

## Vintage Auto Racing



Janet Stewart works alongside her father, Brian Stewart as the Business Manager in their family owned and operated business.

Visit [www.RestoreRacingCars.com](http://www.RestoreRacingCars.com) for descriptions of other projects as well as a great photo gallery.

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Brian Stewart is one of the best known Canadian personalities in motor sports. He has lived and breathed racing for more than 40 years and has won championships as a driver and team owner. Recognized internationally as an auto racing professional who produces winners, his passion and success resulted in him being inducted into the Canadian Motorsports Hall of Fame in 2004.

Brian first stepped onto the track and into the world of auto racing at Mosport International Raceway in 1966 and has been winning races ever since. He won the Canadian Formula Vee Championship in 1969 and went on to win the Canadian Formula Ford Championship in 1972.

Since then he has prepared and fielded countless champions including Paul Tracy, Christiano Da Matta and Wade Cunningham.

Early on his own racing career, Brian's competitors soon discovered that the unique combination of his driving skills along with his background as a Class A mechanic made him really hard to beat. He soon gained a reputation for being able to prepare technically superior cars and it didn't take the others long before they began asking for his help.

More by accident than by design, Brian soon fell into a key "behind the scenes" role and found himself preparing cars for numerous other drivers and giving birth to his then new business, Brian Stewart Racing.

As a team owner, Brian has gone on to win, among other titles, three Canadian Championships and four Indy Lights Championships. One of the things that makes him different from most other team owners in the business is the fact that he is still "hands-on". Even all these years later, he still rises every morning and is in his racing shop working on a racing car of some sort by 8 AM...and puts in a full day...every day.

"I just love working on cars. There's nothing else that I'd rather be doing," says Brian.

Despite the fame and excitement, Brian has always remained close to his roots, working on Formula Vees, Formula Fords and a myriad of other vintage racing cars at every opportunity. Recently I had the opportunity to sit down with him and learn about a project that he currently has on the go in his racing shop, just north of Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

*JS: Tell me about some of the vintage racing cars that you are working on these days.*

*BS: I have three projects on the go right now: a Hawke Formula Ford DL2B, a Tiga GTP and a fleet of Van Diemens.*

*JS: Do you have a favourite?*

*BS: Well, actually, the Hawke is kind of special. It has a special place in my heart.*

*JS: Why is that?*

*BS: Well, a guy by the name of Ross Smith owns the car and has since late in 1971, but earlier that same year, I actually drove the Hawke myself and sat on "the pole" in it at Mosport.*

*JS: Why is the Hawke in your shop?*

*BS: Ross bought the car from another guy named Higgs Murphy back in late '71 and has been racing it himself in vintage class series ever since. Just about every year he has brought it back to me for a tune up. He likes the work that I do and knows that when he takes it out to the track, that it will run – not just that it will run, but it will run well.*



Brian Stewart, 1971, Lotus 61 Formula Ford

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*JS: What kind of work do you typically need to do on a car of that age?*

*BS: Most years it's just routine maintenance – I'd go through it from front to back, checking all of the nuts and bolts as well as the rod ends and then align it of course, but a couple of times Ross has crashed the Hawke. One time he called me and said, "Brian, I crashed the Hawke." I told him "Ross, there's nothing you can wreck that I can't fix."*

*Back in 2002, Ross crashed the Hawke at Le Circuit Mont Tremblant and after we put it back together, he continued to race it until 2009.*

*JS: What happened in 2009?*

*BS: He was heading up the back straight at Mosport with the intention of heading into the pits when the leaders*



Ross Smith, 2009, Hawke Formula Ford DL2B

*came along. They were battling it out for the lead and he managed to get caught up in their dicing. This was a big crash with a lot of damage, but when the repairs to the Hawke are finished this time, I venture to say that it will be even better than it was before.*

*JS: What kind of work has been required this time?*

*BS: Well the whole of the rear end of the chassis was destroyed as well as the transmission, engine mounts, body, suspension and a number of other components. And a lot of parts that are original to these cars are just not available any more so we have to make everything by hand.*

*When I redid all of the small brackets, for example, I made them all out of titanium rather than steel. Titanium is even stronger than steel, but at the same time it is as light as aluminium.*

*JS: What would you say is one of the biggest challenges of working on vintage racing cars?*

*BS: When you're working on a vintage car, you can't improve it otherwise it will no longer be authentic. So when I was making the new parts like the brackets for the oil tank, the bracket for the fire extinguisher and so on, I made them out of titanium rather than steel and in that way, the car is improved without really being changed. But that's one of things I love about working on these cars – looking for ways to improve them without changing the authenticity is a challenge and it's the kind of thing that keeps your mind sharp.*



Hawke Formula Ford DL2B Chassis

*JS: What's next for the Hawke?*

*BS: It should be finished within the next couple of weeks and Ross is looking forward to racing it again this year.*

*JS: Thanks very much for taking time out of your schedule to tell us about the Hawke. It's a car with an interesting history.*

LLS



Titanium Tail Pipe Bracket