

TRACKSIDE



by Diane Dale

So you want to be a racer?

Okay... so you want to look and sound like a racer?

Okay, okay... so you just want to know what it's like and where you can go to watch racing!

Whatever your interest is in Car Racing, welcome to the first of a new regular column for Zedline. 'Trackside' hopes to report and share with you the joys, delights, stupidness, fun, strangeness, seriousness, socialness – but mostly just the intense passion of what it's like to be involved in the grassroots regional racing scene. While I'm open to rant on any of a number of suggested topics – hey - it's my column after all J - feel free to write me with your suggestions at lddale@hotmail.com. I'll be primarily focusing on the Vintage racing scene and more specifically Z cars.

Every since I lapped my 300zx at an Ontario Z Car lapping day in 1998, I've been hooked on being at the track. Over the years I've gotten more and more involved and met a number of great people who share that passion and have been encouraging, helpful, inspiring and insightful. Last year I met up with Jack MacDonnell – a name I knew from racing. I thought it'd be great to profile Jack and his insight as a first look into our local racing world...

*Name: Jack MacDonnell
Occupation: Self Employed
Company Name: MACSTON Performance Productions Inc.
Family: 2 boys, ages 12 & 13, Joshua & Corbin
Hometown: St. Johns NFLD
Contact: jackmac@tunertransformation.com
Website: www.tunertransformation.com*

DD: Hi Jack! Welcome to 'TrackSide' the new column for racing news in the Zedline publication. A lot of people have noticed your Z car (at racing events and ZedFest last year) and are curious to find out more about you and your car...

JM: Hi Diane, thanks for asking, it's a pleasure to share my Z experiences with Zedline.

DD: How long have you been racing?

JM: I have been Solo racing since 1982 (competitively since '86) and more recently participating in Tarmac Performance Rallying.

DD: How did you get into it?

JM: I bought my first Z car ('73 240Z) in 1982 on a Wednesday – 2 days later on a Friday I was lapping the car at Shannonville. Around the same time, my Mom introduced me to a guy at her workplace who was doing regional racing – I helped him with his race car preparation and stuff, joined a local car club and have been involved with motorsports in one form or another ever since.

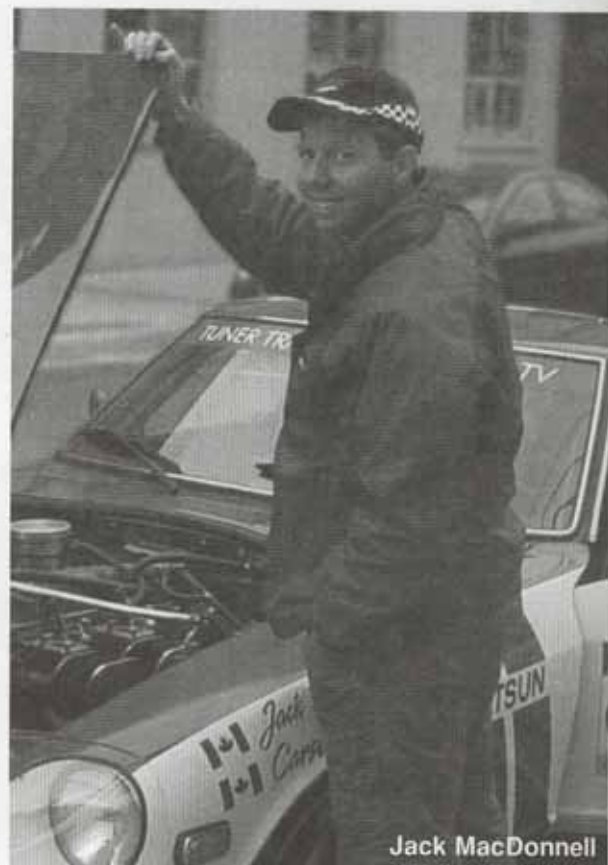
DD: What is your current race car?

JM: A 1976 280Z painted in the 'BRE' racing scheme from the 70's. (Incidentally; I have owned a 240Z 'AFX' toy slot car painted in the same BRE colour scheme since 1972). I've been a car nut ever since I can remember.

DD: What sorts of modifications have you done in the following areas – any that you'd recommend that really worked for you – or any that you wish you hadn't done?

JM:

Engine Performance – The best mod was the bore & stroke to a 3.0L capacity. I used custom 'JE Pistons' with a full floating piston pin setup and the 240 rods, which were race-prepped. The worst mod was a set of inner valve springs that were too stiff, a bad cam grind, a terrible valve job, shoddy workmanship - all combined spelt disaster. Same old story though, you want something done right; you have to do it yourself. Live & Learn.



Jack MacDonnell

Suspension – Coil-overs and cutting sections out of the strut tubes to allow more suspension travel was good. Installing CV's in the rear was very effective – but time consuming. I desperately need a good LSD unit, then I'll be a happy competitor – my welded diff is a handful to drive on tight tracks.

Wheels/Tires/Alignment – I have yet to adapt a killer app here, soon though, I will go with a 5 lug conversion and jam the biggest steamroller rubber I can fit into the wheel well.

Overall Handling – The car is perfectly balanced on all four corners when my co-driver and I (for the Tarmac Rallies) are seated. There is enough power to throttle steer and the rear is also set up loose - specifically for my driving style. The best mod I ever did to this car though, was the installation of an 8-point roll cage. Safety issues were of course dramatically improved and the suspension is more predictable and effective. I highly recommend this improvement for weekend warriors, racers and aggressive street applications.

Body – Still stock, nice & clean. This is about to change though after owning the car for 18 years I've decided to get the torch out and make room for those bigger rollers I mentioned.

Other – I plan on installing an electric water pump and tossing the stock pump/pulley/belt assy in the trash (this cost me a 1 minute penalty at both Targa NFLD 02 and '03 events by failed pumps and belts). A better fuel cell is required and a dry sump lubrication system is planned for this next major overhaul.

DD: *What race cars have been in your past?*

JM: *I have helped close friends build several including a '71 MGB, a '73 Datsun 1200, a '79 March SuperVee but have only owned the '76 280Z. What I would like to own in addition to the Z; a 1968 Ford GT40 Lemans race car, a 1973 Porsche 917 Can Am race car, 1986 AWD Lancia Stratos WRC rally car, 1990 Nissan GTP IMSA race car, a 2004 Ferrari V10 F1 race car and for the street, an Aston Martin V12 Vanquish.*

DD: *And in the future?*

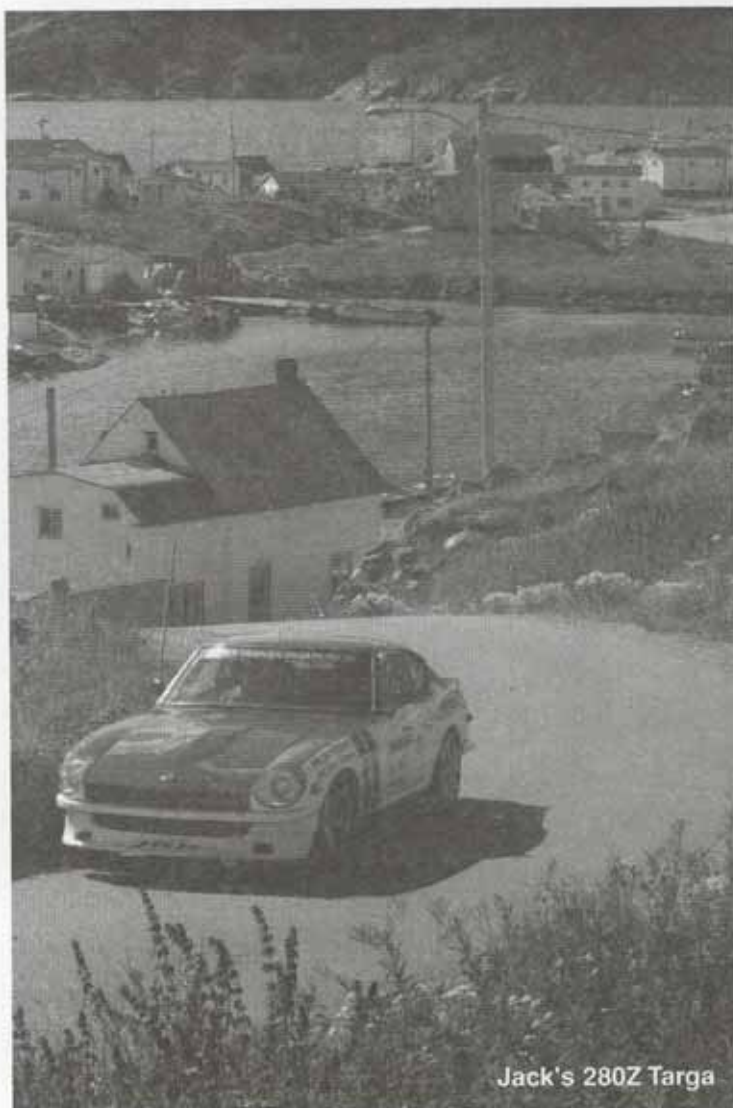
JM: *I'm focused on competing at 'Pikes Peak' in my Z in the next 3 years. This is a major commitment, so first thing is to perform a major transformation on the 280Z this spring, win the Targa 2004 event in September and then move on to more pro rallies to gain more experience before tackling the 14,000ft of Pikes Peak.*

DD: *What motivates you to race?*

JM: *Well, I guess the same thing as everyone else; the speed, the adrenaline rush, the challenge, the competition, and the thrill of victory. No to mention scaring the hell out of myself as I drift over a blind crest on an unfamiliar road at 175kmph – it's that 'holy shit' factor that is addictive to me.*

DD: *Why the passion for Z cars?*

JM: *Not sure really – I think they're a great looking car, smooth curves and lines, fast and sleek - like a sensual women. Oh yeah, more advanced and more controlled than me too... just like a woman.*



Jack's 280Z Targa

DD: *What's your favourite Z car, and why?*

JM: *The '69 to '78 Z car is my favourite generation, everything else, with the possible exception of the new 350Z is too touring for me – not raw enough.*

DD: *I know you've been involved in running at the Targa Newfoundland, can you tell us a bit about that event and how the experience was for you?*

JM: *For 7 consecutive days you are swept up in one of the most challenging and competitive amateur motorsport events on the planet – and it's right in our own backyard – on the Rock! The terrain is breath-taking - all 2200kms of it, the province rolls out the red carpet for all competitors, Newfoundlanders catapult you into some hero-like status and the RCMP give you the thumbs up as you blast by them with 4 wheels in the air coming off a jump at 3x the posted limit. It is a speed event, an endurance test, an emotional roller coaster, a physical workout and very, very addictive. Even though I crashed head-on into a 2" thick steel retaining wall the first year (on the final day) and blew my engine this past year with only 17kms left to finish (on the final day and was in 1st in class at the time too) – I can't get enough of it. I'm gluten for motorsport*



**'76 Datsun 280Z
2002 Targa Newfoundland**

**Driver: Jack MacDonnell
Co-driver: Carson Rasmussen**

punishment and I know that I have an insatiable appetite for SPEED. Bottom line, this Targa event is an once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and I recommend it to any enthusiast - it will blow you away (look for the 1 hour TV show on Global TV and SPEED Channel in the next couple of months on the '03 Targa).

DD: *What other events have you been involved in that you've felt were significant or just plain fun or memorable?*

JM: *The '24 Hours of Adrenalin' mountain bike race at Hardwood Hills is a fabulous event that I've competed in twice. All the same 'race' ingredients, just at a different pace and without the exhaust fumes. I really enjoyed the BFG Supercar Challenge ProSolo type events that took place back in the '90's. I recently rode shotgun with 'Driver XL' from the 'Signal' Drift team in Las Vegas 2 months ago in their 240SX Silvia Spec drift car and was blown away by the car control skills of these guys. I think I'm going to give that a shot this year too in a friend's car. I'm not much of a static car show kind of person, but I must say that last years 'Zedfest' was quite enjoyable - the dedication and enthusiasm of all the attendees is definitely infectious.*

DD: *Your job also seems to focus on racing, or at least on cars - there seems to be some exciting things coming up for you in the spring - can you let us in on the scoop?*

JM: *Yes I can and thank you for mentioning it - to be brief; I developed a new TV show last year and was fortunate enough to sign a multi-year license agreement with SPEED Channel several months ago. The new show is called TUNER TRANSFORMATION (www.tunertransformation.com) and it is a unique cross between Monster Garage, Trading Spaces, High Rev Tuners and*

American/Canadian Idol. I'm the Executive Producer and will also be one of three regular Tuners on the show. We will be transforming 26 vehicles for the first season alone, so just about every type of modern enthusiast car will be represented - the logistics are mind numbing actually. I'm totally immersed in this project now as the first episode will air Tuesday February 17th in Prime Time (as they say; check your local listings for exact time). We will be covering all forms of motorsports on the show too as 'performance' is the backbone of the show. Incidentally, a 350Z will be transformed, so please feel free to check out the website and let us know if you're interested in becoming famous. The 1st generation Z car will be considered if we sign with SPEED for a second season.

DD: *Any other big racing plans for 2004? Where can we find you this season?*

JM: *I really like the new Group 70+ VARAC race series and hope to get the engine rebuilt and some of the car mods completed soon so I can compete at some of the earlier races. By the time summer rolls around though, the car will be undergoing major mods in preparation for Targa and Pikes Peak, which will make it illegal for this race series. I have a lot of promotional campaigns planned this year to coincide with the release of TUNER TRANSFORMATION, so the 280Z will likely be seen all over the place flying my new TV show colours and of course OZC.*

DD: *Thanks Jack!*

And to everyone else... we'll catch you 'TrackSide' next month!

- Diane -