

"WILD BOB" BURMAN TAKES FIRST WOMAN AROUND THE MOTOR SPEEDWAY IN A RACER

FAMOUS DARE-DEVIL AUTO PILOT TREATS SPECTATOR TO SERIES
OF SPEED SENSATIONS DURING PRACTICE ON COURSE.

BY BETTY BLYTHE.

All I can say, now that it is history, is that I have no especial objection to motoring at a mile a minute—with "Wild Bob" Burman at the wheel.

With the knowledge that a less skillful hand was steering I am unable to say just what one's sensations would be over risking his life out there on the Speedway.

I don't suppose anybody will deny that it is a risk.

Why did I do it? Well, I can not exactly say, unless it was because I felt quite safe and at home with Mr. Burman (Wild Bob, they call him) at the wheel. There was some consolation in knowing that if anything happened to me it would also happen to him, and I was of the opinion that he was not anxious to have anything happen to him on the eve of the greatest motor races ever. Neither did he hanker for a mishap to his pet Buick.

Nor do I fancy that I should have been much frightened if Barney Oldfield had been at the wheel. There was a man in the party who thought Mr. Oldfield would have been quite a risk, in view of his utter fearlessness. However, a woman, also in the party, said that if she had to die on a motor race course she preferred to be steered into eternity by a handsome man, and she considered Mr. Oldfield the best looking of any of the drivers.

No, I should not have been afraid of Mr. Oldfield's driving, but I am free to say that I did not like that terrifying Benz he was driving.

I can not tell you much about how my driver looked. His face was awfully dirty. Not that it would have made much difference, because at the speed we were going I could only catch an occasional glimpse of Mr. Burman, and a blurred glimpse at that.

I suppose all of you have stood, at one time or another, beside a race track and wondered, deep down in your soul, how it felt to tear madly through space. Prob-

ably you have even made it a point to ask hand is reeking with nasty oil and you suspect that what is left of your face is likewise decorated. You find yourself inquiring sarcastically of the driver how he knows precisely where all the roughest spots are.

The fact that the driver is utterly oblivious to the fact that you are talking at all does not make any difference. Mere speech out there in that awful hall of stones and sand is helpful.

After a bit one acquires a moiety of hope that he will once more reach the starting point alive. In the supreme relief a hand is incautiously withdrawn from the hold. Quickly, in a panic, back goes the hand, when there flashes before the mind's eye the picture of yourself lying out there on the road, squashed flatter'n any pancake.

That, you know, inevitably, is what would happen in the event of a tumble from the machine that was never made to insure safety. If one stays on a racing car it is sheer luck.

Because, you know, one is far more likely to fall off than he is to stay on. One does not say "in" when referring to a racing car. He gets on it, not in it.

After a little I saw things just like the driver was seeing them. The road was the only thing visible. I could not get my mind, nor my eyes, from it. Funny, that road. It does not go any definite way. Sometimes it goes up, sometimes it goes down; once in awhile it goes on the level. You can never tell which way it is going until you hit it. Then you learn its—and your own—direction with painful surprise. Painful because you are sure to get a wrench in acquiring the knowledge.

Our little Buick racer went splendidly, however, and it did not give us any more jars than it had to. At the first curve I was ready to fall out, and I had got to the point of wondering if all those grinning people would not feel sorry when they came to pick me up—when I woke up. We had passed the curve, and so gently that I had not known it.

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I suppose all of you have stood, at one time or another, beside a race track and wondered, deep down in your soul, how it felt to tear madly through space. Probably you have even made it a point to ask one of the professional drivers. His impressions, however, have little value. Being intent upon one thing—making time—he is oblivious to everything else.

He sits like an image carved from stone. He looks neither to the right nor the left. He hears nothing but the motor, sees nothing but the track ahead. He grips the wheel with a grip of iron. His muscles stand out like great cords on his arms. His face is, oh, so quiet, so fixed that it hurts to look at it.

You have the feeling that although you are there beside him he is scarcely aware of the fact.

The track ahead—that is all he knows.

I don't suppose there have ever been many passengers in racing cars to record their feelings. Famous drivers are chary about giving away free rides. They do not care to be responsible for other lives than their own. You see, they know too well that death is always waiting just around the corner.

I can tell you just how I felt. I was speculating the whole time, as to the exact number of those awful jars and shocks I could endure and remain physically whole and complete. Each one threatened to separate me all into little pieces, and once I looked back at the track to see if one of my arms was not lying there.

Don't get the notion that riding in a racer is anything like gentle dalliance in a touring car. There is no other sensation in the world like it, so that a comparison is entirely out of the question. Talk about going like the wind! Well, I have never traveled on the crest of a gale, but you have got to show me that it can get you around the Speedway any quicker than "Wild Bob's" racer carried me.

First you hold hard and guess if you will land on the biggest pile of rocks. You rather hope for a down-grade spill. You turn up a disgusted nose at the oil that rains from the machine and wraps you in a cloud. You try to find another foothold for the foot that you are sure the red-hot engine is burning to a cinder. You observe with deep distaste that your

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A mile a minute, that's what we went that first two and a half miles round. Then we tried a second circuit at lessened speed to see if it was any more comfortable. I could not detect any difference except that the jars were not so terrific.

After that, well, I suppose the thing got into my blood, and I shouted to the driver to "hit it up" a bit and we'd make a good, speedy finish.

Like a human thing the car responded to the touch on the wheel, and we shot forward so suddenly that—well, I haven't quite my normal supply of breath back yet.

No, I do not believe that I would care to try for a 90-mile record. I'm satisfied.

Talk about thunder! You want to try a racer if you have a curiosity about real, live noise.

When we slowed up at the finish I wondered why everybody was standing watching us so tensely. And I fancied that I could detect more than one look of relief as the wonderful little car halted a fraction of an instant to let me out. (You understand that racing cars never run slowly, not being built that way.)

"Well, I never thought you would have the courage to go out on that track," exclaimed one of the officials. "But, of course, you did not know what you were going into."

Did I not know? You can always trust the Cheerful Idlots to see that one knows everything that it would be better not to know.

And haven't you noticed that there are always Cheerful Idlots around to make things look as black as possible?

They try to frighten you to death, and call it fun.

Well, I'd rather be a coward than to have some people's idea of humor.

Racing cars are not pretty. They do splash one up badly. All disadvantages to the contrary, notwithstanding, however, if Santa Claus wants to put that ugly—but darling—little racer into my stocking next Christmas, I'll try to get up the nerve to run it.

Of one thing I am certain. We'd have a clear road when we started—the Buick and I.

NEGLECTED HORSE WINS WHELAN TAKES BIG SHOOT