

KC Alfa members race their Brit cars at Hallett. Old 77 calls it a wrap.

by Bill Rinke

AROC members, Gary Fuqua and Bill Rinke, spent the weekend of October 17-18 at Hallett Raceway just 30 minutes west of Tulsa, Okla. Gary took his bright red Triumph TR-4, number 69, with the expectation of giving battle to TR-4's and others in his race class. His recently rebuilt motor and a lot of work on other things yearned to be tested on this 1.8 mile road course which has 10 challenging turns. A few hills to go over also. Bill hauled his old 1962 Lotus Super 7 to this Corinthian Vintage Auto Racing (CVAR) sponsored event. Bill's first race in this car was at Hallett in 1988. This event was to mark the end of racing for Bill as this was to be his retirement race weekend.



The Lotus was assigned a permanent number of 77 many years ago and soon became lovingly known as Old 77. A month ago, Bill turned 77. This race was to be Old Bill driving Old 77 for the last time.

Gary and Bill both went out for the 15 minute practice and qualifying time early Saturday morning. They were both in the same race class known as DP and ran in Group 7. The cars ran great. Gary qualified 3rd in class. Bill forgot to turn on his transponder so received no qualifying time for his efforts. The first race of the weekend found Bill and Gary lined up behind the other two cars in the class, both of which were TR-4's. There were 20 cars in Group 7 including several Porsche 911's, a fastback Mustang and a Shelby Mustang plus a Miller Sports Racer. Bill finished 14th and Gary was close behind in 15th. The other two TR-4's finished 16th and 20th.



Bill Rinke leads Gary Fuqua around Hallett during the recent Corinthian Vintage Auto Racing event. Bill and Gary are Strada Fantasma members from the Branson area. They own Alfas, but race their Brit cars on the track.

The second race on Saturday had the cars in Group 7 lined up in the same order that they finished the first race in. Things were warming up both weather wise and excitement wise. Bill won his class finishing 11th overall. Gary finished 3rd in class and 16th overall. Gary's parents, daughter, grandchild and other relatives came to Hallett on Saturday to watch Gary put the #69

TR-4 through its paces.

Bill and Gary belong to Age and Treachery Racing Ltd. which is a loose-knit bunch of car guys, race drivers and lovers of food, beer and fun. Saturday evening the ATR bunch fired up their charcoal grills, set out the wine and cheese, opened a few beers and then enjoyed a great dinner prepared "all by themselves". A huge campfire was started between the open race garage and the track fence and it was quite welcome on such a cool evening. Bill was warming his hands over the fire when a song began behind him. It was a loud rendition of "For He's A Jolly Good Fellow" sung by most of the ATR guys and gals. They had a huge German Chocolate Cake in their hands and an awful lot of candles featuring the number 77. It was Bill's race retirement party. A party that Bill will always remember.

There in the crowd was Bill and Dodie's son Jim and his wife Vickie who drove up from Houston just to be part of the big surprise and to watch the last race of the Lotus. Dodie's brother Dick and his wife Ruth drove up from Wheeler, Texas to enjoy the festivities. Their son Rich drove down from Overland Park, Kansas and brought Jim Mavec with him. Jim was Bill's pit crew during that first race of the Lotus at Hallett. Jim also was pit crew for Bill at many other racing venues. He now was also pit crew for Bill and Old 77 at this last race.

Sunday brought out some really welcome sunshine and warmth. Gary has been suffering with horrible pain in his left foot (clutch foot) due to a case of the shingles. It was just too painful on Sunday for Gary to consider going out for a race. Old 77 never sounded better as Bill warmed it up and prepared to go to the false grid where they line up the cars in the proper order. Once gain, they were lined up in the order of finish in the prior race only this time the order was inverted. The lower cars started first. When the green flag dropped, Bill found that he was able to pass several cars before reaching turn one only to be blocked by a slower car at turn two which allowed some he had just passed to go back around. Racing was at its best and very competitive. Bill finished 3rd in class and 7th overall.

Sunday afternoon was the big final race which set the end results for all of the drivers. Bill started 7th overall and finished 1st in class and 7th overall. He also learned that he had turned his fastest lap ever in all of the many races he had done at Hallett.. A nice way to end a racing hobby - - go out a winner. Bill will still be involved in Vintage Racing as support to those that still race but his Lotus, Old 77, is now up for sale.