

Jim Hunter Story

Whilst in the RAAF in Butterworth I was lucky enough to race for Tan Chong Motors in one of their factory prepared Datsun 1600's. I won the Penang GP around the streets of Penang in 1970 (some may remember that). At a function after a race meeting at Batu Tiga, Kuala Lumpur, I met Frank Matich (4 times Australian Champion Gold Star driver) who offered me a job building racing cars at his Brookvale race shop when I left the RAAF.

I moved to Newport NSW in late 1971 to work for Frank at Brookvale and built a number of Formula 5000 race cars including one for American George Folmer to race in the Indianapolis 500 (he crashed it !).

After working for Frank I was offered a job to head up an import company which we grew in 5 years to turn over 7 million dollars . After a disagreement with the bosses wife we parted ways ☺.

I was fortunate to be able to continue racing with a number of wins and lap records in Australia as well as building my own race car to compete in the Baja 1000 desert race in Mexico which we won in 1987. That car is in the Motor Racing museum at Bathurst. Racing in Mexico was more of an adventure than a race as it was through the desert for 1000 miles with about 20 potential problems every mile including cattle wandering along the track. Part of the track was along the beach on the Pacific side of the Baja Peninsular and was billiard table smooth for 30 miles.

The car sat on 140 MPH for the whole distance !! Another part of the track was over the mountain to Mikes Sky Ranch and we averaged 5 MPH for about 20 miles !

I have competed at Bathurst 1000 and 12 hour 10 or 12 times with a number of podiums but have not quite got to the top step ☹. Very frustrating to get so close with 2nd's and 3rd's but no firsts at Bathurst

Bathurst is cruel with so much that can go wrong including my co-driver crashing when catching the leader ☹. The time and development is huge for endurance events. My mechanic Jerry Churchill and I worked about 16 hours a day for 6 weeks prior including 48 hours straight as we got closer to the race. There was many ideas to try and improve the car especially in the suspension.

We track tested 12 different setups to make the car drivable and to get the most life out of the tyres so to get within reach of a win and have a crash was really depressing and it takes about 3 weeks to get my head back to normal life ☺.

After an engine problem at the Surfers Paradise track one year we qualified 18th . I drove through to 2nd with only Colin Bond in the factory car ahead by about 30 seconds when a brake hose burst at the end of the straight at around 270 KPH so another crash ended our day ☹.

Dianne and I had twin sons, Myles and Boyd, in 1980 and Dianne and I got divorced in 1999.

Around '79 -'80 I was offered a NSW franchise for auto parts which was quite successful and eventually I took their name down and put "Jim Hunters Suspension" up and that company is still operating today.

In 1984 I took over a window tint company that was renting a workshop from me but went broke. That company led me to importing my own window film products from the U.S. and that business, Oceania Distributing P/L, is still going strong and both companies keep me busy 5 days a week. We now distribute window film products throughout Australia and New Zealand. These businesses helped me pay off a couple of factories in Blacktown NSW.

I am keeping fit with a personal trainer Matt 3 times a week (he lives next door to Wayne & Irene Beattie !!) and I have been training with him for over 15 years. (Matt tells me Irene is not too well ☹).

My fitness enables me to continue motor racing overseas (apart from Covid ☹) as well as in Australia. I met my new wife Mimi at a function before a race meeting in Kuala Lumpur. Mimi was the VP of sales for the RHB Bank in Malaysia. Mimi has a son and daughter from her first marriage and her daughter Elsa Hunter discovered cricket at school here in Australia and now plays for Malaysian Womens Cricket as well as NSW U19's. Elsa who is 15 years old is the youngest player to ever play International ICC cricket which she did for Malaysia at 13 years of age in the ICC T20 World Cup qualifiers.

My time these days is taken up with work and Elsa's cricket and a very happy family life in general and I get to play with my race cars on the odd occasion ☺.

I miss the friendships that we had and feel privileged to have been part of those 3 SQN days in Malaysia.