

# Diary of The Glen

by Diane Dale



Group B's Feature Race - Volvo P1800, Datsun 240z, Datsun 240z, Alfa Romeo GTV6

**Watkins Glen. SVRA. The Zippo Grand Prix. MG Collier Cup. Grand Marshall Bobby Rahal 562 entries confirmed at the drivers meeting.**

Wow. Just walking around the paddock my jaw dropped in awe. Pristine conditioned cars, every make, and every model. Stock, modified, open wheel, closed wheel, sports racers, pre-war, post-war, and at least one MG for every year they were ever produced! Track Dog and her team were lucky enough to participate again this year, and what an adventure! Here's the play by play...

**"Travelling Tuesday"** - Picked up Annika (my friend from Sweden currently working with me in New York) at the airport with Track Dog in tow... drove to St. Catherines and introduced Annika to the delights of the Days Inn Hotel. (It was her first time in Canada after all!) Track Dog was still suffering from a mysterious 'bog' in power from the previous Labour Day Sprints race - but Greg Whitehead (Track Dog's "out-of-this-world" mechanic) and I figured we'd investigate and fix it at the track.

**"Registration Wednesday"** - rising bright and early I took Annika for the great Canadian breakfast tradition - Tim Hortons! Hopped into Clifford (the big red truck:) and headed off into the sunrise toward the great US/Canadian border. The custom's officer quizzed Annika if she was the driver of the

carried racing car, but asked little if anything else. ("Racecar driver?" "Vintage Race at Watkins Glen?" "Whatever... go ahead... have fun...") Annika's excellent navigation skills got us into Watkins Glen just around noon where we picked up the keys for our Watkins Glen cottage... we were looking forward to seeing and settling into our homestead for the next couple of days. Previous years I've stayed in hotels, campgrounds, bed and breakfasts - this year we were trying the cottage lifestyle. Up to the track for registration - ran into Bill Barton and his new Z car right away, also a couple of friends from the Historic Cup races at VIR in June and Tom Fitzgerald (the two car Z team from Geneva). We're not even signed in yet and it's already the social event of the year! Driving into the paddock we're greeted not only by more friends (Mike Unger of the gorgeous red 240Z car fame and Bob Middleton - owner/driver of a stunning Datsun 510) but also by a newly paved paddock area - yee hah! Setting up the canopy - the rain begins. The dregs of Hurricane Francis had moved in - little did we know that torrential down pour would be on us until later the next afternoon! Track Dog checked into tech. For some reason this year required an in-person inspection from Jack Whorle (the chief technical inspector). Appears my vented rotors and non-iron brake calipers moved me up a class - I was now running in Group 8, A Production. Okay... this could be interesting - but all classes are

on the same grid, I'm just happy to be here with all my friends and try my best at participating - how could things be any better? Out to the cottage to settle in - wow... a fantastic view right on lake Seneca, 5 miles from the track, fireplace, fire pit, three decks, dock with a boat AND a foosball/darts/game room! Yee hah - this was going to be a fun weekend! Up to the traditional racers meeting place - Seneca Lodge - for dinner and drinks with Bill Barton. Greg met up with us and a bit of bench racing got the week started. Did I mention it was raining?



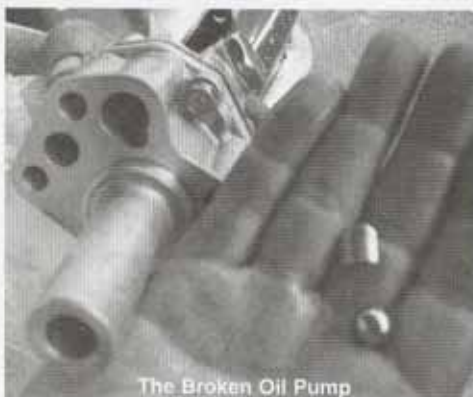
Ron, Greg, James and Annika on the Grid

**"Test Day Thursday"** - When the alarm clock goes off at 6:30am all I can hear is the continued rain. Okay... forget it... I think a little more sleep is worth sacrificing awful conditions on the racetrack. (Strange that I would ever think that - that's not like me - but you've got to understand what kind of rain we're talking about here!) After a leisurely breakfast we head out to the track. Yup... more rain. Sessions are getting black-flagged; rain is streaming down the paddock - thank goodness for the pavement - this time last year it would have been a swamp! I think we've decided we can do some wake boarding in the tide around the garbage pails. Laughter is quite catching at this point - nothing is dry, despite the canopy, Annika and I have dawned our full head to tow rain gear - and we're still soaked! Despite the mayhem, Greg manages to get Track Dog out for a few short test sessions. Unfortunately "The Bog" in the car still exists. A sudden loss of power - intermittent - tach down to 4000rpm then everything restore back to normal. Check the fuel filters (but pressure is still normal), check the fuses, check the electrical, check the distributor. Hmm... everything looks okay. And then the cottage mates start to arrive! Jonathon Brett and his fiancée Kim, Ron O'Brien and James and Tammy Jenkins (crew for Michael Vong). How great to see everyone! Finally I get out for a qualifying session as the rain starts to subside and the track dries a little. I'm running 2:38 laps - not bad for a rusty driver at the Glen and a still very wet track. A couple of corners have big streams - I swear I can see some salmon jumping. (Crawling around the corners I have memories of Comer 10 in the rain at Mosport a couple of weeks ago - this time I'm keeping everything ON the track!) Greg and Ron start re-inspecting lines, filters etc. Hmm... a few suspect items, but the fix doesn't feel right yet. Let's call it a night - off for a group dinner at the Glen Motor Inn - a beautiful scenic lookout over lake Seneca. Cheers to everyone for the weekend to come!

**"Turn-Around Friday"** - Friday the weather began its three-day beautification - it couldn't have been nicer! Sunny and clear - the whole time. Returning to the paddock in the morning we were pleasantly surprised to see the cars that had rolled in overnight. Incredible. Walking through the paddock was a like walking through a vintage museum. And more friends! Johnny, Mike, Joe, Jeremy, Richard, Nick, Ian, Jamie, Leon, Gord, Dave, Bruce and Bruce, Ted, Bob, Ira, Frank, Mark, Eric and his entire family... the socializing just never stopped. How great to see everyone again! Only one session in the early afternoon; managed to get the times down to 2:27's - close to last year's time... but alas... "The Bog" remained. I even got past

some cars that held me back last year - that was enough - I'd already made my weekend! But THEN... an even better part of the weekend began - the in-town festival and the original racetrack re-enactment. Luckily Annika and I were chosen in the lottery this year and were one of the 150 cars for the in-town festivities. We cruised into town with a reported 50,000 spectators, hung out with the gang, then got to 'race' 2 laps of the original race course. There is nothing more exciting than barrelling into town with people cheering, screaming and waving at you the whole way. It really is a tribute to the original racers of the Glen - imagining the real racing that took place on that very course. Heading back to the cottage Ron, Greg, Annika and I couldn't avoid a couple of laps of go-karting... wahooo! Get the racing bug even deeper into our systems!

**"Temperamental Saturday"** - First session out the oil pump blew. LUCKILY... I noticed right away (must have been that BRIGHT orange light on the dashboard and the sudden drop in oil pressure). Thank goodness we installed that tow-hook (thanks to Bill's friend Jim who manufactured us an 'ad-hoc' one the day before!) Wow - the tow truck drivers sure are gentle at the Glen! As determined as ever, Greg replaced the oil pump and then scoured the car and located a



The Broken Oil Pump

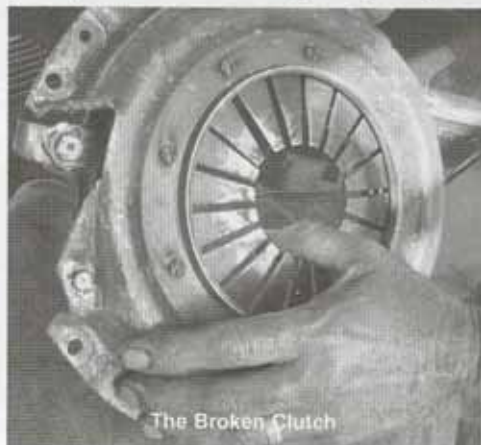
'stuck' needle in the carbs. How on EARTH did he find that? Sure enough - it was the source of "The Bog" - what an incredible discovery. Times got down to 2:23 in the afternoon qualifying race including some amazing dicing with an Alfa, a Volvo and the mighty Z of Richard Madia. Saturday night's banquet proved to be more fun and socializing! (The 'shipped-in' executive washrooms were gorgeous!) Of course - seven of us decided we HAD to stop by the karting place for another round before heading home. (This is, of course, after our crew took a Swedish Flag from the banquet tables and we held the unveiling ceremony in our paddock next to the Canadian Flag - Annika was now 'official'!) Then it was then back to the cottage for more foosball and bench racing!

**"Bring 'em Home Sunday"** - Sunday morning was the hour long Mike Stott UBS Enduro race. Greg and I raced our hearts out - I started, and unfortunately on the second lap felt a very rough vibration in the 'bowels' of the car. Second gear was really rough and



Ron and Greg with the Broken Transmission

I thought - crap... it's the transmission. (Gee - I'm getting good at diagnosing problems!) Brought the car in after six laps for the driver change - I figured if the car was going to break that I wanted Greg to at least get some laps in before we called it quits. Miraculously Greg was able to drive through the problems - with only a couple of gears - fantastic - I think Ferrari should be signing this guy up! We ended quite well - 21st out of 65 - awesome considering that we had actually blown both the clutch AND the transmission! After all that excitement I was certainly happy to call it a day. The crew had worked hard and we'd been able to participate. Now we could pack up early and



The Broken Clutch



Annika, James, Ron, Diane, Greg, Bill in downtown Watkins Glen

do some more spectating. Right. Silly me. Greg, Ron and Steve looked at each and said 'well - we've got a transmission, we're sure you can find a clutch...' Not one to put people to work - I misjudged the commitment of these guys - are you nuts? Off go Annika and I - to find parts - and listen to this... Richard Madia - the Z owner that I was catching in the qualifying race - was the one that came through with a spare clutch!!!! If nothing else I continually learn how committed, helpful and friendly racers can be. Here were all these people doing everything they could to get us out on the track. Amazing... So that was it... with an

hour to spare, the team pulled it all together; and James and Tammy even stayed for the final race even though they were done for the day! The final race was a blast (unfortunately Tom Fitzgerald's brakes seized on the warm-up lap - his Z was in the running for the podium!) Some great dicing, some fun laps - and passing a Porsche 914/6 on the last lap to take third in class!!!! (Bill Barton's Z took 2nd in A Class, Mike Unger's Z took 1st in C Class, Richard Madia's Z took 3rd in C Class, Dick Tillinger's Datsun 2000 Roadster took 2nd in D Class and the Datsun 510s of George Shafer and Bob Middleton took 1st and 2nd

in their class) All this great fun for the weekend and a pile of Datsun trophies to boot - that was just icing on the cake!

As always, I have to say that the Zippo Grand Prix was 'the' vintage racing event of the year. Many, many thanks to Greg (especially!), Ron, Steve, James, Tammy, Annika, Jon, Kim, Mike, Bill and Richard. Over 100,000 spectators during the weekend, the largest vintage gathering in the world - and a 'buzz' that just never went away. (It's still lasting!) Zippo is a spectators' delight and a racer and crew's dream. Hey everyone - book now - make sure you're there next year!

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