



# Gateway Relay

Vol VII, No. 12

St Louis Sports Car Council

December 2018

## Council News & Notes

- Well, winter apparently came early this year with a couple of storms and one event took a hit. The Triumph club's 6<sup>th</sup> annual running of its veterans drive went by the boards due to snow/ice on the winding parts of the route and the presence of chemicals on the primary roads. Ah, but SLTOA's pressing ahead with planning its traditional first-drive of the season, 10 February's Polar Bear Run. As always, the club welcomes all cars/drivers/clubs to come along.
- Looking at the calendar (right), the Jaguar club is resuming its winter "Coffee, Coffee & Cars" gatherings while the MG Club of St Louis has scheduled its annual drive through the Tilles Park Christmas lights display. If you've never participated in this drive, come on out; Brit car ownership is not required.
- And, of course, we're well into the holiday parties, including planned events by the Triumph, MG and Volvo clubs. We expect an announcement on the Austin-Healey group's plans shortly.
- Finally, for the member club officers, another holiday tradition: the web hosting fee has come due. Invoices will go out to each club right around New Years; we hope each club continues to enjoy membership in the STLSCC and signs up for another year.



## Up & Coming

- 7 Dec 18**—Annual **SLTOA Christmas Party**, at the Missouri Athletic Club-West, 1777 Des Peres Rd, Town & Country; 6:30 PM cocktails, dinner at 7:30 PM. Open sign-ups after 5 November, \$25 per person, club subsidized; after the first 70 sign-ups, the rate increases to \$40 per person. Reservation information available at [www.sltoa.org](http://www.sltoa.org), deadline is 3 December. Please bring one car-related gift per couple (or individual, if attending solo), \$15-20 cost range. A second, unwrapped gift for Toys for Tots would be most welcome.
- 15 Dec 18**—First **Coffee, Coffee & Cars** of the winter, at Just Jags, 7113 N Hanley Rd, Hazelwood, 8 AM to 10 AM. For info call (314)524-5300.
- 18 Dec 18**—MG Club of St Louis **Annual Christmas Lights Drive**. Meet at the Central Bank parking lot at Clayton and Conway, depart at 6:30 PM for the Winter Wonderland at Tilles Park. After the drive-through, adjourn to the Kirkwood Brewhouse at 10312 Manchester Rd for fellowship, food and libation.
- 20 Dec 19**—MG Club of St Louis **RUBCO**. Meet at Rooster's, 315 S Grand at 9 AM.
- 29 Dec 18**—**Caffeine & Chrome**, at Gateway Classic Cars, 1237 Central Park Dr, O'Fallon, IL, 8:30 AM-Noon. Complementary coffee, donuts and self tours of the showroom. For info, call (618)271-3000.
- 12 Jan 19**—MG Club of St Louis **Annual Holiday Party**, at Maggie O'Brien's, 2000 Market St, St Louis. Great food and trivia, \$20 per person (club subsidized), 6 PM cash bar followed by dinner at 7 PM. Review the menu and register via the club

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**PEBBLE BEACH**  
**Nov. 5th, 1950**  
 Four Races  
 THRILLING EUROPEAN STYLE  
 ROAD RACE FEATURING  
 THE WORLDS FASTEST  
 SPORTS CARS  
**FIRST RACE 12:00 NOON**  
 SPONSORED BY SPORTS CAR CLUB OF AMERICA  
 Tickets \$1.00 Free Parking

Note: Some club events restrict participation to club members only, primarily for national/chapter insurance reasons. If interested in joining in on a drive or other event, we recommend you contact the club's event coordinator in advance for details.

## In Print

While the magazine's not normally featured in this column, December's *Hemmings Classic Car* has something of possible interest to those who regularly put their sports/collectible cars in concours and shows: a column by David Conwill on "Era apparel," offering suggestions on dressing in an appropriate fashion to match your car's era. For the automotive tech geeks, there's an article on the transition from body-on-frame construction to unibody. December's *Car & Driver* has a one-page review of the Jaguar I-Pace ("A great car that just happens to be electric").



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web site at [www.stlouismgclub.com/](http://www.stlouismgclub.com/) under "Buy Stuff," or send information and check to Tom Hurlbert, 409 Spring Valley, Chesterfield, MO 63017.

**12 Jan 19**—Jaguar Association of Greater St Louis **Annual Awards Dinner**, at the Deer Creek Club, 9861 Deer Creek Hill, St Louis. Hors d'oeuvres and cocktails at 6:30 PM, dinner served at 7:30 PM, 9 PM awards presentation. \$65 per person, reservations accepted until 2 January. Monitor [www.jagstl.com](http://www.jagstl.com) and the online *Growl* for more details.

**27 Jan 19**—**Coffee, Coffee & Cars**, at Just Jags, 8 AM to 10 AM.

**Jan 19**—Gateway VCOA **Annual Holiday Party**. Date, time and location TBA.

**10 Feb 19**—Annual SLTOA **Polar Bear Run**. Traditional kick-off event for the driving season, open to all cars/clubs. Meet at 9:30 AM at the State Farm parking lot in Columbia Center, immediately south of the McDonalds on IL 3 in Columbia. Cars roll at 10 AM for a flats and hills run to Chester, IL, and lunch at Reid's Harvest House. Illinois-based participants can return home afterwards via the route of their choice, those from Missouri can cross the river to Perryville and return with several LBCs via US 61 through Ste Genevieve or the high-speed route via I-55. Monitor [www.sltoa.org](http://www.sltoa.org) for additional details.

**St Louis Car Shows and Cruises:** <http://clubs.hemmings.com/lakerscarclub>

## Roadwork—SCCA: the Road Courses

It might be apocryphal, but Henry Ford reportedly said auto racing started with the completion of the second car. Even if he didn't say it, the statement is undoubtedly accurate. Throughout human history, there has always been competition over who was the strongest/biggest/fastest/etc, and when horses gave way to self-propelled vehicles, racing continued...organized or otherwise.

Within the first few years of the twentieth century, racing venues popped up all over the country, oftentimes at former (and current) horse racing tracks, on state and county fairgrounds and at built-for-the-purpose dirt ovals and similar (Indianapolis Motor Speedway, which opened in 1911, of course proved an exception). However, for those of the left-and-right-turn persuasion, opportunities remained limited, hence the movement towards hill climbs and racing on public roads or, in other words, street races.

Street racing? Nowadays that has a bad connotation (the success of the "Fast & Furious" franchise notwithstanding) (Full Disclosure: the author of this article was a founding member of the Albuquerque Street Racing Association back in 1974, but that's another story and in any event the statue of limitations has run out). But, for the early members of the rapidly growing SCCA, streets and country roads offered the only option.



The Vanderbilt Cup.

A historic precedent existed; the original Vanderbilt Cup series, sponsored by yachtsman, horse racing and auto enthusiast William K. Vanderbilt, took place annually between 1904 and 1911 on public roads on Long Island. Closer to St Louis, the Elgin Watch Company sponsored a series of races around the environs of Elgin, Illinois, between 1910 and 1915, with additional events post-World War I, in 1919 and 1920.

As indicated, the SCCA – formed in 1944 with Theodore F. Robertson serving as its first executive director (ie, president) – grew rather quickly after the end of the war, what with returning servicemen bringing home all sorts of interesting cars that were a lot of fun to drive. While British sports cars like the MG TC tended to dominate, vehicles from other nations such as Italy, France and even Germany also made the trip across the Atlantic. One thing led to another and, in 1948, the SCCA sponsored its first road race, at a small village in upstate New York named Watkins Glen. Other races followed at a number of other temporary courses, including Bridgehampton on Long Island; Elkhart Lake, Wisconsin; Brynfan Tyddyn, Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania; Pebble

Beach, near Monterey, California and Torrey Pines, near San Diego.

The first SCCA-sanctioned race took place at Watkins Glen just over 70 years ago, on 2 October 1948. Cameron Argetsinger, a law student, MG TC owner and new member of the organization, put together the race. He designed a 6.6-mile course with start/finish line at the Schuyler County courthouse on Franklin Street, handled negotiations with something like nine different state and local government agencies to ensure closure of the roads on race day, and even got the New York Central Railroad to modify its schedule so that trains didn't block the racing.



Cameron Argetsinger at the wheel of a Bugatti. Photo via Siminaitis Says.

In his blog, Dennis Simanaitis, long-time engineering editor for *Road & Track*, described the course:

After a right/left chicane of sorts, an uphill on Old Corn-ing Road took the cars out of town and into the woods. In homage to the Le Mans circuit, an S bend along Townsend Road was named White House (*Maison Blanche*). A not overly wide underpass defined the circuit's first intersection with the New York Central tracks.

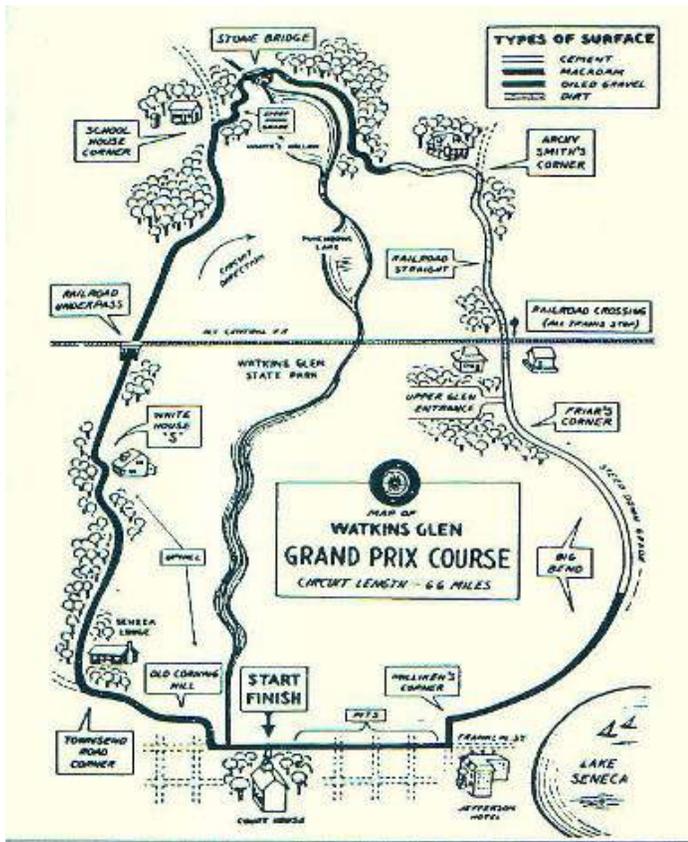
A steep downhill led to a stone bridge crossing Glen Creek onto Whites Hollow Road. A right at Archy Smith's Corner led onto Station Road (and the Railroad Straight), with its crossing the New York Central tracks before a long left downhill sweeper, the Big Bend, leading back into town. A left/right jog brought the cars back onto Franklin Street at the Jefferson Hotel.

The circuit was more than challenging. It was exhilarating and, in retrospect, downright dangerous. Only driver skill, good fortune and luck precluded deadly accidents for the first two years' running.

R&T writer Jack Baruth agreed, describing the section from School House to Archy Smith's corner as "...a nightmare series of blind corners shrouded by deep forest. Unpredictable and brief camber changes hide like land minds in the dark spots between the sunbeams."

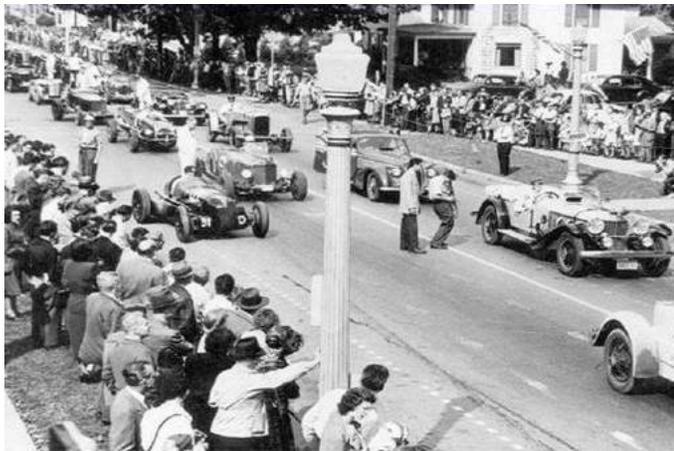
Frank Griswold won the first Watkins Glen Grand Prix, in an Alfa Romeo 8C 2900B, completing the eight laps at an average speed of 63.7 mph. Briggs Cunningham finished second

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The original Watkins Glen layout. Diagram via SnapLap

in his legendary "Bu-Merc Special" a monster 1939 Buick chassis with straight-eight engine wrapped in a Mercedes-Benz SSK body. A brace of MG TCs filled out the field of finishers, including brothers Sam and Miles Collier in 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> and Argetsinger in 9<sup>th</sup>. Five drivers DNF'd for one reason or another: Dud Wilson in a Stutz BB Black Hawk (!); George Weaver, Maserati V8R1; George Boardman, Jaguar SS-1; Mike Vaughn, Lagonda Rapide; and George Felton, Vauxhall OE 30/98.



The starting grid for the 1948 Watkins Glen Grand Prix. Photo via SnapLap.

The group which failed to qualify included a couple of notable names: Charles "Charlie" Addams – cartoonist who created "The Addams Family" – in his supercharged Mercedes Benz S, John and William Du Mont, in a Delahaye 135M and Triumph 1800, respectively; and an young former fighter pilot, John Fitch, in an MG TC.

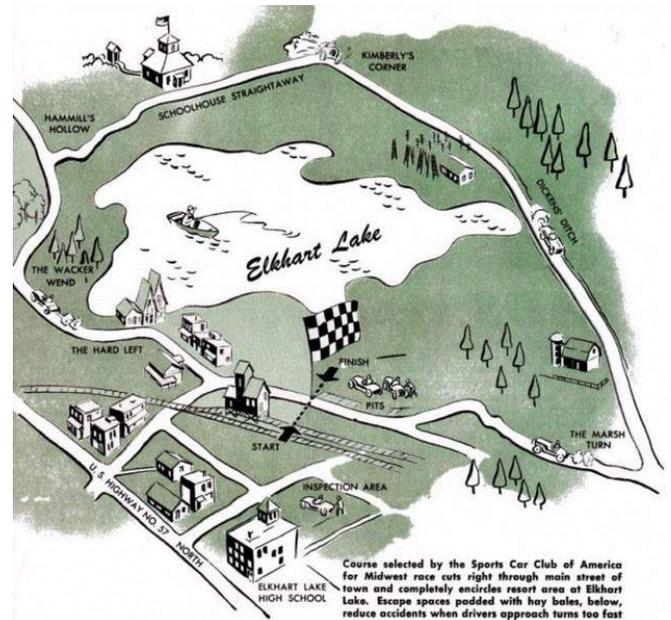
Race day included a Concours, followed by a four-lap qualifying event. The main race, eight laps, commenced at 1:30 PM from a standing start.



John Fitch in his MG TC at the initial Bridgehampton road race. Photo via Sports Car Digest.

During practice, William Milliken, director of flight research at Cornell's Aeronautical Laboratory, engaged in some inadvertent flight testing of his own: at one point on the course his Bugatti 35A

rolled upside down and departed into some hay bales, much to the horror of onlookers. To their delight he emerged unscathed and sauntered away, in the process giving the accident location its permanent name of "Milliken's Corner." Another competitor, Denver "Denny" Cornett, rolled his MG TC into a creek on the second lap; the location became Cornett's Stone Bridge.



The third and final iteration of Elkhart Lake, 1952, incorporating the two previous circuits. Diagram via "Elkhart Lake Open Road Circuits."

The initial Watkins Glen Grand Prix proved a major success for the young national sports car club and its members and other events soon started taking place elsewhere in the country. On 11 June 1949, a group on Long Island kicked off the Bridgehampton Sports Car Road Races along several miles of Suffolk County roads. George Huntoon won the 100-mile feature event in an Alfa Romeo 8C 2600, followed by Tom Cole in a Jaguar SS100 and Sam Collier and John Fitch in MG TCs. Seven drivers DNF'd, including Miles Collier in the Riley "Ardent Alligator" (a 1929 Riley Brooklands with a flat-head Mercury stuffed in the engine bay) and Bill Milliken in a Bugatti T35A.

Events continued to spring up; not surprisingly, these early SCCA-sanction/organized competitions tended to take place near large urban areas, such as Chicago, New York, San Francisco and Los Angeles. In July 1950, members of the Chicago Region of the SCCA organized their own race in Elkhart Lake, Wisconsin. Jim Kimberly served as the chief proponent, assisted by Fred Wacker, Karl Brocken and C.

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Kimberly in his Ferrari at Elkhart Lake. Photo via "Elkhart Lake Open Road Circuits."

Bayard Sheldon, with the assistance of Wisconsin Governor Walter Kohler, Elkhart Lake Bank president Jim Johnson and others.

The initial race took place on 23 July 1950 on a 3.35

-mile road circuit; as noted in "Historic Races of Elkhart Lake," the competition "...had the flavor of a typical club event. All the drivers and cars came out of the Chicago Region and most cars were driven to the event, raced and then driven home." A total of five events took place for cars displacing over and under 1.5L, including two 30-mile novice races and two 60-mile events for more experienced drivers. Approximately 5000 attended the proceedings. Jim Kimberly won the feature race in his Ferrari 166 MM, doing the 20 laps at an average speed of 71.5 mph. Fred Wacker took second in a Healey Silverstone, followed by a Jaguar XK120, MG TD, MG TC, Allard-Mercury and another TC.

Out on the west coast, the first post-WWII sports car race actually took place at an airport, Buchanan Field, the former Concord Army Airbase, on 20 November 1949. The Northern California MG Club, led by northern California MG distributor Kjell Qvale, organized the competition, which ran three miles over the airport's runways. The first SCCA-organized race took place roughly a year later, on 5 November 1950, on streets of the Pebble Beach development owned by the Del Monte Properties Company. Industrialist Sterling Edwards of the San Francisco Region – who had built his own car, the Ford V8-60-powered Edwards R-26 Special – and Del Monte president Jack Morse honchoed the proceedings.

The course stretched 1.8 miles, with start/finish line on Portola Road. Over 10,000 turned out for the festivities; they observed the "Cypress Point Light Car Race" for cars between 750 and 1500CC (SCCA classes G and F); the "Del Monte Trophy" for cars 1500-3000cc (c D & E); the "The Monterey Unlimited Class Race" for anything and everything over 3 liters. The 25-lap "Pebble Beach Cup" served as the final run of the day, with the entrants made up of the top four finishers from the first three races. Won by Phil Hill in a modified 3.8L Jaguar XK120, mod'd with Richie Ginther; the victory marked



Pebble Beach, 1950: Phil Hill leading Bill Breeze on his way to a first-place finish. Photo: Bob Devlin collection.

Hill's first major win in sports car racing. Don Parkinson came in second in another XK120, followed by Jim Seeley in the Cannon Special Mercury, Michael Graham in an Allard J2-Cadillace and Joe Esherrick in his Frazier Nash-BMW 328. The MG contingent included John von Neumann and Elliott Forbes-Robinson, who had placed 1<sup>st</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> in the Cypress Cup event, both driving MG TDs.

By all accounts, these early public road races were huge successes for the SCCA, competitors and those who watched the events. But, within a couple of years, street competition ended and the SCCA was forced to look for more permanent, dedicated venues, the result of several fatalities among both drivers and spectators. The early road courses were extremely dangerous, covering roads that more often than not were not designed for high-speed running and with multiple obstacles (trees, fences, abutments, etc) immediately off the pavement. In writing about Pebble Beach, Art Evans noted,

The circuit was exceedingly dangerous. Spectators stood or sat right at the edges and trees lined the circuit. In a contest between a car and a tree, the tree was inevitably the victor, often with dire results for the car and sometimes the driver as well (my close friend, Ernie McAfee, was killed against a tree there in 1956, marking the end of racing at Pebble Beach.

In accident at Watkins Glen on 23 September 1950 Sam Collier, one of the early road racing proponents – and, with his brothers Miles and Barron, co-founder of the prewar Automobile Racing Club of America – died when thrown from his Ferrari 166. He led the race at the time. Two years later, Fred Wacker in an Allard J2 ran inadvertently close to John Fitch's Cunningham C4-R in a turn on Franklin Street. Both swerved and the back end of Wacker's car came around and hit a group of spectators roadside, injuring 10 and killing a 7-year-old boy.

From 1953 through 1955, the Watkins Glen event took place on a new course outside of town in the middle of some farmland. However, after a 2 May 1953 accident during practice at Bridgehampton which killed driver Robert Wilder, the New York state legislature weighed in, banning all open-road races. A new, closed-course Watkins Glen International race track opened in 1956, while racing supporters on Long Island opened the new Bridgehampton Raceway at a location southwest of Sag Harbor in 1957.

When the Wisconsin state legislature adopted a similar ban, a group of local leaders led by highway engineer Cliff Tufted, in association with the Chicago Region SCCA, built a permanent track on 525 acres southeast of Elkhart Lake. Named Road America, the four-mile-long, 14-turn track hosted its first SCCA nationals on 10 September 1955. Phil Hill won the feature event in a Ferrari Monza, beating out Sherwood Johnson in a Briggs Cunningham D-Type Jaguar by inches.



The Watkins Glen road course layout. Diagram via Bing Maps.

Finally, out in California, the last racing on the road course at Pebble Beach took place on 22 April 1956; Carroll Shelby won the modified over 1.5L event in a Ferrari 750 Monza Scaglietti, followed by Phil Hill in a Ferrari 860 Monza and Jack McAfee in a Ferrari 857 S. Racing for Bay Area enthusi-

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## Featured Events

## VSCDA Elkhart Lake Vintage Festival—Road America, WI

JAGSL/Taxman Group Racing Team 14-16 Sept 18



Left and above photos courtesy of Phil Taxman



Lower photos via David Farrington/P&B Motorsports



### *In Print* (Continued from page 1)

November's *Octane* salutes the original 1966 Morgan Plus 8 – Peter Morgan's personal car – and compares it to the last production version, the 2018 Plus 8 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary model. For Land/Range Rover enthusiasts, a casual drive up California's legendary Rubicon Trail, leading a group of Jeeps ("Our Land Rover is never level, leaning at crazy angles, tipping violently as its wheels scale the walls of canyons"). Towards the back of the issue, a market review of the Jaguar Mk10.

*Classic & Sports Car* for November celebrates "The world's best saloon car at 50," the Jaguar XJ-series. The magazine also has a feature article on the BMW 326 and how it provided the basis for the post-World War II Bristol 400. Over at *Thoroughbred & Classic Cars*, same month, the feature article compares the best available large "super saloons." The list includes the Jaguar 3.8 Mk2, E28 BMW M5, Mercedes-Benz 300 SEL 6.3, Vauxhall Lotus Carlton and Audi S8.

### *SCCA Road Courses* (Continued from page 4)

asts then shifted to the new Laguna Seca race track, which opened with an SCCA National on 10 November 1957.

One can still go to these various towns and communities and retrace the original street courses, although – as Jack Baruth found out while running a new Mazda MX-5 around Watkins Glen – attempting to aggressively (spiritedly?) replicate the original races is frowned upon by the local gendarmerie. As Baruth wrote in "Into the Glen," *Road & Track*, November 2018,

Sure enough, the cop follows me down Railroad Straight and through Friar's Corner. Down the steep grade of Big Bend, I slot the Mazda's shifter into second then left off the throttle completely, still needed a fair amount of brake to stay within the speed limit... Entering the village of Watkins Glen, New York, there's a sharp left-hander where William Milliken rolled his Bugatti T-35 A on the final lap of the four-lap qualifying race in 1948. Easy to see why: The road loses camber and altitude all at once.

A county sheriff appears and drops in behind the policeman...When the light goes green, I start rolling, but they sit motionless until they are certain I've gotten the message. Red flag. This is not a racetrack anymore...message received.

Still, at a historic sites like Watkins Glen, Elkhart Lake and Bridgehampton, you can still (carefully, cautiously, legally) run the course. Most of the towns' visitor centers can provide maps with directions and probably a fair amount of safety admonishments. Go, have a good time and, as you drive around the route (safely!), try to imagine what it was like back when "iron men" prowled the country's roads in sports cars.

**Sources:** Jack Baruth, "Into the Glen," *Road & Track*, November 2018, pp 62-68; "The History of Road America," [www.roadamerica.com/history.html](http://www.roadamerica.com/history.html); Ryan McGee, "You can still drive old Watkins Glen," ESPN, 11 August 2012; SCCA, [www.scca.com/](http://www.scca.com/); North American Race Tracks, [www.na-motorsports.com/](http://www.na-motorsports.com/); "The Glen 1948," Simanaitis Says, <https://simanaitissays.com/>; Racing Sports Cars, [www.racingsportscars.com/](http://www.racingsportscars.com/); Historic Race Circuits of Elkhart Lake, [www.historicracecircuits.com/](http://www.historicracecircuits.com/); "Tribute to the Bridgehampton Race Circuit," Ash Automobilia; "Bridgehampton: The Dust and the Glory," <http://bridgehamptonraceway.net>; "Watkins Glen International – the cradle of American sports-car racing," SnapLap; Art Evans, "History of the Pebble Beach Road Races," *Sports Car Digest*, 9 August 2013; "Elkhart Lake Open Road Circuits," [www.scharch.org/Road\\_America\\_History/ELK-ElkhartCircuits.htm](http://www.scharch.org/Road_America_History/ELK-ElkhartCircuits.htm).



Photos by Andy Ackerman



Warriors & Octane

Misfit Toys Car Club & 1231<sup>st</sup> Transportation Co, MOArNG  
17 Nov 18



For those who are former US Army or Army National Guard with driving time in the "Deuce," it's true: the cab-overs have automatic transmissions and air conditioning...



KGB? GRU? FSB?

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