OPPOSITE **My final Spa 1,000Kms win (of four) came in 1972 in a Ferrari 312PB I shared with Arturo Merzario.**
LAT

CHAPTER 1

The original Spa-Francorchamps

Between 1965 and 1975, one in three top-level drivers of world championship sports prototypes were killed in their cars or as a result of on-track crashes. The odds were worse for those of us who also drove in Formula 1. To understand how and why, no circuit is more illustrative than Spa-Francorchamps.

On the opening lap of the 1966 Belgian Formula 1 Grand Prix, the tightly packed field streamed into an unexpected rainstorm at the fastest part of the Spa* circuit, spraying cars across the countryside. Jackie Stewart's BRM aquaplaned at the feared *Masta* kink, scythed through a woodcutter's hut and plunged into the basement of a nearby farmhouse. Stewart was trapped upside-down in the car with broken ribs and a damaged shoulder while the electric fuel pump discharged a full tank of petrol over his body. Providentially, BRM teammates Graham Hill and Bob Bondurant had crashed less violently nearby and were able to release Jackie with tools borrowed from a spectator.

Not only were racing cars of that era built without driver protection or even equipped with radios, circuits such as Spa were romantic constructs from 40 years earlier. There was very little in the way of protection for competitors and spectators, track marshal support was inadequate, there were no on-site medical capabilities, and organisers were oblivious to the ever-increasing speeds. Stewart's horrifying experience at Spa turned him into racing's most tireless and resolute safety evangelist, frequently unloved but ultimately successful. Unfortunately for me, Jackie's influence on safety didn't begin to take root until 1976, but then it became a movement. By the end of the decade, the modern age of racing safety was firmly established and it has improved each year since. I think that every driver who has survived a racing collision over the past four decades would do well to kneel down tonight and offer an appreciative little prayer for the life-saving contributions of three-time Formula 1 World Champion Sir John Young 'Jackie' Stewart OBE.

Current racers who know the 4.5-mile Belgian track rhapsodise about the way in which its quick corners curl on to high-speed straights, long and short, uphill and down. Sooner or later the stories get around to the challenging *Eau Rouge/Raidillon* complex, giving drivers the opportunity to glaze their tales with hints of diffident valour. It's doubtful that any will mention today's wide asphalt run-off areas, or

**The original name for the track, first used in 1921, was the Circuit de Francorchamps, which morphed into Spa-Francorchamps and then just Spa, associating it with that nearby town's curative waters in which pilgrims have soaked since the 16th century.*

OPPOSITE **My first race at Spa, the 1,000Kms of 1966, was only my second trip abroad. Peter Sutcliffe, a privateer from northern England, invited me to co-drive his Ford GT40 and we finished a very pleasing fourth.**
LAT

the comprehensive rim of steel barriers, or the ubiquity of the marshalling points, or the chicane that brings cars nearly to a crawl. Nor should they. Modern Spa is a fine circuit that produces excellent racing in enviable safety, and all sane drivers should be grateful for that.

But this isn't the Spa I drove in the 1960s and 1970s. It isn't the Spa that nearly broke my spirit and did break my body. Nor is it the Spa on which I won five momentous races in five fragile racing cars.

The original course was an 8.7-mile triangle of rustic byways anchored at each corner by the villages of Francorchamps, Malmedy and Stavelot. The circuit had been conceived in the early 1920s for cars with as little as 50bhp capable of less than 100mph, and continued as a magnificent folly onto which we threw 620bhp machines at over 200mph with ill-advised eagerness. By the time of my début, Spa already had earned a reputation for being an unforgiving circuit, even in an era when safety concerned very few drivers and absolutely no team managers.

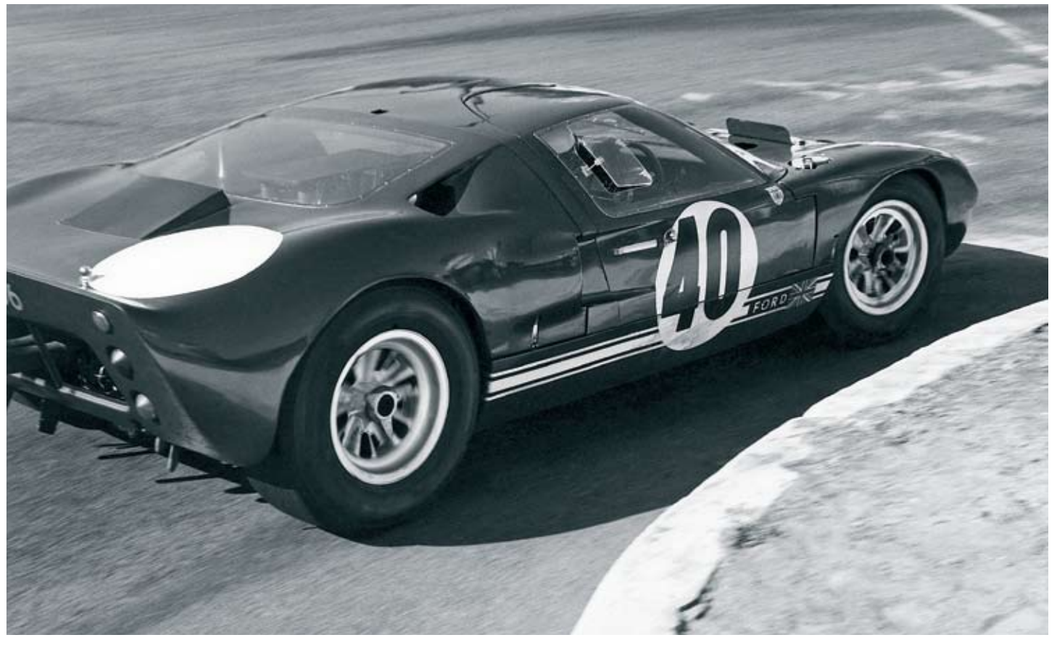
Apart from a single hairpin corner, the original Spa was a ribbon of long straights punctuated by blazingly fast curves, all to be negotiated as aggressively as cross-ply tyres would allow. If, at full throttle, a driver exited the *Malmedy* corner 3mph faster than his competitors, he carried that additional speed down the full 1½-mile length of the *Masta* straight, and did so again on the equally long *Hollowell*. Consider the arithmetic: at 214mph a Porsche 917 covered the length of a football pitch (105 yards) in a single second and did so for about 26 long seconds on each of these two straights. If the speeds of two competitive cars were exactly the same at all other parts of the track, the driver who was 3mph faster on the *Masta* and *Hollowell* straights would pull out an advantage of 14½ car lengths each and every lap of his 15-lap stint, and would be nearly 1,150 yards ahead when his co-driver took over – total domination.

Conversely, a driver's tiniest miscue through the *Masta* kink – a quick left/right in the middle of the *Masta* straight – or the slightest lift at the *Burnenville*, *Stavelot* or *Blanchimont* corners

increased his lap time not by just a few tenths of a second but by two or even three full seconds, costing as much as 1¼ miles during his turn at the wheel. Such a performance was unthinkable and would have led swiftly to unemployment.

More sobering was the harsh punishment for even the smallest mistake or the slightest error in judgement. A racing car with sticky tyres spinning on grainy asphalt will scrub off speed, but the tyres of one that departs the circuit onto slippery grass sacrifice most of their grip and the car loses little momentum. Unimpeded, it could travel a great distance at a disturbingly rapid rate. At Spa, however, no car could slide very far before encountering a house, a tree, a telegraph pole, a wall, an embankment, a ditch or a wire fence garrotte. These hazards were compounded by the provincial nature of the countryside and the region's unpredictable weather. One part of the track might bask in sunshine while another was awash in rain. Without radios, drivers had no warning about deteriorating conditions and often would rush into a veil of water that hadn't been there on the previous lap. It was accepted that crashes on the original Spa circuit often meant serious injury, or worse.

BELOW **My GT40 slides through *La Source*, ready for the plunge down to *Eau Rouge*.** *Ford*



The first test – 1966

My initial engagement with Spa occurred in May 1966 when Charles Bridges put up £60 for me to co-drive Peter Sutcliffe's Ford GT40 Mk1 in the 1,000Kms. The hubris of my successful campaigns with Charles's Lightweight Jaguar E-type and Can-Am Lola T70, overlaid with the universal fearlessness of inexperience, left me unprepared for Spa's stretches of full-bore straights, the breakneck corners, and the narrow country roads with stone houses and stout trees pressing against the circuit.

By the end of Saturday practice, I was sufficiently intimidated by Spa's speeds and perils that the night before my international début was sleepless. Calling my wife Marion and discussing my fears with her wasn't an option. She remained silent to me about her feelings on racing's realities, as I did with her and everyone else. In truth, I was ready to retire, immediately.

That I didn't quit owed much to my ambition of making racing a career and even more to my trust in the superb vehicle I was to drive. With its massively strong steel monocoque, the early Ford GT40 was more robust and safer than any other sports prototype I ever raced. Peter and I drove conservatively without any dramas, finishing an excellent fourth in our maiden year behind the third-placed Ferrari 330P of Michael Parkes and Ludovico Scarfiotti. I was now racing with the big boys and, for the first time, put my fears behind me and carried on with my exciting new career.

The incipient pro – 1967

Once again I was invited to join Peter Sutcliffe in his GT40 for the 1,000Kms of 1967. Even after a full year of serious racing, the circuit's pace was no less disquieting but time and practice were moulding me into a true professional. I had learned the trick of burying reason under layers of confidence and pretence.

Spa is in the lush forests of the Ardennes, where in May – the driest month – it rains more days than not. Denny Hulme, New Zealand's only Formula 1 World Champion and a racer known for his unflinching bravery, shared this advice about the original circuit.

'*Spa? In the rain? Shit. Park it.*' Kiwi wisdom.

I was aware of the likelihood of rain so I wasn't surprised when threatening clouds gathered soon after I began my first stint. Approaching *Stavelot*, the 150mph right-hander taken in fifth gear in a GT40, I could see rain in the distance and slowed to about 100mph by the time the curtain fell. Incredibly, a glance in my mirrors revealed the fast-approaching headlights of a driver much braver than me. Worrying more about survival than position, I pressed my car as close to the apex as possible, practically scraping its right side against the corner of a house.

'Wild' Willy Mairesse in the yellow *Equipe Nationale Belge* Ferrari 412P came blasting past on the outside – and immediately lost it. The telegraph pole that took the first hit deflected him back onto the asphalt where he bounced off the side of a building and continued down the track in the balletic contortions of a monster shunt. I missed a shift while attempting to avoid Willy's gyrating car and began sliding sideways, now in danger of an accident of my own making. With the windscreen misting and my vision obscured, I steered with one hand and fumbled for a gear with the other. Miraculously, the car ended up pointing in the right direction, with me considerably shaken. Just as I began to recover my resolve to return to serious motoring, Racing Team Holland's Porsche 906 flew past, went off the road, flipped and rejoined the track, spinning upside-down like a top. After 1,000 kilometres of such dramas, our sixth place felt sufficient.

Mairesse returned to racing until he sustained a career-ending crash in the 1968 Le Mans 24 Hours. Physically and mentally damaged, and knowing no other means of earning a livelihood, this brave Belgian took his life in an Ostend hotel in 1969.

Willy Mairesse was 40 years old.

ABOVE **Our 1966 race went so well that Peter Sutcliffe repeated the invitation for the following year. Once again we finished in his reliable old GT40, this time in sixth place.** *LAT*

ABOVE **In 1968, Jacky Ickx and I did five long-distance races in the JW Automotive Gulf Ford GT40 for John Wyer. Jacky adored Spa, especially in the rain, but I equalled his best practice time.**
LAT

OPPOSITE **The 1968 Spa 1,000Kms was wet from start to finish. Jacky pulled out a lead of 39 seconds on the first lap and thereafter we were never headed.**
McKlein

A win, at last – 1968

By now my professional racing career was a reality, gracefully accepted by Marion and energetically embraced by me. As a result of my 1967 win in the Kyalami Nine Hours in South Africa with Jacky Ickx in the JW Automotive Mirage M1, John Wyer signed us to continue our partnership the following year. Wyer's 1968 entries were Ford GT40s, splendidly liveried in what became the most iconic team colours ever, Gulf Oil cerulean blue with a broad orange stripe. Less providentially, John Cooper also hired me (for £500) to drive in selected Grands Prix.

While I was grateful to Cooper for the Formula 1 opportunity, I was less enthusiastic about his car. The rear-engine Cooper T81B was powered by a heavy, thirsty Maserati V12 engine that had been first used 12 years earlier in the Maserati 250F. While the Wyer relationship led to glory, my Cooper experience ended in tears.

The 1968 Spa 1,000Kms pitched Wyer's GT40 against Alan Mann's fast – though unstable and temperamental – Ford P68 sports prototype, driven by Frank Gardner and Hubert Hahne. Frank had handily outqualified us by four full seconds on Saturday but on race day Spa's great leveller materialised – hard, implacable rain. This was perfect Jacky Ickx weather.

Jacky loved Spa and he especially loved Spa in the wet. Over my 22 years of professional racing, I never witnessed a lap as brilliant as Jacky's opener that day. When he stormed past the pits to begin lap two, everyone in the paddock was convinced that the rest of the field had been halted by a horrendous accident. Thirty-nine seconds passed before the second-placed car, a Porsche 908 coupé driven by Vic Elford, finally sloshed into sight. By then Jacky had rounded *Eau Rouge*, crested *Raidillon* and disappeared up the *Kemmel* straight – this despite Vic's skill in the rain and the known superiority of the lightweight 908 on a slippery track.

The 908's wet-weather efficiency didn't necessarily empower all Porsche drivers. When I attempted to pass Vic's co-driver, Jochen Neerpasch, at *Malmedy*, he suddenly spun directly

ABOVE **Jacky Ickx and JW Automotive mechanic Ermanno Cuoghi confer at Spa in 1968, while I listen and absorb their wisdom.** *Ford*

in front of me, skating about wildly before leaving the track and crashing violently. The car was destroyed and Jochen was knocked out by a steel tube from the bus shelter he demolished. A month later, his racing enthusiasm much diminished, Jochen said, '*Brian, you can only play Russian Roulette so long.*' True to his sentiments, he redirected his skills towards race management, building a series of successful touring car teams, first around the Ford RS Capri (as competition director for Ford in Germany) and then the BMW CSL.

The race continued, as did the rain. Although I had qualified in the dry with the same lap time as Jacky, Wyer now instructed me, to my great relief, to '*maintain the gap*' and not attempt to equal the wet-weather pace of the otherworldly Mr Ickx. In the end we won by more than a lap, ahead of the Gerhard Mitter/Jo Schlesser Porsche 907. Being damned with faint praise usually rankles, but it was with satisfaction that I read Wyer's post-race comment: '*Redman drove extremely well and did all that was required of him.*' Job secured, at least for now.

RIGHT **Driving steadily through the rain and maintaining the gap, as John Wyer instructed.** *LAT*

ABOVE **Note the broken front suspension on my Cooper in Peter Burn's photo, taken just before my crash and proving it was not driver error.** *LAT*

OPPOSITE **After vaulting the barrier and breaking my arm, the Cooper caught fire. The marshals were woefully equipped; the one wielding the fire extinguisher and smoking reignited the blaze. Once the fire was out, they dragged me from the wreckage, dumped me on the ground and returned to their injured compatriot.** *Sutton Images*

Formula 1 – 1968

I returned to Spa again in June as part of my Formula 1 commitment, burdened to drive the troublesome Cooper. Despite an engine transplant (a BRM V12 for a Maserati V12) and a chassis redesign (to Type 86B), the car remained the same old affliction. By this time Cooper was on an irreversible downhill slide and the team's technical expertise was antediluvian. I complained that the car wanted to spin entering each corner, pushed towards the outside of the track at the apex, and displayed so much instability at the exit that it lifted the inside rear wheel. The Cooper engineer's solution was to lower my rear tyre pressures by five pounds, a change that did nothing for the handling. Of course, a professional driver is paid to carry on regardless, a questionable practice as events later confirmed.

Ludovico Scarfiotti, my usual Cooper teammate, was excused from Spa so that he could fulfil a Porsche commitment at Germany's Rossfeldstrasse hillclimb. On the Saturday of our Grand Prix weekend, just after qualifying, I learned that Ludovico's Porsche 910 left the rain-soaked road and crashed into a tree, throwing him out of the car and killing him instantly.

Ludovico Scarfiotti was 35 years old.

Sunday came. I put Scarfiotti's accident out of my mind and went racing. Even the faint-hearted Cooper-BRM took the *Eau Rouge/Raidillon* complex at 130mph, cresting the hill flat out and gaining speed on the *Kemmel* straight to arrive at *Les Combes* at about 160mph. As I approached this fast left-hander, I felt something fail in my suspension and attempted to spin so I could crash backwards – the safer way to self-destruct. Unhelpfully, the steering had locked and I careened sideways into the barrier. The car's rolling momentum carried it up and over the guardrail with my right arm caught between the unyielding steel and the car's chassis. Once on the other side, the Cooper continued to slide, demolishing a marshals' post and slamming into a parked Vauxhall Velox. The big Vauxhall may have completed the Cooper's ruin, but at least it

ABOVE The aftermath of my calamitous crash at Spa, the wreckage of my Cooper next to the parked Vauxhall Velox that it had hit.
Sutton Images

prevented my car, and me, from disappearing into the forest. Three wheels came off the Cooper – one severely injuring a track marshal – before it burst into flames. Had I not been strapped inside, I might have cheered.

Accidents seem to unravel slowly for racing drivers and, short of being concussed (something we didn't understand in that era), memories record surprising detail. I distinctly recall feeling the two bones in my lower arm snap as I rolled over the barrier and then holding my breath when marshals applied a spray of fire extinguishant. Even damaged and shaken, I was concerned as much about inhaling that toxic cloud as being burned. A Belgian marshal's face appeared through the mist and, without removing the cigarette from his mouth, he started to undo my belts, igniting spilled fuel and causing the car once again to burst into flames.

The marshals finally put out the fire, dragged me out of the wreck and deposited me on the ground. With the driver who created this mayhem temporarily dispatched, they went back to tending their comrade, who not only suffered a ruptured spleen but also a heart attack. From my prone position, the horizon filled with the pensive face of journalist David Phipps as I repeatedly shouted, '*The bloody steering broke!*'

Eventually the corner marshals remembered to cart me off on a stretcher and I was taken by helicopter to Hôpital de Bavière, the teaching facility at Université de Liège. There I was placed under the care of *Professeur* F. Orban, who had been an aide to Winston Churchill during the Second World War. *Professeur* Orban had volunteered for duty that day knowing it was likely that his skills would be needed.

As I lay on the operating table, the masked-and-gowned physician looked hard at me and cautioned, '*Monsieur Redman, it may not be possible to save your arm.*' I smiled and thanked him. Perplexed, he asked how I could be so pleased, to which I truthfully replied, '*Because I am here.*' Somehow, this brilliant surgeon dragged the broken ulna and radius bones back into alignment and managed to insert two stainless-steel Rush pins down the medullary canals, one from the wrist to the elbow and the other in the reverse direction.

This was the first time Marion had to learn from a television broadcast about the downside of her husband's profession. After flying to Belgium, she was collected and watched over by Lucien Bianchi, who replaced Scarfiotti as my new Cooper teammate. Marion provided her usual competent management; Lucien and his wife Marianne offered their unsparing tenderness. It was a blow to us both when, in testing at Le Mans the following year, Lucien was killed in an accident that ended with his Alfa Romeo T33 stopped by a telegraph pole.

Lucien Bianchi was 34 years old.

John Cooper visited me the day after the race and politely inquired as to what caused the crash that destroyed his valuable racing car. '*Something broke in the suspension*,' I told him. John didn't respond well to this assessment but gave a shrug and delivered this rather unsympathetic comment: '*You'll heal, my boy.*' By the next day, I understood. Beneath John Cooper's studied indifference rested his determination to protect the Cooper Car Company's reputation, at the expense of mine, if necessary. On Thursday, *Motoring News* ran a story in which I was quoted as saying the suspension failed, inciting John to call editor Michael Tee and demand a retraction. '*The car didn't fail*,' insisted John, '*it was driver error.*' Serendipitously, the next day's *Autosport* published a photo by Peter Burn, the magazine's chief photographer, that clearly showed the front suspension adrift.

In his 'On The Scene' column in *Autosport*, journalist Patrick McNally wrote:

'The responsibility of those actively involved in motor racing, particularly journalists and photographers, is a heavy one when they record the reasons behind accidents, which they may or may not witness. It is so easy to rush into print with hearsay information that is not based on concrete facts.

'The stories that surrounded Brian Redman's nasty incident last Sunday was a typical example; the personal accounts of apparent eye witnesses varied to the point where they sounded like four separate accidents. On a lighter note, Brian Redman was sitting up in hospital on Monday, his usual cheerful self, and his injuries are confirmed as a broken arm and a burned hand.'

Thank you, *Professeur* Orban, for saving my arm; your two pins remain on duty to this day. Thank you also to Peter Burn for rescuing my career.

The second win – 1969

Life took a swift and positive upturn. I was named a Porsche factory driver, paired in a long-tail 908 coupé for the Spa 1,000Kms with Jo 'Seppi' Siffert, the brilliant Swiss driver who came up through the hard-knocks school of motorcycle racing. Seppi and I (as well as every other Porsche factory driver) spent much of the 1969 season doing our best to avoid testing the new, unsorted 917. It was inevitable that, in the close confines of the Porsche team at Spa, there would be no escape. I was trapped like a rabbit in its hole by a ferret of a team manager.

BELOW By 1969 I was a factory Porsche driver. Jo Siffert and I insisted on racing this tried-and tested long-tail 908 instead of the troublesome – and dangerous – new 917.
Porsche-Werkfoto

ABOVE Our first pit-stop in the 1969 1,000Kms with me about to climb into the 908 to take over from 'Seppi' Siffert: Porsche engineer Peter Falk looks on from the left whilst Seppi confers with Helmut Bott. *Grand Prix Library*

OPPOSITE Our decision to race the Porsche 908 in the 1969 1,000Kms proved to be wise. We won after a tough battle with the Pedro Rodriguez/David Piper Ferrari 312P. *LAT*

'Herr Redman,' queried engineer Helmut Bott, *'you vud like to drive the 917? Now is güt?'*

'But it's raining, Herr Bott,' I explained, hoping that Spa's monsoons might provide an excuse.

'Zen go slow,' he patiently instructed.

Reluctantly I levered myself into the seat, cramming my knees behind the steering column with my head pressed against the roof. As I started the car, the windscreen wiper blade made one sweep to the right before hurling itself gloriously into the pits. Feeling saved, I undid my belts and climbed out.

'Yah, vas iss da matter, Herr Redman?'

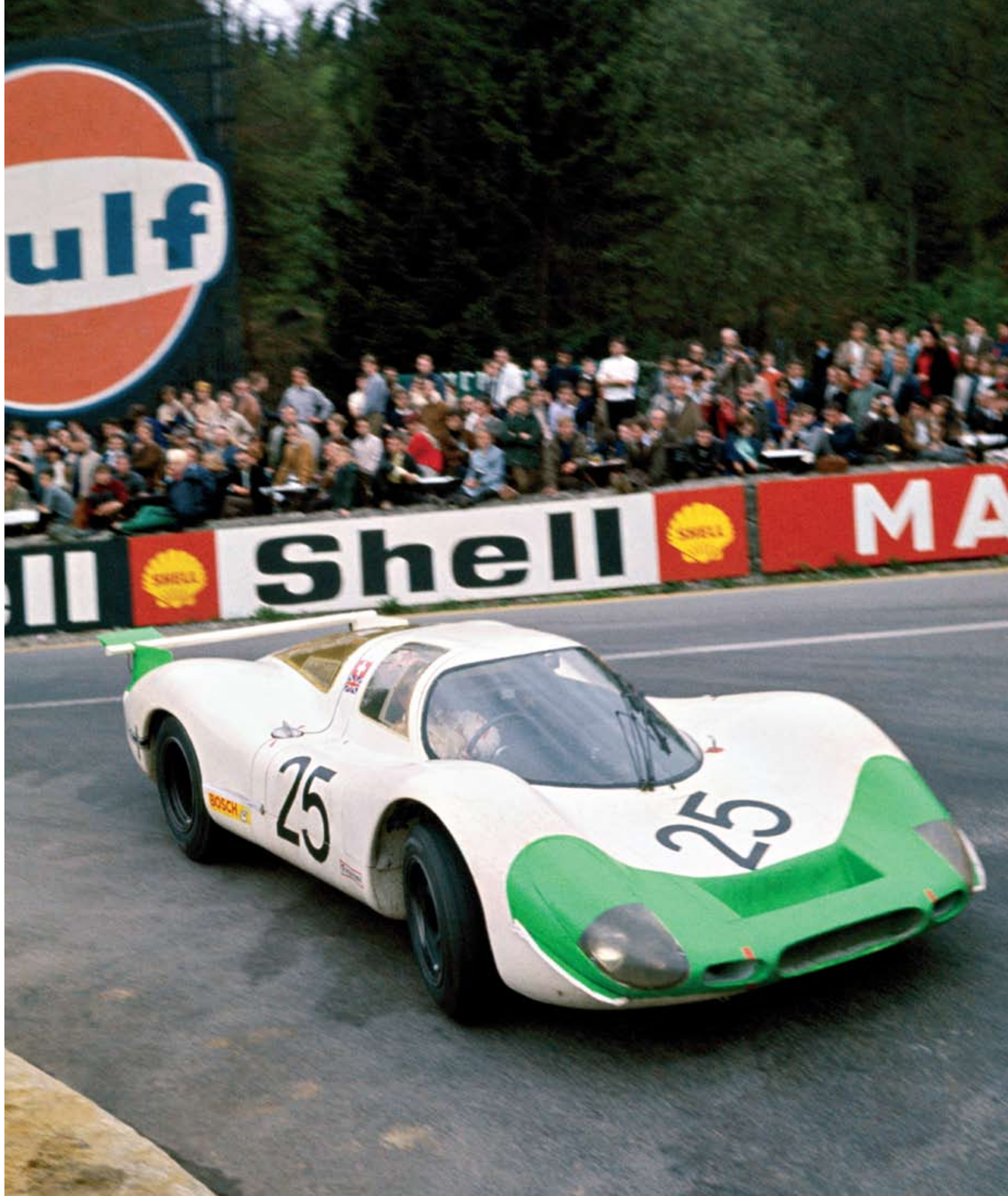
'Well, Herr Bott, you see the windscreen wiper has gone missing, and it's raining.'

'Yah, yah, yah. You go slow. Is not raining so much.'

In the description of a flying lap of Spa that accompanies this chapter, I explain the furious potential of a fully developed 12-cylinder Porsche 917K, which had become a most formidable car by 1970. That day in 1969, however, I carefully explored the lowest possible limits of Herr Bott's unsorted car.

For the race, Seppi and I agreed that we would be far more competitive in a tried-and-tested long-tail Porsche 908 coupé, and how right we were. Gerhard Mitter blew up the lone 917 almost immediately, no doubt by inadvertently selecting third gear instead of fifth, allowing his partner Udo Schütz to go home with a clean uniform. That left Jo and me to fight a hard battle with the Ferrari 312P of Pedro Rodriguez and David Piper and, by the end, we had managed to gain nearly a full lap on them to take the win. While fulfilling my role as 'rear gunner' for Seppi, I did manage to sneak in a lap at 3 minutes 37 seconds, the fastest of the race.

During Porsche's annual Christmas party at the company's Weissach proving ground, engineer Helmut Flegel asked if I wanted to see the new 908/03 and, of course, I said *'yes'*. When he whipped the cover off the car, I began to perspire. Without bodywork, it looked like a go-kart on steroids, but that's not what caused my alarm. In order to position the gearbox ahead of the rear axle, the eight-cylinder engine had



ABOVE **My second Spa 1,000Kms win was satisfying; setting the fastest lap made it doubly rewarding.** *LAT*

been moved forward, pushing the driver even further into the nose. Not only would his feet stick out beyond the front wheels, but there was only an aluminium oil cooler and some delicate bodywork between the soles of his shoes and whatever solid object the car might hit. With the body off, a driver could actually touch the right front tyre from his seat. Gallows humour followed when I suggested that the car was perfect for Douglas Bader, the legless Second World War aviator.

Group Captain Sir Douglas Bader actually deserved more respect. Despite an aerobatics crash in the early 1930s that cost him his lower limbs, he persuaded an undermanned RAF to accept him as a fighter pilot during the 1940 Battle of Britain, ultimately achieving 20 confirmed kills with four more shared and six probable, plus 11 enemy aircraft damaged. It was theorised that Bader actually had a fighting advantage. Legless, more of his blood could be retained in his torso and he was less likely to pass out when executing high-speed turns.

Win number three – 1970

John Wyer took over the testing of the Porsche 917 in 1969 and his organisation, JW Automotive Engineering, was named the official Porsche race team for 1970. By the time we returned to Spa in 1970, the 917K had already proven itself with wins in the 24 Hours of Daytona, the Brands Hatch 1,000Kms and the Monza 1,000Kms. For the Spa 1,000Kms we had new rear bodywork with a tunnel down the middle of a slightly modified tail section that swept up at its trailing edge. This aggressive configuration was designed to give us added speed on the long straights, not that any of the drivers had lobbied for this particular favour. It turned out that the car's tyres shared our misgivings.

During the opening lap of practice, Seppi had a terrifying high-speed incident when a front tyre parted from its rim on the *Masta* straight at about 180mph. After all four wheels and tyres were replaced, it appeared that I was not to be left out of the fun. '*Herr Redman, now iss your turn*.' When I offered my opinion that something might be seriously wrong, Herr Bott gave me the same counsel he had imparted the previous year – go slowly.

I followed this advice impeccably for three laps as I built my speed and confidence. On the fourth lap I felt obliged to take an aggressive run down the *Masta* straight at about 215mph, and then around *Stavelot* at 170mph. So far, so good. But as I approached the flat-out *Les Carrières* at 175mph, my left rear tyre detached itself from the rim, flinging the 917 sideways and causing the car to slew from one edge of the road to the other. In desperation I took both hands off the steering wheel, having once read that the caster (forward tilt) of the front wheels would automatically straighten the car. It worked and eventually the car stopped, undamaged. The same could not be said for my confidence. When I returned to the pits, Seppi fell on the ground laughing, pointing out that my face matched the colour of my white driver's suit.

Incredibly, neither of the tyres that failed on our cars had actually blown. Rather, the centres

ABOVE **With Jo Siffert in the pits in 1970, minutes before the left front tyre of our 917 came off the rim at 180mph on his first practice lap – the same thing as later happened to me.** *LAT*

BELOW **Siffert in our Gulf Porsche (24) begins his duel with Rodriguez (25) at the start of the 1970 1,000Kms. Four more 917s lie behind: Jürgen Neuhaus/Helmut Kelleners (30), Hans Laine/Gijs van Lennep (43), Richard Attwood/Hans Herrmann (29) and Vic Elford/Kurt Ahrens (28).** *LAT*

of the tyres had expanded so much from spinning at such high speeds that their inside beads were pulled away from the rims. Safety pins and studs had yet to be devised but, clearly, a solution had to be found. The night before the race, all of the team's magnesium-alloy wheels were taken to the nearby city of Liège and roughly sandblasted, the better to grip the tyres. No one knew if this would work, although we drivers would be the first to find out.

It rained heavily during the night and, as was normally the case, I slept in fits and starts, often waking in a cold sweat. My thoughts were of Spa's dangers, of course, but I also found myself dwelling, as a child of the Second World War, on how local families suffered when the region was savaged during the Battle of the Bulge*. Somehow, the spectre of senseless losses during the war dovetailed with my fear of Spa's random uncertainties. Even now, I don't know if this grim combination made things worse or better.

The next day was race day. Pedro Rodriguez had put one of the JW Automotive Porsche 917Ks on pole with my teammate Jo Siffert alongside in ours. Two factory Ferrari 512s were our main competition, one driven by Jacky Ickx – on his favourite track – and John Surtees, the 1964 Formula 1 World Champion. We had our work cut out. The track was still wet when the race began, so Pedro and Seppi started on intermediate tyres.

**The last German attack of the war was spearheaded by the armoured column of Hitler's crack fighting force, the First SS Panzer Division, just returned from Russia and led by a young, fanatical Nazi named Joachim Peiper. These battle-hardened soldiers were privileged to wear the Death's Head skull on their collars and had the Führer's name sewn onto their sleeves. The SS, notorious for its atrocities, butchered 130 Stavelot townspeople and continued murdering civilians beyond. At Malmedy the Germans surprised about 100 American GIs at lunch who yielded when they found themselves facing tanks with rifles. After guards herded their prisoners into the centre of a field, a sudden pistol shot revealed the SS's intentions and gunners from the passing tanks and half-tracks joined in, spraying the unarmed Americans with heavy, automatic weapons. Just two soldiers survived by playing dead beneath piles of their comrades.*

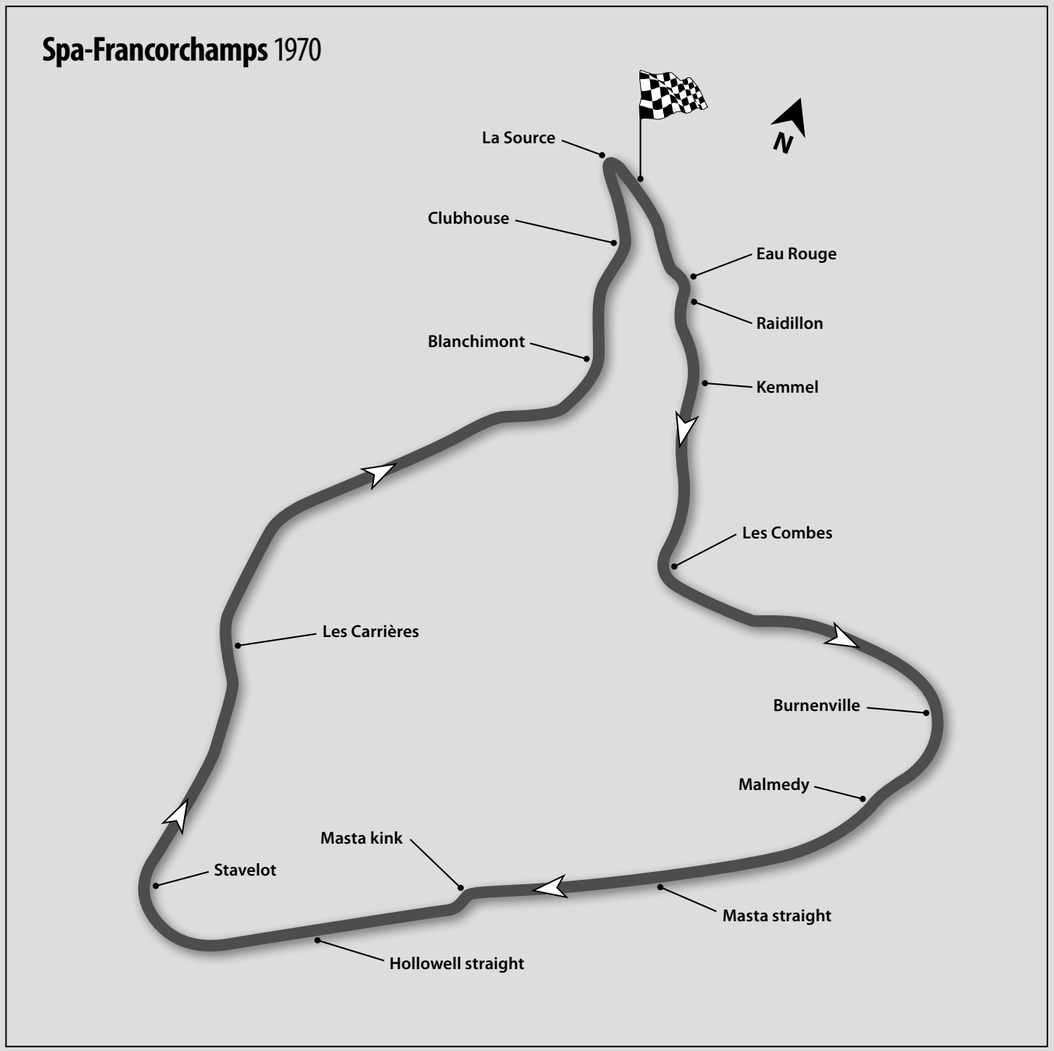
LEFT Teammates Siffert and Rodriguez attack *Eau Rouge* and each other, swapping paint with little concern for the four hours of racing ahead.
LAT

A lap of Spa-Francorchamps

Allow me to take you back to 1970 and share a lap of the original 8.7-mile track – what historians now like to call '*l'ancien circuit*' – in my Porsche 917K.

I'll begin at *La Source*, the final hairpin corner where I progressively squeezed the accelerator until my car was nearly straight, and then mashed the pedal to the floor to begin the downhill dive. As I hurtled past the pits and start/finish line, I slipped from second gear into third as my speed built to about 160mph. A tap on the brakes at the bottom allowed me to swivel through the *Eau Rouge* S-bend, charge uphill at about 140mph and tiptoe through the right/left *Raidillon* sequence. Snatching fourth gear (top in a 917K), I blasted up the gradually rising *Kemmel* straight with speed continuing to increase. In every gear, I revved to a maximum of 8,000rpm; one missed shift and delicate valves would have confronted flailing pistons, resulting in a thoroughly broken engine.

As the sweeping *Les Combes* left-hander rushed into view at 170mph, I braked hard, grabbed third gear and, using every inch of the road, opened the throttle to surge down another steep hill towards the flat-out right called *Burnenville*. Still in top gear, I hammered through the connecting chute into *Malmedy* and onto the *Masta* straight, that narrow 1½-mile country road where I pushed the car to its top speed – 214mph. I tried not to think about this as I neared the *Masta* kink, possibly the most intimidating turn in all of



motor racing. At that velocity, I couldn't indulge even the briefest of unnecessary lifts without losing precious seconds (and my drive). Left/right through there at 180mph and onto the *Hollowell* straight, flat out again at top speed for another 1½ miles.

Stavelot, a long right-hander, was taken in top gear at about 170mph and followed by a fast left that promptly shifted to a 160mph right with its apex at the corner of a stone building. Straight uphill now towards the blind, flat-out *Les Carrières*, still gaining speed into an equally blind 170mph left called *Blanchimont*, where a narrow patch of grass was all that separated the track from a steel barrier. A final uphill straight returned me to *La Source*, the first-gear corner where this lap began. Ploughing around this slow turn allowed a few seconds to breathe, flex and relax before it was time to repeat the exercise – 14 more times.

ABOVE Siffert in our 917 held the advantage on a wet track during the early laps, before Rodriguez/Kinnunen in the other Gulf car dropped out after half distance.
Porsche-Werkfoto

At the drop of the flag, the two of them contested the narrow road side by side, banging their 917s' flanks through *Eau Rouge*, then up the hill and out of sight. I'm sure the hairs on the back of John Wyer's neck stood on end; they did on mine. This spirited Rodriguez/Siffert rivalry turned out to have serious consequences for me at the Targa Florio a year later, to the detriment of my career and the devastation of my body.

The JW Automotive Porsche 917 duos of Rodriguez/Kinnunen and Siffert/Redman soon put distance on the field, leapfrogging each other back and forth as the race unfolded. Ultimately Seppi and I extended our lead, to take the win over the Ickx/Surtees Ferrari at an average speed of 149.42mph, including pitstops. It was the fastest road race ever run. I was able to match Siffert's best time, but Pedro Rodriguez blitzed us all by setting a single lap record of 3 minutes 16.5 seconds at an astonishing average speed of 160.513mph.

At 10 o'clock in the evening, after the interminable prize-giving, Siffert said, '*Come on,*

RIGHT The surface now dry, we have the track to ourselves in this spectacular view of the 917 climbing *Raidillon*, a packed crowd filling the valley behind.
Grand Prix Library

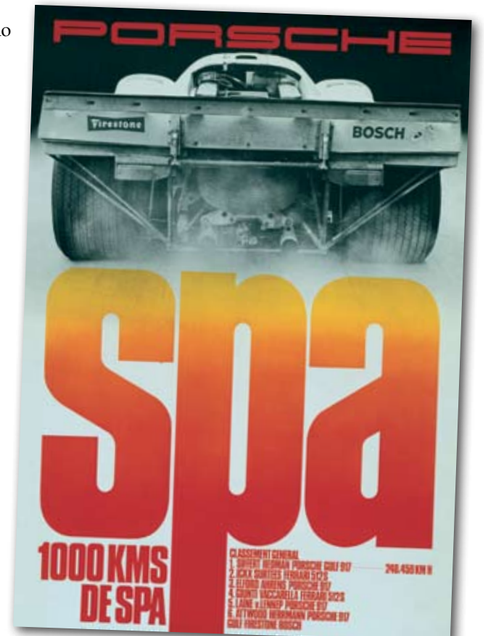
ABOVE Seppi and I are both in view, with mechanics hard at work, including Peter Davies (refuelling). The four main figures on the pit counter are (from left) Grady Davis (Gulf boss), John and Tottie Wyer (both seated) and John Horsman (chief engineer).
LAT

RIGHT In our 1970 win, Jo Siffert and I averaged 149.42mph – the fastest road race ever run.
Porsche-Werkfoto

let's have a drink with the mechanics.' Marion, who was there with our young son James, asked when I expected to return. '*About midnight*' seemed a reasonable enough estimate, although I was unaware that the mechanics were lodging 20 miles away. In sweet, celebratory relief, we partied and sang until four in the morning: '*Prost, Prost Kamerad; Prost, Prost Kamerad*.' Back at the hotel, Seppi demonstrated 360-degree spins with his Porsche 911 in the car park, showering the windows with gravel. The management – both the hotel's and mine – were not amused, but neither Seppi nor I much cared. We had won and remained whole – and the Spa 1,000Kms was behind us for another year.

No Spa – 1971

I missed the Spa 1,000Kms in 1971. This was the year I attempted retirement in South Africa and returned to racing, only to endure a fiery accident in the Targa Florio, as recounted in Chapter 5.



LEFT Porsche's poster listing the top six finishers in the 1970 race demonstrated the company's supremacy over Ferrari.
Porsche-Werkfoto

LEFT Celebrating with Seppi after our second successive victory together, and my hat-trick.
Getty Images/ Rainer Schlegelmilch

ABOVE **After my Targa Florio accident, I missed the 1971 Spa 1,000Kms, returning in 1972 as a works Ferrari driver. Here I talk things over with my teammate Ronnie Peterson.** *Getty Images/ Rainer Schlegelmilch*

Win number four – 1972

Rain was a constant of my racing at Spa and once again played a pivotal role in the 1972 1,000Kms. I had been hired by Ferrari to share a 312PB with Arturo Merzario, a very good but temperamental driver. In the race, with only one hour left to run, the Jacky Ickx/Clay Regazzoni 312PB was leading when Clay picked up a puncture and hit the barrier, damaging the bodywork and oil tank.

Suddenly I was in the lead, but with Ronnie Peterson in the team's third 312PB closing quickly. As we approached the fast *Les Combes* left-hander, I took my usual prudent line to give myself a touch more room in case of trouble – a legacy of my 1968 accident. At that moment there was a wave of movement among the fans clustered by the corner as if something had abruptly startled them *en masse*. It spooked me sufficiently that I lifted and touched the brakes. The spectators, as a group, were closing their umbrellas after a shower that had made the road surface wet but without any obvious puddles. My conservative line and early braking allowed me to make it

RIGHT **My Ferrari 312PB rounding the *La Source* hairpin during the 1972 1,000Kms, made dramatic by 'speed-blur' photography.** *Getty Images/ Rainer Schlegelmilch*

through the corner while hard-charging Ronnie ended up riding along the top of the guardrail like a slot car.

There are moments of wisdom like this that contribute to every win, but I've noticed that the more experienced a driver becomes, the more often they occur.

No joy – 1973

For the 1973 Spa 1,000Kms I was again paired in the Ferrari 312PB with the formidable Jacky Ickx, who set the fastest-ever lap during qualifying at a speed of 163.679mph.

Alas, in the race our gearbox oil cooler failed at about half distance, leaving the race to Derek Bell and Mike Hailwood in their Gulf Mirage M6 – and a new 163.086mph lap record to Henri Pescarolo in his Matra MS670B.

The new Spa-Francorchamps

My move to Formula 5000 and the American Can-Am series ended my string of 1,000Kms races at Spa. Six years later, in 1979, the track management sensibly pruned the circuit's length from 8.7 miles to 4.5, connecting *Les Combes* and *Blanchimont* by a new sector and ceding the 4.4 miles between *Malmedy* and *Stavelot* to full-time public use. I returned to Spa in 1989 to drive Peter Livanos' Aston Martin AMR1 and found the new layout to be fast and fun, the killer kinks and corners now mercifully absent. You can drive much of the original circuit in a road car today, but carefully. It remains largely unchanged.

I won at Spa on five occasions: four in 1,000Kms races – one each in a Ford GT40, Porsche 908, Porsche 917 and Ferrari 312PB – and once with a Chevron B16S in the 1970 500Kms. These successes weren't often pleasurable but they were always rewarding. I recall that each time I stepped from the car at the end, the grass was greener, the sky bluer and the air purer. Now, from the gauzy perspective of over 45 years, I can report that I'm glad to have had the opportunity to engage and conquer the original circuit.

Time does that, even to racing drivers.

OPPOSITE The Ferrari 312PB I shared with Arturo Merzario in 1972 is seen at *Stavelot*, before I took the lead in the final hour for my fourth win in the Spa 1,000Kms. *LAT*

BELOW In 1973, when I drove with Jacky Ickx, my Ferrari 312PB turns into *Les Combes* at the end of the rising *Kemmel* straight, in rare Spa sunshine. A broken gearbox oil cooler ended our effort. *LAT*