

By **Al Adkins**

Ya know...

I tend to lose my perspective of time... I can't believe this SVRA event has been going for 24 years.. 24 Freaking years..I've made every one. I remember when I first started going to the SVRA at the Glenn.... On Sunday I would be driving away thinking.."Man, that was great...it was better than last year..what are they going to do next year so as to not disappoint."

Every year I've driven away from that event...and every year, I'm smilin' thinking..man, 'that was something". I now drive down on Thursday after work... I take Friday off. I figure it's a befitting Birthday week.. Something I've made up to make this pilgrimage to Watkins...short week anyway because of our Labor Day...My birthday usually falls somewhere in the seven day span. Short three day work week ..then off on Friday and ready for the weekend of racing ..story swapping,...food..and couple cocktails.

Thursday nite..we arrived at my buddy's place at the town owned camp ground at the end of Seneca Lake..walking distance from downtown Watkins Glen.. eat..visit...laugh and vist till 2:15am this year...I have my navigator up at 6:00am to take the camper to the track... at the gate at 6:30am and the people at already moving their stuff in...set up camp in the usual spot..set things up..go downtown for breakfast. Afterwards...head to our winery/rally...very nice day warm..very warm. Short 50 mile rally...all on paved road..nothing tricky. End up at one of the falls at the 3/4 point for our box lunch..then on to the state park to line up for own 19 mile run on the old course thru the streets..even though they say you get two laps of the old course 6.6 miles per lap...when they start you at the state park...you actually get three laps in.

Coming down Big Bend coming into town on the first lap is when you get some idea of the people...Big Bend brings you to one last turn before Main Street where they used to start the races from '48-53. Coming around that last corner is when you start to see the crowds...lining both sides of the street...sometimes six and eight deep. All there because of the cars and the tradition of what went on right after the war. All these people are motor heads...just like you and me..car freaks that look forward to this particular day and this particular weekend all year...build it up in the heads...nothing is allowed to interfere with this weekend short of illness or death. It's a religious thing.. I see it as just that..a pilgrimage.. something you can't put out of your mind before the event..or after..both looking back and looking forward.

All these people lining the hay baled streets...all there because of the racing...the cars..the Festival. You driving down Main Street with your group and can't believe the people..you're watching the car ahead of you...looking for friends in the crowd and just catching the sounds of the announcer in front of the court house before you turn off to go back up the hill for another lap of the old race course...all the stuff you see in the original newsreels are there...the long up hill climb...under the rail road tracks...up past the Collier Memorial...the turn down into Stone Bridge.. simply amazing..through the country side...you're smiling..my

navigator's smiling..the guys behind you in the Porsche are smiling..not because of the picture taking at the Stone Bridge...because of where they are and what they're doing.

My favorite part of the track is Big Bend... I think back on the racers running this course back a mere 55-60 years ago and wonder how they kept their concentration with the job at hand because of the breath taking view of Seneca Lake as they motor down the hill back into town. The fall foliage just starting but back then..in full spectrum. I look forward to seeing that view every time I run that course and every time I get near that road.

We get nice parking down into town after our run...and proceed to visit all the booths..all the vendors..enjoy seeing everyone making their run.

You're looking for friends who in some cases..this is the only time once a year you get to see them and share this experience. After all the wine tour/rally runs are over...that's when the race cars from the track come down and grid on Main Street...they sit grided...turned off and everyone gets to walk through the grided cars..this is when you get a real perspective on how big this is... every year I mis-quote the attendance by at least a few thousand people.. Last year I had heard 20-25,000. This year had to have all of that again. We had at least that..everyone milling around..looking at the race cars..meeting the owners of the cars..meeting the drivers..before they make their tour of the old course. Heaven..as close to heaven as you can find.

That's just Friday..Wait till Saturday and the cars start racing up at the track at 8:00am