

THE KENO BROTHERS FROM THE *ANTIQUES ROADSHOW* TO RACE AT THE
35th ROLEX MONTEREY HISTORIC AUTOMOBILE RACES PRESENTED BY
TOYOTA

Their Love of Vintage Racing Started with a Chair

MONTEREY, Calif. (August 12, 2008) – Leigh Keno and Leslie Keno are American antiques experts (PBS series *Antiques Roadshow*), authors, television hosts (WGBH series *Find!*) and are expanding their resume to include vintage auto racing. This week at Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca they honed their racing skills in a three-day racing school at Skip Barber to prepare themselves for the upcoming 35th Rolex Monterey Historic Automobile Races, scheduled for the upcoming weekend.

But how did these two acclaimed antiques experts discover vintage race cars? It all started with a chair.

One of their clients happened to have a great collection of vintage cars. The brothers were helping him to build his American furniture collection. They located and purchased a rare 18th century Philadelphia Chippendale chair and the client suggested that they take a 1958 Lotus race car in barter. Leigh's reaction was, "A race car?" They had no idea what the client was talking about so they went out to the Bridgehampton race track for a weekend of fun.

"We jumped in the car and drove around, drifting into corners probably the wrong way, but it was like being in go karts again," is what Leslie remembered. It was fun and they took the race car.

That was the beginning of a beautiful expansion of their antique background. They were still preaching the preservation of great design and craftsmanship but in a four-wheeled, motorized form. They soon realized that the furniture world, art world and vintage car world is very similar as collectors love beautiful things and strive to preserve them.

Leigh is racing a 1980 Ferrari 512 BB LM and he is the car's third owner. "The Ferrari was campaigned at Watkins Glen, Daytona and Sebring and puts out over 500 horsepower," said Leigh. "It's a total blast to drive." It is the ninth made out of a total of 25 that were built for racing. This is not a street car. The original body is intact and is one of the most important aspects of this rare, vintage race car. 'Don't take away its soul' is something that the brothers truly believe in. This is as true for an 18th century Chippendale chair as it is for a vintage race car. A unique nuance of this amazing car is the short, brown fuzzy troll hair that is on the dashboard of this car. They refuse to remove it as it is part of the car's DNA and that is part of its soul.

Originality is important. Antiques lose points if they are restored and it's the same for vintage automobiles. The patina of an original paint job or finish is prized.

Leslie is racing a 1958 Lotus XI Series 1, which previous resided at the WatkinsGlenMuseum. The Lotus was owned by Annie Spruance and she raced it and the car was called 'Annie Baby.'

He particularly loves the aerodynamics of this car. "It's sculpted with a parabolic curve, bullet-like and very sensual," said Leslie. "It's moving sculpture." The original body boasts hand hammered craftsmanship. The Lotus factory workers who crafted this race car were called 'panel beaters' because they took the stamped forms and beat them into the sculptured shapes and curves.

This will be their first year racing in the Monterey Historic Automobile Races. In previous years, they were just like kids in a candy store with their noses pressed up the window, yearning to race. They decided to join the Skip Barber three-day racing school to learn the track and hone their racing skills.

The school has taught them how to protect and preserve the machinery. Like with clockmaker Peter Stretch with his Philadelphia Tall Case masterpieces, you want to use the antique but not destroy it. Yes, the brothers will be judging the upholstery and fit and finish of the PebbleBeach entrants, but it is just as important to preserve the rare, vintage masterpieces on a racetrack. Hence the blend of antiques and cars.

Both agree that their favorite part of Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca is the straightaway before turn two. They both love the challenge of 'staying in the pedal' and 'keeping your foot in it' and then braking in a straight line. "It is so gratifying to turn the tail around and direct the nose to the other apex; that to me is the biggest challenge," said Leslie.

The brothers are judging pre-war preservation and post-war preservation cars in the Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance as well and this will be their fourth year as judges.

But antiques do not give you the thrill like the adrenalin rush of a vintage race car. The driver gets to experience and appreciate the wind, smell, sound and feel of the moving sculpture, whereas in a rare piece of furniture, perhaps you can sit in it. "It is rare to experience a furniture piece like you can with an automobile," said Leigh. "It's a 180 degree experience in a race car. The rubber, tires, engines and leather upholstery are experienced like they were when they were originally created."

Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca was established in 1957. The world-renowned raceway has been operated since its inception by the Sports Car Racing Association of the Monterey Peninsula (SCRAMP), a not-for-profit 501C(4) corporation. Each race season, SCRAMP donates its net proceeds to the volunteer groups that help put on the races.

Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca's world-class 2008 racing schedule includes the 35th Rolex Monterey Historic Automobile Races presented by Toyota August 15-17, the Corona AMA Superbike Finale September 27-28 and the Monterey Sports Car Championships featuring the American Le Mans Series October 17-19.

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