

1968 –SCCA, Bob Tullius and Group 44

I became involved in car racing events in 1964, starting with Autocross, then Solo I, and later Regional SCCA events in the Mid-Atlantic Region. While going to these races I met many of the local and regional drivers. This was at a time when SCCA regional racing was still fairly low dollar compared to national class events. At that time, it was not unusual to have a well-known driver and team parked in the next pit area to you. Paul Newman was just starting to drive in North East Regional races. He was easy to talk to and became an outstanding driver over a short period of time. Having a good bankroll also helped buy good cars and crew as he progressed.

One of the top SCCA Mid-Atlantic drivers was Bob Tullius, based in Fairfax, Va. Bob was a talented and very competitive driver and prepared his cars so that they seldom, if ever, broke down during a race, campaigning a 1961 Triumph TR-3 successfully the very first year, placing first and second in every race. In 1962 he persuaded Triumph to provide him with a TR-4 to race. He started winning regional and then national events competing with other “sponsored” drivers. In 1965 he formed Group 44 Racing Team and made agreements with Quaker State Oil Co. as sponsor. Bob and Group 44 continued to win races and Triumph



continued to provide new cars each new model change. Bob and I became friends and one day at his immaculately clean workshop, over coffee, Bob told me he was about to ask Quaker State to replace his old tractor-trailer with a new rig to haul his race cars around the country. At this time, I was working in sales with International Harvester, selling large commercial trucks. Bob asked if I could get him a good deal on an International TransStar truck for Group 44 to pull a new semi-trailer. It would also get some good PR for International Harvester.

I contacted my District Manager and within a few weeks a special deal was worked out with Quaker State to buy the truck through me as the local salesman.

Aside from looking great, the truck was set up to be fast. The most powerful diesel engine available was spec'd, with gear ratios, oversize wheels and tires to allow the lightly loaded truck combination to travel at very high speeds. The trailer was very light as well, but strong enough to manage the elevator inside which helped stack 4 race cars in the rear and contain a very useable workshop in the front with storage for spare parts and tires. As with everything else Group 44 did, it was always neat as a pin.

They were stopped one night by a local Sherriff outside Atlanta while coming home from a race at Daytona and clocked by radar at 110mph.

I was very proud of that truck and it got me a few perks with Group 44 as I was always admitted into their pit area at the races. I was also presented with a Group 44 hat which I wore proudly when at the races.

In 1984, British Leyland, who produced Triumph, MG and Jaguar, provided Group 44 with a XJR Jaguar car with a 12 cylinder, 500HP engine to race at the famous 12hour race at Le Mans, France. After 291 laps, the transmission failed and they had to drop out of the race.

Bob and went on to win international races for several more years until he retired from racing. He moved from Virginia to Sebring Florida, living at the famous racecourse there. Over a period of years, he bought several old US Air Force airplanes and also a P-51 Mustang airplane which he flew in various airshows for several years.

Bob was a true competitor never giving an inch but always a gentleman. He loved speed, competing early in his life on motorcycles, then sports cars and finally airplanes.

Bob passed away in 2023 at age 93.
