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CLONING THE 59 DAY WONDER



by
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You're probably thinking you've read this story before, but you don't know the half of it.

The half you may know concerns the restoration of IMSA's first GT champion, the Brumos 914-6 that Peter Gregg and Hurley Haywood used to defeat the Corvette of Dave Heinz for the 1971 GT title.

That car, long gone and forgotten, surfaced in 1988. Brian Goellnicht, a Los Angeles car broker, alerted Brumos crew chief Jim Bailie to the existence of Number 59 in Mexico. Bob Snodgrass, owner of Brumos, concluded a deal to return 914.043.0315 to its original home in Jacksonville, Florida. There, Bailie and a team of nine employees set to the daunting task of restoring the car Hector Rebaque had purchased from Peter Gregg at the end of the '71 season.

Rebaque had campaigned the car

for two years in Mexican Trans-Am racing, in Viceroy colors, before he abandoned it to begin his ascent into the ranks of Formula One. The 914-6 passed through many uncaring hands before its return to Brumos. When Bailie first saw the car, in its metallic blue splendor in San Antonio, Texas, he knew his job would not be easy:

"The car had been through a long tough life. Outwardly it didn't even resemble the car as Peter raced it. It had huge fiberglass fenders and massive spoilers at both ends. The car probably went through a number of owners or drivers without much paperwork changing hands.

"I've restored a lot of cars in my day but I don't think I've ever seen one as bad as this one."

Yet the Brumos team completed such an effective restoration that Bob Snodgrass was able to win the very first SVRA vintage race he entered

Photo by Jim Bailie

with it at West Palm Beach, Florida. Bailie had only 60 days to bring the wreck to reality, and today he says, "We fudge it, and say we did Number 59 in 59 days. It was the kind of thing you wouldn't want to do for any reason. It was insane to do it, but we had to make a date. There really wasn't time to do a lot of intricate research."

Snodgrass triumphed over a Corvette at West Palm, a particularly sweet victory for the car's original driver, Hurley Haywood, who remarked, "Seeing that car beat the Corvette again really brings back some great memories."

In particular, Haywood was recalling the hat trick he and Gregg pulled in 1971, when their 914-6 GT scored overall wins against Heinz' Corvette, and the rest of the big bore field, at Virginia International Raceway in Danville (April 18, 1971), Bridgehampton, New York (June 27, 1971), and Summit Point, West Virginia (September 19, 1971).

One reason the Brumos 914-6 GT originally proved so successful was Peter Gregg's meticulous attention to detail. As Chuck Dressing, Brumos' Communications Director, points out, "We did a lot of little things not done by the factory. We lightened the car, reinforced the chassis, added our own sway bars, dashboard modifications, shift linkage." Peter Gregg's passion for record keeping helped Bailie restore the car to original specifications. Dressing adds, "Peter Gregg kept extraordinarily precise records, which allowed us to bring it back to Brumos specs. We ended up with a car indistinguishable from the original GT. We went to the extent of duplicating the rear chassis supports fitted to the GT in such a way that even a factory technician couldn't tell the difference."

The half of the story you may not be familiar with concerns the other 914-6 GT that Brumos ran on a rental basis that first IMSA season for Hector Rebaque and Cookie Rojas. The Mexican team ran the backup car without notable success through the 1971 season. At that time, Gregg sold the championship winning car, Number 59, to Rebaque. As Bailie says, selling the "Peter Gregg car" to a sportsman like Rebaque had become standard procedure for Gregg at the end of a race season. The comptroller at Brumos, who has been with the company from then to

now, recognized her signature on the MSO (Manufacturers Statement of Origin) transferring the car from Gregg to Rebaque. Bailie says she "about died" when she saw that piece of paper again, some 20 years later.

The backup car, which Rebaque and Rojas had campaigned together, remained with Brumos until it was totalled the following season at Mid-

had any idea that Brumos had actually campaigned two 914-6 GT's.

They assumed that Number 59 was the only car the team had run, because no one knew otherwise at the time. Even Hurley Haywood, who was the only current Brumos member actually on the team back then, had forgotten all about it until, as Bailie says, "we jogged his memory."

"Seeing that car beat the Corvette again really brings back some great memories."

Ohio, in July, 1972. No one remembers who was at the wheel, but one thing was certain — it spelled the end for Number 58. Bailie says, "It was rolled up into a ball and burned." It went to New Jersey, and finally ended up at Aase Brothers Porsche dismantling yard in Anaheim, California. Bailie checked with Dennis Aase, who remembered having the car, and sending it to the masher a long time ago. For old times sake, Bailie couldn't resist taunting Aase — "Gee, if you had the number tag I'd give you ten grand for it right now."

This intricate sequence of events may seem rather clear in hindsight, but when Snodgrass and Bailie embarked on the 914 reconstruction project in 1988, neither one of them

Miraculously, the key to unravelling the mystery was provided by some photographs that long-time race lensman Bill Warner took in November, 1971, at the last IMSA event of the season at Daytona Beach, Florida (*see photo below*). Taken from the same spot, on the same roll, the photos showed Number 58 and Number 59 circulating simultaneously. Bailie recalls Warner had been making noises for quite some time to the effect that Brumos had run two cars that year:

"We said to him, 'Naw, there weren't really two cars. Were there?' It was one of those things that no one really paid too much attention to at the time. Then he came up with pictures of the two cars at the same spot, so it was obvious there had been two. Now the



Photo by Geoffrey Hewitt Photography

. . . the “transaction involved all the secrecy of a drug deal. . .”

question became, where’s the other one? We looked around, but no one had any idea. Every clue we had ended in a complete dead end.”

With special permission from Joe Pendergast of the Southeast Vintage Racing Association (SVRA), Bailie and his crew set about building a replica of Number 59. SVRA authorized the project because the original car could not be found, the backup car had been destroyed, and the historical significance of Brumos’ first IMSA champion merited a replica.

So Bailie searched for a likely candidate for the project, and found it in a 914-6 which Brumos had sold with the factory fender flare option, M471, and was still in Jacksonville. They bought the car and started to build it into a 914-6 GT. Bailie “ran around and looked at a few others, including the exceptionally good one that Kevin Jeanette built for Miles Collier. I shot seven or eight rolls of film. The factory historian sent me some parts books with no pictures.”

Just as the team geared up to complete the replica restoration, Bailie got a call from his old friend Brian Goellnicht, who said, “Why are you bothering with a replica when you can have the real thing?” Bailie, with his stripped chassis waiting to be dipped and painted, told Goellnicht, “Right Brian, now I’m real busy here, so I’ve got to go.”

When it became apparent that Goellnicht wasn’t joking, Brumos set the wheels in motion to bring Number 59 home to Jacksonville. As Bailie says, the “transaction involved all the secrecy of a drug deal,” because the Mexican collector who owned the car did not want to have his name revealed in public. He owned other valuable,

unrestored race cars he did not intend to sell, and did not want to be hounded by collectors.

Once a deal had been concluded to bring the real car home, all work stopped on the replica. The clone car, as it is known around Brumos, sat for-



Jim Bailie confers with Hurley Haywood at Laguna Seca, 1991. Bailie says, “Looks like he’s trying to tell me something and I’m not buying.”

Photo by David Coleman

lornly in the shops, fate unknown, until the SVRA changed hands, and the reconstituted organization gave Brumos another deadline: Finish the replica by Sebring (March, 1991), or you will lose your eligibility for construction under the replica provision we have granted you.

They had given Brumos less than 10 months to finish the project. A number of the sub-assemblies, like the motor, had been built, but most of the work remained to be done. Bailie jumped back into the project, and had the Number 58 car nearing completion — “we were just about to paint the tub and start bolting it together” — when history repeated itself.

At a May, 1990 Savannah Raceway test day, a “guest” driver rolled Number 59 into a ball about the same size Number 58 had become years before at Mid-Ohio. Bailie says, “Had it not had the serial number it did, you’d want to throw it away. The driver, who would prefer to remain anonymous, had never put a mark on a race car in his life. Well he put a mark on this one. We’ve got the accident on tape. It makes Snodgrass want to throw up, because it absolutely ground the car to a pulp.” Chuck Dressing, Director of Communications for Brumos, says the car was shortened 4 feet in the accident — “the engine and gearbox were thrown out on the track.”

So, once again, Number 58 became an objet d’atelier (shop rock), as the Brumos team turned its attention to rebuilding Number 59. The team refused to throw away the wrecked tub. As Dressing says, “the covenant on 59, after it was wrecked, was that the tub wouldn’t be changed. When it was done, you couldn’t tell the car had ever been crinkled.” That little project took six more months, leaving Bailie’s Boys just three months to finish up on 58 before the Sebring deadline imposed by SVRA. The team had learned a lot between the first and second rebuilds, so they corrected a number of things that weren’t quite right the first time — “mostly trim and paint. Stuff that we assumed was the way things had been done. After a year and a half since the first rebuild, we had collected a lot of photographs. There was no guessing. A lot of the let-

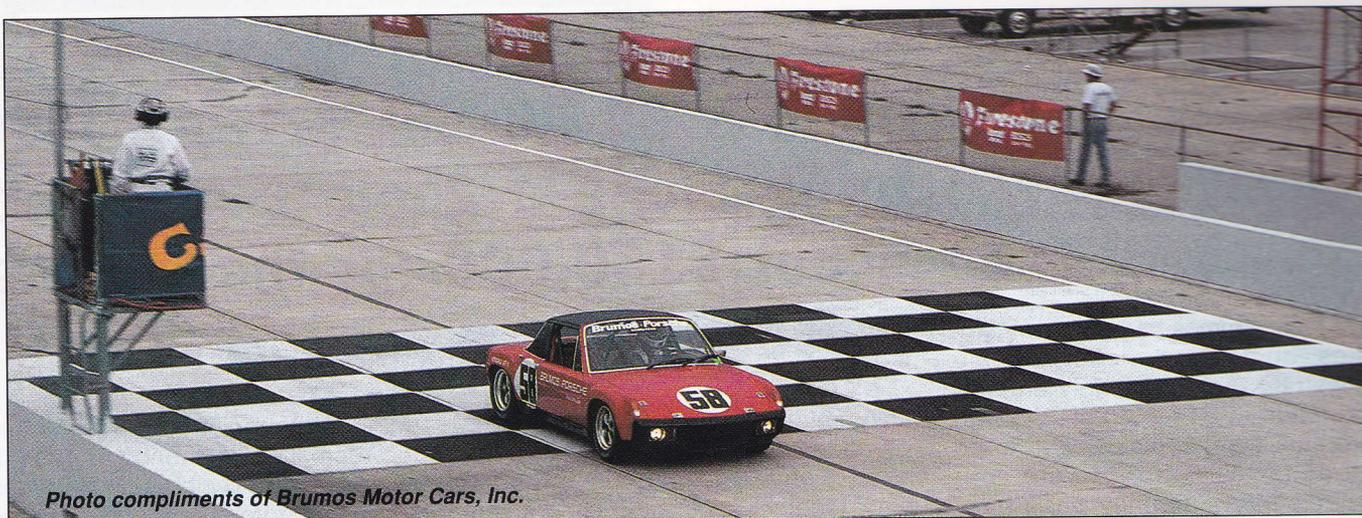


Photo compliments of Brumos Motor Cars, Inc.

THE CLONAL BLUEPRINT ACCORDING TO JIM BAILIE

Roll Bar — Vintage rules allow a maximum of six pickup points, none of them going through the bulkheads. The accident with Number 59 made me think about the way the car folded up. So I strengthened it the second time around with heftier door guards. But I think the vintage people are making a big mistake from a safety standpoint by prohibiting through-bulkhead reinforcements.

Suspension — We use 23 mm torsion bars up front, 180 pound springs in back, non-adjustable Bilstein gas shocks, with a semi-adjustable spring perch. It has a snap ring instead of threads. The proper shock for the car has a snap ring groove and a threaded nut. Brumos has always been very tightly tied with Bilstein. The connection is almost as important as putting the name Brumos on the car.

Tires — Another sore spot. We're forced to use something that was never on the car originally because the vintage organizations give us no choice. A 15 inch Goodyear vintage racing tire, 5.50 for the front, 6.00 for the rear. They're not even of the same tread design. The front is patterned after a design that disappeared in '73, and the rear was last used in '71. All the vintage organizations have done the same thing. They've made a tire list and said, 'use any one you like as long as it's on the list.' But there isn't anything on the list that's right for this car.

Wheels — It originally had 10 inch Minilites on the rear, and 8 inch wide Fuchs on the front. I've got wheels that came with the car, with 59 written on the backside, but I wouldn't dare use them for anything but a coffee table. The car looked like the devil with Minilites in the back, but Porsche had no 10, they only had a 9. Apparently because of IMSA and TRANS-AM rules, they just limited everybody to an 8 and a 10. Even at the first race of the 59 car at Summit Point, Peter had the Minilites on the back of the car. Two of those original wheels are now end tables at Snodgrass' place. The vintage car guys have changed all that, so we now have to run 7 and 8 inch wheels, which is what the car was actu-

ally delivered with as a GT. But it's kind of ironic that we can't run the car the way Peter did back then.

Engine — We use a 2.5 liter engine, with 87.5 mm pistons with an 70.4 mm crank. That's a combination that works real well. We use the early counterbalanced crank with the small hub. If you twist it close to 8,000 rpm for very long, it pitches the flywheel off. It was a serious problem with 'em at the time. The flange distorts so badly that it sets up harmonics in there that just can't be dampened. That's why that large flanged crankshaft with three more bolts (9 versus 6) came along.

We are building a 2 liter motor for the 59 car, so we can run 'em in two classes at the vintage races instead of running them against each other. We'll probably have a better chance in the 2 liter class than the 2.5, because the 2.5 class allows up to 3 liters, so we end up running against cars that are actually quite a bit bigger. The other class is just up to 2 liters, so we'll have a much better chance there. In fact, we'll probably make a whole lot of competitors very angry by moving one car down a class.

Gears — We used to change them a lot. Now we use one set for Sebring, Savannah and Atlanta, that just about works for all three courses. It saves a whole lot of work. First gear is a 15:36 (C). I use that everywhere. I have not modified the cars with a tall first gear. A lot of the guys have done some machining, and used the 18:34 second gear as a first gear. I'm not going to do that to these cars. That's a late model modification. We tried to get these cars as close as we could to the real stuff, other than the roll cage.

We use an 18:34 (F) second, 21:31 (J) third, 23:28 (O) fourth, and a 26:26 (T) top. That works pretty well unless we use the 2 liter engine. We pull about 7,600 - 7,800 rpm, and it will take 8,000, but it's not making power up there, so there's no reason to spin it like that.

We use a limited slip. One of them came in the car, with "59" pounded into the case with a center punch. That's something that one of Peter's guys did — maybe Crew Chief Jack Atkinson.

tering wasn't quite correct the first time. It took IMSA awhile to find me some IMSA stickers old enough that matched. We had to have the Champion decals redone, which is something we don't say too loud around the Bosch representatives."

When they were all done, they affixed a little sign to Number 59. It read, "Made in Jacksonville."

By then, Brumos had plenty of templates, guides and models to help orchestrate their seemingly endless production of 914-6 GT's: "We had more stuff than we knew what to do with as far as patterns were concerned. It was actually quite easy since both of the cars were stripped. But it's not the kind of thing you'd do on purpose. You would not plan this by

. . . Brumos will be happy to build a 914-6 GT for you. Just bring along a good 914-6, and about \$150,000 for the cloning process.

any stretch of the imagination. But if you did plan it, that's the way you'd do it. Take one, strip it, bring 'em both back together, replicating one as you went along."

The Brumos twins have achieved some notable successes in vintage

racing. Number 58 won the Alitalia Cup recreation at Sebring in 1991, a three-hour race which saw Haywood partner Snodgrass and Andy Raka to victory over a 911 2.5 driven by Dennis deFrancesci and Peter Uria. Moreover, Snodgrass won the Sebring SVRA event in '91 as well, with Raka finishing second in Number 58. Haywood, Snodgrass and Raka were also leading the three-hour SVRA enduro at Road Atlanta, when engine failure sidelined the team. Snodgrass feels more comfortable behind the wheel of the clone car, Number 58: "It's a mule, not a million dollar car like the other one is. I feel a lot looser driving Number 58. We don't want to get another scratch in 59."

The Brumos restoration of Numbers 58 and 59 has had a salutary effect on the 914-6 market. Bailie says, "we took an obscure car, and absolutely blew the 914 market wide open. The ones who had GT's were thrilled, the ones who wanted to own one were angry, because we drove the price right through the roof. There were already four legitimate 914-6 GT's restored when we started. We made it six, and ours put the final zinger on price. A regular 914-6 went from \$8,000 or \$9,000 at the most to about \$20,000, overnight. And now it's getting worse."

Bailie knows full well it hasn't always been like that for the mid-engine VolksPorsche. In 1970, he worked as a salesman at Four J Motors (now Nick Alexander Imports) in Huntington Park, California, when "914-6's were all over the place. We couldn't get rid of them. Seems to me I remember, painted on the front window, 'Six Cylinder Porsche, \$5,995.' And those signs were up there forever. We couldn't give those cars away. Nobody wanted one."

Now Brumos will be happy to build a 914-6 GT for you. Just bring along a good 914-6, and about \$150,000 for the cloning process.

Photo compliments of Brumos Motor Cars, Inc.

