Driving at the Slowest Possible Speed

by Rudi Petschek

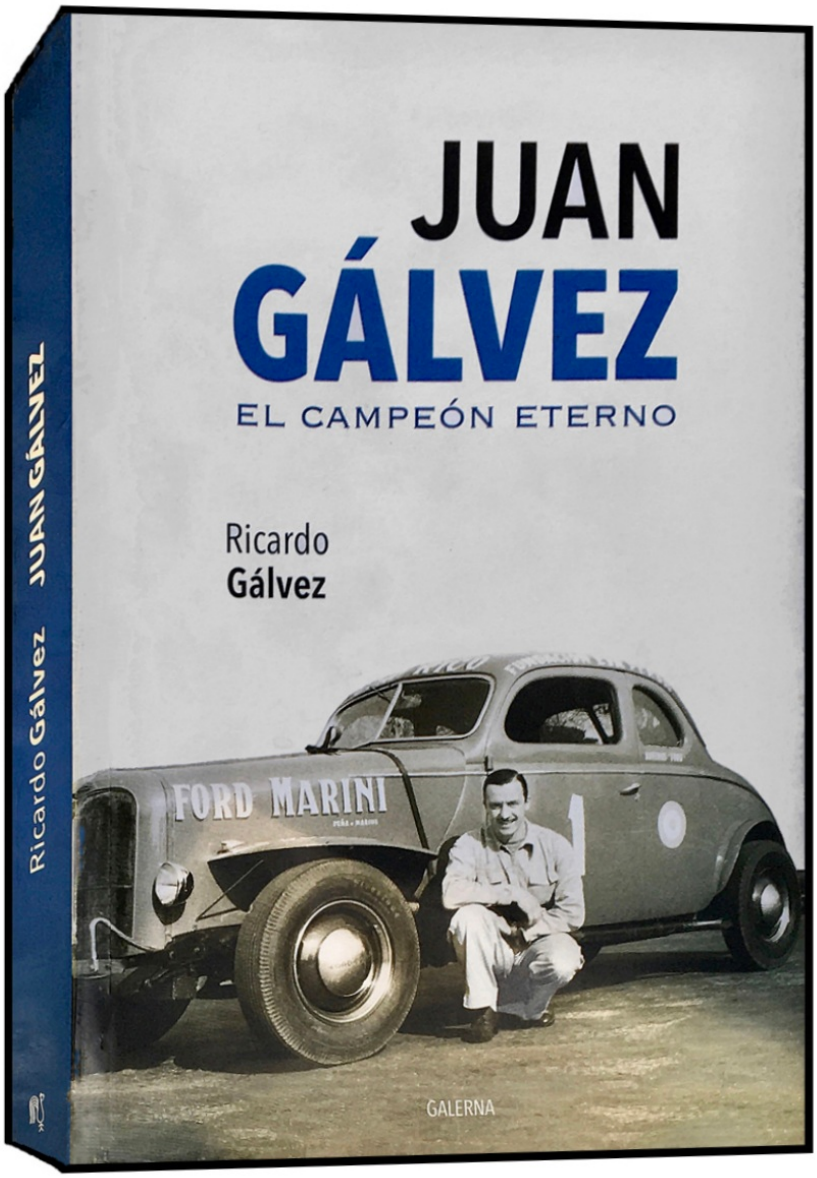
Nevada City, 2020

I read a book.
It brought back old memories
of a thrilling racing series and its star drivers.

In 1880 a Spanish couple named Gálvez vacationed in Argentina. They liked Buenos Aires so much that they never left.

Sixty years later two grandsons embarked on a venture that would forever elevate the family name to national prominence.

They went motor-racing


JUAN
GÁLVEZ
EL CAMPEÓN ETERNO
Ricardo
Gálvez
FORD MARINI
GALERNA
Ricardo Gálvez
JUAN GÁLVEZ

Juan Gálvez (1916-1962) — Oscar Gálvez (1913-1987)

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Juan Gálvez was the all-time greatest Argentine race car driver, having dominated from the late forties to the early sixties, winning nine national championships and three (runner-up) sub-championships in twelve consecutive seasons. Juan Fangio, himself twice national series champion before leaving for Europe to dominate Formula1, stated prophetically that in equal cars nobody can beat Juan Gálvez. Curiously, Juan had never thought of driving race cars, but destiny intervened.

Adding older brother Oscar's five titles and five runner-ups, the brothers won fourteen championships and eight sub-championships in fifteen years (plus two additional sub-championships prior to WW2), in the world's oldest still active motor-racing series dating back to 1937; the most grueling ever raced anywhere: TC—*Turismo Carretera,* long distance road racing in touring cars.

The brothers were as equal in their abilities and talents as they were opposites in temperament. Oscar was exuberant, flamboyant, impulsive; Juan was shy, tranquil, methodical. They were inseparable while growing up; Juan idolized Oscar. Their father, son of the 1880 Spanish immigrant couple, was an accomplished mechanic and machinist. In his shop his two 'born mechanics' sons honed their skills as they longed for the day they could tinker on a car of their own.

Toward that goal they saved every spare centavo in a tin can they kept hidden. They even saved half their allowance for movies by only one watching the film and then relating the plot to the other. By 1929 they had saved enough to acquire an old beat-up Ford-T which they kept hidden from their parents in a neighbor's garage. Finally they had a car of their own on which to experiment. Oscar was sixteen years old; Juan was fourteen. The stage was set.

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They raced coupes from the late-thirties, mostly Fords and Chevrolets, for two memorable decades, in staggered-start multi-stage races over all kinds of roads, from well paved to near-impassable, in extreme climates and elevations, often with such extremes within a few hours. For instance, up to the frosty roads and freezing temperatures of the 15,505 ft. Pass of San Francisco in the high Andes and back down to the sweltering summer heat of the lowlands of Tucumán, uninterruptedly. The longest race stages took twelve to fourteen hours of continuous driving over distances up to and beyond one thousand miles.

Juan Gálvez and his Ford coupe.

The longest races were very long indeed. 1948's longest race spanned half a continent from Buenos Aires to Caracas. It took two and a half weeks to complete over the narrow, treacherous, dirt-and-gravel, mud-and-snow, pot-holed, unprotected precipice-lined mountain roads of the high Andes. (below, page 10, ff.)

Even paved roads were challenging to race on, as well as for the public to drive on. I remember National Route 5, which we traveled often in the early forties, as a single paved lane with sloping dirt or mud shoulders falling off on either side. When two cars converged from opposite directions they would each drop two wheels onto the dirt, or into the mud, at the last possible moment. It was dangerous in the dark and frightful in rainy dark with poor headlights, as sealed beams were still in the future. Passing at speed on paved roads was treacherous until the pavement was widened.

The longest race ever run anywhere was the *Gran Premio* of 1949, a titanic battle between Juan Gálvez and Juan Fangio from start to finish. It started with the longest stage ever raced anywhere—1,158 miles, which Juan Gálvez won in 13½ hours of continuous driving, on his way to winning the twelve stage 7,960 miles race in 104½ hours. The last car, 23rd out of 117 starters, finished 33 hours behind.

I used to listen to these races on the radio, at night, in the dark, before falling asleep. Now, seventy-some years later, with headlamp instead of radio, I am reliving that era by reading about it at night, in the dark, before going back to sleep.

The TC, Argentina's premier motor racing series, the oldest still active motor racing series in the world dating back to 1937, is where Oscar and Juan Gálvez would set records that have endured for six decades and are likely to stand forever.

— The Cars —

"Preparation shall be free for all components, but the body must be closed, of metal, of the type usual for excursions and tourism; it being optional to remove or modify fenders. The chassis must correspond to the make and model of the motor, although they may be of different years of manufacture. Cars shall have four-wheel brakes, retroscopic mirror, gas tank closure accessible to the driver's hand, fire extinguisher, bulkhead separating the motor from the driver compartment, and straps to secure the hood. Open exhaust is allowed provided that it is not aimed at the ground."

It was not unusual for a car to suffer several flat tires and a roll-over or two within a race's stage. A wheel change took a minute and 45 seconds; righting a roll-over a bit more, depending on available crowd assistance. It was also common for competitors to stop and sacrifice race time to assist a rival in distress.

They were all master mechanics. With Juan working from above and his mechanic helper from below, they would change crankshaft, pistons and connecting rods in 42 minutes, practically rebuilding the engine in the short time allowed outside of *parc fermé* conditions between stages. This was a legacy of father Gálvez, Sr., an accomplished machinist at a time replacement parts were custom-manufactured. The rebuilt engines were race-ready, the parts having been properly broken in beforehand.

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Oscar Gálvez, charismatic, flamboyant, always smiling, found success earlier than his reserved younger brother. He soon became a public idol. In those early days before Fangio left for Europe, Oscar and Fangio were national heroes as well as each other's strongest rival. At check points Oscar would only ask, "*Where is Fangio?*"; and Fangio would ask only, "*Where is Oscar?*"

***— Oscar Gálvez** (left in all photos) and **Juan Fangio** —*

The fan base was split in half: Gálvez/Ford vs. Fangio/Chevrolet. A line in the sand drawn between them, whether Fangio vs. Gálvez or Chevy vs. Ford. Had one of them switched, it would have hopelessly confounded their fans. My brother Felix and I favored Fangio; brother Egon rooted for Oscar Gálvez. Juan Gálvez's successes and popularity were still ahead, but just around the corner. Meanwhile, Fangio and Oscar were recognized as the best drivers, in spite of no shortage of strong competition from talented rivals. They remained good friends into old age.

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By the time WW2 interrupted racing Fangio had won two TC championships and each Gálvez brother one sub-championship. As the war's racing hiatus robbed fans of five years of Fangio-Gálvez rivalry, the brothers switched their obsession with engines to racing motorboats. Once auto racing resumed Oscar matched Fangio's two titles, setting their rivalry into a tie, when . . .

. . . President Perón sent Fangio and Oscar on an exploratory trip to Europe, preparatory to supporting an Argentine Formula 1 effort. Had Oscar then joined Fangio in F1, I expect he would have succeeded just as impressively as Fangio did. But Perón, supportive of athletes but not shy about using them for his political advantage, sent Fangio to Europe but kept both Gálvez brothers at home to channel their enormous popularity toward promoting the TC, intending to connect remote communities by improving roads to facilitate the population's mobility.

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The brothers initially raced together, Juan as Oscar's accompanying mechanic, his *acompañante*, but their opposite personalities disagreed about how best to race. Impulsive Oscar drove balls-out; tranquil Juan thought better results would follow if they raced with their heads. Their dispute became irreconcilable. Until then they had been inseparable, working shoulder-to-shoulder on, and in the race car as they had when tinkering as youngsters in their father's workshop, and as they still did in their day job, repairing automobiles for the public.

The discord began at an international race in Brazil. Oscar had a big lead over Fangio but continued to drive frantically. Juan told him to slow down. Oscar didn't. They crashed. Fangio benefitted. Juan was furious. Oscar's impulsiveness had traded prize money for a wrecked race car. Oscar retorted that driving isn't easy; that if Juan thought he could do it better, go ahead and try—challenging words that would soon incur profound consequences.

Juan had benefitted from his eight races of apprenticeship as Oscar's *acompañante*, an advantage that had eluded Oscar who was a naturally brilliant racer from the get-go. In Juan's first drive, the 1941 *Mil Millas,* with Oscar advising and heading his road support, Juan finished second to Fangio in the coupe the brothers shared, which they had built from the ground up. Juan enjoyed driving an occasional race, but as accompanying the brother he idolized fulfilled his competitive spirit he had not considered pursuing a driving career of his own. Their discord changed everything. They auctioned the shop's contents and split the proceeds. Juan kept the shop and sent a friend to the auction to buy back most of the equipment. Oscar moved out, and the brothers became forever independent of each other.

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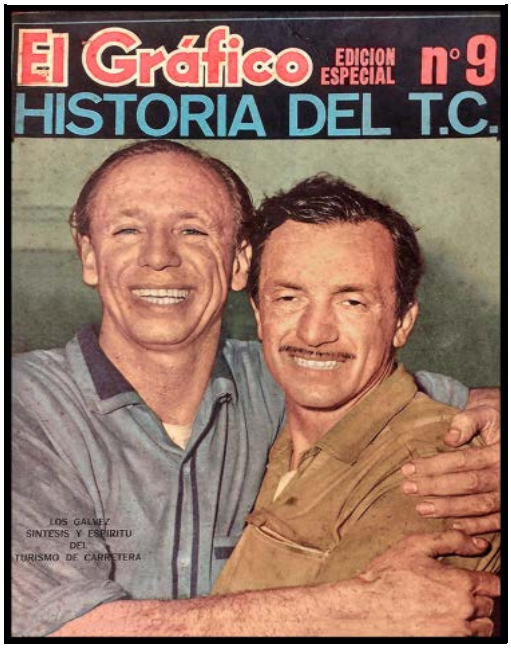
Fangio and his Chevrolet TC coupe.

With Fangio gone to race in Europe the brothers became each other's strongest adversary. Juan soon realized that to succeed he would need to give racing his undivided attention, toward which the repair shop had become a distraction. Prize money now sufficed to fund his racing program, which no longer depended on income from automotive repairs as it had earlier when racing represented a financial sacrifice. Juan took the brave decision to trade security for opportunity; he stopped repairing customers' cars and went racing full time.

Once Juan began to succeed he became unstoppable, winning four championships on the trot before Oscar won two more to tie the score at four titles each by mid-career, generating tremendous fan enthusiasm. Even as Oscar delighted in beating Juan, he was immensely proud of his younger brother's success, despite them not even discussing racing when meeting at family gatherings. Years later, on one of those hazardous mountain roads, Juan came upon Oscar's badly wrecked car. Fearing the worst, he stopped to assist. The brothers embraced on the spot and reconciled, ending several years of discord while continuing their fierce on-track rivalry. The organizers kept changing the rules hoping to break the Gálvez supremacy, but Juan and Oscar, separately, adapted and continued to prevail.



Roadside spectators risked life and limb stretching their necks to see which Gálvez brother would appear in the lead. If a blue Ford coupe, it was Juan; if red, Oscar. With no roadside barriers, only a bit of air and a great deal of danger separated fans from race cars. I once watched them, Fangio too, drive by on one of those very long multi-stage races: *La Carrera de las Catorce Provincias*, which ran through all fourteen of Argentina's provinces. From a prudent distance I could not tell which cars were speeding by, but the memory remains clear.

Those old coupes with six volt electrics and low compression engines are still around, meticulously restored. They run them in historical races, shorter events around the vicinity of a community. A few years back I saw several dozen exhibited at a county fair. I have pictures, but I can't find them. Gorgeous cars of a glorious era never to be matched in all of motor sports.

With the building of race tracks in the mid-fifties an occasional closed circuit race joined the TC championship. The long multi-stage races were gradually curtailed, replaced by three or four laps run on local 200 Km loops in a few hours time.

Juan purchased a second race car, a '37 Ford which he optimized for the closed circuit races that were gradually included in the calendar, then retired it after a few years, keeping it for road support, to break in engines, and to tow the race car back home from a race's distant end. Aside from it, the '39 coupe he purchased in 1947 was the only car he raced for sixteen years up to the end of his career in 1963.

Juan believed that races are won in the workshop. His obsessive focus on every aspect of his racing program, whether mechanical, strategic, or organizational, advantaged him over his rivals who were not at all pushovers, neither as drivers nor as mechanics. Reliability was a constant concern. Juan would inspect even the most minuscule work anyone else performed on his race car. He only bought genuine Ford spare parts and rejected packages that arrived unsealed. Every part, down to the smallest, had its established duty cycle that was never exceeded. Irrespective of how good the part looked upon inspection, once it completed its timed duty it was never used again.

Juan was so inventive that his adversaries didn't bother to innovate; they just copied whatever he did. One morning as he approached his race car he noticed a pair of legs sticking out from beneath. It was brother Oscar checking things out. Noticing an oil cooler, at the next race Oscar's car had one installed as well.

When servo-assisted brakes became common on road cars Juan tried them on his race car, but was unsuccessful. Intending to tackle the issue at a later date, he left the parts installed, but disconnected. Noticing the system on Juan's car but unaware that it was not operational, most cars had it installed at the next race. One driver asked Juan's *acompañante* Raul how Juan was able to make it work when all others could not. Raul, holding back a chuckle, answered that he didn't know, but that Juan was very satisfied with the brakes' performance.

In the early sixties three factors converged that forever modified the TC:

1.- Danger! Average race speeds had increased from 75 m.p.h. to over 130, with a corresponding reduction in longevity of farm animals.

2.- Rules changes made the old coupes of the thirties uncompetitive against the newer Falcons and Torinos the rules now allowed.

3.- President Perón's objective to bring distant communities into the national conversation through road improvement had been achieved.

The 83 years old TC series endures to this day, but considerably modified from its glorious past.

The GP was the year's longest, most grueling and most rewarding race, as well as the most prestigious. Following the nine-stage 4,628 miles of the 1956 *Gran Premio,* Juan commented about the race's physical demands:

"Yes, I finished very tired. One gets very little sleep, because we are never able to retire before eleven or twelve o'clock at night, and by four the next morning we are already next to the race car. The body suffers a great deal. I lost five kilos in that GP and my wife says it is very apparent."

Neither weather nor road conditions, irrespective of severity, affected the schedule. An official noted: *"The looks of those who arrived was painful; covered with mud to the point of it being difficult to identify them; frozen stiff and completely drenched. Some were barefoot from having stepped into the mud and lost their footwear."*

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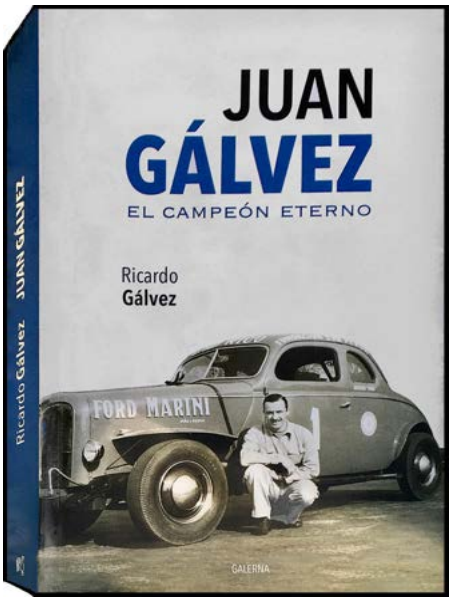
Juan shunned seat belts for fear of getting trapped in a fire, a tragedy he had once witnessed. It cost him his life in 1963 when he was ejected from his car in a freak situation, in a race Oscar tried to persuade him to forego. He was 47 years old. Oscar continued gracefully into old age.



GALERNA, Buenos Aires, 2018

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Fifty-five years after his father's fatal accident, his son Ricardo, aged nine at the time, wrote a comprehensive account of his father's life and career, detailing each of Juan's 145 races and nine championships; a book that rekindled these long buried memories.

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Argentine drivers proved themselves superior to the best European grand prix racers. In Argentina Fangio was as good as anyone, while in Europe he stood head-and-shoulders above his world-class rivals, who marveled at Fangio's ability to make a race car do things they were unable to match. Also, Oscar had astonished the Europeans in Buenos Aires in 1949—famous names like Villoresi, Wimille, Ascari, Farina—by challenging them in their best cars with his inferior Alfa-3800 on the rainy streets of my old neighborhood, Palermo. Oscar prevailed. Fangio was second. The Europeans were impressed.

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Buenos Aires to Caracas

The Longest Race Ever Run

October 20 to November 5, 1948

On a mid-spring night two hours before midnight with six thousand miles of difficult road ahead, 138 competitors started ten seconds apart in Buenos Aires with destination: Caracas, Venezuela. Only a dozen were neither Fords nor Chevrolets. The Ford V8 was allegedly stronger; the Chevy straight six, more reliable.

The field was set in three separate drawings, grouping contestants into a front group of winners, followed by non-winners with 'antecedents' (previous good results); and finally the vast majority of participants without antecedents. Fangio drew pole; Oscar Gálvez started third, Juan Gálvez ninth.

An even longer race from Buenos Aires to New York had been envisioned, but it never happened due to construction delays on the last stretch of road to connect South and North. So a "Round of South America" was planned instead. Brazil had to be bypassed, as it would not soften its intransigence about an unresolved border dispute. The revised race became the *Gran Premio de la América del Sur.* It would run from Buenos Aires to Caracas, six thousand miles in fourteen stages along the narrow, pot-holed, washboard-surfaced, precipice-lined, hazardous mountain roads of the high Andes; along and across flowing creek beds; up to freezing high mountain passes and back down to the scorching summer heat of the low-lands. The race would commonly be referred to as "*La Caracas*." The return from Lima to Buenos Aires was run as a separate GP in five stages. The purse was generous, but it benefitted only the top fifteen finishers of the race and of each stage. Most contestants ended their effort indebted after having endured much strain and discomfort, and life-threatening danger to which five participants succumbed.

During the race's first stage, 1,058 miles to Salta in fourteen hours of continuous driving in sweltering summer heat, one quarter of the field fell by the wayside. Only one third of the starters would eventually reach Caracas.

On its northward route to Lima, Peru—half-distance to Caracas—Stage 4 went through Bolivia. The return southward would reenter Argentina through Chile.

Oscar asserted his dominance from the start, winning the race's first three stages, gaining an advantage he nursed and steadily increased, never ceding his race lead in cumulative time from start to finish. He was, after all, the reigning series champion, and was well on his way to repeating as absolute champion, securing his second consecutive TC title as well as his second consecutive championship for 'special cars'; open-wheels single-seaters for speedway racing, precursors of the Formula 1 cars that Fangio would soon drive to five world championships.

Half-way to Caracas the schedule offered tired racers a day of rest. 'Rest,' in TC parlance, meant a full day of hard work overhauling the tired machines from the tough 3,000 miles behind, to face the remaining tough 3,000 miles still ahead. But it became uncertain whether the race would be allowed to continue from Lima as Peru was in a state of emergency with a military coup in progress.

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> *On rest days,* [one in Peru and one in Ecuador] *racers had eight hours for repairs between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m. These could be exceeded by no more than two hours, which would then be added to their next stage's time. Exceeding this deadline meant elimination from the event.*
>
> *On days that did not precede a day of rest the driver would, following his arrival, have four hours to work on repairing his race-car. The parks were strictly closed at midnight. Exceeding this deadline resulted in disqualification. Late arrivals faced shorter times, or no time at all, for repairs.*

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Fearing the political unrest might disrupt the morning launch, as competitors were readying for sleep they were summoned to their cars for a ten o'clock start. Six dozen sleepless crews were green-flagged into the foggy darkness to race all night on unfamiliar, hazardous mountain roads. Fangio crashed and abandoned.

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Unknown to everyone at that time, the world of TC was to change profoundly in mid-race in Peru. Juan Gálvez, not having yet won a race and therefore still in Oscar's shadow, having by now honed his skills in two seasons of racing, would from the start of stage eight assert his authority on TC over the next fifteen years, winning four of the remaining stages to Oscars two, then 56 of the 133 races still ahead in his career. The following year Juan would devastate the field with six wins in the seven races he contested toward his first championship, prompting Fangio to declare him unbeatable in equal cars.

Responding to a reporter's question, how he managed to win so many races, Juan replied with his timid smile, "*By driving at the slowest possible speed.*" It was to avoid unnecessarily stressing the engine he had painstakingly built. What is the slowest possible speed? Again that timid smile: "*That is determined by my rivals.*"

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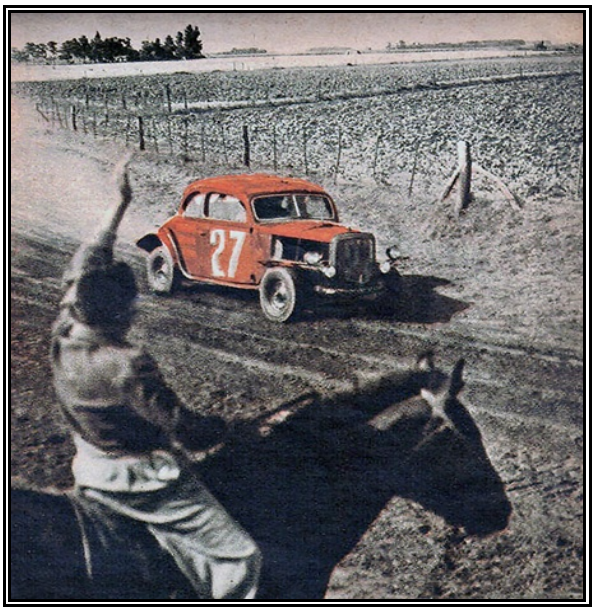
The penultimate stage 13 was the race's slowest; as slow as NASCAR and F1 pit-road speeds. It was run at an average of 38 m.p.h. in an eight and a half hour continuous ascent from 750 ft. to 13,500 ft. It ended with Oscar leading Juan overall by two and a half hours, and third place Domingo Marimón by five hours. The next day they would start the final stage in that order, only 44 of the 138 starters having survived the attrition.



Fans were kept misinformed by their radios' as they listened to the familiar voice of famous sportscaster Luis Elías Sojit, who relied on contradictory information reported through spectators' phone calls and from airplane sightings.

— *Oscar is in trouble!*
— *No, no! It is Juan who has stopped!*
— *No, no! The brothers are leading!*

Reliable reports from the finish line could surprise, perhaps as soon as tomorrow, when the thrilling finale of *La Caracas* would keep me and half a continent glued to our radios in suspense.

Cumulative times were spread sufficiently for no one to expect tomorrow's last stage to change their final position in the results. The race was Oscar's to lose; and if he did, then it would be Juan's to win. Or would it?

Hotel rooms were scarce that night. Oscar, Juan, and both *acompañantes* slept in the same room. Before retiring, Oscar said to Juan, "*I won't win tomorrow's stage.*" His advantage was such that he needn't take risks. He started leisurely from pole and was soon passed by Juan who, eager to win that last stage, was setting a furious pace. The road ahead, according to the Venezuelan Touring Club's description, was in good condition and raised no concerns. They only needed to remain attentive for a danger sign that warned about two sharp drainage dips in a long stretch of fast downhill road.

But the sign had been removed by pranksters. Juan's car got airborne, landing on its nose, which pushed the leaf spring used as a front bumper backward into the car's floor. The second dip again launched the car skyward. This time it landed on roadside rocks that knocked the differential backward, broke the gear box and raised the floor, the car then settling in a ditch.

No sooner had they recovered their composure when the next car appeared and precisely repeated Juan's act, but falling to the opposite side of the road. The difference was that it was easily rescued while Juan's car was hopelessly stuck.

Desiderio, Juan's *acompañante*, rushed up-road to warn the dozens of cars still to follow. Soon a race car road-block would greet Oscar's arrival. Oscar instructed Juan to tie their cars together so he could pull Juan's car back on to the road. The attempt failed and Oscar drove on, but his clutch had been compromised.

A pow-wow among the competitors concluded there was no way for them to get Juan's car back on to the road, so they all continued their race, but leisurely in single file, having agreed to not race each other, as the current points spread made it unlikely for this stage to affect any one's final position in the standings.

A truck passed by. Juan flagged him down and persuaded him to assist. With a chain connecting the vehicles, the truck pulled Juan's car on to the road, but its transmission was broken, its differential shifted back, and the floor was pushed up.

Sunrise start of a race stage on the way to Caracas

Another racer, Foilloux, a Chilean Juan had helped out of a similar situation last year, showed up. Having nothing to lose, Foilloux offered Juan his car's gear-box to reciprocate the favor, but it was incompatible as the Fords were different models, column shift vs. floor shift, and the housings didn't match; a challenge even for a born mechanic.

Desiderio's recollections:

"We installed Foilloux's gear box on to our car, but the rear cross-support had been knocked all the way back. What did we do? We removed the leaf spring we were using as front bumper and placed it in front of the cross-support, fastening it securely with chains and wire. Foilloux's gear box was from a '41 Ford with shift at the steering wheel, so the shift rod exited the box from the side instead of from above as in our '39 Ford that was a floor shift. Because of this we had to change gears by hand from above. I changed gears while Juan operated the clutch. I held the gear box with my feet, and from under the dashboard I would pull it upward with one hand as I changed gears with my other hand. But the gear box moved when braking, and sounded 'trarra-rrraarraa-rrarra-rrán,' *and that is when I would let go with my feet to separate it from the clutch. Once Juan stopped braking I would again couple the gear box and we would continue . . . My back was killing me . . . Suddenly we came upon Oscar's car stranded by the side of the road. Another car was there. We couldn't stop. Oscar motioned for us to not stop, yelling,* 'Go on, go on!' *Truth is, we couldn't have stopped. If we had stopped, how would we have restarted?"*

They drove like this for 264 Km. to the finish. Folks on half a continent remained glued to their radios as they had been for weeks. Juan's repairs had cost him three and a half hours and second place in the standings, but he managed to salvage third place.

Meanwhile, Oscar's car had stopped surrounded by a large pool of oil. He benefitted from push and tow assistance; then coasted the final long downhill stretch toward Caracas, crossing the finish line pushed by a private car with barely thirteen minutes to spare. The enthusiastic crowd mobbed Oscar's car (photo), extracted their idol and jubilantly carried him away aloft.

An official who happened to lean against the car noticed the hood was cold. He asked whether Oscar raced with special water. It wasn't about Oscar getting push and tow assistance, as earlier in the race he, as well as several others, had profited similarly without consequences. But the rules stated that cars must cross the finish line under their own power and Oscar's had obviously not.

Oscar was nowhere to be found. *Acompañante* promptly started the engine to prove it still ran. He then drove the car back a short distance, returning across the finish line under its own power with barely moments to spare. But the rules also stated that the driver himself, not a substitute, must be at the wheel. Oscar, the crowd's idol . . . was disqualified!

Marimón crossed the finish line yelling, *"I came in second! I came in second!"* before being told he had won the race and its huge prize equivalent to twelve brand new automobiles; about 1/3 of a million dollars in today's money. Despite Fords having dominated the race from start to finish, except for Stage 5 won by Fangio, Chevrolets filled eight of the first ten positions, including the win and second place. Marimón later acknowledged not having deserved to win, but noted that he had lost many races he deserved to have won. He honored an agreement struck with Fangio beforehand, to share equally all expenses as well as all rewards.

When Oscar was informed of his disqualification he was distraught. Appeals were made, but the rules would not yield. He never overcame having lost the most important race of his career after having dominated it from start to finish, a race which to this day remains the most famous in Argentina's motor racing history. His nephew Ricardo wrote:

"But I want to state clearly what kind of a person Oscar was. During the race he was awarded an emerald by the Peruvian president in recognition of his achievements. Considering it a disproportionate gift, he decided to raffle it among his peers. The lucky winner was popular Tadeo Taddía [uncle of my girl friend; I never met him]. *The Venezuelan Touring Club, attempting to compensate Oscar for his sorrow, organized a collection that raised a sum equivalent to what Oscar had lost. He refused to accept it and donated it all to the poverty-stricken children of Venezuela. Without a doubt, Oscar was the moral champion of the event, and also . . .*

. . . a Gentleman of Life."

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There would be no respite, as the return race from Lima, run as a separate Grand Prix of 3,000 miles in five stages, would start in thirteen days. After overhauling their cars at the Ford dealership, where Oscar allowed the Ford mechanics to work on his car but Juan did not, they broke in the engines on the drive back to Lima.

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At midnight in thick fog, 44 cars left Lima at fifteen seconds intervals in the order they had finished in Caracas. Behind them, 35 additional cars started according to a draw. Oscar, still fuming from his loss, was determined to avenge it. He would start fiftieth.

Marimón started on pole setting a furious pace. After a while he asked his mechanic,

"Check to see if someone is following and let me know."

"Yes Toscanito [M's nickname]. *It is Oscar."*

"You are crazy. It can't be Oscar. He started fiftieth."

"I am telling you, it is Oscar. He is approaching like a madman. Be careful."

"Look again, because there is no way Oscar could have reached us. How do you know it is Oscar?"

"Because he is the only one with his searchlight on the roof. I'm telling you, it is Oscar."

A moment later Oscar passed them honking his horn and vanished into the distance. He kept on driving the entire race frantically, securing the win in dominant fashion, and with it his second TC championship. Between them, the brothers won seventeen of the nineteen round-trip stages and half of all second places.

Juan, having honed his skills in two seasons as an owner/driver, was now Oscar's equal, ready to obliterate all rivals and set TC records permanently out of reach.

Six years later, in mid-career, the brothers were tied with four titles each, raising fan excitement to a frenzy. Juan would then win five more, and finally Oscar one last one to complete fifteen years of Gálvez total domination of TC's golden era.

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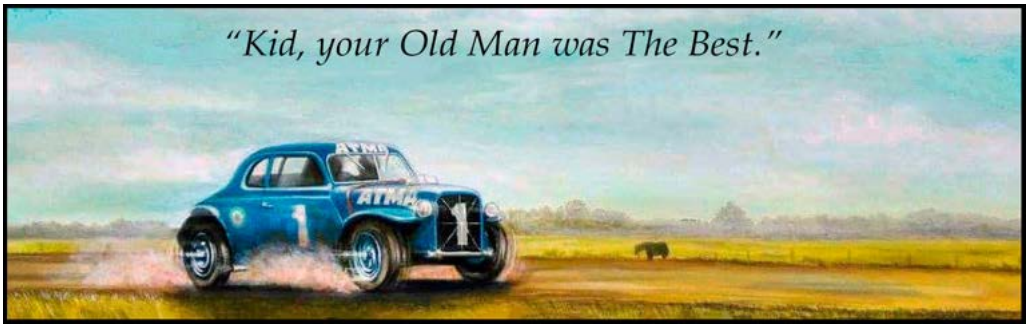
Decades later the great Froilán González, star of TC and F1,
said to Juan's son Ricardo,



Juan's iconic 1938 blue Ford Coupe

In the decade and a half following the discord that transformed the brothers' cooperation into rivalry, each succeeded in proving to the other the validity of his convictions. Oscar's flamboyant, impulsive driving and his emphasis on pure speed earned him an impressive five championships, spread over fifteen years, from first to last.

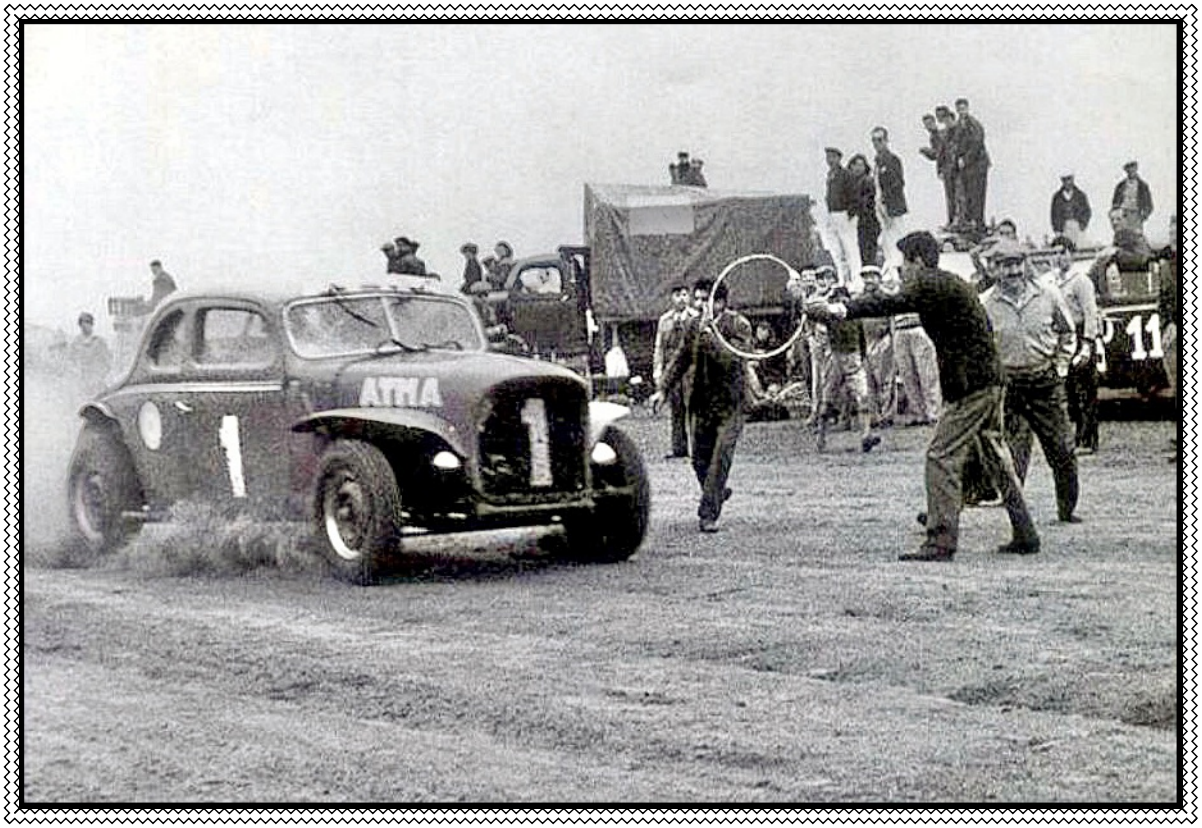
But shy and reserved Juan's cold, calculating tranquility
proved what he kept saying all those years,

❊

"It is not always the fastest who wins,
but he who thinks about how to
take less time than the rest."

❊

Nevada City, 2020


ΑΤΗΑ
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