

# International Automotive Media Award for Lifetime Achievement

## Pete Lyons

One sunny day at a sports car race on the old public road course at Bridgehampton, New York, a very young boy who at that time had no interest in automobiles was invited to step into the cockpit of a tiny Cooper-Norton F3 race car. “This one fits me!” he exclaimed in his mind. Today, he remembers that as a life-changing moment.

Race cars that seem to fit are larger now, but the excitement that springs from them is just as fresh. And to his delight, Pete Lyons has been able to devote the intervening decades to happily wandering the raceways of the world, writing about, photographing and very occasionally being allowed to drive some of the most beautiful and thrilling machines ever created by human genius. Even better, he’s been privileged to know some of the geniuses.

It’s all thanks to his father, Ozzie Lyons, an engineer, photographer and lifelong automobile enthusiast who put Pete’s feet on this road. Ozzie was long the USA correspondent for *Autosport* magazine, and helped his youngster begin shooting and writing for that British bible too. Gradually, but inevitably, covering motorsports became a career.

For several years Pete reported on the North American scene for Autosport, regularly attending great events like the Daytona 24-hour and 500-mile races, the Sebring 12-hour, the Indy 500 and the annual Formula 1 Grands Prix in Canada, the U.S. and Mexico. A special favorite was the Can-Am, the Canadian-American Challenge Cup series for essentially unlimited big sports racing cars. Those glorious years from 1966 to 1974 are the basis for three of Pete’s books, *CAN-AM* and *CAN-AM PHOTO HISTORY*, both published by MBI, and the recent *CAN-AM CARS IN DETAIL*, done in partnership with studio photographer Peter Harholdt for David Bull Publishing.

Going international in 1973, Pete spent four wonderful years as the F1 correspondent for both *Autosport* and the American publication *AutoWeek*. At a time before live TV or the Internet, when fans had to wait for their magazine to arrive to learn the story of a race weekend, Pete tried to put the reader into his shoes at such exotic locales as Argentina, Brazil, South Africa, Japan and all the great circuits of Europe.

After several years on-staff as editor of a US racing monthly, which at first was called *Formula* and later renamed *Racecar*, Pete chose to become a freelancer once again. Today he contributes to a wide variety of automotive publications, including *Vintage Racecar*, which carries his regular column, “Fast Lines.”

A few of the other publications in which Pete’s byline has appeared include *Car and Driver*, *Car Graphic (J)*, *Classic Motorsports*, *Corvette Quarterly*, *Cycle*, *Cycle World*, *Motorsport (UK)*, *On Track*, *Private Pilot*, *Racer*, *Road & #38; Track*, *Sports Car*, *Vintage Motorsport* and many others in many countries.

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To date Pete Lyons is the author of nine books: the new *FAST LINES* anthology of his *Vintage Racecar* columns, published by Octane Press; 2010's *CAN-AM CARS IN DETAIL* for David Bull Publishing (Winner of the 2010 MPG Dean Batchelor Award, details at [motorpressguild.org](http://motorpressguild.org)), *CAN-AM* (Winner, 1996 Dean Batchelor Award), *CAN-AM PHOTO HISTORY*, marque histories of *FERRARI*, *LAMBORGHINI* and *JAGUAR*, *CHAPARRAL* Profile, *JAMES HUNT* Profile.

As well as being honored with the two Dean Batchelor Awards noted above, Pete has received the Ken Purdy Award of the International Motor Press Assoc., a Best Feature Article Award of the Sports Car Club of America and an Award of Appreciation from the Road Racing Drivers Club. Also, Pete's book *CAN-AM* won an International Automotive Media Award in 1996.

The Historic Grand Prix Association has twice awarded its Pete Lyons Cup to owners of vintage F1 cars whom Pete felt best recreated the spirit of the historic times he remembers so vividly.

To scratch that old F3 itch, Pete has attended several competition driving schools, including the Bob Bondurant School, Skip Barber School, British School of Motor Racing, Jim Russell School and Jim Hall II Kart Racing School. He has test-driven many high performance cars, including several Ford GT40s, Lola and Shadow Can-Am machines, a Porsche 935 Turbo, a March-BMW GTP and a Ferrari 250 Testa Rossa. He has competed in Formula Ford open-wheel racing, on go karts, and as a navigator in rallies (class winner with F1 World Champion Denny Hulme in 1976 Tour of Britain).

No Cooper-Norton has come his way, but Pete has owned a Norton motorcycle and several other bikes, including Honda, Suzuki, Triumph and Triton (Triumph-Norton special) and has ridden some of these — and Ozzie's classic Vincent — all across the United States, deep into Mexico and throughout much of Europe. His most interesting personal car was his beloved 1973 Corvette, a bright Targa Red coupe which he drove to the actual Targa Florio in Sicily and on to other races in Europe during his F1 years. The flying bug bit, too: Pete earned his private pilot's license in 1976, and has owned Cessna, Mooney and Piper aircraft. At the extremes of the flight envelope, he has proudly logged pilot time in the Goodyear Blimp and at the (back seat) stick of a Navy Blue Angels jet.

Pete, his wife Lorna Fitts Lyons (former editor of SCCA's Sports Car magazine) and kitty Pumpkin are at home today in Big Bear, a small mountain community in Southern California. Thanks to the Internet they can live in paradise while continuing to write articles and books and offering historical racing photos from Pete's and father Ozzie's archives; see it all at [www.petelyons.com](http://www.petelyons.com)