

Terlingua . . . A Texas Ghost Town with A Sense of Humor and a Racing Team

By Jerry Titus
Contributing Editor

SHERMAN OAKS, Calif., Oct. 24 — Throughout the TransAm series this season, our Shelby-prepared Mustang carried the Terlingua Racing Team banner and wore its yellow-and-black colors. The name was fairly well known in racing circles as the handsome decals had appeared on more exotic machinery from Riverside to LeMans, but this was the first time a car had been officially entered under that title. A few "outsiders" knew the Terlingua story but most couldn't even pronounce it.

The first time I discovered what a Terlingua was I had dropped into Tom Tierny's office at Ford's Dearborn Public Relations Department late in 1964. Though Tom later moved on to become special assistant to Don Frey, the Ford Division general manager, and has since left to form his own PR firm, he was assigned for a time to the Southwest PR office in Dallas. Here he became friends with lawyer and motorsport enthusiast David Witts. The latter numbered among his clients one Carroll Shelby.

The details are vague to me now, but when Witts purchased a large parcel of land in Southwest Texas in a cattle ranch/oil lease deal, it also included a ghost town named Terlingua. As a mining site, it had first come into existence in 1860 and, during World War 2 was one of the world's two sources of mercury and boasted a population of approximately 300 isolated souls.

"Hell, you're a lawyer," responded Tierny, "let's incorporate the thing and make it a legal city. We ought to be able to find all kinds of wild things to do with our own city!" In due course, various Dallas personalities were appointed to the City Council. Witts was named Mayor, and Tierney the Chief Justice. Shelby got in on the fun and was made Social Director. Hmmm.

From there the ideas blossomed. Negotiations with a chili company



SOCIAL DIRECTOR

doing a lot of mail order resulted in Terlingua becoming a 3rd-class U.S. post office. Terlingua also achieved international fame as the Chili Capital of the World, probably due to its "three-alarm" chili, designed especially for fanciers with asbestos gullets and lower intestinal tracts.

Remembering the Central Park Formula One race, certain energetic New Yorkers try to promote from time to time, I suggested to Tierny that Sports Car Graphic sponsor a fictitious race in Terlingua. He saw the possibilities immediately and, via conference call to Texas, I was appointed Racing Commissioner of that GREAT city. Back in Los Angeles, I began sending out releases on the forthcoming Terlingua Formula Libre race to key people in the sport. It was to be run on the streets of the town and we would, by invitation, accept entries from every phase of automotive competition. Craig Breedlove and Don Garlits were rumored to be very interested. It was kept just vague enough to retain some credibility. After all, SCG had sponsored the first annual Road Race of Champions.

Competition Press was, as I'd hoped, among the first to bite. After all, if there WAS to be a big, wild race, they had to let their readers know. Dic Van der Feen and Jim Kaser of the Sports Car Club of America called me up the next day with lewd suggestions about what I could do with my race, so they were onto it. But they did admit they mulled it over all morning before they decided I HAD to be kidding. Could I count on their cooperation? "Sure," laughed Kaser, "you can

say the concept of a major race at Terlingua captures our imagination and thrills us with anticipation."

I used it verbatim and the next release was sitting on ACCUS Director Bill Fleming's desk when he returned from an FIA conference in Europe, strongly implying SCCA sanction. Bill REALLY bit and Kaser admitted later it took a half hour to calm him down enough to tell him it was a gag. But he quickly saw the humor in it and sent us a masterful tongue-in-cheek letter that ended with a promise to give us every assistance on an international level to make it an outstanding event.

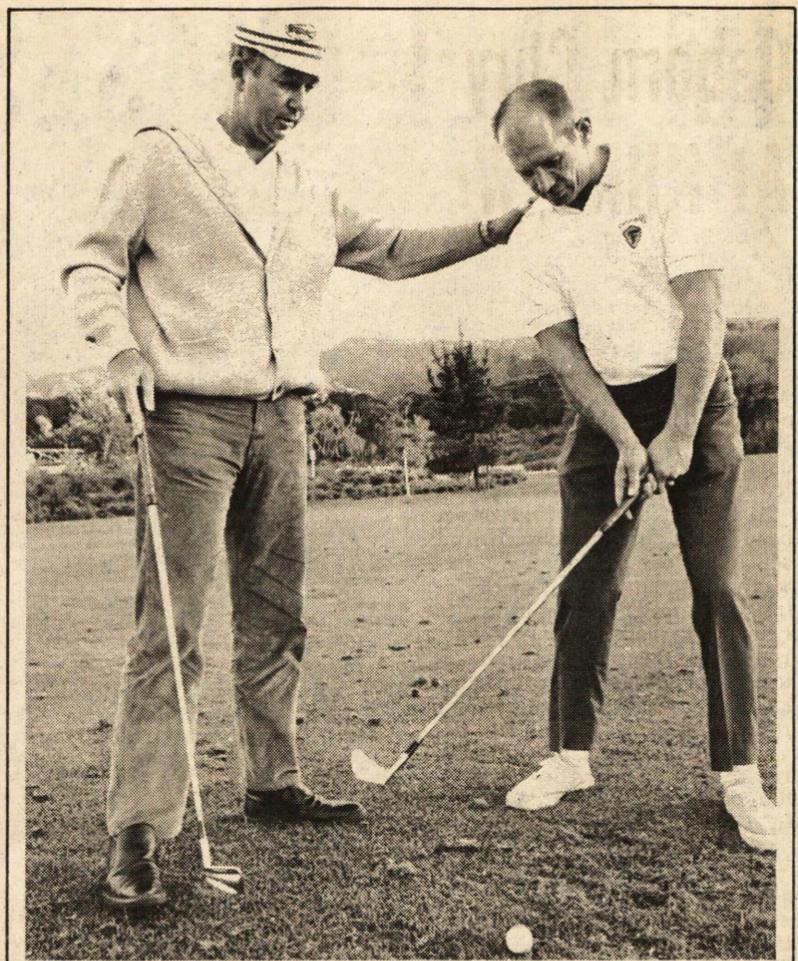
Meanwhile, I sent out another release banning Shelby-American from the event as we'd discovered they were negotiating with NASA for a controlled-rocket engine. It was a bit much and CP, having run all prior releases, caught a whiff of something that didn't smell quite right but subsequent releases about ACCUS cooperation slowed them for another issue. When they were sure they'd been had, their response was some classic editorials and a couple of fake letters from readers, but nothing that came right out and blew the whistle. So the gag went on.

As the scheduled race date approached, a couple of prospective entrants called up and acted more than a bit miffed they didn't get invitations. Letters were coming in from innocent folks who wanted to spectate but didn't know where to stay. One called and wanted to know where the nearest landing strip was. Things were getting out of hand, so we postponed the event indefinitely, blaming it on a vengeful Carroll Shelby who was unfairly using his influence as Social Director of Terlingua to pressure us into accepting his rocket-car entry.

In early '66 Witts decided to "go public" with the exclusive Terlingua Racing Team, an idea I encouraged due to the number of friends bugging me for the expensive decals. Small ads in Competition Press and SCG found him overwhelmed with response.

Shelby, meanwhile, had joined him in purchasing, expanding and developing the Terlingua property as an investment. When Witts advised him the Racing Team fund was reaching significant proportions, Carroll came up with the idea of founding a Boys' Ranch on the place. Others on the City Council liked the idea as well. At first they considered making it for underprivileged or orphaned youths, but decided they could make a more significant contribution to society by working with boys that showed a special talent in mechanics or ranching.

David E. Davis, then publisher of Car & Driver, was made chairman of the committee to draw up a curriculum and initial plans and cost projections were worked out. It is unfortunate that, at this point, everyone involved in getting the program off the ground suddenly had major changes in their professional lives and have had to concentrate their interests in this area these past few months, but the Terlingua Boys Ranch is very much alive and progress is expected to resume shortly.



Keep the Head Down!

Parnelli Jones (right) got his first golf lesson from famed pro Ken Venturi during the Monterey Grand Prix weekend Oct. 14. The two have a loose deal whereby Venturi will teach Parnelli to play golf and Parnelli will teach Ken to drive at speed.
(Jack Brady Associates photo)

Import Show to Feature New Cars, Surtees, Moss

SAN FRANCISCO, Calif., Oct. 31 — More than 150 cars are expected to be on display when the San Francisco Imported Car Show opens its 1967 six-day run on Tuesday, Nov. 14.

The show is the nation's largest exclusive foreign car exposition and will be at Brooks Hall in the Civic Center.

In addition to the new model passenger cars, a special exhibit of race cars will be shown highlighting many of the sports cars competing in the CanAm Championship series.

Local SCCA officials are arranging a concours of antique and classic cars. Films of the year's outstanding auto races will be shown on a continual basis during the show hours of 10am to 11pm.

Supporting the entire week's program will be guest appearances by many of the world's leading auto race drivers, including John Surtees and Stirling Moss at the Auto-week booth. Special forums for youngsters will be held in the theater area.

A European trip for two, via Japan Air Lines, will be awarded to one of the show visitors during closing night ceremonies.

Three After USAC Title

SPEEDWAY, Ind., Oct. 31 — Only two drivers have a mathematical chance of catching A. J. Foyt on the USAC Championship Trail. Foyt's fourth at Hanford, Calif., Oct. 22, gives him 3280 points.

Mario Andretti crashed at Hanford but holds second with 2540 points. Gordon Johncock won the Hanford event and has 2450 points. There are just 1000 first-place points left with 400 at the 200-mile event at Phoenix, Ariz., Nov. 5, and 600 in the Rex Mays Memorial 300-mile race at Riverside, Calif., Nov. 26.

To win the title, Andretti or Johncock will have to win both remaining races while Foyt finishes out of the top 12 on both occasions.

Paschal Takes SCODA Award

FLORHAM PARK, N.J., Oct. 31 — John Paschal is the 1967 SCODA champion with a total of 1100 points, 190 more than second-place finisher Fred Pfisterer. Paschal drove his 1967 Sting Ray to feature wins at Hershey, Nazareth, Westboro, and Stafford Springs.

The victory was particularly sweet for Paschal who was second in 1966 behind Steve Krisiloff by only 10 points.

For most of the 1967 season the SCODA point battle was a tight one between Hank Kleban, Pfisterer, Ben Loquasto and Paschal. By steady driving, 57-year-old Pfisterer nosed out all but Paschal with 910 points.

Three Spins Fail To Stop Vose Fall Enduro Win

MILWAUKEE, Oct. 22 — Despite a half-dozen spins at various sectors of the track, Hamilton Vose III brought his C S/R 427 Sting Ray home in front of the pack to win the Midwest Council of Sports Car Club's Fall Enduro at Milwaukee State Fair Park.

Second in the one-hour affair and third was John Weinberger's Porsche 911S.

In the Baby Enduro for E-F prod, it was Daytona-bound Terry Jesk, MGB, all the way. Formula B went to Bill Blackmore, Alfa Ausca, and Wally Galle won F/C with Denny Doble first in Vee.

Once again Joe Janns won the Hp Sprite go and Tom Brown, Sprite, took the Gp honors. It was the points windup for the 1967 season for the Midwest Council.

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CAN A SPRITE WIN AT INDIANAPOLIS?

Yes. In fact, two of them did. On October 8th, in the SCCA National Race for G and H Production, Chuck Reynolds drove his GP Sprite to first overall, while Joseph Jann drove his Bug-eye to first in HP. Bill Koch, trying to catch Reynolds, set a new GP lap record in his MG Midget, but had to settle for second overall in the final standings.

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