

# PARADE LAPS

By Jack Kelly

"You mean they might let me on the track?" she asked.

"I think so," I replied.

This was an especially interesting proposition for Mary, my SO, at her first Porsche Driver Education event. At le Circuit Mont-Tremblant, north of Montréal, the pit area has a view of the famous Namerow and the front straightaway, but most of the track is not visible from this area. And so the prospect of seeing this wonderful track, even at slow pace, became a highlight for Mary and began the motivation to try driving the Porsche at speed in a future Northeast Region Driver Education event.

A little background here. During my first year in DE, at my fourth event, my brake master cylinder failed in turn five at NHIS, and I drove my car into the tires and barriers. This was the day before our vacation that year, and since then, Mary has been skeptical about my continued interest in Driver Education. Five years later, I convinced her to attend her first event at Mont-Tremblant, since the local village offered cycling, shopping, ambiance, and good food while I was off driving. She attended tech inspection, the Drivers' Meeting, and stayed for the novice meeting, after which I expected her to jump on her bicycle and head off to explore the beautiful mountain countryside. Instead, she hung around, fascinated by this group of Porsche enthusiasts who were all excited about driving on a professional racecourse. And then, during the morning came the announcement over the loudspeaker:

*"During lunchtime, guests will be allowed on the track as passengers at a reduced rate of speed with pace cars."*

"You mean, they might let me on the track?" she asked.

"I think so," I replied.

And so now I witness the nervousness that I remember from my first time on the track. She wanted to drive, but this time, Parade Laps would have her only in the passenger seat. But this was fine. The night before, we asked the guard if she could bicycle the track while I unloaded the car from the trailer.

"Well, maybe," said the guard, "if I don't see," but later the guard was clearly unnerved and so we abandoned the effort.

Later, we found out that Mary could have done a track walk on her bike as long as she signed the waiver. And so now, in the staging area, waiting for Parade laps, she was about to see the track I had described so often.

We are at Mont-Tremblant at a very special time. It's summer, early July, the weather is warm, and despite a few showers during the track event, a wonderful two days of driving. Friendships develop and renew at the track and at the Thursday night group dinner, and we cheer the Red and Black run group at the conclusion of their 90-minute DE Enduro. Many stay for the Mont-Tremblant Blues Festival that begins as the DE event closes on Friday afternoon.

Fast-forward to Friday, and again at lunchtime parade laps. But this time guests can drive. Mary is so excited, she asks for the five-point harness. At she doesn't drive the Porsche normally, and certainly not with track tires, she thinks the car performs wonderfully. Around, she goes, struggling with the line, but following directions, and at the end she is hooked. Struck by the concern for

safety, the realization that finesse is more critical than brute speed, and the impression left by the other women who were improving their driving skills on this wonderful track, she now asks when she can drive officially at a DE event.

"You mean, I can drive the Porsche on these great road courses?" she asks.

"Sure." I replied.