

discovered that aiming the injector spray bar nozzles at 180 degrees to the air flow would create superior atomisation and more uniform mixture strength across the engine. This opened up the tuning window and created more horsepower."

Thirteen inch wheel rims (first used by Stewart) were one of Hedley's innovations. "In 1965, dad lobbied the National Speedcar Club for approval, as it was going to be a cost saving to teams. We made the aluminum centres and (car owner) Eric Morton spun the rims. Tatts was so impressed he took some back to America and the rest is history. Hedley McGee's vision became the standard on every midget in the world," a proud Phil says.

With Stewart's winning came fans, incredible popularity and rivalries – and there was no rivalry greater than with Jeff Freeman.

During the 1963-64 season an increasing competitiveness developed between Freeman and Stewart. There were

Freeman fans and Stewart followers and never the two shall meet! "Some of it was real and some of it was fuelled by the media. They had respect for each other but eventually the trash talk was out of control," Chris recalls.

On May 9, 1965 Freeman was killed at Sydney's Westmead Speedway. The story of how his death occurred has been told and retold many times. He was racing near and on the outside of Stewart when it happened. The cars were close but never touched.

Some of Freeman's distraught fans, however, attempted to convince the police otherwise. Stewart was sent death threats which made newspaper headlines.

"The whole Stewart-Freeman thing got out of control and the fans were the worst," Chris affirms.

Former sidecar competitor, super modified driver and later promoter Sid Hopping captured the crash on

film. Freeman's car rolled into the fence cockpit first. For Stewart it left a lasting scar and he always admitted the repercussions of the tragedy was one of the worst moments of his life.

The years the McGees were involved with George Tatnell provided many impressive on-track results and national titles. These were the days when there was considerable rivalry between Tatnell and Ron Mackay. Both wanted success driving their sleek, fast Offenhausers!

Chris observes that "they had the two best cars for our track conditions. Ronald was the best for a couple of years and then George started to beat Ronald. I believe they were two of the best ever and they beat the Yanks for a few years."

The first Offy Tatnell bought was the former Cascio, Shepherd, McClure car. George won his first Australian Speedcar Championship with this car.

Chris remembers that "George won 30 something races one year. I remember

one week we won at Surfers Paradise, Adelaide and Newcastle – nobody could run with him. George then bought a second Offy – the McGreevy/Weaver, Joe James car – from Neil Ellis. By then it had cross torsion bars and we had built him a very powerful engine. George won his second national title in it at Ballarat's Redline Raceway."

Chris believes that George's success came because "he drove the car straight and had great throttle control. He really had finesse."

Tatnell's ability to adapt quickly helped him too, Chris makes this interesting observation: "Over the years the composition of the dirt at the Showground was changed. The old way around there was no longer the fastest. Phil changed gears, tyres, cams, injection and timing. George adapted quickly and had remarkable discipline with the new combination."

Phil enjoyed working with the Tatnells. "Joe and George were great to work with. George climbed to the top of the

class quickly, a true slick track master. The cams that dad ground and the new McGee fuel injectors extended the Offy era a few more years. I miss George," he laments.

Another of the American drivers the McGees were involved with was Johnny Tolan, a 1963-64 season import. Tolan, a wily pro who made three appearances in the Indianapolis 500 (1956, '57 & '58) and was American Automobile Association (AAA) National Midget Champion in 1950, brought the Kischell Offy.

However, when he came to Australia, with Tattersall and Davies, he was 46 and entering his twilight days in racing.

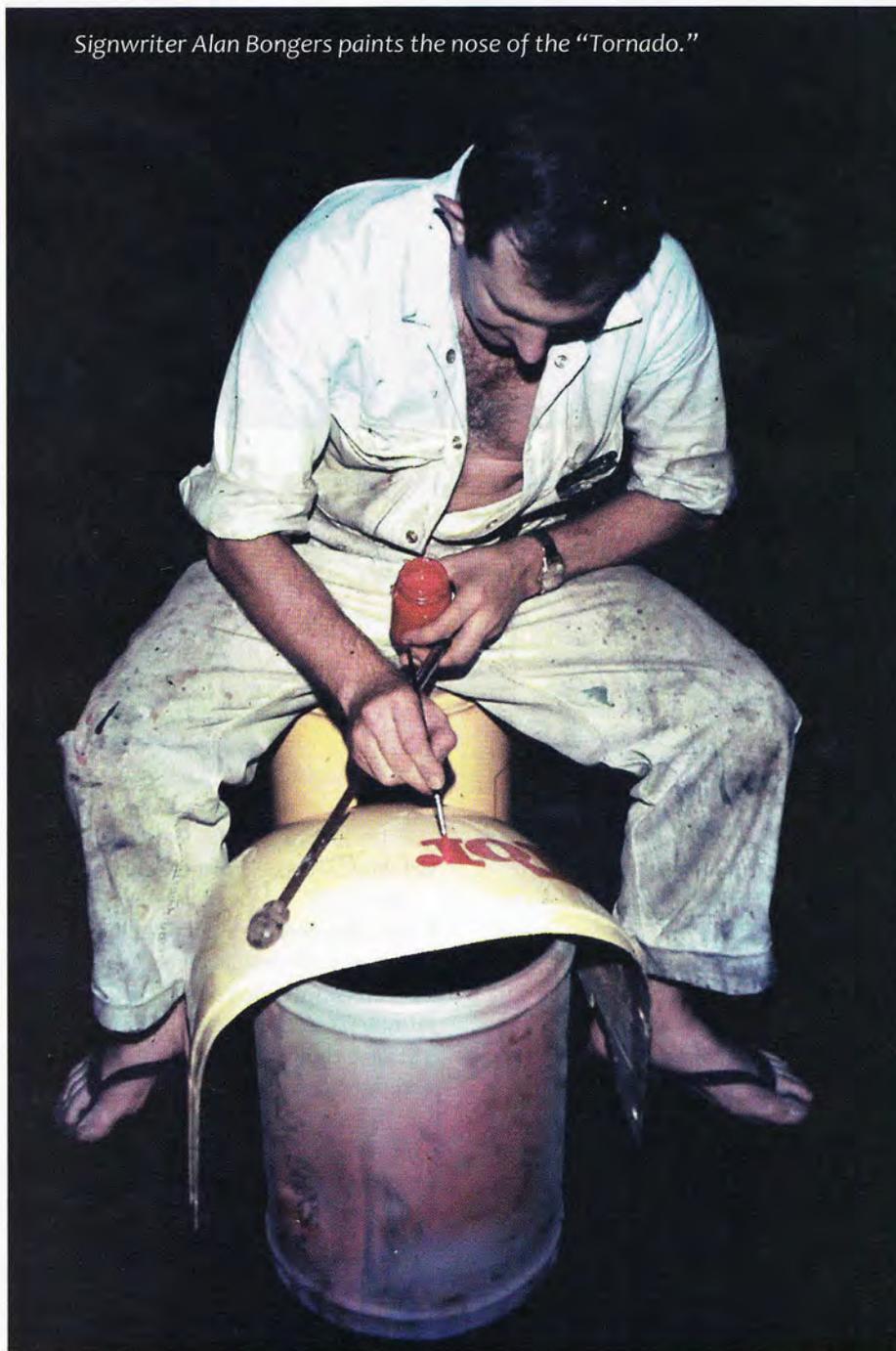
He crashed on the pit corner during a match race with Johnny Harvey at the Sydney Showground in February, 1964 and sustained severe back injuries. Tolan spent weeks in St Vincent's Hospital before returning to America where he officially announced his retirement.

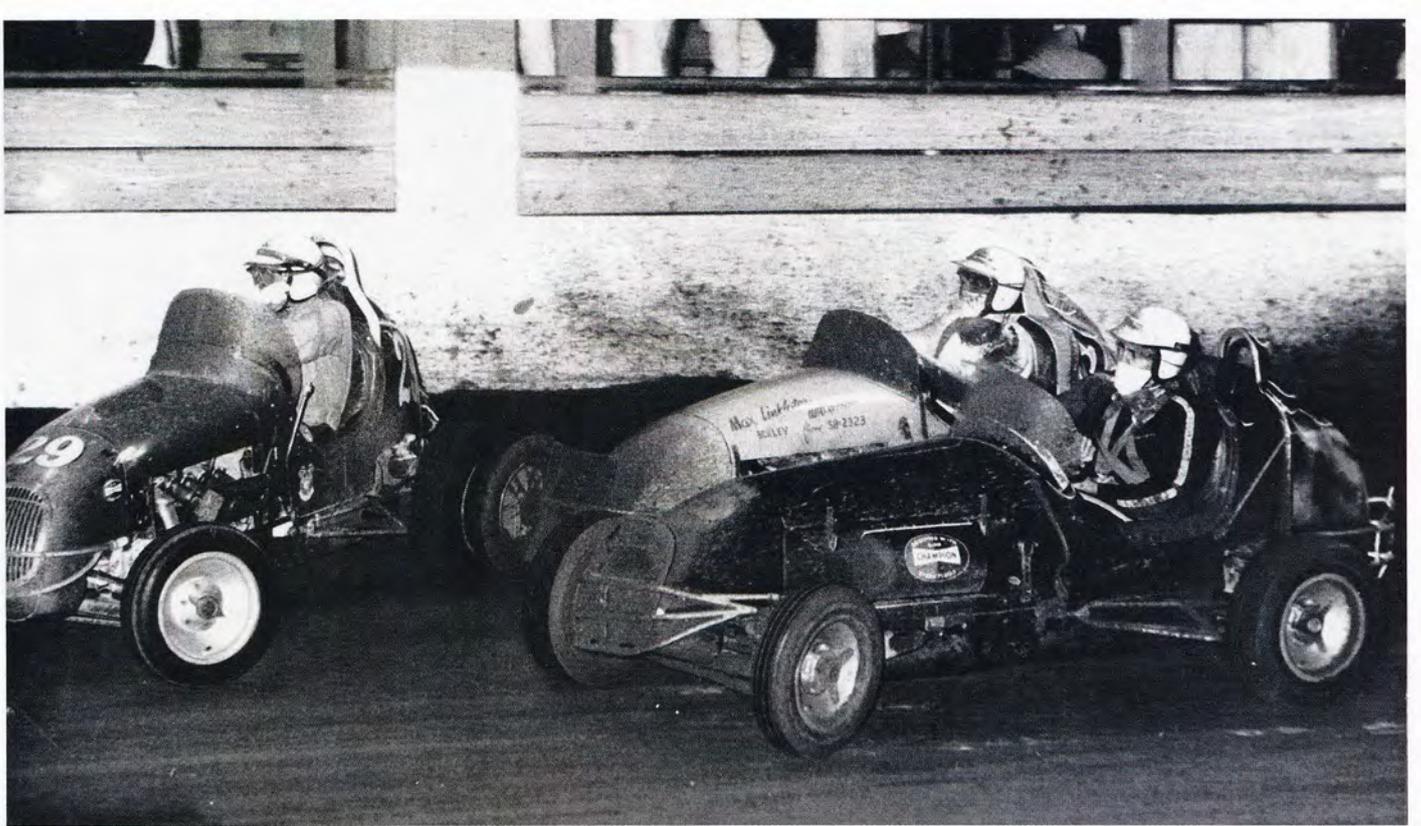
Phil rode in the ambulance with Tolan and visited him each day in hospital. "Tolan was really bored while stuck there," Phil adds. "So, Tattersall and Kevin Park would buy him a drink at the Green Park (Hotel) and smuggle it into the hospital. His injuries were serious and he was smart to retire from driving."

When the McGees built the #13 "Tornado" they ensured they had prominent drivers, including Garry Rush, Brian Mannion, Len Brock and Ray Oram. Even Tattersall did a brief stint in the car. Chris was a keen observer at the time: "Brock ran best when the car was down on power. He had some of his best drives when he could just drive flat out. His lifestyle away from the track was catching up with him, too. He would drive several quick laps and then fade."

At one point Brock had been complaining about the handling of #13. Chris shares what happened next: "Dad suggested we put Johnny Stewart in the car to tell us what was wrong. Stewart drove the car and said 'It's perfect, don't change a thing!' With the coil over

*Signwriter Alan Bongers paints the nose of the "Tornado."*

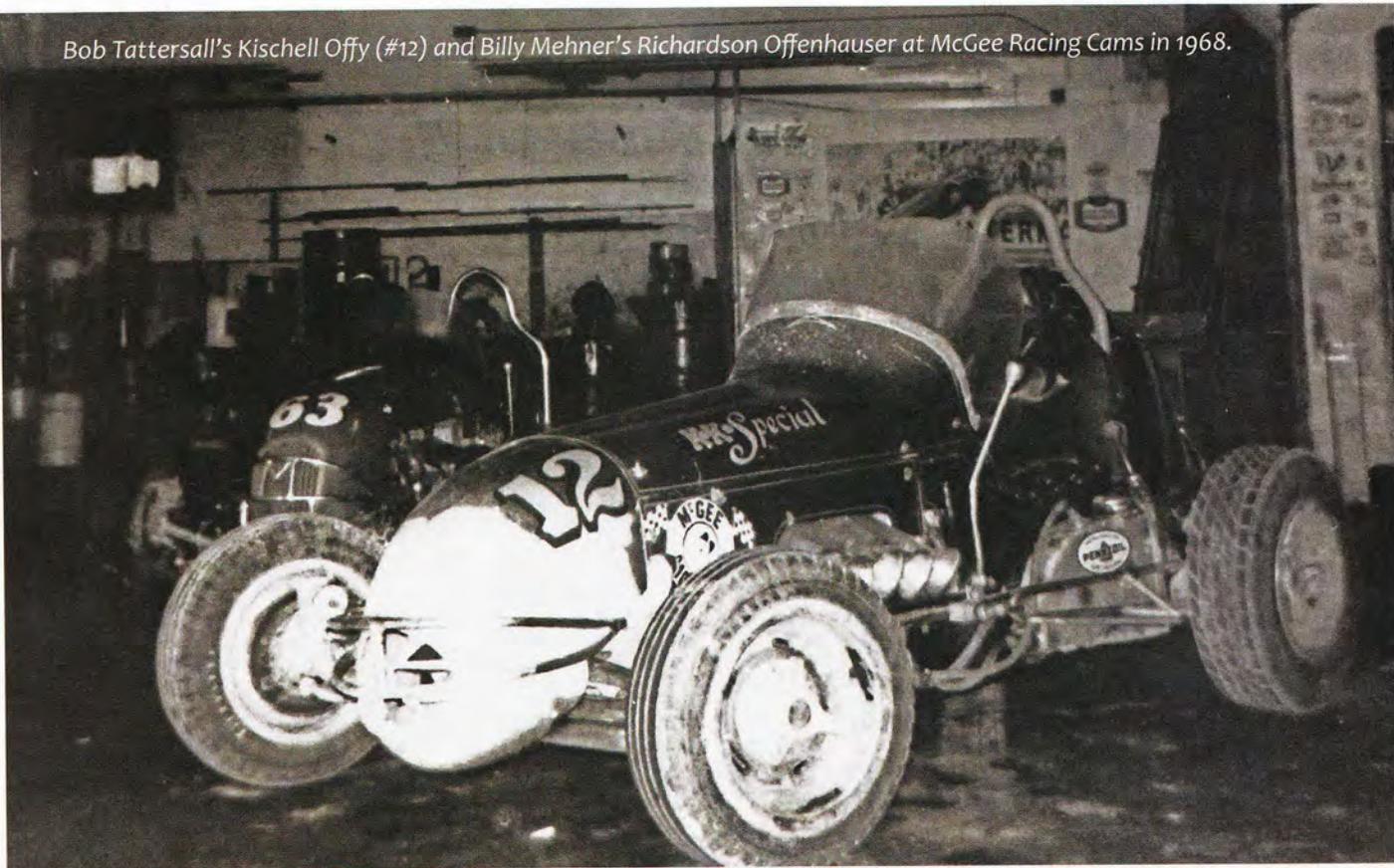




ABOVE: Running closely, Johnny Tolan has the Kischell Offy crossed up in front of a wheel rubbing Johnny Stewart (Linklater Holden) and Jeff Freeman (Mackay Offy) in spectacular action on the Sydney Showground pit corner. It was not a happy 1964 race campaign for Tolan who sustained back injuries after a crash on the pit corner while contesting a match race with Johnny Harvey. RIGHT: A concerned Bob Tattersall, Johnny Harvey and Kevin Park attend to Tolan. He never raced again.

BELOW: High drama on the infield during the Sydney Showground roll cage controversy as track announcer Steve Raymond seeks information from speedcar official Len Steele while American driver Hank Butcher (far left) awaits a reply. That's Showground manager Owen Bateman in the suit.





suspension on our #13 some drivers felt uncomfortable with that suspension, but others like Rush, Tattersall and Oram liked it. Brock was hot and cold. He could outrun anyone on his good nights but would struggle other nights.”

The 1967 Australian Grand Prix was a night when Brock ran hot. Chris was there watching with Frank Brewer. “Mannion led the feature from Brock, who was in our car. The two were nose to tail, the whole race. With a couple of laps to go I said to Frank ‘It looks like Brian will win.’ Frank said: ‘Brock is faking an inside pass each lap and Brian is moving a little lower each lap.’ With that, Brock passed Brian on the outside, coming on to the back straight and went on to win. Then Tattersall got into Brian and spun him out. They disqualified Bob and gave second place to Stewart. It was really interesting to watch a race with a driver of Brewer’s calibre. He could see that Len was setting Brian up for several laps,” Chris recalls.

Chris remembers when Ray Oram quit driving for Don Mackay. “Oram initiated a meeting with Phil and dad, saying he would ‘drive the car the way it’s

supposed to be driven.’ Ray said he felt our car was the most powerful Offy in the country. It was quite flattering really, as he had been driving what I felt was the best car in the country, the ex-Don Meacham Edmunds car. I felt like he could win or be in the top three every week. Often a change is good. Ray had something to prove and we hadn’t been running any good either at that time. Ray came from the back to finish second in that year’s NSW Championship. He never went slow or had a bad night.”

The McGee magic was not confined to speedcars. They did work for solo stars John Langfield and Jim Airey and sidecar national titleholders Graham Young and Doug Robson.

“John Langfield asked us about building an injector for his Jawa,” Chris explains. “We had watched Jim Airey run fast with an injector that a drag racer in the US built. Phil developed a unit for the Jawa. Langy went quick with it on the bigger tracks, but struggled with controlling the power on the smaller ones.

“Graham Young approached us in 1968 about building a system for his

Vincent sidecar. However, Graham then decided to construct a radical new outfit powered by a Hillman! Phil and I finished the injectors for the Hillman on Christmas Eve. The Hillman produced great horsepower but on the racetrack the engine, whether it was gearing or handling, never showed its potential. Horsepower can be misleading. Torque wins races,” Chris says.

Using knowledge from the Jawa project the McGees built injectors for Young’s JAP 880 and Doug Robson’s 1000cc Vincent, both of which won major championships.

Cams were ground for Mitch Shirra and Nigel Boocock for their Weslake engines. Chris says that the “Weslake cam was a four-valve roller cam engine with 1/1 rockers. Nigel was buying them ten at a time.”

The problem with the solo cams was that the design was copied overseas. Chris explains: “We learned they had been copied. It’s so hard to police. What probably happened is someone sent their motor, with one of our cams, back for service and probably didn’t understand