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Road America.

But now that my grouching and nit-picking are over, may I affirm wholeheartedly that this remains one of the greatest vintage race weekends on the calendar. It's filled with color, excitement, subplots, sideshows and a wonderful variety of cars and characters. The race



Engine front or rear? Either is quick and effective in RA's Turn 14. Greg Galdi's '00 BMW M4/E46 GTR leads here.

PICK OF THE LITER

The Three Amigos



THIS STORY STARTS WITH THREE RACER FRIENDS

out of Hibbing, Minnesota: Ed Grierson, Bill Larson and John Staver. All three had campaigned production sports cars like Jaguar XKs and C1 Corvettes, loved sports car racing and liked each others' company. And all three yearned for something a bit faster and better handling. But Ferraris and such were clearly out of reach, and they hit on the notion, probably over drinks, that they might build a trio of purpose-built sports racing cars together. They'd all witnessed how quickly Dr. Dick Thompson went in an overweight, under-braked solid-axle Corvette, and concept was simply to drop that proven and powerful Corvette driveline into something lower, sleeker and roughly 1,000 pounds lighter.

Now cocktail-hour race car plans are as plentiful as mosquitoes at Brainerd (if you've ever been, you know what I'm talking about!), but this one was different. Staver ran a foundry with the space and equipment to build the cars, Grierson worked for Staver and was an ace fabricator as well as a clever seat-of-the-pants engineer, and Larson was already an established local hot-shoe. From the very beginning of the project, their mission statement and mantra was "will it work?"

The three searched out and found a trio of reasonably straight, rust-free 55-57 Chevy 2-door frames in local junkyards,

shortened them 20 inches and narrowed them by 6, added a few gussets and braces, installed that Rochester fuel-injected/Borg-Warner T-10 Corvette driveline and covered the resulting rolling chassis with mail-order Devin fiberglass bodies. The only custom-made parts were beautifully finned, aluminum-alloy brake drums cast up in Staver's foundry.

The Echidna name came from Grierson's wife—an avid crossword-puzzle buff—who knew that an Echidna was a tiny, spiny anteater from Australia. It was perfect! The first car debuted in mid-1958, and by 1959, they were the Cars to Beat on the local Minnesota racing scene. They also did well against tougher competition further south, and Larson's car took a solid first-in-class win at Road America in June of 1961.

So it was special and even heartwarming to see the three Echidnas together again—and moreover racing again! There was a story about them in the race program, and owner/drivers Steve Steers, Bob Hardison and Michael Silverman (with a small, one-session assist from yours truly) were thrilled to show them off and share their unique, "will-it-work?" story with the race-weekend crowd.