



## Kolter's Korner

Well, I've wrestled with this one long enough. If it still sounds like a eulogy, then that's the way it's going to be. The occasion? By the time you read this, John Kolter will be married.

Johnny K. was, and still is, one of ol' Rusty's best buddies, even though we don't get to rouse much rabble since his career took him out of state (he now builds retirement homes out of press-board, or something like that). An old friend reaches a mile-marker in his life like this and you can't help but step back and take a look at the years gone by. And what a sight!!

I remember the first club meeting he stumbled into. By the end of the evening he'd conned me out of my magic distributor wrench - a 13mm crescent at the end of a long, bent handle with odd, significant angles everywhere. It looked like it was cobbled together in a Seoul shanty and then dropped down a garbage disposal - and the dealers were getting fifteen 1976 U.S. dollars for each one. This, so he could have his dad the machinist duplicate it (in titanium, no doubt). He didn't even offer to pop for a brew. What a way to start a friendship.

It wasn't long before we were battling it out weekly on the autocross courses (to stay out of last place). It seemed to have gone on for years. We eventually learned something, I guess, because I remember the SCCA event where we both won our first trophies (just for the record, I was first and J.K. was second!). At another event, this one hosted by our own club, we were plagued by temperatures and humidity way up there in the nineties. Brain fade was epidemic and corner workers were dropping like flies on a steamy sun-baked field of sheep-poo (the track doubled as grazing land for a herd of forty of the woolly beasts). Except for Johnny. His parents had come out to see their racer son, and if you looked over to the only shade tree visible for miles, just outside corner one, you saw him perched comfortably in a lawn chair, farmer's straw hat raked stylishly on his head, sipping at an ice cold lemonade and lecturing dad on the finer points of heel-and-toe. Then there was the early morning slingshot to an event, on which we taught each other all about drafting -- nose to tail,

door to door at close to 100 mph. Ah, youth. In my years as club president (renegade, indeed!), he served as my treasurer, and I recall even finishing the term in the black.

At some point Johnny was bitten by the karting bug, and he brought his first kart out to a regular driver's school for the select few to play with (never pass up a chance to drive one of these things -- trust me). I had a blast. Not only did I beat his best time, I also fried his clutch in the process (now we were even for the wrench). It was great fun watching him dart through the course, his leather-look jacket smoking where it rested on the exhaust pipe behind his shoulders. In his intense concentration, he managed a beautiful 360 -- right about halfway down the longest straight on the course. Hardly an event goes by where we don't come upon this straight dubbed "Kolter's Korner" and laugh. Yeah, laugh it up; I hear he's doing 2-minute laps at Road America these days. Draw your own conclusions.

I have the feeling that some locals may still remember us from our wild and magical trip to the 1979 U.S.G.P. at the Glen. Out of consideration for the new Mrs. K., I have to omit the

details, but it was everything four wild and crazy racing fools could have asked for. Except maybe for John -- he collected the obligatory \$60 love note from one of Ohio's finest. It wasn't my fault, I told him to trust the radar detector.

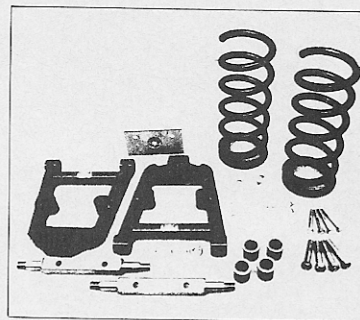
I remember when club hotshoe Mr. G and myself got John's call to retrieve him from a Shell station tucked under a maze of Chicago inner-city interstate. We listened dumbfounded as he explained that he thought the glowing oil light had to be a malfunction in the sending unit, since he himself had just changed the oil. What started as a consolation drink ended as a 200 mile ride home in the middle of the night.

And then there was that night (the term male-bonding cheapens it) when Johnny K., Mr. G., Reech and myself huddled together in the security of a corner tavern and talked about cars, life, values, cars, women, cars, marriage... you get the idea. The real nitty-gritty. Strange it is how you learn what decent people your friends are.

So, Johnny K. is getting married. Well, Kolter, good luck from all of us -- just be careful down that long straight.



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