

Lou Marevich - Kar 20 Team Billy Kart

A childhood dream comes true!!

Since I was a teenager I had a fascination with off road bikes and rally cars and a dream to participate in a Paris to Dakar desert type events. At 16 I started competing in motor bike enduros in Italy before settling in Sydney in 1969 aged 19. For years I followed the local motor sport including rallies and every few weeks with my trusted Husqvarna I used to bush bash mostly near Mudgee.

In 1986 with a few workmates at radio station 2WS we bought a HD Holden from Hoyts cinemas, which did the original Bourke to Bourketown Variety Club bash in 1985. Following months of fundraising and mechanical improvements to an already tested car, we entered the 1987 Variety Bash from Bourke to Barrier Reef then the 1988 Bourke to Blaterskite.

The team split at the end of the 1989 Bourke to Broome bash due to work reasons. For the following few years as owner / builder I extended our house and our third son Robert was born in 1991. In between all this I bought a red HR Holden and from support from the mechanical and panel beating sponsors, plus having the benefit of having worked on the HD we decided to enter the Royal Flying Doctor Trek. Unfortunately I had to withdraw from that event due to Radio 2WS where I had been working since 1980 in the maintenance department receiving permission to convert from the AM Band to the current FM Band from June the 1st 1993

A few weeks later the London to Sydney marathon arrived in town. The rally stopped at Homebush, where the current Olympic Stadium is before finishing at the Opera House. A few spectators in front of me had maroon t-shirts and jumpers with the Kidney Kar Rally and dates printed on them and I noticed that the rally was due to start in August. By the way those spectators are still involved in the rally (Stan Evans, Grahame McKay, Dennis Soulos & Paul Fenech) hopefully I didn't leave anybody out.

The following day I rang the Kidney Foundation sending a deposit, and with John Walsh our paymaster at 2WS and Ian Peasley a good mechanic we entered the 1993 Kidney Kar Rally. That year the rally started in Bondi to finish in St Kilda via Woomera. The Kidney Kar Rally was different from the Variety Bashes, I found the Kidney Kar Rally more challenging and competitive. Team Billy Kart was born in 1994, The Eels colours were chosen for our Rally jackets and over the last 14 years the team has had some top navigators and drivers. Thank you John Walsh, Ian Peasley, Kim Liebig, Andrew Shaw, Harry Christian, Colin Stubb, Scott Sullivan, Greg Mansfield, David Nelson, Rodney Hart, the back ups Dougie and Anthony and a special mention to Gaby Georges who joined the team for the Tasmanian Rally in 1999 and 8 years later and has switched from being the team navigators to being the Main Driver over the last few years. Gaby has been a loyal team mate, very supportive and willing to do any task for the benefit of the team. Gaby is also a strong Roosters supporter and restorer of Fords. Gaby also has put up with my legendary snoring over the years and on serious note is the co-principal of the team.

In 2003 we bought a 1983 VH Commodore 6 cylinders for \$350, after using 2 HR Holdens in previous rallies. Gaby and myself with guidance from team Grumpy Old Men Kar 88 of

Ken Russell and John Gulbert, who had a similar car and the help of previous sponsors managed to build a strong car which I call "Little Beauty". With a small budget the car is gradually improved between events. We have been privileged to have a great group of sponsors including Hornsby Differentials & Gear box, Seven Hills-Toongabbie RSL, Mr Filter, Pedders Suspension, DORO Australia, Artsigns & Graphics, Metropolitan Driveshafts, Award Trophy and Australian Radio Network owner of many radio stations around the country and WS.FM 101.7, MIX 106.5 & The Edge 96.1. All of these sponsors have been strong supporters of the Kidney Kar Rally and Kidney Health Australia over the last 14 years.

Over the years we have done many fund raising activities in schools, shopping centres, parks and had many garage sales. I was also privileged to have Pro Hart paint a fridge which was won by a war veteran widow. For 2 months we sold raffle tickets at local McDonalds, also due to Scott Sullivan being the Marketing Manager for Westfield we did many shopping centre promotions some with up to six Kidney Kar entrants. The most memorable was in 1996 when we did a 4 week Thursday night stint with all the Eels players on the stage. For the last 6 years our major fundraiser has been the Kidney Golf Day at Ashlar Golf Course.

Over the years my wife Elizabeth has supported me tremendously; on the other hand I try to always balance home and work to the rally fundraising activities. One of the questions people still ask me is why am I still involved with the rally? First of all Kidney Health Australia's vision of eventually eradicating Kidney disease is still a few years down the track combined with the motoring adventure and outback travelling and also meeting great people. One of the many that I wish to mention is "Gobbledock" Brian Symonds of Broken Hill, a former entrant and fundraiser for Kidney Health Australia. Late one afternoon 160km from Broken Hill our HR Holden snapped the front end in half. Given no chance to continue by people trying to help us and following a phone call, Brian a steel merchant came to the rescue at 10pm with his car trailer. Until 4am the following morning Brian welded and reinforced the front end in his workshop and we rejoined the rally at 7am that morning in Menindee. Some "Rally-tives" were clapping when myself, Scotty and Gaby left the Start still eating our breakfast.

Over the years Team Billy Kart has won two Supreme Achiever Awards and one John Hogg Hearts Award also finishing in the top ten a few times. For years I have been involved with the Rally Advisory committee. The committee is necessary to make small adjustments to rally rules and also plan and improve this superb event. Everybody is welcome to the meeting to express their opinions. My involvement is mainly marketing and promoting the rally (radio ads for the last 14 years and TV ads lately). Created in 1989 by the then Road boss, Allan Lawson's vision and creativity this unique event is in very good hands since 2001. Road Directors Arthur and Kim Davis, and their officials have done a top job over the last 6 rallies.

My dream of crossing deserts has been fulfilled and in the process I have met lifelong friends and hopefully have done a little bit to help the work of Kidney Health Australia.

Lou Marevich

PS – Work in progress – to win the Jodie Lanyon Memorial Trophy before hanging my yellow and blue jacket.