

THE VINTAGE AND HISTORIC RACING NEWS MAGAZINE

How To Get Started in
Vintage Racing

VICTORY LANE[®]

March 2011 - VOLUME 26, NO. 3
\$4 USA \$5 CANADA

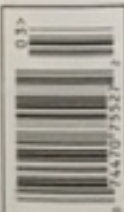


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Vintage Racers [redacted] with a long lost photo of their Lola T140.

One Last Verse In Praise Of Open Trailer Racers

*-story and Photos
by Spike Snyder*

As a kid, I talked my way onto several national racing teams, eager to work without pay, for the chance to be near the big V8 race cars that made my heart race. As a result, when I walked away from racing in the early seventies, all I had to show for those extraordinary years were my "Golden Age of Racing" memories and one souvenir, a large framed picture of legendary

Portland racer Pierre Phillips, at speed, in his brand new Lola T140 #10. Despite decades away from the sport, I kept that picture, over my mantelpiece, for the last forty years.

During many of those years, I may not have been one of contemporary racing's biggest boosters. In time, I became just another cranky and nostalgic old man who chose to believe that racing today no longer welcomes the racer who has a big heart but a small shop. How many times have you heard guys like me say things

like, "I remember the days when all it took to go racing was two guys with a pickup truck and a borrowed open trailer." Nowadays, my local raceway packs its paddock with so many "pit support" semi trailers and diesel pusher motor homes that it makes you wonder if the day of the "borrowed open trailer racer" is at an end. So like some dowdy anthropologist, I took it upon myself to write the definitive, unauthorized study of these vanishing, perhaps soon to be extinct, racers. It didn't seem like much of a job really. I already had a title: "One Last Verse In Praise Of Open Trailer Racers."

In April of 2009, my research took me to California's Infineon Raceway where I stumbled onto the pits of Bill Blake and Bruce Sevier. Friendly and welcoming, they were quick to lean on their pickup and admit that their older single axle trailer was indeed, borrowed from a friend. As I scribbled hasty notes on their racing history, I was sure I had found the last two guys who raced in the "True Spirit Of Vintage Racing". I thought I knew exactly where their stories would take my writing project. But fate had other plans.

Like every vintage racer, they had spent endless hours researching the history of their race car. They had unearthed the names of at least three previous owners. I asked them to speak slowly so I could write all this down. They had uncovered the results of many of their cars' past races, some as far away as New Zealand.



Bill and Bruce Bench Racing with Pierre Phillips.



Bill and Bruce met with legendary owner/driver Pierre Phillips in Portland.

But the ultimate prize still eluded them. For restoration purposes, they would need to find a picture of their car, in its original livery. They told me of their plan to make contact with the car's first owner, Pierre Phillips. "Did you say

Pierre Phillips?" I looked up from my notebook just long enough to take my first good look at their vintage V8 race car. Damned if it wasn't Lola T140 #10.

I asked Bill and Bruce if they would excuse me for an hour or two. I had to go home because there was something over my mantelpiece that I'd like them to have.

Two racing seasons have passed since our chance meeting and as fate would have it, I've been lucky enough to crew for Bill and Bruce at several events. They still pull their borrowed open trailer to races all over the West Coast. They share the grids of the most famous racetracks in the country with old friends and past champions. As open trailer racers, they show not a single sign of becoming a vanishing breed. In fact, they're having every bit as much fun as racers had in 1968, maybe more. And as if to prove their unbroken connection to racings' past, they arranged a reunion at last year's Portland River Classic F5000. It brought together Pierre Phillips, his original Lola T140,

new owners Bill and Bruce and of course, that framed picture of Pierre at speed in 1968.

The bench racing among many generations of racers went on long into the night. And as each story was told, I couldn't help but think about how little racing has changed. Clearly, open trailer racers, the heart of the sport, are alive and well. And I'm pleased to report that even today, all it takes to go racing is two guys with a pickup and a borrowed open trailer.



Two guys, a borrowed open trailer and a pickup.

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