

Bondurant: The Sexy Side of Speed

Written by Nadine Toren

Television personality and AZfoothills.com columnist Nadine Toren is scouring the area, finding savvy Valley features, bringing readers “on the scene.” Every day she’ll introduce you to [celebrities](#), athletes, and give you an inside look into local events and hot spots. She’ll touch on topical issues, and keep AZ fans posted on all the big talkers around town.



Just last week, my life was in “McGov’s” hands.

That’s right; the racing instructor took me for a spin on the Bondurant course, giving me a ride I’ll never forget.

My dress and heels didn’t quite go with my racing helmet, arriving at the track straight from reporting the traffic for the CBS-5 Morning News--go figure, a traffic reporter with a need for speed. Nevertheless, my mismatched outfit was no excuse for the man many refer to as McGov.

A fabulous family of Corvettes sparkled in the Chandler sun, as McGov led me to his car of choice: a bright yellow ZO6 Corvette, which he later mentioned, was one of the fastest cards he’s ever driven.

I was kindly told to get in, strap on my seatbelt, and hold on—so I did.

We started out swerving around on the practice course, in and out of orange cones, slamming on the breaks—wheels screeching as we made sharp turns. After our little warm-up, we hit the track—and boy, was that a rush. Good thing I played passenger, because I could savor the speed exceeding 110 miles an hour. Lucky for me, I felt safe and sound with my new friend McGov, racecar driver extraordinaire.

“Once it’s in your blood, it’s there forever,” said Mike (“McGov”) McGovern, Bondurant’s Chief Instructor.

Speed races through Mike McGovern’s blood every day he goes to work at Bondurant. (www.bondurant.com)

Just off I-10, you’ll find the school of high performance driving—basically a place where thrill seekers can experience what it’s like to be Jimmie Johnson, or for daring darlings, Danica Patrick.

You’ll pick up savvy skills from McGovern, the Chief Instructor who joined the Bondurant team more than 25 years ago.

“It’s the environment, it’s the cars, it’s the excitement about the whole thing,” said McGovern.



McGovern grew up in Northern California.

His mom wanted him to pursue joining the Navy, but Mike was into Nascar. After high school, he worked at Sears Point, the race track in Sonoma. That’s where he met Bob Bondurant, his future employer.

The two hit it off, and in 1983 Bob hired Mike on the spot.

McGov’s initial job was changing tires and washing cars at Bondurant’s original California facility.

“I did all the dirty work.”

But doing the dirty paid off.

In 1990, Bob Bondurant opened up his Chandler, Arizona driving school at Fire Bird Raceway, insisting his buddy McGov make the move to the Valley of the Sun.

Five years later, McGov was named Chief Driving Instructor.

“I’ve trained Tim Allen, Jason Priestly, Jimmie Johnson, Kurt Busch, Joey Logano, plus many more.”

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Yep, this star-studded racer even helps celebs learn the tricks of the trade, whether it be for fun or for a project.

“Prior to the movie ‘Gone in 60 Seconds,’ I helped Nicholas Cage better understand car control. He was an OK driver but great student.”

As a student, you’ll first experience the C6 Corvette, averaging 400 horsepower. Your ride will typically cap at 110 miles per hour, but with the right maneuvering, you’ll reach 170 no problem.

But if you *really* want to live on the edge, hop inside a ZO6 Corvette, cruising 500 horsepower at about 200 miles per hour.

“It’s basically a racecar you can put a license plate on.”



McGovern has any typical dad’s dream job. This father of three boys says racing is his drug of choice— speed simply runs in his genes.

“There’s an addiction and an excitement level that you can’t really duplicate anywhere else.”

And thanks to McGov, I got a taste of that addiction...that fabulously fast and fun-filled high.



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