



100th
Anniversary

41st LIME ROCK HISTORICS
September 3-5, 2023

From The Editor :

Volume 40 #7

I realize that September 2023 is a long way away. However as MG racers and enthusiasts we need to start planning and thinking now on our planned celebration of the 100th anniversary of the MG marque.

Those of you who know the environment at Lime Rock Track would agree it is a perfect place for a celebration. The track was literally born by an MG TC driven by a young Jim Vaill and his friends cruising around the family's gravel pit. The track opened in 1957 and the layout has changed not at all. The setting is more a park than a racetrack. Green hills where spectators watch from lawn chairs or on blankets.

The Historics have been one of America's premier vintage events for over 40 years. There is no racing on Sunday at Lime Rock, instead it is a celebration of the automobile with a concours and car show aptly named Sunday At The Park. A perfect blend for our MG's to compete on an iconic track and to be seen by thousands at the show.

We are planning on at least one race that is all MG's. Should we have enough pre war and T series, they would have their own event. We will have a big MG 100th BBQ in the paddock on Sunday during the car show and hope to have plenty of art, parts, pieces and history for sale and on display all weekend.

We – You need to start planning now. I'd like to get an idea of how many of you and your friends will come to Connecticut next Labor Day. Not a solid commitment, but an email from you to me that says Yes, I want to be there. Along with that please let me know what MG you will bring, will you race or will you put the car in the show or just bring it along as part of the gathering.

Thanks. Let's make this the grandest MG celebration of all.

WHY LIME ROCK?

We're celebrating the history of our marque and what better place than to hold it at one of America's most historic racing venues. Add to it that it's a 3 day Holiday weekend with Sunday being all about cars complete with a concours and show plus time for a huge MG social gathering. Read a bit more about Lime Rock's history;

Jim Vaill never drove a race car. In fact, he spent much of his time in vehicles that couldn't reach 20 mph. Growing up on a farm, Vaill's full-time ride was a tractor. He later ran a bulldozer in the gravel pit owned by his family.

One day in 1955, Vaill and a few friends made some tracks with an old MG. They had no idea they were carving a piece of history.

"We took turns beating that poor little car to death," Vaill said.

It wasn't long before the place began to resemble a racetrack. Vaill didn't realize it until some strangers approached him about building one. The "people from the SCCA" were, in fact, some of the most famous racing figures of the day, including Briggs Cunningham, Sebring winner Bill Lloyd and Gaston Andrey.

Having never considered the idea, Vaill was intrigued. Two years later, he turned Lime Rock pit into Lime Rock Park.

The track's first event was an SCCA drivers school on April 20, 1957. The track had to be re-paved after the 152 cars entered tore it up. It took three days and every dump truck in the area to fix the asphalt surface for the first real race.

Still, the first program ran on schedule. A crowd of 6,660 watched eight races on April 27. Walter Cronkite was among the drivers.

Ten years later, Peter Revson held off Mark Donohue in the first SCCA Trans-Am series race at Lime Rock.

"That was the turning point in the track," said Jim Haynes, who ran Lime Rock for more than 20 years. "We went from just a club track to actually promoting a major race. We obtained sponsorship from Schaefer beer and then the track took off."

In and out of court

When Vaill built the track, he used an aerial photo to determine the configuration. The distance was supposed to be 3 miles.

But the project was scaled back after some equipment disappeared in the 1955 flood, delaying construction for about six months.

"That wiped us out, all our machinery," said Vaill. "It was quite a hassle. I saw one truck get buried and I never did find it."

Vaill sold stock to offset the losses, forming the Lime Rock Corp. Most of the financial support came from operators of local businesses, who believed the track would help them.

"They lost every cent," Vaill said. "Me too."

Vaill tried to defend himself in court after being sued by the shareholders. Among those involved in the suit was track director John Fitch.

"If it was a great success and people were making money, no one would have complained," Fitch said. "As it was, something happened and some of the shareholders didn't like the way things were going."

Neither did the Lime Rock Protective Agency, a small but well-financed group of residents who often complained about the noise.

"There were several suits," Fitch said. "There were people from New Milford to Great Barrington [Mass.] that tried to put the track out of business. Every year, there was a suit. At least one. We spent a lot of time at the courthouse in Litchfield."

It took a toll on the track's finances. It got worse in 1959, after a court order barred racing on Sundays and limited the schedule to 10 unmuffled race weekends a year.

"I love talking about my fiascos," Vaill said. "I'm glad I built it and I'm glad it turned out in spite of the fact of losing everything. It's a fantastic track now."

Owners & Managers

Jim Haynes, president and general manager of Road America in Elkart Lake, Wis., gained control of Lime Rock in 1964, purchasing a majority of stock after the minority shareholders sued Vaill.

Five years later, Haynes sold the track to shipping magnate Harry Theodoracopulos. Haynes managed the track until Theodoracopulos sold it in 1984 to a group of investors led by current owner Skip Barber.

The deal made sense to Barber, who started his racing school at the track in 1975. What he didn't know was how much he would have to invest in the facility.

"When I say the infrastructure was run-down, we turned the air conditioner on here and then needed a whole new electrical service for the place," Barber said. "Flush the toilet and you needed a whole new septic system. It was just like that, one thing after another. You hear about pouring money in the ground? We did."

Grass was planted. The dirt road leading to the track was paved. So was the track, thanks to a fund-raising effort by race fans. It cost just as much to pave the paddock area last year.

Barber estimates spending \$3 million for upgrades. A good chunk was spent on the bridge that allowed fans to cross the Salmon Kill River and walk above the track to the infield.

A racing paradise

At once historic and modern without a hint of a grandstand, Lime Rock Park is fan friendly in the extreme. A beautiful park in the truest sense, even those who are not motorsports fans appreciate what Lime Rock Park has to offer.

Under Skip Barber's ownership, Lime Rock was serviced by two major multi-million dollar renovations. The first was in 2008, when the entire track surface was repaved and a number of safety elements were brought to the latest standards. Crucially, the project was engineered with an intention not to change any aspect of its original track design and layout, making today's final look of the circuit similar to its initial one.

The second major renovation got underway in late 2014 to celebrate Lime Rocks 60th anniversary in 2017. Millions of dollars were invested in upgrading every part of Lime Rock that is not the racing surface itself – spectator areas, walkways, paddocks, restrooms, gardens, ponds, and landscaping.

In 2021, after 37 years of ownership, Skip Barber announced a new ownership structure for Lime Rock Park.

Lime Rock Group, LLC, comprised of General Partners Charles Mallory, Dicky Riegel, and Bill Rueckert, and a group of private investors, have assumed control of the historic road racing circuit in Lakeville, Connecticut.

So, after more than 60 years of its existence, Lime Rock Park is a renewed modern racing facility, but in fact, it is the same old historic Lime Rock as it was in 1957.



Chasing His Dream Part II

A look into the heart and soul of a very special racer
and his race car

By Bob Vitrikas



You gotta admit Bob has the “look,” cool Ray Bans, arm casually draped over the door sill and that wonderful boyish grin. His dream fulfilled, Bob is on the grid at Watkins Glen for the Collier Cup race. Yeah baby!

When we last left our intrepid vintage racer, Bob Schoeplein, he was slipping into the cold darkness (about 20 something degrees) of West Virginia after successfully completing his first driving school. Getting an SCCA competition driving license involves successful completion of six hours of track instruction and certification by your instructor that you are skilled enough in race driving techniques and knowledgeable enough in the rules to join the crowd creating mayhem on the track. Usually, this requires

attendance at two driving schools. This is the story of Bob's second driving school.

Doesn't this guy ever do anything the easy way? I mean, building a race car from a "barnyard special," including complete disassembly and reassembly on a new chassis and then going to driver's school in the SNOW, is a bit beyond the normal struggle for this sort of thing. After Summit Point in the snow, Pocono International Raceway in mid-May promised to be a lovely Spring outing. A great time of year for a top-down drive among the newly leafed trees and budding flowers of northeastern Pennsylvania.

The weather forecast didn't sound too promising. "Rain" they said. We left Bob's house at noon and headed north under threatening skies. Bob led with Honey Bee and I drove his Ford with all the comforts of home. It started to rain about 30 miles north of the Washington Beltway and didn't stop until we took a break for lunch when a patch of blue appeared. Maybe we would have better weather ahead. We started north from York, Pennsylvania, and it wasn't long before the rain returned. With a vengeance. We are talking major league, award winning serial effects here. The rain was torrential. Two-point-six inches, the weather report said. Did I mention the lightning and thunder? Cars were pulled to the side of the road with their four-way flashers going. Bob didn't have four-way flashers on Honey Bee, so maybe that's why he didn't stop. Bob also didn't have a top - or a windshield! How wet was it? At times I couldn't see Bob 25 yards ahead of me. Other times he completely disappeared under a tsunami wave from trucks passing in the opposite lane. I felt horribly guilty driving Bob's other car, a new Ford Tracer. Remember those? It had a top and a windshield. It even had windshield wipers and a defroster. I remembered taking those items out of Honey Bee - to save weight, you know. Colin Chapman would be pleased. Out of reverence, I turned off the stereo radio. Bob got a lot of strange looks.

Twenty miles from our destination, Bob pulled off under an overpass. At first I feared technical trouble, probably electrical. Who could blame old Joe Lucas? I wouldn't work in those appalling conditions either. When Bob struggled into the Tracer he was shaking like a leaf from the cold. I turned the heater up full blast while he described how he couldn't keep the car in its

lane anymore because he was shaking so badly. Fifteen minutes later and Bob was back in Honey Bee and we were rolling again. Race driver candidates are a determined lot. Bob had a test to take that night and a MANDATORY driver's meeting. Seconds after arriving at the motel, Bob was in the shower with max hot water thawing out his frozen bones. He made the MANDATORY driver's meeting, we ate a late supper at 10 PM and turned in at 11:30. Wake up was at 5:30 AM. Groan.....

I tentatively peeked out of the motel window. No rain! Honey Bee fired right up and we were off to the races. Arriving at the race track at 7 AM, we waited to register in the freezing cold (30-something) in a howling wind, for 45 minutes. If it hadn't stopped raining we'd have been back to rrracing in the sssnow again! Honey Bee sailed through tech inspection just like she sailed to Pocono. Word quickly spread about Bob's and Honey Bee's exploits the previous day, and they achieved near rock star status by the time the first driving session started. They looked great out there on the high banked oval portion of the track where the NASCAR stockers run.



MGVR crack pit crew!

After the second morning session, Bob noticed the exhaust was louder than usual. Inspection showed that one of the exhaust manifold studs that attaches the downpipes to the manifold was missing and another nut was VERY loose. We let the car cool down over lunch and repaired Honey Bee in time for the next session. They called Bob's group to the grid, and as Bob backed out of the parking spot, the left rear brake locked up! Bob and I swung into action

like the Woods Brothers NASCAR pit crew. Bob and Honey Bee had come this far and there was no way they weren't going to get this done! Up went the car on the jack, Off came the wheel. Off came the brake drum while the second call to the grid was barked over the public address system. A leaking axle seal had deposited a greasy goo on the brake shoes causing them to lock up. Desperately we cleaned the shoes and drum as best we could and adjusted the brakes a bit looser than normal. Back went the wheel and down went the jack. Time for a test. I kept my fingers crossed and Bob reported the brakes felt fine! Off to the grid as they announced the last call. I anxiously watched to see Bob reappear and was reassured when he did. Honey Bee was running (not spinning) like a top!

At the end of the day's sessions, Bob was the proud recipient of a signed-off SCCA Drivers' School logbook. He was a genuine certified race driver! The sun was setting as we headed for home, but it promised to get warmer as we descended from the mountains towards D.C.. It had been a struggle all the way going there, but the trip home was all downhill. A full moon, clear skies and a warming trend combined to make the long drive home a pleasant one. Honey Bee ran beautifully and the Tracer fought a losing battle trying to keep up on the uphill stretches. As we sped on through the night, I marveled at how well that "barnyard special" had done. There had been a number of blown engines at the track.

Bob commented that the "line" on the infamous high banked oval is close to the top. At a certain point one looks down the oval to where the inside track opens on to the back straight. Bob says that it seems like looking down from the top of a 10-story building. Novices certainly exit the oval at this point. One turns the steering wheel hard left and dives straight down like a WW II Spitfire toward where the oval gives away to the start of the back straight. The engine in this dive reaches the driver's max rpm limit or more likely exceeds the max rpm limit.

The sustained high speeds and Pocono's steep banking had taken their toll. Out of four British entries, Honey Bee was the only British car still running well at the end of the weekend. One of our friends from Alexandria had lost an engine in his MGB. No doubt about it, she had a heart of gold that just wouldn't quit. Come to think of it, so did Bob.

We arrived at Bob's house at 2 AM. It had been a long time since we rolled out of bed at 5:30 that morning! We were both still charged up after the excitement of the day, and Bob talked about the work he planned for Honey Bee before his first race at Lime Rock in September. As we parted company, tired, stiff, wind burned with cut hands and grease under our fingernails, we both looked forward to the next time when we would both be on the race grid!



Bob at his first race at Lime Rock with my Mini "Morris" sharing a canopy. Please notice it is neither snowing nor raining.



MGVR Focus Event –CTMP Mosport-June 16-19

Man...what a blast!

VARAC held their annual Vintage Grand Prix at CTMP Mosport June 16-19 –hosting an MGVR Focus event—one of two this year!

MG's were well represented. We had, like, 22 MG's entered-11 B's;5 Midgets & 6 A's (including Jim Holody's always well turned out and well driven Twin Cam). We had some very cool cars out and some first time Mosport entrants including –**Marl** O'Day with his great MGA (he left his T cars home)—Alan Weller in old MGA 137 ; the ex David Holmes car



Alan

wheeling 137 ahead of Mark O'Day in his new A (Courtesy Richard Coburn)



Larry Smith in his blue Midget came up from VA, Bill Stoler photo



Lino Baggio in his ex BMC Canada works A; Lino-turn 3 (photo courtesy of Dan Burgess)

The lads from WNY brought their Midgets (Joe, Ted, Dick) and they even brought their favourite B- Alan Costich. Thanks to all for coming!



Alan
Costich
leading
Lino over
2 (photo
courtesy
Richard
Coburn)



Ted Hershey in "the mix"! (Photo courtesy Richard Coburn)

A few of us rolled in Wed PM and got MG Central laid out and ready for the party. Thursday was the Test & track orientation. Thursday was hot and humid with a fierce rain / thunderstorm in afternoon. This interrupted track operations for about an hour and wreaked havoc with shelters all over the paddock, but all sessions ran. And by party time, the skies were blue!

We had a Welcome BBQ/ potluck at MG Central. Wielding the tongs and spatulas were Larry and Richard Navin. We had about 50 people enjoying some good food, beverages, and a few old racing stories. Thanks to all who contributed.



MG Central

Friday was Practice & Qualifying. Our MG's were basically split into 2 groups for Qualifying with other Vintage /Historic cars-Group 1 for cars under 1:45 and Group 2 & 3 for those over 1:45. These groups were maintained through racing Saturday & Sunday AM. Sunday afternoon all VH cars ran as one group. Great racing!



Photo-above—busy Corner One—Jody Leclaire (MGB 212); Steve White (B 214); Steve Wilson (in the ex Brian McKie B 71); Jim Holody (Twin Cam 51); Ian Scott (MGB); Mark O'Day (MGA); John Kinnear (MGB) (Courtesy Richard Coburn)

Friday was cool, windy & clear. By Friday PM a lot of people were quite bundled up and had on their “Turkey Bowl” toques for the lower paddock band party—well it is Mosport!

Saturday weather was a bit more of the same—cool & windy. Some were saying that the wind was cutting their lap times. I used that as an excuse on why I couldn't catch Larry!

David Holmes visited with us Saturday along with his son, Evan, and grandson and future racer, James. David has retired from racing. David is well known in VARAC & MGVR—he raced his red A #137 for many years. He has brought back to racing several significant Canadian cars- the Dick Baker clam-shell Twin Cam A Special and

the Tommy Hoan MGTC. Tommy was highlighted in a recent MGVR newsletter and was a very quick and competitive Ontario based racer in the early 50's in his TC. There's lots of great stories about Tommy at the Glen road course, the Grand Island road race –highlighted by the infamous punting of the haybale through a storefront window in downtown Watkins Glen when he clipped it with his TC! David became friends with Tommy and brought Tommy to the track many times. David was also instrumental in getting many of us started in the sport, myself included. VARAC and MGVR, jointly have a trophy for best MGT series car at the VVGP, named in honour of Tommy Hoan. In recognition of David's contribution to the passion of MG Vintage racing, VARAC & MGVR were honoured to award Dave Holmes, on a lifetime basis, the Tommy Hoan Trophy. It's going to a great home.



The "crew" with our old friend, David H, Evan & Grandson, James presenting the Tommy Hoan Trophy

Sat PM was the paddock crawl with ribs & wings at one station & subs at another..and lot's of local craft Publican House beer throughout. Great food, great mingling ...and then Larry's (but not Lino's) favorite Celtic rock band played up on the hill! It was great to see vintage racers rocking! But not too hard, they could break something.

Sunday was sunny and clear, a little warmer and a little less wind (Hmmm..I still couldn't catch Larry!). We had two group races, a special Nation's Cup race at the end

of day (won by the “Brits” 5-3) and at mid-day we had the highlight of the weekend for MG racers—the all MG race.

Since we had room, we graciously invited a few other Brits to the grid, ie Triumphs and some Bug-Eyes..



Start of MG Feature Race (photo courtesy of Bill Stoler)

It was a great race—we had 23 cars start. 10 B's, 4 A's, 3 Midgets, 5 Triumphs and 2 Bug-Eyes.

Being Canadian and known for being polite and gracious, we allowed Henry Frye and his very quick TR250 to win—we wanted the Triumphs to feel welcome!

MG winners in the MG-Triumph race were:
First MGB.... Joe Lightfoot



Joe- Top B—Congrats

First MGA.....Jim Holody



Jim with another award! (photo courtesy Dan Burgess)

First Midget.. Nick Pratt



with top Midget Award ..(photo courtesy Dan Burgess)

Nick

We also awarded some special trophies:



The MGVR Doff of the Cap Trophy for best presented & prepared MGB was awarded to John Kinnear. John is a long time VARAC B racer, and “always” (well almost always finishes. (it is an MG)

*Well Deserved—
Congrats, John! (photo
courtesy Dan Burgess)*



The Tony Simms Cup was presented to VARAC & MGVR to be awarded at the VVGP. Tony was a very accomplished regional racer in his B in the 60's. The trophy was originally the Alitalia Trophy awarded to the top production sports car racer in the region. Tony gave this cup to VARAC/MGVR and managed the award personally for many years. It is awarded to the best raced, prepared and presented MG at the VVGP (by a racer who demonstrates support for the sport of Vintage MG racing). This year VARAC &

MGVR were proud to present this to Larry Smith. Larry's been a great contributor to our sport, to MGVR and a great supporter to the VVGP—well deserved. Congrats, Larry

Again; a great event, lot's of fun, lot's of track time, lot's of friends—very cool to catch up after a few down years! Keep those great cars racing! Thanks to the MGVR organizing team for this event. Thanks to Lino Baggio, Larry Smith, Alan & Diane Weller. Richard and Brenda Navin were tireless on the weekend helping in all aspects! Thanks to Colleen Samilla who did up our race awards and our event souvenirs. Thanks to this group. And Thanks to all for coming out!

Not specifically MG, we had the honor of racing with a British car with great racing history—the “Tatty Turner”. This beautiful Turner Mk I is powered by a Climax engine. and special front bodywork. Racing in the UK in the 60’s it’s presently raced by Kelvin & Declan Jones. As Kelvin said”



The “Tatty Turner” driven by Declan (photo courtesy Richard Coburn)

“it’s been the “underdog” for it’s entire racing history”. Wheeled by Declan-she was amazingly fast!

We were also honoured by the presence of some great MG racing supporters—John Burgess (the Chief) was with us Sat & Sun –spent a lot of time on Alan’s car (no it wasn’t warranty work-his warranty ends when it leaves the gate!) and Dan Burgess who we saw mainly with his head under Alan’s hood. Frank & Connie Mount were out Sunday, Frank was crewing for Mark O’Day. Great to have this MG royalty with us



Larry leading the pack in one...his usual spot all

weekend...(photo courtesy Richard Coburn)

A few more action shots..



*Mark
O'Day in
the thick
of things
(Photo
courtesy
Richard
Coburn)*

*Jim Holody over the top
of 2..(photo courtesy
Richard Coburn)*





John Kinnear hard at it (photo courtesy of Richard Coburn)



David Di Cesar in his always well turned-out A (photo courtesy Richard Coburn)



Bob Eagleson in his always quick B-GT

(photo courtesy Richard Coburn)



One final pic—highlighting the weekend—you know it's a good vintage race weekend when the trash can is full of Castrol GTX and other critical fluid empties!

So...Thanks Again! And MGVR—you have another EVENT in Sept at Put-In-Bay! Enjoy see you there

LIME ROCK PARK IS FULL OF MG HISTORY. THE TOP PHOTO WAS TAKEN AT LIME ROCK IN 1958 AND WAS A PRINT AD NAMED "OCTOGON ON THE BATTLE LINE". THE BOTTOM PHOTO WAS TAKEN AT LIME ROCK IN 2007. WE NEED TO SHOOT A THIRD IN 2023 FOR OUR 100TH - BE THERE WITH US



PLEASE EMAIL ME AT MGVR766@GMAIL.COM AND LET US KNOW IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO COME TO THE MGVR 100th AT LIME ROCK



Parting Shots:



Get ready for



LIME ROCK 2023