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THE MCGEE STORY: GRINDING OUT A LEGACY

By Dennis Newlyn

It was a Wednesday morning in early February, 1966. If a casual passerby had peered into the workshop at 231 Victoria Street, Kings Cross they would have seen the damaged Offy engine block out of the Fussell Cartwright midget driven by Barry Butterworth on a bench.

Across the floor was American Bob Tattersall's #35 Jack Stroud Offenhauser. Parked alongside was the Hartz Offy of fellow countryman Sherman Cleveland.

Scattered around the workshop were the cars and parts of cars of many well known local speedcar drivers. Very soon, because race day was fast approaching, these drivers would be

making an appearance and wanting to see if the repairs to their cars and engines had been completed.

As far as the owners of this family business were concerned, however, it was just another working day and work needed to get done. Fast!

But to those who worshiped at the shrine of the dirt oval, 231 Victoria Street was holy ground.

For this was McGee Racing Cams, under the control and ownership of Hedley McGee, and his sons Phil and Chris. It was a Sydney speedway landmark. Hang around the front door for an hour or so and you would see a parade of famous

racing names enter and leave the place, because it was a regular stopping off point for some of the biggest names in Australian and American speedway.

It was where American legend Tattersall called home, where many other US speedcar super stars housed their car and where Californian Super Modified star Marshall Sargent garaged his mean machine. It was where AJAX Films shot a segment for their magnificent movie detailing the 1965-66 Craven Filter National Speedcar Drivers Championship and, at the peak of his career, it was where triple National Midget Champion Johnny Stewart hung out and parked his yellow Studebaker with number plates DAD 253.

*From left to right: Billy Humphries, Don Meacham and Bob Tattersall in deep discussion at the McGees' workshop.
OPPOSITE PAGE: Craftsman Hedley McGee working on pistons in a Holden engine block.*







For a refreshing lunch time ale at the Green Park Hotel (better known as the GPO, as in hotel without the "h") all you had to do was take an easy 100 metre stroll along the street from the workshop. Some of the biggest names in Sydney speedcar racing frequented the Green Park. It was very much a hub for "those in the know." In many ways the GPO was the centre of Sydney racing, where rules, speedway politics and other matters were discussed and decided.

In the same locale was the Great Wall Restaurant which was another popular haunt for competitors and McGee workshop clients and visitors.

The workshop's location was convenient for competitors who wanted to visit injured colleagues in St Vincent's Hospital, just 300 metres away.

Within easy walking distance of the workshop was that neon fun jungle of night clubs, bars, gambling dens and strip joints called Kings Cross – also known as the glittering mile.

The 'Cross was the intersection where all kinds of characters met and the destination for anyone who wanted whatever desire caught their fancy.



TOP: The year is 1968 and Billy Humphries' beautiful Offy is parked near the McGee Racing Cams shop and also not far from the Green Park Hotel!
 ABOVE: Rob Worthington took this photo of a mud spattered Johnny Stewart relaxing while the McGee team attends the "Trackburner" at Kembla Grange in November 1965.