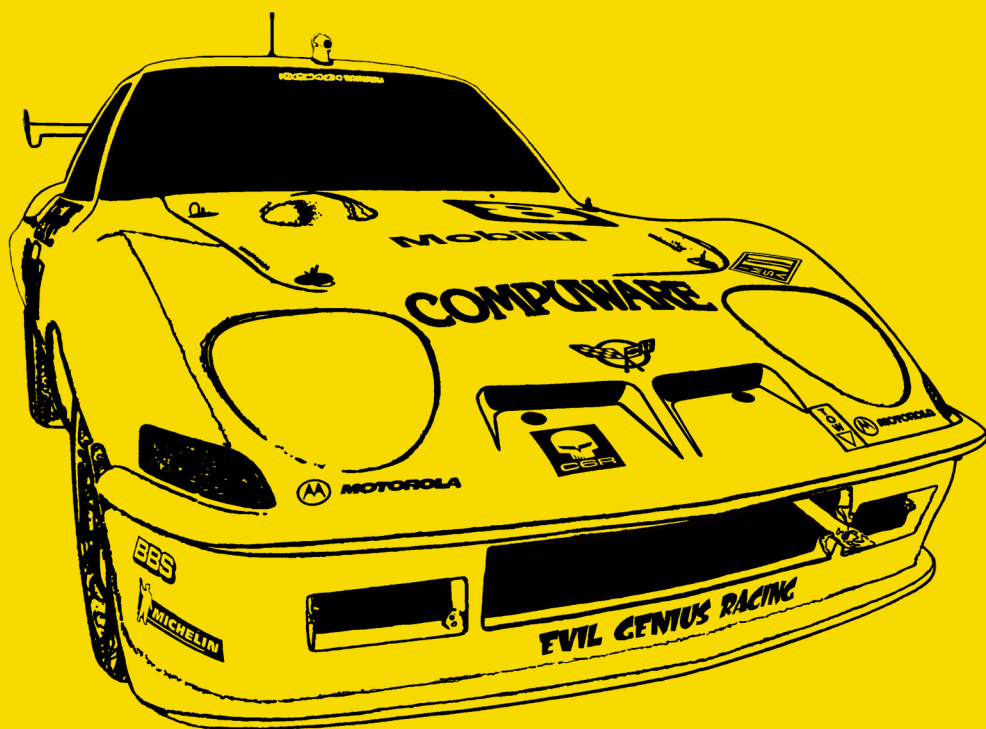


Team Tingvette

Today Lemons, Tomorrow Le Mans!



Thirty-four races on five different tracks, 18,874 miles in 6,592 laps, two events at Bonneville, one Cannonball Run, countless memories, and lifelong friends.

Mike Meier

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Fingers Crossed

You show me a racer who says he has never forgotten to tighten his lug nuts, and I'll show you a liar. – unknown

Shortly after midnight and eighty-five days after this all began I was unrolling my sleeping bag in the back of Bernhard's big box truck, parked outside the gate at Thunderhill Raceway, and hoping to get my first full night's sleep in over a week. With any luck we'd be able to get in early and grab a good spot in the paddock.

The day before we had been mechanics, fabricators, fools who had started out with wrenching resumes that didn't go much past changing our own oil. Flip a couple of pages on the calendar and we were now a race team, ready to get in the car and go for it. This transition, from builder to racer, had been abrupt and in some ways surreal. We had become accustomed to long days working on the car, and we had learned so much since May, and we had done so much, but to be honest it was just barely enough let us bring an apparently healthy car to this race. I knew the Tinyvette would be good enough to start the race but after that, after an hour, or three, what then? As for the racing itself, the driving, the fueling, the traffic and the penalties, I had no idea at all how that would go.



Fresh off the trailer and almost ready to race.

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Shortly after sunrise the track opened and an army of RVs, trailers, trucks, Vanagans, motorcycles, whatever people brought to this race, started inching towards the gate. There were no bathrooms outside the gate so I was a little happier than most when we finally got in. Bernhard and I found a great spot with power and it was located not far from the penalty/inspection area and bathrooms. The rest of the team would be arriving soon but by then Bernhard and I would have our paddock space nicely set up.

Then we unloaded the car. My gawd it sure was bright and shiny. I had never had the chance to get a good look at it in full daylight since it got painted. It looked impressive, and not at all Lemony. Most of the cars in Lemons are either junkers, at least in appearance, or are so battle scarred that they had become junkers. There are some very nicely prepared cars in Lemons too, but they are definitely in the minority.

Still, I was a bit concerned. We had to get through tech and BS inspections, plus back in those days Lemons had something called the *People's Curse*. The *Curse* is where one car, voted on by the teams themselves, would get destroyed by a bulldozer or excavator or some other large, cruel machine. I admit it, the whole thing was quite entertaining, but I felt it was mean-spirited. Every team worried at least a little about the possibility of being cursed, especially newcomers like us. Our car had a mostly straight body and a \$30 paint job that looked great from a distance, and combined those two things screamed "cheaty", so I felt we stood a chance of being a leading candidate in that election. If we drove like ass hats we'd be sure to win it. Whatever. If the curse happens to us we'll deal with it. Meanwhile we still had a lot to do before we would be ready to race.

The technical inspection actually went well. We had one thing to fix and that was quickly taken care of. The bigger issue with tech, for us, was that it was the car's introduction to the Lemons community. Quite a few people were looking it over and once they could see past the shiny paint I figured they were satisfied that ours was a Lemons-grade race car. Later that day, during testing, and while I was in the tower observing, I heard several people exclaim "No way that's a \$500 car." It turns out that's not an uncommon statement heard in and around Lemons, but my feelings at the time were mixed. On one hand, we might have just gotten a couple votes for the curse, and on the other, people thought the car looked great. Soon afterwards several of those



Our little token of respect for the institution of Lemons justice was well-received. *Photo by Phil Greden*

people came by our pits and examined the car. I think they were satisfied. We had a Lemon.

The BS inspection is where we "explain" our build, defend our budget, and convince the race organizers that our entry was in the

spirit of Lemons. Jay, the reason this race series existed, took one look at our car and said, "It's an Opel, you can't do anything for these, so just tell me what you spent." He also asked to see under the hood. Jay was pleased to see a crusty old Opel engine in there instead of the V6 another Lemons GT team had run. I told him we were \$150 over budget mostly due to the cost of the sway bars, and while he was mulling that over I signaled to Bernhard, who was sitting in the car, to pull the lever. The headlight pods flipped open to reveal an excellent single-malt Scotch in one and a "racer" brand beer in the other. He loved it, told us to close it up, called the other judges over, and told us to do it again, then again for a guy with the video camera. The result? Good laughs were had by all and we didn't get any penalty laps for our budget excesses.

Neither Brian nor Bernhard had driven the car yet and I had only driven it for two 20 minute sessions, and that was before the new clutch and tuning, so we each paid a hundred dollars to get some test-day track time. Brian went first and, well, let's pretend we didn't send Brian out with all of the lug nuts loose, that in our haste to get to the track we just put them on tight enough to trailer the car, and let's just remind everyone of the old saying, "Show me a guy who has never forgotten to tighten his lug nuts and I'll show you a liar." Let's just pretend none of this ever happened.

Back out for a few more laps Brian radioed in that handling improved greatly once the lug nuts had been tightened. That was nice

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to hear. Not as nice was his report of rising engine temperatures. We brought him in and tightened the fan belt and put the mechanical fan back in. Apparently the electric pusher fan wasn't quite up to the job. We also discovered we still had a serious transmission oil leak. It looked like we'd be adding lots of oil to it during the race, at least until the inspectors discovered the oily mess under the car and parked us. Fortunately and unfortunately, Saturday would solve that problem for us in another way.

Before day's end Bernhard got some time in the car, and Brian a little more, and just before the end of the day I got in a few laps. We were all happy with the car and felt guardedly optimistic about the race.

As the day drew to an end the guys had a chance to wander the paddock to see what other people brought. All of them came back smiling and with stories to tell about this or that goofy car. Yes, the Lemons paddock is a fascinating place. The cars, the costumes, the extraordinary effort that goes into devising and then executing a theme. People have called this series the Burning Man of motor sports and it was easy to see why. There was a definite counter-culture element to all this. "Serious racers" brought "serious cars" and took it all very seriously. Lemons laughs at itself and is known for its good-natured fatalism. Serious racers have to deal with thousand page rule books. Lemons has a 5 page handout. Serious racers exploit any loophole they can find and/or rationalize and will protest any other team they feel does the same. Lemons has a whiners clause in its skimpy rule book, and if you protest another team, well, there's always the *People's Curse*. In Lemons, the racing itself is earnest, and that's very different from serious.

On top of all that there is a performance art aspect to Lemons. All cars are "themed" and some teams take it much farther than that, showing up in costume, in character, acting out their themes, and staying in costume and character all weekend. Star Trek, Tiger Woods, Tiger Blood, Batman and Robin, Bob the Builder, Cal Worthington, Dumb and Dumber, Ken and Barbie, and many more fantastic acts. We tried our best to look like a Corvette factory team but, well, never mind. Maybe next time we'll go with Geoff's big time porn video producer idea.

Like Burning Man, for a weekend the otherwise hot and barren asphalt landscape at a race track becomes home to a village of happy idiots doing something that makes no beneficial contribution whatsoever to society, is something that could potentially kill them or result in divorce, and is something that they do just for fun. I guess that's why we were here.

It was getting dark, the track had gone cold, and we had run out of things we could do to the car so we drove in to town and found the best, and probably only, restaurant in town. Everyone had worked so hard to get here and we had to celebrate that. Tomorrow would be why we did it, why we spent the whole summer putting this car together, and tonight would be the final hours of putting the team together.

This was the first time we all had a chance to sit together, to get to know each other better. Some drank, most didn't. We joked. I apologized on behalf of Danika Patrick, that she could not be here with us, that she must have had more important things to do, that she'd come to regret turning down a seat in our car.

Eventually we got down to business. I described how things would likely go on Saturday, how we needed to have the driver in the car shortly after the driver's meeting, how the cars would file out onto track and once the transponder check was completed the green flag would drop. We had radios so we'd alert the driver as soon as that happened. We discussed pit stops and how important it was that we do the fueling correctly. We talked about the car, its strengths and weaknesses and how we didn't really know what those were so we needed to be alert and take care of the it.

At one point I set out some semi-serious goals for the team. Don't get hurt, don't catch fire, don't get towed, and finish the race. Accomplishing all four would mean we had a perfect weekend. The serious side of that was my concern that any of these guys get hurt in a car Alan and I built, fire probably being the worse case scenario. If we failed here the other two goals didn't matter.

Assuming we didn't catch fire, setting the goal of not getting towed was just my way of saying we needed to pay attention to the health of the car. This was our first race with it and problems were bound to show up, so bring the car in before the tow truck has to be sent out to get you because by that time a fixable problem will most

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likely have become un-fixable.

The last goal, finish the race, was the one goal every team sets for itself, and it is not an easy one to reach. These races run for 15 hours or so and in that time cars cover seven hundred and sometimes eight hundred miles. Drive smart, drive clean, drive quick, but drive each lap in such a way that you could complete a thousand of them without ever making a mistake.

Back in the paddock the other teams were partying and our guys went out to join them. I mostly hung around our pits and before long Zep or Geoff, maybe both, came back to tell me that another team had their decals made that day by a company in Willows, and they were still open. Our's had not shown up and it was looking like we'd be racing a plain yellow Tinyvette.

I called, they were open, and I drove into town. I had the sketches and artwork with me on a thumb drive. For \$250 they'd be delivered to us by the end of the day, meaning midnight. Such freaking good luck. Back at the track again I was suddenly so tired that I thought I was going to fall asleep while walking around. I returned to our pits and rolled my bedding out next to the car thinking I'd catch a few before the decals arrived. I vaguely remember someone saying they were here, giving someone my wallet, and falling back asleep.

Sunrise at a race track has it's own special kind of magic. I can't think of anything in this sport that says potential, promise, and possibilities, more than the first rays of sunlight hitting the tower, the track, and our pit. It also reminds you that you are in for a long day and that it is best to get going now.

I folded my bedding into a ball and stuffed it into the trunk of my car, put on a fresh t-shirt and socks, and got busy. The decals looked great but I'd let Geoff put them on the car. We already had enough fuel to get through the day but I needed to make sure the in-car cameras were ready. There were still a thousand little things like this to take care of but I have to say, it was already a damned fine day.

People in other pits were stirring. You could hear short bursts of power tools and grinders now and then and the smell of bacon was starting to mix with the morning light to create a very potent version of a motor sports aphrodisiac. Alan and Zep showed up with fresh donuts

for the judges, pink box diplomacy is what we called it, and a breakfast burrito for me. Geoff was moving around in his van and Bernhard was still asleep in the cab of his truck. We'd be a whole team again in a few minutes.

Brian would drive first. He had the most experience in Lemons and could manage a car that was essentially still in its testing phase. With some 121 other cars on track we needed a driver who knew what the starts were like and who could handle the insane traffic.

Bernhard would go next. We needed his experience in the car as well. Zep would go next and then Alan. Us rookies would probably be running short stints so there would probably still be time left for me to race that day. As things would turn out, we'd have a very short day.

The drivers's meeting was funny, as usual, but it was also serious business. There was the usual flag review, a few words from the safety crews, notices of last minute rules and procedure changes, and it concluded with the reminder that all this was serious, so now go have fun.

Things were getting crazy now. We were warming the motor and strapping Brian into the car. We put the hood on and the pins in while one last check of the lug nuts was done. Brian was talking up a storm. Pointing at the fuel gauge, "When should I pit." Me, "I don't know. Shoot for an hour and a half." "Fuel, when should I pit for fuel?" "I don't know. The gauge reads backwards. Pit in an hour and a half and we'll figure it out."

Everyone was wracking their brains for any thing else they could do to make sure this came off without a hitch. Geoff and Zep helped Brian back out of our pit and after a few seconds he disappeared after turning towards the hot pits. This was out of my hands now.

Geoff and Zep headed for pit wall to watch the start of the race and especially watch start/finish for the green flag. I tidied up our pit a bit then joined them. Brian drove past. The car looked so little, but it also looked wonderful, barely believable.

What a fantastic field of cars. The Death Cab, Faster Farms, the Überbird, and the venerable Bernal Dad's Volvo wagon. The Rancho drove by. Those guys did such a great job with the body transplant onto a BMW. The Scallywags, with a full sized ship's wheel manned by a

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pirate skeleton were back and the super friendly and very successful Eyesore Racing was there sporting some kind of flying carpet/middle eastern date palm theme, and as always, the whole team was in costume. The purple and gold King Henry V-8th Cadillac, intimidating because of its size, was here to turn laps slow enough that even we could pass them. The “Hyder” box truck was a favorite at this race. It was themed as illegal immigrants that had just crashed through chain link fence at the Canadian border and were being pursued by the Canadian border patrol. Of course they were in costume, which for one team member included a maple leaf shaved into his chest. When they showed up at BS inspection the doors to the box burst open and the “illegals” inside it fled and were chased down by the Canadian border patrol agents.

This near endless parade of ornamental crapcans included Spank’s Mr Bean-themed Austin Min. The Kill Phil Pussy Wagon, a Kill Bill movie-inspired theme, made their debut, complete with costumes, including an excellent Uma Thurman character. Ted and friends of Dirty Duck Racing were here with a car that would later get the brake-actuated animated roof ornament they’ve become known for. And miraculously the Zombee was back. It would never fully recover from the “flight” it took here the year before and that was a good thing. Zany, creative, and passionate, this series is a Red Bull Flugtag on wheels.

We watched as a tow truck went out to pick up a car that broke down before the race even started. Hopefully there would be only one of those this time. It was time to start this thing. The other 120 cars kept cycling and once the tow truck was back in the green flag dropped, the radios came alive, and we were racing.

I watched the spectacle for a few minutes then returned to our pits to see if there was anything that still needed to be done. If nothing else we needed to be ready for when the car pitted or if for some reason it came in early. This was also our home for the weekend, one furnished with tools and tires, fuel bottles and fire extinguishers, folding chairs under pop-ups. It was immersed in the sounds of the race and surrounded by fellow villagers in this community of off-beat racers. The whale songs of over one hundred cars running full tilt up the back straight behind us and down the front straight before us was in a way a reward for the months of preparation. It was beautiful, and so too



The race had just begun, but things were looking good so far.

were the sounds and frenetic activity of the nearly one thousand habitants of this village. The crowded paddock was a scene of happy and anxious teams and families, some tending to cars that had broken already or had not yet made it out on track, the others just enjoying the scene, the sun, and the absurdity of it all.

I looked across our paddock space and noticed Alan, alone at his truck sorting gear, and realized what this moment was for us. I walked over and quietly said, "We did it. We took the green flag. Our car is out there racing." Without looking at me he smiled and continued sorting his gear. I returned to my seat, sat down, and finished eating my breakfast burrito.

Was this fate, a long forgotten dream come true, latent tendencies finally expressed? Carroll Shelby once said that he had never met a man who as a kid did not want to be a race car driver. I was a man Carroll would have met. When I was a kid I'd spend any Saturday or Sunday a race was on TV sitting alone on our black and white vinyl couch, watching our black and white TV, barely moving. Andretti and Unser at Indianapolis and Phoenix, Petty and Yarborough and Allison at Charlotte and Atlanta, and if I was really lucky, a Cam Am race with Jim Hall's winged Chaparral and maybe even Mark Donahue. I wasn't paying much attention to the names. I wasn't looking for heroes. I wanted to be in one of those cars. I knew I would probably never race anything bigger than my HO-scale slot cars, and over time memories

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Brian was really hustling the car around the track. His confidence in his ability and the car's shows here. *Photo by Steve Cabana*

of those afternoons would fade, but whatever it was that held me glued to that couch all those weekends would stay with me. And now, some 50 years later, I was racing. Was I a kid again? No, I am an adult doing something I had wanted to do since I was a kid. I was racing.

Brian radioed in after a few minutes saying the car was fine and the gauges looked good. Ten minutes or so later he radioed in about some asshole getting in his way, not letting him pass, and that car smoking enough to make Brian sick. I guess we all deal with stress differently, and did he really expect the other car to just let him pass?

Brian's chase went on for several laps before he got by that car. The video showed he really did have to work hard to accomplish that. It was good racing. A few minutes later Brian got on the radio to report a transmission problem. He was stuck in 3rd gear and was coming in.

The car was back in just as the rest of the team had reassembled. "It was stuck in 3rd gear." What did that mean? How do you fix that? Someone said something about a synchro. I knew transmissions had them and sort of knew what they did, but I didn't know what they actually were or how they worked. Our only option was to swap in the parts car's transmission. Zep had done the clutch job earlier so he took over while Geoff, in true Geoff form, was right in there with him.

Brian decompressed, got something to drink, and apologized. It wasn't his fault. I mentioned the mysterious broken part we had found

in the pan. It wasn't completely surprising to Alan and I that the transmission broke. What was surprising was the eight more transmissions we'd go through during the next year or so.

About that time Mr. Bob and a friend came by. Mr. Bob had a long history with Opels and had dropped by by months ago to give us some tools, a field service manual, and even helped work on the car for a few hours. He had come to this race to see how we were doing and recognized immediately what was going on. He and his friend jumped in and started helping. What was it about this Opel community? We've gotten so much help, many more offers of help, and now this!

After the tranny swap Bernhard took the car back out. Everything seemed to be working properly and this transmission did not leak oil. How lucky can you get? The shifter pointed off to the right for some reason, but we could hardly complain. It was working. (We later figured out the transmission was originally from an Opel Manta.)

Too soon Bernhard was in for a penalty, "passing under yellow". The judges had us park the car with some others, probably because they wanted to put together a parade of shame, but it seems they forgot about us and when we asked they just said "It's an Opel, that's punishment enough, go back out and race." Bernhard went back out and drove some great laps and after an hour or so brought the car back in for Zep.

Zep was doing great, he even knocked off a great 2:36 lap, then had an off that he said had something to do with avoiding another car's dive bomb, (Video showed otherwise.) but an off is an off is a penalty so we all met in the penalty area again. The judges talked to Zep to assess his state of mind and before long they let us go again without making us do anything humiliating. I think they liked our car. Zep went back out and spun in T6 of his first lap, so back in "penalty" again they explained that we now had three and that got us a three hour penalty, which left us with one hour of driving in the day, and if we got a fourth penalty during that hour we'd get parked. We elected to take the rest of the day off.

Our little "time out" probably wasn't a bad thing. It gave us time to inspect and work on the car, visit other teams, and relax and enjoy the race as spectators. The engine temperature had been a problem all day and we had been nursing the car to keep it below 220°F. We now

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had time to look into that further. Zep's spin had loosened the exhaust hanger so we fixed it. We also installed a timer for the driver, rotated the tires and did other minor things, then we discovered a problem with the right-side tie rod end. Bernhard was concerned about a possible catastrophic failure, insisting that he'd been there before and it wasn't pretty. Geoff thought it would be OK but we'd need to monitor it. We didn't have a spare so that was our only option, other than quitting.

Sunrise felt different on Sunday. The first rays seemed to be telling me we screwed up, we missed our chance, we had let the Universe down. The second rays said they would give us one more chance, so get up now and start taking care of business.

Sunday's morning ritual was as hectic as Saturday's. Fuel the car, finish putting on decals, install the driver, check the cameras, check the mirrors, check the radios, check the lug nuts, cross your fingers. Alan would be driving first.

I tried to imagine what Alan was thinking as he backed the car out and headed for the entrance to the hot pits. I vaguely recall just telling him to relax, have fun, and stay safe. He was pretty quiet and his



By Sunday morning, now all stickered up, the car was finally done.



Early in Alan's Sunday morning stint, being pursued by the Faster Farms "Chicken Car."
Photo by Steve Cabana

suppressed smile told me he was either already having fun or was contemplating his doom. Either way, this was his moment after an intensive 85 day regimen of wrenching, bleeding, and the work-outs we had started calling Opel yoga.

Video showed that on Alan's way through the paddock he stopped to recenter the removable steering wheel. You have to get it lined up correctly or it won't go back on and Alan was there for several minutes, patiently and serenely trying to do that. No cussing, no flailing, no complaining over the radio, just sticking with the job at hand. His next hour or so would require that kind of patience, perseverance, and a little luck.

Race starts are interesting, but this being Alan's first time in a race, I thought the pre-green lapping would make for a good warm-up and chance to relax before things got hectic. Alan drove great for about his hour and a half stint, a bit slow, but that was never the point. He cranked out the laps, passed King Henry V-8th at least once, got no penalties, the car wasn't hit, the tranny was holding, and the temperatures were good, so that was a great start on the day.

Next up, me. I think I drove well, got passed a lot, did a fair bit of passing myself, and had no problems, but figured out that the tie rod problem probably did lead to Zep's second off on Saturday. When Zep had entered T6 on Saturday he said the car pushed bad and would not turn. Normally you straighten the wheel a bit and stay on the brakes to

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slow the car enough that it would turn again, but this just made it worse and Zep drove off in T6 trying to get it under control. The first time this happened to me I just lifted on the brakes and the car turned fine. So that was what I did in my session. Still, it made things interesting, like when I was entering T2 inside another car and my front wheels were squealing as I got closer and closer to his door, and I know he knew I was there and heard it, but once I was off the brakes things were fine again. Other than that, it was a good session. I turned some mid-to-high 2:30 laps. Zep had been doing about the same lap times. Bernhard and Brian were in the mid-to-low 2:30 range and Brian even broke into the upper 2:20's a few times. Not bad for 84 whp on a 41 year old car that had been left out in a field for the past 25 years, and it was a vast improvement over the 2:50 lap times we ran during our test days.

Brian drove next but came in after about an hour after he started noticing transmission problems (crunchy 3rd gear) and a new engine noise. He didn't want to break someone else's car. We added oil to the engine (it was low), checked the oil in the transmission (it was fine), checked the tie rod (no change, not getting worse), then Bernhard took it out again.

We were entering the closing phase of the race now and the guys did this while I was off doing something else - they decided that I should take the last stint and the checkered flag. Alan would pass on his stint, and Zep, who felt he was in the dog house anyway, passed on his. I encouraged Alan to take his stint, and told Zep he was not in the dog house, and I think I had Zep ready to drive again. We'd split whatever time was left after Bernhard came back in. Then Clint, from Evil Genius Racing, the guy who built our cage and did other work on the car, asked for a short stint in the car. So that's what we did. Clint would drive for 20-30 minutes once Bernhard brought the car back in, Zep declined his stint, and I would take the last hour and a half.

When Bernhard brought the car in the transmission problem had gotten worse. It was a bit crunchy getting into 3rd on up-shifts and down-shifts, plus the rotors were warped or acted like they were warped, and now an engine problem that had been developing and was now pretty bad. The engine was losing power in high-G turns. Fueling? Electrical? We were nearing the end of the race and I was driving now, so I just monitored the situation. An hour later the fuel gauge was hitting "F" (Our fuel gauge reads backwards, so "F means "E".) so I

pitted for fuel. Something wasn't right. We shouldn't be using that much fuel.

Normally after a stint that long you'd change drivers. Not this time. They wanted me back in the car. I couldn't figure out why at the time. Maybe it was compensation for not having driven on Saturday. Once I settled in to lapping again I figured it out. They wanted to reward me for my efforts by having me take the green flag.

With 20 or so minutes left on the clock I took the car back out, drove as well as one could with power cutting out in T2 and T11 and a few other turns, mostly left-handers, and with a shaking front end during braking, and some grind in 2-3 and 4-3 shifts. We had taken the hood off to aid in cooling the engine and that might not have been a good idea. Oil, it seemed, was accumulating on the windshield and the sun was getting lower in the sky. (Later we figured out it was gasoline that was being sprayed on the windshield.) Even so, I found some cars to race and had a great time.

Damn if the last few minutes of these races don't get nutty! The cars in the lead positions were racing each other hard and they weren't going to let slower cars like the Tinyvette be an obstacle. If I left two feet between me and the edge of the track one of these cars would get in there and make a pass. It was great to watch, though. They looked like they were really having fun and I considered every pass made on me to be a successful pass I played a part in. Does that sound weird? Anyway, I had a great chase going with an MR2 that turns out had half again as much power as our little Opel, so I guess I was doing pretty good. I'd reel him in in the turns and he'd inch away in the straights. Give me another lap or two and I'd get him! I never got him. The checkered flag came out.

It was bit emotional. Really. Not because it was a big race, because it wasn't, or that we had won, because we clearly hadn't, or even almost won, because ditto, but because for something that intense to end so abruptly does trigger some emotions. Plus, the guys had sent me out to take the checkered flag, the corner workers at each station were waving all of their pretty flags and giving thumbs up and waves to each driver, the whole Lemons staff was there to meet us in pit lane and shake our hands, all that stuff, celebrating the successful completion of this two-day crapcan race.

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From left to right: Mike Meier, Geoff Straw, Bernhard Wagener, Zep Brattesani, Alan Brattesani, and Brian Doty.

This project that Alan and I had taken on back on May 23 had been a grand success. We had rescued that little car, got it ready to race, started the race, and finished the race. People like Geoff and Bernhard and Brian jumped in to wrench and drive with us, Zep joined to wrench and drive, Alan drove in his first race, Zep drove his first and I drove my second. Gil at Opel GT Source had supported us, the folks on the OpelGT.com forum had supported and encouraged us. The end of this race was the culmination of all that. It was a bit emotional.

Back in the paddock we all reflected on this, and how great the weekend had been, and how all four goals had been met. We had our pictures taken standing next to the car. I put on my sun glasses to hide the tears that would well up I thought about it all too much.

Loading up for the trip home would take some time, but for once there was no hurry, no deadline. When it was time to drive the car onto the trailer I drove it around our section of paddock since that seemed the easiest way to get it lined up with the trailer. I saw Jay and stopped to thank him. He asked if I had a good time. I paused, not able to answer yet. "Good time" hardly expressed what this weekend had been for us. I answered "Yes", a really good time.", while I was thinking "my life just changed", and continued on back to our pit, still trying to think of the right word.

All in all, not a bad weekend. And all in all, not a bad 87 days either.

Race Results

Event: Arse-Sweat Apalooza
Date: August 6-8, 2010
Track: Thunderhill Raceway
Finish: 67th in a field of 121, 55%
Class: C
Best Lap: 2:29.171
Laps Completed: 177
Distance Raced: 531 miles
IoDSR: 66%
eRTOT: 51%
Penalties: Bernhard: PUY, Zep: off, Zep: off
Crew: Alan Brattesani, Zep Brattesani,
Brian Doty, Mike Meier, Geoff
Straw, Bernhard Wagener

"Wow! What a great story!

I am proud of your little Opel, and glad that I could play a tiny role in it!

Good going guys, it sounds like you did great!

And, great photos, the Opel looks great!" – JimVonBaden

"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.

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

AMAZING JOB GUYS!!!! And congratz on the finish. I live in Oklahoma and they are having a ChumpCar

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race later this month. I would say you have the car to run if you can. The track is Hallett Raceway in Hallett, Oklahoma. I am buying a '75 Manta this weekend if I am able to get off this drilling rig.

I have to say you have inspired me to live a dream and do just what you all have done. Thank you for all your great pictures and to see a bunch of normal guys like the rest of us, can build and race a car and have a lot of fun!! Thank you very much!! - JOZ1973GT

Thanks a lot. I am also building a Lemons race car out of an Opel and have been using this site for most of my tech info. (I posted on your Lemons forum also.)

I have read your whole thread and it was very informative. I will be racing my car in September. It was my intention to put a bunch of pics of my suspension and brakes up on this site after I have proven them to work. Hopefully mine will be as successful as yours. - Team Unter Puff