Winner's Cirlce

Bob Bondurant is very important wherever he goes: Monterey, Le Mans, Trader Joe's. "When we married, for the second time in two weeks, in Monaco, people came out from their mega-yachts and applauded as we walked by the famous Monte Carlo marina," says his wife, Pat. The Paradise Valley couple first married at the Bob Bondurant School of High Performance Driving in Chandler on April 23, 2010; then again just prior to the Monaco Grand Prix May 14 at turn 12 of the world-famous course.

At Monaco, years before, Bob had driven in the Grand Prix four times, notching a best fourth finish in 1966. "Racing is such a revered sport in Europe. Everyone knows Bob," says Pat, the school's president, who is today expanding the Bondurant brand throughout the United States and the world.

Champion race car driver, driving teacher at and CEO of the world-famous school, Bob is also celebrating 45 years of the only purpose-built facility of its kind, which has trained almost 500,000 people—professional racers, movie stars, executive chauffeurs, performance enthusiasts, military special teams, teens and moms—to become safer and more proficient at overcoming the challenges of track, street and highway driving.

Throughout 2013, the legendary driver is being honored. In January, Paradise Valley Mayor Scott LeMarr honored him with a town proclamation, as did Chandler Mayor Jay Tibshraeny in February. During the 45th-anniversary celebration at the school that month, Arizona Secretary of State Ken Bennett presented Bob with a proclamation from Arizona Gov. Jan Brewer, and Chuck Gray, former state representative, read a tribute Congressional Rep. Matt Salmon had entered in the Congressional Record in Washington, D.C. So, too, that evening, entertainer, car enthusiast and friend, Jay Leno, expressed his "humble reverence" for Bob's tremendous success, and Maricopa County Sheriff Joe Arpaio presented Bob with an updated "special deputy" badge. The honors continue through the spring and summer.

After competing with dirt bikes in Southern California in his teens, Bob raced Corvettes in the mid-50's, winning the west coast SCCA B Production National Championship in 1959 with 18 of 20 wins.

On July 4, 1965, in Reims, France, he won the seventh of his 10 races to help the Shelby American team bring home the World Manufacturers' Championship, besting Ferrari—almost a half-century later, it is still the only American team to achieve this title. Shortly thereafter, he received a phone call from Enzo Ferrari to race Formula 1 for him in the U.S. Grand Prix—his greatest thrill in a stellar career: "Talking to Enzo Ferrari was like talking to the god of racing; it was surreal," he says.

After a near-fatal accident in 1967 at the Watkins Glen track in New York, Bob drafted the ideas for the school from his hospital bed. Just two years earlier, he recalled training James Garner for his lead role in the John Frankenheimer classic "Grand Prix"—and the concept was realized just six months later. "I can remember the day we started in 1968 at Orange County International Raceway in Santa Ana, Calif., with our first three cars," he says. "We started small but with the same vision we have today: Offer professional and everyday drivers the best track-intensive training in the world. We were No. 1 then, and we are No. 1 now."

TO LEARN MORE
Bob Bondurant School of High Performance Driving www.bondurant.com.