

The Home Page: Bob and Pat Bondurant's Fast-Paced Home

Written by David M. Brown

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Bob and Pat Bondurant are always on the move. So is their Paradise Valley home.



A circular drive invites friends, family and former racing associates into the eucalyptus- and citrus-shaded home of the legendary race driver and founder of the world-famous Bob Bondurant School of High Performance Driving.

Built on two-plus acres in 1984 by Hermosa Homes, with design by David Ross, both Scottsdale, the 7,880-square-foot five-bedroom custom Santa Barbara was renovated in 2002, with new interior design by Ernesto Garcia, ASID, Phoenix.

Throughout the home are photographs and automotive memories of Sebring, Daytona, Le Mans, Laguna Seca, the old Riverside International Raceway and Grand Prix at Watkins Glen, New York, Italy, Germany, Mexico, Belgium, France and Monaco, where the Bondurants married in May 2010.

Many of these tracks Bob last raced on more than four decades ago when, as a member of the Shelby American Racing Team, he helped win the 1965 Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile World Manufacturer's Championship — the first and still only Americans to win that prestigious title. And, they did it against Enzo Ferrari's "unbeatable" GTOs.

Recently, Pat and Bob invited us in for a tour of the home and the automotive and personal histories it celebrates. "Our home joins both of our worlds, like a powerful engine in an intelligently, beautifully designed car," Bob says. "We have the memories of the lives we had before we met, and we have brought them together to celebrate the business, the life and love we now share. We could not both be happier."



The couple's full schedule includes regular visits to the Bob Bondurant School of High Performance Driving at Firebird International Raceway in Phoenix and trips worldwide to racetracks and car and concourse events, where Bob is honored for his racing past. In September, for instance, the Bondurant's will attend the Good wood Revival Festival in England, which celebrates the 'glory days' 1940s, '50s and '60s of the famed Good wood Motor Circuit.

Since 1968, when it opened in Southern California, the school has trained 400,000-plus students to be better drivers: 90 percent of NASCAR drivers; movie stars such as James Garner, Robert Wagner and Paul Newman; kart racers; weekend car enthusiasts; housewives; teenagers; and military specialists and chauffeurs for anti-terrorist and -kidnapping training. The only purpose-built facility of its kind in the world, it's a world destination, from China to Turkey to Germany.

Photo Allison Tyler Jones

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Born in Evanston, Ill., Bob moved to California as a boy and quickly distinguished himself first in dirt-bike racing and later in Chevrolet Corvettes, winning 18 of 20 races in 1959.

Pat is a Memphis, Tenn., native who worked in Huntsville, Ala., helping design the Tomahawk cruise missile facility and relocated from Seattle to Sedona in 2001. Two years later, she moved with daughter Meagan and son Jason to Paradise Valley for their education.

The Bondurant's married twice — first in April 2010 at the school and three weeks later during the Monaco Grand Prix — on the track where Bob had driven to a fourth-place finish in 1966.

They had met at the January 2010 Russo & Steele Car Auction in Scottsdale. 'Like most guys, I waited all my life for this perfect dream woman I had in my mind to appear, and when I finally gave up on her ever coming, there she was,' says Bondurant, who celebrates his 80th birthday April 2013 and the school's 45th two months earlier in February 2013.

Photo Bondurant School



'I love the way Bob feels as he floats down the hallways, telling finite details, with total recall of every single car, the race track, the car he was driving and the opponents he usually beat,' Pat says.

In the corridors of their home and elsewhere are photos of great events, drivers and racing teams: Dan Gurney, Sterling Moss, Mario Andretti, Ken Miles, Carroll Shelby, Phil Hill, Graham Hill, Jim Clark, Jackie Stewart, and the 'Commendatory,' Enzi Ferrari.

Just after the 1965 World Championship win, Ferrari called him to the automotive holy city of Modena, anointing him 'Bondurant Sir Cobra,' and asked him to race for Scuderia Ferrari — at the time the highest honor any racer could be given.

Today, Bob fondly calls Pat his 'new Ferrari.'

Photo Mark Susan



In the couple's pool table/game room — 'The Race Room' — are 100-plus pictures of his racing days. One prized image, courtesy of the Ford Motor Company, is with Carroll Shelby and co-driver and friend Dan Gurney prior to the 1964 Le Mans 24 Hours race, where they placed fourth overall and won the GT III class.

Adjacent to the Le Mans image are pictures and renderings of the #5 Shelby Daytona Coupes they drove to victory. On the hearth flue is a reproduction of a story from Road and Track about Bob (inset) and, under the wall window is a lamp with his racing shoes and goggles, scale models of the Shelby Cobras he drove and a recent picture of the Bondurant's (inset).

The couple's shared love for Old World European pieces, such as the fire screen, urns and sculptures completes the room.

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Bob and Pat share their library, which is finished in Italian plaster and walnut-stained beams.

On June 23, 1967, at the Watkins Glen race track in New York, Bob was guiding a McLaren MARK II Cana at 150 miles an hour into a corner. As he turned the wheel toward the straightaway, the steering arm snapped and he went skyward.

'I can remember seeing the tops of the trees, and praying on the way down," he recalls. 'When I came to, I was in the hospital, and the doctors were telling me I wouldn't walk again or drive in competition again.' Today, he prizes the bent racing wheel from car, which the Ford Motor Company sent him later: It's a talisman of the fragility, and preciousness, of life itself.

Adding to Bob's automotive books, Pat has acquired a large collection, too, including an edition of the Zohar, the medieval Jewish Kabbalistic commentary on man and God. Here, too, she prizes many books about Leonardo da Vinci, her role model and mentor.

'Da Vinci's fascination with flying things, medicine, astrology, religion, architecture and human anatomy and its divine perfection have always inspired me, and I have surrounded myself with these subjects,' she says.

Photo Mark Susan