



RING FREE GOES RACING – AGAIN



2006 Rolex Vintage Festival

LIME ROCK PARK, CT

There were many people we have to thank for getting us into this event. At the risk of omitting someone I will not mention any names. They know who they are and know our sincerest appreciation. At the time the application was due, the car was not even painted (photo submitted is shown below) and the grid for the TransAm cars was already full. The fact that room was made for us is a testament to the cars historic value and its importance in TransAm racing history.



Jan arrived on Wednesday for the early admission to the track for trailers. He finally met in person those who made it possible for us to be here as well as many other participants from the West Coast. Over 18 cars were shipped from the West Coast for the Lime Rock and Glen events.

Thursday was Registration and Tech Inspection. Jan changed the lap belts as Tech recommended changing to the new lap belts as we still had the original belts in the car.



I arrived on Friday with my daughter Susan, granddaughter Brittany and brother-in-law Ike. Were it not for them we would have no photos or video of the car on the track. Jan went out for the first session, tire pressures at 24# all around. Best time was 1:10. Came in and found we had a slight oil leak on the right side of the engine. Jan also decided the 4:33 was the wrong gear for our rpm limit so we installed the 3:89. Using 6500 rpm the oil temperature was burried at 320, pressure between 35-40 – Not Good! The water temperature was at 175 – Very Good.



l. to r. Jan Nelson, Chuck Cantwell, Gary Underwood, Frank Dobias

Gary Underwood, of General Racing and SAAC introduced us to Chuck Cantwell, the project engineer for the 1966 Notchback project for Carroll Shelby. Mr. Cantwell seemed very impressed with our restoration efforts and we were quite honored to have met him.

Times in the afternoon session were around 1:12. Possibly the 4:11 may have been a better choice but given the oil temperature and pressure problems the 3:89 will be a little easier on the engine. Oil temp was still burried at 320. Susan, Brittany and Ike left around 5:30. Jan and I got dressed for the banquet that evening.



At the banquet, Ken Epsman and Craig Conoly introduced us to George Follmer. Jan and George reminisced about the 1970 Bridgehampton TransAm. We also introduced ourselves to Steve Earl and thanked him for accepting us into the event. Chris Eckonimacki was the Guest Speaker with many interesting stories. A very, very enjoyable evening.



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For Saturday practice we decided to remove the fan which we had installed after the Shelby Convention because of overheating in the paddock and pits. On the track we were fine. The temperatures seemed to be cool enough and the fan was helping to blow the oil from the leak around the engine compartment. Using an infra-red temperature gun



we saw readings at the oil cooler around 237° and 219° on the oil filter after the session. Removing the fan did not increase the oil or water temperatures but did greatly decrease the amount of oil sprayed on the right side of the engine and hood. Curt feels the leak is from the crankshaft seal in the timing chain cover. Our times were still around 1:12, the faster cars at 1:03.



While lined up on the false grid for the TransAm Qualifying race Saturday afternoon an official noticed water leaking from under the car. Sure enough, the rubber cap on the water pump nipple was leaking. I ran back to the trailer for the spare. By the time I returned they were sending the cars out for the pace lap. I replaced the cap but Jan had to take the Green Flag from pit lane. Starting from last place Jan was able to pass 2 cars before the end of the 10 lap race. Jan was running consistently in the 1:12 - 1:11 range. We still had the 320° plus oil temp with only 35-40 pounds of oil pressure.

AN INCREDIBLE SUNDAY

The Concors d'elegance takes place on Sunday as local laws prevent the running of unmuffled engines. The cars on display ran along the front straight and around the Big Bend. The TransAm cars were on display along pit lane.



Many of the cars with major TransAm histories had posters and we were ready with ours.



The Posters we had made did their job and brought much attention to the car and helped everyone realize the role it has played in Group II and TransAm racing.

We took a walk along the front straight looking at all the fantastic cars and continued our walk around the track. When we returned to our car, Murray Smith the Announcer for the concors came over and told us "don't go anywhere, you won something". A local TV reporter and crew came over and interviewed us about the car. Towards the end of the Awards Ceremony, Cris Vandagriff, Owner and President





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of the "Historic Motorsports Association" came along with a cart and towed Jan and the car up by the podium. Murray Smith announced *"this year the Best In Show goes to a Ford Mustang"*. They rolled the car and Jan up to the podium where Jan was presented with a Rolex Watch by Colette Bennet, National Sports Marketing Manager for Rolex.



Master of Ceremonies Murray Smith, and Rolex National Sports Marketing Manager, Colette Bennet presenting Jan with the Rolex "Best In Show" award.

RACE DAY



Vintage Car, Vintage Driver

In Mondays warm up session, lasting only 7 laps, Jans best time was still at 1:10. Oil pressure still a concern at 40 psi. We changed tires and moved around the front brake pads for the race.



Rick Kopec and Jan lined up by Curt Vogt on the false grid.

Starting in 28th position we finished 25th. Jan was able to get his fastest lap down to a 1:08, a full second under his best qualifying time at Lime Rock over 24 years ago. Oil pressure however was down to 30 psi. and burried at 320°.

After the race Ken Epsman mentioned to Jan to be at the Farewell Awards Ceremony this evening. We got there early and enjoyed another great buffet dinner. Steve Earl, the President of Lime Rock Vintage Events made some special awards at this ceremony. To our surprise Mr. Earl announced Jans name for the "Best Presentation and Performance" award in the TransAm class. A Steuben Glass Sculpture from BMW and Rolex was presented to Jan by the BMW Representative and George Follmer.



l. to r. Ken Epsman, Jan Nelson, Steve Earl

Once again this car has enabled Jan and I to meet many new friends and be a part of events which many can only dream about.



l. to r. Cris Vandagriff, Jan Nelson, Frank Dobias, Craig Conley and Jere Clark.



Car #6 and her Awards