

More than 50 years ago, the concept of sponsoring an entire major league series was pure anomaly. That is until Racine, Wisconsin floor and car wax company, S.C. Johnson, saw a golden opportunity. Johnson's Wax—at least its more recently introduced car products—seemed a good fit and developed an entire promotional program around the new and monstrous Can-Am series. This was the first pioneering step of its kind. J/Wax looked to have exclusivity in the series. That is until the most well-known and established competitor got involved. This meant the competition was no longer limited to the track. Thus began what is known as "The Wax Wars." Three legendary public relations men who began their illustrious careers in this great era of motorsport—on both sides of this war—tell their tales and reveal who won.

# the Wax Wars

BY TOM STAHLER

In today's racing world, sponsorship is the key element to getting on track. The skills might be there, the driver personality is great, but without the bucks, barely anyone—or anything—moves. Looking back, classically a gentleman's sport, motor racing only really began seeing major sponsorship in the mid- to late-1960s. One of the most notable early major players was the Gold Leaf Cigarette sponsorship of Lotus in Formula 1, where Colin Chapman's team abandoned its national British Racing Green colors for the sponsor's red and gold. Another was Players cigarettes and LaBatt beer in Canada, that sponsored specific races.

Car brands and the cottage industries they created, played associated roles as the concept of "win on Sunday, sell on Monday" became more and more apparent. It would also be discovered during the early years of major sponsorships, the "quality" of the audience—and the brand loyalty they brought. When it came to the Can-Am, still heralded as perhaps the greatest sports car series of all time, these concepts broke ground and opened a door to a whole new way of reaching a targeted audience and invented what would

eventually come to be known as the "Sports Marketing" industry.

## A Tale of Two Companies

Samuel C. Johnson was a woodcutter. His specialty was parquet flooring. His decorative and complicated craftsmanship was the centerpiece of many mansions of the day. In 1886, he bought the Racine Hardware Company and renamed it Johnson's Prepared Paste Wax Company. He developed paste waxes specifically for parquet flooring.

When his son Herbert Fisk Johnson joined the company in 1906, it was renamed, S.C. Johnson & Son (SCJ). The senior Johnson died in 1919 leaving

Herbert to head the company that continued to grow with waxes and household products. Herbert died in 1928 without leaving a will, and after a long legal battle his estate was split equally between his two children, Herbert Fisk Johnson Jr. and Henrietta Johnson Louis.

Herbert's son, Herbert Fisk Johnson Jr., was the third generation to lead the company. In 1936 he hired friend Frank Lloyd Wright to design a new administration building for his company in Racine, Wisconsin. He also worked closely with friend Wright as the company continued to create beautiful, ornate floors that found their way into a number of the world-renowned architect's homes.

In 1935 Johnson flew from Milwaukee to Fortaleza, Ceará, in an amphibious twin-engine Sikorsky S-38. The ambitious trip was to learn more about the carnauba palm tree of northeastern Brazil that produced carnauba wax, one of the main products of his company, and to determine whether groves of these trees could produce enough to meet future demand.

His 1935 two-month, 7,500 mile journey was documented in Samuel Curtis Johnson Jr.'s 2001 film "Carnauba: A Son's Memoir." The film includes footage from a repeat trip that the Johnson family undertook in 1998 in the same restored amphibious plane that the senior Johnson used so many years before.

The Simoniz Company came into being in 1910. George Simons, who developed a cleaner, created the company and a carnauba wax product for car finishes. Along with Elmer Rich of the Great Northern Railway, the two organized the Simons Manufacturing Company. In 1912, Elmer and his brother, R.J. Rich, acquired full ownership. They changed the name of the firm to Simoniz Company and located the first office and backroom factory at 2121 Michigan Avenue in Chicago, which was at the time, was known as "Automobile Row." Elmer Rich used the prominence of radio to promote his product with the slogan "Motorists Wise, Simoniz."

In 1965, Morton International purchased the controlling interest in Simoniz Company.

## A Tale of Three PR Men - Brad Niemcek, Johnson Wax, Carl Byoir and Associates

"I started with Byoir in the Chicago office about three weeks after the 1966 election cycle was completed. I got shoehorned into a congressional campaign in Wisconsin's 8th Congressional District (Green Bay, Appleton and Oshkosh Area) for the



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*Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*. I got a call from Byoir and associates who said 'we no longer see your bylines, so we came looking for you.'"

Neimchek was hired by the top PR firm on the spot, after flying him from Green Bay into Chicago to meet with the office manager. Once hired, his task was to handle the media for all their Chicago-based clients. Byoir was the second largest PR firm in the U.S. at the time.

Byoir also had a well-respected account executive, Bob Henkel. Henkel was a smart, articulate ex-military guy who had worked his way up through the ranks at the firm. One of Henkel's top clients was S.C. Johnson & Son. Early in 1966, key executives and players from Johnson and both Byoir and Johnson's ad agency, Foote, Cone & Belding (FCB), had a brainstorm session on the promotional plans for the car products Johnson's Wax had begun including: KIT Carnuba Wax, and Johnson's Car-Nu. Concerns were coming from SCJ headquarters that sales performance of the products were not meeting expectations. The ad firm came back a few weeks later with a proposal of referring to the products as "J/Wax" with a checkered flag logo and the tagline, "Go with the shine of a winner!" It was at that time that Samuel C. Johnson Jr., who now led the behemoth privately held company to suggest, "Maybe we should be in racing."

Coincidentally, Henkel was invited to a special announcement by the Sports Car Club of America by friend and legendary *New York Times* sports writer Frank Blunk, at the top floor of the Time-Life Building in Manhattan. The announcement turned out to be SCCA competition director Jim Kaser and SCCA executive director John Bishop extolling the SCCA's new unlimited sports car series, the Can-Am. Henkel, looking for an outlet for the J/Wax branding efforts and Kaser seeking additional prize money, ultimately made for the first instance anywhere of a corporate sponsorship of any type of sporting series in history.

Niemcek remembers, "Henkel approached Kaser after the announcement and asked if he could have a 72-hour first right of refusal to sponsor the series. Kaser was floored! And said 'sure.' He took the idea back to Racine and Johnson's said 'It sounds like a wonderful opportunity.' No one realized at the time that this was the first time that a single corporate entity was sponsoring a professional series of auto racing, but it was the first time an American corporation had sponsored a sporting series of any type."

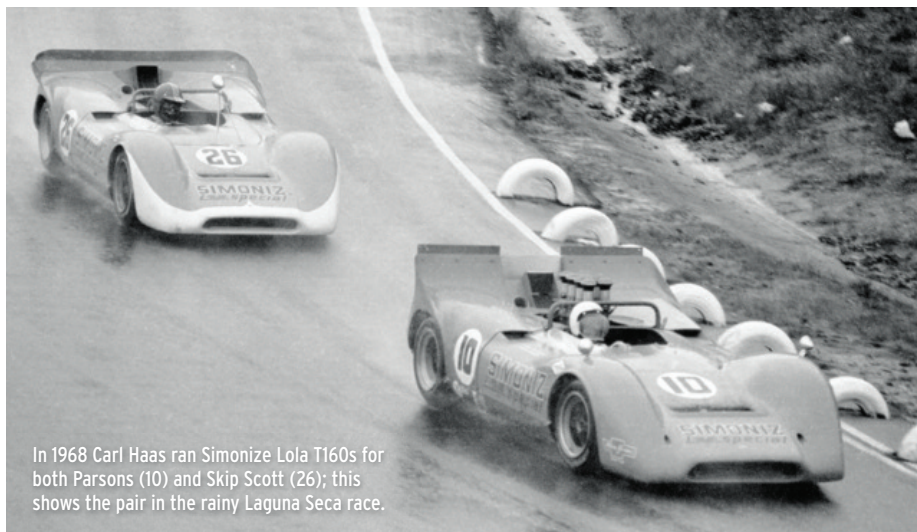
Needless to say, it would become a



J-Wax's groundbreaking series sponsorship, engineered by SCCA's Jim Kaser, was leveraged by hiring racing legend Stirling Moss (at right) as Can-Am Commissioner to interface with media like veteran newsmen/broadcaster Chris Economaki. We see the two at Elkhart Lake's Road America, first round of 1967.



Rival wax brand Simoniz appeared as early as 1967 on this McLaren M1C driven by Chuck Parsons, shown during the 1967 Can-Am finale at Stardust Raceway outside Las Vegas.



In 1968 Carl Haas ran Simoniz Lola T160s for both Parsons (10) and Skip Scott (26); this shows the pair in the rainy Laguna Seca race.

template for sporting finance. J/Wax would give the series serious credibility through its automotive wax branding, entertainment and hospitality at the tracks, have a world-class artist creating the series trophy, large additional sums for prize money and the hiring of retired racing hero Stirling Moss to be the official series commissioner.

The trophy, in of itself, was one of the most unique prizes ever given to that point. “One of the challenges Johnson had was how they would make the series important and identify themselves with the series,” said Niemcek. “They couldn’t put stickers on the race cars, like STP. So they commissioned the J/Wax floating trophy.”

*Competition Press* said in a 1966 article, “The nacelle-like trophy made of magnesium and aluminum, is given its upward thrust by the ‘repel’ action of powerful ceramic magnets in it and the black ‘launching pad’ of its pedestal.” The artist Alberto W. Collie, who created the trophy, made it characteristic of the late Venezuelan-born sculptor’s works—he frequently employed magnets to create surreal levitating forms.

“In 1967, the Can-Am series was going to Road America for the first time and it being in its home state, Johnson’s Wax really wanted it to do it well. Henkel said there will be a lot of people [at the client] who do not know much about the Can-Am or racing and asked if I had any ideas and would there be a lot of billable hours. I said, ‘Yes, why don’t we do a road racing workshop?’ Cliff Tufte (Road America’s founder and President) had scheduled the Can-Am weekend in September, replacing the USRRC date and moved the USRRC race to July. So we put up a tent, got a caterer during the July weekend where there would be a lot of Can-Am-type cars. We got Jim Kaser to talk about the Can-Am from the organizer point of view, we got Cliff Tufte to talk about it from the track promoter’s point of view, Bob McKee to talk about it from a car designer’s point of view and a couple of drivers as well. The thing was a huge success and I got to bill a lot of hours.”



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PETE LYONS

Tough Chuck Parsons, a Kentuckian turned California sports car racer, was United States Road Racing champion in 1966 as well as 1969 winner of the 24 Hour at Daytona with Mark Donohue. A Can-Am stalwart, Parsons came 3rd in the 1969 championship and finally placed 8th among all drivers scoring points in the Big Block era. Here he’s at Bridgehampton in 1968.

Niemcek then was moved to New York to work on other of Byoir’s clients when he was invited to the 1968 race at Bridgehampton by Henkel. During the trip, Henkel explained that the Can-Am would be growing from a six-race to 11-race series in 1969—and would he be interested in doing the series full time? His answer: “Who do I have to kill?”

### Rod Campbell, Johnson Wax, Contracted Through Carl Byoir and Associates

Originally Bob Henkel contracted with Mt. Tremblant track promoter and broadcaster Rod Campbell in 1967 to do the advance PR, and travel with Stirling Moss to develop press conferences, generate media interest and set up radio interviews. “I was involved in promoting the very first Can-Am race in 1966 at Mont Tremblant. Bob Henkel hired me because they liked the newsletter I distributed (with Pierre Luc) in Canada, in both French and English, called *The Motoring Scene/Le Scene Motoring*. I made a point to keep up with everything that was going on in racing.”

Campbell’s interest in racing began in Germany, where he was stationed with the U.S. Army—a draft situation when the Canadian applied for U.S. citizenship. “I had a TR2 and was reading much about racing. So I went to the Nürburgring to see the 1958 German Grand Prix where Stirling Moss and Tony Brooks had Vanwalls on the front row. Moss was married to Katie Molson of the Canadian beer family, which I found particularly interesting. He broke down halfway through the race and Brooks took the win. It was very exciting and thought, ‘I have got to find a way to get involved in this’.”

After the Army, Campbell worked as a sales manager for a radio station in Canada. One of his biggest clients was a car dealer and British Leyland factory race driver named Ed Leavens. Leavens had a short but illustrious career in racing, driving MGs at Sebring, Corvettes in Canada and held a record at Bonneville in an Austin-Healey Sprite. As part of their advertising deal, Campbell would go to numerous area races and do radio reports from the track—including Leavens in all the broadcasts. From there he did the newsletters and reporting to *Competition Press* (now *Autoweek*). Ultimately he worked on a magazine called *Track and Traffic*, which so-lidified his involvement in racing through media.

Traveling with Moss, and doing the advance PR work on the Can-Am, almost 10 years after Campbell first saw him race at the Nürburgring was a special thrill; “My favorite driver of all time was Moss. I had the chance to meet him in Germany, but



did not want to impose, but then interviewed him for radio a few years later at Watkins Glen.”

By the time the 1968 season arrived, Campbell had moved into Formula 1 and was working on promoting races in Canada and the United States. One of the most important future interactions between Bob Henkel and Rod Campbell would be the promotion of the first Detroit Grand Prix in 1982—a Formula 1 race through the streets of Detroit—long before the notable Indy car race held on Belle Isle.

### Dick Stahler, Simoniz, Carl A. Haas Racing

At 27 years of age, T. Richard “Dick” Stahler was the manager of public relations and advertising for Amsted Industries in Chicago, a railroad industry manufacturer, that at the time resided in the Fortune 500 (before becoming private in 1986). He had just been promoted from staff assistant six months prior, in his 18-month tenure at the company. “I was learning a lot.”

Over at Simoniz, who entered the series with Haas in 1968, the first PR guy on the job was a staffer on the Morton International side, Steve Kaye. They sent him out on the road “doing this motorsports thing”—the Can-Am. Kaye was a capable PR man, but he wasn’t comfortable. He was more used to the public relations surrounding salt and the trades.

Stahler remembers, “We were at a PR networking lunch and Steve was lamenting that, ‘I have to go to Riverside this



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weekend for a Can-Am race in California.’ I said ‘Man! That sounds exciting! What kinds of things do you do there?’ He replied, ‘frankly, not hell of a lot, I’m the spokes-person.’”

Seemingly Simoniz wasn’t invested in the program—and Steve Kaye himself wasn’t invested either. So as the networking lunch went on, they began talking and Stahler mentioned a number of ideas of how to boost the publicity at these events. Little did he know, Steve’s boss, Ralph Wells, was sitting within earshot of the conversation. “As most know, my voice carries when I get excited,” said Stahler.

“So at about three o’clock that afternoon, I am sitting at Amsted industries and the phone rings and the guy at the other end, who does nothing to identify himself says, ‘If you are so G-D smart, why don’t you come over here and do it?’ I said,

‘who the hell is this and what are you talking about?’ He said, ‘This is Ralph Wells and I think we need you.’ So, I met with the team at Morton Salt and then went up to Highland Park and met with Carl [Haas] and Chuck [Parsons]. It was an exciting time in motorsports. I saw it as an area that I liked and knew something about as a fan—so I took the job!”

### The Wax Wars

From the inception of the series in 1966 right up to the 1968 Can-Am and USRRC Season, J/Wax was enjoying what those in the sports marketing business refer to as “Sponsor Exclusivity.” Stirling Moss was making appearances, radio tie-ins with numerous track promoters offered fans and the uninitiated, immersive experiences to a Can-Am race with full hospitality. Sales of the wax increased. It was clearly a win for J/Wax and the genius of the first major racing promotional program by Byoir and Associates.

Carl Haas came by the Simoniz sponsorship in an introduction to Morton Salt (owner of Simoniz) executives through a close friend named Harry Woodnorth. Woodnorth was known as probably the “greatest luxury car salesman in America.” He was the sole salesman for Loeber Motors in Chicago, then later went into his own “car sleuthing” business. He would find rare cars for exclusive buyers. Harry bought a warehouse of a former heating a cooling company near the Kennedy Expressway to sell numerous luxury cars, housed onsite. He never even took down the heating and cooling sign as it was rumored he thought it to be too expensive. Harry’s customers, who included the likes of Muhammad Ali and Saudi sheiks, would just know to look for the heating and cooling sign when they came to shop by appointment.

Woodnorth was in a conversation with a Morton Salt executive, who at the time owned the Simoniz brand. Simoniz was the



Despite the ferocity of on-track competition for all that J-Wax prize money, the “Million Dollar Can-Am” remained comradely enough for cooperation between teams. At Edmonton in 1969 Eaton’s Paul Cooke, Haas crewman Gil Munz, McLaren man Tyler Alexander and Chaparral’s Wesley Sweet worked pitched in together on an ailing 494 Chevy.

well-established car wax brand—to the point of being like the Xerox or Coke as most would say “Simoniz my car.” While not its biggest focus, there was new competition in the car wax business from J/Wax, which had a serious corporate commitment to compete directly—particularly with the strong investment in carnauba farms in Brazil and Chica-go start-up, Turtle Wax, which had become the fastest growing brand of car wax growing by leaps and bounds with its “liquid Wax.”

Woodnorth brought the executive and Carl Haas together, who agreed it would be great to enter a car in the series that J/Wax was spending gobs and gobs of money and execute what Stahler refers to as “ambush marketing.” This began in the 1968 racing season with sponsorship in both the Can-Am and USRRC races. In 1968, Chuck Parsons and Skip Scott won the Road America 500 in a Simoniz-sponsored Lola T70 and raced Lola T160s in the Can-Am.

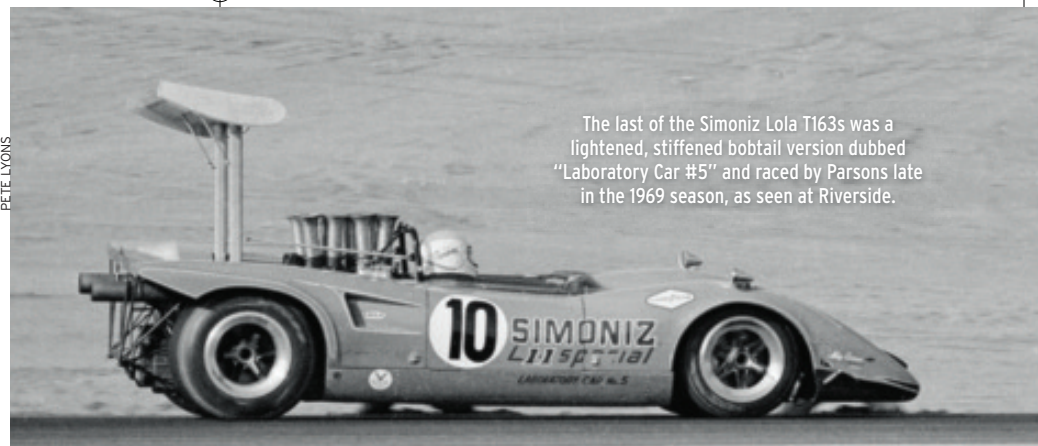
Niemcek said that the entry of Simoniz in the series caused “anxious moments.” He relates: “Henkel posed the question, ‘what if Chuck Parsons, in the Simoniz Lola, won the J/Wax trophy?’ I prepared the position that we would be delighted, because it would be a PR win for both brands—but of course that never happened.”

What most people don’t know about the Wax Wars is this: Simoniz did not sponsor the Carl Haas team, representing itself as a wax product. All the race-car livery and supporting materials touted Simoniz 1 + 1—an oil additive by design to compete with STP.

“When I came in the game changed again. For some wild reason (Simoniz) also thought they could create an STP competitor. This was at the height of Andy Granatelli’s color, power, bombast and success with the growth of STP Oil Treatment, remembers Stahler. “The hook was all the benefits of the other oil additive plus detergent to keep your engine clean. They thought if they could get one to two percent of the STP market, it would be a win as they were not vested in it.”

“On my first day (at Morton/Simoniz) I walked in and they had nothing. There were maybe a couple of news releases. I asked where were they sent, and they said, ‘to the trade papers.’ I didn’t even have a list of the motorsports writers. So I started with dead scratch in April of 1969.” Stahler had to

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The last of the Simoniz Lola T163s was a lightened, stiffened bobtail version dubbed “Laboratory Car #5” and raced by Parsons late in the 1969 season, as seen at Riverside.



Can-Am Commissioner S. Moss, Esq., hard at his liaison work with author Linda Feldhorn while superstar Bruce McLaren goofs off in casual banter with Ian Dunn.

develop his own press lists. “In those days there were sportswriters who actually covered the Auto Racing beat—at least part time. “In Chicago, we had four newspapers. Each one of them had an auto racing writer.”

Immediately, Stahler had to put together an Indy 500 PR program as Simoniz had agreed to co-sponsor then rookie-Mark Donohue’s Sunoco Lola, prepared by Roger Penske. Simoniz wanted to use their new 1 + 1 oil treatment as the sponsoring product. One problem: Penske’s maestro crew chief and engine builder Karl Kainhofer was paid by Sunoco. Kainhofer actually threatened to walk off the job if Simoniz 1 + 1 was

put on the car. It was decided to stick with the wax products as the co-sponsor of the car. Stahler said, “Kainhofer was right. Granatelli had the same problems with

Valvoline-sponsored contingency monies as oil companies didn’t particularly like oil additive companies.”

### A Chance Meeting

As soon as Indy concluded, the following weekend was the first Can-Am at Mosport (now Canadian Tire Motorsport Park). “I put together a nice press kit and headed for Toronto.”

A chance meeting at the bar on Stahler’s first night turned out to be one of his great breaks. “I checked into the Holiday Inn in Oshawa, Ontario, about halfway between Toronto and the track, settled in and went down to the bar for a cold one before dinner. I sat down next to an old guy and made small talk. He introduced himself as ‘Frank.’ He asked what brought me to town and I said I was here for the Can-Am and was ‘they new guy.’ He said, ‘I’m going to the race too.’ Turns out this was Frank Blunk, the famed sportswriter for the New York Times.”

The two ended up having dinner and Blunk asked Stahler if he could ‘bum a ride



Brad Niemcek handled Johnson Wax PR for Carl Byoir & Associates.

to the track in the morning', of course he agreed. "I get out to the track, and I know no one. It's the first time I had seen the place and it's the Friday of a Can-Am. Frank shows me how to get credentials then walks me into the pressroom and declares to the room, 'This is my friend Dick. He works for Simoniz. Be nice to him.'"

Typical of textbook PR, Stahler tried to get involved with the Haas team from the moment he arrived. He began asking questions, in order to develop content for the press and be an effective spokesperson. "There was an overt distrust on Carl's (Haas) part, which flowed over to the crew that I was 'the spy from Simoniz.' When Steve Kaye was doing the job, he would check in, pat a few press on the back and essentially stay out of it and leave the team alone. So there was some initial paranoia."

After Blunk's kind introduction, Stahler took to task meeting the press and tried to get whatever information he could from the team. "Amongst the crew, the guy who warmed up to me the most was (Henry) Ike Smith. There was also Colin Riley, a British former Lotus F1 mechanic who worked on Jimmy Clark's 1965 Indy 500 winning car, and Gil Munz who had worked with Chuck [Parsons] in the USRRC."

Over in the J/Wax camp there were different kinds of challenges. As the title sponsor of the series, J/Wax needed to keep fresh ideas coming to give the press easier access to information, while touting the brands. Niemcek said, "One of my better ideas was to introduce a media guide to the

series. So I put together all the history of the prior years, and printed it on mimeograph machines—it was very humble—with a colored paper cover page. As it turns out, it was the first media guide in racing."

"It wasn't all peaches and cream. Not everyone at the company was on board—and one of them was the brand manager for the unified car products who was not a PR guy but an ad guy. He came along, but he kind of dragged his feet. Sam Johnson, however had good PR instincts."

Niemcek also overcame the adversity of McLaren's success. "One of the biggest problems we had in the Can-Am was there was generally only two possible winners." Most remember that the Can-Am in the 1967-1971 seasons was coined "The Bruce and Denny Show" for the pure dominance. McLaren, as a team, won every race of the 1969 season in the powerful M8B. "So it was hard to get press on any other drivers or teams—or into the pressroom for that matter. Without drivers, you couldn't get quotes. So what we did was introduce Gold, Silver and Bronze medallions at each race. Johnson loved it and commissioned medallions. For the drivers, to get your medallion, you had to come to the pressroom."

It was even more difficult in 1967, as the biggest challenge for J/Wax as a sponsor, was getting the racing beat writers to call the series by name: "The J/Wax Can-Am series." In today's world, this is not really an issue as major sponsorships are mentioned

routinely. But in those days, writers felt that adding company names to any effort was a compromise to journalistic integrity.

Rod Campbell remembers, "Our main job was to get the main mass media guys to pay attention to the sport. It was always stick and ball stuff. We had to grind on (the reporters). I would wine them and dine them and they slowly came around. After a time, they would realize that the sponsors were just trying to help—and what was so sinister about it? Nobody squawks about it at all today"

Stahler certainly had PR budget envy. "J/Wax had a huge investment. They set the tone. It was a million dollar series. Brad was doing things that were never done before in sports PR. He was handing out film clips, had pre-recorded interviews with series commissioner Stirling Moss—who was still seen as a God at the time, even more so than today. They were doing it right! They came to a track the way FedEx came to a ChampCar race."

Rod Campbell observed, "J/Wax, Bob Henkel and Brad Niemcek were really on the leading edge of marketing events. You have marketing managers who are sitting on multi-million dollar budgets—they have a lot of choices. How many magazines should you be in? In those days magazines were the main communication devices. For them to take an event and promote it in every city and get their name in headlines to a sports audience was a very interesting move—very innovative."

They backed it up so well... They were each track promoter's best friend. The track promoters were dead poor when it came to media. So Brad was like Wyatt Earp with two six shooters!" commented Stahler.

Niemcek agreed "We actually had to teach the track promoters and PR people how to promote a race. Johnson provided many tools for them, then showed them how to use them. We would partner with local rock and roll stations in each market and hold a sweepstakes for winners to come to the race on a bus, be met by Stirling Moss, who would brief them on that day's race, give them a program and feed them lunch. In exchange, the stations would agree to run the promotion for three weeks leading up to each race."

"I had to fold and seal all my own news releases," said Stahler. "Then one of the pool secretaries would run the envelopes through the postal meter. I bet Niemcek had secretaries for that stuff."

"Yes, I did" retorted Niemcek. "However, I was a mechanic. What I did was execute other peoples ideas. I didn't think then and I don't think now that I was



Parsons and Haas crewman Colin Riley (formerly with Lotus) at Texas World Speedway in 1969, the season that hard work and consistency made Chuck "best of the rest" behind the Bruce and Denny Show.

the creative equal of Dick Stahler, but I had a lot more money (laughs)."

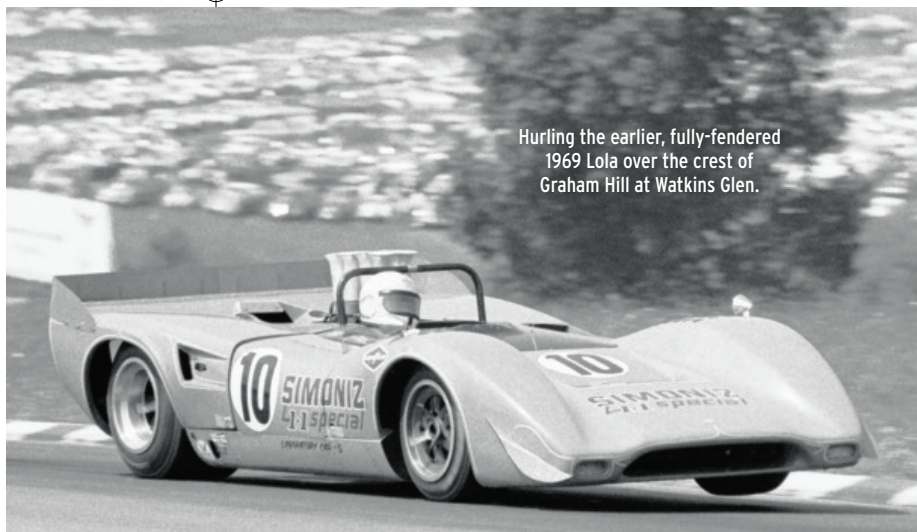
"Retrospectively, there is a big difference between a company that introduces products using motor racing as a promotional vehicle vs. what I had, which was a company that sent me out like a one-arm paper hanger," said Stahler. "I would pay a guy like Pete Luongo \$40-\$50 for a good photo to use in press kits and preludes to races and Morton executives would ask, 'what's that for?' Morton was a publicly held company. Johnson Wax was privately held—as was STP. You can do a lot more spending promotionally because you don't have to answer to shareholders. My whole campaign was based around being the best informed Team PR man wherever I was. While Brad was the big picture...I turned myself into the Can-Am gossip columnist."

Another big problem Stahler faced was the newspapers wouldn't call the car the Simoniz Lola—referring instead to the Lola T-162. "The reporters would say 'the nameplate on the car says Lola T-162/3. So I had to go back to Carl—it was like pulling teeth—but I got him to change the nameplate on the car to 'Simoniz Lola T-162!' Carl learned a lot about sponsorship after I came. Before me, he was resistant to doing the obligations to the sponsor. But this was because, they just didn't know!"

Frank Blunk was replaced on the Can-Am beat by John Radosta at the *New York Times* prior to the fourth round of the season at Edmonton. Just like Stahler, only weeks before, Radosta was new to the scene and Stahler gave a guiding hand to the green reporter. In return, Radosta approached Stahler at Mid-Ohio and said, 'if you haven't seen the *New York Times* today, you should go buy one.' On the front page of the Sports section was big photo of Chuck Parsons and the Simoniz Lola!

The night after the final 1969 Can-Am at Texas World Speedway, J/Wax hosted a banquet for the presentation of the trophy and the Championship check. The McLarens of Bruce McLaren and Denny Hulme took the first two positions of the championship, with Chuck Parsons finishing the season a respectable third. As each prize was awarded, an image of the car was projected on a large screen behind the stage. The final mortar of the Wax Wars was fired at Simoniz that night.

Early in the season at Bridgehampton, Parsons had tagged one of the tires that was used to line the corners. The damage to the nose of the car was bad enough that the Haas crew had to re-place it during a pit stop. There was a spare, but it was the



Hurling the earlier, fully-fendered 1969 Lola over the crest of Graham Hill at Watkins Glen.

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nose from Peter Revson's Lola. It was a plain white color without any sponsor identification. A photo of Parson's car, taken late in the race with no sponsor identification was shown proudly as Parsons accepted his award.

"I would have done the same thing," quipped Stahler.

### So Who Won the Wax Wars?

Many good things come to an end, and so it was for both Simoniz and Johnson in the Can-Am. Simoniz left the series at the end of 1969 after the brand was acquired, and J/Wax did not renew their sponsorship after 1971.

When Johnson ended their sponsorship, the SCCA did not know how to do the promotions themselves and the tracks had the same difficulties. "I think this was one of the chief reasons the Can-Am eventually folded. They could not maintain the momentum of such aggressive promotion," observed Niemcek. Many refer to Mark Donohue's Porsche 917-30 as the "Can-Am Killer," however, losing the promotional power that J/Wax brought with them to the party might be the more logical reasoning behind the foredoomed end of the great series.

Niemcek would continue in the world of public relations then broadcasting. To the racing world, beyond his accomplishments as a PR man and racer, he would become—along with Oscar Koveleski and Tony "a2z" Adamowicz—a founding member of the Polish Racing Drivers of America and with his aforementioned PRDA brothers, set a coast-to-coast world record for a passenger van during the first Cannonball Baker Sea to Shining Sea Memorial Trophy Dash.

Rod Campbell would continue his public relations career in just about all forms of racing. He worked with numerous top-flight drivers including Jackie Stewart, Michael Schumacher and Brett Lunger. His relationship with the Ford Motor company led him to create Campbell & Company, a

Detroit-area public relations firm wholly dedicated to Ford's motorsport activity, that continues today under the leadership of veteran Ford PR man, Kevin Kennedy.

At the end of the 1969 season, Morton Salt sold the Simoniz brand to Texize, the inventor of Fantastik Spray cleaner—ironically SC Johnson would buy Texize in 1986. The sale to Texize meant not only the end of racing sponsorships, but of 140 people working on non-Morton salt activities, they fired more than 100. Stahler was one of them. But after working together during the 1969 racing season, Carl Haas proposed a solution.

"Carl said, 'I need help! I am not sure if it can be long-term, but I will pay you what you were making at Simoniz.'" So at that point, Stahler went to work directly for Haas. "That's when it got real complicated," Stahler chuckles. "But you don't need that story."

T. Richard Stahler went on to a stellar career as one of the top PR/sports Marketing men in the country. But for 30 more years, Haas and Stahler would be employer, client, then partner. Together they accomplished many advances in racing promotion at tracks including Road America, the Milwaukee Mile and the original Houston Grand Prix—and a foray into Formula 1 with Beatrice in the mid-1980s.

So who won the war? Brad Niemcek believes he has the answer: Simoniz. "Johnson's Wax deep-sixed Kit car products and Simoniz still exists."

Rod Campbell believes both Simoniz and J/Wax won. "I think they are both winners. That's a hedge, of course. The only problem is that J/Wax did not stay long enough to have a stronger impact. Had they stayed with it for 10 years, they would have had the kind of impact as Target has had with Chip Ganassi."

Stahler declared the Wax Wars winner as well: "Turtle Wax won the wax wars. They were doing substantial retail promotions at places like Walgreens with co-op money and never went into racing—and outsold both J/Wax and Simoniz." 