

# The Vintage Car Race at Watkins Glen International Speedway

Story by Rose Ward, photos by Tom Butcha, MSA

It was an absolute beautiful day for the Vintage Car Race at Watkins Glen. Vintage cars were qualifying at Watkins Glen International Speedway for the main race on Sunday.

The main event on Friday however was not at the Watkins Glen raceway. It was in downtown Watkins Glen.

What happened downtown takes you back to a time before cars went over 200 mph. Before they had full size shatter proof windshields. Before million dollar sponsors and race car drivers in television commercials.

The cars downtown that Friday put gas in their race cars with a can and a funnel. They strapped their car hoods down with leather belts and wore leather helmets on their heads. Many of their windshields are about six inches high. There were hay bales along the race track instead of cement barriers and 20 foot fences.

This race was not about winning. It was about the love of their cars and the love of racing in a much simpler time.

Technically, it's not a race. The cars do re-enactment laps on the original 6.6 mile Grand Prix Course that starts and ends on Main St in Watkins Glen.

The same start/finish line used on Oct 2, 1948 during



the first post World War II Road race in America. The road race remained downtown until 1953 when it was moved to a temporary track.

In 1956 the race went to its current home on the newly built Watkins Glen Race track which has become one of the best road courses in the United States.

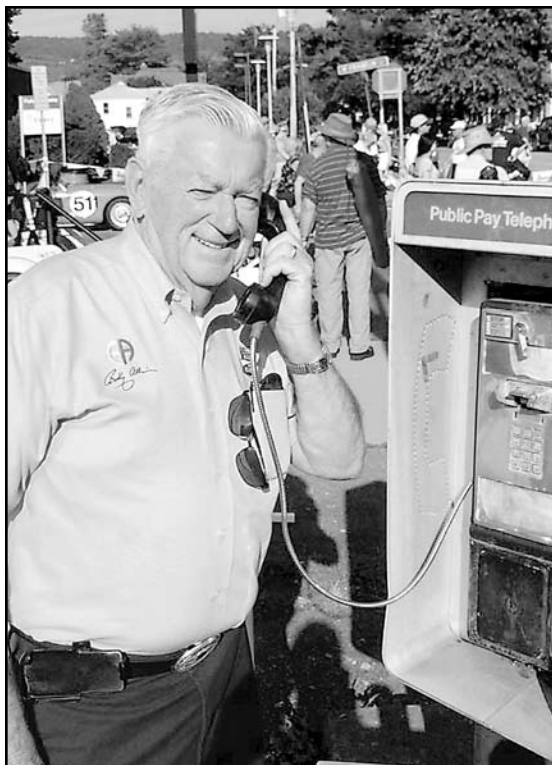
The organizers, sponsors and the whole town do a wonderful job putting this annual event together. Along with the car race, there were car shows, vendors, contests and the Smalley's Garage which does an inspection reenactment on the antique cars.

Race car great Bobby Allison announced "Start your Engines" and the drivers and the spectators enjoyed the ride as they zoomed up the hill by Watkins Glen State Park.

Bobby then hitched a ride with one of the drivers. The

party ended with fireworks set off in the Glen gorge.

If you've never been to Watkins Glen for this annual event, I would highly recommend it.



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