



# *the tinyvette times*

March 17, 2012

## Kicking Off Our 2012 LeMons Racing Season at Sears Point Raceway

**Soon to be formerly known as Infineon Raceway.**

Can you believe we've been racing the Tinyvette for two years already, and even more surprising, that we are about to enter our third season of racing? The little car, and especially the team, has come a long way since that Monday in May 2010 when we dragged the car down from Oroville and started our marathon wrench-a-ton getting it ready for it's first race in August. We survived that race, and we improved at the next race, and then we started actually winning. Four trophies and an IOE later, and we get booted up into A class, then back into B, where we are now competing with our friends on the Bimmervitch and Communism R Us teams. Oh, and Petty Cash Racing, and I guess also Bernal Dads, and OK, Old F.A.R.T.S., and maybe that white MR2 that stole 16<sup>th</sup> place from us on the last lap of our last Sears Point race, and OK sure, a bunch of others we're not that interested in, but who are still fun to race with.

So now the 2012 season has arrived for the west coast teams and we are ready! Almost. We'll be ready.

Sears Pointless, our first race of the season, is next weekend.

After that we've got an Opel event in April, then our next LeMons race at the end of June in Buttonwillow, followed by a return to Thunderhill in September, and finally the December race at Chucwalla Springs Raceway, where ever that is. And do take note that the Buttonwillow race will be a true 24 hour race, non-stop from 10 AM Saturday until 10 AM Sunday.

In addition to the racing we'll probably take to car down to Monterey again for the Concourse d'LeMons and maybe again for the ALMS race at Laguna Seca for another attempt at a photo opportunity with the Corvette Racing guys. And as long as we have the car why not take it to local car shows and let kids sit in a real-race-car? All this, however, presumes that the car survives it's races. (Why is it that Tinyvette-captain Mike seems to be the only one on the team who even considers this every time we enter the car in a race?)

### **The Pointless Team**

The team for the Pointless race includes Alan Brattesani, team co-captain and car co-owner, whose experience at Sears Point



Tinyvette and friends "sprinting" down the front straight during the 2011 Arse-Freeze Apalooza at Buttowillow Raceway. We came to this race with high hope and a strategy that could get us our first top 10 finish. Alas, between mistakes, some bad luck, we did, OK.



Looking good, on the right side anyway, at the conclusion of the 2011 Arse-Freeze Apalooza.

reaches back about 50 decades to when he took a Bob Bondurante racing course there, followed immediately, after raising a family and doing the career thing, by last October's Skankaway race. Alan knows this track well, enough.

Also driving is Alan's son Zep, who still hasn't missed a race yet (gets yet another gold star), has raced at Sears Point twice, and gives himself credit for racing the Bernal Dad's car into a spin just before turn 4 during our last race here. Oh, he introduced LeMons to the "Finger of Shame" as depicted in the photo below, which of course fellow LeMons races provided captions for.

Bernhard Wagener is still stuck in Germany, in winter, but when he gets back, eventually, he'll be dragging a 2.4L Opel back with him. That will be interesting.

Mike Meier, the other half of the team leadership and ownership, finally knocked himself off his pedestal by getting his first black flag at the Buttonwillow race last December. Finally admitting that he too is flawed mortal, he'll be driving and coordinating the Tinyvette effort at Pointless.

Geoff Straw is also returning to Sears Point to support the team with his fire-breathing tools, his wrenching skills, spotting ability, and especially his energy and enthusiasm.

Also supporting the effort will be Ed Clark, formerly of Fraidy Cat racing, the team that ran that awesome Jaguar for a year. Ed was with us at the 24 hour race at Reno-Fernley last year and provided not only race support but breakfast for the team.



Zep and the "Finger of Shame", as captioned by Chicagozer.



Geoff, trying to find the clutch.

Our fourth driver is former Fraidy-captain Eric Donnelly, who is also a veteran of the Tinyvette's race at Reno-Fernley. At that race, his first in the Tinyvette, he told us how much fun the car was, while still making it clear to us that it was by no means a V12 Jaguar. He did go on to say that with just 20 more horsepower the car could really be a contender. Well, Reno-Fernley was our last race on that motor, and we now do have maybe 20 more horsepower. He'll be pleasantly surprised, even if the car still isn't a V12 Jaguar.

Brian Doty wanted to drive for us and we had him all signed up, but the situation changed and now he'll be supporting a Porsche 928 team. Brian's "Estate" LeMons car is a 928. But he'll be checking in on us and I expect he'll want a few laps in the car on test day.

Kai Hagmann is our newest addition to the team. Actually, he's been on the team for over a year, but he has school and swimming and hang gliding and things like that to take care of first. Such are the demands life makes on 6<sup>th</sup> graders. But he'll be at this race with us, helping where he can, clicking photos, spotting, and keeping us cheered up, and by his very presence, reminding us to use only our nice words.

### **Pointless Race Weekend Logistics**

Our plans for the race are similar to past races. We'll get the car and nearly all of our gear to the track early, on Thursday, hopefully before it gets too late. Tinyvette-captain Mike will camp at the track that night so he can get an early start on Friday getting everything ready.

At 7AM we move into our garage. We've got the third one from the gas pumps. At least we'll stay dry, mostly, and it provides a great view of the track. We'll still be doing our fueling in the open paddock, however, right across from our garage.

We'll get the car tech'ed as early as possible on Friday, which means our guys need to get to the track early or else Mike will take the car through tech himself, and you know what that means. Anyway, with tech out of the way early our drivers will have the opportunity to get in a little practice and we will have to time to fix whatever we get flunked for. We usually have no problems with tech or BS, but it could happen.

The race starts at 10:30 AM on Saturday, right after the mandatory driver's meeting, and runs until at 6 PM before it takes a break for the evening. At this time we'll inspect the car and fix whatever needs to be fixed, then we'll either go find food, or join the parties raging in the paddock, or just go to sleep, depending on how things go.

Racing resumes at 10 AM on Sunday and ends at 5 PM. The awards are presented at 5:30, and then they kick us out of the track. We're usually packed and on the road back to Davis within an hour.

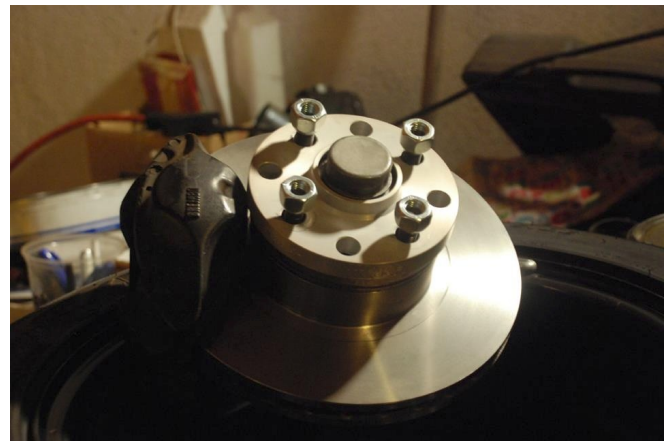
### **The Pointless Car**

We've repair all of the damage from the Buttonwillow race – the door, fender, motor mounts, fuel pump, and some other stuff that got bent during our incident at Sunrise. We also installed a fuel cut-off valve in the rear, right at the gas tank, so that if we are ever dumping fuel again like we did at BW we can shut it off at the source. So all of that is good.



Geoff, putting the decals on the new door, late one frosty night, just before our SFChron photo shoot.

Improvements made to the car include vented disk brakes up front. This should solve the heat problems that we've been experiencing lately, what with our car getting faster and running longer, and our drivers getting faster. We may, even should, also get more stopping power out of them, and that would be nice, unless we start flat-spotting tires.



The rear brakes also got larger wheel cylinders and that will give us a little more help from the rears. But the shoes back there still look new so I wonder if they had even helped us out at all. Maybe we should just take them off. Anyway, we also got a larger brake booster, courtesy of Gil Wesson (Opel GT Source), meaning less effort for more braking, and easier to flat-spot tires.

Another improvement is a higher-capacity (oil capacity) pan for the transmission. It is a hand-crafted custom job by the famous Opel race car builder Bob Legere, aka RallyBob. It was a gift, something to help our cause. We're getting a lot of love from the Opel world. Anyway, this should really help with our transmission temperatures which we are now pretty

sure was the cause of our many transmission failures. (Hot oil = lower viscosity oil = synchros don't work right = grind up our synchros.) Oh, and the pan has a drain plug, so no more spilling hot oil all over your arms. Such luxury! And it includes a port for a temperature sensor, if we wanted to add one. But not to worry, we also have two spare transmissions ready to go, so if Geoff and Ed get bored because we're not breaking anything this time, we can let them swap trannies at the end of the day, then swap them back, just for practice.



At this time Alan and I are dealing with a tire-fender clearance issue. With our new front brakes we needed a spacer so the wheel could clear the caliper. To see how bad, or not bad, our situation was we disconnected the leaf spring and jacked up the wheel until it was against the bump stops. The tire barely made it into the fender. The fenders have since been rolled, giving us maybe 3/4" more clearance. Then, using a stack of washers, we figured out that we could get by with an

8 mm wheel spacer, instead of the 15 mm spacer we currently had. We had looked into getting wheels with a larger backspace but they can't be made and shipped here before the race. Our C4-style alloy wheels have a very slightly larger back-space so if we have to it might be worth putting fresh tires on them. Fender flares are an option, and may be necessary if we damage the fenders at this race because none are any good at body work. But, we'll need a little budget forgiveness from the Judges before doing that.

We'll have four fresh tires for this race. The ones on the car now would be fine for another dry-weather race, but rain is predicted. We'll have the wipers installed, the rain gutter installed, some weather stripping on the driver-side door, and lots of RainX on both sides of the windshield, and maybe we'll mount a paper towel rack or a box of tissues in the car.

There have been a number of other small improvements made to the car. We've got a thermal switch now, so no worries about forgetting to turn on the fan. The radio situation has improved. It won't be spoiling the video any more and we will be able to record radio comms. The radio will also be installed where the driver can reach the volume knob.

We've installed a small time-of-day clock in the car, for those on our team who just have to hurry and finish their stints before their favorite TV show or game starts. The kill switch issue will be resolved with a stick attached to the handle of the switch. Most likely everyone on the team will actually be able to get to the kill switch without it, we drive a tiny Vette after all, but we've got it in case we need it. We do expect Tech will want to see us operate the switch ourselves.



The damage was superficial, or so we thought, until the car ate its fuel pump and started pumping gas onto the track, then almost ate through another one before we discovered the broken motor mounts.

## Pointless Event Details



Date: Friday-Sunday, March 23-25, 2012

Location: Infineon Raceway, Sonoma, CA

Friday: 10 AM - 5 PM, technical and BS inspections

Saturday: 9:30 AM driver's meeting, racing from 10:30 AM until 6 PM

Sunday: short driver's meeting at 9:15 AM, racing from 10:00 AM until 5 PM. Awards presented at 5:30 PM. Hungry tigers released on to the grounds at 8 PM.

## Pointless Fan Guide

Members of the team will be at the track from Thursday night until Sunday after the race and someone will be in or near their garage at all times, so stop by anytime for an autograph, or a hug or a wedgie, or to just hang out and see how this LeMons racing is done.

We're expecting a few visitors from the NorCal Opel world. Keith and his brother, who came by last year, and Gil Wesson, the guy who owns Opel GT Source, the world's main source for Opel GT parts and the guy who has given us lots of parts. Neil will be bringing a few friends, and some other Opel

friends may come. Make sure to invite your people. We'll have shelter that includes a view of the track, plus we'll have some refreshments.

There is an admission fee, \$20/day, \$30/weekend, but Friday is free. For that low price you have pretty much free run of the place. You can go anywhere except where the racing is happening. That includes the grand stands, the paddock, anywhere around the circuit. So when that Crown Vic get dragged in for the fourth time, belching smoke and puking vital fluids, you can go to that team's pit and ooh and ah and commiserate, or worse, offer advice/tell them how to fix it. Or, just park yourself at turn 4 and enjoy the semi-frequent spins. Or best, hang out around the penalty box and enjoy the spectacle of guilt, shame, and humiliation of the up-and-coming Scott Speeds of the world.

## Pointless Paddock Neighbors

Our paddock neighbors, across from our garage, will hopefully be the Bimmervitch and Communists R Us teams, both former Davis folks, friends, and close competitors. They may turn out to be our main challengers. Them and maybe Petty Cash Racing (the blue Jeep), and the Bernal Dads Volvo, Old F.A.R.T.S., and, never mind.

# other tinyvette nonsense

## Team Tinyvette in the Chronicle

The Tinyvette was featured in the San Francisco's "My Rides" on Sunday February 5.

The screenshot shows a web article from the San Francisco Chronicle. The title is "My Ride - 1969 Opel GT". The author is Mike Meier, dated Sunday, February 5, 2012. The article features a photo of Mike Meier and Alan Brattessani standing next to a yellow 1969 Opel GT. The text describes them as a materials scientist and a retired chemist/business owner, respectively, who are the core of Team Tinyvette. The article also includes social media sharing options (Twitter, Facebook, Print, Email, Share, Comments) and a "Most Read" list on the right side of the page.

We had contacted them with our story in November and they were interested and wanted to set up a photo shoot in mid December. We warned them that there was no guarantee that

we'd still have a car after the upcoming Buttonwillow race, and sure enough, the car we brought home from that race was not photogenic. But we got it fixed up, mostly, and Stephen Finerty came up and spent an hour or so with us taking photos, and a few weeks later... we're famous! More or less. Some friends noticed the article, and one guy called Alan to try to sell him some old Opel parts.

But mostly, for us, it was part of the fun of being in LeMons. And most of the comments on the Chronicle's web site expressed fondness for the Opel GT, which is a big part of the fun of owning this car.

## Opel Love

When we first got the car we started posting to the OpelGT.com forums just to introduce ourselves and start up a dialog with people who might be able to help us. At the time we didn't know a thing about Opels. Anyway, reactions were mixed, with some asking us to not destroy a good car, or to not race in LeMons because where weld crap to your car. But others were supportive, and after our first race, we got posts like this one

Hey Mike,

What can I say.....Yellow Opel with a wing on the rear, can relate to both!!!!!! This story told from the first post to the completion of the LeMons race was really a treat for me and would say to a lot of others on this forum. You made us feel included, and involved in the rebuild, rolled paint job (Jim), T1 to the checkered flag. Thanks, to you and the team for a job well done.

P.S. Your first picture from the above post will be my new screen saver!!!!!! – Micah1

and after our second race, this one:

I am totally impressed with your performance. We ran at Buttonwillow last year and could not even finish. Most people have no idea the preparation that is needed to keep an old car running flat out for two days. We wanted to return to Buttonwillow but we just ran at Willow Springs in the Chumpcar 10 hour race. With the holidays in full swing the wives said no more this year. Hope to see you at a race in 2011.  
– Californaigting

And recently, amid final preparations for Pointless, we got this:

All the best to you and Team TinyVette! It's a shame for us Eastern folks that you are so far away; it would be an honor and hoot to stop by and root for you guys!

I always thought when this series first was made public in Car and Driver, it was racing with an emphasis on junk cars and a gimmick (tiger tails coming out of the gas tank, giant paper mache tortoise shells for the roof) but after reading about your car and the work you have done to her, she is a real and legit little racing car. The dilemmas and solutions you guys have experienced are real.

It'll be fun following your exploits for the coming season. The best of luck to all! – MikeNotigan

So with the acceptance of Opels in LeMons complete, it did not come as a complete surprise when RallyBob posted this today:

There's also a chance a few of us forum members will be running a Lemons car in the next year or so (Opel Manta). Got a car, got the drivers. Just need some time...

The love and support we've gotten from the Opel community has been great. The people on the OpelGT forum have been very helpful, Gil has provided a lot of very good advice and discounts on parts, even free parts. We've had people come over to help work on the car at Tinyvette Corporate's Race Fabrication Facility (Mike's place) and even at our first race two former Opel guys jumped in to help with our first of many mid-race transmission swaps. Keith gave us our carburetor, RallyBob has sent us custom parts he made, and Don loaned us his truck to haul to Pointless 2011. We knew at the very beginning of all this that the Opel people were great folks and they've shown that many times. Team Tinyvette will not let them down. We'll race long and clean and will keep the Tinyvette is a condition that represents classic Opels well.

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## Museum-Quality Tinyvette

We came through last August's Thunderhill race without a scratch, so all we had to do is wash the car before we took it over to the California Automobile Museum for a month-long exhibit of Opels in the Car Club Cavalcade. The car was parked between Gil's beautiful Conrero tribute car and the Trimp family's sparkly pink 400 hp Opel GT dragster. Gil brought lots of race Opel memorabilia for the display case and we put our IOE trophy in there with all that palm-size history. And of course we had some LeMons race video playing non-stop, just like LeMons.



Overall, the exhibit looked great. We put extra effort into the display and the museum staff noticed and expressed their appreciation, telling us, and of course we believe them, that it was the best CCC display they had seen in a long time.

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## More Tinyvette Press?

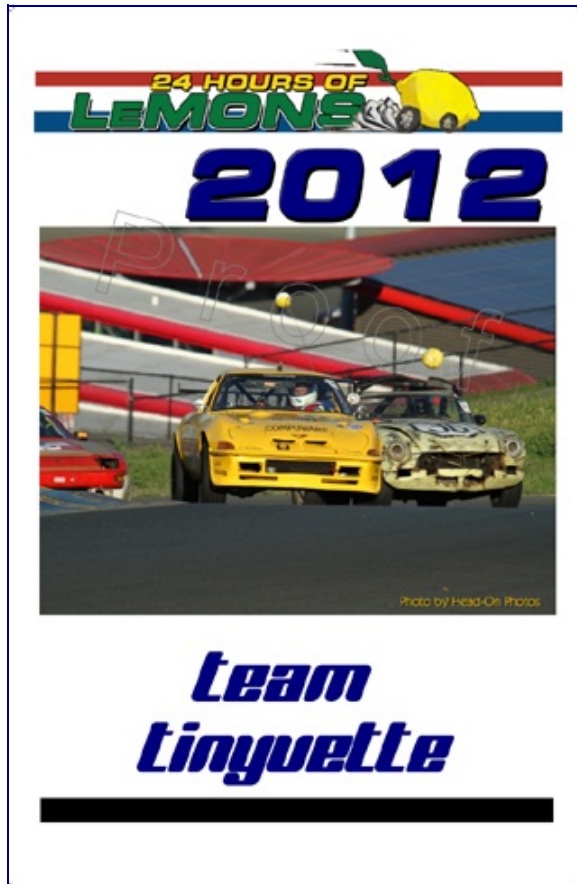
So now that we've made it as high as the Chronicle, what's next? Mike is shooting for a New Yorker article, once his writing is up to that standard, which with study and practice should be in about 40 years. Madeline Brattesani is encouraging us to submit an article to Grass Roots Motorsports, seeing as they support LeMons and all. But then again Car & Driver has really stepped up to support LeMons in a big way, so maybe something like the cover below is a possibility.



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## Tinyvette Swag

We made up calendars for the team and friends of the team. Not only do they look nice, but the team will have no excuse for scheduling a vacation or wedding or birth of a baby for any of our race weekends.



We also have a few bumper stickers and post cards left. Let us know if you want one.

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## Tinyvette Video

We're still getting caught up on our videos, but we have managed to get most of Arse-Freeze and Going for Broken done along with some video from the Skankaway race last October. The four-camera edits we use really help you get the sense of what these races are like, and when we can we also grab some shots from around the paddock, talking to other teams and watching the craziness. So, enjoy, and let us know if you want a DVD of any of these videos. They are all available online on Mike's Vimeo channel. He has set up separate albums for each race to make it easier to find them. The link to that album is:

<https://vimeo.com/kstreetstudio/albums>



***Team Tinyvette***

**What do you mean  
it's not a Corvette?**