

## 1970 Zeidler Formula Super Vee

By Mark R. Brinker



By 1969 Formula Vee had become the most popular racing class on the planet. The cars were relatively economical to run and the competition was intense due to the single-spec nature of the formula. At the time, Volkswagen of America was posting record sales with the Beetle and was poised to introduce new street models with larger, more powerful 1600-cc engines. Because VW believed that racing sold cars, it sought to create a series in the United States to support the sale of these new vehicles.

VW Motorsports boss Josef Hoppen considered several ideas, including simply installing the bigger engines in Formula Vees. Ultimately, Hoppen met with the top Vee constructors (Gene Beach, Ed Zink, Ray Caldwell, and John Zeidler) to discuss the possibilities. According to Zeidler, "We all thought that a 1600-cc Formula Vee would not only destroy the class, but would probably destroy itself. The car would be far too dangerous to run without using full-race components like independent suspension, disc brakes, etc. With Volkswagen just getting into the fastback and squareback models utilizing these components, the Super Vee class was the perfect solution."

Hoppen created a set of complex rules and proposed a second VW class to the

SCCA competition board, one using 1600-cc engines and called Formula Super Vee. The SCCA was not excited at first, but when Volkswagen guaranteed a minimum of seven professional races with significant prize money, a new racing class was born.

The first National Super Vee race occurred on July 4, 1970, at Lime Rock with Zeidler driving one of his cars to victory. Four months later, the Super Vees shocked Formula Ford drivers who were racing in the same field at the American Road Race of Champions at Road Atlanta. Amazingly, Super Vees captured all three podium spots. Tom Davey won in a Zeidler with Harry Ingle's Zink 2<sup>nd</sup> and Jim Clarke's Caldwell 3<sup>rd</sup>. Skip Barber had the fastest FF, but could only manage a 4<sup>th</sup>-place finish.

The first pro Super Vee race, known as the Transatlantic Challenge Race for Super Vees, was held at Daytona in January 1971. This race attracted an international field of 21 cars from 12 manufacturers and helped jump-start Super Vee in Europe. The Super Vee pro series, the Volkswagen Super Vee Professional Championship, also began in '71.

Super Vee continued on for several seasons with numerous rule changes and sanctioning bodies. Many aficionados, however, believe the early years were the best, and Zeidler's cars were among the most successful. So, it was no surprise that Sandi and William Barkley of Geneseo, New York, were excited when they first contacted me to report the Hidden Treasure they had



**THEN**

recently unearthed...a Zeidler Super Vee.

According to Sandi, "In 2006, William and I went to see John Eberhardt in Pittsford (New York) about a Triumph Spitfire Mk I he had for sale. When I walked into the garage, there was a stunning bare chassis hanging from the ceiling. I said 'that's beautiful,' and John was really surprised when he figured out I was referring to the hanging chassis."

The rest of the car was spread out all over the shop. According to William, "the car seemed to be fairly complete, but had gone through many stages in its life. The last transition was into a B-Modified for SCCA solo events, with a liquid-cooled two-liter VW engine. Luckily, the installation had not hurt the original chassis, and the original VW air-cooled engine and related components had remained with the car."

The Barkleys were eventually able to make a deal with Eberhardt, and took the Zeidler home last December. William has now restored the suspension's original pick-up points, the brakes and hubs are again Porsche 914, and the Hewland transaxle is back, as are the correct period Minilites.

Sandi and William have also been busy tracking down the car's history through communication with other Zeidler owners. So far, they've contacted three, and chassis numbers 4, 5, and 7 are accounted for. They can trace their car back to 1983 when it was owned by John Burgess of Syracuse, New York. Then Wayne Kunhel of Cazanovia, New York, bought it in 1989, but in 1995 sold it to Steven Hayward of Spencerport, New York, who sold it to Eberhardt in 1997.

The Barkleys have not found a chassis number on their Zeidler, and it remains possible that they own either Zeidler's Lime Rock-winning car or Tom Davey's 1970 National Champion car, as both remain unaccounted for. Regardless, William is well into the refurbishment and hopes to have Sandi and Super Vee racing in early 2010.

If you can offer further information about this car, please contact the Barkleys at [panhard-usa@juno.com](mailto:panhard-usa@juno.com)

## NOW

