

Remembrances of Great Times with Dave Chandler as a Fellow F1 Enthusiast

Stewart Long, 21 April 2019

OUR RACES TOGETHER IN CANADA

Dave and I attended about ten Formula One Grand Prix races in Montreal from the early 1990's through the mid 2000's, during which time we became fast friends sharing our interests as F1 fans. This remembrance covers how we got together and some unique events that took place in Canada.

SOME BACKGROUND

I'm sure Dave told me what sparked his first interest in this top formula for international open wheel racing, but I do not recall at the moment although no doubt the Chandler family can provide that insight. However, for my own interest, I clearly remember seeing a Rolex advertisement in 1965 with Jackie Stewart standing by his race car. In those days, about the only source for F1 race reports was Road & Track magazine, with a couple of race results being published each month. This meant the reports were typically a month old by the time they were published, but that was still a good way to learn who the drivers were, which teams employed them, and specifications about the cars. As I became more knowledgeable, I decided I wanted to attend a race in person, so that meant Watkins Glen. It took a while, but I finally made it in 1975. I was fascinated with the racing atmosphere, not to mention the cold rain in October in NY which was typical weather that time of the season when U.S. Grand Prix was scheduled. Unfortunately, this was the beginning of the end of the race at the Glen due to gangs overwhelming the facility with parties that had nothing to do with the race. I went back in 1977, but that was the last time I was there. Still, I was fully committed by then as an F1 fan. My interest had also been growing in being a driver and in August 1977 prior to my last visit to the Glen, I borrowed money from my parents and went to England to the Jim Russell racing school at the Snetterton circuit and earned a Formula Ford competition license. You may not have heard of Jim Russell, but his school provided all of the race cars for the famous "Grand Prix" movie with James Gardner. These cars were school Formula 2 cars, but for the movie they were fitted with simulated F1 body work since using actual F1 cars would not have been feasible. So, I was there 11 years after the movie was made and got to meet Jim Russell in person as well as have dinner with him and the other racing students at his country estate.

DAVE AS AN ENTHUSIAST

The reason I mention all of these details is that I'm sure I shared them with Dave many times --- and knowing Dave I cannot remember him ever complaining about repeat stories. We both enjoyed spectating, but we came at it from different perspectives and I'm sure that heightened our conversations. Dave was a pure and passionate enthusiast, with selected drivers that he supported. On the other hand, I'm an engineer and after getting a racing license I realized just how hard it was to keep a car at the limit as F1 drivers are able to do lap after lap. In fact, Jackie Stewart was observed at one corner during a European race to place his right front tire on the same spot in a corner within an inch each lap. So, while I had favorite drivers as well, my focus was more on driving skill and especially on passing expertise.

It may seem quite strange to say I knew Dave well, having only ever been with him at the races in Montreal. However, if you attend all three days of a race event (practice, qualifying, and race day), you spend a lot of time in the grandstands. We would arrive as soon as the gates opened (7:30 or 8:00), stay all day, and be among the last to leave. We saw everything from the mechanics opening the garage doors and warming up the cars, to working on the cars, to the cars on the track, and spotting drivers, team managers, and celebrities in the pits. So that's 10 hours a day for three days per race over ten races or 300 hours, which is more than ample opportunity to get to know someone.

JOINING FOSA

The first year I went to Canadian GP was 1990. I didn't have a ticket, so I decided to see if I could walk up to buy a Friday-only (practice) ticket, which I could. The other days I watched on TV, but that practice day, which was miserably cold and damp (but very entertaining at the hair-pin corner watching brake disks glowing red), led me to conclude that it was definitely worth returning the next year for the full event. Looking for a way to get the best tickets, I learned about FOSA (Formula One Spectators Association) and joined the club. FOSA had influence with the GP ticket office and was able to reserve top row seats in the Gold stands at the start-finish line across from the pits. Not only were these excellent seats, but it also got members together with other enthusiasts. So, that's how fate put Dave and me in adjacent seats. Each year after that, we would ask FOSA to seat us together.

Unfortunately, FOSA could not compete with online services once those became more prevalent, and the club, as run by a husband and wife team who were also official press photographers, closed down. After that, Dave would call the GP ticket office directly in the fall as soon as sales opened for next year's race and request the same top row seats year after year. So, we stayed together even after FOSA was gone.

NOT ALWAYS THE TOP ROW

In 1993 when we arrived and went to the top row, to our shock we discovered that our seats were actually two rows down from the top. Initially we thought this was an error, but then realized that two additional rows had been built into the stands and our seats numbers and row were correct. The only problem was that the GP office had reserved the seats we requested without bothering to mention they were no longer top row! While the view of the track is essentially the same in the upper part of the stands, the top row allows spectators to stand up as much as desired without blocking anyone's view, so it really is significantly better.

OUR 15 MINUTES OF FAME

What caused this situation to be even worse was that I had made a banner that we planned to tie on the railing behind our seats announcing that "USA supports Andretti" since that same year was Michael's first in F1. Fortunately, the individuals in the top row were amenable to putting up the banner. We saw Mario hanging around the pits and he waved to us when he saw the banner. Somehow, I even got on Michael's Christmas card list for a few years and I believe Dave received some cards as well. However, the best outcome was passed on to us the next morning by a local French Canadian who said our banner had been mentioned in one of the Paris newspapers (widely available in Montreal) about qualifying for

the race. I gave the banner to Dave for safe-keeping and bringing to the next race since I was headed to Korea for a long-term engineering assignment. At the time we did not know it would be Andretti's only year in F1. So, this world-famous banner may still be around the Chandler household somewhere.

DAVE AND SENNA

Back to the drivers. Everyone is aware that Dave was a huge fan of Ayrton Senna, who was a brilliant driver from Brazil with exquisite car control skills and a three-time world champion. One of the famous stories of Senna's ability was his qualifying for the Monaco GP one year in mid-career. He was 2 seconds faster than anyone else (which is a huge delta in F1) and described his vision of the track when he set that time as driving through a round tunnel with his car taking corners on the sides of tunnel. He did not go out for the remainder of qualifying since he knew he could not go any faster and actually acknowledged that having his mind so focused in that manner had frightened him. Racers call that "being in the zone," but Senna took it to an unprecedented level of concentration. Of course, few have ever approached Senna's phenomenal level of talent. As a driver myself, I thought about these analytic aspects of how the mind works during qualifying. Dave, of course, admired Senna's spirit and passion for racing and how he continued to push the limits. I liked Senna as well, but just as with Michael Schumacher, he was immature at the beginning of his career and was not above running a competitor off the track, which I find as the most unsporting of behavior in racing. Senna's most infamous incident was his intentional crash into Alain Prost on the first corner of the 1989 Japanese GP that ensured Senna would be F1 champion that year. Fortunately, again like Schumacher, Senna matured and had become a near-perfect driver with both skill and judgement by the time he was sadly killed in 1994 at Monza.

Dave had a small collection of Senna tee-shirts and knew all about Senna's company that put his stylized "S" logo on many products. Because the Canadian GP in 1990's was in late May, Dave needed to leave Montreal about an hour after the race (when traffic began to ease to get off the island) since he had duties related to the end of the school year and could not take off Monday. I did not have that constraint and always enjoyed remaining several hours, initially watching the pits from the stands, then walking over to the pits as the crowd by then was mostly gone. In those years, "Security" was not as heavy handed as it is now and the pits were not blocked off. I enjoyed seeing the cars being disassembled and tools packed for loading into the airfreight containers.

UP CLOSE WITH THE RACE TEAMS

Dave and I had a couple of unique opportunities to get close to the teams. I remember one year we able to stand just inside the Williams garage and listen to Frank Williams talking with the mechanics. Frank was in a wheelchair due to his crash in a rental car years earlier. We were polite and quiet and just took pictures, as were the other dozen spectators with us. The Williams team seemed just to accept our presence as a group of true enthusiasts and didn't mind us being there. As a bit of history, Williams team has been very successful with many wins and world championships that rival Ferrari and McLaren, but it has struggled in recent years. An element of that success was Frank's good judgement selecting upcoming young drivers. Frank offered Senna his first racing contact in 1981, which was in Formula Ford, then signed him again with the Williams F1 in 1994 the year he was killed. The FF contact was signed in the main hotel in Attleborough where I frequently had dinner, although I could not afford a

room there and was instead in the B&B across the street. Who knows, the contact may even have been negotiated at a table where I had sat four years before, but the best part was that I could remind Dave again and again that I had earned my competition license at Snetterton long before his favorite driver.

Another, even more unique encounter, was joining Ron Dennis, who was head of McLaren, along with some team members, and official scrutineers out in the pit lane after the race who were measuring the width of the rear wing on both McLarens. The wings were declared to be about 1 cm too wide and resulted in disqualification. Dave and I noted that Ron was very professional, but obviously upset, although he did not win the argument.

HOW F1 ACCESS HAS CHANGED

It is hard to conceive of regular spectators being anywhere close to that type of very official discussion with the McLaren team in the current F1 world. What stands out after all these years is that F1 used to afford that kind of accessibility for those fans willing to stay around several hours after the race in the 1990's. And it used to be even better. In my second trip to Watkins Glen in 1977, pit/garage passes cost \$10 and most people did not buy them, but of course I did. When I went through the old Kendal garage (now replaced by the new garage for those familiar with the Glen), I was one of the few inside. Spectators could walk down the length of the garage in the middle with cars being behind simple rope barriers on either side, with the garage doors located on the far left and right, although they were all closed because of the cold, wet weather. There were a few mechanics, but no one seemed worried about fans bothering the cars or taking "spy" photos since there was little to hide in those days. Then, I spotted a driver. It was Keke Rosberg, 1982 world champion and father of 2016 world champion Nico Rosberg, sitting in a lawn chair. Since Keke's first F1 drive was not until 1978, perhaps he there racing in a support series like Formula Atlantic. That would also explain why he was relegated to an old nylon webbed lawn chair up against the garage door in his pit area. For a bit of privacy, Rosberg was facing away from the walkway while smoking a cigarette and did not appear like he wanted to talk to any fans so I decided not to press the issue. Those times are definitely long gone, as are drivers who are not highly fit athletes, but seeing that mid 1970's F1 world up close was an amazing experience that I'm very glad I did not miss.

CLOSE ENCOUNTER WITH THE STAR

Back to Dave and Senna. As I mentioned, Dave had school duties and could not stay very late. However, I knew that many times the drivers would come back into the pits after a couple of hours to talk to the team and thank them for their efforts, win or lose. Sometimes, you would spot a driver in one of the garages and the remaining dozen enthusiasts would quickly gather to take pictures and ask for autographs. Another good place to wait was at the end of the garages where drivers came out to walk to the floating dock in the rowing canal to get to their rental cars on the other side of the canal or for the top stars to be picked up by helicopter. So, one year after Dave left, I was waiting in that location with a small number of other fans hoping for a chance encounter. Then, to our great pleasure, out came Senna and he stopped to sign autographs. I was in line of about eight people and thought, wow, I'm going to be able to get my program signed by Dave's ultimate driver and won't Dave be thrilled when I send that to him. Unfortunately, Senna waved and moved on when I was only two people away from

him. So close, although ultimately, I was not successful. Still, Dave and I shared that story many times so it had many positive benefits in that regard.

MY LACK OF RECENT ATTENDANCE

In recent years, I have not attended the Canadian GP, although I was reconsidering especially now that Cheryl is a full-fledged fan. The reason for my declining interest has not been due to less enthusiasm for F1, but rather because of the commercialization of the sport and the extremely restricted access that makes going into the pits after the race to see the cars up close no longer possible. In fact, the catch fences are now so high that even from the top row of the Gold stands the cars going down the main straight must be viewed through the fence, so there is no point in taking photos from that location. However, the most egregious change is that as a spectator who pays a premium ticket price for one of the best stands can only remain there an hour after the race since Security now clears the stands promptly, apparently so they can go home early. This means I could not even use binoculars to watch the cars being packed up in the pits. Dave, of course, also missed having this close access, but his enthusiasm for the race environment and the driver competition was not directly impacted, so he was not so easily dissuaded from attending as I was. I'm sure that Cheryl becoming a fan also helped offset these other lesser aspects of the race, but for me, especially with a much longer trip to get to Montreal it was a deciding factor. My only true and now everlasting regret is that I missed spending time with Dave at these more recent races.

VINTAGE RACING AT THE GLEN

As another way for us to get together, many times I encouraged Dave to come to Watkins Glen during the first weekend in October for the vintage race with the Vintage Racer Group. This is one of the best tracks in the world and it is my favorite by far. The fact that the U.S. GP has so much history there only adds to the racing ambience. The October date is very similar to when the U.S. GP used to run, which means typically chilly early fall weather in upstate NY. The track itself is at 1000 ft. elevation, so a bit of fog is not unusual either. All in all, a fall race at an iconic track like the Glen is just what racing should be and is a window into the past of what it was like to go to an F1 race in there in the 1970's. I've invited Cheryl to be my guest this year or whenever she has the chance in a future year, hopefully before I "retire" from vintage racing. I've been very lucky to have been racing now for 42 years. However, I was not expecting that a little-known aspect of racing, especially vintage racing, is that the social interactions with friends are a big part of what makes it so pleasurable. I know Dave would have enjoyed as much as I do interacting with the other drivers and their families and learning about the technical details of their cars in that very personal kind of way that is now completely gone from F1.

VINTAGE RACING AT THE PVGP

Another offer I made to Dave was for him to come to the Pittsburgh Vintage Grand Prix, which is held every July. It's definitely a longer drive than going to the Glen, but could be a very worthwhile trip. The PVGP brings more than 100,000 people to downtown Pittsburgh to race on city streets in Schenley Park, the way racing was in the 1950's and how the U.S. GP started out running on public roads around the town of Watkins Glen before the track was built. Needless to say, it is a privilege for vintage drivers like

me to be able to still race in this manner. Most people are not aware that the event is entirely for charity and benefits the Autism Society and the Allegheny Valley School. Since I learned during the Celebration of Life ceremony that Dave's juggling club gives shows for autistic students, there is a connection in that regard to the PVGP. The event is open and free to the public, but the drivers make donations to be participants and local businesses also donate services and money to support the event. One of my favorite aspects of the race is using my Porsche 914 to give "charity rides" to members of the public for a small donation. Only a relatively few race cars have two seats with seat belts and can offer these rides, which provide a lap of the track for those who would like to experience what a race car feels and sounds like at a brisk, but safe, non-racing speed. A couple of years ago, a reporter from "Penn Live" got into my car for a ride and asked if she could make a video. Riders frequently want to take pictures or videos, so I always say that it's fine. The only difference this time was that the rider did not tell me she was a reporter or that she planned to write an article and put the video on-line. Fortunately, I always explain the race track during the lap so that each rider has some insights as to how a driver thinks during a race, so the video provides an interesting look at the course. For anyone who would like to see the lap, here is the link:

http://www.pennlive.com/entertainment/index.ssf/2017/07/ride_pgh_vintage_grand_prix.html

PROPOSAL FOR MEMORIAL FUND AT IMRRC

Finally, in closing this remembrance, I have a suggestion related to setting up a memorial fund in Dave's name to honor his life-long enthusiasm for F1 racing. A non-profit organization called the International Motor Racing Research Center has been established in Watkins Glen. The goal of IMRRC is to archive books, programs, and photographs from U.S. and international racing. I'm already a member and donate each year, but I believe Dave would be pleased that one of the ways we are remembering him is through this support of preserving the history of the racing he so enjoyed.

Best Regards from Dave's Long-time Friend and Co-Enthusiast,

Stewart Long