

Rain

They didn't nickname it "*Wetwood*" for no reason. While there were few race tracks anywhere in the world as scenic and pleasant as Westwood on a sunny Vancouver day, it wasn't always that way. In fact, it rained quite a lot!

The track was built on a mountainside in what was in reality the Pacific Coast rainforest. Why do you think the area has such large trees?

Storms charged with moisture rolled in off the Pacific Ocean and when they bumped into the mountains, they dumped their moisture, usually on Westwood.

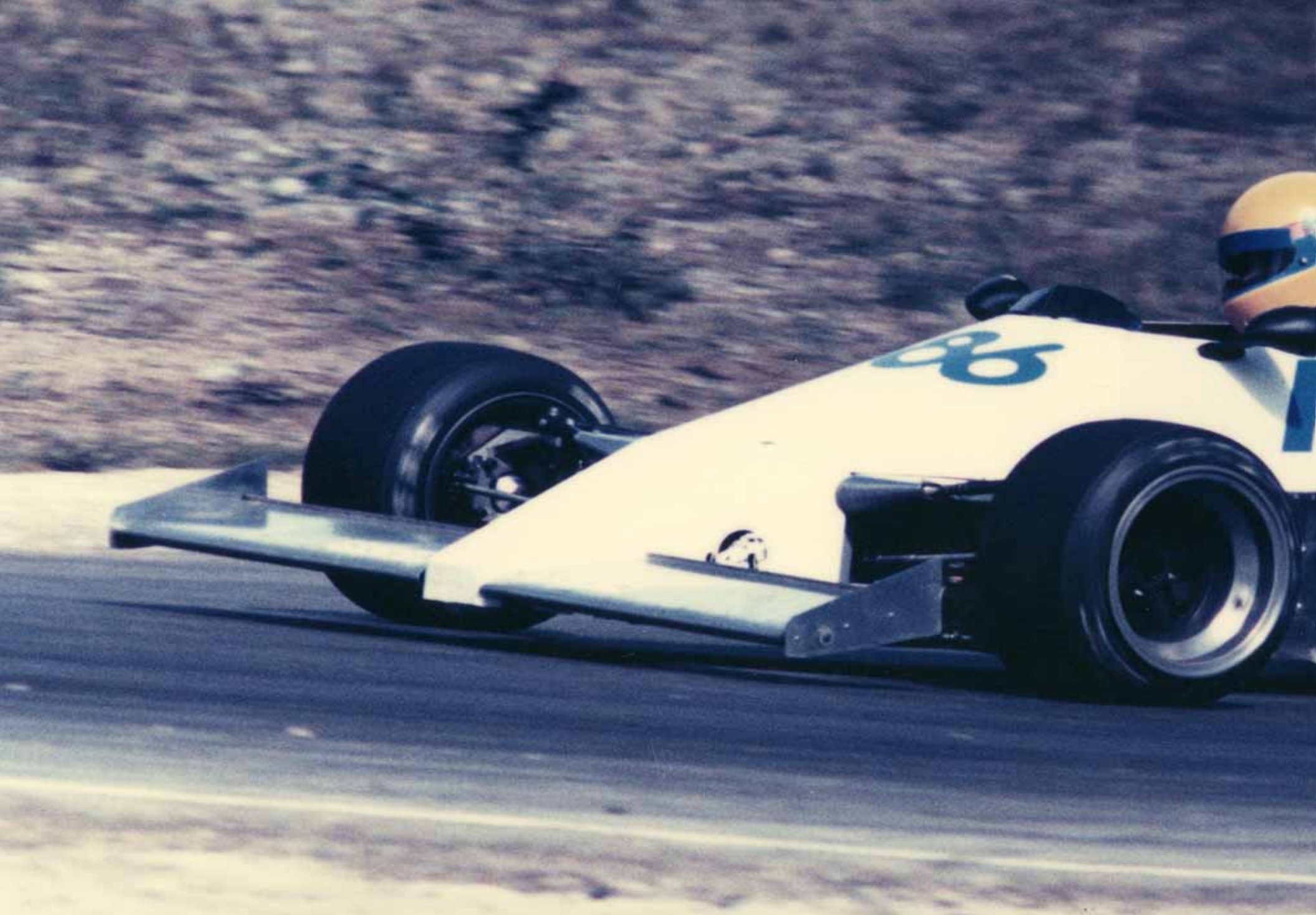
Westwood regulars, by necessity, became experts in the rain or on any other slippery surface. Many did ice racing in the winter.

Rain Trained

Frank Allers, who drove my cars for years, could be counted on to be the fastest in any wet sessions in all the pro Atlantic races we did together. Why? Of course, all of those laps at Wetwood!



Ric Forest in his March 722 Formula B Car, 1972 (Tom Johnston)



Frank Allers in the Author's Johnston JM6, 1985. This was one of the few domestically built Formula Atlantic cars. *(Tom Johnston Collection)*

LAP 3

32 Years of Racing



Three Decades

This section lists significant events that occurred at the circuit over its 32 seasons of operation. The decision regarding what to include is mine:

others may have different opinions.

I have broken the 32 years into three decades for better organization. There is no particular significance to

the order in which the events are displayed other than chronology.

It Wasn't all Guys! There were plenty of women drivers, workers and officials. *(SCCBC Archives)*



1959 to 1969

1958

- December 6: Sod-Turning Ceremony.

1959

- July 26: Westwood opens for business with possibly its largest crowd ever; Pete Lovely sets first lap record, 1:25.7, in a 1500cc Lotus 15.

1960

- May: Olivier Gendebien, famous Le Mans winning—driver comes to Westwood and pronounces it to be one of the top four circuits in the world.
- July 24: First major event, the Westwood International 200, won by Pete Lovely and Jack Nethercutt in a Ferrari 250 Testa Rossa.
- October 30: First season-ending endurance race run, 5 hours, won by Bob Constabaris and Jerry Barber, with two cars (allowed), an AC Bristol and a Porsche.

1961

- Westwood Karting Association (WKA) formed.
- June 11: Karting circuit opens.

1962

- May 6: First Player's Pacific, won by Stan Burnett in his Burnett Special.

Stars of Decade



Sports Racing Cars



Formula Junior



Mercedes 300SL



Bob McLean

(All SCCBC Archives)

1963

- BC Automobile Association donates the pedestrian bridge.

1964

- Eppie Wietzes crashes the brand-new Cooper-Ford in practice for the Player's Pacific; teammate Ludwig Heimrath finishes third and goes on to win the Canadian Championship.

1965

- September 17: First Pepsi Pro race, won by Chuck Parsons in a Genie.
- Popular Westwood driver Bob McLean wins Canadian Driving Championship.

1966

- April 3: Bob McLean Memorial Races. (After winning the Canadian Championship, McLean tragically died racing a Ford GT-40 at Sebring, Florida.)

1967

- August 20: Author Tom Johnston first competes at Westwood, winning his class, edging out local hot shoe Mike Gee by a hair.

1968

- October 19: SCCBC runs a 10-hour endurance race, The Province 10 Hours of Endurance, the longest race in Canada. Of course it rained the whole time. Winners were Wade Carter and Milt Davis in a Porsche 911S, who covered nearly 700 miles.

1969

- June 29: The first major pro race for formula cars, a round of the Gulf Canada Series, won by Eppie Wietzes in a Lola T142.
- The first Province 500 endurance race.

Three Decades

1970 to 1980

1970

- September 20: The first professional Formula Ford race, won by Pierre Phillips of Portland, Oregon, driving a Lotus.

1971

- Pepsi Pro Race converts to Formula Ford.
- Westwood Towers opens.
- Player's Centennial Race of Champions.
- Arleigh Pilkey, Westwood pioneer, passes.

1972

- Driver Marty Loft sets the Formula Ford record at 1:11.4 and it is not beaten for a very long time.

1973

- July 8: The first NASCAR stock car event at Westwood.
- October 7: Author Tom Johnston drives his last race ever, debuting the prototype JM2 sports racer in the season-ending Province 500, crashing on the third lap (he continues, to finish 20th).

Stars of Decade



Formula Ford
(Tom Johnston Collection)



SCCA Nationals
(SCCA)



NASCAR
(Tom Johnston)



Al Lader
(SCCBC Archives)

1974

- May 26: Allan Lader wins the first professional Formula Atlantic race.
- July 14: 15th anniversary celebrated.
- July 27: Four-hour Pro Enduro won by Ken Coupland and Bob Beauchemin in a Chevron B16.
- Honda/BF Goodrich series for Honda Civic sedans begins.

1975

- Name **Mountain High Racing** introduced.
- May 11: The first SCCA National event run at Westwood; this was also the first SCCA National ever run outside of the US.

1976

- May 30: Marty Loft wins Player's Pacific in a March 76B.

1977

- June 5: First Trans-Am race at Westwood, won by Peter Gregg in a Porsche 934 Turbo.
- July 17: Future world driving champion Keke Rosberg wins the Labatt's Formula Atlantic race in a Chevron B34 Cosworth BDA.

1978

- CASC National Runoffs (Canadian amateur road racing championships) held at Westwood.

1979

- June 3: Champagne Motor Sport Weekend: 20th anniversary celebrated.

1980

- June 1: Jacques (l'Oncle) Villeneuve wins Formula Atlantic pro race.

1981 to 1990

1981

- First Historic Weekend event run by Vintage Racing Club of British Columbia (VRCBC).

1982

- Tommy Phillips, son of Pioneer Westwood racer Pierre Phillips, wins CKLG/MCL pro Atlantic race in a Ralt RT4.

1983

- May 21: Michael Andretti turns fastest lap ever at Westwood, 0:58.795, in qualifying for the Formula Mondial (Atlantic) race, in a Ralt RT4 Cosworth.

1984

- July 22: Silver Jubilee, 25th Anniversary Weekend.

1985

- July 21: First Gilles Villeneuve Memorial Weekend.

1986

- July 20: Local driver Frank Allers has his debut Formula Atlantic race in the Keen Engineering Johnston JM6.

Stars of Decade



Player's/GM
(Frank Allers Collection)



Honda Series
(Frank Allers Collection)



Formula Atlantic
(Tom Johnston)



Frank Allers
(Frank Allers Collection)

1987

- First season of the very popular Player's/GM Motorsport series for Chevrolet Camaros and Pontiac Firebirds.

1988

- Westwood Fund to improve the track started.

1989

- SCCBC fails in attempt to build a new facility in Maple Ridge.
- February 8: Deadline for proposals to purchase Westwood Plateau.
- August 6: Hiro Matsushita sets ultimate lap record during Toyota Atlantic race, 0:59.705, in a Swift DB4 Toyota.

1990

- July 8: "The Last Race": 10th annual Historic Races.
- August 5: Mark Dismore wins the last Player's Pacific and last Formula Atlantic race driving a Swift DB4 Toyota.
- October 8: The last race ever at Westwood, a 7-hour endurance race won by brothers Ross and Gord Bentley driving their self-built sports racer.

Big Races

Over the years, events came and went, but there were some that seemed to continue.

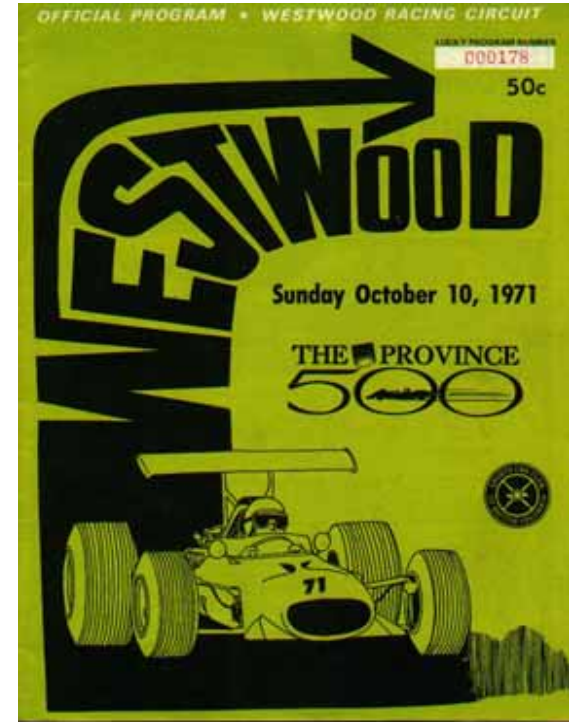
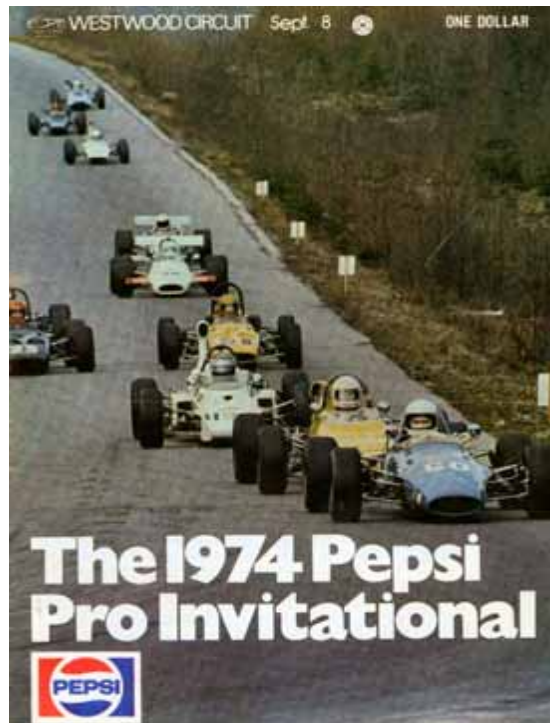
The Player's Pacific, first run in 1962, was probably the biggest event at the circuit. Initially the race was part of Canada's national championship for road racing. The first events were for Group 6 sports cars (later known as Can-Am cars); later ones were for various single-seater formulas, the best-known being Formula Atlantic.

The Player's Pacific was usually (not always) held in the spring. The last Player's Pacific was run on August 5, 1990 and was a round of the Player's Ltd. Toyota Atlantic Series.

An event often held later in the season was also a major professional race. Initially called the Westwood International, it had various names, the most well known would be the Pepsi Pro. Similar to the Player's event, it was initially for Group 6 cars; later it became a mixed event including

Formula Ford.

The third event that seemed to have lasting power was the traditional season-closing endurance race. Most commonly seven hours in length (it was ten hours one year), it was, for a long time, Canada's longest road race. For many years it was known as The Province 500, as it was sponsored by the *Vancouver Province* newspaper. The Enduro, as it became known, was usually run on the Sunday of the Thanksgiving long weekend.



Program Covers from Big Westwood Races. From left: Player's Pacific, 1989; Pepsi Pro, 1974; The Province 500, 1971. (SCBC Archives)

Racing Series Events at Westwood

Canadian Driving Championship

There was, for many years, a Canadian Driving Championship for road racers. Almost every year one or more rounds of the championship were run at the Westwood circuit.

From 1961 to 1968 the championship was run for sports racing cars and was backed by Imperial Tobacco under their Player's brand, called the Player's Challenge Series.

In the years 1969 and 1970, Gulf Canada sponsored the series, now for Formula A, B, and C single seaters.

In 1971, Player's returned and the series converted to the smaller Formula B cars initially, converting to the newer but similar Formula Atlantic in 1974.

For the last year, 1977, Labatt's sponsored the series.

After 1977, Formula Atlantic continued under various sanctioning bodies and sponsors, and invariably visited Westwood at least once each year. Atlantic continues to this day as a major North American professional racing series.

The Atlantic races were some of the most important and exciting events at Westwood.

Canadian Touring Championship

In the late 1960s, Canada had its own version of the Trans-Am series for North American-built small sedans. Several rounds were run at Westwood.

Trans-Am

By the mid 1970s, the real Trans-Am came to Westwood, running races for several seasons.

NASCAR

NASCAR has always had a presence in the US Pacific Northwest and Western Canada. Initially their Western Grand National Series, and later their Winston West Series, would make frequent appearances at Canadian tracks including, for a few years, Westwood.

The locals were all ready to see large "Detroit Iron" embarrass themselves on the road circuit, and some did, but several teams proved to be quite competent, turning in times similar to the road racing sedans of the era.

There were other stock car races at Westwood. On July 14, 1963, over ten years prior to the first NASCAR appearance, the Early-Late Racing Association (ELRA) from Haney Speedway ran two 15-minute heats. Reg Royle won both.

Player's Ltd./GM Motorsport Series

In the 1980s, the future of Canadian road racing seemed to be moving toward series featuring identical show-room-stock cars. The most important of these was the Player's/GM Motorsport series for General Motors Chevrolet Camaros and Pontiac Firebirds. Many rounds of the western portion of the series ran at Westwood. It was very

popular with the fans, especially since local driver Frank Allers dominated the series in the west.

Honda Michelin Series/Honda BF Goodrich Series

A series similar to the Player's/GM except all the cars were Honda Civics. Initially the cars all ran BF Goodrich tires, later Michelins.

Canon Yokohama Challenge

A pro series for Formula Ford cars run entirely in Western Canada. There were races at Calgary's Race City Speedway as well as Westwood. The series began in 1989.

Molyslip Endurance Series, NASPORT, various pro **Sports 2000** series and more also ran at Westwood.

Amateur Racing

International Conference of Sports Car Clubs (ICSCC or Conference), Canadian Automobile Sport Clubs (CASC), Sports Car Club of America (SCCA), and SCCBC all ran their championships at Westwood.

COWPAC

(COWPAC stands for Canadian Oregon Washington Pacific Amateur Championship), a series of races jointly sanctioned by SCCA and CASC in the 1970s.

Series



Above: **NASCAR in The Esses** (Tom Johnston)



Canon Yokohama (Marty Knoll Collection)



Below: **Trans-Am** (SCCA)



Below: **1967 Player's Pacific** (SCCBC Archives)



Honda Series Victory Lap (Frank Allers Collection)



Vintage Racing (SCCBC Archives)



Player's/GM Motorsport Series at The Hairpin (Frank Allers Collection)



Canadian Touring Championship, 1968 (Murray Chambers)

Other Track Users

In order for a racing circuit to be financially viable it must be in reneue use every possible day. The race events themselves usually do not generate sufficient revenue.

Other Motorsport Activities

Westwood Motorcycle Racing Club (WMRC) and the Westwood Karting Association (WKA) trace their roots back to the Coquitlam circuit. Both continue to race today at other

venues but still speak longingly about Westwood, as do the SCCBC people.

There could be a book just about the motorcycle racing at Westwood. I don't know enough about it to write it, so I'll leave that to someone else.

Events that featured combinations of the three racing disciplines were common. In 1965 the three groups worked together to hold a fundraising event for the family of the late Bob Whitehead, former WKA president, who

was tragically killed in a freak racing accident. The event was a relay race involving teams of one kart, one motorcycle and one sports car (hopefully not all on the track at the same time).

One significant graduate from the ranks of the WKA was Greg Moore, the Maple Ridge driver who went on to great success in CART.

Non-Motorsport Activities

There are plenty of people who need access to a private piece of road now and then. Westwood was rented out to accommodate such needs for movie and TV production companies, insurance companies, driver training of all types. Car manufacturers used the track to introduce new models to the press, and to do testing of their own and competitor's vehicles.

The locally-produced TV series *MacGyver* did one episode about racing at the track. The plot was not too wonderful but it was fun seeing many racing friends playing bit parts.

Some people just need a place to have a party, and there were some pretty good rock concerts there in the 1970s.

SCCBC members at one time raced something called mudrunners. Run off-road in the mud they were generally stripped down production cars, there were some interesting designs (see next page).



Early Karting at Westwood, Circa 1961. Many familiar faces can be seen. (Randall Family Archives)



Motorcycle Sidecar Rigs *(Greater Vancouver Motorsport Pioneers Society)*



MacGyver TV Series



Bikes at The Hairpin *(SCCBC Archives)*



Merv Therriault's Mudrunner *(Ed Deak)*