



**Charlie driving his 1965 McLaren M1B during the 40th Anniversary of Can-Am Celebration and Feature Race at Road America in 2006.**

*-story by Don Gwynne*

*-photos courtesy of*

**Don Gwynne and Charlie Barns**

The entry in the prestigious Road Racing Drivers Club (RRDC) website says simply "Began racing in 1959 with Alfa Romeo. 1964 Runoffs champion in G Modified. 29 race wins between 1966-68 in factory Ford Cortina. Raced SCCA Speed World Challenge GT in 2000-2001 with Corvette Z06 and Dodge Viper. Now active in vintage racing."

Charlie's whole remarkable story is much, much richer.

Pull up a chair... It really all started in 1957 while sitting with two friends in the Dallas, TX "Playboy Club" located on the second floor above "Carroll Shelby Sports Cars" on Yale Boulevard, long before Hugh Hefner opened his famous chain of bunny clubs. At the time, Jim Hall's brother actually owned the Carroll Shelby Sports Cars business, and Charlie Ced owned and operated the upstairs "Playboy Club". Charlie Ced and Charlie Barns were acquainted through their participation with



**Charlie's first race car an Alfa Romeo Veloce Spider.**



**His current Alfa Spider.**



**Charlie at Texas Motor Speedway for a Speedvision GT race.**

the "Sea Scouting" program. The other friend, Bob Jackson, was a noted photo journalist for the Dallas Morning News. Four years later, Bob Jackson won the Pulitzer Prize for a famous photo. He was on assignment for the Dallas Morning News the morning of Nov. 24, 1963, when Lee Harvey Oswald was being transferred from his holding cell. Jackson snapped the picture "seen around the world" of Oswald grimacing with Jack Ruby fully visible with pistol in hand, shooting Oswald.

Ced and Jackson invited Charlie to go with them to Sebring, Florida, to watch 12 hours of sports car racing. At Sebring, Charlie saw Juan Manuel Fangio and Jean Behra win in a red Maserati 450S and decided to go racing himself.

After returning from Sebring, he visited Clarence Talley, the local Alfa Romeo dealer in Dallas. He purchased a new red Alfa Romeo Veloce Spider. He drove it on the street for a while, then, with a roll bar, cotton coveralls dipped in a borax solution for fireproofing, and not much of a windscreen, began racing. His first race was in 1959 at Caddo Mills, a Texas airport course which was also often used as a drag strip. Victories followed in SCCA.

At about the same time, friend, Homer Rader bought a "high-backed" Cooper-DKW rear-engined Formula Junior. Rader, a well-respected racer from Dallas, later drove a Lotus-Climax along with Jim Hall in the 1st Mexican Grand Prix, in November 1962. Hall finished 4th, Rader finished 8th. Soon, Charlie bought a Cooper Formula Junior too, from Hap Sharp.

In April 1962, the "Pipeline 200" Formula Libre races at Hilltop Raceway, a 2 mile, 15 turn road course near Bossier City, Louisiana, pitted Charlie against such well known drivers as Dan Gurney,



**Charlie in the #51 GM Merlyn races Ken Miles in the #98 Shelby Mustang over the bump at Green Valley Raceway, TX in 1965.**

# Charlie Barns and his Collection

Roger Penske, Lloyd Ruby, and Jim Hall. Charlie drove his little English Ford-engined Cooper Junior to 9th in the first 100 mile heat and 4th in the second 100 mile heat. 29 year old Dan Gurney won both heats driving Frank Arciero's "Lotus Climax Intercontinental" and was awarded \$2,900 in prize money. Roger Penske, driving the "Cooper Dupont Telar Special" went home with \$900 for placing second in the first heat and third in the second heat.

In the early '60s, "Charlie Barns Racing" began importing (and driving) Merlyn sports racing cars. In addition to winning the SCCA's Southwest Division G Modified Championship several times, a trip to Riverside for the SCCA's first National Championship ARRC Runoffs resulted in the G Modified National Championship in 1964 as well as the traditional SCCA 10 race "National Championship".

"It was fellow Merlyn racer Lynn Kysar that made the 10 race GM National Championship in 1964 possible for me" said Charlie. Kysar and Barns both drove Merlyns, but it was Kysar who did all the long distance tow driving of both Merlyns across the USA, while Charlie's brother flew him to the events in his Cessna 310 aircraft.

Charlie and his Merlyn won an epic "David and Goliath" battle against Shelby team driver Ken Miles in a 1965 SCCA race at Green Valley Raceway, Smithfield, Texas.

For this race, the 1.6 mile Green Valley road course was being run clockwise. Running clockwise, a pronounced bump in the Green Valley track resulted in both cars becoming seriously airborne on every lap, looking more like rally cars than road racers.

Barns' blue #51 GM Merlyn was quicker in the twisty bits, while Miles' white & blue #98 BP Shelby Mustang was faster on the drag-strip straightaway. Bottom line...Charlie won the race! Very few people still driving today can remember winning a sports car race ahead of the legendary Ken Miles.



**Ken Miles (left) and Charlie in the paddock at Green Valley Raceway, TX.**



**On three wheels in his factory prepared Lotus Cortina. Charlie started 40 races and won 29 of them. He won the SCCA Southwest division B Sedan Championship in 1966.**

The business of importing Merlyn sports racing cars brought Charlie into contact Pedro Rodriguez at a U.S. Customs office in Dallas, and they soon became good friends.

Pedro Rodriguez' status as Mexico's best known racing driver (and probably his performance driving a Ferrari 250TR for Luigi Chinetti at Le Mans in 1960 at age 20) made for a warm welcome when Charlie appeared in Maranello on 28 January 1964 bearing an introduction letter from his friend Pedro. "Il Commentadore" Enzo Ferrari graciously hosted Charlie with a personal tour of the Ferrari works.

Never one to stand still, Charlie got involved with Bob Gilbert as a Formcar Formula Vee dealer, and the week after the SCCA's 1965 ARRC runoffs at Daytona, Charlie, his wife Martha, and a Formcar Vee found their way to the Bahamas, specifically to Nassau for the 1965 Nassau Speed Weeks. While the main "Tourist Trophy" event was for sports cars, there was also a "Grand Prix of VWs". 80 Formula Vees were entered. There were two heats on Friday, and the main event on Sunday. Chris Amon and Bruce McLaren both drove Beach Formula Vees, finishing first and second, respectively. Chris Amon won a \$3,250 prize for the Formula Vee win. Although Amon was technically driving for Beach in the FV race, Teddy Mayer reckoned that since the McLaren team had paid his way there, they were entitled to take half his FV winnings! Charlie finished way back in the pack, but remembers the event as a high adventure. Martha Barns drove the same Formcar in a powderpuff ladies race. Chuck Dietrich drove in the same powderpuff event wearing a wig. Ever the sporting gentleman, Dietrich pulled into the pits near the end and intentionally DNF'ed, so as not to adversely affect the real lady driver finishing order. I spoke on the phone with Chuck Dietrich in June 2007, who chuckled as he confirmed the accuracy of Charlie's recollection of the great Formula Vee wig caper at Nassau some 42 years earlier.



**In 1997, Charlie purchased this lime green IROC Camaro. He still owns it.**



**Charlie racing his 1964 Corvette with CVAR Group 1 at Texas World Speedway (TWS).**

In 1966, the Ford Motor Company determined to pursue the SCCA B Sedan Championship and to contest the Under 2 Liter class of the new Trans-Am series. To that end, Peter W. Quenet, then the Manager of Ford's Competitions Department, distributed seven Cheshunt-prepared Lotus Cortina race cars to prominent SCCA racers across the USA. Of course, each recipient had to purchase the cars from Ford, but at one dollar, they were quite a bargain. Advice, spare parts, and some towing support money also followed. Charlie Barns was chosen to receive one of these Lotus Cortinas. The others went to Jim Adams, John Bolander, David Dooley, Allan Moffat, Bob Tullius, and Dave Tallaksen.

Charlie raced his factory-prepared Lotus Cortina in SCCA's SW Division from late 1966 through early 1968. During that time, he started 40 races and won 29 of them, with no DNFs, becoming the 1966 SW Div B Sedan Champion.

Charlie sold the Lotus Cortina after only one race at Green Valley in early 1968, due to SCCA classing the Porsche 911 as a sedan, and took a long break from road racing from 1968 to 1991. The author of this article was lucky to acquire Charlie's Lotus Cortina in mid-1968, and raced it in SCCA and IMSA until 1971, whereupon it was sold to Robert Winkelmann in California, who still owns and vintage races this same car today.

Charlie was lured back into racing by being invited to a couple of celebrity races in the early 1990s. In 1995, Charlie decided to go vintage racing. Charlie decided that if he was to return to driving real race cars, he wanted it to be "real big and real loud". His friend Delmo Johnson offered a red 1969 small-block Corvette and he bought it. From 1996 through 1999, Charlie drove the Corvette in SCCA's "Vintage" class at courses such as Abilene, Texas World Speedway in College Station, and other tracks in the southwest and became involved in CVAR's vintage races with several cars.

His bright red 1965 McLaren M1B was previously owned and raced in Mexico by Moises Solana. Since he acquired the McLaren, Charlie has driven it in numerous CVAR vintage events. Including winning an USRRC Seniors Tour Feature at TWS. Charlie has also raced the McLaren several times at Road America, including the 2006 Kohler International 40th Anniversary Can-Am celebration. Martha Barns has taken several

exciting victory lap rides with the checkered flag waving from the passenger seat of this early vintage McLaren.

For 1997, he purchased a lime green ex-Bobby Unser IROC Camaro from Marty Hibbs at Young Chevrolet in Dallas. Charlie raced it in CVAR vintage events off and on from August 1997 through May 2004.

Charlie noted that he has made absolutely no changes to the car's original Penske/Donahue IROC suspension setup, because it was the best handling car he owned and he didn't want to mess it up! At one CVAR event several years ago, the Camaro's engine developed a problem in one cylinder. Makeshift repairs allowed Charlie to drive it the rest of the weekend on 7 cylinders, and to everyone's surprise, he was faster on 7 than he had been with 8. Charlie reckoned that he was able to get onto the throttle sooner coming out of corners and that the top end didn't seem all that adversely affected. Not the usual way to race, but it nonetheless proved quite effective.

Somewhat overlapping in time, Charlie bought a different red vintage racing Corvette from Dave Davis, the Sales Manager at Young Chevrolet. Charlie regularly races this car in CVAR Group 1 today.

In what might be considered a return to his roots, Charlie bought a red Alfa Romeo Veloce from Duncan Dayton on the east coast. This car is quite similar to his first Alfa. He began racing it with CVAR in February 2003, and still does so today.

Charlie credits much of the success and fun he has enjoyed along the way to the support he receives from his lovely wife Martha, and gives profuse thanks to John Matlack for years of help preparing, maintaining, and crewing his fleet of vintage racing cars.



**Charlie's wife Martha and John Matlack have supported Charlie's racing for years. ■**