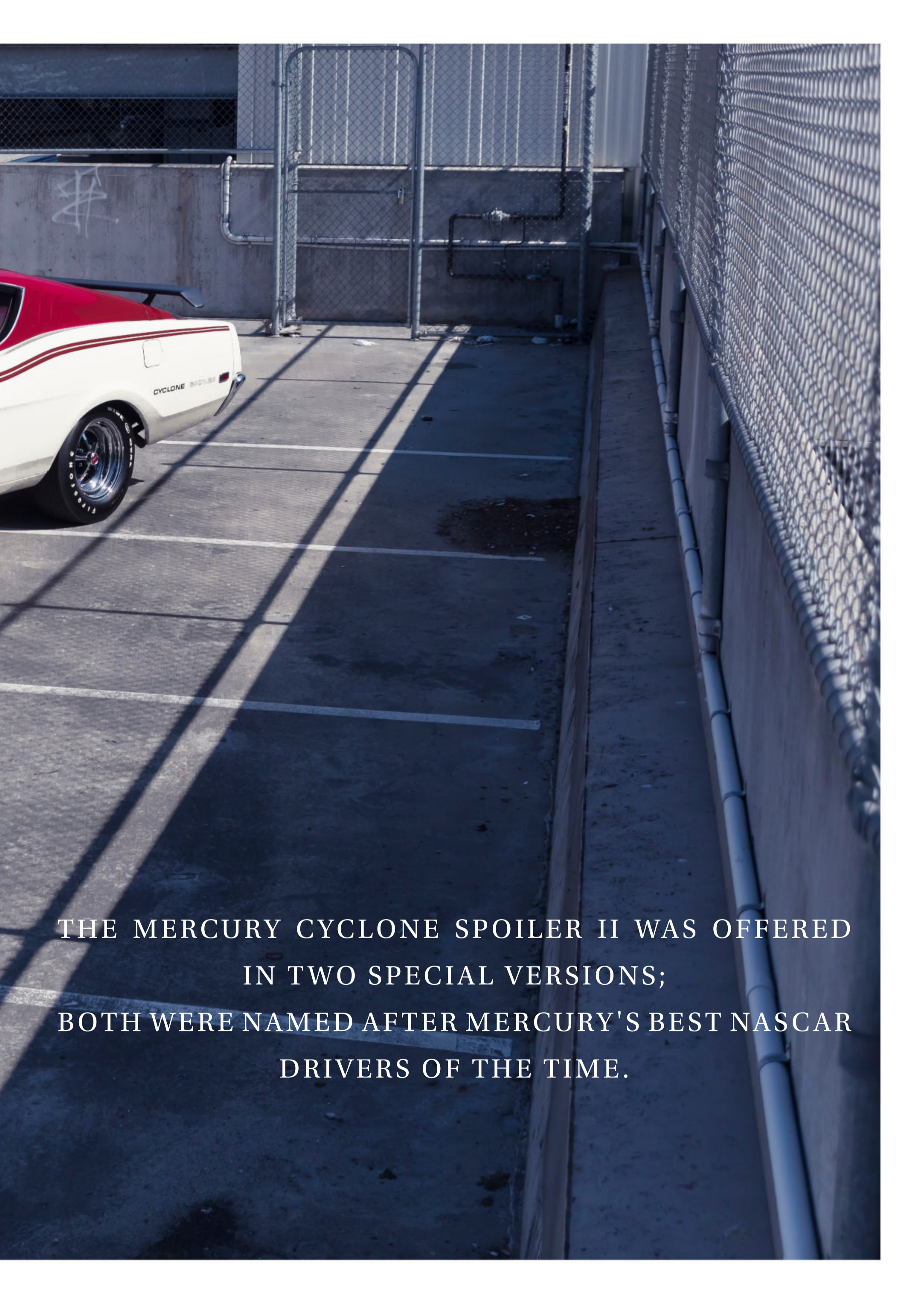
An inspired move from the Mercury team seen them roll the side rocker panels higher as NASCAR measured them from the ground to the bottom of the rocker allowing them to run the cars one inch lower in competition.

These differences may sound small, but it made the made the Cyclone Spoiler II up to 8mph faster than the Talladega - even though the Talladega runs the more potent 428 Cobrajet vs the Cyclone's 351 Windsor.

Greg knew about the unique story of their homologation requirements before setting out to buy one for himself.

"Story goes, that they weren't on track to get the required 500 cars finished in time to satisfy NASCAR requirements. It was fairly labour intensive to cut and extend the cars. The numbers vary depending on your source, but it's believed they only built about 351 out of a reported 503. What they did was, they parked all of the modified ones at





THE MERCURY CYCLONE SPOILER II WAS OFFERED
IN TWO SPECIAL VERSIONS;
BOTH WERE NAMED AFTER MERCURY'S BEST NASCAR
DRIVERS OF THE TIME.



the front and around the edges and then just painted up the standard Cyclones with the W grill and parked them at the back and in the middle of the line-up. When the NASCAR crew came to inspect, they didn't look too hard and gave them the green light to race," he laughs.

The Mercury Cyclone Spoiler II was offered in two special versions; both were named after Mercury's best NASCAR drivers of the time.

The Cale Yarborough special edition was painted in Candy Apple Red over Wimbledon White. Yarborough was best known for his work driving as part of the Woods brother's team in the mid to late '60s.

The Dan Gurney special edition was painted Presidential Blue over Wimbledon White. Gurney was the first driver to win races in four major categories of Motorsport Grand Prix, NASCAR, Indy Car and Sports Car. You can also thank Dan for the traditional Champaign spray from the winner's podium. He was the first to do it after winning Le Mans in 1967 in a Ford GT40 Mark IV.

Holman-Moody, an American company best known for

building and modifying race cars, were responsible for preparing the Mercury Cyclone Spoiler II's. They built almost all of the factory Ford racing vehicles in the '50s, '60s and '70s and had some success running their own teams taking out the NASCAR championship in '68 and '69.

There was no preference for Greg over a Dan or Cale special. "I mean, blokes at the Holman-Moody factory had their hands on my car - cutting it up and modifying it. That's what really makes this car special for me. People may not know the history or the significance of the Cyclone Spoiler II, but the diehards know Holman-Moody and what it stood for back then."

There are a few here in Australia but a check of the official registry only lists one and at the time of writing and only about 41 are accounted for worldwide -19 Dan Gurney and 27 Cale Yarborough.

The Mercury Cyclone Spoiler II is a rare beast indeed, and deserves recognition alongside its more famous winged breatharian.





APF MOTORS

ANGELO FRANGIOSA



WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY **NATHAN DUFF**





"WHAT? You've come to see me in a KIA?" Angelo looks like he has had the wind knocked out of him and I think I've pissed him off even before I make it to the front door of his workshop. "It's my wife's... its good on fuel and...." I stop. "At least tell me you have something better at home." We talk Landy's "It's the 3.5 V8" – "Good motor that one." That seems to placate him. Angelo wanders over to a hose and starts to wash the day's work off his hands.

"50 years turning a spanner," he offers. "But I don't get no awards or gold watch," he laughs.

People like Angelo are rare these days. A life time of knowledge and experience that will retire with him. As cars and technology continue to rapidly evolve, the desire to take a hunk of old metal and make it new again with your own two hands, dies a little more with each generation.

This is the second time I have met with Angelo. The first time, he was in the middle of moving his yard after 30 years in the same location. I loved his old place. The earth smelt of sump oil, parts hung precariously from rusted hinges. Moss arranged itself in symmetrical patterns along guards and windscreens. Discarded and forgotten parts had grown into the landscape and been consumed by vegetation and time.

Angelo bought the property back in 1972. "I had some money put aside - I wanted to by a HK Holden, 3 on the tree with a 161. 100,000 miles on the clock. I wanted that car something shocking! What a dick! What a dick I would have been! Luckily, the old man conned me into buying the property next door to my parent's farm. I put a shed on there in '74 or '75."





“Late nights with the boys working in that little shed till 1 or 2 am. Beer, pizza and 2 acres that you could just do whatever you wanted to do on.” There was barely any residential around there at the time. I wander down the back of the property past a rusted-out Fiat 124. Across the way you can see the suburban creep. New townhouses stand shoulder to shoulder. Magpies sing in the gum trees that pepper the yard and the dull hum of the Gateway motorway is ever present under the din of the suburban day. Places like this are becoming harder to find. People like Angelo are becoming harder to find.

“August 1969, I saw the man land on the moon and then I quit school.”

“In those days, getting a job as an apprentice was an honoured profession. You did your best. ‘Yes sir’, ‘no sir’ to the boss, otherwise it’s a kick up the backside.”

Angelo started as an apprentice with Umberto Basile straight out of school. “He was a bit of a hard task master,” he laughs.

“At TAFE, all the other guys were talking about were Holden and Ford. I’d mention FIAT or Alfa and they would stare at me blankly and say, ‘What? Lancia? What?’

I realised early that they were all competing against each other working on the Australian product. No one was looking at European cars.”

“We would strip down a grey motor and while we had lunch, the teachers would put a problem in there for us to find and fix. They knew I worked on these things daily at Umberto’s, so they pulled the harmonic balancer off and advanced the timing by one tooth to try and catch me out. Vacuum gauge - timings out – ‘Angelo, you’re a smart arse,’” he laughs. “But we enjoyed doing things like that, it’s where the passion for it all comes from.”

“Umberto had his workshop divided in two parts. One section was engine re-building; side valve V8’s, grey motors and so on. On the other side was where he converted the cars he imported from Italy to right-hand drive. Back then, if you sold them, they had to be converted before you could drive them on the road.”

“I’d knock off at 5 o’clock, but my train didn’t leave from the Valley until about 6 o’clock so, I would hang back with Umberto and work on the conversions with him. I never got paid for that extra hour, but I learned a lot. Really changed the course of what I was doing.”

The first right-hand drive conversion Angelo did was on a Lancia Flaminia 3c coupe superleggera.

“They were designed to go left or right, brilliant cars to work on – didn’t need to cut holes in the dash.”

“I’d just got my licence and Umberto said to take it for a test drive and write down what you hear that needs fixing. So, I just took it around the block – I was only earning \$19.20 a week and this car was worth 1,000’s. I got back, and Umberto said to take it for a real drive. ‘You live out at Boondall? Go see your Mum and Dad. But don’t come back and if you prang it.’”

The memory of that first drive is still pin sharp for Angelo. He rattles off the details as if he is looking at a snapshot of the time. “17 years old, my legs shaking all the way – I was so scared. I got home and showed my Mum and Dad. Mum says, ‘You get paid to do this – to drive around all day?’ Typical Italian mother,” he laughs.

“Those were the days when we were taught to listen. No plug-in computers, no Google, no YouTube. Listen and feel what the car was doing. That was the best way to get to know them.”

In 1974, he went to work for Henry Batina at









Continental Car service. A little workshop specialising in FIATs. “I was going to take three months off after leaving Umberto’s but he begged me and accepted my ridiculous proposition of a weekly wage. I had no idea when it came to FIATs. At the time, there wasn’t too many people wanting to fix them. They had the nick name of ‘Fix It Again Tony’, but I’ve now changed it to ‘Fix it Angelo, Today.’”

The first to cause him grief was a FIAT 130 3200 V6 coupe. It had done 20,000 and had stripped a belt and caused some serious engine damage. “Nobody knew anything about these things. Henry was overseas at the time and he told me to pull it apart and there were a few bent valves. Henry flew back and brought the VRS kit back over on the plane in his cabin luggage. We had the workshop manual, but it was in Italian! We had a lot trouble getting it going as the firing order was wrong in the manual – geez it pissed me off.”

Alfas came later in life for Angelo after he had established AFP Motors, his own business on the block of land beside

his parent’s farm.

“Now, 3 of my daughters have Alfas. The eldest has a 147, next one has 156. My third daughter has an Alfa 4 door and the youngest.... she’s getting a donkey – cause she’s a smart arse,” he laughs.

“I’ve had a bunch over the years, but I’ve never actually bought a new car in my entire life. But... I Just bought my dream car. A Maserati Quattroporte – got it at a price even my father would be proud of. But it’s still the biggest splurge ever.”

We go for a walk in the new yard. Cars arranged neatly in rows, no character – they look like any other wreck now. Lifeless. Gone are the gum trees and the overgrowth replaced by cold commercial concrete walls and chain-link fences. He scouts the remains and I ask him about some of the stories the old cars hold. He pauses and says, “You know – probably would have been better at the last place. So many I could have told you about there.”

We pass a clump of Nikkis’ and I remark that I’ve never seen one on the road. “Kept these because they’re basically



a FIAT 500 underneath. Me, Leo and Joe set up Autostrata in the Valley and we bought in the Nikki until about 1992. The boys wanted to branch out into Maserati and Ferrari, but I just couldn't see it working for us, so we parted ways."

Angelo concedes his yard could easily have been filled with Fords and Holden's had Umberto not had the other part of that shop and introduced him to European cars.

"People used to come to me because I was the only one buying these old things. No one else wanted them. I'd stick them in the corner sell bits and pieces off them, get people out of trouble etc."

Angelo estimates that prior to downsizing and moving, he would have had approximately 360 cars on that original property. Lancia, FIAT, Alfa, Maserati, Nikki. But when it came time to move "I couldn't give these things away, no one was interested. I stripped off the parts that I might use and sent the rest to scrap."

A rough scan of the yard and we come up with about 60 cars left now.

"The cars that broke my heart to get rid of, were the 130 coupes - I had about 6 of them. I went to pick them up with the forklift, but they just broke in half. Chassis rusted from the inside out."

Sometimes kids would knock on the door and want to learn about the old ways of doing things, but it's been about 10 years since Angelo had a serious apprentice.

"It's sad the kids are missing out on their rite of passage. You pick a car from a smouldering wreck, restore and drive it. It's a dying tradition."







AVANTI





L

Lorna Venema has a stunning collection of Studebakers. Lorna loves riding on the back of her son's Harley-Davidson motorcycle. Lorna is 83 years old and still drives her 1974 Avanti II with a factory Chevy 400 small block V8 into town in to do the shopping.

Lorna is quietly spoken, has kind eyes a warm smile and giggles like a teenager. We chat and she attempts to fill me with sugar. "Everyone that comes to visit gets some tea and some cake or a biscuit."

We start wandering through Lorna's immaculately maintained Studebaker collection. "There are over 40 years of memories here," Lorna tells me. Lorna offers stories and details of every car we pass, most of which bring a smile to her face and a laugh to the room. We walk towards the first car that her and her late husband, John, bought while on a trip to the US.

She motions to a '57 convertible. "We brought it from a wrecking yard outside of South Bend, Indiana in 1967. Ed

"I DRIVE THE AVANTI INTO TOWN QUITE A BIT. PEOPLE STOP ME AND WANT TO KNOW WHAT IT IS."





Reynolds - he had the big Studebaker yard in South Bend, lent us his big old pick-up truck and we hired a trailer. We had to drag that through the desert.”

It was the first of many adventures Lorna had with John buying Studebakers. “He used to sing; ‘Travelling over the country side – looking for Studebakers,’” (sung to the tune of the Leyland brothers).

“I met John when I came from Melbourne for a holiday with my cousin Gloria – two girls running around Australia by themselves was kind of a no-no back in 1954. Gloria was an ice-skater but there wasn’t any ice skating in Brisbane. So, we went along to a roller rink and I see this long-legged Dutchman flying around, beating everyone... winking. I’d never seen anything like that before and he had a 1939 Lasalle Cadillac ...gone!” She laughs.

John worked as was a labourer at the Darra brickworks. He would have to take a wheelbarrow load of wet bricks out of the press and run the down to the kiln underground then run the bricks back up the hill. It was extremely hard work. “He used to eat an entire loaf of bread of sandwiches a day and wash it down with a bottle of milk. After a while he said to himself, ‘Why am I doing this? Why don’t I just lay the bricks?’”

“So, John became a bricklayer and I was his labourer. We built so many houses together. We spent a lot time in Darwin in the early 60’s, living out of a caravan on the building site. We had the two kids then and we went right around Australia - 14,000 miles we did. The Nullarbor was bulldust back then.”

“It was real adventurous. He said to me a couple of times that he’d never be able to do this if he had have married someone else. We did a lot of things together – it’s been a great life.”

John and Lorna went back to Darwin to work another





three times afterwards but ended up settling back in Brisbane after John got blood poisoning. “He only ever used to do brick laying in stobbies and thongs.”

John was always down at the wreckers buying ‘cheapies’ and fixing them up to sell off. “It was a real hobby for him. He wasn’t that interested in making money from them. If he made a \$100, he would be happy. It was something to do in-between laying bricks.”

“Every time we went to Melbourne though, we would come home with another Studebaker. He went out with my cousin once and come back looking a bit coy. ‘I found a winch! But it’s stuck on a beautiful Studebaker truck.’ It was a 1945 6x6 army truck - took us 3 days to get home in that thing.”

Rob, Lorna’s son, is on hand and we chat about the procession of cars that stretches back to his earliest memories. He runs through a list to try and figure out how many Studebakers they have had over the years. Lark, Dictator, President, Champion, Hawk, Bullet Nose and a bunch of old trucks too. “Must be at least 35 Studebakers alone,” surmise’s Rob. “Although, Dad was always buying and selling old cars, he rarely sold any of the Studebakers.”

We make our way over to the Avanti II. “I drive the Avanti into town quite a bit. People stop me and want to know what it is,” she laughs. “One old fella said me, ‘what’s that you’re driving? A Studebaker? No, they never made anything like that.’” She laughs again.

“We were in South Bend India, visiting the Studebaker museum and a lady pulled up in the Avanti II. I was chatting with her and taking pictures - she had it for sale. John was keen to get going to New Orleans, so he didn’t want to have a look at it. He said he didn’t don’t want any more Studebakers.”

“We finished our holiday and came back home to Australia. We had some friends around and I was showing them the pictures. They wanted to know why my husband didn’t by it.”









REACTION TO THE CAR WAS MIXED AND,
ULTIMATELY, IT WASN'T THE SAVIOUR
EGBERT HAD HOPED FOR.





“After everyone left, John called the lady and ended up buying it. She dropped at a friend’s place in Longbeach and when it landed here in a container, we drove it home with the old plates on it and all.”

Lorna’s Avanti II is a Studebaker and it isn’t, all at the same time. The story of how the car came into existence, and its subsequent rescue, is fascinating.

The original Studebaker Avanti was conceived in 1961 and was the last hope for a company that had been in business for more than 100 years. Studebaker was founded by brothers, Henry and Clement Studebaker in 1852. Up until 1902, when their younger brother John joined, they had primarily built horse drawn wagons and carriages. John was interested in automotive manufacture – particularly electric cars. Studebaker produced battery-powered cars up until 1912 when they succumbed to the gasoline dominated future of motoring.

The Avanti has long been a celebration of modern design. Raymond Loewy, perhaps one the most famous industrial designers of his time, was contacted to put together a small team to design an all-new sporty coupe that was a last-ditch effort to revive Studebaker car sales.

The project began in secret outside the Studebaker design studio. Studebaker chief, Sherwood Egbert, was keen to push the design and production through as fast as possible but was met with too many roadblocks when trying to get the project moving in-house. He needed something to help pull the company out fast as it was swimming in debt and its small cars sales of the Lark had been cannibalised by the big 3.

Reaction to the car was mixed and, ultimately, it wasn’t the saviour Egbert had hoped for. He was aiming to sell 20,000 Avanti’s in the first year but could only build 1200 due to production issues.

Production of all Studebaker cars ceased at its long-time home at South Bend, Indiana in December 1963. Production was moved to Hamilton, Ontario but that too ceased production at the end of 1964 and was closed for good by the end of 1966.

The Avanti should have finished with the rest of the Studebaker lines, but it didn’t.

Leo Newman and Nathan Altman were partners in a South Bend Studebaker-Packard dealership. They purchased the rights

to the Avanti name and its manufacture, as well as a section of the defuncted Studebaker factory. The Avanti Motor Corporation was born.

Production of the Avanti II started late in 1965, with the company aiming to manufacture 300 Avanti IIs a year – a number they fell well short of.

The elimination of the car’s forward rake was the only modification to the original design. Additionally, the original R-series Studebaker engines were no longer available and were replaced with Chevrolet engines and drivetrains.

It was fortuitous that the body had been constructed from fibreglass. Had they been made from steel, the challenge and cost to produce such a complex design would have been prohibitive for the small company. Still, a brand-new Avanti II started at \$7,200 compared to Studebakers \$4,445.

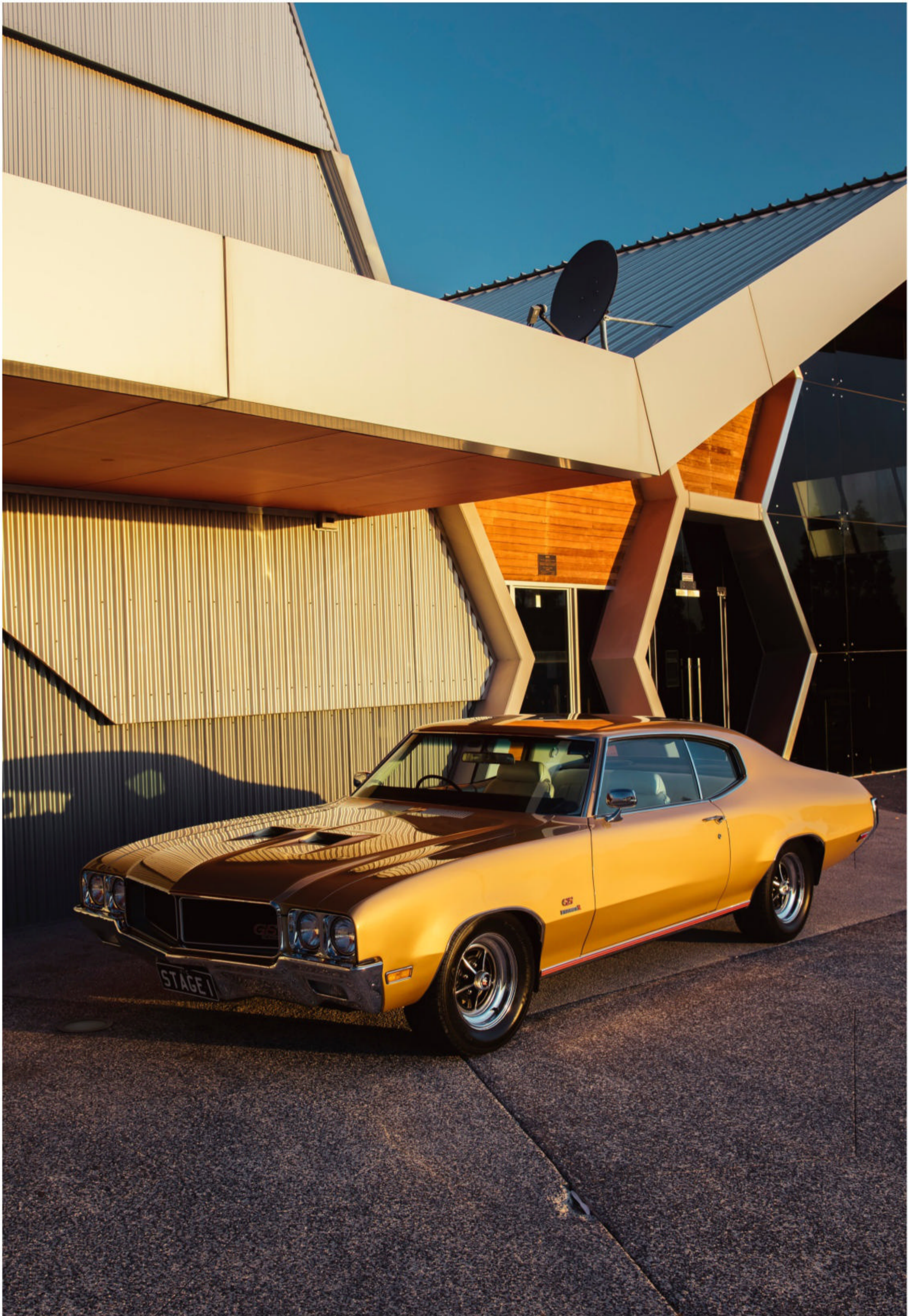
Even though the new cars were built from left-over parts, they were regarded as being superior to the original. Testament to this; Raymond Loewy bought an Avanti II for his personal use. Nathan Altman died in 1976 and control of the company was passed to his brother, Arnold. Retrospectively, this was the beginning of the end of the Avanti II as we knew it.

In 1982, Arnold sold the company to Stephen H. Blake, who had some questionable and expensive ideas that ultimately sent the company into bankruptcy in 1985.

The company went through a succession of owners, ideas and design changes (not all of them good) from 1986 to 2006 when the last Avanti was built. What had started as beautifully designed take on a sports car had sadly been reduced to a re-bodied Ford Mustang.

Legal issues with the last owner saw the factory and show room emptied of all remaining cars in 2011.

We get ready to take the Avanti II for a drive and Lorna settles into the driver’s seat. She kicks it over and we turn out of her driveway and cruise comfortably down the tree-lined road that leads to town. The burble of the 400ci Chevy bounces off the trees and I take a few photos of Lorna at the wheel, she laughs and tells me not to get her bad side. I put the camera away and enjoy the ride and hope that when I’m 83 years old, I’m still enjoying life as much as Lorna is.





BUICK

GS STAGE ONE



WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY **NATHAN DUFF**

A

rubbernecker leans out of the window of his mid-nineties Commodore and lays praise on Con Liapis' Buick GS Stage One as we position it for a photo. "Sweet Falcon, mate!" The pain sweeps over Con's face, its muscle memory formed over the years. He's used to it. Con is a one-man army on a crusade to spread the knowledge of the Buick GS Stage One to the muscle-headed masses.

I'll admit, I was oblivious to the car and the impressive street credentials it harboured until meeting Con. He has the largest collection of Buick GS Stage Ones outside of the States as well as a few other interesting cars.

We struck up a conversation at Motoroclassica over the mutual admiration of the Mercury Cyclone Spoiler II (see page 38), which I'd been waiting beside to try and catch the owner. "That's mine over there". He motions to a Buick GS Stage One. It's nice, but I'm a bit 'meh'. It's pack-up time on

"THE BUICK GS STAGE ONE IS POSSIBLY ONE OF THE GREATEST MUSCLE CARS YOU'VE NEVER HEARD OF."













the last day of the event and I'm a little car'd out. We chat about muscle cars that snuck under the radar and Con starts his pitch. "The Buick GS Stage One is possibly one of the greatest muscle cars you've never heard of," he says. Con talks fast and has an encyclopaedic knowledge - it would be safe to call him an authority on the subject. He is passionate and has more energy than a 5-year-old smashing Ritalin with a red cordial chaser when talk turns to Buicks. But he has a great sense of humour and he's damn good fun to hang out with. Con invites me to check out his impressive collection of Buicks and I eagerly accept.

His first car, a Rambler, sits under a cover in near showroom condition. "Bought it when I was at RMIT in the city - Dad had one. It's one of the Australian-delivered right-hand drive's - came out of AMI." (Australia Motor Industries).

The only modern car in sight is a Porsche 911 Turbo. It sits a little unloved with its bonnet up and a flat battery, de-registered tucked to the side. "Yeah, it's good fun, but modern cars have no soul."

I start pouring over the Grand National, but Con pulls me straight over to the first Stage One that came into his family during the early '70's.

"My brother was actually after a Charger and took one for test drive. It went! No doubt, but there was a dealer on in Mt Alexander Rd, Essendon, that sold these Buicks and he wanted to check them out."

"They weren't cheap though. They went for about \$7,500 back then." To put it in perspective a GT Falcon was about \$5,500 at the same time.

"My brother, Jim, ended up buying the Buick GS Stage One and took me for a spin. He absolutely floored it at this set of lights - it shoved me right back into my seat. I was 12 years old - you don't think something like that gets stuck in your mind for the rest of your life?" He laughs. "It just kept spinning and spinning and spinning for about 100-200 feet!"

The oil crisis hit in '74 and the desirability and value of big muscle cars suffered a sharp decline. "He tried to sell it, but no one wanted it, so it got covered up with a tarp. I bought it off him in 1978, the year I got my license, and



THEY WERE SO IMPRESSED THEY CALLED IT THE FASTEST MUSCLE CAR THEY HAVE EVER TESTED.

restored it to factory original specifications. I love my cars to be as close to original as possible.”

The GS started life as a Gran Sport in 1965 when Buick dipped a toe in the muscle car waters with the introduction of the A-body Gran Sport, which was essentially a Buick Skylark with a few performance parts added on.

Buick was traditionally a company that catered to a more discerning and conservative buyer (read your granddad). It was a step below Cadillac in the line-up, so they were still very well optioned and comfortable to drive.

Gran Sport got shortened to GS in 1967 and the Stage One refers to an option to upgrade the engine with performance parts. At this time however, GM had an intercompany mandate that excluded small and medium cars from having an engine with a displacement larger than 400 cubes. The only exception to this was the Corvette.

GM removed the 400 Cube displacement rule for the 1970 model year on all intermediate cars and that's when the guys at Buick made their move.

1970 is considered the pinnacle of the American horsepower wars, or muscle car mania. Whatever you want to call it - it's safe to say they all went a little batshit crazy. There were high powered options from every maker. Chevy had the Chevelle SS. Pontiac, the GTO. Oldsmobile, the 442. Chrysler had Cuda and Road Runner. The list goes on.

The Stage One, however, was designed to beat anything in full street trim. In the US, they were dubbed the Hemi Killers.

“I'm telling you the Stage One has it all,” says Con excitedly. “In street form, factory standard, these were fantastic! Sure, a lot of other cars and engines in race form would have it over the Stage One, but that wasn't what it was about,” explains Con. “They dragged them in the stock class in which they held records for a long time but they were never really raced.”

The 1970 GS was available with a 350 small block or 455 big block. The 455 was a completely new engine for Buick in 1970. It weighed significantly less than other big blocks thanks to thin wall castings. The 455 was rated at 350 HP but for an extra \$115, you could have the Stage One option added. This included a hot Cam, high performance heads with larger intake and exhaust valves. Compression was increased from 10.0:1 to 10.5:1. High performance Rochester Quadra jet carburettor and high-performance distributor were also added giving a reported 360 HP with 510ft of torque at 2800rpm. However, a more realistic output rating is believed to have been closer to 425hp, if not higher.

In the Jan 1970 issue of Motor Trend magazine, they published their quarter mile times for the Buick GS Stage One, as tested by the magazine. It clocked a jaw dropping 13.38 seconds at 105.5mph. They were so impressed they called it the ‘fastest muscle car they have ever tested’.

For perspective, a Ford Falcon GTHO Phase III, if run with an optional 3.9:1 ratio diff, could reputedly achieve 13.9 seconds down the quarter mile.

Con had read the report in Motor Trend that





IT WAS THE SLEEPER OF THE YEAR, THANKS
LARGELY TO ITS 'OLD MAN CAR' STIGMA
AND ITS CONSERVATIVE APPEARANCE.





THE MUSCLE CAR MADNESS HAD ALL BUT CRASHED BY THE END OF '71. TOO FAST. TOO DANGEROUS.

sparked a furore with Hemi owners and had to try it for himself. "Look I'm no pro driver, but I took a stock GS to Calder and I got a 13.5 pass. My nephew thought he could do a little better, so I gave him a run. He did a 13.41 second pass - there is so much bottom-end torque in these things."

That's impressive for a car with a curb weight of around 1900kg and in street trim.

"My nephew drove me crazy after driving it for the first time." "I gotta get one, I gotta get one!"

It was the sleeper of the year, thanks largely to its 'Old Man Car' stigma and its conservative appearance. The styling and colours were a lot subtler in comparison to other high-performance cars of the era. The lack of audacious graphics and spoilers made room for another option pack.

The GSX (X for experimental) was introduced in mid 1970 which was essentially a cosmetic pack designed to attract young buyers. It was available in Saturn Yellow or Apollo White. This kept in with their space-orientated theme (Stage One refers to the blasters that launch Saturn rockets off the ground). It had front and rear spoilers, hood mounted taco and graphic stripping down the sides.

The Muscle car madness had all but crashed by the end of '71. Too fast. Too dangerous. Insurance premiums went through the roof. Plus a few years on, the oil crisis was the death nail.

The 455 continued to be offered in the GS with a Stage One upgrade through to '73. But after 1970 the horsepower had dropped significantly in the 455

due to a lower compression ratio to accommodate the introduction of unleaded fuel.

Only about 2000 were produced and as the '70s wore on, Buick went back to making cars for old people again (read boring). It wouldn't be until about 15 years later that Buick Grand National sent them to the top of the heap again.

The refinement and drivability of a car that is over 40 years old is a testament to the engineers at Buick. The Buick GS Stage One isn't daily a driver for Con, but he can confidently take one of them out he feels the urge.

"I just love these old cars. To me, it's about the character and soul. I'm actually starting to grow out of the modern cars. Modern cars are great to get around in, but I still use these regularly. The Buick Stage One is a comfortable and easy car to drive and handles and brakes exceptionally well. As long as you're not heavy on the gas, they actually go okay on fuel."

The sun is all but down now, and Con pulls out a copy of 'Popular and Performance Car Review'. It has a list of the 50 fastest muscle cars tested from 1961 - 1972.

I run down the list; No. 1. 1966 427 Cobra; No. 2. 1966 427 Corvette; No. 3. Buick GS Stage One. I shake my head. "You know, I had no idea it was such a beast. It just looks so pedestrian."

"I could tell you had no idea what I was talking about when we first met. It's okay I'm used to it," he laughs.





P O R S C H E

5 5 0 S P Y D E R



WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY **NATHAN DUFF**

MM

ost humble home handymen, such as myself, arrive home from Bunnings with a boot load of MDF and set about creating a bookcase or shelf that will self-destruct at the first hint of supporting any weight. Brad McKernan, however, is using a bunch of MDF he brought home from Bunnings to help create a Porsche 550 Spyder.

The project has been a long time coming for Brad, owner of McKernan Restoration. He owned a fibreglass replica of a 550 Spyder as a young apprentice mechanic back in NZ. “It cost me about \$15K for just the chassis and fibreglass shell. That was decent money back in the early '90s, especially considering the wage I was on as an apprentice.”

“THE AIR COOLED ENGINES FASCINATE ME. SO SIMPLE YET SO COMPLEX AT THE SAME TIME.”







Brad sold the 550 Spyder replica when he moved to Australia in 1999. He took up a position at 3 Points, Mt Gravatt working mostly on servicing Mercedes. But, the love of Porsches was always simmering below the surface. Most people are attracted to the marque by design or race pedigree but for Brad it's about the engineering. "The air cooled engines fascinate me. So simple yet so complex at the same time."

550/1500RS was simply the next project number for Porsche at the time. Max Hoffman, who imported Porsches to the US, renamed it to the 550 Spyder for marketing purposes. Another unique point of difference was the ability to drive it to the track, race it, and drive it back home. No trailer needed. The 550 Spyder dominated at circuits around the world, often beating larger capacity cars outside of its class. Brad began working at Sleeping Beauties Restoration and started doing more fabrication work. A defining build for him was a recreation of the 952 Mercedes Benz (Type W194) 300SL Gullwing. "I did the chassis for that build and ever since that, I've just wanted to create and build rather than restore."

Brad struck up a friendship with Anthony 'Sal' Salpietro

after working on an Outlaw 356 build for him during his time at Sleeping Beauties. Over time, talk turned towards the Porsche 550 Spyder and Brad began the groundwork for the project.

"I've built a couple of chassis for them," he motions above my head. Suspended from the ceiling in his workshop is the chassis for his own 550 Spyder. "I've got a couple of other projects going at the moment, so I haven't had time to work on my own." Brad got a little side tracked building a 910 Porsche – he is looking to build ten road-legal versions. After 12 years, Brad left Sleeping Beauties and set up his own restoration business. Sal gave Brad the go-ahead to build a 550 Spyder replica, but this wasn't going to be a fibreglass body kit – this would be hand fabricated from the ground up. Built the same way they were originally built in 1953.

All of the original 550 Spydres had been hand built using a hammer, dolly and a basic wooden buck to shape those beautiful curves. Apparently, there were three wooden bucks used to make the panels and they all had slight variations – especially in the rear section.

Already having the chassis complete, Brad set about



ALL OF THE ORIGINAL 550 SPYDERS HAD BEEN HAND BUILT USING A HAMMER, DOLLY AND A BASIC WOODEN BUCK TO SHAPE THOSE BEAUTIFUL CURVES.





gathering information and measurements to build his own buck to work from.

Brad accidentally discovered an old drawing with measurements online whilst searching for 550 Spyder badges. “The badges were sitting on top of this drawing that looked like the real deal. It had all the dimensions and angles and heights off the ground - it was really important information.”

Brad got in touch and bought the badges. Thankfully, the seller was good enough to send through a copy of the drawing too.

“I made a 1\5th scale model out of a block of wood and then scaled up the measurements for the buck. I cut out the sections with a jigsaw and then started sanding to refine the measurements and shape. I thought that MDF would be easy to sand – turns out it’s not so easy.”

This was the first buck that Brad had ever attempted to make. “All in, it took me about a 1000 hours of sanding and mucking about – it was bloody terrible,” he laughs.

With the buck complete it was turned over to Steve Bodrog to begin the mammoth task of fabricating the car from the

outside in. He is literally an artist when it comes to shaping metal.

“I’ve spent so many years rubbing my hands over metal my fingerprints are starting to wear off,” says Steve.

It was obvious to Steve, from an early age that he wanted to work around cars. “I knew everything about Bugatti’s when I was in my early teens. Growing up in Yorkshire in the ‘70s you’d see Ford Cortina’s and Escorts getting about. So the more exotic stuff really stood out. I used to watch a show called the ‘Persuaders’ and Roger Moore drove an Aston DBS. I just loved Astons.”

After Steve finished school he wrote to Rolls Royce, Aston Martin and Morgan trying to get anything he could with them.

Aston Martin were having an intake of apprentice positions for the following year. “I didn’t know what it was for – could have been cleaning the toilets for all I knew - I just wanted to be there.”

“I started there in the panel shop at 16. I spent 6 years there and that really set me up for the rest of my life with the skills I learnt.”



Steve's primary job at Aston Martin was shaping panels using bucks. "They were a little more heavy duty, made out of wood with resin edges - where you'd turn a flange was all metal inlaid. They were a proper production box as you were making dozens of things over and over again."

"What Brad has done here is fantastic - it's a great guide for me to work off. Makes my life on the outside shape very easy. The difficulty with this job is actually all the detail on the inside - obviously you don't have that with the buck. Sometimes we measure and work from a donor car if your fortunate enough to have access to one, but that's quite rare."

Steve relies on books, client's photographs and archival imagery for missing pieces of the puzzle. "There were some mysterious holes in the tub in some photos that Brad gave me. I haven't put any drain holes in it yet - maybe that's what they're for? Can you imagine doing Le Mans and it starts pouring rain! You be driving a bloody bath tub," he laughs.

"The time making the actual car is about a ¼ of the total time spent on a project like this.

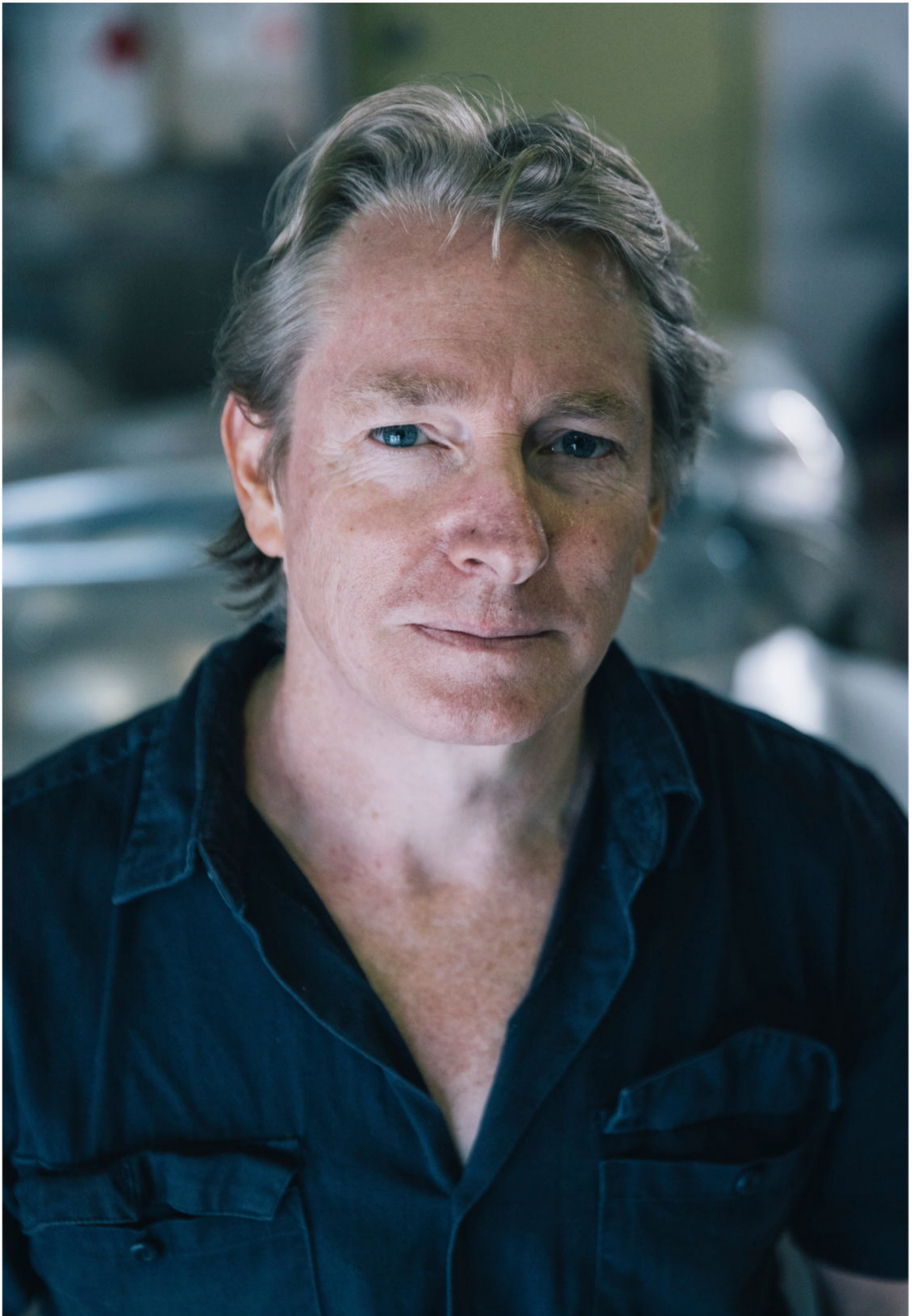
It might only take you an hour or two to make a part but sometimes it takes as long, if not longer, doing the research and making sure you have everything right before you start."

"Sometimes I look at things and think I wish I had have made that a ¼ of an inch deeper. Occasionally, things like that can have a knock on effect, but you just have to live with it. No-one will see them but you. It's not like it's an Italian car," they both laugh.

Steve describes the process about finding small imperfections from the panel if it's rocking a little here and there when he mounts them against the buck. "I









**“I’VE SPENT SO MANY YEARS RUBBING MY HANDS
OVER METAL MY FINGERPRINTS ARE
STARTING TO WEAR OFF.”**

could count on one hand where I have had to re-adjust the buck - a little sanding here and there. Sometimes it’s the panel that needs more shape that is causing it to rock.”

It’s taken 5 years to get the project to this stage and Brad is working toward getting the 550 back into the shop in 2019 to install the drive train and mechanicals.

“This shape should have the quad cam engine, but those engines don’t become available very often and, when they do, it’s big money. We have some parts from a quad cam for it, but it will still run the 356 engine.”

“Sal is the ideal person to do something like this for. He is intently interested in the project and really enthusiastic about it. He understands that work of this scale and quality takes time.”

Porsche made 90 of these handmade works of art – 69 for private customers with the rest being destined for the track.

It’s unclear how many of the original 550 Spyders survive today. Some are still raced and enjoyed for the purpose they were intended. Genuine, unmolested samples are rare and change hands anywhere north of 6 million. The only authentic 550 Spyder known in Australia is in the Lindsay Fox collection.

Brad is a little while off completing his own 550 Spyder. He points to a photo of his son nestled amongst the pictures on the wall of his workshop. “That’s my boy – he’s 3 at the moment. I’m hoping to have it done for when he gets his licence. So, I’ve got a little time up my sleeve yet.”





RENAULT

R5 GT TURBO



WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY **NATHAN DUFF**

T

t's rare to be surprised these days. Generally, when you ask someone about their childhood automotive influence it's their father, brother or mates they knocked around with. Refreshingly, Peter Schortemeyer was influenced by his mother's love of her Renault 5. A car that, in turn, surprised Renault and the buying public upon its release.

The R5 was far from Peters first love. As a boy growing up in the Netherlands, he lusted after slightly more exotic cars. "The A310 Alpine was the first car I fell for." It's low slung stance, staunch angular design and a face full of headlights would excite anyone with a heartbeat.

His Nordic adolescence may have shaped his design aesthetic, but time spent in South Africa as a teenager whet his appetite for speed. "In year 12, I had a racing go-kart with a YZ125 motor and a 6-speed gearbox, but I couldn't afford to race it.

A STYLISHLY DESIGNED CAR WITH CLEAN LINES THAT HAD UNIVERSAL APPEAL ACROSS CLASS AND GENDER.







IT WAS CONSIDERED A MASSIVE LEAP FORWARD
AND A MODERN TAKE ON THE MOTOR CAR.



So, I used to just take it out on the street.” That ultimately caught the attention of the police. “They chased me but couldn’t catch me,” he laughs. “That thing pulled 160km inches off the ground – it was dreadfully quick.”

“I suppose it’s in my blood – my mother always liked to drive fast,” he laughs. “I spent years on motor bikes and always loved having the needle right on the red line.” But after a nasty head-on collision and numerous other crashes, Peter felt as if he had used up 8 of his 9 lives. “I’m a father now and need to play it a little safer. That’s when I started getting into cars.”

“In 1972, my mother had a bright yellow Renault 5 TL. My father always picked bright colours because the weather was always so gloomy in the Netherlands. He always wanted a car that stood out amongst the mist.”

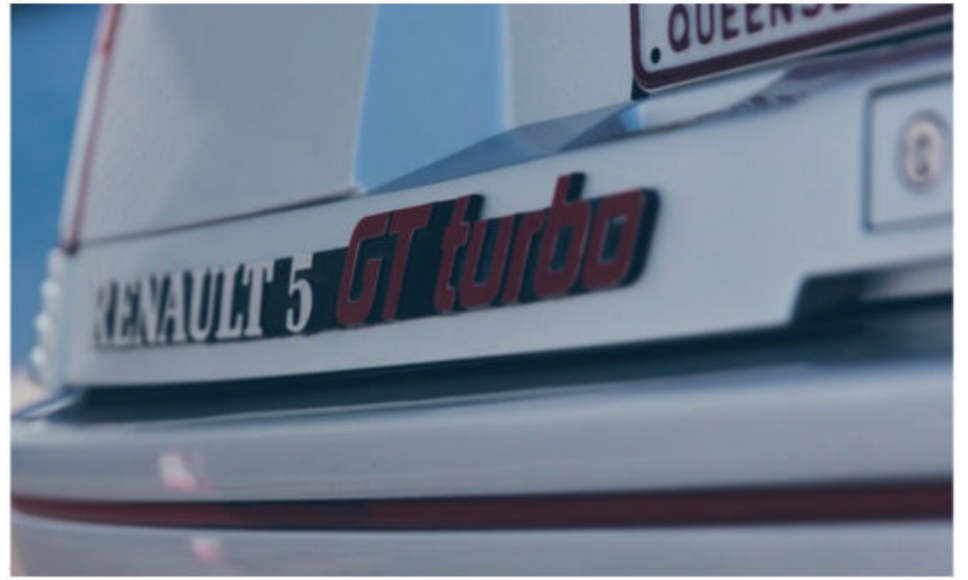
The birth of the Renault 5 was somewhat unconventional as it was not a product of the marketing or product planning departments at Renault. Usually the designer is handed a list of ideas and requirements and is tasked with creating something that is aesthetically pleasing but also fits within said parameters laid out by the company decision makers.

Michel Boué, a 36-year-old stylist, penned the Renault 5 in his spare time for fun. Initially, he sketched over the top of a Renault 4 photo to see what might be possible. His superiors saw what he was working on and recognised his vision. Within two days, his sketch had come to life in a polystyrene-foam model.

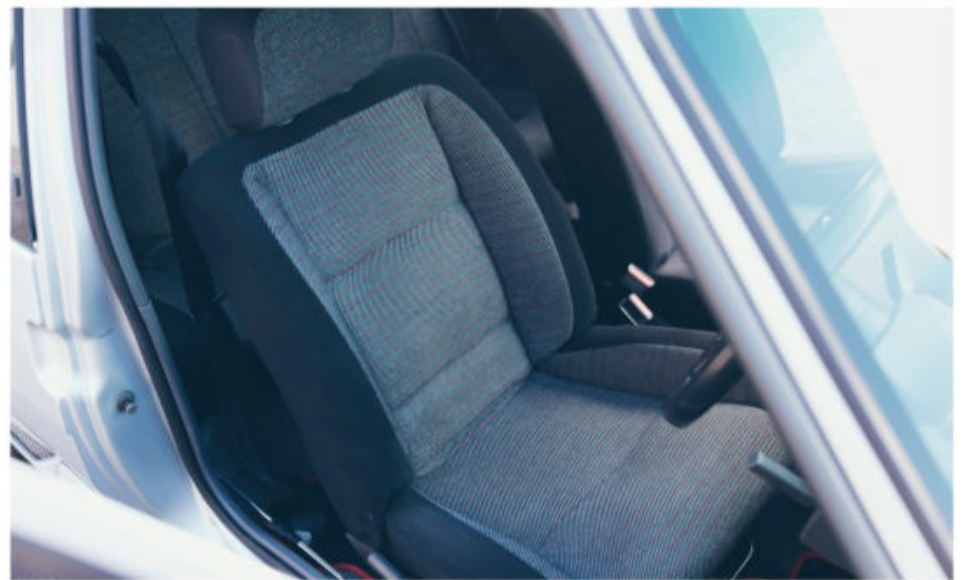








THE RENAULT 5 WAS THE RIGHT
PRODUCT AT THE RIGHT TIME
FOR CONSUMERS.



The scale models were photographed for Michel to continue working on the “face” of the car. At this stage, his first drawing, sans R4 photo, was a rear ¾ view showing most of the Renault 5’s features. A two-door hatchback with plastic bumpers and raised tail lights.

It was considered a massive leap forward and a modern take on the motor car. Ditching the lingering American styling of the late ‘60s (chrome bumpers and tail fins) and offering a stylishly designed car with clean lines that had universal appeal across class and gender. It was a perfect fit for an increasingly forward-thinking modern world. A car designed for the people that they wanted, and could afford.

Production began in 1970, just 8 weeks after the final design was approved and Renault factories struggled to keep up with demand after its release.

The oil crisis hit in ‘74 and the effect was twofold. People stopped buying cars because they couldn’t run them and fuel prices stayed high after the crisis subsided, so the gas guzzlers were no longer desirable.

The affordability and versatility of the Renault 5 made it an ideal car to purchase or downsize to after the crisis. The Renault 5 was the right product at the right time for consumers.

“I’m 53 now,” Peter explains. “This was the age at which I knew my father the best. He was a typical Dutchman - hated spending money. He would free-wheel down the hill and flick the indicator on once or twice so as not to wear the globe out.”

“He always wanted a Triumph Spitfire and he had the money to buy it, but he would never allow himself these things – I don’t want to be like my father in that respect.”

“When this one came up, I just had to have it.” Peter flew to Sydney and nestled in behind the seller’s Porsche and Ferrari was the Renault 5. “The guy I bought it off said sometimes he liked driving this better than the Porsche or Ferrari because it’s just as

much fun to drive and you don’t stand out like a show pony.”

The GT Turbo, like Peter’s, was a hot hatch version that started production in ‘85. The Renault 5 had undergone a redesign the previous year, but not wanting to ruin a good thing, Renault kept the second generation very close to the first.

“It was very much like my mother’s one. It’s old school - manual choke and no power steering. I like little cars – its 30cm shorter than a Mini but my kids can both easily fit in the back. While they don’t love it yet, I’m slowly working them around.”

The appeal of the Renault 5 was broad and given the stylish nature of the car, it was very popular with women. “My wife isn’t really a fan of the car,” chuckles Peter. “I always say if it was good enough for the Princess Diana, it should be good enough for you.”

One notable variant, is the Renault 5 Turbo which is arguably one of the coolest hot hatches to date. It shares the Renault 5 DNA but has massively different mechanicals. Namely, the mid mounted engine and the switch from front wheel drive to rear wheel drive.

Ragnotti Jean steered a Renault 5 Turbo to victory in the 1981 Monte Carlo Rally, which helped bolster the Renault 5’s standing with car enthusiasts. But as the four-wheel drive rally monsters emerged and began to dominate the dirt, the unique Turbo was literally left in the dust.

Just over 9.2 million units were produced from 1971 to 1986 and production continued simultaneously along with its successor – The Clio. But sadly, Michel Boué never got to enjoy the phenomenal success he helped to create. The big C took his life before the first cars made it to the showroom floor. Peter pays homage to his contribution that set millions of wheels in motion with a sticker on the back windscreen of his R5 ‘Merci Beacoup Michel Boué’.







HONDA

NSX

WORDS **JUSTIN JACKY** ★ PHOTOGRAPHY **NATHAN DUFF**





The term ‘cult’ gets bandied around a lot when discussing sports cars. Usually, vehicles produced in low numbers, with mouth-watering performance and a devoted army of fans that would give up an organ just to own one. But in some cases, cult status is more than just supply and demand. In some cases, a car will come out of nowhere and define a generation. The Honda NSX was such a car and it was the perfect encapsulation of the early 90’s sports car landscape. In somewhat of an asymmetry, Honda’s reputation of producing reliable, small engines meant that their customer base was more loyal than it was excitable. If you’d told someone in the mid-1980’s that Honda would produce a supercar that would outperform the likes of Ferrari and Porsche, you’d be laughed out of the pub. But while the punters were laughing, Honda was dominating Formula 1 and developing what would be one of the most important sports cars ever made.

The NSX retained its code name from development, which stood for “New, Sports car, unknown” (‘X’ being the mathematical representation for ‘unknown’). Honda wanted a car that bridged the gap between its bread and butter front engine, front-wheel drive passenger cars, and its high-performance Formula 1 division. This wasn’t just to be a piece of haute couture walking down the catwalk - with Acura being launched in the United States, the NSX was potentially going to make or break an entire market. The format of choice was an underfloor, mid-engine, rear-wheel drive (UMR) set-up with the intention to create a dynamic driving experience similar to a Formula 1 car.



Shigeru Uehara was the Honda Engineer given this mammoth task and with no real frame of reference, he wasted no time in cutting up a CRX and creating the first test mule. While it didn't look close to the original F16 inspired concept sketches, the early test mules gave the Honda engineers enough positive performance to be optimistic. The majority of local competitors were producing big forced induction power figures but Honda wanted to march to the beat of its own variably timed, Formula 1 inspired, atmospheric drum. The car would be powered by a naturally aspirated, high revving, all-aluminium 3.0 litre V6 producing 201 kW - not far shy of the Ferrari 348's 224 kW. So, if power matching was going to prove difficult to come by, the engineers had to focus on the less obvious elephant in the room; weight. Shigeru knew that Honda wanted 'everyday' indulgences like power windows and air conditioning on the NSX, so to achieve the goal of lighter weight, the team decided to build the car from aluminium.

No one had ever built a car entirely from aluminium. Many knew the benefits including weight, strength, corrosion resistance and recyclability, but with high costs and manufacturing challenges, no one else was willing to run the gauntlet. If that wasn't bad enough, Honda was not only going to have to run the gauntlet, they'd also have to build it.

A dedicated manufacturing plant was required just for the NSX and the complex manufacturing processes that were required for the breakthrough design. The engineers faced many hurdles including the deep pressing of the side sills, but with some extreme heat (600 degrees), the aluminium was

poured into dies and created a unique honeycomb blueprint that was then used throughout the vehicle. The car ended up weighing 200 kg lighter than a steel made equivalent and quietly re-invented sports car manufacturing in the process.

When it came time to testing and evaluation, it was the beginning of 1989 and Suzuka was the obvious choice to push the NSX to its limits. Legendary Japanese racing driver, Motoharu 'Gan San' Kurosawa, spent an entire month lapping the famous circuit tuning Honda's pride and joy and in February, he was joined by a very special guest. Fresh off the back of his 1988 World Championship, Ayrton Senna was in Japan testing his Honda-powered McLaren and received an invite to come and inspect the NSX. "I'm not sure I can really give you appropriate advice on a mass-production car, but I feel it's a little fragile," Senna said with a sense of humility and honesty. The engineers spent the next few months focusing on the rigidity of the NSX and in April the team set-up camp at the notorious Nurburgring. It was the first time a Japanese car manufacturer had conducted long-term testing at the circuit and it would provide the ultimate challenge for the car's rigidity. Gan San drove lap after lap, regularly swapping individual components and taking engineers out with him on the circuit for pragmatic chassis development. Data was then analysed by the team in Japan, ultimately resulting in a rigidity increase of around 50%.

Back in the United States, the NSX was unveiled under the Acura badge at the 1989 Chicago Auto Show to much fanfare and the ball was well and truly rolling. McLaren Honda took out the 1989



THE HONDA NSX IS ONE OF THE
GREATEST DRIVER'S CARS
EVER MADE.








Formula 1 world title (Honda ended up winning 6 straight titles from '86 to '91), and the first NSX cars were rolled out of the purpose-made factory in late 1990. Production was limited to 25 units a day and with positive reviews in the press and success on the track, some customers had to wait up to three years to take delivery. Over the next 15 years, the NSX was produced with various model and cosmetic changes but always remained true to Honda's original ethos. Approximately 15,000 units were manufactured in total making it one of the most successful and longest-running supercar productions ever made. The Honda NSX is one of the greatest driver's cars ever made. In many ways, it was a paradox of sorts... it was a supercar, but it didn't have an ego... it used world-first materials, but it was accessible... it was extremely fast but quite nuanced... it was a car for the astute driver that wasn't persuaded by the shiniest, turbo-charged piece that winked at him. The Honda NSX was, as it turned out, a keeper. An all-aluminium body; aluminium double wishbone suspension; titanium connecting rods; with the amount of 'firsts' on the NSX, you'd forget we were talking about a Honda. It was Honda's return to Formula 1; it was 6 straight world titles; it was Shigeru Uehara's baby; it was Gan San's dance partner; it was Senna's cameo; the Honda NSX is that era. Shigeru said Honda wanted "To create a sports car for a new era, we should balance human feelings and vehicle performance at higher levels". In a world where design so often forgets about the interaction between human and machine, the Honda NSX might just be the perfect motoring symbiosis.

*Massive thanks to Samm Warren for
supplying his beautiful NSX for the shoot.*

A narrow alleyway between blue corrugated metal walls, with a dark car partially visible on the right. The scene is dimly lit, creating a moody atmosphere. The text is centered in the middle of the frame.

IF YOU'D TOLD SOMEONE IN THE MID-
1980'S THAT HONDA WOULD PRODUCE A
SUPERCAR THAT WOULD OUTPERFORM
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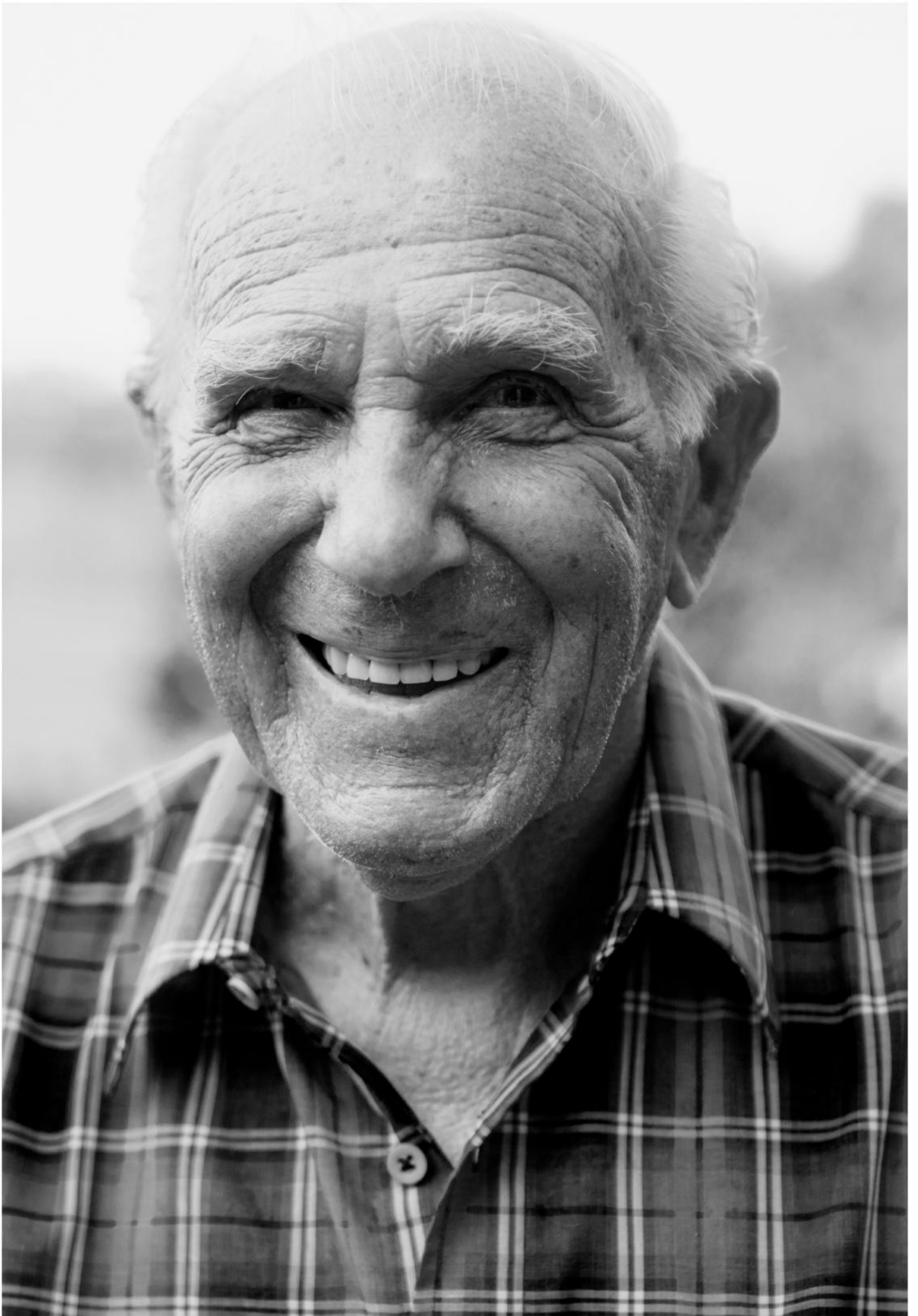


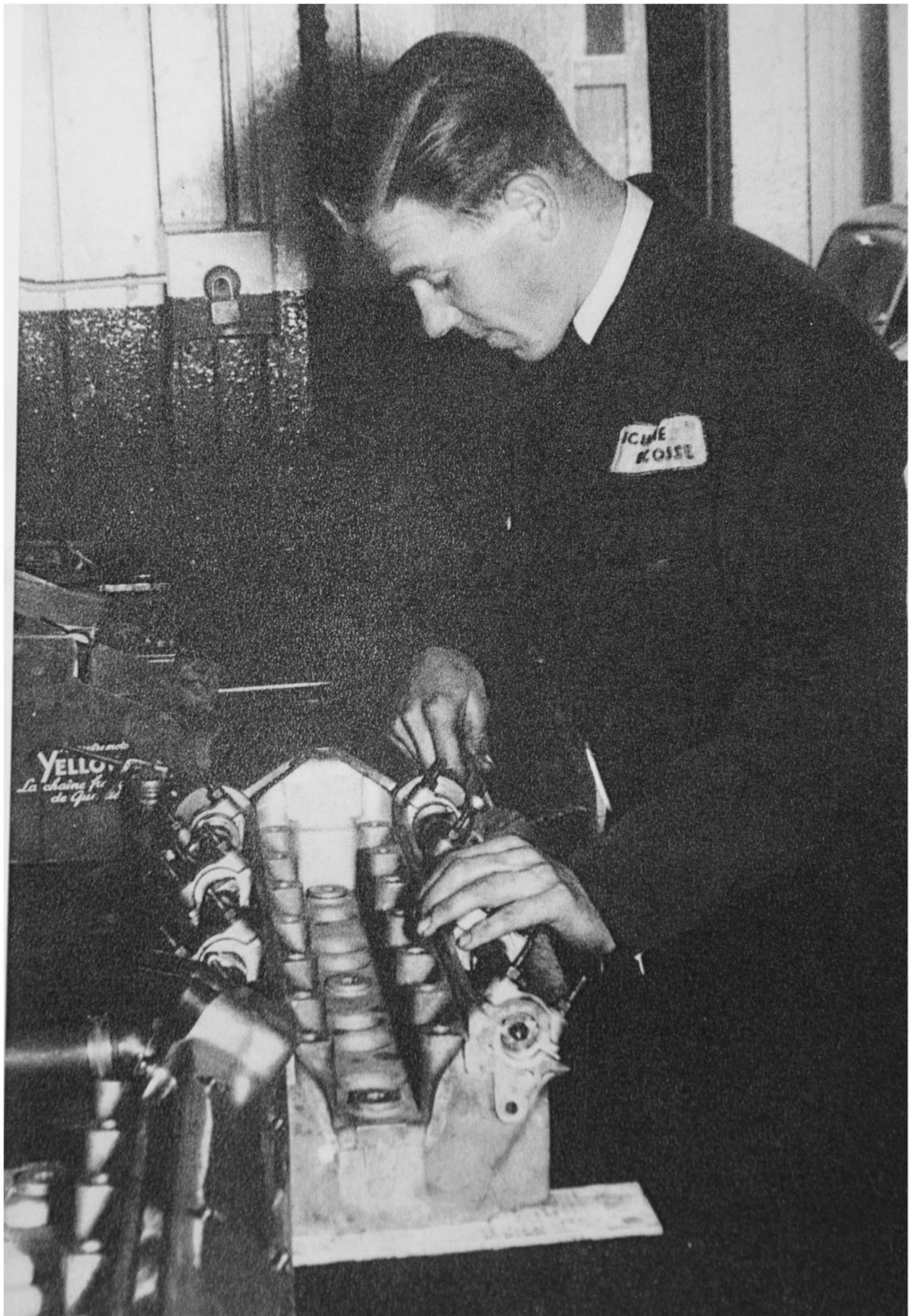
RON
GAUDION



WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY **NATHAN DUFF**







"THE SOUND OF THE D-TYPE STARTING UP STILL SENDS CHILLS THROUGH MY BODY."

YOU may have heard about the D-type Jaguar, it's kind of famous. You may also be aware of its race pedigree and unmatched winning streak at Le Mans in the late 50's. But you may not have heard of Ron Gaudion, the young Australian mechanical engineer who was the first person employed on the Jaguar D-type project and was also the only person to 'spanner' on the '55 works car and the '56, '57 Ecurie Ecosse entries at Le Mans.

The D-types didn't just win the 1957 Le Mans – they utterly dominated it. 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 6th. A lone Ferrari came in 5th. The D-Types were running against a field of 12 Ferraris, 5 Maseratis, a full works team of Aston Martins, MG, Lotus and the rest. "The Ecurie Ecosse team I was working for at the time finished 1st and 2nd," Ron remembers proudly.

"24hrs at peak application - the whole time. Thousands of gear changes, thousands of brake applications – the others simply fell by the way side."

No other works team, before or since, have been able to accomplish anything like that with private entries.

It's over 60 years since that win but the memories Ron has of the time are as sharp as his intellect. Ron was only in England from '54-'57 but his experiences there had a profound effect on his life.

Ron is remarkably humble and warm. We chat for a few hours about his life and his experience of being part of history. He has many endearing qualities and is constantly checking to see if his stories are boring me, "are you me kidding Ron?" we laugh. He chokes up at times, sometimes with pride, others with sadness. He saw and experienced a lot in that short time abroad.

But how does a young mechanical engineer from the suburbs of Melbourne end up in pit lane at Le Mans becoming part of an automotive legend?

"Even from the age of 10, I'd help my father with the family car – he was a tinkerer - he'd buy a car and we'd pull it down. In those days you had to decoke the engine and grind the valves in every 12,000 miles."

"At the age of 12, my Dad taught me and my brothers how to drive in an old 1926 Dodge. Not many people had cars straight after the war - we lived in a street of 98 houses and there were only 3 cars," Ron laughs. "The shonky dealers in those days used to charge you for the key too - 10-pound key fee!"

At 16, he was keen for a motorbike but his Dad wouldn't have it, "because he ran his up the back of a horse!" It was a car or nothing.

Ron spotted an Austin 7 chassis just near Caulfield station, under a peppercorn tree. It had a bonnet, headlights and two guards. "That was it, and they wanted 35 quid for it."

Dennis, Ron's older brother, was a body builder and panel beater – Ron had the mechanical smarts. They split the cost and Ron took out a small loan from his father. "I was 10 when the war started and my grandmother used to give us - for birthday and Christmas - a 16-shilling war bond, which became a 1 pound at the end of 3 years. I had 10 pound in bonds and Dennis had 17 pounds. I had to borrow the extra 7 pound from Dad and re-pay it at 5 bob a week.

"We turned the Austin into a Chummy. Parts were hard to come by, so I wired an orange box to the chassis



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for a seat. Can you picture it? – I'm wrapped in a trench coat in the dead of winter with an orange box wired to the frame of the Austin 7 driving down Swanson street, "he laughs.

By the end of '53, 25-year-old Ron had served a 5-year engineering apprenticeship in Melbourne and followed up through night school at RMIT with an automotive engineering course. "I wanted to know more about engines. Ford and General Motors were in Melbourne, but I wasn't that way inclined – I like British cars. So, I thought I'd go to Coventry, England."

Ron set sail for blighty in January 1954 and upon arriving in Manchester, he got a job straight away as a tool maker in the experimental department at Thomas French and Son.

"I bought a little MG when I was in Manchester. The place I worked at had 1500 employees, but there were only 3 cars out the front. The GM's, my managers and my car – everyone else took the bus."

A smirk works its way to the corner of Ron's mouth. "Young bloke, sports car...the girls," he chuckles. "I had to beat them off with a stick!"

"I was there for 10 months up until December and decided I wanted to go to Coventry and work more in the automotive industry. I had no place to stay there and there was 4 inches of snow on the road - the boss thought I was mad!"

"I went to all the major motor car companies – nothing. I thought I'd try my luck at Triumph and Norton – no luck. I'd forgotten about Jaguar so, on Monday morning I went and seen the personal manager – nothing."

Unperturbed, Ron went to the government service

agency in Coventry looking for automotive work. 'No worries, Jaguar needs gas welders, tool makers, auto electricians, fitters....What do you want to do?'

"Tuesday, I go back to see the personal manager at Jaguar and before he can say anything, I hand him my form from the government agency and he went red as red, 'mate, I forgot all about that.'"

Apparently, a memo had gone around Friday afternoon about a new project, but it had slipped his mind after the weekend – too many Cherries perhaps. "There is a special department starting up to build 100 cars – that's all I know. Go up the hallway second door on the left and see Tyrell Smith, he's the engineer in charge."

"I started at 8am the next morning."

"I had no idea what we were doing so Phil Weaver, the superintendent, asked me if I could read a blue print. Yes, I say - come with me he says. Over in the experimental department there's this big bench with Malcolm Sayer's sketches and blueprints of the D-type and its frame. That was the first time I had heard the word monocoque."

"We started building the D-types from the frame up in February. We put the first 10 together and the competition department, next door, finished them off. From there, they went down to the track for Norm to test." Norman Dewis personally tested every D-type produced. "Norm and I are the only surviving members of the original Jaguar race team – he's 96 now."

"The competition department was running behind schedule and needed help finishing off the D-types for Le Mans. Phil Weaver told me to grab another bloke and come in and finish off car 6. Roy Cole, a transmission specialist, and I had it finished within 5 days - so we



LE MANS

PETER COLLINS / STIRLING MOSS RON FLOCK
2ND ASTON MARTIN



1956.

CHART RON G NINIAN SANDERSON

DAVID MURRAY
FAR RIGHT



"THEY GAVE ME A PAIR OF WHITE OVERALLS
WITH JAGUAR EMBROIDERED IN RED
ON THE BACK - I FELT SO PROUD."



THE D-TYPE WAS TRIUMPHANT IN ITS DEBUT, BUT '55 WAS A HORROR YEAR FOR LE MANS AND MOTORSPORT.

started on number 7. We really clicked as team.”

“No too long later, Phil came and seen me, ‘look Ron – you being a colonial and all, you’ll have a passport right?’ They were short a mechanic and he asked me to be part of the team at Le Mans.”

“The first time I seen a finished D-Type, or drove one, was on the way to Le Mans. It was fantastic - I felt 10 foot tall. They gave me a pair of white overalls with Jaguar embroidered in red on the back – I felt so proud.” He still chokes up a little.

The D-Type was triumphant in its debut, but ‘55 was a horror year for Le Mans and motorsport. The sickening crash between the Mercedes and the Austin Healey is still raw for Ron – 83 were killed and 180 injured. It’s hard to comprehend the scene Ron would have been confronted with.

“The racing was intense, and the crowd had gathered to watch the first pit stop. There were 250,000 people there – I remember seeing the front end of the Mercedes explode and it went upside down on the barrier, the radiator came right over the top of the track, right over out the pits and killed two people behind us. The Healey killed two people on the circuit, right in front of me - I was standing just behind them on the pit counter.” He looks away and catches his breath. There is more there but I don’t ask - he is still visibly shaken by the experience.

After the race, Ron got back to producing the D-types but had gotten to know the lads in the competition department quite well. He got talking to Les Botrrel and Briggs Cunningham (an American entrepreneur

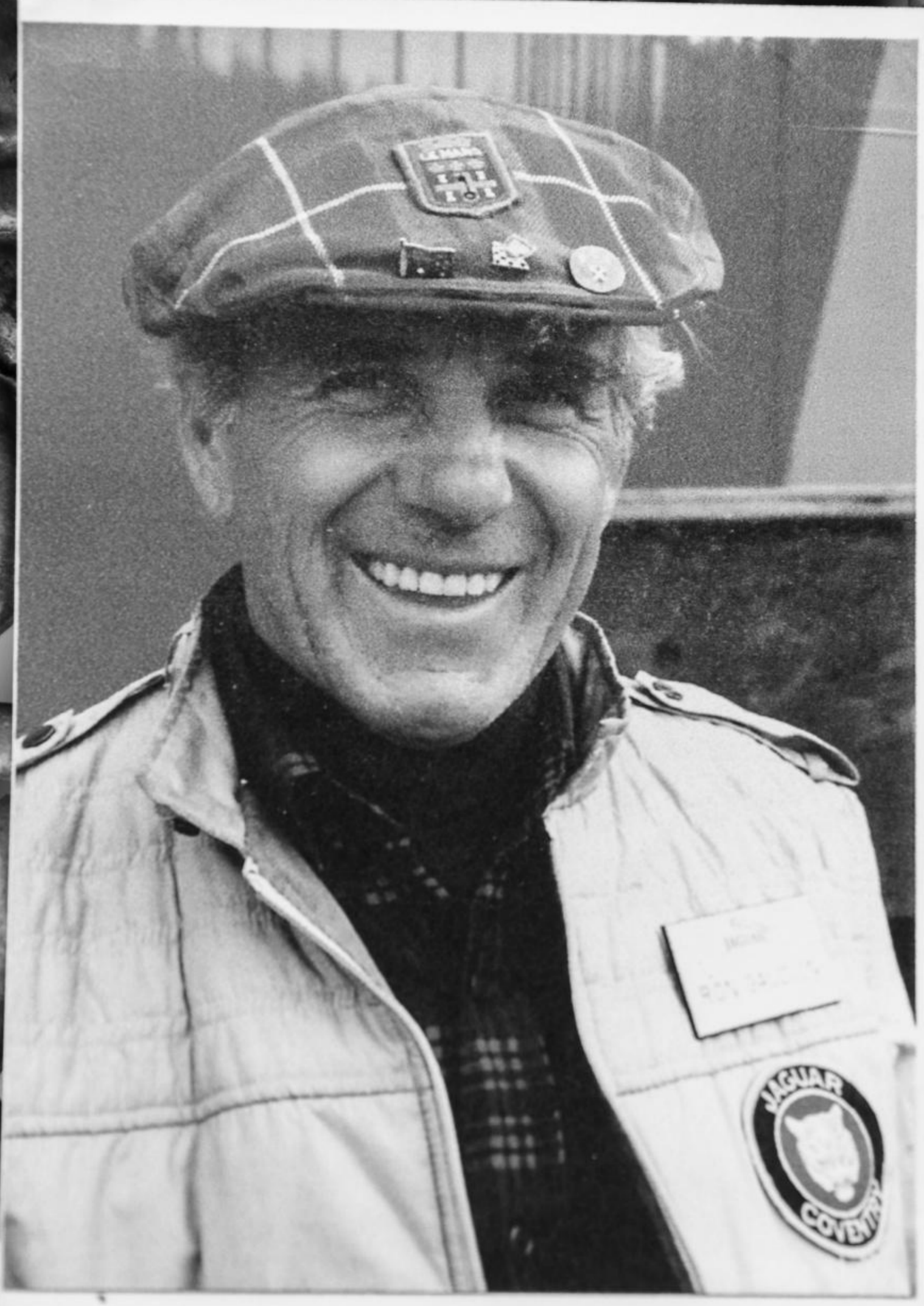
that raced yachts and cars) had offered him a job as well as Ecurie Ecosse – a Scottish privateer team. They had been running C-Types, but they were now buying the first three production D-types. “I said to him, whichever one he didn’t want I would apply for. The next day he tells me he is off to America to work for Briggs.”

Ron entered into negotiations to migrate across to the Scottish team with Ecurie Ecosse patron, David Murray, but a 10-pound pay gave him pause. “I was on 18 pound at Jaguar – but I was well aware you have to pay for experience. So, I asked David to up it to 10 pound and we would have a deal. The experience I gained from working with them has paid off many times over – but you don’t appreciate it at the time.”

By the time ‘57 rolled around the D-types were 4 years old, “and I was of the opinion that they had passed their used-by date and couldn’t get much better. I was 28 and thought I needed to come home and get settled.” Ron had met and married May in ‘57 and they were keen to start their life together.

Ron was recently invited back to England as a guest in the celebration of the 60th anniversary of the historic ‘57 win at Le Mans. It’s a memory he holds dear and he spent a number of days on tour getting reacquainted with some old friends and the original long nose D-types he helped etch into the annals of history.

“The D-types were just as I remembered them 60 odd years ago when I first drove them. The sound of the D-type starting up still sends chills through my body – it was fantastic,” he pauses. “I shed a tear.”



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