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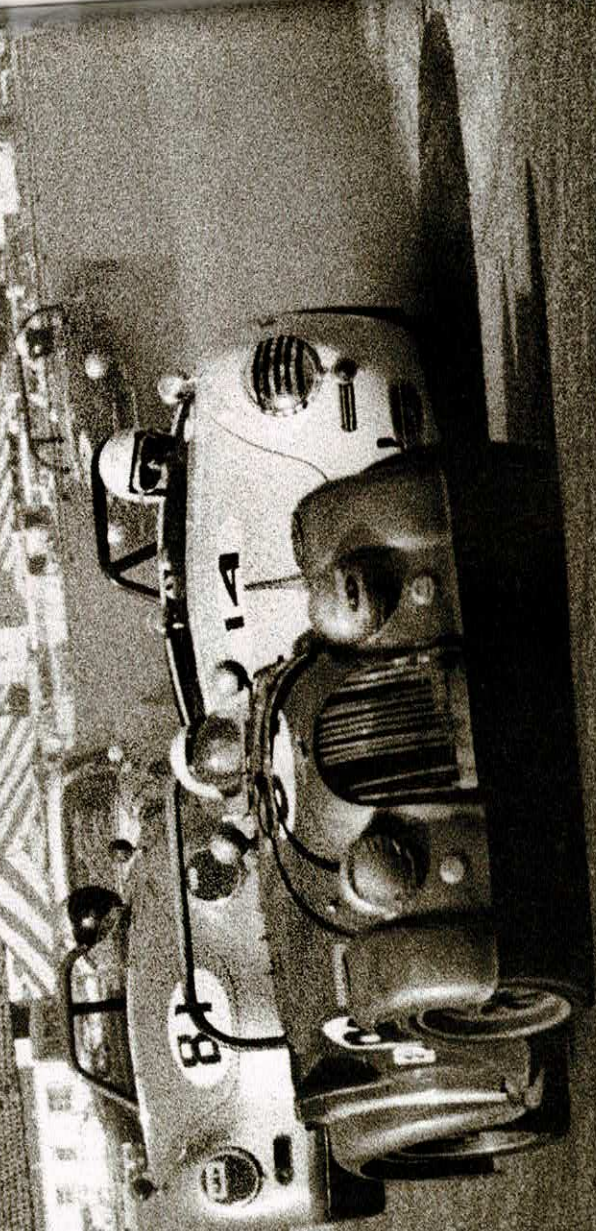
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Last Dance at Daytona

Imports rock in search of SCCA glory

BY JIM DONNELLY
PHOTOGRAPHY INTERPRETED BY HAL CROCKER. FROM HIS ARCHIVES

If you're reading this magazine, you surely know about the Sports Car Club of America's annual national Runoffs, the Woodstock of amateur American road racing. It's always been a big shindig, but if you go back more than 40 years, you may be surprised to learn that, in the 1960s, it alternated between East Coast and West Coast locales for a number of years, and in the East, that location was Daytona. And it was the first runoff that Hal Crocker ever covered.

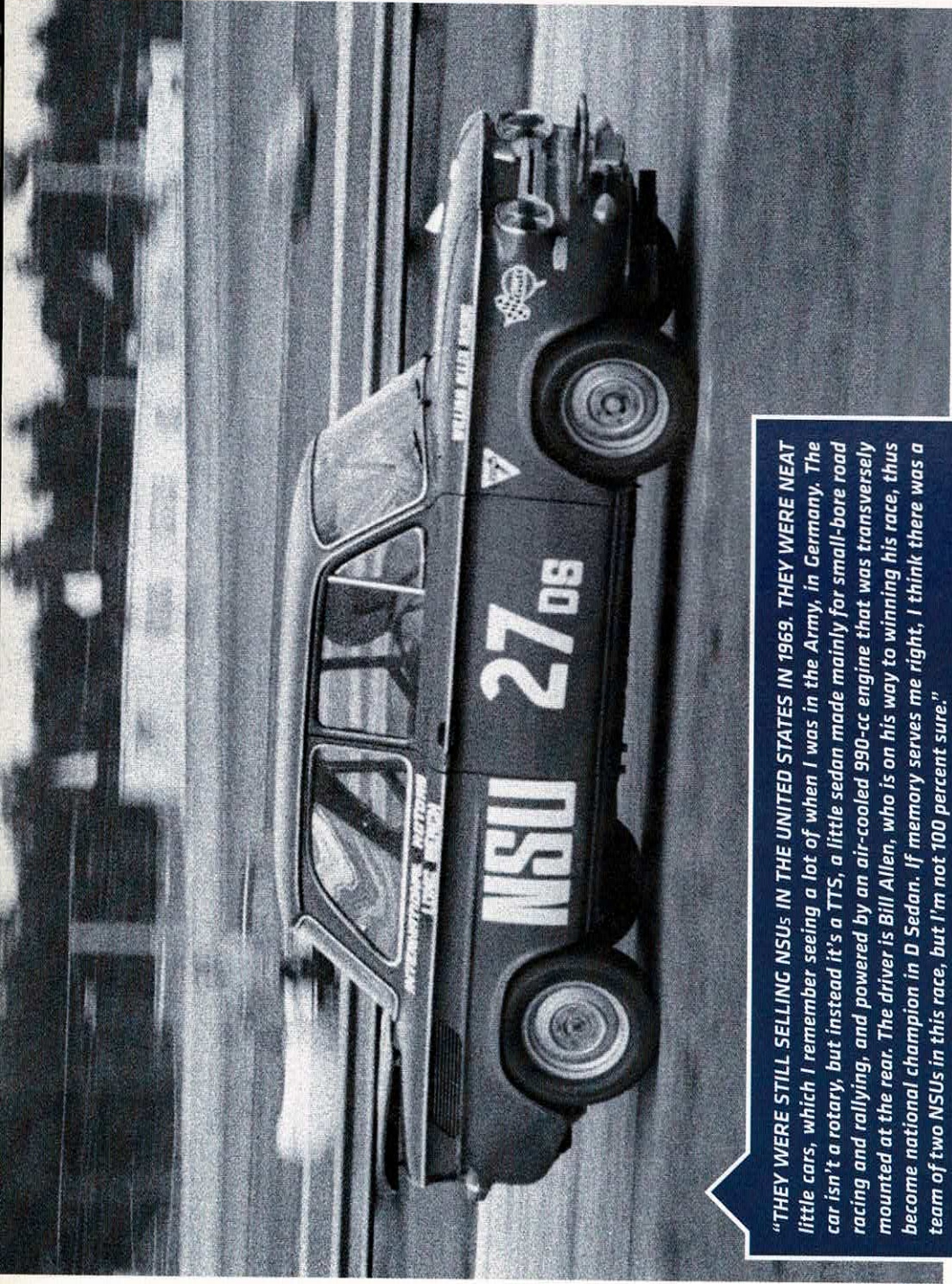
"I don't know how many times they went back and forth, but I do know that this race, 1969, was the last runoff they ran at Daytona. They moved it to Road

Atlanta the following year," Hal told us. The NASCAR palace of speed had its paddock loaded with formula, sports cars and sedans, ready to contest their categories for national notoriety, and as these photos show, there was an impressive variety of makes, body styles, and engine displacements on hand. Whether you liked the biggest sedans or the tiniest, most obscure import, there was something at the runoff to see.

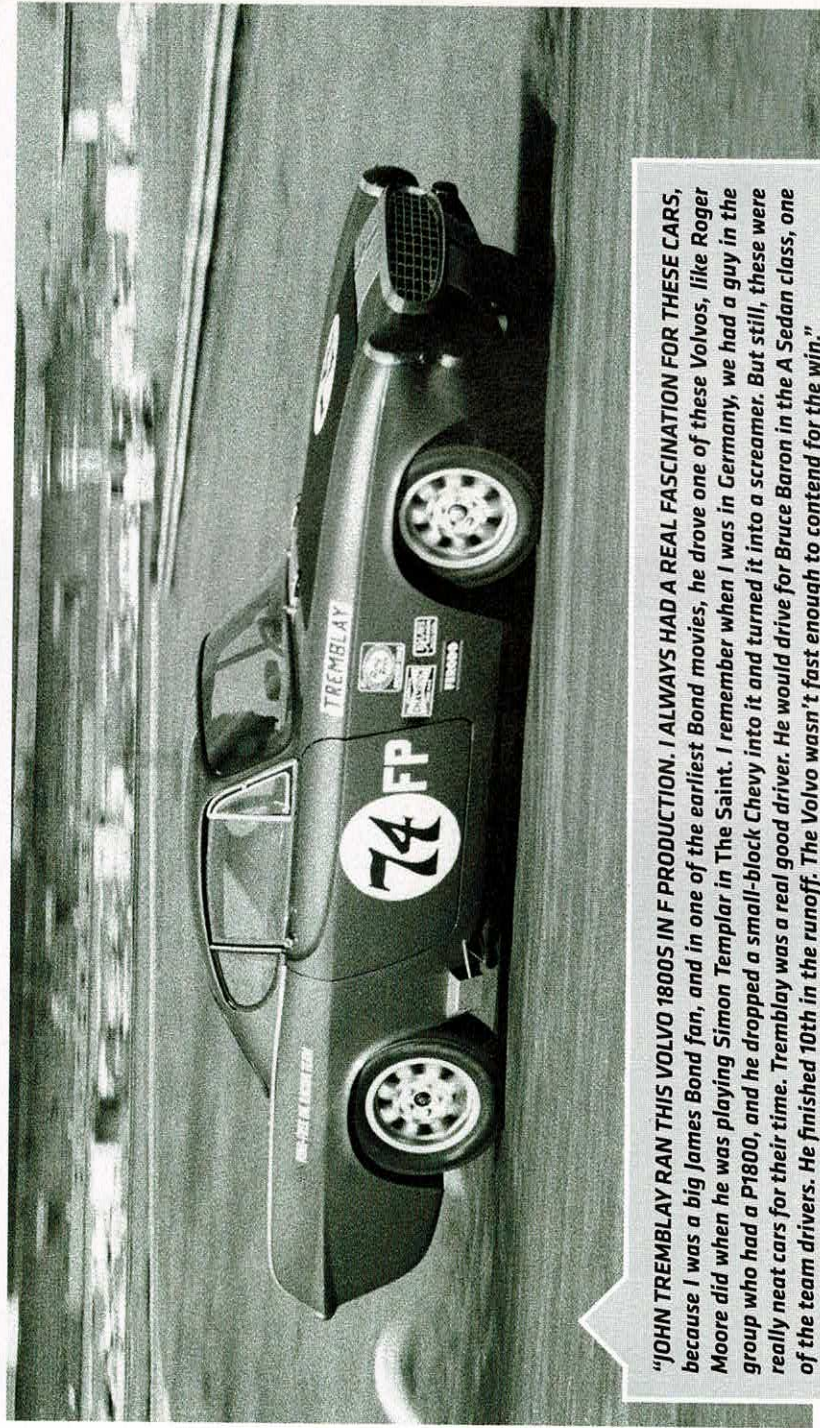
Hal was essentially at the beginning of his extensively traveled career as a racing photojournalist when he showed up at Daytona for the late-season showdown. Then as now, the runoff was a stage upon

"THE FIRST PHOTO WE HAVE HERE IS T.J. Kelly in the Morgan. And it's Doctor T.J. Kelly. He was some kind of a doctor, I think, maybe a dentist. He had a following here in the South. He was from Florida, had a ratty old Morgan, but he drove the hell out of it. Kelly was a pretty good driver. This is the E Production race, or maybe the practice session, so that would make this Morgan a Plus Four. He's here leading the Porsche 590 of Paul Woodroffe, the number 81 Porsche of George Frey and the Group 44 Triumph GT6. These guys are looking really energetic, but this still could be the E Production practice session. They may have been amateurs, but you put a helmet on them and the red mist would come down. Ultimately, Doctor Kelly finished fifth in the championship race."

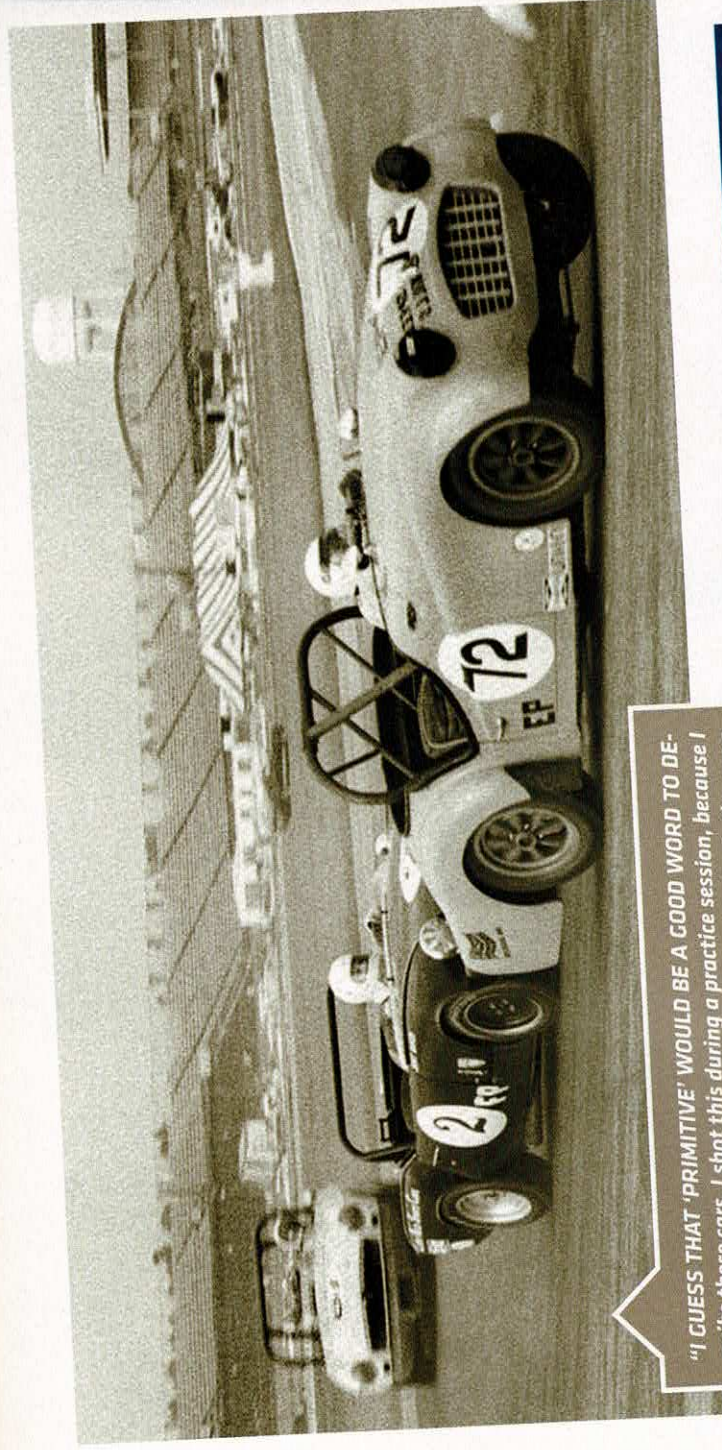
which the very best amateur drivers vied for the privilege of calling themselves national champions. The sheer range of equipment that showed up to do battle was what iced the cake.



"THEY WERE STILL SELLING NSUs IN THE UNITED STATES IN 1969. THEY WERE NEAT little cars, which I remember seeing a lot of when I was in the Army, in Germany. The car isn't a rotary, but instead it's a TTS, a little sedan made mainly for small-bore road racing and rallying, and powered by an air-cooled 990-cc engine that was transversely mounted at the rear. The driver is Bill Allen, who is on his way to winning his race, thus become national champion in D Sedan. If memory serves me right, I think there was a team of two NSUs in this race, but I'm not 100 percent sure."



"JOHN TREMBLAY RAN THIS VOLVO 1800S IN F PRODUCTION. I ALWAYS HAD A REAL FASCINATION FOR THESE CARS, because I was a big James Bond fan, and in one of the earliest Bond movies, he drove one of these Volvos, like Roger Moore did when he was playing Simon Templar in The Saint. I remember when I was in Germany, we had a guy in the group who had a P1800, and he dropped a small-block Chevy into it and turned it into a screamer. But still, these were really neat cars for their time. Tremblay was a real good driver. He would drive for Bruce Baron in the A Sedan class, one of the team drivers. He finished 10th in the runoff. The Volvo wasn't fast enough to contend for the win."

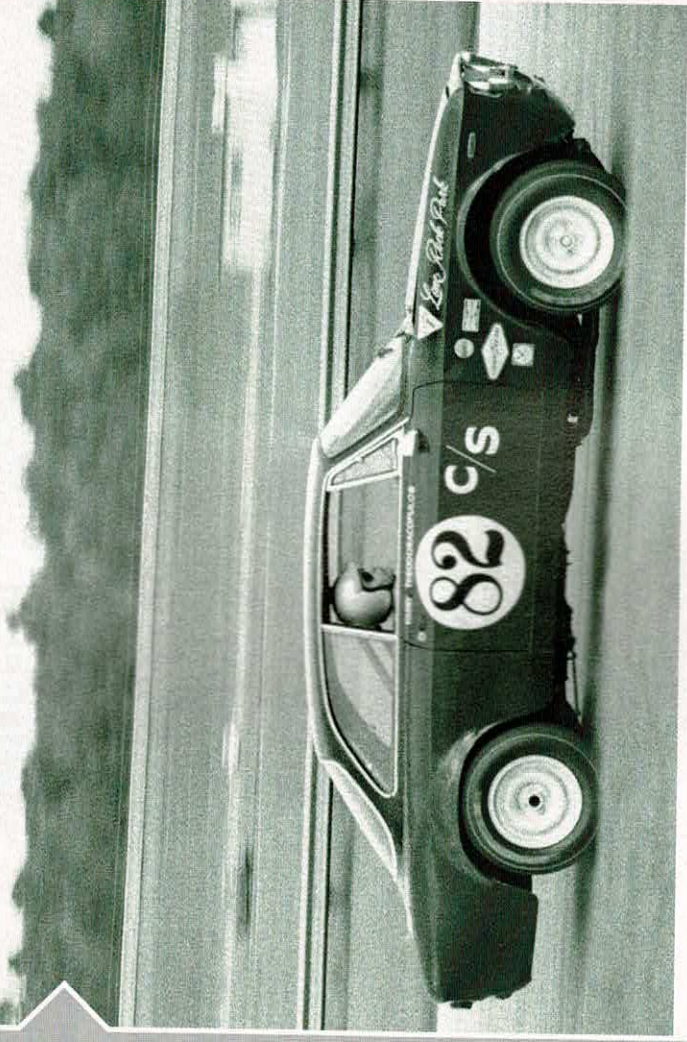


"I GUESS THAT 'PRIMITIVE' WOULD BE A GOOD WORD TO DESCRIBE these cars. I shot this during a practice session, because I don't think they ran E Production and F Production in the same class during the runoff. But yeah, that TR3... wow. It was pretty crude. That was Bill Boemler, leading Terry Barker in the Triumph Spitfire and David Headley in the number 61 MGB. That's about all I can tell you about these guys. There may not have been many people in the huge stands around Daytona, but in terms of participants, you've got to figure 15 cars per race, so there would be 200 cars in the paddock, easily, or maybe more."

"MIKE DOWNS BECAME A NATIONAL CHAMPION FOR Group 44 in this race, driving the Triumph GT6 to the win in E Production. His Group 44 teammates were John Kelly, team owner Bob Tullius and Brian Fuerstenau. I think Mike only drove for the team for a season or two. Jerry Titus also drove for Group 44 for a time. But the main guy there, other than Tullius, was Brian. He was some kind of an engineer from the Washington, D.C., area and an excellent driver. He and Tullius were very good friends, but Brian was killed while piloting this World War II airplane that Tullius owned. Group 44 was one of the most dominant road-racing teams based in America during these years."



"HARRY THEODORACOPULOS, or Harry T as he was better known, had plenty of money. He was the nephew of Aristotle Onassis, the Greek shipping tycoon. Uncle set him up in the shipping business, and I think Harry was an agent for his uncle. I remember when Jacqueline Kennedy married Onassis, I caught a ride up to Mospert with Harry. He always had really good equipment, and he knew how to use it, because Harry won this race in the Alfa GTA, becoming national champion in C Sedan. See how the car is sponsored by Lime Rock Park? I remember when Harry got a brand-new DeKon Monza to run in IMSA, and took it out at Lime Rock to test it. He put it right into the trees. Harry was actually an owner of the firm that built the car, along with Horst Kwech and the engineer Lee Dykstra, but it was Harry's money behind the whole thing. So I guess Harry had more money than driving talent. This Alfa should have been the zenith of what he drove, even though it was the class of the field."



"MILT MINTER. EVERYBODY'S FAVORITE. HE'S EXITING TURN ONE IN THE CProduction championship race, which he won. If memory serves me correctly, this Porsche 911 was part of a two-car team, with Alan Johnson in the other car. Alan was a West Coast Porsche dealer, and Milt was a West Coast driver, from California. Richie Ginther had just retired, and at this time, I would say that Minter and Elliot Forbes-Robinson were the two best shoes on the West Coast. Anyway, I remember that Minter was not supposed to outrun Alan, but it was really important for Porsche to beat British Leyland, especially the Group 44 team. But the original plan was for Alan to win and for Milt to be his wingman. Somewhere in the back of my mind, Tullius and Alan got together at the start of the race, because Tullius never completed a lap in the TR6. So odds are, there was an accident, because Alan only did two laps. I'd almost bet money that there was an incident between the two."

