

## Trofeo & 905 - a non-drivers thoughts - Pete Cousins



When the hairs grow faster from your nose & ears than on your head , as a male, you know it's time for a mid-life crisis. So what was it to be? Before I had time to ponder the options along came my best mate Ken Garlick who not only had decided what his crisis was going to be but had already begun it ! "I've bought a 33 and am going to race it in the Alfa Trofeo series . Nothing too serious. It should be a lot of fun. Why don't you come along?" Sounded like the perfect crisis - cheap , fun & only a mild strain on the marriage and I could relive my former days of crewing on Formula Fords in the seventies.

Ken was having his car built by a local garage who did race preparation so we waited and waited for the car to be ready. Finally it was finished and off we went to do the Intermarque series at Manfeild as a bit of a shakedown bearing in mind not to be seen enjoying ourselves too much as we were well aware that some people close to us thought this was maybe not the best choice of activity for a couple of almost middle-aged men. Ken was right though, it was fun : checking the oil , water & fuel levels was a breeze. We even talked a few times about beating other cars ... even old men get competitive !!

### **Year 1 Trofeo - New boys on the block**

Finally the day came to front up at a real race meeting and start the serious stuff. Slipped back to 70's routines quite quickly. Got through the day OK but the general consensus seemed to be that Ken had the wrong car ( a 33 instead of a Sud ) and the wrong motor ( hydraulic ) as well. Never mind it would all help in our excuses bag when we finished down the track. The year rolled on and we seemed plagued by minor mechanical gremlins which seemed to spoil our season. Sometime towards the end of the season I foolishly suggested to Ken that I thought it would be more logical if we looked after the car's preparation. Funny how quickly "we" changed to "me".

### **Year 2 Trofeo - The steep learning curve & more commitment**

Thoughts of getting this beast going quicker meant a lot of information gathering during the off season. Racing a front wheel drive saloon with considerable extra ballast on the front right hand corner was about as far away from a Formula Ford as one could get. Changed a few minor things on the car and began the season . As the season rolled on my sheds filled up with spare Alfas and the LRRC ( little red race car ) took up permanent residency in my company's workshop. The racing bug had struck again. Through a regular testing program I learnt how to extract that little bit more from the essentially standard suspension system the rules allowed. Ken started to move up the finishing order and by the end of the season we felt we had made real progress to finish 2nd in Trofeo class.

### **Year 3 Trofeo - The man from left field**

For various reasons we relaxed a little too much and too long in the off season and we weren't ready to go when racing started. The need to earn brownie points as well as the dosh to fund the racing program can be time consuming. The grapevine soon alerted us to a new guy ( Simon ) who had a car that was very quick straight out of the box. "Bugger", I thought "someone's moved the goalposts again!"

We stuck to our program of me suggesting what we needed to do to get the car going quicker and Ken going off to find the dosh to do it . Uncle Tony (Lagor) offered very valuable advice and when this was combined

with our increasing knowledge base we showed through more testing that the LRRC was getting to be a quick machine. Now to build Ken's confidence in both his and the car's abilities.

Our end of season was a bit flat .... 2 long drives to Pukekohe for 1 race each time in the wet and to compound our problems we could not get new rubber to get the grip we needed. With better rubber we tested at Taupo in the rain and felt when it rained on race day that we would do well only to be faced with all our races being cancelled. 2nd in class again ... still 1 more rung to climb.



***Ken: Collecting both the Trofeo Class & Overall Points Trophies in Fine Style  
- Trofeo Series AGM 2007 (Photo: Ant Gray)***

#### **Year 4 Trofeo - Unfinished business & the rewards**

The off season started quickly this year ( the week after racing finished ). The LRRC had a complete make over. Stiffening up the car meant we were adding weight so to compensate the driver had to lose some. When racing started we had a leaner & meaner car and a leaner driver who I was hoping would get a little meaner. He did , and to beat Simon twice at Pukekohe at the first meeting was a huge confidence booster to the team. I allowed a custom to develop whereby if Ken won 2 races he was allowed to buy me a beer ( or 2 ) on the way home. I enjoyed several beers as the first part of our season showed good results until the gearbox gremlins struck. We became experts at removing and refitting them and learnt some harsh lessons about making changes to the car that we did not allow enough time for the driver to adjust to. A conservative drive at the last round ( May Madness ) secured us the Trofeo class win and to our great surprise the overall points trophy. Old men are competitive !!



***The author as we came to recognise  
him!***



***The L.R.R.C. in full flight (Taupo Oct '06)  
(Photos: David Frith)***

To have had the chance to participate in your racing series has been a great experience, especially when you can do it with your best mate. I will miss the people and as my sheds empty out ( slowly ) and I have my workshop back I wonder if I have enough time for another mid-life crisis ..... probably, but it will be a hard act to follow..