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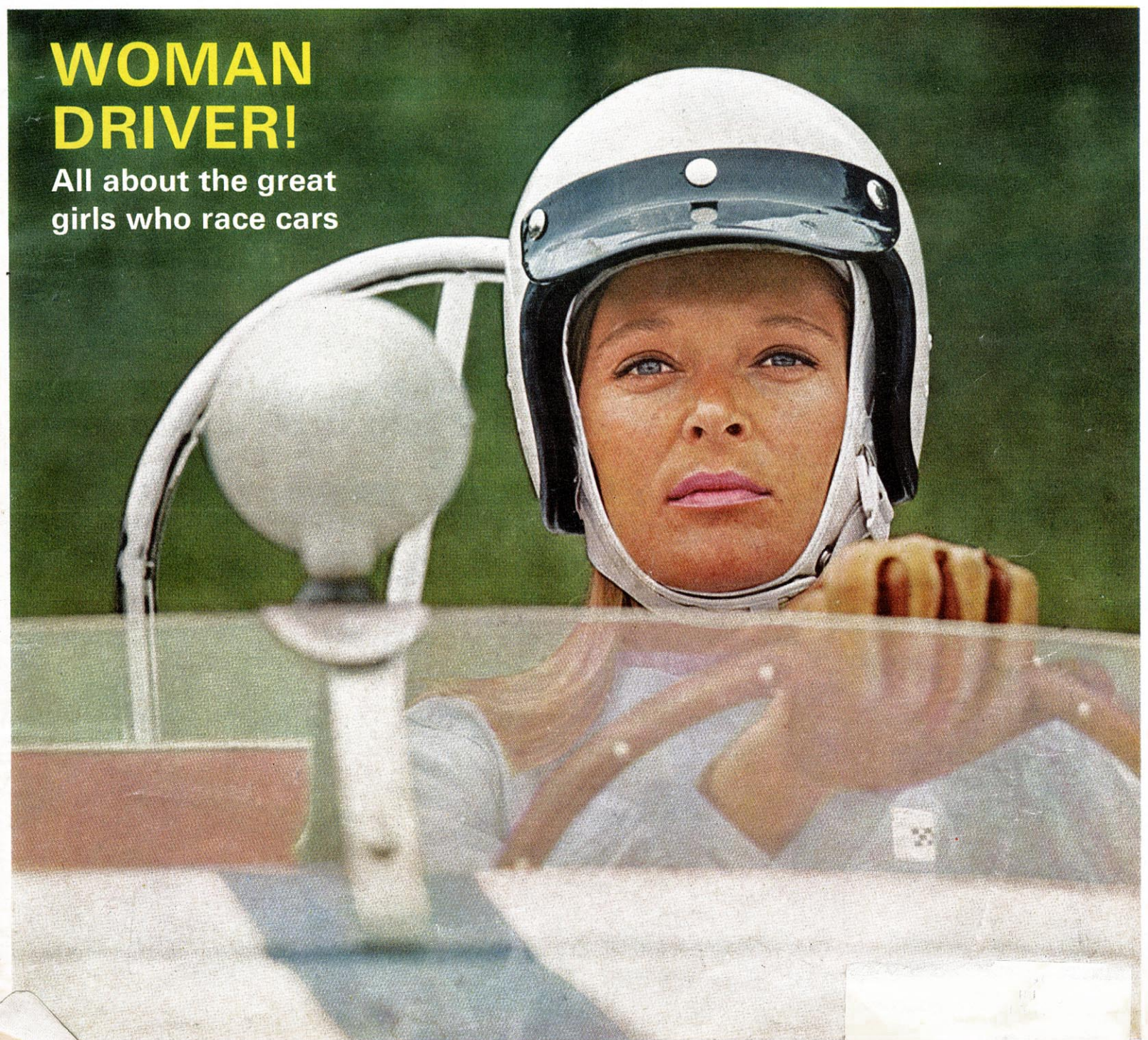
Why it makes the stars look younger—and why you'll buy a set sooner than you think

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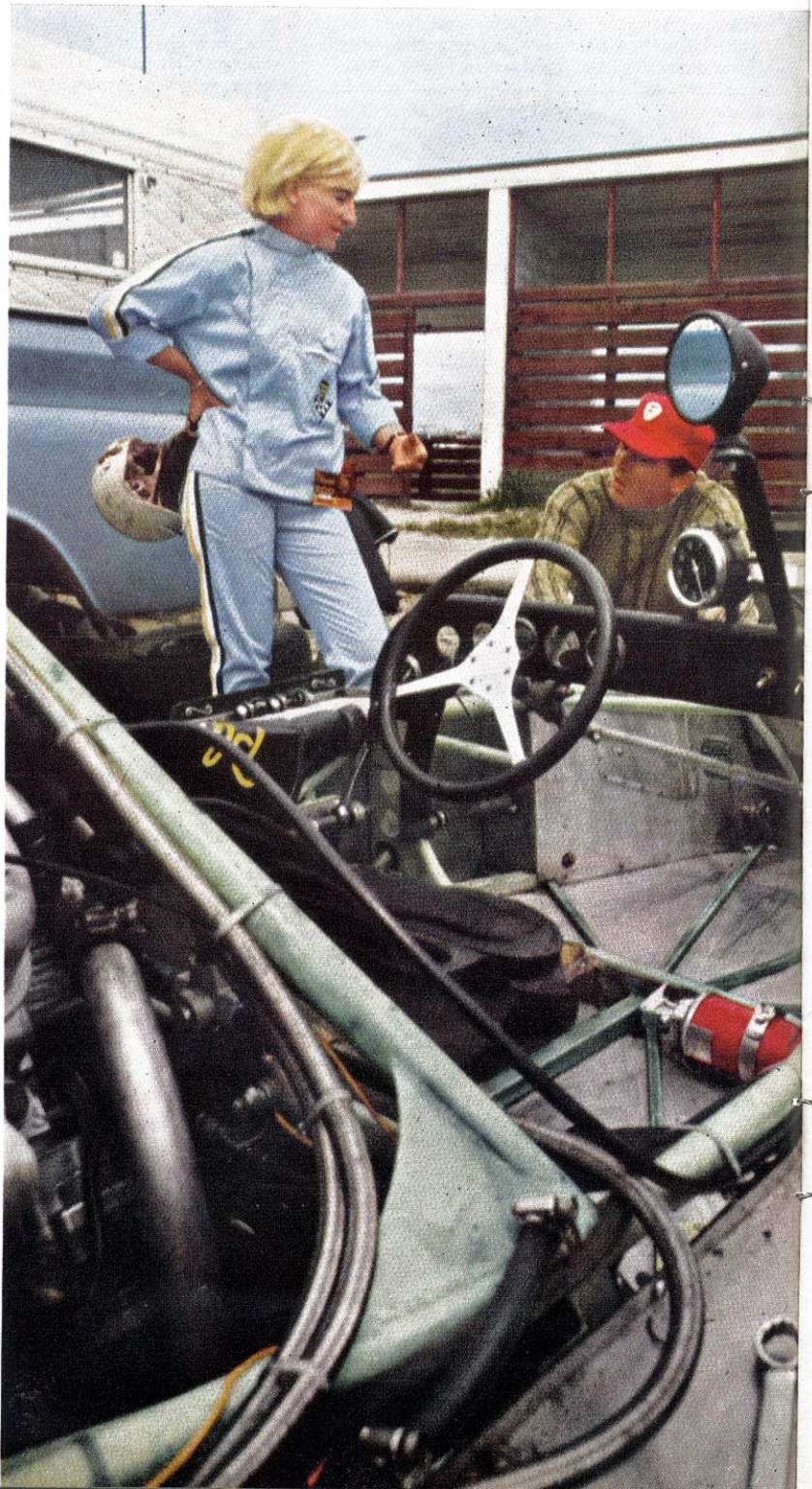
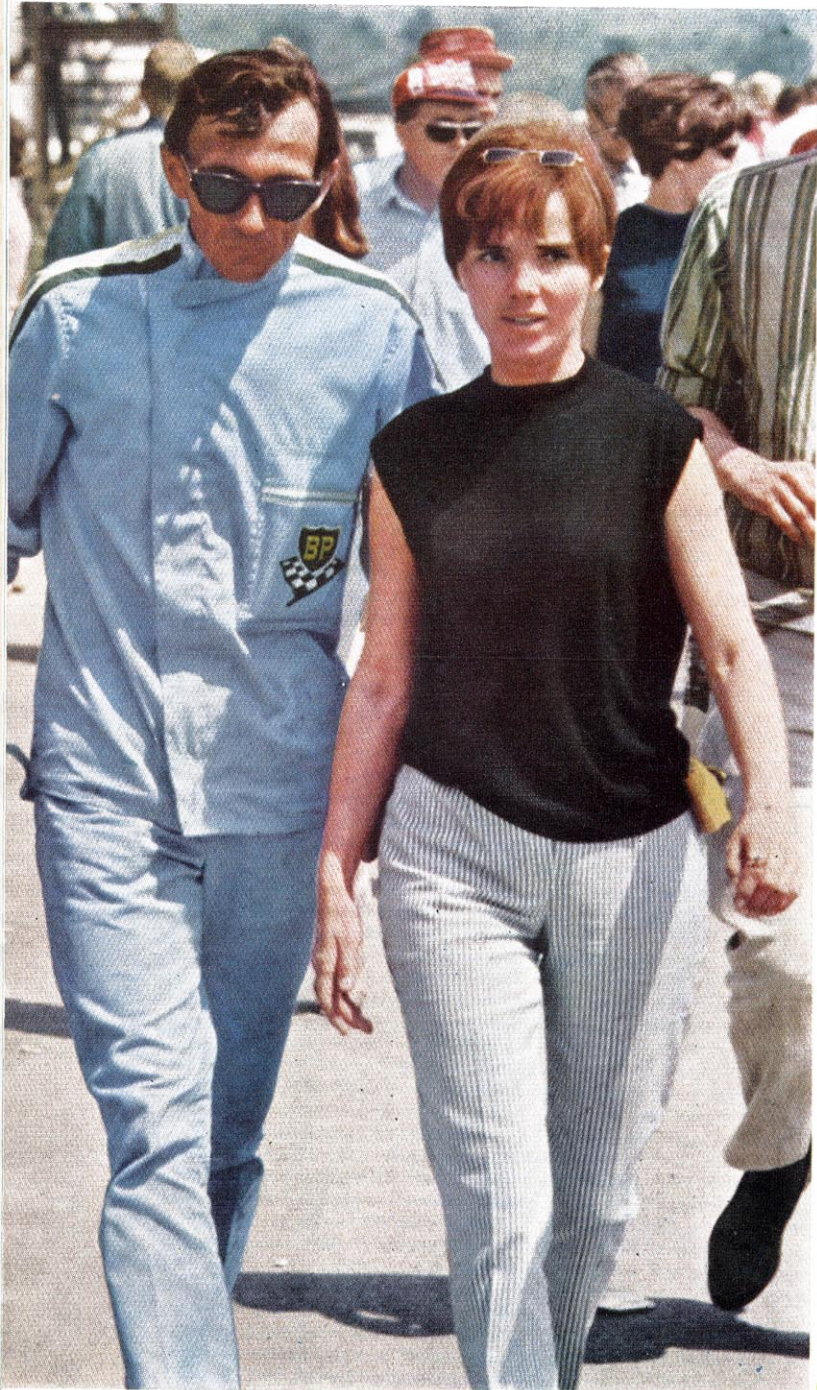


Stephanie Ruys de Perez, mother of two, who races because "it's sensual."

*HORSEPOWER AND
POWDER PUFFS*



GO KILL ME A TIGER,



DARLING

THERE'S A LAW I once devised that says the more *physical*, the more dangerous, the sport, the prettier and fluffier are the girl followers. It's the Edmonds Go-Kill-Me-A-Tiger-Darling Law, and there's no better place to test it than at an auto race meeting.

The Racing Girls are, it seems, almost universally gorgeous. They're mostly very feminine, frequently dressed with the extravagance of *Vogue* models, and they're constant handmaidens to those heroes of the automotive age who regularly risk their necks in an effort to hurl a hunk of mankind's mechanical ingenuity around a racing circuit faster than the next man.

They are, in fact, a social phenomenon. And so I went to Ontario's Mosport racing circuit for the Player's 200 race, one of the season's biggest, to ask them what motor racing's got that most other sports haven't.

There are, I found, three types of Racing Girl: the wife (or fiancée); the pit popies, who are always decoratively on hand at the pits (though not always with the same boy friend); and the girl drivers.

Last things first: the girl drivers. Their involvement is the more surprising because there's something oppressively masculine about a racing car. It's sleek, but that's because it has to be—a sort of auto-dynamic sensuality—but there's still an arrogant *maleness* about the fat, muscular tires, the squat body shell and the uninhibited exhaust that produces a primeval cross between a bellow and a call to arms. It's a shock to see a driver remove the helmet—and shake out a tumble of women's hair.

Stephanie Ruys de Perez has long, fair hair and she wears it like a curtain, the way all swingers do. She's lithe, but you wouldn't mistake her for a man, and the

It's in the pits that you find the glamour. Far left, Inga Cordts escorts husband John to his car for the Player's 200 start, but refuses to watch because "I can't bear it." Diana Carter, Canada's top girl driver, chats with mechanic (left), and Stephanie Ruys de Perez (right), our cover girl, helps push a driver's car to the starting grid. She and Diana race souped-up sedans



CONTINUED OVERLEAF

*GO
KILL
ME A
TIGER,
DARLING*

continued





The handmaidens: left, Carol Lerch says she must be there in case her husband crashes. Top left, Andree Wallace times her fiancé: she says pit popies are "parasites." Top right, Christine Griffen helps driver boy-friend. Connie Jones (left) is Californian; she and her husband tour North America's race tracks. Amy Cook, who finds drivers "exciting," chats with one after his race

sky-blue driver's jump suit matches her eyes. And when, in the race for souped-up sedans which was meant to warm things up for the big race, her Sunbeam Imp broke down on the third circuit, she seemed more prone to tears than blistering language. When he heard about it, the elder of her two sons, eight-year-old Tony, said, "Poor mummy," and her stockbroker husband Alfred greeted her failure with an understanding hug: he's taken up racing this year.

Stephanie hopes her husband will prove a better driver than she is: some girls race in a bid to prove themselves man's equal, but Stephanie says, "If I thought I was better than men I'd be very depressed." She races, she explains, because it's "a sensual thing" — Freudians might even say sexual. "I've always got a kick out of driving fast and well," she says. "You can only do it in a completely physical, instinctive way, and today our instincts are so disciplined they're almost nonexistent". But racing really is a man's world, and religiously before each race Stephanie replenishes her lipstick, in the interests of feeling feminine. She needn't worry; she once told mechanic Jim Spence, "The car feels *squishy*."

This blithe — and reassuring — innocence of things mechanical is a characteristic of girl drivers, and partly explains the sourness of Peter Lerch, one of Canada's better-known purebred race-car drivers, on the subject. He quit tinkering with the suspension of Ludwig Heimrath's car just long enough to say, "Mostly girls who drive just want to wear a tight driver's suit and run around town in a crash helmet, and all the boys are supposed to fall down and kiss their feet. Diana Carter is the only girl who goes out there and does a job."

Now this Diana Carter, blond, 28, girl friend of an ex-driver and one of the staff of *Canada Track and Traffic* magazine, is the idol of all the score or so Canadian girls who race. Yet even she runs into driver disapproval; she beat a field of men and afterward one of them, seeing the winning driver for the first time, said, "Jeez, it's a broad!" Diana has been beating men on the racetrack for six years, and she loves it. "Maybe I'm compensating for not getting enough attention," she says. "But driving's a tremendous ego booster for me."

Pit popies are everywhere at a race meeting: the girl drivers, the wives and the drivers' girl friends I met in the pits all told me so. But no one would admit to actually *being* one.

"The pit popies like to have affairs with drivers because they're in the spotlight," said Diana Carter. "And then it's thrilling to think of being with a man who's 'out there, dicing with death' while they wait to comfort him afterward." If you believe the girls — the drivers, wives and fiancées — pit popies should be easy to spot. "They're the ones who wear the sprayed-on pants and look available," one driver's wife

kindly explained. I couldn't find anyone exactly answering that description, but John Spencer-Nairn, who drives for the Triumph works team and lists his hobbies in an official biography as "fast cars and faster women," pointed out that pit popies are "a decorative and desirable fringe benefit to the sport." Andree Wallace, an advertising agency secretary, quit timing her fiancé's car from the pits to condemn them as "parasites." They must have some value, however: Miss Wallace also admitted knowing men who took up driving for the girls.

In a recent issue of the *British Auto Racing Club News* Miss Wallace sermonized about the "Mosport debacle" of "tight-pants contests" and Rabelaisian drinking parties, and said that auto racing should not have to depend on sex to draw crowds.

Maybe so — but sex *does* draw crowds. Sex and drinking during prerace parties led to Mosport earning a bad name, and this year the track banned overnight camping. Even so, Amy Cook told me Mosport parties were dull: the St. Jovite circuit in Quebec, she said, is the place that *really* swings.

Amy said drivers are usually "more exciting and masculine than most men you meet" — and she may be an authority since for three years she's been Miss Player's 200, a cross between a beauty queen, a hostess and an advertising symbol. She has, inevitably, met many drivers; indeed, she had a couple of reunions with drivers as we spoke. The pits at a race track, she said, are no place for a girl . . . and "the maleness of it all is like a magnet."

I did, in fact, meet one pit popy — scarlet bellbottoms, bikini top — who had just been met by a driver from Texas, and she said that when her new acquaintance's engine was first started "it made me tremble with excitement." The engine is obviously a symbol of something: Christine Griffin, a 22-year-old receptionist whose involvement with racing is through driver-fiancé George Fejer, explained that the start of a race, when cars wait with their engines pulsing, "makes me throb, as though I'm at the very pitch of my emotional being."

The start of the main race, the Player's 200, seemed to trouble, rather than excite, the third group of Racing Girls: the drivers' wives. Inga Cordts, the wife of driver John Cordts, refused to watch. "That's when it's most dangerous, the start and the corners, and I just can't watch him, I can't," she said. So why come racing? "I'm here, just in case . . ."

Just in case of *what*? Most drivers' wives don't dare say it aloud. Carol Lerch did, though. "I live in terror of being at home and hearing on the radio that Peter Lerch, racing driver, was hurt or killed," she says. "I must be there, just in case he needs me. I wish he'd give up driving, but he won't," she says.

You see, the Edmonds Go-Kill-Me-A-Tiger-Darling Law has its flaws: it doesn't work when you're married. ★