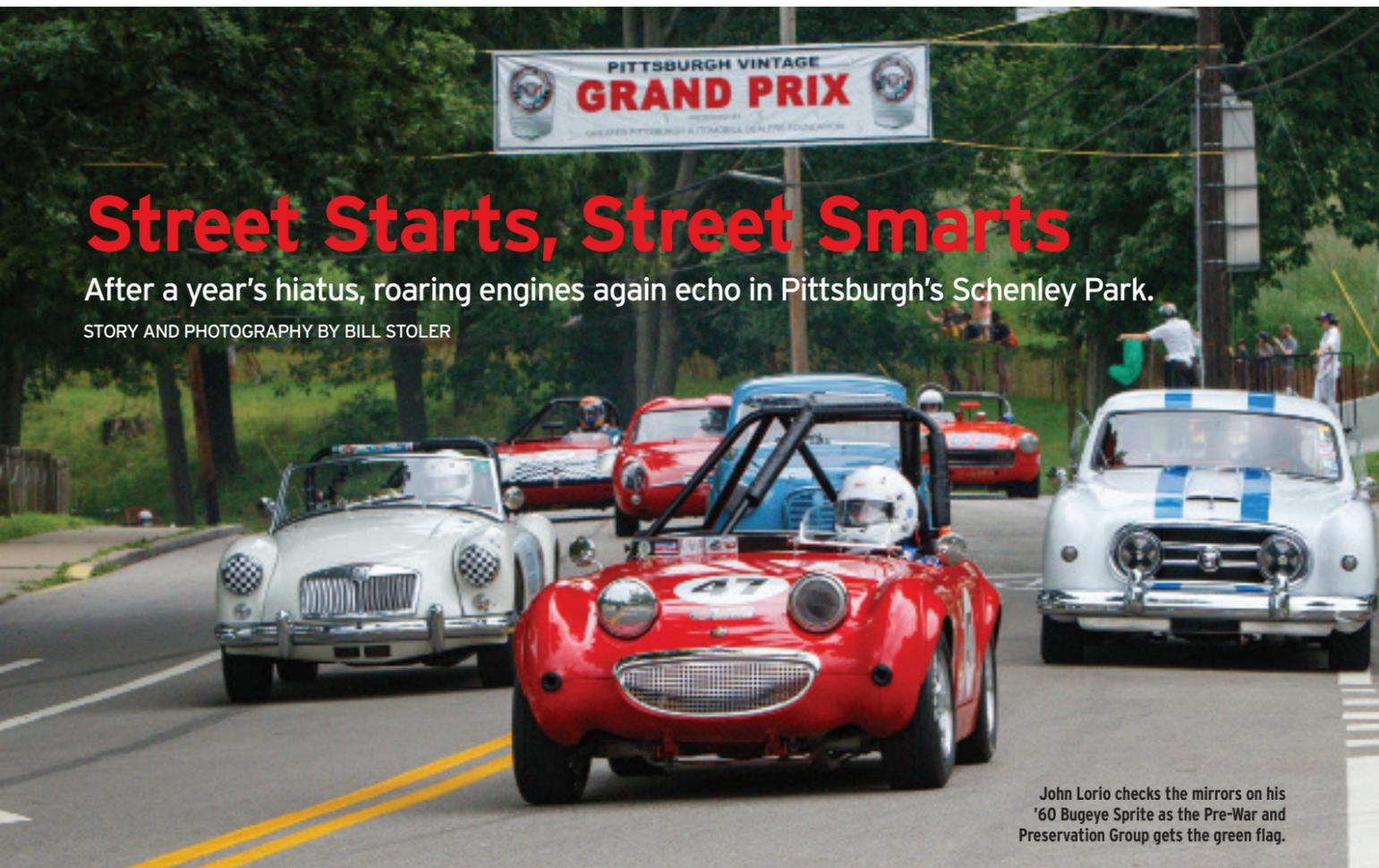


# Street Starts, Street Smarts

After a year's hiatus, roaring engines again echo in Pittsburgh's Schenley Park.

STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY BILL STOLER



John Lorio checks the mirrors on his '60 Bugeye Sprite as the Pre-War and Preservation Group gets the green flag.

**PITTSBURGH'S SCHENLEY PARK IS A VINTAGE RACING** venue like no other, a daunting street course lined with curbs, telephone poles, trees and hay bales. The notorious stone walls that line Serpentine Drive are no friend to the fragile bodywork of a vintage race car. These are public roads every other weekend of the year with manhole covers—crowned in the middle to allow water runoff. The racing line changes every year due to the patchwork of repairs required after a tough winter in western Pennsylvania. Yet, the event appears on the bucket list of many vintage racers, and they have been returning to Pittsburgh since that first event in 1983.

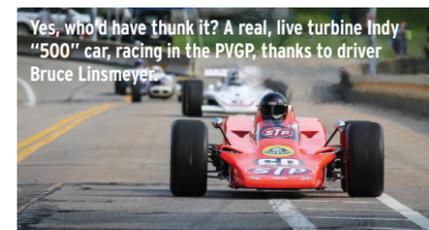
The 39th annual Pittsburgh Vintage Grand Prix takes place in Schenley Park, a municipal park located near the campuses of Carnegie Mellon University and the University of Pittsburgh, this time during the weekend of July 24-25. The competition is the climax of a 10-day festival that raises funds for charity and includes a road rally, numerous car shows, parades, concerts and well attended racing on a purpose-built racetrack the weekend prior—the Pittsburgh International Race Complex.

Last summer, due to Covid restrictions,

Peter Dolan ran hard in his '56 Devin-Triumph TR3.



the streets of Schenley Park remained quiet. This year's event was the largest gathering of people in Pittsburgh in more than 18 months and the PVGP volunteers rose to the challenge to get the charity event "Back on Track!" Executive Director Dan DelBianco



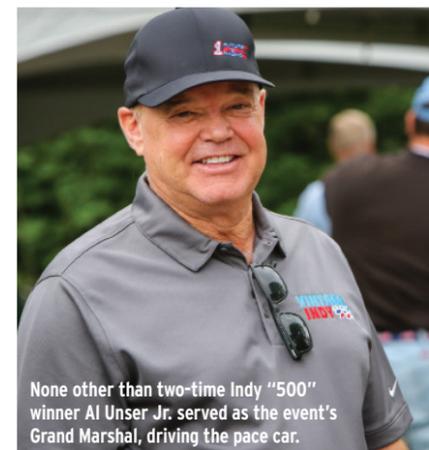
Yes, who'd have thunk it? A real, live turbine Indy "500" car, racing in the PVGP, thanks to driver Bruce Linsmeyer.



This '58 Austin A-35 puts in another lap with Nial McCabe steering.



Not a model often raced here, Michael Zappa's '62 Jaguar E-Type.



None other than two-time Indy "500" winner Al Unser Jr. served as the event's Grand Marshal, driving the pace car.



This beautiful '56 Novi-powered Kurtis-Kraft made old guys' hearts flutter. Rick Rowland drove it.



Mike Lynn heads his '32 B-Block Miller down Serpentine Drive, the "Brightwood Airport Special."

remarked, "It was a challenge to plan and pull it off and we were rewarded with record crowds throughout the 10-day festival. The PVGP is truly our nation's largest vintage race festival and to be able to raise funds for charity makes it even better!"

This year's event marked the first visit of the Vintage Indy cars and Honorary Race Director, Al Unser Jr.—two-time Indy 500 winner and member of racing's fastest family. "Little Al" paced the field of 10 cars each day in his "Johnny Lightning Special"-inspired John Cooper Works Mini. The Vintage Indy Exhibition laps were a huge hit with the fans, who packed in along the fencing to get a glimpse and hear the roar of these historic racing machines that included Bobby Unser's AAR Olsonite Eagle Offy driven by Phillippe de Lespinay. This car was built by Dan Gurney and qualified on the "500" pole for the 1972 race.

You could also not mistake the sound of Bruce Linsmeyer's rare Lotus 56 STP-sponsored turbine, winding through the woods of Schenley Park. With its wedge

shape, it earned the nickname "The Doorstop" and Joe Leonard won the "500" pole and nearly the race in 1968, before a fuel pump failed, but the car ran so strong USAC changed the rules, which essentially outlawed the car.

Rick Rowland brought his 1979 "Genesee Beer Special" Penske PC-7 and a 1956 Novi/Vespa Special and enthusiastically stated, "Everybody associated with the PVGP treated us like gold and did their best to ensure everything went smoothly." Michael Lashmett—president/founder of Vintage Indy said, "The event was a first for us. The event organization was second to none. Our drivers reported they had never been told by so many—thank you for bringing these cars to Pittsburgh! We hope to be invited back again!"

Corvette was the featured Marque this year and a display of all C1-C8 Corvette models drew much interest. PVGP volunteer Jim Kinest worked with 12 local Corvette clubs and attracted 300 Corvettes to the event. For his efforts, he was presented the

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Larry Smith Award that is given each year to a deserving volunteer.

The challenging 20-turn course winding through Schenley Park loosely follows the perimeter of "Panther Hollow" and features 17 elevation changes, along with the stone walls and tight switchbacks of Serpentine Drive—the trademark section of the historic park. The best place for spectators to view the racing action was by the snow fencing placed along the golf course, which is also the site of an international car show with nearly 3,000 cars.

The weekend got underway with a short parade of race cars crossing the Panther Hollow Bridge for a Driver's reception held at the Schenley Park Visitors Center, adjacent to the beautiful Phipps

**The notorious stone walls that line Serpentine Drive are no friend to the fragile bodywork of a vintage race car.**

Conservatory. Practice and qualifying took place on Saturday, leading up to the feature events on Sunday. The racing is divided into five race groups including a Pre-War and Select MG T-Series group. The sight of '50s era MG-TDs being expertly driven in the park really captured the essence of street racing from back in the day at places like Watkins Glen or Elkhart Lake. Kurt Byrnes, Michael Barstow, Manley Ford and Steve Konsin put on an amazing race up front. All of them have been racing at Schenley for years and it shows. When the checkered flag waved, it was Byrnes taking the win in his '51 MG TD followed by Konsin and Barstow in a pair of '53 TDs. Byrnes, a native of Pittsburgh was all smiles and stated, "This is the highlight of my summer...so good to be back!" He also thanked the PVGP and the volunteers for the effort it took to bring the PVGP back this year.



Kurt Byrnes had the time of his life racing his '51 MG TD.

The Pittsburgh Vintage Grand Prix has

raised nearly \$6 million dollars for charity since 1983 with the proceeds going to Autism Society of Pittsburgh and the Merakey Allegheny Valley School. At the

conclusion of the weekend, Honorary Race Director Al Unser Jr. described his first visit to the PVGP: "It's everything they said it would be and more!"

**PICK OF THE LITER**

1968 Miller & Norburn BMW 2002

**R**USS NORBURN WAS a competitor in the IMSA RS series before teaming up with engine specialist, Preston Miller. Together, they formed Miller & Norburn Racing and hired driver Nick Craw, who had been racing in the L&M Formula Continental Series. In 1973, the team fielded cars for both Craw and Norburn in the BF Goodrich Radial Challenge Series. The racing required nearly stock cars like the Ford Pinto, AMC Gremlin and the Mazda RX2. Craw was an open-wheel racer and wondered if he could adapt to racing a BMW sedan on street radials. He also questioned the effectiveness of the BMW 2002, that had the "aero characteristics of a brick." The answer came quickly in February 1973 at Daytona. Craw was leading before the engine grenaded and ended the day. Craw and the BMW captured more wins than anyone, and was named co-champion with Amos Johnson and his AMC Gremlin in 1973. It was the first U.S. National Championship for BMW. Craw would capture another championship in 1975.

The team switched to the 320i at the end of 1975. The BMW was raced and modified by several owners until it was put up for sale in 1993. Billy Revis resurrected the car to SCCA GT-4 specs, including the

"turbo style" fender flares that the car retains today. Revis raced it at the first BMW Car Club of America club race at Palm Beach International Raceway in 1995, before selling the car to Bo Lemmon. Bo's son Mark refurbished the car twice before selling it to present owner Scott Hughes in 2011. Hughes recalls seeing Craw racing this car back in the day at Lime Rock. Hughes has fond memories of 2015, when he invited Craw to drive the championship-winning BMW 2002 at the Monterey Historics. Craw remembered, "It was like meeting up with a long lost friend, not seen in 40 years...very comfortable."

Hughes has been racing the BMW at Pittsburgh regularly since 2012.



Scott Hughes attacks Westinghouse Curve with his BMW 2002, a car with excellent racing history.