

Brian Higgins

(HRCCT Immediate Past President/Board Member)



They say you can't get blood out of a stone and there is almost the same impossibility in getting our modest President to write his own profile. However with my constant and on-going nagging he has finally succumbed to the pressure.

In fairness to Brian I will quote his statement regarding my actions in full and unedited: -
"After months of threats and browbeating by our editor for me to submit a profile as an example to others - for what it's worth here it is"

It should also be noted that this profile contains extracts from the Tasmanian Motor Racing Hall of Fame's Profile on Brian. The HRCCT would like to thank Andrew Lamont and the Hall of Fame for permission to reproduce those extracts.

Brian Higgins - Profile.

My first memories of motor sport were when I was about seven years old. The man that was to become my step father was ex WWII Air force with an interest in both car and speed boat racing. I lived my early years in Launceston so we were often off to Greens Beach, Bakers Beach, Quorn Hall and Valleyfield for car racing, Muddy Creek at Legana for hill climbs and Rosevears for the speed boats of course then followed Longford, Baskerville and Symmons Plains plus several further hillclimbs.

There were a few exotic post and pre-war cars around that I used to absolutely drool over and was always impatient waiting for the next race meeting. I then became a flag marshal at Longford for four years prior to starting my own motor racing adventure. I started out with a Fiat Abarth which gave me a few class successes but I wanted to go to open competition so moved on to an FJ Holden. The Abarth experience proved to be the ideal apprenticeship for the FJ for it was very quick but its handling and breaking was less than ideal. The Abarth had five lifetime owners and I was the only one not to roll it over. I don't know if it was luck or good judgement.

People who see old photos of me from the 1960's when I was racing usually comment "You were so thin back then". Well of course I was - I couldn't afford to eat! I was an impoverished young man living away from home and had a racing car to maintain. With religious like zeal to follow my motor racing dream substantial sacrifices and compromises had to be made. I had it figured that if I skipped a few meals a week (needed six for a full set of spark plugs or about twenty for a new set of brake shoes) I could not only acquire the necessary parts but also improve the power to weight ratio of the car/driver by being lighter. A win-win situation.

Fate then intervened when I was approached by brilliant mechanic Bob Knights who offered to help me repair an engine problem. You cannot imagine how pleased I was with this offer. The fact being I did not know what the problem was, had no idea how to fix it and not the faintest notion of what parts were required or even what they looked like or where they went!

It was also the start of a very successful racing partnership and a lifelong friendship. Bob made the FJ go, I just steered it. They were great times. As I managed to achieve consistent success I was offered some sponsorship. Not a lot but most welcome, and then being paid actual money for doing well. Joy! So then there were three meals a day and the occasional beverage to wash them down with.

Then some generous but possibly misguided people invited me to drive their cars for them. I could not believe my good fortune. I am most grateful to those people for the experience and the faith they had in me. I am delighted to report that none of those cars were ever damaged in any way.

Life eventually overtakes us all so with the onset of marriage, children, mortgages and starting a business my involvement as a driver came to an end. Happily I was able to maintain an interest in motor sport by sponsoring some others to follow their dreams. Also I had an active role in TV, radio and print media racing coverage and promotion.

I have been most fortunate to accumulate some fabulous memories, meet some outstanding people and form some treasured friendships.

I left motor sports in the late 1970's to pursue other interests; my enthusiasm was then rekindled around 2009. I am thoroughly enjoying my involvement with our club and the marvellous members there-in. I believe we can grow into a significant entity in the rich history of Tasmanian Motor Sport.

Extracts from Brian's Tasmanian Motor Sport Hall of Fame Profile

Inducted 2009

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Brian borrowed money from a finance company to buy some furniture, but instead purchased a Fiat Abarth - this was to be Brian's first race car. (He considered the seats passed for furniture.)

The FJ (an ex taxi) was a successful car taking Brian to two Tasmanian Touring Car Championships - the only Tasmanian to win the title, placing his name alongside the like of Peter (Skinny) Manton, Norm Beechey, Alan Moffat and Peter Brock. Brian put the success of the FJ down to mechanic Bob Knights, whom he considered a genius.

After the FJ Brian never owned another race car, being lucky enough to become a driver only, and was very successful, at one stage having 22 consecutive wins in various classes. He had regular drives in a Porsche 356B, Lotus Elite and Elfin Climax, MG/Holden Special, MGA Coupe, Ford Special, Buchanan Holden, Honda S600 and many touring cars. He often competed in different classes on the same day and raced at Longford, Symmons Plains and Baskerville circuits as well as hill climbs at the Queens Domain(Hobart), Penguin, Trevallyn, Hillwood and Baskerville. He set lap records and hill climb records in every class he competed in.

In the Elfin climax, Brian held the lap records at Symmons Plains and Baskerville and also came second in the 1964 Tasmanian Sports Car Championship at Baskerville. The same year - 1964 - Brian became co founder and a major contributor to the Tasmanian Motorist Magazine which covered everyday motoring and Tasmanian motor sport as well. In this job Brian got to drive even more exotic cars, as Brian road and track tested them for his stories in the Magazine. Brian was also involved in TV and radio broadcasts when expert comments were required.



Yes, our President is a Champion - Presentation 1963 Touring Car Championship at Symmons Plains. Lap of Honour car 1913 Deasy owned by Gordon Fysh.