



Porsche Panorama
Volume 721
April 2017



721

PANORAMA

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE PORSCHE CLUB OF AMERICA

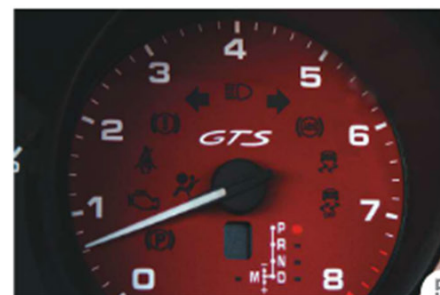
PORSCHE



THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE PORSCHE CLUB OF AMERICA



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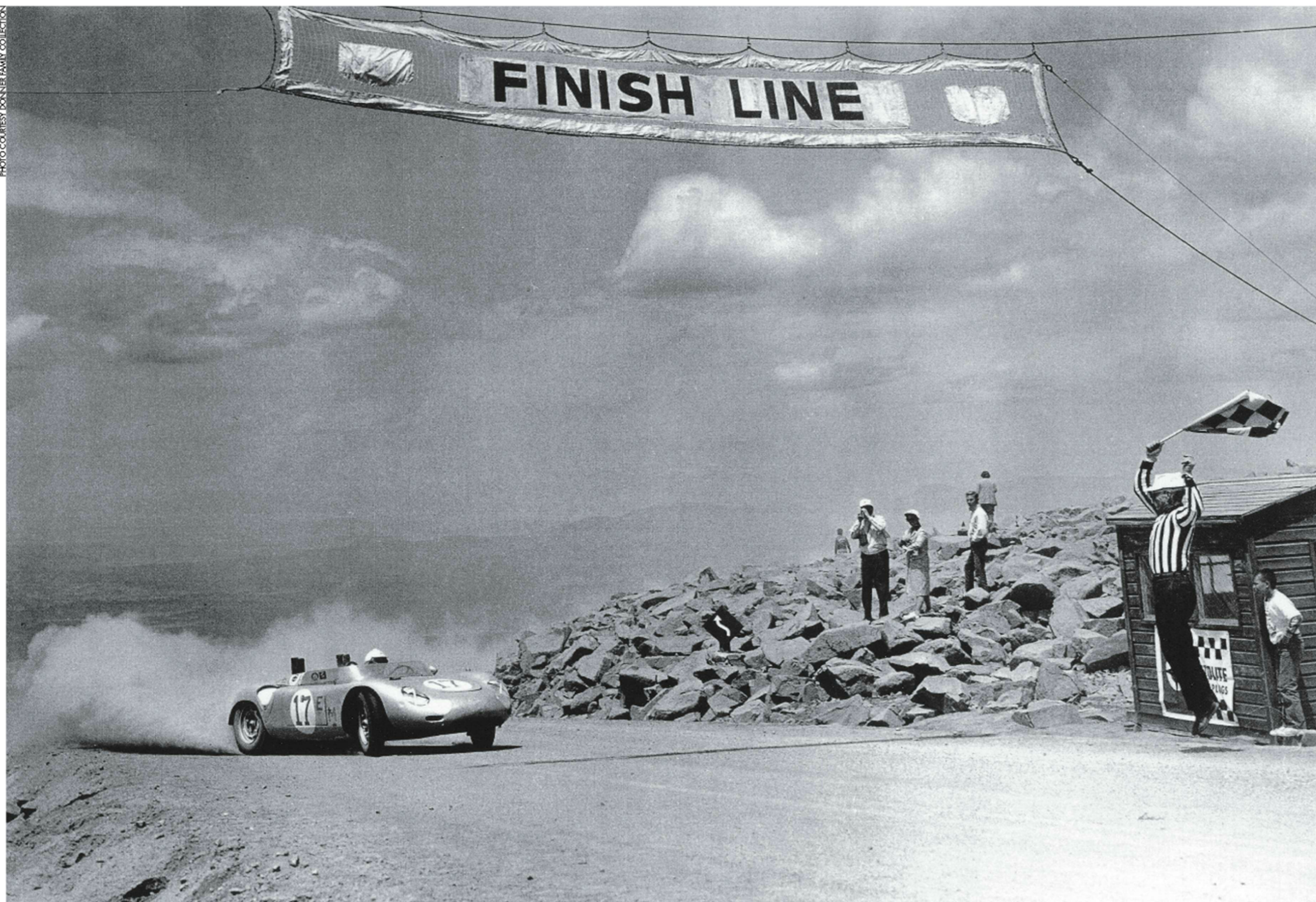
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Photo by Richard Pardon/Porsche

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PORSCHE PANORAMA (ISSN 0147-3565) is published monthly by the Porsche Club of America, Inc., 9689 Gerwig Lane, Suite 4C/D, Columbia, MD 21046. Periodicals postage paid at Columbia, MD, and additional offices. PCA membership dues are \$46.00 for one year, \$90.00 for two years or \$132.00 for three years. Dues include \$12.00 per year for an annual subscription to Porsche Panorama. Postmaster: Send address change to Porsche Panorama, PCA Executive Offices, PO Box 6400, Columbia, MD 21045. Copyright ©2017 by the Porsche Club of America, Inc., all rights reserved. www.pca.org



Back Story

Porsche first appeared at the Pikes Peak International Hill Climb in 1958, when Oklahoman Bill Paine raced his 356A Speedster up the hill with a modified rear lid to get more air into the engine. One year later, Bobby Donner Jr. of Colorado Springs (pictured here) entered his RS60. Donner didn't win in 1959, but he took class wins each of the next three years, even beating Ak Miller and his powerful seven-liter Ford-powered Devin in 1962. That year, Porsches dominated the Sports Car class, taking seven of the top ten positions. Included in that group was Indy 500 winner Rodger Ward in an RSK and later IMSA and Trans-Am competitor Bob Hagestad driving a 356 coupe.

Blaine was the pioneer, but it was Donner and his protégé Mike Collins who did most of the development work on the early Porsche efforts, figuring out how to keep dirt and stones from getting into the fuel-injection system while also getting maximum airflow. They engineered special air filters using organic sea sponges that could easily be cleaned after each run. They also had a local body shop fashion a special rear lid for better cooling. Sticks and stones are hurtful to people, but they were especially rough on the aluminum-bodied Porsches, so they applied coats of fiberglass to the inner fenders to prevent rock-inflicted, inside-out denting.

There was a Porsche lull on the mountain after 1964 until Porsche-powered desert buggies arrived in the 1970s. Eventually Indy-car legend Rick Mears took the overall win in 1976 with a Newman-Dreager chassis powered by a Garretson Enterprises Porsche 914 engine, with some engineering work done by Bruce Anderson. Another notable Porsche entrant was a young California dirt-track racer named Bruce Canepa, whose buggy was powered by a 930 engine.

Eventually the buggy era passed and rally and sports cars came into vogue, making room for other Porsche notables such as eight-time winner Jeff Zwart, six-time victor David Donner, and Pikes Peak's only champion to also win Le Mans: Romain Dumas. Today, 59 years since Blaine first entered his Speedster at Pikes Peak, it looks as if Porsche has a long future on America's Mountain. —Sean Cridland



Pikes Peak Legacy

DAVID DONNER'S SUCCESS AT THE LEGENDARY HILL CLIMB RUNS IN THE FAMILY.

STORY AND PHOTOS BY SEAN CRIDLAND
ARCHIVE PHOTOS COURTESY DONNER FAMILY COLLECTION

AS DAVID DONNER'S team slowly rolled his Porsche GT3 R through the crowd toward the starting line of the 100th Anniversary Pikes Peak International Hill Climb last June, he focused his mind on the task ahead: winning the Time Attack 1 class. Providing the road was clean of debris, the weather held, and the frost heaves near the top didn't play havoc with the car's drivetrain, he

knew it was possible to take his sixth win on America's Mountain.

At the line, the starter pointed the green flag directly toward him. As a signal of his readiness, Donner nodded his head. The clock ticked down to zero, the flag waved, the crowd cheered, the 4.0-liter racing engine growled, the tires dug in, and Donner was off. He'd done it 26 times before, so he knew what to do. He would

accelerate hard out of every corner, carry as much speed as he could on the straights—up to 150 mph—and brake as late as possible to dive aggressively toward every apex.

In the ever-so-steep hairpins in the legendary Ws section, he avoided turning in too sharply, because the outsides of the corners aren't as steep and he could carry more speed than by clipping the apexes.

On the fast but rough upper section, he drove around the bumps and frost heaves. With no turbocharger, he only tapped the brakes, retaining every possible bit of momentum as he climbed higher and higher, eventually rounding Olympic Corner and giving everything that was left as he passed the flag man and the throng of photographers.

Idling the car around the bumpy

dirt road at the summit, at an altitude of 14,110 feet above sea level, he checked his time and hoped it was enough. He'd turned a very respectable 10:00.813, with a good enough margin to take his sixth win on Pikes Peak. That would be a great moment for any champion, but for Donner it carried more weight—the weight of a family legacy going back to his older brother, his father,

and his grandfather.

Taking a deep breath of the oxygen he carried in the car, he climbed out, smiled for a few photos, put on the jacket he had stowed behind the seat, then sat back in his car and quietly unpacked the lunch his wife had stashed in his cool-suit cooler. Since none of the racers leave the summit until all the racers have summited, there was plenty of time to reflect.



Right and above: Robert Donner Sr. was an automotive enthusiast and tireless promoter of the Pikes Peak Hill Climb. Bottom: David's dad Bobby and Aunt Peggy pose with Ab Jenkins' famous Mormon Meteor in fashionable western wear of the day.

IN 1939, DAVID'S GRANDFATHER,

Robert Donner Sr., sold his businesses in Buffalo, New York and brought his wife Margaret and kids Robert Jr. and Peggy to the small city of Colorado Springs, nestled at the foot of Pikes Peak. Photos

show that Robert Sr. was intimately connected to the car world through his Auburn-Cord-Duesenberg dealership in Buffalo. Although never a racer himself, he had backed a team in the Carrera Panamericana race in the 1950s and even flew some parts to them with his plane. After WWII, he kept several imported cars—Jaguars, MGs, Mercedes—next to his Cadillacs and Duesenbergs.

His enthusiasm for automobiles led him to join a group of Colorado Springs businessmen who got the hill climb up Pikes Peak running again in 1946, just a year after WWII ended. Eventually, he served as race chair for several years. As a promotional gimmick, he brought in his friend, speed-record holder Ab Jenkins, to meet the fans and start



the race. Jenkins was mayor of Salt Lake City at the time, but he'd drive his massively long Mormon Meteor land-speed record car all the way from Salt Lake City and back for several years to be part of the Pikes Peak Hill Climb scene. Jenkins lent his celebrity to the race, bringing more fanfare and excitement.

DAVID'S DAD, ROBERT JR.—or Bobby as his contemporaries called him—was always part of the scene as well, helping out wherever he could. He loved learning about the cars, especially during hill climb month, when they'd all be housed at the Broadmoor Garage. The Donners lived close by, so it was an easy jaunt to check out the action. In 1950, 20-year-old Bobby Donner Jr. would meet up-and-coming California driver Phil Hill at the Broadmoor. Hill was just 23 at the time, and he and Donner struck up a friendship that would last throughout their lives, fueled by racing and their common interest in historic racing cars.

Though it took a few years, it was an inevitability that the competitive young Donner would take up racing. He wanted the car that would give him the best chance to win, and that meant a Porsche. Serving in the Marine Corps from 1953 to 1956, Bobby Jr. was stationed at Fort Ord in Monterey for much of the time, near the center of the California sports car racing scene. He bought his first Porsche Speedster from Johnny von Neumann, who arranged to have two of his employees help Donner learn the ins and outs of going fast in a Porsche. Those employees were future racing legends Richie Ginther and Ken Miles.

Bobby Jr. raced Coupes and Speedsters in 1955 and 1956 at places like Palm Springs, Torrey Pines, Santa Barbara, and Pomona. In 1957, he stepped up to 550 Spyders and was a dominant force in Rocky Mountain area races. That dominance continued when he got an RS60 in 1959 and then the RS61 in 1961. In 1958, he married his long-

time sweetheart, Joan Cogswell, and was one of the founding members of the Rocky Mountain Region of the Porsche Club of America.

THAT SAME YEAR, Bill Blaine was the first Porsche driver to race up Pikes Peak. It's not known if that was the spark that propelled Bobby Jr. to enter his RS60 in 1959. With the Donner family's involvement in the hill climb and Bobby's racing career in full swing, Blaine's run couldn't have gone unnoticed. Blaine drove a 356A Speedster with a slightly modified rear lid for better airflow. Though outpowered in class, he did well to the halfway point before something slowed him on the upper portions of the course, leaving him well off pace. Regardless, the stage was set for Bobby to enter his RS60 in 1959.

Bobby and his friend Mike Collins tackled the task with great competitive seriousness. They considered the little RSK, with its low weight and mid-engine layout, to be a great car for the mountain, despite the dirt surface and the altitude.

Of course tires would be a consideration, but so would getting the maximum amount of air into the four-cam 1500-cc engine while keeping dirt from causing damage. Local body man Ed Kyle fashioned a different rear engine cover that allowed the intake trumpets to point higher, away from the dirt and into cleaner air. Then Bobby Jr. and Collins made air filters using sponges and cotton socks, which they cleaned after every run.

Bobby Jr. qualified well and had a fast time at midpoint. Then he made a mistake, spinning off the road at Elk Park and getting high-centered on the dirt berm bordering the road. Coincidentally, it was close to where his brother-in-law Buster Cogswell was spectating. Cogswell and some buddies pushed the little Porsche off the berm and Donner was able to continue on his way.

He finished, but was well out of the running. That experience only motivated Bobby Jr., and he came



Above: 1960 class winners Louis Unser, Charles Bryant, Bob Donner, and Mike Collins (also in a Porsche) pose with overall winner Bobby Unser and an unknown official. Left: Racing at Pikes Peak means being ready for anything, including snow.

PORSCHE CARS SOUTHWEST, INC.				SALES AGREEMENT	
TYPE	CHASSIS NO.	ENGINE NO.	DATE	PRICE	TOTAL
RS 61	P 90 325	718 009	10 1600 Spyder	Silver-metallic	15,000
Additional gear and options (Le-Mans)					
1 Wind-Windscreen					
2 Cops					
Tire Fee					\$ 20.00
Freight					143.00
Duty (Estimated)					725.00
Miscellaneous Chgs.					8.00
					\$897.00
Less Deposit credited 11/10/58					\$ 10,000.00
					1,000.00
					\$ 9,900.00

This is an estimated bill pending receipt of correct duty and miscellaneous charges. Corrected billing will be made at a later date.

Notes not included on above car as it is to be used for racing purposes only.

Car to be picked up in Houston by Ed Bell Express per instructions from Mr. Bobby Donner, Jr.

Manufacturer's Statement of Origin attached.

A successful run to the peak requires memorizing 156 corners. A mistake could mean crashing into trees or boulders, and enough time in the air to think about the outcome.



For the Donners, racing has always been a family activity. Right: Bob Jr. and his wife Joan celebrate a win. Far right: Bob Jr. introduces Bob III to the family passion for Porsches.



back to win his class in 1960, 1961, and 1962. His skills and technical knowledge honed to a sharp edge, in 1962 Donner and his RS61 won the 1500-3000cc class and beat Unlimited Sports Car class winner Ak Miller by six seconds. It was an especially satisfying win, considering Miller's Devin was powered by a Ford 406-cubic-inch FE V8.

During that same period, Bobby was racing his cars at venues around the country. At the 1961 Sebring 12-hour race, Donner and driving partners Don Sessler and Ernie

Erickson finished seventh overall and second in class to another RSK driven by Bob Holbert and Roger Penske. The only other cars ahead of them were the big Ferrari 250 TRs. He also raced at Riverside, Laguna Seca, Daytona, Road America, and Mosport during the early 1960s. Bobby had plans to return to Pikes Peak in 1963 with a Cooper F1 car, but business and life got in the way.

BOBBY'S SON, BOB III, had been born in December 1959, and as Bobby's business and family life got

busier, he fell away from racing. His last race was with Jim Hall's Chaparral team in 1963, driving one of the older front-engined cars. David was born in December of 1964, and it wasn't long before Bobby found another automotive interest: Ferraris.

Although he always had Porsches—and was even known for driving one of them across the country to a Ferrari meet—Bobby Jr. became fascinated with the Italian brand because of its success in both Formula 1 and international sports car races. He loved the road cars, too, but he was never quite as reverential as the aficionados expected. There are photos of him plowing the Donner family's driveway with a 330 GTC. But there were others, including one of the last GTOs, a 512 BB LM, the Niki Lauda 1974 F1 car, and a 365 GTB/4 Competizione that brought him out of retirement to race at the SCCA national run-offs at Road Atlanta in 1977. None of the cars sat idle.

Just as their dad had done, Bobby III and David grew up playing with cars. Eventually, the two younger Donners started racing, first with karts and then small formula cars and sports cars. Like all brothers, they challenged each other fiercely. It was only a matter of time before they raced on Pikes Peak, which their dad was chairing at the time.

Bob III first raced in the Open Wheel class in 1985, placing third. He would finish either second or third each year until he won the

Donner Cracks Select Circle at Sebring

SEBRING, Fla., March 26—(AP)—Bob Donner, 29-year-old up and coming driver from Colorado Springs, teamed with Don Sessler to crack into the top five finishers of the 12-hour Sebring Endurance Sports Car Race over the weekend.

Donner, breaking in a new car, took on the bigger and more powerful Ferraris and stayed right in the thick of things, finishing fifth behind a quartet of Ferraris.

Phil Hill and Oliver Gendebien teamed to win the race in a record shattering performance. The duo covered 210 laps or 1092 miles in the 12-hour time limit. Their average speed was 91.308 miles per hour compared to the old mark of 1042 miles and 86,686 miles per hour.

Hap Sharp, Midland, Texas, who campaigned along with Donner at Continental Divide Raceways last

summer, teamed with Ronnie Peterson in a Ferrari to finish fourth.

Bob Holbert of Warrington, Pa., who also appeared at CDR last season, was the index of performance winner, figured on a complete basis involving size of car and speed. Holbert, heralded as the top Porsche driver in the United States, finished seventh overall in the race.

Still another CDR driver, Jim Hall of Dallas, Texas, was sixth in a Ferrari.

Many of the international field of drivers and cars who competed in the race will appear at CDR this October in the first of five professional international sports car races in the U.S.

How they finished:

1. Ferrari (Phil Hill-Oliver Gendebien)
2. Ferrari (Niki Lauda-Johnny Herbert)
3. Ferrari (Ronnie Peterson-Jay Roberts)
4. Ferrari (Bob Holbert-George Constantine)
5. Porsche (Bob Donner-Don Sessler)
6. Ferrari (Jim Hall-George Constantine)
7. Porsche (Bob Holbert-George Constantine)
8. Ferrari (George Rod-William Sturgeon)
9. Porsche (Peter Ryan-Francis Bradley)
10. Ferrari (Dennis McCluggage - Allen Boggs)
11. Ferrari (A. Turchi-Bruno Serrani)
12. Corvette (Dwight Johnson-Dave Hogan)
13. Lotus (Charles Kurts-Millard Ripley)
14. MGA (Don Horn-James Parkinson)
15. Ferrari (William Kellner-Rick Kasper)
16. Sunbeam Alpine (Peter Frecker-Peter Horner)
17. Maserati (Edgardo Cunniffham-Pat Kimbrell)
18. Austin Healey (Joe Buzzetta-Glen Carlson)
19. Alfa Romeo (George Peck-John Hoffman)
20. Arnold Bristol (Max Goldman-Ralph Burbin)
21. Corvette (Bob Gale-Charles Rickert)
22. Arnold Bristol (Tom Eggar-Job Gary)
23. Austin Healey Sprite (Pat Leavins-John Colgate)
24. Morgan (Al Raker-Jim Bailey)
25. Arnold Bristol (Bud Seaverns-Ray Tamm)
26. Alfa Romeo (Art Swanson-Jose Bryant)
27. Alfa Romeo (Fred Van Buren-Guy LePage)
28. Alfa Romeo (Tom O'Brien-Alan Jacobson)
29. Corvette (Don Tonkin-Ron Moore)
30. Sunbeam Alpine (Philippe Theodoli-Fred St. Barthelemy)
31. Sunbeam Alpine (Paddy Hopkirk-Peter Jopp)
32. Triumph (James Ruskin-Dan Parkinson)
33. Fiat (Ed Golder-John Danni)
34. Alfa (Don Horn-Li Tucker)
35. Austin Healey Sprite (Cory Rissman-John Sprinve)

Open Wheel class in 1989, setting a new class record of 11:18.278. David raced at Pikes Peak for the first time in 1987. He hit a berm and didn't finish, but he would place fifth the following year and then second to his brother Bobby III in 1989. That year they drove the specially designed Donner-Dykstra Specials they had commissioned race-car designer Lee Dykstra to design to their specifications. Things were going very well—and then tragedy struck.

Just a few months after the brothers had finished first and second at the Pikes Peak Hill Climb, they were racing at the Teller County Hill Climb near Cripple Creek. Both men were very fast in practice



The leaves don't fall far from the tree. Bottom: David (in car) and Bob III pose with Niki Lauda's 1974 F1 Ferrari (for many years part of the Donner collection), then some years later with their Lee Dykstra-designed hill-climb car.



Since the road has been paved, David has raced three different Porsches on the Peak, including a GT3 Cup, a 991 Turbo S, and a GT3 R, taking two firsts and a second. Right: Donner, his wife Meredith, and their three daughters after his 2015 victory in the Time Attack 2 class.



and qualifying. Bob III was within sight of the finish when a deer ran across the road and he hit it while going approximately 120 mph. He was killed instantly. It would have been a tragic loss for any family. But racing families are...racers.

PIKES PEAK WAS in David Donner's blood. He would go on to take overall wins at Pikes Peak in 1991, 2002, and 2005, all on dirt. When his father Bobby Jr. passed away in 2010, David became the head of the Donner family, and he kept on racing. In 2012, the first year that the road up the mountain was 100% paved, he raced a Palatov Special to first place in the Unlimited class.

In 2013, Donner decided to do something different. He thought about the tradition his grandfather had started, and how his dad had won with Porsches all those years ago. Now that the road was fully paved, maybe it was time to close the circle and have a Donner race a Porsche again. So, for 2013, David obtained a World Challenge-spec Porsche GT3 Cup.

It was a great car, but it was also the first year perennial Porsche racer Jeff Zwart showed up with his GT3/2



Turbo. In the early years of the Time Attack class, it was all one class and the rules were pretty loose. Also competing in class was the former Rhys Millen Hyundai, which was really a purebred race car from the ground up with an Elantra body. In 2013, it would be raced by friend and well-respected racer Paul Dallenbach. Donner was out-horsepowered by a considerable amount.

Zwart's car was similarly powered, but more or less on the same platform as Donner's. Against such formidable competition, David gave it everything he had. For those on the mountain during practice and qualifying sessions, the distinctive metallic whine of the Porsche was audible for several miles as Donner took inches from every apex, perfectly selecting every up and downshift. You knew from the sound echoing through the mountain canyons that Donner was coming through. Despite the disadvantage in power, Donner outqualified both Zwart and Dallenbach on the lower portion of the mountain. A good start time meant that he might have a chance

of getting up the mountain before the weather moved in on race day. It was a strategy that almost worked.

In the 2013 race—the same year that Sébastien Loeb set his incredible record of 8:13.878 in a Peugeot—Donner drove his heart out and reached the top in an incredible 9:53.582. While he was on the upper, high-altitude portions of the course, the weather moved in. Would it hold for Dallenbach? Yes. Dallenbach still had a reasonably dry surface and enough turbocharged horsepower to take the Time Attack win with a 9:46.001. Zwart wasn't so lucky. By the time he reached the Ws, the road was slippery. He had to settle for third in class with a 10:13.856.

Donner took the year off from Pikes Peak in 2014, instead putting together a string of podium finishes on the West Coast Pirelli Cup series. But the call of the mountain was clear, and a new opportunity presented itself for 2015.

PORSCHE OF COLORADO SPRINGS acquired a 991 Turbo S with all-wheel steering that they tagged for David

to drive under the newly revamped rules, which split Time Attack into two divisions. Time Attack 1 would be for the silhouette cars such as Dallenbach's Hyundai and Zwart's GT3/2 Turbo. Time Attack 2 would be for streetable cars with safety equipment installed. The 991 Turbo S was the perfect car! Still, what's a race without some competition?

And competition there was, because while David Donner and the Porsche of Colorado Springs team were preparing the 991, it was announced that a rival team from Colorado Springs would field a Nissan GT-R for veteran road racer and former Porsche factory driver Randy Pobst. From the very first test session on the mountain in early June, Pobst and Donner traded fast times.

All through official practice it was the same. Observers of the rivalry fielded several questions. Were either Pobst or Donner sandbagging? Were either of them in over their heads? Would the weather play a role? Which car would be the most reliable and make it to the top? Would the hard-charging Pobst

Changing weather conditions make for bumps, frost heaves, and potholes in some of the fastest sections of the course, such as this ess-curve in an area called Boulder Park.



No matter which Porsche he's driving, David Donner enjoys the challenge of racing toward the sky in the world's most famous hill climb.

be able to unseat the genetically mapped Pikes Peak ace Donner and his decades of experience?

It turned out that even though Donner had boost problems on the upper portion of the course, his experience with the line through every one of the 156 corners allowed him to eke out every bit of speed and carry the most momentum without braking. Even with problems, he set a new class record of 10:26.896, in a street car that still had its A/C, heat, and stereo system. Pobst, for his part, let his enthusiasm get to him and went off course at about the one-third point, carrying enough speed in the Nissan to clear a small pond and come to rest in a muddy embankment about 60 yards off course. It was Pikes Peak win number five for David Donner.

For 2016, David was undecided about whether to race or, if he did, what his ride might be. Eventually, two factors came into play. First, the 2016 race would be the 100th Anniversary of the first Pikes Peak Hill Climb, making it second only to the Indianapolis 500 as the oldest race in the United States. With his family's legacy in mind, he decided it was something he wanted to do. But what to drive? Eventually, that issue was resolved. Effort Racing was selling its 2014 GT3 Rs, so David and Les Long of Air Power Racing near Salt Lake City bought the pair to race in selected NASA and PCA races around the country. Although the GT3 R isn't turbocharged like Zwart's 2015 Time Attack 1 winning car, Donner figured that it had enough extra grip, stopping power, and faster shifting to be a class win-

ner—if it could withstand the beating of the Pikes Peak “highway.”

The GT3 R is a more purpose-built race car than its Cup sister. It's lower, lighter, more powerful, and has the transmission from the racing RSR. It's built for tracks such as Daytona or Le Mans or Spa, not for dragging up through hairpin corners as steep as 12% or bouncing over potholes and frost heaves at high speed. However, Donner reckoned it was worth a try.

Experienced crew chief Andrew Brooks came in from Air Power Racing to supervise care for the car during testing, official practice, and race day. Along with locals Tim Eckert and Brandon Tolly, Brooks and Donner went through the car nightly, looking for any breaks, cracks, or tears. Only once did they find anything amiss, and that was easily fixed.

ON QUALIFYING DAY, Donner again did his magic. In all the years he's run at Pikes Peak, he's never qualified lower than second in class. In fact, he has qualified first in class or overall 16 times, setting several records. His main rival for 2016, Raphaël Astier (in a Porsche GT3 Cup) wasn't even close. As race day approached, everyone watched the weather with fingers crossed.

In the meantime, between qualifying and race day, the El Pomar Foundation's Pikes Peak Hill Climb Museum held its annual Hall of Fame inductions. David was there to accept the Donner Family induction for their service to the race and their competitive spirit. David's mother Joan was there, as was his wife Meredith. It was a proud day

for the Donner family, and one that brought back so many memories. Hall of Fame ceremonies can be overwrought with maudlin sentimentality, but in this case, there wasn't a person in the room who didn't think this award was well deserved and overdue.

Ceremonies aside, racers are racers, and David Donner still had a race to run. Sure enough, it rained in Colorado Springs the day before the race. Looking up at Pikes Peak the next morning, one could see the summit dome blanketed in white. Race officials and media struggled to make it up the final turns to the summit. The road was frosted with an inch-thick glazing of ice.

Eventually, the sun came out, the road dried, and the motorcycles had their turn. By the time Romain Dumas set off in his Norma prototype, conditions were nearly perfect. It wasn't long before David Donner started his run to the top.

Donner's Pikes Peak is a world apart from the one spectators see. The mountain at speed is home for him. It's second nature. It's genetically imbued. The spirit of the mountain is in him as it was in his brother, his father, and his grandfather. On June 26, 2016, David took off from the start with a purpose in mind: to drive faster, more precisely, and more cleanly through every single corner on the mountain. It's not a cliché to say that he knows every crack in the road and every rock and tree on the side. He feels it. He hears it. He even tastes it. He can tell from the shadows of the clouds if the road will be dry or wet around the next corner or over the next ridge. He knows, and he drives like he knows.

Though it's just ten minutes of his life, in another way it's a lifetime, or maybe several lifetimes when you count those of his grandfather Robert Donner Sr., his father Bobby Donner Jr., and his brother Bob Donner III. That ten minutes is more than a race. It's an expression of respect to his family and an affirmation of the Donner legacy. ●