

The Preservationist

The Member Newsletter of the Elkhart Lake Historic Race Circuits Preservation Society
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Augie Pabst and the Kimberly Cup

By Augie Pabst with Bob Birmingham

Under a hazy summer sky with a warm breeze gently stirring the air I found myself in front of the historic Feed Mill building in downtown Elkhart Lake. I had come up from Oconomowoc at the invitation of HRC Chairman, Tom Hollfelder to assist in documenting the Historic Circuits from a race driver's perspective as part of the effort to preserve the Historic Circuits. Bill Rice had kindly provided his pristine vintage HRG and I was to drive the circuits and record my impressions at critical locations, with the assistance of my good friend, passenger and scribe Bob Birmingham.

As I waited to start, my mind drifted back to a September Sunday in 1952 when I had come to Elkhart Lake with a good friend, two eager teenagers in love with sports cars and sports car racing, to watch and enjoy the race for the Kimberly Cup.

Slowly I felt myself drift into a kind of reverie, the light seemed to fade and it was 1952 again. I was strapped into an HRG¹ positioned on the starting grid in front of the feed mill amidst fifty or so drivers in the best cars that Europe has to offer, each set on doing well in the fifteen lap race around Elkhart Lake. Few if any cars have roll bars, seat belts are ribbed three-inch army

surplus, leather straps span most bonnets and the array of headgear ranges from leather football helmets to British Cromwells.

In the drawing for grid position I have drawn the forty-fifth position on the grid, the last position in Class 6. Not a lucky draw but I plan to make up for it. There are three supercharged MGs at the front of the grid in Class 5 but I don't expect them to last the entire race. Up near the front of the grid looking a lot like the car to beat in Class 6, sits the 1951 class winner Roger Barlow again driving his Simca Special. Just ahead of me is Bill Spear in a

shiny new Italian OSCA and the great John von Neumann in one of the two Porsche 356s in the race, all three having come all the way from California. Crowds line the street, pretty girls strain to see daring young drivers and men in dress shirts with rolled up sleeves and neckties crane their necks to

get a look at the colorful cars spaced out on the street before them.

Race Officials scurry from one car to another checking lap straps and soon the starter clad in traditional white appears at the front of the grid, circling his green flag overhead as a signal for drivers to fire up their engines. When satisfied, he strolls to one side and then, with a flourish, waives the flag high in the air as each driver pops the clutch and the cars charge off down Gottfried Street.



Augie at the wheel of Bill Rice's vintage HRG chats with Bob Birmingham near the 1952 Start-Finish line.

¹ An HRG was in fact entered in the 1952 Kimberly Cup race, #54 owned and driven by Jack Wherry of Maquoketa, IA. He started from the forty-fifth position on the grid and finished 12th in class and 14th overall.

The first turn is immediately upon us, a double dogleg first left onto Rhine Street and then immediately right at Lake Street in front of Schuler's bar where I suspect more than a few Blue Ribbons were downed last night by spectators and crew members. As we all crowd into the turn, my primary concern is avoiding a collision with cars fighting for position just fractions of an inch away. There is a large paved run-off area on the left in front of the Elkhart Lake Bank protected by hay bales but no one is yet moving fast enough to lose control. I stay on the inside line in second gear hugging the apex of the corner then quickly shift up and race down the Concours Straight where on Saturday night Cameron Peck had scrutinized dozens of classic vintage cars under the glare of the flood lights.



The HRG swings a little wide and skims the hay bales at the 90 degree right turn before heading into Hamill's' Hollow.

Next up is the "Hard Left" a challenging negative camber, 80-degree turn with Siebkens Resort on the left and the Schwartz Resort on the right. I brake, downshift and hold to the inside of the turn feathering the pedal just enough to keep from sliding to the outside. The cars are all still tightly packed but I hold my line and make it through.

Around the corner it continues slightly downhill with a long sweeping right turn that will take me all the way to "Wacker's Wend". Cars are beginning to separate and if I cared to look, there is a quick glimpse of the pristine lake on my right before passing the Osthoff Hotel and Harand Camp on the left and then Fireman's Park on the right. Hundreds of wildly cheering spectators are packed behind the snow fences on both sides of the street urging us on.

I move to the left as I prepare to enter "Wacker's Wend", a .8-mile stretch beginning with a rather simple 120-degree right turn near the golf course club house. I take the corner in third gear, then race slightly uphill to a dogleg left under

acceleration all the way. Now there is a little room to maneuver and I slip by the car in front of me on the inside of the dogleg ... one down!

Ahead is a 90-degree right with hay bales piled high on the outside ready to catch any car that tries to take the corner at excessive speed. I move to the left, brake and downshift at the 200-yard marker then accelerate around the turn just a hair to fast sliding wide nearly into the hay bales... bit of a close call but I make it through.

Safely around the corner I accelerate into Hamill's Hollow where on a high bank ten feet above the road, picnicking fans witness the high speed maneuvers as cars wind through the Hollow. I move to the right side of the course as I dive into the undulating "S" bends, first a downhill to the left

and then a blind uphill to the right. The car ahead enters the Hollow too fast and slides to the outside and I squeeze through underneath... Two down!

Now it's out of the Hollow and onto the high speed one-mile School House Straight where I can air it out with my foot to the floor. I straddle the center line of the narrow twenty foot wide crowned road to avoid tire scrub, quickly reaching my top speed of just over 90 mph.

As I approach Kimberly's Korner, a flat 90-degree right turn at the end of the straight, I see a cloud of dust and the quick movement of spectators warning me that there is trouble ahead. I brake furiously, fishtailing on the asphalt as the corner man frantically waves the caution flag. I see a car in the hay bales on the left, the driver looking a little dazed, and turn in at the apex, continuing the arc out to left, the hay bales just inches away.

Before me now lays an undulating 2.2-mile stretch in which there are three dogleg turns, a right near the Chapel followed by a left beyond

the boat landing and finally another right beyond the “1950 Start-Finish Line”. A third of the way up the stretch I encounter a blind rise in the road, followed by the first dogleg to the right where the outside shoulder falls off steeply into “Dickens’s Ditch”. Now in traffic the turn seems a little more difficult than I expected, the slight undulation in the road having entirely different characteristics at racing speed than it did in practice. I wrestle with the wheel as the ditch yawns ominously and my left wheel runs on the edge of the grass but again I manage to keep things under control. At the next bend the line is wide open and I fly through with little difficulty. Now it’s flat out for just over a mile past the “1950 Start-Finish Line” and around the last dogleg to the left at full speed.

Although the cars are now more spread out, there is still plenty of traffic as I approach the Marsh Turn where I move to the left and brake midway between the 300 and 200-yard markers. The turn is tricky being an acute right hander (slightly less than 90-degrees) at the end of a slightly downhill run with a deceptive outside slant. There are several substantial bumps and a wide ditch on the left waiting to gather up any car whose driver shows more enthusiasm than judgment. I downshift and aim for the apex drifting to the outer edge as I exit the turn.

I get the speed just right and race off down the exit straightaway past the big silver water tank flat out for over a mile, then into a stretch of undulating “S”s where beyond the first rise there appears to be a tree in middle of the road. It’s not of course and the road sweeps to the right over the rise and then back to the left as I fly past “Ted’s Turn”. As I pass the timing stands and the Start/Finish Line on Gottfried Street, I see an MG in the pits steam billowing from the radiator. Three down in just one lap and I think I’m doing pretty well.

About to start the next lap, I suddenly return to the present back on Gottfried Street seated in Bill’s vintage HRG and Bob Birmingham is telling me that it is time to get started. As we tour the circuit, I point out the location where I stood to watch the races in 1952 and the feelings it had generated. The experience ignited the spark that lead to a career that took me to every part of America, to

Canada and Europe, the Bahamas and even to Africa as a result of my relationships with generous car owners.

Today, as in the past, stories of wild on and off track Elkhart Lake adventures ring out in the “race bar” at Siebkens. While converted into shops, the feed mill remains and the train depot still overlooks the main business district, although passenger trains have long since stopped serving the summer residents. The original Osthoff Hotel and Harand Camp, a summer haven for the arts, are long past and in their place is the magnificent Osthoff Resort and yet all in all, the Village of Elkhart Lake and nearby roads are pretty much the same as they were almost sixty years ago.

In the Village, across the street from the railroad depot and bank, stands a State Historical Marker commemorating the original road races and smaller plaques identify named locations around the circuits. Most are named for those who helped to create the spectacular open road events that led to the construction of Road America and that have for these many years meant so much to the Village of Elkhart Lake, Sheboygan County, and its citizens and racing fans from far and wide.



Augie Pabst began his racing career in 1956, first in SCCA production cars and later in high performance Sports Racing cars. In 1959 he was crowned USAC Professional Road Racing Champion having amassed points in his Ferrari Testa Rosa and the Meister Brau Team Scarab. The following year he drove the same Scarab to SCCA's B-Modified National Championship and was named U.S. Driver of

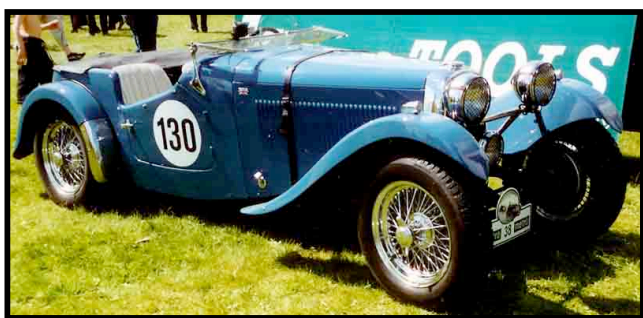
the Year by Competition Press. Internationally he raced at Brands Hatch, Mosport, Nurburgring, Nassau, and several times at Le Mans where in the 1961 24 Hours Race he had a best finish of fourth overall with co-driver Dick Thompson in Briggs Cunningham's Maserati Tipo 63. Over the years he amassed numerous wins at Road America driving for the Cunningham, Meister Brau, John Mecom and Luigi Chinetti's North American Racing Team(s). Pabst who is a HRC Founding Member resides in Oconomowoc, Wisconsin and until recently was a regular vintage racer at Road America.

The Little Known HRG

HRG Engineering Company was a British car manufacturer based in Tolworth, Surrey. Founded in 1936 by Major Edward Halford, Guy Robins and Henry Ronald Godfrey, the cars took their name from the first letter of the founder's surnames. The HRG design was heavily influenced by Godfrey's previous involvement with Frazer Nash. The first HRG introduced in 1936 cost £395, about half the cost of the 1.5-litre Aston Martin, and weighed almost 1,000 pounds less. In 1938 the Company announced the 1100cc model using an OHC engine from Singer Motors Ltd. In 1939 they switched to the OHC 1500cc Singer engine yielding the legendary HRG 1500

The factory's racing team achieved notable early success winning the 1.5 liter class at the Le Mans 24 hour race in 1939 the first year of the 1500cc engine. Nearly ten years later, the team entered and won the 1.5 liter class team prize at the Spa 24 hour race in both 1948 and 1949.

Total production of the 1500's was 111 cars of which as many as 100 are thought to have survived. Many of these cars are still in active use, with a few still in active competition. Proving that HRGs were still competitive 60 years after the first car was produced; a three-car team won the Vintage Sports Car Club 2-hour team relay race in 2006.



Lovingly called "Hurgs" by their owners, this classic HRG 1500 is in showroom condition. that was produced until 1956.

Guy Robins left the company in 1950 and sports car production ended in 1956 after 241 cars of all models had been produced, however, the company remained in business as an engineering concern and as a development organization for Volvo and others. In 1965, they made a prototype Vauxhall VX 4/90 powered sports car but the car never reached production. The company closed its doors for the last time in 1966, one of the few British car makers to earn a profit in every year of operation.

CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS

The Preservation Society was founded in 2008 with the goal of preserving the Elkhart Lake Historic Race Circuits for the enjoyment of future generations. Initially we had just five members but by the end of the first year membership had grown to over one hundred and by the end of 2010 to nearly two hundred. During that time most of the work associated with the spring, summer and fall Dinner Social record keeping and the HRC Merchandise Store has been handled by the five original founders and their families. In 2012 we hope to obtain more involvement from the membership base in these activities. Over the past several years many of you have indicated that you would like to get more involved in the Societies activities and 2012 is your chance to do so. While activity doesn't really get started until April, the sooner we know who we can count on the easier it will be to complete our plans for the year.

Initially we need two or more members who are experienced with Microsoft Excel to assist in keeping records for the spring, summer and fall Dinner Socials. This includes recording and tracking reservation prior to the event, assisting with check-in during the event and compiling a financial report after the event.

We also need three or more members who enjoy selling to help us staff the HRC Store at the Dinner Socials and at the HRC Merchandise Booth on the Vintage weekend. The more volunteers we have, the lighter the workload so five or six volunteers wouldn't hurt a thing.

If you are interested in volunteering to help out in any of these areas please call or email either of the following members:

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