

The Teubler Special Story

by Mike Nilson

In the mid 50's, Helmut Teubler was a mechanic for DKW in Germany. As German car sales grew in North America, the need for experienced mechanics grew. He took the opportunity and came to Toronto to work with W. Ornstein, the importer at the time. In 1960, he teamed up with another DKW mechanic Eddie Khol and started St Clair Motor Service.

They took over a Supertest station at the corner of St Clair and Keele and became the local DKW dealership. Helmut was keen on competition, having been a support mechanic for the DKW rally team in Germany. In 1959 he drove a DKW sedan in the races at Harewood



Acres, doing quite well. In 1960 he decided to embrace Formula Junior and build his own car. The car was built right in the front window.

DKW cars were actually built by Auto Union in Ingolstat Germany. After the war, the company pulled together their resources and decided to restart production of the DKW car. Before the war DKW was known as an entry level car utilizing two stroke motors and front wheel drive. Improvements and updates were continuous and by the late 50's they had a 1000cc, 3 cylinder 2 stroke motor that developed 60hp from the factory.

Formula Junior was created in Italy in 1958 and was the entry level formula, the engine and gearbox being based on production vehicles. Quickly adopted by the FIA, it replaced the old motorcycle based F3. So popular was it, that manufacturers popped up around the world and major countries had FJ Championships. The engine size was limited to 1000 or 1100 cc with Italian cars using engines from Fiat and Lancia, Great Britain had BMC and Ford, Germany had DKW and France Renault and Simca.. By 1964, the formula was no more in Europe, though it continued for a year in the USA, and some cars were converted to Formula 3. In Canada, we already had an entry level class called Canada Class (CC) with a

formula very close to FJ. Uncompetitive front engine Juniors were made part of the Canada Class rules and entries. By 1968, CC was gone and the cars raced in Formula C. The 20-30 car grids of 1961 -62 were a thing of the past and only a few cars came out.

My car, the Teubler Special, was entered in races as the DKW special. In 1961 Helmut raced the car 4 times, most notably at the official opening at Mosport and in the support race for



Helmut in 1961



Canadian Grand Prix FJ support race September 30, 1961.

the 1961 Canadian Grand Prix. By the end of the year he sold the car to another member of the Deutscher Automobil Club (DAC), Gunther Decker. Helmut went back to his first love, rallying and competed there for many years. Gunther raced it for the 1962 season, also in the Grand Prix support race. At the end of the year, the car was sold again to Rod Young. He drove it four times in 1963, twice at Harewood and twice at Mosport, and we see no entries for the "DKW special" in 64 to 66 and then one entry in 1967. 1968 we see the car with a new owner, Murray Cornish. He had a great drive in the school novice race, lapping the field. By 1970, the car was parked again. I did find one entry for the car 1973, a driver's school with Paul Buddenhagen.

By 1973, the car had not travelled far, racing at Mosport, Harewood Acres and St Eugene. The car went from white in 61 to red, 62 to green, 63-70 and finally blue in 73. From what I have been able to find, the car did not compete more that 10-15 times. Racing rules underwent a major change in 1970-71, requiring larger and taller roll bars and extra supporting braces. This car did undergo this update. The only other change was the loss of the engine cover tail section.

In the mid 70s there was a resurgence in racing older cars and the creation of vintage racing clubs around the world. In 1976 we had the newly formed Vintage Automobile Racing Club of Canada, VARAC. The first president, Louw Broadfield found the DKW special and planned on restoration for vintage racing. Health issues ended that ambition, and the car was up for sale again. This is when the car was renamed the "Teubler Special".

So in 1978-79 the car was up for sale. I had become a VARAC member in 1977 and became its next owner. Over the next 15 years the car underwent several starts and stalls, other

race cars came along and the Teubler ended up at the back of the shop. In 1994 another major move for me and the car was now in Ottawa sharing garage space with 4 Formula Vees. A good friend who raced a Mitter DKW formula junior contacted me, inquiring about the car and a deal was struck. The Teubler special was on its way to Pennsylvania with Frank Johanssen.

I lost contact with Frank over the years since he retired and moved. I knew he was an optometrist in a small town. I located the town and found his store and business still with his name. I called them to find out that he had moved to Tampa, Florida, and they agreed to give me his number. I gave him a call to find him well and doing woodworking. The car was still intact, but in no better shape than when I had it. This was 2001. In 2005 I got a call from VARAC member John Lindsay telling me about a fellow who contacted him from the Tampa area and about this car he had. John realized it was my old car and passed along his phone number.

I made the call to Brad Hindel. Brad was a neighbour of Frank and had bought all his race car stuff, including the Teubler. We had a pleasant chat and confirmed, yes, that was my car. I asked Brad, "what do you want to know about it?" He said "Nothing, I don't want it and since it is a Canadian car, I felt it should go home... do you want it back?" Emotions start to flood over me! Did I want it back? What would happen to it if I didn't bring it home? We continue to chat "Brad, what do you want for it?". He answered... "Nothing! I want to see it go home". So, I hooked up the trailer, 24 hours there and 24 hours back. I got a second chance.

48 hours of driving gives you time to think. I don't really remember much other than the fact that I'm saving a race car from oblivion. I also realized that if I didn't save this car no



one else would. There was just too much missing and who would save a one-off car built in Toronto with no significant result to show for. It was meant to be for me to finish what I started. Just not right away.

10 years later, our daughter was off to California, a major downsizing with the house sale. Formula Vees were sold off so no distraction there. A Formula Four did sneak in the house, but that is another story. Finding shop/garage space did prove to be a big challenge. We finally found a shared workspace called Makerspace where I had a nice open 400 square feet but use of the facilities and a large warehouse area. I also had neighbours who could

see what I was doing. That was strange and unusual but very beneficial in a way I didn't realize.

A new shop, a new beginning, same old projects. Makerspace decided to have an open house and invite the public. August 22, 2015 was the date and I had to set up something. This was the time I decided to start the Teubler again, this time in earnest. And the video still exists! https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d8X_q4p9Cjs

Now that I've told the world I'm doing this; I can't back out. The Ottawa Citizen newspaper did an article and I'm in that too!
<https://ottawacitizen.com/news/local-news/makerspace-north-invites-ottawas-creative-minds-with-official-opening?fbclid=IwAR3glrNuP42f3c5HdUXrRd0uf0q9ZtzAhlsd8ZMbmlxDahG1IGqeNyZjDL>

Our national radio broadcaster, the Canadian Broadcast Corporation decided I needed to be on the morning show. So here it is!
https://www.cbc.ca/player/play/2684504214?fbclid=IwAR2SdL48va_848KiWmdl77NnhL4ki_QMCG3DjqiUXoez8sr8nU29dGJ4xeM

The fix is in, so off to work I go! Being put in the media gave me a big lift and desire to get on with the Teubler. The only question was where to start? I picked on something small and obtainable, the dash. But not so simple, the gauges didn't work and needed repair. I found a repair place in Alabama and off they went. The rest of the dash was straight forward, but I made a key decision that has kept with me throughout the project. If this was 1960, what would I use for parts? The dash has switches and lights straight from a DKW of the period. I asked the gauge repair guy to repair but not clean and polish. Wiring for the car came from a DKW sedan as well. Clips were made to hold things down, no ty-raps. Nuts and bolts in key areas were drilled and cotter pinned. Brake master cylinders are DKW, sourced in Argentina and the list goes on.

Facebook has played a major part in this journey. Posting my progress has given me an extra purpose and outlet to tell people what's happening. The more I posted, the more people who started to follow, and they encouraged me along. I can't begin to express how much everyone's input has been to me, I am grateful.

So part two, the new beginning. dash is underway, but the most daunting task is the bodywork. I had next to none. Zero from the roll bar back and steering rack forward. I had to use period photos to estimate what I needed. I had the frame, so I knew the wheelbase, wheels are 15 inch and with the following photo I estimated the rest.



Photo credit Lionel Birnbaum

Having this photo was pretty good, I was missing one key view, the tail section. Practically all photos are of the front three-quarter view, and some from the side, never the rear. A few years ago, I was checking on e-bay for "Mosport photos". Most are the usual big races and famous drivers. One day, there was something different, nonprofessional photos from Mosport. I looked through the collection the person had put up for sale. In the middle of the collection was this photo.

Finally, THE photo that clearly shows the rear of the car. I asked the poster, where did he get the picture? He was at an auction in St Louis, Missouri, bid and won a box of photos. He took the time to take this Kodachrome slide and posted it on e-bay for me to find! The world is a wonderful place!



Making a body is a long process, make a buck of the body, following the form from the photos. Lay the glass fibre, fit it to the frame, cut the openings, make sure everything fits, then paint! I started the buck in 2015, final paint 2021!



The story is straight forward from here. Cut fit assemble, disassemble, change the design, try again. Some parts of the frame were missing. I had to recreate the pedal and brake cylinder mounts. I had the pedals, push rods, just not the frame to mount them on. Same goes for the steering rack. When I recreated them, I also made them adjustable, not original, but needed and kept it with the original look and feel. Wander through my Facebook page to see all the gruesome details!

How many hours, how much money? I can't rightly say, but the years do pile up. I was working through much of it, taking long vacations to California and managing with my wife's health issues.



At Mosport for the first time since 1969.

2021 has been the year! Somewhere along the journey Helmut Teubler started to follow me on Facebook watching me rebuild his car. He is 91 now and I knew we had to get together. Mosport's 60th anniversary seemed like the perfect time. He was at the grand opening 60 years ago. The car was not perfect, but ready for show and tell. The Monday before the event, he calls me from the hospital to say he can't make it, he is getting a pacemaker installed. So, an electrical problem, not mechanical.

Moments like this reminds all of us that life is short, and we must make the moments count. The next big milestone is the Canadian grand prix that was held 60 years ago in September. I was ready and so was Helmut. Covid made it difficult for him to come to the track, so after the event I went to him in Mississauga.

I don't know how to describe the joy I felt at this moment. It was emotional for both of us. How often can one re-unite a one-off race car built in the 60's with its original builder and driver? Very few cars like this survive. Helmut being the oldest member of the Deutscher Automobile Club, joining in 1960 and me the current president of the same club! A rare and special occasion.



The next challenge, get in on the track for 2022 and have Helmut join me then.

Me and Helmut and the car reunion.