

From Bob Ilich . . .

This photo brings back memories of a huge moment in the history of Jack Brabham Racing Organisation. It was taken on part of the French Rheims racing circuit in July 1966 after the French Grand Prix which Jack Brabham had just won plus this was the first time that Brabham had won a Grand Prix with the Repco Brabham racing car plus a Repco Brabham 3 litre V8 racing engine bearing his own name, beating Lorenzo Bandini (deceased) and the V12 Ferrari (Jack hasn't stopped talking about it since), Denny Hulme came in third with his Repco Brabham V8 after running low on fuel.

The magnum bottle of champagne:

Jack had won this along with another 100 bottles of champagne and after the race there was much excitement and merriment. We would all have loved to have had a beer but there was none to be found so instead we had to be content with large amounts of champagne before going onto a celebratory dinner party in a castle on a vineyard. Jack refused to go to the dinner without his team and it was a big night. We don't look too bad in the photo but I can assure you we didn't feel too good!

When we first arrived at Rheims, Roy Billington wanted to take the transporter down a certain street over a street crossing and a Gendarme (French traffic policeman) wanted us to go another way. Roy got out of the transporter to have a chat with the Gendarme and beckoned the transporter forward with the comment "I'll fix this". However after some discussion and much waving of hands, the Gendarme pulled out his gun! We quickly found reverse gear and proceeded where the Gendarme had suggested. However, on our return from the circuit after Jack had won the race, we came to each intersection and the Gendarmes would stop ALL traffic and allow the transporter through. The people on the sidewalks were chanting ... "Jacque Brab-am", "Jacque Brab-am" as we drove back to our hotel.

The New Bedford 6.5 Litre Diesel transporter:

At the start of 1966 we had an old Bedford Transporter. Then one day Jack arrived with this specially built transporter which at the time, was one of the best in the paddock.

It could hold: 3 F1 racing cars, a couple of spare race engines, gear boxes plus all our tools and it seated up to five team members.

When I tell people today that the four or five of us looked after three F1 cars, re-built our own engines and gearboxes and took the lot around the world's F1 circuits, they can't believe it.

When we first got the new transporter, we loaded up and were off down the Autobarn to Monaco. Jack came to us and said he would see us down there as he was going in his plane.

However once we got rolling on the Autobarn with the safety of twin front wheels, five speed gearbox and two speed differential, we found we could cruise around 100 miles per hour and we beat Jack to Monaco!! Jack had a “big smile” on his face.

Not only was he looking to beat Ferrari’s and Lotus’s on the circuit, his new Bedford Transporter was also a winner.

Bob Ilich, March 2007 ©