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SPARE PARTS

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On the weekend of the 13th to 15th of October, I was able to experience the anniversary of a dream I was not even sure I could get into production 40 years ago.

At the start of 1983, we had the first Heron MJ1 prototype completed, it was painted red and is currently being restored down south. At the time it got a lot of public and media attention but it was not until we towed the first Heron, along with a couple of other unfinished cars, from Rotorua to Auckland for the Motor Expo in July '83, that we realised we had something pretty special. None of us were expecting the attention the car got, but by the end of the show, I was certain we had a winner. Initially, I had been worried about how the car would stack up against the other exotic cars at the show, but, as it turned out,

the crowds around our stand were so thick that we could not even see the exotic cars.

Over the next two years, six more prototypes were built before manufacture of the production MJ1 began in partnership with Summit Engineering. Had it not been for the 1983 show and the orders we received things could have gone so differently. In October of 2023, I came over from Australia, with my wife Bev, a woman who worked as hard on this project as I did, and like many others, an unsung hero. We were back in Rotorua to celebrate the existence of a small fibreglass monocoque sports car, most of which still exist 40 years later including that first red prototype. Some

have been or are being restored others have been modernised but all are still distinctly Herons.

The weekend went by too fast but it was an event worth remembering so what follows is my best recollection of the events of the weekend.



FRIDAY NIGHT

On Friday night, we were very humbled by the 30 Heron owners and supporters who turned up at the Arawa Park Hotel in Rotorua. It was a great opportunity to catch up not only with people who had been involved with the Heron through the years but also with current owners who are determined to preserve this unique New Zealand marque. I will not name them for fear of missing somebody out but you know who you are. Thank you. However I would like to especially thank the main instigators of our anniversary weekend. Peter Guilford, Mark Janssen and Walter Wing did an excellent job and this weekend would not have happened without them.

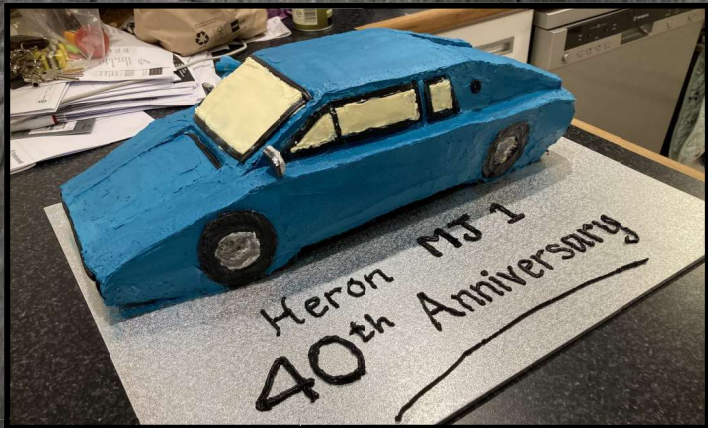
It was interesting that the Mazda MX5 Club were having their get-together at the same Hotel, but we got in first and had our cars parked out the front of the Hotel while the Mazda's had to park out the back.

SATURDAY

On Saturday morning, we all assembled at the Hotel and drove in convoy down to the Rotorua Lake front to display the cars. Walter Wing had brought the Heron Banner and a table etc. Roy Hoare had hoped to be there with his Heron MJ 2+2 but it was, sadly, out of action. Instead, we settled for

looking at his pictures of his Heron, which he showed us with typical Roy humour and enthusiasm.

We had five Heron MJ1 cars displayed at the lake in addition we also had Jim Short's Heron/Short Spyder. Although not wearing a Heron badge it was designed and built in our factory. Jim had intended to put it into



40th ANNIVERSARY OF THE HERON MJ1

by Ross Baker & P Harlow



Ross and Bev Baker

production but as Jim was unsure of the market only two bodies were ever pulled from the moulds.

Michelle brought her newly painted MJ1 on a trailer. It had just been painted it the week before the Show.

About 100 people turned up to see the cars. It was great to speak to people who had been involved in building the Herons that I had not seen for 20 – 30 years.

Unfortunately, the Daily Post had put the write-up about the show in Saturday's paper that did not come out until the day of the show, so only a few knew the show was on. I have had contacts from a lot of people disappointed they did not know anything about the show until it was over.

Saturday Lunch

We drove out in convoy to the new Bike Park at the old Waipa State Mill. Here we had a very nice lunch and another couple of hours session of discussing the Heron marque, then it was back to the Hotel to get ready for the Anniversary Dinner.

Dinner Saturday Night.

Saturday night we had the Anniversary Dinner at the Hotel with about 50 people. This was a great night as I was able to take the opportunity to publicly thank the people for attending the Anniversary and for the display of beautifully presented and restored cars. Bev and I presented the trophy we had brought over with us for the "People's Choice" car. D deservedly this went to Scott Brearley for his well-presented blue Heron MJ1. Fiona and Mark Janssen had made a beautiful anniversary cake in the shape of a Heron that finished the night off perfectly. It was a great night that went on until very late, but we all had a great time that will only get better as more and more cars are restored. See the photo of the cake

SUNDAY

We gathered at the front of the Hotel and thanked and said goodbye to all those who had attended.

I believe it was a great weekend except for the Daily Post posting the article after the event.



Peoples choice award went to Scott Brearley and his blue Heron.



Short Spyder



Club members, Walter Wing (far left) and Roy Hoare (far right) watch as Ross (centre) checks out the one-off Heron XR1 undergoing a full restoration.



Just out of the paint booth but not yet mobile was the Heron belonging to Michelle. It was trailer from Whangarei.